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Hey! Give Me A Boost: the impact of conflict joining on the rally 'round the flag in the United Kingdom, 1948-2000

Marissa Kathleen Wilson
mwilso31@utk.edu

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Marissa Kathleen Wilson entitled "Hey! Give Me A Boost: the impact of conflict joining on the rally 'round the flag in the United Kingdom, 1948-2000." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Political Science.

Brandon R. Prins, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Ian Down, Wonjae Hwang

Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

Hey! Give Me a Boost: the impact of conflict joining on the rally 'round the flag in the United Kingdom, 1948-2000

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ABSTRACT

International Relations has long sought to identify the causes of conflict. Two popular theories that suggest leaders use conflict or domestic purposes – that of diversion and policy availability – rest on the assumption that conflict does in fact lead to domestic political benefits. Chief among these benefits is the boost in public approval ratings, known as the "rally-'round-the-flag." Large-N statistical studies testing the rally effect are few and seldom look beyond the United States. Further, there are no studies that examine the varying rally effects of joining ongoing conflicts versus conflict initiation or participation. The postulated theory suggests conflict joining has a greater rally effect than conflict initiation due to monetary and reputational cost/benefit tradeoffs. Bivariate and multivariate results do not support the theory, indicating joining a conflict does not have a positive impact on approval ratings and, in fact, has a worse effect than conflict initiation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There is strong evidence that the spheres of domestic and international policy are not wholly separate and much research has been devoted to exploring the nexus of the two. Chief among these research agendas is the study of the relationship between international conflict and domestic political performance. Does international conflict involvement impact the political standing of democratically elected governments? Traditionally, this impact is framed in the context of the "rally 'round the flag" effect – the increase in leader approval ratings after the involvement in an international crisis. The majority of empirical analyses concerning this rally effect, however, are limited to studies of American presidents and none explore the disparate impacts of decisions to initiate conflict versus decisions to join an ongoing conflict. This study aims to address these gaps by observing the impacts of both conflict initiation and joining on public approval ratings in the United Kingdom.

In April 1982, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was faced with a foreign policy choice. Argentina had long claimed the British-owned Falkland Islands as Argentinean territory. In December 1981, Argentina succumbed to the military dictatorship of General Leopoldo Galtieri, who sought to resolve the long-standing competing claims to the Islands with a military initiative, calculating that the United Kingdom would not respond in kind. On 2 April 1982, he dispatched military forces to occupy the Islands.

The Conservative Party in Britain had won the 1979 election on a platform of economic reform. By 1982, the party had accomplished few of its election platform goals. Britain was in a state of domestic unrest, plagued with increasing inflation, low

employment, and numerous worker strikes. Three years into her tenure, Thatcher's approval rating had slumped to a mere 20%. In the face of this rather unimpressive domestic political climate and having no contingency plan for retaking the islands, Thatcher had to choose whether or not to engage militarily in an international dispute. On 4 April, Thatcher and the Conservative-lead House of Commons initiated formal conflict with the Argentinean forces and quickly dispatched a hastily assembled group of ships consisting of a nuclear submarine, two aircraft carriers, and a requisitioned ocean cruise liner. On 1 May, the British contingent initiated air raids and on 21 May, troops landed on East Falkland Island.

By mid-June and after 649 military casualties, Argentinean forces had surrendered. Thatcher had led British troops through a 74-day war and only 255 casualties to a decisive military victory. Back home, she enjoyed a massive bump in approval ratings. Thatcher's personal approval rating soared from 29% in February 1982 to 44% in May and peaking at 52% in July. Support of the Conservative Party rose from 27% in February 1982 to 41% in May, the month after invasion.

Two important theories in international relations – Diversionary Theory[1] and Policy Availability Theory – are founded on the assumption that international conflicts do in fact produce a domestic rally benefit that gives political leaders a domestic incentive to participate in international conflict behavior. The dramatic boost in approval ratings after the Falkland Islands conflict has since become an epitomic example of diversion. While empirical research finds evidence of an association between the timing of conflict onset

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[1] The literature sets forth several theoretical versions of diversionary action. Some theories indicate diversionary action is taken through military means and some through positive foreign policy. This thesis recognizes there is no singular "Diversionary Theory of War," but rather numerous theoretical articulations of diversion.

and poor domestic conditions, – economic for diversion and legislative gridlock for policy availability – there are few broad-based empirical projects that test the actual political benefits leaders accrue from military conflict, which is the very foundation on which these theories are built.

Those research projects that do test the political "rally 'round the flag" benefits of conflict reach inconsistent conclusions. The rally arguments are based on four assumptions, sometimes backed with empirical evidence. First, that patriotism surges after conflict (Mueller 1970; Blechman and Kaplan 1978). Second, that political opponents limit criticism of leaders during times of conflict (Schultz 2001; Brody 1991). Third, that society tends to view public institutions in general more positively in times of conflict (Norpoth 1991; Parker 1995). And, finally, that a leader establishes his managerial abilities through foreign policy conflict (Richards et al 1993; Morgan and Anderson 1999). Research on the rally effect focuses mostly on the United States and largely on the rally during one conflict (Mueller 1970; Zaller 1993; Callaghan and Virtanen 1993). Studies of the United States across time have determined that rallies are occasional, small, and short lived (Brody and Shapiro 1989; Lian and Oneal 1993; James and Rioux 1998; Baker and Oneal 2001). Those studies that expand beyond the United States also find limited support for rally effects; in a study of the United Kingdom, Lai and Reiter (2005) determine rallies do not occur in conflicts short of war and are largest when British national interests are at stake. In the first cross-national study of the political

benefits of conflict, Williams, Brule, and Koch (2010) determined democratic leaders are actually punished for participating in conflict[2].

Similar to the diversion and policy availability literatures, research on the correlates of violent conflict is extensive (Altfeld and Bueno de Mesquita 1979; Doyle 1986; Siverson and Star 1990; Smith 1996; Bennett and Stam 1996; Gartner and Siverson 1996; Huth 1998; Reiter and Stam 1998; Leeds, Long and Mitchell 2000), but this research also tends to be narrow in orientation. The research focuses primarily on the causes of conflict onset (Waltz 1988; Gilpin 1988; Fearon 1995; Barbieri 1996; Lemke and Reed 2001; Levy and Thompson 2010), while there is little extant scholarship on why states join ongoing conflicts. And the research that does exist merely draws directly from the indicators of conflict onset (Tures 2001; Reiter and Stam 2002; Leeds 2003; Gibler and Sarkees 2004). What is missing in the nexus of the literatures on conflict and domestic incentives for conflict is a study of the implications of conflict expansion, in which a state joins an ongoing conflict as a third party. This thesis suggests that focusing solely on conflict initiation or onset as a means to divert the public's attention from domestic conditions unnecessarily limits both areas of research. Studying the domestic impact of joining a conflict allows for a new way to explore the foundations of the diversionary and policy availability theories. Studying these implications allows better understanding of the causes of conflict diffusion.

Expanding on key findings in the conflict and diversionary literatures, it might be expected that democratic leaders would use conflict expansion, not just conflict initiation, as a diversionary tactic. If facing a struggling domestic political situation, a democratic

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[2] In a study of the incumbent party's legislative vote share, Williams, Brule, and Koch (2010) determined conflict participation during healthy economic times has no statistical impact on voters' choice; during periods of economic trouble, however, the party of the incumbent looses seats in the legislature.

leader, rather than depleting the coffers to fund the initiation of a costly war, might instead seek to join an existing conflict for diversionary purposes. Conflict expansion may provide a better choice for a leader seeking to divert. Costs – in terms of both blood and treasure – are shared among the belligerents. Conflict joining also obviates the need to seek out an adversary, as targets have already been selected in pre-existing militarized disputes. Regarding the benefits of joining an ongoing conflict rather than initiating one, leaders garner two reputational advantages: first, by joining a conflict, a state can portray itself as either a defender or a third party that simply wants to bring the conflict to a swift and decisive conclusion. In this way, a state can adopt the role of "savior" rather than aggressor. Second, in joining a conflict, leaders have the option to scapegoat their allies should the conflict go badly, thus shifting the blame for their foreign policy failures onto other states. The theory built in this paper – based on these expected costs and benefits – suggests that joining ongoing Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) can be a fruitful way for leaders to rally domestic publics, while simultaneously avoiding the need to manufacture a conflict for political gain. This thesis considers the diversionary implications of conflict diffusion by testing the impact of joining an ongoing MID on the domestic public approval ratings of the Government of the United Kingdom from 1948 to 2000.

This theory is tested using both bivariate and multivariate empirical models. A bivariate comparison of the effect on approval ratings of joining a conflict and initiating a conflict indicates a slightly positive impact for conflict initiation and a slightly negative impact for conflict joining. A multivariate regression analysis controlling for traditional

determinants of political approval reveals no support for the theorized explanatory variables.

This study is organized in the following manner: The first section surveys relevant research in the rally, diversionary, policy availability and conflict literatures. The second section provides the theoretical basis for the political benefits of conflict expansion based on the comparative costs and benefits of initiation and expansion. The third section details the research design, and is followed by a section presenting and discussing the results. A final section offers some brief conclusions based on the findings presented here, highlights some of the shortcomings of the research, and suggests avenues for future research.

Chapter 2: Extant Literature

It is well established that there is more to the domestic public support of a political leader than his domestic policies. By using a principal-agent framework (Richards et al 1993; Morgan and Anderson 1999), scholars have shown the public principal selects an agent leader who must demonstrate his competence to the principal for reselection. Assuming the leader's goal is to maintain office, he will move to display his managerial ability. Voters evaluate this competence primarily by the health of the economy and by the leader's foreign policy management. In the context of the American presidents, the selectorate's calculation of leader competence is shaped by foreign policy performance, second only to economic performance (Tufte 1978; Page and Shapiro 1983; Nincic and Hinckley 1991)[3]. Because democratic leaders are ultimately responsible to their publics, they make foreign policy choices that they believe will be viewed positively by their domestic audience. Therefore, foreign policy decisions are made at least in part with their domestic consequences in mind.

Theories of Conflict and Domestic Benefits

Two major research programs that assess the relationship between foreign policy decisions and domestic consequences are diversionary theories of war and the closely related policy availability theory. These theories subscribe that leaders sometimes turn to foreign policy to generate political capital at home. Diversionary theories of war (Levy 1988) find roots in the sociological literature on in-group/out-group dynamics. The theory suggests that a leader will instigate conflict with an outside entity in order to build

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[3] A later study by Nickelsburg and Norpoth (2000), addressed the American President's role as "Chief Economist" and "Commander-in-Chief." The nature of the president's role in foreign relations outcomes and domestic economic outcomes are different; the President has more control, and therefore more responsibility over foreign actions. Nickelsburg and Norpoth determined the handling of foreign policy is *equally* important as his handling of the economy in the public's evaluation of presidential performance.

cohesion domestically. Following the logic of principle-agent modeling and the findings

of electoral evaluations of leaders, diversionary theory suggests a leader will use conflict

in order to divert his population's attention from a poor domestic political situation. A

significant amount of research in the diversionary literature considers which domestic

situations might lead to diversionary tactics. Traditional support for diversion suggests a

leader will initiate a conflict when facing a negative economic situation (Ostrom and Job

1986; James and Oneal 1991; Russett 1990). Later work began to explore conditions of

domestic unrest outside of economics; scholars began to explore the election cycle and

public opinion. In an analysis of Great Britain, Morgan and Anderson (1999) determined

there is an association between the level of government approval rates and the threat,

display, or use of force. Morgan and Bickers (1992) suggest diversion is not necessary

when general public opinion is down, but only when a leader lacks support from within

his winning coalition. Addressing both approval ratings and the election cycle, Smith

(1996a) notes that diversion is only likely when the outcome of an election is uncertain: if

a leader is secure in his victory, he has no need to divert and if he is sure of his defeat,

diversion would not help.

Closely related to diversionary theories is the policy availability theory. The

policy availability explanation (Brule 2006; Marshall and Prins 2011) posits that a leader

turns to foreign policy primarily when passing domestic policies is difficult. As

diversionary theories suggest it is a bad domestic economic environment or low public

opinion that drives conflict, policy availability says it is the executive's need to display

competence and demonstrate leadership when he is unable to do so in the domestic

legislature. Marshall and Prins (2011) argue that when the congressional environment

closely aligns with the president's policy objectives, he has little incentive to initiate

conflict abroad. Because he is able to achieve his legislative priorities, which establishes his competence to the public, the president has no need for diversionary force. Additionally, when the president enjoys a positive legislative environment, initiating a conflict carries the risk of losing legislative support. But when unable to move his policies through the legislature, the president is more able to use foreign policy, a unilateral tool of the executive, to establish managerial competence. Therefore, it is when the president cannot move policy through Congress that he may turn to foreign policy. In a study of the relationship between United States Congressional gridlock and the executive use of force, Marshall and Prins (2011) determine the President's ability to move legislation through Congress diminishes his likelihood of using major force. In a study interacting the economic and legislative veins of the research agenda, Brule and Williams (2009) conclude that leaders faced with weak party cohesion and economic decline may seek to demonstrate competence through foreign policy rather than fight for legislative consensus over economic policy. This supports the diversionary idea that a president uses force with the intent of bolstering public approval because he is incapable of passing policy through the legislature.

Diversionary theories and policy availability theories rely on the assumption that there are indeed political benefits to conflict. This benefit is often framed in terms of "rally 'round the flag" effect. Traditionally, scholars have defined the "rally 'round the flag' effect as the short term boost in an American President's public popularity after an involvement in an international crisis (Mueller 1970). John Mueller (1970, 1973) pioneered work on rally effects after observing a surge in presidential popularity in the United States after the beginning of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. In November 1979, President Jimmy Carter enjoyed a 26-percentage point boost in approval to 58% after the

assault on the US Embassy in Iran, the beginning of the Iran Hostage Crisis. From December 1990 to February 1991 President George H. W. Bush enjoyed a then unprecedented rise in popularity from 61 to 89 percent approval, presumably thanks to the initiation of Operation Desert Storm in January 1991. In 2001, his son President George W. Bush enjoyed an even larger boost in approval ratings after the terrorist attacks of September 11th. In the week prior to the attack, President G.W. Bush's approval rating was 51%. In the week after the attack his approval rating soared to 86%. And in the week after the President signed the Authorization for Use of Military Force (on 18 September 2011), his approval rating peaked at 90%. Since Mueller's pioneering work, and given events such as those above, international relations scholars have attempted to capture the relationship between international conflict and domestic public support for leaders.

Rally Effects and Conflict

Diversionary and policy availability theories rest on the assumption that leaders do attain political benefits from the use of force. Perhaps the most general indicator of public satisfaction with political leadership is public approval ratings. Like studies in the diversionary and policy availability literatures, the majority of studies exploring the political rally benefits of conflict focus on the use of force in broad terms. The majority of studies explore the impact of conflict onset or conflict initiation. This thesis, however, explores a previously untouched aspect of conflict as a means to garner public support. While conflict *initiation* and *involvement* are frequently the bases for examining rally effects, conflict *joining* has never, to my knowledge, been looked at. By exploring the

disparate impacts of conflict joining versus initiating, I develop an innovative way to study the rally effects of different types of conflict.

Joining an ongoing conflict is a choice, and one that differs from the decision to initiate or defend once attacked. Given the nature of this choice, it is surprising that it has received such little attention in the conflict literature. The primary focus in this area has been to examine the circumstances under which militarized disputes are likely to occur, but relatively little work has tackled the question of states' joining propensities. Why do states join conflicts that are already in progress? Extant literature suggests this question is not significantly different from those that concern conflict initiation, and as such, many of the posited explanations for conflict expansion are extensions of the arguments for conflict onset. However, this approach is suspect, as there are inherent differences between beginning one's own conflict – which is a deliberate decision only if a state plays the role of initiator – and selecting oneself into a conflict already underway.

With respect to conflict expansion, theorists have often borrowed directly from the vast initiation literature to explain the decision to intervene militarily. Most studies focus on the role of shared borders, alliances, and major power status (Siverson and Starr 1990; Smith 1996b; Gartner and Siverson 1996). Reduced distance between states increases the probability of conflict between them because it is simply easier to fight in one's own backyard (Siverson and Starr 1990). Arguably, alliances decrease conflict propensities as they signal a nation's strength in numbers (Morrow 1994; Smith 1995; Leeds, Long and Mitchell 2000). Powerful states are known for their willingness to showcase their capabilities internationally (Huth 1998); further, there is an understandable connection between major powers' willingness to initiate conflicts and

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their willingness to intervene when it is in their interest to do so (Altfeld and Bueno de Mesquita 1979).

Because of the prominence of these variables in the traditional inquiries of conflict studies, they have also been heralded as applicable in the much more sparse conflict expansion literature. Shared borders may increase the probability that a state will join an ongoing interstate dispute if one or more of its neighbors are involved, especially if the conflict in question might produce negative repercussions across national borders. Alliances also contribute to conflict expansion by linking states formally to one another in the event of a conflict; defense pacts are especially important, as these are the alliances that explicitly bind states together should one become embroiled in a militarized interstate dispute (Gibler and Sarkees 2004). Few, if any, studies suggest that conflict diffusion may be a rallying tactic for leaders who need to increase their domestic support and are either unwilling or unable to manufacture disputes of their own.

One strand of inquiry that has implications for conflict expansion and the use of conflict for rallying purposes concerns regime type. Democrats, having a large selectorate to satisfy and whose power is more directly linked to public opinion, are more likely than autocrats to use conflict to garner domestic benefits (Domke 1988; Miller 1995). While the "democratic peace" literature suggests democracies do not fight each other (Doyle 1984), democracies do not appear any less conflict prone than autocracies. Raknerud and Hegre (1997) find that democracies' war-proneness stems not from being as belligerent as autocrats, but because of democracies' willingness to bandwagon with one another. Democratic states flock together (Chan 1984; Siverson 1995; Huth 1998; Raknerud and Hegre 1997). The so-called "democratic diffusion hypothesis" rests on the normative

approach to the democratic peace – that the norms of democratic governance (popular sovereignty, respect for human rights, individual freedoms, constitutionalism, etc) together instill a sense of fraternity amongst democratic states (Doyle 1986; Clark and Nordstrom 2005); when one finds itself in jeopardy, it can call on its brethren to come to its defense.

Taken as a whole, regime type clearly has implications for the rallying use of conflict: first, democracies are more willing to join ongoing conflicts and, second, they are more likely to use conflict as a tactic for increasing domestic support. Accepting that there is an inherent difference between the choices to initiate and join a conflict, is it not likely that the public's rally 'round the flag would be different for a conflict initiation than for conflict expansion?

Theoretical Explanations for the Rally Effect

What is it about conflict that might lead the public to view government leadership more favorably? As Lai and Reiter (2005) point out, there are four general ideas that ground the rally 'round the flag logic. Early studies (Mueller 1970; Blechman and Kaplan 1978) first explained the rally effect suggesting it is a sense of patriotism during conflict that drives the increases support for the president. This idea is also based on the sociological in-group/out-group literature. Studying small groups of individuals, sociologists discovered conflict with an external entity helps build cohesion among members of a group (Simmel 1955; Coser 1956). Extrapolating from this behavioral observation of small, unstructured groups, political scientists apply the basic group cohesion findings to the state level. The idea is that conflict with a foreign entity builds cohesion among the domestic population. According to this argument, the in-group

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national identity becomes salient when there is conflict with the out-group international enemy. This assumed surge in nationalistic emotion is particularly credible after engagement in a conflict in which there was a clear assault on national interests, such as the attacks on September 11th, but may be less believable after a conflict of choice. If a leader initiates conflict unprovoked or joins a conflict without first developing public support for it, patriotism may not increase.

Very closely related to the patriotism argument are two additional logical explanations of the rally effect – a quiet opposition and overall institutional trust. Public support for the leadership may increase during times of conflict because political opposition is silenced. In times of crisis, political opponents are not as outspoken against leaders; if patriotism has increased and the public is generally more positive toward the government, vocal derision of the leadership provides no benefit to opposition parties. Without an opposing faction speaking against the leaders, the administration enjoys unchallenged policy positions, and society's opinion favors the productive administration (Brody, 1991). Similarly, during times of more positive nationalistic sentiments, society views political institutions more favorably. Such support for governing institutions, including the economy, can translate into a higher approval rating for leaders (Norpoth 1991; Parker 1995). As with the argument of increased patriotism, the different types of conflict are likely have different results with the opposition. If a nation is the target of aggression, there is likely a burst in both public and opposition support for the leadership (Schulz 2001). But when a leader decides to engage domestic resources in a fight that is not the response to aggression, the opposition is not likely to be silent and the media is likely to have nationally broadcast the administration's gear-up to fight. The public

response could support either side. When initiating a conflict without being a clear target, opposition might frame this as an unprovoked assault displaying the administration's bellicosity. The administration might frame the decision as a choice to defend liberty and democratic principles or to defend human rights. When joining an ongoing conflict, the opposition might frame the choice as unnecessarily getting involved in other nations' fights, while the administration might frame the choice as an effort to bring a conflict to a swift and decisive close. The opposition is likely to react differently during different types of conflict participation, and the public is likely to rally differently.

A final explanation grounding the rally effect centers on a leader's ability to establish managerial competence through foreign policy behavior. As noted above, in a principal-agent framework (Richards et al 1993; Morgan and Anderson 1999) the public reselects the leader based on his demonstrated management of the economy and foreign affairs (Nincic and Hinckley 1991). By successfully carrying out conflict events, the leader is able to establish management credibility. Conflict initiation may sometimes have the opposite effect, however, signaling foreign policy incompetence. Initiating a conflict may be a sign of the leader's inability to manage international relationships; he may have either signaled weakness that has made his nation the target of an assault or, perhaps, has portrayed himself as a warmonger by needlessly picking fights. When a leader joins a conflict, on the other hand, it may signal a strong ability to manage foreign relations. By joining into a multilateral partnership he establishes his ability to partner and work well with other nations. He may also be seen as a defender of democratic ideals, a bearer of international justice, and a benevolent partner seeking to bring a bloody affair to a close.

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Empirical Evidence for a Rally Effect

Having originated as a theory of American presidents, studies of the rally effect have been focused on the United States, and the evidence remains uncertain. Primarily, scholars have since sought to confirm the existence of rally effects in specific cases. As noted earlier, President George H.W. Bush clearly benefited from a rally effect during Desert Storm, supporting the concept of rally effects in the United States (Zaller 1993; Mueller 1994; Parker 1995). In other cases, however, the rally effect appears conditional on party affiliation. Jimmy Carter enjoyed a large rally among Independent voters during the Iranian hostage crisis (Callaghan and Virtanen 1993), but the rally during Bill Clinton's 1993 missile strikes in Iraq came primarily from members of his own Democratic party (Edwards and Swenson 1997). Slightly broadening the scope from a case study, but still focusing on one president, one study of George W. Bush's approval ratings from 2001 to 2006 determined only "truly dramatic events" like the September 11th terrorist attack could "significantly move approval from the course determined by more fundamental factors" (Eichenberg, Stoll, and Lebo 2006, p 802).

Because the rally has traditionally been argued to be the boost in approval, large-N studies of the American case typically use presidential approval ratings as the dependent variable and find the rallies to be small and short lived. For example, in a study of all major uses of force by the United States from 1950 to 1984, Lian and Oneal (1993) determined a president receives a 0% mean change in approval ratings; only when observing severe and well publicized actions did approval increase, and then it was merely a 2 to 3 percentage point change. James and Rioux (1998) confirmed the rally effect was small and provided further constraints on when the rally is likely to occur. It

appears the rally is positive when presidents "respond with vigor" (p 800) but do not actually use force; when the president actually commits troops, versus strong posturing, the rally disappears (James and Rioux 1998). In an examination of all American militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) from 1933 to 1992, Baker and Oneal (2001) found rallies are small and limited to those crisis events with public exposure – MIDS that are accompanied by White House statements and published in major news outlets can provide about a 2% increase in approval.

Other scholars have determined the existence and magnitude of the rally effect is dependent on characteristics of the population. In a study of American conflicts, 1953 to 1998, Baum (2002) aimed to disaggregate the American sub-groups and tested the rally effects as conditioned by partisanship and level of education. He determined that "individuals who are closest to the point of ambivalence between approval and disapproval… are most likely to change their opinion in response to external circumstances" (p. 265). Additionally, he found individuals who are *moderately* politically aware (as measured by a high school level of education) are most likely to rally and those with *least* political awareness (those with grade school education) are more likely to rally than those with *high* levels of awareness (those with a college education). In a quantitative study of the September 11th rally effect among young adults, Perrin and Smolek (2009) found support for Baum's conclusions that population characteristics (gender, race, and level of education) determine the likelihood to rally, but found opposite results; they determined women, African-Americans, and those with less education were less likely to rally than men, whites, and highly educated individuals.

As the typical rally effect has been shown to be small, scholars have wondered if that rally translates into longer-term political benefits by observing conflict's impact not on approval ratings, but on actual ability to maintain office. Two cross-national studies determined rallies do not necessarily translate into political survival for the leader or the leader's party (Chiozza and Goemans 2004; Williams, Brule, and Koch 2010). Observing national leaders' length in office across multiple regime types, Chiozza and Goemans (2004) determine international crisis does not appear to have any systematic upside to tenure. The consequences of war are not significantly different from the consequences of a lower-level conflict and the outcome of crisis (victory or defeat) do not significantly affect leader tenure; the only significant positive finding is that conflict aggressors appear to face a lower risk of removal. In a study of nine advanced democracies, Williams, Brule, and Koch (2010) studied the relationship between conflict and incumbent party legislative vote share. They determined democratic leaders and their parties receive nil to negative consequences for participating in "dramatic foreign policy behavior" (p:455). The extent of the domestic reaction is conditioned by the state of the national economy. During periods of economic success, conflict leads to no positive impact on the incumbent party's legislative vote share; but during economic decline, conflict participation leads to a decrease in vote share. They conclude that participation in a costly conflict abroad during times of domestic economic troubles leads the public to believe the leadership is ignoring the dire circumstances at home and, therefore, punishes the leader and his party.

There are a handful of rally effect studies that focus on the United Kingdom. Most of these, however, are case studies of the Falklands conflict (Levy and Vakili 1992;

Clarke, Mishler, and Whiteley 1990; Lanoue and Headrick 1994; Norpoth 1991; Clarke and Lebo 2003). Few take a quantitative approach to explore the relationship between conflict onset and public approval. And I am aware of only one that uses a time series analysis to understand the general rally effects for the British population across different conflicts. In a diversionary-focused study using conflict as the dependent variable, Morgan and Anderson (1999) examine Great Britain MIDs from 1950 to 1992 and find there is an association between the level of government approval and the threat, display, or use of force; they conclude government approval must be relatively high to undertake foreign conflict, but lower public approval for the prime minister's party is associated with a higher probability of conflict participation. In the only test using approval ratings as the dependent variable, Lai and Reiter (2005) test the actual rally effect of conflict. They determined conflict involvement does offer a limited spike in approval. Specifically, they determined rallies do not occur in conflicts short of war, and rallies are most likely and largest when national interests are at stake. Like rallies in the U.S. after Pearl Harbor, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and September 11th, the British public rallied only when British interests were the target of aggression – the Argentinean invasion of the Falklands, and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

A More Complete Approach

Scholars often treat these various literatures as separate topics. There is the literature on conflict propensities, the diversionary and policy availability literatures that promote the use of force for domestic reasons, and literature on the rallying effects of conflict. Few, if any, research projects provide a synthesis of them all. What is missing from one may be provided by another, as is suggested herein. Two major problems in the

rally literature is the lack of clear evidence and the limited expansion beyond the United States. Despite extensive research, there remains no definitive conclusion on the relationship between conflict and rallies. Similarly, the diversionary literature is littered with scholarly disagreement. Although the literature on conflict propensities is voluminous, there is very little focus on the difference between initiation and expansion. Because of this lack of distinction, there are few theories concerning a leader's choice to join a conflict. This thesis provides three important additions to international relations literature. First, it expands research on rallies and diversion beyond the United States. Second, it uses conflict joining as an innovative way to test the rally effect, which represents the political benefits on which the diversionary and policy availability literatures are based. And third, by submitting there may be a domestic motivation for conflict expansion, it opens up the research agenda on explanations of leaders' decisions to join ongoing international disputes.

Chapter 3: Theory and Hypotheses:

A Domestic Explanation of International Conflict Expansion

What, then, are these domestic benefits of conflict? If conflict is a costly affair, why do leaders divert resources in order to engage in conflict? Suggesting that war is always *ex post* inefficient, Fearon (1995) frames the cost of conflict as a pie; the prewar pie is always larger than the postwar pie. States must submit military personnel who may lose their lives; they must pay transportation and equipment fees for troops and provide a massive temporary infrastructure for them. Not to mention the physical costs paid by the land on which the battle is fought – infrastructure is destroyed and must be rebuilt by the victor. Therefore there must be benefits to conflict that make it so appealing for leaders to continue to engage in it.

In one of the field's most pivotal works, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al (2003) use regime type and leader incentives to explain engagement in conflict. *Selectorate theory* suggests political leaders' survival is a function of their provision of public and private goods; and this provision is dependent on regime type. The main components of the theory are the *selectorate* – that portion of the population with voting rights – and the *winning coalition* – that portion of the selectorate necessary to retain a leader in power. The size and makeup of the winning coalition varies based on regime type; in democracies the selectorate and winning coalition are quite large, but in autocracies, they are significantly smaller and consist mostly of powerful elites. Autocrats must provide significant *private* goods to his winning coalition, but democratic leaders must provide significant *public* goods.

Private goods – like competitive business advantages, grants of physical property, and direct payment – must be spread more thinly as the size of the winning coalition increases. In order to ensure loyalty among his coalition, a leader provides these private goods directly to his essential supporters and these supporters provide continued loyalty to the leader out of fear of losing their benefits. In an autocracy, these essential supporters are few in number so provision is not cumbersome. In a democracy, however, the winning coalition is much larger and therefore the thin provision of private goods will not suffice to ensure continued loyalty. Public goods – like national security and personal freedoms – benefit all people regardless of membership in the winning coalition. A large winning coalition, like in a democracy, means there are more supporters who need goods to maintain loyalty. Therefore, a democratic leader must provide more public goods in order to maintain power.

Understanding that a leader must be making decisions based on his calculations of the goods he must provide in order to stay in power, it is important to identify both the costs and the benefits of conflict in the context of those provisions. All leaders, regardless of regime type, can benefit from conflict by establishing their threat credibility in the international system (Fearon 1994); those states that use their military strength can use the threat of force to deter potential aggressors. But there are important domestic benefits leaders can gain from military conflict as well. In a study differentiating between regime types and the nature of leaders' removal from office, Chiozza and Goemans (2011) suggest conflict participation has different benefits for different types of leaders. Autocrats, who face forcible and dangerous removals from office, are able to benefit from conflict in both victory and defeat. In victory, they are able to gain legitimacy and

also gain private goods to provide their supporters. Even in a defeat, an autocrat benefits because he is able to quiet or eliminate political opponents by sending them to the front lines. Democrats, who usually experience regular and peaceful removal from office, can benefit from conflict in two main ways: first, as initiators, they can pick the time and place of conflict (usually around an election), and second, elections tend to be postponed during conflict.

When used as an intentional tactic, such as for diversion, conflict participation is geared toward allowing a leader to retain office by boosting public support of the executive. By the designation of some adversary as an "other," conflict participation may unify the domestic public behind a common cause and generate the "rally around the flag" effect. This cultivates the support necessary for leaders to achieve their personal and policy-oriented goals. Although conflict participation may generally serve this function, this thesis suggests that the focus on conflict initiation found in the literature has ignored the possibility that leaders take advantage of opportunities already present in the international system to generate this boost in approval. Specifically, the focus is on the opportunity to join ongoing conflicts. Given the gaps in the conflict expansion literature regarding reasons for joining a conflict, domestic incentive theories like diversion and policy availability may provide an explanation. Indeed, expected payoffs may be the primary factor motivating states – especially and specifically democracies – to join rather than initiate as a means to divert their domestic publics. This is likely to be the case for three separate reasons relating to the tangible and perceived costs and benefits of conflict.

First, war is inherently costly – in terms of both monetary and human capital. Resources outside of the national defense budget must be diverted away from domestic

expenditures in order to facilitate the war-making effort. When a state initiates a conflict – and assumes the role of aggressor as a solo actor – it must bear the whole of the monetary and human costs of doing so. Whereas the costs of going it alone are entirely concentrated, the costs of bandwagoning with others are more diffuse; concentrated costs are more likely to be admonished at home, while spreading costs across participants are more likely to be appreciated and rewarded. Though there are naturally distributional problems that must be solved with two or more players on one side of a conflict, no single state shoulders the burden in its entirety.[4] All co-combatants commit troops; all invest tangible resources in the fight. Although some commit more than others, the resource demands in a shared conflict are not concentrated on one participant. Additionally, as conflict is already underway, much of the "start-up" capital has already been expended to put troops in action, set up bases, and create supply lines. Therefore, a joining partner does not as heavily feel the costs associated with conflict. Assuming that states wish to achieve foreign policy victories while mitigating the expenses necessary to do so, joining is an obviously more attractive option than initiation.

In addition to joining being a cost-effective means of diversion, it can also be more efficient than initiating. When a state chooses to initiate an international conflict, the primary decision it must make is on whom to target. Though the options are not limitless – a state does not choose a target randomly, e.g. – the decision remains complex and difficult. Should a state choose a particular issue of importance to the domestic public, such as severe human rights violations? Should it single out a prior adversary for a renewed dispute? Should it try to locate the dispute in a particular region? With

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[4] Some distributional problems may include which states provide the majority of troops or pay the greatest monetary cost. Others may involve the allocation of benefits – such as territorial division, responsibility for rebuilding, etc – following the conflict's conclusion.

initiating a new MID, answers to these questions must be considered before a threat of force is ever issued. When an opportunity presents itself in the form of an ongoing dispute, however, many of the questions inherent in the nature of conflict have already been answered. This is not to say that choosing to join an ongoing dispute is either obvious or devoid of choice; it is, however, a much simpler choice than initiating a conflict. With MIDs in progress, much of the work has already been done: issues have been chosen, targets have been selected, and the conflict has begun. A potential joiner needs only to commit itself to a side and be, or at the least appear, willing to shoulder part of the burden. Joining, as opposed to initiation, is a much more efficient and arguably less burdensome means to create a diversion.

Finally, there are benefits to conflict joining beyond the division of costs and the political efficiency. These are reputational advantages a joining leader enjoys at home. First is the ability for the leader to characterize the state's intervention in terms of either a defender or rescuer, rather than as an aggressor. The way a leader is perceived by his public can have serious consequences for his electoral fortunes (Levy and Thompson 2010), and a more benevolent role in international conflict may serve to increase a leader's popularity. When a leader has an option to intervene and bring a conflict to a swift and decisive conclusion, he can be seen as demonstrating foreign policy competence, especially if there are few tangible costs to the intervention, as mentioned above. Conversely, if a leader intervenes military and ends up vanquished, he has the opportunity to distribute the blame as much as he had the opportunity to distribute the costs of conflict. In joining, a leader can allocate blame onto his allies, arguing that the only intention of joining was to assist an ally or to combat non-democratic regimes,

rather than shouldering responsibility for the loss alone. This may garner sympathy from the domestic public – sympathy that would not be an option under the auspices of conflict initiation.

It is important to first consider the assumptions grounding theories of diversion and policy availability – that there are domestic benefits of conflict that help enable a leader to maintain power. In the context of this thesis, which embraces an inherent difference between conflict initiation and conflict joining, the following two hypotheses are submitted to test the domestic political rally effects of the two aspects of conflict participation:

H1: Initiating an international conflict is likely to increase government popularity.

H2: Joining an ongoing international conflict is likely to increase government popularity.

For the reasons outlined above, – diffusion of costs, political efficiency, and the reputational benefits of joining an ongoing conflict – I contend that conflict diffusion is as much, if not more so, a means of engendering domestic public support than conflict initiation. As a corollary to Hypotheses 1 and 2, which test the rally effect assumptions grounding the diversion and policy availability theories, the following hypothesis tests my theory that joining a conflict should incite a larger spike in approval than initiating one:

H3: Joining an ongoing dispute is likely to have a greater positive impact on government approval than the impact of initiating one.

Chapter 4: Data and Methods

Data Selection

To test the hypotheses relating to conflict joining and initiation on government approval ratings, I use monthly data from the United Kingdom between 1948 and 2000. The unit of analysis is the country month and the temporal domain is selected based on data availability. Public approval data is available from 1948 to 2013 through a compilation of Gallup and Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) surveys. Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data is available from 1816 to 2001 (Ghosen, Palmer, Bremer 2004). Therefore, temporal domain is left-censored at 1948 based on public opinion data availability. Although MID data is available to 2001, the availability of data for the key economic control variables of change in inflation and change in unemployment mandates the data be right-censored at 2000 (Lai and Reiter 2005).

United Kingdom as Test Sample

Using the United Kingdom as the test sample is advantageous for two primary reasons: it is a mature democracy and it extends research on the domestic benefits of conflict beyond the United States. First, the face that the UK is a mature democracy has both a methodological and theoretical advantage. Its record keeping institutions are well established; unlike in many other democracies, economic and public opinion data has been collected in the United Kingdom for many decades. For the simple fact that voluminous and accurate data is available, the UK serves as an excellent test sample. Theoretically, leaders of mature democracies are the most likely to use conflict for its domestic rallying benefits (Pickering and Kisangani 2005). Because democratic leaders are highly responsive to their public's opinion in order to stay in power, they have a

strong incentive to use foreign conflict as a tactic for bolstering domestic support. Additionally, because the United Kingdom is a mature democracy that holds major power status, it also would have the capability of using these tactics on a global scale. The United Kingdom has both the strength to initiate military engagements for intentional diversion and the global military reach to access conflicts in any part of the world. If a leader is seeking to join a conflict as a means to bolster domestic strength, many have to chose conflicts from among their neighbors; because the United Kingdom has a strong military with the ability to reach any conflict in the world, its opportunities for using joining as a diversionary tactic are larger than many other nations.

Second, focusing on the United Kingdom breaks away from the literature's traditional focus on the United States. The majority of existing empirical studies in the rally and diversionary literatures focus on United States Presidents, who hold broad unilateral military powers. If the president is in need of bolstering domestic support, he has the power to use the military at his sole disposal. Although the British Prime Minister holds de facto control of Her Majesty's Armed Forces in the parliamentary democracy, the ruling party shares the responsibility and the weight of the repercussions of conflict choices. By observing the public reactions to conflict in the United Kingdom, I test the applicability of diversionary theories beyond both the United States and a presidential political system.

Testing the Rally

In addition to expanding the scope of diversionary research beyond the United States, this project also tests the commonly assumed rally effect. Previous research has primarily addressed the causal relationship between domestic discontent and diversionary

tactics, using militarized interstate dispute (MID) onset as the dependent variable and contending that leaders will seek to rally their publics when popularity is low and/or the state of the domestic economy is failing. Though they aim to predict the conditions under which diversion is likely to be used, these studies fail to capture the success of the threat, display, or use of force in boosting government popularity. In this thesis, the traditional dependent and independent variables are reversed in order to assess whether MID participation – through intervention into ongoing conflict specifically – leads to an increase in government approval ratings. Using a similar model, Lai and Reiter (2005) studied the effects of conflict involvement on government approval ratings in the United Kingdom. Though this model is closely related, – focusing on the United Kingdom and using government popularity as the dependent variable – it is theoretically separate with respect to understanding the different impacts of the types of conflict involvement. This will allow the estimation of the consequences of potential diversions, as well as whether MID initiation or MID joining has a greater impact on government popularity in the United Kingdom.

Dependent Variable and Choice of Estimator

Because I am interested in testing the actual domestic political benefits of conflict, the conceptual variable is the public's support of the incumbent leader. The most traditional formulation of this concept is public approval ratings. At first, one might be tempted to use the Prime Minister's approval ratings, keeping symmetrical with studies of the United States President. Unlike studies of the United States, however, this study does not use the approval of an individual executive, but rather the approval of the ruling government party. The nature of a parliamentary political system does not place the

public's evaluation of success solely on the Prime Minister. Rather, the cabinet as a whole constitutes the executive branch and the Prime Minister is the *primus inter pares*; military decisions are made by the cabinet as a collective, and thus by the government as a collective, rather than by the PM as an individual. Therefore, the dependent variable is measured in terms of public support for the governing party. The data[5] is gathered from both Gallup polls and Market Opinion and Research International (MORI), which over time have asked respondents "How would you vote if there was a general election tomorrow?"[6]

Even though raw approval scores appear to be continuous in nature, they are measured as a percentage of the public that approves of the current leadership, and the allowable values are truncated at 0 and 100. Governments cannot receive negative popularity scores, nor is it mathematically possible for them to achieve a score greater than 100 percent. I report the results from an ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation.[7] Because of the dynamic nature of the dependent variable, I also incorporate the approval score from the previous month to account for serial autocorrelation in the time series data. Robust standards errors are implemented to account for the heteroskedastic nature of the dependent variable.

Explanatory Variables

Of primary interest in this research agenda is the impact of conflict diffusion on the public's evaluation of Government performance. It is also worthwhile, though, to

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[5] Data is obtained from Brian Lai and Dan Reiter, who also give acknowledgement to Alastair Smith.

[6] MORI data asks a follow-up question to "undecided" respondents, which assists in most accurately and fully identifying a supported party.

[7] With dependent variable values that are truncated, using an estimator designed for continuous variables – such as ordinary least squares – can provide results that are inherently inefficient. In this case, however, a Kernel density test verifies that even though the dependent variable is technically beta distributed due to the upper and lower bounds, it still approximates a normal curve. For this reason, an OLS model is acceptable.

consider the varying effects of initiation and joining. As hypothesized, because joining an ongoing conflict has both tangible and reputational benefits, governments are more likely to seize these opportunities to boost their popularity rather than bear the costs and negative feedback from initiation. Including both MID initiation and MID joining as independent variables in the model allows us to assess the impact of both options. The first key variable, Initiate, is coded 1 if the United Kingdom initiated a MID during the month of the observation, and 0 otherwise. The data do not reflect the ongoing years of conflict, but just the month in which the conflict began. The variable capturing conflict diffusion, Join, is coded similarly. Data for both of these variables derive from the MID dataset in the Correlates of War project.

These variables are lagged one period before the measurement of approval in order to best capture the post-conflict effect. If a MID occurred at the early stages of a month, comparing to the average public approval rating over the month would be satisfactory. Those MID events which occurred at the end of a month, however, would not be accounted for in their own month's approval rating. Therefore the MID event which occurred at month time t is compared to the approval rating at month time $t+1$.

Control Variables

I employ several sets of control variables in the estimations to capture alternative explanations for variation in government approval ratings. One of the primary factors influencing domestic content is the state of the national economy. As Nincic and Hinckley (1991) note, voters evaluate their leaders first on the health of the economy. It is assumed that high rates of unemployment coupled with worsening inflation create a deterioration of economic performance and generates social costs (Meernik and

Waterman 1996). As punishment for incurring these costs, retrospective voters punish their leaders with low popularity and potentially oust them from power. Conversely, a growing economy is likely to increase support for the political leadership. To capture these phenomena, I measure domestic economic conditions using two variables: the monthly unemployment and inflation rates of change. Again, I use Lai and Reiter's (2005) dataset for the unemployment and inflation rates over the time period in the United Kingdom. Inflation data come from the Retail Prices Index available through the UK Office of National Statistics (ONS). Unemployment data are derived from the International Labour Office and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Year Book of Labour Statistics.

I also control for the domestic election cycle. Previous research suggests that a use of force is more likely during the time leading up to an election in order to bolster approval ratings by demonstrating foreign policy competence and rallying the domestic public (Ostrom and Job 1986; Oneal and Russet 1999; Hess and Orphanides 2001; Pickering and Kisangani 2005). Because diversion is especially likely during the campaign season immediately before an election, one would ideally account for the campaign season. This is particularly difficult in a parliamentary system of government, as elections do not have a set cycle. In a presidential system with fixed election dates, it is easy to simply code for the time preceding the election. In the British parliamentary system, elections are held on a relatively erratic basis. Although elections must be held at least every five years, they are often held prior to the deadline. The general election can be called in one of two ways: first, a motion for a general election is agreed upon by a two-thirds vote in the House of Commons, or second, a vote of no confidence is passed

by a simple majority. Given the first rule, a governing power has the ability to call an election at a time most favorable to itself, but it must already have a dominant two-thirds majority anyway. Because the elections are either well planned by the party in power or a relative surprise with a vote of no confidence, it is nearly impossible to control for campaign season as it relates to the use of force. As a control for public opinion levels, however, accounting for the election cycle is imperative. The party in power has the ability to call for elections and is able to stir up support heading into an election. To account for the campaign season, the month of an election and the two months prior are coded as 1, and 0 otherwise. It is relatively easier to account for the post-election "honeymoon" period: the temporary surge in public support after an election. "Honeymoon" is coded 6 for the month following an election, and continuously drops by 1 until the value is 1 at the sixth month after an election, and 0 otherwise. A final control accounting for the domestic political and election cycle is party affiliation. Because the Labour party is often thought to be more "dovish" when it comes to military involvement, it is generally assumed that Labour governments would be less likely to engage in the use of militarized conflict for political gain, especially initiation (Shultz 2005). Further, when a "dove" leader uses conflict, his support base would be more frustrated, while a "hawk's" use of force would not be unexpected. The use of force during a Labour government is likely to be met with lower approval because his support base is unsatisfied. I code the party of the Prime Minister 1 for each month in which a Labour PM served in office.

Foreign policy competence is the second largest factor that typically impacts public approval. Since "competence" is itself difficult to measure, I approximate a

leader's ability to navigate the international system by operationalizing two aspects of foreign policy: the hostility of the international military environment and conflict fatigue. First, I code whether the United Kingdom is involved in a war – regardless of whether a conflict in a month has already escalated to war or if the war is ongoing from previous months. War is decidedly different than lower-level militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) that often do not result in fatalities and that generally end quite quickly. As Lai and Reiter (2005) determined, being at war may initially boost government approval, but the rally quickly dissipates over time. It is also likely that approval will increase at the conclusion of a war, when troops come home and resources are brought back for domestic use. To account for the relationship between war and approval, the months in which there was a war start or war end are coded 1, and 0 otherwise. War is coded from the MID database in Correlates of War, and is operationalized there as having reached a level 5 on the hostility scale. I also include a control for conflict fatigue. Though an external enemy may boost public support in the short term, the over-extension of military capabilities is viewed negatively. To capture this fatigue, I include a count variable, which identifies the total number of MIDs in which the United Kingdom is involved during any month.

As another control variable relating the international environment, I incorporate a dummy variable that captures whether the United Kingdom was targeted in a MID during the month of the observation. Publics naturally feel a surge of nationalistic emotion after a clear assault on national interests, such as during the Falklands War. Since defensive conflicts are intrinsically likely to increase leadership support, it's imperative to control for them here. The variable original target is coded 1 if the United Kingdom was the target of a threat, display, or use of force during the month.

The final variable to control for in the international foreign policy environment accounts for those conflicts in which the United Kingdom was a partner with the United States. Diplomatically these two countries have a unique "special relationship" that ties them closely both economically, militarily, and culturally. As the most dominant state in the system, the United States is likely to be victorious in any conflict in which it is involved. Understanding the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom and the likelihood of US victory, it is likely that conflicts in which both the US and UK are involved will end in victory and provide a boost to popular support. Therefore, I control for the US-UK relationship with the variable US/UK coded 1 for every MID in which both the United States and the United Kingdom were participants. This variable does not account for the side (target or initiator) or time (originator or joiner) that either state entered the conflict. For control purposes, the relevant concept is the joint involvement of both states, not necessarily on which side the states were involved. Additionally, to remain consistent with the causal conflict variables, the US/UK variable is coded 1 for only the month during which the UK became involved in the conflict, not for all months during which the United Kingdom was involved.

Chapter 5: Results and Analysis

Univariate Analysis

Before attempting to understand how the variables work together as a complete

model, it is important to understand each variable independently. The main features of

the dataset, as described above, are relevant at the individual level in order to provide a

basis for analyzing how the variables work jointly. Therefore descriptive statistics are

presented for univariate analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Min**	**Max**
Country Months	636				
Government approval	636	39.92	7.22	10	60
Change in Approval	635	0.00472	3.43774	-31	23
Unemployment Change	633	0.00087	0.05312	-0.3054	0.30538
Inflation Change	635	0.4917	0.66018	-1.5497	4.32605
Parliamentary elections	14				
MID Participation	92				
War	5				
Targeted in MID	49				
Initiated a conflict	19				
Joined a conflict	24				
Joined an initiator	12				
Joined a target	12				
US/UK joint conflicts	12				

First, in order to perform a useful large-N study, there must be a sufficient number

of events in the independent variables. Therefore, the first variables to consider are the

conflict variables – was the United Kingdom bellicose enough during the time period to

make any determination on the impacts of conflict on approval. Between 1948 and 2000,

the United Kingdom was involved in a total number of 92 militarized interstate disputes,

including five wars (Korean War, Suez/Sinai Crisis, Falklands War, Gulf War, and Kosovo War). Of those disputes, the UK was the targeted state in 49 conflicts. Key to this thesis is the number of conflicts initiated and joined; the United Kingdom initiated 19 conflicts and joined 24.

Second, it is important to describe summary observations about the dependent variable of government approval. During the time period 1948 to 2000, public approval of the government in the United Kingdom averaged 30.92 percent, reaching a minimum on 10 percent and a maximum of 60 percent.
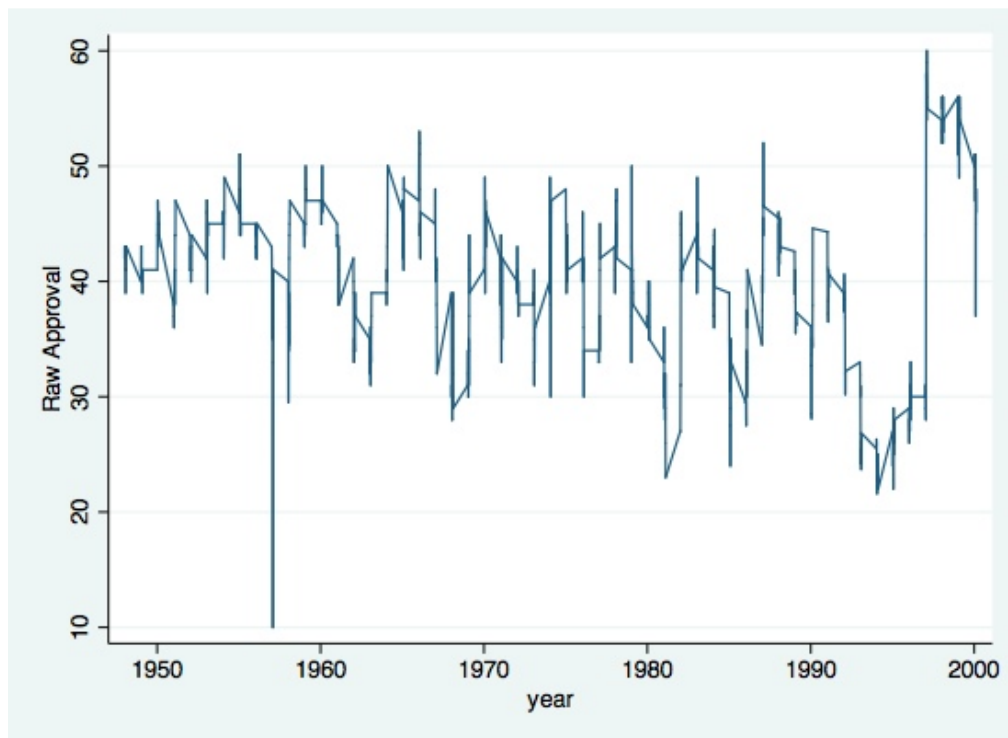

Figure 1: Public Approval of Government in the United Kingdom, 1948-2000

Approval reached the minimum in August 1957, hitting only 10% approval, and the maximum of 60% in October 1997. In August 1957, Prime Minister Harold

Macmillan was facing increasing unemployment and inflation rates and had been facing

the decolonization of British assets. In the months prior to August, the inflation rate had

risen almost 2 percent and Britain had lost control of the now independent Malaysia. In

October 1997, on the other hand, unemployment was on a steady decline and inflation

was only slightly increased; approval had be steadily in the 50s after the Labour Party

had won the elections in May that year, but perhaps the peak to 60 percent approval was

due to the late-August death of Princess Diana and a surge in national pride.

Bivariate Analysis

Table 2: Average Approval Scores and Approval Change

	Average Raw Approval Score (t-1)	Average Change in Approval (t-1)
Overall	39.9197	0.0047
No MID occurrence	39.8185	-0.0654
MID occurrence	40.4719	0.4248
Initiated a conflict	41.7111	0.0444
Joined a conflict	38.9042	-0.2542

It is also important to understand the bivariate relationships between the conflict

variables and approval ratings. Table 2 denotes the average raw approval scores in the

month following an event, as well as the average change in approval between the month

of an event and the subsequent month. Taking no variables into account, the overall

average raw approval score is 39.9197 percent and the average change in approval is

0.0047 of a percentage point. In the months subsequent to a month when no militarized

interstate dispute (MID) occurred, approval is about a tenth of a percentage point lower

than the norm. In those months following a MID onset, raw approval is about half a

percentage point higher than the base overall approval. Breaking the MID occurrence down to consider the variables of most interest to this thesis, initiating a conflict appears to have a positive impact; the average approval in the month after initiating a conflict is almost a percentage point greater than the overall average. Conversely, though, in the months after joining a MID approval is an entire point lower than the overall average and the change in approval is a negative two tenths of a percentage point. From here, it can be inferred that MID onset has the largest positive impact on approval, initiating has a positive impact, and joining has a severe negative impact.

Figure 2 depicts raw approval scores in the month after the UK initiated a conflict and Figure 3 depicts the change in approval ratings after conflict initiation.

Figure 2: Raw Approval Scores after Conflict Initiation
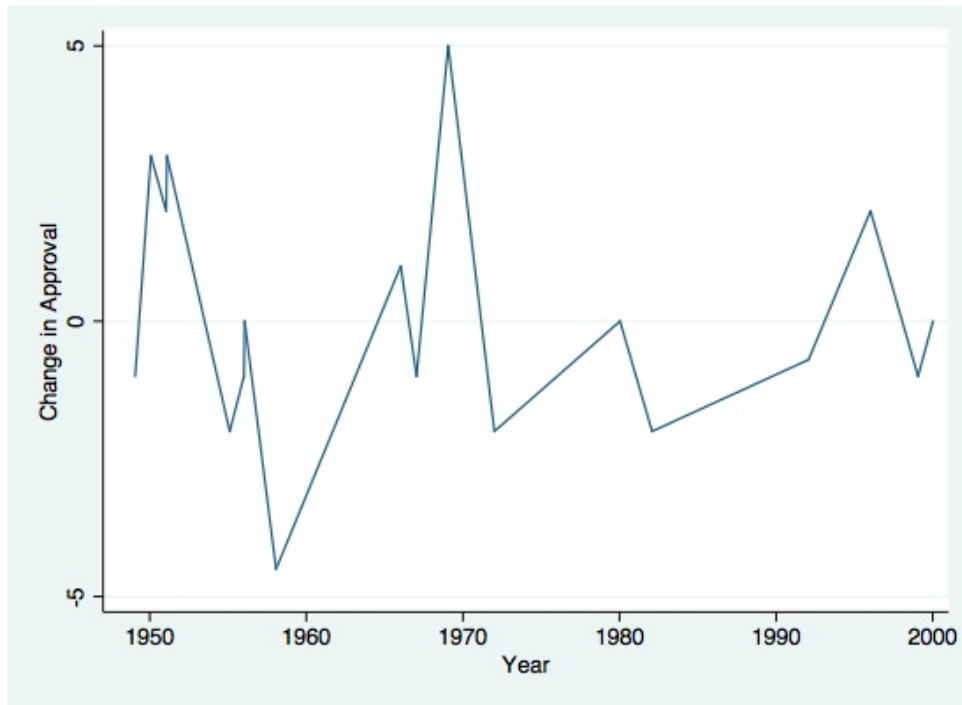
Figure 3: Change in approval after Conflict Initiation

From Figures 2 and 3, it is clear there is enough variance in the approval ratings during conflict initiation to make the subsequent multivariate regression useful. Taking the graphs together, it is also seen that conflict may have a positive impact on approval. For example, in March 1996, the United Kingdom initiated a conflict. Figure 2 depicts a very low approval rating associated with conflict initiation, but Figure 3 indicates there was, in fact, a one-point boost in approval at the time. Likewise, Figure 2 suggests a high approval rating after conflict initiation in June 1958, but Figure 3 indicates there was actually a 4.5 percentage point loss.

Similarly, Figures 4 and 5 represent the bivariate relationship between approval scores in the UK and joining an ongoing conflict.

Figure 4: Raw Approval Scores after Conflict Joining

Figure 5: Change in Approval after Conflict Joining

As with the variation in the dependent variable with conflict initiation, there is also substantial variation in approval after conflict joining. Perhaps the first thing that comes to mind in the graphs is the large negative change in approval around 1961; raw approval scores took a large dip and the change in approval was negatively large. During 1961 alone, the United Kingdom was targeted in two MIDs (in March and May) and joined into two MIDs (in June and August). And between 1960 and January 1965, the UK was involved in eleven MIDs, five as original participants and six as joiners. In 1996, 1997, and 1998, the United Kingdom joined three conflicts. In 1996, raw approval was low and joining a conflict provided a five-percentage point boost. Although raw approval was high 1997 and 1998, joining a conflict decreased approval

Figures 6 and 7 display the raw approval and approval change trends for conflict initiation and joining in one image in order to assist in comparison.
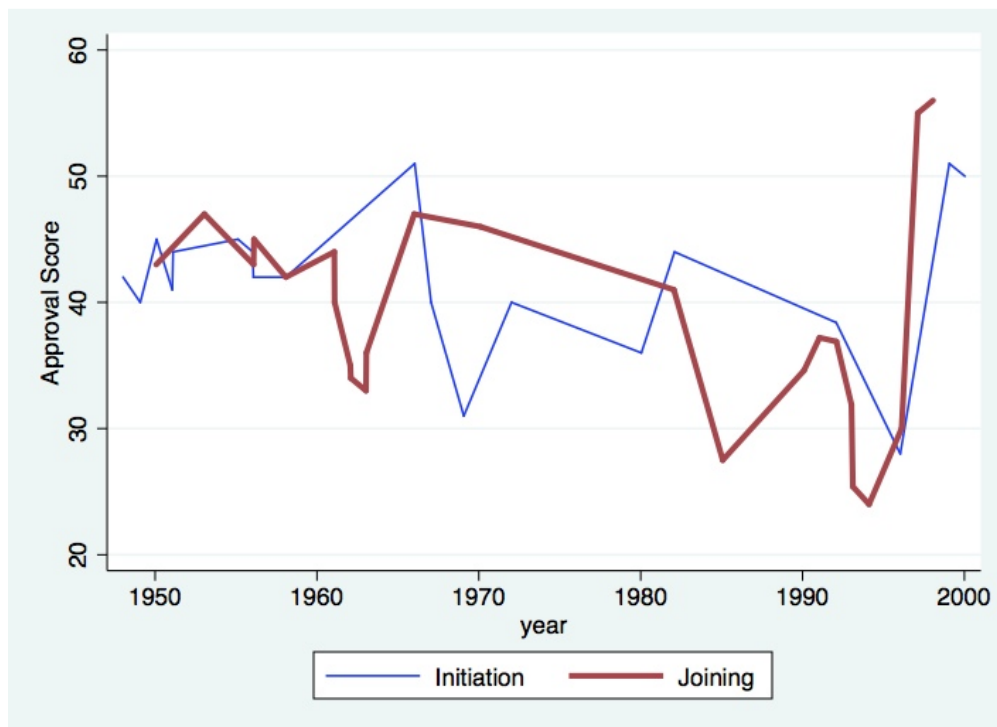

Figure 6: Raw Approval Scores after Conflict Initiation and Joining
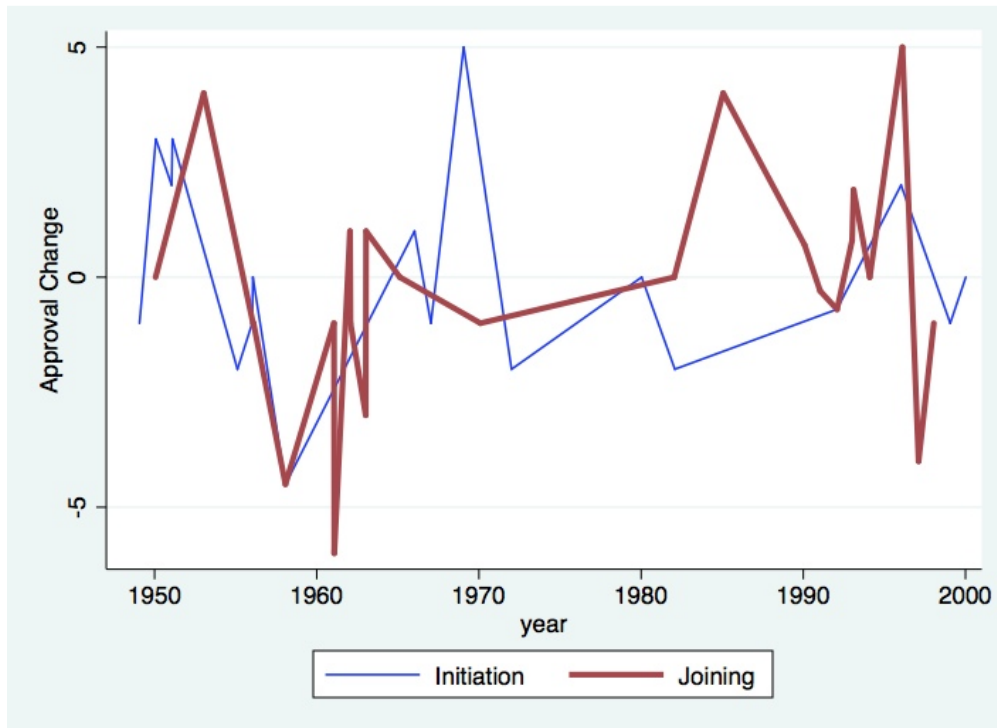
Figure 7: Change in Approval after Conflict Initiation and Joining

In Figure 6, it appears raw approval scores tend to follow the same overall trends after both conflict initiation and joining, indicating the conflict variables are only a part of the larger set of variables the public considers when rating the government. Figure 7, however, shows the more varied way conflict joining and initiation change approval ratings. Although initiating a conflict has provided some spikes in both the positive and negative direction, it appears to sit closer to a zero ±1 change. Conflict joining, though, appears to have a much more erratic effect on approval, with several large negative and positive spikes.

Finally, simple bivariate regression indicates, on average, the raw approval score is expected to increase by 1.95 percentage points after initiating a conflict. Joining a conflict, on the other hand, is expected give the government an approximate 1.02

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percentage point loss in approval. Neither of the relationships between approval scores and conflict initiation or joining, however, have a statistically significant connection. Of note is a bivariate test of the assumption that being attacked can increase approval; a simple bivariate regress between raw approval and the UK being the target of a MID indicates there is a statistically significant (at the 90% confidence level) prediction that being a target will increase approval scores by 1.82 percentage points.

Multivariate Analysis

Now that univariate and bivariate analyzes provide a general description of approval scores and conflict, I analyze the multivariate relationships of several factors that go into the public's evaluation of the government. Model 1 represents the basic model of government approval, including only those variables that the literature has established are benchmarks for the public's evaluation of the government. Models 2 through 5 integrate the conflict variables of interest to this thesis. Model 2 represents the impact of initiating on approval. Model 3 represents the impact of conflict joining. The Correlates of War dataset allows us to analyze conflict joining at a deeper level. The dataset not only separates conflict based on originators and joiners, it also differentiates the aggressors from the targets. Models 4 and 5 represent these differentiations. Model 4 observes the impact of joining an initiating aggressor while Model 5 observes the impact of joining a victim target state. Finally, Model 6 provides the composite model – observing control variables and conflict variables together. In these models none of the explanatory conflict variables are statistically significant.

Table 3: Multivariate Regression of Raw Approval Ratings (Models 1, 2, and 3)

	(1) Basic model	(2) Initiator	(3) Joiner
Constant	5.494*** (1.082)	5.494*** (1.083)	5.491*** (1.088)
Governmental approval (t-1)	0.847*** (0.027)	0.847*** (0.027)	0.847*** (0.027)
Change in Unemployment	3.951 (3.078)	3.951 (3.081)	3.952 (3.081)
Change in Inflation	-0.240 (0.204)	-0.240 (0.204)	-0.239 (0.207)
Parliamentary election	2.151*** (0.649)	2.151*** (0.650)	2.151*** (0.650)
Honeymoon	0.312*** (0.116)	0.312*** (0.117)	0.312*** (0.116)
Ruling Party (Labour)	0.931*** (0.300)	0.930*** (0.301)	0.931*** (0.300)
War Started (t-1)	0.846 (0.945)	0.840 (0.963)	0.837 (0.701)
War Ended (t-1)	1.694 (2.295)	1.695 (2.297)	1.683 (2.304)
Joint US and UK conflict (t-1)	0.821* (0.471)	0.816* (0.483)	0.800 (0.701)
Target of attack (t-1)	0.120 (0.329)	0.121 (0.331)	0.121 (0.329)
Number of conflicts	0.573* (0.306)	0.572* (0.303)	0.573* (0.308)
Initiated a conflict (t-1)	--	0.023 (0.562)	--
Joined a conflict (t-1)	--	--	0.036 (0.849)
R^2	0.7989	0.7989	0.7989
F-statistics	192.41	176.40	176.40
(significance)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	633	633	633

* $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.01$ (Robust errors are reported in parentheses)

Table 4: Multivariate Regression of Raw Approval Ratings (Models 4, 5, and 6)

	(4) Joined Initiator	(5) Joined Target	(6) Composite
Constant	5.529*** (1.085)	5.449*** (1.085)	5.490*** (1.089)
Governmental approval (t-1)	0.847*** (0.027)	0.848*** (0.027)	0.847*** (0.027)
Change in Unemployment	3.950 (3.078)	3.981 (3.089)	3.952 (3.084)
Change in Inflation	-0.251 (0.205)	-0.231 (0.205)	-0.239 (0.207)
Parliamentary election	2.140*** (0.650)	2.136*** (0.652)	2.152** (0.651)
Honeymoon	0.311*** (0.116)	0.310*** (0.117)	0.312*** (0.117)
Ruling Party (Labour)	0.927*** (0.300)	0.934*** (0.301)	0.930*** (0.301)
War Started (t-1)	0.840 (0.942)	0.605 (0.810)	0.830 (0.981)
War Ended (t-1)	1.929 (2.126)	1.709 (2.300)	1.683 (2.306)
Joint US and UK conflict (t-1)	0.940* (0.528)	0.427 (0.702)	0.793 (0.748)
Target of attack (t-1)	0.104 (0.329)	0.127 (0.333)	0.122 (0.332)
Number of conflicts	0.577* (0.313)	0.590* (0.307)	0.573* (0.304)
Joined Initiator (t-1)	-0.763 (1.058)	--	--
Joined Target (t-1)	--	0.959 (1.091)	--
Initiated a conflict (t-1)	--	--	0.026 (0.582)
Joined a conflict (t-1)	--	--	0.038 (0.864)
R^2	0.7991	0.7992	0.7989
F-statistics	176.63	177.89	162.77
(significance)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	633	633	633

* $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.01$ (Robust errors are reported in parentheses).

Considering all six models in combination, it appears the economic and conflict variables are generally not important; these variables are consistently statistically insignificant across all models. These results are surprising. As the literature suggests, the

economy and foreign policy are the most important factors in the public's evaluation of the their leadership (Nincic and Hinckley 1991; Nickelsburg and Norpoth 2000). It is unexpected that the variables representing these are not significant in the models. Regarding the economic variables of inflation change and unemployment change, the unexpected insignificance may be due to data inefficiencies. Because the dependent variable is measured as the raw approval score, perhaps using raw economic data rather than rates of change would provide different results. Concerning the conflict variables representing war and being the victim on an attack, the statistical insignificance is surprising because Lai and Reiter (2005) determined that nothing short of war resulted in a rally and rallies were largest when the United Kingdom was the target of an attack. The insignificance of these variables in this thesis may be due to method selection. Lai and Reiter (2005) use fractional integration and an ARFIMA (autoregressive fractionally integrated moving average) model to reach their conclusions; perhaps more advanced statistical methods will provide different results.

Of moderate statistical significance are the variables representing joint US and UK conflicts and war fatigue. In Models 1 (Basic), 2 (Initiator), and 4 (Joined an Initiator), the variable for joint US and UK conflicts was statistically significant at the 90% level. In these three Models, government approval is expected to increase a little less than one percentage point when the United Kingdom is involved in a MID that the United States is also a part of. This is an expected relationship, because the United States is the world superpower and is likely to win whatever conflicts it is involve in; therefore combining the United Kingdom's strength with the United States' is an almost assured victory and is likely to be rewarded. What is interesting about this result is that the

significance is only present in the Basic model and the two models regarding initiators; when the United Kingdom initiates a MID or joins a MID on the side of an initiator, the US and UK relationship is significant. This may be related to the concept that democracies do no start wars they cannot win and the UK is nearly guaranteed a victory when initiating a conflict with the US as an ally or joining an initiating force along with the US. Regarding the variable that represents war fatigue, they are significant across all models. The relationship is unexpectedly positive – as the number of MID participation increases in a month, approval increases by half a percentage point. This may be due to possible collinearity issues. Because many UK-involved MIDs are not long-lasting, the war fatigue variable may be collinear with a more general MID participation variable, which bivariate analysis indicates does have a positive impact on approval ratings.

The only variables that are consistently highly significant are those variables representing the government-level considerations in approval ratings. During election months, approval for the ruling government increases by about 2 percentage points – likely due to the nature of hard campaigning. Also, the ruling government is likely to call for elections during times of high and/or increasing approval ratings. Likewise, during the honeymoon period after an election, approval is likely to increase by three-tenths of a percentage point each month closer to the election; that is, approval is likely to be 1.8 percentage points higher in the month after an election and decrease by .3 percentage points each subsequent month up to five months. Finally, when the ruling party is Labour, approval is likely to be one percentage point higher. Perhaps a "dove" party is more popular and when it does use conflict it is perceived as a necessary choice. When a hawk government uses force, it is perceived as the government using unnecessary force

to satisfy its own bellicosity. Because foreign policy shifts are not as tied to political party leadership, however, it may not be accurate to characterize British parties as either dove or hawk. The general popularity of Labour governments may simply be the result of the electoral system. Because the government splits votes among more than two parties, the majority of the population can fall closer to one political pole than the ruling party; in the United Kingdom a larger proportion of the population is left of center, but Conservative governments win the leadership because the left parties split their potential vote share between the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. Perhaps, then, the generally higher approval rating of Labour Party leaders is due more to the population's political optimism after the end of protracted periods of Conservative government rule (October 1951 to October 1964 and May 1979 to May 1997) than due to the foreign policy choices of either party.

Based on these results, the theory outlined in this thesis is not supported. None of the theorized conflict variables have a statistically significant relationship with government approval ratings. None of the hypotheses are statistically supported. Additionally, there are some surprising results regarding the lack of significance in the economic variables. Surprisingly Lai and Reiter's (2005) findings that war is an indicator of a rally effect, are also not supported. The government level variables that impact approval ratings, however, are expectedly significant, positive, and robust across all models.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Based on the bivariate and multivariate results, it is clear that joining a conflict does not have a positive impact on government approval ratings in the United Kingdom, as theorized in this paper. The bivariate results show that conflict initiation and joining have small impacts on approval and joining a conflict will decrease the public's view of the government. These results are statistically insignificant, though. Similarly, the multivariate models indicated no significant results for conflict initiation or joining.

These findings are contrary to the postulated theory and stand in contrast to the literature on rally effects. The majority of this literature, however, focuses on the United States. Because this thesis explored the rally effects in the case of the United Kingdom, results may be specific to the British context. As Baum (2002) noted, education is an important factor in determining the likelihood of a rally in the American context; those with a high school level of education are more likely to rally than those with a college education. According to 2009 OECD education data, 37% of the British public held a tertiary education degree, as compared to 41% of the United States population. This supports Perrin and Smolek's (2009) contrary finding that those with less education are less likely to rally. Perhaps there is a combinative explanation between age and education; although the United States has a higher overall percentage of college-educated citizens, the United Kingdom has a higher percentage of young people (age 25-34) with tertiary degrees. This may suggest that highly educated young people are less likely to rally. Considering that the United Kingdom has a highly educated young population and that technological advancements generally thrive in younger audiences, there may be another possible explanation of the absence of the rally in the British population –

Internet usage. Brody (1991) suggests the rally is a result of opinion leadership – the public gets information cues from the media and public opinion follows the opinion of the elite (Brody and Shapiro 1989). In a study of the Korean populations, Lee and Hwang (working paper) suggest the non-existent rally in South Korea is due to the high percentage of the population with Internet access; the ability of the population to self-educate using the Internet diminishes the media elites' power to influence public opinion on foreign policy. As of 2012, the United Kingdom has the highest Internet penetration in the world with 83% of the British population using the Internet[8].

Additionally, the proposed theory suggests joining a conflict would have a different impact on the rally than initiating one. This is true. However this difference is opposite what is suggested. It was suggested that joining a conflict would provide a better rally because joining has monetary and reputational benefits. It is cheaper, administratively more efficient, and less aggressive than initiating a dispute. Results show joining has a negative impact on public opinion, though. This may be due to cost/benefit payoffs or a mis-prediction of public opinion. First, when joining a conflict, costs are shared more broadly, therefore, so are the benefits. Second, the population may see initiating a conflict as a national necessity but joining as a political option. The public may view the government's commitment of British monetary and human resources to another nation's fight as an irresponsible waste.

The results of this thesis are important because they indicate that any type of conflict, whether initiating or joining, is not useful for a British leader who is seeking to use foreign conflict as a means for building domestic political support. The findings in

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[8] Internet usage data is collected by the Miniwatts Marketing Group using Neilson Online and International Telecommunications Union data.

this thesis call into question the foundation of theories that suggest leaders use militarized foreign policy for its potential rallying effects. Two important theoretical arguments in international relations rely on the premise that there are domestic political incentives to conflict. Diversionary theories suggest political leaders opt to initiate conflict abroad in order to divert their public's attention away from dismal domestic circumstances. Policy availability theories similarly suggest leaders resort to conflict when they are unable to establish managerial prowess through domestic policy passage. These theories, one, rely on the assumption that there are in fact domestic incentives to conflict and, two, fail to interpret these incentives for joining a conflict separately from initiating conflict. There appears no domestic incentive for leaders to use conflict initiation or joining for domestic political purposed. The results of this thesis suggest the foundational assumption of the rally effect is weak and suggests proponents of these theories reconsider their predictions.

Although the postulated theory is not supported, there is value in the general premise of the research agenda. First, conflict variables are rarely addressed using the differentiation between joining and initiating. Understanding the incentives to join an ongoing conflict is equally important as understanding the incentives to initiate conflict. By studying conflict joining as a separate phenomenon from conflict initiation, researchers will be able to more fully understand the reasons states and their leaders choose conflict. Finding new ways to test the rally effect and/or other political benefits of conflict as well as determining the reasons leaders choose to join versus initiate conflict are still important topics for further research.

Future research regarding the domestic benefits of conflict might operationalize the benefit in a form different from approval ratings. Previous research has proven that

the boost in public approval after conflict participation is small and short lived when it does occur at all (Lian and Oneal 1993; Lai and Reiter 2005). If this boost is small, how politically relevant could it be? Therefore, studies should test other domestic benefits like length in office (Chiozza and Goemans 2004), or levels of incumbent party vote share (Williams, Brule, and Koch 2010), or the change in incumbent party policy passage, or the change in donor response for party campaigns. Further, it may be worthwhile to study colonial versus non-colonial conflicts. The UK government and population may feel a sense of duty to come to the aid of former colonial holdings, which likely host current economic holdings for British industries. A rally may exist when joining a conflict on the side of a former colonial territory. Additionally, does a rally occur when states participate in conflict with a non-state actor? For example, public opinion in the United Kingdom might increase when national forces are deployed against the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or al-Qa'eda. Also, could a rally after joining a conflict be conditioned by some attribute of the other states? Is the domestic rally of the joining state dependent on an attribute of the initiating or targeted state? Perhaps a rally will occur when a democracy joins another democracy, or when a democracy joins a targeted "victim" state, or when a state rival is on the opposing side.

As such, rivalries may also be a fruitful area of research regarding the propensities of states to join an ongoing conflict. It may be the case that a state is more likely to join a force that is fighting a rival. Geography may also be an important factor in a state's decision to join a conflict. If an enemy is far away, it is likely cheaper for a state to join a conflict rather than initiate one. Issue salience is also likely to have an effect on the decision to join a conflict versus initiate one. If the posturing that leads to a conflict is

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more tangential – like trade relations or access to primary goods – a state is probably more likely to be willing to initiate conflict. If the conflict is more related to secondary interests – such as social norms and ideologies – a state may not be willing to commit resources to initiate a conflict, but would be willing to join a conflict another state began.

Finally, a study like this thesis could also be productive using different methodological techniques. First, an inclusion of more complex economic variables would be beneficial. The inclusion of Consumer Price Index data would help better represent the economy's direct impact on the public, therefore allowing a better observation of how the public is feeling about the government's management of the economy. Additionally, dyadic trade densities could help identify possible conditions for both rallies and conflict joining propensities. Does trade density with a potential partner or target impact the likelihood of a leader deciding to join? It seems intuitive that a state would likely join a significant trade partner, but would opt to avoid conflicts that target them. Similarly, a rally may occur when a leader brings national resources to the aid of a major economic partner. Further, it has been determined that the vote share of the incumbent's party after conflict is conditioned by the state of the economy (Williams, Brule, and Koch 2010). Similarly Lai and Reiter (2005) determine the size and length of a rally is conditional on the level of crisis. Therefore Bayesian methods that account for conditionality should be applied to research on the domestic benefits of conflict joining. Additionally, both the rally effect and the propensity to join a conflict could be linked to the hostility level of crisis.

Further, it is important to perform cross-national analyses in order to determine the wider applicability of the rally effect. Single-country analyses are still beneficial,

though. There are many factors in each state that make the public's evaluation of political leadership different from publics in other states. From the basic make-up of the political system to the political and social cultures, each country's selectorate evaluates leadership differently. In addition to large-N studies of single countries, comparative case studies could also provide interesting results. Because rallies are not consistent in size and occurrence, comparative studies of events that induced large rallies and those that did not would provide possible conditional variables. Comparative studies of cases when conflict did not escalate are also useful. For example, why did Argentina's actions in 1982 lead to actual conflict and incite such a huge rally while the controversy in 2009 did not? Another interesting study might consider the joining propensities of European states before and after the creation of the European Union (EU). Are EU norms a constraint to joining conflicts? Do other EU member states also have to join in order for a rally to occur?

The future prospects for research on the domestic benefits of conflict and the choices to enter into conflict are exciting. Though the results of this research project do not support the postulated theory, the project itself is not without merit. It tests the assumptions of theories that use domestic incentives to explain conflict participation and suggests the diversionary and policy availability theories reconsider predictions made based on the assumption that leaders choose conflict because they believe they will receive benefits at home. Further the project expands the rally literature beyond the United States using a large-N analysis of the United Kingdom. And, finally, it expands the conflict literature by accepting the difference between the choice to initiate a conflict

and the choice to join one and uses this differentiation to address and test popular theories

in a new way.

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VITA

Marissa Wilson graduated *summa cum laude* in 2008 from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville with her Bachelor of Arts degree in "Honors Political Science and Classics: Latin Concentration." During her time pursuing the Master of Arts degree, she has concurrently worked full time for a United States government agency specializing in tactical research and analysis. In 2012, she was honored with the Special Agent in Charge "Coin of Excellence" award for demonstrated commitment to the law enforcement ideals of the US Government.