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# The transnational impacts of American discrimination against minorities: Evidence from survey experiments in democracies

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# The transnational impacts of American discrimination against minorities: Evidence from survey experiments in democracies<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

What is the impact of prominent violations of international norms on support for those norms around the world? Recent studies have shown that American human rights violations may strengthen those norms in authoritarian states, but we know little about the impacts in democratic contexts, especially in cases where the norm and its violations are highly salient. Using a survey experiment in India, I find that exposure to news about American discrimination against minorities significantly reduces Indian public support for minority rights norms and concerns about the state of minority rights at home. Paired survey experiments in the United Kingdom show that when minority rights are less salient, exposure to American discrimination increases concerns around minority rights, but has no impact when they are more salient. The study demonstrates that high-profile violations of international norms may have polarizing impacts on support for those norms around the world.

## KEYWORDS

Human rights violations;  
international norms;  
minority rights;  
transnational

## RESUMEN

¿De qué manera influyen las violaciones prominentes de las normas internacionales sobre el apoyo que tienen esas normas a nivel mundial? Existen estudios recientes que han demostrado que las violaciones de los derechos humanos por parte de Estados Unidos pueden fortalecer esas normas en Estados autoritarios. Sin embargo, tenemos poca información referente al impacto que tienen estas violaciones en contextos democráticos, especialmente en aquellos casos donde tanto la norma como sus violaciones son altamente visibles. Utilizamos un experimento de encuesta en India, que nos permite concluir que la exposición a noticias sobre la discriminación estadounidense contra las minorías reduce significativamente el apoyo del público indio a las normas de derechos de las minorías, así como las preocupaciones relativas al estado de los derechos de las minorías en el país. Existen datos, obtenidos de experimentos de encuestas emparejadas en el Reino Unido, que demuestran que cuando los derechos de las minorías son menos visibles, la exposición a la discriminación

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<sup>1</sup>The data and replication files for this article are available at: <http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/internationalinteractions>. Please direct all questions about replication to the author at [j.j.gruffydd-jones@kent.ac.uk](mailto:j.j.gruffydd-jones@kent.ac.uk).

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estadounidense aumenta las preocupaciones relativas a los derechos de las minorías, pero no tiene ningún impacto cuando estos son más visibles. Este estudio demuestra que las violaciones de alto nivel de las normas internacionales pueden tener impactos polarizadores sobre el apoyo a esas normas en todo el mundo.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Quelle est l'incidence des violations médiatisées des normes internationales sur le soutien à ces normes dans le monde ? Des études ont récemment montré que les violations de droits de l'Homme américaines peuvent renforcer ces normes dans les États autoritaires, mais nous en savons peu sur leur incidence dans les contextes démocratiques, notamment dans les cas où la norme et ses violations sont particulièrement visibles. À l'aide d'une expérience de sondage en Inde, je constate que l'exposition aux informations relatives à la discrimination américaine des minorités réduit grandement le soutien public indien pour les normes des droits des minorités et les préoccupations concernant l'état des droits des minorités à l'échelle nationale. Des expériences de sondage jumelées au Royaume-Uni montrent que lorsque les droits des minorités sont moins discutés, l'exposition à la discrimination américaine accentue les inquiétudes relatives aux droits des minorités, mais n'a aucune incidence quand ils sont plus médiatisés. L'étude démontre que les violations fort discutées des normes internationales peuvent avoir un effet polarisant sur le soutien à ces normes dans le monde.

What are the transnational impacts of human rights violations? When leading liberal nations like the United States break international human rights norms – whether racial equality (Dudziak 2020), opposition to torture (McKeown 2009), good treatment of prisoners (Vasiliades 2005), or democratic governance (McGee 2020) – what does this mean for those norms around the world?

This article examines the global consequences of American discrimination against minority groups. Racist incidents in the United States have dominated news coverage in countries across the world, from the 1960s civil rights struggle (Dudziak 2011; Ioffe 2017) to George Floyd's murder in 2020 (Hassan and Noack 2021; Nwabuzo and Sanaullah 2021; Thelwall and Thelwall 2021). While these incidents have inspired other countries' own local protest movements (Mohdin et al. 2020; Vardaman, 2015), some have suggested that they might do long-lasting damage to international norms of racial equality and minority rights (Adkins and Devermont 2020; Dudziak 2020; Joshi 2020).

There has, however, been very little scholarly examination of how prominent failures to respect international norms affect public opinion. Gruffydd-Jones (2025) finds that, in contrast to psychological literatures on the contagion of norm violations (Álvarez-Benjumea 2023; Blanchard et al. 1994; Spörlein and Schlueter 2021; Stangor et al. 2001), American racial

discrimination made Chinese citizens more likely to value minority rights norms and criticize their own country's respect for these norms. In this article, I examine whether American discrimination has the same impacts in democratic contexts, where discussion of minority rights is more open and salient. Through an online survey experiment in India in 2019, a place (and time) where minority rights and their violations were highly politically and socially prominent, I show that vignettes describing the history of American discrimination against minorities have the opposite effects to those in China: significantly decreasing Indian citizens' perceptions of discrimination and support for minority rights norms at home. Two paired survey experiments in the United Kingdom suggest that this variation is plausibly – if not conclusively – explained by the extant salience of minority rights and their violations.

### **The Impact of International Norm Violations**

To date, there has been little work on how prominent violations of international norms affect those norms across borders. The international relations literature on norm contestation – when an actor “discursively” expresses their disapproval or opposition to a norm (Wiener 2014:1) – is well-developed. Scholars have examined how contestation from authoritarian states (Bettiza and Lewis 2020; Wolff and Zimmermann 2016), local actors (Bloomfield 2016), or the United States (Birdsall 2016; Heller et al. 2012; McKeown 2009) has influenced international norms. But norm violations like racial discrimination or even torture are not necessarily the same as contestations – they are not always an explicit attempt to express disapproval of that norm. They may be carried out by soldiers or police who are not seeking to deliberately challenge or revise a norm (Taylor 2016), but nonetheless, as in the case of Abu Ghraib or George Floyd – their actions become front-page news around the world.

There is a mass international audience for America's human rights violations, especially regarding race. In 2021, almost 90% respondents in Pew's global survey said that discrimination was a serious problem in American society (Silver 2021), suggesting that American racial dynamics have the potential to have a real influence on public opinion around the world. And as Simmons and Jo (2019: 23) argue: “to ignore public opinion when thinking through norm robustness is to ignore the very agents on whose behalf these norms are supposed to operate”.

This is especially important because there is a wide psychological literature telling us that norm violations are contagious (e.g. Cialdini et al. 1990; Goerg et al. 2024; Hill et al. 2012; Keizer et al. 2008). Multiple studies have found that when people are exposed to discriminatory behavior, they also become more likely to discriminate (Álvarez-Benjumea 2023;

Blanchard et al. 1994; Spörlein and Schlueter 2021; Stangor et al. 2001). International Relations scholars have taken this argument and argued that states' contestations of international norms make a norm less legitimate and less likely to be supported or respected (Carnegie and Carson, 2018; Hurd 2007; McKeown 2009; Onuf and Nicholas, 1994; Panke and Petersohn 2012). Chow and Levin (2024) find that US human rights violations "reshape Americans' views on whether other countries' actions were norm violating" (2024: 109).

Other international relations scholars have argued, however, that states' contestations may lead to pushbacks that can help to clarify and strengthen the norm (Badescu and Weiss 2010; Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2019; Keating 2014; Wiener 2014). After high-profile violations, the norms become more salient and their advocates more vocal, which may lead to greater public support (Mäs and Opp 2016; Opp 2012; Rosert 2019). Gruffydd-Jones (2025) argues that authoritarian states who use US human rights violations as anti-American propaganda risk giving oxygen to norms that are otherwise rarely discussed. By criticizing American discrimination against minorities, the propaganda "increases the salience of human rights norms and brings rare cues from the state that those norms should be respected" (2025: 7). Gruffydd-Jones finds that exposure to US racial discrimination makes Chinese citizens more likely to be concerned about discrimination against minorities at home.

That study is limited, however, by its focus on an authoritarian rival of the United States, a country where discussion of those norms is otherwise rare and coverage of American norm violations is highly critical. But what about places where these minority rights norms are widely debated and openly discussed, such as diverse democracies with a history of ethnic or religious tensions? Would we still see an increase in support for the norm, or would exposure to American violations increase the legitimacy of norm-breaking?

In these countries, regular open debates about minority groups and their rights may mean that news of discrimination in the United States will have far less impact than it would in a country where discussion of those issues is normally censored. On the other hand, stronger preexisting views about minority rights in these places may also influence people's responses to American discrimination. The biggest effects in China were amongst liberal-leaning demographics (female, urban, young) who might be more likely to already support minority rights (Gruffydd-Jones 2025). But China does not have strong partisan splits alongside ideological lines (Pan and Xu 2018), and attitudes toward minority rights are unlikely to be as polarized as they may be in countries where those rights can be more openly discussed (Evans and Need 2002). If people are indeed more likely to attend to and assimilate information that plays into their

preconceptions<sup>2</sup>, then news about discrimination against minorities in the United States may deepen the concerns of those already worried about these issues at home, but also make those who do not value minority rights more confident that it is acceptable to violate those norms.

### Survey Experiment in India

I examine this question with an online survey experiment in India. Like China, India is a formerly colonized Asian nation with a huge population. Both states have ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and both have been accused by the UN of violating the rights of their Muslim minorities (OHCHR 2022; 2024). On the other hand, India is a highly diverse democracy<sup>3</sup>, and minority rights are significantly less salient in China than they are in India. Ethnic and religious minorities in India are more numerous than in China<sup>4</sup>, and India scores far higher on measures of cultural and ethnic diversity<sup>5</sup>. A 2020 Pew survey found that 66% of Indians interacted with those of a different race or ethnicity, the highest of 11 emerging economies (Silver et al. 2020). Discussions of minority rights and discrimination are significantly more common in Indian newspapers than in Chinese ones<sup>6</sup>, and are often highly politically and socially contentious (e.g. Kumar 1992; Sharma 2024).

The experiment was carried out online in July 2019 with a sample of 1,313 respondents recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk)<sup>7</sup>. At the time of the survey the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had just won the Indian general election, with the party's controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Bill – which gave Indian citizenship to religious minorities from Muslim-majority neighboring countries – a central feature of its manifesto<sup>8</sup>. As such, minority rights in India were highly salient at the time of the survey.

While it was drawn from all walks of life, the sample more closely resembles the online population – more urban, rich, and well-educated

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<sup>2</sup>See Stroud (2017) and Bolsen and Palm (2019) for a summary of the literatures on selective exposure and motivated reasoning respectively.

<sup>3</sup>Although by the time of the study had undergone significant backsliding (Finzel 2020).

<sup>4</sup>The size of the largest ethnic group in 2018-2020 was 0.916 in China and 0.263 in India (Vogt et al. 2015).

<sup>5</sup>On Fearon's (2003) and Gören's (2014) indexes of cultural diversity; and Alesina et al.'s (2003) index of ethnic fractionalisation.

<sup>6</sup>Between 2010 and 2020, for example, the terms "Discrimination" and "India" were mentioned in 9,750 *Times of India* articles. In China, the *People's Daily* only had 1,108 mentioning "Discrimination" and "China" (excluding articles about the USA).

<sup>7</sup>Having filtered out respondents who took the survey more than once.

<sup>8</sup>In December 2019, the passage of the act led to mass protests around the country (BBC 2019).

– than the overall population. However, the online population, in 2019 in India almost 50%<sup>9</sup>, is also the most likely to uncover news of discrimination in the US, and the most likely to participate in public political and social discussions (Yang, 2009). Studies of Mechanical Turk surveys (Clifford et al., 2015) have found that they are largely consistent with population-based surveys.

I randomly assigned respondents to one of three groups. Those in the control group were given a paragraph containing generic information about minority groups around the world<sup>10</sup>. Those in the main treatment group were given a paragraph about systemic discrimination against minority groups in the United States (Figure 1). The text references violations of all aspects of the norm of racial equality: equality of treatment, equality of opportunity, and equality of outcomes (Búzás, 2018), and while it highlights the human costs of discrimination, it contains no direct criticism or information about the international community’s reaction<sup>11</sup>.

To examine their concern about minority rights at home, respondents were asked on a 1-100 scale, from ‘none at all’ to ‘very serious’: “Does discrimination exist in India against any minority religious or ethnic groups?”. To test support for norms around minority rights, respondents were asked whether they agreed with three questions: whether discrimination should be illegal in India; whether workplaces should provide anti-discrimination training; and whether minority groups should be given preferential access to education (full texts in Appendix A). These were aggregated to form one ‘norms’ measure<sup>12</sup>. I implemented adjusted OLS with covariates for these outcomes (covariates are in Appendix Table 3, alongside unadjusted estimates and non-OLS regressions).

*Results:* As Figure 2 shows, in contrast to studies in China, exposure to American violations decreased Indian citizens’ beliefs that minorities were discriminated against in their country by 5 percentage points (significant at  $p < 0.01$ ). Splitting this variable at the mid-point shows that, compared to 65.7% in the control group, only 56.6% of Indian citizens believed that discrimination was ‘high’ in their country after reading about discrimination in the US. This difference is only slightly less than the

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<sup>9</sup><https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-india>

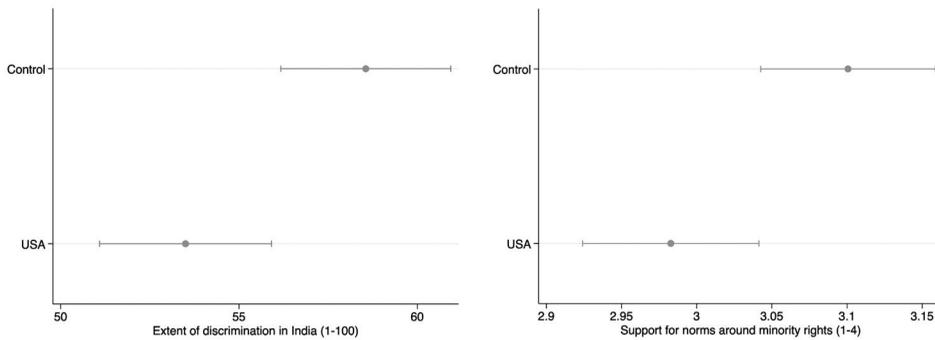
<sup>10</sup>To ensure comparability with previous literature this design follows Gruffydd-Jones (2025). See Appendix A for full texts and a justification of the texts.

<sup>11</sup>To test whether the impacts were driven by the United States, a second treatment group was given a similar paragraph about discrimination in Iran. Please see discussion of this in Appendix A.

<sup>12</sup>Following Gruffydd-Jones (2025). There was reasonable consistency in these measures, with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.55. Results were similar for the measures individually as for the aggregation, but stronger for the most direct measure of the norm: whether discrimination should be illegal (Appendix Table 4). Results are robust to attention checks (Appendix Table 5).

Ethnic minorities in the United States face varying degrees of discrimination. There is a deep-rooted prejudice in the field of law enforcement in the United States and the basic human rights of ethnic minorities are often arbitrarily trampled. According to United Nations statistics, ethnic minorities like African Americans and Muslims are often targets of arbitrary arrest for peaceful activities and are disproportionately more likely to be arrested and sentenced by police than the majority whites. In the economic field, ethnic minorities are in an all-round disadvantage in terms of employment, career development, wage income, and economic status. In addition, the US government has also heavily monitored its Muslim community and the Muslim community is experiencing increasingly serious discrimination. Ethnic and racial discrimination in the United States runs through its history.

**Figure 1.** US treatment (in both India and UK studies).



**Figure 2.** Impact of exposure to American discrimination on perception of extent of discrimination against minorities and support for minority rights norms in India (OLS regressions with covariates, 95% confidence intervals).

difference in perceptions of discrimination in India between ‘backward’ and ‘non-backward’ castes<sup>13</sup>.

The treatment also decreased respondents’ willingness to support norms that protect minority rights by 0.12 on a 1–4 scale ( $p < 0.01$ ). To put this in more substantive terms, exposure to US discrimination decreased the number of Indians who thought discrimination against ethnic or religious minorities in India should be illegal by 6.8 percentage points<sup>14</sup>. This is a sizeable difference, given that Indian Hindus were only 9.2 percentage points less likely than non-Hindus to say discrimination should be illegal<sup>15</sup>.

We should note that this sample is more well-educated and urban than the Indian population, and while it more closely resembles the online population, it is still more highly educated. However, education levels do not significantly affect the results, and the sample demographics are similar

<sup>13</sup>10 percentage points in the control.

<sup>14</sup>From 79% to 72.2% ( $p < 0.05$ ). The treatment reduced the number who ‘strongly agreed’ that it should be illegal from 43.9% to 34.5% ( $p < 0.01$ ).

<sup>15</sup>In the control group, 86.9% of non-Hindus versus 77.7% of Hindus.

to those used in previous studies on this topic<sup>16</sup>. Another issue with MTurk samples in India is that they draw much more heavily from Hindu and upper-caste respondents in the southern states (Boas et al. 2020). While Hindu and upper-caste respondents in this survey are proportional to the population, there are fewer respondents who say that they are Muslims or are from Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the survey than in the population. This does mean that we can not necessarily use the study's findings to tell us about these minority groups.

## Explanations of Variation

The findings are the opposite of previous studies in authoritarian states. Identical language about American discrimination significantly reduces – rather than increases – citizens' perceptions of discrimination against minorities and support for their rights at home. What explains this variation?

One explanation comes from attitudes toward the United States. In contrast to just 41% in China (Gruffydd-Jones 2025), 85% of Indians in this experiment said they 'liked' the United States to some extent. And indeed, as Figure 3 shows, news of American violations had an especially powerful impact on those Indians who said they 'strongly' liked the US<sup>17</sup>. But while the high levels of pro-American sentiment in India may tell us something about the size of this effect, it does not explain its contrasting direction in India and China. Anti-Americans in India did not become more critical of discrimination at home after reading about American violations.

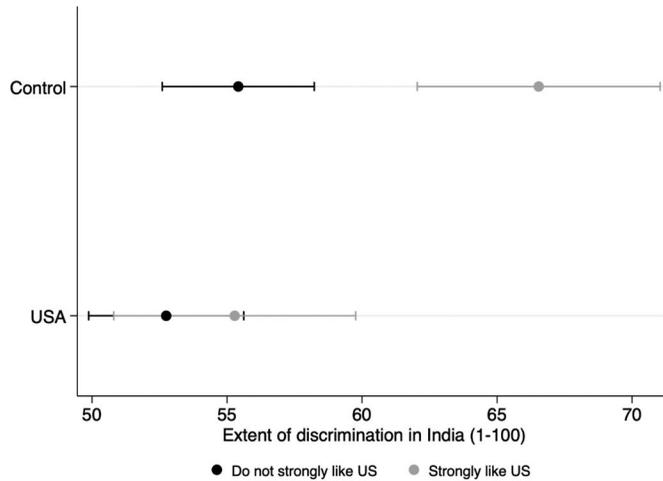
While our Indian sample was originally just as supportive of minority rights as the Chinese sample (Gruffydd-Jones 2025), one notable difference between China and India is the salience of these rights and their violations. In a country like India, with regular high-profile critical media discussions and political debates around minorities and their rights, these norms and their violations are already salient and close to the top of people's minds. In a country like China, where politicians rarely engage publicly with debates on respect for minority rights, and local media almost never critically discuss violations (Brady 2012), then news about racism in the United States will have a much larger impact. This may help to explain why, after George Floyd's death, internet searches for 'minorities' and 'civil rights' surged in China, but not in India<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup>Gruffydd-Jones (2025). Appendix Table 1.

<sup>17</sup>There was no difference for norms, however (Appendix Table 6).

<sup>18</sup>Joshi (2020). Compare <https://trends.so.com/result?query=少数民族> and <https://trends.so.com/result?query=公民权利> in China; with <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=today%205-y,today%205-y&geo=IN,IN&q=/m/097s4,minorities> in India



**Figure 3.** Impact of exposure to American discrimination on perception of extent of discrimination against minorities in India, by whether the respondent ‘strongly likes’ the United States or not (OLS regressions with covariates, 95% confidence intervals).

To examine these explanations further, I carried out a pair of survey experiments in the United Kingdom in 2020. The UK is an open and democratic American ally where minority rights violations are less salient than they are in India. The spread of ethnic and religious minorities in the United Kingdom is far smaller<sup>19</sup>, the UK scores notably lower on measures of cultural and ethnic diversity<sup>20</sup>, and prior to June 2020, discussions of minority discrimination were less common in British newspapers<sup>21</sup> and public attention to the topic was low<sup>22</sup>. As in China, but unlike India, British internet searches for ‘minorities’ and ‘civil rights’ surged after George Floyd’s death<sup>23</sup>.

I included two short experiments in unrelated surveys through MTurk with 426 respondents in March 2020 (Study 1), and then with 455 in September 2020 (Study 2). Respondents were mainly young and urban, similar to those in India. In both studies, respondents were randomly assigned to either the control or US treatment (using the same texts) and then were asked about their beliefs about the extent of discrimination in the UK against ethnic or religious minorities (due to space constraints, I

<sup>19</sup>The size of the largest ethnic group in 2018–2020 is 0.815 in the UK and 0.263 in India (Vogt et al. 2015).

<sup>20</sup>Fearon (2003); Gören (2014); Alesina et al. (2003).

<sup>21</sup>The term “discrimination” was mentioned in just over half as many *Guardian* articles about the UK (5,262) between 2010 and 2020 as in *Times of India* articles about India (10,005). This has evened up since George Floyd, with the four years from October 2020 seeing 3,651 articles on Indian discrimination in the *Times of India* compared to 2,383 on the UK in the *Guardian*.

<sup>22</sup>Ipsos (2020).

<sup>23</sup>See <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=today%205-y,today%205-y&geo=GB,GB&q=minorities,/m/097s4> and Appendix E.

was not able to ask about norms). The second took place a few months after George Floyd's death, a time when racial and minority rights issues were far more salient. Polls show that prior to George Floyd's death, only 2% of the UK population viewed race-related issues as a serious concern facing the country, rising to 24% in the immediate aftermath (Ipsos 2020), with 30% of the population saying six months later that they were now discussing racial issues more often (Nolsoe 2020). To increase the salience of minority rights issues in the second study, respondents in both control and treatment groups also first read an additional prompt about discrimination in the UK (see [Appendix D](#)).

This does mean that we cannot be precisely sure which of the two changes in the salience of minority rights in the UK (the environmental change or the experimental prompt) is responsible, but we are mainly interested in the mechanism, which should be the same for both. If the variation in responses is about the salience of minority rights norms, we would expect the first study to show something similar to China, with exposure to US discrimination increasing perceptions of discrimination in the UK, and the second to be similar to India, decreasing perceptions of discrimination at home. If the variation is about geopolitical rivalry or authoritarianism, the UK should be more similar to India in both cases.

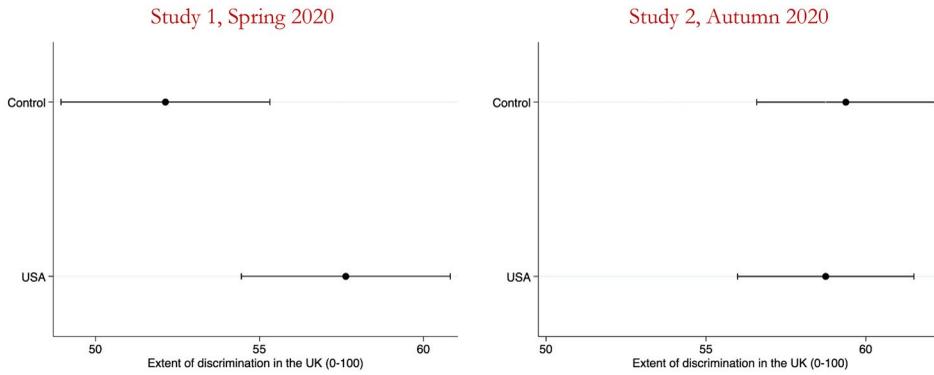
[Figure 4](#) shows that in Study 1 – in Spring 2020 – the UK's findings closely reflected those from previous studies in China (Gruffydd-Jones 2025). Information about American discrimination increased British citizens' beliefs that there was discrimination in the UK by 5.7 percentage points<sup>24</sup>. In Study 2, when discrimination at home was made more salient, the treatment had no effect on people's views.

## Discussion

This study finds that exposure to American discrimination against minority groups makes Indian citizens less concerned about discrimination against minorities in India and less supportive of norms to reduce that discrimination. These findings contrast with previous studies in China, where exposure to American discrimination increased public support for minority rights. The first study in the United Kingdom, a democratic American ally, which finds similar effects to those in China, suggests that this difference is not due to geopolitics or authoritarianism. Interestingly, this study reflects nationally representative surveys in the UK in 2020, which found that British people became significantly more likely to say that

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<sup>24</sup>Statistically significant at  $p=0.013$ . This is similar to Gruffydd-Jones's (2025) effect sizes in China (4.6-6.5 percentage points).



**Figure 4.** Impact of exposure to American discrimination on perception of extent of discrimination against minorities in the UK (OLS regressions with covariates, 95% confidence intervals). Full regression tables in [Appendix Tables 10 and 13](#). Note that the discrimination variable in these studies was originally measured on a 0–10 scale, but has been transposed to a 0–100 scale for comparative purposes.

ethnic minorities were discriminated against at home after George Floyd (YouGov 2024a).

The second UK study suggests that the *ex-ante* salience of these norms and their violations may play an important role in explaining this variation. It implies that in India, where minority rights are especially salient, exposure to overseas violations may not increase awareness of norms to the same extent as in places like China. Future work should directly examine the impact of American violations across a range of places and issue areas where there is a wide variation in the *ex-ante* salience of the norms. The United Kingdom is a useful case in many ways – but minority rights were certainly not invisible in British public discourse even pre-2020, and we should not rule out other explanations for the cross-national differences.

This explanation also does not tell us why the violations make Indian citizens less supportive of minority rights at home. Is it because in places where norms are highly salient and widely discussed, violations by a leading liberal power make the norms less legitimate? One explanation (on perceptions of discrimination at least) may come from [Figure 3](#), which shows that news of American violations has a powerful impact on a subsection of Indian people that is otherwise much more critical of discrimination at home: people who really like the United States. This suggests that – in places like India, at least, where norms are already salient – pro-Americans may take their cues from the United States on how acceptable violations of those norms are<sup>25</sup>. These patterns only appear to come

<sup>25</sup>Pro-Americans in India may also have peculiar characteristics that influence their responses to news of discrimination abroad.

in places where American discrimination has a ‘negative’ effect, however. In the first UK study, pro-Americans had no reaction to American violations<sup>26</sup>, while in the Gruffydd-Jones (2025) China study, it was pro-Americans who became the most critical of discrimination at home.

To what extent do people’s existing views about minority rights determine their response? In India, the evidence is mixed. American violations were especially likely to dampen perceptions of discrimination amongst BJP supporters, who tend to be more conservative on minority rights (Haas and Majumdar 2023)<sup>27</sup>, but as discussed, had an even larger negative impact on pro-Americans, who were far more critical in the control group (Figure 3)<sup>28</sup>. The impact of ideology was much clearer in the UK. In Study 1, it was only the more liberal respondents who became more concerned about discrimination. Conservative respondents became, if anything, slightly (albeit non-significantly) less concerned<sup>29</sup>. These partisan differences were even more prominent in Study 2, where liberal respondents perceived discrimination in the UK to be 5.3 percentage points higher after treatment, but conservative respondents saw it as 7.1 percentage points lower<sup>30</sup>. Notably, these findings reflect similar partisan responses to news of George Floyd’s murder, whereby more liberal respondents became 6 percentage points more likely than before to say that racism was prevalent in the UK after June 2020 (YouGov 2024b), while conservative respondents became 3 percentage points less likely to say the same.

While Gruffydd-Jones (2025) did not ask directly about ideology in China, he did find the biggest positive treatment effects on perception of discrimination came amongst young, female, urbanites – demographics that tend to hold more liberal positions (Pan and Xu 2018). Together, this suggests that in countries where there are ‘positive’ effects of American violations on human rights norms, these effects are likely to only come amongst people who already value those norms in some form (Kunda 1990).

The study demonstrates that the impacts of overseas rights violations are not uniform. American violations of international norms – from racial equality to democracy – often receive widespread, front-page news coverage around the world. Our understanding of the transnational impact of these

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<sup>26</sup>Appendix Table 11.

<sup>27</sup>And had lower perceptions of discrimination in India in the control group. While Hindu men were also more likely to be affected by the treatment, in the control group they were no more likely to believe that discrimination was high in their country. There was no clear difference between any groups on support for norms. See Appendix Table 6.

<sup>28</sup>We also find that the negative effect was stronger amongst self-defined ‘liberals’ (Appendix Table 6). Since scholars have shown that these kinds of Western ideological scales are not that useful in the Indian context (Haas and Majumdar 2023), however, we should not put much weight on this finding.

<sup>29</sup>Appendix Table 11.

<sup>30</sup>Both significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Appendix Table 14.

violations on public support for the norms is, however, limited. Previous work has shown that in authoritarian regimes, norm violations may unexpectedly serve to strengthen the norms. In this study, I find that these positive externalities may also show up amongst the US's democratic allies – at least amongst more liberal groups. However, I also find that in some countries, especially countries where those norms are already prominent and regularly feature in public and political discourse, American norm violations may significantly reduce public support for those norms. As such, at least in the case of minority rights and racial equality, prominent norm violations may serve to polarize support for those norms around the world.

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