

Experts Wanted! Using LinkedIn to Recruit Political and Business Elites for IR Survey Experiments

Richard Clark (ND), Julia Morse (UCSB), & Tyler Pratt (UNC)

International Political Economy Society Annual Meeting

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Elite Opinions Shape IR

- Political, military, and business elites have profound influence on foreign policy



But Elites Are Hard to Reach

- Interviews provide important insight but are resource- and time-intensive (Mosley 2013)
- Emails rely on existing personal/professional networks (e.g., Lin-Greenberg 2021; Renshon et al. 2023) or cold solicitation (data availability challenges)

LinkedIn as Potential Solution

- Recent research using LinkedIn to recruit elite samples from IOs (Clark 2021; Heinzl et al. 2025), military organizations (Lin-Greenberg 2023; Casler 2024), and government (Morse and Pratt 2025)
- Objectives for this project:
 - ① Identify best practices for elite recruitment (randomization of header and message text)
 - ② Demonstrate proof of concept (conjoint experiment)

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LinkedIn Headers (“Call to Action”)



Tyler Pratt 8:34 PM
Sponsored Shape Research
on Foreign Policy!



Julia C Morse 8:34 PM
Sponsored Shape Research
on Foreign Policy!



Tyler Pratt 8:33 PM
Sponsored Foreign Policy
Experts Needed!



Julia C Morse 8:31 PM
Sponsored Foreign Policy
Experts Needed!

LinkedIn Messages

Julia C Morse

Associate Professor of Political Science



Sponsored

Oct 16

Foreign Policy Experts Needed!

Expert Survey



Julia C Morse

Hello! We are fielding a short survey exclusively targeting foreign policy experts as a part of an academic research project. The survey is anonymous and will only take a few minutes to complete.

Click to take the survey [here](#).

Thank you in advance for your time. If you have questions, you can reach out to the research team directly:

Julia Morse (University of California, Santa Barbara) -
jcmorse@ucsb.edu

Tyler Pratt (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) -
tbpratt@unc.edu

[Expert Survey](#) →

Messaging Hypotheses

- **H1 (Gender):** *Female senders will have lower response rates than male senders*
- **H2 (Header):** *Headers with “Foreign policy experts needed!” will generate more clicks than messages with the header “Shape research on foreign policy!”*
- **H3 (Content):** *Messages that include appeals to expertise and offers to share findings will increase response rates, and the highest survey response rates will be for messages that appeal to expertise.*

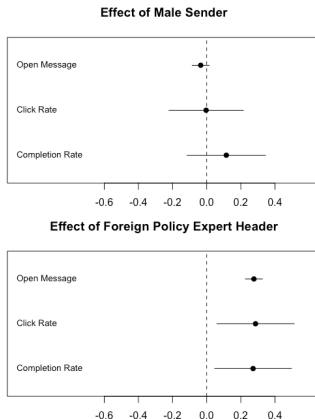
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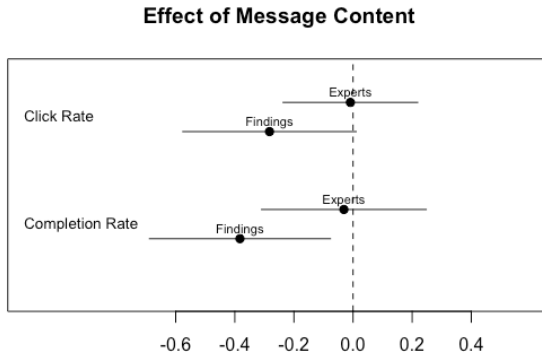
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(Preliminary) Messaging Results: Hypotheses 1 and 2



(Preliminary) Messaging Results: Hypothesis 3



Conjoint Setup

- Respondents are asked to provide input to a hypothetical new U.S. presidential administration (5 years in the future) revising the National Security Strategy
- U.S. government will identify countries that represent most important threats to security and economic well-being, as well as those that represent the greatest opportunity for strengthening U.S. ties
- 3 conjoint iterations with threat perception and 3 with opportunity

Elites of Interest

- **U.S. Military Elites:** LinkedIn users employed by the U.S. Department of Defense, including the armed service branches and civilian defense agencies
- **U.S. Diplomatic Elites:** LinkedIn users employed by the U.S. Department of State and affiliated agencies, including foreign and civil service officers
- **U.S. Business Elites:** LinkedIn users employed by large private U.S. financial services firms, as well as U.S. internet and technology firms

Conjoint Setup

BACKGROUND FEATURES		
	Randomized attribute	Levels
Country Features	(B.1) Regime type	(1) Democracy (2) Autocracy
	(B.2) Population	(1) Large population (2) Small population
	(B.3) U.S. public views	(1) Mostly favorable (2) Mostly unfavorable
	(B.4) Economic power	(1) Small economy (2) Large economy
Leader Features	(B.5) Leader type	(1) Pragmatic moderate (2) Nationalist hardliner
	(B.6) Leader speech	(1) Cautious and factual (2) Impulsive and conspiratorial
THEORY-RELEVANT FEATURES		
Military	(T.1) Military capabilities	(1) Small with basic weapons (2) Large with advanced weapons
	(T.2) U.S. alliance	(1) Formal U.S. ally (2) Not a formal U.S. ally
Past Behavior	(T.3) Compliance	(1) Generally abides by international rules (2) Frequently violates international rules
	(T.4) Resolve	(1) Backs down in disputes (2) Stands firm in disputes
	(T.5) Human rights record	(1) Strong record protecting human rights (2) Weak record protecting human rights
	(T.6) Disinformation record	(1) Has employed disinformation campaigns (2) Has not employed disinformation campaigns
Economic Stakes	(T.7) Supply chain integration	(1) Not integrated into U.S. supply chains (2) Highly integrated into U.S. supply chains
	(T.8) Economic competition	(1) Does not compete with U.S. companies (2) Competes with U.S. companies

Conjoint Hypotheses

- **Military:** alliance ties and reputation for resolve most important
- **Diplomats:** compliance with international rules and human rights record most important
- **Business:** economic competition and supply chain integration most important

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Conjoint Outcomes (Threat)

- **Forced choice:** Which country poses the greater overall threat to the security and economic wellbeing of the United States?
- **Rating:** For each profile, respondents rate perceived threat on a 0–100 scale, where 0 = no threat at all and 100 = extreme threat.
- **Mechanism:** When you judged which country is more threatening, which aspects were you thinking of? (select all that apply)
- **Policy:** When a country poses a threat to the U.S., which policy tools do you think the U.S. should employ towards that country? (select all that apply)

Takeaways & Next Steps

- **Takeaway(s):** LinkedIn as powerful, scalable tool for recruiting otherwise hard-to-reach elite populations for survey and experimental work
 - Appeals to elite expertise increase engagement – framing and content matter!
- **Next steps:** field conjoint and extension of messaging survey in November 2025

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Thanks!

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Conjoint Outcomes (Opportunity)

- **Forced choice:** In your opinion, should the U.S. prioritize strengthening its relationship with Country A or Country B?
- **Rating:** For each country, please rate the extent to which you believe the U.S. should prioritize strengthening its relationship with that country, where 0 = not a priority at all and 100 = a top priority.
- **Mechanism:** When you judged which country the U.S. should strengthen its relationship with, which aspects were you thinking of? (select all that apply)
- **Policy:** When the U.S. strengthens its relationship with a country, what types of policies do you think it is most important for the U.S. to pursue? (select all that apply)

Attention

- Ask 3 factual questions about vignette after first task that does not vary across respondents, following Kane and Costa (2024)
- Correct answers are combined into continuous (additive) measure of attention that can be used to test the robustness of our findings without inducing post-treatment bias
- Also include post-treatment attention check after last conjoint iteration to see whether attention deteriorates over course of study (purely exploratory, not for exclusion)

Pre-Treatment Questions

- **Demographics:** age, income, education, gender
- **Employment:** Employer, industry, job title, job role
- **Global political knowledge:** basic factual questions on trade, development, international cooperation, and conflict
- **Foreign policy attitudes:** cooperative internationalism versus militant internationalism

Conjoint Diagram

