



Defending International Norms: The Role of Obligation, Material Interest, and Perception in Decision Making

Author(s): Richard K. Herrmann and Vaughn P. Shannon

Source: *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Summer, 2001), pp. 621-654

Published by: [The MIT Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3078659>

Accessed: 16/10/2011 00:11

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The MIT Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *International Organization*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Defending International Norms: The Role of Obligation, Material Interest, and Perception in Decision Making

Richard K. Herrmann and
Vaughn P. Shannon

In 1990 the United States announced that Iraq's armed invasion of Kuwait was an unacceptable violation of international law and the norms of interstate relations. President George Bush declared that the Iraqi occupation "will not stand," and with more than half a million troops in the theater, gave the order to repel the Iraqi army and liberate Kuwait. At the same time, Israel's ongoing occupation of southern Lebanon drew less criticism, with many Americans labeling the violent resistance to the Israeli policy terrorism. In the latter 1990s the United States used force to defend Bosnia and Kosovo, while doing much less to stop the bloodletting in Rwanda, the extension of this ethnic conflict into Congo, or the killing in Sierra Leone and Sudan.

The variation in U.S. behavior across these cases raises important questions about the factors that motivate U.S. action as well as about the role of norms in international relations. Because the behavior of the United States in any particular case can be attributed to a compound of factors, identifying the mix of material concerns and feelings of moral obligation is a highly controversial task. Critics of the United States in the developing world complain that Washington follows a "double standard" and uses moral arguments to mask more selfish economic and military goals. Americans, on the other hand, lean toward interpretations emphasizing normative duty and resist attributing behavior to material interests. For instance, when asked to identify the motives driving the U.S. decision to repel Iraq from Kuwait, the American public was inclined to explain the action in terms of

We thank Philip Tetlock, who played a key role in helping to design the experiments; and Richard Timpone, who gave us valuable guidance in analyzing the data. We also thank Paul Sniderman and Thomas Piazza for their assistance in designing the survey instrument and Richard Ned Lebow and Steven Bernstein for reading early versions of the article. Several anonymous reviewers and the editors of *IO* also provided detailed and helpful feedback on earlier versions of the article, and we thank them for their help.

stopping proliferation, defending victims from atrocities, and upholding international norms rather than in terms of protecting U.S. access to oil.¹

Norms play a role in international affairs. Few deny this. Hans Morgenthau, perhaps the best-known contemporary realist who reduced much of international relations to the pursuit of power, himself wrote that “certain things are not done on moral grounds, even though it would be expedient to do them. Such ethical inhibitions operate in our time on different levels with different effectiveness.”² This observation directs attention to our central research questions: not whether norms matter, but how much do they matter and when? How can we explain the variation in decisions to defend norms that are violated? Why do key actors like the United States enact norms in some situations but not in others, and what does this tell us about the operation of norms in the international system more generally?

We address these questions by concentrating on *prescriptive norms* related to the use of force. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink have noted the lack of attention given prescriptive norms, “those which prescribe appropriate behavior to actors,” and the importance of studying them.³ We concentrate on two norms that have been articulated and codified in various long-standing international statutes: nonintervention and the general prohibition on the use of force.⁴ The sustained and widespread acceptance of these norms makes them “robust” norms that Jeffrey Legro’s analysis suggests ought to have an impact.⁵

To explain variation in the enactment of norms we rely on three key concepts: (1) material interests, (2) felt normative obligation, and (3) perception of the situation. Like James March and Johan P. Olsen, we recognize that the logics of material consequence and normative appropriateness are not mutually exclusive and can be interconnected in several ways.⁶ At the same time, like March and Olsen, Stephen D. Krasner, and Finnemore and Sikkink, we also recognize that there is substantial analytical and interpretative value in identifying the different effects of these two causal systems.⁷ We contend that it is also important both (1) to identify the effect perceptions of the situation have on the generation of felt normative obligation and on the construction of material interest, and (2) to recognize that these motivational factors can influence the content of cognitive beliefs about the situation.

We consider three ways to combine our three central concepts. First, perceptions of a situation can evoke felt normative obligation and, in turn, lead to behavior defending the norm. Second, desires to advance material interests may run counter

1. Mueller 1994, 37–42.

2. Morgenthau 1973, 231.

3. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891.

4. These norms are codified in Articles 2(4) and 2(7) of the UN Charter; OAS Charter Articles 18–21; Helsinki Accord of 1975; the Rio Treaty on Hemispheric Security; the OAU Charter; the Pact of the League of Arab States; the UN General Assembly 1965 Declaration on Intervention, and the 1970 Friendly Relations Declaration. See Maechling 1990, 114–16; and Walzer 1977, 51–63.

5. Legro 1997.

6. March and Olsen 1998.

7. See Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 892; and Krasner 1999, 6, 40–42, 72.

to felt normative obligations and bias perceptions of the situation. This can lead to constructions of the situation in which seizing the material gain is framed as consistent with, even required by, moral duty.⁸ Third, normative rules may provide templates that structure perceptions of situations and affect both constructions of material interests and calculations on how best to advance them.

Ideas in general, and prescriptive norms in particular, do not affect international outcomes the same way structures of power do. Structures of power can compel compliance after an actor makes a decision. Norms, however, affect conceptions of identities and interests in the process of actor decision making.⁹ Prescriptive norms give rise to feelings of moral obligation to abide by and defend the norm. As Gary Goertz and Paul Diehl argue, to say the United States is affected by feelings of normative obligation is to say that its leaders and prevailing elite share certain beliefs and norms.¹⁰ Therefore, they suggest that perhaps the best way, surprisingly not used very often, to examine the role of norms is to study the thinking of a country's elite through a survey. Such a "bottom-up" strategy would avoid essentialist stereotypes and provide empirical foundation for generalizations about the ideational landscape in the country.

The strategy we employ relies on a survey of a large sample of U.S. elites, allowing us to distinguish between idiosyncratic peculiarities and general patterns.¹¹ It also allows us to embed four experiments in the survey and thus take advantage of the rigor possible in experimental design while still examining the decision making of an important set of participants. Many of our participants are important decision makers; all of them are opinion leaders who shape the political environment in which government officials operate. As a collective, they represent the pool from which officials are selected and the range of opinion that government policy most likely reflects or at least accommodates.

8. This is consistent with the traditional realist argument that treats cognitive ideologies as self-serving disguises for the pursuit of self-interested material gain. Morgenthau 1973, 14, 88–91.

9. See Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 56; and Finnemore 1996, 5–6, 10. Of course, norms can be enforced by institutions and instruments of power, or even market factors and concerns about reputation. At that point, however, compliance is not a product of the logic of appropriateness but of utilitarian calculation.

10. Goertz and Diehl 1992, 645.

11. The data analyzed in this study were collected using a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) survey conducted by the Ohio State University Survey Research Center. The survey interviewed 514 participants between June and September 1997. Participants were identified from the group of U.S. leaders compiled by Holsti and Rosenau (1984, 1993). The sample included State Department officials, business leaders, officers in the various branches of the U.S. military, religious leaders, labor union officials, and university professors who teach and conduct research in the area of international relations. A list of approximately 4,000 names was obtained from Holsti and Rosenau. A random sample of 1,502 names was drawn from this list. Phone numbers were obtained for these individuals by matching names and addresses to information contained in a national phone and address database. From this list, an activated sampling pool of 1,097 cases was created. Letters were sent to these potential interviewees outlining the details of the survey, encouraging their participation, and informing them that they would be contacted. The survey had an overall response rate of 59.4 percent. When potential respondents were reached in person (that is, not through a spouse or secretary), the response rate was 74.1 percent.

Before we describe the individual experiments we conducted and explain how they address the theoretical questions outlined earlier, we want to define more precisely our key concepts and discuss the experimental method in more detail. We do that in the next section. Following that, we present the specific design of four experiments, explaining in operational terms how we deal with each of our three key explanatory variables and the test of our central theoretical propositions. We then present the results of our experiments and identify the empirical relationships we find between material interests, felt normative obligations, and perceptions of the situation. We also examine the relationship between decisions to defend a prescriptive norm in foreign policy and broader ideological beliefs. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings for interpretations of U.S. foreign policy and international relations theory.

Concepts, Theory, and Experimental Method

The three concepts central to the theoretical issues we pursue are (1) material interests, (2) felt normative obligation, and (3) perception of the situation. We define material interests as economic and military assets that are valued by U.S. leaders. Normative obligation, in contrast, is defined as a collective expectation about the proper course of behavior that identified actors should follow in specified situations. This definition highlights the notion that normative motives involve distinctions of right and wrong.¹² Rather than being reducible to some “optimizing mechanism,”¹³ norms carry “a sense that they ought to be followed.”¹⁴

Realists and idealists have debated the relative effect of material interests and prescriptive norms for a long time. We do not intend to address this fundamental dispute here. Not only is the motivation for action difficult to establish, but also the conceptual distinction between these concepts is often blurred. Both interests and moral obligation are constructed by actors and depend on underlying ideas that include subsidiary value judgments. For instance, judgments that economic gains or military advantages are in a state’s interests depend on subsidiary normative beliefs. Obviously, if a normative prescription is treated as constitutive of interests, then this particular moral obligation and the interest it gives rise to cannot be treated as contrasting explanations.¹⁵ Of course, if interests are derivative of normative ideas entirely different than those mandating a prescribed behavior in foreign policy, then the relative effect of the felt obligation to defend the international norm and some notion of interests could be contrasted. This has been the case in much of the realist-idealist debate, in which normative prescriptions limiting the unilateral

12. See Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 54; Finnemore 1996, 22–23; and Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 8–9.

13. Elster 1989, 15.

14. Chayes and Chayes 1995, 113.

15. Wendt 1999, 77–88.

seizure of resources and territory was seen to be in tension with self-interested desires to exploit opportunities to increase wealth and military leverage.

Constructivists typically use definitions that treat interests as constituted by normative ideas, arguing that norms shape interests and, therefore, cannot logically be opposed to interests.¹⁶ This argument rests on either particular definitions of the concepts that other scholars need not accept or is an empirical claim about the effect norms have on interests. In the latter case, the empirical claim needs to be demonstrated. In either case, the difficulty of differentiating between norms and interests, and the recognition that both are essentially ideational concepts, has directed attention away from norms and interest *per se* and toward different patterns of reasoning that can be connected to behavioral choices. We will adopt this same strategy.

Arguments that prescriptive norms matter in international relations inevitably connect to behavior. As Finnemore explains, “norms by definition concern behavior.”¹⁷ Action may be affected by many considerations including both moral concerns emanating from established prescriptive norms and material desires for wealth and strategic advantage. March and Olsen have made the distinction between two different logic patterns: (1) the logic of the appropriate, and (2) the logic of consequences. In the first pattern, existing prescriptive norms in the international system give rise to reasoning that revolves around questions of what sort of situation this is and what obligations we have. Because we are dealing only with norms that have a moral prescription, we treat these felt normative obligations and moral considerations as synonymous. The second pattern of reasoning evokes utilitarian questions, such as the benefits and gains at stake in a situation and how one can advance interests, both material and ideational.

Conceiving of different systems of logic directs attention to the mind-set of actors. Surprisingly, this phenomenological shift in theorizing has not produced a greater reliance on methods drawn from political psychology, where the study of mind-sets, cognitive reasoning systems, and decision making has a long tradition.¹⁸ Perceptions play a large role in both the logic of the appropriate and the logic of consequences. Perceptions of the situation define which rules, duties, and obligations are relevant as well as the type of utilitarian interests at stake. Perhaps because the study of norms in international relations research has often proceeded at the structural level and has not focused on variation in enactment, the role of perceptions has not received the attention it deserves.¹⁹ We propose to focus substantial attention on perception as a concept and use research strategies and methods to study patterns of reasoning that are well known in political psychology.

Perception of the situation is a cognitive representation of the circumstance and context in which foreign policy decisions are being made. Norms can be conceived

16. Finnemore 1996, 26–27.

17. *Ibid.*, 22.

18. See Herrmann 1988; and Hudson 1995.

19. For one effort to connect perceptions and norms, see Shannon 2000.

of as system-level structures,²⁰ but their operation requires the construction of agent-level perception. This is because prescriptive norms typically include contextual dimensions, such as “moral people do *X* in situation *A*,” as well as qualifications, such as “do *X* in situation *A* unless circumstance *D* obtains.” Not surprisingly, a number of constructivists who work with norms as system-level concepts at the same time argue that to understand enactment agent-level cognitive research is necessary.²¹ After all, norms may be part of a “suprapersonal objective order,”²² but they are enacted at the level of individual agents.

Although perceptions of the situation may be required in any construction of material interests or prescriptive norms, cognition is not necessarily unaffected by these motivational factors. Both material interests and normative obligations, for instance, can evoke emotions that can affect cognition. Social psychologists have debated at some length whether emotion or cognition comes first and whether perceptions are motivated. Research in this vein is perhaps necessarily inconclusive because of the difficulties of isolating the effects of various possible causes of a cognitive representation of the situation.²³ It emphasizes, however, the importance of recognizing that perception can be related to motives and that motives can bias perception.²⁴ Our intent is not to determine if perception is biased. Rather, our theoretical contention is that perception at the agent level is critical to understanding the variation in the enactment, the defense, of prescriptive norms. To test this proposition, we manipulate perceptions of features of the situation experimentally. We concentrate on four features of the situation that in most real-world cases would be in dispute and hypothesize that perceptions of these features affect decisions to enact a norm. We manipulate (1) the motives attributed to other states, (2) the power relationships seen between the United States and other relevant actors, (3) whether the conflict is a cross-border conflict or part of an internal civil war, and (4) the perceived political culture of communities the U.S. might defend.

We expect that these features of the situation are often in hot dispute among actors in the international system and that they have significant effects on decisions to defend a norm. We expect that the situation in which the attacker is perceived to be unprovoked and offensively motivated evokes stronger felt obligations to repel. We also suspect there will be a stronger felt obligation to defend a victim when the attacker is weak and pushing it back would take relatively little effort by the United States than when pushing it back would cost the United States a great deal.²⁵ We assume violations that are seen as crossing interstate borders will evoke greater felt obligations to act than those that are constructed as part of a civil war, and we

20. Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996.

21. See Adler 1991; Checkel 1998; and DiMaggio 1997.

22. Heider 1958, 219.

23. Tetlock and Levi 1982.

24. Brewer 1988.

25. On the relation between cost and obligation, see Heider 1958, 226–28.

assume that victims that are perceived to be democracies will evoke more felt obligation to defend than dictatorships.

The experimental method allows us to create a hypothetical case and define for our participants the features of the situation. Obviously, in real-world cases this process of construction is done in complex ways and produces diverse perceptions and judgments. For instance, people disagree about the motives leading to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and they disagree about the relative power of Serbia and the United States and the costs of repelling Serbian forces from Bosnia or Kosovo. People also disagree about whether the war in Vietnam was a cross-border war or a civil war and about how, in this regard, to frame a potential war between China and Taiwan. People also disagree over the degree to which other countries are democratic. In our experiments, we can control the information participants have about an abstract country we simply label *A*. We can guide their construction of an image of the scene and in this way explore the implications and effects of alternative perceptions.

Our experiments began by describing a scene in which a norm was being violated. We wanted to be sure that participants could see an act that violates an established norm. To do this, we sometimes used value-laden descriptors or told participants directly that the action violates standard norms regarding the use of force. At a minimum, we wanted to describe the scene in terms that, if our participants did not see any normative prescription as relevant, we could conclude that they did not share the norm in question and felt no obligation to enact it.

We provided information to the participants about the actors in the scene. When doing this, however, we manipulated descriptions by varying the four features described earlier. In two of our experiments this was the only information we gave our participants about the countries involved. In these cases our countries were abstract and labeled simply as a country. In two other experiments, we used actual country names; this made the hypothetical scenario more like the real world, but it also surrendered a degree of control over the auxiliary ideas about these countries participants brought to the experiment. In these cases, we were less interested in determining how the features of the situation affect decisions to enact a norm than in how substituting the identity of one country for another affected enactment decisions.

Beyond examining how perceptions of specific features of the situation affect enactment, we were interested in how material interests and normative obligations affect decisions. In the real world, it is nearly impossible to disentangle the effect of utilitarian calculations of consequences from the effect of morally felt normative obligations. The two logic systems and motives are not mutually exclusive. They often lead to the same behavioral choice. Leaders typically have more than one reason for what they do and can think in terms of utilitarian gain and moral duty simultaneously. Additionally, either logic system can lead to quite different policy choices depending on a host of instrumental judgments.

The difficulty of identifying which ideal-typical logic system (appropriateness or consequences) is a useful descriptor of any particular leader's mind-set, and the

empirical conundrum facing any attempt to attribute behavior to one logic system or the other, have not deterred scholars from trying to make these distinctions. Finnemore, for instance, concludes that Robert McNamara's actions at the World Bank related to the alleviation of poverty were attributable to a logic of the appropriate and not so much to utilitarian interest.²⁶ She also argues that the bulk of military intervention following the Cold War has been to save civilian populations in places of little or no strategic importance and that discussions about these actions have not been about "interest and advantage" but "about responsibility and duty."²⁷ She concludes more generally that "consequentialist utility maximization does not explain much of what goes on in international politics."²⁸ Krasner, in contrast, argues "that the international system is an environment in which the logics of consequences dominate the logics of appropriateness."²⁹ He argues that recent constructivist treatments overemphasize the impact of international norms and understate the importance of power and interest. For Krasner, "violation of or adherence to, international principles or rules is based on calculations of material and ideational interests."³⁰ He argues that rulers may honor norms, perhaps only in talk to secure resources, but when material and domestic political interests are at stake, rulers will typically allow the utilitarian logic of consequences to "trump" the logic of appropriateness.³¹

In our experiments we identified the effect on behavior of the different logic systems by constructing scenes in which we manipulated what our participants knew about both the normative violation and the U.S. material interests at stake. Clearly, in a real-world case these factors would be in dispute. In our experimental world, however, we had an advantage in manipulating how our participants constructed the scene. We provoked them to think about normative violation in all cases, but in some cases we added a reference to material economic and military interests in play. Our aim was to evoke the logic of appropriateness (that is, duties and obligations) in all situations and also to induce in some situations thinking along the lines of the logic of utilitarian consequence. We compared decisions to enact and defend a prescriptive norm when utilitarian material factors were made clear and when they were not. We did this in both a purely abstract setting with unnamed countries and in the concrete setting of the Persian Gulf.

All of our experiments are organized in a factorial design. This means that we produced multiple versions of each scenario and randomly assigned participants to different conditions. In other words, we created identical stories, changed a factor about the situation and/or U.S. material interests, and randomly assigned participants to hear the various versions. We analyzed what effect slightly changing the

26. Finnemore 1996, 31, 89–127.

27. *Ibid.*, 87.

28. *Ibid.*, 31.

29. Krasner 1999, 6.

30. *Ibid.*, 9.

31. *Ibid.*, 40–41, 58, 66, 72, 238.

story had on decisions to enact norms. Because everything else about the story was identical and whatever individual difference participants brought to the experiment (such as their own liberal or conservative ideologies) were distributed randomly, we assume systematic differences in enactment are attributable to the features of the situation we manipulated. In this way, we can identify the effect of perceptual differences as well as the effect of adding material interests to the mix. Although the logic of experimental design is consistent across all of the experiments, the specific structure of each and its relation to the theoretical issue under investigation requires a more detailed presentation, which we now provide.

Four Experiments

Overall Design

The survey was divided into three parts. The first part asked questions designed to measure basic foreign policy dispositions. The second part consisted of twelve experiments, four of which are discussed here. The third part collected social and demographic information. We randomized the order of the questions within parts 1 and 2. The average interview lasted thirty minutes.

The experiments began with a preamble that read, "There's a lot of talk these days about American military and economic policy abroad. We'd like to get your thoughts on guidelines for American policy by asking you about some hypothetical situations." Our first experiment, which we call "Repel an Aggressor," began, "For example, let me tell you about a country that has just attacked another country." After participants heard a brief description of the attacker and the situation, we asked, "If the attacker cannot be talked into withdrawing, should our government use our military to push back the invaders or should we stay out of it?" We also asked how strongly they felt about this.³²

Our second experiment, which we call "Defend a Victim," took a somewhat similar form, although it manipulated directly whether the attack was part of a civil war or an interstate conflict and whether the victim had a democratic or nondemocratic political culture.³³ As in the Repel an Aggressor experiment, we asked

32. This experiment had a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design. The manipulated variables are presented in brackets. Eight versions of the scenario are formed with the variable fills randomly assigned. Each participant hears only one version. The exact wording was "For example, let me tell you about a country that has just attacked another country. The attack [occurred as a result of a long-standing historical feud /or/ came from out of the blue]. The attacking country is militarily [strong, and it would /or/ weak, and it would not] take a major effort to push them back. The country that has been attacked [is important /or/ is not important] to U.S. economic and security interests. To summarize, [a provoked/an unprovoked] attack, the attacker is militarily [strong/weak], and U.S. economic and security interests [are/are not] at stake.

33. This experiment had a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design. The manipulated variables are presented in brackets. Eight versions of the scenario are formed with the variable fills randomly assigned. Each participant heard only one version. The exact wording was "Let's move now to another country, which has just [fallen into civil war. This country is /or/ has been attacked by its neighbor. The country that has

participants in the Defend a Victim experiment if they thought the United States should intervene to push back the aggressor or stay out.

After participants expressed their policy preferences in the Defend a Victim experiment, we told them, "We would like to know why you feel that way," and then asked, "As you think about the reasons that led you to this decision, what was the main reason?" Our intent was to tap into the ideas and logics of thinking guiding participants in making their decisions or in explaining and justifying them. Given that normative ideas are thought to have their greatest impact at this level of reasoning, it is important to probe for indications of these sorts of considerations. If participants were thinking in terms of what is appropriate, they should provide an explanation couched in terms of normative obligation, duty, or compliance with rules and expectations. If they were thinking in terms of utilitarian consequences, we would expect them to provide explanations that feature considerations of material interest, and perhaps instrumental effectiveness and expediency.

We recorded participants' responses to our open-ended question, and when they gave us more than one reason, we asked them to tell us which was the most important. Following this exercise, participants heard the following: "Now I am going to read you a list of four reasons that could be related to what you thought our government should do. For each reason, please tell me if it captures your thinking very well, somewhat, or not at all." We presented each reason separately so that participants could comment on the role of each consideration individually. The four reasons we presented were (1) the U.S. material interest at stake, (2) moral obligations, (3) instrumental calculations about the effectiveness of the response, and (4) the responsibility America had in this regard (that is, its role). Each reason was phrased to match the decision the person had made. For example, if they had chosen to use force, the reason presented was "there are important U.S. interests at stake." If they had chosen not to act, the reason was presented as "there just aren't enough important U.S. interests at stake."³⁴

We labeled our third experiment the Persian Gulf experiment, and in it we described attacks by Iran or Israel on Saudi Arabia or Kurdistan.³⁵ As before, we

been invaded is] [an advanced democracy /or/ a backward dictatorship.] [Its rich natural resources are important for U.S. prosperity. /or/ Its natural resources are not important for U.S. prosperity.] Diplomatic efforts have failed to stop the fighting. Should the United States government use our military, including air power and troops, to (restore peace/push back the invaders), or should we stay out of it? Do you feel very strongly about this, or not very strongly?"

34. The other questions read, "Using force will work, we will accomplish what we want this way." Or "Using force won't work. We won't accomplish what we want this way." "It's the right thing to do morally." Or "It's the wrong thing to do morally." "Nobody else will solve it if we don't." Or "It is somebody else's responsibility to solve it."

35. This experiment had a 5×2 factorial design. The manipulated variables are country names and are shown in brackets. Each fill was randomly assigned, and any single participant heard only one version of the story. To explore the potential effect of nuclear proliferation, we created two versions of the Israeli and Iranian scenarios, one in which Israel and Iran are said to have nuclear weapons, and one in which nothing was said about their capabilities. The exact wording was "[(1) Imagine that Iran is actively using /or/ (2) Russia, under a new authoritarian leader, revives its military to a point where it once again is as

used a factorial design to manipulate who the attackers and victims were. Any particular participant heard only one version of the story with a specified attacker and victim. Once a participant heard a version of the Persian Gulf scenario, we asked, "How far do you think the United States should go in this situation to defend [Saudi Arabia/Kurdistan]? Should we only protest diplomatically and not go further if that protest fails; go further and impose economic pressure, but not do more if it fails; or go further still and engage our military forces in combat doing whatever is necessary to defend [Saudi Arabia/Kurdistan]?"

Our fourth experiment, called "Bus Bomb," asked participants to imagine that a bus had exploded in either Israel or Iran, killing eight people, and that in an angry reaction, either the Israeli prime minister or the Iranian president had decided to retaliate.³⁶ The scenario then described the retaliation as an attack on a neighboring country inflicting either collective punishment on a village or assassinating alleged culprits. In either case, the scenario made clear that there was no due process and the retaliatory attack violated international law. Participants were asked, "How severely should the U.S. punish [Iran/Israel] for taking the law into its own hands? Should [Iran/Israel] be punished very severely, moderately severely, not very severely, or not punished at all?"

In our scenarios, participants were asked to defend a norm, not to violate it. We chose to frame the investigation this way for two reasons. First, the norms regulating the use of force are well known, codified in many formal institutions,³⁷ and likely to evoke "politically correct" responses. Although this reflects the noncontroversial discursive importance of a prescriptive norm, it does not address the more important debate over the relative impact of normative obligation on behavior. To deal with this problem, we used a technique applied in studies of racial attitudes.³⁸ We created a context in which defending the norm was appropriate but the respondent could also generate an account for not defending it. Second, because too

strong as ours. Russia is using /or/ (3) Israel is actively using /or/ (4) Iran has acquired nuclear weapons and now has an emerging arsenal of unknown size and location. Iran is using /or/ (5) Israel with a nuclear weapons arsenal of unknown size and location is actively using] arms, money, and troops in an attempt to control [Saudi Arabia and its massive oil supplies /or/ Kurdistan, that land divided between Iraq, Turkey, and Iran.]. How far do you think the United States should go in this situation to defend [Saudi Arabia/Kurdistan]? Should we only protest diplomatically and not go further if that protest fails; go further and impose economic pressure, but not do more if it fails; or go further still and engage our military forces in combat doing whatever is necessary to defend [Saudi Arabia/Kurdistan]?"

36. This experiment had a 2×2 factorial design. The manipulated variables were who made the retaliatory attack and whether it was collective punishment or targeted assassination. Four versions of the scenario are formed with the variable fills randomly assigned. Each participant heard only one version. The exact wording was "Imagine that a bus in [Iran /or/ Israel] is blown up killing eight people and that in the heat of the subsequent domestic reaction the [president if Iran, or prime minister if Israel] decides to retaliate. The retaliation plan goes forward and the [five alleged culprits are killed in a car bomb explosion in Madrid/Iranian or Israeli air force bombs the village in a neighboring country from which the alleged culprits come, killing five innocent people]. The [Iranian/Israeli] retaliation violated international law.

37. Dinstein 1994.

38. Sniderman and Piazza 1993.

few of the emotional and material factors that might lead actors to violate a norm are activated in our scenarios, we concentrated on a more modest measure of compliance. This form of compliance, the defense of a norm, is far from trivial and is typically seen as an essential dimension of normative obligation. The defense of norms is one of the most common reasons leaders use to explain the use of force and intervention in world politics. Leaders often evoke the notion that they have an obligation to defend norms and clearly see defense of a norm as integral to the norm's operation. Theorists typically make the same point, stressing the vital role played by society rebuking and punishing violators.³⁹ Our method, in this regard, evokes Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie, who argue that "whether or not violations also invalidate, or refute a law (norm) will depend (upon . . .) how the community assesses the violation and responds to it."⁴⁰ In our experiments we measured the differential willingness to defend a norm; if by some chance the norm generates only a sense of obligation not to violate the norm but no obligation to defend it, we should see little inclination to defend across any situation and no systematic pattern of normative defense in some situations and not others.

Manipulation of Situational and Perceptual Factors

To see if perceived situational factors affect the enactment of norms, we manipulated the information participants had about the attacker's motives, its power relative to the United States, and whether the attack crossed state borders or was part of a civil war. In the Repel an Aggressor experiment, for instance, we manipulated whether the attack "occurred as a result of a long-standing feud" or "came out of the blue." We also manipulated whether the attacker was strong or weak and what sort of effort would be required to push it back. In the Defend a Victim experiment, we varied whether the attack occurred across state boundaries or was part of a civil war and whether the victim was advanced and democratic or backward and nondemocratic.

In the Persian Gulf and Bus Bomb experiments we explored the role of perception by varying the identity of the attacker. Early in the survey we asked participants to rate ten countries in terms of their offensive or defensive motivation.⁴¹ Iran and Israel were two of these countries, and we examined whether these perceptions of the attacker's general motives affect enactment decisions. We also used this identity substitution to see if relationships between the United States and the norm violator affect enactment. We assumed that more of our participants would see Israel as a friend of the United States than would see Iran in this role and that more of our

39. See Axelrod 1986; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Nadelman 1990, 481; and Goertz and Diehl 1992, 636–40.

40. Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986, 767.

41. The question read, "The foreign policy of some countries is motivated primarily by their sense of insecurity and the need to protect themselves against threats. Other countries are motivated to take advantage of opportunities for gain. On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being the most defensively motivated and 7 being the most aggressively motivated, how would you rank the following countries?"

participants would see Iran as an adversary than would see Israel in this way. Of course, differences in decisions to defend a norm violated by a friend rather than a foe may reflect more than simply perceptions. They can indicate the effect of material interests and strategic motivations. To examine motivational questions in more detail we manipulated the U.S. material interests at stake in a direct fashion.

Material Interests and Normative Enactment

Although almost everyone recognizes the importance of motivational attributions in interpretations of foreign policy, there are few convincing methodologies that isolate the effects of specific motives. As Goertz and Diehl point out, even if we can falsify the importance of a motive by showing that the behavior associated with it did not occur, confirmation of the motive's impact is more complicated.⁴² We might be able to show that a norm is not defended, but when people make choices consistent with the norm, should this be attributed to felt normative obligation, material interest, a compound of both, or a combination of other factors?⁴³ In the natural setting it is nearly impossible to identify the independent causal importance of specific motives or logic systems. Rarely can we find compelling comparative cases or sufficiently detailed and reliable constructions of the decision-making process. Here our experimental method has advantages, and we proceed down three paths.

First, we isolated the comparative effects of felt normative obligation and consequential thinking about material interests, in identical scenarios that feature one actor attacking another, by telling half of our participants that the United States had important economic and security interests at stake. The other half of our participants heard that the United States had no important economic and security interests in the victim country. By comparing the general willingness to defend the victim in the two situations, we can determine the independent effect of the different logics, assuming the specific mention of economic and security interests stimulated more thinking in terms of utilitarian consequences than the specific instruction that there were no economic or security interests at stake. In the *Repel an Aggressor and Defend a Victim* experiments, we did not mention the name of any real country but simply identified the attacker in terms of its power relative to the United States and identified the victim by its connection to U.S. material interests. In the Persian Gulf experiment, we named specific countries, telling half the participants that the victim was Saudi Arabia, and reminding them that there were important oil reserves there, and telling the other half that the victim was Kurdistan, identifying it only as a land between Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.

Second, we compared the effect of the manipulation of U.S. material interests and the effect of the manipulation of situational factors on norm enactment, that is, on

42. Goertz and Diehl 1992.

43. Desch 1998, 159–63.

the behavioral decision to defend the norm. For instance, we compared how much a description of the attacker's motivation affects decisions to Repel an Aggressor with the effect of the direct manipulation of U.S. material interests. We assumed that an unprovoked attack out of the blue is a more egregious norm violation than an attack that is part of a feud and, therefore, should generate a clearer normative obligation. We also assumed that a cross-border attack compared to an attack within a civil war has a similar effect, enhancing the clarity of normative violation. Thus in the Defend a Victim experiment we compared the effect this manipulation of civil and cross-border war has on decisions to defend with the effect the manipulation of U.S. material interests has.

Finally, we examined the reasons participants gave to explain their decisions. If normative reasoning is a large part of the calculation, participants ought to attribute their decision in some part to moral reasons.

Results

Perceptions of the Situation

In both the Repel an Aggressor and Defend a Victim experiment, our dependent variable was a five-point scale ranging from very strongly agree to very strongly disagree with taking action against the attacker. To see if the four factors we manipulated to affect perceptions of the situation had an impact on these decisions, we conducted an ordered probit analysis. Ordered probit is appropriate for data whose categories are ordered but discrete and noninterval, as is the case with our survey responses.⁴⁴ The ordered probit analysis demonstrates the statistical significance of relationships; to illustrate the substantive importance of these associations we also provide the percentage of participants choosing to defend a norm in various conditions.

As seen in Table 1 (rows 1b, 1c, 2b, 2c), three of the four factors did have a significant effect on decisions—and in a direction consistent with the idea that the manipulation of the factor was evoking felt normative obligation.⁴⁵ U.S. elites were more likely to defend a victim when the attack crossed a state boundary than when it was part of a civil war (Table 1, row 2b). In this case, 49.4 percent (127 of 257 participants) of those elites who conceived of the conflict in cross-border terms favored defending the victim, whereas only 23.9 percent (56 of 234 participants) of those who saw the attack as part of a civil war strongly favored doing this.⁴⁶ U.S. elites were also more willing to defend democracies than nondemocracies (Table 1,

44. Greene 1993, 672.

45. The coefficients displayed in the ordered probit results of Tables 1 and 8 are either positive or negative, indicating the direction of change in the dependent variable given changes in the independent variables. For example, in Table 1, 1a and 2a, the positive coefficients indicate that an increase of interests leads to an increased probability to defend.

46. The difference in the number of participants who strongly support defending the victim in the cross-border versus civil war context is significant, chi-square = 48.191; $p < .000$.

TABLE 1. *Ordered probit results for each experiment*

<i>Situational factors</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1. Repel an Aggressor experiment (<i>N</i> = 485)				
a. U.S. interests	1.448744	0.1089723	-13.295	.000
b. Strength of aggressor	-0.1632421	0.1009369	-1.617	.106
c. Unprovoked versus provoked	0.2317775	0.1009274	2.296	.022
tau 1	1.406113	0.2750092		
tau 2 ^a	2.239206	0.2831925		
tau 3	2.433474	0.2862876		
tau 4	3.096045	0.2955169		
2. Defend a Victim experiment (<i>N</i> = 491)				
a. U.S. interests	0.6888818	0.1017641	6.769	.000
b. Cross-border versus civil war	0.7673424	0.1018605	7.533	.000
c. Dictatorship versus democracy	-0.5045469	0.1013467	-4.978	.000
tau 1	1.035064	0.264202		
tau 2	1.871847	0.2713537		
tau 3	2.077146	0.2732913		
tau 4	2.688773	0.2796619		
3. Persian Gulf experiment (<i>N</i> = 471)				
a. Identity of attacker	-0.2436175	0.0621256	-3.921	.000
b. Identity of victim	-0.9715896	0.129403	-7.508	.000
c. Presence of nuclear weapons	0.2980403	0.1242523	2.399	.016
tau 1	-3.115649	0.3313208		
tau 2	-1.054045	0.3024511		
4. Bus Bomb experiment (<i>N</i> = 470)				
a. Identity of attacker	-0.777462	0.0997886	-0.779	.436
b. Collective punishment versus assassination	-0.1669779	0.099897	-1.671	.095
c. Identity of attacker, controlling for perceptions of Israel ^b	0.4663668	0.1640342	2.843	.004
tau 1	-0.3373927	0.1274502		
tau 2	0.2468913	0.127209		
tau 3	1.271203	0.149311		

^aThe similarity between cut points (tau) 2 and 3 of both Repel and Defend experiments may raise concerns that the categories they divide are not distinguishable. We ran a test of equivalence for each and found them *not* to be equivalent (for Repel an Aggressor, $\chi^2(1) = 27.77$, $p > \chi^2 = .0000$; for Defend a Victim, $\chi^2(1) = 32.29$, $p > \chi^2 = .0000$).

^bThose seeing Israel as defensive (<4 on the 7-point scale) and Iran as aggressive (>5 on the 7-point scale).

row 2c). Here 37.5 percent (99 of 264) defended a democratic victim, whereas only 18.0 percent (41 of 227) defended a nondemocratic victim.⁴⁷

Perceptions of the attacker's motives also affected decisions, with U.S. elites more willing to repel an aggressor that was seen as unprovoked and attacking "out of the blue" (Table 1, row 1c). Here, however, the statistical result has a less

47. The difference in the number supporting defense of a democracy versus a nondemocracy is significant, chi-square = 29.491; $p < .000$.

impressive substantive impact; 28.9 percent (72 of 249) of those who saw the attack as unprovoked strongly supported repelling the aggressor, and 22.5 percent (53 of 236) of those who saw the attack as deriving from a long-standing feud strongly favored this course.⁴⁸

Perception of the relative power of the norm violator did not affect decisions, at least not in any consistent way (Table 1, row 1b). This finding is particularly important because it suggests expected costs alone do not necessarily override felt normative obligations. Obviously, leaders face a conflict between defending an international norm and risking the lives and well-being of their soldiers. And equally obvious, given our results, leaders in many cases decide to run these risks and pay the costs to defend a norm. The power of the adversary and, in turn, the likely costs of acting against them might be expected to systematically erode the willingness to defend a norm. Our experimental results do not reflect this pattern. When leaders are deciding whether to defend a norm, our results suggest that they are thinking about more than just material costs. However, the lack of a systematic effect associated with the power of the adversary can be interpreted as consistent with both logics of appropriateness and logics of utilitarian consequences. For instance, it may be that when the adversary was weak and repelling would be easy, participants did feel a greater moral obligation than when facing a strong adversary; but when facing this strong adversary, they thought as neorealists, that is, they worried about the strategic consequences of allowing a strong adversary to become even stronger. In this case, the behavior in both circumstances would be similar, in the first attributable to a logic of the appropriate and in the second to a logic realists might call defensive positionalism.⁴⁹

Identity Substitution and the Pattern of Enactment

In the Persian Gulf and Bus Bomb experiments the impact of perceptual variables was evident but complicated. In these experiments we invoked the names of real countries to see if participants' preexisting images of these countries affected enactment. As seen in Table 1 (row 3a), the identity of the attacker had a significant effect on decisions to defend either Kurdistan or Saudi Arabia, with U.S. elites more likely to repel Iran than Israel. In the Bus Bomb experiment, our simple identity substitution (Iran for Israel) did not have a clear effect on decisions to punish the country that retaliated (Table 1, row 4a). It appears that in the more straightforward case of cross-border attack without any explicit provocation (that is, the Persian Gulf experiment), preexisting images of the attacking countries had a clear effect, whereas in the more normatively ambiguous circumstances revolving around responses to terrorism the effect of perception was more complicated. To delve

48. The difference in the number of participants who strongly support action in the unprovoked feud conditions is not significant, chi-square = 5.962; $p < .202$.

49. Grieco 1990, 44.

TABLE 2. *U.S. elites favoring punishment by perception of attacker's general motives*

1. Persian Gulf experiment				
a. Country attacking	Israel		Iran	
b. Perception of motives	Defensive (<i>N</i> = 31)	Aggressive (<i>N</i> = 52)	Defensive (<i>N</i> = 60)	Aggressive (<i>N</i> = 84)
c. Amount of punishment				
Diplomatic protest only	9.7%	1.9%	8.3%	10.7%
Economic pressure	64.5%	75.0%	41.7%	36.9%
Engage military forces	25.8%	23.1%	50.0%	52.4%
2. Bus Bomb experiment				
a. Country retaliating	Israel		Iran	
b. Perception of motives	Defensive (<i>N</i> = 50)	Aggressive (<i>N</i> = 51)	Defensive (<i>N</i> = 69)	Aggressive (<i>N</i> = 91)
c. Amount of punishment				
Do not punish at all	40.0%	21.6%	24.6%	22.0%
Not very severely	24.0%	13.7%	14.5%	16.5%
Moderately severely	24.0%	43.1%	37.7%	41.8%
Very severely	12.0%	21.6%	23.2%	19.8%

deeper into these cognitive processes we controlled for individual perceptions of Iran and Israel.

In the Persian Gulf and Bus Bomb experiments we used countries as attackers that had different relationships with the United States. We thought most U.S. leaders would be more inclined to see Israel as an ally of the United States than to see Iran in these terms, and that many elites would see Iran as an adversary. We also measured perception of the motives driving each of these countries by asking participants to rank each country on a seven-point scale, ranging from most aggressive to most defensive. We expected U.S. elites to see Israel as more defensive than Iran, but, in fact, their perceptions were quite diverse on this score.⁵⁰ In the Bus Bomb experiment, participants who saw Israel as having defensive motives generally were less inclined to punish Israel than were those who saw Israel as aggressive (Table 1, row 4c). For example, 64.7 percent of elites who saw Israel as aggressive punished it moderately or severely, whereas a mirror image, 64.0 percent, of elites who saw Israel as defensive punished it only a little or not at all (Table 2, row 2c). Perceptions of Iran's motives made

50. 30.0 percent of the U.S. elite saw Iran as mostly defensive (1–2 on the seven-point scale), 40.0 percent saw it as mostly aggressive (6–7 on the seven-point scale), and 9.4 percent were in the middle with 7.3 percent leaning toward defensive (3 on the seven-point scale) and 13.3 percent leaning toward aggressive (5 on the seven-point scale). In Israel's case, 19.4 percent saw Israel as mostly defensive, 24.9 percent saw it as mostly aggressive, and 17.8 percent were in the middle with 17.6 percent leaning in the defensive direction and 20.2 percent in the aggressive direction.

less difference: U.S. elites were inclined to punish Iran regardless of their perception of Iran's motives.

In the Persian Gulf experiment, U.S. elites were also inclined to punish Iran no matter their perception of Iran's motivation, with half favoring the use of force (Table 2, row 1c). Fewer than a quarter of those who saw Israel as aggressive were prepared to use force to punish Israel, although nearly everyone was prepared to at least apply economic pressure. In this experiment, unlike in the Bus Bomb experiment, the difference in the perception of Israel's general motives did not make much difference in the way people responded to Israel's attack.

It is possible that the effect the perception of motivation has on decisions to defend a norm is being overwhelmed by perceptions of the strategic relationships between Israel and the United States and between Iran and the United States. This might explain why in the Persian Gulf experiment twice as many U.S. elites were willing to use force against Iran as against Israel regardless of the perceived motivation. This could also explain why the use of force was the dominant choice in the four situations involving Saudi Arabia where Iran was the aggressor, and why applying sanctions was the dominant choice in the four situations where Israel was the aggressor. Strategic biases might also explain why U.S. elites in the Bus Bomb experiment tended to punish Iran, even when it was seen as defensively motivated, to the same degree they punished Israel, when it was seen as aggressively motivated.

This may be evidence that perceptions of the situation and the perceived identity of the protagonists affect the enactment of a prescriptive norm, which, of course, is a key part of our argument. It also suggests, however, that the process of enactment may be affected by the perception of strategic relationships. If these relationships are seen as extensions of material interests (economic and military), these results may also indicate the importance of material concerns, a subject that deserves careful attention.

Normative Obligation and Utilitarian Thinking About Material Interests

To examine the relationship between deontic and utilitarian reasoning, we present three sets of analyses. First, we explore the degree to which the felt obligation to protect a norm induces action. To identify the independent effect of logics of the appropriate, we look particularly carefully at situations in which there were no obvious U.S. economic and security interests at stake. Second, we compare the effect of our manipulations of perceived situational factors that should evoke normative reasoning to the effect of manipulating U.S. material interest. Third, we focus on the reasons participants gave as explanations for their decisions.

Normative obligation and the logic of appropriateness. In the Repel an Aggressor, Defend a Victim, and Persian Gulf experiments, we asked elites whether they would defend against a norm violation in situations where economic and security interests were at stake and in situations where they were not at stake. We

TABLE 3. *Effects of obligation and material interests on decision to defend a norm*

	<i>Probability of choice^a</i>	<i>Confidence intervals^b</i>	<i>Respondents making this choice</i>	<i>Mean response per condition</i>
1. Chooses to repel an aggressor ^c				
a. U.S. material interests engaged (<i>n</i> = 240)	.4420056	.386–.499	45.8%	3.94
b. No U.S. material interests engaged (<i>n</i> = 245)	.0562078	.037–.081	7.8%	2.00
				F(1,483) = 289.270 <i>p</i> < .001
2. Chooses to defend a victim ^d				
a. U.S. material interests engaged (<i>n</i> = 242)	.4795369	.420–.540	19.4%	2.82
b. No U.S. material interests engaged (<i>n</i> = 249)	.2302631	.185–.282	8.4%	1.99
				F(1,489) = 43.499 <i>p</i> < .001
3. Chooses to use military force (Persian Gulf) ^e				
a. U.S. material interests engaged—Saudi Arabia is victim (<i>n</i> = 245)	.5252359	.458–.594	51.8%	2.48
b. No U.S. material interests engaged—Kurdistan is victim (<i>n</i> = 226)	.1838415	.132–.245	15.0%	2.03
				F(1,469) = 80.978 <i>p</i> < .001

^aProbabilities calculated using CLARIFY. See King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; and Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 1999.

^b95 percent confidence intervals.

^cResponding “strongly use force.”

^dResponding “strongly use force.”

^eResponding “engage military forces.”

found that in all three experiments, considerably fewer people were willing to defend the norm when material interests were not at stake. In situations where the victims represented no economic or security importance to the United States, U.S. elites were significantly less willing to punish the norm violator (see Table 3, as well as Table 1, rows 1a, 2a, 3b). For instance, the probability that a respondent would be strongly willing to repel an aggressor dropped from .44 to .06, and elites were only half as likely (.23 as opposed to .48) to defend a victim when no U.S. material interests were at stake.⁵¹ In the Persian Gulf experiment, the probability that U.S.

51. These probability assessments are derived by using the software CLARIFY. For details on this software, see King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; and Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 1999.

elites were willing to defend Saudi Arabia was .525, and for Kurdistan the probability dropped to .184.

Additionally, we found that the severity with which U.S. elites would punish a norm violator co-varies with the presence of U.S. material interests. In the Persian Gulf experiment, where respondents could react with diplomatic protest, economic sanctions, or force, U.S. elites were more likely to endorse more severe punishment when Saudi Arabia was the victim than when Kurdistan was the victim (the probabilities were .52 and .18, respectively). The use of force was the most popular choice (52 percent) among elites in the Saudi Arabian case, whereas in the Kurdistan case the dominant choice (85 percent) was to limit the punishment to sanctions and protest. This difference might reflect not only the effect of U.S. interests at stake but also the additional norm violation involved when attacking a sovereign state as opposed to a stateless community. It is important to keep in mind, however, that in our scenario Kurdistan was being attacked by either Israel or Iran and that, in the former case, the attack involved a cross-border violation. Some participants may have imagined Iran's attack as part of a civil war against Iranian Kurds, but as reported earlier, participants were more inclined to punish Iran than Israel. If they had seen the Iranian case as a civil war rather than a cross-border conflict, we might have expected some diminution in the willingness to punish. This was not evident, however; even controlling for the Iranian cases, the effect of perceived material interest at stake appears to be substantial.

Perceived clarity of normative violation and material interests. March and Olsen argue that one way to explain variation in norm enactment is to focus on the clarity of the normative or utilitarian reasons.⁵² They contend that when normative obligations are clear and material interest fuzzy, the logic of appropriateness prevails; and, when material interests are clear and the norms at stake are ambiguous, the logic of utilitarian consequences prevails. Our manipulation of material interest was fairly straightforward. We varied the clarity of the normative violation by manipulating, in the Repel an Aggressor experiment, whether the attack came out of the blue or was part of a long-standing feud. In the Defend a Victim experiment we did this by varying whether the attack was across state boundaries or part of a civil war. We assume that the normative obligation to repel and/or defend is clearer in situations where the attack is unprovoked and evidently premeditated and when it crosses state boundaries.

Our manipulations of utilitarian and normative reasoning may not be equally effective, of course, and either one of our manipulations may evoke both types of reasoning. As recognized at the outset, there is no perfect way to disentangle deontic and utilitarian calculations. Just the same, we can compare the relative effect of our manipulation of material interests and normatively relevant situational factors. We do this in two ways. First, we simply compare the percentages of U.S. elites who

52. March and Olsen 1998, 952.

TABLE 4. *U.S. elites deciding to repel an aggressor or stay out in each situation*

<i>Situational conditions</i>	<i>Decision made</i>			
	<i>Repel</i>	<i>Stay out</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>N</i>
1. Repel an Aggressor experiment				
a. U.S. interests/part of feud/attacker is strong	80.0%	16.7%	3.3%	60
b. U.S. interests/part of feud/attacker is weak	61.6%	30.0%	8.3%	60
c. U.S. interests/out of the blue/attacker is strong	81.4%	15.7%	2.9%	70
d. U.S. interests/out of the blue/attacker is weak	80.0%	12.0%	8.0%	50
e. No U.S. interests/part of feud/attacker is strong	11.6%	85.0%	3.3%	60
f. No U.S. interests/part of feud/attacker is weak	11.6%	79.9%	8.7%	69
g. No U.S. interests/out of the blue/attacker is strong	23.2%	69.6%	7.1%	56
h. No U.S. interests/out of the blue/attacker is weak	13.3%	85.0%	1.7%	60
Total	45.0%	49.7%	5.4%	485
2. Defend a Victim experiment				
a. U.S. interests/cross-border/victim is democracy	70.5%	21.3%	8.2%	61
b. U.S. interests/cross-border/victim is not democracy	40.4%	50.0%	9.6%	52
c. U.S. interests/civil war/victim is democracy	27.8%	62.5%	9.7%	72
d. U.S. interests/civil war/victim is not democracy	22.8%	71.9%	5.3%	57
e. No U.S. interests/cross-border/victim is democracy	46.9%	48.4%	4.7%	64
f. No U.S. interests/cross-border/victim is not democracy	3.5%	93.0%	3.5%	57
g. No U.S. interests/civil war/victim is democracy	9.0%	88.0%	3.0%	67
h. No U.S. interests/civil war/victim is not democracy	8.2%	86.9%	4.9%	61
Total	28.5%	65.4%	6.1%	491

chose to defend the norm in various conditions; second, we translate the ordered probit coefficients introduced in Table 1 into the change in probability that a U.S. elite will defend the prescriptive norm when U.S. material interests are present and when they are not, and when the clarity of the normative violation is sharp and when it is more ambiguous.

Table 4 arrays decisions made to Repel an Aggressor and Defend a Victim across the eight conditions of these experiments. In the Repel an Aggressor experiment, when material interests are present, more than 60 percent of the elites were willing to repel the attacker. In three of four situations of this type 80 percent of the elites chose this course of action. In contrast, in the four situations where material interests were not present, in only one case did even close to one-quarter of the respondents choose to repel the attacker. In the other three cases fewer than 15 percent made this choice. Consistent with the ordered probit findings reported earlier, the situational factors related to normative reasoning had the expected effect within the overriding condition of whether U.S. material interests were present or not. For example, once we took into account whether material interests were at stake, attacks that came "out of the blue" evoked more willingness to repel than did attacks coming as part of a

feud (Table 4, rows 1c and 1d compared to 1a and 1b, rows 1g and 1h compared to 1e and 1f). These effects, however, appear to be quite small compared to the effect of material interests.

The results of the Defend a Victim experiment are more complicated, although in terms of the relative effect of normative obligation and material interest they tell much the same story. In the Repel an Aggressor experiment, the vast majority of elites were willing to use force to repel the attacker and, evidently, did not see a contradiction in using force to punish those who violated the norms of not using force. In the Defend a Victim experiment, staying out of the conflict rather than defending the victim was a more typical response. As in the Repel an Aggressor experiment, however, when U.S. material interests were at stake more of the elites were willing to defend the victim than when interests were not at stake (Table 4, rows 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d). When material interests were at stake, more than 22 percent chose to defend, and in one condition more than two-thirds made this decision. When interests were not engaged, the percentage of respondents willing to defend hovered in the single digits with an important exception.

When victims were advanced democracies and the attack came across state boundaries, U.S. elites were more ready to defend, and the effect of these two situational factors appeared to be as large as the effect of material interests alone. This might be due to the normative value attached both to helping a democracy and to defending sovereignty, but it also could reflect in-group identity favoritism associated with advanced democracies (that is, "people like us"). The latter interpretation gains strength when we compare the percentage of elites willing to defend the victim holding constant both material interests and the cross-border nature of the attack (Table 4, rows 2a and 2b, and rows 2e and 2f), but it is less convincing when we compare the effect of the advanced democratic and the backward nondemocratic identities of victims in a civil war (Table 4, rows 2c and 2d and rows 2g and 2h). It appears that a combination of normative reasoning and in-group identity association triggers an especially strong impulse to defend advanced democratic victims from cross-border attacks.

Another way to evaluate relative effects of material interests and the situational features that evoke normative reasoning is to consider the effect each of these variables has on the probability that elites will choose strongly to repel an aggressor and/or defend a victim.⁵³ Table 5 presents these probabilities and confidence intervals for elites in each condition of the two experiments. In the Repel an Aggressor experiment, the results are again quite clear. The change in the probability that an elite will strongly choose to repel is far greater when moving between any two conditions in which material interests are engaged and are not engaged than between any two conditions in which material interests are held constant. For instance, compare the change between rows 1a and 1e, between rows 1b and 1f, and so on with any change between rows 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d or between rows 1e, 1f, 1g,

53. See King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; and Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 1999.

TABLE 5. *Probability U.S. elites will repel an aggressor or defend a victim in each situation*

<i>Situational conditions</i>	<i>Probability^a</i>	<i>Confidence interval^b</i>
1. Repel an Aggressor experiment (<i>n</i> = 514)		
a. U.S. interests/part of feud/attacker is strong	.365	.294–.440
b. U.S. interests/part of feud/attacker is weak	.427	.348–.504
c. U.S. interests/out of the blue/attacker is strong	.456	.375–.537
d. U.S. interests/out of the blue/attacker is weak	.520	.446–.595
e. No interests/part of feud/attacker is strong	.037	.021–.060
f. No interests/part of feud/attacker is weak	.052	.030–.084
g. No interests/out of the blue/attacker is strong	.061	.036–.092
h. No interests/out of the blue/attacker is weak	.082	.053–.120
2. Defend a Victim experiment (<i>n</i> = 514)		
a. U.S. interests/cross-border/victim is democracy	.719	.651–.782
b. U.S. interests/cross-border/victim is not democracy	.533	.457–.612
c. U.S. interests/civil war/victim is democracy	.427	.349–.506
d. U.S. interests/civil war/victim is not democracy	.248	.188–.318
e. No interests/cross-border/victim is democracy	.459	.377–.540
f. No interests/cross-border/victim is not democracy	.274	.210–.341
g. No interests/civil war/victim is democracy	.193	.138–.259
h. No interests/civil war/victim is not democracy	.086	.055–.123

Note: Based on response “strong use of force” for each.

^aProbabilities calculated using CLARIFY. See King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; and Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 1999.

^bA 95 percent confidence interval is used for both experiments.

and 1h. The fact that the confidence intervals for rows 1a and 1e, for rows 1b and 1f, and so on do not overlap also suggests that the responses in these scenarios are significantly different. The confidence intervals are not so distinct when comparing between rows 1a, 1b, 1c, or 1d and between rows 1e, 1f, 1g, and 1h.

The results for the Defend a Victim experiment are most consistent with this pattern. Compare, for instance, the probability that elites will strongly defend a victim when material interests are at stake with the probability that they will defend when material interests are not at stake, holding everything else constant (Table 5, rows 2a and 2e, 2b and 2f, 2c and 2g, 2d and 2h). In these cases, the probability is roughly between 20 and 30 points higher when material interests are at stake. However, we also see that if the victim is an advanced democracy, the probability that elites will defend it is also consistently greater, holding the other situational factors constant (Table 5, rows 2a and 2b, 2c and 2d, 2e and 2f, 2g and 2h). It is important to keep in mind that in only two of the eight experimental conditions is there a greater than 50 percent probability that U.S. elites will defend the victim and protect either U.S. material interests or the prescriptive norm. Why U.S. elites are reluctant to defend a victim is not immediately evident in the behavioral choices

TABLE 6. *U.S. elites' reasons for decisions to defend or not to defend a victim*

	<i>Responses to closed-ended questions</i>		<i>Responses to open-ended questions</i>	
	<i>U.S. interests</i>	<i>No interests</i>	<i>U.S. interests</i>	<i>No interests</i>
1. Reason for decision to defend	<i>N</i> = 96	<i>N</i> = 43	<i>N</i> = 59	<i>N</i> = 31
a. "There are important U.S. interests at stake"	74.0%	46.5%	55.9%	22.6%
b. "It is the right thing to do morally"	33.3%	62.8%	6.8%	9.7%
2. Reason for decision not to defend	<i>N</i> = 123	<i>N</i> = 193	<i>N</i> = 81	<i>N</i> = 126
a. "There aren't enough U.S. interests at stake"	13.4%	38.3%	12.3%	23.0%
b. "It's the wrong thing to do morally"	34.1%	25.9%	11.1%	8.7%

alone. To address this question, in this experiment we asked participants to tell us the reasons for their decisions.

How elites explain their choices. After participants made their decision in the Defend a Victim experiment, we asked them to identify the main reason for their choice. We recorded their open-ended responses to this question and later sorted answers into four categories: (1) material interest reasons, (2) normative reasons, (3) instrumental reasons (such as this tactic will not work), and (4) other reasons. After we recorded the open-ended responses, we asked participants how well each of four specified reasons captured their thinking, allowing them to comment on each reason separately. Table 6 summarizes participants' responses to both the open-ended and closed-ended inquiries.

Both sets of responses highlight the prominent role the logic of utilitarian consequences plays compared to the logic of normative obligation. For instance, among participants who heard that U.S. material interests were at stake and who did defend the victim, 56 percent (Table 6, row 1a) said in response to an open-ended question that the presence of U.S. material interests was the main reason for their choice. In response to the closed-ended question, 74 percent of participants in this condition said the presence of U.S. interests was a reason that captured their thinking very well. In contrast, only 7 percent in an open-ended response said morality or normative obligation was the main reason for their decision to defend. Substantially more, 33 percent, agreed in response to a closed-ended query that normative reasons captured their thinking very well. When U.S. material interests are at stake, decisions to defend a victim have multiple motives, including both utilitarian and normative reasons, and U.S. elites are not reluctant to attribute their decisions to both, especially to the presence of U.S. material interests.

The elite evidenced some reluctance to explain decisions not to defend a victim in terms of the lack of U.S. material interests. When we told participants that no U.S. material interests were at stake and they chose not to defend, only 23 percent in open-ended and 38 percent in closed-ended responses attributed their lack of action to the lack of U.S. material interests. This could reflect some embarrassment at not fulfilling the normative obligation and thus reflect the discursive importance of the prescriptive norm. It is important to note, however, that in both open-ended and closed-ended responses the reason most frequently given for not defending the victim when no U.S. material interests were at stake was this absence of U.S. material interests (Table 6, row 2a).

Although the logic of utilitarian material consequence is dominant in the elite decisions in this experiment, normative reasoning is evident among those elites who chose to defend the victim after they were told there were no U.S. material interests at stake. Among this group normative reasoning was not always evident in their open-ended responses, but 63 percent said moral reasons captured their thinking very well when specifically asked about this reason. Moreover, 47 percent said the presence of U.S. interests drove their decision, even though we had told them there were no U.S. material interests at stake. Evidently for this group, the normative obligation generated its own sense of interest, as constructivists might expect. Of course, as seen in Table 3 (row 2b), less than 10 percent of the elites made this decision to defend the victim in this situation.

The data in Table 6 also suggest that although moral reasons play a role in elite decision making, there is substantial disagreement regarding what obligations follow from an international norm in any particular situation. For instance, among those U.S. elites who were told that U.S. material interests were at stake, roughly the same percentage of those who defended the victim and those who did not defend the victim said moral reasons captured their thinking very well (Table 6, rows 1b and 2b). Less dramatic but still indicative of difference in normative interpretation are the nearly 63 percent of elites who, when told that no U.S. material interests were at stake, said the moral thing to do was to defend the victim and did so, compared to the more than 25 percent of those who—in the same condition—chose not to defend the victim and said this was the moral thing to do.

Finally, Table 7 presents the percentage of participants who said in response to closed-ended questions that material interest reasons or normative reasons captured their thinking very well. The general patterns follow those discussed earlier, with the elite showing little reluctance to attribute decisions to defend the victim to material interest reasons (Table 7, rows a–d) and some reluctance to attribute decisions not to defend to a lack of interests when material interests were not at stake. It is important to note, however, that despite this relative reluctance, the lack of U.S. material interests remains the reason the largest percentage of participants identify as capturing their thinking very well (Table 7, rows e–h). Interestingly, the decision to defend in the absence of U.S. material interest is more likely to be attributed to moral reasons when the victim is an advanced democracy (Table 7, rows e and g). Decisions not to defend a victim, however, seem to be influenced less by moral

TABLE 7. *U.S. elites who attribute their decisions to utilitarian or moral reasons*

<i>Situational condition</i>	<i>Reason for defending victim</i>			<i>Reason for not defending victim</i>		
	<i>Interests</i>	<i>Moral</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>No interests</i>	<i>Moral</i>	<i>N</i>
a. U.S. interests/cross-border/victim is democracy	69.8%	39.5%	43	0.0%	23.1%	13
b. U.S. interests/cross-border/victim is not democracy	76.2%	19.0%	21	16.7%	36.0%	24
c. U.S. interests/civil war/victim is democracy	75.0%	35.0%	20	28.6%	29.5%	44
d. U.S. interests/civil war/victim is not democracy	90.0%	33.3%	12	15.4%	41.5%	41
e. No interests/cross-border/victim is democracy	46.7%	73.3%	30	41.9%	25.8%	31
f. No interests/cross-border/victim is not democracy	50.0%	0.0%	2	36.4%	23.1%	52
g. No interests/civil war/victim is democracy	33.3%	50.0%	6	35.1%	28.0%	57
h. No interests/civil war/victim is not democracy	60.0%	40.0%	5	37.7%	26.4%	53

reasons be they generated by a normative commitment to democracy or by in-group biases.

The Validity and Generality of the Results

Theories of international relations often emphasize the importance of ideas as explanatory factors. Cognitive perspectives have for decades explained action in terms of the ideas in the minds of leaders,⁵⁴ constructivists have more recently concentrated on the ideas that are shared in the international system,⁵⁵ and neo-realists have adopted the language of perceived power and perceived threat.⁵⁶ Despite the prevalent use of ideas as explanatory concepts, how to identify ideas and evaluate their impact on behavior in operational terms is not well developed. Scholars often rely on interviews with a few leaders, depend on archival records or codified laws, and try by a logic of loose correlation or process tracing to establish causal linkages. We have employed a method for identifying and studying the impact of several key ideas that is well established in social psychology and the study of opinion but which is somewhat unusual in the study of international relations.

54. Herrmann and Fischerkeller 1995.

55. Jepperson, Katzenstein, and Wendt 1996.

56. Rose 1998.

A survey of a large sample of U.S. leaders with a series of experiments embedded in it has strengths in terms of identifying ideas and their effects. It also undoubtedly raises questions about the validity and generalizability of our findings. Central to these concerns are three questions: (1) Are decisions made in the experimental context anything like decisions made in the real world? (2) How robust are the patterns? That is, do they apply only to certain types of people and not to others? (3) What can findings drawn from an exclusively American sample and in the domain of a single type of norm tell us about processes in the international system more generally? Although we cannot answer each question definitively, each deserves consideration before we turn to our substantive conclusions.

First, although our participants make decisions in a hypothetical context devoid of many of the features found in a real-world context, the bare bones of these contexts are similar to questions confronted in real situations. Moreover, we find substantial similarity in results in both our more abstract and content-specific experiments. Perhaps more important to note, however, is that the effects we find are produced by manipulations over the phone. In real life, the stimuli would certainly be far more vivid and compelling. Participants instead of hearing about material interests and normative violations would see, in living color no less, lives and treasure being lost and the desperate faces of victims being savagely attacked. This is likely to make their reactions much stronger than those we pick up in our experiments. We see no reason, however, to assume these stronger reactions would be in different directions. Our manipulation of both material interest and normative obligation had a hypothetical quality to it, and we see no evidence that our experiment gave an advantage to one sort of consideration over the other. It may well be that the results we find are minimal effects and that in real cases the trends we see experimentally would be more dramatic as the stimuli became more intense, but we suspect the basic relational patterns would still hold.

Second, the results we have presented thus far reflect trends among the U.S. elite as a whole. This aggregate focus makes sense given our interest in the United States as a collective actor, but it may disguise important individual differences. For instance, the patterns we find may apply to certain types of Americans much more so than to other types. If this were so and a particular type of elite was in power, it would be necessary to know more about that type of elite before commenting on the applicability of our findings. To explore this possibility, we looked for a relationship between well-known fault lines in the U.S. elite and choices in our experiments. We constructed scales to measure three dispositions that have been found to represent important divisions within the U.S. elite.⁵⁷ They are (1) internationalism versus isolationism, (2) accommodative cooperativeness versus militant assertiveness, and (3) liberal versus con-

57. See Wittkopf 1990; Holsti and Rosenau 1993; and Holsti 1996.

TABLE 8. Probit results for dispositional effects on choice

<i>Dispositional factors</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Repel an Aggressor experiment (N = 450)				
Military assertiveness	-0.094785	0.0401203	-2.363	.018
Internationalism/isolationism	-0.0428163	0.0398431	-1.075	.283
Ideology	0.0172238	0.0447222	0.385	.700
tau 1	-1.027683	0.2233453		
tau 2	-0.3713811	0.2207837		
tau 3	-0.2367902	0.220895		
tau 4	0.2828737	0.221653		
Defend a Victim experiment (N = 452)				
Military assertiveness	-0.0847504	0.0399679	-2.120	.034
Internationalism/isolationism	-0.0744023	0.0396261	-1.878	.060
Ideology	-0.0229075	0.0449607	-0.510	.610
tau 1	-0.8847709	0.2242277		
tau 2	-0.1800817	0.2210066		
tau 3	0.0061064	0.2207109		
tau 4	0.5199637	0.2233226		
Persian Gulf experiment (N = 471)				
Military assertiveness	-0.0430917	0.0435276	-0.990	.322
Internationalism/isolationism	0.0080778	0.0435048	0.186	.853
Ideology	0.0584178	0.048634	1.201	.230
tau 1	-1.388875	0.2487012		
tau 2	0.5051954	0.241115		
Bus Bomb experiment (N = 470)				
Military assertiveness	0.1290652	0.0409535	3.152	.002
Internationalism/isolationism	-0.0156241	0.0415244	-0.376	.707
Ideology	-0.0186296	0.0458696	-0.406	.685
tau 1	-0.3947001	0.2226007		
tau 2	0.1624104	0.222241		
tau 3	1.259539	0.2279734		

servative.⁵⁸ Table 8 presents ordered probit results that suggest that there are not systematic differences between liberals and conservatives or between internationalists and isolationists when it comes to making choices in our experiments. Militant assertive elites are more likely to repel aggressors and defend victims. However, they also are more likely to forgive retaliators in the Bus Bomb experiment. This latter finding suggests that the difference between militants and cooperators probably has less to do with felt normative obligations to defend norms than with the proclivity to use force to defend material interests.

Our results are fairly robust across ideological divisions, but it is possible that decision makers may be affected by the roles they hold. Although many of our participants hold official positions in government, most do not. It is possible that top

58. The items we used to build these scales are reported in the appendix.

government decision makers decide whether to defend an international norm in ways different from those identified here. Obviously, our aggregate results cannot predict the decision making of a particular individual, such as a president or a secretary of state. However, even if these individuals were atypical—either because of role demands or personality—they would still need to win over the support of the general elite, or at least a substantial part of it, for whatever decision they make. Moreover, it seems likely that holding top government office, and thus being responsible to domestic constituents, will increase the priority granted to U.S. material interests and reasoning in terms of utilitarian consequence, as much as it would increase the priority given to felt normative obligation and the logic of appropriateness at the international level. If this were the case, it would only reinforce the basic patterns we find.

We conducted our interviews between June and September 1997. Obviously, like with all interviews, our survey took a snapshot. We cannot be certain similar attitudes and logics of reasoning prevail at other times. We do not, however, see major changes in the global and national situation since 1997 that would be likely to change the patterns we report. Our survey was conducted after the end of the Cold War. Basic U.S. geostrategic relations with Russia and China have not changed since, nor has the situation in the Persian Gulf. The United States' reliance on oil still commands attention as do relations with Iraq and Iran. U.S. forces continue to fly over Kurdistan and remain deployed to Saudi Arabia. By the time we conducted our survey, U.S. troops had been out of Somalia for some time, and the most intense fighting in Rwanda was past. Conflict in Sierra Leone, Kosovo, and Kashmir was still brewing.

Third, our study is limited to an exclusively U.S. sample, to one type of norm (prescriptive), and to only one prescriptive norm at that. Because our intent was not to examine how various norms compare with each other but rather to explore the variation in the enactment and defense of a single norm, we focused on a prescriptive norm that satisfies most of Legro's criteria for a robust norm⁵⁹—one that is likely to matter. Of course, decisions to defend other types of norms in other countries may follow patterns different from those we find for leaders in the United States, but the U.S. case is, nevertheless, important. The United States, after all, is a critical case when considering the importance of prescriptive norms in the international system and has been treated as such in previous research.⁶⁰

The United States because of its power is in an unusual position to defend norms and enact system standards. Also, the United States is sufficiently powerful that when it is affected by normative obligation, observers are less likely than in cases of weak states to attribute this to the pressure of external compulsion. Finally, the United States is a critical case because if prescriptive norms are to be treated as

59. Legro 1997.

60. See Klotz 1995; and Tannenwald 1999.

important independent determinants of international relations, they need to affect the thinking, rhetoric, and action of the strong and not just the weak.

Conclusions

In this project we have not questioned the existence of a prescriptive norm but rather why a well-known and often respected norm is sometimes defended by the United States and sometimes not. Our aim has been to focus on the variation in normative enactment, a phenomenon that has not received sufficient attention in the recent revival of interest in norms among international relations theorists. To an important degree this revival has concentrated on norms as parts of a systemwide ideational structure and has not concentrated on the situational specifics inherent in most prescriptive norms nor on the qualifications and exemptions that are part of most norms. This is somewhat odd given the critical role situational factors play in the legal treatment of norms,⁶¹ the role that accounts (excuses, denials, justifications) play in the discursive treatment of norms,⁶² and the role exemptions play in the philosophical examination of norms, for example, in the analysis of “just” war.⁶³

Our premise at the outset was that an explanation of variation in the defense of a norm requires theory at the level of cognitive agents. We proposed that to understand the enactment of a norm, it was necessary to take into account the perceptions of the situation as understood by agents. We found that perceptions of the situation do play an important role in decisions to defend a norm. Especially important are perceptions of the motives seen to be behind the violation, perceptions of the situation as a cross-border conflict or a civil war, and perceptions of the democratic character of the victim. The prescriptive norm we investigated was most likely to be defended when leaders perceived the attacker to be unprovoked and offensively motivated, perceived the attack as crossing national boundaries, and perceived the victim to be democratic. We suspected that the perceived power of the adversary that would need to be confronted to defend the norm would have a major impact on decisions to enact a norm because, after all, it would affect expected costs. Surprisingly, we found this not to be the case in our Repel an Aggressor experiment.

Our finding that agent-level perceptions matter is important. It implies that just as we deal with the construction of interests and norms, we need to address the construction of situations. Unless we believe that this construction process is determined uniformly for everyone by an objective external reality, to understand the operation of norms in the international system we must link together structural and agent-based theories. The features of the situation we have found to have an important impact on decisions to defend a norm are precisely those features of the situation that in most real-world cases provoke intense debate, if not in the United

61. See Chayes and Chayes 1995, 123; and Kratochwil 1989, 10.

62. Scott and Lyman 1968.

63. See Walzer 1977; and Edgerton 1985.

States, then at least in the international system. When we introduce cognitive variation at the agent level to our understanding of the operation of norms, we must also introduce the possibility that in-group biases and other psychological inclinations will affect enactment decisions.

We found in our Persian Gulf experiment that a simple substitution of one country name for another in an otherwise identical scenario had a significant effect on decisions to defend the international norm. This finding may reflect different perceptions of the motives and power of the two countries, Israel and Iran, but it also is likely to reflect perceptions of the relationship each of these countries has with the United States. There is a tendency to defend norms more actively when violated by foes than when they are violated by friends.

Leaders in the United States clearly do defend international norms sometimes. They are most likely to do so when U.S. economic and security interests are at stake. Felt normative obligation motivates some action, but not nearly as much as material interests do. In all of our scenarios, weighing against decisions to defend a norm were the potential costs and the countervailing influence of other norms, such as protecting U.S. lives. In cases where U.S. material interests were at stake, these considerations were overcome and leaders chose to act. When only normative obligation was involved, far fewer leaders made a similar choice.

We did not find that U.S. elites felt compelled to disguise in some form of justificatory ideology the priority granted to U.S. economic and security interests, as Morgenthau might have expected they would.⁶⁴ Our participants may have provided more normatively based explanations for their choices had we asked them to defend their choices publicly. In the confines of our confidential interview, however, they explained their choices mostly in terms of U.S. material interest. This was somewhat more true for decisions to act than for decisions not to act, but it suggests that among the U.S. elite, when U.S. economic and security interests are at stake, taking action is mostly perceived as a morally defensible norm in its own right. This apparent intuitive realist inclination may be easy to understand given what Morgenthau called "nationalist universalism,"⁶⁵ or elevating individual national interests to the level of universal normative prescription; it also may go some distance in explaining why many less powerful states respond with skepticism to U.S.-led calls for a new world order based on normative principles.

Appendix: Questions Used to Construct Disposition Scales

Liberalism–Conservatism Scale Items (Cronbach's alpha = .88)

"Generally speaking, would you consider yourself to be a liberal, a conservative, a moderate, or haven't you thought much about this?"

64. Morgenthau 1973, 88–91.

65. *Ibid.*, 241–56.

“Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or what?”

Internationalism–Isolationism Scale Items (Cronbach’s alpha = .72)

“America needs to cooperate more with the United Nations in settling international disputes.”

“It is essential for the United States to work with other nations to solve problems, such as overpopulation, hunger, and pollution.”

“The United States needs to play an active role in solving conflicts around the world.”

“The U.S. government should just try to take care of the well-being of Americans and not get involved with other nations.”

“The United States should provide less economic aid to other countries.”

Militant Assertiveness–Accommodative Cooperativeness Scale Items (Cronbach’s alpha = .66)

“Generally, the more influence America has on other nations, the better off they are.”

“The best way to ensure world peace is through American military strength.”

“The use of military force only makes problems worse.”

“Rather than simply reacting to our enemies, it’s better for us to strike first.”

“Despite all the talk about a new world order, military strength and the will to use it is still the best measure of a country’s greatness.”

“The United States could learn a lot by following the example of other countries.”

References

- Adler, Emanuel. 1991. Cognitive Evolution: A Dynamic Approach for the Study of International Relations and their Progress. In *Progress in Postwar International Relations*, edited by Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford, 43–88. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Axelrod, Robert. 1986. An Evolutionary Approach to the Study of Norms. *American Political Science Review* 80:1095–1111.
- Brewer, Marilyn B. 1988. A Dual Process Model of Impression Formation. In *Advances in Social Cognition*, vol. 1, *A Dual Process Model of Impression Formation*, edited by Thomas K. Srull and Robert S. Wyer, Jr., 1–36. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Chayes, Abram, and Antonia Handler Chayes. 1995. *The New Sovereignty: Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Checkel, Jeffrey T. 1998. The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory. *World Politics* 50 (2):324–48.
- Desch, Michael. 1998. Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies. *International Security* 23 (1):141–70.
- DiMaggio, Paul. 1997. Culture and Cognition. *Annual Review of Sociology* 23:263–87.

- Dinstein, Yoram. 1994. *War, Aggression, and Self-Defense*. 2d ed. Cambridge: Grotius.
- Edgerton, Robert B. 1985. *Rules, Exceptions, and Social Order*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Elster, Jon. 1989. *The Cement of Society: A Study of Social Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finnemore, Martha. 1996. *National Interests in International Society*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International Organization* 52 (4):887–917.
- Goertz, Gary, and Paul F. Diehl. 1992. Towards a Theory of International Norms: Some Conceptual and Measurements Issues. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36 (4):634–64.
- Goldstein, Judith, and Robert O. Keohane, eds. 1993. *Ideas and Foreign Policy*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Greene, William H. 1993. *Econometric Analysis*. 2d ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Grieco, Joseph M. 1990. *Cooperation Among Nations: Europe, America, and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Heider, Fritz. 1958. *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. New York: Wiley.
- Herrmann, Richard. 1988. The Empirical Challenge of the Cognitive Revolution. *International Studies Quarterly* 32 (2):175–203.
- Herrmann, Richard K., and Michael P. Fischerkeller. 1995. Beyond the Enemy Image and Spiral Model: Cognitive-Strategic Research After the Cold War. *International Organization* 49 (3):415–50.
- Holsti, Ole R. 1996. *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Holsti, Ole R., and James N. Rosenau. 1984. *American Leadership in World Affairs: Vietnam and the Breakdown of Consensus*. Boston: Allen and Unwin.
- . 1993. The Structure of Foreign Policy Beliefs Among American Opinion Leaders: After the Cold War. *Millennium* 22 (2):235–78.
- Hudson, Valerie M., with Christopher S. Vore. 1995. Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow. *Mershon International Studies Review* 39 (October):209–38.
- Jepperson, Ronald L., Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein. 1996. Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security. In *The Culture of National Security*, edited by Peter Katzenstein, 33–78. New York: Columbia University Press.
- King, Gary, Michael Tomz, and Jason Wittenberg. 2000. Making the Most of Statistical Analyses: Improving Interpretation and Presentation. *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (2):347–61.
- Klotz, Audie. 1995. *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Krasner, Stephen D. 1999. *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich V. 1989. *Rules, Norms, and Decisions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich V., and John Gerard Ruggie. 1986. International Organization: A State of the Art on an Art of the State. *International Organization* 40 (4):753–75.
- Legro, Jeffrey W. 1997. Which Norms Matter? Revisiting the “Failure” of Internationalism. *International Organization* 51 (1):31–63.
- Maechling, Charles, Jr. 1990. Washington’s Illegal Invasion. *Foreign Policy* 79:113–31.
- March, James G., and Johan P. Olsen. 1998. The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders. *International Organization* 52 (4):943–69.
- Morgenthau, Hans J. 1973. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 5th ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Mueller, John E. 1994. *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Nadelman, Ethan. 1990. Global Prohibition Regimes: The Evolution of Norms in International Society. *International Organization* 44:479–526.
- Rose, Gideon. 1998. Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. *World Politics* 51 (1):144–72.
- Scott, Marvin B., and Stanford M. Lyman. 1968. Accounts. *American Sociological Review* 33 (1):46–62.

- Shannon, Vaughn. 2000. Norms Are What States Make of Them: The Political Psychology of Norm Violation. *International Studies Quarterly* 44 (2):293–316.
- Sniderman, Paul M., and Thomas Piazza. 1993. *The Scar of Race*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press.
- Tannenwald, Nina. 1999. The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use. *International Organization* 53 (3):433–68.
- Tetlock, Philip, and A. Levi. 1982. Attribution Bias: On the Inconclusiveness of the Cognition-Motivation Debate. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 18:68–88.
- Tomz, Michael, Jason Wittenberg, and Gary King. 1999. CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results. Ver. 1.2.1. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University. Available at (<http://gking.harvard.edu/>) (accessed June 2000).
- Walzer, Michael. 1977. *Just and Unjust Wars*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wendt, Alexander. 1999. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wittkopf, Eugene. 1990. *Faces of Internationalism: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.