

# A longitudinal study of consumer animosity: the case of the US presidential elections

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study investigates the longitudinal effects of animosity towards the U.S. following their 2020 presidential election, and provides insights into how political events influence consumer animosity and willingness to buy.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study used a survey-based within-subjects design, collecting data in the U.K. and France across five waves before, during, and after the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Linear panel regressions were performed to analyze temporal changes in political animosity, product judgments, and willingness to buy U.S. products.

**Findings:** The study found a significant decrease in consumer animosity towards the U.S. following the 2020 election, along with increased willingness to buy U.S. products. The triggering event intensified animosity's effect on willingness to buy, while its effect on product judgment remained unchanged. These results highlight the malleable and contextual nature of consumer animosity and purchasing behavior. Animosity-related events are particularly influential for ethnocentric consumers.

**Originality:** This study offers a longitudinal perspective that has been largely missing in the field of consumer animosity.

**Research limitations/implications:** The focus on two European countries may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Future research could explore the longitudinal effects of consumer animosity across diverse cultural settings and events.

**Practical implications:** This study underscores the importance of monitoring political events and associated shifts in consumer animosity. The results identify those marketing-relevant indicators that are more sensitive to animosity-relevant events (willingness to buy) and those that are less sensitive (product judgments).

**Social implications:** The study uncovers the intricate relationship between political events and consumer behavior, demonstrating how geopolitical developments can affect attitudes towards a country and its products internationally.

**Keywords:** Consumer animosity, longitudinal study, political animosity, election, willingness to buy, product judgment.

## 1. Introduction

New and emerging geopolitical conflicts or tensions between groups are pervasive in today's globalized world. Recent examples of aggressive and/or military actions include the Russian war against Ukraine, the terror attack by Hamas on Israel, and Israel's subsequent retaliation on Lebanon. Politically, the resurgence of nationalist parties in national governments—such as Brexit, MAGA, and the rise of right-wing parties across Europe—reflects a shift from multilateralism to more nationalistic policies. From an economic perspective, the trade war between China and the U.S. or the disputes about trade tariffs on electric cars between China and the European Union, metaphorically depicted as the “car trade war” (Theile and Theurer, 2024), emphasize rising tensions within bilateral relations. Such tensions between country dyads are nowadays more visible to consumers due to the digitalized and interconnected world, which fosters feelings of animosity towards specific target countries. When Donald Trump was inaugurated as President of the United States in January 2025, consumers around the world were immediately informed about potential international disputes, including the new president's claim to Canada, Greenland, and Panama (Collinson, 2025). Obviously, events such as changes in the political government of a country can be the starting point of increased international conflicts and may lead to consumer animosity. However, so far, the international business literature is silent about how consumers' attitudes towards imported products and their willingness to buy such products alter during a change in the political leadership in the exporting country.

Consumer animosity encompasses factors that influence consumers' negative attitudes and feelings toward a specific country, which decreases consumers' buying behavior of products from that specific country (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Riefler and Diamantopoulus, 2007). Consumer animosity can affect economies on the macro level with national calls for boycotts and on the micro level by damaging the sales of businesses. For example, accompanied by Trump's

reinauguration in 2025, the electric car producer Tesla faced strong consumer opposition in many countries due to Elon Musk, the Tesla-CEO, publicly supporting Trump. In Germany, the new Tesla model sales declined by approximately 60 % in January 2025 compared to January 2024 (Reeves, 2025). Additionally, many Tesla owners put stickers on their cars stating they bought the car before Elon Musk became a key player in the electoral campaign (Peyser, 2025). These real-life incidents showcase how the outcome of a political event in an animosity-target country may alter consumers' opinions and behaviors regarding imported products in a dynamic manner. Various studies investigated the antecedents, consequences, conditions, and mechanisms of consumer animosity in different country settings (e.g., Klein *et al.*, 1998; Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Gineikiene and Diamantopoulos, 2017; Harmeling *et al.*, 2015; Heinberg, 2017; Shoham *et al.*, 2006; Westjohn *et al.*, 2021). However, these studies focused on past or existing manifest conflicts, such as military and trade wars. Less is known about how changes in a national government affect the responses of international consumers. Accordingly, our research answers a recent call in consumer research to historize the present and analyze the effects of current political events on consumer behavior (Goor *et al.*, 2025).

Moreover, while the antecedents and consequences of consumer animosity are predominantly studied in cross-sectional designs, longitudinal assessment of animosity effects is scarce (for exceptions, see Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Lee and Lee, 2013). Longitudinal studies, however, provide an insightful approach to explore dynamics and the changes in relationships among variables, such as consumer animosity and buying tensions, in the course of time. They help explore which events evoked such changes and therefore, they are a valuable input into theory development (Chintagunta and Labroo, 2020; Mathur *et al.*, 2008; Steenkamp and Maydeu-Olivares, 2015). Borrowing from the event study method (Eden *et al.*, 2022; Sorescu *et al.*, 2017), we use the term 'event' to refer to specific announcements or occurrences (such as the U.S. presidential election) that are expected to have an impact on consumers' attitudes and

behaviors. Notably, along with Trump's inauguration in 2025, we have seen many U.S. Big Tech leaders reshaping their relationship with the new president (Guardian, 2025). However, improving the relationship with the national government may also impact the attitudes of international consumers, as the Tesla example demonstrates. Hence, understanding long-term animosity effects on consumption patterns is crucial for managers in internationally operating firms because it allows a more accurate business forecasting and, hence, long-term strategic planning compared to the conclusions based on cross-sectional data.

Addressing these needs, we study the long-term effects of animosity on marketing-relevant aspects (i.e., willingness to buy and product judgment) during an impactful political event: the 2020 U.S. election. Because of its size and economic and political importance, the U.S. is a country often examined in animosity research (either as the home country of the participants or as the target of animosity; e.g., Bahaee and Pisani, 2009; Hoffmann *et al.*, 2011; Klein, 2002; Krüger *et al.*, 2024; Russell and Russell, 2006). As changes in the political leadership have global ramifications, events like the U.S. election are noticed and followed outside of the U.S. In 2020, the acting president Donald Trump received intense and controversial media coverage, and, on January 6, 2021, the tension and polarization culminated in the attack on the U.S. Capitol building in Washington D.C. This election thus represented a unique opportunity to study the dynamics of animosity of consumers from countries that have historical, political, and economical relationships with the U.S. (i.e., the U.K. and France) and to explore the impact that animosity-relevant events can have on consumer beliefs (e.g., judgments of U.S. products) and their preferences (e.g., willingness to buy U.S. products).

Our study contributes to the literature in several ways: First, we answer the repeated calls for more longitudinal studies (e.g., Amine, 2008; Lee and Chon, 2021; Park *et al.*, 2021) and, thus, address a void within the animosity research stream. With five-waves of data collection, we conduct, to the best of our knowledge, the first within-subjects study with multiple time

points to analyze how animosity develops over time. Second, by carefully planning the study even before the impactful event occurs, we are able to contrast different phases of the animosity development, including phases before, during, and after an external event. To contribute to external validity and assess whether the animosity dynamics are universal or country-specific, we run our study in two different animosity home countries, the U.K. and France, in which most consumers shared similar view concerning the desirable outcome of the election, that is, the election of Joe Biden over Donald Trump (YouGov, 2020). Third, we identify the consumers who react more sensitively to the animosity-relevant event. Interestingly, we will show that particularly ethnocentric consumers—who prefer to buy domestic—are affected, with greater readiness to buy from the specific country that is the target of consumer animosity. Lastly, by following the U.S. presidential elections, we could show that the detrimental effect of animosity on willingness to buy is impacted by changes of national governments. Remarkably, we focus on animosity stemming from political disapproval, which we consider a relatively mild form of animosity that is underresearched despite it may more frequently occur in real life in contrast to harder forms of animosity that are rooted in military, economic, and religious conflicts. While it seems to be reasonable to assume that the intensity of consumer animosity influences how effectively international companies can respond with marketing strategies, strong animosity rooted in military or trade conflicts can leave firms with little room to mitigate consumer rejection. On the other hand, we believe mild forms of animosity are particularly relevant for brand strategies. Milder animosity caused by political disapproval offers more flexibility, as internationally operating companies can more easily counteract these mild forms of animosity by distancing their brand from government actions, emphasizing shared values, focusing on product benefits, and/or engaging locally with consumers. Hence, while strong forms of animosity will very likely lead to consumer boycotts, milder forms of animosity feelings could be addressed by managerial strategies. This investigation thus advances international marketing theory by

showing, through a longitudinal study, how fluctuating levels of even mild animosity may affect consumer buying decisions.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1. Past literature on consumer animosity**

Klein *et al.* (1998, p. 90) define consumer animosity as the “remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events”. Thus, consumer animosity refers to hostile country-related attitudes between two parties evoked by a former or concurrent negative incident. The field largely adopted this definition (e.g., Nijssen and Douglas, 2004; Russell and Russell, 2006). After Klein *et al.* (1998) introduced the concept of consumer animosity and the Animosity Model of Foreign Product Purchase, which predicts that animosity towards a country negatively impacts the willingness to purchase, independent from product judgment, the research area experienced great attention resulting in more than 200 studies publicized in more than 90 scientific journals (Krüger *et al.*, 2022).

Consumer animosity toward a particular country has several marketing repercussions, including a diminished willingness among consumers to purchase products either from or associated with that country (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Leong *et al.*, 2008; Funk *et al.*, 2010). Consumer animosity also increases consumers’ boycott intention and brand avoidance (Hoffmann *et al.*, 2011; Khan and Lee, 2014; Leonidou *et al.*, 2019) and influences consumers’ product preference (Shimp *et al.*, 2004; Russell and Russell, 2006). Likewise, consumer animosity decreases consumers’ attitudes towards the brand (Russell and Russell, 2010) and trust (Lee and Mazodier, 2015) of brands and products originating from, or associated with, that target country.

Past research has replicated the Animosity Model of Foreign Product Purchase (Klein *et al.*, 1998) across several animosity home-target countries including, China and Japan (Fong *et*

*al.*, 2014; Harmeling *et al.*, 2015), the U.S. and Japan (Klein, 2002), the U.S. and France (Russell and Russell, 2006), Korea and Japan (Hong and Kang, 2006), and the Netherlands and Germany (Nijssen and Douglas 2004). In total, more than 100 different country dyads with specific bilateral histories and tensions have been studied (Krüger *et al.*, 2022).

## **2.2. Dynamics of consumer animosity**

The animosity literature has outlined that consumer animosity can be stable (e.g., Chinese consumers' long-term resentment toward Japan due to World War II history that lasted many generations) or situational (e.g., U.S. consumers' resentment toward France during the Iraq War in the early 2000s due to political disagreements over military intervention that lasted for a shorter period of time before cooling down again) (Jung *et al.*, 2002). This distinction is relevant for organizations operating internationally. However, quantitative research on the conditions of the animosity dynamic is sparse. The research by Amine (2008) indicates that current events can intensify the effects of stable animosity on consumer behavior. Therefore, fluctuations in the salience of animosity feelings in a given population are likely to occur before or after an event. So far, Amine (2008) has discussed these assumptions in ethnographic research and proposed that it is important and necessary to conduct longitudinal animosity studies. This call motivated our research.

To advance international marketing theory and to address the challenges of internationally operating organizations, it is essential to close this void in the literature. Consider the situational animosity with fluctuating love-hate relationships of European consumers towards American politics, companies, and products. For instance, there has been a paradoxical relationship between French and American people throughout history, which tends to be more positive or more negative depending on the period of time or a specific event (Marchi, 2011). While anecdotal evidence indicates that such binational relationships are presumably dynamic, prior

cross-sectional animosity studies reflect only a snapshot of the situation and may not be entirely representative of subsequent consumer behavior. However, depending on the context and situation, the salience of animosity changes and it is likely that animosity only influences consumer behaviors and/or beliefs if the animosity level and/or salience reach a given threshold. Moreover, the boycott literature has recently shown that consumers' emotional and behavioral responses to moral transgressions follow a dynamic pattern of escalation and attenuation (Lasarov *et al.*, 2023). Building on this previous research, we intend to explore how changing situational contexts influence the animosity effects of consumers' product judgments and willingness to buy imported products. We assume that the effects of consumer animosity on these two criteria are highly context-dependent. When political tensions or media coverage make animosity salient, consumers are more likely to evaluate products negatively and avoid purchasing them. In contrast, during periods of low salience, consumers may arguably focus on product-related factors and temporarily set aside their negative feelings.

Notably, we assume that the changing situational contexts are particularly relevant for mild forms of consumer animosity, such as animosity stemming from political disapproval. We assume that the impact of consumer animosity is shaped by its salience over time, making it a dynamic rather than static phenomenon. While strong forms of animosity—such as those rooted in military conflicts or major trade disputes—tend to be persistent and emotionally charged, remaining top-of-mind for consumers and consistently influencing purchasing behaviors, milder forms of animosity often fluctuate in salience and are more volatile. These lower-intensity sentiments are more context-dependent and may only become salient when triggered by external cues, such as media coverage or public discourse (Hartman *et al.*, 2022)<sup>1</sup>. As a result,

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<sup>1</sup> Such mild forms of animosity are also easier to treat than harder forms of animosity. In the case of partisan animosity in the U.S. (the animosity of Republicans/Democrats towards each other), several interventions have been tested by prior research. These include correcting misconceptions, highlighting commonalities between different groups, fostering positive contact, and building a dialogue (Hartman *et al.*, 2022) which could also be implemented by international marketers in the case of political animosity.

consumers might disregard these feelings in everyday consumption decisions unless reminded of the underlying issue. Understanding the interplay between temporal salience and the effects of animosity is therefore essential.

Therefore, the present research aims at providing reliable insights in the dynamics of the relationship between consumer animosity and willingness to buy and product judgment by observing temporal changes in consumer animosity during an important event. As an event we consider the 2020 U.S.-American presidential elections as this is a case which (1) addresses the dynamic relationship between European consumers and American politics, which is of relevance due to its political and economic impact and (2) is predictable in order to establish pre-event baseline measurements.

### **2.3. Political animosity**

The type of an incident that evokes animosity attitudes can be diverse. While the first studies considered war and economic animosity (Klein *et al.*, 1998), subsequent studies also considered political, religious or socio-cultural disputes as animosity drivers (Abraham and Reitman, 2018; Kalliny and Lemaster, 2005; Nes *et al.*, 2012; Riefler and Diamantopoulos, 2007). Hoffmann *et al.* (2011) identified perceived threat, antithetical political attitudes, and negative personal experiences as three universal drivers that mediate the influence of specific triggers on consumer animosity. In the present research, we focus on political animosity, which we operationalize as the reactions of European consumers towards the outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential elections. Previous studies only looked at situations where there is a high level and salience of animosity, as in the case of war animosity. We consider milder forms of animosity (e.g., the attitudes that some European consumers might have with regard to U.S. American politics) and which might become highly salient in certain situations (i.e., the U.S. operations during the Iraq War that was scorned by many French consumers; Heilmann, 2016). Hence, these milder forms

of animosity might have a more fluctuating effect, which require a longitudinal investigation to understand the peaks in their impact. Mild forms of animosity are underresearched, but we believe considering this type of animosity is particularly relevant for internationally operating companies. While managers have less possibility to counteract most strong forms of animosity, there might be more possibilities to maneuver and mitigate the negative consequences of the milder forms of animosity feelings.

Political animosity is one particular source of animosity that has gained less attention in the literature than war or economic animosity (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Riefler and Diamantopoulos, 2007). Hoffmann *et al.* (2011) showed that, antithetical political attitudes, which refer to whether the policies of a particular country contradict individuals' political or ethical convictions, lead to animosity sentiments. Different political issues—including government regulations, lack of freedom, political (authoritarian) system, oppression, and human rights violation—can evoke individuals' political animosity towards this country (Nes *et al.*, 2012). Research confirmed a country's corruption (Witkowski, 2000) and foreign policy (Diamantopoulos and Riefler, 2011; Witkowski, 2000), or even a particular policy-leader of the country (Diamantopoulos and Riefler, 2011; Smith and Li, 2010) as triggers for political animosity. Therefore, we consider in this research how consumers in a specific country (U.K., France) react to the election of a new political leader (the president of the United States), when there is a choice between two options with different implications for the international relationship of the countries in consideration.

In this research, we analyze the effects of political animosity on consumers' willingness to buy and product judgment. The original study of Klein *et al.* (1998) demonstrates that general consumer animosity affects willingness to buy, but is unrelated to product judgments. As previous research showed that political issues between two countries decrease the willingness to buy products from the respective country (Bahae and Pisani, 2009; Ettenson and Klein, 2005;

Witkowski, 2000), we also expect negative effects of political animosity on willingness to buy. However, unlike Klein *et al.*'s (1998) original study, subsequent studies found a negative impact of animosity on product judgment (e.g., Gineikiene and Diamantopoulos, 2017; Shoham *et al.*, 2006; Westjohn *et al.*, 2021). Research even confirmed political animosity's detrimental effect on product judgment (Witkowski, 2000). Accordingly, it is reasonable to propose that consumers adjust their product judgments in alignment with their political animosity to maintain consistency in their consumption behavior. We therefore assume a negative effect of political animosity on the willingness to buy and the evaluation of products from the particular target country.

*H1.* Political animosity towards a target country decreases (a) the willingness to buy and (b) the product judgment of products from the target country.

## **2.4. The longitudinal impact of events on the effects of animosity**

While antecedents, consequences, and conditional effects of animosity are largely examined in past cross-sectional research, evidence about the dynamics of fluctuating levels of animosity and their effects remains scarce. Only the studies of Ettenson and Klein (2005) and Lee and Lee (2013) focused on longitudinal effects by examining consumers' animosity during and after a negative incident. Ettenson and Klein (2005) examined consumer animosity following the French government's nuclear testing in the South Pacific during the testing and after the resolution of the conflict in two separate cross-sectional studies. They found that animosity levels dropped, but still remained on a relatively high level. Lee and Lee (2013) focused on the bilateral relationship between Japan and China by investigating animosity during the Senkaku dispute in 2010 and six months later. They found that contemporary animosity decreased after the dispute, while the level of historical animosity did not change. The effect of both types of animosity on willingness to buy faded after the dispute. Lastly, Lee *et al.* (2017) built on Lee

and Lee's (2013) study, observing the same Chinese-Japanese relationship at the same time points. These studies investigate instances of animosity that stem from the action of one nation unto another nation or region, while our work focuses on the animosity generated due to the internal politics of a nation. More importantly, while these studies indicate that animosity levels shift in the course of time, their use of cross-sectional data did not allow a more nuanced understanding of how individual consumers' animosity evolves over time and how this affects marketing-relevant outcomes. The absence of a within-subjects design leaves unanswered critical questions regarding the temporal dynamics of animosity and its potential moderation by external events.

Researchers distinguish between stable and situational animosity (Ang *et al.*, 2004; Jung *et al.*, 2002; Lee and Lee, 2013). While stable, often historic animosity develops through deeply-routed collective memory, situational animosity can be triggered through contemporary incidents through episodic memory (Lee *et al.*, 2017). We build on associative network theory (Bower, 1998; Teichert and Schöntag, 2010), which posits that concepts are organized in a network of associations in the consumers' mind. Related concepts are connected, which allows for the retrieval of information through these connections. Accordingly, we assume that while historic animosity should be relatively stable and persist over time in a person's memory structures, events (i.e., presidential elections) could trigger specific memory structures that activate or expand linkages in the animosity-relevant associative network. When a negative event occurs it activates specific memory structures, which can temporarily increase the salience of hostile attitudes and feelings. This intensifies the effect of consumer animosity on marketing-relevant indicators temporally.

As discussed above, we expect that predominantly mild forms of animosity tend to fluctuate in their impact depending on the situational context, such as media coverage or political developments. As a result, their influence on product judgments and willingness to buy is not

constant but varies with the salience of the underlying trigger. Accordingly, we propose that the negative effect of political animosity on consumer behavior is not static but is sensitive to external triggers. With regard to elections, we further argue that consumers feel uncertain in advance of the event about whether a negative outcome might occur soon if at least one of the candidates contradicts their political views. Hence, they might have increased animosity feelings before the event. These feelings might further increase or become more salient, when the unfavored candidate wins or cool down when the favored candidate wins. Notably, the boycott literature shows that consumers' emotional and behavioral reactions could slowly arise and cool down (Lasarov *et al.*, 2023), and therefore, monitoring over a longer period of time is necessary.

In sum, we argue that external events affect the strength of animosity's impact on willingness to buy and product judgments over time (Figure 1). With regard to the reactions of U.K. and French consumers to the U.S. presidential election in 2020, we assume that the majority of consumers would consider the election of Donald Trump as an event opposing their own political attitudes and thus as an event that increases the salience of animosity feelings. By contrast, the election of Joe Biden would prevent this negative outcome. This assumption is supported, among others, by a YouGov (2020) survey conducted between September-October 2020, stating that people in both countries prefer Biden (France: 64%, U.K.: 61%) over Trump (France: 14%, U.K.: 13%) to win the elections. Furthermore, according to the same study (YouGov, 2020) people in those countries considered that the actions of Biden would have a much less negative impact than the actions of Trump on themselves (Biden's negative impact: France: 8%, U.K.: 7%; Trump's negative impact: France: 27%, U.K.: 30%) and on their countries (Biden's negative impact: France: 11%, U.K.: 13%; Trump's negative impact: France: 65%, U.K.: 52%). These findings support our assumption that people in the U.K. and France considered Trump's election over Biden a negative outcome.

*H2*. Events occurring during the course of time will modulate the negative effect of political animosity on (a) willingness to buy and (b) product judgments. Perceived negative (positive) events will increase (decrease) the negative effects of animosity.

## **2.5. The role of ethnocentrism**

Consumer animosity is distinct from but related to the concept of consumer ethnocentrism as both concepts affect consumers' intention to avoid imported products. Shimp and Sharma (1987, p. 280) defined ethnocentrism as "beliefs [...] about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign made products". Ethnocentric consumers avoid buying products from *all* foreign countries, as they perceive they have a moral obligation to buy domestic products to support their national economy for reasons such as avoiding unemployment and they generally devalue foreign products' quality (Klein, 2002; Shimp and Sharma, 1987). By contrast, consumers with animosity feelings avoid buying products from one *specific* target country independently of consumers' quality perceptions of the respective products (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Klein and Ettenson, 1999). This tendency results from negative emotions such as anger, fear, contempt or regret (Antonetti *et al.*, 2019; Harmeling *et al.*, 2015).

Many studies on consumer animosity also incorporate the construct of consumer ethnocentrism due to its conceptual relationship with animosity (Klein *et al.*, 1998). Most researchers analyzed the effects of ethnocentrism as an additional factor to the effects of animosity (Klein *et al.*, 1998). Krüger *et al.* (2024) recently suggested that consumer ethnocentrism can moderate the relationship between animosity and boycott participation. Building on this assumption, we acknowledge that ethnocentrism may also moderate the relationship between animosity and willingness to buy from a long-term perspective. We expect that consumers with high levels of ethnocentrism should exhibit stronger reactions compared to those with low levels of ethnocentrism. While consumers with higher levels of ethnocentrism generally display a lower degree

of willingness to buy foreign products overall, these ethnocentric consumers are nevertheless sensitive to external events that trigger animosity and should be more sensitive than less ethnocentric consumers (Fernández-Ferrín *et al.*, 2015).

*H3.* Consumer ethnocentrism moderates how events occurring during the course of time affect willingness to buy. Consumers with high levels of ethnocentrism will be less willing to buy in light of perceived negative events, whereas their willingness to buy will increase in the absence of such events. The willingness to buy of consumers with low levels of ethnocentrism will be less affected by the event.

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Insert Figure 1 here

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### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Procedure**

To test our dynamic animosity framework and the proposed hypotheses, we adopted a multi-wave survey-based research approach.<sup>2</sup> In particular, we developed an online survey and cooperated with the professional service provider called TGM Research to collect data in the United Kingdom (U.K.) and France. We designated the U.S. as a suitable target country due to a) the economic interdependencies of the U.S. with France—with record levels of bilateral flow of goods (French Embassy to the United States, 2023)—and the U.S. with the U.K.—each other's number one country of foreign direct investments (U.S. Embassy & Consulates in the United Kingdom, 2024), b) the political discords and the perceived economic dominance (Rosen, 2024), and c) the global interest in the political leadership of the U.S. (Kay, 2024). The U.S. is a widely studied target country within the animosity literature (e.g., Amine, 2008; Ba-hae and Pisani, 2009; Russell and Russell, 2006). The U.K.'s political and historical ties with the U.S. are stronger than those of France, and the political dichotomy in the U.K. aligns more

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<sup>2</sup> The research approach was approved by the Ethics Committee of the corresponding authors' university on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

closely with that of the U.S., as seen in the Labour Party's proximity to the Democrats compared to France's Socialists. This makes the choice of these two countries a strength in the study, as we consider two contexts and expect milder effects of consumer animosity in the U.K. compared to France.

To warrant inferences between the U.S. presidential elections in 2020 and consumer attitudes and behavior in France and the U.K., we conducted a five-wave panel survey over a monthly interval (September 2020 until January 2021) (see Figure 2 for a detailed timeline of the U.S. presidential elections). In particular, we collected data two times before (T1: September, T2: October), one time during (T3: November), and two times after (T4: December, T5: January) the elections. Recall that the candidates were Donald J. Trump (Republicans) and Joseph R. Biden (Democrats), and that the latter won. This study design enables us to observe consumers' attitudinal and behavioral reactions during the election process in both countries.

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Insert Figure 2 here

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To investigate the longitudinal effects of animosity, we applied a within-subjects design and sent out the questionnaire to the same respondents repeatedly. Following Woolridge (2010), we sought to achieve a balanced sample, ensuring no missing values for any of the time periods for all survey participants (see Table A1 in the Appendix for sample size of the waves and attrition rate).<sup>3</sup> Table 1 provides detailed information about the sample in France ( $M_{\text{age}} = 54.70$  years,  $SD = 12.06$ ) and the U.K. ( $M_{\text{age}} = 54.57$  years,  $SD = 12.57$ ).

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Insert Table 1 here

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<sup>3</sup> The initial sample was  $N = 646$  in France and  $N = 378$  in the U.K., which was reduced to participants who answered all waves in order to create a balanced sample. Employing  $\chi^2$ -tests for categorical variables and t-tests for the metric variables, we found no significant differences with regard to the sample characteristics of the participants of the balanced sample and the excluded subjects (gender:  $p_{\text{U.K.}} = 0.17$ ,  $p_{\text{France}} = .29$ ; education:  $p_{\text{U.K.}} = 0.53$ ,  $p_{\text{France}} = 0.08$ ; neighborhood:  $p_{\text{U.K.}} = 0.85$ ,  $p_{\text{France}} = .72$ ; income:  $p_{\text{U.K.}} = 0.46$ ,  $p_{\text{France}} = 0.90$ ; conservatism:  $p_{\text{U.K.}} = 0.38$ ,  $p_{\text{France}} = 0.56$ ; liberalism:  $p_{\text{U.K.}} = 0.32$ ,  $p_{\text{France}} = 0.55$ ; social policy:  $p_{\text{U.K.}} = 0.99$ ,  $p_{\text{France}} = 0.75$ ; environmentalism:  $p_{\text{U.K.}} = 0.21$ ,  $p_{\text{France}} = 0.68$ ; patriotism:  $p_{\text{U.K.}} = 0.63$ ,  $p_{\text{France}} = 0.56$ ).

### 3.2. Material and measures

We structured the online survey as follows. First, we welcomed the participants and informed them that participating in the online survey was voluntary and that we treated the data confidentially with no inferences about the participants. The questionnaires were, in most parts, the same across the five waves: All questionnaires contained a scale to measure consumers' animosity on the political level adopted from Hoffmann *et al.* (2011). To measure consumers' evaluation of U.S. products and their willingness to buy such products, we adopted the widely used scales from Klein *et al.* (1998). In the first wave, we additionally measured ethnocentrism using Shimp and Sharma's (1987) CETSCALE. All items of these scales were measured on 7-point Likert scales ranging from -3 (totally disagree) to +3 (totally agree) (see Table 2 for an overview of the items). We further asked participants to indicate their political orientation ("How conservative/liberal/social/green/patriotic are you?"). The questionnaires ended with socio-demographical questions (e.g., age, gender). To ensure semantic equivalence between the French and English versions of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was translated and back-translated from English into French and no relevant differences were noted between both.

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Insert Table 2 here

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### 3.3. Validity and multi-country invariance

To assess the validity of the multi-item constructs, multi-group confirmatory factor analyses (MG-CFA) with AMOS 29.0 were conducted for both countries. All indicators meet the commonly considered thresholds for reliability (i.e., Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha > 0.70$ , average variance extracted AVE  $> 0.50$ ) and discriminant validity (i.e., AVE  $>$  squared correlations with all other constructs) for both, the French and the U.K. samples (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Model fit is acceptable with  $\chi^2/df \leq 3$  (Kline, 1998), comparative fit index (CFI)  $\geq 0.95$  (Hu and Bentler, 1999), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)  $\leq 0.05$  (MacCallum *et al.*,

1996). Table 3 summarizes all constructs' means and standard deviations. Table 4 shows the inter-construct correlations and AVEs for France and the U.K.

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Insert Table 3 and Table 4 here

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#### 4. Results

In a first step, we conducted repeated measures ANOVAs to compare the animosity values and dependent variables over time. The Mauchly-test of sphericity shows a significant effect ( $p < 0.001$ ), which is common in designs with more than two repeated measures (O'Brien and Kaiser, 1985). Wilk's Lambda of  $\lambda = 0.89$  for U.K. ( $F_{U.K.}(4,293) = 8.838, p < 0.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.108$ ) and of  $\lambda = 0.76$  for France ( $F_{France}(4, 404) = 31.857, p < 0.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.240$ ) confirmed our assumption that consumer animosity varies over time, that is, the animosity scores were significantly different across the five measurements. These variations are depicted in Figure 3. Bonferroni-adjusted post-hoc test revealed significantly lower animosity scores for the fifth wave as compared to the first wave ( $M_{Diff/France} = 0.45, 95\%-CI[0.32, 0.58]$ ;  $M_{Diff/U.K.} = 0.29, 95\%-CI[0.12, 0.46]$ ). In particular, the results for France showed significant differences among all time periods, except for the difference between T3 and T4 and between T4 and T5. Similarly, the results of the British sample confirmed significant differences between T1 and T5, between T2 and T4 and T2 and T5, T3 and T4 and T3 and T5, as well as between T4 and T5. To review, the election happened during the period of T3.

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Insert Figure 3 here

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Interestingly, this decrease in consumer animosity are accompanied by a significant increase in consumers' willingness to buy (Wilk's Lambda  $\lambda_{U.K.} = 0.94, F_{U.K.}(4,293) = 4.369, p < 0.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.056$ ;  $\lambda_{France} = 0.84, F_{France}(4, 404) = 18.932, p < 0.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.158$ ), while the product evaluations appear relatively stable over time ( $\lambda_{U.K.} = 0.97, F_{U.K.}(4,293) = 2.238, p = 0.006$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.030$ ;  $\lambda_{France} = 0.96, F_{France}(4, 404) = 4.525, p = 0.001$ , partial  $\eta^2$

= 0.043). The results illustrating temporal changes for willingness to buy and product judgment are provided Figure 4.

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Insert Figure 4 here

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Next, we ran a linear panel regression using Stata (version 18) to compare animosity values and willingness to buy over time (Hsiao, 2003). We adopted a random effects estimator for our panel analysis, considering within and between-subjects differences for a total observation of  $N = 3,525$ . The results confirm a significant negative relationship between political animosity and consumers' willingness to buy U.S. products ( $b = -0.23, p < 0.001$ ), supporting H1a. The full estimation results are presented in Table 5. Notably, this detrimental animosity effect on willingness to buy is stronger for French consumers as compared to British consumers ( $b = -0.07, p = 0.047$ ). Furthermore, including dummy variables for the different time periods with the first wave as the baseline (T1) confirms our previous analysis and reveals significant differences between the waves. In particular, the results confirm a significant negative influence of T3, T4, and T5 compared to T1. The results show no significant differences of animosity's effect comparing T1 and T2 (both periods are prior to the event, i.e., the election). The Wald Chi-squared difference test assured that the included coefficients within the model are jointly different than zero (Wald  $\chi^2(11) = 538.67, p < 0.001$ ). In sum, the event intensified the negative influence of political animosity on the willingness to buy, supporting H2a. This is indicated by the negative overall effect of animosity on the willingness to buy ( $b = -0.23, p < 0.001$ ), which is significantly intensified in wave T3 (animosity  $\times$  wave:  $b = -0.08, p < 0.05$ ), T4 ( $b = -0.12, p < 0.001$ ), and T5 ( $b = -0.08, p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the event increased the influence of animosity on the willingness to buy. Note that the level of animosity decreased, which is in line with our assumptions that European consumers preferred Biden over Trump. Still, the event might have increased the salience of the international relationships and this strengthened the effect of indi-

vidual's level of animosity on their willingness to buy. To better understand this complex moderation effect, we ran separate simple correlation analyses for each wave, which show that the negative relationship between political animosity and the willingness to buy became stronger during the course of time ( $r_{T1} = -0.40$ ,  $r_{T2} = -0.43$ ,  $r_{T3} = -0.44$ ,  $r_{T4} = -0.52$ ,  $r_{T5} = -0.51$ ).

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Insert Table 5 here

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Another panel regression model, with product judgment as the dependent variable, emphasizes animosity's negative impact on product judgments ( $b = -0.07$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ), supporting H1b. However, animosity's negative influence on product judgments is stable over time and does not show any differences across the different time points (Table 6), rejecting H2b. Accordingly, the effects of the waves (as indicated by the animosity  $\times$  wave-interaction) are not statistically significant (T2:  $b = -0.03$ ,  $p = 0.21$ , T3:  $b = -0.01$ ,  $p = 0.77$ , T4:  $b = 0.015$ ,  $p = 0.58$ , T5:  $b = -0.01$ ,  $p = 0.86$ ). Hence, the influence of animosity on product judgment remains on a statistically significant, weak level without any variations across the waves. Remarkably, the effect of animosity on the product evaluation did not change in the course of time, whereas the effect on the behavioral intention (willingness to buy) changed. This finding adds to the long debate about whether animosity effects develop via product judgments or whether they more directly influence behavior (Klein *et al.*, 1998).

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Insert Table 6 here

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Finally, we tested whether consumer ethnocentrism exerts a moderating role for the time-variant effects on the willingness to buy (H3). We ran a comprehensive panel regression with all five waves, ethnocentrism, and the country (France vs. U.K.), also accounting for the effect of animosity (i.e., to isolate the effects of animosity and ethnocentrism). The results are displayed in Table 7. Notably, there is a strong negative effect of ethnocentrism on the willingness to buy ( $b = -0.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Yet, the statistically significant interaction terms of ethnocentrism

with all waves indicates that the gap in willingness to buy between individuals with stronger and weaker ethnocentrism reduces over time (as compared to the baseline T1). This pattern occurred both in France and the U.K. The conditional effects of ethnocentrism on  $\pm 1$ SD are displayed in Figure A1 in the Appendix.

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Insert Table 7 here

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For the sake of comprehensibility, we now concentrate our longitudinal analysis on starting point (T1) and end point (T5). Additionally, we split ethnocentrism at the midpoint of the scale (4) and analyzed whether consumers low on ethnocentrism responded differently to the presidential elections than consumers high on ethnocentrism<sup>4</sup>. For both home-countries, we ran a repeated measures ANOVA with time (T1 vs. T5) as a within-subjects-factor and ethnocentrism (low vs. high) as a between-subjects-factor. The analysis confirmed the main effect of time and the interaction effect of time  $\times$  ethnocentrism for both, the U.K. and France. For the main effect of time, there is a Wilk's Lambda of  $\lambda = 0.96$  for the U.K. ( $F_{U.K.}(1, 295) = 13.320, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.043$ ) and  $\lambda = 0.95$  for France ( $F_{France}(1, 406) = 21.657, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.051$ ). For the interaction effect of time  $\times$  ethnocentrism,  $\lambda = 0.94$  for the U.K. ( $F_{U.K.}(1, 295) = 18.721, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.060$ ) and  $\lambda = 0.97$  for France ( $F_{France}(1, 406) = 11.878, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.028$ ). Thus, these main and interaction effects are confirmed for the U.K. and France.

When contrasting the willingness to buy at T1 and T5 with t-tests for dependent samples separately for low and high levels of ethnocentrism, we found a notable pattern of interaction (which aligns with the full analysis reported above). For consumers with lower levels of ethnocentrism, the willingness to buy did not change ( $t_{U.K.}(135) = 0.478, p = 0.634$ ;  $t_{France}(99) = -0.717, p = 0.475$ ), while there are statistically significant increases for consumers with higher

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<sup>4</sup> Because such a dichotomization might reduce the statistical power of the analysis, we first reported the full analysis with the continuous specification of ethnocentrism above (see also Appendix A1).

levels of consumer ethnocentrism from T1 to T5 ( $t_{U.K.}(160) = -5.720, p < 0.001$ ;  $t_{France}(307) = -8.103, p < 0.001$ ). As the descriptive statistics in Figure 5 show, consumers with lower ethnocentrism display a relatively high level of willingness to buy, which does not appear to vary over time. By contrast, those consumers with stronger ethnocentrism generally display a lower level of willingness to buy, but these ethnocentric consumers respond to external events, such that their willingness to buy increased after the elections. These results support H<sub>3</sub>.

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Insert Figure 5 here

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## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this multi-wave longitudinal study demonstrate that feelings of political animosity towards a target country respond to external influences over time and that this, in turn, influences consumers' willingness to buy products from the target country. As such, we investigated the effect of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, in which Joe R. Biden won against Donald J. Trump. The study observed a significant decrease in animosity towards the U.S. in both the U.K. and France following the presidential election. This reduction in animosity led to a notable rise in consumers' willingness to purchase U.S. products. However, presumably because the event made animosity feelings more salient to the consumers, we also observed a more intensive negative relationship between consumers' individual level of animosity and their reduced willingness to buy during the course of time. In fact, the direct negative correlation between animosity and willingness to buy steadily increased (in absolute value) in the course of time from  $r_{T1} = -0.40$  in the first wave to  $r_{T5} = -0.51$  in the last wave, leading to a medium-strong relationship. This finding supports the initial finding of Klein et al. (1998) that consumer animosity decreases willingness to buy. However, it also adds to the literature by showing that increased salience of an event strengthens this negative relationship. In international business, willingness to buy and product judgments are strongly related constructs, but animosity effects systematically differ for both (Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Klein *et al.*, 1998). Notably, and in

line with some prior findings (e.g., Gineikiene and Diamantopoulos, 2017; Shoham *et al.*, 2006; Westjohn *et al.*, 2021), we found that animosity negatively affects consumers' product judgment. However, this effect—although statistically significant—is rather weak. Hence, it partly aligns with Klein *et al.*'s (1998) initial claim that the animosity effect on willingness to buy is independent and not mediated by the product evaluation. Providing a new contribution to the literature, we further show that this effect remains stable over time and does not respond to external events. Note that prior research tested animosity effects on product judgments, mainly focusing on events that happened in the past, where the event had already happened or the issue was out of consumers' control. Moreover, we find that the political event's effect on willingness to buy is particularly strong for ethnocentric consumers (i.e., French consumers favoring French products), while the willingness to buy was not affected by such political events for those consumers with lower levels of ethnocentrism.

### **5.1. Theoretical implications**

The study makes several key contributions to the literature on consumer animosity. First, matured over twenty-five years, research in the field of consumer animosity has produced valuable insights into its antecedents, consequences, and moderating factors; however, studies investigating the long-term effects of animosity remain limited (Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Lee and Lee, 2013), presumably because the research design is more demanding than cross-sectional investigations. Responding to calls for more longitudinal research on animosity (e.g., Amine, 2008; Lee and Chon, 2021; Park *et al.*, 2021), this study investigated French and UK consumer animosity towards the U.S. before, during, and after the 2020 presidential election, employing a longitudinal research design. Not only did we track consumer animosity over an extended period after the triggering event, but we also anticipated this event's poten-

tial influence on animosity levels. We were thus able to establish the animosity baseline before the event occurred. This approach is novel in the animosity literature. By doing so, this study, to the best of our knowledge, is the first to demonstrate through a within-subjects design that individual animosity levels fluctuate based on external events. Importantly, we assessed these dynamics in two countries with strong historical and economic ties to the target country.

The panel regression confirmed that the effect of animosity on willingness to buy is malleable and contextual. Our study demonstrates that consumer animosity is present at varying levels across all waves, with consumers exhibiting higher levels of animosity generally showing lower willingness to buy products from the target country. However, the strength of the relationship between animosity and willingness to buy is not constant; it varies depending on contextual factors. This variation occurs not only across different countries but also over time. In our case, temporal fluctuations are influenced by the development of political events, and—presumably—by the frequency and tone of media coverage and consumer discourse surrounding these events. As a result, the relationship between animosity and willingness to buy strengthens over time, likely because intensified media coverage increases the salience of animosity-related feelings, which in turn amplifies their impact on consumer behavior. Notably, our study was based on the observation that a majority of U.K. and French consumers expressed strong preferences for Biden over Trump, projecting Trump's election may cause more negative outcomes on themselves personally and their countries (YouGov, 2020), and that Trump's political agenda could be a cause of political consumer animosity. Our longitudinal study showed that feelings of political animosity were on a higher level in the time before the elections as consumers were insecure and feared that Trump might win again. After Biden's election, the level of consumer animosity dropped, and the willingness to buy American products increased. Clearly, consumer animosity and the animosity effect on willingness

to buy is dynamic and dependent on critical events. Of course, the direction of the effect is dependent on consumers' evaluation of the outcome of the effect (Biden's election as the positive outcome). Past research had only considered consumers' animosity feelings after an event and typically with cross-sectional studies. The present study contributes to animosity theory by stressing the dynamic nature of the construct. For managers of international operating companies, it is important to know that animosity levels and the effects of animosity on willingness to buy can be altered.

Second, the literature on consumer animosity identifies various causes, with most studies focusing on past military actions and current economic issues that have been directed at specific countries as the primary sources of animosity (Klein *et al.*, 1998). This study broadens the understanding of political animosity (Hoffmann *et al.*, 2011). Our findings emphasize that internal politics (that are not necessarily directed at specific foreign countries) can also shape (in our case dampen) consumer hostile attitudes. Notably, European consumers' willingness to buy U.S. products was significantly higher after the election compared to the time before. Of course, the direction of this change depends on consumers' attitudes towards the different possible outcomes of the election. In this research specific case a majority of European consumers' considered Trump's election as a negative event (YouGov, 2020) and the absence of the negative event relieved them from animosity feelings. This change in animosity feelings was accompanied with consumption intentions. Hence, variations in consumer animosity do not only impact consumers' daily routines but also have broader economic implications, influencing national economies and trade relationships.

Further, our study enhances the understanding of the relationship between animosity feelings and product judgments. In their seminal work, Klein *et al.* (1998) emphasized that while consumer animosity negatively affects willingness to buy, it is conceptually unrelated to product judgments. Several studies empirically confirmed this null relationship (e.g., Heinberg,

2017; Khan *et al.*, 2019). However, other research has identified a negative effect of animosity on product judgments (Gineikiene and Diamantopoulos, 2017; Shoham *et al.*, 2016). The present research also confirmed notable differences in the animosity dynamics between both related constructs. Our longitudinal findings demonstrate that the effect of political animosity on willingness to buy is contextual, while its impact on product judgment remains consistent over time. We find some weak negative relationship between consumer animosity and product judgments. The effect of consumer animosity on willingness to buy cannot fully be explained by animosity effects on product judgments which then inform one's willingness to buy. Evidently, the temporal effects investigated in this research appear somehow unrelated for consumers' willingness to buy and their product judgments. Even if consumers hold strong negative feelings against a country reducing their willingness to buy products from that country via emotional or normative processes, their cognitive evaluation of the product judgment remained rather unaffected by temporal fluctuations.

## **5.2. Managerial implications**

Consistent with prior research assessing short-term animosity and willingness to buy relationships (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Shoham *et al.*, 2016; Westjohn *et al.*, 2021), this study finds a significant negative relationship between consumer animosity and willingness to buy over the long term. It is not surprising that researchers have begun exploring strategies to mitigate the effects of animosity (e.g., Angell *et al.*, 2021; Mandler *et al.*, 2023). Our findings offer valuable insights for practitioners. The initial results of our longitudinal study reveal that the harmful effects of animosity are malleable and can fluctuate both in response to negative incidents and also with shifts in political direction. While the underlying reasons of animosity between countries can be stable/historic (e.g., stemming from military conflicts), the activation and strength of animosity feelings can also be determined by situational/contemporary singular events. This

changeable nature of consumer animosity and its effects on willingness to buy also implies that there is room to maneuver for companies.

Our results have direct implications for how companies may mitigate political animosity. However, we are not arguing that managers should only focus on one type of animosity (for example, political animosity alone) in their strategic decision-making; they should bear all types of animosity in mind. First, our results indicate a significant decrease in animosity over time and after specific events that consumers evaluate as positive (or events that might help to prevent a perceived negative event). In this case, European consumers may have been relieved that one candidate had not been elected and this relief reduced animosity feelings. Our findings suggest that changes in a nation's government and political direction can shape animosity toward a given country. In a similar vein, tourism research has also shown that the outcomes of elections in a destination can affect tourism in that destination afterwards (Severt and Hahm, 2020). Managers are therefore well advised to monitor and track fluctuations in consumer animosity, particularly during major political events or turmoil, in order to anticipate shifts in consumer attitudes and adapt their marketing strategies accordingly. After the 2024 election of Trump, the CEOs of many U.S. big tech companies were seeking a closer relationship with the new administration. Many European consumers disapproved with these decisions and, in turn, the evaluation of some brand images suffered, as illustrated by a marked drop in Tesla sales in Germany in January 2025. Likewise, threats of tariffs in late 2024 and early 2025 led Canadian consumers to boycott U.S.-American brands (e.g., Linthicum and Calnan, 2025). Managers should also be ready to adjust their strategies to take advantage of improving consumer sentiment as political tensions subside. Our study shows that the amplitudes will be particularly strong in markets with ethnocentric consumers.

Second, marketing strategies should prioritize mitigating the impact of animosity through positive brand positioning and culturally sensitive, ethically grounded messaging, especially in

regions where consumer sentiments are influenced by geopolitical shifts. Notably, after the 2024 election of Trump, many CEOs of leading U.S. tech firms aligned with Trump and did the opposite of what our research would suggest in order to keep non-U.S. consumers who felt political animosity towards the Trump administration. Customers in other countries might associate their animosity to these companies. Hence, if U.S. companies are culturally sensitive they would have to trade-off whether they rather try to keep the U.S. consumers or the international consumers who feel political animosity. This approach of being politically more sensitive, however, would require managers of internationally operating firms to be aware of the consumers' political attitudes in the different markets. An ethnocentrically-biased view on national politics will prevent them from developing adequate international strategies for the different markets. Marketing research that is culturally open and acknowledges the intricate relations in a globalized economy will help here. Moreover, strategies such as rebranding or market entry should be carefully considered and implemented only when the effects of animosity are expected to be long-lasting. Crafting messages that highlight a brand's positive values and address lingering biases can enhance consumer perceptions and increase willingness to purchase. In cases where animosity is high, minimizing the emphasis on the product's country of origin in the company's communication can help avoid reinforcing negative consumer attitudes. Likewise, brands that are strongly linked to a particular country might explicitly shift the emphasis to a country-of-manufacture or a country-of-design that is different from the country associated with the brand. For example, some foreign car brands highlight the domestic production of certain models sold in the U.S.

Third, our study shows that, as animosity declines, there is an opportunity to increase willingness to buy, while the negative effect on product judgment may persist. Arguably, product judgments are predominantly driven by the target country's product country image. Managers should prioritize strategies that enhance the perceived value and quality of their products to

counteract these long-term biases. By focusing on product differentiation and highlighting superior attributes, companies can mitigate the residual negative perceptions and strengthen their appeal to consumers. While brand managers have very little control over national politics, they have more control over their own product attributes. This is reassuring as the current research shows that product judgments remain relatively stable regardless of consumer animosity and willingness to buy. As such, companies that are able to ride out the storm of political animosity and focus on maintaining positive product evaluations are in a better position to recover following a favorable political event. In contrast, companies that suffer from both poor product judgment (controllable) *and* an unfavorable political climate (uncontrollable) are in a doubly worse off position, in terms of consumer's willingness to buy. This effect may not be evident during 'down times' when the political context is such that consumers' willingness to buy is low for both companies with positive and negative product evaluations. However, once a political event occurs that reduces political animosity, the companies who have maintained positive product evaluations, will experience a much quicker recovery than companies who have confused product evaluations with consumer's willingness to buy. Therefore, this research's recommendation to practitioners is to continually focus on factors within their control (product evaluations) even when willingness to buy may be dependent on factors beyond their control (politics).

Fourth, the effects of animosity are culturally sensitive and vary across different countries. Understanding the cultural and political context of target markets is crucial for managers to develop more effective, culturally attuned marketing campaigns and enhance brand perception. Tailoring strategies to align with local values and sentiments can help improve consumer engagement and mitigate the negative effects associated with animosity.

Lastly, our findings also have implications for the more general society. They show that political decisions, such as the election of a state's president, are not independent from the

national economy's success. Companies will more easily sell their exports internationally if consumers in their target markets do not have animosity feelings against the country's politics.

### **5.3. Limitations and future research directions**

The findings of this study open avenues for future research on consumer animosity. However, like all empirical studies, this one also has limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, our study focuses on only two European countries, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Besides attitudes regarding conservatism (higher in the French sample) and social policy (higher in the U.K. sample, Table 1), the profile of political attitudes largely overlaps in our two samples. Yet, the dynamics of consumer animosity are likely not universal and may systematically vary across countries with different relationships towards the target country. The dynamics in consumer animosity may be different in societies that share the same values and political attitudes as compared to those societies that differ on these dimensions. Future studies may replicate or adjust our approach in other regions of the world. Furthermore, this study centers on a specific political event, which may limit the applicability of the findings to different contexts. Future research could investigate the longitudinal effects of animosity in diverse cultural settings and across various events.

Second, while our study considered a time frame of five months, future research could benefit from examining longer durations. The study by Lasarov *et al.* (2023) on corporate transgressions recently demonstrated that emotions can cool down over time and that consumers' boycott intentions may diminish. In the context of binational transgressions, the time consumers require to forget and forgive may be significantly extended, with some conflicts persisting across generations. Thus, we advocate for animosity research that spans a larger time frame to capture these long-term dynamics.

Third, our study showed that consumers with different levels of ethnocentrism reacted differently. Future studies could incorporate additional variables to investigate why and how consumer responses to binational transgressions vary over time. Research might explore factors that influence individual differences in consumer animosity and corresponding behaviors. These factors could include individual-level variables such as political attitudes, personality traits, emotions, and coping strategies, as well as meso-level and macro-level influences like economic conditions, media impact, and social movements.

Lastly, we encourage scholars to test new ways to countervail the influences of animosity. Gineikiene and Diamantopoulus (2017) referred to the nostalgia of historically connected markets and Mandler et al. (2023) referred to perceived brand globalness as strategies to mitigate animosity effects. Our research opens up new directions for mitigation strategies as it has shown that animosity levels are dynamic and that the relationship between animosity and the willingness to buy is also fluctuating. Hence, it is worthwhile for managers of internationally operating companies to try to influence animosity feelings and animosity effects. In particular, political animosity is often a milder form of animosity than war animosity and therefore, managers are well advised to try to counteract it. However, future research should support managers by testing strategies that focus on the changeable nature of political animosity.

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## 7. Tables

Table 1. Socio-demographic information on the final sample in France and the U.K.

	France (N = 408)	U.K. (N = 297)
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	51.0%	49.8%
Male	49.0%	50.2%
<i>Education</i>		
School diploma	29.2%	20.5%
High school diploma with a-levels/equivalent	26.7%	33.7%
Bachelor's degree/equivalent	31.1%	30.0%
Master's degree/equivalent	9.1%	7.1%
PhD/equivalent	3.7%	2.7%
Other	0.2%	6.1%
<i>Neighborhood</i>		
Rural area	36.3%	25.3%
Mid-size town/suburb of a mid-size town	38.7%	45.8%
Large city/suburb of a large city	25.0%	29.0%
<i>Income</i>		
Above average	9.8%	12.5%
On average	56.3%	45.3%
Below average	33.9%	42.2%
<i>Political orientation*</i>		
Conservatism	11.91 (52.57)	3.48 (57.80)
Liberalism	17.38 (45.59)	14.09 (49.03)
Social policy	-1.10 (55.10)	21.33 (48.41)
Environmentalism	31.79 (46.16)	32.49 (43.60)
Patriotism	42.50 (44.23)	34.06 (51.93)

Notes. \*Means (standard deviations) for the respective countries on a scale from -100 to +100

Source: Authors' own work

Table 2. Measurement model of the MG-CFA

Construct	Measurement items	France		U.K.	
		$\lambda$	$\alpha$	$\lambda$	$\alpha$
<i>Political Animosity</i>	(1) The international appearance of the U.S. is embarrassing.	0.82		0.89	
	(2) I disapprove of the politics of the U.S.	0.87		0.75	
	(3) The influence of politicians from the U.S. puts [Britons/French] out of work.	0.75		0.72	
	Source: Hoffmann <i>et al.</i> (2011)		0.82		0.85
<i>Willingness to Buy *</i>	(1) I would feel guilty if I bought an American product.	0.87		0.86	
	(2) Whenever possible, I avoid buying American products.	0.89		0.90	
	(3) I do not like the idea of owning American products.	0.83		0.78	
	Source: Klein <i>et al.</i> (1998)		0.88		0.90
<i>Product Judgments</i>	Products made in the U.S. ...				
	(1) are carefully produced and have fine workmanship.	0.79		0.67	
	(2) show a very high degree of technological advancement.	0.80		0.69	
	(3) usually show a very clever use of color and design.	0.85		0.77	
	(4) are usually quite reliable and seem to last the desired length of time.	0.91		0.89	
	(5) are usually a good value for the money.	0.86		0.72	
	Source: Klein <i>et al.</i> (1998)		0.86		0.92
<i>Ethnocentrism</i>	(1) Only those products that are unavailable in [the U.K./France] should be imported.	0.72		0.57	
	(2) It is not right to purchase foreign products, because it puts [Britons/French] out of work.	0.90		0.89	
	(3) We should purchase products manufactured in [the U.K./France] instead of letting other countries getting rich at our expense.	0.81		0.86	
	(4) [Britons/French] should not buy foreign products, because it damages the [British/French] economy and causes unemployment.	0.89		0.92	
	(5) It may be more expensive in the long run, but I prefer to support [British/French] products.	0.62		0.66	
	Source: Shimp and Sharma (1987)		0.89		0.89

Notes. MG-CFA model fit:  $\chi^2(196) = 495,385$  at  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.53$ ; CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.05;  $\lambda$  = standardized factor loadings;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's Alpha; results correspond to the first wave T1 (Table A2 in the Appendix summarizes the MG-CFA results for France and the U.K. for T2-T5); countries in brackets refer to the home country (France, U.K.). \*Indicators of willingness to buy are measured inversely (indicating reluctance to buy). Following the procedure of the authors who originally developed this scale (Klein *et al.*, 1998) and most subsequent work (e.g., Abraham and Reitman, 2018; Leong *et al.*, 2008; Maher and Mady, 2010; Shoham *et al.*, 2006), we reverse coded these items before running the analysis.

Source: Authors' own work

Table 3. Means and standard deviations

France	T1		T2		T3		T4		T5	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
PA	4.92	1.14	4.74	1.22	4.57	1.19	4.44	1.22	4.33	1.20
WTB	4.34	1.40	4.52	1.50	4.56	1.47	4.79	1.51	4.81	1.46
PJ	4.29	0.81	4.35	0.90	4.42	0.92	4.40	0.97	4.47	0.91
CET	4.88	1.18								
U.K.	T1		T2		T3		T4		T5	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
PA	4.53	1.36	4.55	1.38	4.56	1.35	4.36	1.37	4.19	1.14
WTB	5.00	1.35	5.12	1.45	5.20	1.45	5.24	1.46	5.26	1.43
PJ	4.34	0.90	4.34	0.96	4.35	1.06	4.43	1.05	4.46	1.05
CET	4.24	1.24								

Notes. PA = political animosity, WTB = willingness to buy, PJ = product judgment, CET = ethnocentrism.

Source: Authors' own work

Table 4. Correlation coefficients and AVEs

		<b>France</b>				<b>U.K.</b>			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1	Political Animosity	0.65				0.62			
2	Willingness to Buy	-0.39	0.74			-0.44	0.71		
3	Product Judgments	-0.39	0.32	0.67		-0.14	0.25	0.60	
4	Ethnocentrism	-0.17	-0.41	0.08	0.63	0.27	-0.55	-0.01	0.62

*Notes.* The diagonal elements represent the average variance extracted (AVE); All correlations are taken from the CFA.

*Source:* Authors' own work

Table 5. Results of the linear panel regression on willingness to buy

	b	SE	z	p	CI[95]	
					LL	UL
Animosity	-0.225	0.034	-6.55	0.000	-0.292	-0.157
Country						
France	-0.203	0.175	-1.16	0.244	-0.546	0.139
Animosity $\times$ Country						
France	-0.068	0.034	-1.99	0.047	-0.136	-0.001
Wave						
T2	0.399	0.169	2.36	0.018	0.068	0.730
T3	0.507	0.172	2.95	0.003	0.171	0.844
T4	0.806	0.168	4.81	0.000	0.477	1.135
T5	0.610	0.167	3.65	0.000	0.282	0.937
Animosity $\times$ Wave						
T2	-0.059	0.035	-1.69	0.091	-0.127	0.009
T3	-0.076	0.036	-2.14	0.032	-0.146	-0.006
T4	-0.123	0.035	-3.48	0.000	-0.192	-0.054
T5	-0.083	0.036	-2.34	0.019	-0.153	-0.013
constant	5.997	0.171	35.03	0.000	5.661	6.332
$\rho$	0.602					
$R^2$	0.238					

Notes. Dependent variable: willingness to buy. SE = standard error, CI[95] = confidence interval, 95%, LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit. Country baseline = U.K. Wave baseline = T1.

Source: Authors' own work

Table 6. Results of the linear panel regression on product judgment

	<b>b</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>[95% CI]</b>	
					LL	UL
Animosity	-0.067	0.026	-2.58	0.010	-0.118	-0.016
Country						
France	-0.310	0.129	-2.41	0.016	-0.562	-0.058
Animosity × Country						
France	0.070	0.026	2.72	0.007	0.019	0.120
Wave						
T2	0.197	0.130	1.52	0.128	-0.057	0.451
T3	0.117	0.132	0.89	0.372	-0.140	0.375
T4	0.034	0.128	0.26	0.791	-0.218	0.286
T5	0.164	0.128	1.28	0.200	-0.087	0.414
Animosity × Wave						
T2	-0.033	0.027	-1.26	0.209	-0.086	0.019
T3	-0.008	0.027	-0.29	0.771	-0.061	0.046
T4	0.015	0.027	0.55	0.580	-0.038	0.068
T5	-0.005	0.027	-0.17	0.864	-0.058	0.049
constant	4.608	0.128	36.01	0.000	4.357	4.859
ρ	0.544					
R <sup>2</sup>	0.040					

*Notes.* Dependent variable: product judgment. SE = standard error, CI[95] = confidence interval, 95%, LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit. Country baseline = U.K. Wave baseline = T1.

*Source:* Authors' own work

Table 7. Results of the linear panel regression with ethnocentrism on willingness to buy

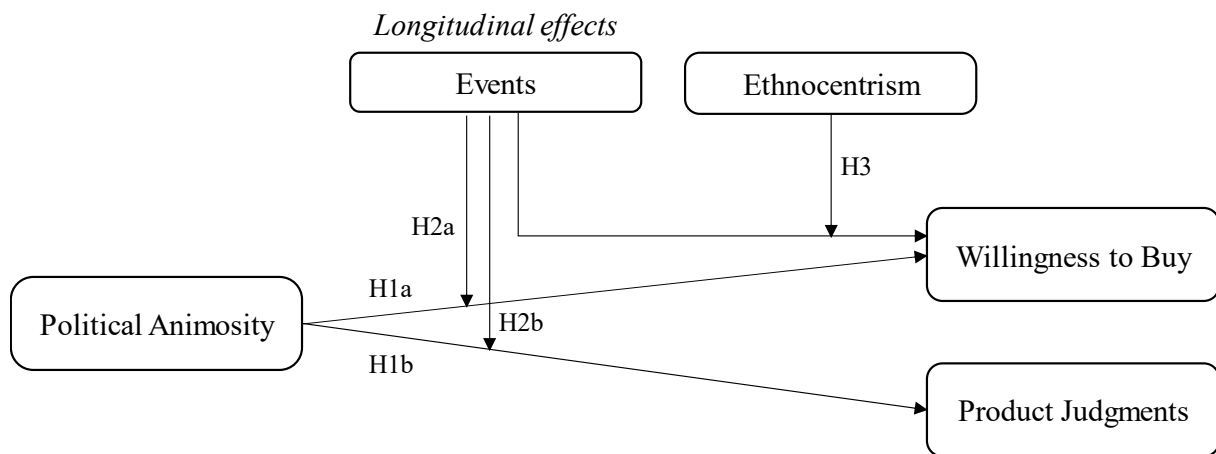
	b	SE	z	p	CI[95]	
					LL	UL
Animosity	-0.224	0.041	-5.52	0.000	-0.303	-0.144
Country						
France	0.318	0.448	0.71	0.477	-0.559	1.195
Animosity × Country						
France	-0.033	0.058	-0.58	0.565	-0.146	0.080
Wave						
T2	-0.626	0.344	-1.82	0.069	-1.300	0.048
T3	-0.759	0.347	-2.18	0.029	-1.439	-0.078
T4	-0.010	0.344	-0.03	0.976	-0.684	0.664
T5	-0.468	0.333	-1.41	0.160	-1.121	0.184
Country (France) × Wave						
T2	0.193	0.460	0.42	0.674	-0.708	1.094
T3	0.383	0.466	0.82	0.411	-0.530	1.295
T4	-0.245	0.458	-0.53	0.593	-1.141	0.652
T5	-0.154	0.450	-0.34	0.733	-1.037	0.729
Animosity × Wave						
T2	-0.072	0.049	-1.47	0.142	-0.168	0.024
T3	-0.064	0.050	-1.28	0.201	-0.163	0.034
T4	-0.153	0.050	-3.05	0.002	-0.251	-0.055
T5	-0.137	0.050	-2.74	0.006	-0.236	-0.039
Animosity × Country (France) × Wave						
T2	0.003	0.070	0.04	0.971	-0.135	0.140
T3	-0.049	0.072	-0.69	0.489	-0.190	0.091
T4	0.010	0.071	0.14	0.892	-0.130	0.149
T5	0.060	0.072	0.84	0.403	-0.081	0.200
Ethnocentrism	-0.392	0.058	-6.73	0.000	-0.506	-0.278
Ethnocentrism × Country						
France	-0.098	0.079	-1.25	0.210	-0.252	0.056
Ethnocentrism × Wave						
T2	0.254	0.053	4.79	0.000	0.150	0.358
T3	0.298	0.053	5.61	0.000	0.194	0.402
T4	0.207	0.053	3.90	0.000	0.103	0.311
T5	0.290	0.053	5.50	0.000	0.187	0.394
Ethnocentrism × Country (France) × Wave						
T2	-0.070	0.072	-0.98	0.327	-0.211	0.070
T3	-0.087	0.072	-1.22	0.224	-0.227	0.053
T4	0.043	0.072	0.60	0.548	-0.098	0.184
T5	-0.027	0.071	-0.38	0.704	-0.167	0.113
constant	7.673	0.326	23.51	0.000	7.033	8.313
ρ	0.589					
R <sup>2</sup>	0.281					

Notes. Panel regression, N = 3,525, random effects. Dependent variable: willingness to buy. SE = standard error, CI[95] = confidence interval, 95%, LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit. Country baseline = U.K. Wave baseline = T1. Wald  $\chi^2(29) = 731.09, p < 0.001$ .

Source: Authors' own work

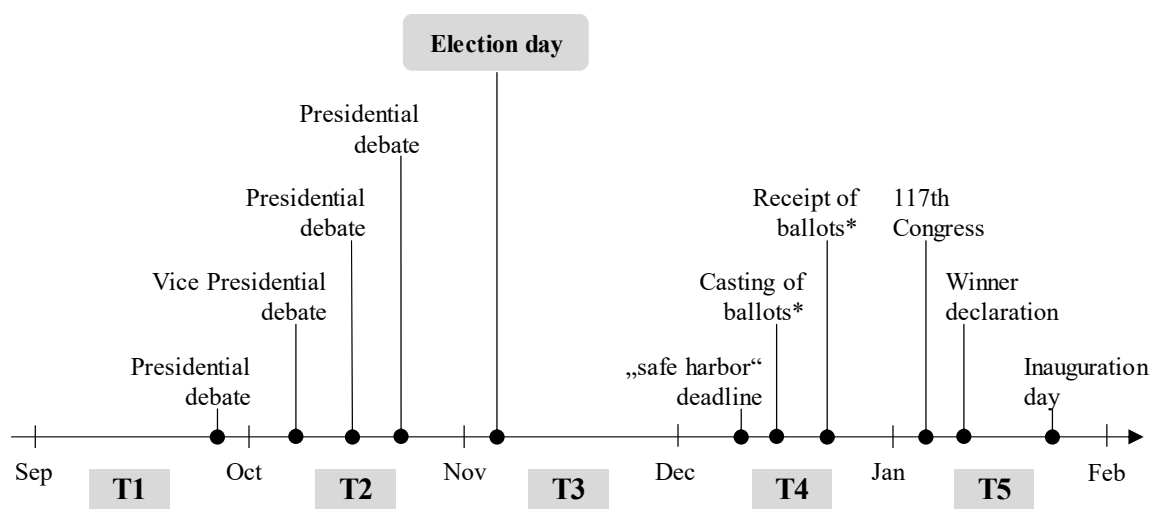
## 8. Figures

Figure 1. Theoretical framework



Source: Authors' own work

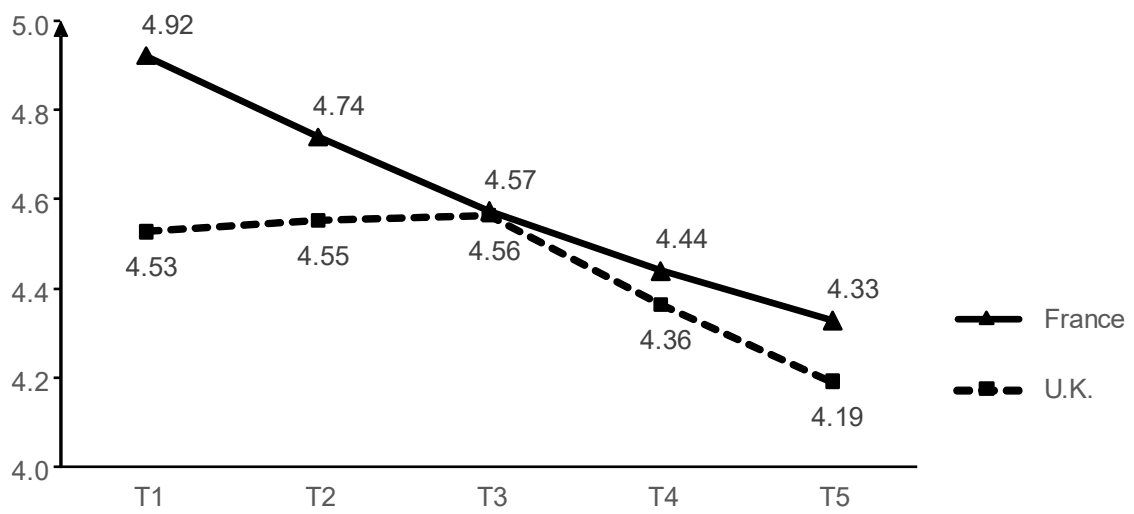
Figure 2. Timeline of the 2020 U.S. Presidential Elections and the Data Collection Waves



*Notes.* \*The electors of the Electoral College cast ballots for president and vice president; figure based on J.P. Morgan Global Research (2020).

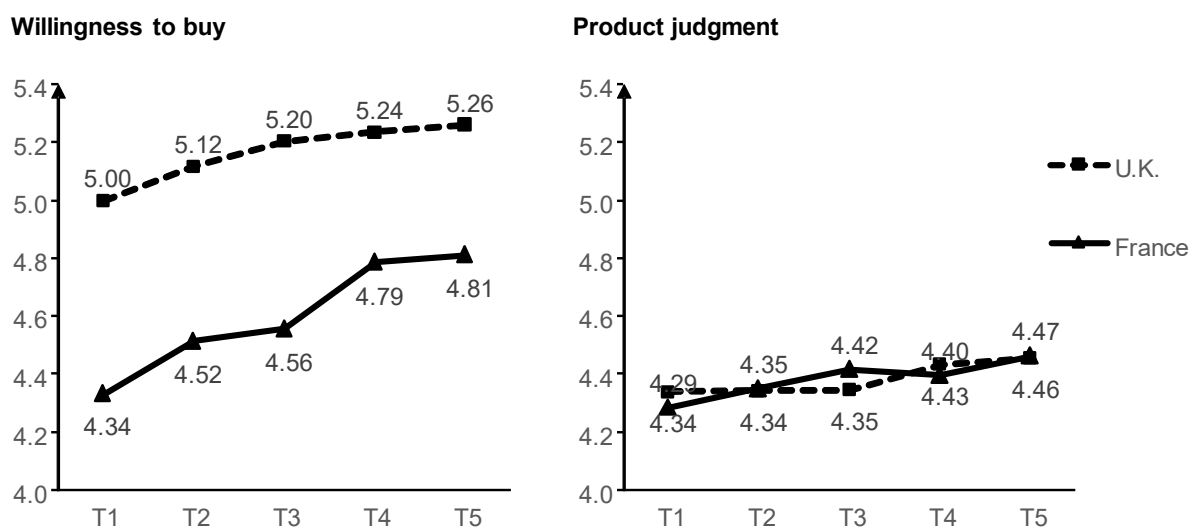
*Source:* Authors' own work

Figure 3. Consumers' animosity toward the U.S. over time (T1 to T5)



Source: Authors' own work

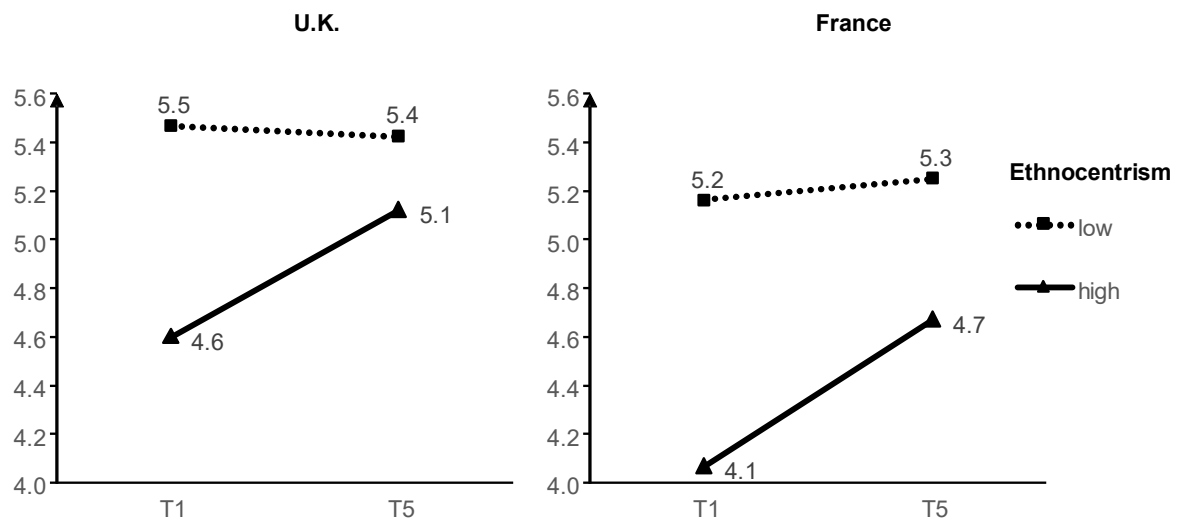
Figure 4. Consumers' willingness to buy U.S. products and product judgment over time



Notes. Significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) for willingness to buy: U.K.: T1/T3, T1/T4, T1/T5. France: T1/T2, T1/T3, T1/T4, T1/T5, T2/T4, T2/T5, T3/T4, T3/T5. Significant differences for product judgment: U.K.: none, France: T1/T3, T1/T5.

Source: Authors' own work

Figure 5. The moderating role of consumer ethnocentrism (WTB at T1 vs. T5)



Source: Authors' own work

## 9. Appendix

Table A1. Sample sizes and attrition rate of the five waves

Wave	Sample size			Attrition rate (in %)		
	U.K.	France	whole sample	U.K.	France	whole sample
1	378	646	1024	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	372	624	996	1.6	3.4	2.7
3	361	619	980	4.5	4.2	4.3
4	366	593	959	3.2	8.2	6.3
5	327	572	899	13.5	11.5	12.2

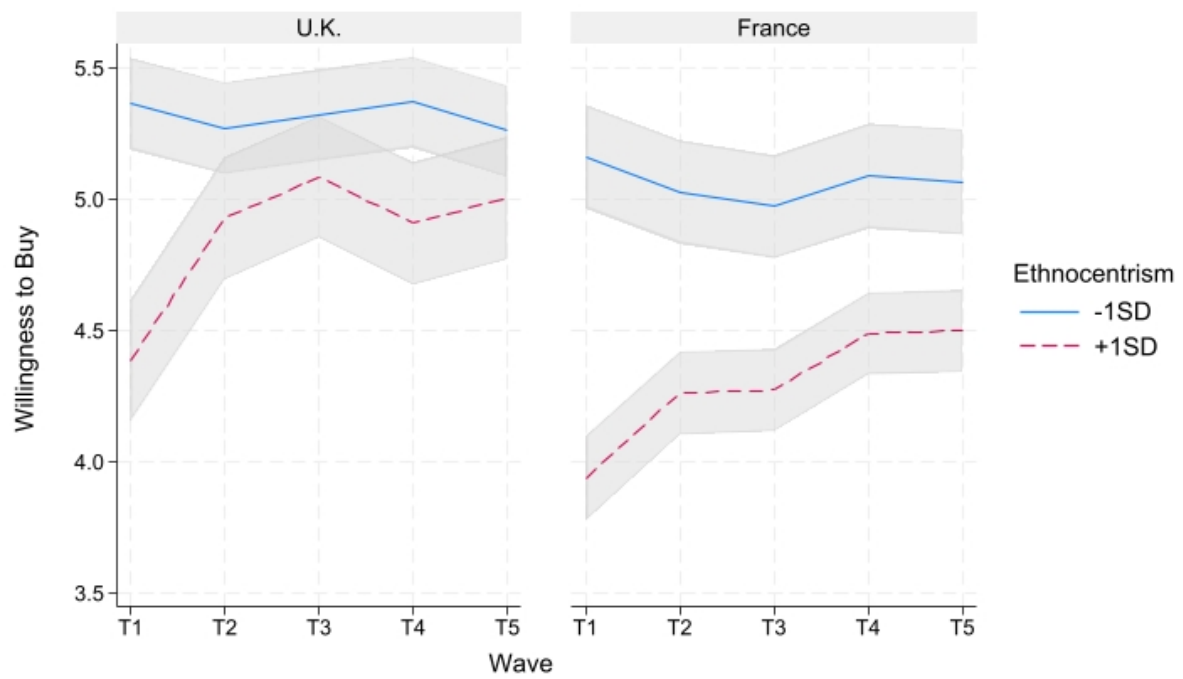
Table A2. Measurement model of the MG-CFA, waves T2-T5

Construct	Item	France								U.K.							
		T2		T3		T4		T5		T2		T3		T4		T5	
		$\lambda$	$\alpha$	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	$\lambda$	$\alpha$
Political Animosity	(1)	0.90		0.84		0.88		0.92		0.94		0.87		0.87		0.87	
	(2)	0.80		0.86		0.75		0.85		0.77		0.76		0.85		0.87	
	(3)	0.63		0.73		0.79		0.73		0.60		0.75		0.72		0.67	
			0.81		0.85		0.85		0.84		0.82		0.85		0.85		0.87
Willingness to Buy	(1)																
	(2)	0.88		0.87		0.89		0.87		0.89		0.89		0.89		0.93	
	(3)	0.92		0.96		0.93		0.96		0.89		0.90		0.93		0.87	
		0.87		0.84		0.83		0.82		0.80		0.82		0.85		0.82	
		0.89		0.91		0.92		0.90		0.92		0.92		0.91		0.91	
Product Judgments	(1)	0.85		0.87		0.87		0.84		0.75		0.77		0.74		0.76	
	(2)	0.80		0.86		0.89		0.85		0.84		0.83		0.83		0.82	
	(3)	0.82		0.88		0.86		0.86		0.87		0.87		0.87		0.83	
	(4)	0.92		0.91		0.91		0.91		0.85		0.89		0.88		0.88	
	(5)	0.90		0.86		0.89		0.86		0.80		0.86		0.80		0.74	
			0.91		0.92		0.91		0.90		0.93		0.94		0.95		0.94

Notes:  $\lambda$  = standardized factor loadings;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's Alpha, MG-CFA model fit for T2:  $\chi^2(82) = 190,654$  at  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.33$ ; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.04; T3:  $\chi^2(82) = 218,321$  at  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.66$ ; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.05; T4:  $\chi^2(82) = 214,650$  at  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.62$ ; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.05; T5:  $\chi^2(82) = 243,611$  at  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.97$ ; CFI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.05.

Source: Authors' own work

Figure A1. Moderating effect of ethnocentrism on willingness to buy U.S. products



*Notes.* Blue solid line: 1SD above ethnocentrism's mean, red dotted line: 1SD below ethnocentrism's mean, CI bands are shaded grey.

*Source:* Authors' own work