

Sweden and Children's Rights

A case study of Sweden's ratification of the Convention on
the Rights of the Child

Albin Lagerlöf

Abstract

In 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The convention, whose purpose is to ensure and protect children's rights globally, was later ratified by Sweden 1990. Thereby, the country committed itself to legally follow the articles of the convention.

By conducting a descriptive case study analysis of the CRC, this text aims to investigate why Sweden ratified in the convention. The analysis relies on a social constructivist tradition in the study of International Relations and adopts a framework of norm, role and identity. By applying the three factors separately, the analysis describes Sweden's ratification of the CRC as a result of normative aspirations and foreign policy tradition of supporting human rights (norm); expected behaviour of a middle power in international relations (role) and status seeking with respect to group dynamics (identity). These results are presented when examining previous academic literature, official documents from the UN and the Swedish parliament as well as statements from policymakers. Following these results, I argue the three factors should be considered as complementary perspectives in the investigation of why Sweden ratify international treaties.

Key words: Sweden, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Norm, Role, Identity
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1 Introduction

1.1 Research problem

Within international politics Sweden has prominently adopted a foreign policy characterised by moral values (see Dahl 2006; Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond 2016). This can also be illustrated in the way Sweden has supported international treaties whose purposes have been to handle global issues. One such example is the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), which is a treaty that supports the promotion of children's rights globally. The CRC, which was accepted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in November 20 1989, is therefore the outcome of international cooperation and negotiation within the United Nations (UN). Sweden ratified¹ the CRC in June 29 1990 (United Nations 2022, p. 3).

However, as the Swedish government ratified the CRC the state also agreed to follow its legal bindings and directives. Therefore, the ratification of the treaty comes with implications on how the domestic politics can and will be performed (Holsti 1970, p. 244). Why a sovereign state as Sweden ratify an international treaty is therefore a central research problem within the study of International Relations (Simmons 1998). This puzzle is especially prominent considering Sweden has already been recognized, from an international perspective, as well-performing in domestic measures regarding democracy and human rights (International IDEA 2017). The country's positive attitude towards international cooperation in general, and the specific treaty of CRC in particular, could therefore be assumed to be explained by other factors than inadequate democracy procedures. International Relations scholars have emphasised non-material factors such as ideas and expectations to be one convincing explanation for states' foreign policy behaviour (Finnemore & Sikkink 2001, p. 392–393). Thus, an appropriate approach to examine the research problem is to account for of how a state relates to norm behaviour, its international role as well as national identity.

¹ Ratification means that a state formally accept to commit itself to the legal bindings of a treaty (Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969, p. 3).

1.2 Purpose and research question

The purpose with this thesis is to investigate how a norm, identity and role affect foreign policy behaviour. More specifically, this text aims to examine how the three factors affected Sweden's ratification of the CRC. Following this aim, the research question for this thesis is: *Why did Sweden ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child?*

To answer this research question, the text adopts a theoretical framework of a norm, role and identity in international politics. The study therefore originates from the constructivist assumption that states act within an international community in which social interaction shapes the foreign policy behaviour of each individual state. This study can therefore be identified as belonging to the field of literature that treats states as social actors, predominantly affected by public values, beliefs and ideas (Finnemore 1996, p. 128). The methodological approach for this study will be made of a case study analysis of the Swedish ratification of the CRC. This approach enables a more in depth analysis and provides tools for a systematic review of how the factors of norm, role and identity affected the ratification of the treaty.

As the study examines Sweden's ratification of CRC, the analysis considers how international cooperation and negotiation can be converted into national politics. Therefore the outcome of this study is of relevance for multilateral organisations, such as agencies of the UN. This also demonstrates the scientific value of this study for actors outside of research and the academia (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 18).

1.3 Scope of the study

This thesis examines how the ratification of the CRC can be described by the function of a norm, role and identity in international relations. One first important notation is, however, that the focus of this text is not primarily to present an analysis regarding these factors as such. Although the analysis covers over-time descriptions, it is not claimed to provide an in depth analysis of each factor with respect to its foundation and construction. Instead, the focus will be to observe how the factors can be applied in order to describe Sweden's ratification of the CRC. Secondly, it should be noted that the ratification of CRC comes with implications on domestic social and economic policies (Holsti 1970, p. 244). However, this text does not observe the outcomes of CRC on Sweden's legal and political environment. In contrast, the focus will be to describe the specific decision to ratify the treaty.

1.4 Disposition of the study

The rest of this text is organised in accordance with the following structure. Section 2 provides a brief background regarding the CRC, whereas section 3 describes previous relevant literature for this study. Next, section 4 describes the theoretical framework of this text, presenting a theoretical understanding of each of the three factors which are applied in the analysis. The same section will also account for definitions and operationalisations of the theoretical concepts. In section 5, the methodological framework is presented which also includes a description regarding case selection, material and methodological reflections. Section 6 presents the analysis, consisting of both empirical findings and theoretical discussion. Finally, section 7 summarises the analysis and reflects upon theoretical and methodological choices of this text. Additionally, the last section suggests areas for future research.

2 Background

2.1 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Before describing the theoretical and methodological framework of the analysis, it is necessary to account for a background of the CRC. The following section will therefore provide a brief description on the historical evolvement of the convention and account for the main principles adopted in the treaty.

What initially started the process of the CRC was an initiative from Poland. In 1978, Poland formally sent an request to the UN, proposing the body should adopt a convention focusing on children's rights. In addition to the previous UN declaration on children's rights from 1959, the Polish initiative therefore addressed children's rights to be integrated in juridical and practical procedures (Holzscheiter 2010, p. 145–146). After the initiative, a drafting process was organised which included rounds of drafting of the convention, as well as sessions of discussion between UN member states. In the same sessions also other relevant actors were involved, such as the non-governmental organisation Save the Children (High Commissioner for Human Rights & Rädna Barnen 2007, p. xxxviii–xxxix). In November 20, 1989, the final proposal for the CRC was decided upon and adopted by the UNGA, and approximately half a year later, June 29 1990, did Sweden ratify the convention (United Nations 2022, p. 3).

The CRC contains of 54 articles in total. The first 41 articles in the convention cover explicit agreements on children's rights. Examining this part of the text, the most central agreements can be summarised by five main articles which constitute the founding values of the convention (Rubenson 2000, p. 14; Barnombudsmannen 2021). The main values of the convention are;

- “- equal value and rights of all children, prohibition of discrimination (article 2)
 - the best interests of the child, a primary consideration in all decision-making (article 3)
 - the right of the child to life, survival and development to the maximum extent of the available resources (articles 4 and 6)
 - the right to freely express views and to be heard (article 12)”
- (Rubenson 2000, p. 14).

The additional 13 articles cover agreements on cooperative directives for states in order to comply with the convention (Barnombudsmannen 2021). These include, for example, agreements on how states are allowed to announce reservations² from any articles of the treaty (Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, p. 15). In this way, the agreements within the convention can be grouped into different categories.

² Reservation refers to when a state either disregards or legally alters articles when ratifying a treaty (Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969, p. 3).

3 Previous literature

Previous literature has examined Swedish foreign policy behaviour with respect to the promotion of human rights. For example, Brysk (2009) investigates how Sweden systematically has been a supporter of human rights actions internationally, and holds that “Sweden sets the gold standard for human rights foreign policy promotion” (Brysk 2009, p. 42). Additionally, Ingebritsen (2002) observes Sweden as an entrepreneur of norms in different policy areas, such as the provision of financial aid to development projects. Concluding previous literature regarding Swedish foreign policy actions, it can be said that Sweden historically has embraced a self-perception of being a state which leads normative behaviour in international politics (Lawler 2005, p. 443; Bergman 2007, p. 77).

Other relevant literature for this thesis has more specifically focused on the ratification of international agreements and treaties. With respect to the CRC, focus has been to investigate how children’s rights have been incorporated in foreign policy behaviour of the EU (von Bahr 2017; von Bahr 2019). Literature has also examined how states (Lundy, Kilkelly & Byrne 2013; McCall-Smith 2019) and specifically Sweden (Thorburn Stern 2019) adopts the convention into domestic law. Other literature extends this research by instead examining the initial motives for states to ratify international treaties (Simmons 2000; Goodliffe & Hawkins 2006; Hathaway 2007; Avdeyeva 2007; von Stein 2008). This literature do however vary in terms of theoretical framework. For instance, Avdeyeva (2007) apply mechanisms of coercion, acculturation and persuasion in order to understand states’ ratification of women’s rights treaties. Other scholars operationalise norms as a norm-confirming behaviour and observes the number of treaty ratifications within specific regions globally (Simmons 2000; Goodliffe & Hawkins 2006; Hathaway 2007). Thus, previous literature is inconclusive regarding how to conceptualise and also understand states’ ratifications of international treaties.

Despite the large amount of literature covering ratification of international treaties, still less research has investigated how ratification of international treaties can be described by an interplay of the theoretical factors norm, identity and role. Additionally, to my knowledge, no study has yet attempted to describe why Sweden ratified the CRC from a perspective of the three factors above. By providing a single case study analysis of the CRC, this text aims to extend previous literature regarding the effect of ideational factors within international relations. Following this procedure, the study also strives to strengthen its relevance for the research field of International Relations (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 18).

4 Theory

In order to understand Sweden's ratification of the CRC, this study adopts a theoretical framework of norm, identity and role in international relations. The framework is thus built upon three separate factors, which are considered to have been influential in the ratification process of the convention. The following section describes each of the theoretical perspectives separately. In addition, the section is summarised with a description of the definitions and operationalisations that are used for the analysis.

4.1 Norms in international relations

The forum of global politics can be viewed as a community in which actors behave in accordance with certain regulations and objectives (Florini 1996, p. 376–377). Within this community, international norms are seen as an explanatory factor which constitutes predictability and stability of states' behaviour (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998, p. 894; Björkdahl 2002, p. 11, 20). Additionally, international norms also form states' interests and, in turn, instruments for achieving their aims (Florini 1996, p. 366).

How to proceed with defining a norm do however vary within the literature. This study follows the definition presented by Finnemore (1996, p. 22) who defines a norm to be "shared expectations about appropriate behavior held by a community of actors". Such definition identifies at least three important factors to have in consideration when studying a norm. First, norms are not private but instead formed by social interaction, thus result of collective expectations. In this way, a norm is distinguished from an idea which instead is held by one actor alone (Finnemore 1996, p. 22). Second, norms are not merely thoughts that construct actors' interests, but are also manifested in actions (Florini 1996, p. 364). In this sense, it is conceptualised in the definition of a norm that it implies a certain way of behaviour. Third, a norm also induces a notion of oughtness. With respect to the second point, a norm therefore implies a confirming behaviour of something regarded as both rightful and desirable (Florini 1996, p. 364–365). However, all foreign policy actions are not compatible with present norms. Rather, a norm can be violated when actions are in opposition to what is considered as the desirable or collectively accepted. Such norm-breaking behaviour can, for example, be followed by economic sanctions (Goertz & Diehl 1992, p. 638). Intuitively, then to follow a norm can be called a norm-confirming behaviour. All together, these

perspectives should be observed as points which explain the norm factor used in this study.

Previous description introduced the definition, function and categorisation of a norm in international relations. Still, we need to account for why states decide to adopt a norm. On this matter, March and Olsen suggests that states follow the “logic of appropriateness” which emphasises that states adopt foreign policy actions with respect to what is considered appropriate (March and Olsen referred in Finnemore & Sikkink 1998, p. 912). This would assume that states do not make decisions in order to achieve strategic benefits, such as improving political or social positions, but to follow what is morally right instead. Furthermore, foreign policy decisions may be implemented with respect to reputation, where norms are assumed to be confirmed in order to uphold good reputation toward other actors internationally (Sikkink 1998, p. 520). This reasoning therefore extends the explanatory power of norms in international relations. In sum, this provides theoretical understanding regarding how and why a norm led Sweden to ratify the CRC.

4.2 Roles in international relations

Also international roles can be observed as a factor which affects foreign policy actions. Such role theory has been elaborated by scholars as Sebastian Harnisch, who describes roles as “social positions that are constituted by [...] expectations regarding the purpose of an actor in an organized group” (Harnisch quoted in Brommesson 2016, p. 530). Thus similar to a norm, a role refers to a certain behaviour depending on expectations of other actors internationally (Harnisch 2012, p. 49).

Holsti (1970) extends this discussion and highlights the importance of national role performance and national role. By these concepts, the author suggests that a government’s foreign policy actions all combined constitute a state’s role internationally. Such actions include both political decisions, international obligations or different reactions to global events. For example, if Sweden understands itself as a mediator in international politics this would lead the state to adopt policies that confirm this role, for example by being involved in peace keeping dialogues or projects. In this way, foreign policy actions of a state could be described as result by a state’s international role (Holsti 1970, p. 245–246). This logic is also elaborated by Neack (1995) who discusses roles of middle powers in international politics. As noted by the author, middle powers are usually states characterised by relatively high level of prosperity, traditions of moral behaviour in foreign policy and well-functioning diplomatic relations. Such attributes also lead middle powers to support harmony, order and moral standards in relation to other international actors. Thus, middle powers adopt their role and foreign policy actions accordingly (Neack 1995, p. 224–225). Middle powers are

then conceptualised by their ambition to embrace a role of leadership and tendency to apply social influence in multilateral contexts (Karim 2018, p. 346).

Additionally, previous reasoning is founded upon the assumption that foreign policy is not only determined by and the result of provision of material resources but also of diplomatic actions. It is therefore moral attributes that tend middle powers to aim for influence and respect internationally (Karim 2018, p. 346). Traditionally, states as Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands have been identified as middle powers (Neack 1995, p. 225; Jordaan 2003, p. 165, 171–172). Role theory together with the model of middle powers therefore provide a second theoretical understanding regarding why Sweden ratified the CRC.

4.3 Identities in international relations

Reus-Smit (2013) describes that states' actions are formed by the identity of each state. Thus, identity is an additional factor which determines foreign policy actions. Central for this argument is what each state identify itself as. A state that identify itself as a liberal democracy may for example resist policies that leads to human rights violations, since it lays in the identity of the state to instead promote liberal democracy values (Reus-Smit 2013, p. 225). For this study, this leads identity to be defined as “conceptions of statehood [...] developed while taking into account the perspective of others” (Gurowitz 2006, p. 310).

As pointed out by Hudson & Day (2020, p. 123–126), a state's identity is formed by continuous discussion concerning actions and self-image. This reasoning also builds upon the psychological research on ingroups and outgroups, where actors can be subject to cognitive bias due to group dynamics. As held by Lebow (2008), groups enable cooperation and fill the purpose of supporting group members to develop. Intuitively, members who are part of this group constitute the ingroup. But as also argued by the author, actors are likely to enter groups due to self-interests. This is illustrated by the fact that actors are biased towards rather entering groups with high status compared to groups with low status. Low status groups can in this sense be regarded as outgroups; groups which refer to the *other*, separate from the members of the ingroup (Lebow 2008, p. 478–479).

Here it is also of importance to discuss the interplay between identities and norms. Norms can be said to indicate purpose and identity for states and also guide policy actions in global matters (Reus-Smit 2013, p. 225). From such perspective, a state's identity can therefore be investigated by how it relates to the expected behaviour by others. This understanding has also been extended by Gurowitz (2006, p. 309), who suggests factors as national history or domestic institutions to be relevant when observing how probable it is for a state to adopt a specific norm. Following this description, it is therefore useful for this study to theoretically observe norm and identity as two separate factors in the description of Sweden's ratification the CRC.

4.4 Analytical framework

Previous sections have described the theoretical framework of this study which is applied in order to theoretically understand Sweden's ratification of the CRC. To analytically proceed with this framework, it is necessary to account for operational definitions of the concepts. To start with, the ratification of the CRC is defined as "the international act so named whereby a State establishes on the international plane its consent to be bound by a treaty" (Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969, p. 3). The treaty which is ratified is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Although one can argue a treaty is not theoretical element that needs to be operationalised, the text will follow this definition in order to strengthen the internal validity of the analysis (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 55, 57).

Furthermore, from a norm perspective, Sweden's ratification of the CRC will be understood as a norm-confirming behaviour motivated to improve children's rights. Here, children's rights are conceptualised as, for example, the liberty from any oppression, access to basic needs and the right to personal integrity (von Bahr 2020, p. 8–9). For the empirical analysis, *norm* is operationalised by examining how Sweden historically has been involved in work related to promotion of human rights. This practise follows the suggestion made by Goertz & Diehl (1992, p. 636–637) who hold historic analysis is appropriate when studying norms, since actions and traditional behaviour are both acknowledged and institutionalised over longer period of time. Moreover, the analysis conceptualises human rights promotion by examining level of aid giving, involvement in peace-keeping dialogues and the usage of diplomatic channels within the UN (Brysk 2009, p. 5).

Next, the analysis understands *role* as a way of behave internationally. More specifically, this will be analysed by observing Swedish foreign policy actions in accordance with the position of an international middle power. Identifying these actions implies a review of the Swedish behaviour in events linked close to the ratification of the CRC. For instance, this is observed by Sweden's involvement in multilateral working groups or initiatives taken by Swedish representatives, both related to the adoption of the CRC in the UNGA. Thus, role is separated from norm with respect to both the time dimension and policy area. That is, norm will be held as a concept that has been constituted over a longer period of time, also before the CRC was initiated. Moreover, the norm factor observes additional policy areas associated with human rights promotion. For the role factor instead, this is only observed in specific relation to Sweden's ratification of the CRC (year 1990), both with respect to time dimension and political actions.

Finally, *identity* is understood as the internal view of Swedish procedures and how it refers to foreign policy action (Hudson & Day 2020, p. 124–126). To investigate how identity affected Sweden's ratification of the CRC the analysis will account for, what I call, the internal perspective, which refers to Sweden's policies, institutions and approaches in relation to children's rights. This is also conceptualised in statements from policymakers regarding questions as 'what are

Sweden?’ and thus referring to the identity that is perceived in relation to other international actors. In the analysis, the identity aspect is also studied from an external perspective where the identification of ingroup and outgroup means to search for potential coalitions which Sweden was part of in relation to the CRC. Analytically, identity therefore focuses on rhetoric from Swedish policymakers concerning the country’s characteristics and group belonging, which also separates the factor from the domains of norm and role.

For the analysis in this text, the three theoretical factors – norm, role and identity – will be held as three separate perspectives to describe the ratification of the CRC. This framework is also illustrated in figure 1 below. Such framework may be criticised since it is possible for the factors to overlap due to the complexity of social phenomena and social behaviour (Finnemore 1996, p. 16). However, by the operationalisations above I argue this text still holds analytic tools to theoretically separate the factors in the analysis. In turn, this is also considered to improve the reliability and internal validity of the study (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 55–58).

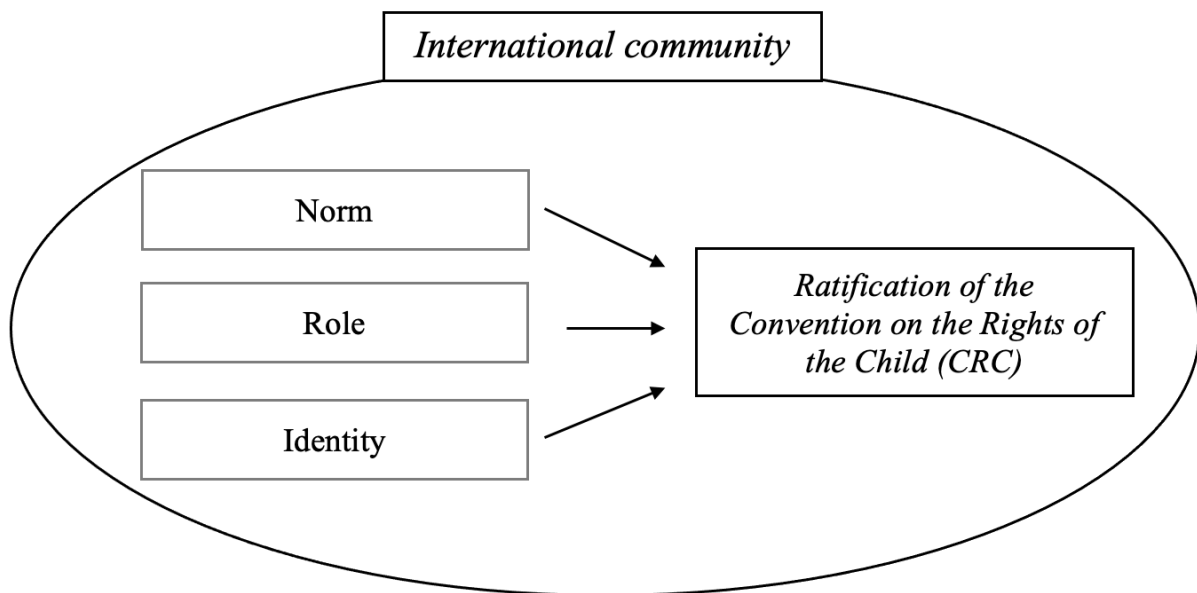


Figure 1. Note: Theoretical framework illustrated. Source: Author’s own illustration.

5 Method

5.1 Case study method

This thesis will apply a qualitative case study method, which means the study provides an in depth analysis of a single case (Lindvall 2007, p. 270). This approach is especially useful when investigating why a certain political decision was made (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 13). Thus, to apply a case study is argued to be the best choice of method with respect to the research question of this thesis. The case that is analysed is Sweden's ratification of the CRC, which then constitute the object of analysis in this study (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 26).

Furthermore, the case study methodology is founded upon a descriptive analysis. This procedure implies that the case will be described in accordance with the theoretical framework presented in section 4. In practice, this means the analysis will be structured by an examination of each factor in turn, which enables a systematic review of Sweden's ratification of the CRC (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 23–24). However, the ambition of this study is not to suggest causal mechanisms, but rather to present a deepened and nuanced description of why the convention was ratified by Sweden. Thus, from a methodological standpoint, the interaction between empirical findings and theoretical perspectives is central for the analysis in this text (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 23–24, 48). It should also be noted that the study has the potential to compare the theoretical factors and to recognise similarities or differences between the perspectives.

Since the method is built upon a descriptive case study, this will come with limitations on the capability to develop empirical generalisations. This is especially true considering that the case has been selected with respect to its dependent variable (Geddes 1990), and since the study does not aim to seek variation in accordance with a research design of *method of agreement* or *method of difference* (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 226–227). Instead, the research design has been chosen with respect to two other arguments.

First, although not able to completely achieve empirical generalisations, the study still possess the ability to generalise the results to a theoretical population (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 48, 238). Since the case holds the characteristic of being a Swedish ratification of an international treaty, it can be generalised to theoretical case of *Swedish foreign policy behaviour*. This implies that the case can be derived to a theoretical population of historical events, and therefore be said belonging to a broader population of Swedish foreign policy actions. Second, as also argued by Flyvbjerg (2001), the case study method applied in this thesis

will observe the CRC as an important *example* of reality. Thus, the outcome of this thesis is argued to have a scientific value as it comes with a specific description of a complex social and political action (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 75–76, 84–85). For example, this is exemplified by how the text observes norm, identity and role within international relations and its implications on foreign policy.

5.2 Case selection

The CRC is not the only international treaty which has been ratified by Sweden. For the sake of transparency and intersubjectivity, it is important to present a reasoning on why the CRC has been chosen as object for analysis (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 151, 280–281). First, the CRC has been selected with respect to its magnitude of international cooperation. The convention was adopted by the UNGA with no objections, and a year after its adoption in the UNGA the convention had been ratified by the necessary number of parties in order to be put into practice (Rubenson 2000, p. 13; OHCHR n.d.). Moreover, the CRC belongs to the most ratified convention covering human rights globally, and the U.S. is the only state which has not ratified the treaty yet (von Bahr 2020, p. 1; McCall-Smith 2019, p. 426). In sum, the CRC has been selected as it is considered to be both relevant and important with respect to the research problem of this text.

Second, the CRC has also been chosen with respect to the extent by which the treaty has been covered in academia. That is, since the convention was ratified 1990, there has been a comprehensive debate regarding how Sweden should comply with the articles of the convention (Stern & Jörnruud 2011). Therefore, investigating what factors that led Sweden to ratify the convention in the first place is argued to be of relevance for the general understanding of Sweden's relationship towards children's rights, and the ratification of the CRC in particular.

5.3 Sources and material

The empirical material for this text has been gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources refer to material as protocols from committee meetings within bodies under the UN, policy proposals within the Swedish parliament and public statements from policymakers. For the secondary sources instead, these refer to previous academic literature within the field of International Relations and Internet sources covering the CRC and events related to the convention.

Since this material lays foundation for the analysis, it has been necessary to apply a critical assessment of the sources. For this procedure, the material has been selected with respect to the criteria of time, authenticity and tendency (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 104, 106). For the first, the ambition has been to select material, such as meeting protocols, which has been created and published as close to the meeting date as possible. With respect to authenticity and tendency instead, these imply to collect material from sources that are considered reliable and trustworthy (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 104, 106). Here, the ambition has been to collect UN and Swedish parliament documents only from official webpages on the Internet. To summarise, the aim has been to review all the empirical evidence according to the critical aspects above in order to increase the reliability of the sources (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 104).

5.4 Methodological reflections

With background in the previous discussion, it is also necessary to present reflections on the methodological framework applied in this thesis. First, this study proceeds from a deductive research design, meaning that the theoretical framework guides what empirical material that is considered for the analytical description (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 49). However, as also noted by Teorell & Svensson (2007, p. 24), this description may exclude relevant empirical material and thus not present an all-covering portrait of the reality. In order to meet this potential critique, the text has strived to include empirical material from multiple sources to provide a more comprehensive description of the case.

Second, although the methodological framework builds upon descriptive analysis, it should be noted that much of the theoretical framework proceeds from assumptions of causality. This duality is very well summarised by Finnemore (1996), who argues that constructivist theory, similar to other theoretical approaches of the International Relations research, investigates state behaviour in international politics. Thus, it is embedded within constructivist assumptions to provide both descriptive and explanatory analysis (Finnemore 1996, p. 142). This also leads the three theoretical factors applied in the text to be based on a causal understanding of what guides state behaviour in international relations. A reflection is therefore that, while the methodological approach of the study is descriptive, the theory advances from explanatory assumptions. This also constitutes an important reflection for the research design of this thesis.

Third, since the thesis examines Sweden's ratification of an international treaty, the study applies a state-level analysis. This means that the analysis accounts for Sweden's behaviour towards other policy actors internationally. With respect to ideas, beliefs and decisions, Sweden is therefore observed as an unitary actor. However, from such reasoning it is still possible to account for statements and initiatives from individual policymakers, which together provide important empirical material for describing Sweden's ratification of the CRC (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 66–67).

6 Analysis

The following section constitutes the analysis in this study. With background in the theoretical framework, the analysis is structured according to the three factors of norm, role and identity. Thus, the analysis is divided in three separate sections, each providing an analytic account for both empirical findings and theoretical discussion. In order to analytically distinguish between different fields of empiric events and material, the three sections have been divided into subsections in turn. This categorisation also follows the description regarding operationalisations which was elaborated in section 4.4.

6.1 Norm and the ratification of the CRC

6.1.1 Normative aspects of the CRC

In section 2, a summary was provided with respect to the main values of the CRC. A more in depth analysis of the convention can describe its content from three separate groups of rights. Such categorisation has been illustrated by Hammarberg (1990), who groups the main values of the convention into three subcategories. The first is *provision*, and refers to children's right to fundamental necessities such as "food, health care, education, recreation and play" (Hammarberg 1990, p. 100). The second is *protection*, which is noted as the protection from psychical or psychological harm. The third is *participation*, which instead focuses on children's right to be involved in decisions which eventually affect their conditions and future (Hammarberg 1990, p. 100). In sum, the convention thus addresses children's rights to provision of material basic needs, freedom from harm and possibility to participate in decision making forums.

These categories can be understood as central values of the CRC which the UN decided upon when the convention was adopted. Similarly, these were also the values Sweden decided to comply with as the country ratified the convention. These principles of children's rights can be also be viewed as normative aspects of the convention, which the UN ought to be implemented in order to promote children's conditions globally. This normative ambition of the treaty is also present with respect to the convention's purpose of especially covering and improving children's rights, compared to previous human rights treaties (Hammarberg 1990, p. 99). However, understanding Sweden's association with

such normative motives, it is necessary to provide a historic account for how the country has been involved in work promoting human rights.

6.1.2 Sweden's history of human rights promotion

Sweden has a long tradition of promoting human's rights and being involved in humanitarian work. Starting in the 1950's, Sweden was involved in the drafting process of the Convention of Human Rights within Europe. Additionally, the country became member of the European Court of Human rights in 1966 (Hagtvedt Vik & Østberg 2021, p. 3–4). As noted by Brysk (2009), the tradition of human rights promotion also includes the condemnation of authoritarian states who are involved in human rights violations. During the Cold War, Sweden expressed criticism towards the Soviet bloc for violations on democratic values in Afghanistan 1979 and Poland 1980. Likewise, Sweden implemented sanctions towards South Africa between 1978–1979, as explicit critique towards the apartheid rule within the country (Brysk 2009, p. 44).

In addition, Sweden's work on human rights can be illustrated by the number of high officials that have held important positions for humanitarian work and international cooperation. For instance, the Swedish official Folke Bernadotte was influential for the mediation between Palestine and Israel in 1948. Especially, Bernadotte played a leading role in the draft of UN Resolution 194 which covers protection of Palestinian refugees (Brysk 2009, p. 46). Additionally, the Swedish diplomat Dag Hammarskjöld was appointed Secretary-General of the UN from 1953 to 1961 and was central for the peace-keeping diplomacy in the Suez crisis in 1956 (Ingebritsen 2006, p. 30). Also Olof Palme, who was the Prime Minister of Sweden between 1969–1976 and 1982–1986, operated on mission from the UN Secretary-General as mediator in the conflict between Iraq and Iran 1980–1986 (Bjereld 1995, p. 31). This exemplifies how Sweden has been involved in activities which encourage compliance with democratic values and human rights globally.

Furthermore, Sweden's support for human rights has also been manifested in financial numbers. Between 1967–1989, Sweden was one of the largest donors of the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) in the world (SOU 1991:48, p. 134–136). This commitment can also be observed within more specific programs within the UN. For instance, in 1990 Sweden belonged to the main donors of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which focuses on women's social and economic welfare in developing countries. The country's allocation to the program had also increased from 0.49 to 3.5 million SEK during the decade (1980–1991) (SOU 1991:48, p. 148). An additional example is the country's support for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), whose purpose is to distribute resources to improve the conditions for vulnerable children globally. From 1961 to 1990, the Swedish aid to the UNICEF increased from 1.8 to 340 million SEK. Moreover, the country has provided additional financial support for special programs within the UNICEF, which increased from 27 to 38 percent between 1983–1989 (SOU 1991:48, p. 154–155).

Thus, over time Sweden has characterised itself as provider of financial support to development programs.

Concluding previous description, it can be noted that Sweden has a tradition of promoting human rights proposals and programs. From a norm perspective, these actions can be observed as a traditional way of Swedish foreign policy behaviour. Swedish diplomats acting for promoting human rights in peace-keeping events, or a Swedish government deciding upon increased foreign aid for human rights programs, can together be understood as events which constitutes a tradition of Swedish way to behave in international politics. Furthermore, similar to the argumentation by Goertz & Diehl (1992), this could imply a certain self-regulating behaviour of the state since the actions have been implemented over time. As also argued by the authors, this would indicate norms to be present (Goertz & Diehl 1992, p. 636–637). Theoretically, the positive, institutionalised behaviour of Sweden in response to human rights can therefore be viewed as a norm-confirming behaviour.

This discussion is also applicable with respect to Sweden's ratification of the CRC, which initially described, included a normative aspect of promoting children's rights. Although children's rights is a specific form of human rights and thus entail certain attributes (von Bahr 2020, p. 8–9), we can note that the CRC includes normative aspects by observing its most central values and principles in section 6.1.1. Thus, one observation is that the Swedish tradition of promoting human's rights, such as ensuring safety for refugees or supporting women's conditions by aid, also can be observed in the involvement of promoting children's conditions by ratifying the CRC. Considering this historic relationship between Swedish foreign policy and a norm aspect, a first result is therefore that the Swedish tradition of human rights promotion also led the country to ratify the CRC.

Additionally, the ratification may not only be understood from an internal perspective of Sweden's historic, positive attitude towards human rights, but also as the outcome of collective expectations. As the CRC was ratified by Sweden, it must be noted that the country did not only accept to follow the legal bindings of the convention, but also provided a statement to other actors globally. This reasoning is especially relevant since Sweden was relatively early with ratifying the convention – approximately seven months after the convention was adopted in the UNGA (United Nations 2022, p. 3). Theoretically, the action to ratify the CRC may therefore not only have provided means to improve children's rights but also to confirm a desirable outcome of international politics. From such perspective, Sweden would have followed a logic of appropriateness which also leads the ratification to function as a goal itself (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998, p. 912). Additionally, this reasoning could indicate that the ratification of the CRC mainly can be described by the historic, traditional way of Swedish foreign policies, rather than motives of avoiding economic sanctions as consequence of norm-breaking behaviour (Goertz & Diehl 1992, p. 638). Building upon the first result in this section, a second result is therefore that Sweden ratified the CRC in order to provide, or confirm an already established, good reputation with respect to the country's positive stance on human rights (Sikkink 1998, p. 520).

6.2 Role and the ratification of the CRC

6.2.1 Drafting process of the CRC

Before the CRC was adopted by the UNGA 1989, a drafting process of the convention took place within negotiating forums under the UN. During this process, Sweden was active and sought to steer the course of the convention (Thorburn Stern 2019, p. 271). This ambition was also stated by the country already when commenting on the initial Polish draft of the convention in 1978 (E/CN.4/1324 1978, p. 16). Further observations regarding Sweden's active participation in the drafting process can be noted when studying the working group which composed the convention before its adoption by the UNGA.

During the 90th plenary meeting in December 20, 1978, the UNGA appointed the Commission on Human Rights as responsible for the drafting process of the CRC with respect to structure and arrangement (A/RES/33/166 1978, p. 154–155). The following year, 1979, a working group was organised which gathered continuously between 1979–1987 (Cohen 1989, p. 1448). It was open for all members of the UN to contribute to the working group, and also non- and intergovernmental organisations were invited to the meetings (Cohen 2006, p. 187). The early years of the working group was characterised by low recognition from international actors. From 1983 and onward, however, more actors became active in the drafting process (Cohen 2006, p. 187–188). Similarly, Sweden also began to be more active in the drafting of the CRC throughout these years.

In addition to general proposals on terminology for the convention, Sweden was especially involved in the discussion regarding the matter of children's rights in wartimes (Article 38). More specifically, the Swedish representatives was involved in the terminology concerning the age of children participating in armed fight, and did favour the suggestion to raise the minimum age of soldiers from 15 to 18 years (E/CN.4/1989/48 1989, p. 111, 113; Cohen 2006, p. 191). Sweden, together with other states and organisations, supported the formulation;

“[...]. With respect to persons who have attained majority before the age of 18 years, States Parties shall endeavour to prevent them from taking a direct part in hostilities. Persons who have not attained the age of 15 years shall not be allowed to take part in hostilities”

(E/CN.4/1989/48 1989, p. 111).

Likewise, Sweden joined a group of countries³ in order to state their discontent with other suggestions which was perceived as less restrictive with respect to minimum age of military participants (E/CN.4/1989/48 1989, p. 111–114). By actively express support for and discontent with certain suggestions, this exemplifies how Sweden played active part in the drafting of the CRC.

In addition to specific formulations within the convention, Sweden was also represented in the general work of the drafting process. In 1987, two years before the adoption of the CRC in the UNGA, the Swedish diplomat Jan Mårtenson was selected for the position as Head of the Centre for Human Rights, as well as Director-General of the UN Office in Geneva. According to Adam Lopatka who was Chairman of the drafting working group, Mårtenson provided necessary technical support for the drafting process (High Commissioner for Human Rights & Rätts Barnen 2007, p. xl). In this way, expertise from Swedish officials can be considered as important for the drafting of the CRC.

From the empirics above, it can be noted that Sweden was influential in the advancement of the CRC. Furthermore, this description can also be discussed from a role perspective, where Sweden's behaviour can be observed according to the role of a middle power. Both Sweden's ambitions to steer Article 38 within the working group, as well as technical support for the drafting process, can be noted as a forums in which Swedish representatives managed and expressed influence. These forums, which are characterized by diplomatic relations and negotiation, also constitutes an important area for practice of power and influence for a middle power in international relations (Karim 2018, p. 346). It should also be noted that Sweden's ratification of the CRC is an action which recognises the importance of international order and cooperation, a characteristic which middle powers tend to share (Neack 1995, p. 224–225). From a role perspective, a result is therefore that Sweden's ratification of the CRC could be understood as an intuitive foreign policy action according to the country's position of a middle power in international relations. However, Sweden's role with respect to the CRC can also be illustrated by observing the World Summit for Children in 1990.

6.2.2 The World Summit for Children 1990

During September 29 and 30, 1990, representatives from 73 governments of the world's states gathered in New York for the World Summit for Children (UN Audiovisual Library 1990). At the time, this was the largest meeting of high officials concerning children's rights, and the purpose of the summit was to establish practical procedures regarding the matter. Thus, the meeting became a next step after the CRC to support children's rights globally. During the summit, the participants decided upon common goals with respect to children's rights

³ Australia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, New Zealand and Venezuela.

which was summarised in both a declaration and a plan of action (United Nations n.d.). For instance, the plan of action emphasised the importance of state's measures to support children's health and education. Additionally, the plan of action called the world's states to ratify the CRC (World Summit for Children 1990, p. 13–15, 18–19).

Actors who took initiative for the summit was the UNICEF in 1988 together with six states, which successfully asked the Secretary-General of the UN, Pérez de Cuéllar, to invite for the summit (OHCHR n.d.; UN Audiovisual Library 1990). Among this group, Sweden was one of the six states to participate in the initiative.⁴ Sweden was therefore active in the work of promoting children's rights also after the adoption of the CRC. However, Sweden's role is not only observed by the initiative itself but also during the two days as the summit was held. For instance, the Swedish ambassador Hans Dahlgren was appointed president for the working group which was responsible for the drafting of the declaration of the summit (E/ICEF/1990/12 1990, p. 5). Also, in a press briefing the Canadian representative during the summit, Yves Fortier, described that Dahlgren had important leadership with respect to the drafting of the summit declaration (UN Audiovisual Library 1990). This illustrates how Sweden was influential also in practice during the summit.

From a time perspective, it should be noted that the summit was held after Sweden ratified the CRC. Therefore, Sweden's participation in the event is not alone an argument for why the country ratified the convention. However, considering the empirics of Sweden as initiator to and active participant during the summit, it is worth noting that Sweden took leadership and was committed to the work of the convention also after it was adopted in the UNGA. Given that also the World Summit for Children was a forum in which Sweden could practice influence and diplomatic power, this can be understood as an additional example of how, and where, Sweden behaved in accordance of the position as middle power (Karim 2018, p. 346). Thus, Sweden's participation with respect to the summit supports the finding presented in section 6.2.1, and also extends the theoretical understanding regarding why Sweden ratified the CRC.

⁴ The other initiators were Canada, Pakistan, Mali, Egypt and Mexico.

6.3 Identity and the ratification of the CRC

6.3.1 Internal perspective of identity

Before Sweden proceeded with formal ratification of the CRC, the Swedish government raised a proposition in the Swedish parliament suggesting the parliament members to accept the convention (Prop. 1989/90:107, p. 27). In the proposition it was argued that Swedish procedures concerning social institutions, such as day care and elementary school, was adequately provided for children. Likewise, it was described that comprehensive routines regarding financial support for family services were established in the country (Prop. 1989/90:107, p. 22–24). In addition, it was argued that the convention's notion of children's rights was compatible with how Sweden perceived the matter (Prop. 1989/90:107, p. 22). Thus, the government held that Sweden met the requirements and directives within the convention.

However, in the same government proposition it was suggested that Sweden should ratify the convention with reservation for Article 37(c) (Prop. 1989/90:107, p. 27). Here, the specific paragraph, which concerns deprivation of liberty and children's separation from adults, was described as not compatible with Swedish juridical procedures concerning the imprisonment of young criminals (Prop. 1989/90:107, p. 81–82). Thus, it was proposed that Sweden should ratify the convention but with a reservation for Article 37(c). Therefore, analysing the initial proposition, the question did not seem to be whether Sweden should ratify the convention, but if it should do so with any reservations. In contrast to the proposition, other parliament members expressed arguments in opposition to reservations.

Before the vote in the parliament, parliament members sent motions as response to the government proposition. Here, opposing arguments was raised towards the proposal to ratify the convention with reservation towards Article 37(c). In contrast to the proposition parliament members held that the convention was preferably to be ratified in full, in order to not undermine any of the directives in the convention (Mot. 1989/90:So53, p. 11). Additionally, it was argued that a reservation from a country like Sweden could, in practice, function as a justification for also other states to consider submitting reservations (Mot. 1989/90:So53, p. 15). Other parliament members also argued that it was problematic that a country, which otherwise claimed to support children's rights, in this case suggested to reserve itself from an article whose purpose is to protect children (Mot. 1989/90:So49, p. 3). It was stated that such behaviour could negatively affect Sweden's reputation internationally (Mot. 1989/90:So49, p. 3–4).

Also before the parliament decision, the proposition was sent to parliament committees for preparatory counsel and debate. In general, these discussions focused on whether Sweden was able to live up to the directives of the CRC.

However, similar to the motions above, also here opposing arguments to the proposition was raised. For instance, when the Social Committee of the parliament formulated their stand, they held that a reservation would negatively affect both the convention itself as well as Sweden's position towards other states (Bet. 1989/90:SoU28, p. 33). Therefore, with background in the previous motions, the Social Committee suggested that Sweden should ratify the convention without reservations (Bet. 1989/90:SoU28, p. 33–34). Eventually, when Sweden ratified the CRC the country did not announce any reservations from articles in the convention (United Nations 2022, p. 3).

From a theoretical perspective, this internal debate can be traced to a question of Swedish identity. That is, noting the argumentation from Swedish parliament members, a ratification of the CRC seemed to be a question of Swedish way to proceed. From an identity aspect, it was argued that it was in accordance with the Swedish identity to ratify the convention. Support for this reasoning can be found in two points. First, the initial government proposition suggested that a ratification of the CRC was compatible with Swedish institutions for social services and routines considering children's rights. In this way, and following the notation from Gurowitz (2006, p. 309) that domestic conditions and institutions are important for the attitude to follow international norms, it was held that Swedish identity in relation to children's rights enabled the country to ratify the convention.

Second, a reservation towards Article 37(c) was also argued to jeopardize Sweden's credit and influence in international relations. Especially, this argumentation positioned Sweden as a *progressive* country which holds an identity of *leadership* in the support for children's rights. Thus, any reservations from articles in the convention could be assumed to threaten both of these identities. Although the empirics above focus on a specific article of the convention, and not the whole treaty as such, this debate indicate that the matter of ratifying the convention was associated with how the Swedish image towards other actors would be affected. Thus, by assumption, this thought can also be applied with respect to the question of ratifying of the whole convention.

Concluding this section, a first result is therefore that Sweden ratified the CRC with respect to its internal view on identity, associated with both progressivity and leadership. However, as previous paragraphs have focused on how the identity factor appeared in the internal discussion, this understanding can also be elaborated by instead examining external perspectives of Swedish identity and the Swedish behaviour within the UN.

6.3.2 External perspective of identity

In March 1989, the final draft of the CRC was sent to the Commission on Human Rights for final discussion. In response to the draft, all five of the Nordic countries⁵ were represented in the same statement. Swedish representative Anders Rönquist, who announced the statement, said that the Nordic countries were positive towards the draft and the general effort of the UN to improve children's rights (High Commissioner for Human Rights & Rätts Barnen 2007, p. 212). In the same statement, Rönquist also announced concerns with respect to potential reservations from the convention. Here, Rönquist pointed "that every State that wished to ratify the instrument should undertake a careful review of its legislation and practices regarding children's rights" (High Commissioner for Human Rights & Rätts Barnen 2007, p. 213).

In this sense, Sweden held that reservations from articles in the convention would be of concern regarding the work for children's rights. This reasoning would also be strengthened by the fact that Sweden, after the country ratified the convention 1990, expressed criticism in form of objections towards states who reserved themselves from articles in the convention. For example, such objection were made towards Jordan in 1992 who reserved themselves from Article 14, 20 and 21 with respect to the country's domestic laws (United Nations 2022, p. 7, 17–18).

Considering the previous description we obtain an external perspective of how the identity aspect affected the Swedish decision to ratify the CRC. These empirics can also be understood from a perspective of ingroup and outgroup (Lebow 2008, p. 478–479). Following the statement from Rönquist, the group of countries that ratified the convention as whole could be identified as an ingroup. Members of this group was characterised by countries which obliged themselves to respect all the articles in the convention. The outgroup, on the other hand, would refer to the group of states which, by any motives, would reserve themselves from articles in the treaty. Here, also the external perspective treats the question of identity with respect to Sweden's ratification of the CRC, where the question to ratify the convention can be observed as an action that was related to Sweden's status internationally. As Sweden ratified the convention, the country would enter the ingroup which, by theoretic assumption, could be considered as a group of better reputation and higher status internationally (Lebow 2008, p. 478–479). From an identity aspect, a second result is therefore that the decision to ratify the CRC was the outcome Sweden's aim to seek, or uphold, high status internationally with respect to group belonging.

⁵ Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

7 Conclusion

The purpose of this text has been to investigate why Sweden ratified the CRC. By applying a case study of the CRC, the study has described the ratification from three theoretical factors – a norm, role and identity in international relations. From the analysis, I have presented results which, all combined, provide a broad and nuanced description of Sweden’s ratification of the treaty. These findings from the analysis are summarised in figure 2 below. Given the methodological description in section 5, it is not up to this thesis to value the degree of explanatory power of the factors and to further develop theories. Instead, since the three factors share the same ontological and epistemological domain, but focus on separate elements of social behaviour, they constitute complementary descriptions regarding what affects foreign policy decisions. I argue therefore all three factors provide necessary perspectives in order to understand what led Sweden to ratify the CRC. In this way, I suggest all three perspectives should be considered when analysing foreign policy behaviour in general, and the particular action to ratify international treaties in particular.

Norm	Role	Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutionalised foreign policy behaviour regarding promotion of human rights (diplomatic actions, influential diplomatic positions in human rights matters and provision of aid). - Collective expectations with respect to human rights promotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Behaviour in accordance with the concept of a middle power. - Influential in the drafting process of the CRC (the working group of the convention). - Active participant prior and during the World Summit for Children 1990. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internally: Ratification of the CRC was a matter of trustworthiness and credibility towards other states. - Externally: When ratifying the convention, Sweden entered an ingroup with high status internationally.

Figure 2. Note: Summary of the analysis.

One advantage of this text is the theoretical and methodological ambition to hold the norm, role and identity factor separated. Indeed, from this framework we are able to achieve three distinct perspectives which all provide useful description regarding Sweden’s ratification of the CRC. This study could, however, be confronted with critique regarding the selection of theoretical factors. Relevant comments may, for example, concern to what extent the factors can be held separate also in reality and that the complexity of the social elements could hinder the analysis from providing valid results (Finnemore 1996, p. 16).

Although such reasoning is relevant, I argue the analysis has provided evidence regarding where and when the factors are more or less prominent. For instance, the analysis described the role factor to entirely appear in forums of the UN where Sweden behaved according to the position of a middle power. This role was observed both in Sweden's influence in the drafting process of the CRC as well as in the World Summit for Children the same year as the convention was ratified. This emphasises that the role factor was present over time. In contrast, the identity factor seemed to be present in both the forum of the UN as well as in debates within the Swedish parliament. According to the empirical findings, however, this factor did only appear in close relation to the decision to ratify the CRC. One suggestion is, therefore, that the role and identity factor could have been more or less influential depending on what forum or time aspect that is observed. By distinguishing the factors in this way, our understanding regarding determinants of foreign policy behaviour is extended. Also, this would constitute one counter argument towards the potential critique mentioned in the previous section.

Following the analysis in this text, there are important considerations which future research may take into account. First, to evaluate the explanatory power of the theoretical factors it can be suitable for future research to find multiple cases for comparison. Here, variation can be studied regarding how different types of states relate to norms, roles and identities with respect to international treaties in different policy areas. Additionally, with respect to external validity, such studies should consider to test whether the operationalisations used in this text are applicable for also other cases of international actors and treaties. Second, to provide a more in depth analysis regarding the effect of ideational factors on foreign policy, future research may focus on only one of the three factors applied in this text. Such focus could more theoretically elaborate on how ideational factors evolve over time, and also examining their causal effect on ratifications. In sum, future research may therefore complement this study in the selection of methodological as well as theoretical framework. Ultimately, such contributions would propose a more comprehensive account regarding why, where and when states decide to ratify international treaties.

8 References

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