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Powerful political actors in the international system quite frequently adopt unilateral policies whose implications extend beyond their respective borders. Examples include financial market regulation as well as taxation, trade and environmental policies. They do so to avoid lowest common-denominator outcomes in areas where they desire more ambitious international policies, and to motivate or coerce other countries to shoulder a part of the burden associated with problem solving. This article explores whether and how such unilateralism affects public opinion in other countries, arguing that such analysis can point to external constraints on unilateralism and is worthwhile also for normative reasons. Empirically, we examine the effect of a major unilateral European Union (EU) climate policy initiative, which regulates emissions from aircraft, on public opinion in India and the United States, the two largest democracies outside the EU. Based on survey experiments, we study the effects of cost and sovereignty considerations on people's evaluation of the EU's new policy. The results show that both types of concern play a significant role and may act as a constraint on unilateral European climate policy.

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