

APPENDIX of Diplomacy of Whataboutism and U.S. Foreign Policy Attitudes

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A1: Pretest Survey Instruments

Prior to fielding our main survey vignette, we fielded two pretest surveys. The first one from August 10 to August 12, 2021 and a second one from August 22 to August 25. We used Lucid's online platform to recruit 425 and 722 U.S. adult citizens, respectively. These pretests sought to determine our selection of key aspects of our main survey as as the exact scenarios such as human rights or election interference, the various whataboutism instruments, the selection of foreign country in the scenarios, etc..

Figure A1: Acceptability of US Action Against Violation Type (Pretest 1)

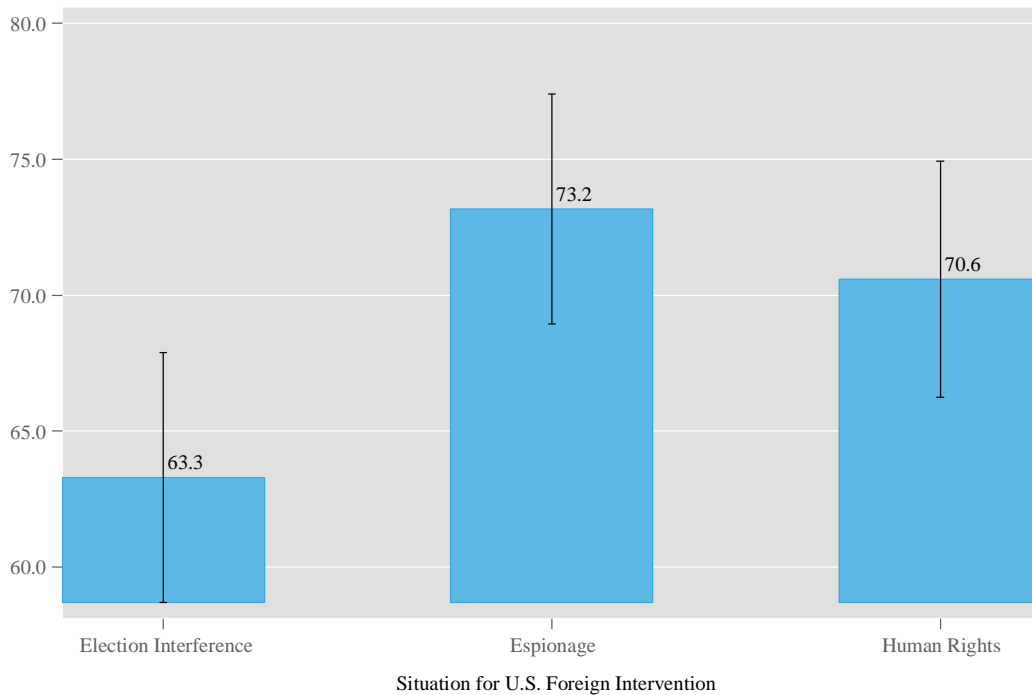


Figure A1 displays how American respondents viewed U.S. activities in other countries. Specifically, we asked respondents how acceptable it was for the U.S. to conduct the following actions: (1) interfere in another country’s elections to ensure the election of parties friendly to the U.S. (*Election Interference*), (2) spy on foreign governments and foreign publics to promote U.S. interests (*Espionage*), and (3) use sanctions or military force to prevent human rights abuses (*Human Rights*). These three areas are displayed on the horizontal axis, and the vertical axis displays the percentage of respondents who answered that these actions were acceptable to them with accompanying 95 percent confidence intervals.¹ Americans generally felt that espionage against foreign governments and foreign publics were the most acceptable type of U.S. activities abroad (73.2%), followed by coercive actions to promote human rights (70.6%). Although also widely supported, the least acceptable activity of the three involved the electoral interference in other countries (63.3%).

¹ For presentational purposes, we binarized the outcome variable, which was a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from “1” (never acceptable) to “5” (always acceptable). The results do not change using the full scale.

Figure A2: Country Favorability (Pretest 1)

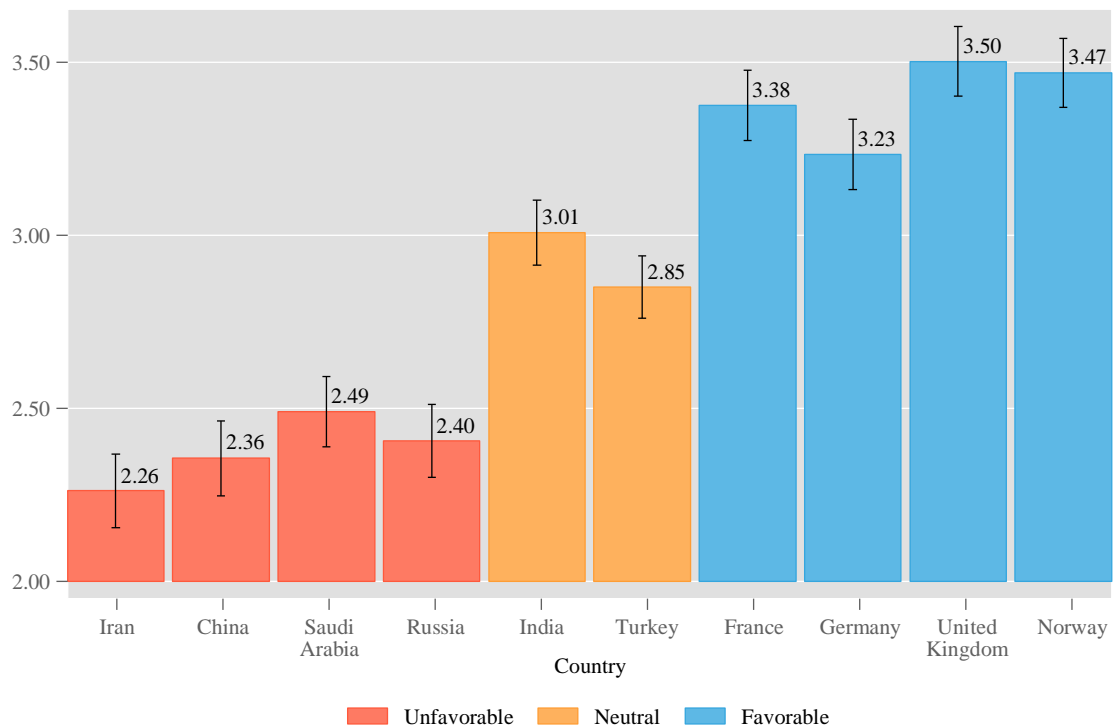


Figure A2 displays the country favorability ratings for U.S. respondents. The vertical axis displays the mean favorability rating those respondents scored, which ranged from “1”, very unfavorable, to “5”, very favorable. For presentational ease, we split the group of countries among unfavorable (red), neutral (orange), and favorable (blue). Despite growing US-China tensions, the US public did not view China any worse than Iran or Russia. These three countries and Saudi Arabia are generally viewed unfavorably among the American public. Moving upwards on the favorability rating, India and Turkey are viewed more neutrally while European allies of the US are rated more favorably with the United Kingdom and Norway having the highest favorability ratings. Accordingly, each one of our three planned whataboutist state actors (Russia, Turkey, and Germany) was chosen from a different level of country favorability.

Figure A3: Whataboutism Instrument Comparisons (Pretest 1)

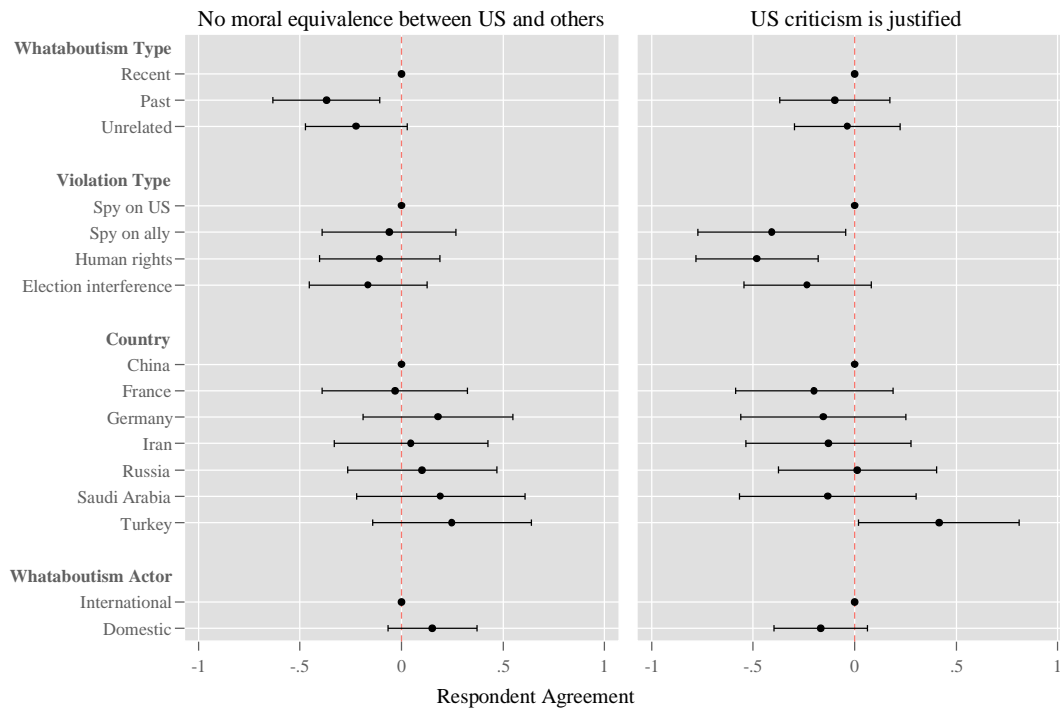


Figure A3 displays the regression analysis of our mini-experiment where respondents viewed the following vignette where the bold words represent the randomized component: *The US government criticized [country] for its [violation type]. [Whataboutism actor] questioned this criticism, pointing out that the US [whataboutism type]*. After viewing this short vignette, respondents were asked whether US criticisms were justified (right figure) and whether the US is morally superior (left figure). In each of the randomized categories, the US criticized seven different target countries on four different violation topics (espionage against the US, espionage against an American ally, a human rights violation, and electoral interference in the UK). Even with this extremely limited sample (425 respondents), we found that whataboutist messages that targeted the more relevant and similar violations by the US reduced respondents' view of US moral superiority compared to past transgressions or less relevant ones (e.g., discussing US torture when the criticism is on refugee handling). The past transgressions were statistically significant at the .05 level while the unrelated ones were significant at the .10 level. As for

other factors such as country of criticism, messenger identity, or violation type, they do not appear to matter (statistically insignificant).

Noticeably, for the justification of US action, the type of whataboutism message does not affect respondent opinion. Instead, the justification of US criticism depends on the issue area under question. In general, criticisms of espionage against the US and election interference against the UK are seen as more justified than US criticism of espionage of a close US ally (the UK) and of human rights abuses (both are less justified and statistically significant when compared to the reference group, espionage against the US).

Together, these results provide limited evidence that whataboutism messages affect US moral authority, but justification for US action is limited to issue areas deemed legitimate for Americans. The lack of difference among country perpetrators (hostile, neutral, or allied) and the identity of the messenger (domestic or foreign) is surprising in that the message and its content appear to matter the most.

Figure A4: Comparison of Instrument Similarity (Pretest 2)

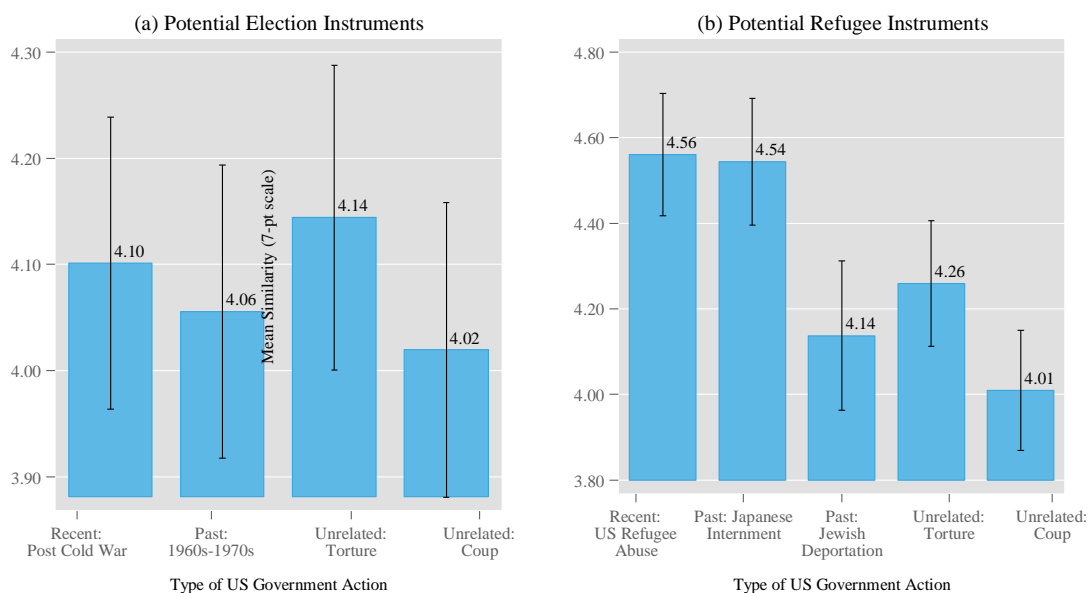
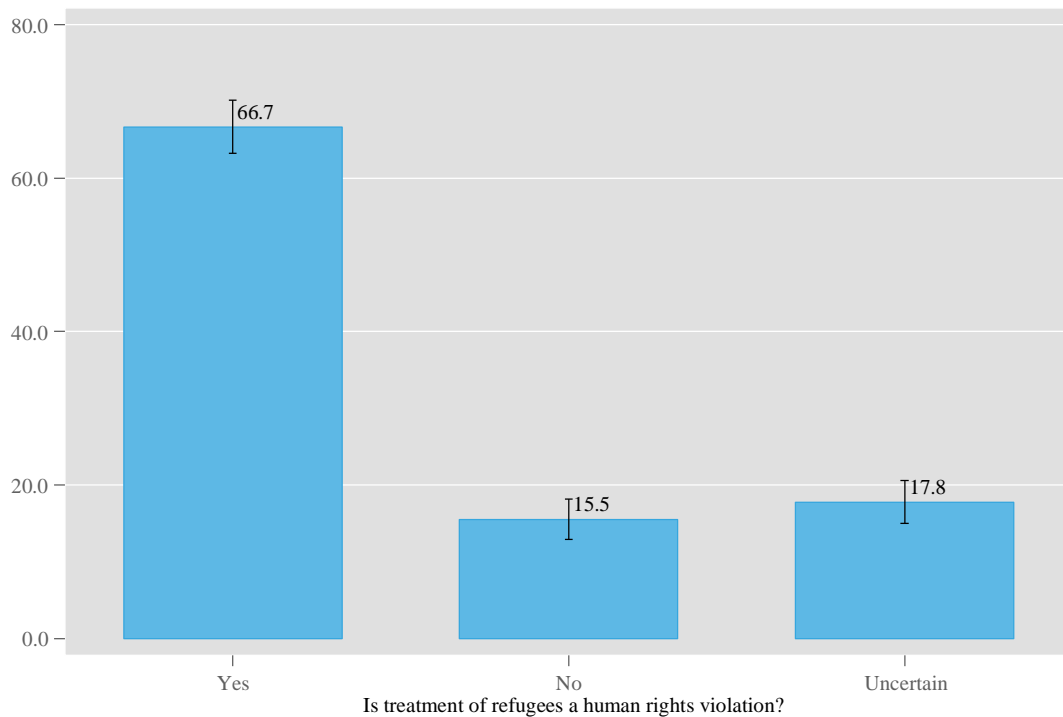


Figure A4 displays the results asking respondents to determine the similarity of the particular acts. The vertical axis displays the mean similarity score out of a 7-point scale, split by election and refugee issue areas. On the part of elections, we were not able to ascertain if the acts were dissimilar, but we did find distinctions in the refugee vignette. For the main survey, we combined the Japanese internment and Jewish deportation of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany together as those events were seen as consistent with the more recent example. One possibility for the lack of differences in the election scenario may be due to language (i.e. a reference to the whole post-Cold War era), which is why we focused on the last twenty years instead in the final main survey. We noticed that inducing military coups and torturing terrorists rated similar in both issue areas, which is why we selected one common unrelated treatment for the main survey.

Figure A5: Refugee Scenario Check (Pretest 2)



For the refugee instrument, we wanted to make sure that our respondents viewed the described acts as a human rights violation. Respondents were presented the following information:

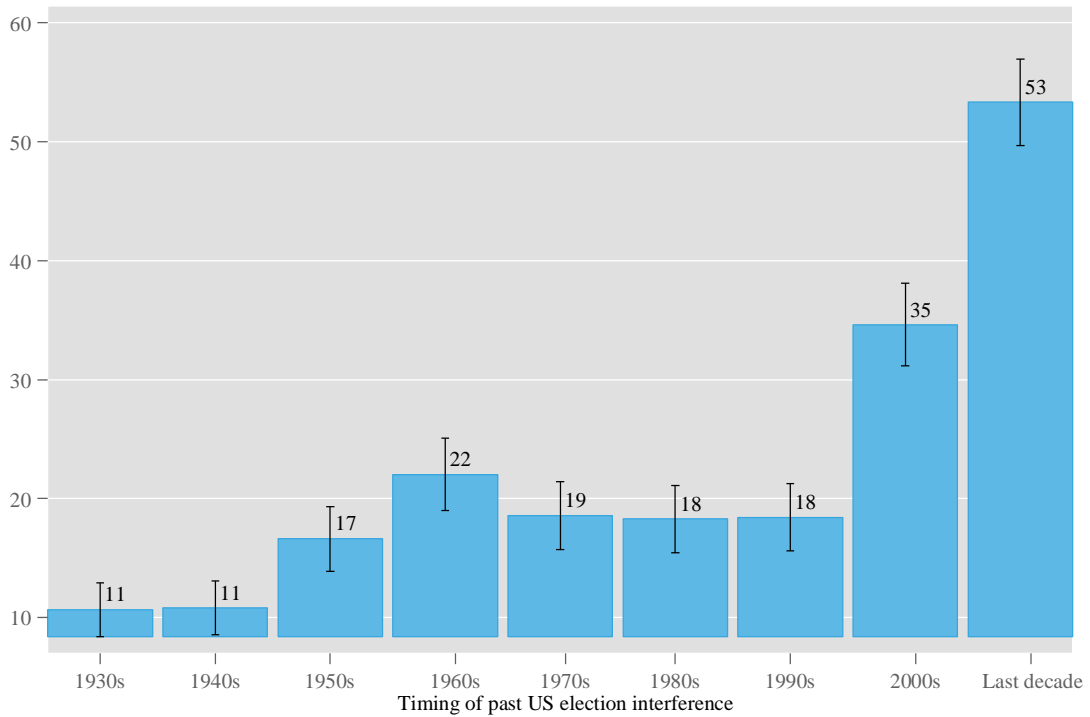
Several years in the future, suppose a foreign country treated refugees arriving at its borders in the following way:

- *Sheltered refugees in life endangering and overcrowded facilities.*
- *Ignored the frequent use of violence towards refugees by detention facility guards.*
- *Tolerated the frequent sexual assault of women within the detention facility.*
- *Deported some refugees, including unaccompanied children, back to their home countries where they face the prospect of violence and death.*

Then respondents were asked if this treatment constituted a significant human rights violation.

As Figure A5 shows, two-thirds of respondents overwhelmingly thought so. However, it should be noted that nearly one-third either said no or were uncertain, suggesting that human rights could be a potentially divisive issue, which reinforces our approach in our surveys to select different issue areas rather than relying on a single issue.

Figure A6: Length of Past Instrument (Pretest 2)



For this section, we asked respondents the following question in our second pretest: When the U.S. thinks about foreign election interference, pundits and decisionmakers sometime raise various past examples of US election interference. In your opinion, how relevant are the following examples to today? Select all that apply.

[U.S. election interference in the 1930s / 1940s / 1950s / 1960s / 1970s / 1980s / 1990s / 2000s / in the past decade]

Figure A6 displays the results from this question where 2000s and last decade indicate that this timing is the most relevant. Thus, for our main instrument comparison we tried to use the same twenty year span for our treatments. Also, there did not appear to be a large difference for respondents in evaluating past years.

A2: Survey Details

A2.1: Main Survey

Introductory prompt: In this survey, you will be asked questions about US relations with other countries around the world. We will describe diplomatic exchanges that could occur in the future between the US and another country. Please carefully read this information and answer the questions that follow.

[Randomize either human rights or elections interference vignette]

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Election Interference Vignette²

As a major part of its global leadership position, the US seeks to protect itself and her allies from foreign interference.

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In 2027, US intelligence discovered that [country] intervened in France's presidential election against the incumbent president. The [country] government secretly gave the pro-[country] opposition candidate 60 million dollars for use in their election campaign. The funding was provided in a mixture of cash and encrypted usb-drives with cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

A US government spokesperson publicly exposed the intervention and denounced [country]'s intervention in France's election, calling it "unacceptable behavior". The US promised future actions to punish [country] for its interference in France's presidential election.

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Whataboutism Treatments

No Comment: The [country] government spokesperson did not give a public response to the US statement. Instead, all media inquiries to [country] were addressed as "no comment".

Denial: A [country] government spokesperson denied any involvement in France's election. The spokesperson stated, "The accusation of [country] meddling in elections of other countries is absurd."

Whataboutist rhetoric: A [country] government spokesperson accused the US government of using double standards in its criticism of others, claiming that the US [unrelated/ past / relevant]. Experienced independent factcheckers have confirmed the accuracy of [country]'s claim about [unrelated / past / recent].³

- *Unrelated:* ...that the US has tortured hundreds of suspected terrorists in the Guantanamo military base and other locations around the world... the use of torture by the US government.
- *Past:* ...in the past has intervened in a similar manner in at least 23 elections around the world between 1946-1959. Like Turkey, the US has frequently intervened by funding its preferred candidates' election campaign with millions of dollars... past US electoral interference in other countries.
- *Recent:* ...that the US continues to intervene in a similar manner and has done so in at least 23 elections since 2000. Like Turkey, the US frequently intervenes by funding its preferred candidates' election campaign with millions of dollars...recent US electoral interference in other countries.

² The full text of the survey, with the demographic and other followup questions, will be provided upon publication of this article.

³ This reflects a key characteristic of whataboutism- namely that the facts raised by the whataboutist about the allegedly relevant U.S. behavior are completely true and there is no attempt to contest their veracity on the U.S. side (as separate from contesting their implications etc.).

Refugee Crisis Vignette

A major goal of American foreign policy has been the defense and promotion of human rights. Many observers argue that defending human rights is consistent with core American political values.

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In 2027, a major humanitarian crisis in the Middle East has led to a large influx of refugees to [country]. The [country] government placed refugees in temporary detention centers, which human rights groups have criticized for its substandard food and medical treatment and overcrowded facilities. There are scattered reports of widespread violence by guards towards the refugees and sexual assault of female refugees throughout the detention centers.

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[country] further plans to deport all refugees, including unaccompanied children, back to their home countries. There are widespread reports that some of those already sent back have died of non-natural causes. A US government spokesperson criticized [country]'s response to the refugee crisis, saying: "We are deeply troubled by the conditions in the detention centers and the threat of deporting refugees back to conditions that would physically endanger them." The US warned [country] of future actions to punish [country] for the way it is mistreating the refugees.

Whataboutism Treatments

No Comment: The [country] government spokesperson did not give a public response to the US statement. Instead, all media inquiries to [country] were addressed as "no comment".

Denial: A [country] government spokesperson denied any mistreatment of refugees. The spokesperson stated, "[country] complies with all international laws on the treatment of refugees."

Whataboutist rhetoric: A [country] government spokesperson accused the US government of using double standards in its criticism of others, claiming that the US [*unrelated / past / relevant*]. Experienced independent factcheckers have confirmed the accuracy of [country]'s claim about [*unrelated / past / recent*].

- *Unrelated:* ...that the US has tortured hundreds of suspected terrorists in the Guantanamo military base and other locations around the world... the use of torture by the US government.
- *Past:* ... in the past illegally jailed and placed over 127,000 Japanese Americans in concentration camps during WWII and sent back thousands of Jewish refugees back to Nazi Germany where many of them subsequently died in the 1930's...past US migration and detention policy during the 1930's and WWII.
- *Recent:* ... continues to detain refugees by the US-Mexican border in inhumane living conditions and frequently deports these migrants, including unaccompanied children, back to their home countries despite well-documented cases of migrants dying of unnatural causes upon their return...recent US migration and detention policy.

Attention Check Questions

Election Vignette:

- Which country did the US accuse of meddling in France's presidential election?
[Russia / Germany / Turkey / Iran / Italy]
- How much money did the opposition candidate for the 2027 French presidential election receive?
[\$10 million / \$45 million / \$50 million / \$60 million / \$65 million]

Refugee Vignette:

- Which country did the US accuse of mistreating refugees?
[Russia / Germany / Turkey / Iran / Italy]
- Is the following criticism about the mistreatment of refugees in the detention centers true or false?
[True / False]

Mid-survey Attention Check Question:

- You probably have a favorite color. But we are more interested in making sure you're doing the survey carefully, so please just select the color brown here.
 - Orange
 - Blue
 - Green
 - Red
 - Yellow
 - Black
 - Purple
 - White
 - Brown
 - Don't know

Main Outcome Questions:

- Do you approve or disapprove of how the US government behaved in this situation?
[Strongly approve/ Somewhat approve/ Neither approve nor disapprove/ Somewhat disapprove/ Strongly disapprove]
 - In a sentence or two, please explain why you [approve/disapprove/are uncertain] about how the US government behaved in this situation.
-

- If the US government eventually decides to punish [*country*] for meddling in France's election, would you support or oppose imposing economic sanctions?
[Strongly approve/ Somewhat approve/ Neither approve nor disapprove/ Somewhat disapprove/ Strongly disapprove]

Moderator Questions:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

[Strongly agree/ Somewhat agree/ Neither agree nor disagree/ Somewhat disagree/ Strongly disagree]

- The US is the best country to assume the responsibility of policing other countries that undermine democracy.
- The US criticism of [*country*] reflects a genuine US government commitment to protecting democracy.
- [*Country*] is morally equivalent to the US in respecting the sovereignty and domestic autonomy of other countries.

A2.2: Follow-up Survey⁴

Introductory prompt: In this survey, you will be asked questions about US relations with other countries around the world. We will describe diplomatic exchanges that could occur in the future between the US and another country. Please carefully read this information and answer the questions that follow.

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Denial: A [country] government spokesperson denied any involvement in France's election. The spokesperson stated, "The accusation of [country] meddling in elections of other countries is absurd.”

Whataboutist rhetoric: A [country] government spokesperson accused the US government of using double standards in its criticism of others, claiming that the US continues to intervene in a similar manner and has done so in at least 23 elections since 2000. Experienced independent factcheckers have confirmed the accuracy of [country]’s claim about US electoral interference in other countries.

US response: [Whataboutist rhetoric above]. When asked about [country]’s comments the following day, a US Department of State spokesperson responded, [*dismissal / democratic motivation / admission of guilt*].

- *Dismissal:* ... “We must not let [country] distract us from its own unacceptable behavior by raising irrelevant issues.”
- *Democratic motivation:* ... “Unlike [country]’s recent intervention in France, the US government’s interventions in foreign elections were done to promote and protect democracy around the world.”
- *Admission of guilt:* ... “Unlike [country], the US government has carefully reviewed its policies on election interference and is now strongly committed to ensuring that its actions are consistent with America’s democratic values.”

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Whataboutist rhetoric: A [country] government spokesperson accused the US government of using double standards in its criticism of others, claiming that the US continues to detain refugees by the US-Mexican border in inhumane living conditions and frequently deports these migrants, including unaccompanied children, back to their home countries despite well-documented cases of migrants dying of unnatural causes upon their return. Experienced independent factcheckers have confirmed the accuracy of [country]'s claim about recent US migration and detention policy.

US response: [Whataboutist rhetoric above]. When asked about [*country*]'s comments the following day, a US Department of State spokesperson reacted to [country] accusations by stating, [*dismissal / contextual / admission of guilt*].

- *Dismissal:* ... “[*country*] must not be allowed to distract us from its own unacceptable behavior by raising irrelevant issues.”
- *Context:* ... “The US provides more humanitarian assistance than any other single country worldwide. Since 1975, the United States has accepted more than 3.3 million refugees for permanent resettlement – more than any other country in the world.”
- *Admission of guilt:* ... “Unlike [*country*], the US has investigated the complaints regarding its treatment of refugees at the border with Mexico and has taken measures to improve the refugee’s situation.”

A3: Sample Statistics and Treatment Balance

Table A1: Survey Sample Characteristics

	Main	Follow-up
Gender		
Male	48.28	47.81
Female	51.72	52.19
Age		
18-29	17.50	18.03
30-44	29.58	27.34
45-64	32.03	31.06
>65	20.89	23.56
Education		
High school or lower	32.59	33.6
Some college	35.19	33.28
College/university	20.63	21.45
Graduate/professional school	11.59	11.67
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	13.95	16.01
Non-Hispanic White	69.66	66.71
African-American	10.03	12.38
Asian/Indigenous/Other	6.36	4.91

A total of 2,452 and 3,200 U.S. adult citizens were recruited using Lucid marketplace for the main and follow-up surveys, respectively. Table A1 displays the main characteristics of both survey samples with regards to gender, age, education, and race/ethnicity. Overall, the stratified sample is fairly similar to the national population sample with lightly higher levels of education and fewer non-white Hispanics and African-Americans compared to the national census. The treatment balance shown in Table A2 for the main survey and Table A3 for the follow-up survey suggests that we achieved good block randomization balance for gender, age, and education our two samples, which is split by the five and six whataboutist treatment groups crossed with Russia, Germany, and Turkey for the main and follow-up surveys, respectively.

Table A2: Balance Across Treatments (Main Survey)

Russia					
	Control	Denial	Unrelated	Past	Relevant
Gender					
Male	50.87	53.49	51.17	49.68	46.01
Female	49.13	46.51	48.83	50.32	53.99
Age					
18-29	13.08	19.33	20.07	15.82	17.57
30-44	28.78	29	26.09	28.8	28.75
44-64	34.01	31.33	32.78	31.33	30.67
>65	24.13	20.33	21.07	24.05	23.0
Education					
High School or less	32.84	29.1	32.43	34.71	33.44
Some college	36.09	35.45	34.12	31.53	36.69
College/university	18.34	23.41	23.65	21.66	21.1
Graduate/professional	12.72	12.04	9.8	12.1	8.77
Germany					
	Control	Denial	Unrelated	Past	Relevant
Gender					
Male	46.44	50.93	46.2	48.08	45.17
Female	53.56	49.07	53.8	51.92	54.83
Age					
18-29	17.28	18.21	18.79	19.65	19.31
30-44	28.7	30.86	27.58	30.79	28.66
44-64	31.48	31.17	34.55	31.96	30.22
>65	22.53	19.75	19.09	17.6	21.81
Education					
High School or less	33.44	31.99	32.51	30.45	29.78
Some college	33.13	38.51	35.6	38.21	41.69
College/university	21.88	18.32	20.74	21.19	16.93
Graduate/professional	11.56	11.18	11.15	10.15	11.6
Turkey					
	Control	Denial	Unrelated	Past	Relevant
Gender					
Male	50.29	40.46	47.42	48.21	50.59
Female	49.71	59.54	52.58	51.79	49.41
Age					
18-29	17.94	14.16	16.36	16.07	19.53
30-44	28.24	35.26	28.79	31.25	31.36
44-64	33.82	32.66	32.12	32.14	29.88
>65	20.0	17.92	22.73	20.54	19.23
Education					
High School or less	35.31	30.99	32.83	36.14	32.63
Some college	33.53	33.63	32.52	29.82	37.43
College/university	23.74	19.88	20.67	19.88	18.56
Graduate/professional	7.42	15.5	13.98	14.16	11.38

Table A3: Balance Across Treatments (Follow-up Survey)

Russia						
	Control	Denial	Relevant	Dismissal	Context	Admission
Gender						
Male	47.46	38.79	52.28	44.94	51.75	46.45
Female	52.54	61.21	47.72	55.06	48.25	53.55
Age						
18-29	17.75	17.88	16.72	17.13	14.82	16.57
30-44	28.45	25.15	28.27	27.25	27.49	28.11
44-64	29.01	35.76	31.91	35.11	31.81	30.47
>65	24.79	21.21	23.1	20.51	25.88	24.85
Education						
High School or less	31.91	36.59	31.38	33.33	36.44	33.53
Some college	37.32	35.02	32.92	32.48	37.53	35.05
College/university	22.22	18.93	21.54	22.51	16.44	22.05
Graduate/professional	8.55	9.46	14.15	11.68	9.59	9.37
Germany						
	Control	Denial	Relevant	Dismissal	Context	Admission
Gender						
Male	44.32	48.66	46.15	46.6	44.82	54.06
Female	55.68	51.34	53.85	53.4	55.18	45.94
Age						
18-29	16.38	16.31	19.09	20.42	21.51	17.37
30-44	29.38	29.95	22.51	29.84	22.91	22.97
44-64	32.49	31.82	32.48	28.53	31.84	33.61
>65	21.75	21.93	25.93	21.2	23.74	26.05
Education						
High School or less	34.88	34.96	30.12	35.47	30.7	35.34
Some college	33.72	34.96	33.92	33.87	32.11	30.75
College/university	19.48	18.97	24.85	18.4	25.92	19.83
Graduate/professional	11.92	11.11	11.11	12.27	11.27	14.08
Turkey						
	Control	Denial	Relevant	Dismissal	Context	Admission
Gender						
Male	53.19	49.86	47.33	45.93	46.06	51.12
Female	46.81	50.14	52.67	54.07	53.94	48.88
Age						
18-29	19.89	15.98	18.4	21.39	19.24	17.7
30-44	25.97	28.1	29.6	27.17	29.15	29.49
44-64	28.73	30.58	26.67	30.35	30.32	28.37
>65	25.41	25.34	25.33	21.1	21.28	24.44
Education						
High School or less	33.99	33.14	31.54	31.58	35.71	34.1
Some college	32.01	30	31.27	34.21	30.36	31.52
College/university	21.53	21.71	23.45	22.51	20.24	25.79
Graduate/professional	12.46	15.14	13.75	11.7	13.69	8.6

Figure A7: Power Tests

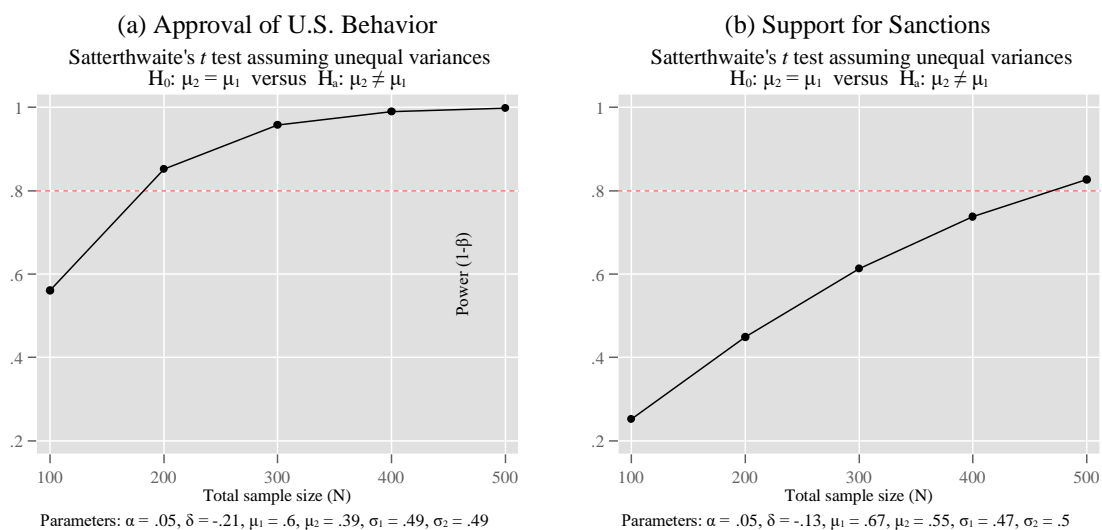
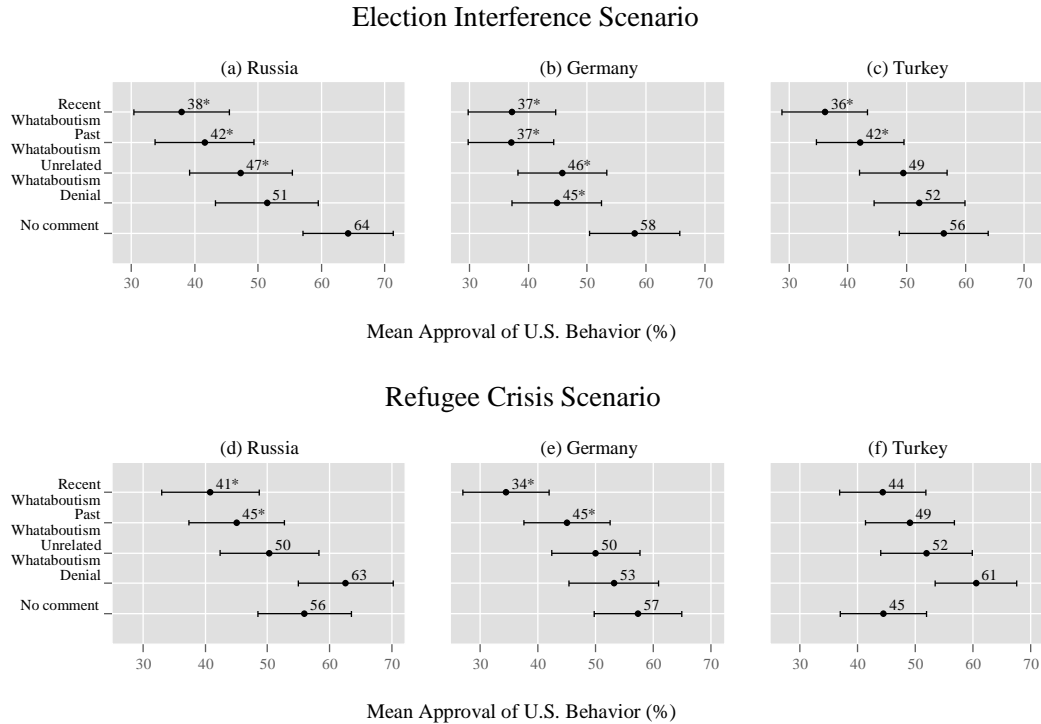


Figure A7 displays a power calculation test for the outcome approval of U.S. behavior (A7a) and support for sanctions (A7b). Both subfigures calculate the sample size needed with a minimum power of .80 using the mean and associated standard deviation of “no comment” and “recent whataboutism” for Russia. As the figure shows, for approval, a total sample size of 200 (100 for each treatment) would suffice to generate enough power, while for sanctions, a total sample size of 500 is needed (250 for each treatment). As our heterogeneous treatments have a minimum sample size of 300 (4,904 observations divided by 15 variations = 326, statistical power is not a major concern for our study.

A4: Robustness Checks

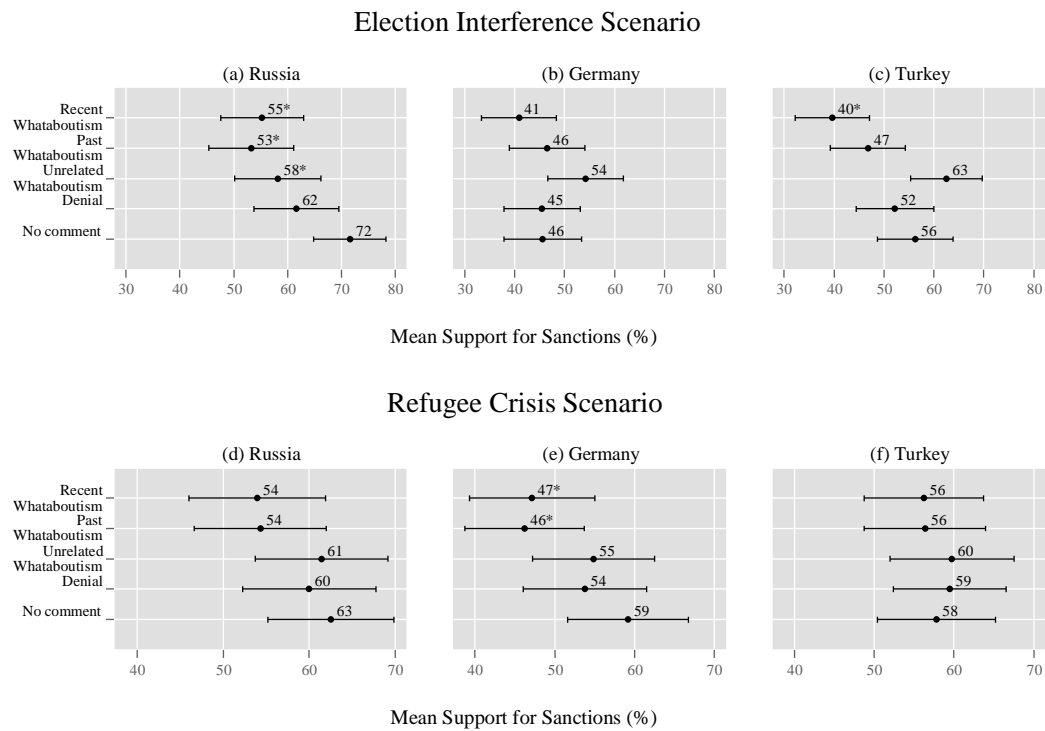
Figure A8: Whataboutism and Public Approval, by Issue Area and Country



Notes: Figure A8 displays the mean approval for U.S. behavior for the election interference scenario (top) and refugee crisis (bottom) by identity of the whataboutist actor. The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

Separating the results by issue area and country, Figure A8 shows that the results in the main text are broadly robust to country effects except in the case of Turkey for the refugee issue. This may have to do with certain pre-treatment effects where respondents may be aware of the extent of the refugee issue with respect to Turkey, making any whataboutist counters ineffective in either direction.

Figure A9: Whataboutism and Sanctions, by Issue Area and Country



Notes: Figure A9 displays the mean support sanctions for U.S. behavior for the election interference scenario (top) and refugee crisis (bottom) by identity of the whataboutist actor. The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

Figure A9 displays the effect of whataboutism and the imposition of sanctions with the top half featuring the election vignette and the bottom half the refugee vignette. For the election vignette, whataboutism from Germany appears to have no significant effect in contrast to the negative and significant impact on imposing sanctions on Russia and Turkey. Conversely, refugee crises elicit the opposite effect with only Germany appearing to have significant decrease in public support for sanctions when using whataboutist rhetoric. Together, these results may suggest some potential pre-treatment effects or at the very least uncertainty on the part of respondents in the type of punishment to pursue.

Table A4: Whataboutism and Public Support for US Foreign Policy, by LPM and Probit

Variables	Linear Probability Model		Probit Regression	
	Approval	Sanctions	Approval	Sanctions
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Denial	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.10 (0.06)
Unrelated	-0.07** (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.18** (0.06)	-0.00 (0.06)
Whataboutism				
Past	-0.13*** (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.36*** (0.06)	-0.22*** (0.06)
Recent	-0.17*** (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.47*** (0.06)	-0.26*** (0.06)
Female	-0.05** (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.14** (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
35 to 54	0.01 (0.02)	0.07** (0.03)	0.03 (0.07)	0.19** (0.07)
45 to 64	-0.03 (0.02)	0.14*** (0.03)	-0.08 (0.06)	0.38*** (0.07)
65 and Older	-0.05 (0.03)	0.16*** (0.03)	-0.12 (0.07)	0.41*** (0.07)
Some College	0.05** (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)	0.15** (0.05)	0.15** (0.05)
College	0.12*** (0.02)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.32*** (0.06)	0.23*** (0.06)
Postgraduate	0.17*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.45*** (0.08)	0.35*** (0.08)
Hawkishness	0.08*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.21*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)
Democrat	0.16*** (0.02)	0.15*** (0.02)	0.42*** (0.05)	0.40*** (0.05)
Republican	0.01 (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)	0.03 (0.06)	0.16** (0.06)
Constant	0.48*** (0.03)	0.36*** (0.03)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.38*** (0.08)
R^2	0.082	0.079		
Pseudo R^2			0.062	0.059
Observations	4804	4804	4804	4804

Standard errors in parentheses * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table A4 displays regression results using LPM and Probit regression with respondent demographic controls such as partisanship, education, age etc. We used lineary probability model (LPM) and probit models to analyze its effects on approval (columns 1 and 3) and support for imposing sanctions (columns 2 and 4). Overall, the whataboutist messages (similar

and recent) consistently reduced approval of criticism and sanction support, with similar results across model specification. Controlling for demographics like age, education, and partisanship did not have a large impact on responses to whataboutism, though some of these covaraites reach significance.

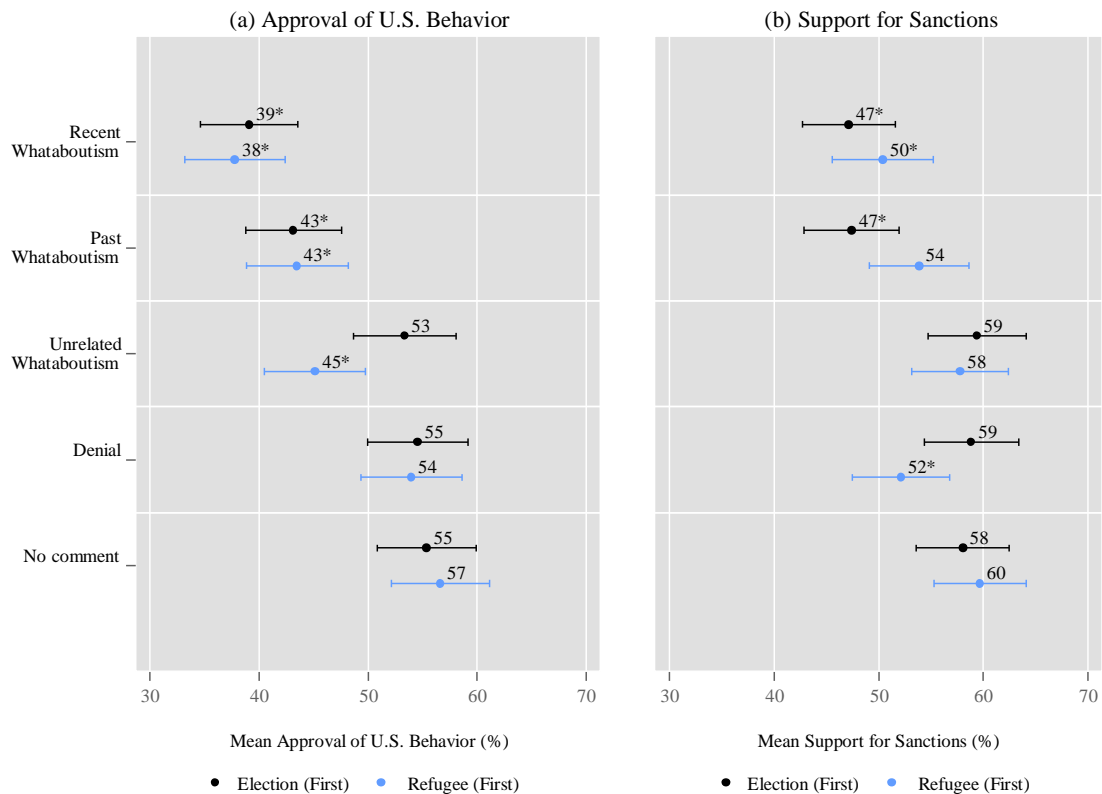
Table A5: Whataboutism and Public Support for US Foreign Policy

Variables	Russia		Germany		Turkey	
	Approval (1)	Sanctions (2)	Approval (3)	Sanctions (4)	Approval (5)	Sanctions (6)
Denial	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)
Unrelated	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.11** (0.04)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)
Whataboutism						
Past	-0.16*** (0.04)	-0.11** (0.04)	-0.19*** (0.04)	-0.08* (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)
Whataboutism						
Recent	-0.18*** (0.04)	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.24*** (0.04)	-0.10* (0.04)	-0.10** (0.04)	-0.09* (0.04)
Whataboutism						
Female	-0.06* (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
35 to 54	0.01 (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	0.09* (0.04)
45 to 64	-0.01 (0.04)	0.18*** (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.19*** (0.04)
65 and Older	-0.00 (0.04)	0.27*** (0.04)	-0.11** (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.20*** (0.04)
Some College	0.08** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
College	0.16*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.08* (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)
Postgraduate	0.19*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.04)	0.15*** (0.04)	0.07 (0.05)	0.16*** (0.04)	0.09* (0.04)
Hawkishness	0.09*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)
Democrat	0.13*** (0.03)	0.15*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.17*** (0.03)
Republican	-0.02 (0.03)	0.06 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)
Constant	0.48*** (0.05)	0.32*** (0.05)	0.48*** (0.05)	0.40*** (0.05)	0.47*** (0.05)	0.34*** (0.05)
R ²	0.094	0.123	0.096	0.058	0.074	0.093
Observations	1547	1547	1596	1596	1661	1661

Standard errors in parentheses * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Table A5 runs an identical specification as Table A4 using LPM specification, split by target country. Results are broadly similar.

Figure A10: Whataboutism, Approval and Sanctions, by Scenario Order

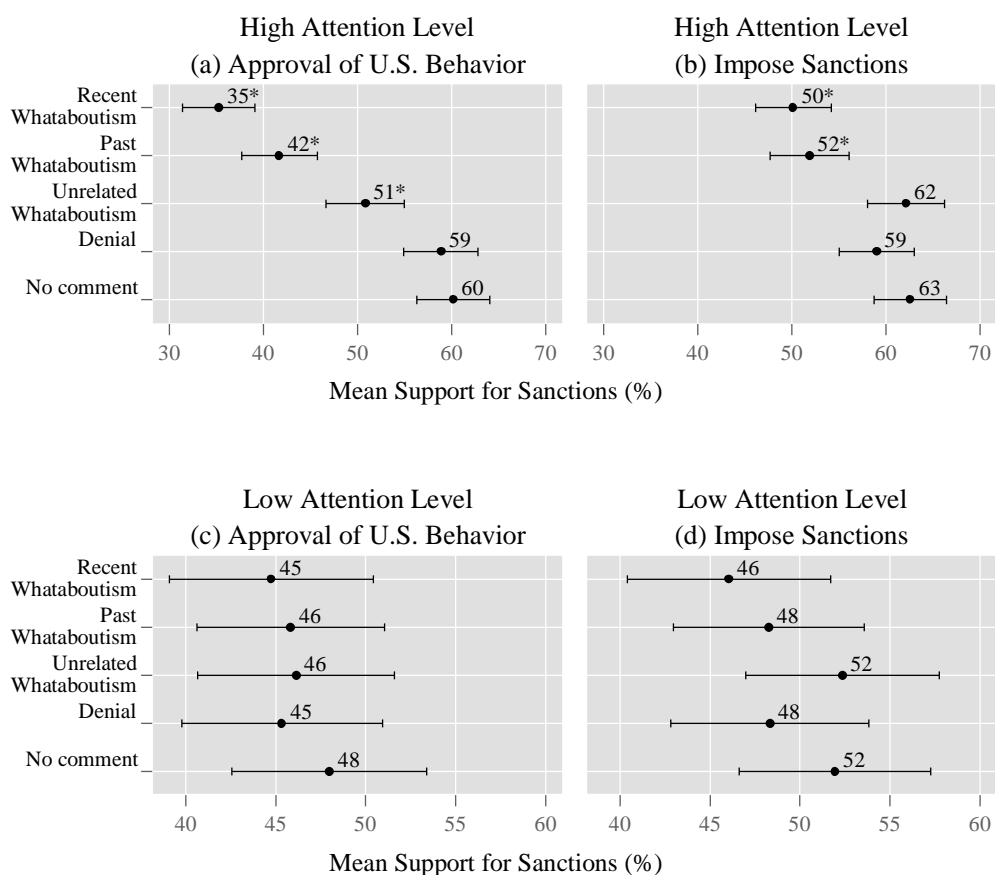


Notes: Figure A10 displays the mean approval for U.S. behavior (left) and support for sanctions (right) based on order of the survey vignettes displayed. The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

Figure A10 displays the results from the main survey by splitting the sample into respondents who observed the elections scenario first (black) with those respondents who viewed the refugee crisis scenario first (blue). As both Figures A10a and A10b show, recent and relevant whataboutism reduces public approval and support for sanctions by similar point estimates as Figure 3 in the main text. The elections first and the refugee first scenarios point estimates and confidence intervals broadly overlap, suggesting that viewing one issue area did not

significantly affect how respondents view the subsequent issue area. However, some categories are less robust in this regard such as the unrelated whataboutist and denial treatments which occasionally exhibit significant and inconsistent differences. These differences may be driven by the reduced clarity of these weaker treatments related to the unrelated and past whataboutism's effect on public opinion, which is not exhibited in the relevant and recent whataboutist treatment. Furthermore, there is no clear pattern in these divergences when it comes to which exact vignette is first, indicating, in turn, that these order differences have not led to any systematic effects on our results.

Figure A11: Main Effects of Whataboutism, by Attention Level

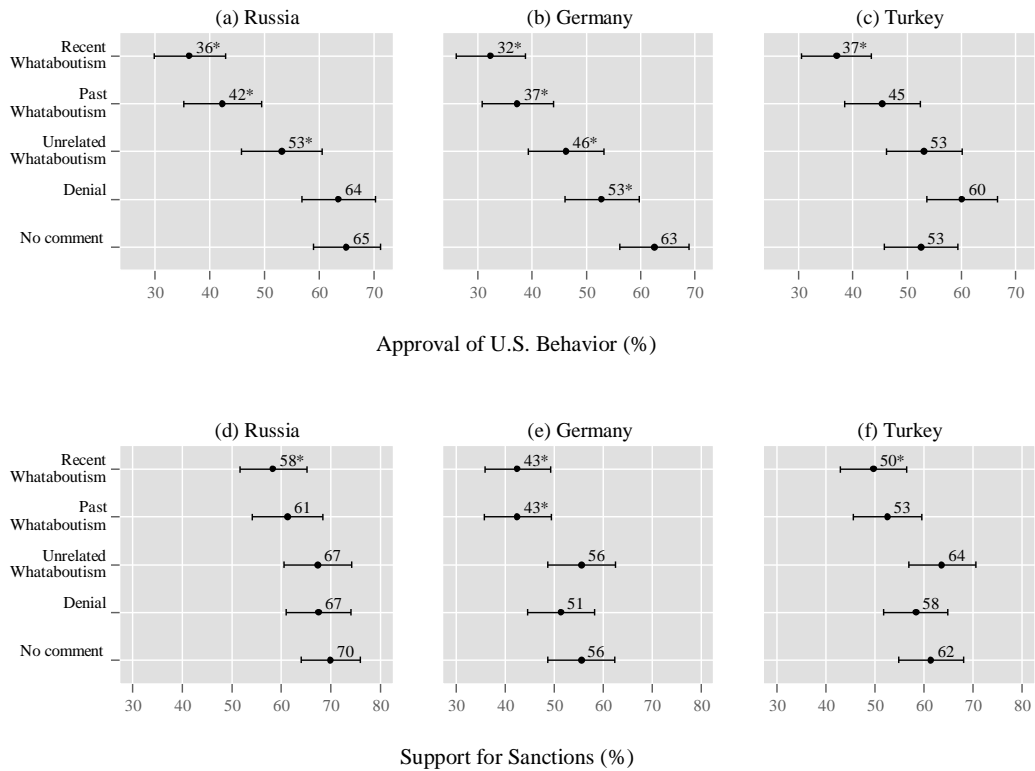


Notes: Figure A11 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior (left) and support for sanctions (right) for attentive (top) and inattentive respondents (bottom). The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

There are some concerns that some respondents from Lucid may suffer from inattention. We addressed that issue with several manipulation checks. Between the two vignettes, we asked respondents to fill out simple instructions of picking the right color, which 91 percent of respondents correctly answered. To further ensure that respondents were reading the vignettes, we also asked respondents specific questions about the vignette itself (for details, refer to Appendix A2). Roughly 80 percent of respondents were able to get the criticized country question correct while roughly 65 percent could identify the particular details correctly. We

decided to check for the respondents who were reading most carefully, which is displayed in Figure A11. Here, we separate the sample between attentive (65 percent or higher) as high attention and define the rest as low attention. High attention respondents appear to elicit consistent (and a bit stronger) results while low attention respondents exhibit attenuation effects. However, it should be noted that since most of the respondents passed the attention check, the statistical power on the low attention group is also much lower.

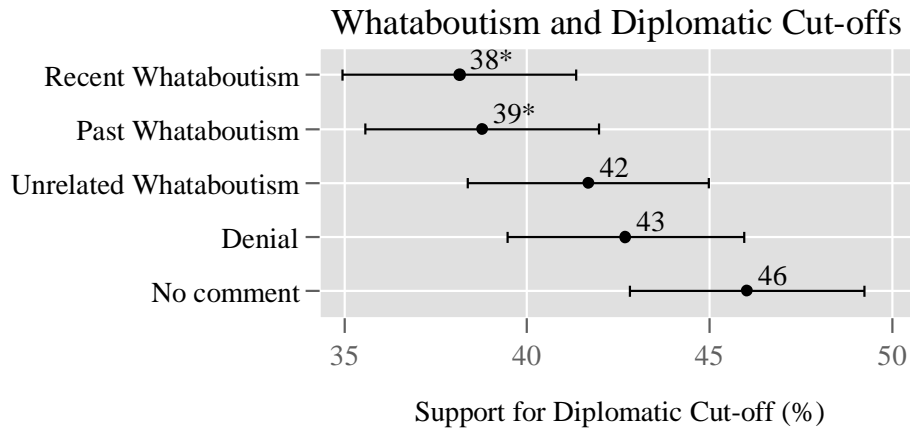
Figure A12: Main Effects of Whataboutism, by Country (High Attention, Main Survey)



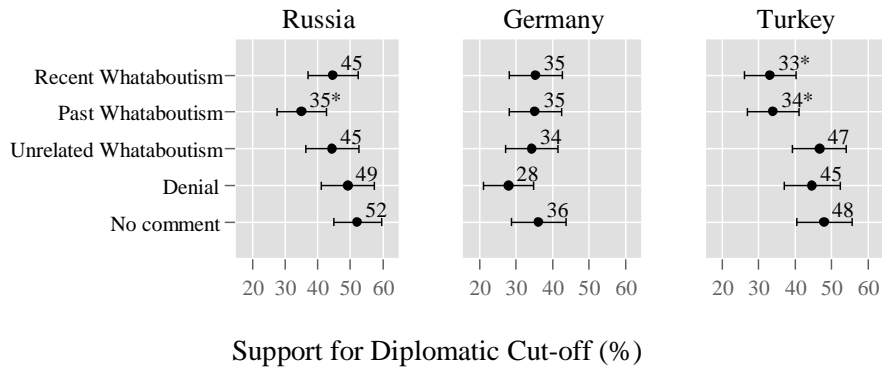
Notes: Figure A12 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior (top) and support for sanctions (bottom) for only attentive respondents. The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

When only analyzing the high attention group (see Figure A12), we observe that some of the attenuation country effects for each country are reduced as less attentive respondents generate more noise in our data. Thus, respondent attentiveness influences our results. However, our main results remain unchanged despite the attention problem among a few respondents.

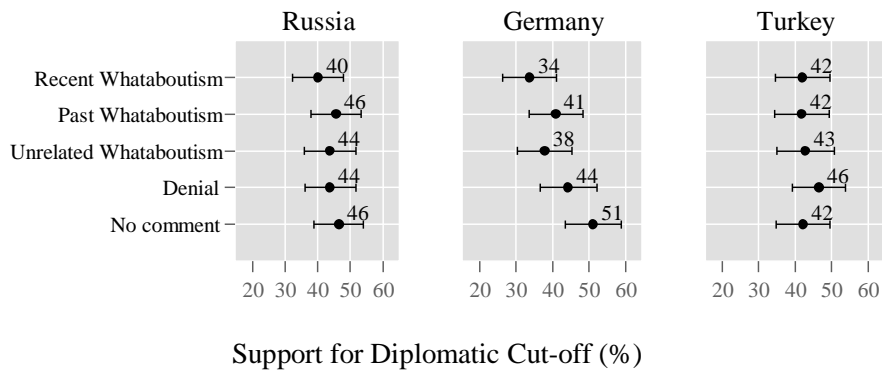
Figure A13: Whataboutism and Diplomatic Cut-off, by Issue Area and Country



Election Interference Scenario



Refugee Crisis Scenario



Notes: Figure A13 displays the mean support for diplomatic cut-offs for pooled scenarios (top), election interference scenario (middle), and refugee crisis scenario (bottom). The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level

Figure A13 examines how whataboutism affects respondent support for diplomatic cut-offs. While the overall effect is similar to the support of economic sanctions (top-figure), the analysis by issue area and country for elections interference (middle-figure) and refugee issues (bottom figure) is much more inconsistent. For example, whataboutism appears to work for Russia and Turkey with regards to election interference but not Germany for diplomatic cut-offs. This could be partly driven by Americans believing that cutting off Germany should not be affected by national security as Germany is a key ally, but at the same time, the results are for refugee issues show whataboutism as not helping either of the three countries. It may be that individuals have different views on what constitutes legitimate punishments for both issue areas where diplomatic cut-offs are not a sufficiently strong punishment compared to economic sanctions. There is some evidence of this when examining the hawkishness of respondents (see section A5, Figure A19).

There is also a larger issue that diplomatic cut-offs by the U.S. against China have been extensively discussed in the U.S. media regarding China's hosting of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. Thus, public attitudes on this type of punishment in this particular case could be generating much of the inconsistency that we are observing here. For this reason, we did not include this analysis in the main text as it added mostly noise rather than understanding on the effects of whataboutism.

A5: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

Table A6: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Approval, by Respondent Characteristics

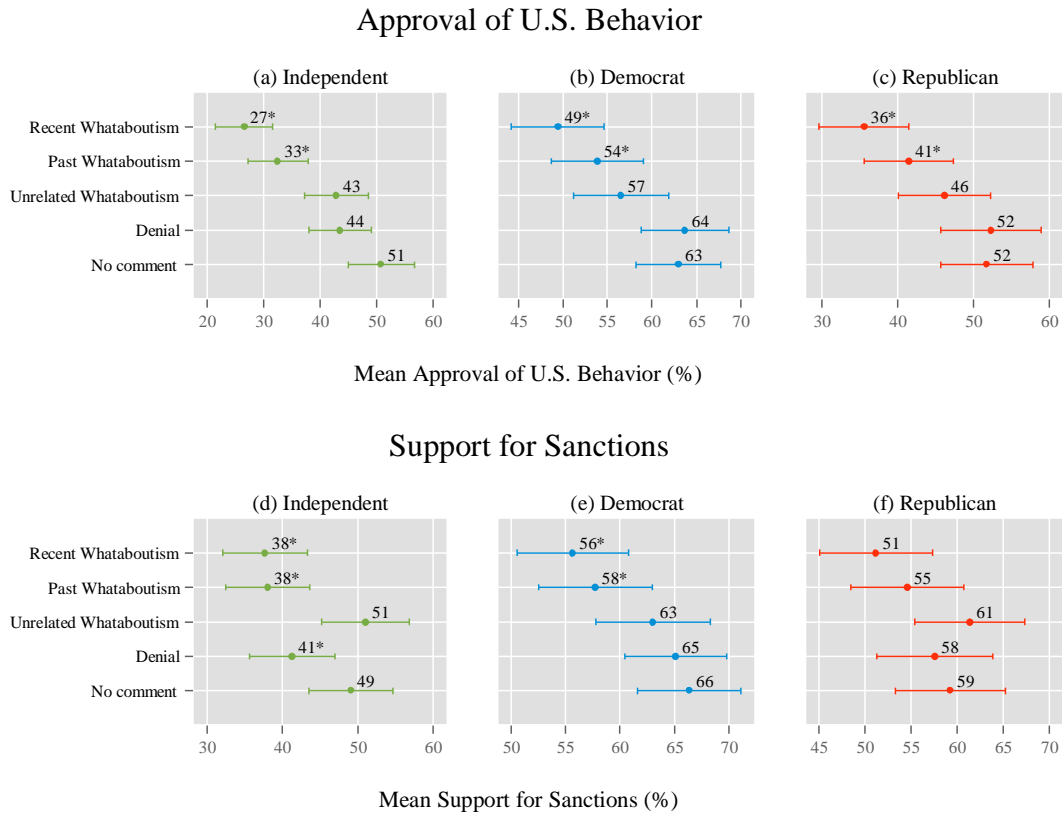
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Party ID	Female	White	Education	Age	Hawkishness
Denial	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.10 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.02)
Unrelated	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.08 (0.04)	-0.08** (0.03)	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.07** (0.02)
Whataboutism	-0.18*** (0.04)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.15** (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.13*** (0.02)
Past	-0.18*** (0.04)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.15** (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.13*** (0.02)
Whataboutism	-0.18*** (0.04)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.15** (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.13*** (0.02)
Recent	-0.23*** (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.03)	-0.18** (0.04)	-0.18*** (0.03)	-0.11* (0.05)	-0.17*** (0.02)
Whataboutism	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.02)
Full Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R-squared	0.080	0.079	0.080	0.079	0.086	0.079
Observations	4860	4860	4860	4860	4860	4860

Standard errors clustered by respondent in parentheses * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.
Notes: The constituent variables and interaction variables are excluded for presentational clarity since the whataboutism variables are significant on their own regardless of the interaction effects in question, which can be directly interpreted from the table.

Table A6 displays the heterogeneous treatment effects of whataboutism compared to the “no comment” response. Each column shows how the treatment effects interacted with respondent demographic characteristics, including partisanship, gender, race, education, age, and hawkishness. In general, whataboutism, particularly recent and similar whataboutism, did not depend on respondent characteristics such as party identification (column 1), education (column 4), or gender (column 2).

The only demographic factors that moderated the observed effects of whataboutism was age. Younger respondents were less affected by the negative effects of whataboutism on U.S. policy approval. Older respondents were somewhat more sensitive to these effects, though only moderately. Overall, these results suggest that whataboutism affects respondents at largely equal levels regardless of their demographic characteristics or predispositions.

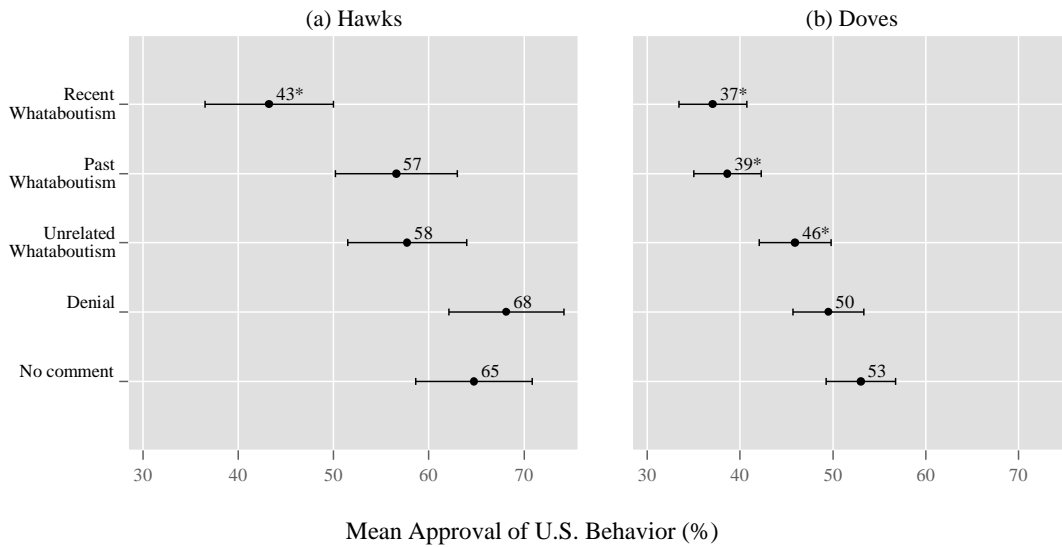
Figure A14: Whataboutism and Foreign Policy Support, by Partisanship



Notes: Figure A14 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior (top) and support for sanctions (bottom) separated by party identification. The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

Figure A14 repeats the analysis in Figure 3 in the main text to explore partisan effects. Overall, there were no substantial partisan effects on approval of U.S. behavior. Americans across political affiliations had lower approval after recent whataboutism treatments (top figure). The marginal differences in approval between recent whataboutism and “no comment” were $63 - 49 = 14$, $52 - 36 = 16$, and $51 - 27 = 24$ points for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, respectively (top-figure). Whataboutism also led to lower support for sanctions across all groups, except Republicans (bottom figure). Republicans’ consistent support for sanctions may reflect their hawkish stance on imposing them regardless of the target’s exact response.

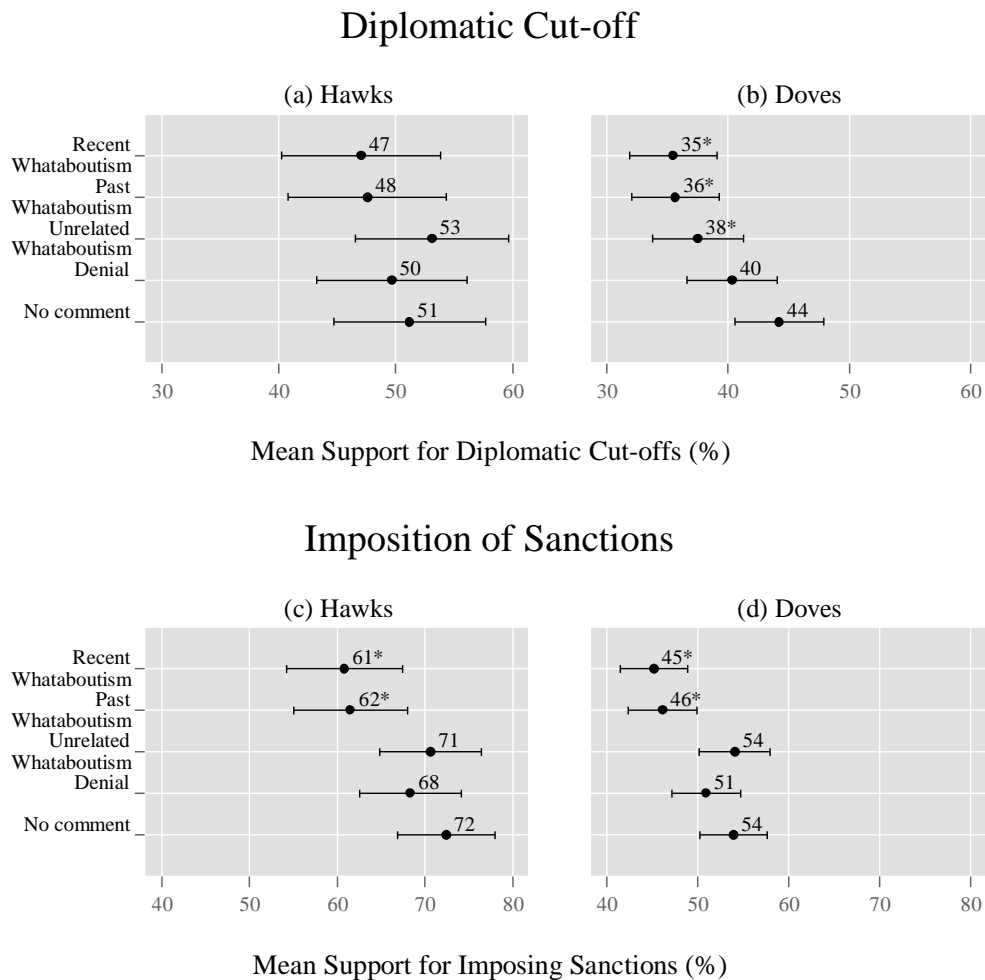
Figure A15: Whataboutism and Public Approval, by Hawkishness



Notes: Figure A15 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior split by hawks (left) and doves (right). The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

Figure A15 splits the results in Figure 2 in the main text by respondent hawkishness. The hawkish variable uses military assertiveness questions from Herrmann, Tetlock, and Visser (1999). Following Brutger and Kertzer (2017), we dichotomize the variable, classifying the top quartile as hawks. Results are broadly robust to hawkishness. While hawks were more likely to approve of U.S. behavior overall, the mean difference in approval of U.S. behavior between “no comment” and recent whataboutism converged for hawks and doves. Hawks reduced approval by $65 - 43 = 22$ points, while doves reduced approval by $53 - 37 = 16$ points. Thus, our main results were not primarily driven by respondent hawkishness.

Figure A16: Whataboutism and Punishment, by Hawkishness

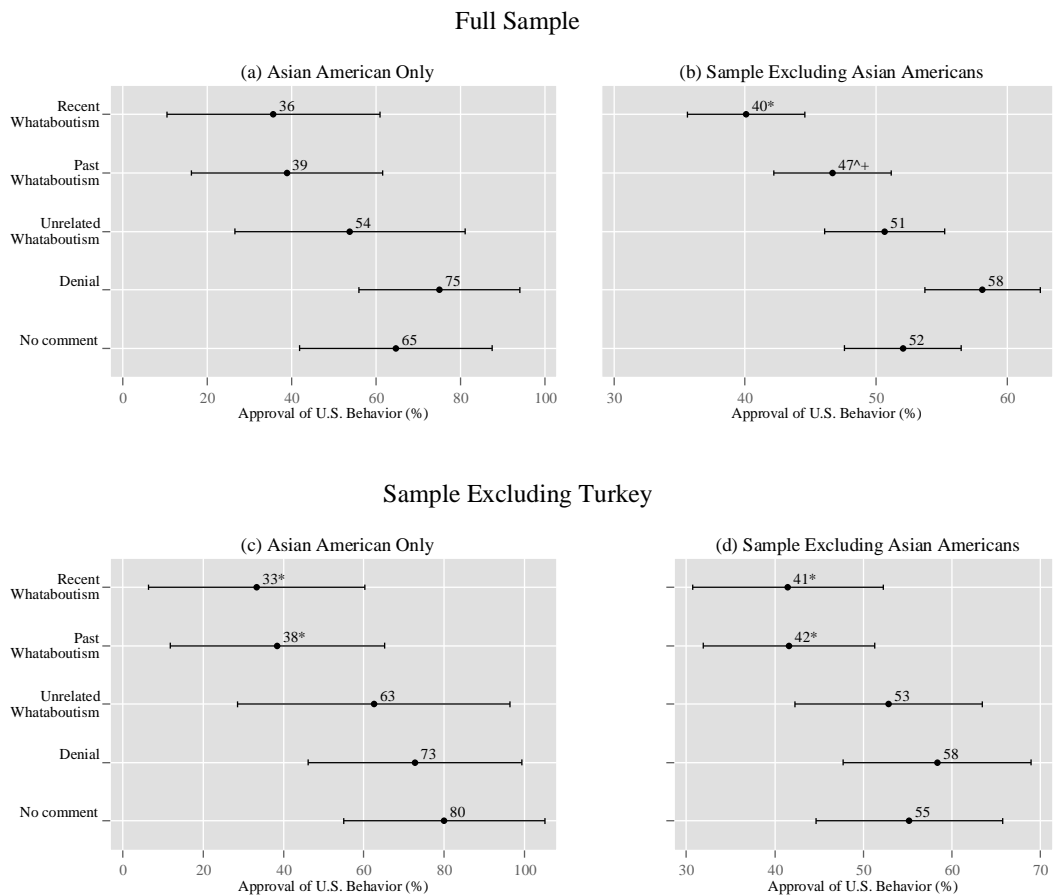


Notes: Figure A16 displays the mean support for diplomatic cut-offs (top) and support for sanctions (bottom) split by hawks (left) and doves (right). The denial, unrelated, past, and response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level

Figure A16 repeats the analysis in Figure A15 by checking for the effects of whataboutism on support for punishments conditional on respondent hawkishness. As we mentioned in Appendix A4 (see Figure A13), the inconsistency with diplomatic cut-off may reflect certain respondents viewing diplomatic punishments as broadly lacking. Figure A16 provides some evidence of this as hawks and doves equally reduce their support for sanctions (about a 10 percent reduction) when exposed to whataboutist rhetoric, but hawks do not exhibit much difference across whataboutism treatments when asked to support diplomatic cut-offs. In

contrast, doves consistently reduce their support for both sanctions and diplomatic cut-offs when exposed to whataboutist rhetoric (A16b and A16d). These results suggest that the willingness to support punishments may depend on how respondents view the use of different coercive measures even if they largely agree on their approval of U.S. behavior.

Figure A17: Whataboutism and Approval (Refugee), by Asian-Americans and Excluding Asian-Americans



Notes: Figure A17 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior. The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level and a plus (+) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.10 level.

Some aspects of whataboutism in our refugee vignette may have resonated differently with respondents depending on their identity. For example, Asian Americans may have felt more strongly about past whataboutism referencing the internment of Japanese Americans. Similarly, Hispanic Americans may have felt more affected by recent whataboutism discussing U.S. actions along the Mexican border. To evaluate these potential heterogeneous effects and their impact on our overall results, we analyzed the results for Asians (Figure A17) and

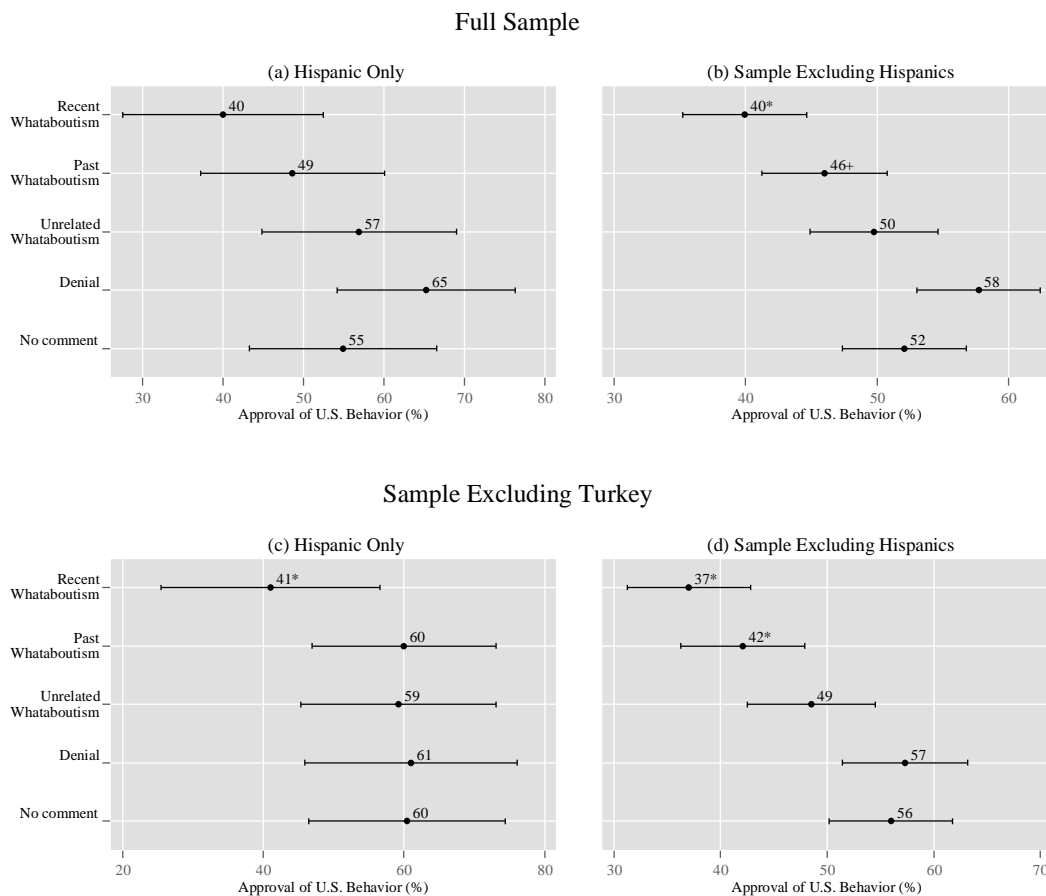
Hispanics (Figure A18) in the refugee scenario and compared them with an analyses excluding these groups from the general sample.

Our subsamples of Asians (roughly 4%) and Hispanics (roughly 14%) were small and lack statistical power, so conclusions are tentative. Among Asian-Americans (Figure A17a), the effect of past whataboutism (compared to no comment) was larger but insignificant (26%) compared to the general sample excluding Asians (6%) (Figure A17b). The effect of recent whataboutism was also larger (29% vs. 12%) but insignificant as well. While the significance and effect size of past whataboutism declined excluding Asian-Americans (although still significant at the 0.1 level), these results appear to be driven mainly due to participants already knowing and being “pre-treated” by Turkey’s role in the Syrian refugee crisis (discussed on pages 21-22 in the main text and Figure A8 in Appendix A4).

Excluding respondents who read about Turkey, the effect of past whataboutism in the general sample without Asian Americans became significant ($p < .05$) and substantive (see Figure A17d). Interestingly, with this exclusion, both recent and past whataboutism became significant and substantively stronger for Asian-Americans only, though the extremely small sample ($n = 54$) limits conclusions.

Among Hispanics, the effect of recent whataboutism (compared to no comment) was similar to the general sample without Hispanics (15% vs. 12%) but insignificant (Figure A18a-b). Excluding respondents who read about Turkey, the effect of recent whataboutism in the general sample excluding Hispanics regained significance ($p < .05$) and size (19%; see Figure A18d). With this exclusion, recent whataboutism also became significant for Hispanics only sample (19%; see Figure A18c), though again, the small sample size ($n = 343$) limits further conclusions.

Figure A18: Whataboutism and Approval (Refugee), by Hispanic and Excluding Hispanics

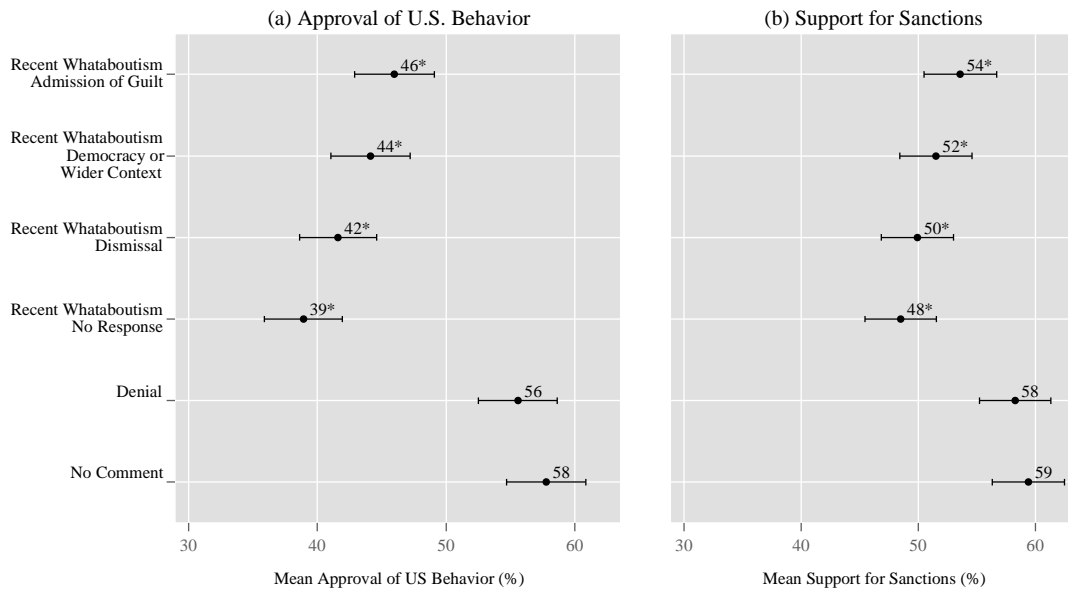


Notes: Figure A18 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior. The denial, unrelated, past, and recent response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level and a plus (+) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.10 level.

These results tentatively suggest our main results were not driven by identity-based effects for some subgroups. While we cannot completely rule out such effects, our analyses suggest that they are unlikely to substantially explain our overall results. Future research with larger, more diverse samples is needed to fully understand how identity may moderate responses to whataboutism.

A6: Robustness Checks (Follow-up Survey)

Figure A19: Whataboutism on U.S. Policy Approval and Sanctions Support

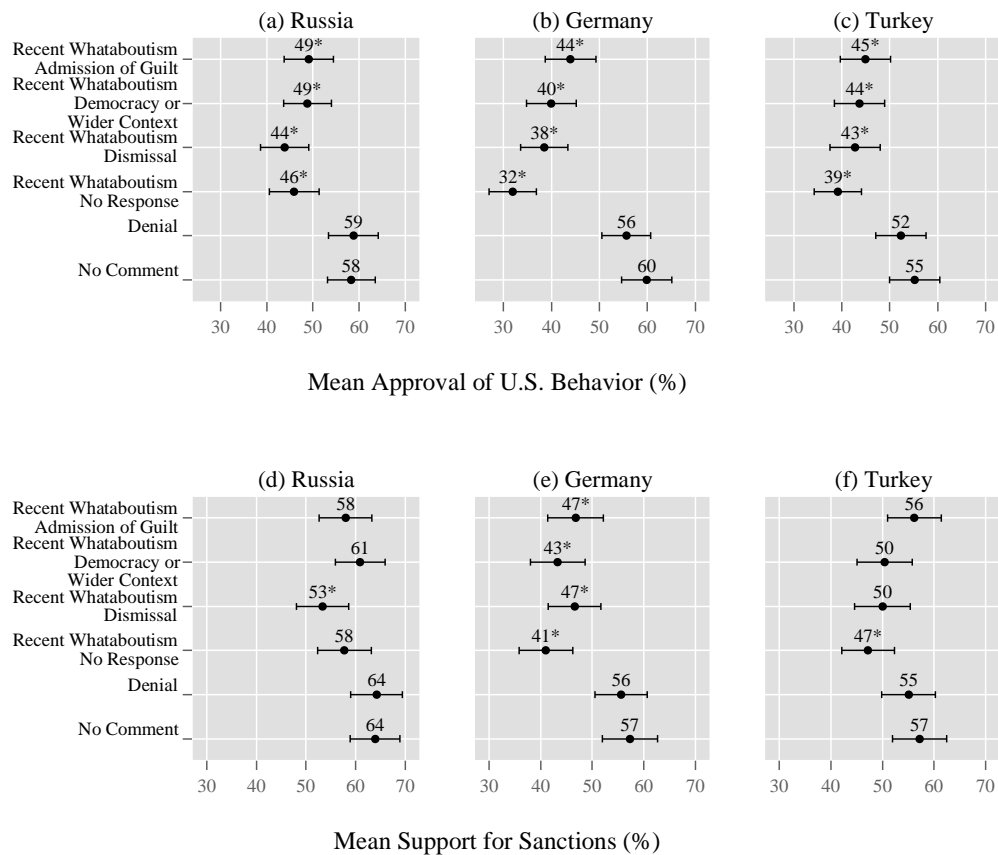


Notes: Figure A19 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior (left) and support for sanctions (right) for the follow-up survey. The denial, recent whataboutism with dismissal, democracy and wider context, and admission of guilt rejoinder response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

Figure A19 displays the results of the follow-up survey with the types of responses on the vertical axis and mean approval of U.S. behavior (A19a) and mean support for sanctions (A19b) on the horizontal axis. In general, recent and similar whataboutism compared to “no comment” drops approval by $58 - 39 = 19$ percent and support for sanctions by $59 - 48 = 11$ percent. These results effectively replicate the findings in Figure 3 in the main text where recent and similar whataboutism reduced public approval and support for sanctions by 18 and 10 percent, respectively. Furthermore in the pooled results, allowing the US government to respond to whataboutism does not significantly change the negative effects of whataboutism on public support for US foreign policy. The pooled results are partly explained by Russia and Germany pre-treatment effects as discussion on sanctions were extensively covered in the

media during the lead-up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Thus, the key difference is that Americans may consistently agree on whether the U.S. is in the right or wrong but disagree on the particular foreign policy action to take.

Figure A20: Whataboutism Approval and Sanctions Support, by Country



Notes: Figure A20 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior (top) and support for sanctions (bottom) by country for the follow-up survey. The denial, recent whataboutism with dismissal, democracy and wider context, and admission of guilt rejoinder response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

Figure A20 displays results by country. There were strong negative effects of whataboutism on approval across countries (top half), even after the U.S. responded. However, effects on sanction support were mixed (bottom half). Whataboutism reduced sanction support for

Germany and Turkey but had mixed effects for Russia. This may reflect survey timing, as our follow-up survey was fielded a month before Russia invaded Ukraine. While media attention on Russia was not as bad as late February 2022, the discussion of the U.S. imposing further sanctions on Russia was discussed regularly. This may have caused pre-treatment effects, leading to the attenuation bias. However, pre-treatment effects did not extend to approval, which involved a different issue space. Whataboutism still significantly reduced approval of U.S. behavior for Russia. In short, whataboutism had a detrimental impact on support across countries, but effects on policy opinions varied, potentially due to external events.

Table A7: Whataboutism and Support for US Foreign Policy (LPM vs. Probit on Follow-up)

Variables	LPM		Probit	
	Approval (1)	Sanctions (2)	Approval (3)	Sanctions (4)
Denial	-0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.00 (0.06)
Recent Whataboutism	-0.17*** (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.46*** (0.06)	-0.21*** (0.06)
Dismissal Whataboutism	-0.13*** (0.02)	-0.07** (0.02)	-0.37*** (0.06)	-0.19** (0.06)
Context/Democracy Whataboutism	-0.12*** (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.32*** (0.06)	-0.11 (0.06)
Admission Whataboutism	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.27*** (0.06)	-0.10 (0.06)
Female	-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.20*** (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)
35 to 44	0.05* (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)	0.13* (0.06)	0.13* (0.07)
45 to 64	-0.03 (0.02)	0.12*** (0.02)	-0.08 (0.06)	0.31*** (0.06)
65 or older	-0.05 (0.02)	0.10*** (0.03)	-0.12 (0.07)	0.25*** (0.07)
Some college	0.06*** (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)	0.17*** (0.05)	0.17** (0.05)
College	0.08*** (0.02)	0.07** (0.02)	0.23*** (0.06)	0.18** (0.06)
Postgraduate	0.17*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.48*** (0.07)	0.35*** (0.08)
Hawkishness	0.08*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.24*** (0.02)
Democrat	0.19*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.02)	0.51*** (0.05)	0.50*** (0.05)
Republican	0.04 (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)	0.09 (0.05)	0.16** (0.06)
Constant	0.46*** (0.03)	0.37*** (0.03)	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.35*** (0.08)
R^2	0.100	0.085		
Pseudo R^2			0.076	0.064
Observations	4998	4998	4998	4998

Standard errors in parentheses * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table A7 displays the results with a LMP and Probit. Results are broadly identical.

Table A8: Whataboutism and Public Support for US Foreign Policy (Follow-up Survey)

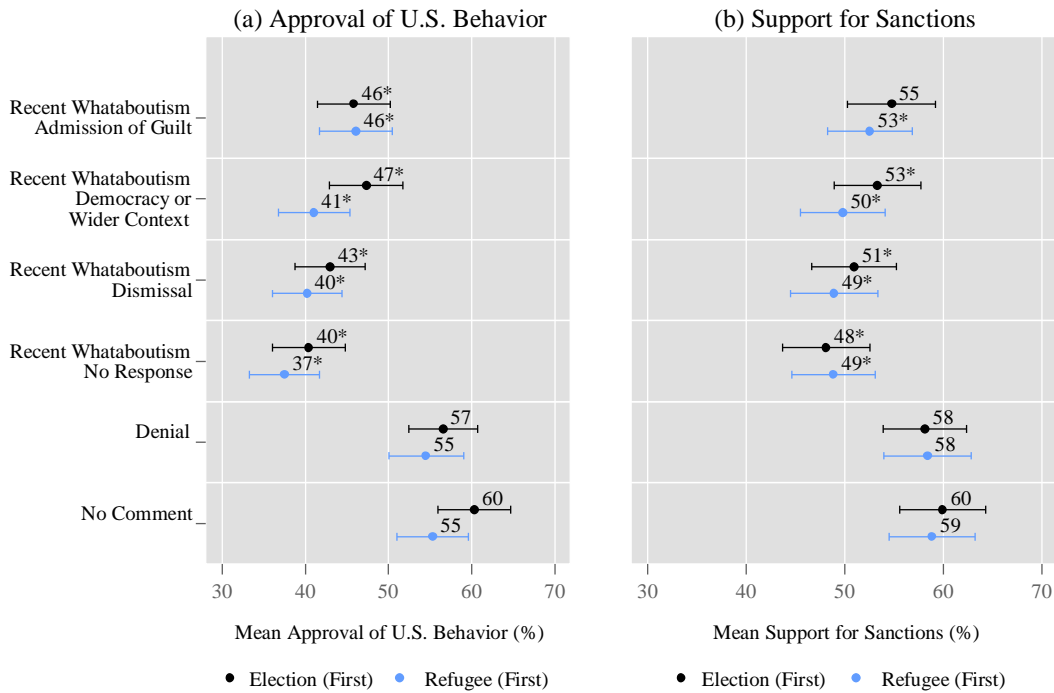
Variables	Russia		Germany		Turkey	
	Approval (1)	Sanctions (2)	Approval (3)	Sanctions (4)	Approval (5)	Sanctions (6)
Denial	0.03 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)
Recent Whataboutism	-0.11** (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)	-0.26*** (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.04)	-0.14*** (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)
Dismissal	-0.10* (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.18*** (0.04)	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.12** (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)
Whataboutism	-0.08* (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.20*** (0.04)	-0.11** (0.04)	-0.10* (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)
Admission	-0.08 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.15*** (0.04)	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.08 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
Female	-0.13*** (0.03)	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.05* (0.03)	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.05* (0.03)
35 to 44	0.04 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)
45 to 64	-0.02 (0.04)	0.16*** (0.04)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.13*** (0.04)
65 or older	0.03 (0.04)	0.22*** (0.04)	-0.07* (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.10** (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)
Some college	0.07* (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)
College	0.09** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)	0.04 (0.04)	0.09* (0.03)	0.06 (0.03)
Postgraduate	0.21*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.12** (0.04)	0.08 (0.04)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.14*** (0.04)
Hawkishness	0.08*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)
Democrat	0.22*** (0.03)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.03)	0.16*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.03)
Republican	0.04 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)	0.10** (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Constant	0.46*** (0.05)	0.36*** (0.05)	0.49*** (0.05)	0.37*** (0.05)	0.44*** (0.05)	0.37*** (0.05)
R^2	0.117	0.107	0.107	0.094	0.103	0.095
Observations	1641	1641	1701	1701	1656	1656

Standard errors in parentheses * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Overall, the results in Table A8 are similar to Table A7 with respect to recent and similar whataboutism significantly reducing public approval. However, the effect of whataboutism on

public support for the imposition of sanctions is much less consistent, which may be attributed to messenger identity effects potentially caused by media reporting over Ukraine in the period in which the survey was conducted. One other issue is that there is a slight difference in Table A8 and the previous Figure A20 with respect to Turkey. Specifically, in Figure A20f, recent and relevant whataboutism show statistically significant negative effect on public support for sanctions against Turkey, but this effect is statistically insignificant in Table A8, column 6. This is partly due to a sample reduction effect where 20 percent of respondents for whatever reason did not answer the hawkish questions, which reduced the sample size. Since Table A8 includes the hawkishness control, this would reduce the sample size and lead to larger standard errors, which would explain the lack of statistical significance on sanctions in Table A8, column 6 for Turkey.

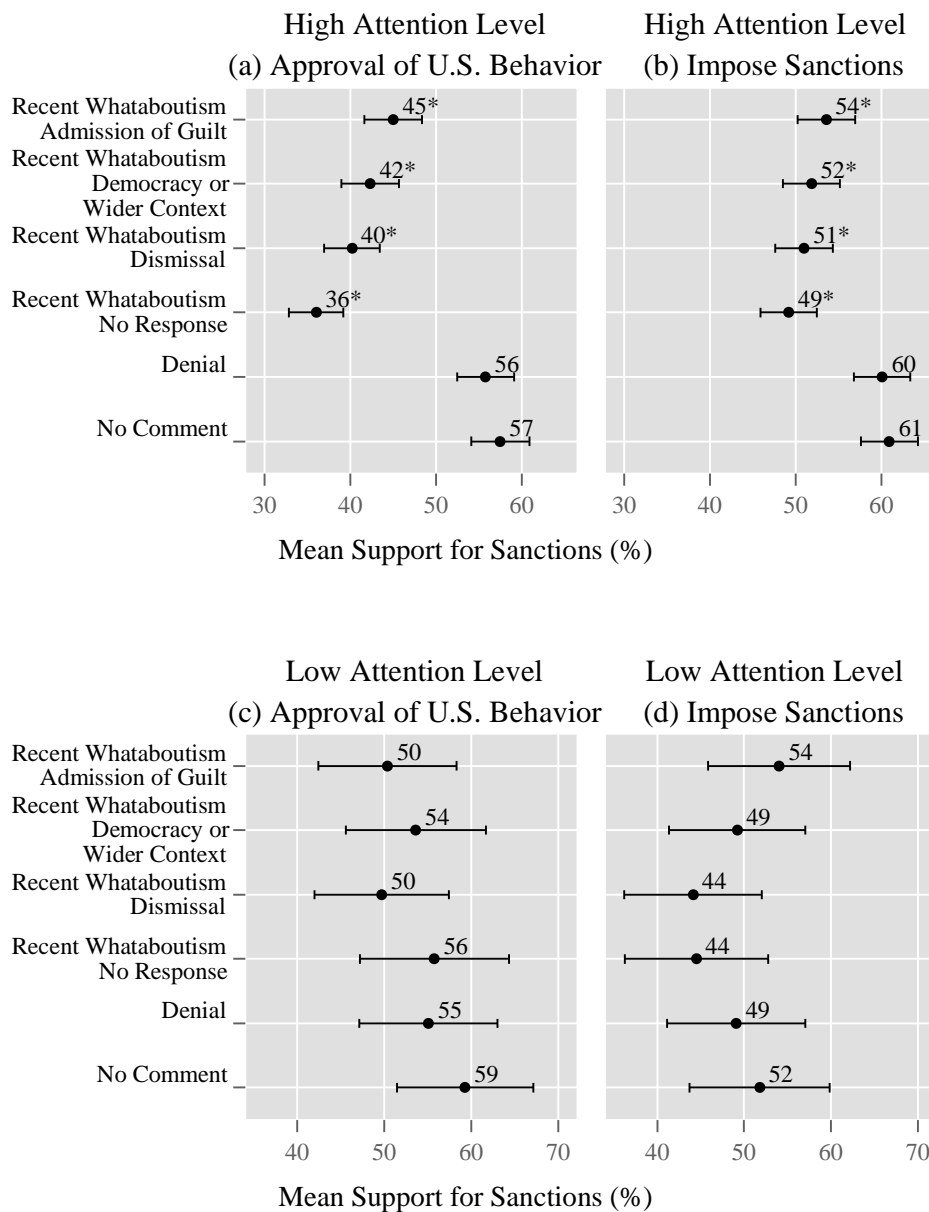
Figure A21: Whataboutism, Approval and Sanctions, by Order (Follow-up Survey)



Notes: Figure A21 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior (left) and support for sanctions (right) by order of the survey vignettes displayed for the follow-up survey. The denial, recent whataboutism with dismissal, democracy and wider context, and admission of guilt rejoinder response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

Figure A21 displays the results from the follow-up survey by splitting the sample into respondents who observed the elections scenario first (black) with those respondents who viewed the refugee crisis scenario (blue). Both Figures A21a and A21b show that for all whataboutism treatments, the order does not broadly change respondents’ attitudes, suggesting that framing effects are not present.

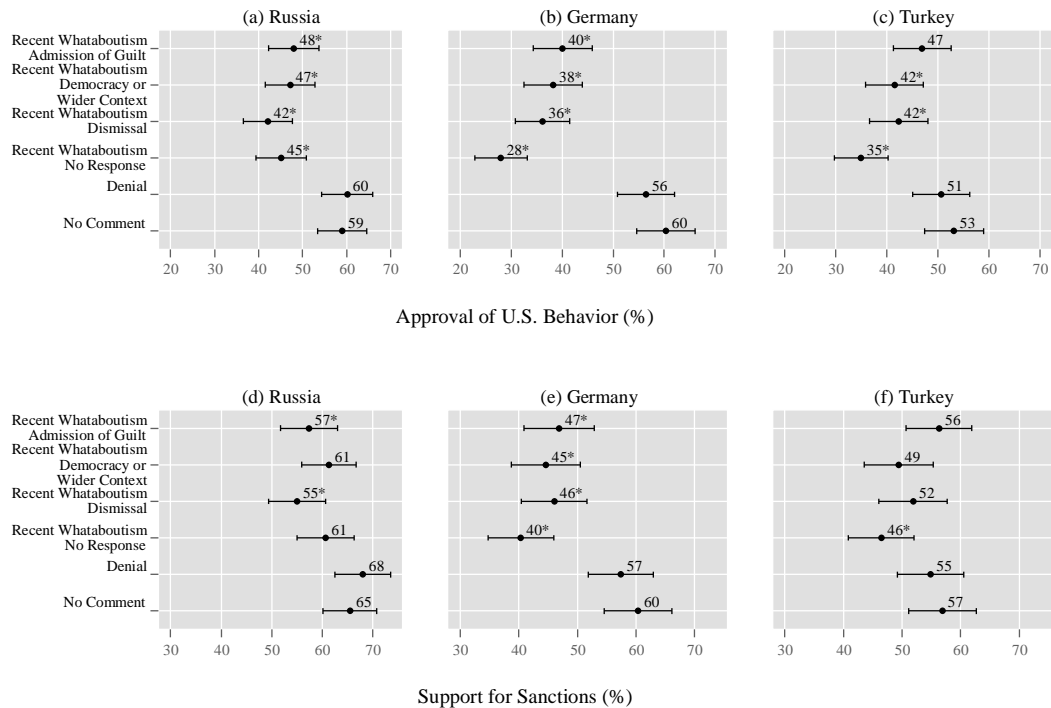
Figure A22: Main Effects of Whataboutism, by Attention Level (Follow-up)



Notes: Figure A22 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior (left) and support for sanctions (right) split by attentive (top) and inattentive respondents (bottom) for the follow-up survey. The denial, recent whataboutism with dismissal, democracy and wider context, and admission of guilt rejoinder response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

We also conducted attention checks in our follow-up survey. As in the main survey, we asked respondents to answer with simple instructions to pick the right color, which roughly 95 percent of respondents got correct. We also asked respondents specific questions about the vignette itself (for details, refer to Appendix A2.2). Roughly 84 percent of respondents were able to get the criticized country question correct while roughly 53 percent could identify the particular details correctly. Figure A22 separates the population between attentive (83 percent or higher) as high attention and the rest being defined as low attention. High attention respondents appear to elicit consistent results while low attention respondents suggest large attenuation effects. However, it should be noted that since most of the respondents passed the attention check, the statistical power on the low attention group is also much lower.

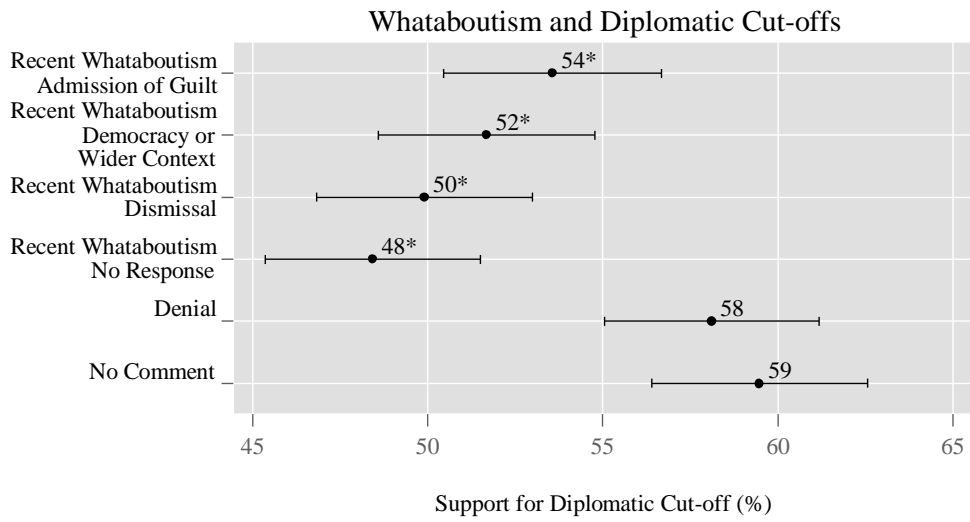
Figure A23: Main Effects of Whataboutism, by Country (High Attention, Follow-up)



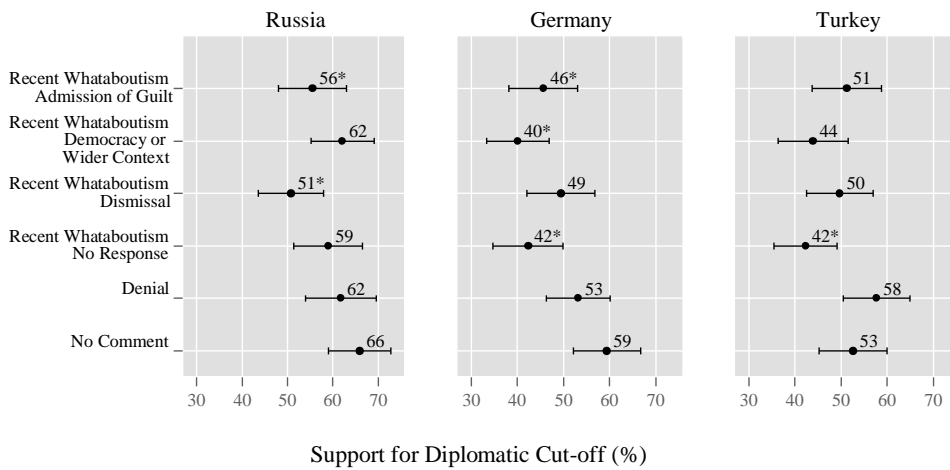
Notes: Figure A23 displays the mean approval of U.S. behavior (top) and support for sanctions (bottom) for attentive respondents only for the follow-up survey. The denial, recent whataboutism with dismissal, democracy and wider context, and admission of guilt rejoinder response point estimates are accompanied with an asterisk (*) if they are significantly different from the “no comment” response at the 0.05 level.

Figure A23 displays the results separated by country for the high attention respondents only. We observe that some of the attenuation country effects for each country are reduced as less attentive respondents generate more noise in our data. However, Russia’s whataboutism regarding sanctions is less effective, which may be partly due to the timing of the fielding of the survey during mid-January 2022, where the lead-up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine already occupied most of the news reporting, particularly with regards to sanctions. However, our main follow-up results remain unchanged despite the low attention problem among a few respondents.

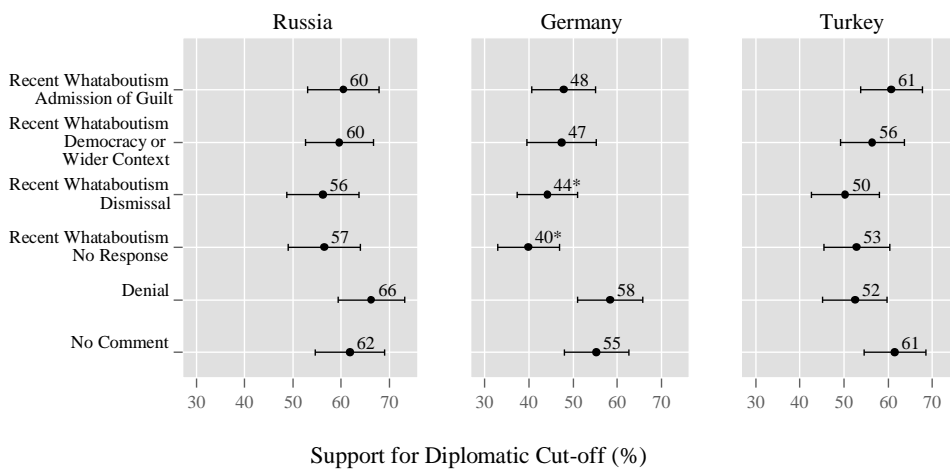
Figure A24: Whataboutism and Diplomatic Cut-off, by Issue Area and Country



Election Interference Scenario



Refugee Crisis Scenario

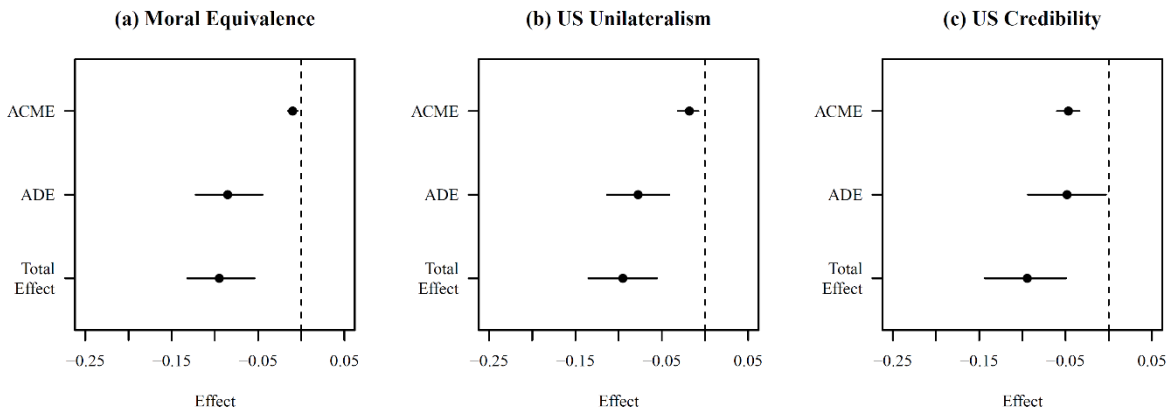


Notes: Figure A24 displays the mean support for diplomatic cut-offs for pooled scenarios (top),

Figure A24 shows the diplomatic cut-off results of the follow-up survey. When pooling the issue areas together and focusing on the whataboutist treatment effects, the results look fairly similar to Figure A14 where the relevant whataboutist treatment between the main and follow-up surveys have nearly identical point estimates if 10 as opposed to 11 percentage difference for the main and follow-up survey, respectively (see top Figure A24). However, there are divergences for between electoral intervention (see middle of Figure A24). Specifically, Germany is now statistically significant when using relevant and recent whataboutism as it relates to electoral interference issue, but Russia is no longer significant while the same type of whataboutism. This may be partly driven by strong pre-treatment effects on the nature of punishment due to the timing of the survey occurring before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In fact, pre-treatment effects are more likely as the refugee crisis diplomatic cut-off values are similar between the follow-up and main survey, suggesting that human rights issues are seen differently than national security-related issues (see bottom of Figure A24).

A7: More Causal Mediation Analysis and Sensitivity Tests

Figure A25: Causal Mediation Analysis of Whataboutism and Support for Sanctions



Like Figure 6 in the main text, support for punishing the criticized state is mediated primarily by a loss of US credibility. As Figure A25c shows, a recent and similar whataboutist rhetoric reduces public support for sanctions by reducing US credibility. The other two mechanisms of US unilateralism and moral equivalence are relatively weak in comparison.

Figure A26: Sensitivity Analysis for Public Approval

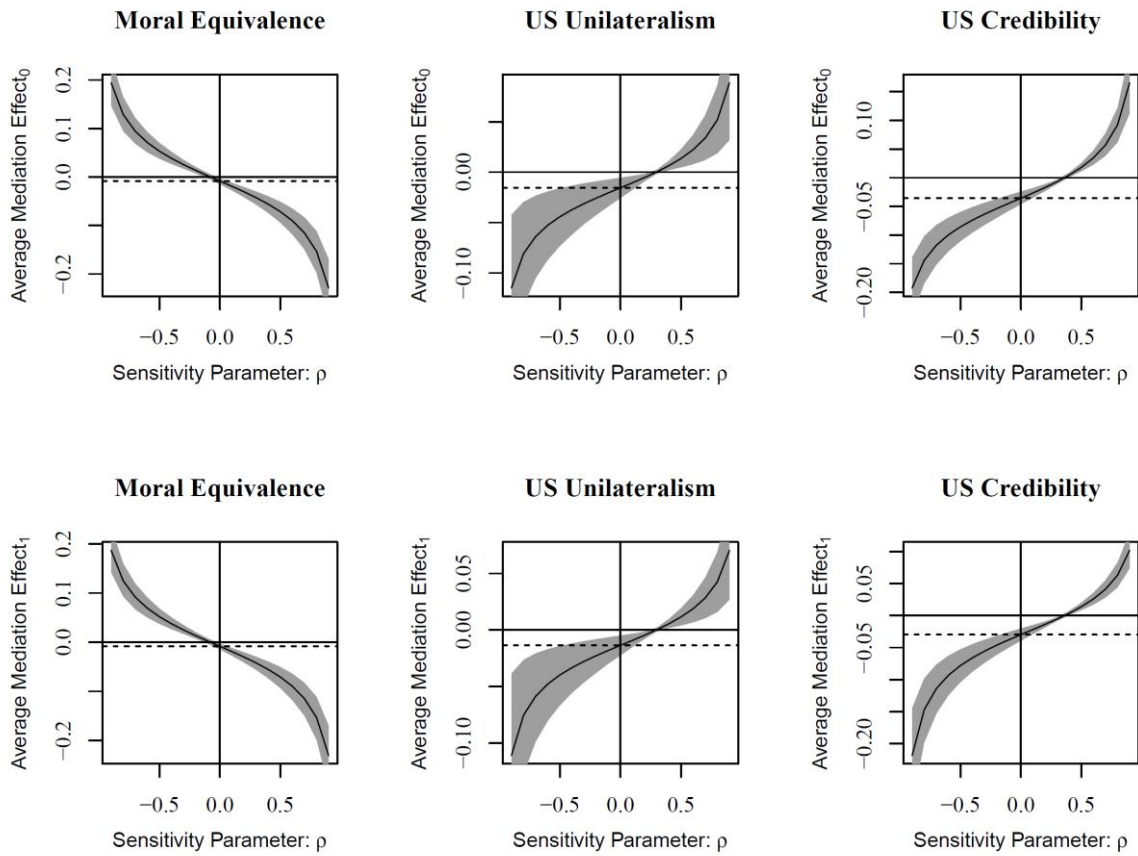


Figure A26 displays the sensitivity tests for the causal mediation results in Figure 6 in the main text with respect to moral equivalence, US unilateralism, and US credibility. The sensitivity tests suggests that of the three mechanisms, the US credibility mediator is the most robust to large deviations in ρ while the other two, particularly, moral equivalence, are quite sensitive and thus poor mediators in this context.

Figure A27: Sensitivity Analysis for Support for Sanctions

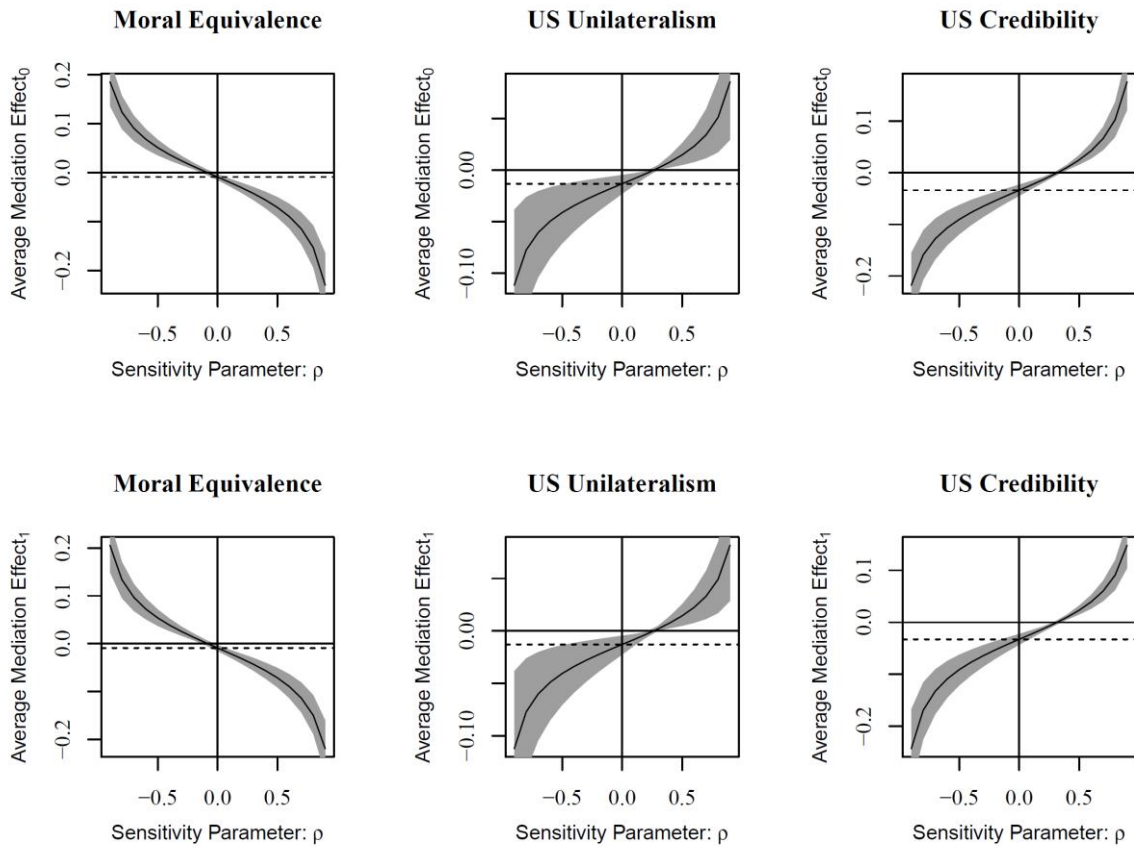


Figure A27 in the appendix displays the sensitivity tests for the causal mediation results shown in Figure A25, with respect to moral equivalence, US unilateralism, and US credibility. Similar to the results in Figure A26, the sensitivity tests suggest that among the three proposed mechanisms, the US credibility mediator is the most robust to large deviations in ρ , while the other two mediators, particularly moral equivalence, are quite sensitive and thus poor mediators in this context.

A8: Text Analysis

Figure A28: Diagnostic Values by Number of Topics (Election Vignette)

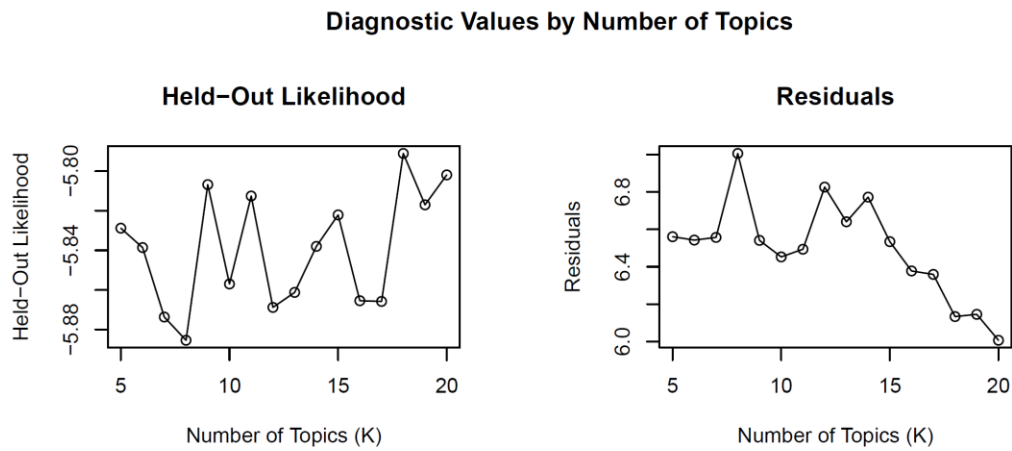


Figure A27 displays the search for the optimal number of topics from 5 to 12. This range is suitable given that the open-response comments are done in the context of a survey experiment. As we can see from the held-out likelihood, the optimal range of topics is between 6 and 9. It appears that 9 topics maximizes the likelihood with the lowest residuals at 8 topics, topic exclusivity suggests as shown in the relationship between semantic coherence and exclusivity in Figure A28 suggests that the optimal mix of exclusivity and semantic coherence occurs from 8 to 12. 9 topics appear to cover the preferred mix that achieves balance between hold-out likelihood, residuals, and exclusivity. Thus, we settled on 9 topics for election vignette.

Figure A29: Exclusivity and Semantic Coherence (Election Topics)

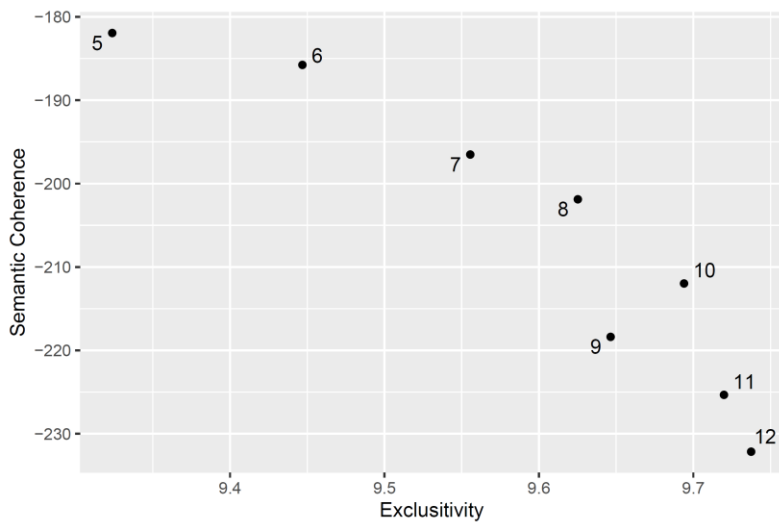
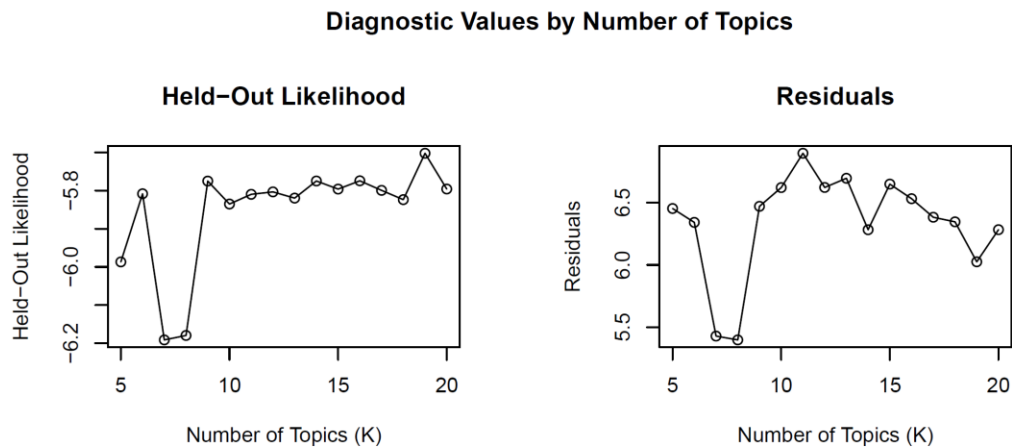


Figure A30: Diagnostic Values by Number of Topics (Refugee Vignette)



As before, Figure A29 displays the search for the optimal number of topics from 5 to 12. As we can see from the held-out likelihood, the optimal range of topics is between 6 and 9 with 9 topics maximizing the hold-out likelihood but 8 topics having the lowest residuals. Figure A30 shows the relationship between semantic coherence and exclusivity. Each of the points represent the K-topics from 5 to 12. Here, we can see that the optimal mix of exclusivity and semantic coherence occurs from 8 to 12. Looking at data in Figure A30, 8 appears to cover the preferred mix that achieves balance between hold-out likelihood, residuals, and exclusivity. Thus, we settled on 8 topics for our text analysis of the open responses in the refugee vignette.

Figure A31: Exclusivity and Semantic Coherence (Refugee Topics)

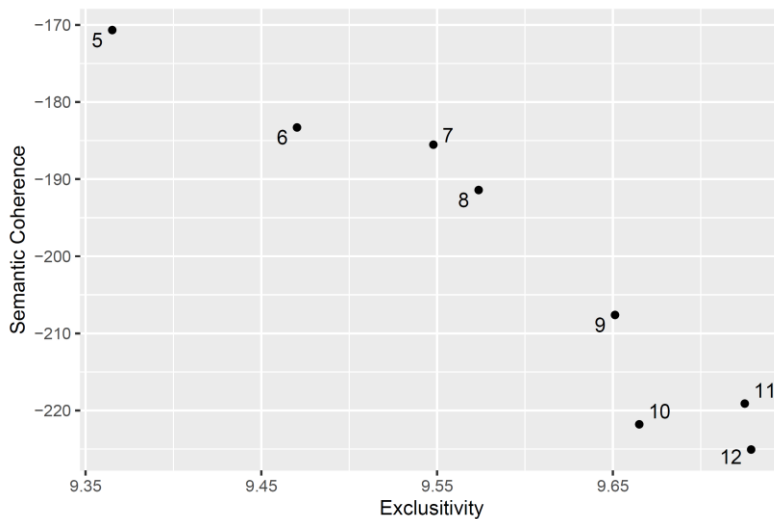


Table A9: Top Ten Representative Comments for Selected Topics (Election Vignette)

Topic 4 (US Hypocrisy on Democracy)	Topic 8 (US Defender of Democracy)
<p>It's hard to call b.s. on another country about elections when we do the same stuff here. It's like when someone tells their friend they drink too much but that person drinks just as much or even more; it's hard to take serious and causes immediate upset.</p> <p>Pot calling the kettle black and a recent situation, probably goes on throughout the world.</p> <p>Though it is the pot calling the kettle black, or hypocrisy, the criticism did give voice to a very questionable practice of our own country.</p> <p>Pot calling the kettle black. Do as I say not as I do.</p> <p>It's hypocritical. They signal virtue while committing the same sort of act. Hypocritical, but sadly expected.</p> <p>Global mischief impacts the entire world however should it not be something more locally relevant? As in, shouldn't the neighboring countries be more involved than a country a third of the way around the globe? Just feels like the foreign policy can be a bit of a reach.</p> <p>[I] just feel like it was a messy thing to do, and there are way calmer ways too do things.</p> <p>That's pretty hypocritical considering the U.S. rigs stuff all the time.</p> <p>It sounds like they did the right thing but are also bring hypocritical.</p> <p>Pot calling the kettle black.</p>	<p>Turkey should not have attempted to influence France's presidential election. The US's intentions were good but France should have dealt with the problem themselves.</p> <p>The US works to keep election integrity of democracies throughout the world, and works to fight nefarious actors like Russia who attempt to intervene in sovereign elections.</p> <p>They outed Russia for interfering inf France's election process and say they plan to seek consequences.</p> <p>We should denounce any meddling in free and fair elections.</p> <p>Germany should not have interfered in Frances`s election and they should have been outed.</p> <p>France is our allie so it is important to srep up in defense of their election and against Russian meddling.</p> <p>Ensuring that all countries have fair and free elections is important.</p> <p>US does behave with double standards with regards to interfering in elections and torturing prisoners, but should still use its influence to prevent corruption of democracy given their global standing.</p> <p>It is desirable that we support our allies and criticise or punish those who interfere in an ally's elections.</p> <p>We must make sure that all elections are fair across the globe.</p>

Table A10: Top Ten Representative Comments for Selected Topics (Refugee Vignette)

Topic 2 (US Defender of Human Rights)	Topic 5 (US Hypocrisy on Human Rights)
<p>I believe in secure borders and proper vetting of all immigrants. When it comes to refugees, beggars cant be choosers. All human beings should have food, water, shelter, and be free from abuse; however, if they are truly refugees, they will graciously accept any help that is rendered. I am an independent so I see issues from both sides.</p> <p>All aspects are in favor of the support the us has ectending protecting refugees.</p> <p>The US rightfully called out human rights abuses in Russia.</p> <p>When refugees are fleeing for the safety of their lives, protection is necessary.</p> <p>The US that we have our fault should always be a leader in speaking out concerning human rights violations.</p> <p>Because when there is a bully you gotta call them out and confront them. The one thing bullies hate? Being called out for what they truly are.</p> <p>The US is expressing it's concern of Russia's infringement of human rights.</p> <p>To protect and see after human lives!!!</p> <p>We should always speak out when human rights are violated.</p> <p>U.S. is the world leader in protecting human rights.</p>	<p>You can't overlook what this country did & years later criticize others without facing our truth.</p> <p>The US government at present become a do what meets the govt agenda country instead of a lead by example country.</p> <p>Because America allows the same thing to happen to our illegal immigrants. By placing them in detention centers, bad things happen to people staying there. While I believe that no human being should be harmed in any way, America can't really criticize another country for allowing the same to happen to another country's illegals. Instead we work together to prevent illegals coming to our countries, and instead promote legal immigration.</p> <p>I don't know much about the history of what happened therefore I can't make an educated guess.</p> <p>Because every nation has a right to protect its borders. In history many of the refugee crisis' that are burdened on a nation end up being a soft invasion of sorts. Who are we to tell another country accross the world how to manage its borders when we cannot control own.</p> <p>US is the non official representative of the United Nations. They objectively watch the other countries despicable acts.</p> <p>No one should ever had been placed in one of those detention centers. The concentration camps were evil and should never had been instigated to begin with.</p> <p>I don't think it is ok to tell another country to stop doing something our country is also doing. Lead by example.</p> <p>There is only so much which can be done when interfering in others' affairs but also its hard to watch unfortunate situations unfold and not wish to help.</p> <p>Our country needs to focus on our own problems and not worry about other countrys.</p>