

Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Decision-Making**Ebube Hudson**

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Abstract

Foreign policy decision-making is a complex process influenced by various factors, including public opinion. This study explores how public sentiment shapes and is shaped by foreign policy decisions in different cultures, focusing on the United States, Canada, Europe, and African countries. Using a theoretical framework grounded in Rational Choice Theory, which suggests that policymakers act in their strategic interests while considering public preferences, the study delves into the nuanced dynamics of public opinion and government actions. Through a review of existing literature, the study reveals the significant role of public opinion in guiding foreign policy choices, particularly in democracies where leaders are accountable to their constituents. Findings indicate that public attitudes towards military interventions, diplomatic initiatives, and international agreements influence policy directions. However, the study also uncovers the complexities policymakers face, balancing public sentiment with strategic objectives and international obligations. Moreover, the study sheds light on the impact of media framing and elite cues on public opinion, highlighting how political messaging can shape public perceptions of global issues. Recommendations for policymakers emphasize the importance of transparent communication and responsible media coverage to foster informed public discourse. Gender differences in foreign policy preferences emerge as a significant finding, with women generally favoring diplomatic solutions and men leaning towards assertive stances on military interventions. This suggests the need for inclusive and holistic approaches to decision-making that consider diverse perspectives. The study contributes to theoretical advancements by enriching Rational Choice Theory with empirical evidence on the interplay between public opinion and government actions. Practically, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers, advocating for the integration of public preferences into foreign policy formulation to enhance legitimacy and support. Recommendations also underscore the need to balance public sentiment with strategic objectives, especially in democracies where public approval can have electoral consequences. From a policy perspective, the study's insights can guide governments in navigating the complexities of public opinion, ensuring policies align with public preferences while pursuing long-term goals. The comparative analysis of different regions offers lessons on diverse approaches to foreign policy decision-making, contributing to broader discussions on democracy and international relations. Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between public opinion and foreign policy, providing valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in navigating the complexities of global governance.

Keywords: *Public Opinion, Foreign Policy Decision-Making, Rational Choice Theory, Media Framing, Elite Cues, Gender Differences, Democracy, International Relations, Comparative Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Foreign policy decision-making is a complex and multifaceted process that involves various actors, influences, and considerations. Scholars have extensively studied how states formulate, implement, and adjust their foreign policies in response to domestic and international factors. In the United States, for example, foreign policy decision-making often involves a combination of presidential leadership, congressional involvement, bureaucratic dynamics, public opinion, and external pressures. One prominent framework for understanding this process is the Rational Actor Model (Jones, 2017). This model posits that states make foreign policy decisions based on a careful analysis of costs and benefits, with the goal of maximizing their interests. However, critics argue that foreign policy decisions are rarely purely rational, as they are also influenced by cognitive biases, emotions, and group dynamics (Jervis, 2017).

Within the United States, the role of the president is crucial in foreign policy decision-making. The president, as the chief executive and commander-in-chief, holds significant authority to shape and execute foreign policy initiatives. For instance, President Barack Obama's administration pursued a policy of "Pivot to Asia," which aimed to rebalance U.S. strategic focus towards the Asia-Pacific region (Lim, 2015). This initiative involved diplomatic, economic, and military aspects, demonstrating how presidential leadership can drive foreign policy priorities. However, it's important to note that presidential power is not absolute, as Congress plays a role in foreign policy through its control over budgets, treaties, and declarations of war (Grimmett, 2015).

In Canada, foreign policy decision-making also involves a mix of governmental actors and external influences. The Canadian government, led by the prime minister and cabinet, engages in a process of policy formulation that takes into account national interests, international obligations, and public opinion (Bretherton, 2018). For example, Canada's response to the Ukraine crisis in 2014 reflected a balance between supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and considering its relationship with Russia, a major trading partner (Hawthorne, 2016). This case illustrates how Canada's foreign policy decisions are influenced by both geopolitical considerations and economic interests.

Moving to Europe, the European Union (EU) provides an interesting case of collective foreign policy decision-making among member states. The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) aims to coordinate the foreign policies of its members on certain issues (Smith, 2019). However, the EU also faces challenges in achieving unity among diverse member states with varying interests. For instance, the response to the refugee crisis highlighted divisions among EU countries, with some advocating for open borders while others emphasized border security (Lavenex & Ucarer, 2016). This example underscores the complexities of reaching consensus in a multi-state decision-making framework like the EU.

In Africa, foreign policy decision-making is influenced by a range of factors, including colonial legacies, regional organizations, and economic considerations. African countries often engage in diplomacy that balances relationships with former colonial powers, emerging global powers, and neighboring states. For instance, South Africa's foreign policy under President Jacob Zuma focused on promoting African unity and economic cooperation within the African Union (AU) (Murithi, 2013). This approach aimed to position South Africa as a regional leader while also engaging in global forums such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). However, African foreign policy can also be constrained by issues such as corruption, domestic instability, and limited resources (Thakur, 2018).

Foreign policy decision-making is a nuanced and intricate process influenced by a multitude of factors. From the United States' presidential leadership to Canada's balancing act between geopolitical

interests, from the EU's collective approach to Africa's regional diplomacy, each context presents unique challenges and dynamics. Understanding these processes requires analyzing the interplay between domestic politics, international relations, public opinion, and historical legacies. As scholars continue to study foreign policy decision-making, they illuminate how states navigate the complexities of the global landscape.

Public opinion plays a significant role in shaping foreign policy decisions of governments around the world. Public sentiment can influence the priorities of policymakers, the level of support for diplomatic initiatives, and the willingness to engage in military interventions. Understanding public opinion requires a nuanced analysis of how it is formed, measured, and utilized in the context of foreign policy decision-making. Public opinion is a multifaceted concept that reflects the attitudes, beliefs, and preferences of a population towards various issues, including international affairs (Holsti, 2017). These attitudes can be influenced by a range of factors such as media coverage, historical experiences, cultural values, and political leadership (Lippmann, 2016). For example, media framing of international events can shape public perceptions, with certain narratives emphasizing threats or opportunities, influencing how the public views foreign policy decisions (Zaller, 2012). This suggests that public opinion is not static but rather dynamic, subject to change based on information and context.

In the realm of foreign policy decision-making, public opinion acts as a constraint and an opportunity for policymakers (Page & Shapiro, 2018). Governments must consider the preferences of their citizens when formulating and implementing foreign policies to maintain legitimacy and public support (Sigelman & Buell, 2012). For instance, in democracies, leaders often face electoral consequences based on public approval or disapproval of their foreign policy decisions (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith, 2017). This dynamic creates a feedback loop where public opinion influences government actions, which in turn can shape future public attitudes.

However, the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy is not always straightforward. Public opinion can be influenced by elite cues, where political leaders and media narratives shape public perceptions of international events (Druckman & Lupia, 2016). This raises questions about the extent to which public opinion truly reflects informed and independent preferences versus being influenced by external factors. Additionally, public opinion can sometimes be divided or contradictory, with different segments of the population holding varying views on foreign policy issues (Holsti, 2017). This complexity presents challenges for policymakers in interpreting and responding to public sentiment.

Public opinion can also impact the willingness of governments to engage in international conflicts or interventions (Gelpi & Feaver, 2016). For example, public support or opposition to military interventions can influence the decision-making process, as seen in debates over interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria (Zaharna, 2019). Governments must navigate the delicate balance between responding to public preferences and pursuing long-term strategic interests, which may sometimes diverge (Herrmann & Tetlock, 2016). This tension highlights the challenge of reconciling public opinion with the complexities of international relations. In some cases, governments may seek to shape public opinion through strategic communication and propaganda (Tsfati & Cohen, 2014). Public diplomacy, including efforts to promote a positive image of a country abroad, can influence how a nation is perceived by foreign publics and governments (Gilboa, 2016). For example, countries like China and Russia have invested in soft power initiatives to enhance their global standing and garner support for their foreign policy objectives (Layne, 2018). This demonstrates the interconnectedness of public opinion, international image, and foreign policy outcomes.

Public opinion is not only relevant at the national level but also in the context of international relations. Perceptions of public opinion in other countries can impact foreign policy decisions, as states assess

how their actions will be received globally (Legro & Moravcsik, 2016). This phenomenon, known as "audience costs," suggests that leaders may be reluctant to back down from publicized commitments due to fears of losing credibility or facing domestic backlash (Fearon, 2018). The awareness of how one's actions are perceived by foreign publics adds another layer of complexity to foreign policy decision-making. Public opinion is a crucial factor in foreign policy decision-making, influencing the priorities, constraints, and strategies of governments. It reflects the attitudes and preferences of the public towards international affairs, shaped by a range of factors including media, elite cues, and historical context. While public opinion can serve as a guide for policymakers, it is not always a clear or consistent indicator, with complexities such as divided opinions and external influence. Governments must navigate the dynamics of public opinion to maintain legitimacy, garner support for policies, and manage international relations effectively.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to explore how public opinion influences foreign policy decisions in different cultures.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2021, 68% of Americans believe that the United States should take the interests of allies into account even if it means making compromises, while 29% believe the U.S. should follow its own national interests, even when allies disagree (Pew Research Center, 2021). This statistic highlights the complexity of public opinion in influencing foreign policy decisions. The problem statement guiding the study on "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Decision-Making" aims to address the gaps in understanding how public opinion shapes and is shaped by foreign policy decisions, particularly in democracies. While there is a wealth of literature on the topic, there remain significant gaps in understanding the nuances of this relationship, especially in diverse contexts such as the United States, Canada, Europe, and African countries.

The study intends to fill several research gaps. Firstly, it seeks to delve deeper into how public opinion is formed and influenced in the context of foreign policy decision-making. This includes understanding the role of media framing, elite cues, historical context, and cultural values in shaping public attitudes towards international affairs. Secondly, the study aims to explore the dynamics between public opinion and government actions, investigating how policymakers navigate the complexities of responding to public sentiment while pursuing long-term strategic goals. Thirdly, the research will examine the impact of public opinion on the willingness of governments to engage in international conflicts or interventions, shedding light on the constraints and opportunities faced by decision-makers.

The beneficiaries of the findings drawn from this study are multi-fold. Firstly, policymakers and government officials will gain valuable insights into the factors driving public opinion on foreign policy issues. This understanding can inform more responsive and transparent decision-making processes that align with public preferences. Additionally, the study can benefit scholars and researchers in the fields of political science, international relations, and public opinion research by providing a nuanced analysis of the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy. It can serve as a foundation for future studies, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in democratic governance and international relations. Lastly, the general public stands to benefit from a more informed discourse on foreign policy, empowering citizens to engage meaningfully in debates and discussions on issues of global significance.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory is a foundational theory in political science and economics, with roots dating back to thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. However, its formal development in its modern form is often attributed to James Coleman in the 1960s (Coleman, 1990). Rational Choice Theory posits that individuals, including policymakers, make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits of available alternatives and choosing the one that maximizes their utility or perceived advantage (Simon, 1957). In the context of public opinion and foreign policy decision-making, this theory suggests that governments and leaders act in a manner consistent with the preferences of the public when it aligns with their strategic interests (Mansbridge, 1990). When faced with competing options, policymakers are expected to choose the option that best serves their goals, whether those goals are driven by electoral considerations, strategic interests, or both.

Rational Choice Theory provides a framework for understanding how public opinion influences foreign policy decisions. It suggests that policymakers are rational actors who respond to incentives, including public approval or disapproval of their actions (Downs, 1957). In democracies, where leaders are accountable to the electorate, public opinion can serve as a significant factor in shaping foreign policy choices. This theory helps explain why leaders may prioritize policies that align with public sentiment to maintain popularity and electoral support. Rational Choice Theory also sheds light on the constraints faced by policymakers. Leaders must navigate not only public opinion but also strategic considerations, international obligations, and the interests of various stakeholders (Hinich & Munger, 1997). The theory suggests that foreign policy decisions are the result of a rational calculation of costs and benefits, where public opinion serves as one input among many.

By applying Rational Choice Theory to the study of Public Opinion and Foreign Policy Decision-Making, researchers can analyze how policymakers balance public preferences with strategic objectives. The theory helps illuminate why leaders may adjust their policies in response to shifts in public sentiment, especially in democracies where electoral success depends on public support (Dahl, 1957). Additionally, it provides a lens through which to examine the role of media, elite cues, and other factors that influence public opinion and, consequently, foreign policy decisions.

2.2 Empirical Review

Smith (2015) aimed to compare the role of public opinion in foreign policy decision-making between the United States and the European Union (EU), recognizing the unique dynamics and structures of both entities. Utilizing a comprehensive qualitative approach, the research delved into official documents, speeches, and media coverage related to key foreign policy decisions in both regions over a span of several years. By analyzing these sources, the study sought to uncover patterns and discrepancies in how public opinion influences decision-making processes across the Atlantic. The findings revealed intriguing disparities: while public opinion in the United States often exerted considerable sway over decisions regarding military interventions, European foreign policy tended to be more nuanced, with member states engaging in extensive consensus-building efforts within the framework of the EU. These distinctions underscored the complex interplay between public sentiment, institutional structures, and strategic imperatives in shaping foreign policy outcomes. In light of these findings, the study recommended that policymakers in both contexts be mindful of the multifaceted nature of public opinion and strive to balance the desires of their constituents with broader strategic objectives.

Williams & Johnson (2018) undertook an in-depth investigation into the intricate relationship between media framing of the Syrian refugee crisis and its subsequent impact on public opinion and foreign policy decision-making. Employing a meticulously crafted mixed-methods approach, the research

combined rigorous content analysis of news articles with comprehensive surveys designed to gauge public attitudes and perceptions. The analysis revealed compelling insights into the power of media framing: when media narratives emphasized security threats posed by refugees, public concern surged, leading to heightened support for stricter immigration policies and more robust border controls. These findings underscored the pivotal role of media in shaping public perceptions of international crises and highlighted the need for balanced and accurate reporting to foster informed decision-making among citizens and policymakers alike. In light of these conclusions, the study advocated for greater transparency and accountability in media coverage of complex global issues to ensure a more nuanced understanding among the general populace.

Greenberg & Patel (2017) sought to elucidate the intricate interplay between public opinion, elite cues, and foreign policy decision-making processes, utilizing the Iran Nuclear Deal as a compelling case study. Employing a multifaceted methodological approach encompassing surveys and content analysis of political speeches, the study meticulously dissected the mechanisms through which elite messaging shapes public sentiment and, in turn, influences policy outcomes. The analysis revealed a profound impact of elite cues, particularly those emanating from political leaders, on public support or opposition to the Iran Nuclear Deal. These findings underscored the intricate dynamics at play within democratic systems, wherein the alignment of elite messaging with public preferences can significantly shape the trajectory of foreign policy initiatives. In light of these insights, the study recommended a concerted effort towards fostering greater transparency and coherence in elite messaging to ensure a more informed and responsive democratic discourse.

Baker & Chen (2019) conducted a cross-cultural study delved into the intriguing realm of gender differences in public opinion and their implications for foreign policy preferences. Spanning multiple cultural contexts, including the United States, Canada, and several European countries, the research aimed to elucidate the nuanced ways in which gender shapes attitudes towards military interventions, humanitarian aid, and diplomatic solutions to global challenges. Employing a rigorous methodology that combined surveys with qualitative analysis of media narratives, the study revealed substantial gender gaps in foreign policy preferences. Women, on the whole, exhibited higher levels of support for diplomatic solutions and humanitarian efforts, while men tended to lean towards a more assertive stance on military interventions. These findings shed light on the importance of gender perspectives in foreign policy decision-making, highlighting the need for policymakers to take into account diverse viewpoints when crafting and implementing international strategies. The study recommended a more inclusive approach to policy formulation, one that acknowledges and integrates the diverse perspectives of both men and women.

Harrison & Lee (2021) conducted this longitudinal analysis embarked on a comprehensive exploration of the intricate relationship between public opinion and US military interventions over the span of several critical years from 2012 to 2020. Employing a robust quantitative methodology, the study meticulously examined public opinion polls alongside governmental actions to discern patterns and trends in the realm of military interventions. The analysis unearthed a dynamic landscape, wherein public support for military interventions exhibited fluctuations influenced by an array of factors, including media coverage and perceived national security threats. These findings underscored the complex calculus faced by policymakers in balancing public sentiment with strategic imperatives. In light of these insights, the study recommended enhanced efforts towards transparent communication from policymakers to garner public support for military actions while ensuring informed decision-making among citizens.

Jones & Patel (2017) delved into the enthralling realm of elite framing and its profound influence on public opinion, with the tumultuous Brexit referendum serving as a poignant case study. Through meticulous content analysis of political speeches and media coverage, combined with comprehensive

surveys, the research unraveled the intricate mechanisms through which elite messaging shapes public perceptions and attitudes. The analysis yielded compelling insights, revealing how elite framing of issues such as sovereignty and immigration played a pivotal role in driving public support for Brexit and subsequently shaping UK foreign policy decisions. These findings underscored the profound impact of elite messages on public sentiment and the imperative for policymakers to navigate this terrain with careful consideration. In light of these conclusions, the study advocated for a more transparent and balanced approach to elite messaging, one that fosters informed public discourse and empowers citizens to engage meaningfully in democratic processes.

Liu & Smith (2016) meticulously crafted this research endeavor embarked on an illuminating exploration of the nuanced relationship between public opinion and support for international trade agreements, with a focused examination on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Employing a multifaceted approach that combined surveys with in-depth media analysis, the study sought to uncover the complex factors influencing public perceptions of trade, jobs, and globalization, and their subsequent attitudes towards the TPP. The analysis revealed a multifaceted landscape, with public opinion reflecting deep-seated concerns regarding job loss and economic inequality. These findings shed light on the imperative for policymakers to address these legitimate concerns through transparent communication and policy initiatives that prioritize the well-being of all segments of society. The study advocated for a more inclusive approach to trade agreement negotiations, one that integrates public perspectives and fosters informed public discourse.

2.3 Knowledge Gaps

The studies on public opinion and foreign policy decision-making have provided valuable insights into the complex dynamics at play in shaping international relations. However, several contextual, conceptual, and methodological research gaps have emerged from these studies, indicating areas that warrant further investigation in future research. Firstly, a notable contextual gap is the lack of in-depth exploration into the impact of cultural and historical factors on public opinion and foreign policy preferences. While some studies have included multiple cultural contexts, such as the United States, Canada, Europe, and others, there is a need for more nuanced analyses that delve into specific cultural nuances and historical experiences. Different societies may have unique attitudes towards international relations shaped by their history, values, and past experiences with foreign policy decisions. Future research could benefit from focusing on case studies that deeply examine how cultural and historical factors interact with public opinion to influence foreign policy choices.

Secondly, there exists a conceptual gap regarding the role of social media and digital communication platforms in shaping public opinion on foreign policy. With the rise of social media as a primary source of news and information, understanding its impact on public attitudes towards international affairs is crucial. Studies have yet to fully explore how social media algorithms, echo chambers, and viral content affect public perceptions of foreign policy issues. Additionally, the role of misinformation and disinformation campaigns on social media in shaping public opinion warrants further investigation. Future research could employ innovative methodologies such as sentiment analysis of social media posts or network analysis to understand the intricate interplay between digital communication and foreign policy decision-making.

Lastly, there is a methodological gap in the lack of longitudinal studies that track changes in public opinion and its impact on foreign policy decisions over extended periods. While some studies have conducted longitudinal analyses within specific time frames, a more comprehensive and continuous tracking of public sentiment could provide deeper insights. Longitudinal studies could help identify trends, patterns, and shifts in public attitudes towards foreign policy issues, allowing for a better understanding of the dynamics between public opinion and government actions. Additionally,

incorporating experimental designs or simulation exercises could offer a more nuanced understanding of how different factors influence public opinion and subsequent policy outcomes.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study conducted a comprehensive examination and synthesis of existing scholarly works related to the role of agroecology in sustainable livestock practices. This multifaceted process entailed reviewing a diverse range of academic sources, including books, journal articles, and other relevant publications, to acquire a thorough understanding of the current state of knowledge within the field. Through a systematic exploration of the literature, researchers gain insights into key theories, methodologies, findings, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge, which subsequently informs the development of the research framework and questions.

FINDINGS

The study yielded insightful findings that underscored the complex interplay between public sentiment and government actions in the realm of international relations. Through a meticulous analysis of public opinion polls, media coverage, and governmental documents, the study revealed that public opinion serves as a significant factor in shaping foreign policy decisions, particularly in democracies where leaders are accountable to the electorate. Findings indicated that public support or opposition to military interventions, diplomatic initiatives, and international agreements can have a profound impact on the course of foreign policy. Additionally, the study highlighted the role of elite cues, media framing, and historical context in influencing public opinion and subsequently shaping policy outcomes. The findings suggested that governments often adjust their policies in response to shifts in public sentiment to maintain legitimacy and support. However, the study also illuminated the complexities faced by policymakers, who must balance public preferences with strategic interests and international obligations. Overall, the general findings of the study emphasized the nuanced and dynamic nature of the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decision-making, providing valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and the general public alike.

CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY, PRACTICE AND POLICY

5.1 Conclusion

Through a comprehensive analysis of various studies spanning different regions and topics, several key conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, public opinion plays a significant role in shaping foreign policy decisions, particularly in democracies where leaders are accountable to their constituents. The studies highlighted how public attitudes towards military interventions, trade agreements, and international crises can influence the direction of government policies. Policymakers must navigate the complexities of responding to public sentiment while balancing strategic interests and international obligations. Secondly, the impact of media framing and elite cues on public opinion cannot be understated. The studies revealed how media narratives and political messaging can shape public perceptions of global issues, influencing support for or opposition to foreign policy initiatives. This underscores the importance of transparent and responsible communication from political leaders and media organizations to ensure an informed public discourse.

Thirdly, gender differences in foreign policy preferences emerged as a significant finding. Women were found to generally express higher support for diplomatic solutions and humanitarian efforts, while men leaned towards more assertive stances on military interventions. This suggests the need for policymakers to consider diverse perspectives when crafting foreign policy strategies, ensuring inclusivity and a holistic approach to decision-making. Lastly, the studies highlighted the need for further research to address contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps. Future studies should delve into the impact of cultural and historical factors on public opinion, explore the role of social

media in shaping perceptions, and employ longitudinal designs to track changes over time. By addressing these gaps, scholars can contribute to a deeper understanding of how public opinion shapes foreign policy decisions and how policymakers can effectively navigate the dynamics between public sentiment and international relations.

5.2 Contributions to Theory, Practice and Policy

Firstly, from a theoretical standpoint, the study has added depth to our understanding of how public opinion interacts with foreign policy decision-making processes. By delving into the nuances of public sentiment and its impact on government actions, the study has enriched Rational Choice Theory, which posits that policymakers are rational actors who weigh costs and benefits. The findings of this study have provided empirical evidence to support the notion that public opinion plays a pivotal role in shaping the choices made by governments, especially in democratic contexts. This contribution enhances our theoretical framework for analyzing the dynamics between public sentiment and policy outcomes.

In terms of practical implications, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers and government officials. The findings highlight the importance of considering public opinion when formulating and implementing foreign policy initiatives. By understanding the preferences and attitudes of the public, policymakers can align their decisions with the desires of their constituents, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and support for their actions. This practical application of the study's findings can lead to more responsive and accountable governance, where public input is integrated into the decision-making process. Additionally, the study's emphasis on the need for transparency in elite messaging aligns with good governance practices, suggesting that clear and honest communication with the public is essential for fostering trust and legitimacy.

From a policy perspective, the study offers concrete recommendations for policymakers to navigate the complexities of public opinion in foreign policy. For instance, the study suggests that policymakers should balance public sentiment with strategic objectives, especially in democracies where electoral considerations are significant. This recommendation has implications for how governments approach issues such as military interventions, trade agreements, and international alliances. By acknowledging and addressing public concerns and preferences, policymakers can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of their foreign policy decisions. Furthermore, the study's insights into the impact of media framing on public opinion underscore the importance of responsible media coverage in shaping public perceptions of global events. Policymakers can use this knowledge to engage with the media and ensure accurate and balanced reporting to promote informed public discourse.

In terms of broader contributions, the study adds to the ongoing dialogue on the role of democracy in foreign policy decision-making. By highlighting the influence of public opinion in democracies, the study underscores the accountability and responsiveness of democratic governments to their citizens. This contributes to the broader discussion on the merits and challenges of democratic governance in the context of international relations. Additionally, the study's comparative analysis of different regions, such as the United States and the European Union, sheds light on the diversity of approaches to foreign policy decision-making. This comparative perspective offers valuable lessons for policymakers and scholars seeking to understand the complexities of international relations in diverse contexts.

Furthermore, the study's exploration of gender differences in public opinion and foreign policy preferences adds a layer of intersectionality to the discussion. By recognizing that gender shapes attitudes towards diplomacy, military interventions, and humanitarian aid, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of how diverse perspectives influence foreign policy decision-making. This contributes to ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and inclusivity in policy formulation and

implementation. Policymakers can use this knowledge to design policies that take into account the diverse needs and perspectives of different demographic groups, leading to more equitable and effective foreign policy outcomes.

In conclusion, the study has made substantial contributions to theory, practice, and policy in the field of international relations. Theoretical contributions include enriching Rational Choice Theory and providing empirical evidence on the interaction between public opinion and government actions. Practical implications include the importance of considering public sentiment in policy formulation, while policy recommendations focus on the need to balance public preferences with strategic objectives. The study also contributes to broader discussions on democracy in foreign policy, media framing's impact on public opinion, and gender differences in foreign policy preferences. These contributions provide valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners seeking to navigate the complexities of international relations in an increasingly interconnected world.

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