# Flexible Election Timing and International Conflict[1]

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While there are a large number of studies examining the differences in conflict behavior due to varying institutional arrangements, scholars have not effectively addressed the differences in electoral cycles between systems with fixed versus flexible election timing. At the same time that parliamentary regimes give the PM the power to dissolve parliament, they give the parliament the power to remove the government with a vote of no confidence. Together, these institutional attributes make the precise timing of the elections—and thus the public's opportunity to hold the government accountable—largely uncertain. I develop a theory that expectations of an upcoming election constrain the foreign policy decision making of executives, and induce pacific behavior. I estimate the probability of an election in a sample of 17 advanced parliamentary democracies from the 1950s-2001. I find convincing support for my theory, as the probability of hostile dispute initiation is a function of those characteristics that influence the timing of elections, including majority support and the electoral cycle. More specifically, majority and minority governments face varying incentives to initiate disputes because of the different risks of an immediate election.

[1] A previous version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, 2011 and the International Relations Workshop at Texas Tech University. I would like to thank Phil Arena, David Brule, Daina Chiba, Dennis Foster, Michael T. Koch, Bill Reed, Martin Steinwand, and Scott Wolford for their helpful comments. Replication materials, as well as the Online Appendix, are available at web.missouri.edu/williamslaro/.

Electorally-motivated leaders make foreign policy choices with an eye toward the next election. In this manner, the threat of performing poorly in an upcoming election constrains the foreign policy behavior of executives. It is peculiar, then, that scholars have not effectively addressed the differences in electoral cycles between systems with fixed versus flexible election timing. In these systems, an election can be called at virtually any time as a result of decisions made by the government—by dissolving parliament—or the opposition—via a successful vote of no-confidence. Though both actors can trigger early elections and an election must be called by a specific date, the exact timing of elections is often uncertain and the object of intense speculation. If executives choose their foreign policies with an eye toward the next election, then we should give more attention to the differences in election timing in systems with fixed versus flexible timing.

I develop a theory that electoral cycles influence the conflict behavior by determining the timing of the opportunities for the public to hold the government accountable. As the anticipated risk of an early election increases, governments become less aggressive because of fear of electoral retribution. I test this theory on a sample of 17 advanced parliamentary democracies from the 1950s-2001. I first use country-specific models of election timing based on government- and national-level attributes as well as policy performance to generate the probability of an immediate election, which I argue represents an accurate approximation of real-world expectations. My expectation is that the probability of dispute initiation will be highest when the probability of an early election is lowest. I find support for this proposition, and demonstrate that the threat of *ex post* accountability produces decreases in the probability of conflict that rival traditional determinants of conflict such as contiguity. I also present a more nuanced picture of election timing and conflict than previous studies. The effects of the electoral cycle on dispute initiation is the result of the interaction between majority support and the time left before an election must be called (or, the time left in the constitutional inter-election period [CIEP]). Since majority and minority governments face different election hazards throughout the electoral cycle, their conflict behavior reflects these differing constraints. This project is able to shed light on two empirical patterns: that of minority governments being less conflictive than majority governments, and that of more conflict occurring early in the election cycle rather than later.

This study improves on previous research in a number of ways. First, by recognizing the constraining effects of potential electoral accountability, I present a more accurate portrayal of the relationship between public control and the executive's freedom of action. This is the first attempt to estimate country-specific models of election timing, which presents a portrait of election timing that sheds light on a number of empirical puzzles. The models perform extremely well, and correctly predict 97.0% of the observations (approximately a 5% improvement in predictive capacity over the modal category). Second, I clearly identify the credible mechanism linking government attributes (such as majority governments and time left in CIEP) with conflict as being one of increasing the opportunity for *ex post* accountability through

early elections. Finally, I provide a more accurate conceptualization of the varying constraints that different governments and states face as they progress through the electoral cycle.

These findings are relevant for a number of literatures in the study of international conflict. The results suggest that greater attention should be paid to how the risk of early elections—and governments' expectations of success or failure—affects domestic audience costs (Fearon 1994). Indeed, as the probability of an early election increases, then the potential audience costs for backing down in a crisis are likely to be magnified. These are the situations in which governments can more credibly signal their resolve to potential aggressors. These results also speak toward the role of opposition parties in constraining the foreign policy behavior of governments (Schultz 1998). Rather than being passive observers, these results identify the constraining role that opposition parties can have in determining *ex post* accountability through early elections.

In the next section I briefly discuss broad theories of domestic politics and international conflict and how election timing fits into those theories. I then develop my theory regarding electoral expectations and international conflict. In the third section I describe my data collection and estimation procedure. I then test my hypotheses and provide the implications for other research. In the final section I conclude.

## *Ex Post* Accountability and Conflict Initiation

This project directly tests how government attributes affect conflict through the *ex ante* mechanism of the timing of elections. In doing so, I can isolate the effects of attributes without convoluting the relationship with expectations derived from different causal mechanisms. More specifically, I explore how electoral cycles—the period from one election to the next—influence executives' freedom of action in foreign policy making.

We can divide the population of studies of the motivations to use force at different stages of the electoral cycle into two sets of studies, which arrive at two diametrically opposed conclusions. The first set of studies postulates diversionary behavior. The idea that a successful international conflict can improve an executive's prospects for reelection is not a new one. Conflicts throughout the ages have been identified as being (at least partly) motivated by the desire to improve domestic political stability, including, among others, the Napoleonic Wars and World War I (Blainey 1977). When evaluating the diversionary literature, it is helpful to divide it into two distinct, but similar, ideas. The first approach is the "rally" approach because of its fascination with the "rally 'round the flag phenomenon." This is the idea that the leader's incentive to initiate conflict is based on the immediate and substantial boost in popularity following an international conflict (Mueller 1970). While early studies found that leaders are more likely to use force in the period immediately prior to an election (e.g., Russett 1990), the strength of the empirical relationship varies under conditions such as the presence of war (Stoll 1984), or economic problems (Hess and Orphanides 1995). The second approach suggests that,

when faced with a declining economy, leaders have the incentive to improve the public's perception of the leader's competence by successfully engaging in a conflict abroad (Richards et al. 1993). In both the competence and the rally versions of diversionary theory, the leader has the incentive to use force immediately prior to an election because the popularity boost (rally version) or the improved perception of competence (competence version) increases the leader's chances at reelection (see Levy 1989 for a review).

Other scholars examining elections and conflict take fault with the empirical evidence and suggest that any sort of rally tends to be short-lived and slight following a crisis. Instead, a different strand of the literature predicts the opposite behavior of diversionary theory. These scholars look at the mechanisms by which governments will be held accountable—*ex post*—for their foreign policy behavior. In a way, this category relies on the threat of *ex post* accountability to *ex ante* constrain office-motivated leaders. Accountability can occur through government change via a successful no-confidence motion or through elections. By distributing power to the public—who is typically more risk-averse than the executive—states will be less conflictive (Leblang and Chan 2003; Reiter and Tillman 2002). Those attributes that increase the costs of removing the government increase the risk of initiation (Palmer, London and Regan 2004) and enable states to fight longer (Koch 2009). A more direct test suggests that the risk of initiation is highest when leaders are more secure in office (Chiozza and Goemans 2003).

This relationship extends to electoral concerns, as Gaubatz (1991) finds that the threat of upcoming electoral losses induces pacific behavior in the executive. He argues that the key factor in the relationship between election cycles and uses of force is the amount of control the public has over its leaders. As the election nears, democracies resist the pressure to start wars because the public power is highest relative to the power of the government (Gaubatz 1991; see also Huth and Allee 2002). On the other hand, more recent cross-national studies have failed to identify a systematic relationship between foreign policy aggression and elections (Lian and Oneal 1993; DeRouen 1995; Leeds and Davis 1997; Meernik and Waterman 1996).

When we consider the diversionary incentives that supposedly rewards leaders' aggressive behaviors (e.g., Downs and Rocke 1994) in tandem with the constraining impacts of *ex post* accountability (e.g., Gaubatz 1991), a puzzle arises: if leaders use force to buttress their electoral fortunes (as diversionary theory posits), then why do we not see leaders use force when it would help them the most—in the run up to an election? I argue that these pieces do not provide an accurate portrayal of elections and conflict because of two problems. The first problem is that these models, when applied outside the United States to flexible election systems, are misspecified. Since early diversionary studies examined whether the immediate pre-election behavior was different than behavior throughout the president's term, a dummy variable indicating an election year was a simple but effective test (e.g., Stoll 1984; Russett 1990). Even studies focusing on the dynamics throughout the election cycle (e.g., Gaubatz 1991) employ only slightly more informative variables such as election quintiles. These approaches may be appropriate—though arguably not precise enough—for fixed systems, but they are woefully

inadequate for systems with flexible timing. In these systems, one must incorporate the idea that an election can be called at virtually any time (see Strom and Swindle 2002 for variations). A nice first step toward a more complete modeling strategy is Koch (2009), who uses the time left in the CIEP (logged). Even then, this improved operationalization lacks the nuance within election cycles. Implicitly, this assumes that two governments with 12 months left in the election cycle face the same risk of an election, whether they are majority or minority governments, single-party or coalition governments, young or old.

The second flaw in these studies is that there is a disconnect between their theories and empirical methods. Using the time left in CIEP as a proxy for the likelihood of an election is appropriate at the end of the cycle (when an election has to occur), but we know that the probability of elections varies throughout the cycle. Indeed, assuming that the risk uniformly increases or decreases throughout the cycle is imprecise at best and wrong at worst. Furthermore, if the causal mechanism of these theories is electoral accountability, then they are addressing the research question in an indirect fashion. If it is about opportunities for *ex post* accountability and the time left in CIEP is intended to measure this, then why not directly measure that opportunity (as the probability of an election)? Otherwise, one assumes that all governments—regardless of majority status, size or strength—influence conflict similarly just because they are all at the same point in the electoral cycle. In the next section, I develop my theory of the expected risk of elections and their effects on international conflict and demonstrate how my theory improves upon these measures.

## Theory

I start with the basic assumptions that leaders are motivated by remaining in office (Downs 1957) as well as fulfilling their policy goals, and that they pursue policies that help them satisfy their objectives. Elections, by changing the composition of parliament, threaten both the leader's tenure and his/her ideological goals by potentially removing the leader's party from its position of power. Certainly, executives prefer to stay in power, but if that goal is not attainable, I assume that they would prefer to have their party maintain power. The threat of upcoming elections influences the foreign policy behavior of executives because international conflict threatens the primary and secondary goals of executives.

Elections offer the most direct manner of holding leaders accountable. For foreign policy to influence vote choice, however, a foreign issue must be perceived as important and salient to voters (e.g., Edwards, Mitchell and Welch 1995). Schultz presents convincing evidence that democratic publics are aware of foreign policy events (2001). First, the "public is clearly aware of its government's participation in international crises: concern about foreign affairs rises and falls in lock-step with US involvement" (Schultz 2001: 74). Moreover, uses of force occupy some of the highest positions on the list of news events that the public follows ``very closely'' (Schultz 2001: 74). Among the voting public, foreign policy issues are consistently quite salient, and eclipsed in terms of importance by only economic issues (Singer 2011). Indeed, Aldrich,

Sullivan and Borgida (1989) find that foreign policy may offer a better way of distinguishing between candidates at elections than domestic issues.

Foreign policy has the capacity to influence voters' decisions (e.g., Fiorina 1981; Nickelsburg and Norpoth 2000), but in what manner? The cross-national evidence generally points to a public that is risk-averse to conflict, so when the public has a greater role in decision making—like immediately prior to an election—the leader will strive to reflect those pacific interests. Election campaigns create open political spaces where politically legitimate actors can take diverse stances in foreign policy in front of an attentive public (Gaubatz 1991: 16). This corresponds to an increased opportunity for the public to hold the government accountable. In fact, we can identify international conflict as a primary factor influencing leaders' political fortunes in a number of ways. While Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995) show that democratic leaders face higher removal hazards after defeat in a costly war than autocratic leaders, Chiozza and Goemans (2004) find no effect of crisis outcomes on democratic leaders' tenure. Yet, there are obvious cases where a war causes a president to not run for reelection since he is facing likely defeat (like Harry Truman with Korea and Lyndon Johnson with Vietnam) (Auerswald 1999: 472). Candidates are cautious to campaign on pro-war platforms, and instead focus on framing themselves as the best candidate to promote peace (Gaubatz 1999: 49-50).

While the findings for the effects of conflict on leader tenure are inconclusive, there is preliminary evidence that governing parties involved in international conflict suffer at the polls during the next election, especially when economic conditions are poor (Williams, Brule and Koch 2010). In the US case, the shadow of upcoming elections has been pinpointed as part of the rationale behind President Eisenhower not intervening in the Suez Canal Crisis (Auerswald 1999) and George H. W. Bush not sending ground troops into Somalia in the Summer of 1992 (Baum 2004). Consequently, while there may not be a definitive answer regarding the effects of conflict on leader tenure, there is reason to believe that conflict influences the electoral fortunes of leaders and their parties.

In parliamentary democracies, concerns about the cabinet's ability to maintain the parliament's confidence acts as a brake on foreign policy aggression. For example, France was hesitant to intervene in the Suez Canal Crisis because Prime Minister Guy Mollet feared that members of his fragile governing coalition would defect at the first sign of trouble (Auerswald 1999). The other architect of Operation Musketeer, British PM Anthony Eden, faced a no-confidence motion (NCM) that threatened the cabinet's stability following the British intervention (Kahler 1984). While the NCM failed to bring down the government, a highly unpopular Eden resigned two months later. Thus, the overall evidence suggests that the public pays attention to hostile foreign policy actions and considers them highly salient, and parties respond to these shifts in public opinion. This is reflected in a number of phenomena, including leaders' concerns about how foreign policy aggression affects the electoral fortunes of their party as well as their own political tenure.

Given the potentially high costs of international conflict, governments will avoid aggressive behavior as elections approach out of concern of foolishly making foreign policy a salient issue. This statement is unproblematic in fixed systems when all actors know from day 1 when the election will be. In flexible systems, on the other hand, there is always some uncertainty about the timing of elections by the important actors (PM, head of state, coalition partners, opposition parties, etc). Each actor continually updates his/her predictions of possible election dates, but no one knows exactly when it will happen until parliament is dissolved and new elections are called.

At this point perhaps a simple explanation of flexible election timing is needed. A general election can be called early in the majority of parliamentary systems for three reasons: at the end of the constitutionally-defined election cycle, after a passage of a vote of no confidence against the incumbent cabinet, and after the dissolution of parliament. I will briefly explore how each of these reasons for elections constrains the foreign policy choices of executives.

The first catalyst for general elections in parliamentary systems is the end of the constitutional inter-election period. Simply put, time runs out and an election is legally required. While the precise date of the election may still be uncertain (depending on the typical length of the campaign), all actors know that an election must occur by the specified date. It is during this time that executives in parliamentary systems face similar accountability constraints as those in systems with fixed election timing. Cross-national, systematic studies identify this period of the election cycle that executives are the least war-prone (Gaubatz 1991). Throughout the rest of the election cycle, there is a great deal more uncertainty about the possible timing of the next election, as well as significant variation in those predictions.

In parliamentary governments, the government depends on the parliament's support for its formation and continuation. The power for a parliament to pass a no-confidence motion (NCM) gives the parliament a strong check on the power of the executive (e.g., Diermeier, Eraslan and Merlo 2002). This allows the legislature to vote to remove the prime minister and have new elections in the event that it loses the support of parliament.[i] Yet, much like the lack of checkmates in chess games between grandmasters, NCMs may not have to pass to be effective; credible signs of successful NCMs may be enough to trigger preemptive resignation by the government (Laver 2006). Thus, governments facing a higher risk of removal by the parliament will be reluctant to choose policies that would risk their removal. As shown by the Suez Crisis, executives will be unwilling to initiate conflicts that could empower the opposition and threaten their tenures (Auerswald 1999).

The third institutional tool is the ability of the PM to dissolve parliament. Typically, this gives the government a significant advantage to determine when an election will be held at a strategically advantageous time (Smith 2004). Cross-national studies of election timing identify the value of holding office relative to expected benefits from future governing as the key

determination in the decision to dissolve parliament (Balke 1990; Kayser 2005; Palmer and Whitten 2000).

How does international conflict affect the relative benefit of holding office? If economic conditions are strong and an election is expected soon, the leaders face no incentive to risk their favorable electoral prospects by initiating a foreign conflict. If conditions are poor and an election is on the horizon, then some have theorized that leaders have an incentive to "gamble for resurrection" (Downs and Rocke 1994). In reality, we see few leaders engaging in this type of behavior, possibly because of the electoral costs to conflict identified above. Executives even seem reluctant to immediately face the electorate following successful military campaigns if other conditions are unfavorable. A prime candidate for this type of behavior is the aftermath of the British victory in the Falklands War. The public responded favorably to the victory—even in the face of rising unemployment—yet PM Margaret Thatcher waited over a year before choosing to face the electorate (Norpoth 1987). Leaders may shy away from foreign policy aggression before elections lest they be "vulnerable to accusations of being motivated by electoral concerns rather than by the national interest" (Gaubatz 1999: 17).

Based on this evidence, the more probable statement is that conflict reduces the benefits of holding office and the potential for winning office while providing little long-term benefit. If it is the case that conflict is costly in the long-term for electorally-motivated leaders, then we should expect them to be more pacific as elections near (e.g., Gaubatz 1991). In parliamentary democracies, then, the constraining effects should wax and wane according to changes in actors' expectations of the proximity of elections. This leads me to my hypothesis:

**Hypothesis:** *As the probability of an election increases, the probability of conflict initiation decreases.*

This theory produces a wide range of empirical expectations based on all those government attributes, indicators of policy performance, and systemic features that influence the timing of elections. By determining the threat of *ex post* accountability, we can explore these variables' indirect constraining effects on conflict behavior.

## Data & Methods

I theorize that greater expectations about the potential for immediate elections constrain executive behavior. This warrants a two-stage research design where I first examine the probability of an election and then explore the threat of *ex post* accountability on conflict. To test this hypothesis, I generated a sample of 17 parliamentary democracies from the 1950s-2001. The start date for each country is determined by the first democratic election at which all the data are available.[ii] The end date of 2001 is determined by the availability of the MID3 data set (described below). I choose these countries because they all have consolidated systems of party competition and have flexible election timing due to the power of parliamentary dissolution and

no-confidence motions.[iii] Though some states are certainly more conflict-prone than others, all of the countries have the opportunity to initiate disputes. I provide these countries in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

For the first stage of the research design, I produce a data set with the quarterly/election cycle as the unit of analysis to model the timing of elections.[iv] The dependent variable is coded 1 if a (lower-house) parliamentary election occurs in that quarter. I analyze a quarterly time frame because while realpolitik variables may vary little across years, the important domestic political variables all change. It is hard to imagine an annual research design doing these domestic variables justice, especially considering how often governments change, leaders resign and elections occur throughout the year. The summary statistics of these variables are provided in Table 2.

[Table 2 about here]

Even though this is a sample of only advanced parliamentary democracies, there is substantial variation in the median durations of electoral cycles (shown in Table 2).[v] Due to country-specific variations in institutional arrangements and traditional practices, the effects of government attributes may be more pronounced in some countries more than others. I allow the underlying risk of an election, as well as the effects of important attributes, to vary by estimating separate logit models for each country. I estimate logit models rather than duration models for two reasons. First, actors make decisions about the timing of elections based not on how much time has elapsed, but on how much time is left in the election cycle (Lupia and Strom 1995; Diermeier and Stevenson 2000). While effective at estimating the *time since* an event, duration models are not helpful in looking at *time until* an event. Second, my theory is based on the risk of an election in that quarter, rather than the cumulative risk or conditional risk (which is produced in duration models). By estimating a logit model that controls for the time left in the election cycle, I shift the focus to the time remaining in the election cycle, and I can generate risks of an election *in that quarter*.

The goal is to estimate political actors' expectations of whether an election will be held in the following quarter. Of course, the actors who determine the election dates have a more accurate assessment of the true probabilities, in part because they hold private information. Their perceptions are not always accurate, however, which is why snap elections can be surprising.[vi] To estimate the *future election probability*, I calculate the predicted probability of an election in the next quarter, which is an estimate of actors' expectations concerning the potential immediacy of an election.

Formal models of parliamentary dissolution typically analyze how government attributes influence the executive's decision to dissolve parliament and call for early elections by

influencing the government's current benefit from holding office relative to its future benefits (Lupia and Strom 1995; Diermeier and Stevenson 2000; Strom and Swindle 2002; Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009). A key element is whether the government has the parliamentary majority needed to implement its platform and ultimately withstand the opposition's attempts to remove it. Since minority governments have to rely on the often fickle votes of supporting parties in parliament, their value from holding office is relatively small (Strom 1990). Likewise, single-party governments will receive greater benefits from governing and will be less likely to dissolve and forgo these benefits. These variables also reflect the opposition's difficulty in removing the government with a NCM. Another variable reflecting the costs of removal is the *effective parliamentary parties*, with higher values making it more difficult for the opposition to band together to remove the government (Laakso and Taagepera (1979). Finally, older governments will also be more willing to dissolve government, given that they receive less value from holding office. With the use of the government composition data from Woldendorp, Keman and Budge (2000),[vii] I produce dummy variables representing *majority government*, *single-party government*, and *government tenure (in quarters)*.

Early on in the cycle (immediately following an election), the government values office the highest and prefers maintaining office through the majority of the rest of its term before calling new elections. As each day passes, the next constitutionally-mandated election looms larger, further reducing the government's value from holding office (Diermeier and Stevenson 2000; see also Lupia and Strom 1995). This relationship is conditional on whether the government has majority support. To test these expectations, I produce the *time left in CIEP*, which measures the percentage of time remaining in the electoral cycle before an election has to occur (with higher values representing immediately following an election).[viii] Because of the conditional expectations based on the strength of government, I interact the election cycle with majority governments (*majority*×*CIEP*). Since my goal is to accurately predict the actors' anticipated expectations of an election, it is important to reflect how these expectations change once the election date is announced. I used *Keesing's World Archives* to determine the date when the election is announced. The *time since call* counts the number of quarters since an announced election, with zero representing situations where the election date is still uncertain. Finally, I also control for the possibility that governments will "surf" and ride the wave of popularity that accompanies positive economic growth to an early election. I use the Penn World Table 6.2 to create the *percentage of change in real GDP per capita* from the previous year (Heston, Summers and Aten 2006).

In order to explain the initiation of hostile interstate disputes, I produce a second data set with the directed dyad/quarter as the unit of analysis. Using a quarterly data set rather than an annual data set has two primary advantages. First, it allows the examination of multiple disputes within the year, as well as changes in government. Second, the shorter time frame establishes a tougher test of my hypotheses and ultimately provides a stronger causal inference. The dependent variable is coded 1 if that country was an original initiator (Side A) in a hostile

(hostility level 4 or 5) Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) in that quarter against that target. MIDs reaching this level include uses of force and wars, which occupy higher places on the public's issue agenda than threats or displays of force (Schultz 2001:74) and are therefore more likely to influence *ex post* accountability. Only the quarter of the MID's onset is coded 1. I use a logit model to estimate the determinants of conflict in advanced parliamentary democracies, and I include three cubic splines because there is considerable evidence that conflicts exhibit temporal dependence (Beck, Katz and Tucker 1998).

In the second stage, I use the *future election probability* to predict the initiation of hostile disputes. I base the inclusion of control variables on Russett and Oneal (2001) with a few additions. I include the *lower democracy* score (based on Polity IV's democracy values, Marshall and Jaggers 2002), a dummy variable for whether the dyad does not share a border and is not within 150 miles over water (*non-contiguous*), the *logged distance* between capitols (Werner 2000), a dummy variable for whether both states are minor powers (*minor power dyad*), whether the states share an *alliance* (Gibler and Sarkees 2004), and the two states' *capability* scores (Singer, Bremer and Stuckey 1972). I also control for three domestic characteristics that influence the potential benefits of conflicts as well as the attractiveness of the target. I include *leader tenure (in quarters)* for both states in the dyad to control for the potential for younger leaders to behave more aggressively in order to demonstrate resolve (Wolford 2007). *Government partisanship* is the "rile" score from the Comparative Manifesto Project, weighted by each government party's share of seats (Klingemann, et al. 2006). The expectation is that more right-wing governments (with higher values) will be more aggressive. Finally, I include the *real GDP per capita growth* for both countries to control for possible diversionary motives (Russett 1990).

In the next section I develop my dynamic operationalization of the election cycle and then demonstrate how conflict behavior varies between elections.

## Conceptualizing the Election Cycle

Figure 1 provides the logit coefficients (and 95% confidence intervals) for each variable across the 17 sample states. Because a lack of within-country variance prevents consistent estimates, some variables do not appear in the models for some states. For example, a number of states lack enough variation to estimate either *majority* or *majority*×*CIEP*.

[Figure 1 about here]

The first inference is that even in the sample of advanced parliamentary democracies, there is substantial heterogeneity. There is ample variation in the sign, magnitude and uncertainty regarding the estimates of the constant term. Recall that the constant in these models represents the unobserved country-specific effects, which includes all the institutional and strategic variables that cannot be included due to lack of within-country variation. The constant therefore includes key information known to influence the probability of dissolution such as the length of

the CIEP (Strom and Swindle 2002) as well as the institutional rules governing the role of the head of state in dissolution (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009). These exclusions, combined with the different intuitive meaning of holding the included variables constant at 0, cause the baseline probability to fluctuate from the lowest probability of 0.01 in Australia to the highest of 0.99 in Austria.

Second, the effects of key variables vary widely across countries. The timing of elections in all the sample countries is influenced by the time (in quarters) since the election date was announced. On its face, this is not surprising, but it is reassuring since it suggests that using information about public pronouncements of timing can produce more accurate estimates. Other variables, like *single-party government* and *real GDP per capita growth*, consistently do not gain statistical significance across the countries, indicating little influence on election timing. Having majority support in parliament reduces the probability of an election in some countries (for example, Austria, Netherlands, etc), but has no effect in others (i.e., Italy and Japan).[ix] This variation is understandable given the varying institutions that determine the attractiveness of government termination via replacement compared to parliamentary dissolution (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009). The effect of *effective number of parties* varies substantially across countries and is negative and statistically significant in some (United Kingdom) and positive in others (Portugal). Altogether, these subtleties buttress my decision to disaggregate these countries and suggest that a pooled analysis would at best provide estimates that would cloud these important differences, and at worst would bias these estimates. Certainly, using these variables in pooled analyses to capture *ex post* constraints should be strongly discouraged.

Third, this country-specific approach produces an extremely high level of fit. When I combine the predicted probabilities across countries, I correctly predict 97.0% of the cases, which is an improvement of 4.7% over the modal prediction (92.3%). To demonstrate how the predicted probabilities correspond to the actual timing of elections, I present Figure 2.

[Figure 2 about here]

Figure 2 shows the predicted probability of a United Kingdom House of Commons election from the first quarter of 1960 (1960q1) to the first quarter of 1975 (1975q1), with vertical lines representing the actual dates of five general elections. Of the five elections, the logit model produces estimates that track highly with four elections (1964q4, 1970q2, 1974q1, and 1974q4). This is comforting, as it suggests that the model performs quite well in terms of using a latent variable (the probability that $Y = 1$) to represent both unobserved values (the underlying risk of an election) and observed values (the election). The variation in predicted probability in this case is primarily a function of two variables shown in Figure 3.

[Figure 3 about here]

In the United Kingdom case the model is able to accurately predict elections based on information related to the electoral calendar and the government's age. The predicted probability

of an election (and 95% confidence intervals) increases as the *time left in CIEP* decreases (as the electoral clock winds down) and as *government tenure* increases. As a sign of the model's strength, it is able to predict the snap election called in October 1974, which is only eight months after the previous election. Since the snap election occurs early in the election cycle, it is an election that previous measures of election cycle (like months until the next election, Koch [2009]) could not anticipate.

Figure 2 also draws attention to two types of predictive errors. The first type of error is where the model predicts an election, but none occurs (i.e., *false positive*). In this case, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan resigns on October 19, 1963 and is replaced by Alec Douglas-Home. A change in the PM is coded as a change in government, which causes *government tenure* to decrease from 16 to 1, which drastically reduces the predicted probability of an election. The second error (*false negative*) represents a snap election called by Labour PM Harold Wilson (1966q1) only two years after the previous election. Of these types of errors, I am most comfortable in making the first since this type reflects errors when the latent variable does not correlate with the observed outcome (election), but still most likely accurately reflects actors' expectations about the risk of an election. The second type of error reflects the inability of a latent variable to predict outcomes that have a large stochastic components (i.e., snap elections based on electoral motivations), but still may accurately reflect expectations about an election. The models' high rate of percent correctly predicted (97.0%) is not a result of having a high rate of false predictions; the false positive rate is only 22.5% while the false negative rate is a meager 16.1%. Thus, I can be confident that the country-specific predicted probabilities can be aggregated to accurately measure actors' perceptions of the underlying risk of a future election in any given quarter.

Recall that I theorized that government attributes influence foreign policy behavior by influencing the threat of *ex post* accountability. More specifically, I expect that minority and majority governments would have different patterns of initiation because they face different risks of elections throughout the electoral cycle. In order to observe these effects, I first need to discern the impacts of the *time left in CIEP* on the future election probability for minority and majority governments. The *majority*×*CIEP* interaction term in Figure 1 for Canada is statistically significant, which hints at different shapes of election risks across government types. Indeed, we see exactly this in Figure 4.

[Figure 4 about here]

The top panel of Figure 4 shows the future election probability for both minority and majority governments over the *time left in CIEP*. I also provide the histograms of the *time left in CIEP*. Asterisks represent those values of *time left in CIEP* where the predicted values are statistically different from each other (95% confidence level). Both government types begin the election cycle with low risks of another election. For minority governments, going from 0.75 of the election cycle left to 0.50 increases the risk of an election considerably (from 0.025 to 0.91),

while the risk remains relatively flat for majority governments (from 0.14 to 0.29). This makes sense, as the first fourth of the election cycle is when a minority government demonstrates whether it has the credible support of a majority of parliament (via the support of some opposition parties) in order to remain in government. If it fails to do so and it is obvious that other coalitions are not possible, parliamentary dissolution will occur and elections will be called early. For majority governments, there is little risk of an election until about a fourth of the election cycle left, at which point the probability begins to rise until it reaches its maximum. The difference in predicted probabilities is largest halfway through the election cycle.[x]

This figure demonstrates the vastly different opportunities for electoral accountability with majority and minority governments. Minority governments face much more variable risks of elections, which offer different *ex post* constraints. Majority governments are reasonably secure the first three years of office. This may explain two empirical phenomena: first, that majority governments are less constrained than minority governments (e.g., Ireland and Gartner 2001), and second, that more conflict occurs early in the election cycle (e.g., Gaubatz 1991). In the next section, I test my theoretical expectations by modeling the threat of *ex post* accountability on the initiation of interstate conflict.

## Flexible Election Timing and Conflict

In the second stage of the research design, I estimate a logit predicting the initiation of a hostile interstate dispute in that quarter by that sample country. I expect that the coefficient for *future election probability* will be statistically significant and negative, which would lend support to the *ex post* constraints approach. One obstacle that arises is the additional predictive uncertainty that accompanies using an estimated value (in this case, the *future election probability*) as a fixed variable.[xi] To calculate the appropriate measures of uncertainty (confidence intervals), I use Clarify (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000) to generate 1000 simulated predicted election probabilities for each of $N$ observations in the first stage models. I then estimate the second stage logit (predicting the initiation of hostile disputes) 1000 times, changing the predicted values of *future election probability* at each iteration. Using the percentile method, I then calculate the 95% confidence intervals for the second stage coefficients. This approximates the sampling distribution and incorporates additional predictive uncertainty regarding the threat of an upcoming election. Since the logit model is nonlinear, I present the corrected confidence intervals for all variables.

[Table 3 about here]

The coefficient for *future election probability* is large, negative and statistically significant since the confidence intervals do not overlap zero ([-21.96, -0.95]). This supports my hypothesis that governments that face the risk of being immediately held accountable have statistically lower probabilities of initiating a hostile dispute.

To further explore the substantive impacts of these changes, Figure 5 shows the predicted probability of initiation (and 95% confidence intervals) across the range of values of *future election probability*.[xii] To provide a sense of the distribution of *future election probability*, I also provide a box-whisker plot at the bottom.

[Figure 5 about here]

The first inference is that the probability of initiation decreases substantially as a function of *future election probability*. The magnitude of the decline is far greater at the lower levels of *future election probability* than at more extreme values. In other words, elections offer the biggest constraint when going from no risk to moderate risk. When an election seems imminent, further increases in the risk of an election do not modify the leader's foreign policy behavior. Moreover, decreases in the risk of an election produce a statistically significant decrease when the electoral risk is low, as evident by the confidence intervals. The confidence intervals increase (causing the changes to become statistically insignificant) because most of the values of *future election probability* are lumped at lower levels (as shown by the box-whisker plot). This also demonstrates that the threat of *ex post* accountability has its largest impact at the most common values of *future election probability* (i.e., at lower values).

These changes produce substantively meaningful decreases in the probability of initiation, as increasing the *future election probability* from 0 to its mean of 0.08 decreases the initiation probability from 0.11 to 0.07 (a percentage decrease of 35.7%). Likewise, increasing the *future election probability* from 0 to 0.3 decreases the initiation probability from 0.11 to 0.03 (a 72.7% decrease). These may appear to be small changes, but when we compare them to the influence of strategic environment variables that have been identified as large determinants of hostility (Bennett and Stam 2000) we can gain a better sense of their substantive impacts. For example, shifting the dyad from a minor dyad to a major dyad increases the probability of a MID by 0.07; shifting the dyad from non-contiguous to contiguous increases the probability of initiation by 0.085. With this in mind, we can conclude that the changes in the probability of initiation due to the threat of *ex post* accountability in this sample are similar and in some cases substantively *greater* than the effects of major power status and contiguity.

A principal benefit of this research design is that I can determine how domestic political arrangements influence conflict through the timing of elections. The bottom panel of Figure 4 shows the predicted probability of a state initiating a hostile dispute in that quarter for majority and minority governments across the *time left in the CIEP*.[xiii] In the immediate aftermath of an election—when the risk of another election is low—both governments face their greatest freedom to use force. It is in the first quarter of the election cycle when minority governments are actually statistically more likely to initiate. Soon after, the differences in electoral accountability opportunities become apparent for minority governments, causing their probability to fall considerably. The largest decrease in probability occurs between 80% and 60% of the election cycle left. Majority governments face little risk of an early election in the

first half of the election cycle, so they are relatively secure and unconstrained, making conflict more probable. This behavior changes drastically in the latter half of the election cycle. The government knows that it is running out of time and that any conflict would provide another salient issue by which the voters can hold it accountable.[xiv] Facing the higher risk of an election, both government types behave less aggressively.

Other government attributes also indirectly influence conflict. For example, having the head of state announce the timing of the election in that quarter acts as a considerable constraint on the executive. With the use of the coefficients from the Japan-specific model we can see that announcing the election date in that quarter reduces the executive's probability of initiating a MID from 0.092 to 0.059 (a 36.2% decrease). Likewise, we can use the coefficients from the Canada-specific model to examine how government tenure influences foreign policy behavior. As governments age from their first quarter in office to their fourth, the probability of initiating decreases from 0.11 to 0.103 (a -5.94% decrease). Staying in office one more year further brings the executive closer to an election and decreases the risk of initiating a hostile dispute from 0.103 to .087 (a 15.9% decrease).

While the probability of a conflict seems rather small, it is important to evaluate the substantive effects in the context of the rarity of conflict. The baseline probability of an initiated conflict in a given quarter is only 0.11, which is small enough that any slight change in the probabilities leads to a massive relative change. Moreover, since this model predicts the *quarterly* predicted probability, one can generate a rough estimate of the *annual* unconditional probability of a conflict with the following equation: $1 - (\Pr(I)^4)$. For a minority government early in the election cycle, the unconditional annual probability of a conflict is therefore 0.373 (or, $1 - (.89^4)$). When one considers these factors, it appears as though the electoral cycle has profound and significant effects on the decision to initiate force abroad. These changes are even more substantial given the natural changes in election risks that occur through the cycle (as shown in Figure 2). Even after controlling for the capabilities of the state, incentives for diversion, the number of strategic opportunities, and the history of dyadic conflict, I still find statistically significant and substantively meaningful effects of electoral motivations.

I also estimate a series of models to rule out two other causal paths. I first explore the possibility of reverse causality, or the incentive for leaders to time their elections around foreign policy events. I find no statistical effect of either being involved in hostile disputes, or the previous history of conflict behavior influencing whether an election occurs in that quarter.[xv] Next, I use events data to determine if the lack of conflict prior to elections is the result of potential targets modifying their behavior so that the state has fewer incentives to fight (e.g., Smith 1996; Leeds and Davis 1997). I find no evidence that potential targets become more conciliatory during those times where we would most expect diversionary behavior: when the threat of an upcoming election is coupled with poor economic conditions (Russett 1990). These results are available in an online appendix.

## Conclusion

While there has been considerable attention paid to the role of domestic political institutions in international conflict, the scholarly attention given to election timing has been scant and on the whole unsatisfactory. Studies fail to respect the varying incentives for governments (and opposition parties) in systems where the timing of elections is a function of actors' interests. I develop a theory that explains the constraining effects of election timing on international conflict. When governments expect that an election is imminent, they will be more constrained in their foreign policy behavior and will behave less aggressively. I find strong support for this theory, especially when one considers the variation in opportunities for *ex post* accountability for different government types across the election cycle.

In doing so, I provide a solid theoretical foundation and strong empirical support that explain an empirical phenomenon. This study supports Gaubatz's (1991) original argument about the constraining effects of greater public control over the executive. Yet, the argument is more nuanced than its original formulation. The risk of an election varies throughout the electoral cycle as a function of a variety of government characteristics and policy performance. The implication is that a simple conceptualization of the electoral cycle as a dummy variable, quintiles, or even a simple linear variable, will likely cloud and confuse the true opportunities available for electoral accountability. Instead, directly estimating the probability of an election takes into account government-level variation (like government characteristics), as well as national-level effects both observed (economic growth) and unobserved (random effects). Both majority and minority governments face high risks of elections late in the electoral cycle, which reduces their incentives to be hostile. This explains the finding that conflict is more prominent in the early stage of the electoral cycle (Gaubatz 1991).

Finally, this project suggests that future studies of the domestic sources of international conflict should be cautious in examining the effects of government attributes. These findings identify a strong interactive effect between majority support and the electoral cycle. Studies that look at these factors in an additive fashion risk substantial omitted variable bias because the effects of majority governments are conditional on the election cycle, and vice versa. I also demonstrate the benefits of scholars taking a more direct approach to testing the credible mechanisms that connect institutions and conflict—in this case, I directly test the effects of *ex post* accountability on conflict.

This theory has implications for four important literatures in the study of international conflict. First, institutions can influence the behavior of states by improving the informational quality of the signals sent by states. States are able to more credibly signal their resolve in systems where backing down after making a threat would impose high audience costs on the leader. In its simplicity, the theory overlooks the idea that not all democracies face the same degree of audience costs all the time. In fact, if we take audience costs to mean the extent to which the leader (or government in this case) suffers politically from backing down, then these

costs can vary as widely as institutions do. With respect to this paper, a higher risk of an election represents a more immediate way of suffering audience costs. Indeed, the results are consistent with this extension, as the states that face the most direct application of audience costs (with the highest *future election probability*) are least likely to initiate conflicts. Future research could explore whether the lack of initiated conflicts is due to being able to more credibly threaten and force conciliatory actions or to less aggressive behavior overall.

This project also has implications for the diversionary literature. These results certainly suggest that the limited findings in support of American diversionary behavior (e.g., Stoll 1984) do not extend to advanced parliamentary democracies. We echo Leeds and Davis' (1997) conclusion that while diversionary theory is "logically plausible", it is not "empirically valid" (830). In fact, the time in the election cycle when diversionary scholars would suggest as the most opportune time for conflict—when the *future election probability* is highest—are met with the least conflict. One explanation is that as nations near the end of the election cycle other states act more conciliatory and give them fewer opportunities for conflict (Smith 1996). Robustness checks indicate that potential targets are not responding to the threat of an election in parliamentary democracies, which means that the pacific behavior that I observe is unrelated to possible strategic interaction.

I contribute to our understanding of the effects of government attributes on conflict by identifying and isolating how the causal mechanism—the timing of elections—affects conflict. This technique starts from a clear foundation and provides a more useful characterization of the domestic sources of conflict. For example, majority governments may be more conflict-prone because they face fewer *ex ante* constraints (Auerswald 1999), yet they are also more clearly accountable for any foreign policy failures (Brule and Williams 2009). With this modeling approach, I can conclude that majority governments are significantly more prone to initiate conflict at some stages of the election cycle because they are much less likely to experience early elections. Moreover, I find that the effects of government attributes on the timing of elections are heavily context-dependent, which would cast doubt on the usefulness of including these attributes (i.e., majority government, coalition government, time left in CIEP) as measures of *ex post* accountability in models of conflict.

Finally, these results contribute to a growing literature about the role of opposition parties in conflict (Schultz 1998; Ramsay 2004; Arena 2008). Parliamentary oppositions can have a key role in the foreign policy behavior of states by partially determining how soon the government will be held accountable to the electorate. Opposition parties can speed up electoral accountability—and thus constrain the executive—through two mechanisms. First, they can either pass a vote of no-confidence or produce a credible enough threat to trigger a resignation by the government. These are typically followed by early elections. Second, opposition parties can also make the government more willing to call early elections by decreasing the government's benefit to holding office. By withdrawing support for the government or contributing to policy deadlock, opposition parties can make early elections seem more attractive for governments

when compared to their current troubles. Because of greater autonomy in foreign affairs, these constraints deal directly with fears of *ex post* accountability rather than any sort of *ex ante* blockage of policy.

## Tables and Figures

Table 1. Sample Countries

| | Elections | Hostile MIDs | Obs. | Median Dur. | Sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 17 | 0 | 18,705 | 2.70 | 1954q2-2001q4 |
| Austria | 12 | 0 | 17,711 | 3.69 | 1959q1-2001q4 |
| Belgium | 13 | 0 | 17,266 | 3.10 | 1961q1-2001q4 |
| Canada | 13 | 10 | 16,920 | 3.60 | 1962q2-2001q4 |
| Denmark | 17 | 2 | 17,323 | 2.59 | 1960q4-2001q4 |
| Finland | 10 | 0 | 16,563 | 3.99 | 1961q4-2001q4 |
| France | 10 | 8 | 17,710 | 4.23 | 1959q1-2001q4 |
| Germany | 8 | 0 | 13,782 | 3.87 | 1971q3-2001q4 |
| Greece | 8 | 7 | 12,374 | 3.53 | 1974q4-2001q4 |
| Ireland | 12 | 3 | 17,136 | 3.84 | 1961q3-2001q4 |
| Italy | 10 | 0 | 16,062 | 4.10 | 1963q1-2001q4 |
| Japan | 13 | 1 | 17,323 | 3.19 | 1960q4-2001q4 |
| Netherlands | 11 | 0 | 17,715 | 4.00 | 1959q1-2001q4 |
| New Zealand | 13 | 0 | 18,839 | 3.01 | 1954q2-2001q4 |
| Portugal | 8 | 0 | 11,043 | 3.08 | 1976q3-2001q4 |
| Spain | 7 | 0 | 11,156 | 3.60 | 1977q3-2001q4 |
| United Kingdom | 11 | 2 | 17,602 | 4.10 | 1959q3-2001q4 |
| **Total** | 193 | 33 | 275,230 | 3.52 | |

Table 2. Summary Statistics of Key Variables

| Variable | Mean | Std. Dev. | Minimum | Maximum | Mode |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Election Timing* | | | | | |
| Majority | | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Single-Party Government | | | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Effective No. of Parties | 3.39 | 1.44 | 1.54 | 9.14 | |
| Time Since Call | 0.15 | 0.56 | 0 | 6 | |
| Real GDP Per Capita Growth | 2.68 | 2.92 | -8.83 | 16.67 | |
| Government Tenure | 6.32 | 4.43 | 1 | 21 | |
| Time Left in CIEP | 0.59 | 0.28 | 0 | 1 | |
| Majority×CIEP | 0.46 | 0.34 | 0 | 1 | |
| *Dispute Initiation* | | | | | |
| Future Election Probability | 0.09 | 0.18 | 0 | 1 | |
| Lower Democracy | 0.13 | 7.53 | -10 | 10 | |
| Minor Power Dyad | | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Capability Side A | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.001 | 0.06 | |
| Capability Side B | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.0002 | 0.32 | |
| Non-Contiguous | | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Logged Distance | 8.20 | 0.83 | 4.68 | 9.42 | |
| Alliance | | | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Leader Tenure Side A | 16.8 | 15.4 | 0.71 | 102.13 | |
| Leader Tenure Side B | 6.05 | 6.65 | 0.003 | 38.35 | |
| Government Partisanship Side A | -1.25 | 17.14 | -58 | 48.46 | |
| Real GDP Per Capita Growth Side A | 2.59 | 2.58 | -7.45 | 13.99 | |
| Real GDP Per Capita Growth Side B | 1.90 | 7.61 | -65.31 | 122.24 | |

Table 3. Dyadic Analysis of the Effects of Future Election Probability on the Initiation of Hostile Interstate Disputes

| **Variable** | **Coefficient** | **95% C.I.** |
|---|---|---|
| Future Election Probability | -6.545** | [-21.960, -0.951] |
| Lower Democracy Score | 0.095** | [0.091, 0.097] |
| Minor Power Dyad | -0.815** | [-0.938, -0.700] |
| Capability Side A | -6.555** | [-10.464, -3.248] |
| Capability Side B | -5.860** | [-7.330. -4.391] |
| Non-Contiguous | -0.946** | [-1.074, -0.852] |
| Logged Distance | -0.242** | [-0.276, -0.201] |
| Alliance | 1.504** | [1.457, 1.578] |
| Leader Tenure Side A | -0.029** | [-0.032, -0.022] |
| Leader Tenure Side B | 0.042** | [0.040, 0.046] |
| Government Partisanship Side A | -0.008 | [0.011, 0.005] |
| Real GDP Per Capita Side A | -0.011 | [-0.024, 0.005] |
| Real GDP Per Capita Side B | -0.054** | [-0.055, -0.053] |
| Peace Quarters Spline 1 | 0.0001** | [0.0001, 0.0001] |
| Peace Quarters Spline 2 | -0.0001** | [-0.0001, -0.0001] |
| Peace Quarters Spline 3 | 0.0001** | [0.0001, 0.0001] |
| Constant | -2.619** | [-2.819, -2.319] |
| Observations | | 275,230 |
| $\chi^2$ | | 189.8** |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | | 0.29 |

**: p-value < .01, *: p-value < .05

Figure 1. Logit Coefficients (and 95% Confidence Intervals) for the Determinants of Election Timing Across Sample Countries: Country-Specific Models

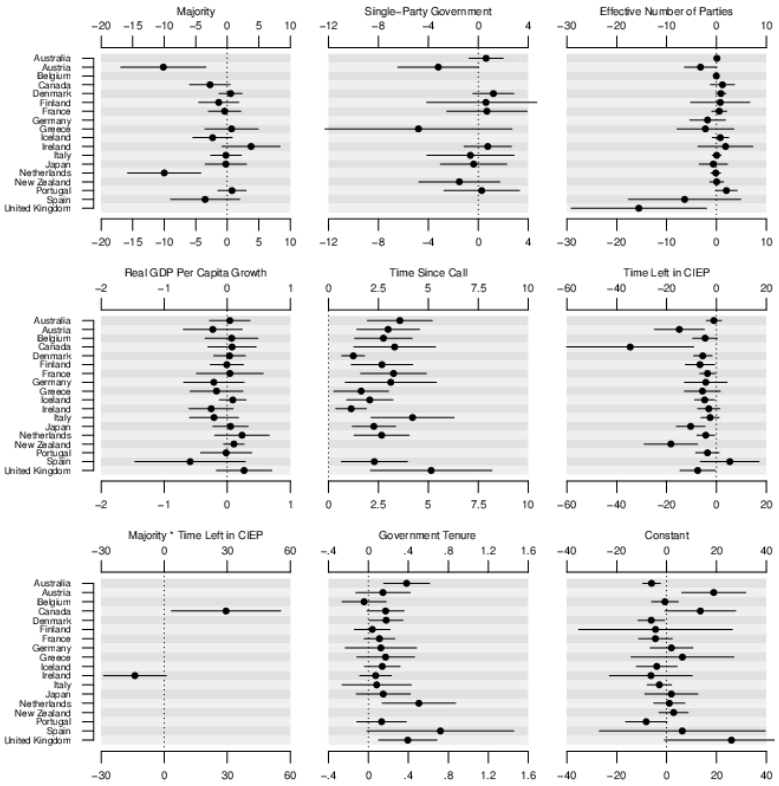
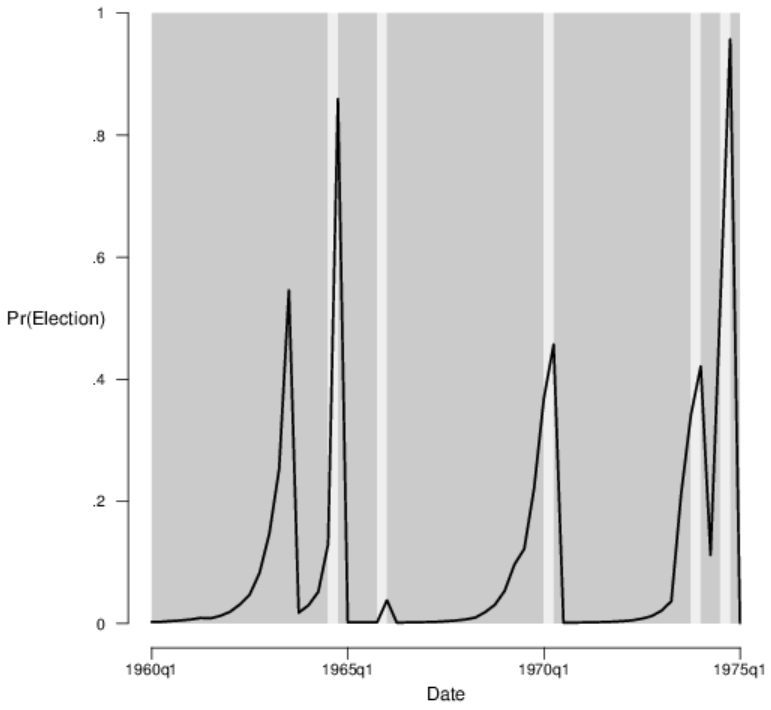


Figure 2. Predicted Probability of an Election Compared to Actual Election Dates: United Kingdom, 1960-1975




Note: vertical lines represent quarters in which general elections occurred.

Figure 3. Effects of Election Cycle and Government Tenure on the Probability of an Election in the United Kingdom

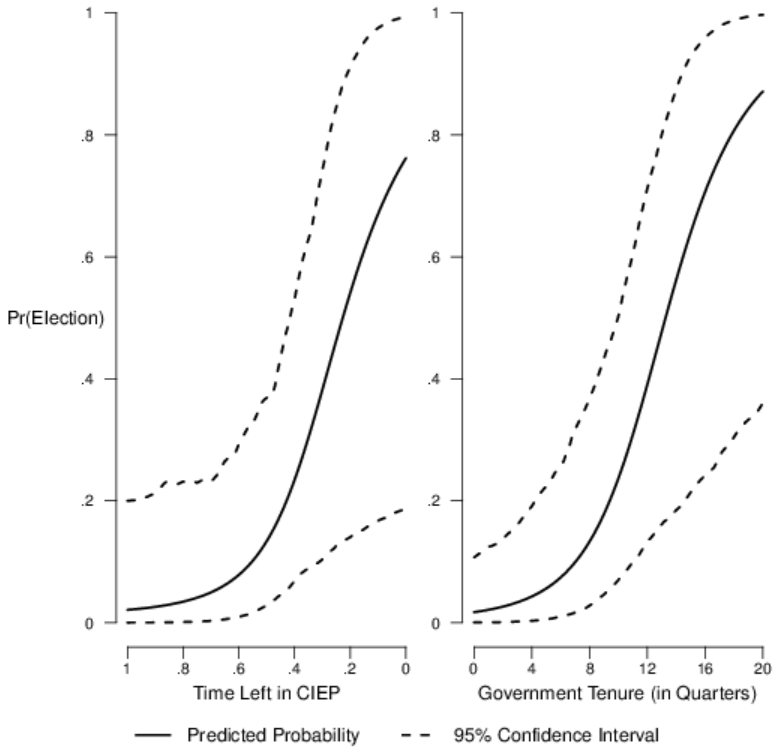


Figure 3. Predicted Future Election Probability and Predicted Probability of the Initiation of Hostile Disputes across the Percentage of Time Left in Constitutional Inter-Election Period for Majority and Minority Governments

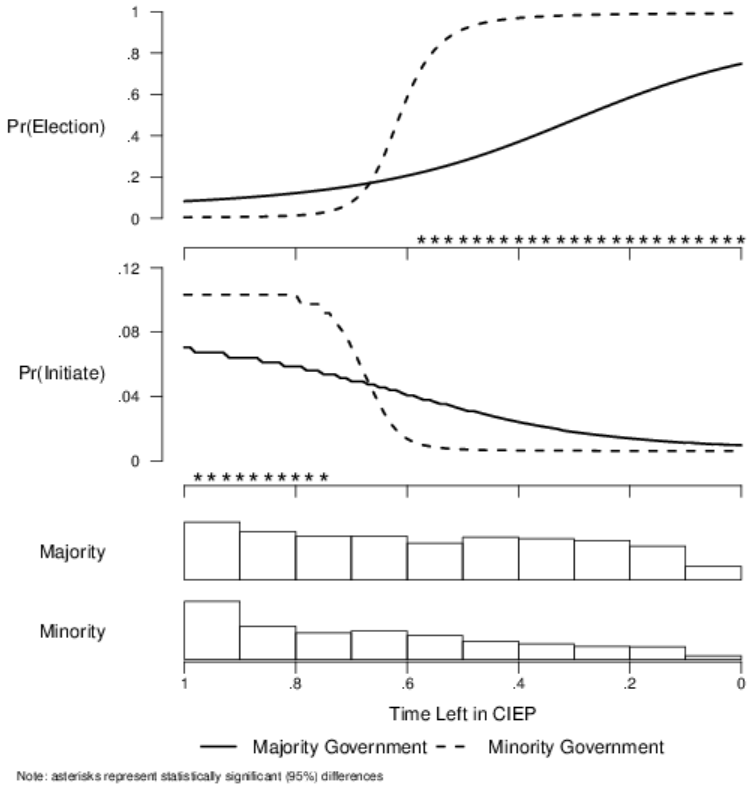
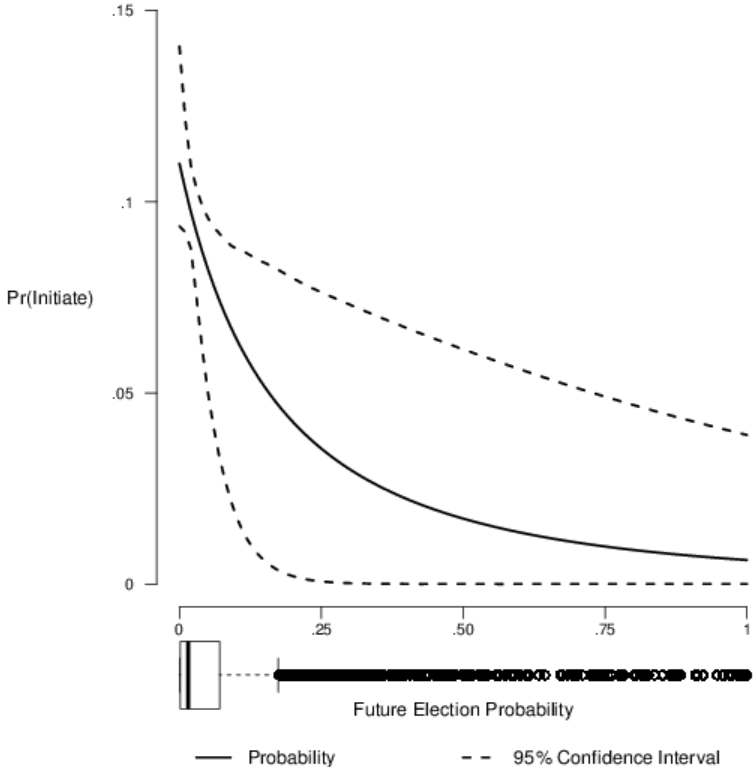


Figure 5. Effects of *Future Election Probability* on the Initiation of Hostile Disputes



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[i] Though the task of deciding whether to appoint a formateur or dissolve parliament sometimes resides with a non-partisan head of state, in the vast majority of successful NCMs parliament is dissolved and new elections are called.

[ii] For most countries, the availability of *time since call* determines the start date while Germany lacks *real GDP per capita growth* data prior to 1970.

[iii] Other advanced democracies, like Switzerland and the US, are excluded because their election cycles are fixed. Other parliamentary democracies are excluded because either early chamber dissolutions are not allowed (Norway) or early elections are not allowed (Sweden) (Diermeier and Stevenson 2000: 633-634).

[iv] If an election occurs, there will be two observations for that country in that quarter (i.e., one representing each distinct election cycle). For example, Canada has two observations for the first quarter of 1980: one for the period up to the general election on February 18 and one after.

[v] As expected, countries with longer constitutional electoral cycles (like Ireland and the United Kingdom) experience longer spells between elections than those with shorter cycles (like Australia and New Zealand). Yet, there are other countries that have 4-year election cycles (like Denmark and Japan) but have shorter median durations that are not easily explained by the length of the constitutional election cycle.

[vi] These predictions of future election risks are estimates of the real-world assessments and necessarily incorporate some error. I deal with this increased predictive uncertainty by simulating measures of uncertainty in the second stage. My expectation is that the true relationship between election timing and conflict is actually stronger in reality, because of actors' more accurate expectations regarding the timing of elections.

[vii] I update this data set through 2001 with the use of the annual volumes from the *European Journal of Political Research*.

[viii] This standardizes the election cycle so that its values are directly comparable across systems with 3-, 4-, and 5-year election cycles.

[ix] *Majority* is positive and close to being statistically significant in Ireland. Since this is part of an interaction with *time left in CIEP*, it represents the effect of having majority support in parliament on the probability of an election when there is no time left in the election cycle. This is a rare occurrence, so it offers little substantive meaning.

[x] The difference between the probability for majority and minority governments becomes statistically significant and negative when *time left in CIEP*=0.58, and reaches its maximum (a difference of -0.63) halfway through the election cycle.

[xi] Indeed, using the predicted values as a variable in the second stage violates the assumption that the independent variables are fixed in repeated sampling (Kennedy 2003: 157). This is most problematic in the case where the variable with measurement error (in this case, the *future election probability*) is correlated with the stochastic component of the conflict equation. I have no *a priori* rationale for why the *future election probability* would be correlated with the

unobserved component of international conflict. Since I am confident that the coefficient is unbiased, I move on to correcting the overconfident standard errors.

[xii] The baseline scenario is one where there is a moderate risk of initiating a hostile MID. The *lower democracy* score is held constant at 0, both states are minor powers with *capability scores* equal to 0.01, they are not alliance partners, non-contiguous, with mean distance between capitols (*logged distance*=8), both leaders have been in office for 16 quarters, with a government of moderate partisanship (*government partisanship*=0), and both sides have 0% *real GDP per capita growth*. The baseline probability of a hostile dispute given this scenario is 0.11.

[xiii] I first set the explanatory variables—aside from *majority* and *time left in CIEP*—at either their means (for continuous variables) or their modes (for binary variables) and calculate the probability as I vary the *time left in the CIEP* both additively and interactively. I then take this predicted *future election probability* and generate the predicted probability of an initiated dispute.

[xiv] The difference between majority and minority governments is positive and close to being statistically significant (at the 90% confidence level) when there is 60%-40% left in the election cycle.

[xv] I include a dummy variable measuring whether a hostile MID occurred in that country in that quarter, and the number of quarters since the previous hostile dispute.