

Misperceptions, Competition, and Support for Democracy: Are Meta-Perception Corrections Effective?

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Abstract

A growing consensus suggests that an underlying cause of anti-democratic attitudes and support for partisan violence is that partisans misperceive the other side. That is, they vastly exaggerate the extent to which members of the other party are obstructionist, anti-democratic, and supportive of violence. When these misperceptions are corrected, citizens' own beliefs moderate. Yet, what happens when misperception corrections compete with contrary information that reinforces the initial misperception? Such competition defines most democratic environments and can come in the form of questioning the validity of the correction or conflicting information. Druckman hypothesizes that such competition undermines the efficacy of corrections. He tests his predictions with a survey experiment in the U.S. The results reveal that correcting misperceptions does not constitute a robust way to counter democratic backsliding among citizens; it is an ironic victim of competitive information environments. He discusses the implications and the need to address pressing questions such as the extent to which democratic stability rests on moral commitments or self-enforcing equilibria reached by instrumental actors.

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The last decade has been a perilous period for American democracy. Multiple international indicators of democracy have downgraded the United States, suggesting backsliding (e.g., Holodny 2017, Agence France-Presse 2021, Freedom House 2021, Kottke 2021, Boese et al. 2022). This development reflects a multi-dimensional array of institutional and behavioral forces at the federal and state levels. One notable factor, however, concerns citizens' explicit or tacit acceptance of anti-democratic behaviors and partisan violence (e.g., Bartels 2020, Graham and Svobik 2020, Bright Line Watch 2021, Kingzette et al. 2021, Kalmoe and Mason 2022). The threat is that citizens normalize democratic transgressions, which affords substantial leeway for elites to take undemocratic actions that serve their own interests. A burgeoning literature suggests that anti-democratic attitudes and support for partisan violence each stem, in part, from dramatically exaggerated perceptions that members of the other party strongly support each (Mernyk et al. 2022, Pasek et al. 2022). Partisans' own support for anti-democratic actions and partisan violence significantly decreases once they learn of the other side's lower levels of actual support (Braley et al. 2022, Mernyk et al. 2022). For instance, Voelkel et al. (2022b) test 25 interventions meant to "strengthen democracy"; they report that half (5/10) of the interventions that significantly reduce anti-democratic attitudes or support for partisan violence involve correcting misperceptions about the other party.¹ In discussing these types of corrections, Finkel et al. (2020: 536) claim that they "hold particular promise for ameliorating political sectarianism."

Such optimism, however, may be premature. Work on corrections uniformly focuses on settings where partisans receive uncontested "accurate" information about the other side's beliefs. Yet, in most political contexts, any claim that one side holds salubrious beliefs will likely

¹ Specifically, this is true for 3 of the 5 successful anti-democratic attitude interventions and 2 of the 5 support for partisan violence interventions.

be countered with a less flattering portrayal. For instance, if a poll suggests the average Republican does not support partisan violence, Democratic candidates may suggest otherwise in their efforts to win over voters. As I discuss in the next section, there are reasons to suspect such competitive information settings undermine the impact of corrections, making them a less promising antidote. I then present an experiment that shows this is unfortunately the case. I conclude with a discussion of the implications for democratic functioning and questions that need addressing in efforts to strengthen democracy.

Anti-Democratic Attitudes and Support for Partisan Violence

A defining characteristic of 21st century American politics is its polarization. Among members of the public, this manifests as high levels of animosity against members of the other party (Iyengar et al. 2012, 2019). This development, along with contemporary events, prompted scholars to explore the extent to which Americans hold anti-democratic attitudes (Bartels 2020, Graham and Svolik 2020) and support partisan violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022, Westwood et al. 2022).²

Anti-democratic attitudes entail support for violations of laws, norms, or ideals (Ahmed 2022) regarding electoral fairness, constitutional practices, or civil liberties (Graham and Svolik 2020). The worry lies in voters privileging their party's victory over democratic practices, which, in turn, vitiates legitimacy and forbearance. Weingast (1997: 262) explains that the "roots of democratic stability [lie] in rational calculation: Citizens aid those who are threatened because

² The relationship between animosity and these other outcomes, though, remains unclear. For example, on anti-democratic attitudes, compare Kingzette et al. (2021) and Orhan (2022) with Broockman et al. (2022) and Voelkel et al. (2022a); also see Harteveld et al. (2022). With respect to concern about these outcomes, the Bright Line Watch (2021) reports "support for co-partisans taking illiberal actions was discouragingly widespread, indicating once again that the normative commitments described...are not always upheld in practice" (e.g., Graham and Svolik 2020, Clayton et al. 2021, Braley et al. 2022, Pasek et al. 2022). They also find that while support for partisan violence is not absolutely high, "it is important to note that [this does] not mean the risk of political violence is minimal."

the potential victims will later fail to come to their aid if they fail to come to the victims' aid.” Put another way, elites maintain democracy because they otherwise anticipate losing citizen support, and citizens value democracy because they fear that failure to do so makes them vulnerable to oppression by other citizens (also see Helmke et al. 2022).³ Maintaining democracy requires that citizens punish elites, even co-partisan elites, who transgress key democratic norms. Citizens do this because they anticipate that those on the other side will as well. Thus, if partisans come to anticipate those from the other side will not hold their leaders accountable, then they will stop doing so too – for the system to be self-reinforcing, everyone needs to believe the other side will check its leaders. If, instead, Republicans think that Democrats will allow Democratic leaders to flaunt democratic norms and act in an imperious manner, then Republicans have little incentive to restrain their own elected officials (and, of course, the same is true in reverse). After all, it is better to have an authoritarian with whom you agree than one with whom you disagree.⁴

Partisan violence – where partisans endorse physically threatening or harming opponents (Kalmoe and Mason 2022) – works similarly. To be clear, actual engaging in partisan violence differs from finding it justifiable, but the latter normalizes the former, making it more likely (Webber et al. 2020, Baum et al. 2022). Mernyk et al. (2022) explain that individuals typically support violence preemptively due to a threat from the other side. Support reflects a form of

³ This is a coordination game: “how one citizen group reacts to a [sovereign] transgression depends on how it anticipates that the other group will react. If the first group anticipates that the other group will challenge, then it is best off challenging. But if it believes the other will acquiesce, then it is better off acquiescing” (Weingast 1997, 248).

⁴ Writing at the end of the 20th century, Weingast (1997: 254) states, “The U.S. Constitution has proved binding in practice partly because citizens are willing to defend it by reacting against proposed violations. Anticipating that reaction, political leaders rarely attempt violations. Citizens’ reaction implies that U.S. constitutional restrictions on elected officials are self-enforcing” (254). This depiction just 25 years ago reveals how quickly perspectives change.

protection or retribution; an equilibrium of no support for violence requires that citizens anticipate that the other side will not act violently first (also see Diamond et al. 1987: 9).

The insight from this theoretical work is that anti-democratic attitudes and support for partisan violence partially depend on anticipatory beliefs about what actions those from the other party will take. This aligns with research on meta-perceptions that roughly refer to what one believes the other side believes.⁵ For instance, Republicans consider whether an average Democrat would support significantly reinterpreting the Constitution to block Republican policies, or support violence to advance their political goals. Work on meta-perceptions, consistent with the aforementioned theories, shows that the more extreme one believes the other side to be (e.g., perceiving them to have strong anti-democratic attitudes), the more extreme one becomes (e.g., holding anti-democratic attitudes) (e.g., Lees and Cikara 2020, Moore-Berg et al. 2020, Pasek et al. 2022).

This becomes an acute problem when individuals hold exaggerated misperceptions such that they believe those of the other party endorse deleterious behaviors (i.e., anti-democratic attitudes and support for partisan violence) at much higher levels than they actually do. These individuals consequently move in more extreme directions, inter alia. Basic social identity theory, where people attribute malicious motives to an out-group as a source of group esteem (e.g., Rubin and Hewstone 1998), as well as a media environment that focuses on conflict and extremity (e.g., Levendusky and Malhotra 2016, Mullinix and Robison 2016, Druckman et al. 2022) prompt exaggerated meta-perceptions. For instance, Braley et al. (2022) find that partisans, on average, view members of the other side being “probably” or “definitely” likely to

⁵ I say “roughly” because prior work in the field of psychology often defines “meta-perceptions” more specifically to refer to how individuals think they are perceived by others. Here, I use the term to refer to perceptions of others’ beliefs more generally.

violate more than 5 of 7 democratic norms (e.g., ignoring controversial court rulings by judges from the other party, reducing polling stations in towns that support the other party), even though the actual average is approximately 1.35 of 7 (across parties). Mernyk et al. (2022) report that partisans overestimate the average amount of support for partisan violence by out-partisans by between 245% and 442%. This leads to the exaggerated meta-perception hypothesis: partisans significantly overestimate the extent to which the average member of the other party supports partisan violence and holds anti-democratic attitudes. Moreover, as suggested by the previously discussed (anticipatory) theories, there exist significant relationships between meta-perceptions and attitudes. This is captured by the meta-perception impact hypothesis: partisans' support for partisan violence and their anti-democratic attitudes are correlated with their perceptions of how the average member of the other party would act (in each case).

Both Braley et al. (2022) and Mernyk et al. (2022) show that when respondents learn of the “true” levels of anti-democratic attitudes (e.g., 1.35 of 7 behaviors) and support for violence via prior surveys that were conducted, their own support drops by 25% (for anti-democratic attitudes) and between 44% and 29% (for support for partisan violence). In short, providing accurate information about what opposing partisans believe reduces the correlation between the initial (exaggerated) out-party meta-perceptions and partisans' anti-democratic attitudes and support for partisan violence, and consequently, reduces the levels of those outcomes. This is the correction hypothesis: when offered a correction that provides accurate data about the extent to which the average member of the other party supports partisan violence and holds anti-democratic attitudes, partisans' own support for partisan violence and anti-democratic attitudes significantly decreases relative to having no correction (in each case), all else constant.

Furthermore, the correction reduces or eliminates the relationship between perceptions and attitudes specified by the meta-perception impact hypothesis.

The Braley et al. (2022) and Mernyk et al. (2022) results along with those from studies on related outcomes (e.g., animosity, obstruction) (e.g., Ahler and Sood 2018, Lees and Cikara 2020) have led to extreme enthusiasm for this approach for stabilizing democracy. Indeed, Ruggeri et al. (2021) report successful evidence of a correction in 25 of 26 countries in which they tested it, concluding that such corrections have “the potential to increase social cohesion and wellbeing of populations around the world” (1377).

Political Competition and Meta-perception Corrections

The implicit psychological assumption underlying successful corrections is that partisans hope to maintain accurate beliefs about the other side.⁶ They likely have weak prior beliefs about the specific attitudes of the other side and thus when presented with what appears to be authoritative information via a correction, they believe it. Alas, there are two concerns with this portrait. First, partisans may alternatively have identity-protective motivations but simply lack access to alternative information from the correction (and have low confidence in their own projections). Second, and more importantly, in most political contexts, positive portrayals of a party will be challenged with negative ones by the other side. That is, if a widely discussed poll suggests most members of a party dismiss anti-democratic actions and partisan violence, elites from the other party will be incentivized to question the results to paint the other side in a negative light. In his discussion of experiments that provide only one-sided information, Riker

⁶ The ostensible effectiveness of meta-perceptions corrections is interesting given similar corrections of misinformation have mixed success (Walter and Tukachinsky 2020). A common explanation for the failure of such corrections lies in partisans having strong prior beliefs that they are motivated to protect (Flynn et al. 2017). In the case of anti-democratic attitudes and support for partisan violence, it may be that such perceptions are less ingrained and thus more susceptible to corrections.

(1995: 33) explains that “in none of the experiments, have experimenters allowed subjects to hear debates by elites on appropriate action. In the real world of political and economic life, disputes by elites form a constant background to decision-making.”

Elites can challenge a correction in at least two ways. First, a correction is scientific information meant to sway one’s view. Such evidence can have an effect but also remains vulnerable to politicization that, in this context, occurs when an actor emphasizes the inherent uncertainty of science by casting doubt (Oreskes and Conway 2010). Uncertainty can generate anxiety that leads to a preference for risk aversion and dismissal of evidence (Kahneman et al. 1991). Thus, elites have an incentive to exploit uncertainty to question evidence that does not benefit them. Climate change denialists frequently employ this approach by suggesting “uncertainty” around the evidence (ignoring the reality that all science contains uncertainty) (Pearce et al. 2017). For instance, Bolsen and Druckman (2018) show that a message pointing to uncertainty about a consensus climate change report undermines the effect of exposure to that report on climate change beliefs (relative to when individuals only learn of the report) (also see Bolsen et al. 2014a, Bolsen and Druckman 2015). This applies straightforwardly to a meta-perception correction given such corrections come from surveys that always contain exploitable uncertainty. The uncertainty hypothesis is: when the correction is accompanied with a statement about the inaccuracy and uncertainty of polls (e.g., low reliability and recent poor performance), the correction will no longer have an effect, all else constant. That is, neither the correlation between meta-perceptions and the outcomes nor the overall scores will differ from the no correction control condition, all else constant.

Second, extant correction studies preclude counter-framing. Even if a survey offers evidence that portrays a party as relatively pro-democratic and anti-violence, their opponents can

offer a distinct (emphasis) frame that selectively offers contrary information (Druckman 2001). This type of framing competition has been shown to undermine the impact of any particular frame. For example, Sniderman and Theriault (2004) present individuals with two competing frames presented together (e.g., regarding a hate group rally, an individual receives both a frame about the group's right to free speech and a frame about the public safety threat of a hate group rally). They find that the effect of either argument becomes muted. People instead base their decisions on their initial beliefs, which in our case would be the initial meta-perceptions. Chong and Druckman (2007) further show that if one frame resonates more than the other, it will be even more powerful, pushing individuals in the direction of that perspective (also see Druckman 2010, Nyhan et al. 2022). Hence, if a portrayal of the other party in a negative light coheres with extant beliefs or perceptions, it will be more influential (and this is to be expected, given the aforementioned high levels of animosity towards the other party) (Druckman et al. 2012). The point is that a counter-framing of the opposing party as anti-democratic or supportive of partisan violence will undermine the impact of the correction. The competing frame hypothesis is: when the correction is accompanied with information that offers an opposing perspective, the correction will no longer have an effect, all else constant. That is, neither the correlation between meta-perceptions and the outcomes nor the overall scores will differ from the no correction control condition, all else constant. In short, as soon as one accounts for the reality of political competition inherent to politics, meta-perceptions corrections will no longer be robust.

Experiment

To test these hypotheses, I implemented a survey experiment with a sample of 1,384 partisans (including leaners), drawn from a balanced sample provided by Bovitz's high-quality

Forthright panel.⁷ Data were collected from July 22 to July 29, 2022.⁸ Sample demographics appear in the appendix. Given my focus on evaluating the robustness of corrections, I sought to replicate two prominent correction experiments and then add conditions to test my hypotheses. I build on Mernyk et al.'s (2022) meta-perception correction experiment regarding support for partisan violence and Braley et al.'s (2022) regarding anti-democratic attitudes. My experiment began with respondents answering demographic and political background variables. They then reported their support for partisan violence meta-perceptions, their support for partisan violence, their anti-democratic attitude meta-perceptions, and their anti-democratic attitudes.

For measuring support for partisan violence, I follow Mernyk et al. by asking items taken from Kalmoe and Mason (2022) about when it is acceptable for members of their party to send threatening messages to out-party leaders, when it is acceptable for members of their party to harass members of the other party on the Internet, how justifiable it is for members of their party to use violence to advance their political goals, and how justifiable it is for their party to use violence if the other party wins the next presidential election.⁹ Following Braley et al. (2022), the anti-democratic attitude questions asked about support for banning rallies by those from the other side, ignoring rulings by out-party judges, freezing social media accounts by out-party judges,

⁷ The panel recruits respondents via mail campaigns based on address-based probability sampling, as well as via online ads, and their data have been used extensively in political science (e.g., Druckman et al. 2022). I follow prior work by including leaners but not pure Independents (e.g., Druckman and Levendusky 2019). The sample was quota-matched to represent American adults on age, gender, education, Census region, and race. The sample also was meant to include roughly equal numbers of previously identified (via earlier survey panel screening) Democrats and Republicans (including leaners). The actual sample ended up including about 4% who reported being pure Independents, who are excluded from analyses. It also skewed slightly Democratic in self-reported partisanship. The survey also included attention checks; the final N is based on those who passed the attention checks.

⁸ Pre-registration for the study is available at: https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=GRL_LM9.

⁹ Westwood et al. (2022) challenge Kalmoe and Mason's (2022) measures. I address two of their critiques insofar as I included multiple attention checks and employ more symmetric scales than Kalmoe and Mason. Their other critique suggests using items about more specific acts of violence. The use of general measures is likely less problematic for my purposes given I am not interested in pinpointing precise levels of support across the population and instead focused on the impact of the experimental treatments being tested.

reducing voting stations in towns that support the out-party, passing laws that make it easier for their party to get elected, using violence to block out-party laws, and reinterpreting the Constitution to block out-party policies.¹⁰

The meta-perception items for both constructs asked respondents to report how they believed an average out-partisan would answer, while the attitudinal questions directly asked the questions just reviewed. All questions, a la Mernyk et al. (2022), were answered on 0 to 100 scales, with higher scores indicating more harmful behaviors. Finally, for all four key sets of measures – support for partisan violence meta-perceptions and attitudes and anti-democratic meta-perceptions and attitudes – I created scales that averaged across the items, with respective alphas of .94, .95, and .93 and .89. The question wordings for all items appear in the appendix.

I randomly assigned respondents to one of four experimental conditions. First, the no correction control condition had respondents follow the just-described sequence with the expectation of a significant positive correlation between meta-perceptions and both anti-democratic attitudes and support for partisan violence (i.e., the meta-perception impact hypothesis). Second, the correction treatment condition inserted an intervention after each meta-perception set of questions, but prior to respondents providing their own attitudes. It explained that the same questions had been posed to a nationally representative sample of members of the other party in a prior survey (from June 20-22, 2022). They were provided with a table that reported the meta-perception answers they had just provided along with the actual responses

¹⁰ One of their items asks about partisan violence and thus overlaps with the violence battery (which is why I asked the violence items first to prevent any confusion of being asked a full violence battery after answering a violence item). It seems reasonable to consider violence as an example of an anti-democratic attitude; however, the literature also treats it as a distinct construct, as I do here (e.g., Clayton et al. 2021, Voelkel et al. 2022a,b). My design differs from Braley et al. (2022) in three ways. First, their meta-perception questions asked about most members of the other party, whereas I ask about the average member. Second, they used distinct response scales. Third, they provided correction feedback after each meta-perception question, whereas I ask all the meta-perception questions and then provide all the feedback. My approach is more aligned with Mernyk et al. (2022).

from the other party survey. This highlighted their exaggerated meta-perceptions and thus served as a correction.¹¹ (The overall average meta-perception and out-party survey results, across items, were also provided). The correction survey numbers of out-party support did in fact come from a survey I had implemented from the same vendor as this study (on the dates mentioned).¹² This is the same correction approach used by Mernyk et al. (2022); the exact presentation of the correction is detailed in the appendix question wording section. The correction hypothesis suggests this information will vitiate or sever the ties between meta-perceptions and attitudes and thus lower anti-democratic attitudes and support for partisan violence. Such results would replicate prior work.

The third (uncertainty) treatment condition added to the correction a brief paragraph that pointed out that “interpreting any survey or poll can be tricky and possibly unreliable, as was made clear by the 2020 presidential election polls. Indeed, a report from the American Association for Public Opinion Research states, ‘the average performance of polls in 2020 was among the worst in recent memory.’” A link was also provided to the report. A pilot test showed that this prompt led individuals to believe polls contained higher degrees of uncertainty, compared to those not exposed to such a prompt.

The fourth (competing frame) treatment added to the correction a brief paragraph describing an example of members of the other party supporting anti-democratic actions and what might be construed as violent political actions. For the former, partisans learned of a study by Yale political scientists that offers a different picture, showing that more than 95% of the other party would vote for a candidate that took anti-democratic positions. Respondents were

¹¹ Few respondents did not have exaggerated meta-perceptions.

¹² In the no correction control group, respondents received a similar table that just reported their answers with no reference to an out-party survey.

told that the study’s authors conclude “only a fraction... choose democracy over partisan loyalty.” They were also provided a link to the study by Graham and Svobik (2020).¹³ For partisan violence, Republicans were told of a distinct survey by Morning Consult showing that a vast majority of Democrats supported protests against police after George Floyd’s death, while Democrats learned of an ABC/Ipsos poll showing a majority of Republicans believe January 6th rioters were protecting democracy (both were provided link to the surveys).

In Table 1, I provide a summary of the experimental conditions and hypotheses (other than the exaggerated meta-perceptions hypothesis).¹⁴ The main point is that both the uncertainty and competing frame hypotheses suggest that adding (either) prompt beyond the correction will vitiate or eliminate the relationship between meta-perceptions and attitudes. They also will lead to anti-democratic attitudes and support for partisan violence scores that will not differ from the control.

¹³ An author of the study confirmed this depiction of its results (personal communication with Matthew Graham, July 11, 2022).

¹⁴ As noted, respondents always completed the political violence portion of the survey first and then the anti-democratic attitude portion. To maintain consistency, respondents always were assigned to the same condition for both sections. This approach follows Druckman et al. (2013), recognizing that order effects could occur and thus it is best to keep the order constant (and interpret the results with that in mind) rather than introduce more sources of variation and undermine statistical power (Druckman 2022).

Table 1: Conditions and Hypotheses

Condition	Survey Sequence*	Hypothesis
No Correction Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meta-perceptions • Attitudes 	<p><i>Meta-perception impact hypothesis:</i> partisans' support for partisan violence and their anti-democratic attitudes are correlated with their perceptions of how the average member of the other party would act (in each case).</p>
Correction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meta-perceptions • Correction with actual out-party attitudes from representative survey. • Attitudes 	<p><i>Correction hypothesis:</i> when offered a correction that provides accurate data about the extent to which the average member of the other party supports partisan violence and holds anti-democratic attitudes, partisans' support for partisan violence and anti-democratic attitudes significantly decreases relative to having no correction (in each case), all else constant.</p> <p>The correction reduces or eliminates the relationship between perceptions and attitudes specified by the meta-perception impact hypothesis.</p>
Correction + Uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meta-perceptions • Correction with actual out-party attitudes from representative survey + Statement about the uncertainty of polls • Attitudes 	<p><i>Uncertainty hypothesis:</i> when the correction is accompanied with a statement about the inaccuracy and uncertainty of polls (e.g., low reliability and recent poor performance of polls), the correction will no longer have an effect, all else constant.</p>
Correction + Competing Frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meta-perceptions • Correction with actual out-party attitudes from representative survey + Statement with evidence of out-party anti-democratic attitudes/support for violent behaviors • Attitudes 	<p><i>Competing frame hypothesis:</i> when the correction is accompanied with information that offers an opposing perspective, the correction will no longer have an effect, all else constant.</p>

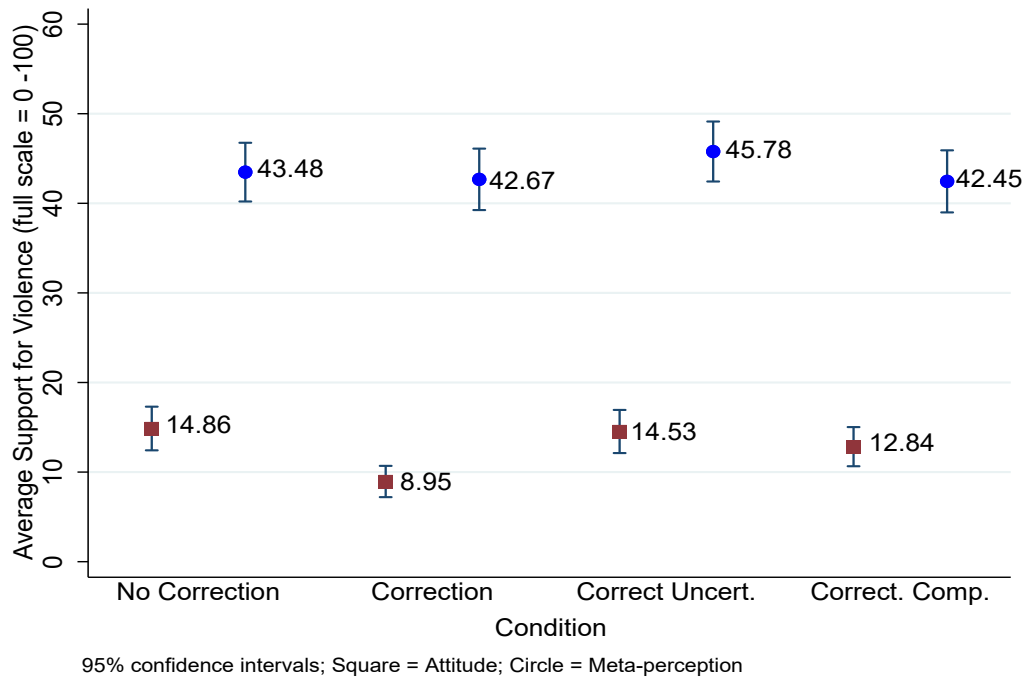
*Respondents always answered all the partisan violence questions first (the meta-perceptions, treatment if applicable, and attitudes) and then the anti-democratic attitude questions second (the meta-perceptions, treatment if applicable, and attitudes).

Results

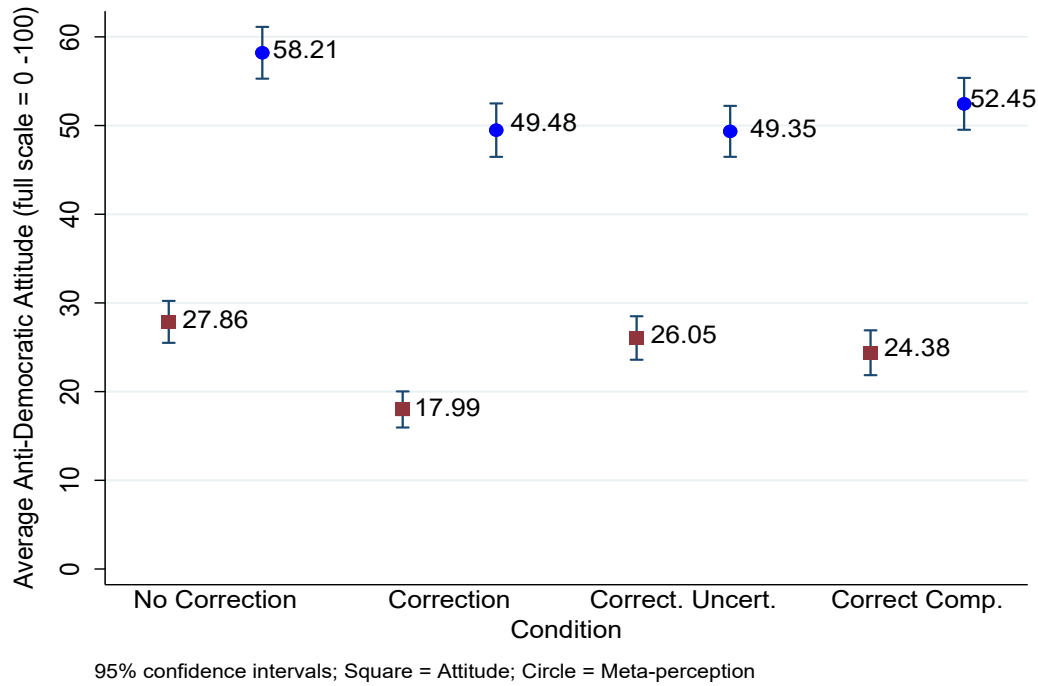
As will become clear, the results for support for partisan violence and anti-democratic attitudes echo one another, and thus I present the results in concert. I begin in Figure 1, which displays the meta-perceptions by condition, merging across parties, for support for partisan violence (panel A) and anti-democratic attitudes (panel B).¹⁵ Consistent with prior work and the exaggerated meta-perceptions hypothesis, I observe dramatic overestimates of the other party across conditions (recall that corrections always occurred after the meta-perception questions). Partisans projected the average out-partisan's support for violence to be roughly 30 percentage points higher than it actually was and anti-democratic attitudes to be approximately 25 to 30 percentage points higher than they actually were (all significantly differ at $p < .01$ for two-tailed tests).¹⁶

Figure 1: Exaggerated Meta-perceptions

Panel A: Support for Partisan Violence Meta-perceptions



Panel B: Anti-Democratic Attitudes Meta-perceptions



I next turn to Figure 2, which displays the mean scores by condition for support for partisan violence (panel A) and anti-democratic attitudes (panel B). The results, a la prior work, strongly support the first part of the correction hypothesis. Panel A shows that the correction significantly reduces support for partisan violence from an average of 14.86 (std. dev. = 22.94; N = 343) in the no correction control condition to 8.95 (16.54; 347) in the correction condition ($p < .01$). We find an analogous pattern of results for anti-democratic attitudes in panel B. The correction significantly reduces such attitudes from 27.86 (22.25; 343) to 17.99 (19.29; 347) ($p < .01$).¹⁷

¹⁵ All graphs truncate the y-axes that always run from 0-100; I do this to highlight the differences on what is an otherwise wide-ranging scale.

¹⁶ The lower projections in the anti-democratic attitudes treatment conditions might reflect a question order effect insofar as when answering those items, respondents had already been exposed to the violence interventions, which may have led them to slightly lower their estimates (even in the uncertainty and competing frame conditions).

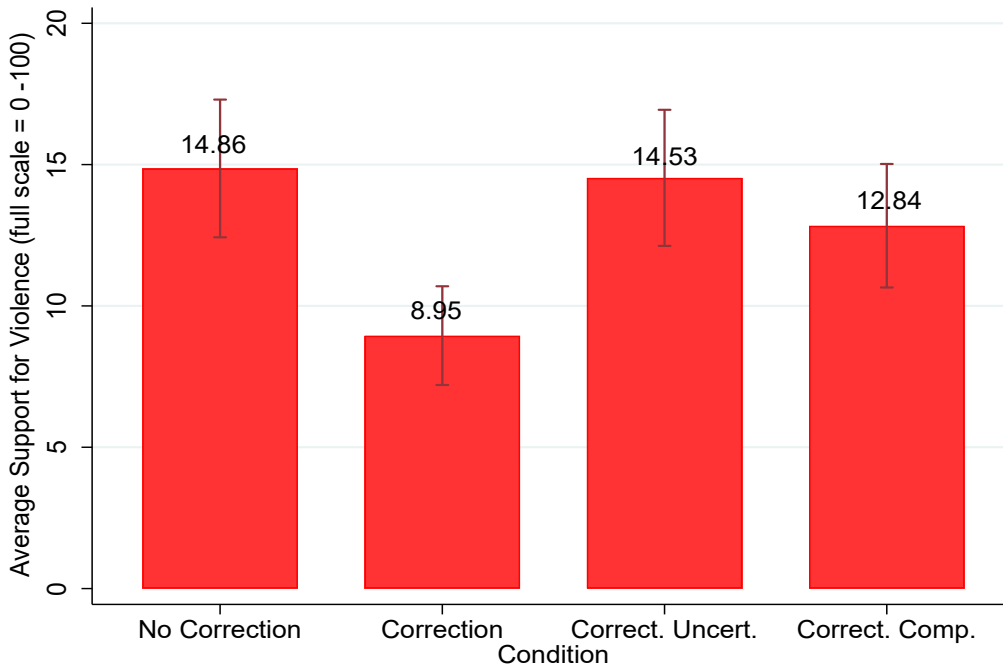
¹⁷ The substantive impact of the correction for support for partisan violence and anti-democratic attitudes registers at 40% and 35%, in the range of prior work (Barley et al. 2022, Mernyk et al. 2022).

Figure 2 also offers clear support for the uncertainty and competing frame hypotheses. For support for partisan violence (panel A), the introduction of uncertainty or competition eliminates the correction effect, leading to respective scores of 14.53 (22.80; 347) and 12.84 (20.69; 347) that no longer significantly differ from the no correction control score of 14.86 ($p = .85$, $p = .22$, respectively).¹⁸ Further, both those scores are significantly greater than the correction condition score of 8.95 ($p < .01$ for both). For anti-democratic attitudes (panel B), uncertainty undermines the correction, leading to a mean of 26.05 (23.23; 347), which does not differ from the no correction control score of 27.86 ($p = .30$) (and is significantly greater than the correction condition; $p < .01$). The competition treatment restores anti-democratic attitudes to 24.38 (24.38; 347), which is just significantly lower than the no correction control ($p = .05$); however, it also is significantly higher than the correction condition ($p < .01$). Thus, it substantially reduces the efficacy of the correction, although it is not technically consistent with the hypothesis of eliminating any correction effect.

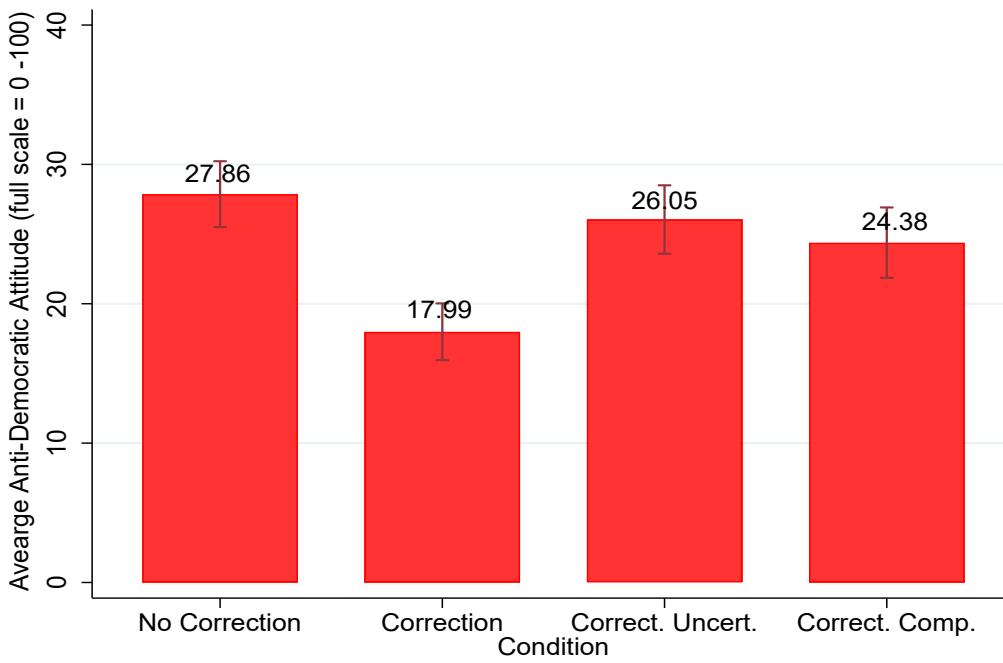
¹⁸ The relatively lower scores for the competing frame conditions stem from Republicans not being as impacted. For the violence condition, this likely reflects the post-George Floyd killing protests not being a particularly strong re-framing of violence. See the appendix for means by party.

Figure 2: Averages Across Conditions

Panel A: Support for Partisan Violence



Panel B: Anti-Democratic Attitudes



The meta-perception impact hypothesis suggests that there should be a significant correlation between meta-perceptions and the outcomes in the no correction control condition. The correction hypothesis posits that the relationship should significantly reduce (or disappear) with the correction, while the uncertainty and competing frame hypotheses state it should be restored in the uncertainty and competition conditions. In Figure 3, I present the relationships between those variables by condition, along with their correlations, for support for partisan violence (panel A) and anti-democratic attitudes (panel B). The figures show significant relationships for both outcomes across conditions and, thus, in no case did the correction or any other treatment eliminate the relationship fully. That said, the results clearly support the hypotheses (i.e., none necessitated complete elimination of the relationship). First, consistent with the meta-perception hypothesis, there are significant relationships in the no correction control conditions for both outcomes ($p < .01$). Second, as predicted by the correction hypothesis, the correlation significantly decreases in the presence of the correction, dropping from .28 to .20 for support for partisan violence and .25 to .13 for anti-democratic attitudes (both $p < .01$). Third, as suggested by the uncertainty and competing frame hypotheses, the correlations do not significantly differ from the no correction control group once alternative information is added.

I offer a more formal test by regressing each outcome variable on meta-perceptions along with interactions by experimental condition. To this, I include a host of other explanatory variables identified in prior work as potentially affecting support for partisan violence and/or anti-democratic attitudes as well as demographic variables. The results appear in Table 2. Most importantly, the results confirm the correlational findings: for both outcomes, meta-perceptions are significant and positive (a la the meta-perception impact hypothesis), the interactions with the

correction condition are significant and negative (i.e., the link to meta-perceptions declines as predicted by the correction hypotheses), and the interactions with the other conditions are not significant, indicating that the introduction of uncertainty or competition undermines the correction effect (consistent with the uncertainty and competing frame hypotheses).¹⁹

Otherwise, I find that Republicans exhibit less support for partisan violence and lower anti-democratic attitudes; this could reflect a conservative predilection for order and structure (Jost 2021). Humanizing the other party (on a scale that measures de-humanization) correlates with less support for both outcomes; however, more positive out-party thermometer ratings increase support. While this latter finding is ostensibly curious – one would expect more favorable feelings towards the other party to lower support for partisan violence and anti-democratic attitudes – it coheres with prior work, including Mernyk et al. (2022) (also see Kalmoe and Mason 2020). One possible explanation is that those with higher scores support the political system and thus do not advocate for extra-systematic actions. Yet, the measure of anti-establishment orientation (Uscinski et al. 2021) is not significant. Thus, it remains a puzzling but seemingly robust relationship.²⁰

Perhaps more interesting is the consistent positive effect of ethnic antagonism, which is Bartels' (2020) measure of the extent to which the respondent believes that those on welfare are better off than those who work, that they feel like a stranger in their own country, that discrimination against Whites is as big of a problem as discrimination against Black people, and that immigrants do not contribute a great deal to American society. This points to the role of

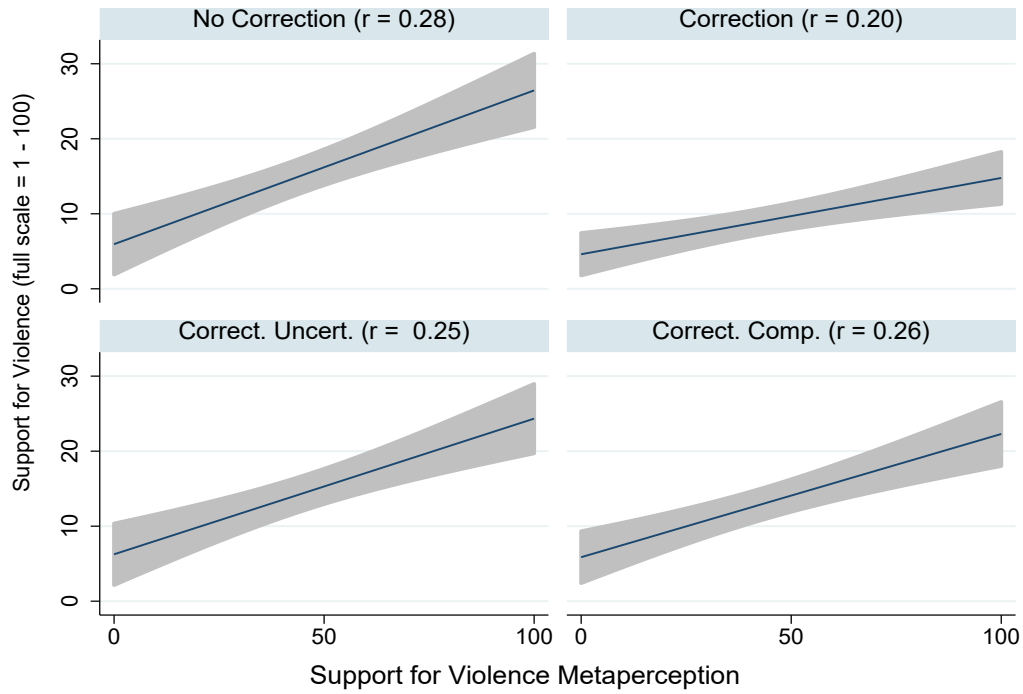
¹⁹ I find a partisan asymmetry in these results. Democrats largely match the overall results, while Republicans do not display a statistically significant interaction between the correction condition and meta-perceptions. This is the case even though the correction significantly reduces the overall scores for Republicans for both outcomes. This suggests other possible mediational processes for Republicans (e.g., perhaps involving norms). See the appendix for the results.

²⁰ The negative relationship between support for partisan violence and policy extremity is similarly puzzling.

racial cleavages in driving these beliefs (also see, e.g., Mason et al. 2021). Those who are more aggressive also are more supportive (Kalmoe and Mason 2022) while high self-monitors (i.e., those who care more about self-presentation) exhibit less support, likely reflecting a social desirability effect (Mernyk et al. 2022). Finally, older people and those with more political knowledge significantly oppose both anti-democratic attitudes and partisan violence, showing that such respondents recognize the potentially dire consequences of these types of actions for the system. Again, the main takeaway is that the correction antidote is not robust to the introduction of competing information.

Figure 3: Relationship Between Meta-perceptions and Attitudes

Panel A: Support for Partisan Violence Slopes



Panel B: Anti-Democratic Attitudes Slopes

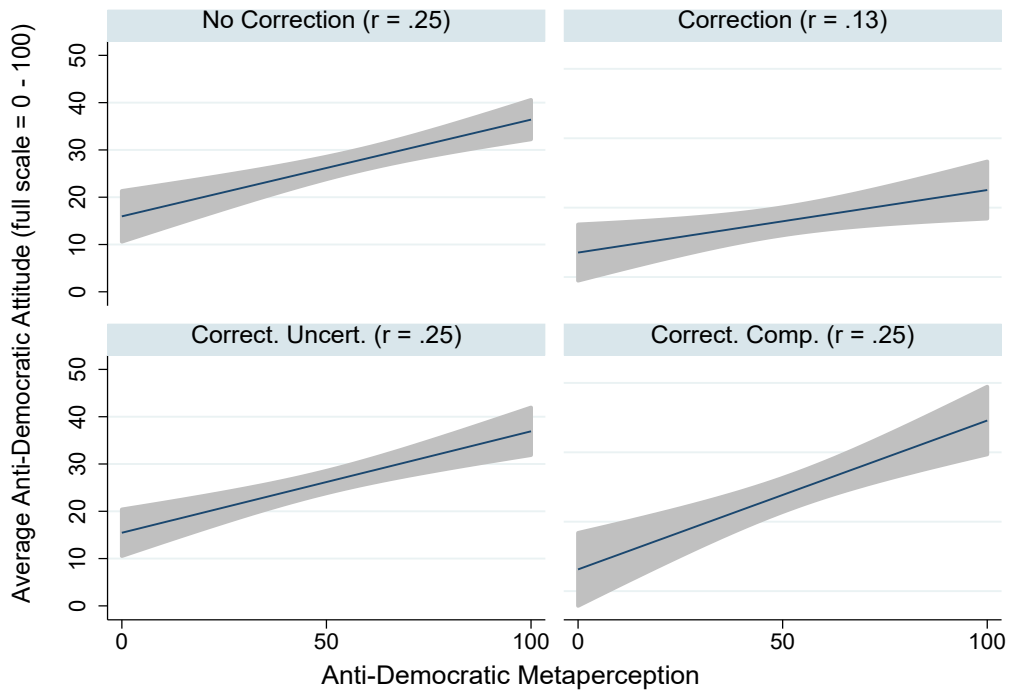


Table 2: Support for Partisan Violence and Anti-Democratic Attitudes Regressions

	Support for Partisan Violence	Anti-Dem. Attitudes
Meta-perception	0.205*** (0.032)	0.197*** (0.039)
Correction	-1.959 (2.315)	-2.257 (3.227)
Uncertainty	0.510 (2.387)	1.414 (3.276)
Competing Frame	0.235 (2.307)	-1.636 (3.320)
Correction X Meta-perc.	-0.091** (0.043)	-0.135** (0.053)
Uncertainty X Meta-perc.	-0.027 (0.044)	-0.048 (0.054)
Comp. Frame X Meta-perc.	-0.053 (0.043)	-0.017 (0.054)
Partisanship (Republican)	-0.650** (0.272)	-0.533* (0.294)
Out-Party Humanization	-0.046*** (0.017)	-0.141*** (0.018)
Out-Party Thermometer	0.127*** (0.023)	0.072*** (0.025)
Self-Monitoring	-0.180*** (0.025)	-0.228*** (0.027)
Aggressiveness	0.098*** (0.021)	0.076*** (0.023)
Authoritarianism	0.007 (0.030)	0.044 (0.032)
Ethnic Antagonism	0.109*** (0.030)	0.083** (0.032)
Anti-establishment	-0.031 (0.028)	0.019 (0.030)
Policy Extremity	-0.068** (0.028)	0.030 (0.030)
Political Knowledge	-10.895*** (2.220)	-10.393*** (2.418)
Political Interest	0.713 (0.503)	0.069 (0.543)
Education	0.452 (0.566)	0.823 (0.615)
Income	0.821* (0.490)	-0.648 (0.531)
Black	0.326 (1.527)	-0.089 (1.647)
Hispanic	2.135	0.227

	(1.487)	(1.607)
Asian-American	1.471	6.188**
	(2.692)	(2.911)
Woman	-2.385**	-1.752
	(1.013)	(1.097)
Age	-1.891***	-0.987**
	(0.453)	(0.489)
Constant	9.584**	17.699***
	(3.831)	(4.371)
Observations	1,382	1,382
R-squared	0.292	0.280

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 for two-tailed tests.

Conclusion

The last decade has seen increased concern about democratic erosion in the United States. The starkest indicators, which presumably underlie the country's downgrading in international democracy ratings, involve elite decisions about rejecting election results, suppressing electoral participation, evading checks and balances, and so on. Yet, as long as basic institutions remain in place, elites can only take such actions when citizens do not hold them accountable for doing so. This accentuates the significance of understanding citizens' opinions on topics such as partisan violence and anti-democratic actions. As articulated in the theoretical discussion, if citizens defect from anti-violence, democratic focal points, democratic erosion can occur. This has seemingly already taken place, and the question is just how far it will go.

Recognition of this reality along with widespread evidence of extreme misperceptions of out-partisans has led to substantial discussion of how to combat a cycle of the normalization and increasing levels of polarization, support for partisan violence, and anti-democratic attitudes (e.g., Drutman 2020, Wilson et al. 2020). Correcting exaggerated meta-perceptions seems like a robust approach, as it has been replicated with many distinct measurement strategies in several contexts (e.g., Ruggeri et al. 2021). Alas, the results presented here show that the introduction of competitive information environments that define democratic polities undermines such

corrections. Given elite incentives to paint the other side in unflattering terms, it certainly does not seem like an approach on which one should depend. Indeed, the last few years of American political rhetoric have been dominated with claims (lies) of electoral fraud perpetrated by Democrats and assertions of widespread support for the January 6th insurrection among Republicans.

If these results prove robust to additional tests, where do they leave scholarship on public support for American democracy? For one, they highlight the conundrum that a defining element of democracy, competition, undermines efforts to protect democracy. This is unfortunate. That said, whether these attitudes are dramatically more elevated than decades ago remains unclear, given the lack of benchmark data. Moreover, it remains unclear whether citizens who express these attitudes would take the corresponding actions per se (Druckman et al. n.d.), and thus the threat may be more about the normalization of such beliefs and carryover to supporting anti-democratic candidates. More importantly, other antidotes exist, and deeper theoretical questions remain unanswered.

In terms of the former, Voelkel et al.'s (2022b) strengthening democracy study reports that one of the most influential interventions involved candidates from different parties making a joint statement supportive of accepting the results of the election and the transition of power. This coheres with other work that reveals the impact of bipartisan statements (e.g., Bolsen et al. 2014b, Harbridge et al. 2014, Westwood 2022). Of course, such an approach relies on elite partisans' moral commitment to democracy, and there may be a tipping point where competition and power trump any such values. The extent to which democratic stability can rest on shared values as opposed to self-enforcing equilibria (the approach taken in this paper) remains unclear. It echoes a long-standing debate about the necessity of both pluralism and checks and balances.

As Schattschneider (1942: 9) states, “If the multiplicity of interests in a large republic makes tyrannical majorities impossible, the principal theoretical prop of the separation of powers has been demolished” (also see, e.g., Dahl 1956, Burns 1963, Kernell 2003). It may be that this moment of American democracy reveals the virtues of duplications if legal checks constrain extreme actions. Yet, other downsides beyond gridlock exist. For instance, formal rules may generate asymmetrical privilege due to partisan sorting; Helmke et al. (2022: 435) point out the intersection of sorting and extant institutions has meant Democrats are more vulnerable to “legally permissible electoral distortions.” Furthermore, strong institutional constraints preclude formalizing norms and ideals that once were taken for granted but now seem vital to stability. This speaks to the main lesson of this paper: studying mass attitudes about democracy requires acute attention to the institutional settings in which those preferences are formed.

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Appendix

Question Wordings

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?

Democrat *Republican* *Independent* *Some other party*

PROGRAMING INSTRUCTION: IF ANSWERED DEMOCRAT OR REPUBLICAN, ASK, PUTTING IN THE APPROPRIATE PARTY:

Would you call yourself a strong [**Democrat / Republican**] or a not very strong [**Democrat / Republican**]?

Strong *Not very strong*

PROGRAMING INSTRUCTION: IF ANSWERED INDEPENDENT OR SOME OTHER PARTY, ASK:

If you had to choose, do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?

Closer to *Closer to* *Neither*
Democratic Party *Republican Party*

In general, how interested are you in politics?

Not at all *Not too* *Somewhat* *Very* *Extremely*
interested *interested* *interested* *interested* *interested*

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Less than *High* *Some* *4 year college* *Advanced*
High school *school graduate* *college* *degree* *degree*

What is your estimate of your family's annual household income (before taxes)?

< \$30,000 *\$30,000 - \$69,999* *\$70,000-\$99,999* *\$100,000-\$200,000* *>\$200,000*

Which of the following do you consider to be your primary racial or ethnic group?

*White African American Asian American Hispanic or Latino Native American Other
or Black*

Which of the following best describes your gender identity?

Man Woman Transgender None of the categories offered

What is your age?

18-24 25-34 35-50 51-65 Over 65

To help us keep track of who is paying attention, please select “Somewhat disagree” in the options below.

Strongly disagree Disagree Somewhat disagree Neither disagree nor agree Somewhat agree Agree Strongly agree

Many people don't know the answers to these questions, so if there are any you don't know, just check “don't know.”

How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a Presidential veto?

Cannot override 1/3 1/2 2/3 3/4 Don't know

Do you happen to know which party currently has the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.?

Democrats Republicans Tie Don't know

Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional?

President Congress Supreme Court Don't know

Who is the current U.S. Vice President?

Nancy Pelosi Kamla Harris Mike Pence Charles Schumer Don't know

Would you say that one of the major parties is more conservative than the other at the national level? If so, which party is more conservative?

The Democratic Party

The Republican Party

Neither

Don't know

When you're with other people, how often do you put on a show to impress or entertain them?

[Slider from 0 to 100 – never (0) to about half of the time (50) to always (100)]

How good or bad of an actor would you be?

[Slider from 0 to 100 – very poor (0) to fair (50) to excellent (100)]

When you're in a group of people, how often are you the center of attention?

[Slider from 0 to 100 – never (0) to about half of the time (50) to always (100)]

For each of the following statements, indicate the extent to which the statement is false or true for you.

There are people who have pushed me so far that we have come to blows.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – very false (0) to neither false nor true (50) to very true (100)]

Given enough provocation, I may hit a person.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – very false (0) to neither false nor true (50) to very true (100)]

I have threatened people I know.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – very false (0) to neither false nor true (50) to very true (100)]

Here are some ideas people have expressed about American society. Please indicate whether you disagree or agree with each statement.

Even though we live in a democracy, a few people will always run things anyway.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

The people who really “run” the country are not known to the voters.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Big events like wars, the recent recession, and the outcomes of elections are controlled by small groups of people who are working in secret against the rest of us.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Much of our lives are being controlled by plots hatched in secret places.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

The opinion of ordinary people is worth more than that of experts and politicians.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

People who have studied for a long time and have many diplomas do not really know what makes the world go round.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Official government accounts of events cannot be trusted.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Politics is a battle between good and evil.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Here are some other ideas people have expressed about American society. Please indicate whether you disagree or agree with each statement.

It's great that many young people today are prepared to defy authority.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

What our country needs most is discipline, with everyone following our leaders in unity.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

God's laws about abortion, pornography, and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

There is nothing wrong with premarital sexual intercourse.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Our society does NOT need tougher government and stricter laws.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

The facts on crime and the recent public disorders show we have to crack down harder on troublemakers, if we are going preserve law and order.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Here are yet other ideas people have expressed about American society. Please indicate whether you disagree or agree with each statement.

These days, people on welfare often have it better than those who work for a living.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Things have changed so much that I often feel like a stranger in my own country.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Discrimination against whites is as big a problem today as discrimination against blacks and other minorities.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Immigrants contribute a great deal to American society and culture.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Please read the following short article.

Officials in a midsize town have been working for four years on a plan to produce an event license to cover all of the major events that occur at the town’s local stadium, which hosts concerts and home sports games. The application would be submitted each January and list all events expected to occur at the stadium over the next 12 months. If an unlisted event emerges during the year, lawmakers could hold a special hearing on the event, or accept it without a hearing and add it into the existing license. To assist with this plan, lawmakers filed legislation that would change state licensing laws so that annual event licenses will expire within one year. “This makes a minor change to current law, which provides that all licenses issued shall expire on December 31 of each year,” a lawmaker said.

What was the topic of the short article you just read about?

<u>Medical</u> <i>funding</i>	<u>Event</u> <i>licensing</i>	<u>Political</u> <i>polarization</i>	<u>City</u> <i>budgeting</i>	<u>Election</u> <i>monitoring policy</i>	<u>Campaign</u> <i>finance reform</i>
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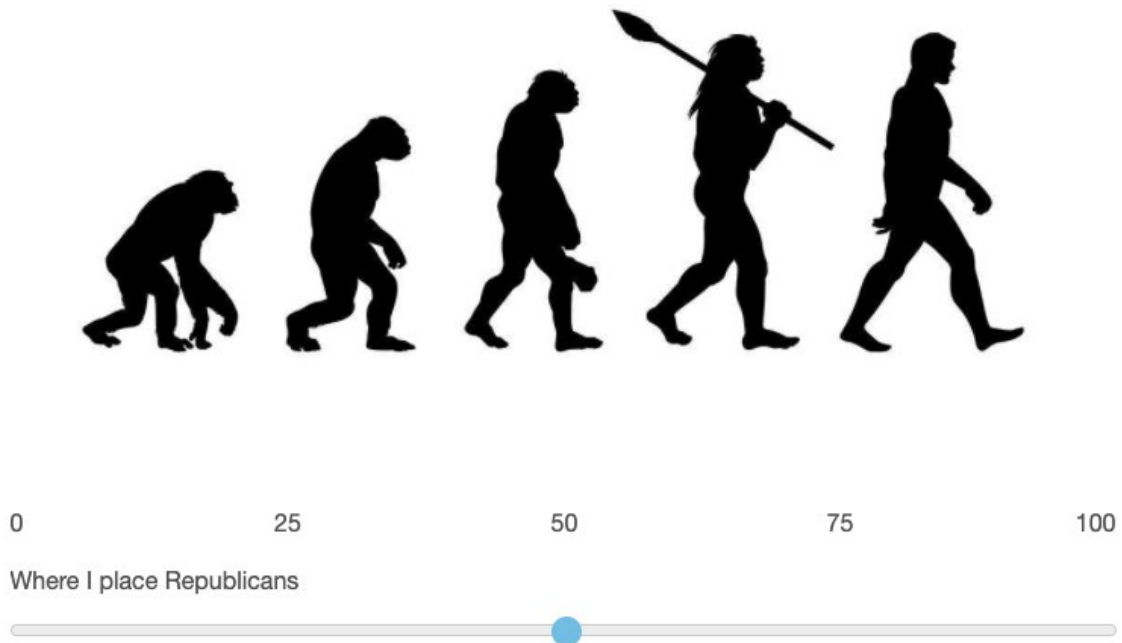
We’d like you to rate how you feel towards **\$OUTPARTY AND \$INPARTY** on a scale of 0 to 100, which we call a “feeling thermometer.” On this feeling thermometer scale, ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you feel unfavorable and cold (with 0 being the most unfavorable/coldest). Ratings between 51 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm (with 100 being the most favorable/warmest). A rating of 50 means you have no feelings one way or the other. How would you rate your feeling toward these groups? **[Use sliders from 0 to 100]**

\$OUTPARTY

\$INPARTY

****Insert appropriate out-party and change “Most” to “Average”**

Where would you place MOST REPUBLICANS on this image?



FOR DEMOCRATS

Please indicate whether the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.

It is important for the government to provide many more services, even if it means an increase in spending.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

The government should spend much less money on defense.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

The government should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of Black people.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.
[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

There should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

FOR REPUBLICANS

Please indicate whether the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.

The government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education, in order to reduce spending.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Government defense spending should be greatly increased.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

The government should not make any special effort to help Black people because they should help themselves.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

By law, abortion should never be permitted.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

Instead of a government insurance plan, medical expenses should be paid by individuals, and through private insurance plans like Blue Cross.

[Slider from 0 to 100 – strongly disagree (0) to neither disagree nor agree (50) to strongly agree (100)]

FOR EVERYONE →

We'd like you to guess how an average [outpartisan] would respond to the following questions. Please give your best guess.

How do you think an average [outpartisan] would respond to the following question?

When, if ever, is it OK for [outpartisans] to send threatening and intimidating messages to [inparty] party leaders?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average [outpartisan's] view.

[Sliding scale from 0 (Never) to 100 (Always)]

How do you think an average [outpartisan] would respond to the following question?

When, if ever, is it OK for an ordinary [outpartisan] in the public to harass an ordinary [inpartisan] on the Internet, in a way that makes the target feel frightened?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average [outpartisan's] view.

[Sliding scale from 0 (Never) to 100 (Always)]

How do you think an average [outpartisan] would respond to the following question?

How much do you feel it is justified for [outpartisans] to use violence in advancing their political goals these days?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average [outpartisan's] view.

[Sliding scale from 0 (Not justified at all) to 100 (Extremely justified)]

How do you think an average [outpartisan] would respond to the following question?

How much do you feel it is justified for [outpartisans] to use violence if the [inparty] party wins the next presidential election?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average [outpartisan's] view.

[Sliding scale from 0 (Not justified at all) to 100 (Extremely justified)]

No Correction Control

On the previous pages, you answered 4 questions about how much you think the average [OUTPARTY] supports various forms of violence on a scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support).

In the table below, we have included **the responses you gave** about how you think an average [OUTPARTY] would respond to these questions.

Question	Your guess
When, if ever, is it OK for [outpartisans] to send threatening and intimidating messages to [inparty] party leaders?	
When, if ever, is it OK for an ordinary [outpartisan] in the public to harass an ordinary [inpartisan] on the Internet, in a way that makes the target feel frightened?	
How much do you feel it is justified for [outpartisans] to use violence in advancing their political goals these days?	
How much do you feel it is justified for [outpartisans] to use violence if the [inparty] party wins the next presidential election?	
Average support for violence	

Your guess for how the average [OUTPARTY] would respond to these 4 items was: XX.

Correction Treatment

On the previous pages, you answered 4 questions about how much you think the average [OUTPARTY] supports various forms of violence on a scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support).

We also asked these same questions to a nationally representative sample of [outpartisan]s. The [outpartisan]s who took the survey had the same distribution of gender, age, region, race, and education as the full [outpartisan] party. The survey was conducted from June 20-22, 2022.

In the table below, we have included **the responses you gave** about how you think an average [OUTPARTY] would respond to these questions alongside the **actual answers** that a representative sample of [outpartisan]s. gave to these questions.

Question	Your guess	Actual average [outpartisan]’s response*
When, if ever, is it OK for [outpartisans] to send threatening and intimidating		XX

messages to [inparty] party leaders?		
When, if ever, is it OK for an ordinary [outpartisan] in the public to harass an ordinary [inpartisan] on the Internet, in a way that makes the target feel frightened?		XX
How much do you feel it is justified for [outpartisans] to use violence in advancing their political goals these days?		XX
How much do you feel it is justified for [outpartisans] to use violence if the [inparty] party wins the next presidential election?		XX
Average support for violence		XX

*The average Democrat’s responses for the respective violence questions are 14.40, 14.82, 12.52, and 13.61, leading to an overall average support of 13.84. The average Republican’s responses for the respective violence questions are 11.95, 12.68, 10.61, and 10.51, leading to an overall average of 11.44.

Your guess for how an average [OUTPARTY] would respond to these 4 items was: XX.

The actual average [outpartisan]’s response to these 4 items was XX.

Uncertainty Treatment = Correction Treatment + →

Recall that the “actual average [outpartisan]’s score comes from a survey we conducted with a nationally representative sample of [outpartisan]s. That said, interpreting any survey or poll can be tricky and possibly unreliable, as was made clear by the 2020 election polls. Indeed, a [report](#) from the American Association for Public Opinion Research states, “the average performance of polls in 2020 was among the worst in recent memory.”

Competing Frame Treatment = Correction Treatment + →

For Republicans → Recall that the “average actual Democrat’s response score” comes from a survey we conducted with a nationally representative sample of Democrats. That said, some may point out that other surveys offer a different picture. For example, while not explicitly about violence, a Morning Consult [poll](#) nonetheless showed that nearly 70% of Democrats express support for the protests against police sparked by the death of George Floyd in June, 2020.

For Democrats → Recall that “average actual Republican’s response score” comes from a survey we conducted with a nationally representative sample of Republicans. That said, some may point out that other surveys offer a different picture. For example, while not explicitly about

violence, an ABC/Ipsos [poll](#) nonetheless showed that more than 50% of Republicans believe the January 6th rioters were “protecting democracy,” nearly a year after the attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Please share **your views** on the following questions.

When, if ever, is it OK for [**inpartisans**] to send threatening and intimidating messages to [**outparty**] party leaders?

Please choose a point on the scale below that best describes your view.

[Sliding scale from 0 (Never) to 100 (Always)]

When, if ever, is it OK for an ordinary [**inpartisan**] in the public to harass an ordinary [**outpartisan**] on the Internet, in a way that makes the target feel frightened?

Please choose a point on the scale below that best describes your view.

[Sliding scale from 0 (Never) to 100 (Always)]

How much do you feel it is justified for [**inpartisans**] to use violence in advancing their political goals these days?

Please choose a point on the scale below that best describes your view.

[Sliding scale from 0 (Not justified at all) to 100 (Extremely justified)]

How much do you feel it is justified for [**inpartisans**] to use violence if the [**outparty**] party wins the next presidential election?

Please choose a point on the scale below that best describes your view.

[Sliding scale from 0 (Not justified at all) to 100 (Extremely justified)]

For Democrats

We’d like you to guess how an average REPUBLICAN would respond to the following questions. Please give your best guess.

Would an average REPUBLICAN support banning FAR-LEFT group rallies in the state capital?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average REPUBLICAN’S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average REPUBLICAN support ignoring controversial court rulings by DEMOCRAT JUDGES?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average REPUBLICAN'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average REPUBLICAN support freezing the social media accounts of DEMOCRAT JOURNALISTS?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average REPUBLICAN'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average REPUBLICAN support reducing the number of voting stations in towns that support DEMOCRATS?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average REPUBLICAN'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average REPUBLICAN support laws that would make it easier for REPUBLICANS (and harder for DEMOCRATS) to get elected?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average REPUBLICAN'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average REPUBLICAN support using violence to block major DEMOCRAT laws?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average REPUBLICAN'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average REPUBLICAN support significantly reinterpreting the Constitution in order to block DEMOCRAT policies?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average REPUBLICAN'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

No Correction Control

On the previous pages, you answered 7 questions about how much you think an average REPUBLICAN supports various actions a scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support).

In the table below, we have included **the responses you gave** about how you think an average REPUBLICAN would respond to these questions.

Question	Your guess
Would an average REPUBLICAN support banning FAR-LEFT group rallies in the state capital?	
Would an average REPUBLICAN support ignoring controversial court rulings by DEMOCRAT JUDGES?	

Would an average REPUBLICAN support freezing the social media accounts of DEMOCRAT JOURNALISTS?	
Would an average REPUBLICAN support reducing the number of voting stations in towns that support DEMOCRATS?	
Would an average REPUBLICAN support laws that would make it easier for REPUBLICANS (and harder for DEMOCRATS) to get elected?	
Would an average REPUBLICAN support using violence to block major DEMOCRAT laws?	
Would an average REPUBLICAN support significantly reinterpreting the Constitution in order to block DEMOCRAT policies?	
Average support	

Your guess for how an average REPUBLICAN would respond to these 7 items was: XX.

Correction Treatment

On the previous pages, you answered 7 questions about how much you think an average REPUBLICAN supports various actions a scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support).

We also **asked these same questions to a nationally representative sample of Republicans**. The Republicans who took the survey had the same distribution of gender, age, region, race, and education as the full Republican party. The survey was conducted from June 20-22, 2022.

In the table below, we have included **the responses you gave** about how you think an average REPUBLICAN would respond to these questions alongside the **actual answers** that a representative sample of Republican's gave to these questions.

Question	Your guess	Actual average Republican's response*
Would an average REPUBLICAN support banning FAR-LEFT group rallies in the state capital?		XX
Would an average REPUBLICAN support ignoring controversial court rulings by DEMOCRAT JUDGES?		XX

Would an average REPUBLICAN support freezing the social media accounts of DEMOCRAT JOURNALISTS?		XX
Would an average REPUBLICAN support reducing the number of voting stations in towns that support DEMOCRATS?		XX
Would an average REPUBLICAN support laws that would make it easier for REPUBLICANS (and harder for DEMOCRATS) to get elected?		XX
Would an average REPUBLICAN support using violence to block major DEMOCRAT laws?		XX
Would an average REPUBLICAN support significantly reinterpreting the Constitution in order to block DEMOCRAT policies?		XX
Average support		XX

*The average Republican’s responses for the respective anti-democratic attitude questions are 28.12, 23.37, 22.15, 18.66, 21.25, 12.79, and 17.40, leading to an overall average of 20.53.

Your guess for how an average REPUBLICAN would respond to these 7 items was: XX.

The actual average REPUBLICAN’S response to these 7 items was XX.

Uncertainty Treatment = Correction Treatment + →

Recall that the “actual average Republican’s score comes from a survey we conducted with a nationally representative sample of Republicans. That said, interpreting any survey or poll can be tricky and possibly unreliable, as was made clear by the 2020 election polls. Indeed, a [report](#) from the American Association for Public Opinion Research states, “the average performance of polls in 2020 was among the worst in recent memory.”

Competing Frame Treatment = Correction Treatment + →

Recall that score comes from a survey we conducted with a nationally representative sample of Republicans. That said, some may point out that other surveys offer a different picture. For example, an experimental [survey](#) by Yale Political Scientists looked at whether Republicans would vote for a Republican candidate they like if that candidate took anti-democratic positions (e.g., to ignore court decisions unfavorable to Republicans, support reducing polling station in

Democratic areas). The survey showed that more than 95% of Republicans would still vote for that candidate. The authors conclude that “only a fraction... choose democracy over partisan loyalty.”

Please share **your views** on the following questions.

Would YOU support banning FAR-RIGHT group rallies in the state capital?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support ignoring controversial court rulings by REPUBLICAN JUDGES?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support freezing the social media accounts of REPUBLICAN JOURNALISTS?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support reducing the number of voting stations in towns that support REPUBLICANS?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support laws that would make it easier for DEMOCRATS (and harder for REPUBLICANS) to get elected?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support using violence to block major REPUBLICAN laws?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support significantly reinterpreting the Constitution in order to block REPUBLICAN policies?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

For Republicans

We'd like you to guess how an average DEMOCRAT would respond to the following questions. Please give your best guess.

Would an average DEMOCRAT support banning FAR-RIGHT group rallies in the state capital?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average DEMOCRAT'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average DEMOCRAT support ignoring controversial court rulings by REPUBLICAN JUDGES?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average DEMOCRAT'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average DEMOCRAT support freezing the social media accounts of REPUBLICAN JOURNALISTS?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average DEMOCRAT'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average DEMOCRAT support reducing the number of voting stations in towns that support REPUBLICANS?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average DEMOCRAT'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average DEMOCRAT support laws that would make it easier for DEMOCRATS (and harder for REPUBLICANS) to get elected?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average DEMOCRAT'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average DEMOCRAT support using violence to block major REPUBLICAN laws?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average DEMOCRAT'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would an average DEMOCRAT support significantly reinterpreting the Constitution in order to block REPUBLICAN policies?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes an average DEMOCRAT'S view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

No Correction Control

On the previous pages, you answered 7 questions about how much you think an average DEMOCRAT supports various actions a scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support).

In the table below, we have included **the responses you gave** about how you think an average DEMOCRAT would respond to these questions.

Question	Your guess
Would an average DEMOCRAT support banning FAR-RIGHT group rallies in the state capital?	
Would an average DEMOCRAT support ignoring controversial court rulings by REPUBLICAN JUDGES?	
Would an average DEMOCRAT support freezing the social media accounts of REPUBLICAN JOURNALISTS?	
Would an average DEMOCRAT support reducing the number of voting stations in towns that support REPUBLICANS?	
Would an average DEMOCRAT support laws that would make it easier for DEMOCRATS (and harder for REPUBLICANS) to get elected?	
Would an average DEMOCRAT support using violence to block major REPUBLICAN laws?	
Would an average DEMOCRAT support significantly reinterpreting the Constitution in order to block REPUBLICAN policies?	
Average support	

Your guess for how an average DEMOCRAT would respond to these 7 items was:

Correction Treatment

On the previous pages, you answered 7 questions about how much you think an average DEMOCRAT supports various actions a scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support).

We also **asked these same questions to a nationally representative sample of Democrats**. The Democrats who took the survey had the same distribution of gender, age, region, race, and education as the full Democratic party. The survey was conducted from June 20-22, 2022.

In the table below, we have included **the responses you gave** about how you think an average DEMOCRAT would respond to these questions alongside the **actual answers** that a representative sample of Republican's gave to these questions.

Question	Your guess	Actual average Democrat's response*
Would an average DEMOCRAT support banning FAR-RIGHT group rallies in the state capital?		XX
Would an average DEMOCRAT support ignoring controversial court rulings by REPUBLICAN JUDGES?		XX
Would an average DEMOCRAT support freezing the social media accounts of REPUBLICAN JOURNALISTS?		XX
Would an average DEMOCRAT support reducing the number of voting stations in towns that support REPUBLICANS?		XX
Would an average DEMOCRAT support laws that would make it easier for DEMOCRATS (and harder for REPUBLICANS) to get elected?		XX
Would an average DEMOCRAT support using violence to block major REPUBLICAN laws?		XX
Would an average DEMOCRAT support significantly reinterpreting the Constitution in order to block REPUBLICAN policies?		XX
Average support		XX

*The average Democrat's responses for the respective anti-democratic attitude questions are 36.91, 24.34, 23.44, 17.23, 26.04, 16.15, and 21.95, leading to an overall average of 23.72.

Your guess for how an average DEMOCRAT would respond to these 7 items was:

The actual average DEMOCRAT'S response to these 7 items was XX.

Uncertainty Treatment = Correction Treatment + →

Recall that the “actual average Democrat’s score comes from a survey we conducted with a nationally representative sample of Democrats. That said, interpreting any survey or poll can be tricky and possibly unreliable, as was made clear by the 2020 election polls. Indeed, a [report](#)

from the American Association for Public Opinion Research states, “the average performance of polls in 2020 was among the worst in recent memory.”

Competing Frame Treatment 3 = Correction Treatment + →

Recall that score comes from a survey we conducted with a nationally representative sample of Democrats. That said, some may point out that other surveys offer a different picture. For example, an experimental [survey](#) by Yale Political Scientists looked at whether Democrats would vote for a Democratic candidate they like if that candidate took anti-democratic positions (e.g., to ignore court decisions unfavorable to Democrats, support reducing polling station in Republican areas). The survey showed that more than 95% of Democrats would still vote for that candidate. The authors conclude that “only a fraction... choose democracy over partisan loyalty.”

Please share **your views** on the following questions.

Would YOU support banning FAR-LEFT group rallies in the state capital?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support ignoring controversial court rulings by DEMOCRAT JUDGES?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support freezing the social media accounts of DEMOCRAT JOURNALISTS?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support reducing the number of voting stations in towns that support DEMOCRATS?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support laws that would make it easier for REPUBLICANS (and harder for DEMOCRATS) to get elected?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support using violence to block major DEMOCRAT laws?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Would YOU support significantly reinterpreting the Constitution in order to block DEMOCRAT policies?

Please choose a point on the scale below that you think best describes your view. [Sliding scale from 0 (do not support) to 100 (fully support)]

Description of Sample

The table below is a demographic portrait of the sample. Note for the race and ethnicity variable, respondents could choose more than one category.

	Demographic Category	Percentage of Sample
<i>Age</i>	18–24 years old	13.01%
	25–34 years old	16.18%
	35–50 years old	29.55%
	51–65 years old	26.30%
	Over 65	14.96%
<i>Gender</i>	Man	48.55%
	Woman	49.64%
	Transgender	1.66%
	Other	0.14%
<i>Race & Ethnicity</i>	White	75.00%
	Black	15.25%
	Asian American	3.54%
	Hispanic	13.08%
	Native American	1.81%
	Other	0.01%
<i>Education</i>	Less than high school degree	2.67%
	High school graduate	22.40%
	Some college	37.72%
	4-year college degree	26.23%
	Advanced degree	10.98%

I compare the sample to 2018 benchmarks from the U.S. Census Bureau, via the American Community Survey (ACS). However, importantly, recall my sample only includes partisans and thus the benchmarks are not strictly applicable.

The relevant ACS numbers are as follows:

Age: 18-24: 12.08%; 25-34: 17.87%; 35-50: 24.54%; 51-65: 24.88%; Over 65: 20.65%

Gender: Male: 49.2%; Female: 50.8%; (they do not ask “transgender” or “other.” The Williams Institute estimates less than 1% of the adult population identifies as transgender (<http://bit.ly/2Nj5DZE>).

Race: White: 72.2%; Black: 12.7%; Asian American: 5.6%; Hispanic: 18.3%; Native American: <1%; Other: 5%

Education: Less than high school: 12%; High school: 27.1%; Some college: 28.9%; 4-year college degree: 19.7%; Advanced Degree: 12.3%

Across categories, the sample matches the ACS benchmarks fairly well. The biggest discrepancies are that the sample includes more older people (and fewer middle-aged people) and fewer without a high school degree (and more with some college or a bachelor’s degree). These are well-known limitations of any survey sampling procedure, not just mine. Most notably, the least-educated are less likely to be online. I also ostensibly have fewer Hispanic

people but that likely reflects that I did not have a distinct question that asked about being Hispanic.

Means By Party

Democrats' Support for Partisan Violence

Condition	Mean (Std. Dev.; N)
No Correction Control	13.97 (22.72; 182)
Correction	8.44 (15.76; 189)
Correction with Uncertainty	14.71 (23.53; 187)
Correction with Competing Frame	13.98 (22.58; 188)

Republicans' Support for Partisan Violence

Condition	Mean (Std. Dev.; N)
No Correction Control	15.87 (23.21; 161)
Correction	9.55 (17.47; 158)
Correction with Uncertainty	14.33 (22.00; 160)
Correction with Competing Frame	11.49 (18.19; 159)

Democrats' Anti-Democratic Attitudes

Condition	Mean (Std. Dev.; N)
No Correction Control	27.80 (21.91; 182)
Correction	19.53 (19.07; 189)
Correction with Uncertainty	25.46 (22.04; 187)
Correction with Competing Frame	26.18 (24.33; 188)

Republicans' Anti-Democratic Attitudes

Condition	Mean (Std. Dev.; N)
No Correction Control	27.93 (22.69; 161)
Correction	16.15 (19.45; 158)
Correction with Uncertainty	26.74 (24.60; 160)
Correction with Competing Frame	22.26 (23.36; 159)

Regressions By Party

Democrats' Support for Partisan Violence and Anti-Democratic Attitudes Regressions

	Support for Partisan Violence	Anti-Dem. Attitudes
Meta-perception	0.201*** (0.046)	0.271*** (0.057)
Correction	-1.627 (3.298)	1.228 (4.473)
Uncertainty	-0.134 (3.348)	5.909 (4.570)
Competing Frame	-0.416 (3.268)	-4.604 (4.619)
Correction X Meta-perc.	-0.127** (0.063)	-0.181** (0.074)
Uncertainty X Meta-perc.	-0.000 (0.063)	-0.143* (0.076)
Comp. Frame X Meta-perc.	-0.007 (0.064)	0.071 (0.077)
Partisanship (Republican)	-1.537 (0.987)	-0.709 (1.036)
Out-Party Humanization	-0.037 (0.024)	-0.099*** (0.025)
Out-Party Thermometer	0.068** (0.034)	0.000 (0.035)
Self-Monitoring	-0.161*** (0.036)	-0.188*** (0.037)
Aggressiveness	0.058* (0.031)	0.034 (0.032)
Authoritarianism	-0.036 (0.046)	0.008 (0.047)
Ethnic Antagonism	0.243*** (0.046)	0.176*** (0.048)
Anti-establishment	-0.013 (0.040)	0.061 (0.042)
Policy Extremity	-0.121*** (0.046)	-0.031 (0.048)
Political Knowledge	-9.040*** (3.112)	-9.102*** (3.258)
Political Interest	1.201* (0.707)	0.547 (0.740)
Education	-0.199 (0.788)	0.011 (0.827)
Income	0.874 (0.666)	-0.075 (0.694)
Black	-0.067 (1.783)	-0.380 (1.856)

Hispanic	2.711 (1.907)	0.822 (2.003)
Asian-American	-0.254 (3.377)	5.885* (3.535)
Woman	-2.364* (1.395)	-1.552 (1.458)
Age	-2.170*** (0.621)	-1.030 (0.649)
Constant	30.142*** (7.200)	34.163*** (7.920)
Observations	745	745
R-squared	0.308	0.287

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 for two-tailed tests.

Republicans' Support for Partisan Violence and Anti-Democratic Attitudes Regressions

	Support for Partisan Violence	Anti-Dem. Attitudes
Meta-perception	0.201*** (0.045)	0.135** (0.055)
Correction	-1.572 (3.246)	-6.381 (4.709)
Uncertainty	0.940 (3.409)	-2.430 (4.736)
Competing Frame	-0.588 (3.281)	1.381 (4.822)
Correction X Meta-perc.	-0.060 (0.059)	-0.072 (0.076)
Uncertainty X Meta-perc.	-0.050 (0.061)	0.043 (0.077)
Comp. Frame X Meta-perc.	-0.065 (0.059)	-0.092 (0.075)
Partisanship (Republican)	-0.015 (0.968)	0.486 (1.087)
Out-Party Humanization	-0.059** (0.024)	-0.175*** (0.027)
Out-Party Thermometer	0.137*** (0.031)	0.109*** (0.035)
Self-Monitoring	-0.165*** (0.036)	-0.242*** (0.040)
Aggressiveness	0.128*** (0.030)	0.094*** (0.033)
Authoritarianism	-0.019 (0.045)	0.079 (0.051)
Ethnic Antagonism	-0.029 (0.046)	0.060 (0.052)
Anti-establishment	-0.036 (0.039)	0.006 (0.044)
Policy Extremity	0.023 (0.043)	0.055 (0.046)
Political Knowledge	-10.844*** (3.275)	-7.702** (3.735)
Political Interest	0.194 (0.749)	-0.746 (0.845)
Education	1.212 (0.820)	1.727* (0.925)
Income	0.714 (0.730)	-1.232 (0.825)
Black	3.081 (3.489)	6.352 (3.922)
Hispanic	1.721	0.280

	(2.464)	(2.762)
Asian-American	3.915	4.938
	(4.579)	(5.155)
Woman	-1.997	-1.855
	(1.501)	(1.694)
Age	-1.572**	-1.328*
	(0.674)	(0.761)
Constant	25.545***	38.133***
	(8.584)	(9.690)
Observations	637	637
R-squared	0.322	0.322

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 for two-tailed tests.