

Electoral Margins and American Foreign Policy¹

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Conventional wisdom holds that large margins of electoral victory contribute to presidential power. How does this variation in power impact U.S. foreign policy? I argue here that presidents who win elections by a substantial margin authorize the use of substantial military force more regularly, but do so at the expense of personal diplomacy and low-level crisis engagement. This distinction stems from the variation in the external constraint that other political actors place on these policies. New presidents who are empowered by a decisive election have more leverage and are therefore better able to pursue otherwise constrained foreign policies such as the use of major force. In contrast, those who win by smaller margins have less political capital and are forced disproportionately to the less constrained arenas of diplomacy and crisis intervention.

Victory in a U.S. presidential election only requires a majority in the Electoral College, but it is widely acknowledged that the margin of victory impacts what a president is able to accomplish once in office. The expectation is that a substantial mandate contributes to political power, and power enables bold policymaking. A voluminous body of academic work explores the effect of electoral margins on domestic policy,² but the implications for foreign policy have not been systematically addressed in the literature. This article seeks to fill that gap by asking: Does the margin of victory in presidential elections alter the content of American foreign policy?

The short answer is that it does. In the empirical analysis that follows, I will demonstrate that substantial margins of victory translate into political power that increases a president's ability to overcome constraints from other institutional actors (notably Congress) on the use of military force. Of course, there is much more to U.S. foreign policy than force alone. To gain a more complete picture of foreign policy activity, I expand the analysis to assess diplomacy and crisis engagement. In these cases, however, the relationship with electoral margins works differently. While military force is more constrained (Howell and Pevehouse 2005) and therefore requires political capital to implement, weaker presidents can still initiate diplomacy and engage (non-militarily) in foreign political crises because these actions are subject to less constraint. As a result, those who win elections by less embrace these foreign policies disproportionately.

The theoretical framework that I present here, which focuses on the interplay between political strength and constraint, stands in contrast to that which underpins most research tying elections to foreign policy. The "rally" and diversionary war literatures, for example, speak to the ways in which elections might shape foreign policy by altering incentives (Morgan and Bickers 1992; James and Rioux 1998; Baum 2002). In this view, the shadow of an upcoming

election leads presidents to tailor their foreign policy decisions accordingly. Here, the theoretical mechanism is quite different: elections and their outcomes alter presidential *power* and, with it, the ability to attain otherwise constrained policy preferences. Put differently, while the existing literature sees anticipation of the next election as an important determinant of foreign policy, this analysis demonstrates that the previous election matters as well.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. I begin by developing the theoretical relationship between the margin of electoral victory and presidential foreign policy behavior. With the theoretical relationship identified, I turn to empirical tests of the derived hypotheses using data on elections and foreign policy activity from 1945 to 2001. I explore the relationships at multiple levels of analysis, controlling for factors such as the partisan composition of Congress, presidential approval, and the condition of the economy. These findings contribute to a growing literature indicating that politics does not stop at the water's edge, but rather that domestic political intuitions deeply impact foreign affairs. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of these findings for how we think about elections, presidential agendas, and foreign policy.

Theory

I link electoral margins to foreign policy outcomes in three steps. First, I draw on the extant literature to establish that electoral margins contribute to presidential strength early in administrations. Second, I identify a spectrum of foreign policies that vary in the degree to which they are subject to external constraint, and therefore require different amounts of political strength to implement. These are diplomacy (low constraint), crisis engagement (medium constraint), and substantial military force (high constraint). Third, I formalize the relationship between political strength and policy choice, establishing that an increase in power leads to an increase in more constrained activities and, counterintuitively, to a decrease in less constrained activities.

Electoral Margins Contribute to Political Power

Presidents claim mandates, and the press, public, and Congress respond in kind because they share the belief that

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² For key examples see, Hershey (1994), Conley (2001), Johnson and Crisp (2003), Peterson, Grossback, Stimson, and Gangl (2003), and Grossback, Peterson, and Stimson (2005).

electoral margins translate into political power.³ As Conley (2001) notes, the margin of electoral victory informs Congress about the political strength of a president and the popularity of his agenda. The result is that a significant margin of victory in an election puts a president in a better bargaining position vis-à-vis Congress and therefore makes his preferences more attainable, all else equal.⁴ Legislators take careful note of this information because they recognize that standing in the path of a president with popular support can have consequences (Mann 1990:90).

I argue that electoral outcomes are among the most powerful and transparent signals of popular support available in American politics, particularly early in administrations. Public support, in turn, both increases the range of alternatives available to a president (Neustadt 1960; Light 1982) and influences the president's choice and timing of alternatives (Ostrom and Simon 1985; Rohde and Simon 1985; Ostrom and Job 1986). Popular presidents can move public opinion in favor of their preferences (Andrade and Young 1996) and receive more deference from Congress (Edwards 1980; Rohde and Simon 1985). As Marra, Ostrom, and Simon (1990) note, popular support provides presidents with political currency that is vital to electoral survival and policy effectiveness. In short, presidential popularity conveys credibility to other political actors and has a self-reinforcing effect on the public.

Most studies of the relationship between popular support and presidential power conceive of support in terms of approval ratings obtained through polling; however, there are two related reasons why electoral margins are a superior indicator of a president's true standing early in an administration.

First, presidential agendas, prospects, and policies are disproportionately determined early in the term, making the initial information about political strength conveyed by an electoral outcome especially significant (Light 1982). The signal of popularity (and the corresponding power) conveyed by an electoral margin declines over time, but it plays an important role in setting the priors of actors who could constrain a president's agenda (Grossback et al. 2006). Beginning the first day in office after an election, public opinion polling and the course of events are used to update these priors, but the initial election provides the point of departure. Thus, while the window of a hundred days that receives so much attention in the media is arbitrary in length, the idea that presidential agendas and success are disproportionately determined early in a term is very real.

³ There is a long history of presidents claiming that electoral margins bestow power. Eisenhower, for example, took the margin of his victory as a referendum on his policy preferences, saying, "the Republican Platform of 1956... was overwhelmingly endorsed by the country's voters—by a margin of almost ten million votes" (Eisenhower 1958). Along similar lines, Coolidge suggested that his substantial margin of victory (25% points in the popular vote) indicated that voters supported at least the "broad general principles" of his campaign (Kelley 1983).

⁴ There is a substantial literature on electoral mandates. Kelley (1983), for example, argues that "elections carry messages about problems, policies, and programs—messages plain to all and specific enough to be directive." Conway (2001) posits that a mandate exists when the electoral outcome of an election is due to a particular policy prescription. However, it is difficult to confidently identify situations that pass this test. Indeed, in earlier work, Riker (1988) argues that it is impossible to take an aggregated election outcome and parse out the degree to which it should be attributed to a particular policy issue, implying that Conway's standard is impossible to meet. Others have gone so far as to link this identification problem to the accumulation of extra-constitutional presidential powers through unsubstantiated mandate claims (Dahl 1990; Ellis and Kirk 1995). It should be noted, however, that the work on the implications of electoral margins, while voluminous, is generally under-theorized and therefore provides a relatively weak footing for the arguments made here.

Second, and more importantly, an electoral margin carries information beyond what is provided by polling because it represents the official count of mobilized voters rather than a snapshot of a more disengaged public's response to a pollster's phone call. Polling, particularly early in the term, occurs at a time when presidents are governing rather than campaigning. This is a moment in the cycle when presidents "cash in" the capital bestowed by popularity to achieve political goals rather than maximizing popularity to win an election. Electoral outcomes are therefore an important indication of the public's preferences and a president's popularity and political skill "when it counts." Thus, electoral margins convey information about a president's strength on the campaign trail and the reach of his political apparatus—factors that public opinion polls leave out, but that a legislator may well take into account regardless of whether they would like to ride the president's coattails in the next election, have a president campaign on their behalf, or avoid overly enthusiastic presidential efforts in support of a rival.

Political Power and Foreign Policy

Upon initial inspection, it might seem that the power derived from electoral margins would have little impact on foreign policy. This is simply because it is commonly assumed that presidents have near absolute foreign policy power and therefore need no additional political strength to pursue their preferred course of action (Wildavsky 1966; Peterson 1994; Canes-Wrone, Howell, and Lewis 2008). However, recent work adds a wrinkle to this orthodoxy by demonstrating that presidents do not have equal autonomy in all areas of foreign policy (Baum 2004; Brule 2006). For example, Howell and Pevehouse (2005, 2007) find that Congress constrains the use of substantial military force but that presidents have more discretion over less politically salient tactics such as minor uses of force. The implication is that presidents are faced with an array of foreign policy options that require different amounts of political power to implement. This variation leads to a relationship between the content of U.S. foreign policy and the margin of electoral victory, which I have argued is an important source of strength early in administrations. I establish a spectrum of policies ranging from diplomacy, to crisis intervention short of force, to substantial military force. Each of these policies holds risks and rewards for presidents. I therefore do not argue that presidents systematically prefer one policy option over the others. Rather, presidents seek the autonomy to choose among policy options, and power obtained from a large electoral margin can provide this.

Diplomacy

Presidential diplomacy is relatively unconstrained for a variety of reasons. First, Congress has few functional institutional levers with which to influence the diplomatic agenda aside from the Senate's role in confirming State Department officials and ratifying treaties. Moreover, presidents have a variety of tools with which to circumvent the Congressional role in the treaty process, most notably the use of executive agreements. While Congress decisively influences the content of diplomatic relationships in a few key instances—Taiwan and Cuba, for example—this is the exception rather than the rule. Congress exercises especially little influence on the president's personal diplomatic agenda in the form of summits and state visits.

Presidential diplomatic autonomy arises in large part from Congressional disinterest. Congress has little incentive to expend effort to influence diplomatic relations because Congressional constituencies are local rather than national, leading members to focus disproportionately on domestic politics and the relatively few aspects of foreign policy that garner public attention or directly impact their constituency. In the vast majority of cases, diplomacy operates well beneath the public's radar (Ostrom and Simon 1985), and typical individuals do not know much about or engage with foreign policy (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Holsti 2004). Indeed, the consensus in the literature is that, absent the major use of force (which I will turn to momentarily), public opinion is fundamentally incidental to the day-to-day foreign policy process (Mueller 1973; Holsti and Rosenau 1984; Zaller 1994; Shapiro and Jacobs 2000). The result is that non-conflict foreign policy rarely contributes to Congressional reelection prospects and is therefore less subject to fierce political rivalry. In reaction to these incentives, members of Congress tend to invest less in foreign policy expertise in general and diplomacy in particular (Gailmard and Patty n.d.).⁵

Diplomacy, however, remains attractive for politically weak presidents (including those constrained by small margins of electoral victory), who do have a national constituency and can turn to diplomatic engagement as a residual productive outlet for obtaining their foreign policy objectives. Simon and Ostrom (1989) note that, under some circumstances, direct presidential diplomacy can increase popular support. Although the political benefits of diplomacy can be transitory, the president can therefore engage abroad to create windows of opportunity for improving his political standing (Mackuen 1983). In sum, diplomatic engagement is a low risk, but low reward foreign policy.

Crisis Intervention

The president of the United States is confronted with a nearly constant stream of international crises and must decide whether or not to engage. Many of these are clearly outside the interests of the United States and are therefore unlikely to draw U.S. engagement. Others are so strategically important that involvement is essentially unavoidable. However, in many cases, presidents have some leeway over whether to engage or remain aloof. To take a well-known example, McGeorge Bundy, National Security Advisor for Kennedy and Johnson, famously noted, "Pleikus are like streetcars." By calling the Pleiku crisis a streetcar, Bundy was simply saying that if one waits a little while, another such crisis would come along. Later in life, Bundy expressed regret about the cynicism that this comment implies, but the moment of candor reveals

⁵ Gailmard and Patty's forthcoming book also speaks to the deeper historical origins of the variation in presidential autonomy over diplomacy, crisis intervention, and the use of force. In their view, presidential claims of autonomy are important in part because they can be self-reinforcing. Thus, because the executive claim of diplomatic authority is older it is also more entrenched, reinforced, and unquestioned in American politics. Presidents wasted no time asserting diplomatic autonomy. While George Washington initially took the first part of the constitutional requirement for the Senate's "advice and consent" on treaties at face value and sought input on ongoing treaty negotiations and diplomatic missions, he quickly grew disenchanted with legislative involvement. Consultation gave way to updates, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century presidents routinely presented completed treaties to the Senate for ratification but sought no input on their negotiation. Lower level diplomacy was the prerogative of the executive from the very start. In contrast, presidents began to assert themselves forcefully in matters of armed conflict in the twentieth century (Fisher 2004).

the degree to which presidents have discretion when it comes to crisis engagement.

Presidential autonomy over crisis engagement stems in part from the office's substantial informational advantages when it comes to foreign policy, particularly in the short term (Baum and Potter 2008). As it does for diplomacy, this in part derives from the relative disinterest of other political actors and the public, but it also has an institutional basis. The presidency has important constitutional advantages in the foreign policy arena that are particularly felt in crisis situations, and they have been bolstered over time by the acquiescence of the legislative and judicial branches. The National Security Act of 1947, for example, increased presidential influence over foreign policy by handing over the levers of bureaucratic control. The courts have further supported presidential preeminence in the foreign policy arena (Marra et al. 1990). The result is that Congress is typically playing catch-up, particularly in the shortened timeframes that accompany crisis situations.

Crises are, however, inherently unpredictable. They can drag on, escalate out of control, or evolve to become political liabilities for a president, and in such cases, Congress tends to reassert itself. Thus, while crisis engagement may provide a president with an attractive opportunity to look statesmanlike in a situation that is more likely than diplomacy to garner some publicity, it also carries the risk of non-negligible costs. Crisis engagement could therefore be considered a medium risk, medium reward foreign policy.

Military Force

Howell and Pevehouse (2005) demonstrate that, contrary to popular belief, Congress constrains the president's ability to resort to force. They find that when the president's party holds more seats in Congress, the use of major force is more common precisely because partisan control allows the president to avoid or overcome constraint. In contrast, they find no relationship with the minor use of force (over which presidents maintain more autonomy), which is in keeping with the distinction I draw here between more and less constrained foreign policy activities.⁶

Presidents need political power to deploy substantial military force because it is more politically salient than diplomacy or crisis intervention. Most scholars draw a clear distinction between public opinion on foreign policy in general, on the one hand, and public opinion in relation to conflict on the other. For example, Powlick and Katz (1998) argue that public opinion is typically latent and inactive, leaving presidents a free hand in most circumstances to conduct policy as they see fit. However, they suggest that under limited circumstances, particularly those surrounding the commitment of military forces, foreign policy issues may "activate" public attention. Thus, while the public is typically not closely attuned to the details of international politics, the commitment of significant U.S. forces typically attracts attention. With public attention comes increased political salience and interference from political actors outside the executive branch.

Conflict has potential benefits for presidents. Scholars have long noted that the public often responds positively in the short term to military engagements abroad, and a voluminous literature has investigated the validity and mag-

⁶ In later work, Howell and Pevehouse (2007) do find a relationship with minor force, a point that I will return to in the empirical analysis.

nitude of the “rally” phenomenon. Lee (1977:253) noted, “the average man’s reaction [to engagement abroad] will include a feeling of patriotism in supporting presidential actions.” Most empirical updates and tests confirm the existence of a short-term rally effect to a greater or lesser extent, and under at least some circumstances (James and Oneal 1991; Oneal and Bryan 1995). However, even if presidents are not banking on a durable rally in their approval ratings, military engagements provide presidents with an opportunity to change the political discourse and invoke their role as commander in chief.

The use of force, however, carries potential costs as well. Sizable military engagements typically last longer and attract more scrutiny than less forceful foreign policies. The result is a partial erosion of the president’s informational advantage vis-à-vis both Congress and the public (Baum and Potter 2008). Moreover, lengthy engagements rapidly become costly ones. Even if Congress is poorly positioned to cut off funding to troops in the field, the power of the purse contributes to still more scrutiny. Several scholars have argued that casualties that may accompany the major use of force have the potential to turn public opinion against the use of force and the president who initiated it (Mueller 1973; Gartner and Segura 1998; Slantchev 2004). Kriner’s (2010) finding that Congress is less likely to contest the president’s conduct of major military actions when presidential approval is high suggests that these risks are potentially higher for presidents with low approval ratings to begin with. Finally, the returns on the use of force are unpredictable, particularly because rallies in opinion are not necessarily consistent or durable (Lian and Oneal 1993). Taken together, this suggests that while significant potential benefits accompany the use of substantial force, there are substantial risks as well.

Linking Political Strength and Policy Choice

I have established that election margins can contribute to political strength and that various foreign policies require different quantities of political strength to implement. The remaining task is to clarify how variations along these two dimensions interact. I argue that an increase in political strength will lead to an increase in otherwise constrained policies, but that such an increase will also be associated with a decline in the incidence of less constrained policies.

Trade-offs in foreign policy occur in two ways. Presidents choose which problems to address (for example, a choice between addressing a diplomatic problem in Latin America or a military problem in Asia). They also substitute alternative policies as solutions to a single problem (i.e. to address a situation in North Africa with force or diplomacy). This conception of the trade-offs that presidents face builds on the well-established literature on foreign policy substitutability (Most and Starr 1989), which, among other things, holds that leaders have a variety of foreign policy options that may achieve their goals (Bennett and Nordstrom 2000).

This balancing act between policy options becomes clearer when it is modeled in a decision theoretic framework as a simple budget optimization problem with two constraints, political strength and time (Figure 1). For simplicity, I consider the trade-off between two foreign policies: a more constrained activity like the use of force (X_1), and a less constrained activity like diplomacy (X_2). Presidents have some finite amount of political strength or capital (Y), which they can spend to overcome

constraint. By definition, X_2 requires less Y to obtain than X_1 , meaning that it has a lower “price” (p), that is, $p_1 > p_2$, resulting in a budget line with a slope of p_2/p_1 .

As I have discussed, each policy comes with potential risks and rewards. It is therefore unclear *a priori*, which would be preferred by presidents. One thing that is clear, however, is that a president would likely be ill served by a foreign policy that consisted exclusively of diplomacy or force because the optimal approach is highly context dependent. In some situations diplomacy may be highly rewarding. In others, crisis intervention or the use of force may achieve the desired effect. Presidents seek the autonomy to pick the right tool for the job, and a strong president has more options than a weak one. I therefore assume no preference order between the foreign policies, but instead argue that presidents seek balance and flexibility, which I model with a standard convex indifference curve between bundles of X_1 and X_2 .

The final constraint on presidential choice is time. Presidents and administrations have finite resources and must prioritize activities. To capture this constraint on capacity, I assume that total activity is bound at T , meaning simply that there a limited amount of total foreign policy activity that can be accomplished and it must be divided in some way between X_1 and X_2 . The constraint is therefore a diagonal from T/t_{X_2} (where t_{X_2} is the time required per unit of less constrained activity) to T/t_{X_1} (where t_{X_1} is the time required per unit of the constrained activity). For simplicity, I treat t_{X_1} as equal to t_{X_2} in Figure 1. However, the implications of the theory hold if $t_{X_1} > t_{X_2}$ or $t_{X_1} < t_{X_2}$.

Taken together, the indifference curve, budget constraint, and limit on total activity constitute a optimization problem for a hypothetical president. The central implications are apparent in Figure 1 and give rise to testable hypotheses. An *increase* in political power leads to an *increase* in the incidence of more constrained policies, but also a *decline* in less constrained policies. As presidents gain political capital (i.e. they shift from Y to $Y + \epsilon$) they can “afford” more constrained policies, shifting the budget line from Y/p_1 to $(Y + \epsilon)/p_2$. In conjunction with constraint on total capacity (the solid black diagonal), this

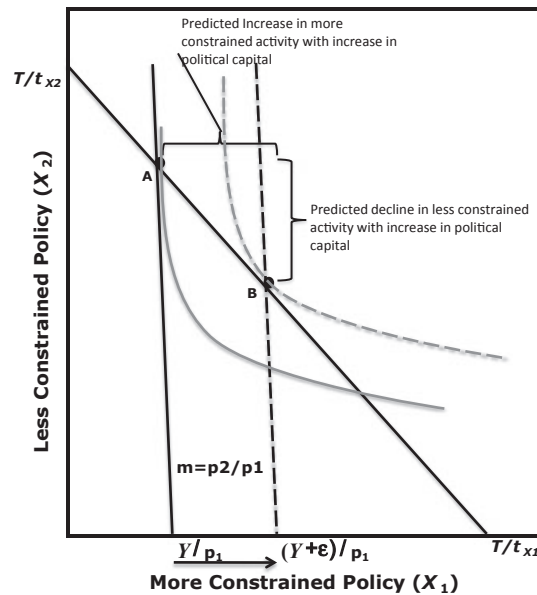


FIG 1. Power, Constraint, and Policy

shifts the intersection of the constraints and the indifference curve from A to B.

All this, of course, assumes that presidents will not respond to weakness by simply doing less. This expectation is, however, in keeping with Ostrom and Job's (1986) assertion that each president has a limited time in which to make a case for reelection or put a mark on history and therefore has a strong incentive for action. Moreover, as I have already implied, less constrained policies like diplomacy and crisis intervention, though less politically contested, still have value. Thus, if presidential activity is constrained, the total volume of activity remains the same but the focus of the activity shifts away from the constraint.

Hypotheses

In sum, electoral margins are a source of political strength while diplomacy, crisis intervention, and the use of substantial force require varying amounts of political strength to implement. I anticipate that an increase in political power in terms of an increased margin of victory will result in a corresponding rise in otherwise more policy and a decline in less constrained policy. Taken together these insights give rise to four hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: *There is a strong negative relationship between the margin by which a president wins an election and diplomacy.*

Hypothesis 2: *There is a weak negative relationship between the margin by which a president wins an election and engagement in international crises.*

Hypothesis 3: *There is a strong positive relationship between the margin by which a president wins an election and the major use of force.*

Hypothesis 4: *There is a strong positive relationship between the margin by which a president wins an election and the probability of a major use of force given the opportunity for a major use of force.*

Hypotheses 1–3 are straightforward and posit the sign and magnitude of the relationships between electoral margins and the three foreign policies that I have described in detail. The fourth claim takes a slightly different form. While the signs and magnitudes of the counts of diplomatic activity, crisis engagement and the use of force are testable implications of the theory; the theory itself is about trade-offs. It therefore makes sense to expand the inquiry to explicitly consider the choices that presidents make. By assessing the actual use of force in the context of opportunities it is possible, in a limited way, to investigate the choices that presidents make about foreign policy.⁷ In addition, because oppor-

tunities for force arise in situations that are clearly of high political salience for the United States, it is reasonable to anticipate that the United States often engages diplomatically when force is not used.

Research Design and Findings

I test these hypotheses in a series of statistical models loosely based on those of Howell and Pevehouse (2005, 2007), but with departures owing to the need for different controls, the emphasis on electoral margins as the key explanatory variable, and the relative shortage of degrees of freedom. I begin by describing the variables in detail. Summary statistics and additional tests can be found in Appendix 1 to this article.

Dependent Variables

I measure diplomatic activity in terms of direct interaction between heads of state.⁸ This can take the form of presidential trips abroad or official visits from foreign leaders to the United States. In the models that follow, I consider both the combined and disaggregated measures of presidential trips abroad and official visits.

While official visits certainly do not capture all diplomatic activity, they serve as a useful proxy for the underlying object of interest. Presidential time is valuable, and presidential activities are carefully choreographed. Meetings between heads of state occupy substantial resources, particularly in terms of time, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that they signal an administration's commitment to high-level diplomacy. In addition, direct presidential diplomacy is precisely the sort of activity that is most likely to be "crowded out" by other activities that require more political capital. Finally, direct presidential diplomacy is substantively important in its own right, as some issues in international relationships can only be sorted out at the highest levels. Official visits act as deadlines that move international relationships to the front burner. Moreover, while the actual signing of agreements is often staged for public consumption, the agreements themselves represent thousands of hours of work and negotiation by administration officials.

Relying on direct presidential diplomacy as a measure of diplomatic engagement does have some limitations. There are a certain number of "obligatory" state visits between close allies. Presidents since Reagan have actually made a point of getting their trips to Canada and Mexico out of the way before the inauguration, but a trip to the United Kingdom invariably happens within the first few months in office regardless of the political strength of the newly elected president. To address this, I count the total time of visits in days rather than the number of visits because even though presidents must visit and host a certain number of key allies and strategically important states they still hold sway over the length of these visits.⁹

I draw on data from the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) project to measure U.S. involvement in international crises. The ICB project identifies two defining conditions

⁷ Ideally, the empirical analysis would also consider total opportunities for crisis intervention and diplomacy. However, there are several reasons why this is not possible. First, the opportunity for diplomacy is essentially constant since a president could theoretically be abroad or hosting a foreign head of state any day of the quarter. As far as opportunities for crisis intervention are concerned, the difficulty is that the ICB data set was not built to account for crisis "opportunities." Many situations that are not in the data set would have become crises by the ICB definition if the United States had become involved. Others that are in the data set were so removed from US interests that it would be a stretch to say that there was an opportunity for US engagement. Still others transpired in such a way that the crisis was only perceived by the crisis actors, that is, secrecy or obscurity meant that US decision makers were likely unaware that the crisis even occurred until after the fact. For more on this see Brecher and Wilkenfeld (2000).

⁸ Data on presidential travel was derived from information available on the State Department website <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/trvl/pres/index.htm>.

⁹ Data on official visits is available from the State Department: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/c1792.htm>. I treat days on which there was more than one foreign head of state in the United States as single positive observations. This primarily occurred when there were multiple heads of state present for a summit or signing event, but was rare.

for a crisis: (i) a change in type and/or an increase in intensity of disruptive, that is, hostile verbal or physical, interactions between two or more states, with a heightened probability of military hostilities; that, in turn, (ii) destabilizes their relationship and challenges the structure of an international system—global, dominant, or subsystem (Brecher and Ben-Yehuda 1985).¹⁰

I assess only crises in which the U.S. was a third party—rather than all crises, or crises in which the U.S. was an actor—in order to isolate situations in which presidents have chosen to engage as opposed to those in which the United States was forced to act by strategic interest. I also excluded instances of U.S. involvement in the form of direct military activity, as this would overlap with major uses of force.

Data on the use of force are adapted from and Howell and Pevehouse's (2005) quarterly data set. They in turn draw from Fordham (1998), Fordham and Sarver (2001) and Zelikow (1987), all of which build on Blechman and Kaplan's (1978) original use of force data set. The data set ranks U.S. applications of force on a five-point scale ranging from low to high. Howell and Pevehouse demonstrate that Congress only constrains the use of "major force" as described by Blechman and Kaplan (1978).¹¹ I follow their lead by only counting events that reach this threshold.¹²

Data on opportunities for the use of force come from Howell and Pevehouse (2007).¹³ They mined the front page of the New York Times for mentions of "violent acts perpetrated against the United States government, threats to the stability of foreign regimes, gross violations of international law, and nuclear proliferation."¹⁴

Independent Variables

In the regressions that follow I rely on the popular vote margin to characterize the magnitude of the president's victory (*Pop. Lead*).¹⁵ I analyze the margin in terms of the lead in percentage points over the closest runner up in order to minimize the impact of third party candidates. To account for the possibility that the effect of the electoral margin could fade over time, I multiply the electoral

margin by the time to the next election. This causes the value to decline linearly (Baum and Groeling 2009).¹⁶

To account for variation in the amount of constraint imposed by Congress, I include the average percentage of seats held by the president's party in both houses (*Congress*).¹⁷ I also evaluate the combined number of seats that the incoming (or reelected) president's party gains or losses in the House and Senate (*Seat Swing*). This "coat-tail effect" could be another source of early political strength deriving from an election, as was apparently the case in the 2008 election when the surge of Democratic Congressional successes was seen as a signal of strong popular support for Obama and his agenda. These measures capture aspects of two competing theories of Congress. The *Seat Swing* variable reflects Grossback et al.'s conception of the message members of Congress receive from elections (Peterson et al. 2003; Grossback et al. 2005; Grossback, Peterson, and Stimson 2006), while the *Congress* variable adheres more closely to standard conceptions of institutional balancing in which the relative strength and distribution of parties within the branches drives outcomes (Krehbiel 1996).

I control for the independent effect of presidential approval ratings with data from Gallup (*Approval*), assessing the first poll in each quarter.¹⁸ This allows me to distinguish between the independent effect of electoral margin and the more commonly discussed effects of day-to-day popularity.

I include the president's term (1st or 2nd) to address the possibility that second term presidents could be systematically more or less likely to go abroad, engage in international crises, or use force (*Term*). For example, it may be that presidents engage in more diplomacy in the second term because they are freed by term limits from the need to win reelection.

I also control for the president's political party (*Party*) to account for the possibility that there are partisan differences in the inclination toward various foreign policy options. For example, some might argue that Democratic presidents systematically prefer diplomacy while Republicans are inclined toward force. I code Democratic presidents 0 and Republican presidents 1.¹⁹

Many scholars have noted that foreign policy, and particularly the use of force, may respond to underlying economic conditions. In general, the literature links weak economies to relatively aggressive foreign policy (Clark 2000; Fordham 2002). DeRouen and Peake (2002), for example, suggest that military engagements can divert public attention from an economic downturn. It is rea-

¹⁰ The system level data set that results from this definition currently contains 452 incidents from the end of WWI through 2006. For more on the International Crisis Behavior project, see Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1989, 2000).

¹¹ A major use of force requires the use of at least one "major force component," which is defined as two or more aircraft carrier task groups, over a battalion of ground forces, or one or more combat air wings.

¹² I replicated all models using minor uses of force as the dependent variable and, as anticipated, found negative but statistically insignificant results for the electoral margins variable. This result likely reflects the heightened autonomy of presidents in this area.

¹³ I rely on Pevehouse and Howell's opportunities data rather than Meer-nik's (2004), because they cover the entire period of analysis under investigation here and have a more expansive definition of opportunity.

¹⁴ This measure does have limitations. For example, Brule, Marshall, and Prins (2010) point out that it is unreasonable to think that such opportunities always arise exogenously from the international environment independent of the president's vulnerability or strength.

¹⁵ The most obvious alternative is the Electoral College margin. Arguably a president able to win a broad range of states is more powerful than one with an equivalent margin in the popular vote whose support was more concentrated. In response to these concerns, I checked all the models presented in the analysis that follows using the Electoral College margin and found results of the anticipated signs, but of inconsistent statistical significance. There are two likely explanations for this outcome. First, the Electoral College measure does not map as clearly to the theory that I have outlined, which is predicated on signals of popular support. Second, the Electoral College has a well-known tendency to exaggerate the degree by which the winning candidate prevails and is therefore a muddier signal of popularity to those who would constrain the president's agenda.

¹⁶ Results without this erosion parameter and with nonlinear erosion can be found in Table A3 and are similar to those presented here.

¹⁷ In unreported robustness tests, I assessed alternative conceptions of Congressional constraint, specifically whether the government is unified and "legislative potential for policy change" (LPPC), which is a measure adapted from Brady, Cooper, and Hurley (1979). LPPC indexes the size of the majority and its cohesiveness, as well as the size of the minority and its cohesiveness. The findings are consistent with those presented in Table 1.

¹⁸ Some readers may be concerned about collinearity between the election margins and approval ratings. The correlation is positive, but relatively low (0.105).

¹⁹ It is also possible that presidents might have varying baseline levels of military aggressiveness. For example, Reagan's rhetoric about restoring American military prowess might suggest such a tendency. Alternatively, presidents such as Eisenhower might be less constrained due to their military background. While I only include *Party* in the primary models, I tested other president-level covariates such as age, military experience and vice presidential experience in unreported robustness checks, finding no systematic effect. Presidential fixed effects models, the results of which can be found in Appendix 1, resolve all such potential issues. The results from those models confirm the findings reported here.

sonable to anticipate that economic conditions may also have a relationship with electoral margins, given Americans well-known tendency to vote with their pocketbooks. In response, I control for the condition of the economy using quarterly data on unemployment from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (*Unemployment*).²⁰ Some work relating the condition of the economy to the use of force also includes the Consumer Price Index in equivalent regressions, so I include it here as well (*CPI*).

The regressions on diplomacy need to account for changes in the relative ease and speed of air travel over the period of analysis, which would presumably have an independent effect on presidential diplomacy. Regular presidential air travel on dedicated craft began with Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1943 trip to the Casablanca Conference, but very early air transit was uncomfortable, insecure, relatively slow, and therefore infrequent. From Kennedy onward, however, there has been a surprising degree of consistency in the quality of presidential air transport. The major cut point occurs in 1958 with the introduction of jet engines after which speed, range, and comfort remained remarkably constant. Indeed, there have been relatively few presidential planes—just four Boeing jets in the last 50 years, all with maximum speeds of approximately 600 miles per hour and ranges of about 7,500 miles. These trends hold for foreign heads of state as well. Therefore, I simply control for the introduction of jet engines on Air Force One in 1958 (*Jet*).

Finally, in the regressions on crisis engagement and the major use of force, I include a dichotomous variable for the Cold War period (1945–1989) (*Cold War*). The concern here is that the heightened strategic tension in that period may have made the commitment of U.S. forces a substantively different proposition than it was after the Soviet Union fell and United States emerged as the sole superpower in the system.

Period and Structure of the Analysis

The models cover the period from 1945 to 2001. I assess just the first year of each term in order to remain consistent and comparable with other work on the effects of presidential electoral margins (e.g. Grossback et al. 2005, 2006) and to further minimize concern over the potentially declining effect of electoral margins over time. Limiting the analysis to the first year of each term also avoids complications introduced by midterm elections as well as presidents who did not serve a full term.

I exclude periods in which the president was not elected, but rather took office upon the death or departure of a predecessor (Truman's first term, Johnson's first term, and the Ford Administration), since there is no theoretically meaningful electoral margin to assess. Truman and Johnson are included in the analysis once elected in their own right.

Model and Findings

I test the hypotheses by fitting eight maximum likelihood models (two for each dependent variable), which are presented in Table 1. Since diagnostics revealed no evidence of substantial temporal dynamics, I follow Howell and Pevehouse's (2005) lead by employing relatively simple negative binomial models for the dependant variables

that are counts (Models 1–6). These models have a quarterly unit of analysis. Models 7 and 8 are logistic regressions on the dichotomous use of force, with the “opportunity” for force as the unit of analysis.

I do not include presidential fixed effects in the primary models in Table 1. Presidents are elected twice at most and many served only a single term. There are therefore a maximum of eight observations per president and a corresponding shortage of degrees of freedom. More significantly, there are at most two election margins per administration. In such a circumstance within administration analysis asks too much of the data. As a result, the comparison is necessarily between (rather than within) administrations. I do, however, explore potential outliers and presidential fixed effects models in Appendix 1 to this paper and find substantively similar results to those that I present here.

Models 1, 3, 5, and 7 fit just the bivariate relationship between the margin of electoral victory and the dependent variables. Models 2, 4, 6, and 8 fit the models with the control variables. The bivariate tests provide assurance that the observed relationship is more than an artifact of the control variables (Achen 2002, 2005).

Models 1 and 2 indicate a strong, statistically significant negative relationship between margin of electoral victory and total diplomacy (the combined measure of presidential trips abroad and visits to the U.S. by foreign heads of state). That is, as predicted by Hypothesis 1, as the margin of electoral victory increases, direct presidential diplomacy decreases. The magnitude of the effect is substantial—holding the remaining independent variables constant, a hypothetical newly elected (or reelected) president who ties a rival in the popular vote is predicted to spend 16 days on diplomacy. When the electoral margin increases by 10-percentage points this declines to just 6 days—a reduction of nearly two thirds.

In line with expectations, the findings for crisis intervention are weaker. While the sign is in the correct direction, the bivariate relationship in Model 3 does not reach the threshold for statistical significance. The coefficient in Model 4, however, is negative and statistically significant, indicating partial support for Hypothesis 2. A 10% increase in the margin of electoral victory (from 0) results in a 20% decrease in U.S. crisis engagement.

As presaged by Hypothesis 3, the sign flips when it comes to the use of force. Models 5 and 6 assess the relationship between electoral margin and the major use of military force, and here the coefficients for electoral margin are positive and significant. All other covariates held constant, a 10-percentage point increase (from 0) nearly triples the expected instances of the major application of military force by the United States.

The relative magnitudes of these effects also match those predicted by the first three hypotheses. Figure 2 compares the relative effect of electoral margin on diplomacy, crisis intervention, and the use of force (Models 2, 4, and 6) by identifying the change in the predicted percentage of the mean quarterly value as electoral margin increases from 0 to 20, which is the approximate range in electoral margin observed in the data. There are substantial changes in both diplomacy and the use of force over that span, and a more moderate change in crisis intervention.

The strong substantive effect on diplomacy is particularly notable. It seems that while the literature has almost exclusively focused on conflict and crisis, variation in presidential power and autonomy also has important effects on the U.S. diplomatic posture.

²⁰ I tested change in GDP per capita as an alternative measure of economic misery and obtained equivalent results.

TABLE 1. Trips Abroad, Crisis Engagement, Uses of Major Force, and Opportunities for Force: 1945–2001

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>	<i>Model 8</i>
	<i>Diplomacy</i>	<i>Diplomacy</i>	<i>Crisis</i>	<i>Crisis</i>	<i>Force</i>	<i>Force</i>	<i>Force/Opp.</i>	<i>Force/Opp.</i>
	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$
Pop. lead	-0.013 (0.005)**	-0.014 (0.001)***	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.009 (0.004)*	0.017 (0.006)**	0.031 (0.010)**	0.029 (0.009)**	0.027 (0.010)**
Seat swing	-	-9.187 (2.627)***	-	-4.075 (1.844)*	-	-4.399 (5.812)	-	2.867 (3.063)
Congress	-	-1.575 (1.182)	-	7.242 (2.029)***	-	4.120 (4.048)	-	8.884 (4.118)*
Approval	-	-0.001 (0.013)	-	0.018 (0.013)	-	0.052 (0.018)**	-	0.041 (0.032)
Term	-	0.287 (0.176)	-	0.302 (0.136)*	-	-0.874 (0.810)	-	1.230 (0.478)*
Party	-	0.031 (0.161)	-	0.809 (0.313)**	-	1.269 (0.559)*	-	1.032 (0.794)
Unemployment	-	0.052 (0.065)	-	-0.140 (0.058)*	-	0.228 (0.095)*	-	0.284 (0.154) ⁺
CPI	-	0.046 (0.051)	-	0.143 (0.047)**	-	0.015 (0.094)	-	-0.024 (0.012)*
Jet	-	0.509 (0.180)**	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cold War	-	-	-	0.856 (0.249)***	-	0.670 (0.414)	-	-2.947 (1.893)
<i>N</i>	58	58	58	58	58	58	3,716	3,716

(Notes: ⁺ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.)

Estimates for Models 1–6 are maximum likelihood coefficients obtained from negative binomial models with a quarterly unit of analysis. Estimates for Models 7 and 8 are maximum likelihood coefficients obtained from logistic models with the opportunity for the use of force as the unit of analysis. Standard errors (clustered by president) in parentheses. Constants are suppressed to conserve space.)

A similar thing can be said for the findings on the opportunity to use force. Models 7 and 8 in Table 1 support Hypothesis 4, indicating that when confronted with an opportunity to use force presidents with substantial margins of victory are more likely to act on it. Indeed, the predicted probabilities in Figure 3 indicate that over the observed span of electoral victory the probability that a president will employ force given the opportunity increases from near 0 in the case of a tie in popular vote to nearly one out of three with an electoral margin of victory of 20%.

The two Congress variables tell a mixed story across the models. *Seat Swing* is negative and statistically significant in models of diplomacy and crisis intervention. As the president's party increases its Congressional presence, the United States is more likely to become involved in international crises. The robustness checks that follow, however, do not consistently find such an effect for Congressional margins, so it is possible that this finding is an artifact of this particular model. In contrast, the *Congress* variable is positive and significant in the models of crisis and opportunity for force. The mixed findings for crisis are unsurprising since, as I have already pointed out, this is the middle option. Moreover, the negative findings for diplomacy and the positive findings for opportunity are in keeping with the theory. However, the lack of consistent statistical significance lessens confidence in these findings and limits the degree to which we can arbitrate between the aforementioned theories of Congress. Indeed, it is telling that, at least in the first year, the effects of Congressional strength are tempered by the inclusion of electoral margins in the model vis-à-vis what has been found elsewhere in the literature (i.e. Howell and Pevehouse 2005, 2007).

Approval rating is generally insignificant across the models with the exception of the large, statistically significant

coefficient for the use of force. Existing findings on the relationship between approval polls and the use of force is mixed, and this secondary finding from this analysis only adds to that. While Kriner (2010) finds evidence of a modest relationship between approval and the duration of major military actions, most work in this area finds no relationship between approval and force (e.g. Meernik 2004; Howell and Pevehouse 2005, 2007). The difference likely owes to the fact that the models that I present here are limited to the first year after the election.

Findings for the role of *Term* are equally mixed. The coefficients are positive and significant for crisis intervention and force/opportunity, but insignificant elsewhere.

There is a relatively consistent effect for the party variable across the models. It is positive in all cases and statistically significant in the regressions on crisis involvement and the use of force. While this result stands in partial opposition to Gowa's (1998) finding that partisanship stops at the water's edge, it does not suggest that Republicans are systematically more aggressive. Instead, the take away appears to be that there is some evidence to suggest that Democratic presidents are less active in foreign policy across the board. However, it is worth noting that this finding does not prove especially durable in the robustness checks that follow.

Unemployment has the anticipated positive relationship with force and force/opportunity. The use of force literature has established that presidents tend to turn to the external use of military power to distract from economic woes at home. The negative relationship with crisis intervention is less expected, but is consistent across the robustness checks. Further complicating matters, *CPI* has a positive and significant relationship with crisis, but a negative and significant relationship with force/opportunity.

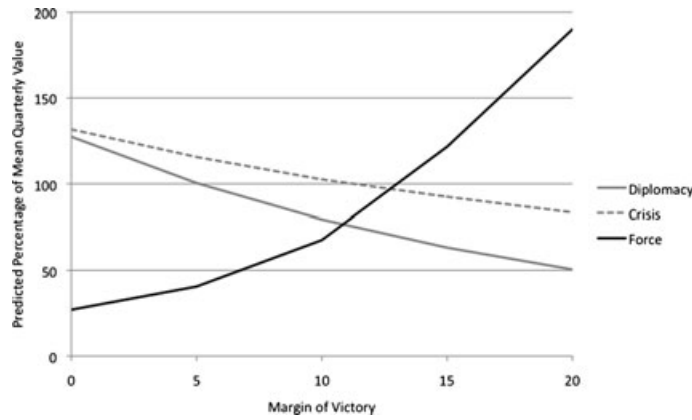


FIG 2. Quarterly Expected Value/Mean as Electoral Margin Ranges from 0 to 20
(Notes: Estimates are significant at the .05 level or greater. Confidence intervals are excluded to aid visualization.)

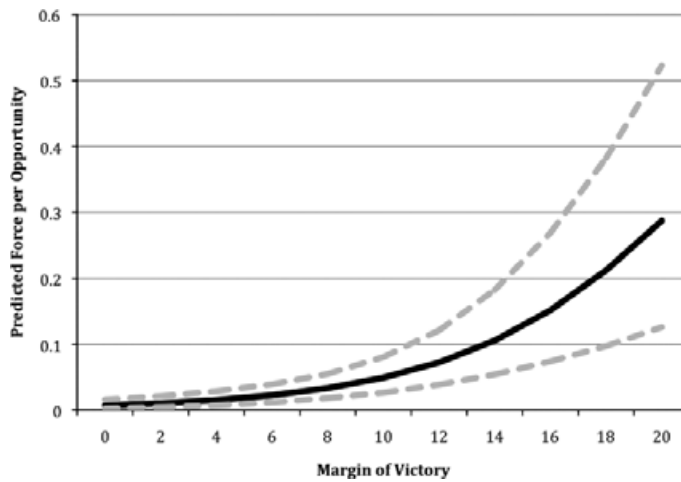


FIG 3. Probability of Force Given Opportunity as Electoral Margin Ranges from 0 to 20
(Notes: The area between the dashed lines is the .95 confidence interval.)

Robustness

For the primary robustness check, I explore alternative specifications of the dependent variables (Table 2). First I disaggregate the diplomacy measure into presidential trips abroad and official visits to Washington by foreign heads of state. Next, I explore covert operations to further isolate interventions over which presidents have the greatest discretion, since these interventions are particularly insulated from Congressional control and public scrutiny. In lieu of major uses of force, I turn to fatal militarized interstate disputes (MID) initiated by the United States from the Correlates of War (COW) project.²¹ The COW project defines a MID as: “[A] set of interactions between or among states involving threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual uses of military force... these acts must be explicit, overt, non-accidental, and government sanctioned” (Gochman and Maoz 1984).²²

²¹ Similar findings are obtained from regressions on U.S. initiated MIDS with more major uses of force, as identified with either the fatality level variable or the level of hostility variable.

²² For more on MIDS and the COW project see, Singer (1972, 1979, 1980) and Leng and Singer (1988). The current MIDS 3.10 data set contains 2,331 militarized disputes from 1816 to 2001 coded for duration, outcome, and level of fatality (Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer 2004).

Models 1 and 2 indicate a significant negative relationship between electoral margin and trips abroad by the U.S. president as well as official visits from foreign heads of state. However, when disaggregated, it becomes clear that the effect on official visits by foreign heads of state is substantially smaller than that observed for presidential trips abroad. This finding seems reasonable since presidents presumably have more discretion over their own actions than those of other heads of state.

Model 3 finds the expected negative relationship between electoral margin and covert operations. While often violent, these interventions are secret and can remain so long after the fact. They therefore require almost no political strength to implement. This finding helps to further clarify the distinction that separates the previously identified positive findings for the public use of substantial force from the negative relationship between crisis engagement and election margins.

In contrast, there is no clear relationship between electoral margin and the number of fatal MIDS initiated by the United States. The sign is positive, but the standard error is large enough to render this largely meaningless. Interpreting a null finding is difficult, but it is plausible that it stems from the definition of the MID measure, which combines events that the president has

TABLE 2. Trips Abroad, Crisis Engagement, and Major Uses of Force: 1945–2001

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Abroad $\beta/(SE)$	Visit $\beta/(SE)$	Covert $\beta/(SE)$	MID $\beta/(SE)$
Pop. lead	-0.036 (0.010)***	-0.005 (0.002)**	-0.010 (0.006) ⁺	0.003 (0.004)
Seat swing	-18.112 (8.060)*	-7.006 (1.153)***	-5.475 (1.568)***	-1.736 (3.240)
Congress	-8.771 (3.077)**	-0.946 (0.697)	8.093 (3.529)*	2.492 (1.727)
Approval	0.004 (0.019)	-0.006 (0.011)	0.003 (0.016)	-0.000 (0.018)
Term	1.006 (0.342)**	-0.373 (0.153)*	0.358 (0.206) ⁺	-0.097 (0.231)
Party	0.227 (0.640)	0.014 (0.222)	1.092 (0.616) ⁺	0.366 (0.257)
Unemployment	0.236 (0.102)*	0.071 (0.057)	-0.036 (0.058)	0.132 (0.061)*
CPI	0.119 (0.102)	-0.006 (0.042)	0.109 (0.055)*	-0.020 (0.033)
Jet	-0.627 (0.370) ⁺	0.761 (0.245)**	-	-
Cold War	-	-	0.991 (0.396)*	-0.236 (0.254)
N	58	58	58	58

(Notes: ⁺< .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

Table entries are maximum likelihood coefficients obtained from negative binomial models. The quarter is the unit of analysis. Huber/White clustered standard errors (by president) in are parentheses. Constants and alpha coefficients are suppressed to conserve space.)

substantial control over with those that are more subject to constraint (substantial military engagements including those with casualties short of 1,000 battle deaths). In this sense, the measure falls somewhere between crisis involvement and the major use of force in the degree to which it is predicated on presidential power. Indeed, this finding is not altogether surprising since, as Fordham and Sarver (2001) note, “in spite of its usefulness for other conflict research, the MID data are not appropriate for analyses of U.S. decisions to use force.”

A variety of additional robustness checks can be found in Appendix 1 to this paper. There I assess potential outliers and present results from time-series models with presidential fixed effects and seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) analyses (Zellner 1962; Greene 1990). The findings I have presented hold in these alternative specifications, indicating a robust and consistent relationship between electoral margins and foreign policy in the directions that I have hypothesized.

Conclusion

All else equal, presidents who win elections by a substantial margin engage in less personal diplomacy and fewer international crises, but turn to military force more regularly. I have argued that this distinction stems from the increase in political power lent by substantial margins of victory. Powerful presidents have more options and leverage, and are therefore better able to pursue constrained foreign policies such as the use of major force, but do so at the expense of personal involvement in diplomacy. In contrast, constrained policies are less available to

those who win by less, are they are forced disproportionately toward diplomacy and crisis intervention. These findings contribute to the emerging body of research (i.e. Canes-Wrone et al. 2008) that seeks to reestablish the importance of the broader institutional framework when seeking to understand how presidents make foreign policy.

In the process of establishing this argument, I hope to have made two secondary contributions. First, the theory and analysis recast the relationship between elections and presidential foreign policy in more general terms of variation in power and constraint and away from analysis of the incentives introduced by future elections. Second, I have expanded the analysis of foreign policy beyond the usual myopic focus on conflict. My hope is that these adjustments pave the way for productive future work.

These findings also have implications for policy. The positive relationship between electoral margins and the use of major force demonstrates another path through which U.S. electoral intuitions can systematically alter international politics. Given the unique position of the United States in the world, if there are systemic elements shaping the United States’ military behavior then there are necessarily global implications. The insight that relative commitment to diplomacy depends in part on the availability of other options, however, is of equal importance. As Clinton’s late, and ultimately unsuccessful, foray into the Middle East peace process demonstrates, it can be important to commit to diplomatic engagement and leadership early in a presidency. However, the analysis presented here suggests that there are systematic forces pushing the “strongest” American presidents away from personal engagement in diplomacy, especially at the beginning of their administration when they would likely be most effective. The result is uneven diplomatic engagement that may undermine effectiveness.

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Appendix 1

This appendix provides additional statistical results to establish the robustness of the core findings from Table 1. All data are available on the author’s website.

Table A1 presents summary statistics for the variables used in body of the paper as well as the robustness checks that follow.

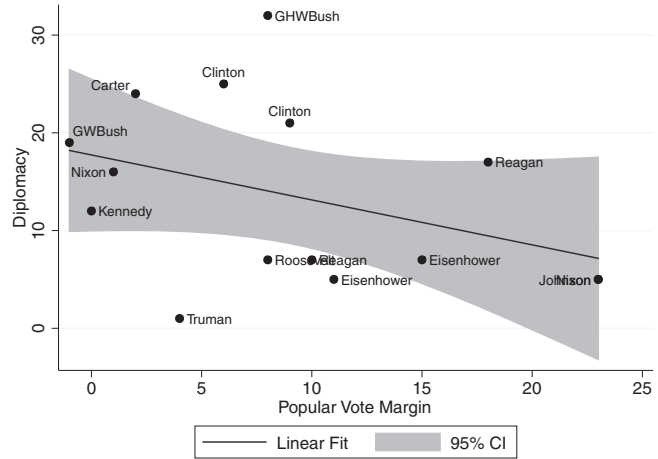
TABLE A1. Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent variables				
Diplomacy	11.65	8.49	1	32
Crisis	1.20	1.17	0	4
Major force	0.59	0.79	0	2
Opportunity	0.068	0.252	0	1
Abroad	3.40	4.38	0	17
Visit	8.25	6.33	1	25
MID	0.88	0.87	0	3
Covert	0.25	0.49	0	2
Key independent variables				
Pop. lead	9.21	7.22	-1	23
Approval	60.84	8.60	36.48	83.35
Seat swing	0.52	0.08	0.43	0.68
Congress	0.507	0.080	0.349	0.679
LPPC	3.58	13.07	-14.32	26.96
Unified	0.45	0.50	0	1
Party	0.536	0.494	0	1
Unemploy.	5.22	1.72	1.10	7.50
CPI	3.61	2.75	-2.70	11.20

Outliers

A primary concern is that outliers might drive the relationship between electoral margins on foreign policy behavior. To alleviate this concern, I present simple scatter plots (Figures A1–A3) of the margin of electoral victory and the three central dependent variables—diplomacy, crisis engagement, and the use of major force.

FIG A1. Diplomacy and the Popular Vote Margin



There is some structure in the data in Figure A1, but it adheres closely to issues that I have raised and controlled for. For example, it is apparent that early presidents travelled less than later ones—this is precisely the issue that the control for the advent of jet travel addresses. There could also be some concern that G.W. Bush or Johnson has an undue influence on the finding. However, the key insights from Table 1 hold when these presidents are excluded from the analysis.

FIG A2. Crisis Involvement and the Popular Vote Margin

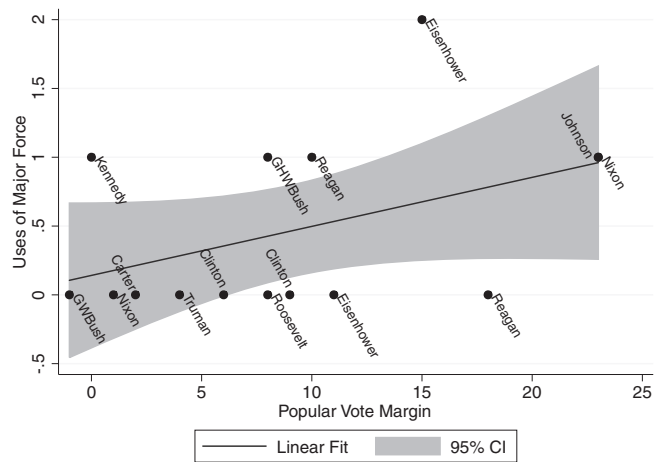
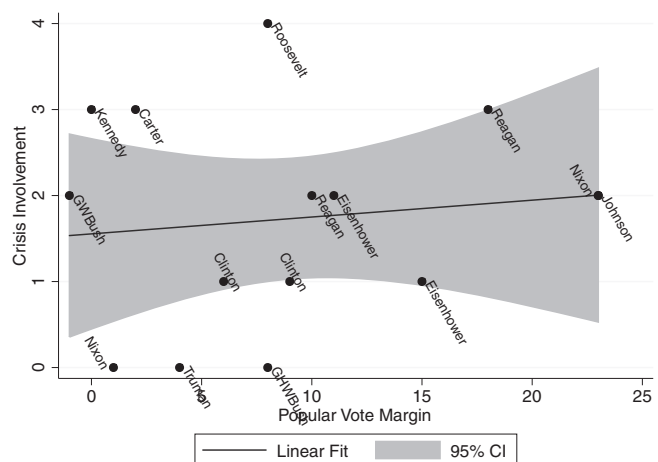


FIG A3. Use of Major Force and the Popular Vote Margin



The data in Figures A2 and A3 are less evenly distributed because crisis involvement and the use of force were relatively less frequent events. It is notable in itself that there were no quarters in which there were substantially more such engagements that could be driving the overall effect. It is also worth noting that the same presidents are not having the same effect across all measures. For example, where G.W. Bush seemed to possibly be driving the findings in favor of the hypothesis in Figure A1, the opposite seems to be the case in Figure A2. This implies that the attempt to bolster robustness by turning to multiple dependent measures is working as anticipated.

Fixed Effects

In order to alleviate any remaining concerns about the impact of individual presidents on the aggregate findings, Table A2 replicates the results using a time-series negative binomial model with presidential fixed effects. I leave out the *Party*, *Cold War* and *Jet* variables because they do not vary within presidency. Again, the core results hold, though, unsurprisingly, they are somewhat less statistically significant.

TABLE A2. Presidential Fixed Effects

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
	<i>Diplomacy</i>	<i>Crisis</i>	<i>Force</i>	<i>Force/Opp.</i>
	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$
Pop. lead	-0.010 (0.003)**	-0.010 (0.006) ⁺	0.020 (0.010) ⁺	0.092 (0.021)***
Seat swing	-0.825 (2.731)	-2.341 (1.075)*	-1.245 (2.741)	10.001 (2.365)***
Congress	8.487 (2.367)***	4.644 (2.437) ⁺	6.148 (5.403)	-0.378 (2.461)
Approval	0.011 (0.008)	0.035 (0.006)***	0.017 (0.024)	-0.002 (0.012)
Term	0.684 (0.139)***	0.302 (0.093)**	-0.615 (0.346) ⁺	0.179 (0.395)
Unemployment	-0.073 (0.087)	-0.110 (0.059) ⁺	0.441 (0.137)**	0.385 (0.121)**
CPI	0.056 (0.041)	0.113 (0.029)***	0.036 (0.034)	0.016 (0.030)
N	58	58	58	3,716

(Notes: ⁺*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

Estimates for Models 1–6 are maximum likelihood coefficients obtained from negative binomial models with a quarterly unit of analysis. Estimates for Models 7 and 8 are maximum likelihood coefficients obtained from logistic models with the opportunity for the use of force as the unit of analysis. Standard errors (clustered by president) in are parentheses. Constants are suppressed to conserve space.)

Erosion Parameters

In the primary analysis I multiply the margin of victory by a linear erosion parameter (time to the next election) in order to capture the idea that the effect of an election probably declines over time. However, the results are not reliant on this manipulation of the data. In Table A3, I replicate the key findings from Table 1 first with no erosion function (Models 1–3) and then with an exponential erosion function, e^{-x} (Models 4–6). The results are equivalent to those from Table 1.

TABLE A3. Alternate Erosion Functions

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>	<i>Model 8</i>
	<i>Diplomacy</i>	<i>Crisis</i>	<i>Force</i>	<i>Force/Opp.</i>	<i>Diplomacy</i>	<i>Crisis</i>	<i>Force</i>	<i>Force/Opp.</i>
	No erosion	No erosion	No erosion	No erosion	Quadratic	Quadratic	Quadratic	Quadratic
	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$
Pop. lead	-0.047 (0.004)***	-0.023 (0.013) ⁺	0.117 (0.041)**	0.077 (0.040) ⁺	-0.007 (0.000)***	-0.005 (0.002)**	0.013 (0.004)**	0.015 (0.005)**
Seat swing	-9.198 (2.620)***	-4.191 (1.810)*	-5.083 (5.982)	2.496 (3.442)	-9.238 (2.596)***	-4.024 (1.842)*	-3.588 (5.745)	3.281 (2.638)
Congress	-1.553 (1.133)	7.013 (1.980)***	3.166 (4.289)	9.512 (4.310)*	-1.641 (1.246)	7.291 (2.026)***	5.157 (4.019)	8.878 (4.065)*
Approval	-0.002 (0.012)	0.018 (0.014)	0.057 (0.021)**	0.044 (0.036)	-0.000 (0.013)	0.018 (0.013)	0.047 (0.017)**	0.037 (0.031)
Term	0.272 (0.175)	0.267 (0.126)*	-0.985 (0.868)	1.414 (0.467)**	0.282 (0.184)	0.324 (0.140)*	-0.695 (0.718)	1.131 (0.473)*

TABLE A3 (continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	Diplomacy	Crisis	Force	Force/Opp.	Diplomacy	Crisis	Force	Force/Opp.
	No erosion	No erosion	No erosion	No erosion	Quadratic	Quadratic	Quadratic	Quadratic
	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)?$
Party	0.036 (0.151)	0.750 (0.288)**	1.071 (0.593) ⁺	1.217 (0.796)	0.011 (0.163)	0.830 (0.315)**	1.469 (0.557)**	0.948 (0.750)
Unemployment	0.054 (0.065)	-0.141 (0.057)*	0.228 (0.109)*	0.284 (0.182)	0.050 (0.064)	-0.139 (0.057)*	0.221 (0.082)**	0.265 (0.144) ⁺
CPI	0.045 (0.051)	0.145 (0.048)**	0.025 (0.103)	-0.024 (0.013) ⁺	0.047 (0.051)	0.143 (0.046)**	0.010 (0.085)	-0.024 (0.012)*
Jet	0.499 (0.174)**	-	-	-	0.509 (0.190)**	-	-	-
Cold war	-	0.835 (0.240)***	0.623 (0.398)	-2.947 (1.893)	-	0.866 (0.252)***	0.737 (0.433) ⁺	-2.865 (1.782)
N	58	58	58	3,716	58	58	58	3,716

(Notes: ⁺< 0.10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

Estimates for Models 1–3 and 5–7 are maximum likelihood coefficients obtained from negative binomial models with a quarterly unit of analysis. Estimates for Models 4 and 8 are maximum likelihood coefficients obtained from logistic models with the opportunity for the use of force as the unit of analysis. Standard errors (clustered by president) in are parentheses. Constants are suppressed to conserve space.)

Seemingly Unrelated Regression

Given the argument that presidents are trading off between foreign policy options, it is possible that the error terms of the models on diplomacy, crisis intervention, and force could be correlated. In such a situation, estimating each equation separately ignores the information that comes from knowing that the error terms in the two equations are related (Zellner 1962). In such instances seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) can be used to estimate the equations jointly. I present SUR results in Table A4.²³

TABLE A4. Seemingly Unrelated Regression Analysis

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Diplomacy	Crisis	Force
	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$	$\beta/(SE)$
Pop. lead	-0.164 (0.046)***	-0.013 (0.007)*	0.013 (0.005)**
Seat swing	-66.752 (22.410)**	-4.903 (3.135)	0.760 (2.375)
Congress	-7.045 (19.683)	6.542 (2.911)*	0.631 (2.202)
Approval	-0.031 (0.098)	0.017 (0.015)	0.029 (0.011)*
Term	2.715 (2.195)	0.560 (0.309) ⁺	-0.119 (0.233)
Party	1.782 (3.385)	0.304 (0.491)	0.417 (0.371)
Unemployment	0.262 (0.615)	-0.171 (0.082)*	0.129 (0.062)*
CPI	-0.142 (0.391)	0.181 (0.053)***	0.002 (0.040)
Jet	7.543 (2.756)**		
Cold war		0.930 (0.364)*	0.067 (0.280)

(Notes: Two tailed tests: ⁺< 0.10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

N = 58 for all models. Table entries are coefficients obtained from seemingly unrelated regression analysis. The quarter is the unit of analysis. Standard errors are in parentheses.)

The core findings hold and the Breusch-Pagan test is significant, providing evidence for the substitution effect that I described in the theory section.

²³ I do not employ SUR as the primary analysis in the article because it is a modified OLS analysis, which is less appropriate for the count data that constitute the primary dependant variables.