

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The authoritarian dynamic and Brexit: Understanding the relationship between authoritarianism and wanting to leave the EU

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Abstract

Individual-level authoritarianism is prominent in explanations of preferences for Brexit. We contend that extant accounts have provided an incomplete theoretical and empirical understanding of this relationship. Drawing on the idea of the 'authoritarian dynamic', we show that perceptions of the economic/cultural threat of immigration have stronger effects on the pro-Brexit views of individuals with weak authoritarian predispositions (libertarians). At the same time, perceptions of normative threat, which pertain to concerns like loss of faith in or lack of consensus among established authorities, have a greater impact on the pro-Brexit views of individuals with high authoritarian predispositions (authoritarians). These conditional relationships, which have previously gone unacknowledged, are crucial to understanding which individuals are likely to respond to 'increased threat' with pro-Brexit attitudes. We demonstrate these relationships with pro-Brexit views using British Election Study longitudinal panel data. The results clarify the conditional impact of threats and authoritarian predispositions on attitudes.

KEYWORDS

authoritarianism, Brexit, normative threat, personal threat

1 | INTRODUCTION

On 23rd June 2016 52% of the United Kingdom (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU) in a referendum, seemingly heeding the Leave campaign's message that it was time to 'take back control' of the UK's borders. Over the next three and a half years, before the UK's formal exit on 31 January 2020, 'Brexit' dominated British politics. Preferences to Leave or Remain in the EU became a more important fault line than traditional cleavages such as social class and party identity and appeared only to strengthen over time (Evans & Mellon, 2020; Evans & Schaffner, 2019; McDonnell, 2019; Scotto et al., 2018; Sobolewska

& Ford, 2020).¹ While the leaders of the two major parties, Conservative and Labour, had campaigned to Remain, after the referendum the Conservatives firmly established themselves as the party of Leave, that is, Brexit, while the Labour party wavered, ultimately promising to hold

¹ e.g., see YouGov polls: <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2019/06/18/most-conservative-members-would-see-party-destroye>; <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2019/11/11/four-ten-mainland-britons-dont-care-about-northern>; <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/survey-results/daily/2019/10/08/70079/1> and 'We're not morons: Brexit divisions harden across Britain', *The Guardian*, 26 January 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jan/26/uk-brexit-voters-mansfield-brisol-torbay-leeds-post-referendum>.

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a referendum after a Brexit deal had been secured that would include the option to Remain.

In extant explanations of Brexit preferences individual-level authoritarianism has loomed large, with the argument being that authoritarians are more pro-Brexit (e.g., Norris & Inglehart, 2019). In this article, we contend that these accounts have provided an incomplete theoretical and empirical understanding of the relationship between authoritarianism and Brexit preferences. We argue that both high authoritarians and low authoritarians, or 'libertarians', hold more pro-Brexit views when they perceive high threat—but not the same type of high threat. Libertarians have a stronger response to threats to individual autonomy, while authoritarians have a stronger response to normative threats. We discuss these two types of threat in detail below.

To develop our argument, we draw on the notion of an 'authoritarian dynamic', first outlined by Feldman and Stenner (1997) and developed further by Stenner (2005). We examine the tensions between Stenner and Feldman's version of the authoritarian dynamic and an alternative presented by Hetherington and Weiler (2009; 2018). Rather than being mutually exclusive, we argue that both versions of the dynamic are valid once we acknowledge that they focus on distinct types of threat.

Finally, we outline how our analysis can explain the contradictions in previous findings about Brexit: the nuanced understanding we present offers solutions to puzzles pertaining to Brexit, such as that countries with higher levels of authoritarian values than Britain's are less anti-EU in their attitudes and preferences (Carl et al., 2019), and 'that individuals who support the Labour Party but have ... [characteristics] that would put them in the Leave camp are significantly more likely to vote Remain. Vice versa, supporters of the Conservative Party with Remain-favouring characteristics are more likely to vote Leave' (Alabrese et al., 2019, 138). We return to these puzzles in the Conclusion.

2 | BREXIT, AUTHORITARIANISM, AND THREAT

The 2016 EU referendum in the UK took place in a context in which both major party leaders, Conservative and Labour (all post-war governments have been formed by one of these two parties), supported the Remain campaign, along with all living former prime ministers. At the same time, these 'traditional forms of political authority (be they either the European Union or the British establishment) were presented as failed and even destructive' (Andreouli et al., 2019, 15) by the Leave campaign. A large part of this narrative of failure pertained to immigration—the inability of successive governments to control it and the threat of a new influx of immigrants if Turkey joined the EU. In 2004, the UK was one of three EU states to open its labour market immediately to new members from Central and Eastern Europe. Immigration from these states was much greater than anticipated, such that net migration—the difference between the numbers of people immigrating to versus emigrating from the UK—rose by 50% between 2003 and 2004 to over 200,000 (it had been below 100,000 in 1997 and negative as recently as 1993).

Both major parties began to commit to 'controlling' immigration, and the Conservatives to bringing annual net migration down to the tens of thousands. Yet under a Conservative-led government from 2010 to 2015 net migration remained over 200,000 every year except 2012 and was over 300,000 in 2015 (when their winning manifesto again promised to bring net migration down to the tens of thousands). In 2016, the year of the referendum, net migration was almost 250,000. The public noticed: between 2000 and 2016 the proportion seeing immigration as a major problem increased from 7 to 49% (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018, 148). Net migration has remained above 200,000 every year since 2016. This inability of successive governments to fulfil promises to reduce immigration, along with broader struggles over the terms of Brexit, reinforced narratives of establishment failure. For example, Nigel Farage said in 2019 that, 'I've come to realise that with our existing political system we are never going to get the Brexit that we voted for. These two parties, filled with career politicians, influenced by big money and the politicians, simply won't ever deliver it to us.'

In existing accounts of Brexit, authoritarianism—'[T]he prudent and just balance between group authority and individual autonomy' that is 'marked at one end by preference for uniformity and insistence upon group authority [authoritarian predispositions], and at the other end by preference for difference and insistence upon individual autonomy [libertarian predispositions]' (Stenner, 2005, 17, 15)—is a key explanatory variable.² Authoritarian attachment to in-group national and cultural norms, for example, to nationalism, in a context of increased rates of immigration is seen as having had an unconditional influence on antipathy towards the EU (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Peitz et al., 2018; Scotto et al., 2018).³ This was apparently the case, both during the referendum, for example, 'authoritarian and populist values formed a cleavage dividing Leave from Remain supporters in all parties' (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, 391), and after, for example, 'concerns over national control are predominantly associated with authoritarian predispositions' (Peitz et al., 2018, 1318).

However, these conclusions ignore the possibility of an 'authoritarian dynamic', in which authoritarian predispositions⁴ are activated in contexts of heightened 'normative threat' rather than exerting an unconditional influence, that is, the relationship with Brexit preferences is moderated by perceptions of threat (Feldman, 2003; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005). 'Normative threat' consists of threats to legitimate authority and social consensus, such as failed political leadership or perceptions of growing divisions in society (Stenner, 2005). Differences in expressions of attitudes and preferences between authoritarians and libertarians, such as nationalism and illiberalism, increase when authoritarians perceive high normative threat, while those differences dissipate when authoritarians perceive

² We refer to individuals as 'authoritarians' or 'libertarians' as shorthand based on whether they are further towards one or other end of the continuum

³ Some of these studies demonstrate authoritarian attachment to in-group norms via higher levels of nationalism (e.g., Scotto et al., 2018), while others assume that attachment to in-group norms influences authoritarian response (e.g., Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

⁴ '[the] pre-existing and relatively stable tendency to respond in a particular way to certain objects or events' (Stenner 2005, 14)

normative threat to be low. Libertarian perceptions of normative threat do not increase (and may decrease) their expressions of nationalism and illiberalism because they do not have implications for the individual autonomy they care most about.

In their analysis of British electoral politics, Fieldhouse et al. (2020, 42) write of, 'a competence shock ... when both [major parties] were unable to fulfil their promise to reduce net migration to "the tens of thousands" once they took office'. In the context of Brexit, this would suggest that the narrative of failure on immigration that is the subject to the above quote from Nigel Farage—perceptions that both major parties would fail to address it—and that the major parties were divided, indicating threat to social consensus—would be normatively threatening. This type of threat would be particularly salient to authoritarians, leading to a desire for action to address the problems, restore faith in authority and protect valued in-groups, such as through a 'hard Brexit'. At the same time, increased normative threat either would not affect libertarians or would prompt them to embrace rather than limit difference (Stenner, 2005), leading to no change or a desire for less nationalism and more liberalism, such as by staying in the EU or a 'soft Brexit'. In sum, perceptions of increased normative threat from major party divisions and failures to address the issue of immigration should be associated with increased differences in pro-Brexit preferences between authoritarians and libertarians, according to the account of the authoritarian dynamic offered by Feldman and Stenner.

Hetherington and co-authors (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009) provide an alternative account of the authoritarian dynamic, however. They contend that the influence of authoritarian predispositions under conditions of increased threat is opposite to the influence claimed by Feldman and Stenner. Given perceptions of high threat, both authoritarians and libertarians evince similar levels of nationalism and illiberalism. It is when threat is low that the differences between authoritarians and libertarians manifest themselves, with authoritarians still expressing nationalistic and illiberal preferences while libertarians return to preferences for individual autonomy and difference.⁵

Hetherington et al., however, examine the personal threat of terrorism rather than normative threat. Indeed, even though not tested empirically, Feldman (2013, 37) also argues that because libertarians prize autonomy and independence they 'exhibit more authoritarian attitudes when personally threatened and, more generally, when they perceive a threat to their autonomy'. The differences between normative and personal threat in the Brexit debate are illustrated by then Home Secretary Theresa May and Nigel Farage. Theresa May said of immigration in 2015 that, 'it can hold down wages and push British workers out of jobs' (quoted in Judis, 2016, 136).⁶ Unlike Nigel Farage's emphasis on failures of leadership, May is pointing to threats

from immigration to individual employment and income prospects. Feldman's claim implies that perceptions of threat with implications for individual autonomy, such as the economic and cultural threat of immigration, will be associated with a different authoritarian dynamic from normative threat. By impinging on individual autonomy, such economic/cultural threats from immigration will prompt expressions of more pro-Brexit views among libertarians, such as preferences for national control of immigration and broader beliefs in the benefits of leaving the EU, diminishing differences in their pro-Brexit views with authoritarians.

We argue that rather than being mutually exclusive alternatives (see Claassen & McLaren, 2021), the conflicting relationships between authoritarian predispositions and perceptions of high threat—in which authoritarian expressions of nationalism and illiberalism increase most (Feldman and Stenner) or libertarian expressions of nationalism and illiberalism increase most (Hetherington et al.)—are because authoritarians and libertarians respond to different types of threat. We thus resolve the tension in the authoritarian dynamic by differentiating the dynamics of normative threat and the dynamics of the economic/cultural threat of immigration. Resolving that tension offers a more nuanced account of the relationship between authoritarian predispositions and pro-Brexit views than heretofore.⁷

3 | HYPOTHESES

We examine two principal hypotheses of the relationships between authoritarian predispositions, the economic/cultural threat of immigration, normative threat, and Brexit views. We begin in *H1a* and *b* with the relationships between authoritarian predispositions and perceptions of each type of threat. Previous research on authoritarian perceptions of a dangerous world (e.g., Stenner, 2005) leads us to expect that individuals with stronger authoritarian predispositions will perceive greater economic/cultural threat from immigration, even though it is libertarians who will be more responsive to elevated threat of this type:

H1a: Immigrant threat hypothesis: Higher authoritarians perceive greater economic/cultural threat from immigration than libertarians.

By the same token, while Stenner (2005, 41) argues that authoritarian predispositions are triggered by elevated normative threat she also shows that authoritarians are often less likely to lack faith in authority or view society as divided because they are motivated to support authority and see consensus. We therefore examine:

H1b: Normative threat hypothesis: All else equal, higher authoritarians perceive lower normative threat—captured in the context of Brexit by perceptions that the parties are divided and will fail to reduce immigration—than libertarians.

Our second set of hypotheses turns to the relationship between authoritarian predispositions, the two different types of threat in *H1a*

⁵ This debate focuses on issues such as the conflation of threats to personal autonomy and threats to authority rather than categorizations of threat such as realistic/symbolic or material/cultural, which do not directly map onto the distinctions relevant to authoritarianism, for example, libertarian concerns about autonomy may cut across such distinctions as material/cultural threats.

⁶ Green et al. (2016, 467) refer to people, 'seeing immigrants as menacing local culture and ways of life', suggesting an additional dimension to threats to individual autonomy.

⁷ This is not to say that the two types of threats are uncorrelated, or that economic/cultural threats will have no impact on authoritarians: the argument is about relative effects. The relationship between perceptions of the economic/cultural threat of immigration and normative threat requires exploration but is beyond the scope of this article.

and H1b and pro-Brexit attitudes, beliefs and preferences. We have theorized that the relationship between authoritarian predispositions and threat found by Hetherington and Weiler (2009) will be present when perceptions of the economic/cultural threat from immigration are high: greater economic/cultural threat leads libertarians to identify as pro-Brexit and favour the defence of national norms, bringing their attitudes, beliefs and preferences closer to those of higher authoritarians.⁸ This implies that the relationship between pro-Brexit views and authoritarian predispositions is negatively moderated by perceptions of the economic/cultural threat of immigration. In the alternative relationship between authoritarian predispositions and threat postulated by Feldman and Stenner (1997) and Stenner (2005), authoritarians become more likely to identify as pro-Brexit and favour national control when perceiving higher normative threat. This moderating effect of normative threat increases the differences between the attitudes and preferences of authoritarians and libertarians, implying that the relationship between pro-Brexit views and authoritarian predispositions is positively moderated by perceptions of normative threat.

These accounts of economic/cultural threat effects and normative threat effects—perceptions that the parties are divided and will fail to reduce immigration—lead us to test the following competing hypotheses:

H2a: Economic/cultural threat effects hypothesis: Differences in the pro-Brexit views of libertarians and authoritarians are reduced by perceptions of higher economic/cultural threat of immigration; there are no effects of normative threat.

H2b: Normative threat effects hypothesis: Differences in the pro-Brexit views of libertarians and authoritarians are increased by perceptions of higher normative threat; there are no effects of economic/cultural threat.

H2c: Simultaneous threat effects hypothesis: Differences in the pro-Brexit views of libertarians and authoritarians are simultaneously reduced by perceptions of higher economic/cultural threat of immigration and increased by perceptions of higher normative threat.

H2a and *H2b* are consistent with the notion that the competing accounts of the relationship between authoritarian predispositions and perceptions of threat are mutually exclusive. *H2c* tests our theory that when perceptions of the economic/cultural threat of immigration and perceptions of normative threat are high both authoritarians and libertarians will hold more pro-Brexit views. On the other hand, when one is high and the other is low, whether it is authoritarians or libertarians whose views become more pro-Brexit will depend on whether the high threat is economic/cultural or normative. It is also possible that there are only main effects of authoritarian predispositions, meaning their relationship with pro-Brexit views is not conditional on threat perceptions—a null hypothesis that will be tested.

⁸ This is drawn from Hetherington and Weiler's (2009; 2018) account of the interaction between authoritarian predispositions and threat. While they do not appear to regard immigration as presenting a threat in quite the same way, or perhaps in intensity, as the war on terror or the gay rights agenda in the United States, this seems to ignore 'the historically unprecedented flows of immigrants into Britain from the early 2000s onwards' (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018, 35) that we have described. To be clear, our claim is not that the economic/cultural threat of immigration does not matter at all to authoritarians but that it matters less than it does for libertarians.

4 | DATA

We use British Election Study (BESIP) longitudinal internet panel data (Fieldhouse et al., 2019) to test the hypotheses. The BESIP online panel is administered by YouGov; at the time of writing, there have been 20 waves between February 2014 and June 2020. Each wave comprises approximately 30,000 respondents and is designed to be cross-sectionally representative of the British population.⁹ A random subsample of 1 in 4 respondents answered the Wave 7 (April–May 2016) and 14 (May 2018) questions on child-rearing values that constitute Feldman and Stenner's and Hetherington and Weiler's measure of authoritarian predispositions.¹⁰

The data allow us to examine Brexit attitudes and their associations with authoritarian predispositions and distinct threats while taking advantage of the panel design: the measures of threat and authoritarian predispositions we use in the analysis were almost always gauged in prior waves to the indicators of attitudes and preferences that are our dependent variables. We begin where much of the previous research on Brexit has, April–July 2016 (Waves 7 to 9), in the context of the referendum campaign and aftermath of the 23 June vote. However, relationships found during the referendum campaign may not have endured or could have been swamped by the development of new identities and hardening of Brexit attitudes (Evans & Mellon, 2020; Hobolt et al., 2021). To provide a more complete test we therefore fast-forward more than 3 years to examine the same dependent variables in the last survey in which the BESIP asked all the relevant questions prior to the UK's formal withdrawal from the EU (Wave 17 in November 2019).

To test the hypotheses, and our broader claim that understanding of the relationship between authoritarian predispositions and pro-Brexit preferences is incomplete, we need to predict dependent variables that are the same or similar to previous research. We focus on four related but distinct indicators that fit this criterion: whether or not an individual voted Leave (or would vote Leave if there was another referendum) and the strength of their Leave or Remain identity (e.g., Norris & Inglehart, 2019); the extent to which an individual identifies as European (e.g., Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017; Hobolt, 2016, 1268) and belief in a positive 'Brexit dividend' for sectors such as the economy (e.g., Fisher & Renwick, 2018).¹¹ Details of the operationalization of these and all other variables are provided in Appendix Table A20. We estimate models in which Leave preferences, strength of Leave identity, European identity, and belief in a positive Brexit dividend are a function of authoritarian predispositions, perceptions of economic/cultural threat from immigration and perceptions of normative threat.¹²

⁹ BESIP checks for the consequences of panel attrition provide 'no clear indication of a bias caused by the standard cycle of attrition and replenishment' (Fieldhouse et al., 2019).

¹⁰ Like those authors, we do not use Altemeyer's RWA because it 'make[s] it impossible to distinguish between a direct effects model of threat and the interaction model' (Feldman, 2013, 58), which is at the heart of the hypotheses we test. Feldman has advocated the use of child-rearing values to capture individuals' authoritarian predispositions.

¹¹ These dependent variables were chosen because of their prevalence in existing research. We are agnostic about any causal arrows between them, such as the relationship between favouring Leave or Remain and belief in a positive Brexit dividend.

¹² These dependent variables have not thus far directly been part of the debate about the authoritarian dynamic, but Hetherington and Weiler (2018) have referenced Brexit as another

To ascertain authoritarian predispositions we use Feldman's (2003) four questions about child-rearing values, gauging preferences for obedience, respect for elders, good manners, and being well-behaved over alternatives such as independence. We sum and rescale the child-rearing values from 0 to 1, where 0 represents the four most libertarian responses, 1 the four most authoritarian responses, and scores in between a mixture. While we use the Wave 7 (Cronbach's Alpha = .67) and Wave 14 (Cronbach's Alpha = .65) measures, these questions were also asked in two other waves of the panel. These data show that authoritarian predispositions are stable over time, particularly given measurement error, with correlations of .71–.75 between the four waves and mean scores between 0.40 and 0.45 on the 0 to 1 scale.¹³

In order to test *H1a* and *H2a, b and c*, we use perceptions of the extent to which immigration has been good or bad for economic and cultural life, asked in May–June 2016 of BESIP (Wave 8) and May–June 2019 (Wave 16). Although there is 'heated debate' (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, 369) about the relative impact of perceptions of the economic and cultural impact of immigration on Brexit views, we find that they are correlated at 0.79 in Wave 8 and 0.81 in Wave 16. We therefore combine them into a single index of economic/cultural threat, rescaled from 0 to 1, on which higher scores indicate higher threat.¹⁴

We tested the validity of our claim that this measure taps into the personal threat that Feldman argues is of greater concern to libertarians because it impinges on individual autonomy by regressing the Wave 8 and Wave 16 indexes on the percent change in the foreign-born population in a respondent's local authority from 2005 to 2015, the measure used by Goodwin and Milazzo (2017). If the indexes are associated with personal threat (loss of individual autonomy) from immigration, we would expect higher scores for respondents in areas in which immigration has increased the most. In addition, we would expect a respondent's personal economic circumstances to be related to their perceptions of immigration at least as strongly as to national economic circumstances. We show in Appendix Table A2 that higher scores on the indexes are associated with respondents living in areas that have experienced more change in immigration. In addition, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between the economic/cultural threat indexes and *personal* economic circumstances in both waves that is of equal or greater magnitude to the national economy.¹⁵

Normative threat stems from distance from, or lack of faith in, authorities and perceptions of division or lack of consensus (Stenner, 2005). We focus here on two indicators that capture normative threat while also being related to the subjects of Brexit and immigration. First, we operationalize lack of faith in authorities as perceptions that neither of the prospective parties of government would reduce immigration,

taken from yes-no questions about whether or not a Conservative or Labour government would be successful in reducing immigration if elected, with a score of 1 meaning a respondent answered that neither party would achieve a reduction and 0 meaning that one or both parties would achieve a reduction.¹⁶ Majorities, 57% of respondents in the June–July 2016 (Wave 9) and 53% in the May–June 2019 (Wave 16) surveys, thought that neither major party would reduce immigration. The BESIP data show that the overwhelming majority of respondents also wanted to see immigration reduced, and authoritarians even more so. Oyamoto et al. (2012) demonstrate the influence of social norms on authoritarians, that is, that personal views matter less than collective opinion, and the implications for the maintenance of authority and societal consensus.¹⁷ In this case, overwhelming public opinion in favour of reducing immigration being thwarted by those in power would contribute to perceptions of normative threat for authoritarians.

Second, we operationalize divisions or lack of consensus by combining questions about how united the Conservative and Labour parties were, from 'very united' to 'very divided' in the May–June 2016 (Wave 8) and May–June 2019 (Wave 16) surveys, rescaled from 0 to 1 where 1 means most divided. To be sure, perceptions of these divisions may or may not be related to Brexit, but it is the disunity itself, not its cause, that should be salient to authoritarians. Both major parties were seen as more divided than united in the survey, but as more divided in the later wave (0.82 compared to 0.69).

The correlations between the two indicators of normative threat range from 0.08 to 0.18, showing that they are related but gauge different dimensions (see Appendix Table A1); we therefore include them separately rather than in a single index. Table A1 also shows that the normative threat indicators are weakly correlated with the economic/cultural threat of immigration, with none exceeding ± 0.08 . Finally, as would be expected, and in contrast to economic/cultural threat, the indicators of normative threat do not increase with change in the local non-British population, or with personal economic circumstances (see Appendix Table A3).¹⁸

We include a number of control variables from the BESIP based on previous research: partisanship, age, education, and social class, with previous findings showing that Conservative party identification, older age, lower education, and lower social class are associated with pro-Brexit views (e.g., Alabrese et al., 2019; Clarke et al., 2017; Goodwin & Heath, 2016; Green & Shorrocks, Forthcoming; Hakhverdian et al., 2013; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009; Hobolt, 2016;

real-world example that fits their account, while Stenner's (2005) theory of normative threat and authoritarianism implies an influence that goes beyond the indicators of tolerance that are her primary focus.

¹³ In Appendix Figure A1 we look at the direct relationships between the dependent variables and authoritarian predispositions for the same respondents over time, starting in Wave 7. This analysis shows no obvious changes.

¹⁴ Green et al. (2016) and Peitz et al. (2018) also combine economic and cultural perceptions into a single measure of 'immigrant threat'.

¹⁵ The correlations between the different kinds of threats (and authoritarian predispositions) are shown in Appendix Table A1.

¹⁶ 'Don't know' responses were also included in this category.

¹⁷ As a check, we re-estimated all the models in the article with a three-way interaction between authoritarianism, the indicators of normative threat, and the extent to which respondents wanted to see immigration increased or reduced, that is, personal views on reducing immigration. Point estimates from the models are shown in Tables A9 and A10 and Figures A2–A4 of the Appendix for respondents above and below the mean preference for reducing immigration. The effects of authoritarian predispositions are consistent with those presented in the main text; indeed, they are somewhat stronger rather than weaker the more a respondent expresses a personal preference for reducing immigration.

¹⁸ In Appendix Tables A11–A13, we also show that other indicators of normative threat that have been used in previous research outside the context of Brexit, including the average ideological distance from parties and their leaders (Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005), and satisfaction with democracy (Stenner & Haidt, 2018), give similar results to those presented below.

TABLE 1 Authoritarian predispositions and perceptions of threat

	<i>H1a: Economic/cultural threat of immigration</i>		<i>H1b: Normative threat</i>			
	<i>Economic/cultural threat (May–June 2016)</i>	<i>Economic/cultural threat (May–June 2019)</i>	<i>Major parties unlikely to reduce immigration (June–July 2016)</i>	<i>Major parties unlikely to reduce immigration (May–June 2019)</i>	<i>Major party disunity (May–June 2016)</i>	<i>Major party disunity (May–June 2019)</i>
Authoritarian predispositions	0.285 (0.012)*	0.249 (0.015)*	-0.359 (0.091)*	-0.069 (0.111)	-0.067 (0.009)*	-0.050 (0.010)*
Age	0.245 (0.023)*	0.160 (0.030)*	0.890 (0.179)*	0.763 (0.220)*	0.093 (0.018)*	0.167 (0.020)*
Education	-0.232 (0.015)*	-0.190 (0.019)*	0.185 (0.119)	-0.067 (0.139)	0.051 (0.012)*	0.047 (0.012)*
Social Class AB	-0.065 (0.011)*	-0.070 (0.013)*	0.063 (0.083)	0.118 (0.097)	0.019 (0.008)*	0.027 (0.009)*
Social Class C1C2	-0.025 (0.010)*	-0.025 (0.011)*	0.053 (0.076)	0.047 (0.083)	-0.002 (0.008)	0.016 (0.008)*
Conservative party id	0.033 (0.010)*	0.023 (0.012)**	-0.947 (0.079)*	-0.523 (0.091)*	-0.084 (0.008)*	-0.059 (0.008)*
Labour party id	-0.091 (0.010)*	-0.108 (0.013)*	-0.399 (0.077)*	-0.411 (0.094)*	-0.044 (0.007)*	-0.041 (0.008)
No party id	0.000 (0.012)	0.015 (0.013)	-0.240 (0.089)*	-0.226 (0.095)*	-0.023 (0.009)*	-0.015 (0.009)**
Constant	0.481 (0.020)*	0.422 (0.028)*	0.248 (0.157)	0.022 (0.198)	0.665 (0.016)*	0.726 (0.018)*
n	4916	3370	5423	3701	4512	3214
Adjusted/Pseudo R ²	0.29	0.21	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.05

Notes: Estimates for Economic/Cultural threat, and Brexit division are from OLS, Major parties likely to reduce immigration from logit models. In all models, authoritarian predispositions are measured in Wave 7 for Wave 8 and 9 dependent variables and Wave 14 for Wave 16 dependent variables. All control variables are from the same wave as the dependent variable.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .10$.

Source: BESIP Waves 7 (April–May 2016), 8 (May–June 2016), 9 (June–July 2016), 14 (May 2018), 16 (May–June 2019).

Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Peitz et al., 2018). The operationalization of these variables is also described in the Appendix.

5 | ANALYSIS

For the tests of the *H1* relationships between authoritarianism and the three different dimensions of threat, we display estimates from regression models in which authoritarian predispositions predict perceptions of the three threats in Table 1: in the context of the referendum in 2016 (Waves 8 and 9 in May–July 2016) and 3 years later as the United Kingdom prepared to formally leave the EU (Wave 16 in May–June 2019). We use the authoritarian predispositions measure from the nearest prior wave to the dependent variables—Wave 7 in April–May 2016 and 14 in May 2018—while taking the control variables from the same wave as the dependent variable where possible (see notes below table).

The tests of *H1a* and *H1b* are in the first row of coefficients in Table 1. They show, in line with *H1a*, that authoritarian predispositions are associated with increased perceptions of economic/cultural threat in both waves. The differences between authoritarian and libertarian perceptions are large according to these models: about one standard deviation. But Table 1 also shows, in line with *H1b*, that the relationships between authoritarian predispositions and the two indicators of normative threat are negative, that is, authoritarians are somewhat more likely to believe the major parties' promises of 'controls', and more likely to think there is unity in the major parties. The

effect sizes are smaller than for economic/cultural threat, at between one-quarter and one-third of a standard deviation. Thus, like Stenner (2005), we show that all else equal higher authoritarians are more likely to see a dangerous world when it comes to economic/cultural threats from immigration but no more, or somewhat less, likely to perceive normative threat.

Table 2 examines *H2a*, *b* and *c* and the question of how, if at all, these perceptions of threat affect authoritarians' Brexit preferences differently from libertarians. This question is addressed from regression model estimates in which the four dependent variables gauging Brexit preferences—Leave/Remain preference, strength of Leave/Remain identity, European identity, and belief in a positive 'Brexit dividend'—are a function of authoritarian predispositions, economic/cultural threat of immigration, normative threat, the interactions between authoritarian predispositions and each indicator of threat, and the control variables previously mentioned (see notes to Table 2). Given the interactions in the models, the 'main effects' of authoritarian predisposition in the first row of estimates represent its relationship with the dependent variables when threats are at zero, that is, when there is no perceived economic/cultural or normative threat. The next three rows of estimates represent the relationships between perceptions of threats and the dependent variables when authoritarian predispositions are zero, that is, among libertarians. The shaded rows in Table 2 show the moderating effects of authoritarian predispositions on the relationships between perceptions of threats and the dependent variables associated with the tests of *H2a*, *b* and *c*.

TABLE 2 Effects of authoritarianism and threats on brexit views

	June–July 2016			May–June 2016			November 2019			Composite p-value
	Leave preference	Strength of Leave identity	Weakness of European identity	PositiveBrexit dividend	Weakness of European identity	Strength of Leave identity	Leave preference	Weakness of European identity	PositiveBrexit dividend	
Authoritarian predisposition	0.621 (0.611)	0.091 (0.099)	0.002 (0.056)	0.034 (0.031)	-0.256 (0.098)*	-0.168 (0.135)	-0.425 (0.981)	-0.256 (0.098)*	-0.019 (0.058)	.1624
Economic/cultural threat of immigration	5.604 (0.319)*	0.925 (0.043)*	0.570 (0.024)*	0.386 (0.013)*	0.590 (0.034)*	0.620 (0.047)*	4.874 (0.419)*	0.590 (0.034)*	0.360 (0.020)*	.0000
Normative threat:										
Major parties unlikely to reduce immigration	-0.799 (0.149)*	-0.079 (0.026)*	-0.042 (0.014)*	0.012 (0.008)	-0.035 (0.019)**	-0.042 (0.026)	-0.510 (0.198)*	-0.035 (0.019)**	-0.018 (0.011)	.0000
Major parties divided	0.832 (0.395)*	0.203 (0.068)*	0.025 (0.038)	-0.048 (0.021)*	-0.138 (0.062)*	-0.166 (0.084)**	-0.222 (0.620)	-0.138 (0.062)*	-0.126 (0.037)*	.0000
Economic/cultural threat x Authoritarian	-0.944 (0.562)**	0.149 (0.075)*	0.007 (0.043)	-0.116 (0.024)*	-0.107 (0.062)**	-0.175 (0.085)*	-0.740 (0.792)	-0.107 (0.062)**	-0.166 (0.036)*	.0000
Unlikely reduce immigration x Authoritarian	1.008 (0.275)*	0.123 (0.048)*	0.077 (0.026)*	0.009 (0.015)	0.089 (0.038)*	0.133 (0.052)*	1.097 (0.389)*	0.089 (0.038)*	0.028 (0.022)	.0000
Major parties divided x Authoritarian	-0.524 (0.709)	-0.208 (0.119)**	0.021 (0.067)	0.101 (0.037)*	0.393 (0.111)*	0.258 (0.152)**	0.797 (1.104)	0.393 (0.111)*	0.153 (0.066)*	.0001
n	3949	2928	4075	3972	2250	2278	2113	2250	2068	
Adjusted R ² / Pseudo R ²	0.38	0.49	0.39	0.43	0.38	0.28	0.37	0.38	0.43	

Notes: Estimates for Strength of Leave identity, Weakness of European identity and Positive Brexit dividend are from OLS, Leave preference from a logit. Models control for respondent social class, age, education level, and party identification from the same wave as the dependent variable. Lower n for Strength of Leave identity in Wave 9 is because these questions were asked of a random subsample.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .10$.

Source: British Election Study, Waves 7 (April–May 2016), 8 (May–June 2016), 9 (June–July 2016), 16 (May–June 2019), 17 (November 2019).

The last column of Table 2 shows the p -values for the composite statistical significance of the variables in all eight models.¹⁹ Given the total number of independent variables in the models, a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons implies statistical significance equivalent to $p < .05$ when the composite p -value is below .0005.

The 'main effects' for authoritarian predispositions in Table 2 indicate that in the absence of threat authoritarian predispositions do not have a statistically significant relationship with Brexit views—an important finding given previous claims (e.g., Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Peitz et al., 2018). At the same time, Table 2 shows that perceptions of greater threat from immigration are associated with the pro-Brexit views of authoritarians and libertarians. In Wave 7 of the BESIP in June–July 2016, for example, moving from perceptions of lowest threat to highest threat increases the probability of favouring Leave by at least 0.6 and weakens European identity by 0.35 on the 0–1 scale for both.

Turning to the interactions that test $H2a$, b and c , consistent with $H2a$ the interactions between threat from immigration and authoritarian predispositions are negative in 6 of the 8 models, with p -values less than .05 in three of the models, less than .10 in two others, and a composite p -value for the interactions that is less than .0005. This is also inconsistent with $H2b$. These relationships show that given increased perceptions of economic/cultural threat from immigration, although the pro-Brexit views of both libertarians and authoritarians increase, the pro-Brexit views of libertarians increase more, bringing them closer to those of authoritarians.

At the same time, however, Table 2 shows that the moderating effects of authoritarian predispositions on the relationships with normative threat are positive in all but two instances, statistically significant for 9 of the 16 interactions at $p < .05$ and one at $p < .10$, and jointly statistically significant at $p < .0005$ for both indicators of normative threat. This is inconsistent with $H2a$, and, combined with the interactions between the economic/cultural threat from immigration and authoritarian predispositions, consistent with $H2c$. Thus, this analysis indicates systematic variation in the relationship between authoritarian predispositions and Brexit views that is at odds both with extant accounts of a straightforward and unconditional relationship between authoritarianism and Brexit views and with notions of an authoritarian dynamic with threat that simply reduces or increases the differences between libertarians and authoritarians.

Figure 1 illustrates. It shows differences in attitudes and preferences based on point estimates (see Appendix Table A4) for libertarians and authoritarians one standard deviation above ('high') or below ('low') the mean in perceptions of economic/cultural threat with normative threat at its average, and one standard deviation above ('high') or below ('low') the mean in the two indicators of normative threat with economic/cultural threat at its average (all other variables are set at their mean or mode).²⁰ Each marker represents the direction and size of the change in pro-Brexit attitudes for each dependent variable

for authoritarians—blue squares—and libertarians—red circles—given high rather than low threat, with positive change indicating shifts in a pro-Brexit direction. For example, in the first graph, when economic/cultural threat is perceived as high rather than low, libertarians are 70 points more likely to favour Leave, going from strongly favouring Remain (0.16) to being firmly in the Leave camp (0.86). Differences in threat also affect high authoritarians, making them more likely to favour Leave, but by 60 points (from 0.26 to 0.86). The result is that with high economic/cultural threat libertarians and authoritarians end up in the same place—the kind of pattern shown by Hetherington and Weiler. This is repeated for the three other dependent variables in the two survey waves, with differences almost always further in a pro-Brexit direction for libertarians than authoritarians under conditions of high economic/cultural threat, resulting in similar pro-Brexit views to authoritarians.

But the remaining three graphs of Figure 1, illustrating the relationships for the two normative threat indicators separately and combined, also show that perceptions of greater normative threat are associated with increases in the pro-Brexit views of high authoritarians by up to 10 points while leaving libertarians relatively unaffected. This shows that greater normative threat widens the differences in the attitudes and preferences of libertarians and authoritarians. The graphs illustrating the relationships with normative threat also replicate Stenner's (2005) finding that normative threat can push libertarians in the opposite direction, embracing the difference they value by endorsing more liberal viewpoints. We see this across the board when the indicator of normative threat is that the major parties will not achieve reductions in immigration.

Figure 1 also shows that the pro-Brexit changes in the views of authoritarians given high normative threat is less in absolute terms than under conditions of high economic/cultural threat; perceptions of immigrant threat, as previous research has established, were a major influence on Brexit views. However, normative threat does more to distinguish authoritarians from libertarians than economic/cultural threat. For example, Figure 1 shows that going from low to high economic/cultural threat is associated with a 10-point greater increase among libertarians than authoritarians in favouring Leave in 2016. At the same time, an increase in normative threat from lack of faith that the major parties would reduce immigration is associated with an increase in the difference between authoritarians and libertarians in favouring Leave of 23 points.²¹

Figure 2 illustrates further by presenting the differences in the impacts on libertarians and authoritarians of the four combinations of threat—low economic/cultural threat and low normative threat, high economic/cultural threat and high normative threat, and the two combinations of high and low. Where the bars are above the axis in blue they show that authoritarians change in a more pro-Brexit direction than libertarians; bars below the axis in red show that libertarians change in a more pro-Brexit direction than authoritarians. Figure 2

¹⁹ These p -values are from Wald tests of the joint significance of the eight coefficients.

²⁰ Table A5 of the Appendix displays the estimates with confidence intervals used in Figure 1. These are for a 55-year-old, educated to A-level, from social class C1C2, who identifies with a party other than Conservative or Labour.

²¹ As an additional check on the robustness of these relationships, in Appendix Table A6, we re-estimate the models using the authoritarian-libertarian values index instead of child-rearing values, which is closer to Altemeyer's measure of authoritarianism (see footnote 10). They show similar conditional relationships between authoritarianism and threat.

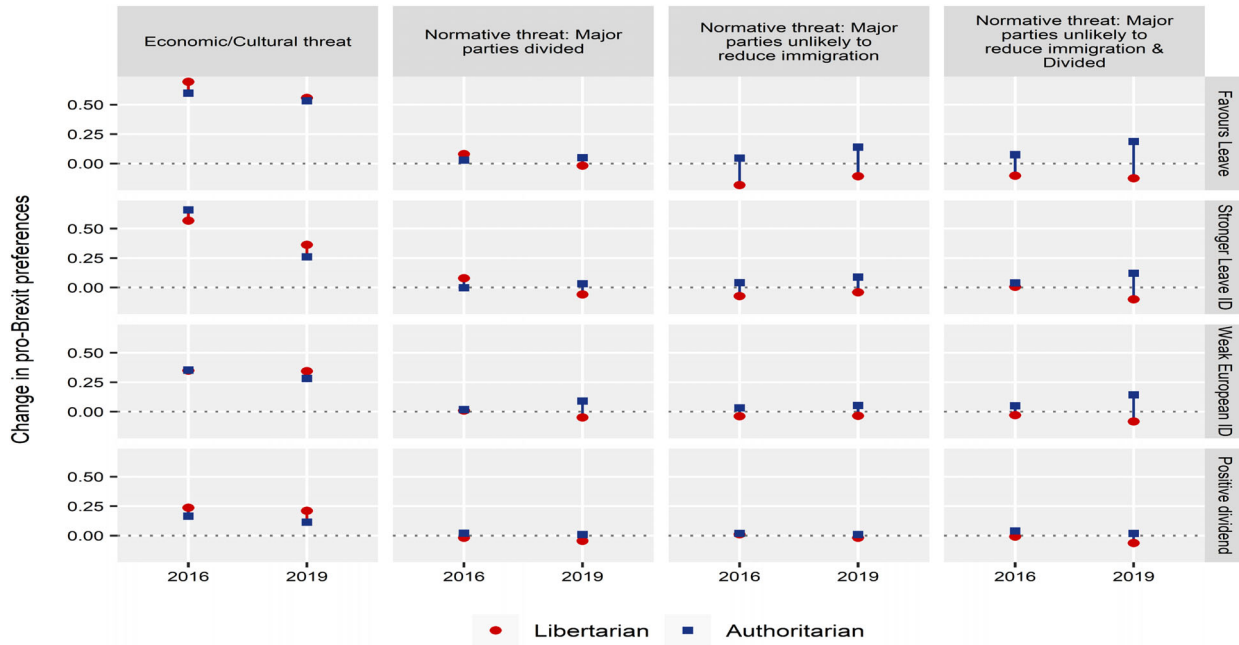


FIGURE 1 Change in pro-Brexit Preferences (max. = 1.0) of authoritarians and libertarians when threats change from low to high. Figures are based on the estimates in Table 2. They show the increase in pro-Brexit attitudes in Waves 8 (May–June 2016) and 9 (June–July 2016) and Wave 17 (November 2019) of BESIP when threats change from low to high. Red circles indicate estimated change for libertarians (0 on the authoritarianism scale) and blue squares indicate estimated change for authoritarians (1 on the authoritarianism scale). Red lines indicate greater change for libertarians; blue lines indicate greater change for authoritarians.

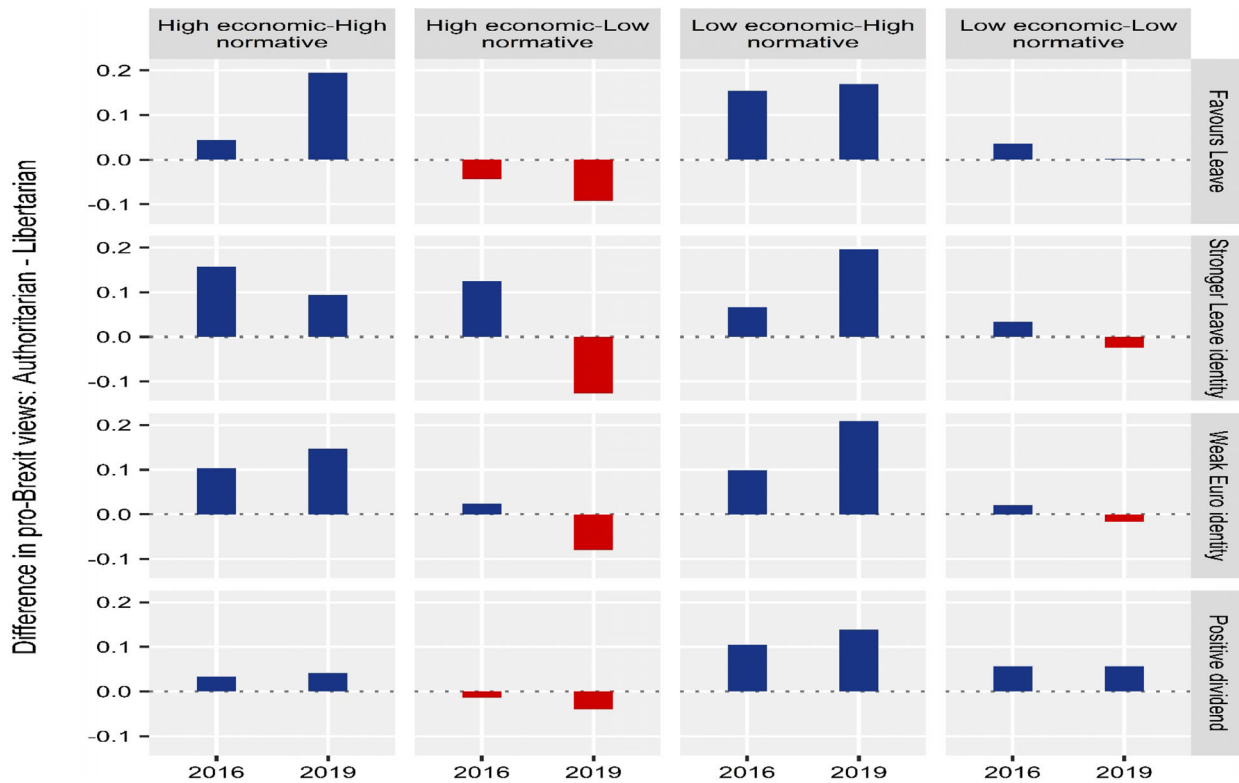


FIGURE 2 Differences between authoritarians and libertarians under different threat scenarios: low and high economic/cultural threat of immigration and low and high normative threat. Bars represent the difference in the change in pro-Brexit views between authoritarians (1 on the authoritarianism scale) and libertarians (0 on the authoritarianism scale) under different threat scenarios using the estimates in Table 2. Source: British Election Study, Waves 8 (May–June 2016), 9 (June–July 2016) and 17 (November 2019).

shows clearly the tendency for an increase in the more personal threat of immigration to be associated with a decrease in the differences in pro-Brexit views between libertarians and authoritarians because libertarians move towards the more pro-Brexit views of authoritarians, while increased normative threat increases these differences because authoritarians become even more pro-Brexit relative to libertarians. Indeed, the combination of high economic/cultural threat and high normative threat is generally less likely to separate authoritarians and libertarians than high normative threat and low economic/cultural threat.²²

This analysis reinforces the need to acknowledge the authoritarian dynamic and the relationship between authoritarian predispositions and personal and normative threats in two respects. First, the relationship between authoritarian predispositions and Brexit views is not unconditional; indeed Table 2 shows no relationship between authoritarian predispositions and Brexit views in the absence of threat. Second, if we were only to focus on the economic/cultural threat of immigration we would be discussing the tendency for libertarians to adopt nationalistic and illiberal views that are closer to authoritarians. By the same token, if we were only to focus on normative threat we would be discussing the tendency for authoritarians to be more pro-Brexit and for differences between authoritarians and libertarians to grow; clearly, we need to consider both types of threat.²³

While this analysis reinforces support for *H2c*, it also begs the question of the relative dynamics of the economic/cultural threat of immigration, normative threat, and pro-Brexit views, given the debate about whether it is libertarians or authoritarians who are more likely to express more illiberal attitudes under high threat perceptions (e.g., Feldman, 2013; Hetherington & Suhay, 2011; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009; Stenner, 2005). Our analysis implies that who becomes more illiberal will depend on shifts in perceptions of the different types of threat. We can get some leverage on this issue with the BESIP data: perceptions of the economic/cultural threat of immigration, the extent to which the major parties would achieve reductions in immigration, and major party divisions were asked in most surveys from Wave 7 (April–May 2016) to 16 (May–June 2019).²⁴

²² Wald tests confirm that the pro-Brexit views of libertarians under high economic/cultural threat and high normative threat are either lower (for five of the dependent variables at $p < .05$) or no different than under conditions of high economic/cultural threat and low normative threat. For authoritarians, in contrast, the differences are statistically significant and higher when there is a high normative threat for five of the eight dependent variables (at $p < .05$). Figure 2 suggests the possibility of three-way interactions between economic/cultural threat, normative threat and authoritarian predispositions. We show models with these estimates in Appendix Tables A7 and A8. The three-way interactions are statistically insignificant and the estimated probabilities show very similar patterns to those presented and discussed in the main text.

²³ This also implies that we should see similar effects for other personal threats or other indicators of normative threats. We provide an example in Appendix Table A14, using personal threat from terrorism and operationalizing normative threat as the ideological distance from the major parties. In addition, in Appendix Tables A11–A13 we estimate the models with other indicators of normative threat. In all cases, the patterns of interactions with authoritarian predispositions are the same as those shown in Table 2 (see also Stevens & Banducci, forthcoming).

²⁴ In Online Appendix Tables A15–A18, we take further advantage of the BESIP panel by estimating models with the same dependent and independent variables from Waves 10 to 16 where available. The interactions between threats and authoritarian predispositions show dif-

Ideally, we would look at variation for the same respondents over time but there are too few who answered the relevant questions in all these waves. We therefore look at aggregate variation. The economic/cultural threat of immigration and faith in the major parties' likelihood to reduce immigration vary by about one-third of a standard deviation, whereas perceptions of party unity vary by a full standard deviation over the more than three years. As would be expected, greater authoritarian sensitivity to threats means that this variation is somewhat larger for authoritarians than libertarians. These aggregate shifts in perceptions suggest that at some points in time we would observe libertarians moving closer to authoritarians in their pro-Brexit views, just as Hetherington and Weiler's (2009) research argues. This is what we might see in a context like the December 2016 (Wave 10) survey of the BESIP, roughly 6 months after the referendum, when faith in the parties' ability to reduce immigration had increased, perceptions of major party divisions were relatively low, and perceptions of the economic/cultural threat of immigration were higher than in any of the subsequent waves. At other times the gap between authoritarians and libertarians could become larger due to authoritarians' sensitivity to normative threat. By March 2019 (Wave 15) of the BESIP, economic/cultural threat was at its lowest point in the series while lack of faith that the two parties would achieve reductions in immigration had increased 8 points from its low in May 2017 and perceptions of major party divisions were their highest in the series. In still other contexts we would see movement in a pro-Brexit direction from both libertarians and authoritarians when both the economic/cultural threat of immigration and normative threats were relatively high: this is what we see in the April–July 2016 surveys of the BESIP, during and immediately after the EU referendum campaign.²⁵

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this article, we have re-examined the relationship between authoritarian predispositions and pro-Brexit views. Previous research has provided an incomplete understanding of this relationship by ignoring the authoritarian dynamic and conflating different types of threat. It has thus drawn overly simplistic conclusions such as that, 'it [immigration] is the same as asking about Brexit, minus a bit of risk appetite' (Kaufman, 2016). We have shown that perceptions of the economic/cultural threats of immigration, while having a considerable impact on the Brexit views of authoritarians and libertarians, have relatively stronger effects on libertarians, who are otherwise less likely to be pro-Brexit. Thus, claims that concerns about national control of borders drove pro-Brexit attitudes only among authoritarians are incorrect. At the same time, normative threat—stemming from lack of faith in established authorities and perceptions of societal divisions—increased the

ferences that are in the expected direction and statistically significant ($p < .05$) in 37 of 48 tests (and at $p < .10$ in a further three).

²⁵ In an additional check, shown in Appendix Table A19, we re-estimated the relationships in multilevel models with random intercepts for regions of residence (the 11 census regions in the BESIP) to account for potential spatial variation. The results indicate little regional difference and interactions that continue to support *H2c*.

pro-Brexit views of authoritarians relative to libertarians but differences in perceptions of normative threat are not a full explanation of authoritarian and libertarian expressions of these preferences either.

We have demonstrated these relationships in the context of the Brexit referendum, and more than 3 years later as the United Kingdom formally withdrew from the EU. There are, however, limitations to our analysis and avenues for future research. First, we have tested the hypotheses with secondary survey data from which we have constructed key variables such as normative threat; ideally we would gather primary data using more direct measures of perceptions of the failure of authorities and of social dissensus.

Second, while we show in Appendix Table A2 that there is a relationship between flows of immigration between 2005 and 2015, personal economic perceptions, and perceptions of the economic/cultural threat of immigration, we cannot be certain that perceptions of economic/cultural threat are rooted in concerns about individual autonomy. Third, and related, it is possible that perceptions of the economic/cultural threat of immigration are a proxy for another variable such as the impact of globalization (Colantone & Stanig, 2018). This is certainly worth exploring in future research, but our examination of the influences on these perceptions suggests that they are at least affected by changes in the number of immigrants in the community. Moreover, even if perceptions of economic/cultural threat capture variation in some other factor such as globalization, its negative interaction with authoritarian predispositions could still be due to the personal impact of globalization.

Fourth, although we have used the BESIP longitudinal panel to predict Brexit views in later waves of the survey from authoritarian predispositions and perceptions of threats gauged in earlier waves, we cannot rule out the possibility of reverse or reciprocal causation in which Brexit views influenced authoritarian predispositions or perceptions of threats in those earlier waves (see Luttig, 2021). Future research should test our claims using within-person changes in perceptions of threats and their interactions with authoritarian predispositions. Fifth, the relationships should also be explored using experimental methods to manipulate perceptions of normative and personal threat pertaining to Brexit and other issues as further tests of the hypothesis that authoritarians and libertarians have distinct responses to different types of threat.

Finally, elite rhetoric may also add to our understanding of when and why perceptions of different threats form or intensify. Future research should look at variation in elite characterizations of threats, such as Nigel Farage's indictment of the system as opposed to Theresa May's focus on pressures on individuals' wages and jobs, and their causes and consequences. It may be that authoritarians and libertarians are sensitive to such differences in elite framings of threat. Brandt and Henry (2012) have also suggested that expressions of authoritarianism are moderated by political culture. While their focus is on the impact of individualistic versus collectivistic cultures on gender differences in authoritarianism, how different political cultures enhance or constrain authoritarian expression under threat is an additional dimension that should be explored.

Putting these limitations to one side, our findings pertaining to Brexit suggest that Eatwell and Goodwin (2018) are correct when they say that extant accounts of the relationship between threats and populist preferences need to be 'complicated'.²⁶ Euroscepticism, for example, goes beyond the United Kingdom and previous research has made the connection with immigration (e.g., McLaren, 2001). Our research suggests that this relationship too needs to be complicated in terms of how threats from immigration interact with authoritarian predispositions and by incorporating normative threats. The complexity we have demonstrated may also help to solve some of the puzzles in the findings of previous research on Brexit views. For example, while aggregate negativity toward immigration peaked 5 years before the referendum (English, 2020), the impact on pro-Brexit preferences of such a 'softening' of attitudes would depend on the extent to which it reflected a decline in economic/cultural or normative threat. Carl et al. (2019) observe that countries with higher levels of authoritarian values than Britain's are less anti-EU in their attitudes and preferences: this need not be a puzzle if normative threat is lower in those countries, that is, there are fewer intra-party divisions and authoritarians have more faith that governments will do what they promise. Finally, Alabrese et al.'s (2019) puzzle about characteristics that put individuals in the Leave or Remain camp but who actually voted Remain and Leave is explicable given low normative threat or high personal threat.

Such dynamics also have implications for the kinds of messages that would be effective in moderating Brexit preferences. An emphasis on areas of party and societal consensus, or changes in immigration policy by the major parties, may alleviate the concerns of authoritarians while having little effect on those with weaker authoritarian predispositions if they are not accompanied by a lowering of perceptions of the economic or cultural threat presented by immigration. Indeed, while the focus of this article has been on Brexit, the findings about distinct effects of different types of threats on libertarians and authoritarians should be generalizable to other preferences and other contexts (e.g., Stevens & Banducci, *Forthcoming*).

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data are available at <https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-objects/panel-study-data/>.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

All procedures and analysis reported in this manuscript were in accordance with the ethical guidelines specified in the APA Code of Conduct.

²⁶ Although Brexit views probably reflect a number of different considerations, the interpretation of the result of the referendum as sacrosanct, representative of the iron will of the British public, and thus immune to being revisited falls squarely into populist attitudes (Akkerman et al., 2014).

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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