Brexit Identities and British Public Opinion on China

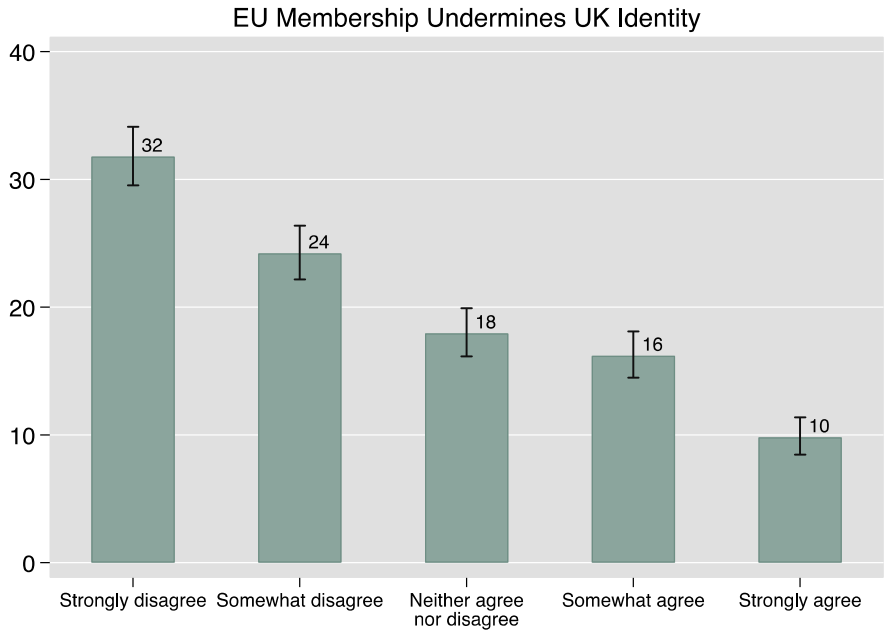
International Affairs

Online Appendix

Appendix 1: Regression Analysis

As discussed in the main text, we used two questions to measure Brexit identities. Figure A1 plots the distribution of the responses to the question on the EU. About 10 per cent of our respondents strongly agreed with the statement that being a member of the EU undermines Britain's distinctive identity. These respondents can be regarded as having the strongest Leave identity. They were followed by 16 per cent who somewhat agreed with this statement. On the other side of the spectrum, 32 percent and 24 per cent of the respondents strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed that EU membership threatens their national identity.

Figure A1: Measuring Brexit identities

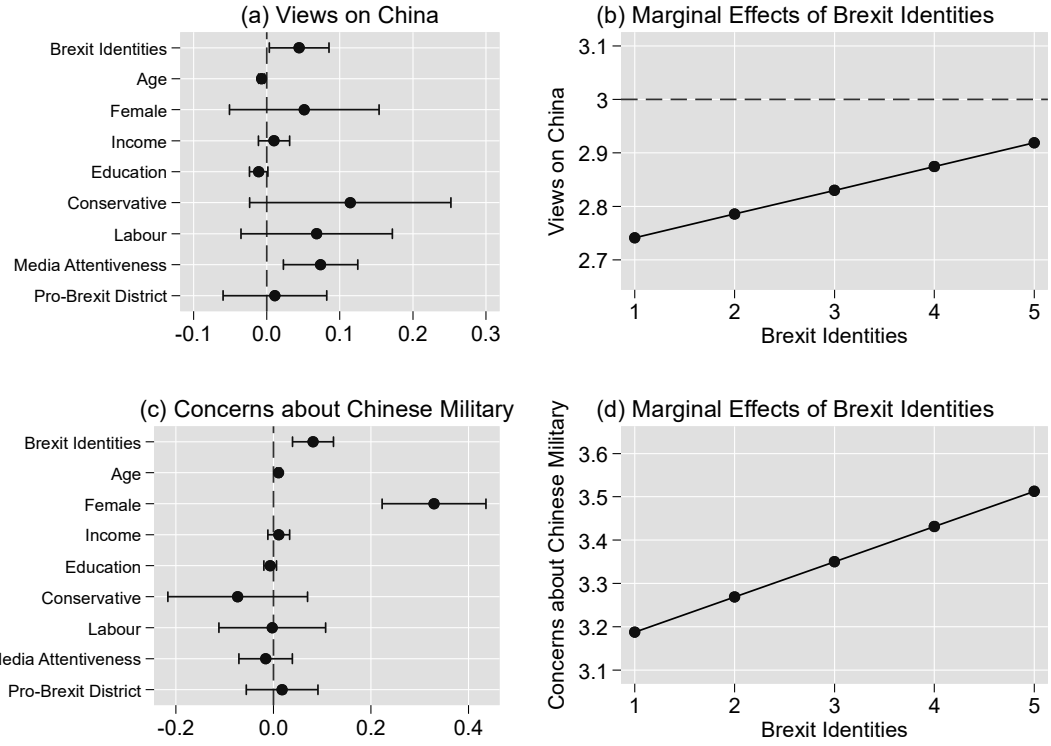


Source: authors' survey.

We then associated this measure of Brexit identities with the four questions in Figure 1 in the paper, using a series of statistical models that control for a host of demographic variables. These variables include age, gender (dummy variable, with male as the baseline), income (11-point scale from the poorest to the richest), education (18-point scale from no formal education to university or higher degrees), party affiliation (Conservative and Labour versus others as the reference category), and media attentiveness (measured by asking respondents how much

attention they pay to news about national politics via TV, radio, printed newspapers, or the Internet). Additionally, we included a measure of how the respondents' locality voted in the Brexit referendum. This variable is constructed by classifying the district of the respondents into three categories: anti-Brexit (districts that had <50 per cent support for Brexit in the referendum), slightly pro-Brexit (>50 per cent but <55 per cent support for Brexit), and strongly pro-Brexit (>55 per cent support for Brexit).

Figure A2: Brexit identity and views on China and the Chinese military



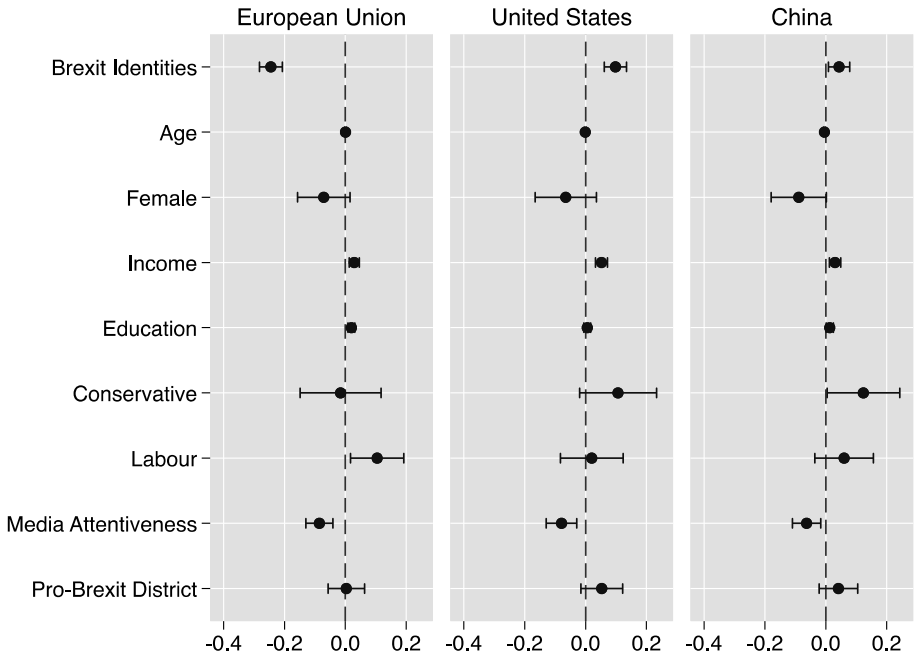
Notes: Brexit identities are measured on a five-point scale, from 1 (Remainer) to 5 (Leaver). Coefficient plots with 95 per cent confidence intervals in (a) and (c) are estimated from OLS regressions with robust standard errors. Constants are omitted for presentation. The marginal plots in (b) and (d) are calculated with other control variables held at their mean. Source: authors' survey.

Figures A2(a) and A2(c) plot the coefficient estimates from OLS regression models, with respondents' views on China and concern about Chinese military power as the dependent variables. Both of these variables are coded such that higher values indicate more favourable views and greater concerns. Thus, for those independent variables with 95 per cent confidence intervals to the right of the dashed vertical line of zero, a one-unit increase in that variable will lead to a corresponding percentage increase in the coefficient estimates on the favourability of China and concern over its military.

Turning to our main variable of interest, we can see that Brexit identities are positive and statistically significant in both models. In other words, those who identify more with the Leave identity tend to view China more favourably but are also more concerned with the rise of Chinese military power. The substantive effects, which are plotted in Figures 2(b) and 2(d), show that for typical Britons (with all other demographic variables held at their mean), moving from being a Remainer to being a Leaver improves their opinion of China from somewhat less favourable to neutral. In the meantime, they are also 12 per cent more likely to view a rising Chinese military as a cause for concern.

Figure A3 plots the results from three OLS regression models predicting the importance that respondents would place on the UK having an FTA with the EU, the US, and China. Here, we can see that Leavers believed FTAs with China and the US should be a higher priority for the UK government, as indicated by the positive and statistically significant coefficient estimates. In contrast, and unsurprisingly, the negative and statistically significant coefficient for the EU FTA suggests that Leavers think a trade agreement with the EU is far less important.

Figure A3: Brexit identities and preference for a free trade agreement



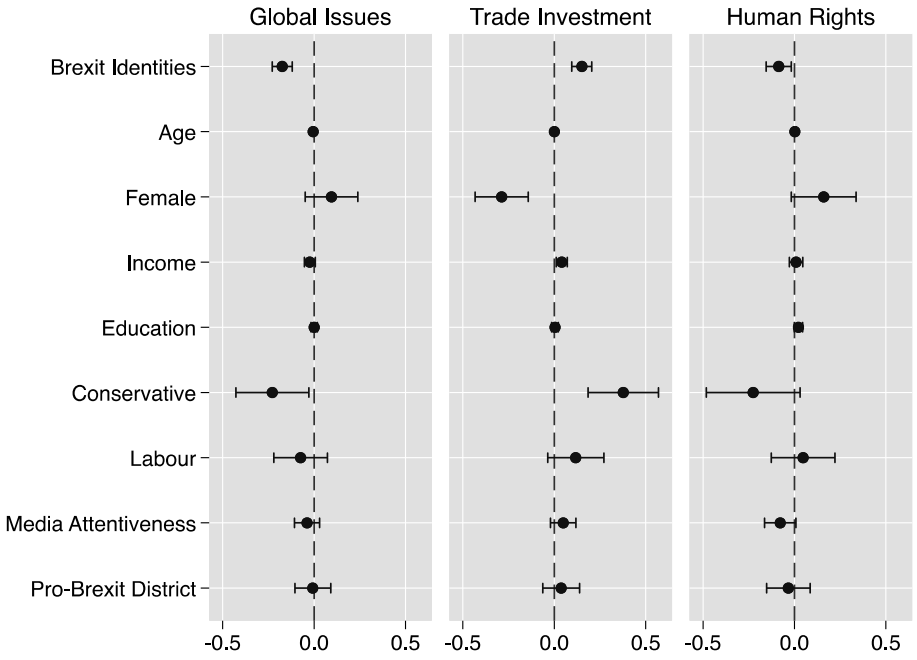
Notes: Brexit identities are measured on a five-point scale, from 1 (Remainer) to 5 (Leaver). Coefficient plots with 95 per cent confidence intervals are estimated from OLS regressions with robust standard errors. Constants are omitted for presentation. Source: authors' survey.

Figure A4 presents results from three probit models, corresponding to the three issues ranked the highest by the respondents: collaboration on global issues; trade and investments; and human rights in China. Once again, we see divergent effects across these three issues, driven by Brexit identities. While respondents with greater attachment to the Leave identity were

predictably less inclined toward addressing global issues and meddling with China's human rights record, they were more in favour of promoting trade and investment with Beijing.

We now briefly turn to the other control variables and examine the statistically significant ones, most of which are consistent with conventional wisdom. First, respondents who were younger and paid more attention to the news had a more favourable view of China (see Figure A2(a)). Second, women and older respondents were more concerned about the rise of China's military power (see Figure A2(c)). Third, respondents with higher incomes and education gave equal weight to the UK having FTAs with the EU, US, and China, while media attentiveness had the opposite effect (see Figure A3). Finally, conservative and low-income respondents were less likely to pick collaboration on global issues but more likely to choose trade and investment as the top priority for UK policy on China (see Figure A4).

Figure A4: Brexit identities and UK foreign policy choices regarding China

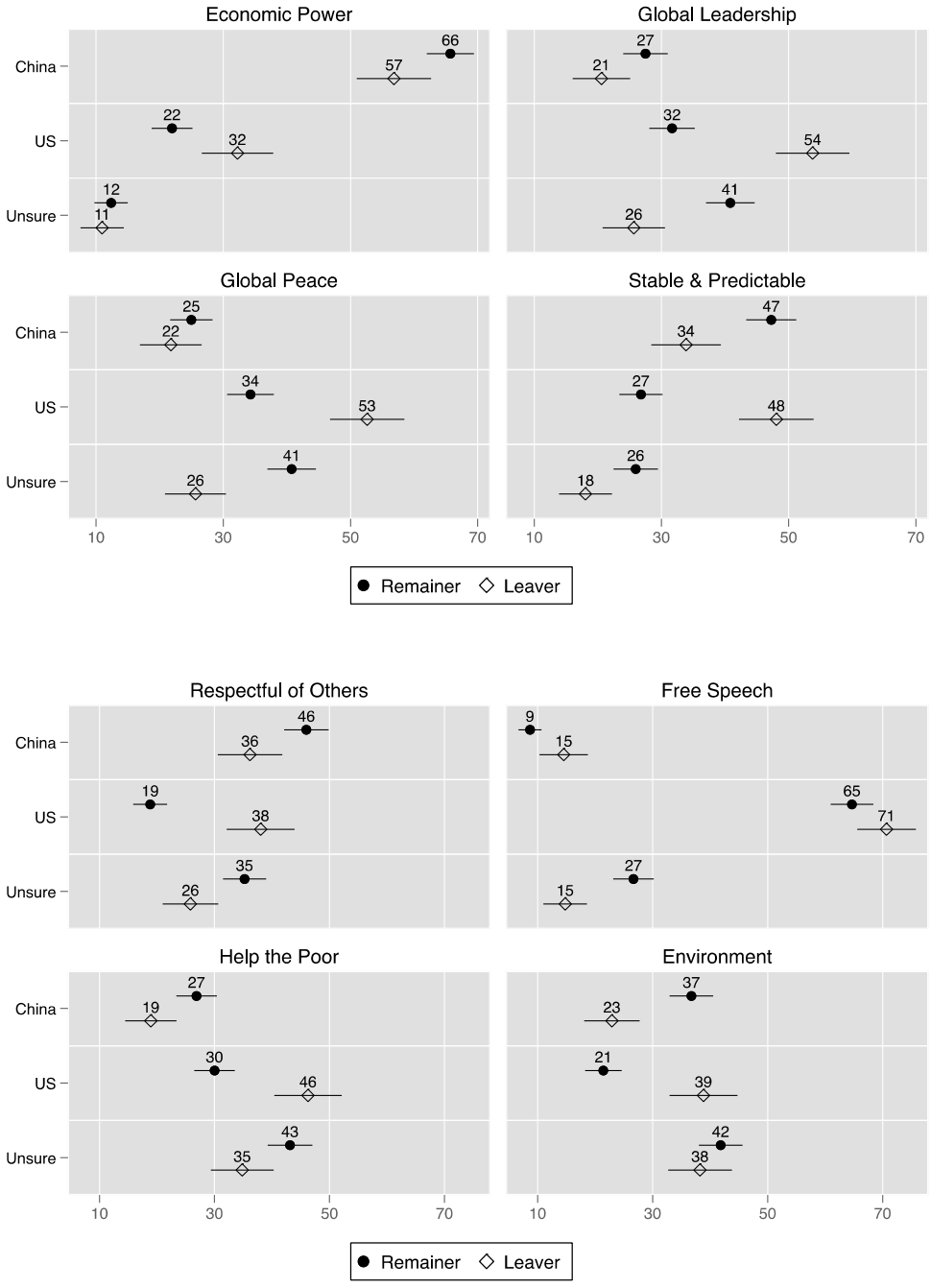


Notes: Brexit identities are measured on a five-point scale, from 1 (Remainer) to 5 (Leaver). Coefficient plots with 95 per cent confidence interval are estimated from probit models with robust standard errors. Constants are omitted for presentation. Source: authors' survey.

In Figure A5, we estimated a series of multinomial logistic regression models corresponding to the eight leadership questions. In each model, we use the 'unsure' response as the baseline category and include all of the previously used control variables. For ease of presentation, we omit the full model estimations and instead report the predicted probability for the diehard Remainers and Leavers, i.e., the two most extreme groups of those respondents who said they strongly disagreed or strongly agreed with the statement that EU membership undermines British national identity. Across all eight categories, British nationalists consistently held more

favourable views on the United States than on China. Except in the case of free speech, the differences are all statistically significant.

Figure A5: Brexit identities and views of China versus the US



Notes: Predicted probabilities (in percentage points) for diehard Remainers and Leavers (the two extreme categories) are calculated using estimates from multinomial regression models with other control variables held at their mean. Source: authors' survey.

Closer inspection reveals a number of more nuanced findings. In the question on which country will be the more responsible global leader, 54 per cent of Leavers believed that the United States will be more responsible. Indeed, the difference in support for the United States between Leavers and Remainers is nearly 22 percentage points. By contrast, Remainers were largely undecided (41 per cent). In general, a large swathe of them either favoured China or were uncertain whether China will be a more responsible global leader.

Moving towards whether the United States or China will do more to maintain global peace, 53 per cent of Leavers felt that the United States will do more to maintain global peace than China, compared to 34 per cent of their counterparts. Likewise, the Remainers continued to remain undecided (41 per cent). A similar pattern emerges regarding public perception of whether the United States or China will be more stable or predictable. These results suggest that in the area of global peace, Leavers strongly believe that the United States will be a better steward of global leadership than China.

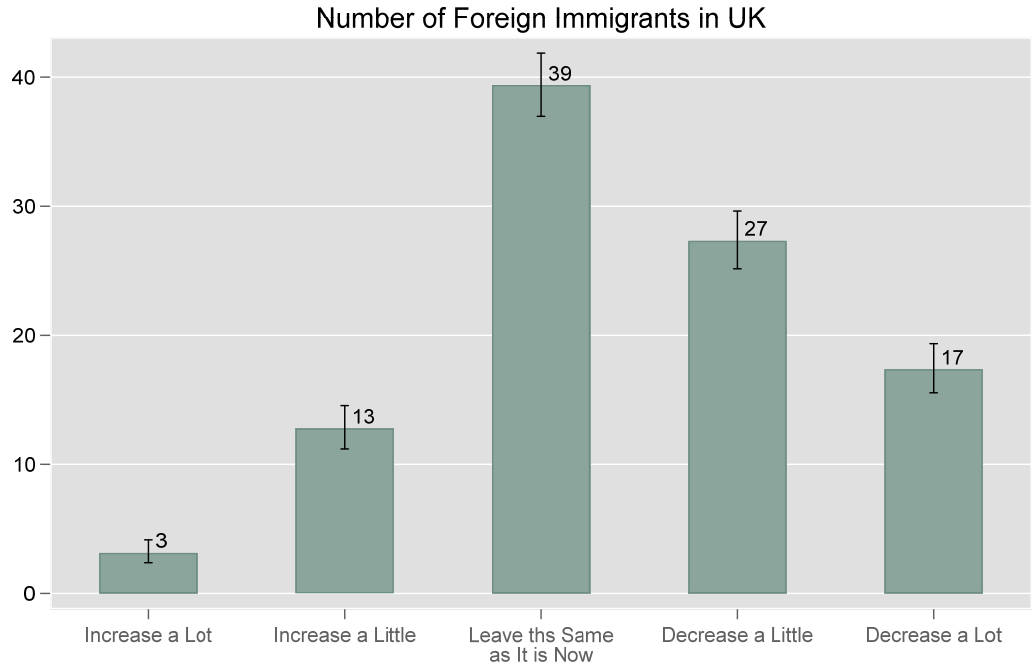
For the other four categories of questions on political and social rights issues, we see similar results. While not as distinctive, Leavers continued to have unfavourable views on how China cares for its own people and addresses environmental challenges. Although large numbers of Remainers (43 per cent) and Leavers (35 per cent) remained uncertain, 46 per cent of Leavers believed that the United States will do more to help the poorest groups in its own country, compared with 19 per cent for China. On environmental issues, Leavers and Remainers were completely split; 39 per cent of the former compared to 21 per cent of the latter felt that the United States will do more to address environmental issues. For China, it is 23 per cent for Leavers versus 37 per cent for Remainers.

For whether China or the US would be more respectful of other people, Leavers consistently preferred the United States. Specifically, 38 per cent of Leavers believed that the US would treat other people better, while 46 per cent of Remainers surprisingly believed that China would do better than the US. On protecting freedom of speech, both groups seemed to be on the same page. The results together suggest that while Remainers unequivocally care more about political protection and human rights, when asked to compare Chinese and American leadership in these categories, Leavers continue to have unfavourable views of China compared to their counterparts in most categories.

Appendix 2: Alternative Measure of Brexit Identities

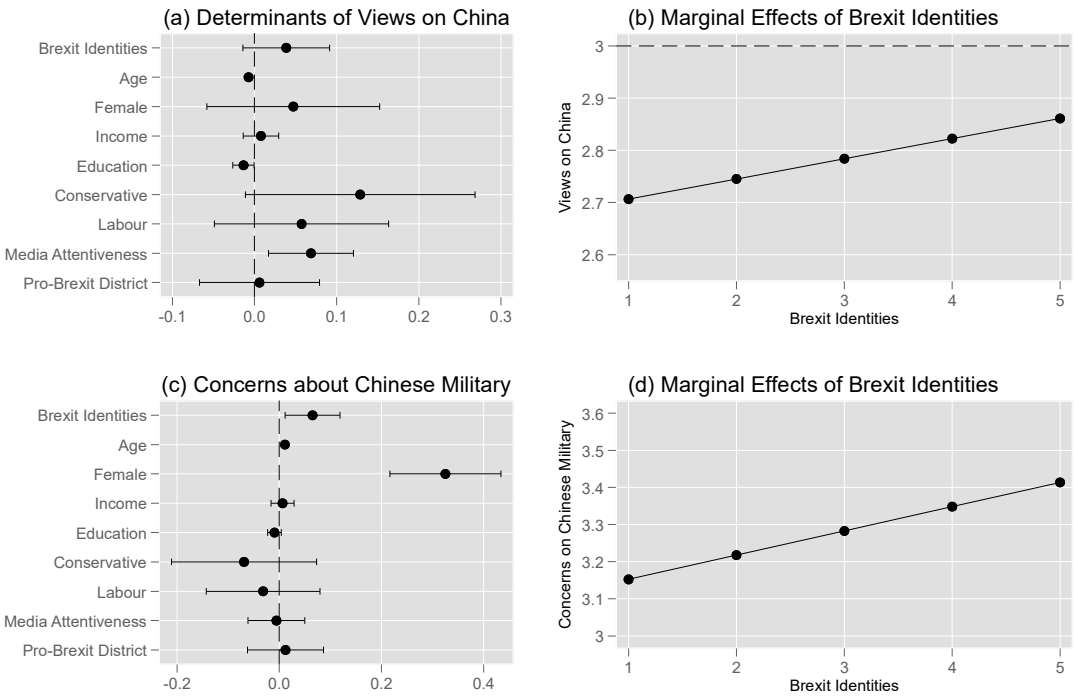
In the paper and Appendix 1 above, we measured Brexit identities using the question asking them about how membership of the European Union undermines Britain's distinctive identity. Here, we conducted all the analyses in the main text using the alternative measure of Brexit identities using the following question: "do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United Kingdom to live should be increased, decreased, or left the same as it is now?" There are five answers to this question: "decrease a lot", "decrease a little", "leave the same as it is now", "increased a little", and "increase a lot". The distribution of the responses is plotted in Figure A6. The correlation coefficient of this measure of Brexit identities and the one used in the main text is 0.506 and the Cronbach's alpha is 0.657, suggesting that the two measures are correlated but also capturing different aspects of the underlying measure. Figures A7, A8, A9, and A10 correspond to Figures A2, A3, A4, and A5 in Appendix 1, respectively. Since these results are qualitatively similar to those reported above, we omit the discussion here.

Figure A6: Distribution of Brexit identities



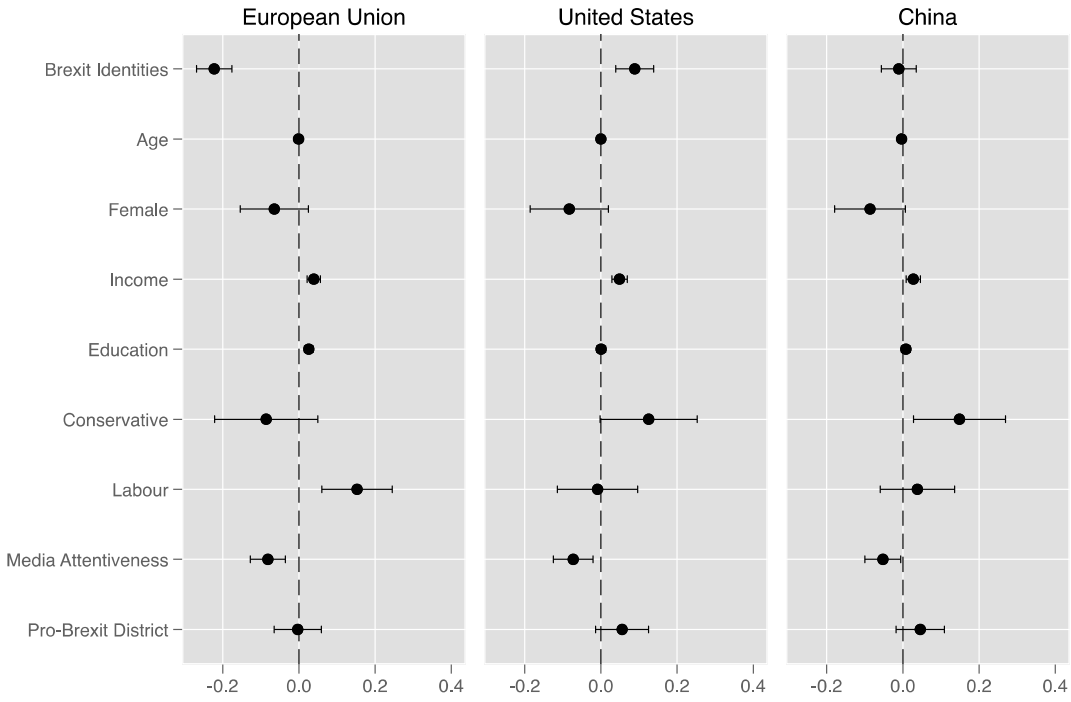
Source: authors' survey.

Figure A7: Brexit identities and views on China and the Chinese military



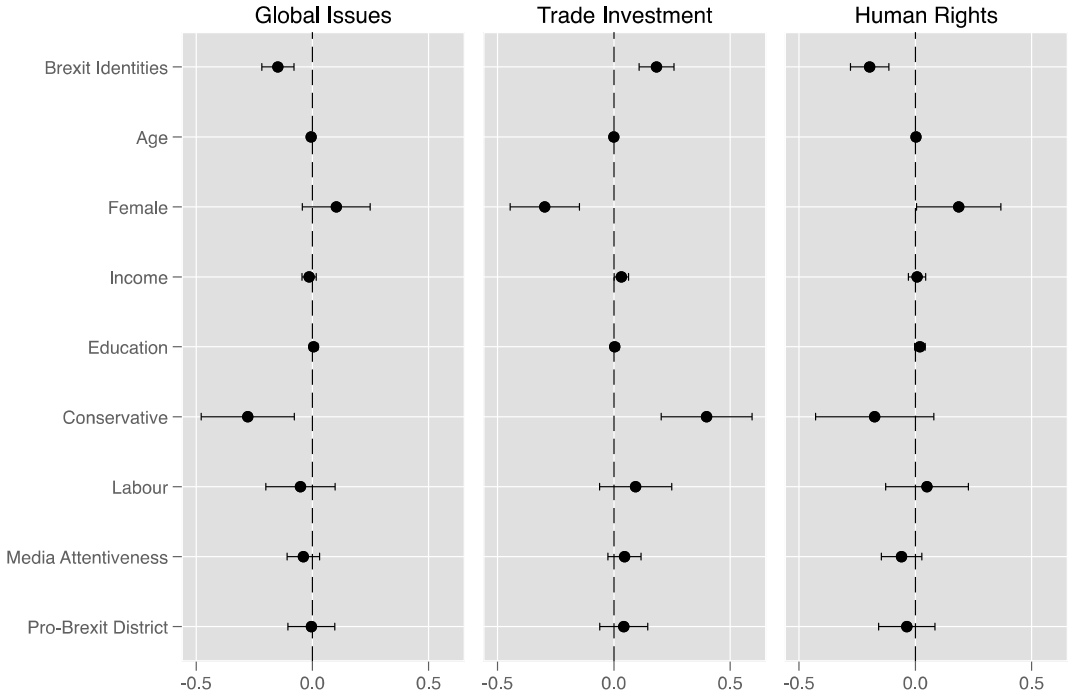
Notes: Brexit identities are measured on a five-point scale, from 1 (Remainer) to 5 (Leaver). Coefficient plots with 95 per cent confidence interval in (a) and (c) are estimated from OLS regressions with robust standard errors. Constants are omitted for presentation. The marginal plots in (b) and (d) are calculated with other control variables held at their mean. Source: authors' survey.

Figure A8: Brexit identities and preference for free trade agreement



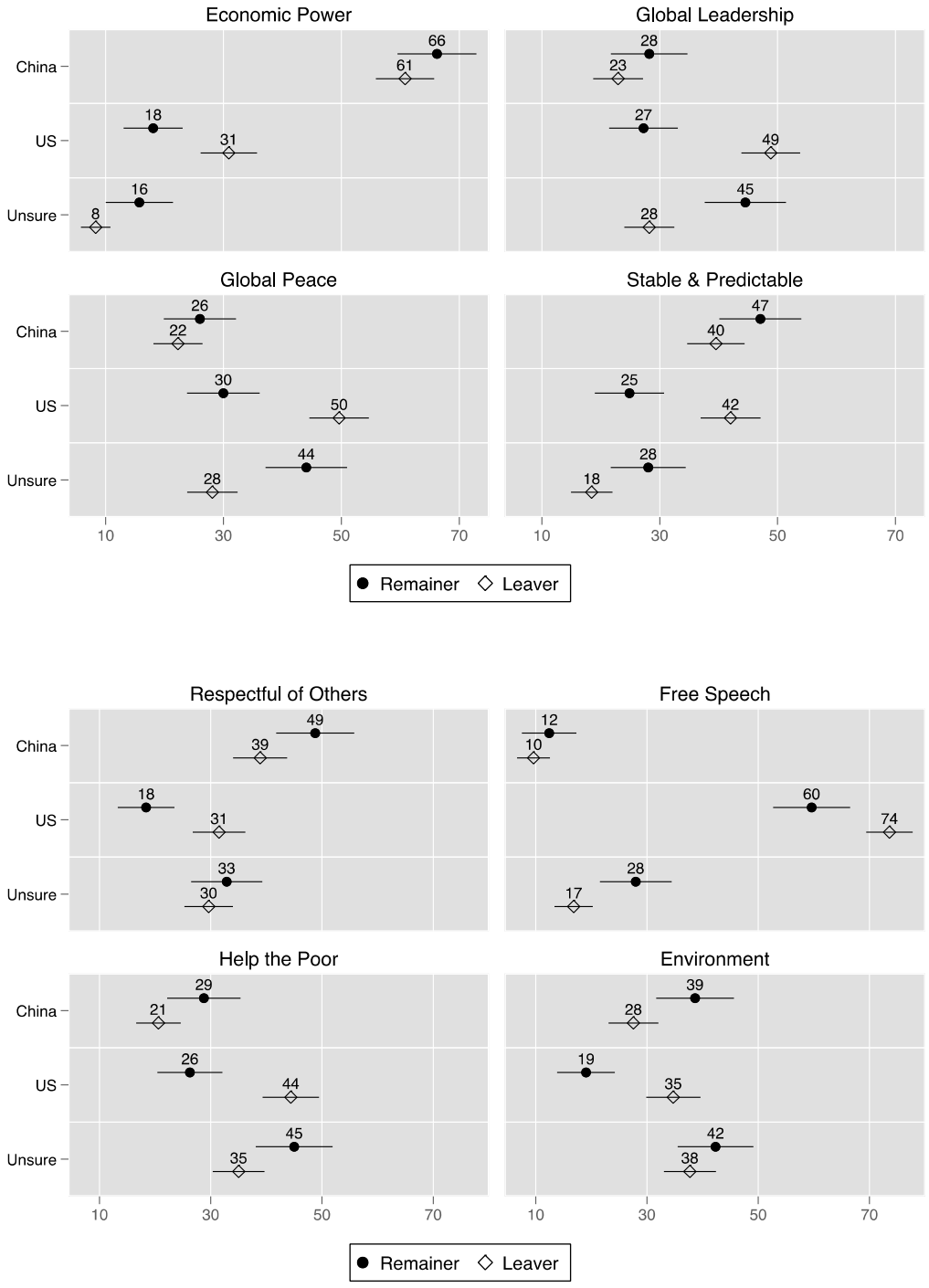
Notes: Brexit identities are measured on a five-point scale, from 1 (Remainer) to 5 (Leaver). Coefficient plots with 95 per cent confidence intervals are estimated from OLS regressions with robust standard errors. Constants are omitted for presentation. Source: authors' survey.

Figure A9: Brexit identities and UK foreign policy choices regarding China



Notes: Brexit identities are measured on a five-point scale, from 1 (Remainer) to 5 (Leaver). Coefficient plots with 95 per cent confidence interval are estimated from probit models with robust standard errors. Constants are omitted for presentation. Source: authors' survey.

Figure A10: Brexit identities and views of China versus US



Notes: Predicted probabilities (in percentage points) for diehard Remainers and Leavers (the two extreme categories) are calculated using estimates from multinomial regression models with other control variables held at their mean. Source: authors' survey.

Appendix 3 Survey Questionnaire

1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Most people I know voted to remain in the European Union					
Being a member of the European Union undermines Britain's distinctive identity					

2. Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United Kingdom to live should be increased, decreased, or left the same as it is now?

- Decreased a lot
- Decreased a little
- Left the same as it is now
- Increased a little
- Increased a lot
- Do not know

3. In the coming decade and in the context of competition between the United States and China, which country do you feel …

	China	United States	Do not know
will be the largest economic power?			
will be the more responsible global leader?			
do more to maintain global peace?			

be more stable and predictable?
be more respectful to other people around the world?
be more committed to freedom of speech and expression?
do more for the poorest elements of their country?
do more to address climate change and environmental issues?

4. Which elements of the relationship with China do you think should be the highest priority for the British government?

- Cooperation on global issues like climate change, epidemics, and counter-terrorism
- Promoting trade and investment including negotiation of some kind of free trade agreement or comprehensive economic partnership
- Addressing cyber security
- Advancing human rights and democratic reforms in China
- Protecting British values and institutions at home from growing Chinese influence
- Addressing intellectual property rights
- Don't know

5. If Britain were to pursue a free trade agreement with the following countries and regional blocs, what is your opinion on the priority of forming trade relations with these countries?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
European Union					
United States					
China					
Japan					
Commonwealth countries					
Latin America					

India

6. In the coming decade, are China's increasing military and defense capabilities a serious concern for Britain?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not
- Don't know

7. Are you ...

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

8. What year were you born?

9. Which area of the UK do you live in?

- North East
- North West
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South East
- South West
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Non UK & Invalid

10. Where were you born?

- England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Republic of Ireland
- Other: Commonwealth member country
- Other: European Union member country
- Other: Rest of the world
- Prefer not to answer

11. What is your marital status?

- Married
- Living as married
- Separated (after being married)
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Never married
- Civil Partnership

12. Do you have any children?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

13a. Are you currently employed or self-employed?

- Yes
- No

13b. [For those that responded "No" for Q16a] Have you ever been employed?

- Yes
- No

14. Are you a member of a labour union?

- Yes
- No

15. What is the highest educational or work-related qualification you have?

- No formal qualifications
- Youth training certificate/skillseekers
- Recognised trade apprenticeship completed
- Clerical and commercial
- City and Guild certificate
- City and Guild certificate -- advanced
- ONC
- CSE grades 2-5
- CSE grade 1, GCE O level, GCSE, School Certificate
- Scottish Ordinary/ Lower Certificate
- GCE A Level or Higher Certificate
- Scottish Higher Certificate
- Nursing qualification (e.g., SEN, SRN, SCM, RGN)
- Teaching qualification (not degree)
- University diploma
- University or CNAA first degree (e.g., BA, B.Sc, B.Ed)

- University or CNAA higher degree (e.g., M.Sc, Ph.D)
- Other technical, professional or higher qualification
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

16. To which of these groups do you consider you belong?
- White British
- Any other white background
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed background
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Any other black background
- Chinese
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to answer

17. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?
- Conservative
- Labour
- Liberal Democrat
- Scottish National Party (SNP)
- Plaid Cymru
- United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)
- Green Party
- British National Party (BNP)
- None
- Prefer not to say

18. What was the range of your household income last year?
- Under £10,000
- Between £10,000 to £20,000
- Between £20,000 to £30,000
- Between £30,000 to £40,000
- Between £40,000 to £50,000
- Between £50,000 to £60,000
- Between £60,000 to £70,000

- Between £70,000 to £80,000
- Between £80,000 to £90,000
- Between £90,000 to £100,000
- Over £100,000
- Prefer not to answer
- Don't know

19. How much attention do you pay to news about national politics on TV, radio, printed newspapers, or the Internet?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all