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**THE UNITED STATES' STRINGENT SOVEREIGNTY: HOW FOREIGN POLICY
FRAMING PRIORITIZES SECURITY OVER HUMAN RIGHTS**

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Abstract

American policymakers utilize valence framing, purposeful descriptions of outcomes as positive or negative, to influence the opinions of voters while maintaining the moral superiority felt by many citizens in the liberal Western hegemon. This study intended to combine the political theories of Constructivism and Realism to form Constructive Realism, a theory that emphasizes the significance of state power and norms as joint influences on constituents. Constructive realism was then applied to four case studies – the UN Security Council, International Criminal Court, Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. This study also intended to highlight the relationship between these various factors, and how the use of negative framing of international human rights treaties can manifest increased out-group threat perception, and preference of domestic security over global human rights. An online, mixed-methods survey involving several different questionnaires was utilized, as well as a framing manipulation vignette. Unfortunately, the vignette manipulation was not statistically significant. But participants who perceived more conflict were more likely to approve of the fabricated treaty compared to those who perceive less conflict. Threat perception was significantly correlated with all dependent variables other than rates of political knowledge and attitudes about human rights. Moral superiority displayed a weak negative correlation with perceived threat. Attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations and U.S. security and military funding, as well as cognitive bias and nationalism, all correlated positively with perceived conflict.

Keywords: Human rights, United States, realistic conflict theory, valence framing effect

The United States' Stringent Sovereignty: How Foreign Policy Framing Prioritizes Security Over Human Rights

The United States is a notably dominant country in terms of economic power and military security. As the western hegemon, many nations value the United States' actions and fear their strength. While respect may have dwindled in recent years due to intragovernmental squabbles and inept management of domestic situations, the U.S. is nevertheless recognized by most as the sole global superpower (McNeil, 2019). Thus, it would be expected for the United States to uphold its own values, especially those surrounding civil and human rights (Holsti, 2010). The political theories of realism (Mearsheimer, 1995) and constructivism (Wendt, 1992) would support U.S. international interventions that align with the moral values preached by many American policymakers; whether that be due to overall state power held as a hegemon or domestic controlling norms, respectively. Yet, the U.S. has overwhelmingly failed to uphold its own ethical declarations about global justices and equality. Thus, realism and constructivism theoretically fail in this area, primarily due to both theories lacking discussion about the implications of valence framing and conflict perception.

Rather than protect the equality of all people, internationally safeguarding human rights, the U.S. first and foremost maintains its sovereignty. This choice is baffling given domestic policies that are intended to uphold these values. The puzzle therein lies in the clashing between national ethics and international actions. This thesis intends to illuminate the convoluted relationship between the moral framing of political issues, the subsequent perception of threat involved in international relations, and how this is visible in the lack of support for the treaties discussed herein as well as constituent values.

The U.S. often uses moral and identity-based statements when speaking about international policy issues, to be framed as an ethical liberal hegemon (Thompson, 2020). However, these statements are phrased in a way that frames the actual participation in and ratification of treaties in a negative light, thereby dodging the upstanding restraints that these agreements present (Glazer, 1976). As such, policymakers and political actors are able to perform different roles and present varying frames depending on the situation, attempting to maintain moral norms for a certain audience while dissuading a secondary set of individuals from supporting foreign policies that would increase human rights interventions (De Witte, 2019). Examples of this variation in framing are provided in the case study portion of this thesis.

The argument herein is that United States policymakers vacillate between treating organizations and treaties as domestic versus international issues. Policymakers have created a tradeoff format, two separate levels of policy discussions and framing, rather than a Venn diagram design. As such, politicians are able to combine the two levels when they deem fit, treating an issue as both national and global, but also disconnect them when desired to achieve a different goal. This format has been enabled through the scale by which constituents rely on policymakers for political information, and the wide berth of information that never passes through Congress to reach constituent ideals and voting. For example, many international treaties never make it past the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, meaning that constituents are largely unaware of treaties unless they are proposed to the full Senate floor as being a national necessity. Yet, domestic issues are never discussed by that committee even if they have international effects. They are treated as two entirely separate entities. While in some senses this level format may appear positive, it allows policymakers – as opposed to international bodies and constituents – to be judge, jury, and executioner in terms of necessity of intervention. The primary

circumstances that encourage alterations in framing are political partisanship and perceived threat from other countries. In terms of political partisanship, an international issue is framed in terms of domestic polarization relating to party. As for perceived threat from other countries, policymakers frame an issue based on the potential risk that certain other states involved may or may not pose.

Treaties that present the potential to increase the effectiveness of international human rights policies are given different domestic valences by policymakers in comparison to those which benefit U.S. military power and security. Realist literature highlights the political influence emerging from state power and strength. As expected based on this literature, state power is utilized as both a sword and a shield, a weapon and a defense. It can both bolster the reputation a state has and damage the perception of another (Mearsheimer, 2001). However, constructivist literature emphasizes a significant point, that perceptions are built almost entirely on the repetition and affirmation of norms and values (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Wendt, 1992). Thus, the framing of treaties created by policymakers must maintain a balancing act, one that upholds traditional American moral values and manages to avoid active participation in international treaties that do not present a direct benefit for the United States. In the results, the moral framing of treaties and organizations by policymakers and their influence on constituents was analyzed using a valence framing manipulation.

Previous studies have shown that although human rights norms have been largely internationalized, their implementation remains almost exclusively national (Donnelly, 1986). Thus, despite international human rights being recognized as a global necessity, it is up to individual states to implement these rights within their own boundaries. In the case of the United States, despite the consistent recognition that international treaties are a necessity for successful

cooperation, the U.S. has repeatedly refused to ratify treaties that it has previously supported. Foreign states have no internationally recognized obligation to protect foreign nationals abroad; however, they also fail to take initiative when it should be taken. Should two states enter conflict, and one be severely outgunned and outmanned, countries uninvolved in the initial attack have no requirement to assist the outnumbered state even if it is arguably the right thing to do based on the loss of innocent lives. Current norms of state sovereignty prohibit states from acting coercively abroad against virtually all violations of human rights, genocide being the exception that proves the rule (Donnelly, 2013). The U.S. misunderstands the meaning and scope of human rights, making these rights more difficult and complicated than necessary, and falsely equate citizens' rights and human rights – presuming that an international treaty will have a direct negative effect on national law (Minkler, 2013). There is direct tension between national rights in the U.S. and international human rights treaties that has been created through the exploitation of a false narrative that will be further discussed in the succeeding case studies. The most important problems facing humanity are in the arena of international relations, where independent, egoistic nations face each other in a state of near anarchy (Axelrod, 1984).

The relationships between framing, value recognition, threat perception, and group categorization are crucial for understanding American foreign policy and treaty ratification. The political puzzle posed herein will be illuminated through the analysis of United States foreign policy under the lenses of domestic in-group bias and negative framing, as well as perception of conflict. Framing will be investigated using political statements made by policymakers, and value recognition will be explored in a similar format. This examination will be conducted using the context of four critical international committees and treaties often correlated with human rights protections. These organizations and documents are the United Nations Security Council

(UNSC), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

These four cases are relevant to the argument at hand because of their salience in Senate discussions of international relations and domestic values. As a case foil, the UNSC is an organization in which the United States is a permanent member, thereby providing it with immense powers. The ICC was vehemently rejected by U.S. policymakers for years due to fears around potential effects for domestic law, fears that were entirely unfounded. Both CEDAW and the CRC are intended to explicitly protect the human rights of minority individuals, women and children, and yet have been denied by the U.S. due to the possibility that they could alter gender roles in typical, heteronormative family units. In actuality, the latter three of these cases have been rejected by the U.S. under the idea that moral values would be shifted in an unwanted manner. This expansion beyond the fundamentals stands in opposition to the ethical constraints that guide U.S. foreign policy as detailed by biased policymakers. Hence, this labyrinth of cases and this puzzle of values and actions must be dissected to truly understand the complexity of United States foreign policy. It should be noted that these cases are not to imply that the U.S. would not lose a certain semblance of judicial sovereignty by participating, but that the U.S. actively places this sovereignty above the maintenance of international human rights.

Literary and Theoretical Basis

Valence Framing Effect and Realistic Conflict Theory

To truly clarify the extent of this study, several concrete definitions must be provided to the set of theories and terms often referenced throughout this paper. Political behavior and choices will be analyzed as a function of in-group favoritism and framing, more specifically, realistic conflict theory (RCT) and the valence framing effect (VFE). In-group favoritism is the

pattern of favoring individuals perceived to be within one's own social group as opposed to individuals perceived as 'other.' These social groups are often reinforced with heuristics, a learned process by which individuals make judgments and group their perceptions quickly and efficiently. Research has shown that these groups can be formed through short-standing organizations, and that the mere perception of in-group circumstances spurs favoritism (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) and increases susceptibility to framing. Framing is the process by which particular topics are phrased. This leads to the framing effect which is cognitive bias wherein an individual's choice from a set of options is influenced more by how the information is worded than by the information itself (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Research has demonstrated that in moments of uncertainty, people are particularly influenced by framing, heuristics, and biases promoted by other individuals who are within their perceived in-group (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Thus, if a constituent is uncertain about how they should perceive or vote on a certain issue, they are more likely to abide by their Senators' statements.

RCT is a theory that states that hostility between groups is caused by direct competition for limited resources (Sherif, 1956). However, these so-called 'resources' do not have to be tangible, or even real. As long as a person perceives an imaginary threat, perception of conflict emerges (Sherif, 1956). For example, an individual may assume that there is a certain amount of power in the world that must be taken for one's own country, and the pursuit of power could incite warfare. Even if one does not feel personally attacked, perceptions of threat to one's own group can trigger prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. People may also become resentful of other groups because of a sense of relative deprivation (Halevy et al., 2010). VFE is the result of a natural tendency of human perception and a learned cognitive bias that all individuals have (McDonald et al., 2021). Through exposure, we have been conditioned to seek out positive

terminology in an accepting manner, and to avoid or at least be more cautious with negative language. The principle is that our choices are influenced by the way they are framed through different diction, settings, and situations. For example, if a specific political party frames immigration into the United States as a dramatic loss of resources and job opportunities, individuals within that party may develop a bias against immigrants because they perceive a threat (McDonald et al., 2021). This perception of threat can be advanced into the treaty ratification processes of U.S. foreign policy. Both of these phenomena, RCT and VFE, are applicable to American foreign policy due to the extremity of partisan politics, the prominence of domestic politics over international politics, and the broad lack of knowledge surrounding global human rights violations outside of the United States.

Constructive Realism

For this study, the international relations (IR) theories of realism and constructivism will be combined to form 'constructive realism.' On one hand, realism is a theory that tends to emphasize the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies (Mearsheimer, 2001). Realists focus on three primary characteristics: (1) realists treat states as the principal actors in world politics, with a large focus on great powers; (2) realists believe that the behavior of great powers is influenced mainly by their external environment, not by their internal characteristics; and (3) realists hold that calculations about power dominate states' thinking, and that states compete for power among themselves. In the case of this research, the primary issue lies with assumption number two, that behavior is controlled primarily by external factors, rather than internal characteristics. Realists tend to minimize the power of not only domestic politics, but also in-group favoritism and framing by focusing on

government power instead of constituent norms and values. Hence, realism on its own is not substantive enough for this study.

On the other hand, constructivism focuses on the transformation of identity and interest through an “evolution of cooperation” (Wendt, p. 418, 1992). This evolution faces two large constraints due to its drastic nature, the first being that the process is incremental and slow. The second, more fundamental, constraint is that the evolution of cooperation presupposes that actors do not identify negatively with one another (Wendt, 1992). These constraints are not applicable for American politics because of the extreme partisanship that has spilled over into further polarization. Thus, constructivism overemphasizes the power of norms and their influence. While constructivism is significant – it tends to neglect the legitimacy and leverage that states have as great powers rather than collections of individuals. Enemy perception is largely formed through suspected threats to state power, sovereignty, and security; rather than solely a potential difference in values (Maoz et al., 2007). It is also important to note that norm cascades – which is the state adoption of norms based on international pressures – is not always reliable nor applicable (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). In the case of the United States and international human rights treaties, domestic pressure is far greater and more influential than foreign demands. Therefore, constructivism on its own is also incapable of applying entirely to this study.

Constructive realism is a theory proposed within this study to account for the psychological elements of in-group favoritism and the effects of framing. Constructive realism combines constructivism and realism, while removing the faulty constraints. This theory specifically recognizes the mutual significance of state power and cultural norms, yet also argues that both of these influences alone do not have the requisite force to shape foreign policy. Constructive realism also explicitly includes psychological concepts to form a roadmap of

political decision-making. Both theory and evidence suggest that legitimacy constrains U.S. policy in a weaker and more conditional manner. This is most prominently viewed in the United States' maintenance of power despite their lack of participation in several international human rights treaties (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2008). In the international area, a failure to honor a commitment hurts a state's reputation because it signals that it is prepared to breach its obligations. This breach can affect future outcomes, obligations, and opportunities.

This thesis intends to clarify how the United States takes active steps to establish a reputation as a norm abiding state and a liberal hegemon, all while failing to ratify significant human rights treaties. Framing an issue as one that might negatively affect American values and autonomy sets off a different chain of policy and public opinion responses than a framing that sets up an issue as both in line with U.S. values and a non-threat. Norms and values may not inspire an immediate, direct effect in the "sense that a bullet through the heart causes death," but they do set a chain of heuristics and events into motion (Kratowil & Ruggie, 1986). Cultural environments affect not only the incentives for different kinds of state behavior but also the basic character of states – the state identity – that emerges through alterations in context (Jepperson et al., 1996).

Therefore, the nation itself and the power it wields are also a massive influence in security policy and active decisions to not involve the U.S. in international human rights disputes. Western policymakers trumpet the importance of creating webs of overlapping institutions outside of the typical areas of national government. However, the U.S. has no desire to potentially waste time and resources to uphold these institutions (Mearsheimer, 1995). Constructive realism is key to this puzzle because there is a necessary balance between norms and values, along with genuine state power, needed in order to satisfy public opinion. This

balance is not always met; thus framing becomes necessary for policymakers as a tool to manipulate constituents. This framing requirement will be approached through the individual case studies. In-group favoritism and selfishness prevent the United States from actualizing the values it preaches. Constructive realism encapsulates both the character of the U.S. in international relations and the in-group favoritism prompted through framing.

Treaty Ratification

United States foreign policy is a deceptive and dynamic field, especially the regulations surrounding treaty agreement, ratification, and implementation. The base outline for the treaty processes is negotiation, transmission to the Senate, and entry into force. Negotiation involves the U.S. President, the Secretary of State, and other invited individuals working together to create a comprehensive and detailed document that will act as the treaty within the United States. This version of the treaty should be comparable, if not the exact same, to the original used by other nations. The Constitution authorizes the President to make treaties, but the President must then submit them to the Senate for its approval. Once the treaty has been agreed upon by the President and the Secretary of State, it enters the Senate whereby a majority vote must be passed before further steps are taken. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) is integral to this process, as the treaty must first successfully pass through the committee before being considered on the Senate floor. Lastly, entry into force involves the President presenting this domestically agreed upon treaty to the international body and set of states that originally created it. Should the body agree to the U.S. version of the treaty, then the U.S. has officially ratified the treaty and it is to be upheld both domestically and internationally.

While the treaty process described may appear simple, in practice it is anything but. Incentives, constraints, and biased influences play particularly powerful roles in governmental

proceedings. Legislator behavior is largely determined by ideological considerations based on political party and environment salience. Studies have shown that re-election is one of many factors that is capable of altering political behavior. Specifically, re-election concerns increase participation in domestic politics and moderates positioning on issues involving distinct ideological beliefs (Fourinaies & Hall, 2021; Griffin, 2006). Foreign policy and treaties can often be perceived as a secondary issue in comparison to domestic bills (Fourinaise & Hall, 2021). While the use of incentives in politics is often defined as ethically concerning, it is so inherently engrained in American political decision-making that it is perceived as typical and does not result in moral outrage. These incentives, along with coercion and constraints, can range from plea bargaining to welfare benefits, to grants for particular policies (Grant, 2006). Loss aversion is typically recognized as an economic concept; however, it applies perfectly to the puzzle at hand. United States policymakers, and subsequently citizens, are interested in the outcomes of foreign policy because of the potential for perceived threat and loss that aligns with negative framing and poor treaty results (Allen et al., 2005). In the case studies, I will explicitly draw connections between the expected loss framed by certain policymakers, and their subsequent influence on treaty ratification.

Research has shown that the personal values of both policymakers and constituents lead to the salience of foreign policy in domestic politics (Lavine et al., 1996). Values and attitudes are relevant in policy because they encourage policymakers to frame issues in a specific format and alter constituents' perception of policies (Lavine et al., 1996). Policymakers are trained to express moral and political values through policy opinions and speeches because that is what constituents are the most likely to respond to (Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010). Thus, in order to be successful, policymakers must perform specific roles for varying audiences. The current research

intends to explore how states, policymakers, and constituents play many different roles, each of which is relevant to the field of foreign policy. However, the psychological study intended to analyze how the perceived moral superiority of constituents plays a distinct role in the reception of framed policy and the subsequent perception of threat.

Biased players in this game of ratification are state actors who influence policymakers. These actors can be Senators directly involved in the process; but they can also be Representatives, Secretaries, or even non-governmental organizations and individuals. This moral posturing to play a particular role in the domestic and international fields most often takes place either within the SFRC or on the full Senate floor. One example of this posturing was seen in the SFRC hearings for the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), where former Senators Joe Biden and Jesse Helms substituted basic party values with ethical beliefs held by certain party wings, and acted as persuasive figures (SFRC, 2002). Throughout the SFRC meetings, as stated in the executive report, Biden highlighted the unfair political struggle that women have faced, whereas Helms emphasized concerns regarding female autonomy and abortion (SFRC, 2002). To be clear, both Senators focused more on their own perceptions of women and family values than on the treaty itself; Biden believing that actions should be taken to protect the autonomy and rights of women, and Helms preaching his concerns regarding disruption to 'American family units.' As a result, both Senators successfully persuaded their Committee party members to agree with them based on moral standards, and the CEDAW vote within the SFRC broke on party lines (SFRC, 2002).

Despite CEDAW being an international treaty, discussion within the Foreign Relations Committee centered solely around domestic cultural and moral values. In fact, the majority of the Committee discussion released in the executive report was regarding domestic concerns, such as

the right to an abortion, paid maternity leave, and female healthcare services (SFRC, 2002). Eventually, the primary issue that stalled CEDAW was the potential effect on typical gender roles in family units. SFRC Senators took the opportunity to incite moral concerns and convictions, thereby undermining the attempts at communication between liberals and conservatives. The values and ideals of policymakers and even the general public can bleed into foreign policy at any point through issue framing and subsequent in-group favoritism. Senators are both explicitly attached to the process of treaty ratification and vessels for the moral values of their constituency (Kertzer et al., 2014).

Political actors are able to enact policies through the legal processes outlined in the U.S. Constitution. But what the Constitution does not account for is the needlessly time-consuming procedure that emerges with the influence of personal and public ethics and opinions. Discussions about domestic policy can deviate greatly from that around international rights and foreign policy (Gelb & Rosenthal, 2003). Often, literature surrounding politics recognizes the widespread influence of values and framing but fails to analyze the underlying processes which bolster the creation of in-group favoritism and the perception of threats, which are basal to these political processes and humans themselves (Gelb & Rosenthal, 2003; Kertzer et al., 2014). There is a fundamental tension between internal values and the role of being a policymaker that will be deconstructed within this thesis and analyzed under the given cases.

Moral Politics

Democracy is a form of government built on a foundation of ethical principles and it cannot survive unless those principles are honored and protected. For the U.S., values matter because of how and why certain laws are adopted, and the presumption that the governing individuals are capable of maintaining the value-based foundation created (Thompson, 2020).

Studies have even shown that in political messaging promoted by policymakers and media, values are often more persuasive than the policies themselves (De Witte, 2019). Value-framing formed by morals and political partisanship, slowly intersecting fields, can alter the heuristics present in constituents and subsequently their voting habits and desires (De Witte, 2019).

Researchers have noted that one of the most striking features of contemporary American politics is that political rhetoric is increasingly moralistic while the actual ability of governing systems to achieve moral ends is in decline (Weiner, 2019). Given the fact that policymakers and constituents often disagree with one another, moralized politics is bound to fail except on those rare and transient occasions when a single moral vision possesses all branches of government (Weiner, 2019).

One example of value-framing that is influenced by morals and political partisanship is the debate over abortion. Pro-choice advocates often frame the issue as a matter of individual autonomy and reproductive rights, emphasizing a woman's right to make decisions about her own body. Meanwhile, pro-life advocates often frame the issue as a matter of protecting the sanctity of human life, emphasizing the moral imperative to protect the lives of unborn children. Furthermore, these value frames can intersect with other heuristics or mental shortcuts that people use when making decisions. For example, people may be more likely to trust information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs and values, a phenomenon known as confirmation bias. They may also be more likely to seek out information from sources that share their political beliefs, a phenomenon known as selective exposure.

Morality, values, ethics, universal principles – the whole panoply of ideals in international affairs that were once almost the exclusive domain of preacher and scholars – have taken root in the hearts, or at least the minds, of the American foreign policy community. A new

vocabulary has emerged in the rhetoric of senior government officials, Republicans and Democrats alike (Gelb & Rosenthal, 2003). This framing did not emerge overnight, as it has been solidifying slowly for the past 30 years, until it began to become synonymous with partisan ideals (Gelb & Rosenthal, 2003). Debates over right and wrong are now embedded both in the international arena and in domestic deliberations. Politics has become a split-level field. No longer do Democrats and Republicans differ on purely governmental topics. Lines have been drawn in the metaphorical sand, both in terms of morals and genuine policy, two terms once separate that have become virtually interchangeable.

CEDAW, for example, is often rejected by Republican party members due to the misconception that it would interfere with not only Constitutional powers, but with 'American' families and gender stereotypes (SFRC, 2002). These misconceptions are entirely unfounded, and yet former Senator Helms claimed that CEDAW would encourage "divisive social issues" rather than closing the sexism gap in the U.S. in the minority views Committee document written by the Republican senators on the SFRC (SFRC, 2002). Based on his letter to Biden in response to CEDAW, Colin L. Powell – the Republican Secretary of State at the time – was persuaded by Helms' farcical arguments and supported the decision that CEDAW should not be presented to the full Senate (SFRC, 2002). American public opinion has moralistic tendencies, but these tendencies are founded from policymakers who frame their values in ways that influence constituents (Kertzer et al., 2014). On one hand, realists use morality and ideology almost synonymously as threats to rational decision making. On the other hand, constructivists lament that state power is represented as having far too much influence in realist theory, and subsequently in how realists analyze policy. But constructive realism proposes that like ideology, morality acts as a systematic rather than stochastic predictor of foreign policy attitudes. Also that

state power may act as the foundational basis on which moral superiority is built in the United States.

Foreign policy does not readily fit the theoretical mold most scholars associate with domestic issues, which is why studies on the intersection between domestic moral values and foreign policy decisions by governmental figures has been historically minimal (Wood & Peake, 1998). In spite of foreign policy being fundamentally different from domestic policy, exploring the influence of individual and domestic ethics on policy decision-making is key in any analysis of U.S. government. Foreign policy decisions that bolster the United States, along with assisting other countries, support the mental idea of American exceptionalism (Fearon, 1998). Therefore, rationality and *realpolitik* justifications are not always the backbone of U.S. foreign policy and treaty ratification. Instead, framed moral values and threat perception play foundational roles to sway public opinion, and is rational for policymakers due to its assistance in winning elections and garnering support. While there has been a variety of research studies conducted on the intersection between the framing of policies, value-based leadership, and foreign policy; studies have yet to explicitly connect the psychological phenomenon and theory of valence framing effect and realistic conflict theory with these topics.

Ethical Framing and Perception of Conflict

The valence framing effect and realistic conflict theory are particularly relevant to the arguments herein. The valence framing effect has been studied previously in political research; however, the majority of studies focus on the impact of negative framing rather than positive or neutral (Bizer & Petty, 2005; Bizer et al., 2011). The study intends to include this comparative aspect between the variation of frames for a more explanatory result. This thesis also intends to explore how personal attitudes can affect the reception of framing and subsequent judgment of

international politics. Realistic conflict theory is often discussed in terms of limited, tangible resources (Jackson, 1993). But this study intends to analyze how framing can enhance the perception of lost resources and eventual increase in perceived threat to state power. Thus, by combining this effect and theory, the cases discussed herein and psychological study can be better applied to foreign policy and treaty ratification. VFE and RCT together are capable of assisting in the analysis of the roles that policymakers play in international and domestic relations in a particularly significant way.

Research has repeatedly shown that individuals, especially those in positions of power, believe they are far more moral than their actions showcase (Ellemers et al., 2019; Teper et al., 2011; Ying & Ming, 2021). For policymakers, enacting values into policy is a common affair, whether that be the opinions of their constituents or their own. However, it should be noted that if an actor enforces a program that differs from the desires of their constituency, framing must be employed to sate public opinion (Feinberg & Willer, 2019). In terms of foreign policy, morals and ethics are often mentioned as being fundamental factors that the American government uses when deciding on treaties and interventions (Thompson, 2020). But that is very rarely the case. Morality is framed as a primary concern but acted upon as a secondary concern; and an increased perception of threat by other countries can limit national desire to internationally intervene. This pattern is evident based on the treaties in force within the United States. The United States has overwhelmingly approved treaties that increase state power – whether that power be emerging from technological development, military security, or economic prosperity – one prominent example being the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO; Office of Treaty Affairs, 2020). In terms of human rights treaties, or treaties that provide international rather than domestic

assistance, the U.S. has ratified far fewer documents than any other G20 country (“Where the United States Stands on 10 International Human Rights Treaties,” 2013).

Values are exponentially significant in foreign policy, and therefore in treaty ratification, as are internal and external identities in the United States. Personal values, both individually and collectively held, can predict a wide variety of different choices, such as foreign policy preferences (Kertzer & Tingley, 2018). Violations of international norms, such as failing to ratify a relevant treaty, stems from the domestic motivated biases of state actors (Shannon, 2000). These biases compel leaders not only to interpret scenarios in a way which most applicably aligns with their own beliefs and partisan values, but also frame them in a particular way which encourages their constituents to do the same (Shannon, 2000). This framing of proactive foreign policy in a negative light, which encourages threat perception, became particularly common in the United States after the Cold War (Meernik et al., 1998). American Foreign policy views began to drift into a more conservative area, which highlighted a greater need for military power and individualistic action (Schlesinger, 1992). The War on Terror following the 9/11 attacks is a notable example. The U.S. launched a global campaign against terrorism that was characterized by an individualistic approach to foreign policy. This approach involved the use of military force, intelligence gathering, and other measures to target terrorists and their networks, rather than relying on international cooperation or traditional diplomacy. This scale for international policy never quite returned to its former equilibrium (Gadarian, 2010). Treaty ratification refusal expressed by the United States is characteristic of this Cold War mentality in terms of foreign policy. The tension between the quest for a more humane foreign policy and the old imperatives of security and stability has led most commentators to criticize human rights centric foreign policy as simplistic and naïve (Schmitz & Walker, 2004).

Nevertheless, there are moments in which international concern overcomes domestic framing. It is significant in and of itself that these treaties made it to the Senate; these treaties and organizations being the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the International Criminal Court (ICC). This means that an issue was relevant and agreed upon enough to be addressed not only by the states involved, but also by the President of the United States and their staff. Therefore, American values must at least partially align with moral policy decisions due to the initiation of the treaty ratification process. International treaties are often framed in a way that implies a constraint to U.S. sovereignty or an attack on security. In these particular cases, treaties stated that center solely on human rights rather than security – the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – likely reached the Senate Foreign Relations Committee due to moral pressures caused by other countries and U.S. constituents. This is argued because of the pattern discussed previously, seen within the U.S. treaties in force, the majority of which involve the concept of increased state power rather than international assistance (Office of Treaty Affairs, 2020).

Rather than practical application, people are more perceptive and responsive to ideological claims and assistance (Blanchette, 2006). Foreign policy framing does matter to domestic audiences, as posturing affects partisanship, in-group favoritism, and ultimately what is or is not aligned with U.S. values. This is because scenarios in which the U.S. does assist other countries in their times of need allow for American exceptionalism to be upheld (Wander, 1984). It provides U.S. citizens and policymakers with a sense of moral superiority, which were tested within this study in a psychological context. Experimental studies have shown that human rights

agreements do have a positive influence on democracies when ratified (Chilton, 2014). However, ratification is dependent on Senate action, action that has largely been framed in a negative light. Therefore, foreign policy is not only influenced by typically 'American values' in the United States, but it also is of genuine interest to certain domestic audiences. This is because of the moral superiority that can emerge through state power, and individuals subsequently feel as though they are of particular value in international relations (Thies, 2017).

Most often, treaties often become buried once they enter the Senate, whether that be due to a particular committee or the entire floor. Turmoil, leverage, and failed compromise currently rule the U.S. Senate, and this single-handed grip which controls the government is typically drawn on political party lines (Brownstein, 2021). The delineation between policy and ethics has become increasingly murky. Virtues and vices are framed as being particularly relevant in foreign policy, rather than the actual partisan opinions and goals, which creates a moral dilemma (Reiter-Haas et al., 2021). When policymakers are faced with decisions that are framed in moral terms, they may be more susceptible to internal biases and more likely to perceive threats. This may be because they feel pressure to maintain their partisan positions and hold onto power. This is why moral framing is not only an extremely relevant topic herein, but also why it is so damaging to successful international relations.

Psychology is always present in human decision-making, constituted by its structural determinants but also playing its own agency-level constitutive and causal roles, and therefore it should be considered in any analysis of foreign policy decisions (Pursiainen & Forsberg, 2021). Moral posturing in politics does assist in the creation of an in-group/out-group mentality, and the perception of American exceptionalism creates this frame that is perpetuated by policymakers (Levy, 2013; Wander, 1984). This frame encourages the idea of conflict based on perceived

threat to state power and norms. Thus, while prior literature has recognized the significance of psychology in foreign policy, it has largely failed to ascribe the particular theories of realistic conflict theory and valence framing effect to the realism and constructivism nuances in international treaty ratification.

Psychological Competition and In-Group Favoritism

The ongoing and pervasive problem is that the United States actively selects competition on an international scale to endorse domestic security and sovereignty, as opposed to treaty cooperation. Once again, this is noticeable based on the treaties that the U.S. has entered into force (Office of Treaty Affairs, 2020). In the field of international relations, citizens are foremost concerned regarding their own state, rather than that of others, leading to in-group favoritism on a global landscape. This is due to a perceived 'cost' of helping others, especially seen among politically active citizens who have the greatest potential to shape government policy (Tomz, 2007). The constant ebb and flow of international relations can be particularly daunting to the United States, which largely focuses on domestic policy and sovereignty over basic rights. There is a scale of prioritization in the U.S. that is almost solely an American quality as a result of political decisions, both past and present.

Realistic conflict theory is built on a variety of different concepts ranging from intergovernmental evasion to relative competition, to relatability with certain groups and their allies. Research (Cadsby et al., 2016) has demonstrated that the impact of social identity on competition and cheating patterns is statistically relevant; and that in a controlled experiment, dishonesty was evident not only to benefit oneself, but also one's in-group. These benefits on a global playing field might not even be real, but the imagined version of them is threatening to the public. The U.S. is likely to pursue benefits that increase their own relative power, this can easily

involve cheating as a tactic. Especially given that the U.S. is the western hemisphere hegemon, a desire to maintain power may be correlated with cheating. Studies (Echebarria-Echabe, 2003) also confirmed that competition affects mutual attitudes, images, and behaviors of groups even if the groups are passive targets of decisions that the institutional authority makes. Moreover, competition – regardless of whether beneficial or detrimental – deteriorated images of and attitudes toward high-status out-groups. Those with power in government create a form of valence framing that we as an in-group abide by and believe, this forced creation of an in-group aligns with RCT and the perception of negative out-groups.

Furthermore, in-group favoritism was more strongly associated with opposition to resource-specific policies that represent high realistic threat (compared with symbolic policies) (Perry et al., 2018). In contrast, out-group hostility was more consistently associated with both resource-specific policies and symbolic policies (Perry et al., 2018). A citizen of a country may be less willing to provide monetary assistance to a separate country rather than their own, which indicates both in-group favoritism and out-group hostility. Resource-specific policies can range anywhere from providing military support to a country in need, to basic tariff and tax laws. Studies have repeatedly shown that the U.S. and its policies are framed in a manner to citizens that promote the creation of perceived threats and prevent the United States from assisting in a pro-social manner that is desired by voters (Perry et al., 2018; Smith, 2015).

This lack of pro-social action taken by the United States on behalf of its citizens is largely enforced by negative framing. Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that the contradiction between the United States acting as a liberal hegemon in verbiage but not in practice is largely misunderstood by U.S. citizens due to framing (Bihan-Poudec, 2020; Druckman, 2001; Mintz & Redd, 2003). Studies show that the important role of implicit aptitude in helping people learn

interpersonal norms from trial-and-error experience is crucial (Savani et al., 2022). Particularly because in real-life intercultural interactions, the relevant cues are often complex, and the feedback is often fleeting and inconsistent but immediate. This is a key factor in framing, as citizens are often more likely to receive information from partisan politicians or biased media sources (Pew Research Center, 2019). Constituents are far more likely to receive their information from sources that phrase issues in a particular way to promote influence, rather than directly from the source of an issue (Gadarian, 2010). It is a very rare circumstance to speak with an individual experiencing their human rights being stolen by the nation they reside in. The U.S. is arguably separate from those individuals and their trauma, thereby preventing the necessary interactions that encourage pro-social action. This also assists in the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy that is prevalent in United States in-group politics, and its reflection in ongoing policies or lack thereof. There is a constant connection to politicians in the U.S. government, and yet it is astoundingly rare to truly see the effects of United States actions in other countries.

While many citizens feel a keen sense of companionship with fellow citizens, a result of in-group favoritism, there is an apparent barrier that prevents this on an international scale (Druckman, 2001). If most individuals are moral, the moral outcome is more likely to be produced by one individual. However, if most individuals are immoral, it is more likely to be produced by a group. This rule is not only useful for reconciling previous mixed evidence on moral decision-making in groups but may also be applied to better design organizations and institutions. Combined with RCT, with which we perceive both real and imaginary threats, often falsely equating the two – this tendency aligns with the United States' lack of interference and assistance in other countries (Jackson, 1993). There is the potential, within many organizations, that a nation will fail to act as they assume a separate state will step in.

Studies have also shown that shared reality influences intergroup ratings, despite differences in evaluations (Bihan-Poudec, 2020; Dimdins & Montgomery, 2004; Druckman, 2001). Shared reality should be reflected in a tendency that plays a significant role in social connectedness. Subjective experience of sharing a set of feelings, beliefs and concerns about the world is a defining feature of identity creation and management (Dimdins & Montgomery, 2004). These results are particularly significant for the influence of valence framing effect in political scenarios. A particular framing effect can encourage a shared reality because VFE can result in different effects based on the frames utilized, and thereby perception of threats. Studies have also shown that feeling watched brings out the most charitable aspects of human nature (Frimer et al., 2014). However, this is far less likely in human rights situations involving the United States. This is because the United States is less likely to cave to international pressures when compared to domestic pressures, and moral superiority with a lack of knowledge and negative framing increases an expectation of losses or failure. There is a strong potential for policymakers in the U.S. to believe that interfering in international relations, especially regarding rights and liberties, that the gains will simply not outweigh the losses. Studies have shown that decision-making people react differently to positive wordings than to negatives, which may be caused by negativity bias: a difference in emotional force of these wordings (Holleman et al., 2021). This conception of loss is a prevalent psychological factor which defines framing. Findings have demonstrated that, in comparison to the loss frame, the gain frame increased behavior and brain sensitivity to the failure of decision-making under uncertainty (Xu et al., 2020). Therefore, to the U.S. public, the pursuance of certain international treaties might appear to have no actual benefit to the U.S., thus preventing action.

This compilation of both psychological and political theories assists in the basic deconstruction of why the United States prioritizes its own sovereignty and security above the human rights of non-citizens. The concepts successfully begin the analysis of the tension between actors and moral actions, norms and motivations in policymaking, and how these relationships are used to frame foreign policy in the United States. This propensity will now be expanded upon using the four case studies previously mentioned: the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the International Criminal Court (ICC). These cases were specifically chosen due to their salience in international relations and contention in domestic politics in the United States. Particularly, the recent resurgence of ICC interest highlights the post-Cold War foreign policy that the U.S. displays. To clarify, the UNSC is intended to present a foil for U.S. action in international relations, rather than a particular example of the United States neglecting participation. However, it also stands as an optimal example where the U.S. prioritizes security above the maintenance of human rights. By comparing these cases against one another, differences in domestic valences – undiscussed by both realism and constructivism – are proven to be particularly relevant in treaty ratification.

To be clear, prior to the discussion of particular treaties regarding these terms, human rights is defined as the rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. These rights most often include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more (United Nations, 2022). The next particularly significant term is international human rights law. International human rights laws are the obligations of governments all over the world to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to

promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups (United Nations, 2022). While many countries may understand the concept of human rights, they often fail to uphold those liberties; not only in international relations, but also within their own nations reflected through domestic policies.

Relevant Case Studies

United Nations Security Council

The UNSC was first founded in 1945, and its first session occurred in 1946. However, it was soon paralyzed for decades afterwards due to the Cold War. This halt in progress occurred because of the presence of the Permanent Five (P5) members and their isolationist tendencies. As the victors of WWII – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – gained a constant seat on the Security Council along with veto power. This means that if a P5 state vetoes an action or even a discussion, the other 14 member states are powerless to stop them, even if a secondary P5 member verbally opposes the veto. There is no process by which the other members are able to actually reject or reverse a veto. The UNSC has 15 members at a time, the other 10 being elected by the UN General Assembly for two-year terms. The U.S. has been an active member of the UNSC since its inception, with the current ambassador for the U.S. being Linda Thomas-Greenfield, appointed by President Biden in 2021 (UN General Assembly [UNGA], n.d.).

The UNSC is arguably the most influential body within the UN, because it has the authority to physically intervene in a nation's affairs. The UNSC P5 members having been using the veto vote for decades as both a shield and a weapon – protecting themselves and their allies while attempting to damage other countries. This means that U.S. politicians are typically complimentary of American participation and do not promote a negative framing effect in order

to influence their in-groups. John Kerry, a former U.S. Secretary of State, remarked that the UNSC “has a vital role to play in advancing global security and stability” (Kerry, 2016). This characterization of the UNSC is a foil in comparison to the other organization and treaties discussed herein. Given that the UNSC is a body that manages many international security concerns, U.S. participation practically guarantees greater global leadership and military prowess, and policymakers have no need to hide under the guise of morality. These desired goals and guarantees are a prime example of the loss aversion and political incentives discussed herein, and are also visible in the current treaties in force in the U.S. (Office of Treaty Affairs, 2020). The United States, as a P5 member, has direct and vital influence in the UNSC. In three separate cases, the U.S. was able to prevent UNSC action against Israel despite all other 14 members of the Council supporting draft resolutions (United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2022). This means that in cases of moral controversy, the U.S. is willing to uphold relations with allies above human rights. However, the U.S. claims its actions are to maintain “peace and security” and states that intervention would cause further panic, thus framing the veto as ethically correct (Wood, 2023). Veto power has also allowed the P5 to avoid scrutiny and liability from the International Criminal Court (ICC) when a situation develops in the Court’s territory (Papalia, 2017).

Humanitarian and military intervention outside of a UN Security Council mandate remains a very highly contested area of international law. For example, in 2002 the U.S. was able to use a pocket veto to achieve amnesty from the ICC for their troops in the UN mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ultimately, this allowed soldiers to operate outside of the legal framework alluded to in the UN mission resolution and act as they deemed fit to bring Bosnian-Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to justice (Schmemmann, 2002). This action cost the lives of many

civilians, and the U.S. faced no repercussions due to the pocket veto and their refusal to abide by the ICC. If the United States was not granted the use of a pocket veto, it is very likely that there would have been no intervention on the part of the U.S. in fear of fellow member state retribution or disapproval (Schmemmann, 2002). The United States utilized its unilateral power to place its own security – the capture of Radovan Karadzic, over human rights – the lives of several innocent citizens. In 2008 when Karadzic was eventually captured, there was little discussion surrounding the victims of U.S. actions. Instead, policy actors such as Richard Holbrooke – a former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations – called the events “great news” and “historic,” declaring that Karadzic’s capture was a step forward for Serbia to “join the West” (Reuters Staff, 2008). U.S. policymakers spoke very little, if at all, about civilian casualties caused by their own actions, instead citing Karadzic as the sole murderer (Reuters Staff, 2008). For the U.S. public, the capture of Karadzic was presented as an ascent to westernized democracy for Serbia. Karadzic did indeed commit a variety of horrifying international crimes, but the United States did as well. The timeline around U.S. participation revealed a last-minute initiation of action because the consequences of the U.S. participating was deemed the lesser evil than the continuation of the war (Daalder, 1998). Thus, the United States got to act as a moralistic savior in a time of need. This type of action is not abnormal for the United States, and there have been several instances in recent years where the U.S. employs airstrikes with hundreds of civilian casualties (De Lauri et al., 2021).

The United States puts personal and allied interests over the global good – Bosnia and Herzegovina being only one example of many. The United States is able to do this because of their refusal to abide by ICC law, and their veto ability in the UNSC. As a preeminent liberal hegemon and a P5 member, the U.S. is able to be more blatant regarding support for the UNSC

being based on military power, rather than the promotion of peace. That is not to say that the previously discussed balancing act is not applicable, simply lesser so given the security implications of the UNSC. United States officials – such as John Kerry and Richard Holbrooke – have greater freedom to frame the UNSC in a less moral context and format. To the domestic public, the UNSC is presented as a primary figure for stability, it is presented in a similar manner to the international field (Hopkins & Stohl, 2022).

Relating back to the loss of innocent lives in the UN mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in one such incident in 1995, NATO aircraft mistakenly targeted a marketplace in the Bosnian town of Tuzla, killing at least 37 civilians. Following the incident, NATO and the U.S. expressed regret and condolences to the families of the victims. However, there is no evidence of a formal apology from the U.S. government specifically for civilian casualties in the UN Bosnia and Herzegovina mission. There was no mention of this tragedy to U.S. citizens in any domestic situations. Thus, the U.S. used their non-realpolitik capability to act as they pleased in alignment with typical American values; those values being domestic protection and overarching power. Assisting at the very last moment, without the opportunity to face any repercussions, also promoted the ideal moral actor façade that the U.S. often promotes to maintain their liberal, hegemonic image. The United States policymakers successfully gave a broad apology to the international actors, yet ignored the existence of casualties to their own constituents. United States actors and media are often who constituents receive their information from. There is a great dearth of international relations knowledge held by U.S. citizens because of this skew in receptivity to non-U.S. media sources (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). This results in a narrative built by U.S. policymakers and often unknowingly upheld by U.S. constituents. While

these actions and values are typical for most states, the U.S. has both the incentives and influence to truly act upon them, no matter the consequences.

To reiterate and clarify, the split-level role playing, and moral posturing utilized by American policymakers allows them to frame the UNSC in a positive light without actually taking any beneficial action. Richard Holbrooke is cited saying that the UNSC is “the principal organ of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security” (Holbrooke, 1999). However, it is the U.S. that purposefully emphasizes security related actions over those intended to maintain human rights. In addition to stating that “America is back” being involved in IR and that “diplomacy is back at the center of our foreign policy,” President Biden’s first foreign policy address in February 2021 included references to key priorities of his administration (Hopkins & Stohl, 2022). These priorities were moderately clarified by the Biden administration’s Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, released in March 2021, that noted the United States “will again embrace international cooperation” highlighting that the United States “will move swiftly to earn back our position of leadership in international institutions” (Hopkins & Stohl, par. 3, 2022). The Biden administration managed to frame U.S. participation in the UNSC as not only a significant matter in foreign policy, but also a given right in a position of leadership.

This highlights the hypothesized tension between internal values – cooperation, and policymaker roles – leadership. The actors significant in this matter are not solely the President and his administration. However, presidential power is particularly significant given the Administration’s ability to select an actor to act as Ambassador, and the President’s position as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. In this case, American policymakers follow the rationale that as the United States has a predetermined position of significance in the UNSC, the

political debate in this realm of international influence has already been completed and won. Policymakers in certain countries, those who are not members of the P5, have expressed reservations regarding the veto clause and its clear creation of bias. However, no change has been made. The P5 members fail to view the world and its issues through the same lens as non-P5 members. The P5 power gives five countries supreme control and very little control to other nations.

This case is particularly significant, not solely because the United States is a large proponent, but also because the element of hypocrisy is astounding. Despite the Biden administration supporting “international cooperation toward a better, safer, more resilient, more prosperous world,” the UNSC is still a large point contention for non-P5 countries (Hopkins & Stohl, par. 3, 2022). The United States has effectively placed personal and allied interests over the global good. As the Western hegemon, much of the power in this area of the globe is wielded by the United States. However, rather than eradicating the P5 or creating a system that allows for overriding a veto, the U.S. is solely interested in domestic security and sovereignty. The values preached by the Biden administration are simply not upheld in practice. As theorized, constructive realism emerges – both norms and values, as well as state power and precedence. This is not to say that the Biden administration are the sole culprits of this framing, rather it has been occurring since the inception of the UNSC.

The supreme power that the United States, and other P5 countries, hold in the UNSC allows for an active avoidance of failures and consequences. Thus, non-P5 countries are left to suffer the consequences. For example, in a recent remark, President Biden claimed that “Members of the U.N. Security Council, including the United States, should consistently uphold and defend the U.N. Charter and refrain — refrain from the use of the veto, except in rare,

extraordinary situations, to ensure that the Council remains credible and effective” (White House [President Biden], par. 32, 2022). Yet, the United States is notorious for utilizing the veto vote when it benefits relevant allies rather than perceived enemies. As stated earlier, the United States’ protection of Israel on several separate occasions is an excellent example of this claim. This power is exceptionally comprehensive, and this is a major factor in U.S. decisions and policies. But the partisan opinions of these actors and the norms within their parties are also influential factors. Hence, constructive realism successfully expresses the genuine benefits that the P5 brings to the U.S., along with the ability to hide its failures. Framing is formed from partisan groups and moral values, which eventually are reflected in foreign policy.

Should United States actors perceive a threat from a particular nation or desire to assist an allied state, if that country comes into question with the UNSC, the United States can act as it pleases in terms of domestic benefits. The U.S. public is amenable in this way, and can often be swayed due to lack of knowledge yet recognition of the importance of international influence (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). This competition is often more imagined than real, but people still may become resentful. This dislike and distrust can be seen in political statements regarding other countries and their security ‘threat’ to the United States. This rival-oriented sentiment is palpable, an example being Senator Rick Scott’s declaration that “China is a bad actor. China is not our friend,” in his op-ed on China’s growing influence in the Western hemisphere, specifically in Latin America (Scott, 2019). Even if a constituent does not feel personally threatened, perceptions of threat to one’s own group can trigger prejudice.

The United States actively participates in the UNSC as the P5 veto power gives the U.S. a sense of superiority, which is sought out to promote sovereignty and strength. While other countries, which are not our allies, also have this veto power, the benefits of the UNSC far

outweigh the costs. This loss aversion is framed positively in policy, while the United States is the United Nation's principal monetary donor, the U.S. maintains a lucrative military budget and upholds their position of power within the UNSC (U.S. Mission to the United Nations, 2023). The security desires are maintained, and the United States has a proverbial 'crutch' to lean on when needed to show supposed cooperation and moral values. As expressed previously, while loss aversion is typically recognized as an economic concept, it applies perfectly to the desired outcomes of foreign policy which emerge as a result of perceived threat and negative framing (Allen et al., 2005).

This case reflects the preference of the U.S. to protect domestic security over the rights of other nations. There is an evident tradeoff between the levels of policy, the international relations goals promoted through moral posturing, and the domestic policy results that benefit solely the United States. Despite the discussion by policymakers surrounding cooperation and fairness, which the Biden Administration has recently displayed, the power that the UNSC provides the U.S. ensures a maintenance of sovereignty that government officials are unwilling to sacrifice in order to assist others. Most United States citizens are unaware of the influence that the UNSC has, or even know of the P5 members. Most the vast majority of citizens receive their political information from policymakers and media, bypassing the psychological stage in which they format their own opinions (Pew Research Center, 2019). There is a clear delineation between the moral tenets and values expressed by policymakers, and the actual actions taken by the UNSC. The UNSC is a prime example of the United States prioritizing security over international human rights, and how the U.S. not only fails to ratify relevant treaties but also vetoes actions which could save lives.

International Criminal Court

In contrast to the U.S. framing of the United Nations Security Council is the discussion and policy surrounding the International Criminal Court (ICC). The importance of the ICC to this thesis is not only its opposition to the UNSC, but its recent resurgence in domestic political discussion due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine (“Senators introduce resolution calling for war crimes accountability,” 2022). The ICC was formed in 2002 via the Rome Statute, however this organization was four years in the making (ICC, 2020). The initial conference set to establish the ICC was in 1998, and the accords took almost half a decade to be finalized. The United States was instrumental in the beginning processes of creating the ICC. But, despite negotiating the accord, the U.S. does not legally recognize the jurisdiction of the ICC (NPR, 2022). This stands in stark opposition to President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris’s recent claims that Russian President Vladimir Putin is a “war criminal” and that evidence should be gathered to put Putin on trial, considering that this supposed trial would take place within the ICC (NPR, 2022). In Biden’s speech before the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly – an annually scheduled meeting for member states – he not only explicitly discussed Russia’s misuse of veto power within the UNSC, but he also did not discuss the United States’ similar conduct and lack of influence within the ICC (White House [President Biden], 2022). The ICC had a rough start once the United States announced their refusal to recognize its jurisdiction. To many United States citizens, the concept of the ICC was irrelevant given its difficulty intruding into domestic policies, until very recently when the Court came into political conversation.

In early September 2022, Senate Resolution 546 emerged. This resolution is a response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and proposes that the U.S. condemns Russian President Vladimir Putin for his actions (Clapp & Sikkink, 2022). The resolution is a bipartisan bill, a

practically unforeseen act in modern politics. Of the 25 cosponsors, 12 are Republicans, 12 are Democrats, and one is an Independent. Thus, the actions addressed in the resolution are significant enough to the United States that the balancing act between statements and actions has been tipped. Senators from across the aisle are giving speeches and releasing statements about Russia's wrongdoings – ranging from Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Goodwin, 2023) to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (Seddiq, 2022). The tension between internal values and the role of being an active policymaker has swayed in the direction of genuine action, this can be noted by the action words within the resolution itself (Graham, 2022).

These are the first steps in 20 years that the United States has taken toward actually joining the ICC, as the resolution requires cooperation with the organization, and even recommends that ICC member states “to petition the ICC or other appropriate international tribunal” to take appropriate investigation steps (Graham, 2022). The recent release of a bipartisan Senate letter to Biden has also emerged in the media. The Senators are requesting that Biden direct the U.S. government to share evidence about Russian war crimes in Ukraine with the International Criminal Court in The Hague, despite the Pentagon's resistance to such a move (Savage, 2023). The Pentagon's hesitancy is due to national security concerns in terms of domestic intelligence. However, the most significant cause of these actions taken by Congress is not the maintenance of human rights, but concerns that Senators have due to the perceived threat that Russia poses to the United States. Even the recent letter refers to holding “Putin and his henchmen accountable” as its primary purpose (Savage, 2023). Thus, while both groups have security concerns, they are for two separate reasons – one of which being national intelligence and the other being military prowess and strength. Since the Pentagon is resisting action, while

the Senate is pursuing it, the Senators essentially have a leg up because they can easily utilize the human rights atrocities caused by Russia as a moral frame to encourage action.

Currently, 120 countries are officially State Parties of the International Criminal Court. The 18 judges that sit on the Court are nonpartisan representatives from certain State Parties, and both the leader of the ICC and the judges change every three years. Judges are not up for reelection once their term is completed. Therefore, the cycle of varying values, viewpoints, and beliefs is constantly changing. The ICC is a permanent international court established to investigate, prosecute, and try individuals accused of committing the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole (ICC, 2020). The ICC has jurisdiction over four primary crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, breaches of the Geneva convention, and the crime of aggression (ICC, n.d.).

Unlike most international treaties that are dismantled by the Senate, the ICC in particular has been an enemy of the Executive Branch. The difference in words versus actions is notable. As mentioned herein, President Biden (White House [President Biden], 2022) has placed a specific emphasis on promoting growth in international relations and misuse of UNSC veto powers by Russia in specific speeches. However, any relations involving the pursuance of the ICC have been actively avoided by the Executive Branch. The false promises made by the Executive Branch play into the moral superiority complex that many citizens have. The terms *cooperation* and *fairness* have been repeatedly utilized by the Biden Administration in speeches or statements given to the public, yet not applied to policy. An example of this verbiage is in President Biden's remarks before the 77th session of the UNGA, in which he stated that "cooperation for the advancement of all humankind" was a primary goal of his administration (White House [President Biden], 2022). While the annual sessions of the UNGA are a typical

occurrence, Biden utilized this occasion to directly call out Russia and their illegal actions. Therefore, Biden promoted the image of a U.S. that focuses heavily on cooperation, and Russia as an unwanted foreign invader into Ukraine. While President Biden was not wrong in relation to Russia, his advertising of the U.S. as a collaborative and ethical nation is a mockery of genuine moral values. This promoted frame has also not been implemented in the international field. Instead, there has been consistent urging for other countries to take a stand against states that violate U.S. norms and basic rights. By addressing constituents with diction that encourages positive emotions and ethical posturing – while not actually applying these statements to foreign policy – the Biden Administration has been able to bolster feelings of moral superiority and avoid any form of loss. President Biden has emphasized the importance of unity, empathy, and respect in his rhetoric, particularly in the aftermath of the divisive and tumultuous Trump presidency. In the terms of tension on the balancing act, the Biden Administration has overwhelmingly chosen statements over actions. The lack of action taken by the Executive Branch appeared to spark the unlikely bipartisan bill and letter that would involve the U.S. taking up an international position to admonish the Russian government.

Prior framing surrounding the ICC was largely negative in the United States and opposed all actions taken that could potentially affect the U.S. in a disadvantageous manner (Blinken, 2021). Even certain U.S. Senators still actively oppose the ICC, with Senator Tom Cotton stating in an online press release to his constituents, and the greater United States, that the “ICC has no legitimate jurisdiction” and targets U.S. military forces for supposedly defending themselves from “terrorist aggression” (Cotton, 2023). Participation in the ICC was deemed unconstitutional because it would allow the trial of U.S. citizens for crimes committed on U.S. soil, which are otherwise entirely within the judicial power of the United States (NPR, 2022). This false

conceptions are built from a fear of unwanted involvement in United States domestic affairs, as evidenced by the Bush administration's firm opposition to the ICC (CRS, 2006). Another reason that the ICC has been criticized in the U.S. is that it is seen as lacking sufficient checks and balances to ensure fairness and impartiality in its proceedings. Critics argue that the ICC's prosecutors have too much discretion in deciding which cases to pursue, and that defendants do not have sufficient protections and due process rights.

This case is particularly significant because it highlights the characteristic tension in U.S. foreign policy, preliminary creation followed by refusal to cooperate. Given the fact that the United States was crucial in negotiating the accord which created the ICC, their lack of participation and sudden interest is a tightly wound combination of threat perception and moral superiority. The U.S. views the ICC as a potential threat to U.S. sovereignty by giving an international tribunal the power to investigate and prosecute U.S. citizens for international crimes. Yet, the ICC is only involved in the four crimes stated earlier. They have no jurisdiction beyond these crimes, or in relation to any other laws upheld by domestic entities. The ICC can investigate and, where warranted, prosecute, and try individuals only if the State concerned does not, cannot or is unwilling to do so genuinely. Therefore, the ICC would only interfere in U.S. affairs if an abhorrent crime were committed and the United States fails to try the criminals involved (CNN Editorial Research, 2022). This negative outlook was often framed as the only outcome, and policymaker opinion on the ICC was poor (Schaefer, 1998). Yet, the willingness to overlook that frame given Russia's invasion of Ukraine reveals the United States' real interests in power and security.

U.S. Senators' present desire to become involved in the ICC stems from the perception of Russia as a national threat and the prioritization of domestic security over international human

rights. While Senate Resolution 546 does represent a positive framing of the ICC that has not been present in the political sphere since its inception, it is important to note that the protection of human rights in Ukraine is not the United States' primary concern. Instead, the U.S. repeatedly discusses Russia and the sanctions placed on them, implying that weakening Russia is the foremost goal. This displays the tension between internal values and the leadership role which the U.S. claims to have. In the words of Senate Resolution 546, the U.S. "is a beacon for the values of freedom, democracy, and human rights across the globe" (Graham, par. 2, 2022). The ICC is also described as being "an international tribunal that seeks to uphold the rule of law, especially in areas where no rule of law exists" (Graham, par. 7, 2022). This positive and heroic framing of both the United States and the ICC encourages U.S. participation in the organization.

However, the U.S. has repeatedly failed to abide by the ICC. The majority of the Resolution makes it clear why the U.S. is finally taking a stance in support of the ICC, and that is due to the presence of Russia as an opposing threat. This is unsurprising given the contentions between the U.S. and the Russian Federations that have existed for decades. The United States' P5 position in the UNSC cannot be used as an advantage in this case, as Russia is also a P5 member and can veto any actions that would negatively affect them. The resolution gives little mention to the protection of human rights, despite that being the framing promoted by U.S. politicians through the usage of action words and moral claims ("Senators introduce resolution calling for war crimes accountability," 2022). The U.S., should it choose to pursue the ICC, would be potentially risking some of its own power and money to uphold the organization (Goodman, 2022).

Standing as a juxtaposition to the UNSC domestic valence framing, is that which surrounds the ICC in the United States. As explained previously, if the U.S. were to become an

official State Party of the ICC, it would not have any particular position or special privileges. While no officials in the U.S. government have officially come forwards regarding this evolution of leadership, academics argue that a reason as to why the United States has previously refused to join the ICC is because it would not have a position of extreme power (Clapp and Sikkink, 2022). The constant changing of nonpartisan leadership every three years puts the United States on an equal level with all other member states. This appears to be a concession that U.S. Senators are willing to make, given the resolution. It is fair to assume that, given prior disagreement with the ICC, the Executive Branch disagrees with greater involvement.

United States policymakers preach an ethical value-based mentality to politics, often contradicting the realpolitik process which they claim to uphold. Safety and security, equity and assistance, all ideals which the U.S. prides itself on. But the United States sacrificed these values to maintain the prior refusal to cooperate with the ICC. Constructive realism clearly emerges in this analysis of U.S. involvement, or lack thereof, in the ICC. Norms of superiority and moral stature have been present in domestic framing even before Senate Resolution 546 was proposed. When the U.S. finally did take some form of action, the release and support of the Resolution, it was in response to the power of Russia rather than the protection of human rights in Ukraine, a response to the perceived threat that Russia has. The protection of citizens in Ukraine would be a supplementary goal of the U.S. rather than a primary one. Even the recent letter to President Biden states that holding Putin accountable, and ensuring that the U.S. "is on the right side of this war," are end objectives (Savage, 2023).

The sudden positive reflection of the ICC as a necessary and viable organization has caused a shift in basic American in-group structure. Rather than favoritism aligned by political party, a common enemy and perceived threat has emerged, that threat being the Russian

Federation. The U.S. constantly refers to Russia as an enemy, whether that be in political speeches or popular movies and media, therefore this frame was easily manipulated to fit current circumstances. Moral beliefs and superiority are also framed within Senate Resolution 546. After condemnation of war crimes conducted by Russia, there is a call to action for the accountability of Putin and the safety of the Ukrainian people (“Senators introduce resolution calling for war crimes accountability,” 2022). Russia presents a threat to United States security, and thereby sovereignty, the coveted rights held by the states. The ICC presents the U.S. with the power to diminish this threat, albeit not from a position of supreme power. In conclusion, the ongoing interest in the ICC may be under the guise of international human rights protection but is greater oriented toward the omniscient goal of great power and global hegemony.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is one of the most prominent examples of the United States failing to ratify a widely accepted human rights treaty, particularly designed to protect minors and their rights. In 1989, the CRC was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The treaty was entered into force in 1990, a little under a year later (UNGA, 2002). The CRC is largely controlled by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Every country within the United Nations other than the United States, all 192 of them, have ratified the CRC. This includes countries such as Somalia, South Sudan, Tonga, Yemen, and the Russian Federation. The CRC has faced a constant barrage of different domestic framing in U.S. politics. In 1995, former President Bill Clinton approved of pursuing the CRC in the United States. His Secretary of State at the time, Madeleine Albright, signed the CRC on behalf of President, thus beginning of the process of ratification (CGA, 2013). Despite this, the

CRC reached a standstill, and it was never even presented to the Senate in a context of genuine ratification consideration (CRS, 2015).

The discourse around the CRC has been a prominent topic in U.S. foreign policy and human rights actions for decades. For the past decade and a half, the U.S. Senate and three presidents have been unwilling to join this global alliance and ratify the CRC, which—ironically—was drafted with the active involvement of representatives of the Reagan administration (CRS, 2015). But, as hypothesized, getting a treaty to face the full Senate comes with different moral framing than that required for successful audience signaling. Several proponents have emerged, the majority of which have a position within the executive branch of the U.S. government. Examples include Colin L. Powell, a former U.S. Secretary of State, who guided the CRC through the advice and consent process at the Senate – despite its eventual dismissal, and Former President Barack Obama. Colin L. Powell was a lifelong advocate of children's rights before his passing in October 2021. Even after Powell was no longer the Secretary of State, he created the America's Promise Alliance, which he said, “would be focused on five things that every child in America should have,” those five things being basic rights greater outlined in the CRC (First Focus, 2021). Former President Obama, despite his Administration's support of “the goals of the Convention,” never pursued the CRC beyond basic interagency reviews (CRS, 2015).

However, there are also certain strong opponents. The Bush Administration and Republican lawyer Michael P. Farris are two prominent examples (Attiah, 2021). There are widespread misconceptions through valence framing – spread to the public by a very small number of organizations – about the CRC's likely impact. Many American religious organizations are in staunch disagreement with the CRC because they fear state intervention in

'family life' and values – they perceive the CRC as a threat, this is evidence of RCT (CRS, 2015). Farris has explicitly reinforced these misconceptions several times, claiming that the treaty “preempts parents’ fundamental rights to direct the upbringing and education of their children, without incurring binding legal obligations” and that the “CRC would automatically override almost all American laws on children and families” (Farris, 2009).

Even the Bush Administration expressed serious political and legal concerns with the treaty, arguing that it conflicted with U.S. laws regarding privacy and family rights, a patently untrue statement (CRS, 2015). These have been used to fuel political opposition that influenced decisions by both Bush administrations and the Clinton administration to not pursue its ratification. Critics have mislabeled the CRC a “threat to the American family” and made unsubstantiated claims about it undermining our national sovereignty and interfering with our parent-child relationships (Davidson, 2005). Despite the arguments being false, many interest groups are able to gain a political foothold when social issues are in play (Burstein & Linton, 2002). These groups cite the large influence that both the UNHCR and the OHCHR have in global affairs as proof regarding involvement in familial affairs, and thereby sovereignty. However, these organizations explicitly have no right to actively involve themselves in state decisions unless given permission by the domestic government. No other nation appears to have had these concerns, and despite assertions of some opponents, the CRC does not give children a right to sue their parents or give the UN authority over American families.

This negative framing of the CRC and its adjacent organizations have led many Americans to oppose the CRC simply based on a false narrative actively pursued and promoted by certain political figures discussed herein (Davidson, 2005). Overall, the U.S. has been criticized for failing to fully understand and prioritize the CRC's impact, particularly with

regards to children's rights and participation. The U.S. could be a key character in the maintenance of human rights for children globally, but instead it fails to do so based on a misconception regarding intervention and a primal need to protect in-group sovereignty and opinions. As previously expressed, the United States has largely avoided the CRC with conservative family value framing; and a manipulation of what is to be perceived as “privacy and family rights,” which are simply laws that correlate with basic gender stereotypes (CRS, 2015). The Clinton Administration did not transmit the treaty to the Senate because of opposition from key Members of Congress, including then-Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms, who is also well-known for misconstruing and stopping CEDAW. The George W. Bush Administration did not support ratification of CRC, citing “serious political and legal concerns” with the treaty (CRS, 2015).

Despite widespread U.S. support for the overall objectives of the Convention, policymakers have also raised concerns as to whether it is an effective mechanism for protecting children's rights. Opponents argue that ratification would undermine U.S. sovereignty by giving the United Nations authority to determine the best interests of U.S. children (CRS, 2015). Therefore, the individual qualities of the Convention are highly lauded, while the amalgamation of each factor in the CRC is seen as ‘too much’ or that the UN is going ‘too far.’ This opposing argument can easily be dismantled when partisan politics are highlighted, as the majority of disagreement is seen in conservative individuals. But the framing provided forms an in-group mentality not only as the United States versus the United Nations, but also conservative citizens versus liberal citizens.

This case is particularly significant given the difference in values expressed by the United States and the domestic framing discussed herein. The United States is the second largest

monetary contributor to the OHCHR, behind only the European Commission, yet the U.S. has repeatedly refused to ratify the CRC (OHCHR, 2022). However, despite their voluntary monetary contributions to the OHCHR, they often do not ratify or abide by the treaties created. The United States does have labor laws designed specifically for minors (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). However, the CRC focuses not only on labor, but also equity, safety, and wellbeing – a set of policies that the U.S. is largely lacking in. The United States also fails to uphold its own basic labor laws, and the rate of child abuse and sequent court dismissals in the U.S. is abysmal (Davidson, 2005). Child labor laws are also consistently considered a *lenient* issue in the United States. An example of this behavior is Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders recently signing a law that rolls back the requirements that the state verify the ages of workers under 16 and provide them with work certificates permitting them to work (NPR, 2023). Sanders presented the prior requirement as an undue burden on parents (NPR, 2023). Arkansas isn't the only state looking to make it easier to employ kids in a tight labor market and fill an economic need. Bills in other states, including Iowa and Minnesota, would allow some teenagers to work in meatpacking plants and construction, respectively (NPR, 2023). Thus, not only has the United States failed to ratify the CRC, but policymakers are actively stepping away from maintaining the basic rights of children.

The potential for intervention in family life, a misguided understanding of the CRC, has been distributed by many conservative policymakers and religious organizations. In terms of constructive realism, the moral values, and norms that the U.S. intends to portray domestically through child labor laws does not transition into the international arena due to the rejection of the CRC. Certain conservative United States policymakers oppose the CRC primarily due to a perception that sovereignty will be impeded, and security threatened by allowing the CRC to

make recommendations about laws and policies for minors (CRS, 2015). This perceived threat has transitioned into a potential loss for state power and hegemony, hence the influence of loss aversion on policymakers.

There is a mentality that rights for children are a resource that comes under threat when a Convention designed to assist in the preservation of rights comes into fruition. To be the preeminent resource for human rights is a so-called 'coveted' position, and the CRC represents a threat to this position for the United States. American autonomy has been the centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy for centuries. However, autonomy has slowly become aligned with secrecy and absence. Nationalism has become a domestic argument for recusal from the human rights portion of the global sphere and expansion of security policy and influence. Instead of protecting the human rights of children, both within the United States and internationally, U.S. policymakers have been fearful to even allow the treaty onto the Senate floor because of possible rejection (SFRC, 2002). However, statistics from countries that have ratified the CRC and abide by its articles have shown strong progress for minors. If anything, the U.S. would actually gain a foothold in the area of international human rights, particularly within the rights of children and minors, which it has astoundingly failed to do so in the past. This mentality of security and sovereignty over the protection of actual human beings and their rights can be seen with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is another example of where the United States has refused to ratify a treaty designed for the protection of human rights for minority groups, in this case, women. CEDAW is also relevant to the study at hand because it is an international treaty specified to protect a minority

group that the United States has failed to ratify for fear of invasion into U.S. laws and policies (SFRC, 2002). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, and entered into force in 1991, CEDAW is designed to provide a universal definition of discrimination against women and brings attention to a whole range of issues concerning women's human rights (UNGA, 1981). The U.S. has been a part of the UN since its inception and is a major player, yet the last time CEDAW was addressed by Congress was in 2002 when Biden was the chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (SCFR, 2002). CEDAW was briefly mentioned by the Obama Administration, yet the SCFR at the time never actually approached the treaty for consideration. One hundred eighty-seven of the 193 United Nations member states have ratified CEDAW. The only states that have not are Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga, and the United States (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner [OHCHR], 2015).

Much like the CRC, many proponents in the executive branch have emerged in support of CEDAW. Most notably, when President Joe Biden was the SCFR committee chair, he was in strong support of CEDAW. In fact, he authored the SCFR document that detailed the favorable vote by the committee (SFRC, 2002). At the time, Biden claimed that the Committee was “committed to ensuring that promotion of the rights of women is fully integrated into American foreign policy” (SFRC, 2002). Fellow Senators who supported the treaty claimed that it set forth “measures to achieve equal rights for women throughout the world,” and agreed to all of the Committee provisions desired by opponents (SFRC, 2002). But, since President Biden’s inauguration in early 2021, the administration has completely failed to abide by this prior commitment and Biden has never mentioned CEDAW as being a priority. This is not the say that President Biden has not made any statements on women’s rights, the administration’s response to the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* (The White House, 2022) being a prime example. But, CEDAW has

not been mentioned and the U.S. explicitly stated that CEDAW has no effect on women's right to bodily autonomy (SFRC, 2002).

In spite of support from many members in 2002, the treaty was never introduced to the full Senate due to opposition. SCFR Republican members, the minority group at the time, were in staunch disagreement with CEDAW. Some of these members included ranking minority member Jesse Helms, and Senators Sam Brownback and Mike Enzi (SFRC, 2002). Helms declared in the Executive Report for the SFRC that there was "a disturbing trend among executive branch officials and non-governmental organizations to devote resources, energy, and political will to the ratification of multilateral treaties rather than to promotion of the norms represented by those treaties in the countries where they are under attack" (SFRC, 2002). Despite this elaborate and arguably prejudiced claim, Helms did not provide any relevant examples or information of support, he used mere framing to effect the outcome. Senator Brownback claimed that the SFRC report created was "not reliable" and that CEDAW would incite a "massive disruption of well-settled U.S. domestic law" (SFRC, 2002). It is important to note that simply because historical precedence does exist in a particular policy area, that this precedence is ethical and promotes equality. Senator Brownback also failed to cite relevant sources. Additionally, given that at this time the U.S. had ratified fewer human rights treaties than any other G20 country – a trend which has continued to this day – former Senator Helm's claims simply fail to align with fact.

However, the negative domestic framing of CEDAW by Helms and his colleagues became one of the primary reasons why CEDAW never made it to the full Senate. Conservative opponents argued that the treaty was unnecessary, and that it would undermine traditional gender roles and the family structure. The U.S. Secretary of State at the time, CRC proponent Colin L.

Powell, was successfully swayed by Helms and expressed concern that the vote would be too early in the process for CEDAW to pass and enter the process for ratification. Powell responded on behalf of the administration at the time, the Bush Administration, and claimed that despite CEDAW's heroic goals and the Administration's supposed protection of women's rights, the treaty was not a "high priority" (SFRC, 2002). Yet, when CEDAW did eventually become clarified enough that passage was possible, the following Senate Committee on Foreign Relations refused to reintroduce the treaty. This was done under the guise that CEDAW was not only unnecessary but would also interfere in a country's domestic and private family affairs unprompted. While the CEDAW commission can review a country's status relating to gender equality and provide recommendations to be followed, CEDAW cannot invalidate a state's sovereign status. In fact, there is no reason for the United States to assume this would happen, as thus far, countries who have been given recommendations by CEDAW have wholeheartedly committed themselves to the cause (UNGA, 1981). CEDAW is internationally recognized, and while it is perceived as 'lesser' in terms of crisis, for women it is of particular importance and should be ratified by the United States (UN Women, n.d.). But, the mere perception of a threat promoted by negative framing, that the hegemony of the United States could be in a position of peril, has dissuaded the Senate pursuance of CEDAW.

Similarly to the CRC, concerns regarding sovereignty have emerged, and yet can also be easily assuaged. For example, certain Senators and even presidential administrations have claimed that CEDAW would have a direct effect on abortion laws within the United States due to the promotion of access to "family planning" resources (Koh, 2002). In the SFRC Executive Report, Senators Helms, Brownback, and Enzi claimed that "ratification of CEDAW will help lawyers and other pro-abortion advocates reach the goal of enshrining unrestricted access to

abortion in the United States,” a patently false statement (SFRC, 2002). However, the U.S. Department of State has officially reported that CEDAW is abortion neutral, and Catholic countries that ban abortion, such as Ireland, have ratified CEDAW (Koh, 2002). This misunderstanding is caused by improper, negative framing from conservative actors who align with particular religious and family values. Again, much like CRC, the in-group us versus them ideology emerges. The United States touts itself on equality and yet fails to uphold these ideals in the area of human rights for women (Horowitz & Igielnik, 2021). There has been minor domestic work in the area of women’s rights, but the United States is notorious for fearing loss. However, CEDAW would arguably only be beneficial for the United States, as it would assist in the removal of the pink tax, the passage of the Violence Against Women Act, and other basic rights that should be provided to women. Different in-groups within U.S. politics, mostly along partisan lines, have framed CEDAW in various ways as opposed to simply stating the facts. For example, the fallacy that CEDAW ratification would “undermine the American family by redefining traditional gender roles with regard to the upbringing of children” (Koh, 2002). The result is that while the current norm is to not be biased against women, actors have failed to abide by this basic right in an actual human rights treaty. Therefore, the U.S. is able to avoid repercussions should they not abide by CEDAW as they discriminate against women.

Specifically in terms of the CRC and CEDAW, there is a superiority mentality in the United States that children’s and women’s rights can simply be resolved domestically, and international influence is entirely unnecessary. This shows the hypothesized ‘separate’ levels of policy, rather than a beneficial Venn diagram concept. The United States, based on the moral values promoted by policymakers, should be entirely willing and even wanting to ratify these treaties. U.S. politicians tout an adherence to equality and liberal ideals, as expected from a

Western liberal hegemon. However, the U.S. has failed to applicably abide by these treaties and specifically promote human rights for minority individuals. The mere idea that CEDAW or the CRC could potentially intervene in family affairs caused an influx of negative framing that may never be recovered from. CEDAW is framed in such a way which encourages domestic action to promote women's rights, and yet any action in the international sphere is frowned upon. The convoluted intertwining of international and domestic norms, moral beliefs, and political values and actions is thus most applicably analyzed from the lenses of multiple distinctions.

Study Overview

Based on the research and case studies herein, this study intended to analyze the following: How do realistic conflict theory and the valence framing effect help to explain the apparent division between the protection of domestic security and sovereignty, and the championing of international human rights defense by the United States? The specific aims of this study were to supplement the background information on treaties discussed above by analyzing the potential psychological processes behind the decisions made, and apply these potential processes to the actual decisions of U.S. citizens and their knowledge of human rights IR. In order to successfully complete these aims, an online survey was used. Perception of conflict and the valence framing manipulation were assessed in the context of international relations knowledge, political partisanship, moral superiority complex, and domestic nationalism. The results are intended to help shape current policy and hopefully inform the greater public of these issues.

It was hypothesized that the participants who received a negative vignette frame were less likely to approve the treaty compared to those who received a positive or neutral frame. It was also hypothesized that participants who perceived more conflict were less likely to approve

of the treaty compared to those who perceived less conflict. In comparison to those who perceive less conflict, it was hypothesized that those who perceived more conflict would have stronger rates of cognitive bias, nationalism, and moral superiority; as well as lower rates of political knowledge. The negatively framed participants would also have more negative attitudes about human rights and U.S. involvement in international relations, and more positive attitudes about U.S. security and military funding. Lastly, it was hypothesized that stronger rates of cognitive bias, nationalism, moral superiority, and conservative thinking would correlate with lower levels of political knowledge, more negative attitudes about human rights and U.S. involvement in international relations, and more positive attitudes about U.S. security and military funding.

This study is particularly important for U.S. citizens who are largely unaware of modern foreign policy and the lack of intervention in human rights atrocities. The United States preaches prosperity and freedom, yet only in domestic circumstances. There is an overwhelming failure on the U.S.'s part in upholding these beliefs on an international playing field. By analyzing the political knowledge and preference of United States citizens, before applying these results to the scales chosen to represent and apply to RCT and the VFE, this study expands on prior research while also examining a new direction for this field of research.

Method

Participants

The population of interest is citizens of the United States who have spent the majority of their time within the United States. Participants could be dual (or more) citizens, but one of their citizenships must be American. Individuals with visas, green cards, or other forms of travel allowance were unable to participate. Participants must have also been 18 years of age or older to ensure that they are legally allowed to vote in the United States. Beyond these requirements,

there were no necessities regarding race, age, gender, or other participant variables. The sample was that of convenience due to the usage of Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is a crowdsourcing website for businesses to hire individuals remotely to perform on-demand tasks (Moss & Litman, 2020). MTurk can also be used for the purpose of psychological research by attaining participants over the internet to complete online surveys. Research (Moss & Litman, 2020) on MTurk has shown the typical participant characteristics of MTurk participants, the percentages are as follows; 57% identified as female, 37% of people on MTurk are in their 30's, another 17% are in their 40's, and roughly 11% are in their 50's; 79.9% of MTurk users are White, just above the 2020 U.S. census percentage of 76.5%. Other studies on MTurk participant variables have revealed similar percentages (Arechar et al., 2017).

Of the 294 individuals who participated in the survey portion of this study, 293 of them provided their age, the mean was 32.77 with a standard deviation of 8.74; the range was 50 years, from 18 years of age to 68 years of age. Of the study participants, 33.3% ($n = 98$) identified as cisgender females, 2.7% ($n = 8$) identified as transgender females, 62.6% ($n = 184$) identified as cisgender males, 0.7% ($n = 2$) identified as transgender males, and 0.7% ($n = 2$) identified as non-binary. The majority of participants identified as White, 84.7% ($n = 249$) of participants; 1.4% ($n = 4$) of participants identified Black or African American, 3.4% ($n = 10$) of participants identified American Indian or Alaska Native, 9.9% ($n = 29$) of participants identified Asian, and 0.7% ($n = 2$) of participants identified Hispanic or Latino(a).

Participants were compensated with a monetary reward. Given the use of Amazon Mechanical Turk as the distribution service for the survey and based on the average previous study compensations for MTurk (Hara et al., 2018), participants were given around \$1.00 USD for compensation. Survey recesses and compensation were intended to counteract low survey

retention, as studies have shown these conveniences to be beneficial in thwarting participant breakoff (Peytchez, 2009).

Design

A 3-group, between-groups, quasi-experimental design was used for this study. This is a result of the vignette-manipulated independent variable driving the experimental element of this study, followed by correlational elements intended to analyze potential relationships between the independent variable and dependent variables.

Materials

Valence Framing Effect Stimulus

A vignette was created to analyze the effects of positive and negative framing on constituent perceptions of the United States participating in international human rights treaty ratification. This vignette did not exist, and therefore one was designed specifically for this study. Prior research illuminated the particular elements necessary for a successful framing vignette, such as provocative diction and the use of loss aversion techniques (Bizer et al., 2005, 2011). The vignette was intended to frame a fictitious treaty that focuses on global human rights in either a positive, negative, or neutral way to U.S. citizens. Beyond the treaty, no other variation in diction will exist, this is intended to control for other potential effects. Thus, participant responses should have been influenced by the manipulation they receive. The vignette began as follows:

“You turn on the TV to see a U.S. Senator speaking on the news. They are discussing an ongoing human rights treaty on the Senate floor. This treaty is designed to support refugees who have recently moved to a different country and is endorsed by the United Nations after being constructed by the UN Refugee Agency. The treaty has already been ratified by all but seven official member states of the UN.”

This portion of the vignette was intended to act as the verbal base before the manipulation was added. The purpose of this paragraph was to provide participants with a basis on the fictitious treaty before they were asked about their opinions on it. Without this base, participants would not be given enough viable information to encourage a form of political framing. The version of the manipulation that a participant receives was randomly assigned and followed the paragraph above. Participants were either be assigned a positive, neutral, or negative frame.

Positive: "The Senator speaking is discussing the many benefits of the treaty. Not only will the ratification of the treaty protect refugees around the world, but it will also bolster the United States economy. How likely are you to support the ratification of this treaty?"

Neutral: "The Senator speaking is discussing the written agreement within the treaty, along with its various nuances and terms that would affect both United States citizens and international refugees. How likely are you to support the ratification of this treaty?"

Negative: "The Senator speaking is discussing the harmful effects that this treaty would have on the United States. Not only would the treaty negatively affect the economy, but it also presents a threat to U.S. security and sovereignty. How likely are you to support the ratification of this treaty?"

Support for the treaty was rated on a 7-point, Likert-type, scale (1 – *very unlikely*, 7 – *very likely*). High numeric responses to the positive vignette and low numeric responses to the negative vignette indicated prominent valence framing effect. The neutral vignette served as a controlled basis. Participants completed two attention checks relating to the vignette in order to ensure that they were aware of the vignette content. These checks were purposefully after the other survey inquiries in order to alter the focus of the participant. Participants were asked which agency (or agencies) within the United Nations were said to have promoted this treaty, options being the *UN Refugee Agency*, *UN Women*, *UN Population Fund*, *UN International Children's Emergency Fund*, and *UN Development Programme*. Participants were then asked if the vignette

they read spoke of *treaty benefits*, *treaty harms*, *neither*, or *both*. The second inquiry was specifically used to discern if a participant was aware of the manipulation that should have affected their treaty approval, statistical success would emerge due to the participants recognizing the Senator's framing. The treaty support item acted as the manipulation check to ensure that the framing manipulation was successful.

Measures

Group-Based Cognitive Bias. To measure group-based cognitive bias, the Group Identification Scale (Brown et al., 1986) was used. For the purposes of this study, the in-group identity discussed was *American*. The scale consists of 10 statements, 5 of which are reverse scored and all of which were presented in a random order. An example statement, tailored to Americans as the in-group identification for this study, is "I am a person who considers the American group important." A second example, which is to be reverse scored, is "I am a person who criticizes the American group." Each statement was rated on frequency of application to self on a 5-point, Likert-type, scale (1 – *never*, 5 – *very often*). The higher the score, the greater an individual is biased toward the American in-group. In terms of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha for the measure was 0.71 (Brown et al., 1986), indicating a fair measure of inter-item correlation. A check on the validity of the scale was done by comparing the scores from respondents whose spontaneous comments about their group had been classified as positive, with those whose comments were neutral or negative (Brown et al., 1986). The two groups had significantly different scale scores, suggesting that the inventory was indeed tapping aspects of people's affinity to their group (Brown et al., 1986). With the survey data collected for this study, Cronbach's alpha for the measure was 0.81, indicated a greater scale of inter-item correlation.

Moral Superiority. Personal moral superiority was measured using the Self, Other, and Desirability Trait Judgments Scale (Tappin & McKay, 2017). Ten traits were provided to each participant and participants were asked to judge the extent to which each trait describes (a) themselves and (b) the average person. While the original scale asks for the social desirability of each trait as well, this study excluded that portion of the survey as it was not relevant to the hypotheses. The presentation order of the traits themselves was randomized across each rating set and participant. Rating judgments for the self and the average person were provided on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – *not at all*, 7 – *very much so*). Examples of these moral terms include ‘honest,’ ‘trustworthy,’ and ‘fair.’ Five terms were measured in the opposite manner, being immoral terms, to reduce blind responses. Examples of these immoral terms include ‘deceptive,’ ‘prejudiced,’ and ‘insincere.’ Immoral terms were reverse scored. It was expected that participants will rate themselves higher for moral terms than the average person, and the opposite for immoral terms. In terms of reliability for these traits, the ‘self’ ratings have a tested reliability of $\alpha = 0.88$, the average person having $\alpha = 0.93$, indicating measure consistency (Tappin & McKay, 2017). For the data collected from survey participants, the ‘self’ ratings had a tested reliability of $\alpha = 0.81$, the average person had $\alpha = 0.82$, producing similar consistency.

Nationalism. Nationalism, or national identity, was measured by the United States Identity Scale (USIS; Meca et al., 2020). Participants were given 11 statements, presented in a random order. Unbeknownst to the participants, these statements are split into two separate sections: affirmation and centrality. Affirmation statements focus on emotional connection to citizenship and centrality statements are based on personal connection to American identity. An example of an affirmation statement is “I dislike being American,” which was reverse scored. A centrality example is “In general, being American is an important part of my self-image.”

Participants were asked to respond to the statements on a 4-point Likert scale (1 – *does not describe me at all*, 4 – *describes me very well*). Higher ratings on the scale indicated a greater sense of nationalism. In terms of internal consistency, Cronbach's alphas were 0.92 and 0.93 for the U.S. affirmation and centrality subscales, indicating high internal consistency (Meca et al., 2020). For convergent validity and predictive validity within the USIS, cultural practices were moderately correlated with the affirmation and centrality subscales (Meca et al., 2020). For the survey data collected, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.75 overall. This was less than originally expected, however, still a viable result.

Attitudes About Human Rights. Attitudes about human rights were measured using the Human Rights Questionnaire (HRQ; Diaz-Veizades et al., 1995). The scale was intended to measure personal attitudes about basic human rights. The questionnaire consists of 38 statements in total, placed into four separate factors – Social Security, Civilian Constraint, Equality, and Privacy. For the purposes of this study, the survey was limited to 32 statements and removed the Privacy factor. The Social Security subscale focuses on social and economic benefits for all; the Civilian Constraint subscale centers on freedoms of the general public; and the Equality subscale focuses on the fairness of rights between groups. The statements were written in a 7-point, Likert-type, response format asking for level of agreement with the statement (1 – *strongly disagree*, 7 – *strongly agree*). A Social Security example is “if a person does not make enough money to support his or her family adequately, the family should be aided by the government.” A sample Civilian Constraint statement is “everyone should have the right to leave any country, even his or her own.” An Equality example is “women and men should have equal rights in divorce or the ending of marriage.”

The overall reliability of the HRQ as measured by coefficient alpha was 0.85 (Diaz-Veizades et al., 1995), implying high internal consistency. The subscale totals are determined by the sums of the items that defined each factor; items that loaded negatively on the factors were reverse-coded. The coefficients alpha for the four human rights subscales were 0.81 for the Social Security subscale, 0.76 for the Civilian Constraint subscale, and 0.83 for the Equality subscale, once again indicating high internal consistency (Diaz-Veizades et al., 1995). The overall reliability of the data collected for this study was $\alpha = 0.68$. While this was a lower number than originally expected, it was still viable for the purposes of this thesis.

Attitudes About United States Involvement in International Human Rights Issues.

Attitudes about U.S. involvement in international human rights issues were measured using the Global Bystander Intervention Scale (Albayrak-Aydemir & Gleibs, 2021). The scale was intended to measure personal beliefs about the U.S. being involved in global affairs, rather than domestic affairs. There are 12 statements in total, split into four different subscales each with three statements. These subscales are Notice, Emergency, Responsibility, and Know. The Notice subscale involves recognizing the existence of a global event; the Emergency subscale focuses on interpreting the event as an urgent situation; the Responsibility subscale centers on taking the authority to assist; and the Know subscale involves being aware of how to help. The original scale was focused on Syrian refugees and the ongoing war. However, to highlight a crisis that is well-known and publicized by the media, that the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine with malintent, the term 'Syrian' was replaced with 'Ukrainian.' A Notice statement example is "I am aware that there is a war in Ukraine causing many people to flee their homeland." An Emergency example is "I believe that the situation of Ukrainian refugees is an emergency that requires the help of other people." A sample Responsibility statement includes "It is my duty to do something

to ease the pain and suffering of Ukrainian refugees.” Lastly, a sample Know statement is “I know a number of ways I can help Ukrainian refugees.” The statements were written in a 7-point (1 – *strongly disagree*, 7 – *strongly agree*) response format, asking for the degree to which the participant agrees or disagrees with the following statements. A higher sum score represents more positive attitudes on human rights intervention. For this study, overall interrater reliability was tested with Cronbach’s alpha, with a result of 0.91, indicating high internal consistency. For the most similar participant group studied with this scale, the internal consistency was above a 0.77 (Albayrak-Aydemir & Gleibs, 2021).

Attitudes About United States Military Power and Security. Attitudes about U.S. military power and security were measured by the Public Attitudes Towards Security and Counter-Espionage Matters scale (Fischer, 1999). The scale was intended to measure personal attitudes about hegemonic power the U.S. has in terms of security preservation. The scale has 10 statements in total. Considering that certain statements are formatted to include lettered options, ranging from (a) to (f), the inquiries were limited to include only questions that require a Likert-type agreement response, of which there are six. An example of a statement includes, “in order to maintain American’s leadership in the world, the government should maintain a high level of secrecy surrounding technology with military uses.” Participants were asked on a 5-point (1 – *definitely should/strongly agree*, 5 – *definitely should not/strongly disagree*) response format. Certain statements were not formatted in this scale and were therefore altered from their current 4-point scale to fit the above described. Higher sum scores in this scale indicate a more positive perspective on United States military power and security. Given the original intentions behind this scale, to discern the policy and program areas which have received surprisingly strong endorsement in terms of public backing, as well as perspectives on crime and punishment, there

is no clarification as to the validity and reliability of the scale. Thus, these items were established within this study by conducting the necessary reliability test. The result was a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating high inter-rater reliability and internal consistency.

Political Partisanship. Political partisanship was measured by the Ideological Consistency Scale on the Political Polarization Survey (Pew Research Center, 2014). The scale includes 10 statements with opposing viewpoints that are rated on a 3-point scale. An example is "government is almost always wasteful and inefficient" versus "government often does a better job than people give it credit for." Responses ranged from -1 (liberal response) to +1 (conservative response). A response of zero indicated a lack of agreement with either opposing statement, or a complete lack of response. Participants were informed that they are to select the statement that comes closer to their own views, even if neither is exactly correct. Participants were solely provided with the 10 opposing statements; they were not told which responses are typically liberal and which are typically conservative. Participants were only asked which statement they are more likely to agree with, if either. The higher sum of responses, the more consistently conservative a participant is. Given that this scale has been utilized several times throughout the past two decades, there are several different reliability results. However, the most recent in 2014 showed Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72$ (Pew Research Center, 2014), indicating a high level of reliability. Utilizing the data from this study, the Cronbach's alpha was only 0.50. This was likely due to the low number of questions and the low variation in response options.

Knowledge About Ongoing and Past Global Affairs. Knowledge about ongoing and past global affairs was examined utilizing basic inquiries designed to align with the study at hand. Participants were asked what particular acronyms stand for. The acronym was one of the four relevant to the study (UNSC, CRC, CEDAW, and ICC). Participants were provided with

five potential responses in a multiple-choice format (see Appendix A for the measure created). Only one of the five responses were correct, with the other four being red herrings. Participants were then provided with the name of a key state actor in a particular case study, as well as the year the inquiry relates to, before being asked what position this actor was in during the specified time period. The number of potential responses provided was also five in a multiple-choice format. Only one of the five responses will be correct, the other four being red herrings. The resulting inquiries created a scale of eight questions, and the results were assessed in terms of sum of correct responses. The greater a sum, the more questions that a participant got correct and the greater knowledge they have regarding ongoing and past global affairs. Given the subject of this scale, intended to examine basic a participant's basic knowledge of existing treaties rather than psychological factors, reliability was not provided but was tested for. Utilizing the data from this study, the Cronbach's alpha was only 0.28. This is likely due to the low number of questions or the difficulty of the questions themselves.

Perception of Conflict. Perceptions of threat, aligned with realistic conflict theory, were measured using two scales. The first scale is the Right-Wing Protective Popular Nationalism Scale (Flannery et al., 2021). The scale has 15 statements and generally assesses desire to protect the American in-group. The second scale is the Perceived Competitive Threat measurement (Khan et al., 2021), which has 10 statements and is intended to assess perceived contention between the U.S. and other countries. There is no exact measure for RCT as is it a theoretical framework rather than a construct to be assessed. Thus, these scales were used in unison to analyze competitive threat to American government, culture, and economic power.

An example of a statement on the Right-Wing Protective Popular Nationalism Scale is, "In regard to American culture we need to protect what we have." The original scale stated

“Australian” rather than “American,” so each statement in the scale was altered accordingly. The prompts were rated on a 7-point scale (1 – *strongly disagree*, 7 – *strongly agree*). Negatively-worded items were reverse coded, with a high sum of scores indicative of a belief in the need to protect American culture from out-group threats. Cronbach's alpha coefficients displayed an overall alpha value of 0.89 (Flannery et al., 2021), indicating a high internal consistency. For convergent validity, the scale showed strong partial correlations with constructs relating to national attitude (e.g., nationalism, symbolic threat), demonstrating convergence with theoretically similar constructs (Flannery et al., 2021).

The second scale, the Perceived Competitive Threat measurement (Khan et al., 2021), was originally tailored for industry and business threat. For the present study, the scale was slightly altered to reflect the national economy of the United States rather than a particular company. An example of an altered statement within the study is, “In the United States, our government has the resources for vigorous and sustained competitive action and for retaliation against other countries or states.” The response scale for the Perceived Competitive Threat measurement is the same as that in the Right-Wing Protective Popular Nationalism Scale. A high sum of scores indicates a high level of American nationalism and desire to protect the U.S. economy. Cronbach's alpha coefficients displayed an overall alpha value above a 0.90 (Khan et al., 2021), indicating high internal consistency. Discriminant validity was supported and thus the survey successfully assesses the intended attitudes (Khan et al., 2021). The overall Cronbach's alpha for both scales together was 0.67. This coefficient is ample for the purposes of this thesis, especially because these scales have never been combined before in research.

Demographics. The survey concluded with a set of general inquiries to investigate the demographic characteristics of the participants completing the survey. Participants were asked

their age, along with their gender (*cisgender female, transgender female, cisgender male, transgender male, non-binary, or other*), and their ethnicity (*White, Black/African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino(a), American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Mixed, or other*). Participants were then asked their country of origin (*United States or other*), citizenship (*United States citizen, non-United States citizen, U.S. and non-U.S. citizen [more than one citizenship], or other*), and whether or not the participants spend the majority of their time within the United States. Lastly, participants were asked whether or not they are registered to vote, and which political party is listed on their voter registration (*American Independent, Democratic, Green, Libertarian, Peace and Freedom, Republican, No Party Preference, or other*).

Procedure

The survey portion of the study was conducted using Qualtrics, an online survey tool. Once an individual provides informed consent, they proceeded into the assessment portion of the survey. If an individual does not consent, they were shown the final page of the online survey thanking them for their time and providing a debrief of the study intentions. In the consent form, participants were encouraged to respond with the answer that first comes to their mind. Exact hypotheses and expectations were disguised in an attempt to prevent bias. However, this disguise is not ethically concerning, and appears in most psychological studies. The survey began with the valence framing effect vignette, participants were randomly assigned to a condition (positive, negative, or neutral). The participants completed the two attention check questions at randomized moments in the survey. Lastly, participants completed the dependent variable measures for attitudes about human rights, attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations, attitudes about U.S. military power and security, moral superiority, group-based cognitive bias, and

nationalism in a randomized order. Participants then responded to the participant variable measures for perception of conflict, political partisanship, and knowledge about ongoing relations in global affairs in a randomized order. The survey concluded with the demographic measures. Participants were shown a final page thanking them for their time and providing a debrief of the study intentions.

For a small estimated effect size, a total of 160 participants or more was necessary for this study. The effect size was estimated to be small based on the results of other similar studies (Bizer et al., 2011; Blanchette, 2006; Echebarria & Guede, 2003; Jackson, 1993; Xu et al., 2020). The necessary sample size was determined by using a G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) a priori sample size test with an $\alpha = 0.05$, a desired power = 0.90, and a Pearson correlation statistical analysis. To address the possibility of high attrition due to the length of the study survey, recruitment of participants more than suggested attenuated the loss of participants over time. More recruitment reduced the participant gap that a lengthy study could produce. Research has shown that a response rate of 60% is optimal for most studies (Fincham, 2008). Therefore, the over-recruited sample size was roughly 267. A participant number of 300 was requested, but only 294 participants consented to take the survey. To prevent survey burnout given the length of the survey, participants were encouraged to take breaks between sections as needed.

Ethical Considerations

The level of risk to participants in this study was minimal. The probability of an event that is serious, prolonged, and permanent occurring as a result of study participation was practically null. The study risk is comparable to the risk encountered in everyday life. Participants who consume any medium of news or media about politics already experience a similar level of risk. Thus, there is little to no likelihood of adverse events as a result of

participation in this study. The nature of this study does not involve targeting a protected or vulnerable population. If anything, this study is intended to alter policy in a way that would protect vulnerable populations and minorities in a global context. In addition, this study did not involve asking participants to provide sensitive information. The most personal topics that were broached are political participation and partisanship in the frame of nationalism towards the United States. This study did not involve deception. As a result, there were no particular protections intended to assist vulnerable individuals or those who may feel affected by sensitive topics of a personal nature.

In addition with this study being minimal risk, participation was entirely voluntary. Survey participants had the option to or not to participate in the study, and they were able to withdraw from the survey without any repercussions. Participants were also not selected or singled out in any particular way other than assuring that all participants are adults with United States citizenship. The sole required question was that of consent. After participants provided positive consent, all subsequent questions were voluntary as opposed to mandatory. The data collected from the survey participants is anonymous. Participants were not required to include their name, IP addresses, or any personal or identifying information. Additionally, all participant data was stored and maintained in a password-protected Qualtrics account on a password-protected computer.

While this study did not have immediate benefits for the participants in a direct manner, it will hopefully have a significant effect on society at large. This study could lead to the recognition of stark truths in the United States, which policymakers and citizens often try to ignore or blame on others. For scholarly knowledge, this study could open up greater discussions around framing, its effect on favoritism, and how this is reflected in U.S. society when compared

to a larger international field. Considering there are very few potential risks to participants within this study, it is fair to state that the benefits largely outweigh these improbable, and frankly nonexistent, threats to wellbeing.

Results

Demographics

Of the requested 300 participants through Amazon Mechanical Turk, 294 people consented ($n = 294$) and proceeded to take the survey. Before delving into the hypotheses and corresponding result of this study, demographics must first be analyzed. Of the 294 participants, 1.7% ($n = 5$) did not provide a response in terms of whether or not they were born in the United States. Thus of the participants, 97.6% ($n = 287$) were born in the United States, and 0.7% ($n = 2$) were not. In terms of citizenship status, 98.0% ($n = 288$) of participants provided a response. The responses indicated that 95.6% ($n = 281$) of participants were solely United States citizens, 2.4% ($n = 7$) of respondents had more than one citizenship, one of which being the United States. Participants were also asked if they spend the majority of their time within the United States, 93.5% ($n = 275$) of participants said yes, 6.1% ($n = 18$) said no, and 0.3% ($n = 1$) did not respond. For the purpose of increasing the number and variety of responses for this study, individuals who did not provide an answer for their citizenship or stated that they spent the majority of their time outside of the U.S., still had their responses analyzed.

Of the study participants, 95.9% ($n = 282$) stated that they are registered to vote, 4.1% ($n = 12$) stated that they are not registered to vote. Of those registered to vote, 14.6% ($n = 43$) had American Independent listed as their affiliation, 51.4% ($n = 151$) had Democratic listed as their affiliation, 4.8% ($n = 14$) had Green listed as their affiliation, 1.4% ($n = 4$) had Libertarian listed as their affiliation, 1.4% ($n = 4$) had Peace and Freedom listed as their affiliation, 22.1% ($n = 65$)

had Republican listed as their affiliation, and 0.3% ($n = 1$) had No Party Preference listed as their affiliation.

Vignette Manipulation and Treaty Approval

Unfortunately, of the 294 survey participants, only 111 (37.76%) got the important attention check correct – that check asking what the Senator's said about the vignette treaty (treaty benefits, treaty harm, neither, or both). As such, it is unsurprising that the valence frame effect manipulation did not work. The manipulation hypothesis was that participants who received a negative vignette frame were less likely to approve of the treaty compared to those who received a positive frame or a neutral frame. Three one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to analyze this hypothesis, one for the total 294 participants, one for the 111 participants who got the one specific attention check correct, and one for the 183 participants who did not get the attention check correct. Results for all three tests revealed that the type of frame a participant received did not have a significant effect on the likelihood of treaty approval.

For the 294 participants, the type of vignette frame did not have a significant effect on likelihood of treaty approval, $F(2,291) = 0.52$, $MSe = 1.15$, $p = 0.594$, $\eta^2 = 0.004$. Participants who received the negative frame were not significantly less likely to approve of the treaty compared to those who received a positive frame or a neutral frame. A similar lack of effect emerged with the 111 participants who responded to the attention check question correctly. The type of vignette frame did not have a significant effect on likelihood of treaty approval, $F(2,108) = 1.00$, $MSe = 1.29$, $p = 0.371$, $\eta^2 = 0.018$. In regard to the 183 participants who replied incorrectly to the attention check, the hypothesis failed as well. The type of vignette frame did not have a significant effect on likelihood of treaty approval, $F(2,180) = 0.56$, $MSe = 1.07$, $p = 0.573$, $\eta^2 = 0.006$. However, despite the failure of the hypothesis – and thus by the vignette

manipulation – it should be noted that for the participants who got the attention check correct ($p = 0.371$), the p -value is far lower than that for the participants who got the attention check incorrect ($p = 0.573$). Potential relationships between the framing manipulation and the dependent variables were not analyzed because the manipulation was not successful.

Perceived Conflict and Treaty Approval

It was hypothesized that participants who perceive more conflict are less likely to approve of the treaty compared to those who perceive less conflict. A univariate regression analysis was conducted. Perception of conflict does have a significant effect on treaty approval; $F(1,270) = 68.90$, $MSe = 0.95$, $p < 0.001$. The R -value is 0.452, indicating a moderate correlation – nearly a strong correlation – between conflict perception and treaty approval. The R^2 -value is 0.204, indicating that 20.4% of the total variation in treaty approval can be explained by the level of perceived conflict by participants. Despite this statistical significance, there is a crucial difference from the initial hypothesis. According to the data, the resulting correlation between conflict perception and treaty approval is positive rather than negative; the relationship between the variables is such that participants who perceive more conflict are actually more likely to approve of the treaty compared to those who perceive less conflict.

Perceived Conflict and Dependent Variables

The next hypothesis was that in comparison to those who perceive lower levels of conflict, those who perceive more conflict will have stronger rates of cognitive bias, nationalism, and moral superiority; as well as lower rates of political knowledge ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 2.26$). These participants will also have more negative attitudes about human rights ($M = 144.66$, $SD = 13.84$) and U.S. involvement in international relations, and more positive attitudes about U.S. security and military funding. To test this hypothesis, a multivariate general linear model was conducted.

In opposition to the original hypothesis, moral superiority ($M = 0.97$, $SD = 6.98$) displayed a weak negative correlation (See Table 3). Also in opposition to the initial hypothesis, attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations ($M = 65.62$, $SD = 10.28$) correlated positively with perceived conflict (See Table 3). Political knowledge and attitudes about human rights did not produce significant results. In support of the original hypothesis, cognitive bias ($M = 37.99$, $SD = 6.07$), nationalism ($M = 28.40$, $SD = 7.07$), and attitudes about U.S. security and military funding ($M = 76.30$, $SD = 13.39$) all correlated positively with perceived conflict. Thus, as conflict perception increased, so did positive attitudes about U.S. security and military funding, levels of cognitive bias and nationalism (See Table 3).

Table 3

Perceived Conflict and Significant Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Correlation	<i>p</i> -value	F
Cognitive Bias	0.683	< .001	177.22
Moral Superiority	-0.192	< .001	21.06
Nationalism	0.279	< .001	13.74
Involvement	0.697	< .001	163.42
Security/Military	0.311	< .001	18.14

Note. This table demonstrates the dependent variables which produced statistically significant results. 'Correlation' is Pearson's correlation to perceived conflict ($n = 185$).

Correlation Between Dependent Variables

Lastly, it is hypothesized that stronger rates of cognitive bias, nationalism, moral superiority, and partisan conservative thinking will correlate with lower levels of political knowledge, more negative attitudes about human rights and U.S. involvement in international relations, and more positive attitudes about U.S. security and military funding. These interrelationships were analyzed through bivariate correlations (See Table 4 for significance).

Unlike the initial hypothesis, a lack of political knowledge correlated negatively with attitudes about U.S. security and military funding. Cognitive bias correlated positively with attitudes about human rights and attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations; and correlated negatively with moral superiority. Moral superiority correlated positively with attitudes about human rights. Nationalism correlated positively with attitudes about human rights and about U.S. involvement in international relations. Attitudes about human rights correlated positively with attitudes about U.S. security and military funding, and conservative thinking. The positive correlation between attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations and attitudes about U.S. security and military funding, and conservative thinking, was unexpected.

Following the initial hypothesis, a lack of political knowledge negatively correlated with attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations. Cognitive bias correlated positively with nationalism and U.S. security and military funding. Moral superiority correlated positively with nationalism, U.S. security and military funding, as well as higher levels of conservative thinking. The positive correlation between nationalism and conservative thinking was expected and supported. Attitudes about human rights correlated positively with attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations. Lastly, an increase in conservative partisanship did positively correlate with attitudes about U.S. security and military funding, which corresponds with the original hypothesis.

Table 4*Correlations Between Dependent Variables*

Dependent Variable	Knowledge	Cognitive Bias	Moral Superiority	Nationalism	HR Attitude	Involvement Attitude	Security Attitude	Partisanship
Knowledge	1.000	-.087	-.095	.084	-.083	-.118*	-.116*	.033
Cognitive Bias	-.087	1.000	-.176**	.256**	.160**	.613**	.394**	.087
Moral Superiority	-.095	-.176**	1.000	.114*	.256**	-.079	-.172**	.168**
Nationalism	.084	.256**	.114*	1.000	.176**	.284**	-.030	.167**
HR Attitude	-.083	.160**	.256**	.176**	1.000	.581**	.148*	.273**
Involvement Attitude	-.118*	.613**	-.079	.284**	.581**	1.000	.324**	.159**
Security Attitude	-.116*	.394**	-.172**	-.030	.148*	.324**	1.000	.174**
Partisanship	.033	.087	.168**	.167**	.273**	.159**	.174**	1.000

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Discussion

As discussed previously, the overall problem that was analyzed throughout this study is the psychological roadmap of mental processes that lead to foreign policy decisions within the United States, specifically in relation to international human rights. This is a notable issue, and can be supported by the sheer amount of human rights treaties that the U.S. has failed to ratify. While not entirely achieved, this thesis was intended to resolve a theoretical gap in research by intertwining the various phenomena and theories discussed herein.

Overall, the results of this study were unexpected, yet interesting, in relation to the initial hypotheses. Unfortunately, the negative, positive, and neutral vignette manipulated frames did not relate to a significant variation in treaty approval likelihood. Therefore, the frames could not be used as an independent variable for further testing, as it did not have a significant effect on the survey participants. Despite the vignette within this study not providing the necessary manipulation, some of the results can still be construed as similar to prior research. Prior studies have shown that, through exposure, we have been conditioned to seek out positive terminology and to avoid or take more caution with negative diction (McDonald et al., 2021). Only 33.0% of participants received the positive vignette version. However, 51.0% of participants replied that they read about treaty benefits (which were only mentioned in the positive vignette), as opposed to the negative and neutral scripts (which spoke of treaty harms or neither, respectively). Despite no positive verbiage being present, participants still believed that they read about a beneficial treaty. They sought out or misremembered positive language even though it did not exist. This perception and belief of context or an event has been noted in prior research as well, specifically that around realistic conflict theory. As long as a person perceives an imaginary threat, RCT emerges. There is a potential for this to emerge with the valence framing effect as well.

Prior studies have shown that the personal values of policymakers and constituents lead to the salience of foreign policy in domestic politics. More specifically, these values are relevant in policy because they encourage policymakers to frame issues in a specific format and alter constituents' perception of policies (Lavine et al., 1996). Policymakers are trained to enact moral values through policy opinions because that is what constituents are the most likely to respond to (Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010). It is entirely possible that the vignette manipulation failed not only due to participants' false perception of positive verbiage, but also due to the brief nature of the statement given. Value-framing can alter heuristics present in constituents and subsequently their voting habits and desires, but this process may occur far slower than initially assumed (De Witte, 2019). It is possible that a longer vignette with more detail, and greater developed arguments, would have given the participants more time to accurately attend to and reply based on the frame version which they received. Thus, despite the short statement including a certain frame, it likely needed to be longer to fully encompass the 'frame training' that a policymaker receives and encourage a constituent to reply as they normally would in a voting scenario.

The results of this study revealed that perceived conflict and treaty approval were positively correlated. This stands in opposition to the initial hypothesis, that expected a negative correlation, such that a greater level of perceived conflict would be associated with a lower level of treaty approval. This hypothesis was based on studies discussed in the introduction of this study, which have shown the isolationist nature of American foreign policy emerge over several decades (Gadarian, 2010; Schlesinger, 1992). While the results were unexpected, that does not imply that they differ entirely from the concepts employed in this study. More particularly, loss aversion may come into play. United States policymakers, and subsequently citizens, are interested in the outcomes of foreign policy because of the perceived threat and poor treaty

results. There is a possibility that participants who perceived more conflict also encouraged the treaty and its application to involvement not only because it would make the United States appear morally salient, but also because rejecting the treaty may cause greater conflict that could directly affect them in a negative manner. By accepting and approving the treaty, participants may have assumed that the large amount of conflict they perceived would be lessened, thus providing participants with personal and national benefits.

The results of this study showed that each dependent variable was significantly correlated with perceived conflict other than knowledge about human rights issues and attitudes about human rights. This was in opposition to the original hypothesis, which assumed significant results for every dependent variable. Often, literature surrounding politics recognizes the widespread influence of values and framing but fails to analyze the underlying processes which bolster the creation of the perception of threats (Gelb & Rosenthal, 2003; Kertzer et al., 2014). This study intended to analyze this process and apply it to politics. Despite the lack of significance to these two dependent variables, the goal was achieved to a certain extent. For attitudes about human rights, it is possible that a relationship did not emerge because there was no direct connection to the United States. The Human Rights Questionnaire (Diaz-Veizades et al., 1995) had no references to the United States, and provided a very general set of overall questions. Therefore, perceived conflict may have not had a connection to attitudes about human rights because the questionnaires for conflict (Flannery et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021) had direct references to the U.S. whereas the Human Rights Questionnaire (HRQ; Diaz-Veizades et al., 1995) did not. This may have caused a difference since a lack of direct connection can reinforce two separate thought processes for two separate survey elements.

For knowledge about human rights issues and the organizations discussed within this study, research (Bihan-Poudec, 2020; Druckman, 2001; Mintz & Redd, 2003) has repeatedly demonstrated that the contradiction between the United States acting as a liberal hegemon in verbiage but not in practice is largely misunderstood by U.S. citizens due to framing. This effect was expected to be expanded upon beyond framing, to conflict perception. This result did not occur. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the vast majority of participants did poorly on the organization and treaty knowledge section of the survey. Based on the results, 17.9% of participants responded to five out of eight questions correctly, 13.8% responded to three out of eight correctly, and 4.5% responded to zero out of eight correctly. The majority of participants, responded to no more than four out of eight correctly. Thus, while perceived conflict and knowledge did not relate as hypothesized, the level of knowledge held by average U.S. citizens – the participants in this study – was minimal. The Dunning-Kruger Effect, a cognitive bias that causes an overestimation of capability, may have also affected the results. It is possible that participants overestimated their own knowledge, and their lack of self-awareness led to quick survey responses that were incorrect.

The results showed that moral superiority displayed a weak negative correlation with perceived conflict, which stands in opposition to the initial hypothesis. This suggests that an increase in perceived conflict actually correlates with a lower rate of moral superiority. Prior research has shown that individuals, especially those in positions of power, believe they are far more moral than their actions showcase (Ellemers et al., 2019; Teper et al., 2011; Ying & Ming, 2021). Thus, this hypothesis most directly applied to policymakers rather than constituents, and it is constituents who participated in this survey. There are several potential explanations as to why this hypothesis failed; but there are two which most directly apply to the study at hand. Firstly,

an illusion versus reality situation may have emerged (Tappin & McKay, 2017). There is a strong possibility that the participants of this study recognized the underlying hypothesis about the connection between perceived international threat and internal moral superiority, causing their moral illusion to fade and for them to provide more realistic survey responses. A second option is that participants replied in terms of self-moral superiority rather than the expected in-group moral superiority. Participants replied in relation to solely themselves, rather than in connection to the American in-group. In terms of this study, the secondary option is more plausible, as the morality questionnaire did not mention any form of in-group response section.

Also in opposition to the initial hypothesis, attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations correlated positively with perceived conflict, implying that greater perception of conflict supports positive attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations. There are a variety of reasons that this effect could have emerged, despite it differing from the initial hypothesis. Firstly, studies have also shown that feeling watched brings out the most charitable aspects of human nature (Frimer et al., 2014). A particular framing effect can encourage a shared reality, and thereby RCT and perception of threats. There is the possibility that participants were concerned about recorded responses, despite being informed that no personal data was collected. Secondly, foreign policy decisions that bolster the United States, along with assisting other countries, support the mental idea of American exceptionalism (Fearon, 1998). Rationality and realpolitik justifications are not always the backbone of U.S. foreign policy and treaty ratification. The involvement questionnaire (Albayrak-Aydemir & Gleibs, 2021) was altered to fit the ongoing Ukrainian crisis caused by Russia's invasion. Thus, American support in this crisis would likely support the ideal U.S. exceptionalism often strove for. Lastly, it is likely that participants with high perception of conflict feel this threat

particularly from Russia. Therefore, by altering the questionnaire to fit the current crisis, participants may have recognized that by assisting Ukrainian citizens, Russia would be weakened in a certain sense. While certain results of the survey were unexpected, they can still be applied to the research discussed in the introduction of this study.

In support of the original hypothesis, cognitive bias, nationalism, and attitudes about U.S. security and military funding all correlated positively with perceived conflict. Thus, as conflict perception increased, so did positive attitudes about U.S. security and military funding, levels of cognitive bias and nationalism. This was expected as personal values, both individually and collectively held, can predict a wide variety of different choices, such as foreign policy preferences (Kertzer & Tingley, 2018). Studies show that the important role of implicit aptitude in helping people learn interpersonal norms from trial-and-error experience is crucial for successful global relations (Savani et al., 2022). By being primarily U.S. citizens who gain their information from popular media sources, most Americans do not have the interpersonal norms experience that many other countries immerse their citizens in. Therefore, it can be argued that U.S. citizens have a lesser capability to successfully interact and assist in international relations.

Regarding the correlation between dependent variables, several of results were as initially expected. A lack of political knowledge negatively correlated with attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations. Cognitive bias and moral superiority correlated positively with nationalism, U.S. security and military funding, and higher levels of conservative thinking. Attitudes about human rights also correlated positively with attitudes about U.S. involvement in international relations. These significant results are likely because American Foreign policy views began to drift into a more conservative area during and after the Cold War, which highlighted a greater need for military power and individualistic action (Schlesinger, 1992). The

more individualistic dependent variables correlated positively with one another, and correlated negatively with collectivist ideals – an example being the positive correlation between U.S. security and military funding and nationalism. The interrelationships between these variables are significant from a theoretical perspective due to their statistical significance which adheres to American individualistic foreign policy views and actions. In the view of constructive realism, power and norm enforced in-group favoritism foils collective action to protect human rights.

Despite this study successfully fulfilling to certain hypotheses, there were nevertheless limitations that presented issues. Not all participants replied to each question, this could have led to a drop in sample strength. However, for this study, the participant response amounts remained within the margin of error. Thus, while there were still enough participants to abide by the requisite sample power, it is almost always a good idea to include more participants. The majority of participants were also Democrats (as written on their voter registration forms), while a far smaller amount identified as Republican. This skew in political party may have influenced the results of this study, as both political parties have strong opinions on foreign action, which was discussed in the case study portion of this study. People are also particularly influenced by framing, heuristics, and biases promoted by other individuals who are within their perceived in-group (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). In the failed vignette manipulation, this study did not provide a specific political party that the fake Senator spoke for. If a political party was provided based on the participant's own party, it is fair to assume that the in-group bias would have been greater and thus provided results that better aligned with the initial hypotheses. Overall, due to the skewed sample selection relating to political party, and failure of the vignette manipulation, these findings should not be generalized to any larger

population. Instead, the hypotheses should be re-run with separate data, or altered and expanded upon in future research.

Prior studies have shown that policy-making individuals react differently to positive wordings than to negatives, which may be caused by negativity bias: a difference in emotional force of these wordings (Holleman et al., 2021). The valence framing effect has been studied previously in political research; however, the majority of studies focus on the impact of negative framing rather than positive or neutral (Bizer & Petty, 2005; Bizer et al., 2011). While this study attempted to resolve this gap in research, it failed to do so. Therefore, for future studies, a successful analysis of the valence framing effect with negative, positive, and neutral framing should be done and applied to constructive realism. As constructive realism is most prominently viewed in the United States' maintenance of power despite their lack of participation in several international human rights treaties, it is still easily applied to American policymakers and constituents. Constructive realism is a theory that combines the significance of state power and norms, two very influential factors that shape the framing of international issues. Thus, the valence framing effect and constructive realism are inextricably intertwined and should be studied as such when investigating the underlying thought processes in political decision-making.

In terms of politics, the purpose of this research was to compare and contrast relevant organizations and treaties that the United States either actively participates in as a primary member or that which they fail to ratify. This study intended to analyze the various relationships between the framing of issues by policymakers and the perceived threat felt by a significant portion of United States citizens. The results proved that there is a significant relationship between perceived threat by other countries and treaty approval by U.S. citizens. For the theory of constructive realism, a future direction that should be taken is its application to the valence

framing effect, which was discussed previously. Beyond that, a second direction is the re-running and testing of constructive realism and perceived threat. With more time, an entirely new perceived threat questionnaire could be designed specifically for the concepts within constructive realism – state power and norm influence. With a brand-new survey, rather than one altered from other questionnaires, the results involving perceived threat may actually align with the initial hypotheses in their entirety. For psychological purposes, this study was intended to highlight the effects that the valence framing effect and perceptions of threat have on the various dependent variables. This study also has the purpose of analyzing the relationship between internal moral values and external attitudes relating to real world issues. While this connection to real world issues has been examined previously, this study introduced this topic to four interwoven treaties, which has yet to be done.

It is expected that the perception of conflict statistical results found within this study can be used to form foreign policy in the United States that assists more in international relations, rather than causing harm. By creating an environment in which constituents are aware of policy framing and how it affects perceptions and attitudes, foreign policy will hopefully be approached more objectively by policymakers and citizens. This study acts as an invitation to United States policymakers to cooperate and compromise more than historically and currently seen. The intention of this study is to increase research and understanding in this area of study, which will hopefully transcend into policy action some day in the near future. The study may increase internal realization and knowledge of U.S. hypocrisy relating to international human rights treaties, but this result is not guaranteed. Instead, it is participant dependent. Participants who are truly interested in the study are more likely to gain this beneficial result.

In conclusion, the overall purpose of this this thesis project is to begin the recognition of hypocrisy in the United States that will hopefully lead to changes in foreign policy decisions. While the United States should protect its own sovereignty and security, its position as a liberal western hegemon must be upheld in international human rights treaties and policies. The distinct delineation between moral values expressed by United States citizens, the framing of international human rights issues by policymakers, and the actual actions taken by the United states in crises is alarming and should be recognized as such. Ideally, study participants and readers of this study are now aware of the valence framing effect and conflict perception, and its effects on policy decision-making and constituent beliefs. The key message of this study is that in order to enact change, the recognition of attitudes that contrive human rights involvement as a negative action is necessary. For the future directions of this study, as described in the discussion herein, a re-working of the survey is essential before successfully re-running the study and applying it to larger populations.

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Appendix A**Knowledge About Ongoing and Past Global Affairs Measure**

1. What is UNSC an acronym for?
 - a. *United Nations Security Council*
 - b. Universal Nationalist Safety Court
 - c. Unified National Security Committee
 - d. United Nations Safety Council
 - e. Unified Nation-State Committee
2. What is ICC an acronym for?
 - a. *International Criminal Court*
 - b. Immigration Commission Court
 - c. Institute for Central Command
 - d. International Command Council
 - e. Immigration Consular Council
3. What is CEDAW an acronym for?
 - a. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*
 - b. Committee on the Equality of Defense Around the World
 - c. Council on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and Children
 - d. Convention on the Exclusion of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
 - e. Committee on the Equality of Defense for All Women in Need
4. What is CRC an acronym for?
 - a. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*
 - b. Council on the Reformation of International Courts

- c. Committee for the Rights of Children
 - d. Council on the Regulations for UN Committees
 - e. Convention on the Rules for Courts and Councils
5. In 2002, what governmental position did Joe Biden hold? [CEDAW]
- a. *Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*
 - b. Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
 - c. Secretary of State
 - d. Secretary of Defense
 - e. Senator on the U.S. Select Committee on Intelligence
6. In 2003, what governmental position did Colin L. Powell hold? [CRC]
- a. *Secretary of State*
 - b. Attorney General
 - c. Secretary of Defense
 - d. Secretary of Homeland Security
 - e. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations
7. In 2021, what governmental position did Linda Thomas-Greenfield hold? [UNSC]
- a. *U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations*
 - b. Secretary of State
 - c. Chair of the Office of Treaty Affairs
 - d. Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors
 - e. Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
8. In 2022, what governmental position did Lindsey Graham hold? [ICC]
- a. *Member of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary*

- b. Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
- c. Ranking Member of the Senate Appropriations Committee
- d. Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
- e. Member of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

Note: All questions and responses were randomized per participant. The italicized responses are the correct answers to the questions. The bracketed information in questions four through eight will not be given to participants.