I began this project by accident. In Fall 2014 I was taking a class on international law and one day, as the professor was lecturing on treaty making, he casually mentioned that treaties had different entry into force (EIF) thresholds. Interested, I asked why, but he knew of no explanation for the threshold variations. Unsatisfied with this response, I decided to dedicate my Senior Capstone project to finding out the answer myself.

I began by searching through Summon and the Social Sciences Citation Index to gauge what had already been written about EIF variations. As my initial keyword searches turned up little on the topic, I had to get creative in order to identify secondary sources. Already familiar with international legal issues, I structured my research around general Realist and Constructivist explanations of international agreements, with the intention of expanding those arguments to the new study of EIF thresholds. I hypothesized that the dependent variable, EIF thresholds, was the result of treaty issue areas and that areas addressing collective action problems, such as global security, would yield higher EIF thresholds compared to other issue areas. I had a hunch that my topic was not only legal in nature, but also had some connection with the politics of international relations. Through JSTOR, Summon, and readings from my Political Science classes, I began scoping through international law/relations theory articles.

Mid-way through the project, I had a breakthrough that changed the course of my research strategy. The theoretical literature wasn’t providing adequate explanations for my hypothesis and I found myself unsure on how to proceed. Drawing back to skills I learned from a previous course, I designed an experiment in which I developed a randomized assessment of various treaties’ EIF provisions. In coding the EIFs, I would be able to test my hypothesis by showing whether or not collective action issue areas produced treaties with higher EIF stringency scores. Discussions with my supervising professor, Dr. Sarah Bush, introduced me to Barbara Koremenos’ Continent of International Law (COIL) project in which she utilized a similar research design. Koremenos’ writings would prove indispensible as I used her citations and the library’s databases to identify a new list of reputable authors relevant to my revamped research track.

Producing a usable sample of treaties to code was the most challenging part of the project. I expected to easily access all treaties through the United Nations Treaty Series collection, but the website proved difficult to navigate. Instead, I relied upon a myriad collection of treaty databases maintained by universities, regional governmental organizations, and private research groups to create my treaty population. While analyzing the treaties, I came across the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and discovered a lengthy political battle over its EIF threshold that I thought would be a perfect case study of my hypothesis. A meeting with librarian Rick Lezenby introduced me to previously unknown UN websites through which I found primary sources by the
UN and state representatives on the CTBT EIF negotiations. Further keyword searches through Summon and Google Scholar brought up Congressional reports that filled in gaps from the UN sources and provided new analysis on the U.S’ role in the CTBT controversy. Books acquired through the stacks and ILLiad afforded me better understanding on how to possibly connect the political dimensions of treaties back to my hypothesis.

While cross-referencing and the use of primary sources had reduced my reading list to the most essential works, I was still unable to connect all the parts into a cohesive paper. Here, I relied less on library and print resources and more on the human element. Through office hour visits with Dr. Bush, classroom workshops, and even late-night text sessions with my peers, I was able to bridge the gap that would finally connect my experiment and the politically charged CTBT case study to my hypothesis.

As a capstone project, this paper was the perfect “cap” to my undergraduate career. I realized how much I loved the research process; from developing a question, to working through frustrations and roadblocks, to finally reaching a worthwhile answer. This project exposed me to a different aspect of international law and developed in me a new interest in institutional design research. From the readings and research skills I learned in previous classes, to the expertise of Temple scholars and librarians, to the feedback of my Temple peers, this project represents the cumulative knowledge I acquired at Temple. In essence, this project is Temple Made.