"The Impacts of Russian Election Interference on Allies’ Confidence in the United States: The Case of Japan"

We examine whether election interference by Russia, and its perceived impact on American democracy, damage foreign public opinion about the U.S. in allied countries. The results of our survey experiment in Japan provide some evidence of weakened faith in the U.S. among foreign citizens. Specifically, information about the erosion of American democracy due to interference, compared to information about the absence of such a consequence, reduces both trust in the U.S. as an ally and belief in U.S. capacity to defend Japan. Comparison with similar experiments in Australia and the United Kingdom suggests how context conditions the effects. Our study sheds light on the connections between the image of the U.S. as a democracy — a core part of its “soft power” — and the foreign public’s attitudes toward U.S. alliances, with both theoretical and practical implications.

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