War in Palestine and Third-Party Reactions: The U.S. Context

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Abstract

The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on October 7th, 2023, led to widespread civilian suffering and sparked sharply divided international responses. This study investigates how such a distant yet emotionally charged conflict affects third-party individuals, particularly in a polarized society like the United States. Specifically, this study explores how misalignment between individuals' stances on the war in Palestine and the positions of their government or society relates to anger and normative collective action intentions. We explored both the direct effects of misalignment on anger and collective action intentions, as well as whether anger mediates these relationships. Additionally, we examined whether political ideology moderates these pathways. We conducted a cross-sectional study with U.S. participants (N = 473). Results showed that misalignment with the government predicted both anger and normative collective action, with anger fully mediating the relationship. Misalignment with society predicted anger but not collective action directly, and anger inconsistently and weakly mediated this effect. Political ideology moderated the indirect effect of societal misalignment on collective action, with stronger effects for liberal participants. Lastly, no moderation was found for government misalignment. These findings identify misalignment as a key predictor of anger and normative collective action. Lastly, this thesis discusses the theoretical contributions of misalignment as a novel antecedent of anger, as well as some practical implications.

Keywords: Israel-Palestine Conflict; Third-Party Reactions; Misalignment; Anger; Normative Collective Action; Political Ideology

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian war is one of the most enduring and geopolitically significant conflicts in modern history, with far-reaching humanitarian, political, and social consequences. The escalation of violence in October 2023 led to widespread civilian casualties and mass displacement, intensifying global concerns over the humanitarian crisis (UNRWA, 2025). In response, international reactions have become increasingly polarized, both between groups and among individuals, with people and governments taking sharply contrasting positions (UN Human Rights Council, 2024). While the war directly affects those involved, it also shapes the attitudes and behaviours of *third parties*—people not directly involved but observing the conflict from afar, many of whom have become emotionally and politically invested. Reactions among third parties, however, vary considerably. Some governments, particularly in the West (i.e., EU and USA), have expressed political and military support for Israel, while others have openly condemned its actions (Ataman, 2024). At the societal level, the war has sparked mass protests, public debates, and both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel demonstrations across different regions (Murillo & De Paris, 2024).

One potential explanation for these varying levels of emotional involvement and political action is the misalignment between an individual's personal beliefs about the war and the official stance of their government or the dominant societal discourse. When individuals perceive such a disconnect, especially on issues they consider morally significant, this can evoke feelings of anger directed at political institutions or society at large. Anger, in turn, functions as a motivating force, prompting individuals to engage in collective actions aimed at expressing dissent or demanding change.

In this context, the thesis focuses on three key questions: i) how perceived misalignment between individual, societal, and governmental positions on the war in Palestine

contributes to anger; ii) how this anger subsequently predicts engagement in normative collective actions; and iii) how political ideology moderates these relationships.

The Role of Misalignment on Anger and Collective Action

Misalignment occurs when an individual's personal beliefs about a particular societal issue contradict the positions taken by their government or the dominant societal discourse. This discrepancy can potentially create psychological discomfort and a sense of alienation, particularly when the societal issue at stake is tied to deeply held moral convictions (Mullen & Skitka, 2006). Research on affective polarization suggests that misalignment is a common phenomenon in societies where ideological divisions are strong, leading individuals to feel disconnected from prevailing political and social narratives (e.g., Kleinfeld, 2023). Misalignment can take different forms, with one of the most consequential being the divergence between personal beliefs and governmental positions.

When individuals perceive that their government is actively supporting policies that contradict their moral values, they may experience anger as a reaction to perceived injustice. Anger is a key emotional response to violations of moral principles, particularly when individuals believe that their government is complicit in harm or oppression (Van Zomeren, 2013). This reaction is particularly pronounced when people feel that their government's actions not only fail to reflect their values but also actively contribute to suffering. For example, in the United States, individuals who support Palestinian rights but see their government providing military aid to Israel may view this as an implicit support for human rights violations, potentially leading to moral outrage (Mullen & Skitka, 2006). Research on moral mandates suggests that when people see a particular issue as a matter of fundamental moral concern, they are more likely to react strongly (Skitka et al., 2005), in this context, when their government takes a stance they perceive as unjust. This anger can serve as a key

motivator for collective action, as individuals seek to oppose their government's stance and advocate for change.

Collective action is a common response to governmental misalignment, as individuals attempt to challenge or influence policies and/or decisions that they see as unjust. It can take normative forms, such as signing petitions or participating in peaceful protests, or even non-normative forms, such as engaging in civil disobedience or disruptive demonstrations (Borinca & Spears, 2025; Tausch et al., 2011). Although both normative and non-normative forms of collective action are addressed in the broader literature, this thesis focuses specifically on normative action. This choice is based on evidence that anger—the central emotion in this study—is particularly linked to normative collective action, whereas contempt more strongly predicts non-normative forms (Tausch et al., 2011).

Of particular relevance to the present thesis, the large-scale protests in response to the war in Palestine reflect the dynamic between misalignment and collective action. In the U.S., between October 7, 2023, and June 7, 2024, there were over 12,400 pro-Palestinian protests, making it one of the most persistent foreign-policy-related movements in recent history (Chenoweth et al., 2024). The scale of these protests suggests that many individuals view their government's policies as morally unacceptable and are using collective action as a means of expressing dissent and demanding change. In contrast, pro-Israel protests have been less frequent and less sustained, likely because the U.S. government's policies already align with the views of those who support Israel, reducing the perceived need for activism. This pattern reinforces the idea that misalignment with governmental positions can serve as a strong driver of political mobilization, particularly when individuals perceive their government as complicit in harm.

Beyond misalignment with governmental positions, individuals may also experience a sense of misalignment with their broader societal environment. This occurs when people feel

that the dominant discourse within their community, workplace, or social circles does not reflect their personal beliefs. Skitka et al. (2005) demonstrated in one of their studies, that when people view a societal issue as moral, they are less willing to accept someone with opposing views in both close and distant relationships. By extension, feeling misaligned with society on a conflict perceived as morally significant (such as the war in Palestine) may evoke similar negative reactions. Additionally, people may react when society fails to behave as expected during significant societal crises (Borinca et al., 2024). In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian war, individuals who feel that their society dismisses or opposes their stance may experience frustration and emotional distress. This frustration is especially pronounced when the issue at hand is tied to deeply held moral convictions, as individuals may feel that their community is ignoring or invalidating concerns that they see as fundamentally important (Skitka et al., 2005).

The experience of societal misalignment could also drive collective action, as individuals may seek alternative communities that validate their beliefs and provide a platform for activism. For example, when people feel alienated from their immediate social environment, they may turn to activist networks, protests, or online movements where they can engage with like-minded individuals. This is particularly important in the case of pro-Palestinian activism, where individuals who feel disconnected from their societal context may find solidarity in large-scale protest movements. Such dynamics have been evident in the United States, which has witnessed thousands of pro-Palestinian demonstrations (Chenoweth et al., 2024). By engaging in collective action, they not only express their discontent but also possibly reaffirm their social identity within a group that shares their views. The growing presence of global protests and boycott movements, such as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, reflects how individuals use activism to bridge the gap between personal beliefs and societal attitudes (BDS Movement, 2017).

Taken together, these dynamics suggest that misalignment—whether with government policies or societal attitudes—can serve as a powerful driver of both anger and normative collective action intentions. When individuals perceive that their personal values are disregarded or contradicted by political or social institutions, they may experience strong emotional responses, particularly anger. This emotional response, in turn, could increase the likelihood of engaging in activism to challenge the status quo. By understanding the role of misalignment in shaping emotional and behavioural responses, this thesis aims to contribute to a broader understanding of third-party reactions to the war in Palestine and the mechanisms that drive political mobilization in polarized contexts.

The Mediating Role of Anger

While misalignment with government or societal stances can create psychological discomfort, this alone may not necessarily lead to action. Many individuals may feel frustrated by their government's policies or societal norms but remain passive. Anger acts as a crucial emotional catalyst, transforming frustration into a willingness to mobilize and take collective action (Van Zomeren, 2013). Without anger, people may disengage or feel powerless; with it, they are more likely to challenge authority and advocate for change.

Anger is particularly powerful because it is an approach-oriented emotion—it motivates people to confront perceived injustices and take corrective action (Van Zomeren, 2013). When individuals perceive that their government or the society they live in is failing to uphold moral values or dismisses their concerns, they may experience moral outrage (Mullen & Skitka, 2006). This anger is often directed at authority figures, whether governmental institutions or dominant societal groups, and fuels participation in collective action as a form of protest or solidarity with affected communities (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013).

The role of anger in collective action is well-documented. Research shows that when individuals perceive an issue as a moral violation, they are more likely to challenge authority

and engage in activism (Skitka et al., 2005; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian war, people who strongly oppose their government's stance may not only feel disappointed but also morally compelled to act. People may hold dissenting views, but it is anger that pushes them to act. A relevant real-world example is the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, particularly its escalation in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd (Christián et al., 2022). While concerns about systemic racism existed long before Floyd's death, it is possible that it was the misalignment between public demands for justice and governmental inaction that sparked mass mobilization. People expressed anger and outrage over police brutality and the failure of authorities to address racial injustice. This anger turned passive frustration into one of the largest protest movements in U.S. history, with over 15 million participants (Buchanan et al., 2020). The case of BLM illustrates how anger can transform perceptions of misalignment into a powerful drive for collective action—without anger, the injustice might have remained a topic of discussion rather than becoming a call to action.

This thesis builds on existing research by highlighting misalignment as a distinct predictor of anger and normative collective action. While previous studies have extensively examined the role of perceived injustice in mobilization (Tausch et al., 2011; Van Zomeren et al., 2008; Van Zomeren, 2013), misalignment has not been explicitly studied as an antecedent to anger. This distinction is important because misalignment captures a broader disconnect between personal beliefs and institutional or societal stances, even in the absence of direct harm. By examining how misalignment evokes anger, which in turn motivates normative collective action, this thesis offers a deeper understanding of why individuals in third-party countries mobilize around distant conflicts. In this process, anger serves as the key emotional driver that transforms feelings of disconnection into readiness for action.

The Moderating Role of Political Ideology

While misalignment can provoke anger and lead to collective action, not all individuals react to misalignment in the same way. The extent to which misalignment translates into anger and subsequently motivates collective action may depend on individual differences, particularly political ideology. Political ideology shapes how people interpret political events, evaluate moral concerns, and decide whether to respond through activism (Jost et al., 2003).

Liberals typically hold values centred on equality, social justice, and human rights (Mikołajczak & Becker, 2019). These values might make them particularly sensitive to perceived violations of moral principles by both institutions and society. When misalignment occurs with the government, liberals are likely to view it as a failure of institutional morality and a betrayal of the government's responsibility to uphold justice, prompting strong moral outrage and a motivation to act Similarly, when misalignment arises with the broader society—through prevailing social norms or dominant public discourse—liberals may experience this as a failure of their community to live up to fundamental moral standards, intensifying feelings of alienation and anger. In both cases, liberals are more likely to channel this anger into collective action, consistent with their stronger commitment to social change and activism (Tausch et al., 2011). In contrast, conservatives prioritize values such as stability, security, tradition, and social order (Jost et al., 2003). When facing misalignment with the government, conservatives may be more inclined to tolerate or rationalize this disconnect due to a stronger tendency toward system justification and a belief in preserving institutional legitimacy (Jost et al., 2003). Misalignment with societal norms is also less likely to provoke strong emotional reactions among conservatives, as they tend to value social cohesion and view activism—particularly disruptive collective action—as an undesirable challenge to established order (Jost et al., 2003). Therefore, even when conservatives

experience anger, they might be more likely to seek institutional or gradual solutions rather than engage in public protest or activism.

Accordingly, this thesis predicts that political ideology moderates the indirect relationship between misalignment and normative collective action via anger, with this pathway being stronger for liberals than for conservatives. For liberals, misalignment with either government or societal positions is more likely to evoke intense anger and motivate collective action, whereas conservatives are less likely to act on their anger through protest or activism. By examining this moderating role of political ideology, the thesis offers a more nuanced understanding of ideological differences in third-party reactions to the war in Palestine.

The War in Palestine: The U.S. Political and Social Context

The United States plays a central role in the Israeli-Palestinian war, both politically and financially, making it a critical case for studying third-party reactions. As Israel's largest international ally, the U.S. provides billions of dollars in military aid annually, alongside diplomatic support in global institutions (Rubio, 2025). This strong governmental stance has shaped public discourse, creating deep divisions in American society over how the conflict should be addressed. Given the government's firm position and the highly polarized nature of public opinion, the U.S. presents a unique context to examine how misalignment with government policies or societal norms leads to anger and collective action.

Political polarization in the U.S. has become increasingly pronounced, with ideological divides extending across nearly every major issue (Kleinfeld, 2023). This applies to the Israeli-Palestinian war, where political ideology strongly influences attitudes. Although U.S. support for Israel—including its right to self-defense—was historically a bipartisan stance, the recent escalation has intensified divisions (Braems, 2023). Most Republican leaders advocate for unconditional military support for Israel, emphasizing the destruction of

Hamas. In contrast, many Democrats highlight the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and favor a diplomatic approach that considers Palestinian suffering (Braems, 2023; El Baz et al., 2024). These ideological differences suggest that both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli individuals in the U.S. may experience misalignment with their government or society, which in turn fuels anger and support for collective action.

This misalignment is evident in ongoing large-scale protests across the country. Pro-Palestinian demonstrations have become one of the largest foreign-policy-related protest movements in recent U.S. history, with participants calling for an end to military aid to Israel and demanding greater pressure for a ceasefire (Chenoweth et al., 2024). Pro-Israeli protests, while present, have been significantly smaller and have declined over time. This difference may be explained by the fact that pro-Israeli activists generally align with the government's position, reducing their need for sustained protest (Chenoweth et al., 2024). This contrast provides a real-world example of how misalignment can drive collective action—when individuals feel their government's stance contradicts their beliefs, they are more likely to mobilize.

Given the high level of political engagement and ideological polarization, the U.S. offers an important setting for studying the role of misalignment in anger and collective action. The significant gap between governmental and public positions on the war, combined with widespread activism, enables this study to examine how individuals who feel unrepresented by official institutions or societal consensus respond through social protest. In a country where political identity often shapes both beliefs and actions, this study sheds light on how people in third-party countries react to foreign conflicts while navigating a polarized society.

The Current Study

This study examines how misalignment with governmental and societal positions on the war in Palestine influences anger and support for normative collective action. While research has established anger as a driver of normative collective action, little is known about how misalignment contributes to this process, particularly among third-party observers. This study addresses that gap by investigating whether anger mediates the relationship between misalignment and normative collective action and whether political ideology moderates these effects. By exploring these dynamics, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how global conflicts evoke emotional reactions and mobilize social movements, even beyond the directly affected regions. Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Main Effects

Hypothesis 1a: Misalignment between individual and governmental positions on the war in Palestine is associated with anger toward the government and intentions to engage in normative collective actions against the government.

Hypothesis 1b: Misalignment between individual and societal positions on the war in Palestine is associated with anger toward the society and intentions to engage in normative collective actions against the society.

Mediation Effects

Hypothesis 2a: Anger toward the government mediates the relationship between misalignment with governmental positions and normative collective action intentions against the government.

Hypothesis 2b: Anger toward society mediates the relationship between misalignment with societal positions and normative collective action intentions against society.

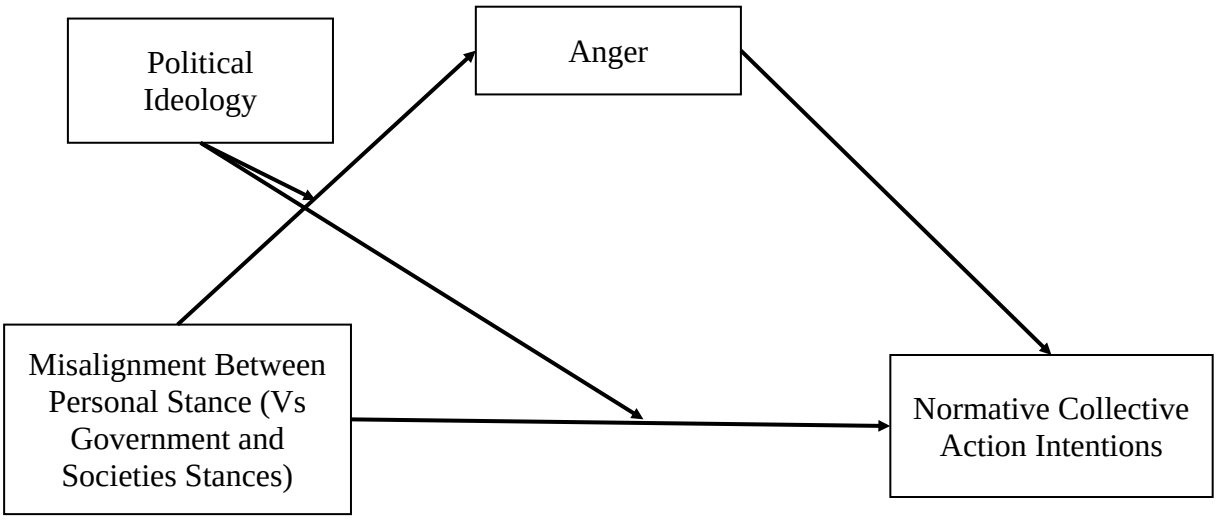
Moderation Effects

Hypothesis 3a: The effect of misalignment with the government on normative collective action intentions via anger will be moderated by political ideology, with liberals demonstrating a stronger indirect effect than conservatives.

Hypothesis 3b: The effect of misalignment with society on normative collective action intentions via anger will be moderated by political ideology, with liberals demonstrating a stronger indirect effect than conservatives.

Figure 1

Visual representation of the research model



Method

Participants

A priori power analysis was conducted using the G-Power to determine the required sample size for Multiple Regression. It indicated that a minimum of 485 participants is required to detect a small effect size of ($f^2 = 0.02$) with a significance level (α) of 0.05, and a desired power of 0.80. A total of 503 American participants were recruited for the study. Participant exclusion occurred in several situations. Firstly, participants were not included in the sample when they did not give their consent at the beginning of the study. Secondly, participants who failed attention checks were excluded, which occurred 30 times. After

quality checks, 473 participants were included in the sample (249 female, 220 male, 2 non-binary/third gender, 2 prefer not to say). Participants were recruited via the online platform Prolific, and they received financial compensation for their participation in the study.

The age range of participants was between 19 and 79 years old (M = 39.49, SD = 12.66).

Research Design and Procedure

This study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences at the University of Groningen (EC-BSS). Participants were recruited through Prolific, which involved a link inviting individuals to participate in an online survey administered through Qualtrics survey software. The survey was expected to take about 10 minutes to complete, and individuals were compensated for their participation in the study.

The study employed a cross-sectional design. Participants were invited to complete a survey about their perceptions of the war in Palestine. Participants were first presented with an informed consent form explaining the study's purpose, procedures, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. After providing consent, they completed demographic and background questions, including age, gender, nationality, and country of residence. Next, participants answered a series of questions about their political orientation and moral convictions regarding the war in Palestine.

The survey continued with questions about misalignment, where participants rated how much their personal views aligned with U.S. government policies on Palestine and the dominant societal discourse on the issue. Finally, participants indicated the extent of anger they felt toward the government and society due to their stance on the war, as well as their intention to engage in collective actions. A debriefing was provided at the end of the questionnaire, which included additional details about the purpose of the study and the contact

information of the research supervisor, whom participants could contact if they had questions or experienced discomfort.

Measures

Attention Check

An attention check was added to the questionnaire to assess participants' attention to the content: "This item serves only to identify participants who are not reading and responding to the survey carefully. Please do not respond to this item." (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*).

Independent Variables

Misalignment. Misalignment was measured by assessing individual, perceived governmental, and perceived societal positions regarding the war in Palestine. The discrepancy between the mean of the individual position scale and the mean of either the governmental or societal position scale indicated the degree of objective misalignment. The items used in all three scales were identical in nature, where the only difference was the stance (i.e. my own, governmental, societal). All scales used an ad hoc design, with participants asked to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), in response to four statements per measure.

Individual Position. Participants were first asked to report their individual stance. They indicated their agreement with four items, examples include: "I support the Palestinian cause in the war." and "I think it is important to take a clear stance on the war in Palestine" ($\alpha = 0.81$, $M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.36$).

Government Position. Next, participants were asked to evaluate their perceptions of their government's stance. Participants rated their agreement with four statements. Examples of the items include: "I believe my government supports the Palestinian cause in the war." and

"I believe my government finds it important to take a clear stance on the war in Palestine" (α = 0.84, *M* = 4.34, *SD* = 1.46).

Societal Position. For perceptions of their society's stance, participants rated their agreement on four different statements. Examples of the items include: "I believe most people in my society support the Palestinian cause in the war." and "I believe most people in my society find it important to take a clear stance on the war in Palestine" (α = 0.87, *M* = 4.60, *SD* = 1.39).

Objective Misalignment Scores. In order to obtain an objective measure of misalignment, scores were calculated by taking the difference scores between participants' personal stance scores and their perceptions of either the government's or society's stance. The mean score for misalignment with the government was *M* = 1.37, *SD* = 1.46, and for misalignment with society, *M* = 1.02, *SD* = 1.05. Higher scores reflect greater misalignment between participants' personal views and the perceived positions of their government or society.

Mediating Variable

Anger. Anger was assessed using an ad hoc scale that evaluated anger directed toward the government and society. Participants were asked to indicate their level of anger on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) in response to the following statements: "I feel angry when my government's stance on the war in Palestine differs from my own" (*M* = 3.81, *SD* = 2.06); and "I feel angry when the stance of most people in my society on the war in Palestine differs from my own" (*M* = 3.66, *SD* = 1.95).

Moderating Variable

Political Orientation. Political orientation was measured using three items adapted from the scale by Borinca et al. (2022). Participants were presented with the statement: "Political opinions are often placed on a left-right scale, also known as a liberal-conservative

scale in some countries like the US." They were then asked to indicate their opinions on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Liberal) to 7 (Conservative) in response to the following items: "How would you rate your political views?", "How would you rate your social views?", and "How would you rate your economic views?" The three items were averaged to create a single composite political orientation score (α = 0.95, *M* = 4.68, *SD* = 1.97).

Outcome Measure

Normative Collective Action. To assess normative collective action, ad hoc questions were designed, inspired by the work of Tausch et al. (2011). Participants rated their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) for six questions. Examples include: "I would sign online petitions supporting my stance on the war in Palestine" and "I would share information or opinions on social media about the war in Palestine" (α = 0.95, *M* = 3.94, *SD* = 1.94).

Control Variables

Because moral convictions have been shown to be a powerful predictor of both anger and collective action in previous research (Van Zomeren, 2013), we included it as a control variable. This ensures that any associations observed between misalignment and emotional and behavioural responses are not simply due to participants' moral stance on the Israeli-Palestinian war.

Moral Conviction. Moral conviction was assessed using a scale adapted from Van Zomeren et al. (2018), tailored to the context of the Israel-Palestine war. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale with the following three items: "My opinion about the war in Palestine is an important part of my moral norms and values"; "My opinion about the war in Palestine is a universal moral value that should apply everywhere in the world"; and "My opinion about the war in Palestine is a universal moral value that should apply at all times" (α = 0.91, *M* = 4.43, *SD* = 1.70).

Other Measures

In addition to the measures reported above, our questionnaire included measures for perceived misalignment, general anger towards the situation in Palestine and non-normative collective action. However, those items were not included in this thesis, and all subsequent analyses do not contain these measures. The full questionnaire, including the scales for the aforementioned measures that were not used, can be found in Appendix A.

Results

Assumptions and Preliminary Analysis

Prior to analysis, assumptions of multiple linear regression were checked. Linearity was visually inspected through a scatterplot of standardized residuals against predicted values, which showed a random distribution, indicating the assumption was met (see Figure B1 in Appendix B). Normality of residuals was examined using a histogram and a normal P-P plot, both of which suggested that the residuals were approximately normally distributed (see Figure B2 in Appendix B). The assumption of homoscedasticity was also met. Multicollinearity was assessed using VIF and tolerance values, all of which fell within acceptable ranges (VIFs < 10, tolerances > .30). Independence of errors was confirmed by a Durbin–Watson value of 2.07, which is within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5. Finally, Cook's distance values ranged from 0.00 to 0.04, suggesting that no influential outliers were present.

Correlations

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed among the key study variables. For an overview of all correlations, see Table B1 in Appendix B.

Objective misalignment with the government was positively correlated with anger toward the government ($r = .34$, $p < .001$) and with normative collective action intentions ($r = .13$, $p = .005$). Similarly, misalignment with society was positively correlated with anger

toward society ($r = .09$, $p = .043$) but was not significantly associated with normative collective action intentions ($r = –.06$, $p = .236$).

Anger toward both the government ($r = .52$, $p < .001$) and society ($r = .50$, $p < .001$) was strongly correlated with normative collective action, indicating that greater anger was consistently associated with stronger intentions to participate in collective action.

Political ideology was coded such that higher values reflect more conservative orientations. It was negatively correlated with misalignment with the government ($r = –.37$, $p < .001$), misalignment with society ($r = –.20$, $p < .001$), anger toward the government ($r = –.25$, $p < .001$), anger toward society ($r = –.20$, $p < .001$), and normative collective action intentions ($r = –.12$, $p = .011$), indicating that more liberal individuals were associated with higher misalignment, stronger emotional responses, and higher collective action intentions.

Main Analysis

To test the main effects, simple regression analyses were conducted to examine whether misalignment with governmental or societal positions predicts both anger and normative collective action intentions.

Misalignment with Government

The first analysis showed that misalignment with the government's stance on the War in Palestine significantly predicts anger toward the government ($B = 0.47$, 95% CI [0.35, 0.59]). The model was overall significant, $F(1, 471) = 59.66$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .11$. In the second model, misalignment with the government significantly predicted normative collective action intentions ($B = 0.17$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.29]). This model was also significant, $F(1, 471) = 7.98$, $p = .005$, $R^2 = .02$.

Together, these findings support Hypothesis 1a, indicating that greater misalignment with governmental positions predicts both higher anger and stronger normative collective action intentions.

Misalignment with Society

The analysis indicated that objective misalignment with society's stance on the War in Palestine significantly predicted anger toward society ($B = 0.17$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.34]). The model was overall significant, $F(1, 471) = 4.10$, $p = .043$, $R^2 = .01$. However, the second analysis showed no significant association between misalignment with society and collective action intentions ($B = –0.10$, 95% CI [–0.27, 0.07]). The overall model was not significant $F(1, 471) = 1.41$, $p = .236$, $R^2 = .003$.

These findings offer partial support for Hypothesis 1b, as misalignment with societal positions was associated with increased anger toward society, but not with greater intentions to engage in normative collective actions.

Mediation Analyses

To test Hypothesis 2a, a mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4), with objective misalignment with the government as the independent variable, anger toward the government as the mediator, and normative collective action intentions as the dependent variable. Moral conviction was included as a covariate.

Misalignment with the government significantly predicted anger toward the government ($B = 0.38$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.27, 0.49]). Anger, in turn, significantly predicted normative collective action intentions ($B = 0.36$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.44]). The indirect effect of misalignment on normative collective action through anger was statistically significant ($B = 0.14$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.19]; completely standardized effect = 0.10). The direct effect of misalignment on collective action was not significant ($B = –0.07$, $p = .208$, 95% CI [–0.17, 0.05]), nor was the total effect ($B = 0.07$, $p = .178$, 95% CI [–0.03, 0.18]), indicating that the association between misalignment and normative collective action was fully accounted for by the mediator.

These findings provide support for Hypothesis 2a, suggesting that the relationship between misalignment with governmental positions and intentions to engage in collective action is explained by increased anger toward the government.

To test Hypothesis 2b, a similar mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4), with objective misalignment with society as the independent variable, anger toward society as the mediator, and normative collective action as the dependent variable. Moral conviction was again included as a covariate.

Misalignment with society significantly predicted anger toward society ($B = 0.18$, $p = .016$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.33]), which in turn was positively linked to normative collective action intentions ($B = 0.35$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.27, 0.43]). The indirect effect via anger was significant ($B = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.12]; completely standardized effect = 0.03). The direct effect remained significant ($B = –0.15$, $p = .027$), while the total effect was not ($B = –0.09$, $p = .219$).

These results provide some weak support for Hypothesis 2b. Objective misalignment with societal positions was associated with higher anger toward society, which in turn was associated with increased normative collective action intentions. However, the presence of a significant direct effect alongside a significant indirect effect indicates inconsistent mediation.

Moderated Mediation Analyses

Moderated mediation analyses were performed for the dependent variable Normative Collective Action, with Misalignment with Government/Society as the independent variable, Political Ideology as a moderator, and Anger with Government/Society as a mediator. These analyses were performed using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 8).

In the moderated mediation analyses for Hypothesis 3a, the interaction between misalignment with the government and political ideology did not significantly predict anger toward the government ($B = –0.05$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .10$, 95% CI [–0.10, 0.01]). For normative

collective action, the interaction was not significant (B = –0.04, SE = 0.03, p = .08, 95% CI [–0.09, 0.01]), nor was the index of moderated mediation (index = –0.02, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [–0.04, 0.00]).

This indicates that the strength of the indirect association between objective misalignment with the government and normative collective action intentions via anger did not significantly differ due to political ideology. Therefore, Hypothesis 3a is not supported.

In a similar moderated mediation analyses for Hypothesis 3b, the interaction between misalignment with society and political ideology significantly predicted anger toward society (B = –0.11, SE = 0.04, p = .003, 95% CI [–0.18, –0.04]), indicating that political ideology moderated the association between misalignment and anger. This relationship was stronger for more liberal participants (B = 0.25, SE = 0.08, p = .003, 95% CI [0.09, 0.42]) and not significant for more conservative participants (B = –0.18, SE = 0.13, p = .161, 95% CI [–0.43, 0.07]).

For normative collective action, the interaction between misalignment and political ideology was significant, (B = –0.07, SE = 0.03, p = .049, 95% CI [–0.14, –0.00]), and the index of moderated mediation was also significant (index = –0.04, SE= 0.01, 95% CI [–0.07, –0.01]). The indirect effect of misalignment on normative collective action via anger was stronger for more liberal participants (B = 0.08, 95% CI [0.03, 0.15]) and not significant for more conservative individuals (B = –0.06, 95% CI [–0.17, 0.03]).

Taken together, these results support Hypothesis 3b. Political ideology significantly moderated the indirect effect of objective misalignment with society on normative collective action via anger.

Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how people in third-party countries, specifically in the United States, react to ongoing conflicts when they experience misalignment between their own stance and the stance of their government or society. We investigated whether that misalignment would lead to feelings of anger and normative collective action both directly and via anger, while controlling for participants' moral convictions. Additionally, we explored the moderating role of political ideology in this relationship. The first hypothesis assumed positive direct effects of societal or governmental misalignment on anger and normative collective action. The second hypothesis explored the mediating role of anger. The third and last hypothesis explored whether political ideology moderates this relationship.

In line with Hypothesis 1a, participants whose views on the War in Palestine differed more from their government's stance reported more anger towards the government and were more willing to engage in normative forms of collective action. Hypothesis 1b was only partially supported: although higher misalignment with society also led to increased anger toward society, it did not significantly predict normative collective action intentions.

Regarding hypothesis 2a, anger significantly mediated the relationship between governmental misalignment and collective action, supporting the idea that emotional responses could be a key mechanism that translates simple disagreement into action. Hypothesis 2b, which examined anger as a mediator in the relationship between societal misalignment and normative collective action, was very weakly supported by the results, as the mediation was inconsistent and the effect sizes were very small. This suggests that while societal misalignment increased anger and, in turn, promoted normative collective action in the statistical analysis, the overall influence of societal misalignment on collective action

appears minimal in practical terms. Therefore, future research should treat the evidence for this hypothesis with caution.

Finally, Hypothesis 3a was not supported, as political ideology did not significantly influence the strength of misalignment on collective action via anger when it comes to governmental misalignment. A potential reason for that could be that experiencing misalignment with society feels more personal to an individual's social identity than misalignment with a more distant group (i.e. the government). As liberal individuals tend to prioritize values such as human rights and equality (Mikołajczak & Becker, 2019), it is likely that when they feel like those values are not upheld by the members of their community that they would experience a stronger emotional response. In their case, governmental misalignment might not evoke a stronger reaction, not because it is less significant, but possibly because it is more expected. Given the current U.S. administration's well-documented pro-Israel and right-leaning stance, many liberal participants may already feel deeply misaligned with governmental positions. As a result, this type of misalignment may not produce additional emotional activation.

On the other hand, the findings show support for Hypothesis 3b, as political ideology moderated the pathway from societal misalignment to collective action through anger, while controlling for moral conviction, with liberals demonstrating a stronger indirect effect than conservatives.

Together, these findings highlight the important role of anger and its interaction with ideological beliefs, especially shaping collective action intentions when liberal individuals experience higher misalignment with the views of their society.

Implications

Our findings offer several contributions to existing theory as well as novel insights on why individuals who are not directly involved in a conflict engage in collective action.

Previous research mostly focused on triggers of anger and collective action, such as feelings of injustice to someone's ingroup, direct harm or deeply held moral convictions (Skitka et al., 2005; Van Zomeren, 2013). However, understanding the emotional and behavioural responses of those not directly impacted by a conflict or situation has received much less attention. The present research addresses and tests that gap by suggesting that misalignment, with either the society or the government, could be an antecedent for anger and collective action, specifically in the case of third-party individuals in the United States. Our findings provide evidence for misalignment as a trigger for anger, suggesting that individuals can experience strong emotional reactions even without direct involvement. Moreover, the full mediating effect of anger when it comes to governmental misalignment supports the existing views of anger as an approach-oriented emotion which drives individuals to mobilize and engage in collective action (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Specifically, our findings show how anger is a mechanism through which simple differences in views (i.e. misalignment) are transformed.

Moreover, to assess whether misalignment is indeed a distinct pathway, we statistically controlled for participants' moral convictions on the war in Palestine. Moral Conviction Theory suggests people react more strongly when the attitudes they hold about a certain issue are tied to their moral beliefs (Skitka et al., 2005). Therefore, controlling for moral convictions was essential to ensure that the effects of misalignment that we observed are not simply due to participants' moral outrage regarding the war in Palestine. Our analyses showed that misalignment remained strongly associated with anger and collective action intentions, independent of moral conviction. This implies that even though anger and normative collective action intentions towards this war are likely viewed as a moral issue, feeling misalignment, especially with the government, is an additional element that can possibly, by itself, contribute to higher anger and willingness to act.

Our findings also raise a question of how the concept of misalignment relates to existing identity-based models of collective action, such as the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). This model suggests that collective action is primarily driven by identifying with an ingroup, as well as perceived injustice and efficacy (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Although misalignment as a construct may resemble the us vs. them dynamic outlined in SIMCA, in our study, the 'us' refers to an individual's personal stance, while the 'them' represents the perceived position of the government or society, instead of it being a defined outgroup. Based on that, we argue that misalignment does not necessarily have to be identity-driven, as it is possible to misalign with your ingroup over a specific issue or align with an outgroup's stance. Therefore, misalignment encompasses a broader individual-level of disagreement between values. This distinction is important as it suggests that individuals could feel angry and want to act without the particular aspect of identification. In essence, even though misalignment shares some elements with identity-based constructs, they might be conceptually different. This highlights the importance and novelty of studying misalignment and its potential to elicit anger, even in the absence of direct harm or personal involvement in the conflict.

Besides theoretical implications, this thesis offers some practical, real-world implications by highlighting how, even though the War in Palestine might feel distant to individuals in the United States, their emotional responses can still shape political behaviour when they experience misalignment. This is important as it offers insight into how third-party individuals from a democratic country without current domestic conflicts can still experience anger and mobilize for a cause that is distant to them. Furthermore, our results indicate that people's willingness to participate in collective action is not only influenced by domestic issues, but also by how their government and society respond to international conflicts. This has critical implications for a highly polarized country such as the United States. If pro-

Palestinian individuals consider the U.S. government to be complicit in the War in Palestine, for example, by providing military aid to Israel, there is a high chance for unrest and destabilization. These findings therefore give insight into why this particular conflict has led to ongoing large-scale protests in the U.S. (Chenoweth et al., 2024).

Pro-Palestinian activist movements can utilize our findings when framing their messages and calls to action by emphasizing how the U.S. government does not represent their values regarding the war, which could increase participation in collective action. Specifically, as we found evidence for normative collective actions, this provides an opportunity for people to channel their anger into peaceful forms of protest.

Finally, policy makers and government officials should take public opinion into consideration when dealing with foreign policy decisions to avoid a greater division between the people and the government. Acknowledging societal disagreements openly rather than dismissing or ignoring them could help mitigate some of the negative emotional reactions and reduce the potential for societal instability. However, given the current polarized political climate in the U.S. and the government's strong pro-Israel stance, implementing transparent and inclusive communication remains challenging.

Strengths of the Study

The main strength of this research is the use of a large and diverse U.S. sample, which provides an opportunity for generalization of our results within the country. Moreover, studying reactions to a highly relevant conflict in real time, in a polarized country like the U.S. is very impactful. Another methodological strength is the use of validated, as well as ad hoc measures for misalignment in our questionnaire. This allowed us to investigate concepts through established scales, while also bringing novelty when it comes to measuring misalignment.

An additional strength comes from our analytical approach, specifically the use of mediation and moderated mediation analyses. Using this method, we were able to gain a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics involved, especially because our mediation hypotheses were supported. Moreover, examining how the mediating role of anger differs by political ideology and finding support when it comes to societal misalignment, we gained insight about the conditional effects, and confirmed how this relationship is stronger for more liberal individuals. Additionally, controlling for moral conviction in the mediation and moderation analyses ensured that our findings about misalignment are not simply due to individuals' moral stances about Palestine, but that misalignment itself is sufficient to evoke the emotional and behavioural responses within our sample.

Our research was also a part of a thesis project in which another study found support for the mediation pathway within a German sample, using the same measures and overall framework. This replication is highly important as it provides more evidence to generalize the findings to Western societies and provides our study with higher external validity.

Lastly, an important strength of this study is its significant real-world relevance that contributes to its ecological validity. Data collection occurred in the first week of April 2024, while the conflict in Palestine was actively ongoing, capturing participants' emotional and behavioural responses in real time. This approach enhances the applicability of our findings to understanding political behaviour during periods of active international conflict.

Limitations and Future Directions

The first limitation of the present research is due to its correlational design, as it is not possible to draw conclusions about causal relationships regarding our findings. Future research should aim to investigate these dynamics, especially the potential role of misalignment as an antecedent of anger, in an experimental or longitudinal design. Furthermore, it is crucial to consider that our outcome variable 'normative collective action'

assessed participants' self-reported intention to engage in these forms of protests. Due to this, it is possible that these findings might not reflect real behaviour. Future research could address this by attempting to measure individuals' actual engagement in normative collective actions, for example by looking at past behaviour.

Secondly, it is important to note that even though our sample was large and diverse, it draws conclusions about the United States, which is a Western developed country. Additionally, although the replication of our findings in a German context is a great starting point, it still makes it difficult to generalize the results in a non-Western context. Therefore, it would be beneficial to see if our findings extend to non-Western samples, especially in post-conflict societies, where these dynamics could be highly interesting to investigate.

Another key limitation of this study relates to the conceptual distinction made between misalignment and the "us vs. them" dynamic central to the SIMCA (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Although we argued theoretically that misalignment captures a different emotional and motivational pathway compared to group identification, our study did not empirically measure identification with the Palestinian cause or perceived efficacy, which are two core SIMCA components. Therefore, we cannot fully determine whether misalignment and identity-based factors represent truly distinct psychological constructs or if they might overlap or interact in predicting collective action. Future research should therefore explicitly measure identification and efficacy alongside misalignment to empirically test and clarify whether misalignment indeed adds explanatory value independently from established identity-based predictors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis illustrates the key role of anger as an emotional catalyst for normative collective action among individuals whose values do not align with their government's stances on the same issue. Importantly, political ideology moderated these effects in the case of societal misalignment, suggesting that liberals in the United States may

be more responsive to disagreement with societal norms. Together, these findings shed light on how seemingly distant conflicts can still influence third-parties from a democratic and polarized context to mobilize and engage in collective action. Finally, this thesis highlights the potential and novelty of studying misalignment as a distinct predictor in research about collective action.

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Appendix A

Scales from the Questionnaire

Political Orientation

Political opinions are often placed on a left-right scale, also known as a liberal-conservative scale in some countries like the U.S. Please indicate your general political opinions on a scale **from 1 (Liberal) to 7 (Conservative).**

1. How would you rate your political views?
2. How would you rate your social views?
3. How would you rate your economic views?

Note. Items are adapted from Borinca et al. (2022).

Moral Convictions

In this section, we are interested in your moral beliefs about the war in Palestine. Please read the statements below carefully and indicate your level of agreement on a scale from 1 to 7, **where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree.**

1. My opinion about the war in Palestine is an important part of my moral norms and values.
2. My opinion about the war in Palestine is a universal moral value that should apply everywhere in the world.
3. My opinion about the war in Palestine is a universal moral value that should apply at all times.

Note. Items are adapted from Van Zomeren et al. (2018).

Positions on the War in Palestine

Personal. In this section, we are interested in your **personal stances** on the war in Palestine. Please read the statements below carefully and indicate your level of agreement on a scale **from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)**.

1. I believe the war in Palestine is an important issue.
2. I support the Palestinian cause in the war.
3. I believe the war in Palestine requires active attention.
4. I think it is important to take a clear stance on the war in Palestine.

Government. In this section, we are interested in your perception of your **government's stances** on the war in Palestine. Please indicate your level of agreement on a 7-point scale **from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)**.

1. I believe my government sees the war in Palestine as an important issue.
2. I believe my government supports the Palestinian cause in the war.
3. I believe my government thinks the war in Palestine requires active attention.
4. I believe my government finds it important to take a clear stance on the war in Palestine.

Public/Society. In this section, we are interested in your **perception of societies' stances** on the war in Palestine. Please indicate your level of agreement on a 7-point scale **from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)**.

1. I believe most people in my society see the war in Palestine as an important issue.
2. I believe most people in my society support the Palestinian cause in the war.
3. I believe most people in my society think the war in Palestine requires active attention.
4. I believe most people in my society find it important to take a clear stance on the war in Palestine.

Subjective Misalignment Measurement

Please read the following statements and indicate your level of agreement on a 7-point scale **from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)**.

1. My stance on the war in Palestine differs from my government's stance.

2. My stance on the war in Palestine differs from the stance of most people in my society.
3. I feel my government's position on the war in Palestine conflicts with my own.
4. I feel that the views of most people in my society on the war in Palestine do not align with my own.

Anger

In this section, we are interested in your anger levels regarding the war in Palestine. Please read the statements below carefully and indicate your level of anger on a 7-point scale **from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much)**.

1. I feel angry when my government's stance on the war in Palestine differs from my own.
2. I feel anger towards the current situation about the War in Palestine.
3. I feel angry when the stance of most people in my society on the war in Palestine differs from my own.

Collective Action

Normative Collective Action. In this section, we are interested in your opinions on the statements below. Please indicate your level of agreement on a scale **from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)**.

1. I would sign online petitions supporting my stance on the war in Palestine.
2. I would share information or opinions on social media about the war in Palestine.
3. I would participate in online campaigns or discussions related to the war in Palestine.
4. I would participate in peaceful protests related to the war in Palestine.
5. I would donate to organizations supporting my stance on the war in Palestine.
6. I would attend community meetings or events related to the war in Palestine.

Non-Normative Collective Action. In this section, we are interested in your opinions on the statements below. Please indicate your level of agreement on a scale **from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)**.

1. I would share anonymous posts criticizing opposing stances on the war in Palestine.
2. I would participate in social media boycotts or unfollow campaigns related to the war in Palestine.
3. I would report a video or post content that opposes my stance on the war in Palestine.
4. I would participate in sit-ins in public spaces to protest the war in Palestine.
5. I would engage in symbolic acts like removing or defacing public symbols related to the conflict.
6. I would distribute flyers or posters without authorization to express my stance on the war in Palestine.

Note. Items for both collective action scales are inspired by Tausch et al. (2011).

Appendix B

Figure B1

Scatterplot of Standardized Residuals Against Predicted Values for Normative Collective Action

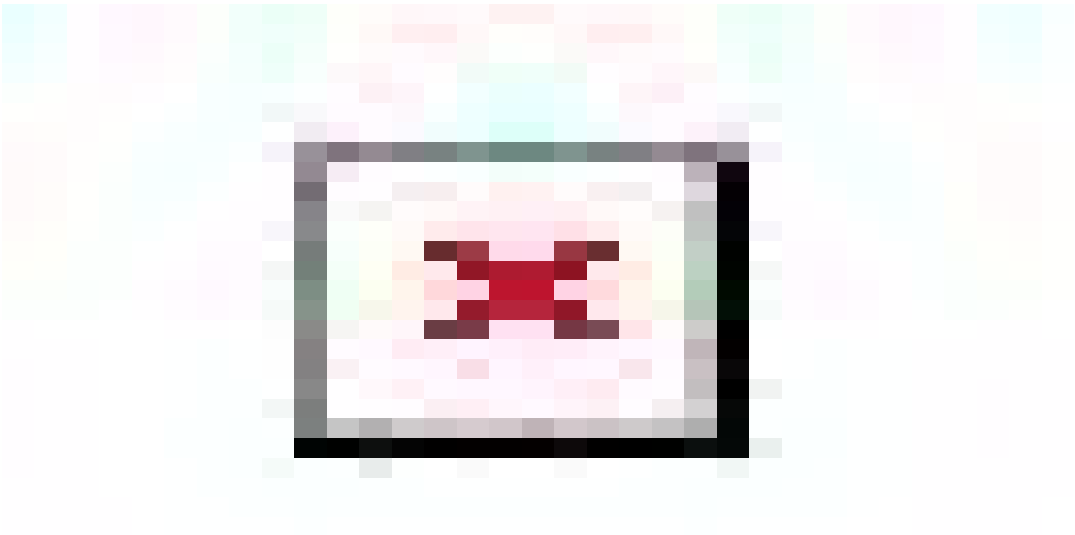

Figure B2

Normal P–P Plot of Regression Standardized Residuals for Normative Collective Action

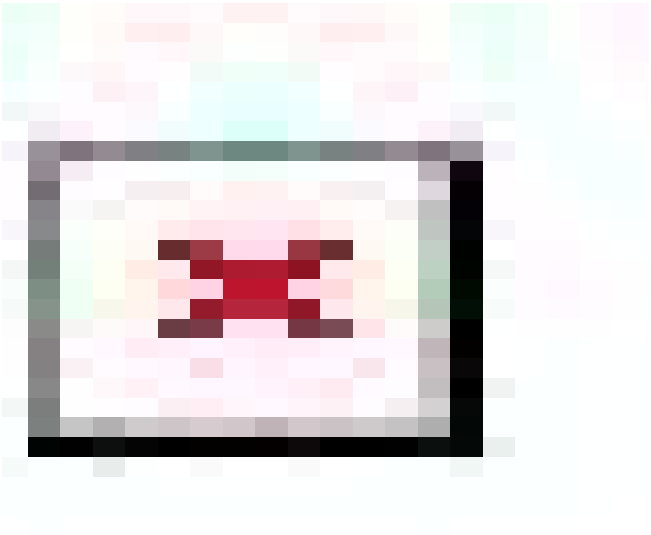

Table B1

Correlations Between Study Variables (N = 473)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Misalignment Government	—						
2. Misalignment Society	.511**	—					
3. Anger Government	.335**	.108*	—				
4. Anger Society	.292**	.093*	.807**	—			
5. Normative Collective Action	.129**	-.055	.515**	.498**	—		
6. Political Ideology	-.372**	-.196**	-.248**	-.202**	-.116*	—	
7. Moral Convictions	.154**	-.011	.454**	.476**	.490**	-.113*	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01