

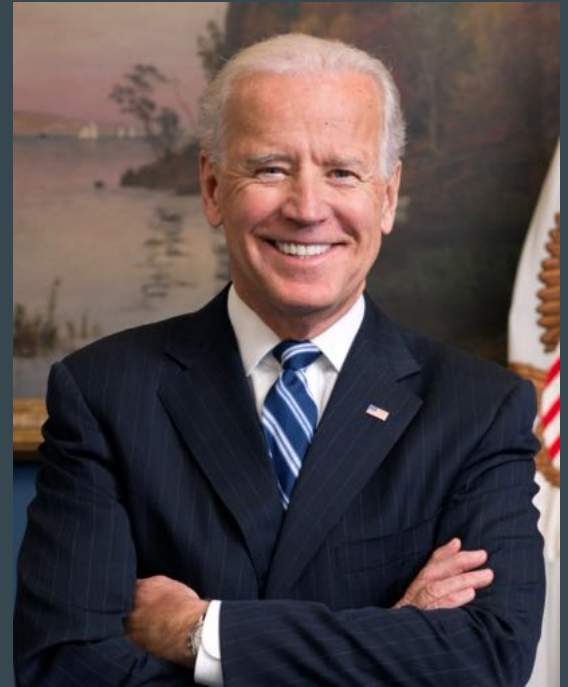
# Perspective Taking Through Partisan Eyes

Cognitive Empathy, Partisanship, and Attitudes Toward International Cooperation



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# Motivation: Empathy, Cooperation, and Foreign Policy



# Motivation: Empathy, Cooperation, and Foreign Policy

Classic IR theory links conflict to failure of cross-national empathy (Jervis 1978)

- Or the inability to consider issues from others' perspectives (Davis 1983)

But key questions remain unanswered:

- Do empathetic attitudes engender support for international cooperation?
- Can perspective taking cues spur empathy, and in turn, support for cooperation?
- How does empathy interact with partisanship in foreign policy attitude formation?

Why should we care?

- Fraying international order + partisan polarization = uncertain prospects for cooperation

# Argument: Perspective Taking x Partisanship

Cross-national empathy increases support for international cooperation

- Makes individuals more cognizant of potential for “win-win” outcomes

Partisanship strongly conditions these effects

- Concentrated among individuals with weak partisan attachments

Evidence: pre-registered survey experiment involving 4,788 U.S. respondents

- Some participants treated to engage in cross-national empathy
- Also vary issue area (climate/nuclear) and target of perspective taking (China/India)

# Theory: Cross-National Empathy and IR

Empathy makes international politics less conflictual by helping actors understand others' perspectives (Booth & Wheeler 2007; Holmes & Yarhi-Milo 2017; Bayram & Holmes 2019)

- Reduces negative stereotypes
- Mitigates self-serving biases
- Increases altruism

*H1: Perspective taking cues will increase support for international cooperation*

# Theory: Cross-National Empathy, Partisanship, and IR

Partisanship proxies for the *malleability* of political attitudes

- Strength of partisan priors predicts whose views will change (Gerber & Green 1999; Chaudoin 2014)

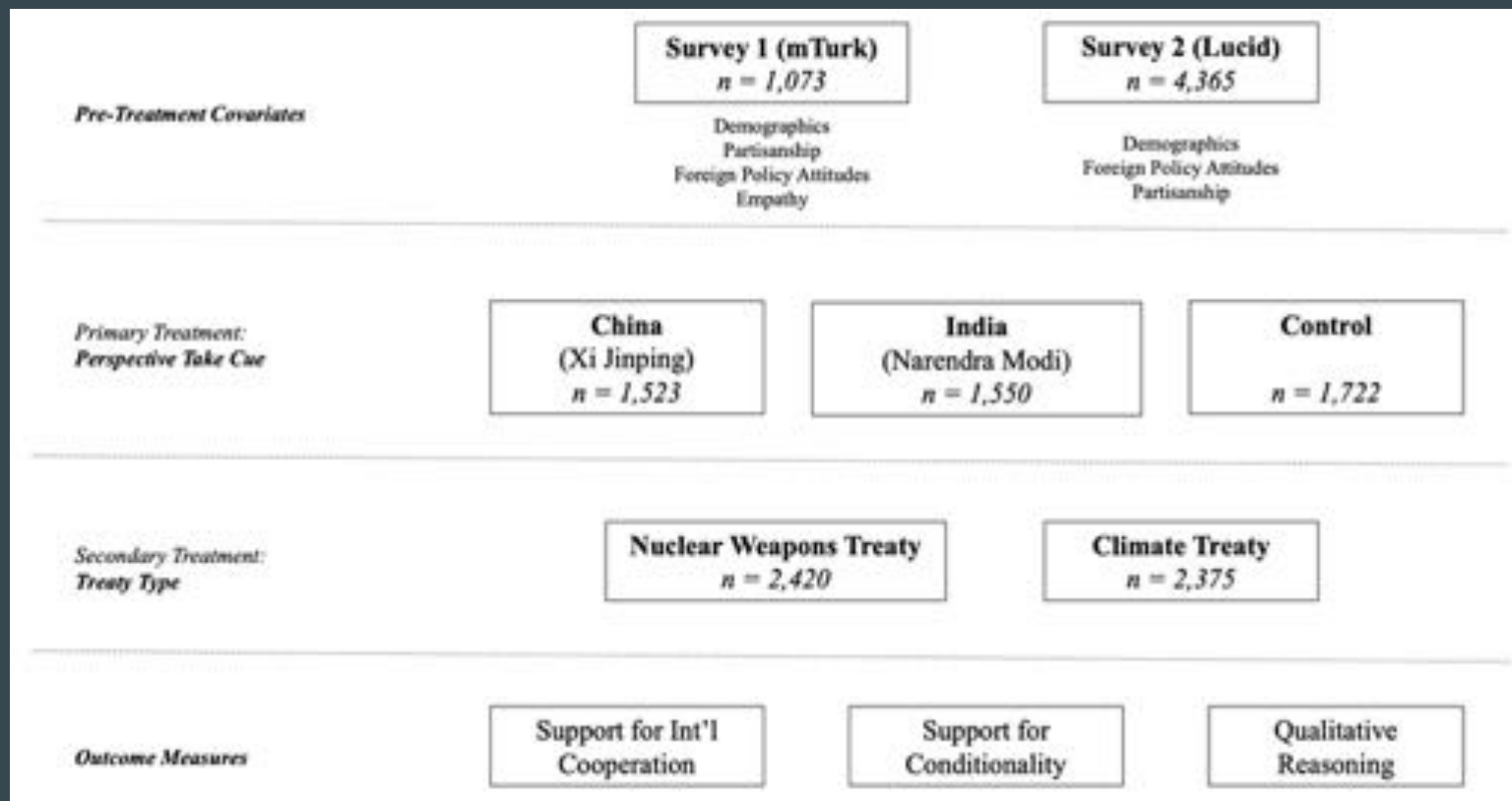
*H2a: Perspective taking cues will have more positive effects on support for international cooperation among weaker partisans than among stronger partisans*

Partisanship captures the *content* of political attitudes

- Relative to Republicans and Independents, Democrats like cooperation more and are more empathetic (Rathbun 2007; Brutger 2021)

*H2b: Perspective taking cues will have more positive effects on support for international cooperation among Republicans and Independents than among Democrats*

# Data & Methods: Experimental Setup



# Data & Methods: Treatment and Outcome

## Primary Treatment

Cue to “take the perspective” of political leader of India or China (blue box)

## Primary Outcome Measure

*“Now, think about your personal views on [climate change / nuclear weapons]. How much do you support the United States of America accepting international treaty requirements to [reduce carbon emissions / stop developing and producing tactical nuclear weapons]?”*

This is Narendra Modi, the leader of India.



As you read the scenario below, put yourself in the shoes of the leader of India. As the leader of India, imagine how you would approach an international treaty to limit climate change.

Political leaders of the seven largest economies in the world are meeting to discuss ways to limit climate change. One proposal is for the countries to sign a treaty requiring all countries to pay for carbon offsets in proportion to their yearly carbon emissions. Experts say that if a significant number of countries live up to the treaty requirements, the treaty would reduce the impact of climate change. However, the treaty would also significantly raise energy prices for the countries that implement it.

As the leader of India, what policy would you adopt?

Accept climate treaty requirements (reduce carbon emissions by taxing energy)

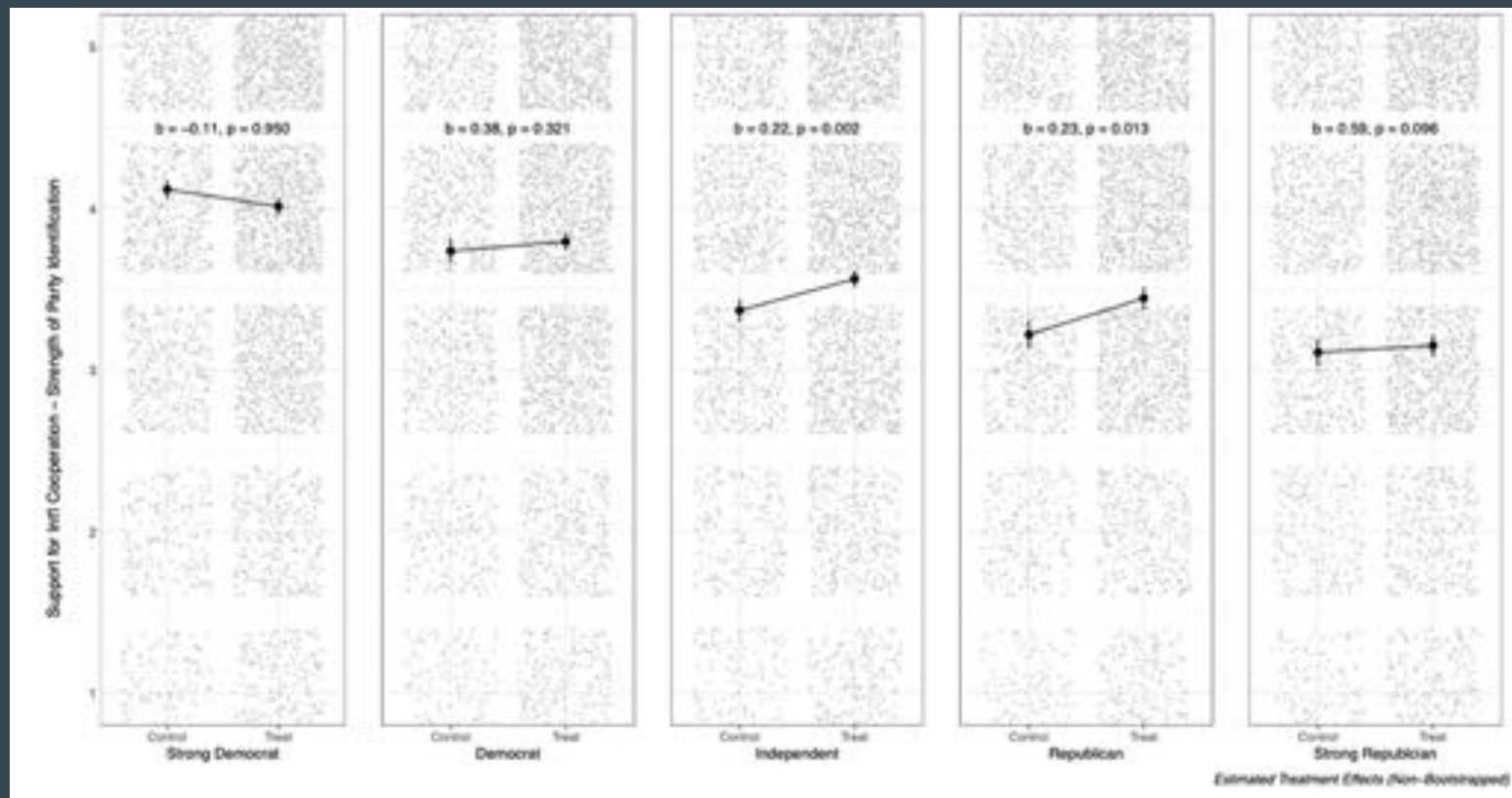
Reject climate treaty requirements (do not reduce carbon emission by taxing energy)



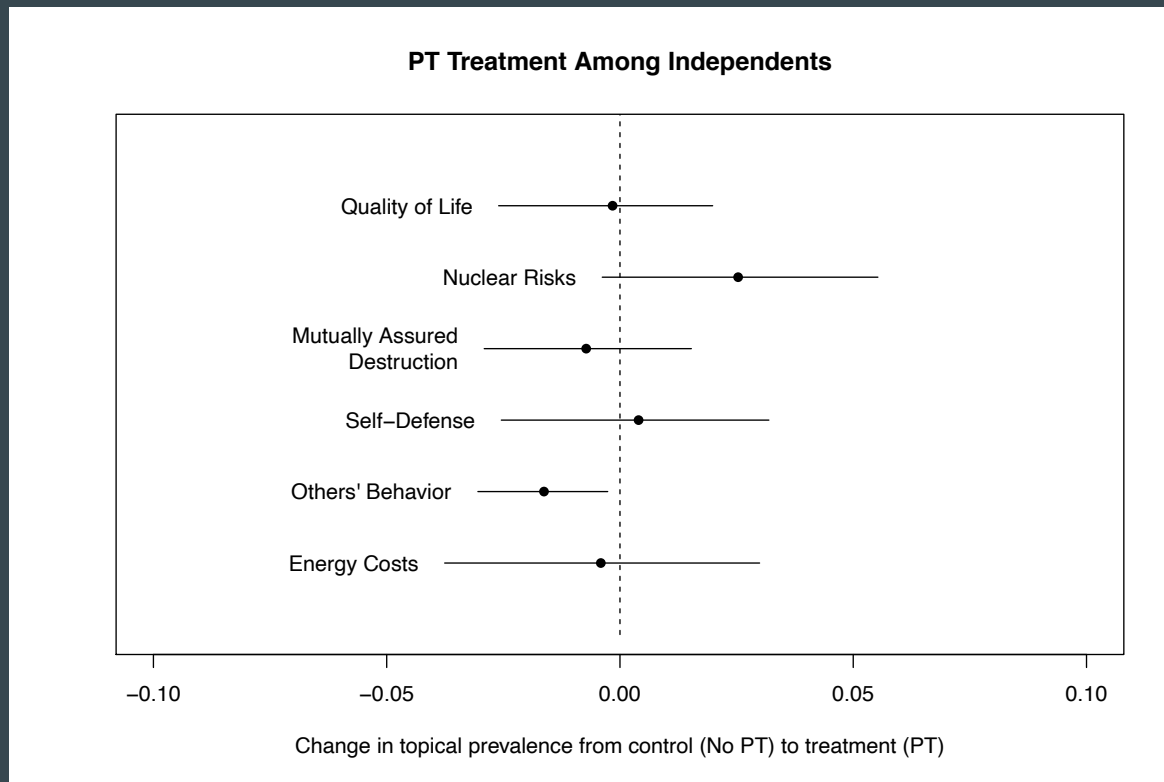
# Results: Main Treatment Effects

	<i>Main Effects</i>		<i>Country</i>		<i>Topic</i>	
	Main (1)	Controls (2)	China (3)	India (4)	Security (5)	Climate (6)
PT Condition	0.055*	0.072**	0.054	0.094**	0.058	0.084*
Standard Error	0.038	0.037	0.044	0.044	0.051	0.055
<i>p</i> -value	0.070	0.027	0.109	0.033	0.252	0.062
Control Mean	3.56	3.56	3.56	3.56	3.66	3.5
Control SD	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.19	1.32
DV Range	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]
Controls	No	9	9	9	9	9
Adj- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.011	0.088	0.094	0.094	0.050	0.125
Observations	4,788	4,518	3,063	3,077	2,292	2,226
Interaction			0.044*			-0.024
Standard Error			0.045			0.075
<i>p</i> -value			0.084			0.375
Observations			2,896			4,518

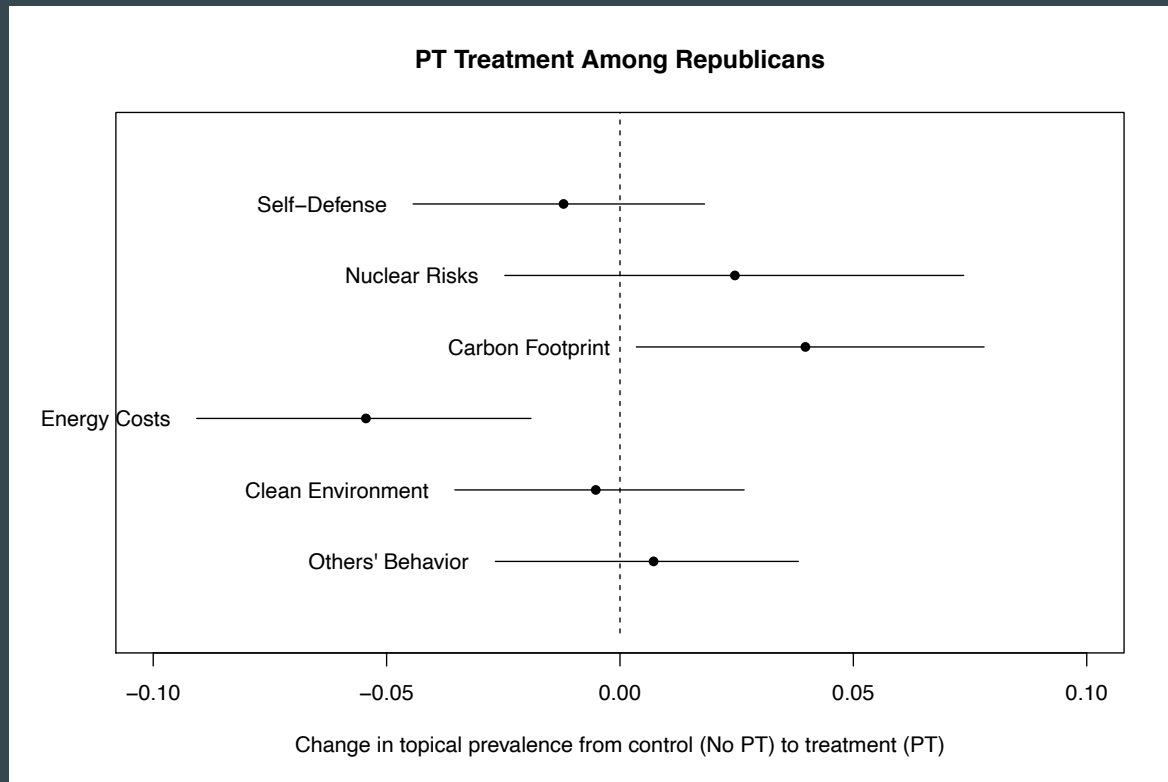
# Results: Heterogeneous Effects by Partisanship



# Results: Topic Modeling Among Independents



# Results: Topic Modeling Among Republicans



# Conclusion: The “Swing Empathizers”

Cross-national cognitive empathy increases support for international cooperation

- Modest effect reflects challenge of perspective taking?

Partisanship powerfully conditions this effect

- Concentrated among weak partisans
- Empathy moderates rather than exacerbates polarization

Is the glass half-empty or half-full?

- Perspective taking cues don't move the needle for many
- But they might affect the median voter

Questions?

Thank you!

# Appendix: Balance Tables

Table A1: Covariate Balance

<i>Waves 1 - 3</i>			
Variable	Control Mean	PT Mean	p-value
Age	40.168	41.268	0.019**
Education (High School)	0.228	0.251	0.056*
Education (College)	0.659	0.638	0.088*
Education (Post-Grad)	0.113	0.110	0.456
White (Non-Latino)	0.702	0.712	0.229
Black	0.127	0.138	0.224
Latino	0.093	0.084	0.109
Age	0.578	0.590	0.332
Democrat	0.434	0.439	0.362
Independent	0.253	0.250	0.384
Republican	0.313	0.311	0.460
<i>Waves 1 - 2</i>			
Income (less than 50k)	0.110	0.104	0.219
Income (50k-100k)	0.100	0.085	0.252
Income (100k+)	0.025	0.022	0.424
Interventionism good	0.216	0.183	0.099*
Trust Other countries	0.545	0.519	0.181
Perspective-taking index	2.038	2.058	0.445
<i>Wave 3</i>			
Attentiveness	2.580	2.538	0.146

Notes: \*  $p < .1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , and \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . P-values calculated using Randomization Inference (5,000 re-randomizations) and one-tailed tests in accordance with preregistered analysis plan.

# Appendix: Political Attentiveness

Table A8: Political Attention By Party ID

*How often do you pay attention what's going on in government and politics?*

	Never	Sometimes	Half	Most	Always	N
Strong Democrat	1.25 %	8.72 %	11.71 %	43.96 %	34.37 %	803
Democrat	4.05 %	27.85 %	16.46 %	36.20 %	15.44 %	395
Independent	4.72 %	24.93 %	18.06 %	36.12 %	16.17 %	742
Republican	3.82 %	25.59 %	20.88 %	40.59 %	9.12 %	340
Strong Republican	0.63 %	10.32 %	10.63 %	43.33 %	35.08 %	630
N	108	580	449	1201	724	3062

**Note:** Strong partisans are about twice as likely as weak partisans to say that they “Always” pay attention to politics.



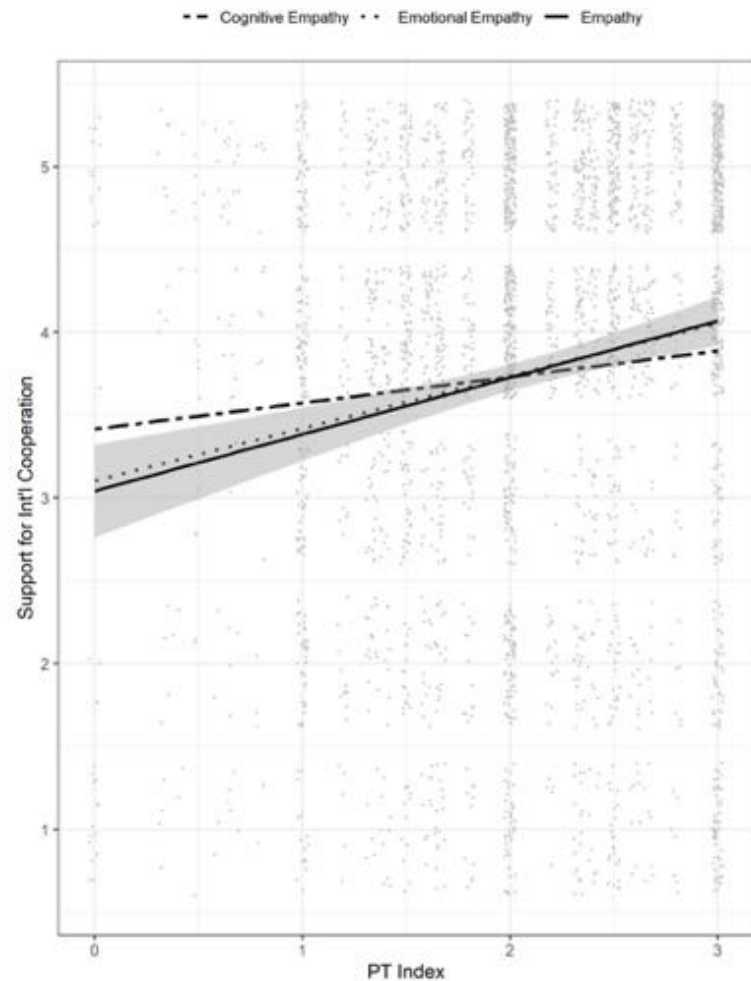
# Appendix: Correlates of Partisanship

Table A9: Correlates of Party ID

	Strong Democrat	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Strong Republican
Support Intl Coop (Among Control Group)	81.40 %	65.61 %	54.78 %	47.73 %	42.28 %
(N)	(371)	(221)	(345)	(176)	(246)
Perspective Taking Index (0-3)	2.22	2.16	2.13	2.00	1.93
(N)	(218)	(270)	(244)	(133)	(98)
Attention to Politics (1-5)	3.01	2.31	2.34	2.26	3.02
(N)	(803)	(395)	(742)	(340)	(630)
Survey Duration	21.54	19.79	21.62	20.83	24.38
(N)	(1021)	(665)	(986)	(473)	(728)

**Note:** In the control group, Democrats are more likely than Independents or Republicans to support international cooperation. Self-reported empathy increases as we move from right to left across the political spectrum. Strong partisans are more attentive to politics than weak partisans. All respondents completed the survey in roughly the same amount of time.

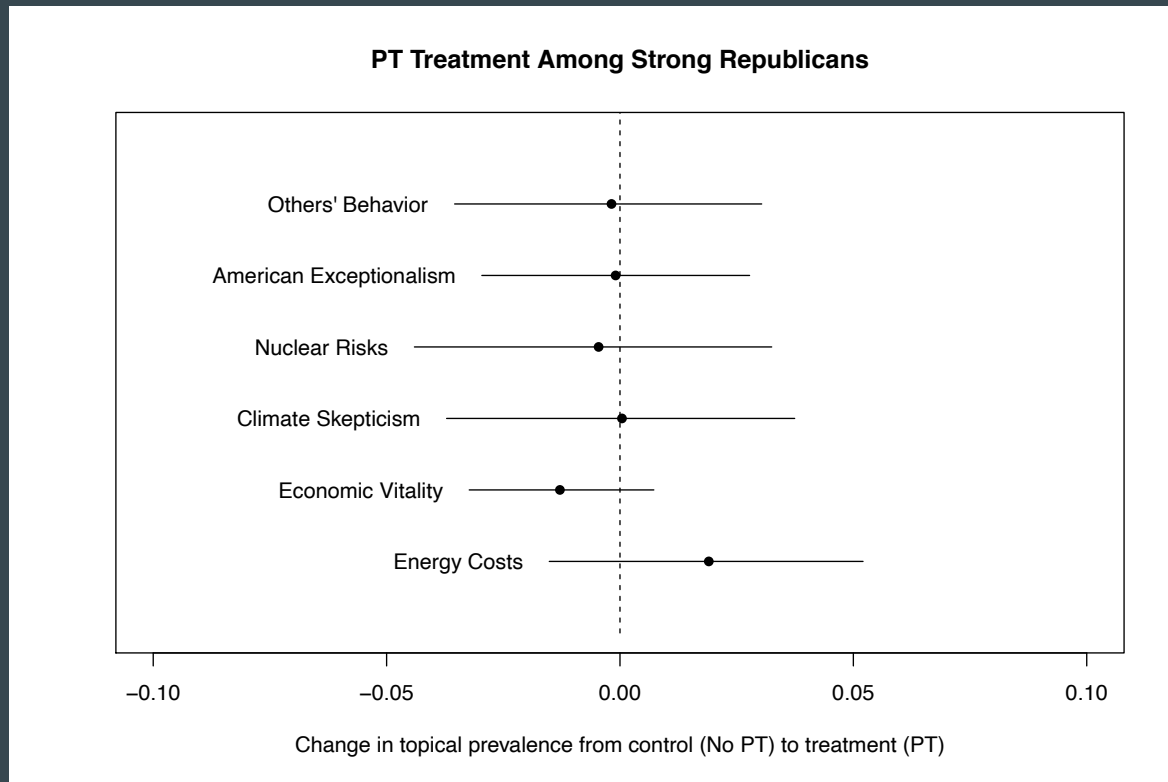
# Appendix: Self-Reported Empathy vs. Int'l Cooperation



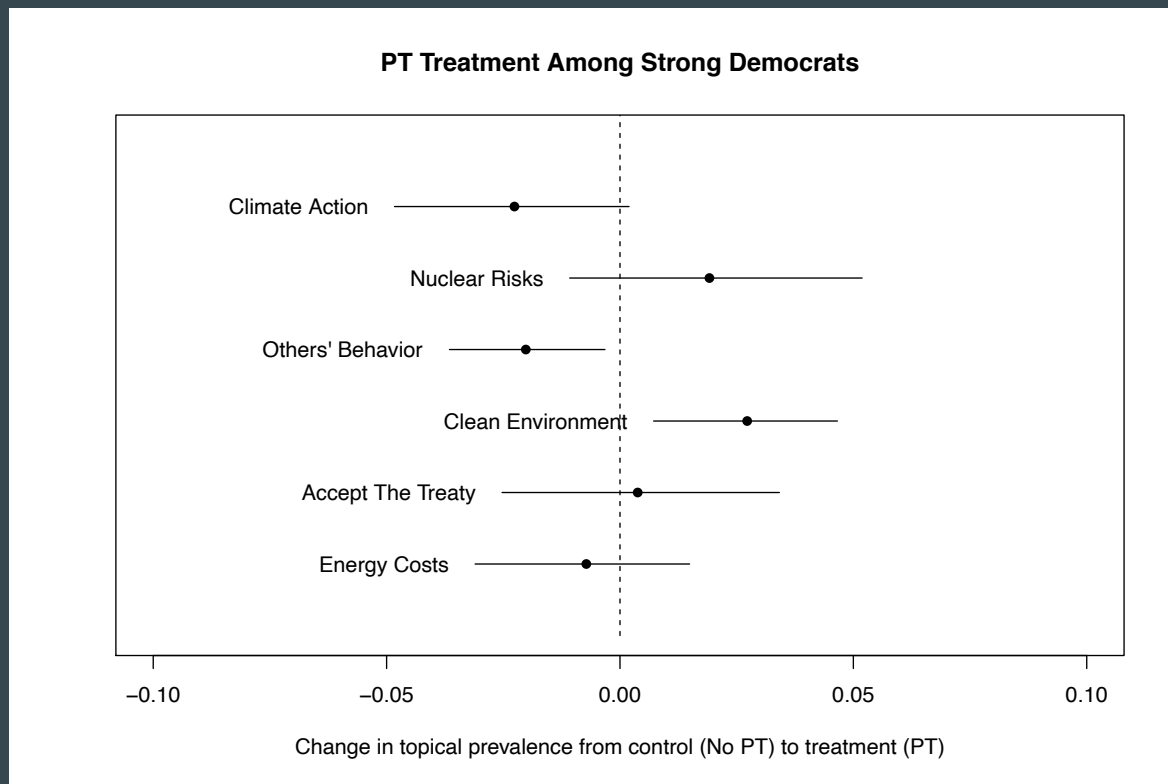
# Appendix: Partisanship Results

	Strong Democrat		Democrat		Independent		Republican		Strong Republican	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
PT Condition	-0.099	-0.107	0.052	0.038	0.209***	0.221***	0.232**	0.230**	0.039	0.059
Standard Error	0.065	0.065	0.083	0.083	0.078	0.078	0.103	0.103	0.097	0.096
p-value	0.935	0.950	0.265	0.321	0.004	0.002	0.013	0.013	0.342	0.271
Control Mean	4.116	4.116	3.735	3.735	3.368	3.368	3.218	3.218	3.109	3.109
Control SD	1.051	1.051	1.112	1.112	1.311	1.311	1.179	1.179	1.368	1.368
DV Range	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]	[1-5]
Controls	No	4	No	4	No	4	No	4	No	4
Adj- $R^2$	0.006	0.028	0.030	0.038	0.017	0.028	0.013	0.013	0.028	0.044
Observations	1,199	1,198	773	773	1,135	1,135	540	540	872	872

# Appendix: Topic Modeling Among Strong Republicans



# Appendix: Topic Modeling Among Strong Democrats



# Appendix: Topic Modeling Among Democrats

