

Partisan Macroeconomic Preferences and the Diversionary
Use of Force in the United Kingdom 1971-2000

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Abstract

This thesis explores the diversionary use of force in the context of The United Kingdom. Building on theory that suggests that diversionary tactics are most likely when domestic turmoil affects the core constituents of the incumbent party, I operationalize domestic turmoil as macroeconomic conditions that disfavor the core constituents of the incumbent party and test its effects on the initiation, or threat of, force towards other countries through logistic regression models and time-series data from The United Kingdom, 1971-2000. I find strong support for the hypothesis that high inflation during times of Conservative government increases the likelihood of initiation of force but fail to establish a causal relationship between high unemployment during times of Labour government and the initiation of force.

Key words: Diversionary Theory, Inflation, Unemployment, Partisan Macroeconomic Preferences, Scapegoating, Rally 'Round the Flag Effect

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Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Objectives of Study	2
1.2	Research Question.....	2
2	Theoretical Framework.....	3
2.1	Public Opinion and the Diversionary Use of Force	3
2.2	The Causal Mechanisms behind the Diversionary Use of Force	5
2.3	The British Context	9
2.4	Summary and Hypotheses	10
3	Research Design	12
3.1	Material	12
3.1.1	The Dependent Variable: Use of Force	12
3.1.2	Independent Variables	13
3.2	Methodology and Regression Diagnostics	17
4	Results	19
5	Discussion	22
5.1	Validity of Results.....	22
5.2	Reliability of Results	23
5.3	Conclusions	23
5.4	Suggestions for Further Research	24
6	References.....	26

1 Introduction

On April 2nd, 1982 the Argentinian junta invaded and occupied The Falkland Islands (Sp. “Islas Malvinas”), a territory previously controlled by The United Kingdom. To the surprise of many, the British government responded forcefully and sent their navy to defend the relatively insignificant islands a couple of days later. Though neither party of the conflict officially declared war, the conflict lasted for ten weeks until The United Kingdom had regained control of the islands. The effects on public opinion in The United Kingdom were significant and the country rallied around the previously unpopular Conservative government who easily won re-election the following year. The Falklands War has since then been studied by numerous scholars and arguments have been made that both sides of the conflict acted in the forceful manner that they did to bolster their domestic support. This theory is called the diversionary theory of war and has been studied for a long time. The case of the Falklands War is not the focus of this thesis, however. Instead this study will dwell deep in into the theory and mechanisms behind diversionary tactics. Based on the available research I will further develop the theory and incorporate partisan macroeconomic preferences and test my hypotheses on time-series data from The United Kingdom 1971-2000.

The diversionary theory is a theory that aims to explain aggressive foreign policy actions by states towards other states as a reaction on domestic turmoil in the initiating state. A simple definition of diversionary tactics is that political leaders under certain circumstances employ an aggressive approach in their foreign policy to divert the electorate from domestic turmoil. An overview of the current research on the subject will be provided in the theory section along with a development of the theoretical arguments about the causal mechanisms behind diversionary behavior. While the theoretical framework is based on numerous studies employing different methods and focusing on different cases, the object of study in this thesis is The United Kingdom. I use logistic regression and time-series data, covering the period 1971-2000, to examine how unemployment and inflation affects the use of force initiated by The United Kingdom and how it relates to which party is in office. While the object of study is The United Kingdom it is not a case study in the sense that I examine specific conflicts. While focusing on a specific state limits the possibilities for generalizations and makes some variables constant, most studies are either focused on The United States, cross-national data or are case studies limited to very specific examples. By focusing on The United Kingdom, my aim is to provide insights on the causal mechanisms behind diversionary behavior and more specifically how it is related to partisan macroeconomic preferences.

1.1 Objectives of Study

There are numerous studies related to diversionary theory, both cases studies and quantitative studies. Many case studies in the past have found support for the theory while the empirical findings from quantitative studies have shown more ambiguous results. Over the last 20 years there have been an upsurge in quantitative studies as a result of more refined statistical methods available and many of the more recent statistical analyses have found evidence to support the occurrence of diversionary behavior (see e.g. Morgan & Bickers, 1992; Brulé & Hwang, 2010). Ability to do research in the field is, however, still limited due to lack of data (e.g. opinion poll data) and for this reason many studies are focused on the United States. My aim is in part to further deepen the empirical research on countries other than the United States, in this case the United Kingdom, but also to develop and further deepen the knowledge about the mechanisms behind diversionary tactics. I follow the example of DeRouen (2000), Brulé & Williams (2009) and Brulé & Hwang (2010) and use macroeconomic indicators to operationalize domestic turmoil as independent variables as well as controlling for public opinion. To my knowledge, a study including partisan macroeconomic preferences has never been performed on The United Kingdom specifically. Due to the rather different political systems in the United States and the United Kingdom the analysis may deepen our understanding on the mechanisms behind diversionary tactics and how they may differ between different political systems.

More specifically I aim to deepen the understanding of, and refine the arguments on how macroeconomic factors or “the economy” is related to diversionary behavior. Further, I hope to provide insights on how partisan macroeconomic preferences affect the diversionary use of force in the British context.

1.2 Research Question

Given the objectives of the study, the overarching research question is: “How do domestic turmoil, operationalized as inflation and unemployment and combined with partisan preferences, influence the initiation of force or threat of force by The United Kingdom?” More specifically I aim to examine how partisan macroeconomic preferences relate to institutional constraints and the state of the economy and how those interactions in their turns affect the initiation or threat of initiation of force.

2 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will define the concept of *diversionary behavior* and provide a thorough overview over the research in the area. I will focus on the causal mechanisms behind diversionary behavior and provide theoretical arguments on why macroeconomic variables play an important role and how they interact with partisan preferences in the British context. Most prior research taking into account macroeconomic variables is focused on The United States (see e.g. Gowa, 1998; DeRouen, 2000; Fordham, 2005; Brulé, 2006; Brulé & Hwang, 2010) and the measurements used of the state of the economy are often quite simply measured as growth in GDP. Some scholars as e.g. Brulé and Hwang (2010) have further developed the arguments on why macroeconomic variables matter and used variables such as unemployment and inflation in interaction with other variables to specify their models with interesting results, these results, however, are very specific for the American context and cannot be generalized to other types of political systems. The United Kingdom provides an interesting case as a parliamentary democracy that is an active agent in world politics.

Diversionary theory is an extension of the “in-group—out-group hypothesis that states that conflict within a group can be diminished if the group is exposed to a common external threat (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010:129). To put it simply diversionary theory is this hypothesis applied to foreign policy. Morgan and Bickers (1992:26) concludes that foreign policy decisions in its essence are political decisions and therefore need to be analyzed from this perspective. This means that domestic politics cannot be overlooked when studying international politics. Basically, the diversionary theory tells us that domestic politics influence foreign policy. When political leaders are faced with domestic turmoil they can divert the attention from the domestic troubles by using force against a foreign enemy.

Given that diversionary behavior is present in The United Kingdom, a central question is how the underlying causal mechanisms behind it work.

2.1 Public Opinion and the Diversionary Use of Force

For diversionary behavior to be rational in some sense, the actors that take these actions must believe that it will work or else the operation would bring costs but no benefit. As mentioned earlier the diversionary theory of war is built upon the sociological theory commonly referred to as the in-group-out-group-hypothesis (see Simmel, 1964). The empirical foundation of this theory is research made on

smaller groups and as Levy (1989:261-262) concludes it is problematic to generalize this theory and apply it to larger groups, such as e.g. the population of a country, and even to define what constitutes a group in this context.

A common operationalization of what constitutes the in-group is the electorate of a democratic country (hence making the rest of the world the out-group) and the conflict or turmoil in the in-group has often been measured through public opinion polls, if the public is supportive of their leader it indicates low turmoil and if not the in-group is in conflict. This outline summarizes the approach taken by many scholars (especially the early ones) in studying the diversionary theory. This perspective is not the only perspective on diversionary theory but since the reasoning behind it is intuitively logical and much empirical research takes on this approach I will start by outlining diversionary theory from this perspective before moving on to other theoretical approaches.

A concept closely related to the diversionary use of force and public opinion is the “Rally ‘Round the Flag Effect” which Lai and Reiter (2005:255) defines as an increase in public support for the government caused by involvement in international conflict. Most empirical studies of this phenomenon focus on the United States and find empirical support for the Rally ‘Round the Flag Effect (Russett & Graham, 1989:241-242). Lai and Reiter (2005) conducted a study in which they analyzed the impact of the use of force on public opinion in the United Kingdom over time, i.e. if the rally ‘round the flag effect is present in the British context, one of the few of its kind. Their results showed that involvement in international crises, which do not evolve to wars, do not lead to a rally effect. However, their study showed a significant rally effect for some of the wars that Britain was engaged in during the covered period, namely the Falklands war and the Gulf war. They conclude that their results indicate that rallies seem to be most likely when the public perceives a direct threat to the national interest, which would not be the case when involved in minor crises. Lai and Reiter (ibid:269) also suggest that these findings implicate that diversionary tactics would not be used since the government would find it hard to invent a credible threat that could actually cause a rally effect. As mentioned, however, their study focuses on the effects of international crises (while controlling for other variables) on public opinion (measured as support for the party in office), i.e. the dependent variable is the support for the party in office and not the initiation of conflicts. While their argument that it wouldn’t be rational to engage in diversionary tactics if there were no effects on the electorate is strong it is a theoretical argument and does not in itself constitute direct evidence of an absence of diversionary use of force in The United Kingdom.

Before I outline the current theory I would like to state that there are many studies regarding this phenomenon and while many scholars find evidence that supports the use of diversionary tactics in democratic countries (see e.g. Morgan & Bickers, 1992; Gelpi, 1997; Morgan & Anderson, 1999; Brulé & Hwang, 2010), others are more critical of the empirical evidence (See e.g. Levy, 1989; Dassel & Reinhart, 1999). Nor is there a consensus among the scholars that have found evidence to support the theory regarding the exact causal mechanisms.

In a quantitative study over diversionary tactics in the United States 1953-1976, Morgan and Bickers (1992) try to explain why earlier statistical studies have failed to find support for diversionary theory. They argue that the methodology applied by earlier scholars has been inadequate and that their theoretical arguments have been underdeveloped (ibid:30-34). In previous studies the effect of the general approval rating have been examined and they mean that this isn't in line with the original in-group-out-group theory and that it is instead the support from their core supporters that decision makers consider when making their decision (ibid.). Therefore, instead of focusing on the general approval ratings, they focus on the percentage of the electorate who state that they would vote for the president (since that's what will get him or her elected). Morgan and Bickers (1992:34) also argue that earlier studies have been focused on war, instead they mean that the most likely use of force to be expected are actions on a lower hostility level, such as threat, display or use of force short of war, since war is linked to higher risks and could backfire in the public opinion. Regarding their reservations on methodology used by earlier scholars they claim that a linear relationship has been assumed. They mean that this is wrong because diversionary tactics is most likely to work when internal conflict is rather low. In their study they find support for their hypotheses and find a significant relationship between a decreasing voting intention for the incumbent and the probability of use of force (ibid:29-50).

In another study Morgan and Anderson (1999) conducts a similar study but instead studying diversionary theory in the British context for the 1950-1992 period. Their results are in line with the study by Morgan and Bickers (1992), they finds a negative relationship between the use of force and the percentage of the electorate that state that they would vote for the party in office.

To summarize it; evidence suggests 1) The nature of the relationship is non-linear, 2) The decision makers (the executive) seem to consider support from potential voters (and not general support in the whole electorate) when making foreign policy decisions and 3) The most likely diversionary actions are militarized actions short of war.

2.2 The Causal Mechanisms behind the Diversionary Use of Force

All executives of states are faced with constraints in their decision making. Some constraints are of an institutional nature (the political system as defined by the constitution is often stable over time, for example), while other constraints vary over time (e.g. support in the legislature). Numerous studies have explored the effects of constraints on the executive on the initiation of force. This thesis is focused solely on The United Kingdom and thereby I regard institutional constraints as constant variables. Despite being constant, these variables do matter

when I derive theoretical expectations and hypotheses, therefore I will provide a brief overview of the research on institutional constraints and the diversionary use of force.

An underlying assumption of the diversionary theory is that the initiation of force is never the first rational option for an executive facing domestic turmoil. The ideal solution to domestic turmoil is of course to actually solve the situation at hand. This implies that the initiation of force as a diversionary tactic is most likely to be applied when the executive faces some kind of domestic turmoil that the executive for some reason can't solve directly, i.e. when faced with constraints. Constraints in decision-making can of course also limit the executive's abilities in the foreign policy arena and limit the ability of the executive to use diversionary force. There is no consensus among scholars on whether the constraints on the executive we typically see in democratic states makes the diversionary use of force more or less likely and this poses a central question in the studies on the diversionary use of force. According to the Democratic Peace Theory, democratic states almost never initiate force towards each other (though this doesn't mean that they are less prone to conflict initiation in general) and Maoz & Russett (1993:663-624) find empirical support for the claim that institutional constraints have a negative impact on the initiation of force in democratic dyads (for similar findings see e.g. Gelpi & Griesdorf, 2001). As noted earlier Maoz & Russett (1993:624) points out that their findings are only generalizable for democratic dyads and does not provide an explanation for monadic democratic peace. They also conclude that earlier research concerning the democratic peace theory have failed to provide a solid theoretical explanation of the causal mechanism behind democratic peace. Proponents of the diversionary theory instead argue that constraints on the executive under some circumstances can work to increase the likelihood on the initiation of force. In a cross-sectional study Gelpi (1997) explores the effect of regime type on the initiation of force when faced with domestic turmoil and finds that the lack of institutional constraints in some types of autocratic regimes makes the use of diversionary force less likely since the executive have a wider array of options to deal with domestic turmoil such as using violence against opposing factions or redirect resources to opposing groups in an arbitrary fashion. Pickering & Kisangani (2005) performs a similar study and find that "...the countries with the greatest proclivity to use diversionary force are those with leaderships that are vulnerable to elite and mass pressures. Somewhat surprisingly, this condition seems most prevalent in deep-rooted democracies and consolidating autocracies." (ibid:41). The theoretical argument here is that the constraints present in a democratic regime actually makes the diversionary use of force more likely since it more often constitutes the last resort. While findings supporting The Democratic Peace Theory reaches other conclusions regarding the effect of institutional constraints on the initiation of force, The Democratic Peace Theory in itself doesn't necessarily contradict The Diversionary Theory (Oneal & Tir, 2006 provides an excellent example of how the both theories can go hand in hand).

Given the support for the prevalence of diversionary tactics in the democratic context, a central question is what effect the system of government has on the

diversionary use of force. A problem when comparing presidential states and parliamentary states is that the vast majority of democratic states are parliamentary democracies and only a few democratic states have a presidential system (Ireland & Gartner, 2001:549). Another problem when comparing political systems is that there is no generally accepted classification system for political systems which e.g. would make it hard to place the various sorts of semi-presidential systems in a presidential-parliamentary dichotomy (Strøm, 2000:264). As a consequence most cross-national research on democratic systems and the diversionary use of force don't distinguish between the different systems, instead focusing on other key differences in governmental structure. A notable exception is Reiter & Tillman (2002) who distinguishes between presidential, parliamentary and various semi-presidential systems. Their findings, however, are inconclusive and they fail to establish a connection between political system and the diversionary use of force. Most other cross-national studies instead focus on parliamentary democracies and the consequences of different government arrangements while studies on The United States distinguish between united vs. divided government. Brulé & Williams (2009) explores the effects of government arrangements on the diversionary use of force, operationalizing domestic turmoil as economic decline. They perform a cross-national study (including the USA, treating divided government as minority government and united government as majoritarian government) and find that executives of minority governments are more likely to initiate force when faced with economic decline and that executives of coalition governments are less likely to do so. They also use the variable "weak party" to measure how party strength (i.e. the influence parties have on individual members of parliament) affects the initiation of force and find that executives in systems with weak parties also are more likely to initiate force when faced with economic decline. They conclude that "government arrangements (1) shape the extent to which the executive's party is held accountable for the state of the economy and (2) affect the capacity of the executive to address economic decline with policy." (ibid:790). More specifically they draw the conclusions that coalition governments clouds the line of accountability and makes diversions less likely and that minority governments and governments in systems with weak party cohesion are constrained when it comes to meet the challenges of an economy in decline and are therefore more likely to use diversionary force (ibid.). Smith (1996:150) reaches the same conclusion regarding the effect of coalition governments but attributes the effect of coalition governments to restraints in systems where "...the consent of many political units is required to enact policies". In line with these conclusions he also concludes that The United States is less likely to use diversionary force under divided government (ibid.). Contrary to the findings of Smith and Brulé & Williams, Ireland & Gartner (2001) reach the conclusion that minority governments are the least likely to initiate force using a duration analysis. They were, however, unable to differentiate between the effects of majority and coalition governments.

Parliamentary democracy is characterized by simple and indirect accountability and efficiency in decision-making (Strøm, 2000:286-286). This is especially true for the Westminster systems as represented by the British system

(ibid: 281). The British system, hence, is distinguished by a clear line of accountability and comparatively few constraints on the executive. With that said, there are, as in all systems, structural restraints such as elections and the required support of members of parliament. With a clear line of accountability the electorate will punish incumbents for not pursuing their policies of choice and research shows that while economic and social issues tends to divide parties on the left-right spectrum this is not the case for foreign policy issues (Mair, 1997:24-25), making the use of force a possible diversion from domestic policies. I will return to the specific constraints in The United Kingdom in the next section.

As mentioned earlier Morgan & Bickers (1992) and Morgan & Anderson (1999) argue from a theoretical standpoint that the in-group is constituted by the key constituents of the incumbent executive and that diversion is directed towards this group and they find empirical support for their claims. Following their example, to some extent, is a study by Brulé & Hwang (2010). Their study covers The United States 1949-1994 and they operationalize domestic turmoil as macroeconomic variables tied to partisan preferences. They propose that “the executive is more likely to use force abroad when the legislature is expected to pursue an economic bill that is harmful to the executive’s core constituents” (ibid:366). Their theory states that the Republicans’ core constituents are more concerned with inflation than the Democrats’ core constituents, and that their core constituents on the other hand are more concerned with unemployment due to their different demographic backgrounds. In their theory the electorate isn’t the direct target of diversion but instead the legislature. Under times of divided government the incumbent president when faced with economic challenges affecting the president’s core constituents (e.g. rising unemployment levels and a democratic incumbent) is heavily restrained in pursuing policies to remedy the economic challenges since the congress is in opposition. In addition to this members of congress might pursue policies that are directly harmful to the president’s core constituents. They find empirical support for their claims that diversionary use of force in the American context is most likely under these circumstances (ibid:376-377). While their findings are specific for the complex legislative system of The United States, some theoretical conclusions can be made. Their results imply that constraints on the executive make the diversionary use of force more likely given that the constraints restrict the executive from satisfying its core constituents, which is line with the findings of Morgan & Bickers (1992) and Morgan & Anderson (1999). It also suggests that macroeconomic partisan preferences might be a better specified operationalization to measure domestic turmoil given the theoretical argument that core constituents, not the general public, is central to explain the causal mechanisms behind the diversionary use of force.

There is empirical support for the claim that left-wing governments are helped by low unemployment and hurt by high unemployment and that the same is true for inflation and right-wing governments in countries with a clear line of accountability between the executive and the electorate such as The United Kingdom (Powell & Whitten, 1993). Many studies on how macroeconomic variables affects the diversionary use of force have been made and have included

various macroeconomic variables such as growth in GDP, inflation, unemployment and quite commonly, a “misery index” that combines unemployment and inflation (see e.g. DeRouen, 2000; Ireland & Gartner, 2001; Mitchell & Prins, 2004; Brulé & Williams, 2009) and the results of these studies have found different and often contradictory results on the effect of macroeconomic variables on the diversionary use of force due to their different methodologies. What is somewhat surprising is that none of these studies explore the connection between ideology and macroeconomic preferences. Brulé and Williams (2009:792) recommend that future studies take this into account in the light of the literature on economic voting. The only study to incorporate this perspective is, to my knowledge, the above mentioned study by Brulé & Hwang (2010).

2.3 The British Context

The United Kingdom is a parliamentary democracy operating under the Westminster system. As a consequence of the first-past-the-post system British politics have traditionally been dominated by the two major parties The Labour Party and The Conservative Party. Over the covered time period 1971-2000 there have been no coalition governments and only a few short periods of minority government (1974, 1976-1979, 1997) (Paun, 2009:10-19). The United Kingdom is considered to have a strong party system with high party cohesiveness (Brulé & Williams, 2009:794).

It could be argued that power to a high extent lies within the legislative body in parliamentary systems like the British one. While this isn't necessarily untrue it is not entirely obvious who has the real power when it comes to foreign policy and the initiation of force at low to medium hostility levels. Williams (2004:916-917) describes foreign policy decision making in The United Kingdom as secretive and based on conventions rather than strict rules. A consequence of this, according to Williams, is that “...cabinet behaves differently under different prime ministers and it is difficult for outsiders to gain reliable information about how and where specific decisions are taken” (ibid:917). Further, Williams also describes how decisions on military intervention have often been formulated by a small group around the prime minister rather than the cabinet as a whole (ibid:916). My conclusion is that when it comes to foreign policy and military intervention, the executive, by convention, has stronger decision making power than in domestic policy and that the executive in this context should be defined as the prime minister rather than the whole cabinet. With reservation for variations depending on which prime minister in office, the system could almost be described as presidential when it comes to decisions regarding military intervention. In other words: the executive in The United Kingdom is operating

under more constraints when formulating domestic policy than when formulating foreign policy.

The earlier mentioned study by Brulé & Hwang (2010) is the only one taking into account partisan macroeconomic preferences and there are a few problems with generalizing their findings to the British context. First of all, divided government is not possible in the same sense in the British system (while it is possible that there are different majorities in the House of Commons and the House of Lords this has few, if any, implications) and the party of the executive is always the same party that holds the majority in the House of Commons (with the rare exceptions of minority governments where no party alone holds the majority). In the Westminster system, hence, it is not possible for the executive to “divert the legislature” in the same sense as Brulé and Hwang describes). This implies that if diversion occurs in the British context it is the electorate (or a part of it) or the members of parliament from the executive’s party that get diverted. Another central issue is whether similar assumptions can be made regarding partisanship and macroeconomic preferences. It is hard to find substantive empirical support for claims specific to The United Kingdom regarding macroeconomic preferences and partisanship but cross-national studies largely support the claim that left-wing parties prioritize to combat unemployment and right-wing parties prioritize combating inflation (Powell & Whitten, 1993; Berlemann & Markwardt, 2007). Given the historical connection between the Labour Party and organized labor and between the Conservative party and the capital owning class, there is no reason to assume that this wouldn’t hold in the specific British context. Anecdotal evidence such as the Thatcher government’s intense policy of fighting inflation at the cost of rising unemployment is also in line with the cross-national studies.

2.4 Summary and Hypotheses

The research on the diversionary theory of war is extensive and at the same time limited. There is neither a consensus on the occurrence of diversionary tactics or on the causal mechanisms behind it. The inconclusiveness of the aggregated theory on the diversionary use of force can to a large extent be attributed to the use of different methodologies and material. By drawing on the empirical findings that find support for the diversionary use of force I develop a model to be applied to the context of The United Kingdom.

Research comparing government arrangements and the diversionary use of force can be viewed from two perspectives. One perspective is that countries that tend to have a certain government arrangement is more or less likely to engage in the diversionary use of force. The other perspective is that the propensity to use diversionary force within the same country can vary over time depending on government arrangements. As have been described, The United Kingdom has a

system that greatly favors majoritarian governments and majoritarian governments have dominated the covered time period. The theory is not entirely clear on whether diversionary behavior is more or less likely under majoritarian government. On one hand majoritarian government is not characterized by the constraints that according to theory could make the diversionary use of force more likely, on the other hand The United Kingdom with its majoritarian system has a clear line of accountability that clearly connect the incumbent party to domestic and economic policy, increasing the likelihood for diversionary tactics. The clear line of accountability, The United Kingdom's role in world politics and the divergence between restraints on the executive in domestic policy vis-à-vis foreign policy makes me draw the conclusion that the use of diversionary of tactics is not unlikely in The United Kingdom.

Following the example of Morgan & Bickers (1992) and Morgan and Anderson (1999) I hypothesize that the likelihood of the diversionary use of force is at its highest when the core constituents of the party in office are threatened by domestic turmoil. Drawing on the economic voting theory by Powell and Whitten (1993) I assume that the core constituents of the Conservative Party are more prone to react negatively to high inflation and that the core constituents of the Labour Party are more prone to react negatively to high unemployment. Thereby I operationalize domestic turmoil as macroeconomic variables specific for the two major parties of The United Kingdom. Based on this reasoning and the theoretical overview I derive the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Governments led by the Conservative Party, when faced with high inflation should be more likely to initiate the use of force or threaten to use force.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Governments led by the Labour Party, when faced with high unemployment should be more likely to initiate the use of force or threaten to use force.

3 Research Design

In this thesis the object of study is the government of The United Kingdom and the cases consists of months. As a dependent variable I use a binary variable that for each month is coded as either a month when there was a militarized incident with active involvement from The United Kingdom or not. When using a binary variable as the dependent variable one cannot apply a standard OLS-regression model because a model of that kind requires a continuous variable as the dependent variable (Hilbe, 2009:1). A better method for dealing with a binary dependent variable is the binary logistic model (Hilbe, 2009; Djurfeldt & Barmark, 2009; Menard, 1995). Another advantage of the logistic model is that it's underlying mathematical assumptions aren't as strict as those of the OLS-model (Djurfeldt & Barmark, 2009:125). As Morgan & Anderson (1999:801) points out, a linear relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable isn't to be expected due to theoretical considerations and therefore a non-linear method is more appropriate.

3.1 Material

I have chosen to study the diversionary use of force in the British context for mainly two reasons. The first and foremost reason is, as explained in the theory chapter, that most research in the area are focused on the United States of America or are cross-national studies. The United Kingdom makes an interesting object of study since the political system differs quite a lot from the American one. The second reason is the availability of material. I use public opinion numbers and statistics regarding the macroeconomic state of the country in a time-series and that kind of statistics, collected with even time intervals over a long period of time are rare and exists only for a few countries in the world. I have accessed and gathered monthly data from 1971-2000 and use this to perform my statistical analysis.

3.1.1 The Dependent Variable: Use of Force

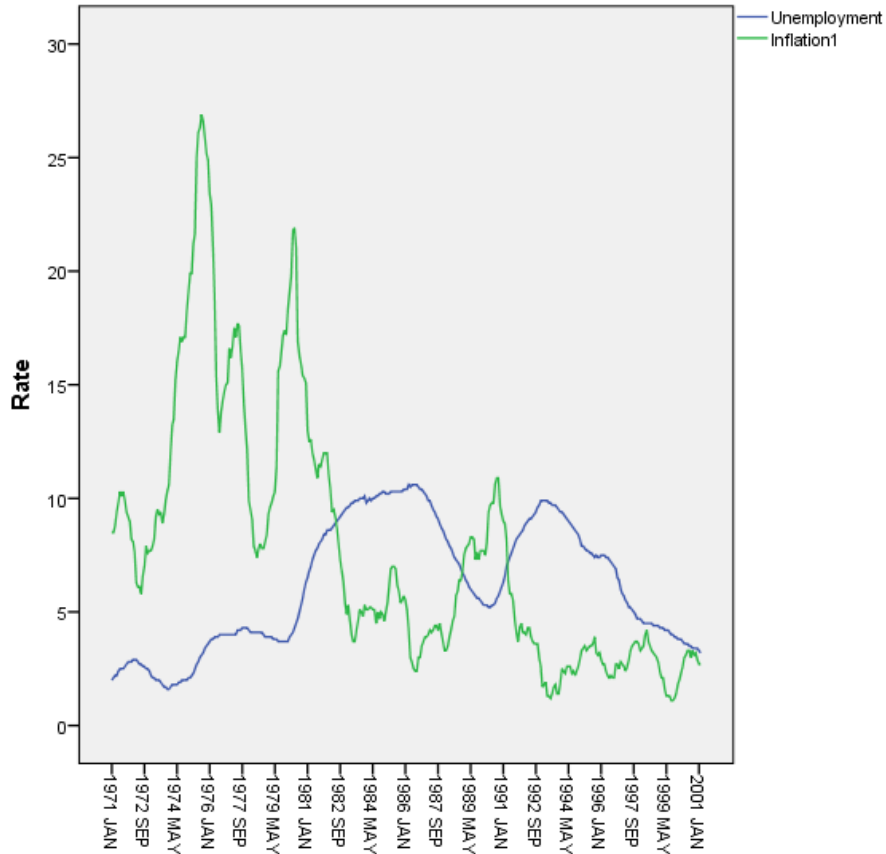
To operationalize the use of force in accordance with the theory I use data from the Correlates of War Militarized Dispute (MID) Dataset. The datasets used are MID 2.1EE and MID 3.1. The datasets are thoroughly explained in Ghosn et al. (2009) and Jones et al. (1996) and I use the data on incident level. The months when The United Kingdom has been involved in a militarized incident and either

threatened, displayed or used force or engaged in a war is coded as 1 while all other months have been coded as 0. The material derived from the MID 2.EE dataset uses the coding rules from the 3.1 dataset and provides information on actors and escalatory incidents (MID 2.1.EE codebook) while the 3.1 dataset on incident level provides information on escalatory as well as deescalatory incidents. The MID 2.1EE dataset provides information about incidents in the period 1971-1992 and the 3.1 dataset provides information on incidents during the period 1992-2000. When coding my dataset I have applied the same rules when using the 3.1 dataset and therefore the dependent variable is coded as 1 during a month when The United Kingdom has initiated or escalated the use of force (by use of force I here mean the threat, display or use of force, thereby including, but not restricting it to, war), and 0 otherwise. During 16.1 % (58 of 360 months) of the months in the covered time period The United Kingdom engaged in a militarized incident.

3.1.2 Independent Variables

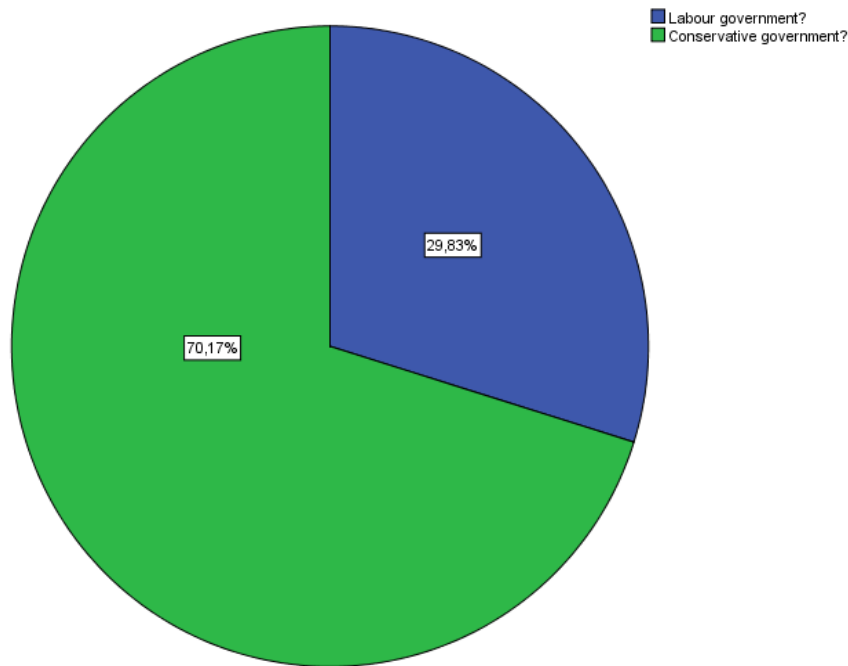
To examine the hypotheses that Conservative governments reacts to high inflation and therefore engage in diversionary use of force and that Labour governments reacts to high unemployment in the same manner I use statistics from The Office for National Statistics in the United Kingdom. The inflation rate is measured for each month as the change over the last year in the retail price index (RPI) (United Kingdom Office for National Statistics, 2012). A more common way to measure inflation rate is the consumer price index (CPI), since information about the CPI in Britain only has been gathered systematically and monthly since the 1980's I chose the RPI to be able to cover a longer time period. The inflation rate measured as change in RPI however should be a fairly good indicator of inflation. The monthly unemployment rate also comes from The Office of for National Statistics and is in this case measured as people percentage of the population who are claiming benefits related to unemployment (United Kingdom Office for National Statistics, 2012). While they are numerous ways to measure unemployment this data is used because it has been systematically collected every month since 1971. The data has been seasonally adjusted. I use a time lag of one month to be able to get a clearer picture over the causality issue. Graph 1 shows the unemployment rate and the inflation rate in the United Kingdom over the studied time period.

Graph 1
Monthly inflation and unemployment rates in the UK 1971-2000



To distinguish between months with a Labour government and a Conservative government I use two dummy variables, one named Conservative government where a month with a conservative government is coded as 1 and months with a Labour government coded as 0 and one named Labour government with the reverse coding. Even though these variables basically tell us the same thing, I have chosen to use both of them to make interpretation of interaction variables easier. As you can see in graph 2 the Conservative party was in office during roughly 70 % of the covered time period and the Labour party was in office for only roughly 30 % of the time. This means that the sample of Labour party governments is rather small.

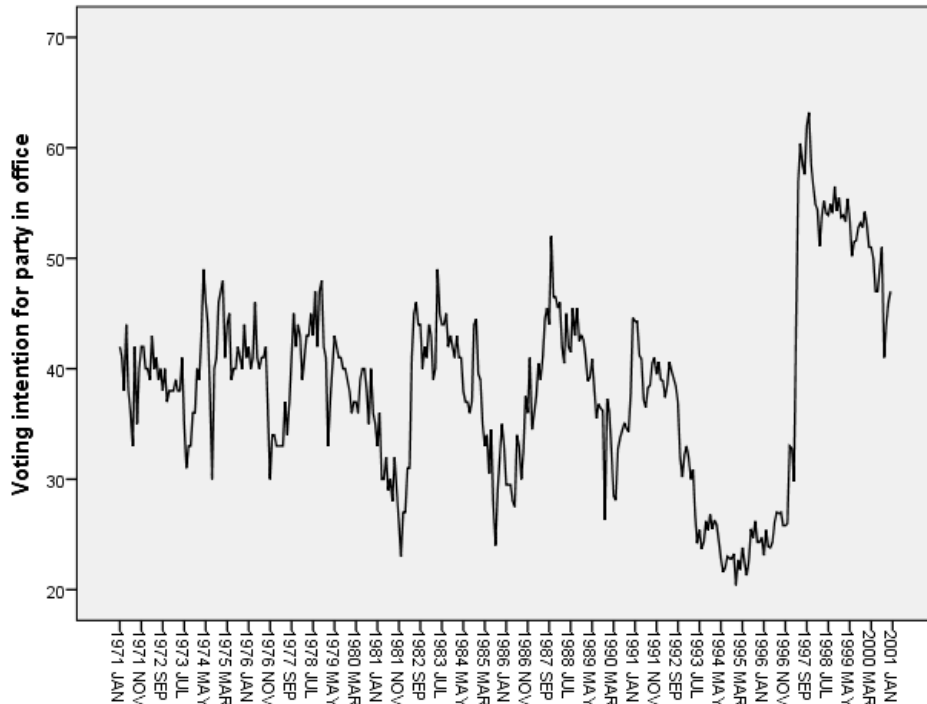
Graph 2
Party in office, expressed as percent of the time 1971-2000



The variables mentioned above are the most interesting variables from the theoretical point of view; in addition to these I add control variables for my statistical analysis. Since earlier theory in the field pointed to the impact of public opinion polling I have included a variable called voting intention. The data consists of monthly opinion polling in The United Kingdom, conducted by the Gallup poll, where the question asked to the respondents was: “Q: If there were a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for? Q: If don’t know: Which party are you most inclined to vote for?” (King & Wybrow, 2001:2). The sample size ranged from approximately 1,000-1,200 respondents (ibid:1). When compiling my data I have used the percentage of respondents who said that they would vote for the party in office. The Gallup polls have been compiled by King and Wybrow (2001:2-20). I have done some minor changes to the material. During months when more than one poll has been conducted I have taken the average percentage between those polls to use for that month. For a few months there weren’t any polls conducted (often due to coinciding with a general election), to be able to create a time series I have used the function “linear interpolation” in SPSS and replaced the missing data with an average of the previous and the next month’s data. The same type of data was used by Morgan and Anderson (1999:805) and they found the variable to have a significant negative effect. The advantage with the Gallup data is that it has been collected systematically over a long period of time and statistical measures have been taken to make the data reliable. Graph 3 shows the percentage in the sample that

responded that they would vote for the party in office over time. When performing the regressions I have lagged the variable with one month as in the cases of inflation and unemployment.

Graph 3
Percentage of voters with the intent to vote for the party in office in The United Kingdom 1971-2000



Another control variable I have used is a dummy variable for when The United Kingdom have been to war. Since war in itself is a militarized incident it is natural to see a cluster of months with involvement in militarized incidents. During the period the United Kingdom have been to war twice, the Falklands war and the Gulf war. The months when engaged in one of those two wars were coded as 1 while all other months were coded as 0. It is essential to control for war to be able to draw conclusions since the risk for coincidences would be high otherwise. When doing this I also follow the scholars in the field (see e.g. Morgan & Bickers, 1992; Brulé & Hwang, 2010).

The most central variables for my study are two interaction variables created by the government party dummies and the inflation and unemployment variables. The variables are created by taking the dummy variable times the unemployment variable for the Labour governments and the inflation variable for the Conservative governments, thereby activating the unemployment variable under a Labour government and the inflation variable under a conservative government in accordance with the theory. Including interaction variables of course raises the issue of multicollinearity and this will be discussed in the next section. When creating the interaction variables the lagged variables for inflation and unemployment rates are used. A list of all variables used is given in table 1.

Table 1
List of variables

Dependent variable:	Use of force	Coded as 1 during a month when the United Kingdom threatened to, displayed or used force, 0 otherwise.
Independent variables:	Inflation	Inflation rate measured as change over the past year in RPI.
	Unemployment	Percentage of population who are claiming unemployment related benefits.
	Conservative government	Coded as 1 in a month when the Conservative party is in office and 0 otherwise.
	Labour government	Coded as 1 in a month when the Labour party is in office and 0 otherwise.
	War	Coded as 1 in a month when the united Kingdom is at war and 0 otherwise.
	Conservative * Inflation	
	Labour * unemployment	

3.2 Methodology and Regression Diagnostics

The goal of my statistical analysis is to be able to draw conclusions regarding the significance of variables and the direction of the effect. The models produced are not intended to fully explain why The United Kingdom, or any other country for that matter, chooses to use force. My intent is to research if there are any signs of the diversionary use of force and to further explore the reasons behind this behavior. I will point out a few aspects regarding the reliability issue that may cause some concern and account for the measures taken to improve the reliability.

As mentioned earlier one of the strengths of the logistic regression model is that it isn't built upon as many strict assumptions as the OLS-model. Some problems may arise however. One problem is multicollinearity (i.e. when the independent variables are highly correlated with each other). If multicollinearity exists statistical inference may be hard. Menard (1995:66) warns that correlation above 0.80 between two or more variables may cause problems. I have correlated all independent variables with each other and found a significant correlation > 0.8

only between the government party dummy variables and the interaction variable Labour government*unemployment¹ (0.965). Brambor et al. (2006:70-71) concludes that a common mistake among scholars in political science is to exclude constitutive terms in interaction models. This they mean, can lead to a misspecification of the model (ibid:66). The problem posed by multicollinearity is that it may make it harder to get significant variables due to inflated standard errors. This risk is preferable compared to the risk posed by a misspecified model which could result in significant predictors that in reality are not significant.

Of course misspecification could be a problem anyway, as always, but I won't perform any tests regarding this matter. A solid theoretical foundation and the fact that I test the variables in various models in different constellations should reduce the risk for specification errors.

Finally, since the material consists of different time series, the issue of autocorrelation is a concern. I have tried to find a solution to this but haven't succeeded. This problem appears to be widespread among scholars, as Oneal and Russett (1997:283) conclude: "The greatest danger arises from autocorrelation, but there are not yet generally accepted means of testing for or correcting this problem in logistic regression.". This of course means that conclusions made from the statistical analysis should be interpreted with caution.

¹ And of course between the two government party dummies. This however poses no concern since they aren't used in the same regressions.

4 Results

The focus of this chapter is on presenting the logistic regression models I have developed and compare the results to the hypotheses outlined in chapter 2. Tested issues of reliability will be addressed in this chapter as well, but a more thorough discussion regarding validity and reliability will be provided in the following chapter.

Table 2

Models of economic indicators and public opinion and the use of force in the UK, 1971-2000

Dependent variable: Use of force

Ind. variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)	β	Exp (β)
Intercept ^a	0.76 **	2.13	-3.14 ***	0.04	1.42 ***	4.15	-2.72 ***	0.66				
Inflation	-0.18 ***	0.84			-0.29 ***	0.75			-0.26 ***	0.77	-0.26 ***	0.71
Unemployment			0.12	1.13			0.07	1.07	0.04	1.04	-0.16 **	0.85
Cons. dummy	-1.95 ***	0.14			-3.56 ***	0.03			-3.13 ***	0.04		
Lab. dummy			1.94 ***	6.96			-0.50	0.61			2.60 *	13.45
Vot. intention									0.02 **	1.02	0.01	1.01
War									1.93 ***	6.88	2.76 ***	15.83
Con*inflation					0.28 ***	1.33			0.22 **	1.24		
Lab*unemploy.							0.58 *	1.78			-0.29	0.75
Diagnostics												
-2 log likelihood	263.972		296.797		251.115		292.688		244.700		250.077	
Hosmer & Lemeshow (sig.)	0.000		0.001		0.091		0.010		0.216		0.000	
Overall predicted	88.9 %		83.4 %		88.9 %		82.0 %		88.9 %		90.0 %	

^a Intercept was found to be insignificant at the 0.10-level in models 5 and 6 and therefore excluded from the regressions.

* Significant at the 0.10 level (two-tailed test), ** Significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed test),

*** Significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed test)

The models presented in table 2 have all been tested with the Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness of fit test. While goodness of fit statistics certainly can be interesting, the focus of this thesis is not to find a model that fully can explain why a government would use force, or threat of force, towards another country but to try to provide evidence that supports or contradicts the theoretical expectations. With that being noted, I will briefly assess the goodness of fit of the models. The interpretation of the p-values derived from the Hosmer-Lemeshow test is that a high p-value reflects a good fit (over 0.05) while a low p-value contradicts this (Hilbe, 2009:250).

A brief look at the table above tell us that only two of the models have a p-value greater than 0.05, model 3 and model 5. The 2-log likelihood statistic is harder to interpret but generally a lower number means that the fit is better. The overall predicted percentages show the percentage of cases (months) where the outcome (military action or no military action) was predicted correctly in each model. Since there was no military action during most of the months in the study these percentages should be interpreted carefully. To give an example; in model 2 the overall predicted percentage is 83.9 %, at hand this looks like a good prediction but the truth is that it predicts that there will be no month when the UK use, or threatens to use, force. Since the share of months when force, or threat of force, is used only constitutes 16.1 % of the sample it's easy to see that this number doesn't necessarily tells us much. Though, when comparing the models a higher predicted percentage reflects a better fit which is fully in line with the other measurements on goodness of fit.

As mentioned before, the most interesting results aren't the models and how well they predict the outcome but the significance of the variables derived from the theory. Model 1 includes the independent variables inflation and government party as well as an intercept. Both variables are significant at the 0.01 level and both show a negative effect, i.e. as inflation rises the probability of use, or threat of use, of force decreases. The inflation variable is significant and shows a negative effect in all models that includes it. The dummy variable for government party (Conservative or Labour government, which is basically the same variable but is used as two variables so that I will be able to report the results from the interaction models in a clear way) is also significant and the results indicates that Labour governments uses force to a higher degree than Conservative governments. The unemployment variable, when used, is only significant in model 6 (on the 0.05 level). The results indicate that unemployment isn't a factor that affects the executive's decision to use force.

In model 3 and model 4 I introduce interaction variables between government party and inflation respectively unemployment. In model 3 the interaction variable between inflation and Conservative government is significant at the 0.01 level and shows a positive effect which is in line with the theoretical expectations and interesting since the inflation variable in itself shows signs of an opposite effect. In model 4 the interaction variable between Labour government and unemployment is significant at the 0.10 level and shows a positive effect in line with the theoretical expectations. Note however that neither the Labour dummy

nor the unemployment variable is significant in this model and that the fit is rather bad for the model.

In models 5 and 6 I incorporate the control variables mentioned in the previous chapter together with the interaction variables and the variables that they are built upon. In model 5 all included variables are significant except unemployment. The intercept is not included since it was not shown to be significant. Once again the Conservative government dummy and inflation interaction variable is significant, this time at the 0.05 level. I have included a dummy variable for the months when the UK is in a war and this variable is significant. I have also included a variable which, with public opinion polling, measures the percentage of the people that intends to vote for the incumbent government party. This is the same variable as Morgan and Anderson (1999) used for their study and while it is significant in model 5 it surprisingly shows a positive effect, contrary to earlier findings. As in model 3 the inflation variable is significant and predicts a negative influence on the outcome, unlike the interaction variable between Conservative government and inflation that is also significant (0.05) but shows a positive effect. Model 5 is also the model that, compared to the others, has the best fit. In model 6 the interaction variable between Conservative government and inflation is omitted and replaced with the interaction variable between Labour government and unemployment. The effects of the war variable and the inflation variable are roughly the same as in model 5. The unemployment variable however is significant at the 0.05 level unlike in the other models and shows a negative effect. The intention to vote on the incumbent party variable is not significant in this model and the dummy variable for government party is significant only at the 0.10 level. The interaction variable between unemployment and Labour government is not significant and this is not in line with the theoretical expectations.

To summarize, I conclude that there is quite strong support for hypothesis 1. Governments led by the Conservative Party seems to be more likely to initiate force when faced with high inflation. This is supported by the significant and positive interaction variables in models 3 and 5. The fact that neither the inflation nor the Conservative dummy variable showed a positive effect in themselves despite being significant. Model 5 that included the interaction variable as well as the control variables was also the model with the best fit compared to the others. On the contrary, I find no empirical support for hypothesis 2, that governments led by the Labour Party when faced with high unemployment should be more likely to initiate force. The interaction variable was included in models 4 and 6. While the interaction variable was positive in model 4 it was only at a 0.10-level and when included in model 6 together with the control variables it was negative and insignificant.

5 Discussion

5.1 Validity of Results

Studying the diversionary use of force empirically is challenging. It is impossible to gain full knowledge about what the ulterior motives behind a certain action are. We can observe the militarized action in itself and we can observe the conditions that from a theoretical standpoint seem auspicious for diversionary behavior, but we can never know for sure. This of course doesn't mean that the phenomenon shouldn't be researched empirically. While it does not provide a single explanation of why states engage in conflict it is a valuable part of the explanation. No theory can claim to have that one answer.

The diverse and extensive research on the diversionary use of force provides valuable insights and in this thesis I have built upon earlier empirical findings to further develop the theory and apply it to The United Kingdom. My findings, at the least, points to interesting interactions between partisan macroeconomic preferences and the use of force.

Various measurements have been used to operationalize domestic turmoil. I chose to follow the example of Morgan & Bickers (1992) and Morgan & Anderson (1999) and define the "in-group" as the core constituents of the incumbent and elaborated on the findings of Brulé & Hwang (2010) and the research on economic voting provided by Powell & Whitten (1993) to specify what constitutes domestic turmoil to the core constituents. Currently there is no best practice to follow when operationalizing domestic turmoil, but the empirical findings introduced in the theory chapter suggests that partisan macroeconomic preferences such as inflation and unemployment connected to partisan preferences might be a good operationalization. While not being uncontroversial it is more specific than most other operationalizations such as support for the incumbent party or the use of a "misery index".

All in all, with reservation for the inherent problems in studying diversionary behavior, I would suggest that the validity of my findings are quite solid.

5.2 Reliability of Results

Issues of statistic inference were raised in chapter 4 and I can't rule out that autocorrelation has damaged the results. The issue of multicollinearity was also raised and this was successfully avoided in models 1 and 2 which do not contain interaction variables. Interaction variables combined with the original variables leads to some amount of multicollinearity, however, as Brambor et al. (2006:70-71) it would be more harmful to omit the original variables than to include them. This of course makes it harder to assess the reliability of the results and no absolute conclusions can be made from these regressions.

Domestic turmoil was operationalized as high inflation combined with the Conservative Party in office and high inflation combined with the Labour Party in office. The operationalization is not evident but supported by theory. Other variables could have been used to measure domestic turmoil but the variables that were chosen had strong empirical support. On a more detailed level, other measures of inflation and unemployment could have been used. The choice of the variables that I used was made mainly due to availability, but there is nothing that suggests that other available variables would have been more suitable. It could be argued that the change in unemployment and the change in inflation should have been used or, at least controlled for. This, however, was beyond the scope of this thesis. Neither was the measure used for conflict initiation evident but due to the limitations in this thesis I had to make a choice and I followed the example of Morgan & Bickers (1992) and Morgan & Anderson (1999) and included militarized actions short of war.

In summary, things could have been done to further strengthen the reliability of the results but due to the limitations of a thesis at this level I chose not to pursue this further. Despite this, there is nothing that suggests that the reliability of my results is low.

5.3 Conclusions

As outlined in the previous chapter there is strong support for hypothesis 1. Albeit the issues of multicollinearity and autocorrelation the results of the regressions supported hypothesis 1 in every way possible. The lack of support for hypothesis 2 might be attributed to a misspecification in the model but it is possible that the weak support for the hypothesis could be attributed to the comparatively low amount of cases of months with Labour government in office.

The strong support for hypothesis 1 and the lack of support for hypothesis 2 does, however, constitute a puzzle. It might be attributed to the lack of data (a study covering more years would have provided more data), but it could of course also be attributed to a misspecified model. Another possible explanation might be

inflated standard errors as a result of the correlation between the Labour Party dummy variable and the interaction variable Labour government*unemployment.

As mentioned earlier, the diversionary theory cannot fully explain why war or aggressive foreign policy occurs, nor is it the aim of the theory. It should also be noted, however, that diversionary tactics isn't necessarily the sole cause of a single conflict but rather one of many. It is seldom emphasized, but diversionary tactics is most likely to be one ingredient of many in international conflict. Other factors that of course also play a role are e.g. whether there are provocations from other states, pressure from other super powers and many other things. It is short of impossible to control for all variables that might have an effect on the initiation of conflict and the limitations of a bachelor's thesis doesn't leave room for a further elaboration on the matter. My results, however, does not depend on the assumption that diversionary tactics is the sole cause, or even the dominant, of any given conflict. Rather, my results points to under which conditions diversionary tactics might play a part and how the mechanisms that might be triggering the tactics work.

While the scope of this study is limited, I have identified a few variables that might have developed the theory further if they were included and that could prove to be valuable in future research. These suggestions will be presented in the next section.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

I have, in this thesis, considered constraints of the executive as constant. While constraints in The United Kingdom could be assumed to be more or less constant over time there are some variables that could be measured that might change over time. In my study I have not controlled for government arrangements due to the relative constant setting in The United Kingdom. There was, however, some brief periods of minority government during the covered time period. Given the theories available on government arrangements and the diversionary use of force this is something that should be controlled for in future studies, especially if covering longer periods of time. Another possible measure of restraints in some sense could be the size of the majority at any given time. It is reasonable to assume that the larger majority the incumbent has, the less constrained it is legislatively. Another institutional factor that wasn't included in this study is the effect of election system. Election system is a constant variable in a study covering one country and there wouldn't have been any point in including it. The findings, however, suggest that constraints on the executive works different in a parliamentary system than in a presidential and arguments could be made that differences in election systems between parliamentary countries could affect the constraints on the executive. In a first-past-the-post system like the British one, the outcome in a single constituency could affect the majority situation in

parliament to a higher degree than it would in a proportional system. If the election is close to call between the two major parties in enough constituencies that could be considered to be a constraint on the executive in domestic affairs. This should be studied further in future cross-national studies.

Another important theoretical variable is party cohesiveness. In most studies where this variable is used it is used to compare party cohesiveness between different political settings. Hence, it wasn't relevant to include this variable in this study. Bailey & Nason (2008) suggests that the conventional measurements of party cohesiveness isn't applicable to measure changes within The United Kingdom and proposes a new measurement. While their proposal is certainly interesting, the data they provided didn't cover the same time period as this study and to include it would have meant a lot more work. I do, however, strongly support the inclusion of country specific measurements of party cohesion in future research.

Finally, some scholars performing cross-national research have used relative measures of inflation and unemployment instead of absolute measures. Their argument goes that constituents experience turmoil to a higher degree if the inflation/unemployment level is comparatively lower in neighboring countries, i.e. absolute levels doesn't mean as much as the levels compared to the surrounding world. This is an interesting perspective that I wasn't able to incorporate in this study but this should be given some thought in future studies.

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