Nothing to Lose, Everything to Gain:

Electoral Vulnerability and International Conflict

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Abstract: Why are some governments more conflict prone than others? While ample studies have been dedicated to explore the numerous differences between democracies and other political systems, variation within democracies is an important avenue of research to build an understanding of international conflict. To this end, this project seeks to address the degree to which variation in governments' electoral vulnerability can explain a state's behavior in joining international conflicts. Put succinctly, *how are differences in a government's margin of electoral safety related to its propensity to engage in interstate conflict*? This paper constructs and then empirically tests an argument that governments are more prone to engage in militarized disputes when they are in a position of greater electoral vulnerability.

Introduction

Why are some governments more conflict prone than others? While ample studies have been dedicated to explore the numerous differences *between* democracies and other political systems, variation *within* democracies is an important avenue of research to build an understanding of international conflict. Democracies are argued to be unique in that regimes are constrained in their behavior to pursue aggressive foreign policies because elected statesmen are accountable to a large electorate. However, a much needed step in the literature seeks to explain how various degrees of governments' electoral vulnerability are related to a state's likelihood of engaging in interstate conflict. To this end, this project seeks to address the degree to which variation in governments' electoral vulnerability can explain a state's behavior in joining international conflicts. Put succinctly, *how are differences in a government's margin of electoral safety related to its propensity to engage in interstate conflict*?

Explaining and testing the pacific effects of democracy remains an important task for scholars of international relations. If democracy can be said to dampen a state's tendency toward conflict with other democracies, then it is worth exploring the mechanisms at work leading to this observation. Even disputes that do not escalate to war are important queries of interest because once a democracy has signaled its resolve in a conflict, its increased audience costs make it more committed to its stated goals than other political regimes (Fearon 1994). Not only does the study of government vulnerability and conflict help in understanding how conflict develops and escalates in the international system, but it also provides policy-relevant research that has direct implications for practitioners of foreign policy.

Despite a vast literature positing that democratic institutions provide an impetus for peaceful foreign relations, I argue that democratic governments with low margins of electoral

safety are more likely to accept the uncertainty of international disputes and engage more freely in conflict. The context for the puzzle of my research is nested in a brief survey of the literature on democracy and conflict in the following section. Following the review of the literature, I develop a theoretical argument connecting governments' margin of safety to interstate conflict and then use my argument to motivate testable implications. Following the theory, a research design is constructed to empirically test the stated hypotheses. Finally, the results of the empirical test are discussed and future extensions for research on democracy are explored.

A Review of an Inconclusive Literature

Democracies differ from other forms of political systems in that they are less likely to go to war with one another. Maoz and Abdolali (1989) use a dyadic level of analysis to show that pairs of democratic states have never been observed to go to war with one another. This empirical finding has been confirmed in numerous studies, but theories built to explain the phenomenon of the "democratic peace" have differed (e.g. Russett and Oneal 1999; Ray 1998). In arguing that "democratic states are in general about as conflict- and war- prone as nondemocracies, but democracies have rarely clashed with one another in violent conflict", Maoz and Russett (1993, 624), for example, explain this pacific behavior is largely due to shared norms of cooperation and compromise. Fearon (1994) constructs an institutional argument built around the increased audience costs found in democracies. Because democratic regimes are punished more harshly than autocracies from reneged threats, democracies signal their resolve through sending more credible threats concerning an interstate dispute. Yet, democracy has been shown to have little monadic effect in dampening the onset of conflict with other regime types (Quackenbush and Rudy 2006).

Not only has variation between political systems been explored, but there is also a developing literature that seeks to explain the onset of conflict due to variation within democracies. Linz (1990) argues that because presidential systems encourage an element of winner-take-all, institutional constraints tend to encourage competitive rather than cooperative environments. As opposed to parliamentary systems, a directly elected president may perceive he has a popular mandate, even if a plurality vote enabled him to win office with less than a majority. Ireland and Gartner (2001) test the relationship between government composition and conflict to assess the degree to which variation within parliamentary systems explains conflict. They find that while majority and coalition governments are statistically indiscernible from one another in regards to their likelihood to initiate conflict, minority governments are more likely to pursue foreign policy with far more caution because they face a greater threat to be voted out of office from a no confidence measure. However, whether it is the effective number of political parties or the composition of a coalition, Reiter and Tillman (2002) argue that both electoral rules and the structure of democratic government have no significant relationship with conflict. Williams (2011) contributes to the above institutional arguments of conflict initiation through deriving a model where governments and leaders are more risk adverse when the shadow of subsequent elections is short. Because legislators are constrained in their decision-making due to the immediacy of constituent accountability arising from elections, pacific behavior is induced.

Similar to Williams (2011) argument of election timing, other studies have argued that governments' propensity toward conflict is dependent upon their vulnerability in retaining office. One strand of this literature has posited that politically vulnerable governments are less likely to engage in conflict. Prins and Sprecher (1999) contend that because vulnerable governments face stronger opposition, government policymaking is constrained and the likelihood of conflict will

decrease. Similarly, Leeds and Davis (1997) show that politically vulnerable governments are less conflict prone because their attention is more focused upon domestic concerns. Yet another strand contends that governments with dangerously low margins of safety are most conflict-prone. Using the economy to proxy political vulnerability, DeRouen (1995) argues that governments facing recessionary periods are more apt to use international conflicts as a diversionary tactic to focus the electorate's attention away from the domestic economy. Additionally, governments have also been argued to use international crises as a means to demonstrate their competence during economic downturns (Richards et al. 1993). Because coalitions lack party discipline and minority governments face strong opposition, Brule and Williams (2006) posit that executives over such governments are less able to implement their ideal domestic policies and thus more likely to turn toward foreign conflicts during periods of domestic dissatisfaction.

Because states are not unitary actors, the domestic determinants of international conflict are an important avenue of research. However, much of the theoretical work in this literature is overly dependent upon the American context as empirical evidence in research designs. Many of these studies have found that domestically vulnerable governments are more inclined toward bellicose foreign behavior (see Ostrom and Job 1986, Nincic 1990, James and Oneal 1991, DeRouen 1995 and Wang 1996 for example). Nevertheless, it is because of this dependency that many scholars have rejected findings in the American foreign policy literature and sought to refute arguments built around electoral vulnerability and conflict. While American preponderance in military and economic capabilities make it an outlier in many circumstances, its governmental leaders are just as vulnerable at the polls as other advanced democracies. As

such, this paper uses a test of 28 democracies to argue that electorally vulnerable governments are more inclined to toward bellicose behavior and thus more likely to join international disputes.

The existing literature is far from conclusive as the relationship of government vulnerability and conflict remains uncertain. Few studies have sought to proxy government vulnerability through a combination of government composition and the proportion of the vote that is controlled by the ruling party(s). The following section seeks to construct a theory built from previous work that addresses how variation in governments' margins of safety both across countries and over time can be related to a state's likelihood to pursue interstate conflict.

A Theory of Electoral Vulnerability and International Conflict

Whether under a parliamentary or presidential system, each government varies in its degree of electoral vulnerability. Additionally, the margin of safety any national government faces varies over time, as each election leaves the ruling party(s) in a unique institutional arrangement. A party may at one election be advantaged through forming a majority government, for example, or disadvantaged the next when forced to form a coalition government. To help elucidate the connection between the margin of safety and a government's sensitivity to the electorate, two examples are presented below.

First, *Party A* wins a clear majority and is left in an advantageous position relative to other parties due to its control of a majority of legislative seats and is unlikely to be burdened by the cumbersome demands of governing by coalition. Furthermore, not only does *Party A*'s advantageous institutional arrangement enable it to face a diminished opposition, but also, as the level of vote share increases above that required to maintain government, *Party A* has a greater degree of maneuverability in its policy making. In this way, *Party A* is less constrained both in

its short- and medium-term time horizons because its policies face weak legislative opposition and the shadow of upcoming elections are less concerning because it devalues marginal changes of vote share relative to electorally vulnerable parties. In the second example, *Party B* forms a minority government after failing to gain a majority of votes/seats. In addition to not holding an institutional advantage through controlling a majority of the legislature, the party is continuously vulnerable to a vote of no confidence from the opposition. Moreover, because *Party B*'s government is sensitive to any marginal change in vote share, its medium-term policy strategy is highly constrained by the electorate.

When facing decision-making in international politics, every regime is subject to what Robert Putnam has described as the "two-level game" (Putnam 1988). Governments cannot act with a free hand in the international sphere because whatever policy they enact at the international level must win the support of a winning coalition from the selectorate at the national level. In this way, policies enacted at the international level pose direct consequences for a regime's survival if it is not sufficiently accepted by its domestic audience. All regimes fall liable to the two-level game, but because democracies face large selectorates, they encounter greater domestic constraints than authoritarian regimes. Thus, for a balance to be struck between foreign and domestic policy agendas, a democratic government must place significant weight upon the demands of the electorate.

Because a vulnerable government is more sensitive to marginal changes to its vote share in upcoming elections, it is more inclined to pursue an aggressive foreign policy and not balk from challenges abroad. While governments with high margins of safety face reduced domestic constraints in the two-level game, vulnerable governments are highly constrained by their constituents and are more apt to accept the associated risks from engaging in foreign disputes.

The utility from participating in an international conflict is a cost-benefit function of the probability of winning the dispute multiplied by the benefits derived from its conclusion minus the associated costs of joining the international conflict.[1] All disputes are clouded by a fog of uncertainty and have inherent electoral risks for a ruling government. One must note that the assumption of uncertainty in international conflict creates acute risks for democracies because it is impossible to divine how the effects of a militarized dispute will shape subsequent elections. The more secure a government is from marginal deviations in upcoming elections, the less likely it is to risk its strong position for international gains. However, as a government becomes less secure, it is increasingly inclined to accept more uncertainty and turn toward international conflict as a means to leverage domestic electoral gains. Thus, a government's propensity to join a militarized interstate dispute increases as its electoral margin of safety diminishes. Vulnerable governments turn toward international bargaining and aggressive foreign policies as a means to leverage additional domestic support through two primary mechanisms: 1) diversionary effects and 2) welfare gains derived from international conflicts.

International bargaining and dispute formation serve as an excellent means for a government to realize short-term domestic gains through a diversionary effect. When constrained in domestic decision-making, a government can turn toward the international level to rally its voters around a nationalist cause. Many international crises often begin with swells of patriotism and support for the ruling government, however, these rises in national support are rarely long-lived and are by no means guaranteed at the onset. Therefore, a government is more inclined to pursue an aggressive foreign policy when it is facing increased domestic vulnerability. Additionally, governments do not necessarily have to initiate disputes to induce a

[1]Summary of the expected utility from an international conflict:
*Utility = (Probability of Success*Benefits) - Costs*

"rally around the flag" effect, but can also stand course in the face of foreign aggression over an international commitment. One does not have to look far for examples of governments using this tool of foreign policy to leverage international outcomes for domestic gains. Thatcher's Conservative government, for example, used the Argentine-initiated dispute over the Falkland Islands to bolster its domestic support among the British electorate.

The second mechanism by which a vulnerable government can use foreign conflicts to gain domestic support is through the promise and disbursement of welfare gains derived from international disputes. Many foreign quarrels involve tangible economic benefits such as shipping lanes, natural resources, bordering territory or financial access to new markets to name a few. A government can use the gains derived from a dispute to bolster its support among the electorate either through the provision of public goods or through the specific allotment of private goods to highly valued domestic groups. In the former example, public goods can be used to gain widespread national support while electoral support from individuals and select political actors can be induced through the provision of private goods. Both the promise of such rewards and the effectual disbursement of the gains associated with a conflict give cause for a government with low margins of safety to join an international dispute.

A party governing in coalition, however, will be less able to exercise any deviation from existing policies due to it being susceptible to the defection of a junior partner. Therefore, a government ruling in coalition has less leverage to pursue its most preferred foreign policy. For this reason, government coalitions should be less likely to engage in international conflict despite the ruling party having a low margin of electoral safety relative to the opposition.

While a government's electoral insecurity is argued to increase the likelihood of interstate conflict, this should be tempered by a party's political ideology. Many studies have shown that

rightist parties are more hawkish than leftist parties (e.g. Klingermann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994; Schultz 2001). Regardless of ideological orientation, any government with a low margin of safety faces more domestic constraints and thus, should be more inclined to advance an aggressive foreign policy and not bulk in the face of militarized confrontation; however, left ideologies should diminish this effect while right ideologies should enhance this effect.

The above argument motivates the following testable hypotheses. First, as the difference between the government and opposition vote share decreases, the probability of interstate conflict increases. Because vote share is the best indicator of a party's electoral success and even its institutional position in government (opposition), it acts as an ideal test of a government's margin of safety and its propensity toward militarized disputes. Another institutional hypothesis is that a ruling party in coalition should be less likely to engage in conflict; however, as its vote share increases, the pacifying effects of coalition should diminish. Finally, it is hypothesized that a government's ideology should enhance or diminish the effects of vulnerability. Rightist governments are more likely to engage in conflict than those parties representing left ideologies. The subsequent research design is aimed to test the aforementioned hypotheses.

Empirical Analysis

In order to test the degree to which a government's margin of safety, composition and ideology is related to the likelihood of an interstate dispute, I first require cross-sectional data on the occurrence of international conflicts involving at least one democratic state during a given year. The Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data collection provides information about conflicts in which one or more states threaten, display, or use force against one or more other

states between 1816 and 2001 (Jones, Bremer and Singer 1996; Ghosen, Palmer and Bremer 2004). The dependent variable in this research design is the occurrence of militarized conflicts during a given country-year observation. Using these data, I construct *militarized interstate dispute* (*MID*) as a dichotomous variable where 1 indicates whether at least one MID occurred during a country-year observation.[2] While there are 1,085 observations, 834 of these take values of zero indicating no MIDs occurred during the country-year. Furthermore, the decision to dichotomize the variable was justified in that only 96 country-years observed more than one MID, thus it is substantively important to understand what gives rise to a county engaging in a single militarized dispute.[3] *Table 1* provides a summary of descriptive statistics for each variable of interest.

To measure the key explanatory variable of interest, *margin of safety*, I use election data provided in the Comparative Manifesto Project (Budge et al. 2001). Margin of safety is constructed through taking the difference of vote share between the largest party in government and the largest party in opposition.[4] Using the difference in vote share resulting from one election, I lag this variable to fill-in observations for all country-years between national elections. Negative values correspond to a government party having a fewer percent of votes than the dominant opposition party and positive values indicate the largest party in government having a higher vote share than the largest party in opposition. The minimum observed value is -25.9 in Norway (1969-72) while the maximum is 38.4 in Austria (1962-65).[5] In addition to vote share, I use the Party Government dataset to create a dummy variable for *coalition* (Jaap, Keman

[2] A dispute must have a hostility level of "show of force", "use of force", or "war" to be considered a MID in the empirical analysis.
[3] Approximately 8% of observations experienced 2-4 MIDs ,14.3% observed 1 MID and 76.9% observed 0.
[4] The correlation between "vote gap" and "seat gap" is 0.88 which indicates that using vote share as a proxy for electoral vulnerability also has significance for institutional arrangements.
[5] Note: Mexico had the highest observed value of margin of safety with 93.8 (1961-63), but it is dropped from the analysis for the years1960 through 1996 because it does not meet the specification of "democracy" according to *Polity IV* measurements.

and Budge 2011). This variable takes a value of 1 if the government was in coalition or 0 otherwise.[6] Not only are these variables expected to independently be related to conflict, but their interaction should also be statistically significant. The effects of margin of safety should be mitigated if the ruling party is in coalition.

Table 1 about here

The Comparative Manifesto dataset also provides measurements of party ideology at every election. Using these data, I construct the variable, *government ideology*, as the left-right placement of the largest party in government. Parties are placed on a 10-point scale where 0 indicates an extreme left position, while 10 represents the most rightist ideological position. The majority of observed governments are left-of-center, but enough variation exists to provide leverage in addressing the relationship between ideology and conflict.

Because my theory pertains to how margins of safety affect a democracy's likelihood of engaging in international conflict, I censor the analysis to only democracies. Using the Polity IV dataset, I exclude any country-year observations from the model that do not meet minimum requirements of institutional and electoral characteristics (Marshall, Jaggers and Gurr 2010).[7] In addition to democracy, I use the lagged onset of MIDs as a control in the model. Put succinctly, one could expect that if a militarized interstate dispute occurred in the previous year, the country is more likely to observe a MID in the following year. Additionally, I control for the power of the executive to make unilateral decisions at the international level through including a

[6] While minority governments are considered to have low margins of safety and thus are substantively interesting, I excluded such a variable from the analysis. This was done primarily because minority governments are nested in the combination of vote difference and coalition. This is confirmed when adding a control for minority in the model, the coefficients and standard errors were effectively unchanged.

[7] Polity IV data uses institutional characteristics to give a country a rank of its autocracy versus democracy level from -10 to 10. Only country-year observations receiving values of 6-10 are included.

parameter measuring executive constraint in the model.[8] Finally, I control for economic performance to test the validity of my argument while including the context of the national economy. Using data from the World Penn Table, I include a variable for the real GDP per capita in the model as well as the annual change in real GDP per capita (Heston, Summers and Aten 2009). The inclusion of the year-to-year change is meant to test alternative domestic economic arguments of when governments are most likely to join militarized interstates disputes.

I specify a logistic regression to estimate the parameters in my model. Due to the dependent variable being dichotomous, the assumptions of logistic regression make it the best choice because the dependent variable is bounded in that it can only take values of 0 or 1. While the majority of MID observations are zeros, they are not so preponderant as to be considered a "rare event", and as such, the use of a generalized logistic regression is justified.[9] The model tests 28 democratic countries between the years 1960 through 2001; however, not every country is observed throughout the time series because some do not maintain a consistently high Polity score while others democratized in the midst of the four decades of interest (e.g. Albania).[10] The model is specified below.[11]

$$Militarized\ Interstate\ Dispute = \propto +\beta_1[Margin\ of\ Safety] + \beta_2[Coalition] + \beta_3[Margin\ of\ Safety * Coalition] + \beta_4[Ideology] + \beta_5[Controls]$$

[8] Executive constraint is taken from the Polity IV dataset.
[9] A probit model was also used, and as expected, it produced substantively identical results and consistent statistical significance across variables. Similarly, a rare events logitistic regression produced nearly identical results.
[10] The appendix includes a list of the countries and years included in the analysis.
[11] Because margin of safety could act to make both highly vulnerable governments and highly secure governments more aggressive, a quadratic term was used in preliminary analyses, but did not show statistical significance.

Results

My analysis includes 28 countries between the years 1960 through 2001; however, due to using the lagged occurrence of a MID as a control, the test is limited to 1961 through 2001. The results from the model are presented in *Table 2*. The primary explanatory variable, *margin of safety*, is both statistically significant and correctly signed. It is predicted that as the government increases its margin of safety over the opposition through gaining one additional percent of vote share, that the likelihood of a MID decreases by 4%; conversely, as a government becomes more vulnerable, it is expected to increase its probability of engaging in a MID by 4% for each one percent reduction in vote share. While the presence of a coalition government is correctly signed in that coalitions are less likely to initiate an international conflict, it is not statistically significant at conventional levels. Thus, the difference between a government ruling by majority or in coalition is statistically indiscernible in its relationship to engage in an international dispute. However, the positive signed coefficient on the interaction of government safety and coalition confirms the hypothesis that coalition acts to mitigate the effects of highly insecure governments and international conflicts. The presence of a coalition should diminish the indirect relationship between a ruling party's advantageous difference in vote share over the opposition and the likelihood of participating in conflict. And finally, while government ideology is statistically significant, it has modest substantive effects. Its positively signed coefficient indicates that as a government moves one unit to the right in ideology on a 10-point scale, it is predicted to result in 5% more MIDs. Conversely, if a government were to move to the left by one unit, it is expected to engage in 5% less MIDs than an identical government with a right-of-center government.

Table 2 about here

When controlling for executive constraint, the results cannot support with any degree of confidence that governments with less constrained executives are any more likely to engage in conflicts than governments with highly constrained executives such as the majority of parliamentary systems. Therefore, the analysis supports the explanatory power given to a government's margin of electoral safety even over institutional frameworks such as executive constraints (presidential systems are often argued as having less constrained executives). Additionally, neither a state's GDP per capita at time *t* nor the change in its GDP from time *t-1* to time *t* is statistically significant. This gives a high degree of explanatory leverage to the margin of safety argument posited in this paper over counterarguments such as a government's increase in belligerence in response to recessionary periods brought about by economic shocks. Finally, the lagged occurrence of MIDs as a control is both correctly signed and highly significant. A country that had a MID last year is over seven times more likely to experience a MID in the subsequent year. It must be noted that this control may not be as substantively significant as indicated in the model due to potential autocorrelation of errors.[12] It should be noted that as a robustness check, standard errors have been clustered by the 28 countries included in the model.[13]

The empirical test conducted above allows for the confirmation of the first hypothesis. Governments with low margins of safety, as operationalized through differences in vote share, are more likely to engage in conflict than electorally safe governments. However, the second hypothesis is only partially supported. Coalitions are not statistically significant less likely to participate in international disputes; however, coalitions can help temper the adverse effects of a ruling party with a dangerously low difference in vote share relative to the opposition. Finally,

[12] *Figure 2*, included in the appendix, depicts the relationship between margin of safety and likelihood of a MID.
[13] Clustering by countries controls for an observation in one year of a country being related to an observation in another year of the same country (i.e. not all country-year observations are independent).

the hypothesis concerning ideology is mostly confirmed as government ideology is both significant and positive. Rightist governments are more likely to engage in conflict than leftist governments. And thus, one could expect that a right-leaning government with a low margin of electoral safety will be even more conflict prone than a leftist government with an equally precarious electoral vulnerability.

Table 3 about here

A further interpretation of the results is provided in *Table 3*. Using observed country-year characteristics from the data, both the predicted occurrence of a MID as well as the observed occurrence of a MID is listed. In the case of the minority government of 1973 Denmark, for example, the probability of a militarized interstate approaches nearly 40% because of the rightist governing party's precarious position of vulnerability. The government in 1985 Italy, on the other hand, is not only left-leaning, but has a more comfortable margin of electoral safety than the government of 1978 France. Because of its dangerously low vote share advantage and due to it experiencing a MID in the previous year, the French government is predicted with over 50% likelihood to experience a MID in 1978.

Conclusion

How does a government's margin of electoral safety relate to its propensity to engage in international conflicts? This question not only has substantive interest for scholars of international conflict and electoral systems, but also for statesmen and policymakers. This paper has sought to contribute to the currently inconclusive literature on government vulnerability and conflict through espousing and testing an argument where government vulnerability is more

likely to lead to international conflict. Governments with low margins of safety face more domestic constraints and are therefore more likely to employ an aggressive foreign policy and not balk at militarized resistance from other states. Furthermore, the use of a cross-national research design allows further leverage to be gained on exploring how variation across democratic system is related to electoral vulnerability and international conflict. This paper takes a needed step outside of the American context to incorporate advanced democracies throughout Europe, the Americas and East Asia. Despite vast differences in legislative systems and executive constraint, the results from the analysis are robust. Electoral vulnerability is one of many domestic determinants of international conflict; nonetheless, its independent effect is substantial amidst of host of other factors. Furthermore, when it comes to the gravity of a militarized dispute, any variable that has an effect, regardless of its magnitude, is worthy of investigation and due concern.

Despite the confirmation of the aforementioned empirical analysis, this paper is not without its concerns and there remain extensions for future work. Currently, margin of safety is only measured in terms of vote share. This should be expanded to include the number and size of effective parties because the threat of defection can be just as powerful a source of vulnerability as vote share. The presence of a minor party in coalition acting as "king maker", for example, may have substantial constraining effects upon the leading party in government. Additionally, the current model only tests the ideology of the largest party in government. Expanding the analysis to include ideology of the opposition as well as junior partners in a governing coalition can also allow for a greater test of a government's vulnerability. If a party is ruling with parties in close ideological proximity, it is less liable to defection than a coalition composed of a myriad of ideological representations.

Finally, while this paper tests the general relationship between electoral vulnerability and engaging in militarized interstate disputes, future studies would be well served to investigate the extent to which competing causal mechanisms are at work leading. Disaggregating data to test the likelihood of vulnerable governments engaging in specific types of conflicts would allow for great explanatory power. For example, separating categories of MIDS to examine whether tenuous governments engage in militarized disputes in order to secure distributional gains to appease domestic interests would allow for a test of diversionary conflict arguments. While this paper provides support for theories of vulnerability and conflict, there is still room for future analyses to theorize when and why insecure regimes enter into conflict.

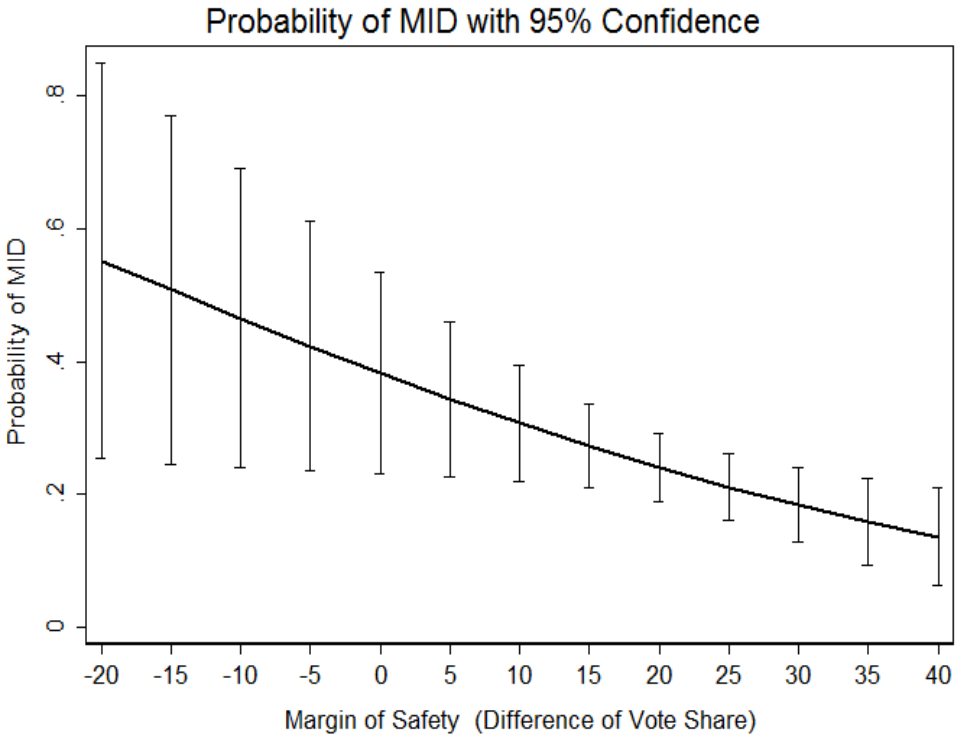
Appendix

TABLE 4: ***COUNTRIES AND YEARS INCLUDED IN THE EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS***

Country	*Years*	*Country*	*Years*
Australia	1961 – 2001	*Luxembourg*	1964 - 2004
Austria	1962 - 2001	*Macedonia*	1998 - 2002
Belgium	1961 – 2001	*Mexico**	1961 – 2000
Bulgaria	1990 – 2001	*Netherlands*	1963 – 2006
Canada	1962 – 2000	*New Zealand*	1960 - 2002
Croatia	1992 – 2001	*Norway*	1961 - 2001
Denmark	1960 – 2001	*Portugal*	1976 - 2005
Finland	1966 – 2001	*Romania*	1990 – 2000
France	1962 - 2001	*Slovakia*	1992 – 2002
Germany	1961 - 2001	*Spain*	1977 – 2004
Greece	1974 - 2000	*Sweden*	1960 - 2006
Ireland	1973 – 2001	*Turkey*	1961 – 1999
Israel	1973 – 1999	*United Kingdom*	1964 – 2010
Italy	1963 – 2001	*United States*	1960 - 2004

Notes: *Indicates not all observed country-years met requirements for democracy as specified by Polity scores.

FIGURE 1*: THE EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL VULNERABILITY ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF A MILITARIZED INTERSTATE DISPUTE*



Notes: The above plot holds all values constant while margin of safety varies. The government is moderate at a placement of 5 and not in coalition. In addition, the system is parliamentary and no MID occurred in the previous year. Australia in 1993 reflects this theoretical condition.

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Tables

TABLE 1: ***DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS***

Variable	*Obs.*	*Mean*	*S.D.*	*Min.*	*Max.*
Militarized Interstate Dispute					
MID (dichotomous)	1,085	0.23	0.42	0	1
MID (count)	1,085	0.40	0.94	0	11
Margin of Victory (Vote Gap)	897	8.55	12.36	-25.9	38.39
Ideology	897	4.86	0.94	1.93	7.42
Coalition	897	0.54	0.50	0	1
Controls					
Lagged MID (dichotomous)	1,062	0.23	0.42	0	1
Executive Constraint	875	6.85	0.47	5	7
GDP per capital	946	18,736	8,088	2,487	64,155
Change in GDP per capita	924	462.0	601.4	-2,502	4,121

TABLE 2: ***LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF GOVERNMENT MARGIN OF SAFETY AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF A MILITARIZED INTERSTATE DISPUTE***

Variable	*Model Vote Gap*	*Odds Ratio*
Margin of Safety	-0.04*	0.96
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Coalition (dummy)	-0.68	0.50
	(0.45)	(0.23)
Margin of Safety Coalition*	0.04*	1.04
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Government Ideology	0.10	1.11
	(0.11)	(0.12)
Executive Constraint	0.22	0.75
	(0.32)	(0.16)
GDP per capita	0.00	1.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Change in GDP per capita	-0.0003	0.999
	(0.0002)	(0.000)
MID (t-1)	1.80**	6.05
	(0.32)	(1.96)
Constant	-0.32	0.73
	(1.32)	(0.97)
Observations: 814		
Pseudo R-squared: 0.17		

*Notes: *p<.05: **p<.01. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Standard errors have been clustered by country for robustness.*

TABLE 3: EXPECTED AND OBSERVED VALUES OF A MID

Variable	***Minority Denmark 1973***	***Coalition Italy 1982***	***Majority Government U.K. 1989***	***France 1978***
Margin of Safety	-13.4	7.9	11.5	0.46
Coalition	0	1	0	1
Government Ideology	6.9	4.7	6.5	1.91
Executive Constraint	7	7	7	5
GDP per capita	17,741	18,399	21,732	18,848
Change in GDP per capita	794	31	472	577
MID (t-1)	0	0	0	1
Expected Likelihood of MID	0.39	0.17	0.22	0.56
Observed MID:	0	0	0	1