Ministerial Instability in Parliamentary Democracies: Early Elections in England and Israel

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments \hspace{1cm} 3

Abstract \hspace{1cm} 4

Chapter One: Introduction and Consideration of Parliamentary Democracies \hspace{1cm} 5

Chapter Two: Methods, Measures, and Results \hspace{1cm} 24

Chapter Three: Majority Advantages: The Key to Securing Ministerial Stability \hspace{1cm} 37

Chapter Four: Why Foreign Policy Crises Do Not Lead to Ministerial Instability \hspace{1cm} 47

Chapter Five: Why Economic Indicators Fall Short in Predicting Ministerial Stability \hspace{1cm} 59

Chapter Six: Explaining the Arbitrariness of Ministerial Instability and Future Research \hspace{1cm} 68

References \hspace{1cm} 79

Appendix \hspace{1cm} 87
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Abstract

In parliamentary democracies, early elections can occur when a prime minister resigns, when a parliament dissolves, when there is a snap election, or when there is a vote of no confidence. Ministerial instability, defined throughout this thesis as a case of an early election, has long been assessed by the literature as a condition that emerges from party disagreements. Throughout this thesis, I examine the effect of exogenous shocks, specifically economic and foreign policy variables, on ministerial instability in England and Israel. While there was no stand-alone relationship revealed between ministerial instability and a foreign policy or economic crisis, a greater majority is linked to less political instability in cabinets overall. This finding has implications for the reforms that England and Israel could take to secure a more stable future in their parliaments. Through case studies on economic and foreign policy crises in England and Israel, I find that England is more insulated from exogenous shocks while Israel’s stability rests more securely on exogenous conditions. This difference likely exists because of the effect of foreign policy crises on Israel’s legitimacy as a nation, creating extreme volatility.
Chapter One

Introduction and Consideration on Parliamentary Democracies

Why do prime ministers of parliamentary democracies leave before a previously-scheduled election in their country occurs? Prime ministerial instability, or an unforeseen change in power, has become increasingly more common among parliamentary democracies, particularly in the last few years. In July 2022, for example, former Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid was forced to resign and call for new elections after his parliamentary coalition fell apart after less than six months. Even more abruptly, British Prime Minister Liz Truss resigned because of immense internal-party pressure after just 44 days in office (Holmes, 2021; Meredith, 2022). Ministerial shifts among prime ministers in parliamentary democracies are common, and as such, the resulting elections after such shifts are common as well. As of 2022, for example, Israelis have gone to the polls five times in the past three and a half years. This election exhaustion, critics claim, will lessen voter participation, and has the potential to lead to less trust and efficacy in parliamentary democracies overall (Topor, 2022). Even after multiple elections, however, prime ministers can reclaim power and stir up an enthusiastic voter base. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for example, has been prime minister for over twelve collective years and has played a role in six different elections.

Political scientists have mainly deemed the issue of leadership instability as being an indicator of political problems. These political problems, which are often attributed to internal reasons, ultimately lead to a ministerial shift out of power. This change in power, Rotberg (2021) argues, is the culmination of a unified frustration, either from other political leaders or of the country’s population. In fact, the fall or significant political upheaval of most historical governments, like the German Weimar Republic and the French Republic, has mostly been
attributed to fragmented parliaments and unstable leadership (Carozzi, Cipullo, & Repetto, 2020).

However, the study of potential relationships between the effects of external factors on ministerial instability—rather than internal problems within the parliamentary system—has been not as frequently examined in the literature. Furthermore, most literature on parliamentary instability focuses solely on parliament termination as an indicator of political instability (Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008). However, as will be shown in subsequent sections, instability can present without a new change in power, like through successful snap elections. Because of this nuance, the literature on parliamentary coalitions and fragmentation would benefit from an expansion in analysis that considers parliamentary strife more broadly.

As such, this paper poses the following questions: Why does ministerial instability occur in parliamentary democracies? Are there internal or external economic or military factors that contribute to the likelihood of an early election being called? This thesis examines potential economic and foreign policy crises during which there are shifts in ministerial power or when there are unscheduled early elections called, both within Israel and England. This exploratory analysis focuses on the potential implications of “ministerial instability”, defined as instances of snap elections, the resignation of a Prime Minister, parliament dissolution, or a successful (passed) motion of no confidence. The thesis then transitions to case selections in England and Israel’s history—both times in which ministerial instability can be explained with a crisis and in times when the instability stems from an additional factor.

*Historical Background*

Historically, Israel and England’s parliamentary systems are similar. After all, Israel has based most of its governmental structure on England after the British Mandate (Topor, 2022).
However, both countries differ in their specific electoral processes, despite both countries being parliamentary democracies. As Hanna and Abraham Diskin write, Israel is seen as a “pure” electoral system through their usage of “a rather extreme proportional representation allocation formula; and a closed list ballot” (1995, p. 31). Indeed, Israel has never had a consistent majority party without creating coalitions with other parties (Diskin & Diskin, 1995, p. 33). England, on the other hand, has a two-party parliamentary system, which has long been hallmarked as one of the most efficient and stable parliamentary democracies. Despite the differences between both nations’ political systems, both populations have similar voting turnouts of 70.5% and 67.3% in Israel and England, respectively (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2023). In this way, both nations have similar parliamentary structures and share similar levels of democratic enthusiasm and buy-in from their citizens.

Of course, it would be remiss to conduct a comparison between the two nations without an acknowledgment of the role of religion in political decisions. One noticeable difference is the role of religion in both countries: England is officially a Christian parliamentary democracy whereas Israel is a (and the only) Jewish democratic nation. In an analysis of the 1977-1990 electoral period in Israel, Diskin and Diskin (1995) point out that rarely—both in this period and the general history of Israel—are coalitions won without some sort of religious coalition, whether it be a far-right Orthodox Party or a far-left anti-religious party. England, on the other hand, while having distinct tie-ins with Christianity, rarely has extensive political battles entrenched in religious beliefs. While this religious difference may seem superficial, Bloom, Arikan, and Vishkin (2021) point out that Israel routinely has conflict, both internally and externally that ensues because of the nation’s religious affiliation: Internal factions split over the role of religion in the country and the economic aid that should be given to the religious
population; there is constant religious tension within the country between Israeli-Jews, Arab-Israelis, and Palestinians; and there is persistent foreign policy tension among Israel and countries who ban Jews from entering their country.

As such, examining differences in where political instability rises between two countries with similar parliamentary systems is crucial to discovering the core causes of political strife. Furthermore, the study of potential internal and external reasons why a parliament may dissolve would allow members of the government to predict future political instability and shed a light on the true political priorities of members of parliament. Ultimately, this paper aims to consider whether ministerial instability is linked to specific economic or military factors, or if instability is idiosyncratic.

**Ministerial Instability: How do Democracies Collapse?**

During each Prime Minister’s term and new shift of power, there are three cyclical phases: cabinet formation, governance, and termination (Strom, 2008; Baron, Diermeier, & Fong, 2012). At the end of each term limit (England’s term limit is five years; Israel’s term limit is four years), there are elections for the next prime minister (UK Parliament, 2022; Knesset, 2022). While there are limits to when elections must be called, neither England nor Israel have a maximum number of times that a prime minister can be re-elected. Each country has its independent term limits and differences in internal political workings; however, both are by-in-large similar in parliamentary structure.

These phases, in other words, represent a “life cycle” that every government goes through. When a new government takes power, there is almost always an initial success period where a coalition is unified and can pass agenda items with ease (Strom, 2008). However, between this success period within the governance and termination phases—assuming that the
termination is not due to a normal term limit—there is some political disruption that leads to a coalition ultimately fracturing. The flexibility in life cycle outcome and duration depends on the priorities of the parliament; if coalition members feel as if their party is not represented accurately within the prime minister’s policies, the life cycle could end more quickly as the coalition falls apart.

For this reason, at the heart of each of these phases in the parliamentary system is bargaining—among citizens as to why the leader should be elected, among the leader’s party, and among the wider elected body when the policy is created (Diermeir & Merlo, 1998; Strom, 2008). If a government has a majority of seats, reshuffles in coalitions can happen without necessitating parliamentary or ministerial shifts. While the prime minister is the most prominent cabinet member in the system, the prime minister ultimately reflects a collective body. As a coalition is attempted, concessions within the prime minister’s party often happen within cabinet selection (Bucur, 2019). However, when bargaining, both among the coalition and among the rest of the parliament, is not possible, the term length and efficacy of the prime minister are threatened. Therefore, due to a lack of efficacy in the governance stage, the life cycle of a particular prime minister and cabinet could end.

Within parliamentary democracies, there are two main oversight mechanisms employed to keep coalition unity, one which functions at the ministerial level and the other which functions at the parliamentary level (Bäck, Muller, Strobl, et al., 2021). The Prime Minister strategically selects a cabinet, which is often bargained by members of the coalition for ministerial positions. This ministerial compromise, in some ways, helps to mitigate the frequency of elections, as most of the laws are theoretically representative of the parliament and coalition. Models of ministerial instability inherently assume that people are rational and want to anticipate potential strife in
political systems (Goldstone et al., 2010). With this assumption, prime ministers would want to maximize political survival and coalition compromise by choosing a broad and diverse cabinet. For example, Martin and Vanberg (2020) contend that most coalition compromise occurs in the parliament, where the policies are more likely to be scrutinized with media attention—rather than in private during the cabinet-level discussions of policy. In other words, the parliament, rather than the cabinet members, are more likely to represent the politics of their coalition.

Amendments to ministerial policies represent the second level of oversight mechanisms: A parliamentary mechanism (Bäck et al., 2021). If a Prime Minister chooses a narrow, but more politically aligned base, then most compromises come after the parliament is formed. This mechanism allows parliamentary members to correct amendments and vote according to their coalition. Both mechanisms are commonly employed strategies by parliamentary democracies—first bargaining for a representative ministerial base followed by bargaining for specific policies that suit the parliament. In tandem, they help to ensure accountability in representing the coalition they are elected on behalf of.

If a prime minister is certain that her collective body, or coalition, is no longer loyal in party support—or if the coalition does not think the prime minister is still accurately representing the goals of the coalition, an early election could be called. These early elections occur in the wake of government instability, which happens for a variety of reasons: A snap election, a motion of no confidence being passed, a resignation by a prime minister, or the dissolution of the parliament. However, when there is an early election called for one of these reasons, there is not necessarily a shift in ministerial power. Rather, if the prime minister and government survive a snap election, for example, they remain in power.
Notably, however, while early elections are called during a snap election, a passed motion of no confidence, a dissolver of parliament, or a resignation of a prime minister does not always lead to an early election. Instead, the figurehead—which in the case of Israel is the President and in the case of England is the Monarch—appoints the next person in the party, who attempts to form a coalition. If they can succeed, a new election is not called. Even if the selected incumbent leader does not achieve a majority coalition, they remain in power as a minority government, until the next election is called. Regardless of if there ends up being a shift in leader power, an early election can signal that there is some sort of problem within the coalition or cabinet unity. All of these ways of termination or termination within the parliamentary democracy signal this downturn of bargaining power, thus ending the life cycle of a particular government.

*Why Early Elections and Ministerial Instability Occurs: Snap Elections, Votes of No Confidence, Parliament Dissolution, and Resignation*

One of the main reasons that an early election may happen is a snap election or an election that is conducted earlier than expected. Former British Prime Minister Theresa May announced snap elections in 2017 to try to seize what her party anticipated, would consolidate her power, and secure her term (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2022). This strategy, while unsuccessful for Prime Minister May, is commonly employed among prime ministers when they do not believe they will win at the time of a normally scheduled election. Often, this strategy is employed among political instability and falling popularity—a sign of a beginning cyclical termination stage of a parliamentary democracy—and attempts to reverse it. Strom (2008) finds that snap elections are more likely to be called in minority governments, likely because of the government’s falling popularity and looming shortened life cycle. While often successful, snap
elections lead to less democratic satisfaction by citizens in the respective country and less trust for their leader overall (Morgan-Jones & Loveless, 2021). Therefore, while prime ministers often use snap elections to gain or consolidate personal or party-political power, the usage of such has negative effects on democratic trust.

Notably, there are some circumstances in which power changes happen and a resulting snap election is not called. For one, if a party in the coalition is against a snap election, despite the Prime Minister’s desire to have one, they can outright block or lobby against calling an early election (Strom, 2008, p. 541). In addition, if a prime minister resigns or retires for a non-political reason, an early election is not called. Instead, the next premiership is selected by the Monarch or President in power and given a chance to form a coalition, which almost always happens if the former prime minister resigned for health reasons. However, if the former prime minister left office because of a political scandal, elections are called.

At any point during a cabinet member’s term, members of parliament can file what is known as a vote (or motion) of no confidence. While a minister could simply resign, if the prime minister is given a “vote of no confidence”, the entire coalition dissolves. In 1990, through an attempt to decrease the amount of governmental instability that comes from calling for reelection, Israel adopted the “constructive vote of confidence” (Topor, 2021, p. 211). The constructive vote of confidence works similarly to a standard no-confidence vote but only allows for the motion to be filed when a successor can win the proper number of votes to form a coalition (Rubabshi-Shitrit & Hasson, 2022; Topor, 2021). While this is mandated in Israel, it is only encouraged in England. While a motion of no confidence remains one of the clearest ways that a parliament can indicate distrust in a Prime Minister’s leadership, they rarely lead to termination—only about 5% of the time (Popping & Wittek, 2015). In fact, Israel, which has had
several motions of no confidence, has only had one case where there was a vote of no confidence that actually passed (1990). Despite the low rate of termination, motions of no confidence carry significant weight in indicating that there is coalition-trouble, or that a prime minister’s power is being questioned.

While the parliament holds a central role in ensuring policies are coalition-centric because of its oversight mechanism, it also holds a central role in passing a vote of no confidence. There are three main pathways in what happens after a motion is filed. In one scenario, the motion is passed, and the Prime Minister recommends to the President to dissolve the parliament (Lento & Hazan, 2021). As a result, there are a new set of elections that follow shortly after. In the second scenario, the motion of confidence is passed but a coalition is formed quickly, without necessitating the resignation of a prime minister. The third potential result after a motion of no confidence—which is the most common—is government resignation. Even if a Prime Minister survives a vote of no confidence, even if it is by slim margins, their ability to pass Parliamentary legislation crumbles. While frustrating for the prime minister, this secondary mechanism enforces the ideals of a successful parliamentary democracy: A premiership that accurately represents its coalition. These all serve as checks and balances to ensure that the legislative majority approves of the cabinet.

Even if a vote of no confidence is not passed, nor is a snap election called, two other mechanisms can lead to full government collapse—or at the very least, signal instability within leadership. One of these mechanisms is the dissolution of parliament or the official term end of a parliament. While all parliaments automatically dissolve after it is time for the next round of general elections, they can be dissolved by the President or Monarch for Israel and England,
respectively. These dissolutions are normally the result of advice being given by the prime minister, in times of unrest.

As shown throughout this section, whether it be through a failed snap election, ahead of parliament’s plan to file a motion of confidence or overall unrest in the country, the final and most straightforward way that can lead to a leadership switch, and thus, ministerial instability, is through resignation. While resignations might be seen by the public as a sign of a failed leader, through the lens of defining ministerial instability, a prime ministerial resignation could be a combination of economic, military, or internal instability—all of which necessitates, or forces, a new leader to take office.

Why Ministerial Instability Matters

It may seem intuitive that switches in the role of Prime Minister result in instability. Indeed, governmental collapse and instability cause political turmoil (Rotberg, 2016). The mechanism that connects prime ministerial instability with overall governmental is a strong one and is the basis for the paper’s objective: To discover any factors that predict instability externally, which would then be reflected by instability in leadership.

However, the literature suggests that transitions of ministerial power can actually help to drive political, economic, and social change within domestic and international policy. Domestically, in a parliamentary democracy, where a term limit is not guaranteed, a power shift allows new actors and new ideas to flow into positions of power (Coleman & Skogstad, 1990; Shearer, Abelson, Kouyaté, Lavis, & Walt, 2016). In times of lulled growth or a stalled economy, new leadership often provides markets and institutions the boost they need to re-visit old policies, bring in new political voices, and consider reform. Internationally, a transition of
power, whether a full governmental collapse or a pre-scheduled ministerial shift, can alter major global relationships.

Despite positive potential progress in government leadership switches, frequent government collapse has a long history of leading to economic instability. The new economic policies, spurred by new leadership, create internal instability and volatility (Aisen & Veiga, 2010). Increases in political instability correlate with higher inflation, which has the potential to create cyclically higher inflation and interest rates if public opinion and perceptions are not managed (Alesina & Perotti, 1996). Just as government collapse subsequent ministerial shifts in power have strong potential for positive change, government instability often leads to these cyclical patterns of unresolved internal and external strife.

In many ways, governments market prime ministerial shifts as an assurance to citizens that a shift in leadership will help stabilize politics in times of domestic or international strife. However, this assurance is faulty: As more ministerial shifts occur in Israel, the more polarized the government becomes overall, which only leads to more shifts in leadership (Rahat & Hazan, 2005). While the parliamentary electoral system is often lauded for being a highly “democratic system”, Topor (2021) cautions against this optimistic position. Instead, he notes the case of Israel, where there is ongoing tension and instability in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. These frequent switches of leadership, he argues, prevent real headway from being made on the issue, as negotiations are not consistent nor productive among quick switches in leadership (Topor, 2021, p. 209).

What Mechanisms Could Be Tied to Instability?

As foreshadowed by the literature within the field of instability in parliamentary democracies, there are three main reasons why parliamentary democracies may collapse:
domestic economic issues, foreign policy setbacks, and internal parliamentary dynamics. This section lays out how each of these core issues could potentially lead to ministerial instability and the end of a life cycle of a prime minister.

Political scientists have been generally conflicted in examining the direct link between economic indicators and popularity within the government, specifically in England. Whereas Goodhart and Bhansali (1970), as well as Miller and Mackie (1973, p. 279), determined that popularity and economic indicators—specifically unemployment and GDP changes—did not correlate to popularity in the British government, Frey and Schneider (1978, p. 246) found that economic indicators influenced subsequent governments’ popularity. Beck (1990) attempts to explain these differences in results, noting that political scientists that have uncovered an economic link to popularity tend to have datasets spanning since the end of World War II—thus making the data and results more comprehensive. Notably, however, Beck’s analysis of the accuracy of the link between popularity and economic variables has only been updated since 1990—since when, of course, there have been many economic crises in England. General popularity is linked to the decisions that parliament members make, including strategic electoral decisions, like filing a motion of no confidence. Accordingly, further uncovering whether economic indicators are linked to government popularity helps to clarify what factors lead to ministerial stability overall.

As aforementioned, one of the main attributable causes of higher inflation and economic instability overall is leadership changes as uncertainty in markets rises (Aisen & Veiga, 2010). However, the causal relationship between economic and ministerial instability could function the other way: If there are foreign policy crises that cause economic instability, like an oil spill or involvement in a war, this instability could then trickle down to less unified politics in a nation,
furthering instability. By this logic, voters who value economic prosperity over other core agenda items would presumably be unhappier with higher rates of domestic inflation and interest rates—thus putting pressure on their parliament members to hold the main leadership (ultimately, the Prime Minister) accountable. However, if a prime minister does try to stabilize the government through an austerity measure, she could be alienated by her working-class base, only leading to more ministerial instability. This political pressure, as spurred through unhappiness by voters and parliamentary members alike, is a common force by which coalitions fall apart. Forced to choose between potential re-election and parliamentary unity; many parliament members may choose to listen to their constituents or party over their coalition, thus leading to a coalitional schism.

Another key mechanism by which instability within a parliament or cabinet can rise is through foreign policy setbacks. Foreign policy setbacks, including military crises, war, and other situations where a disproportionate number of resources is expended, almost always splits the parliament about controversial issues. One of the main explanations for this rise in instability is a lack of parliamentary control: In Westminster systems like England and Israel, cabinets do not need to consult with parliaments before deploying troops or intervening in foreign policy processes (Lagassé & Mello, 2018). Furthermore, war and other foreign policy instability often act as a trigger for economic or social unrest (Goldstone et al., 2010). Yet again, pressure through dealing with these agenda items forces divides within the parliament. However, in response to these internal or external crises, the parliament could also be united. This nuance is crucial in considering this base of literature and analysis: While crises can always lead to instability, the structure and priorities of a particular country can determine whether these specific events rally a party or a nation and lead to a unified front—even if temporary.
Chowanietz (2019) finds that rallying around the flag is the default for countries in situations involving repetitive acts of terror and large numbers of fatalities. However, Balcells and Torrats-Espinosa (2018) find that rallying in the face of terrorism does not guarantee a united government—rather the rallying is in terms of democratic participation. In other words, political instability encourages citizens to vote more, which could either draw unite people behind a cause or could cause more internal instability overall.

As most literature contends, in addition to external economic and political instability, ministerial instability could also be reasoned by the inner workings of how prime ministers were elected, and by what margins they won by. For example, if a prime minister had a particularly strong electoral victory and parliamentary majority, their term length may be longer and less contested overall (Huber, 2021). However, Huber and Martinez-Gallardo (2008) found no relationship directly between term length and chances of cabinet survival. In other words, while other ministerial factors, like popularity, could factor into how long terms last, the duration itself is not an indicator of ministerial instability. As such, there is no universal length that predicts if ministers can stay in office for a certain amount of time, they will stay there until the next election.

To explain how prime ministers get to the position of being able to bargain in the first place, many academics have relied on game theory to predict government structure and ultimately, ministerial instability. In fact, game theory is central to the formation of parliamentary coalitions as party leaders sort which policy items are non-negotiables and which could be given up for a chance for power (Fountas, Kampisioulis, & Drakatos, 2012). As early as the 1940s, Von Neumann and Morgenstern coined coalition theory: The prediction that a coalition would only have as many parties as necessary because winners of the coalition would
only want to share the cabinet positions and power with as few parties as possible (p. 290). Although this theory has been debated, this way of thinking about cabinet formation marked a shift from previous thinking in the field, which assumed that governments would want to collect as many seats as possible in their government.

Scholars describe the tradeoffs within government formation itself: A prime minister must decide if she wants a single-party majority coalition with cabinet stability or if she wants a more proportional system, which may be more unstable but is inherently more representative of the people (Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2003). While a single-party system seems to be the more logical choice, scholars in the field are quick to point out that while these systems might have more cabinet stability at the onset, a foreign policy issue could deeply divide the country, leading to immediate elections. In their quantitative analysis, Huber and Martinez-Gallardo (2003) found that coalition governments that truly represented the heterogeneity of a nation were much less likely to be replaced than governments with one cabinet. As such, the strategy of electing but also keeping a coalition strong have a large influence on ministerial instability.

Within these models, the independent variables are different configurations of the same variables: utility of policy, office-holding benefits, and positional power. The dependent variables in the models, on the other hand, are in bargaining success and power. Ultimately, the models agree that if there are enough incentives or payoffs given to a member of the government, most officials will concede to a policy initiative (Baron, Diermeier, & Fong, 2012; Fountas et al., 2012). While there are differences in the amount, or the strategy, in incentives offered and accepted, the consensus among scholars is that all officials have a point at which they will concede a policy initiative, or even a party, for something in return.
These incentives are commonly negotiated through bargaining, another main power ability of a prime minister. As shown earlier in the paper with bargaining, as soon as the prime minister cannot offer proper incentives any longer, their power and efficacy wane, normally predicting ministerial instability overall. Admittedly, not all theorists support the hypothesis that there is a link between external factors and ministerial instability: Goldstone et al. (2010) find that internal political instability is one of the most common predictors of ministerial instability—rather than economic instability. In other words, they find that no external factors play a role in potential switches in power. As such, some forms of modeling do not agree that potential economic instability or other factors could form a power breakdown. However, Goldstone, Bates, Epstein, et al. (2010) concede that their quantitative explanations of ministerial instability could be missing outliers in foreign policy events, which would raise a reasonable doubt that all ministerial instability is a result of only internal political factors.

In addition to game theory models emphasizing the critical importance of bargaining for prime ministers in coalitions, game theory is successful in showing ways in which crises could hurt or even help prime ministers. For example, utility in power would increase during an economic crisis in a country that values economic gain, which would boost positional power. While game theory certainly has benefits in explaining ministerial instability, ultimately the theory assumes that leaders always make rational choices and that there aren't any potential external factors outside of bargaining and power to take into consideration. On the other hand, however, prime ministers could have vastly different political priorities—whereas one prime minister might compromise on her economic agenda to secure an election for the next term, another prime minister may still try to actively prioritize economic reform, even if she ultimately loses the subsequent election (Huber & Lupia, 2001). Furthermore, a crisis itself, whether it be
domestic or international, could reveal something not rational in ministerial transition—if for example, an economic crisis strengthened a prime minister’s rule.

Ultimately, whether or not a prime minister or voters are rational, the literature must consider the role of factors outside of political strategy. Game theory assumes certain preferences, both within leaders and with the citizens of a nation. However, as the life cycle of a parliamentary democracy occurs and initial popularity wanes, the priorities and preferences of the public and the cabinet alike could change. Considering this potential difference in rationality between prime ministers is important in advancing the collective understanding of ministerial instability: If there is even some possibility of variation among the outcomes of ministerial instability in the models, there could be external factors that play at least some role within ministerial instability as well.

How Will this Study Address Ministerial Instability?

In subsequent chapters, I will empirically test when ministerial instability appears and what factors ministerial instability may correlate to, specifically considering economic, foreign policy, and structural factors. This section of the paper will create and model a data set that shows every point of “ministerial instability” both in England and in Israel since 1945 and 1949, respectively, as well as economic and foreign policy conditions at these points. Beyond having similar parliamentary structures, as aforementioned, a direct comparison between England and Israel shows the nature of instability in two democratic nations with notably very different foreign policy and domestic dynamics.

Additionally, whereas Israel could be seen as a relatively new country towards the parliamentary system altogether, England is seen more as a parent of the regime type (Rotberg, 2013). Even so, Israel has evolved through more structural iterations of the system—including
the adoption of the constructive vote of confidence. The comparison of these countries could reveal potential differences in where ministerial instability occurs, thus revealing the dynamics of newer and older countries, the role of geopolitics, and internal identity politics in a nation’s instability of a nation.

To construct each point of ministerial instability within both countries, I build from and refine the dataset “ParlGov”, which compiles election and cabinet data (Döring, Huber, & Manow, 2022). Specifically, I add measures of economic and foreign policy crises to each moment of ministerial instability, which will allow comparisons in variation within and across factors. These analyses will allow a systematic look at potential mechanisms linked to ministerial instability—as well as a deeper understanding, as a result, of parliamentary priorities in each country. After these quantitative analyses, I will compare case studies in both Israel and England where ministerial instability was and was not affected by internal and external economic and foreign policy-based factors.

Predictions

Ultimately, I predict that there will be more ministerial instability in years with worse economic outcomes and more foreign policy crises. Due to Israel’s precarious geopolitical location, I expect the country to have less ministerial instability in times of foreign crises because the parliament and cabinet will have to come together for survival. Concurrently, I expect Israel to have more ministerial instability in times of domestic economic instability because of underlying domestic issues, like welfare, that often serve a major political role in the formation of coalitions within the country. However, unlike Israel, which might be more inclined to show a united front in foreign crises, I predict that England will be more likely to have ministerial stability in times of economic crisis. This would allow England to continue to project stability as
one of the world’s economic powerhouses. Under this assumption, England will show more instances of ministerial instability in cases of foreign policy-based crises. The study of these hypotheses, under the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted in subsequent chapters, helps to consider the study of ministerial instability as being influenced by factors other than solely internal politics.
Chapter Two

Methods, Measures, and Results

Methods

To determine if any factors lead to ministerial instability within Israel and England, whether it be signaled by a resignation, a snap election, a vote of no confidence, or a parliament dissolving, I employ three sets of variables: economic variables, foreign policy variables, and internal variables. England and Israel’s datasets examine the internal and external stability of each nation through economic and foreign policy lenses at every period of ministerial instability since 1942 and 1949, respectively. I then use these results to process trace cases of instability in both countries.

Early Election

The measure of early elections was collected and developed using ParlGov, a dataset constructed by German researchers Döring, Holger, Huber, and Manow (2022). While only a relatively new dataset, Döring et al. (2022) have uniquely compiled numerous election data in each parliamentary democracy, including information about each election, the parties involved, and cabinet type. Based on the ParlGov dataset and with the help of the Knesset and the UK Parliament Websites, I constructed three main election variables per year.

Based on research into mechanisms of government that lead to ministerial instability (see Chapter 1), I employ the variable of “early election” to encompass different causes of government collapse or signs of instability within a parliamentary democracy—snap elections, the resignation of a Prime Minister, parliament dissolution, or a successful (passed) motion of no confidence. Notably, cases in which the Prime Minister retired, died, or had medical complications were not counted as early elections because there was no ministerial instability
that led to the change of power. The construct of “early election” is ordinal; a zero indicates that there was no early election while a one indicates that there was at least one early election in the year. Furthermore, the sub-variables of vote of no confidence, resignation, snap election, and parliament dissolves were created to track the specific mechanism that caused the early election in a year. These sub-variables were marked to see if there are relationships between instability and a specific type of early election more than another.

While the dataset by Döring et al. (2022) is certainly extremely valuable, it is worth noting particular gaps in the dataset. Particularly, the vote of no-confidence variable in the ParlGov dataset is indicated by the researchers as solely experimental. I constructed my own variable of ministerial instability by tracking the mechanisms by which early elections occurred (Knesset Website, 2023; House of Commons Website, 2023; House of Lords Website, 2023). In instances where there was a vote of no confidence (VNC) that did not pass, coupled with resignation or another form of ministerial instability, both VNC and resignation were indicated on the datasheet. I am agnostic as to whether a VNC actually passed in the statistical analysis because regardless, a VNC being filed indicates signs of instability if it led to an election through any other mechanism.

The variable “Election Year” measures every year there was an election in the given country, including both early elections and normally scheduled elections. Measurements for this variable are ordinal, ranging from (0) no election occurred in the year to (1) at least one election occurred in this year. This variable was included because preliminary research by Huber and Lupia (2001) suggests that any time there is an election, there are some levels of economic instability and strategy that emerge.

*Internal Ministerial Variables*
To see if there are internal factors that predispose a government or cabinet to ministerial instability through early elections, I included a few key variables in the dataset. Much like the early election variables, the internal ministerial variables were based on data from the ParlGov (2022) datasheet.

The first variable (“Left_Right”) included was the left or right political leaning of the party. This variable was included because of previous research by Aisen and Veiga (2010) that indicated that left-leaning parties were more likely to have economic controls. The measure is ranked on a 10-point scale (0 = conservative, 10 = liberal). As indicated by Doring (2022), the variables were aggregated based on four bodies of literature that began creating categories of what would define a left or right government (Castles & Mair, 1983; Huber & Inglehart, 1995; Benoit & Laver, 2006; CHES, 2010). Instances of missing data in the “left_right” variable were constructed through single imputations based on averages of the overall party.

The second internal variable (“Majority Seats/Total Seats”) was constructed based on election results, as recorded by the ParlGov Dataset. This dataset seeks to explore whether coalitions that were won by a larger majority are protected from having an early election than coalitions that were won by a smaller majority. The third internal variable is the “Time (in Months)” variable. This variable addresses the research conducted by Huber and Martinez-Gallardo (2008), who found no link between the time remaining in office and the chances of cabinet survival. This variable is being included as a control, so it may be removed during interaction analyses. Furthermore, however, if there indeed is this intuitive link between cabinet stability and the length of a cabinet, then strategies of how to keep a cabinet in power with the understanding that it would become more stable over time, would be imperative.

Economic Variables
As indicated by past literature that high inflation or overall economic downfalls could put pressure on parliamentary members to enact legislation to remove prime ministers from power, economic variables overall are crucial to understanding how ministerial instability may form. For all of these variables, great effort has been made to standardize the economic variables within each country, considering that few variables had a full set of data from the 1940s.

One of these main variables to measure such economic stability is the GDP of both Israel and England. This data has been gathered by the World Bank, which offers data from 1960s-present. To standardize this data further, both within and between the country datasets, the GDP growth rate has been added by recoding the variable. Furthermore, the increased inflation rate per year has been added as a standardization of inflation. Other measures of economic stability within nations that have been added are the unemployment rate of each nation per year as well as the inflation rate and the foreign direct investment net flows (% of GDP).

Military Variables

The final set of variables to test ministerial instability against are military variables, specifically measures that allow comparisons across foreign policy involvement in coalitions. Specifically, the construct of the “number of crises” was recorded per year in each country using the International Crisis Behavior Dataset (ICB) (Duke, 2022). While there are several measures for political crises, the International Crisis Behavior Project is a widely used and comprehensive dataset that tracks all “crises”, ranging from wars to mobilizations of colonial powers. The dataset also offers a summary of each crisis and all of the nations involved in each, which helps to show the extent of the involvement of England and Israel in each crisis. Duke (2022) notes that by far, the most common “crisis” type is interstate military-security crises. This analysis would reveal relationships between a crisis happening, and then ministerial instability ensuing.
To account for this discrepancy, the constructed dataset for this thesis offsets the crisis by one year because the literature-based hypothesis for this research would assume one-way causality (a crisis triggers ministerial instability). This data has been coded ordinally as (0) *no crisis occurred in the year before* or (1) *at least one crisis occurred in the year before*. As an example, the Six-Day War occurred in Israel in 1967. The crisis, which involved Israel, Jordan, Egypt, the United States, Syria, and the once-Soviet Union, was a protracted conflict. Because literature surrounding foreign policy and instability predicts that a foreign policy crisis in 1967 would lead to future ministerial instability, the Six Day War has been coded as “1” into 1967.

“Military expenditure”—which would shed light on potential conflicts abroad and thus lead to potential ministerial instability, has been calculated using the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database. The database has been calculated using market exchange rates to convert spending into US dollars per year. Using this data, I calculated the “military increase percentage in the past year”. This additional variable aims to measure if significant changes in expenditure are linked to ministerial instability.

*Results*

To maximize both data quantity and relevance of conclusions, Israel’s dataset began in the year of its founding in 1949 while England’s dataset began in the year of 1945, after World War II, which marked a new era of using parliamentary democratic stability to cement a nation. The year 2022 and 2023 were excluded from the calculations because of insufficiently collected economic and military data. Furthermore, the variables “Early Election” and “Crisis in Year” have each been recoded from (0) *no crisis or early election* and (1) *early election or crisis* to (1) *no crisis or early election* and (2) *early election or crisis* in that year. These recoded variables allow for a differentiation between values and missing data in SPSS, which helps to clarify and
solidify the analysis. All of the analyses account for the probability of an early election, taking into consideration internal factors and variables.

Using every year as the unit of analysis in the calculations, there were 79 data points in the Israel dataset, and 86 data points in the England dataset. Of these data points, I identified only 13 years and 11 years in Israel and England, respectively, that met the criteria of ministerial instability (an early election caused by a parliament’s dissolution, the resignation of a Prime Minister, a snap election, or a vote of no confidence) within a nation.

This results section will begin with an overview of ministerial instability overall, before transitioning to the relationships noted in England’s and Israel’s data. As an exploratory analysis, the section will then conclude with relationships noted across the country when both England and Israel’s datasets are combined.

*Overall Results in England and in Israel*

Israel experienced the most ministerial instability in the thirty years following the nation’s founding (until 1970) and in the last ten years. Overall, however, instability is more permeable in Israel and is not clustered. England, on the other hand, experienced ministerial instability more in clusters throughout time, and has specifically experienced a rise of instability in the last ten years like Israel.

Israel’s most common way of ending a coalition was through parliament dissolution. England’s most common form of governance to signal instability is through snap elections—wherein the Prime Minister calls an early election to try to (unsuccessfully) keep support while they can before their previously scheduled election. From a policy perspective, this indicates that in Israel, the Knesset members themselves are more likely to be the reason why ministerial instability is triggered: the Prime Minister is not able to get anything done and therefore
dissolves the parliament. In England, on the other hand, the Prime Minister is more likely to be in control of how ministerial instability is formed through securing election power.

Because there were limited case studies in which there were instances of early elections, very little of the data is statistically significant. However, there are some important relationships and conclusions that can be drawn in considering how instability forms in parliamentary democracies broadly. Overall, there was no correlation between foreign policy crises and instances of ministerial instability in either nation. Importantly, despite the fundamental differences between both countries, both nations had similar patterns of foreign policy crises and ministerial instability to each other. These relationships are noted in the figures below. A more specific breakdown (by decade) of ministerial instability and foreign policy crises is shown in the appendix (Figure 5 and Figure 6). As shown in the aforementioned figures, Israel has a less visibly aligned pattern with ministerial instability and foreign policy crises per decade, whereas England’s ministerial instability and foreign policy crises follow a more similar pattern. There were also no major correlations between economic crises and ministerial instability overall between either nation.

Figure 1: Israel’s Foreign Policy Crises and Ministerial Instability

Figure 2: England’s Foreign Policy Crises and Ministerial Instability
England

**Relations Among Variables**

To examine the relationship among England’s early elections, monetary variables, and political variables, a binary logistic regression was run. Notably, the selection of factors for the model together accounts for 19% of the variability (Nagelkerke $r^2 = 19.3$) in whether a country had an early election each year. Among the variables, the margins by which a cabinet won in an election accounted for a high statistically significant variance in determining whether England was to also have an early election in that year ($B=-17.31$, Wald=2.70).

To see if any variables in the model are collinear, which could potentially mask the statistical significance of a single factor that contributes, correlations among all of the variables were examined. Notably, not consistent with the hypothesis, there were no significant relationships between the Early Election variable and any of the economic or foreign policy variables (Table 1). There were some statistically significant findings among the economic and foreign policy variables, like a strong statistically significant relationship between military expenditure and inflation, ($r=.80$, $p<.001$). These relationships will not be explored because they are not directly related to changes in ministerial instability in a nation overall.

**Table 1: Correlations among Foreign Policy Variables, Economic Variables, and Ministerial Instability in England**
However, the variable measuring the degree to which a cabinet wins a majority of seats had a moderate statistically significant correlation with the early election variable, which was negative ($r = -.25, p = .05$). Figure 3 illustrates this relationship. This correlation was consistent with the finding of the binary logistic regression, which also indicated that most seats accounted for the most variability in determining if England would have an early election in a given year. Despite significant amounts of collinearity between the variables military spending, foreign direct investment, and inflation, there were no alternative correlations revealed with early elections.

Figure 3: Majority of Seats with Probability of Early Exit
England’s interaction analysis with all other independent variables accounting for majority seats, increased the variability of explaining whether there was an early election in a year to 30 percent. While the variables of an early election and crisis in a year do not have a correlation and account for a minor amount of variance ($B = -0.55, p = 0.46$), when the interaction variable of majority seats was accounted for, the crisis in year variable had a much stronger interaction, although the result was not statistically significant ($B = -34.59, p = 0.2$). England’s interaction variable results with the majority seats suggests that while a foreign policy crisis does not influence England’s ministerial instability by itself—a crisis and a smaller majority together might lead to more instability.

**Israel**

*Relations Among Variables*

A binary regression revealed that when an early election was the dependent variable, the selection of variables for the model together accounted for 67% of the variability (Nagelkerke $r^2 = 0.67$) in whether Israel had an early election each year. While none of the variables were statistically significant on their own, the majority seats and GDP growth were the largest predictors of whether Israel was to have an early election, although the results were not significant ($B = 3.32$, Wald = 0.039; $B = -1.92$, Wald = 2.92).

The selection of the factors in a regression model (GDP growth, unemployment, inflation, military expenditure, foreign direct investment, and the crisis variable) revealed no significant relationships or instances of collinearity between ministerial instability. These correlations between the variables are noted in Table 2.

**Table 2: Correlations among Foreign Policy Variables, Economic Variables, and Ministerial Instability in Israel**
After no correlations were revealed among the variables in reference to an early exit (ministerial instability), I conducted a statistical analysis between the size of a parliamentary majority and the GDP growth in a year against ministerial instability given the binary logistic regression results. During this analysis, the parliamentary majority was flagged as a significant indicator of Israel’s ministerial instability (see Figure 4). The key relationship of note is in looking at the size of the parliamentary majority about the GDP growth of the year, given the predicted probability of an early exit. The relationship revealed that when the size of the parliamentary majority was low and there was slow growth in a year, the projected probability of an early exit was low. However, when there was slow growth in a year with a larger parliamentary majority, the probability of early exit increased. This is exactly opposite from findings of high growth, which indicated an inverse relationship between high growth and the size of the majority: As the size of the majority grew in high growth years, the probability of an early election went down.

Figure 4: Israel’s Probability of Early Exit with the Size of the Parliamentary Majority
Exploratory Analysis and Main Takeaways

Given the increased variability accounting for ministerial instability with all of the variables’ interaction with the majority of government, I conducted one more interaction. This interaction was run between the GDP growth and the foreign policy crisis variable to see if a country is having both types of crises at the same time and if it is more likely to lead to ministerial instability in a nation. In England ($r= -0.06, p= -0.28, n= 78$) and in Israel ($r= -0.13, p= 0.44, n= 73$), however, there was no statistically significant correlation between the early election probability in a nation and the interaction variable that encompasses both economic and foreign policy turmoil.

The main takeaways from the results are that there were statistically significant relationships between instability and the size of the parliamentary majority in both England and Israel. While the other predictor variables account for a moderate amount of significance and variance in ministerial instability when aggregated, other individual variables do not have significant impacts on ministerial stability overall. As such, stability can be explained more by
endogenous shocks in the governments of Israel and England beyond specific factors. Future chapters will try to make sense of why these foreign policies and economic factors did not, or were not enough solely, to routinely lead to ministerial instability in either country.
Chapter Three

Majority Advantages: The Key to Securing a Ministerial Stability

One of the major findings through analyses of ministerial stability, as shown in the above results section, is a clear positive and statistically significant relationship between Israel and England’s majority party and the length before an early election occurs. This finding that a larger parliamentary majority secures a more stable parliament, as indicated by fewer early elections, is expected: A stronger majority assumes a tighter-knit coalition with more overall support for their respective prime minister. Because this result was expected, the finding helps create validity and confirms sound methods—thus also allowing for more certainty in the lack of other significant findings.

As the data collected echo, the mechanism by which a government remains in power is significantly related to how many disagreements are present in parliament (Kalandrakis, 2007). This mechanism can be interpreted in two ways. On one hand, if there is a stronger majority, fewer parliament-wide disagreements may arise because of similar party politics. However, in cases where multiple parties work to form a coalition with a strong majority, coalition members are unlikely to make progress. In this case, a strong coalition is predicated on keeping fundamental disagreements between parties at bay. The other mechanism that helps explain why majority governments stay in power longer is linked to the utility of the political party—how much power parties can negotiate in their coalitional government. When the utility from a cabinet is relatively large when compared to the partisan disagreement, parliamentarians are more likely to concur with the consensus. In other words, if there are ongoing incentives (utility) for a party within a coalition, most officials will concede to a policy initiative (Baron, Diermeirer, & Fong 2012; Fountas, Kampisioulis, & Drakatos, 2012). As such, the utility of the
majority government increases with higher margins because a dissenting small party is likely to both be defeated by the remaining large coalition and iced out of further political decisions.

Despite the quantitative findings as well as confirming literature in that a stronger majority leads to more stability overall, there is a stipulation in the majority government ruling: Even a party with a larger constitutional majority and with few divisive political items has external controls that make a difference in ensuring a long-lasting government. Two of these controls are economic and foreign policy crises. While the data showed no link to external foreign policy crises, there have been foreign policy crises to lead to an otherwise very stable majority government (like in the example of Brexit and the aftermath of the event). However, economic controls are shown to have some relationship in affecting the majority and early election stability relationship in addition to the majority of the government. Future chapters will further discuss ways in which foreign policy and economic instability interact with ministerial instability: However, this chapter will examine how findings for the link between a majority government and stability can be further implied and linked through an examination of Israel’s small parties Yisrael Beiteinu (YB) and Sephardim Shomrei Torah (SHAS) and England’s two-party system, and a discussion of what Israel and England can learn from each other to maximize stability through securing coalitional majorities.

Implications

In 92% of elections, England’s resulting parliament has been made up of only one singular party (Bassi 2017). Israel, on the other hand, has an average of thirteen political parties that form a parliament per election cycle. Furthermore, government stability overall has a negative relationship with the number of parties in a parliament as well as the number of opposition parties (Taylor & Herman, 1971). Thus, given the nature of each’s parliamentary
structure, a majority government in England is more likely to have fewer parties within the coalition—all of which subsequently would agree on most foreign policy agenda items. By this logic, majority governments in Israel, on the other hand, which often have multi-party coalitions, are more likely to withstand an early election if divisive issues that coalitions had to compromise on are kept at bay.

While the main finding of the quantitative research shows a negative link between the majority of seats and the probability of an early election occurring in a parliament, the findings have distinct implications in parliament democracies developing strategies to increase stability. To do so, Israel and England can increase the majority by which their party wins, which—excluding the variable of slow or great GDP growth—would help to guarantee long-term stability and longevity for cabinets both in England and in Israel.

*A History of Israel’s Small Parties: Representation or Extortion of Power?*

In the first and second Knesset proceedings in 1945 and 1943, respectively, there were 24 parties in Israel. By the Eighth Knesset election, 17 parties won seats. An analysis of the scope of the multi-party system in Israel revealed that between the period 1950-1965, there were over 7,873 possible winning coalitions (Mahler & Trilling, 1982, p. 296.). As shown through the data collected in this thesis, Israeli coalitions most commonly end because Knesset members resign (dissolution of parliament), meaning that they hold more inherent power in the way in which elections unfold in the nation. Because of Israel's multi-party parliamentary system, small parties have always held a non-representative portion of power to their size. Two Israeli parties that have maintained a particularly disproportional level of power in the Knesset are Yisrael Beytenu (YB) and Shomrei Sfarad (SHAS). Both parties help to paint a picture of Israel’s need to reform or face more lingering ministerial instability.
YB is a secularist, nationalist right-wing political party in Israel that was originally secular Russian-speaking Israelis. The party now is often criticized as being intended for unequally upholding and focused on providing the material interests of Ashkenazi (Jews from Europe) economic elite at the cost of the unitary policy in the rest of the country when passing Knesset policy. The party does the majority of its negotiating predicated upon the idea of a hard line towards the peace process and the integration of Arab-Israelis. The internal party politics in many ways isolated YB from the rest of Israeli parties; primaries among the party never took place because their party leader—Avigdor Lieberman was always elected—allowing him to make the party more extremist over time. While the party has experienced a steep decline from 15 seats in 2012 to only seven seats in 2022, the proportional power they hold in the Knesset is significantly more. Despite pleading from Prime Minister Netanyahu for some flexibility in an already-right-leaning policy concerning the transfer of the population of Palestinians, YB has long been effective at achieving concessions from right-leaning parties because the coalition of such right Prime Ministers often rests on the small party.

SHAS is another small party that holds a disproportionate amount of power considering its electoral seat threshold. Unlike YB, SHAS is a highly religious Haredi (Orthodox) political party in Israel, that represents the interests of Sephardic Jews (from the Middle East, Iberian Peninsula, and Africa). SHAS seeks to replace secular Zionism with religious Judaism as the hegemonic ideology in Israeli society and presents this as the remedy for the socio-economic and cultural grievances of its constituency. Particularly, the group aims to emphasize the religious commonalities between Sephardic and Ashkenazi, rather than their differences. Because SHAS’ main objective is for equality and representation of Sephardic Jews, they sometimes form left coalitions and sometimes align with right coalitions—all dependent on who gives them more
assurance for Sephardic and religious reforms, including passing religious laws to enforce a stricter adherence to Judaism (by the right coalition) or by passing more inclusive labor and union laws that benefit Sephardic—which are disproportionately wage labor workers.

An analysis of two of Israel’s most powerful small parties is important in considering how an Israeli majority in government interacts with the representative policies it can pass. Furthermore, the small parties show how competing and extremely niche foreign policy platforms could allow for more unique combinations of parties encompassing religion, ethnicity, and political beliefs—which can lead to either more progress and innovative policy or more instability.

*Electoral Stability vs. Electoral Strategy: Lieberman’s “Dirty Trick”*

As indicated by the data, a higher majority of seats won decreases the likelihood of an early election. In Israel’s proportional electoral system, which ensures that based on the percentage vote that the party wins, they get that proportion of the Knesset’s 120 mandates, the majority of the party is inherently lower. However, there is a minimum electoral threshold of entry to prevent even more parties from complicating the electoral system. If a party cannot make this threshold, it is counted as a “wasted vote” and the party does not gain any seats in the election. In 2014, citing a desire to reduce “wasted votes” and increase voting participation in Israel, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman changed the voting threshold from 2% (about two seats in the Knesset) to 3.25% (four seats). In changing this voting threshold, Lieberman forced smaller parties to consolidate—which as aforementioned in the literature, could lead to a greater chance of a majority government, and thus, stability in the government.

Unfortunately, however, Lieberman’s decision to raise the electoral threshold has not always been championed as pure in the intention of helping Israeli stability. The threshold
change, often nicknamed by critics as “Lieberman’s dirty trick” forced Arab parties to consolidate into the United Arab Party (or the Joint List), or else risk potentially not having any seats in the Knesset. Lieberman, who has often been called out by left-wing critics for attempting to exclude Arabs and other minorities in Israel, made this new threshold in an attempt to exclude Arab parties from representation. The trick backfired, however—Arab parties consolidated in 2015 and garnered 13 seats.

In this move, however, Lieberman’s party (YB) garnered more power—despite its small size. In the subsequent 2015 presidential election in Israel, Likud won by 6 seats over the Zionist Union. Their first scenario that did not work was trying to make a coalition based on right-wing ideas (a one-state solution to the Palestinian problem and unfreezing settlements). The second coalition that did not work was also based on right-wing parties. The final coalition that worked excluded Lieberman. A year later, Lieberman said he would join the coalition if the government built 2,000 housing units in east Jerusalem. This case concludes that the peace process is hindered by coalition-building constraints, the problem is more acute in parliamentary democracies rather than in presidential democracies because more parties are being combined in their beliefs. While Lieberman’s attempt to consolidate parties was successful (although Arab inclusion was likely not his intended goal), it reveals another wrinkle in the problem with vote thresholds to ultimately increase majority seats and government stability: Strongly fractured parties. In many ways, England’s united two-party system encompasses similar, albeit more extreme, challenges to that of the United Arab List: Fewer parties lead to more fractures within parties. This could result in even more internal instability than a new election and lead to more government inefficiency.

*Is Consolidation in Israel Even Possible?*
Even despite these differences, Prime Ministers in Israel have long relied on stronger majority coalitions to stave off early exits and keep stability within the government. On the other hand, Prime Minister Netanyahu for example, in almost all of his election years has undergone ministerial instability due to his polarizing nature and contentious policies and resulting in small majority governments (Gold & Greene 2022). While Israel, as indicated by the data, has a relationship between majority governments and increased stability overall, a way they could continue to increase their majority of victory is through party consolidation.

While consolidation in Israel seems like a surefire way to ensure more parliamentary unity, Israeli scholars argue that Israel’s internal Palestinian conflict will always keep divides within parties. Oren Yiftachel (2006), for example, argues that Israel’s parties can be seen through ethnic divides that have all but predetermined an individual’s socioeconomic status in Israel. On the one hand, an elite made up of mostly Ashkenazim are driving its own political agendas in Israel and making policies. Because Ashkenazim are generally wealthier in Israel, peace and compromise with Palestinians further their economic goals through more investors. However, Mizrahi and Haredi Jews, who are in lower socioeconomic positions, do not place as much emphasis on economic growth through compromise and instead want to keep and expand settlements. As such, Yiftachel suggests that there is a growing divide between “two major Zionist goals: territorial expansionism and economic growth” (2006, pp. 1-2). Because each goal is associated so heavily with a socioeconomic and thus, ethnic group, Yiftachel alludes that this problem will create divides in Jewish unity. Admittedly, this is a key difference between Israel and other parliamentary democracies—party lines, ethnic lines, and religious lines all complicate narratives of party allegiance and party unity.

*England’s Two-Party System*
By contrast, England’s two-party system essentially confirms that each election will emerge with a majority government of either the Conservative or the Labour Party, ensuring stability. While this party system could benefit Israel in creating a more stable government, the two-party system leaves out an important representation of the Liberal party in England, which only holds a small number of seats in the Parliament. To attempt to consider reform in ensuring a majority government without sacrificing representation for stability, Bromhead (1976) writes that,

“Most Conservative and Labour politicians are quite happy about the electoral system, but Liberals are not, perhaps a tenth or more of the voters in the country would now really like to vote Liberal; but there are only a handful of Liberals in the Commons, and their seats seem unlikely to increase much. Is this situation fair? Is it democratic? Is it expedient?” (Stankiewicz, 1967, Chapter 4, p. 54).

In response to such a desire for more parties being represented, Bromhead (1967) suggests that a way to increase representation while still keeping a two-party system is by increasing specialized parliamentary committees. Over fifty years after Bromhead wrote his piece, England has adopted more of these committees, while still employing their existing two-party system. While increased stability cannot be directly attributed to specialized committees, they certainly help allow for specific ways in which there can be more representation, even without resorting to a proportional party system.

While a two-party system seems to be the more logical choice in creating a stable system, scholars in the field are quick to note that while these systems might have more cabinet stability at the onset, a foreign policy issue could easily divide the country and lead to immediate elections. In their quantitative analysis, Huber and Martinez-Gallardo (2003) found that coalition
governments that truly represented the heterogeneity of a nation were much less likely to be replaced than governments with one cabinet. As such, the strategy of electing but also keeping a coalition strong has a large influence on ministerial instability, especially in England.

*From a Hung Coalition in 2017 to a Steep Majority in 2019: England’s Coalitional Progress*

While the referendum on whether England should leave the European Union took place in 2016, a deal allowing England to formally leave the union was not struck until 2019. Most of this delay, as Russell (2020) points out, can be attributed to efficiency and coalitional majorities in England’s system. In 2017, after calling an unsuccessful snap election to secure a coalitional base, Prime Minister May declared that England officially was in a hung parliament. A “hung parliament” in the case of England, happens when there is not enough of a majority for one party to govern, so the leader of the party must try to form a government by making coalitions (UK Parliament, 2023). In other words, when England does not have enough of a majority, they revert to how Israel’s parliament always functions. At the same time this was occurring (or perhaps, because it was occurring in the first place), England was having nationwide conversations over the status of Brexit. The conversation, which did not progress, led to Teresa May’s removal. Notably, England’s parliamentary system, unlike Israel, does not typically use coalitions to make policy progress and concessions—rather, they use the system to decide on a single party leader.

While England’s elections in 2017 suffered from a weak coalitional majority, resulting in stalled parliamentary progress, the nation’s elections in 2019 resulted in the Conservative Party winning by a majority of over 80. This majority was the highest number of seats won since 1987. As soon as Boris Johnson came into office, he passed Brexit, which had been stalled by the previous government. He also increased public spending and prioritized stabilizing economic policy throughout the nation (McCann, Leatherby, and Blacki Miglozzi 2019). While it is hard to
determine the causality of Johnson’s policies—whether the Parliament united due to a desire to finally pass Brexit, or whether Brexit passed because of the formed majority—the case demonstrates how the efficiency of the English government is maximized when there is a two-party system with a large majority. When England follows Israel’s coalitional tendencies of winning by only a small majority, their productivity lessens significantly, and their instability subsequently rises.

*Synthesizing Majority Governments: What Israel and England Can Learn From Each Other*

Securing a strong majority in a country is certainly tied to success in quantitatively preventing early elections. In some ways, however, this finding goes against Von Neumann and Morentern’s coalition theory that a coalition is likely to form only with the number of parties necessary to win to maximize utility per party. However, rather than have only as many parties as necessary, according to the data, a cabinet would want as many seats as possible, despite the potential risks of internal instability that would form from decision-making. However—importantly—ministerial stability does not necessarily lead to more progress. Unitary governments are effective in uniting during a large foreign policy crisis but may have difficulty achieving more specific foreign policy goals throughout a Prime Minister’s tenure. Balancing Israel and England’s different populations and goals is crucial in ensuring that each government reaches policies that can be effectively, and efficiently, constructed. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, Israel could learn from England in maintaining more overall stability in nations. However, because Israel has more ethnic groups and England does not have significantly less instability than Israel regardless, the system that both nations employ has their own sets of positives and negatives.
Chapter Four

Why Foreign Policy Crises Don’t Lead to Ministerial Instability

Contrary to literature that suggests foreign policy crises might lead to widespread ministerial instability, there were no significant relationships found linking foreign policy crises to an increased probability of an early election in either nation. This is contrary to the original hypotheses, which suggested that England would be more likely to have ministerial instability in the wake of a foreign policy crisis, whereas Israel would be more likely to have ministerial stability during a foreign policy crisis because the country must bind together because of their precarious geopolitical position. In both cases, there were no relationships between the state of stability in a nation and the nation’s crises.

This chapter attempts to explain why the measure of foreign policy, as measured by the International Crisis Behavior Project (2023) does not account for changes in stability in either England or Israel. Chapter Four highlights cases of foreign policy crises that did and did not lead to ministerial instability and then draws conclusions on what other factors might have played a significant role in the separation of these roles. The first two examples will detail times in which a foreign policy crisis led to ministerial stability through rallying around the flag: Israel’s National Unity Government from 1967-1974 and England’s involvement in the Libyan Civil War. The second two case studies will detail instances in which a foreign policy crisis led to ministerial instability: The Lavon Affair (1961) in Israel and the Cod War (1974) in England. A comparative approach to these cases and these hypotheses will help to draw out the major differences between the countries in how their crises play out traditionally in their parliaments.

As indicated by results in the previous chapter (see Figure 4), when either England or Israel is in a slight minority or majority government, slow GDP growth is much more likely to
decrease the likelihood of an election, rather than high GDP. This relationship is likely possible because GDP growth beyond a certain level signals to investors that growth could be out of control, or prone to a market crash, leading to pre-emptive withdrawals in markets. Whether or not there was a crisis in the previous year barely had any effect on the probability of an early exit—however, when England had a crisis in the previous two years, the probability of an early exit was lower across the board in the majority of the parliament. This relationship likely exists because having a crisis in the previous year might unite the country around one specific party—might not want to have more stability so do everything possible to keep the coalition together, no matter the size of the majority. This relationship suggests a weakly positive relationship between England and foreign policy crises, which is important in seeing how individuals rally around the flag.

*Ministerial Stability Amidst Foreign Conflict: Cases of Rallying around the Flag*

*The 1967-1974: Israel’s National Unity Governments*

From the period of 1960 to 1974, Israel—despite many small coalitional disagreements—had three different national governments. This period, which was full of international strife in Israel’s timeline, represented a key point in which Israel rallied around the flag. This period began with the lead-up to The Six-Day War, also known as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Since the 1956 Suez War between Israel and Egypt, there had been United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF) alongside the border to help facilitate peaceful maritime trade between the two nations. While the period between 1956 and 1967 was relatively tense, it was also mostly peaceful, in part thanks to UNEF. However, in the build-up to the war, Israel publicly declared that if Egypt ever closed the borders of the Straits of Tiran to Israel, they would have just cause to declare war on Egypt.
Following this statement, Egyptian President Nasser closed the straits to Israeli vessels, militarized the border, and withdrew all UNEF personnel. In response to this perceived escalation, a month later, Israel launched successful airstrikes against Egypt, leading to the withdrawal of Egyptian troops from the Sinai Peninsula. Also, in response to this escalation and on the eve of the Six-Day War, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol struck a deal with coalition leaders from the other side (Menachem Begin, Yosef Sapir, and Moshe Dayan) to streamline the process of making military decisions and mobilizing more quickly. This moment defined Israel: It was the first unity government in Israel (Knesset) and set the stage for a period of streamlined military decisions.

Following the unification of the government, Jordan and Syria joined the war, attacking Israel from the north and the east, respectively. The Six-Day War has often been hailed as an Israeli-won war; in only six days Arab nations lost over 20,000 citizens whereas Israel lost only 1,000. In addition, Israel won not only the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, but also the Golan Heights from Syria. These geolocational wins allowed Israel to gain a decent amount of strategy over other nations and more policy implications for the region. Prime Minister Eshkol declared that “Israel would not relinquish any of the Arab territories she now occupied until the Arabs agreed to negotiate directly with Israel a formal peace treaty incorporation secure and recognized boundaries” (Shlaim and Yaniv, p. 242). Internally, though, Eshkol’s cabinet was suffering a split in what to do. In what was unprecedented for the time, the left-leaning cabinet made a closed-door decision to sign peace agreements with Syria and Egypt with the original borders from before the war, with the understanding that the two nations would recognize Israel and demilitarize Israeli borders. A month later, in August of 1967, the Cabinet changed its mind due to Arab provocations—when Arab leaders at a Khartoum summit
Ministerial Instability in Parliamentary Democracies

conference publicly stated that they would have “no peace, no recognition, and no negotiation with Israel” (Shlaim & Yaniv, 1980, p. 243). At this point, there were six positions on what to do after the 1967 war—which threatened to break apart coalitions. As dictated by Shlaim and Yaniv (1980), the six positions are: unconditional hawks (people who did not want to return any of the territory won by the 1967 war), militant hawks (people who would concede the Jordanian river as a border and keep the rest of the land), moderate doves (people who wanted compromise on the West Bank in exchange for peace), militant doves (wanted to return all territories and establish a Palestinian state in exchange for a long-lasting peace agreement), and unconditional doves (who called for Israeli withdrawal from territories they had won, without any stipulations). Shlaim and Yaniv (1980), through quantitative analysis, ultimately found that there was no way to form a coalition during this period without Knesset members that subscribed to at least four of these different groups, which would lead to a substantial amount of strife.

The unitary government held discussions to figure out what position the government should take. Over three days, cabinet members discussed and came to a consensus, winning by one vote (nine votes to ten) for Israel to propose peace with Egypt and Syria and give up the Golan Heights and the Sinai. However, Prime Minister Eshkol, in the spirit of the unitary government, asked the government to reconvene again to see if the ministers—despite representing rival political parties—could come to a unanimous decision.

Despite the unanimous decision made by the Knesset on how to handle territories annexed by Israel after the Six-Day War, the country was forced to stay together through three more coalitions to convince international audiences of their plan and Israel’s legitimacy as a whole (Shlaim & Yaniv, 1980, p. 243). For the next two unity governments, Prime Minister Golda Meir (and Prime Minister Menachem Begin for the third) and the rest of her ministers,
engaged in debate with other nations on the legitimacy of Israel and the beginnings of a brokered peace deal between crumbling foreign relations with Egypt.

Cohen (1999) proposes that the stakes of Israel’s united government began in 1967, not only because of increasing tensions around the country from almost every side—but also because of the rumor that Egypt had nuclear weapons; and a sighting of four Egyptian planes over Israeli city Diamona one day. Waller (1986) cautions, though, in assuming that the unity government was actually “a year of unity” (p. 63). Instead, Israel was forced to be in a position of unity as they handled their foreign policy affairs or else risk major internal problems and factions that coupled with their external instability—both physically and in their questioned legitimacy—could lead to serious repercussions (Waller, 1986; Yaniv & Shlaim, 1980; Cohen, 1999). In many ways, this example of the unity government agrees with the literature and the hypothesis for this set of data: When Israel is faced with significant foreign threats, they must bind together despite internal disagreements.

_England in 2012: Libyan Civil War_

England’s crisis in 2011, lagged one year to reflect how ministerial instability affects the year after the crisis, was in the Libyan Civil War. England joined forces with the United States, France, Canada, Italy, and Qatar to eliminate power from Libyan authoritarian leader Muammar Gaddafi. The need for English intervention began in January 2011, when civil uprisings in Libya began, calling out corruption and protesting for a democratic expansion of values. By February, protests spread around the country, prompting Gaddafi to persecute and discriminate relentlessly against protesters—including campaigns of mass killings. England intervened in part through their duty to the United Nations Security Council. In tandem with other countries in the council, England helped block off economic opportunities from Libya and helped to impose a no-fly zone
over the country which was all efforts in backing the National Transitional Council (NTC).

England also helped to train Libyan soldiers to fight against Gaddafi, an example of how their soft power helped to make true conflict and physical change throughout the nation—although from afar (Joffé, 2016). Because of the role that the United Nations Security Council played in invoking the no-fly zone and encouraging England to take an active role in the conflict, the majority of parliamentarians and citizens were on board with the intervention. In addition, this issue was removed from the daily life of the British, meaning that it was not highly debated in parliament.

While England was in a foreign policy crisis, as marked by the ICB crisis, their position in the conflict was largely through giving aid, rather than as a direct threat to their nation’s legitimacy. This differentiates stakes from those of Israel—England’s geopolitical location serves as a crucial force in allowing them to intervene in other foreign policy affairs with the affairs rarely threatening internal conflict in the country. In this way, the foreign policy crisis of the Libyan war goes against the previously established hypothesis that England might be more likely to stay together in a foreign policy crisis than an economic one. This is despite low English support for the war overall: Only one in three British citizens supported military action in Libya (Ginsberg & Ormsby, 2011). Public attitude might not matter whether a crisis affects England’s instability because it does not directly impact individuals’ everyday lives. Therefore, in isolation as just as an external foreign policy crisis—like the Libyan war—England’s parliament can rally behind the flag—although, from afar.

Ministerial Instability in Foreign Policy Crises: Crumbling Coalitions

Israel in 1961: The Lavon Affair
The Fourth Knesset in 1961 was the shortest term in Israel’s history—less than 21 months (The Israel Democracy Institute). While the government suffered a foreign policy crisis, they had a more major internal crisis that happened in 1954, which was the impetus for the foreign policy crisis and overall instability years later. This internal crisis, known as the Lavon Affair, had foreign policy ramifications that ultimately ended in ministerial instability (Weiss, 2013).

The Lavon Affair originally began in 1954 because of an Israeli desire to dismantle Egyptian President Nasser’s regime. President Nasser had been a fervent denier of Israeli rights and used his geolocation in the Suez Canal to block much trade—and thus economic growth—from entering Israel. The Israeli Military Intelligence decided that they would set off a series of non-fatal bombs (unattributed to Israel) in Egypt in an attempt to destabilize the regime, known as Operation Susannah (Anderson 2011). The operation involved recruiting Egyptian Jews as spies, who were promised citizenship in Israel if they partook in the bombings. While the first few bombings of buildings (which were importantly unhabituated) in the operation were indeed successful, the Egyptian police discovered the cell of the spies and the ring of Israeli spies helping them. While tensions were certainly bubbling between Egypt and Israel in response to the failed operation, there were significant stability problems at home, too. Egypt tried and hung two of the bombers—an embarrassment that was thrown at Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon (Weiss, 2013). Lavon, parliamentary opposition members claimed, was part of the sabotage of the operation and did so intentionally. The actual traitor in the situation was Israeli spy Avri Elad, who was a double agent in Egypt. The main concern among the Israeli government was the safety of the 50,000 Egyptian Jews, who were being wrongly prosecuted and discriminated against following the failed Operation.
This Operation in Egypt was being conducted as Israel was helping another country in North Africa: Algeria. As President Nasser tried to send in troops to help the Algerian movement for independence from France, Israel helped France by training Jewish-Algerians to fight back: An effort that has long been considered a key turning point in helping France retain some sovereignty over Algeria. While this affair was an embarrassment to Israel in 1954, it did not lead to any crippled ministerial instability, in part due to the French Israeli arms deals that the French gave Israel as a thank-you for helping to defeat Nasser—although not in Egypt—in Algeria.

After years of instability and foreign tensions, caused by the botched Operation—Egypt had tried unsuccessfully to take over the Gaza Strip, Israel, and French nuclear scientists were cooperating greatly much to the dismay of the United States, and the Soviet Union, French, and British were fighting over ownership of the Suez Canal in “best interest of Egypt and Israel”. All of this increased foreign tension was coupled with a subsequent internal uproar about the crisis, over seven years later. By the time Prime Minister Ben-Gurion swore in 1961 to the Fourth Knesset, information about Operation Susannah resurfaced: Two officers that had been responsible for the botched Operation falsely implicated Defense Minister Lavon. As a result of this new information, Defense Minister Lavon was cleared of bad name—a result, that Prime Minister Ben-Gurion mistrusted strongly, leading to his resignation in protest. Even though current investigators would all point to the fact that Lavon was framed, Israel suffered a massive humiliation, internally and externally—which ultimately led to the resignation of Prime Minister Ben-Gurion.

As Yaniv and Shlaim point out, Israeli foreign policy has long been described as reactive due to their external geopolitical environment. However, they also contend that internal foreign
policy issues, like the Lavon affair, will always be linked to international Israeli policy issues because of the countries’ constant (necessary) position of self-defense. According to Yaniv and Shlaim,

“All the indicators, then, suggest that this complex multiple fragmentation of all mainstream political forces in Israel which results from the compounding of intra-party divisions by inter-party ones will continue to operate on Israeli foreign policy in the foreseeable future. That it will cost Israel dearly in terms of her already shaky international status can be taken for granted”.

The Lavon Crisis illustrates a unique time in which Israel went against previous stances wherein the country’s ministers and parliamentarians would unite when there was a foreign policy crisis to maintain their stability. However, as shown through the affair, the delayed effects and bubbling foreign policy tensions—as a result of an internal ministry operation—caused too much instability and political disagreements for the coalition to stay together. This example shows that while Israeli coalitions have stayed together during times of major foreign policy crises, times in which these crises are coupled with internal affairs (often because the foreign policy crises are so central to Israeli legitimacy and safety) challenge stability significantly.

**England in 1974: The Cod War**

In 1973, England was engaged in the “Cod War”—a dispute between England and Iceland over the fishing rights of cod. In the year prior, Iceland had signed an agreement with England and West Germany allowing their fishing rights to extend fifty miles off of their coast. However, England and other European countries quickly began to see the prices of fish rise, and Iceland began to infringe even further on particularly British boats, even the ones that were not within the fifty miles. In May of 1973, after Icelandic fishers fired at British fishers unprompted,
the British fishers reported back to the government that they would leave (leading to more of an economic and fish industry crisis) if they were not protected. Britain responded by sending naval ships to the waters, until over five months later when the British and Icelandic parliaments came to a fishing agreement.

The foreign policy crisis that was happening in England at the time was coupled with an internal movement for North Ireland's independence, spurred by the 1973 Northern Ireland border poll. While the poll passed with a majority of Unionist supporters—remaining with England—the impact of the poll destabilized part of England. The Irish Republican Army, for example, was a part of instigating many different bombs to prevent people from going to the polls to vote to stay with England. Over two hundred people were harmed. This destabilized England politics and was the major impetus for Prime Minister Harold Wilson to resign. This pass of the poll towards independence from England stemmed from the Sunningdale Agreement, an agreement wherein the British government stated the Northern Ireland Assembly would have proportional representation (like Israel) but would still have their economy ultimately controlled by England. In this way, England’s instability was predicated on the economic decisions they were making, which caused dismay at the control the nation had over others.

The Cod War, while it came to an agreement, earmarks a time in England’s history when they are dealing with both foreign policy and internal domestic instability. However, at the root of both cases of policy-related instability is an economic concern, both within the confines of the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) and in the fishing industry.

Summary of Foreign Policy Conflicts

This chapter details four case studies of instability resulting from foreign policy crises; The Israeli case of the National Unity governments stemming from a direct challenge of Israeli
sovereignty, the Lavon Affair, the Libyan Civil War, and the Cod War. As shown through the quantitative analysis between foreign policy crises and ministerial instability, exogenous crises do not seem to be driving ministerial instability. Instead, stability shocks are more attributed to game theory models about the strategic interaction between a cabinet and its utility in decision-making (Fountas, Kampisioulis, & Drakatos 2012).

While exogenous shocks are not indicators of ministerial instability, there are other potential explanations for how foreign policy crises are linked to instability—and why federal reactions differed between Israel and England as shown in the case studies. Put simply, the nations have vastly different stakes in their foreign policy goals as well as in their crises when they arise. Whereas in Israel, foreign policy crises are normally centered around whether Israel has the right to exist, in England, the crises are mostly interventional and are coupled with the support of other powerful nations. In other words, foreign policy conflicts in Israel might tend to have more inherent internal instability because the crisis affects citizens daily—therefore meaning Israel bands together during a foreign policy crisis but is tipped over the edge when a foreign policy crisis (already bringing a lot of tension and instability in the parliament) is coupled with another internal political crisis or scandal. In short, situations have more extreme effects in Israel because the geolocation and severity of Israel’s security issues push everything more. This rallying echoes the literature: The more severe and internally threatening the violence is, the more support occurs for political action to be taken (Chowanietz, 2010). Israel rallies around the flag more strongly, but it is with more inherent instability as the reactions are more polarizing and destabilizing.

England, on the other hand, is more insulated from foreign policy crises affecting the nation. This insulation can be reasoned by looking at the nation’s international stance, which has
recently been more based on England being an advisory figure rather than fighting specific wars physically. This policy stance has been a notable departure from the nation’s front-line involvement in the Cold War and NATO’s founding—however, in both of these cases, England’s role was in helping to insulate their overseas colonies from Russian influence, rather than in their physical motherland (Imperial War Museum, 2023). In the case of the Cod War which did lead to instability overall, the war was also coupled with internal affairs (just like in Israel). Another key part of the Cod War (even besides the Ireland internal debates that further destabilized the nation) was that the war, in more ways than the Libyan Civil War which did not lead to ministerial instability, was predicated upon economic prices and industry. England got involved particularly because fish prices were rising and stayed involved in the conflict until it was resolved. This helps to paint a picture of the priorities of parliamentary affairs in England being economically central, even when they are foreign policy based.

Due to the differing nature of the crises in both nations, a future study in ministerial instability could divide crises or run categorical country analyses by the severity of the crisis. Crises that threaten the existence of a nation, for example, could be separated from crises that are more removed from the nation itself, or serve more of an advisory role. The categorization could be extended by countries too—in countries that have ongoing threats and countries that would be described as not threatened on an everyday basis. The following chapter examines economic shocks in both countries more closely.
Chapter Five

Why Economic Indicators Fall Short in Predicting Ministerial Stability

While England and Israel are both parliamentary democracies with a large amount of economic growth and international economic prestige, they both have drastically different patterns of growth and average levels of economic indicators. While Israel’s growth rate is on average, five and a half percent, England’s growth rate hovers around two and a half percent (World Bank 2023). The differences in growth rate are significant: Because Israel is considered the Start-Up Nation of the world with one of the highest businesses per capita in the world, the country has above-average economic growth—fueled by increasing world dependency on many Israeli products. While Israel, on average, has higher growth rates than England, the unemployment rate in Israel is significantly higher, considering that many Israelis, particularly religious Jews live off welfare and are unemployed. Furthermore, Israel had an average inflation rate from 1950-2023 of over 27%, while England’s inflation rate during the same timeline was only 5.32% (Trading Economics and Official Data 2023). While there are distinct reasons for differences in each country’s economic indicators (Israel is a high-growth society while England has a more stable—and interconnected economy), keeping the relative difference of both country’s economic indicators in mind is crucial in considering potential causes into why economic indicators lead to stability in one country but might lead to a different outcome in another.

Based on the data collected for this research, England’s data revealed that overall, there were no significant economic indicators that impacted the probability of an early election. Israel’s data showed that in years of high growth, the size of the parliamentary majority helps to insulate a cabinet from an early election because while high growth indicates success, it could
also indicate economic volatility. On the other hand (and less intuitively), in years of slow
growth—the size of the parliamentary majority has more of an effect on the predicted probability
of an early exit. Chapter Three attempts to explain why Israeli data may function the way it does.

Overall, besides the small Israeli finding linked to GDP growth and majority seats, these
findings are contrary to what we would expect given the literature: High inflation, high
unemployment, and periods of low GDP would place internal pressure on parliamentarians to file
a motion of no confidence—signaling ministerial instability—on their prime minister. In
addition, periods of economic crisis should cause divisions and cracks in coalitions, leading
again to ministerial instability, as the primary cause for disagreements between different parties.
Notably, these inner coalition or party disagreements would likely be more visible and
quantifiable when looking at Israel, which has more parties that form one coalition. As such, the
hypothesis is that while both countries would be more prone to ministerial instability given
economic instability, Israel might be more prone to such instability because of more internal
components and disagreements about welfare.

Nevertheless, the limited findings shed light on what other factors may be involved when
considering economic turmoil in each country. This chapter examines four case studies, two in
England and two in Israel. The first pair of case studies examine both England and Israel’s
economic conditions in 1980, a year for both nations where the unstable economic conditions did
not actually lead to ministerial instability. The second pair of case studies examines economic
conditions in 2021, a year of high growth and instability for both nations. These case studies
attempt to make sense of what factors might influence economic stability—and cases in which
economic stability and ministerial stability are not linked. What is important to remember in
these case studies, however, is while I am selecting cases that go against the hypothesis linking
economic instability to ministerial instability (particularly in Israel), there are also many examples where Israel and England have cases that do fit the hypothesis. By in large, however, a lack of correlation between economic indicators and ministerial instability means that the exception cases should be explored and analyzed further.

Poor Economic Conditions and Maintaining Stability: A Case Study Comparison on Negative GDP Growth in 1980: Israel and England

Israel in 1980: Currency Instability and Foreign Woes

At the beginning of 1980, Israel’s inflation rate was 131.02%—one of the highest reported inflations in Israel’s history. Israel’s GDP was also at one of the rare times of resulting negative GDP growth: -1.53%. Based on the poor economic conditions in the country, the country should be in prime condition to have ministerial instability. Notably, however, this hypothesis would only be correct when looking at 1980 in isolation. In contrast, the period of 1980 represented a pivotal foreign moment in Israel’s legitimacy and development in self-defense—and one that represented a need for Israel to stay united even among much economic and foreign policy instability.

In 1977, Israel’s Labour Party was defeated by the Likud Party after holding almost thirty years of coalitional majorities. Prime Minister Begin, who ran on the political ideals of establishing the West Bank as official Israeli territory, began to implement foreign policy (Shlaim and Yaniv, p. 244). His policy initiatives focused primarily on making peace with Egypt, a foreign policy decision that Krasna (2020) writes was an intentional—and successful—strategy to break the Arab coalition and gain one neighbor with normalized relations.

In 1978, Israel’s current Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat met in Jerusalem for unprecedented peace talks in response to decades of conflict since
the founding of Israel in 1949. The two leaders had several meetings, in which they discussed land agreements and the incorporation of Palestinian and Israeli peace into whatever territorial agreements emerged. The result of the meetings was the emergence of the first official peace deal between the two leaders, The Camp David Accords, overseen by President Jimmy Carter. While the peace deals were regarded highly in Western nations, even winning leaders Sadat and Begin the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978, the deal triggered foreign policy tension in Arab nations. The large impact of the event was felt, not only through economic and foreign policy implications but through the overall opinions of much of the Muslim League.

Over three years later, in 1981, Sadat was assassinated by Egyptian Lieutenant Khalid Islambouli. At the victory parade of the eighth anniversary of Egyptian relations in the Suez Canal, he assembled his troops to pose as part of the military parade. The assassination, although an Egyptian conflict, shows the extent of the conflict and how the economic crisis has foreign policy implications far beyond Israeli borders.

In addition to the foreign conflict surrounding Israel in the 1980s, which triggered an economic crisis, Israel fundamentally was undergoing an internal economic shift. In 1980, Israel shifted its currency from the Israeli pound to the shekel. While the initial purpose of the switch from the Israeli pound to the shekel was because of the overwhelming support for Israelis to have a Hebrew name for their currency—switching to the shekel helped Israelis cement their nationhood and economic independence further. However, the switch to the shekel—coupled with the aforementioned foreign policy issues around the time—triggered hyperinflation from 1980 until 1985, when Israel passed the Israel Economic Stabilization Plan.

Given all of the economic problems in Israel, then, why did Israel not have ministerial instability? Examining the context surrounding the year 1980 reveals major foreign policy
implications that while there was no crisis in the year 1980—there were significant foreign policy problems that emerged around that year. As shown through the foreign policy cases, Israel’s reactions are more volatile in times of crisis overall—but are more likely to rally around the flag during pivotal moments of foreign policy challenges to the legitimacy of Israel. While this case details a time at which economic instability led to (contrary to the hypothesis) stability, the case aligns with the foreign policy previous hypothesis and literature that states that foreign policy crises are likely to keep Israel together because the country is more likely to rally around the flag because of the nation’s precarious geopolitical position and their predisposition for terror. Even though Israel was undergoing economic crises, they were also undergoing foreign stress—which meant the country was not afforded the luxury of breaking coalitions because they had to stay together to fight off foreign pressures.

_England in 1980_

Just like Israel, England was experiencing poor economic conditions in 1980. The nation was in a recession, spurred by rising unemployment, negative GDP growth (-1.93), and high inflation rates. Unlike Israel, however, which would be more likely to have ministerial instability in times of sole economic crises, England is more like to experience ministerial instability in economic crises than during foreign crises. As such, the puzzle as to why the country did not experience ministerial instability can also be explained by considering the geopolitical context of England during 1980.

Many of England’s economic woes were labor driven—that began as an outrage to the opinions of the majority government. In fact, much of the platform that Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher ran on was on an intention not to intervene in the labor market as well as to reform unions, opinions which grew to national outrage against her campaign. After
PM Thatcher was elected, The British Steel Corporation (BSC) denied over 90,000 workers a pay increase, despite an inflation rate of over 17%—a move that has often been directly linked to Thatcher’s political beliefs (Swarthmore College Database). On January 2\textsuperscript{nd} of 1980, steel workers at the BSC went on strike, demanding pay, which snowballed into the Corporation firing individuals—decreasing output, and leading to a more nationalized strike (Apple, 1980). The nationalized strike was successful; the sheer size of the strikes shut down plants across the nation and created internal parliamentary anxiety about the lack of production in such a profitable industry. At the height of the strikes, the steel industry in Britain lost over two million dollars a day (Downie Jr., 1980). Notably, the United States and other European nations were also experiencing similar losses (Matthews, 2013). Thatcher, to her credit, tried to enact pay raises for workers who showed evidence of increased productivity, or in other words, for workers who were not striking. The steel strikes in 1980 were a turning an economic turning point for England: they represented one of the first times when union leaders from blue-collar workers were able to make a pointed difference in affecting England’s economic policy.

Indeed, England’s strong economic reaction to the strikes was reflected in the reaction of Thatcher’s opposition party, the Labour Party, and many of her cabinet members, who spoke against her and led many to (falsely) hypothesize that the economic scandal would lead to ministerial instability and an early election. Even through more intensely downturned economic conditions and strikes in the coal industry, up until 1984, Thatcher remained in power. How then, was a Prime Minister in the middle of such an economic crisis, insulated from instability? Put bluntly, other countries insulated the instability on behalf of England. As 1981 occurred, England (along with many other countries including the United States, Japan, and Canada) was in stagflation. As such, the high relative value of the British pound allowed Britain to import goods
for cheaper than the manufacturing cost—a concept that was only possible because of the looser monetary policies that other governments were employing. While England was mostly out of their recession by 1985, the nation faced extremely high unemployment, which eventually led to Thatcher’s removal from office. While she was making steady progress on inflation, however, and substantially changing the British model of import and exports overall—she stayed in power, likely predicated upon the promise that she was making significant economic gains in the nation. Even later in 1999 during another steel-related recession, the Dutch company merged with Steel Companies to help prevent rising prices of raw goods, which would have affected the whole of England.

Examining both of these cases together helps to show the difference in priorities between the nations—what they have to prioritize for the good of their nation: British prioritization of interconnected webs with other nations in currency versus Israeli prioritization of economic growth.

*High Economic Growth and Instability: A Case Study Comparison of Israel and England*

*Israel in 2021*

Economically, Israel had a productive 2021 year. Their GDP growth was 8.19 percent, which was above the average of Israel’s normal growth patterns. Furthermore, Israeli inflation was below average at 5%. This growth has continued—in December of 2022, the OECD ranked Israel as the fourth best-performing economy, only behind Greece, Portugal, and Spain (Wrobel, 2022, The Times of Israel).

Despite Israel’s productive economic year, which has continued into a stretch of economic prosperity, Israelis went to the poll for the fourth time in two years in March 2021. After Prime Minister Netanyahu’s party (Likud) won the greatest number of seats, President
Reuven Rivlin allowed him to try to make a coalition. However, Netanyahu was not able to meet the coalitional deadline, meaning that Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett formed a unity party with parties Blue and White, the Labour Party, YB, New Hope, Meretz, and Yamina, where each leader of their vastly separate parties would have two years as foreign minister and then serve the other two years as prime minister. The process to make this agreement, which first consisted of Netanyahu’s failure to form a coalition—took over three months to be ironed out. As shown by the difficulty to form parties over the course of three months, there was more existing internal instability throughout the government despite positive economic conditions. As a whole, Israel’s dependency on small parties to form coalitions marks instability within the nation that is unique to the country.

*England in 2021*

Much like Israel in 2021, England’s economic growth on paper indicated long-term stability in the nation. England’s GDP rate in 2021 was over 7.1%-- largely a response to pandemic levels of low GDP. However, underlying the economy’s rebound was high oil and electricity prices which severely undermined several industries in England and weakened their trade deficit overall as well as led to continued price growth. While in the steel crisis in England, workers were upset, in this case—the middle class in England was upset, leading to a call for a new election.

*Conclusions*

While both England and Israel have maintained high relative GDPs, both represent two completely different economic models. While Israel has been an extremely fast-growing economy, England’s economy is more rooted in long-term industrialism and interconnectedness with other nations. As such, industrialism produces inherently slower progress economically;
Coalitions are linked heavily to parts of the economy (especially because it is a two-party system). In both case examples, England’s instability (or potential instability that was mitigated with a lasting government) was related to raw goods like steel and oil. In a growing economy like Israel, though, there is more volatility and economic policy is not as tied to coalitions (instead it depends and is linked to desires of the religious for more welfare, for example). Both of Israel’s examples in economic turmoil revolved less around raw goods and more around other considerations of a growing economy—like currency changes and reasoning how economic and foreign policy parties can align overall. While economic outcomes are certainly tied to ministerial instability in both nations, some economic instability allows room for economic spikes upward. Just like a deeper analysis of the relationship between foreign policy and instability, this chapter has revealed that instability is more linked to economic endogenous shocks than exogenous economic shocks, specifically how the economy in both nations functions.
Chapter Six

Explaining the Arbitrariness of Ministerial Instability and Future Research

While the term “ministerial instability” was coined and popularized out of a desire to explain electoral changes in the post-war period, the incidence of the term has grown exponentially as coalitions seem to be breaking or causing political contention, both in England and in Israel. Just on February 15, 2023, after years of multi-party coalitions and early elections, Knesset members broke out into a physical brawl—fueled by a deep frustration in needing to go to the polls even more. Ministerial instability is affecting how parliament members are interacting both with their constituents and also with government officials. This concluding chapter will begin with three major takeaways from the research, before moving into limitations and future study.

Main Findings and Conclusions

Takeaway One: Majority Governments Are Linked to Fewer Early Elections

Through efforts to identify how economic and foreign policy crises contribute to the longevity of prime ministers, there is a clear link between the majority seats of a government and ensuring ministerial stability within the nation. While other key economic and foreign policy indicators were not flagged as significant in their analyses, these findings are still largely informative in guiding future study on ministerial instability. Contrary to literature that predicts foreign policy crises will directly lead to ministerial instability, both countries had examples of when the crises led to unstable governments as well as when the crises led to a more stable form of government. Instead, as aforementioned, the size of the majority of government seems to ensure that a parliamentary democracy remains in power longer and subsequently has a lower chance at an early election.
Takeaway Two: Both Countries Can Learn Significantly from Each Other in Reforming Their Political Systems

While Israel and England are both parliamentary democracies, they have vastly different policies—each of which has vastly different benefits and trade-offs. One of the major advantages of a two-party system like England is that, unlike Israel, the country often goes to full-term and has a much smaller chance of going to an early election overall. This decreased probability stems from the fact that a two-party system ensures a higher majority at which a party will win. Due to the longer-lasting coalitions, individual coalitions in theory can inject more ideas into the parliament. However, the distinct downside of a two-party system is that because the country is so equally split between two parties, the system oscillates almost every election between two major parties. As such, efficiency in policy progress might be higher than Israel per party but could stall progress over a longer period, as policies are quickly reversed.

Israel, as shown through the data and the case studies, often has crises that are more dramatic and divisive, due to their geopolitical location. However, as a system, too, the proportionally electoral democracy system, like Israel, introduces more ministerial instability and shorter terms overall, leading to poll fatigue from Israelis. When coalitions do form, they are often (like in England) across a variety of views. Unlike England, for example, Israel’s system allows a more proportional and representative outlook in the coalitions. While this might lead to slower political progress overall within coalitions as parties battle out policies, the policies that are decided are more representative of the population—which means that they are less likely to be overturned promptly upon a new government. Shorter terms might lead to more instability, but they can also lead to more ideas being let in as new voices filter into decision-making roles (Coleman & Skogstad, 1990; Shearer, Abelson, Kouyaté, Lavis, & Walt 2016).
Importantly, however, the data presented in this thesis does not make a judgment on which type of parliamentary system is more efficient. While larger majorities are empirically linked to less ministerial instability overall, instability should not equate to overall political progress. As such, while England’s two-party system has less instability, parties in power—and thus ideas as well—oscillate frequently. On the other hand, Israel’s proportional system is more unstable but is more representative of different political and social groups overall. As such, the ideas may be less likely to be overturned in the next cabinet. Importantly, however, as Israel’s parties are becoming more divisive, even though the coalitions are supposed to work with everyone in mind, they are beginning to reverse policies as coalitions switch, which is slowing efficiency and progress in the nation overall (on issues like Israeli settlements). In their book entitled “Israeli Democracy Under Stress”, Diamond and Sprinzak (1993) write that “While a majoritarian electoral system—like the first-past-the-post, single-member-district system of England or the United States—is clearly inappropriate for a society as deeply and complexly cleaved as that of Israel, some way must be found to reduce the fragmentation and proliferation of political parties.”

One way to increase many seats that a government wins is by decreasing the number of parties. As aforementioned, whereas Israel has thirteen main parties, England operates by a two-party system. As such, increasing the majority of a government—or setting up the Israeli electoral process to not be reliant on coalitions—would particularly benefit Israel’s parliamentary stability. To decrease the number of parties, Israel could raise the vote total (the electoral threshold) needed for a party to get before gaining seats in the government. While this idea certainly has merit, Israel has already attempted several reforms: all with differing degrees of success in implementation. Examining this case is an important stipulation in considering the implications of implementing an electoral threshold and looking at the political and stability-
based trade-offs in ensuring stability and ensuring the representation of different political and ethnic minorities.

Even despite any reforms that England or Israel makes to decrease ministerial instability within their nation, considering the political roles and priorities of their constituents who ultimately can help derail or unite parliaments will be crucial in keeping unity. Furthermore, as detailed in the results, each country has a different preferred mechanism in which instability occurs: Israel’s parliament dissolves through the Prime Minister whereas England is more likely to have a snap election called. As such, the mindset of a leader is different; whereas Israel’s coalitional system means that when no progress is occurring due to a stalemate in the Knesset, it makes more sense for a Prime Minister to simply dissolve the parliament and start again. This differs from the two-party system, in which the Prime Minister aims to capitalize on the majority of support within the party when possible. Each Prime Minister plays a different role—whereas English Prime Ministers aim to secure a strong party to then pass legislation, Israeli Prime Ministers do so through securing a functional coalition.

**Takeaway Three: Using the Data to Predict Ministerial Instability**

If this data were extended to more parliamentary democracies, which will be detailed more in limitations, future research could use the majority of government won coupled with the bubbling of discontent to figure out predictions of ministerial instability. This could be done, both by projections of foreign policy and economic crises, but also through looking at internal measures of instability that were not reflected in the dataset, like approval ratings of prime ministers. The next step in this data is reconciling these findings with other ways that could preemptively predict instability overall.

**Limitations and Future Study**
Given takeaway three of the dataset, there are some limitations of the dataset that could be expanded in future studies. One primary factor within the limitations is the nature of the data themselves: there are a limited number of cases that serve as examples of early elections. Between both countries, from 1945 and 1949 in England and Israel, respectively, there were a cumulative 35 cases of ministerial instability. The cases (Figures 5 and 6) are in tables in the appendix, listing the Prime Minister and the manner of exit that caused the ministerial instability overall. While a deep dive analysis allowed an in-depth exploration of the intricacies of both England and Israel, the limited number of cases in each nation certainly reduced the number of countries and statistical power of the analysis. This research could be expanded to all parliamentary democracies to see if there are trends among all countries with economic or foreign policy variables. This would be particularly useful because this analysis is more case-based, but an analysis of all parliamentary democracies could shine a light on more broad implications overall.

Another limitation is in what the measure of “ministerial stability” itself captures. Ministerial stability, which I have chosen to define as instances of an early election, stemming from resignments, parliamentary dissolutions, votes of no confidence, or snap elections, encompasses a lot of outward dynamics that lead to coalition building and ultimately, policy restructuring. However, as shown by the case studies, many other factors are both country and case-specific, that cannot be taken into consideration specifically. An analysis of the Lavon Affair, for example, shows that even when Israel did suffer a foreign policy crisis, it also had a larger internal scandal which is what drove ministerial instability. As such, there should be a developed measure that examines internal political scandals because in this case, the internal scandal is what caused initial ministerial instability.
Furthermore, the Lavon Affair had implications years and years after. This timeline brings up another problem with the measure of ministerial instability—the quantitative measure itself is relatively stagnant whereas the effects of the instability could be carried over into different years, and not be accounted for. The effects of foreign policy and economic crises could also extend much past the original year, like in the example of the steel crisis in England. As such, there is a decent amount of noise and other factors involved in each case—including the timetables, the actors, and other confounding variables that give each case its context and consideration. Future studies should include a compound crisis variable that takes into account the timing of economic and foreign policy crises. As demonstrated in the qualitative case studies, crises often led to ministerial instability when there was some interaction between both forms of crises. Quantitative analysis in this thesis (see Chapter 2) revealed no such interaction, however, as will discuss in the “Future Analysis” section, the GDP growth measure could be altered to a more encompassing form of economic instability—which may alter these interaction results.

One of the main challenges with this research can be seen when drawing back to Mahler and Trilling’s (1982) discussion on coalitions, where they warned against focusing only on winning coalitions in thinking about how coalitions form: “Coalition theorists must realize that “winning” may simply mean “sufficiently large to run the government efficiently,”, rather than “greater than one-half the size of the parliament” (p. 292). As such, looking at ministerial instability, defined through the eyes of winning governments—excludes potentially successful, albeit minority governments. This research, therefore, could be extended as a comparative analysis between majority and minority governments by taking into consideration the finding that a higher majority tends to lead to longer-lasting coalitions.

*Future analysis*
Besides re-examining the term of ministerial instability to see how the term could attempt to capture more of a temporal look at coalition building, exploratory analysis in looking at economic growth would be helpful as well. For example, statistically modeling the growth rates to be “moderate growth” (2-4%) or periods of growth on either side of that: maybe just the more moderate the economic growth the more stable (if the growth is positive) and volatile growth on either end of the spectrum is what triggers instability overall. Unpredictable growth, even if it is extremely high, could trigger instability within a cabinet of a government as a coalition struggles to scale marketplace regulations and prevent inflation rates. Because of this skyrocketing inflation, too high growth and rising GDP are often linked directly to widening income inequality (Dabla-Norris, Kochhar, Suphaphiphat, Ricka, and Tsounta 2013). As such, unhappiness with the government and subsequent pressure for the prime minister to step down can both emerge from a tanking GDP as well as one that is growing unsustainably. Future research, as a result, should take GDP growth not as a linear model with instability, but instead, as a range of “optimal” and “non-optimal” economic values.

Another way in which the economic analysis could be expanded in this research is by incorporating the parliamentary budget and federal debt as a factor of analysis. The budget and debt take into consideration internal economic instability within the parliament and would likely be a more accurate and consistent measure of whether an economy is in a recession. These variables help to show both potential internal instability forming over agreements or disagreements about the budget and economic priorities of a nation, but also help to show the ways in which foreign debt could harm or rally coalitional unity. Whereas many of the economic variables included in this thesis rely on purely endogenous (GDP, inflation, etc.) or exogenous (foreign direct investment) factors, the analysis does not have many economic variables that
encompass and coalesce the two types of factors together. Given that this analysis largely concludes that instability is formed through a combination of both factors together, incorporating a variable that does the same could be crucial in finding a relationship between ministerial instability and another factor.

Finally, underlying all of the analyses is an assumption that instability (as marked by early elections) is a negative indicator in a government. However, should instability actually be measured through early elections? As seen in Chapter 1, early elections can indicate the overall accountability of a parliament to the prime minister, as well as an understanding that parliamentary mechanisms are not, at least completely, blocking the dissolution and reelection of a new prime minister. On the other hand, if there are no early elections in a country’s history, its coalitional processes may not be democratic. Future analyses could compare different forms and measures of instability that go beyond early elections—so as not to treat turnover as an inherently detrimental mechanism. Another exploratory analysis would be to define a “normal” level of early elections per country and run analyses based on abnormalities within the elections—both being too high and too low. Using datasets like Varieties of Democracy (VDEM, 2023), I could explore correlations between democratic erosion and a specific amount of instability in a nation (either too much or too few early election turnovers). This correlation would, in turn, show mechanisms behind parliamentary democracies and show further variation between nations. Finally, I could separate “good” indicators from “bad” indicators of early elections: For example, a vote of no confidence could indicate that parliamentary processes are working whereas a parliament coalition falling apart has a more direct link to both internal and ministerial instability.

*Predicting Ministerial Instability in England and Israel*
The preceding chapters discussed how Israel’s foreign policy and economic crises are elevated because of the interwoven tense nature of the crises and Israel’s safety. These inherent higher stakes imply that situational reactions are amplified: Israel either rallies around the flag heavily in times of crisis or decides that their government needs to be changed in conflict—leading to an early election. While Israel has more intrinsic instability, the recent trend of normalization in Israel could foreshadow less extreme foreign policy crises and ultimately less resulting instability.

In 2020, the heads of state from two of Israel’s longtime neighbors, the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Bahrain gathered alongside Prime Minister Netanyahu to sign the “Abraham Accords Declaration” (Singer, 2021, p. 448). In the Declaration, both recognized Israel officially, opened up flights between the two countries, and signed an agreement of complete normalization and peace. Just after, Israel signed similar agreements with Sudan and Morocco (Singer, 2021, p. 449). While all four of these nations have admittedly not been among Israel’s biggest critics, the normalization and legitimization of Israel in four of its neighbors has changed the trajectory of conflict as a whole in the Middle East. While Saudi Arabia does not have any official diplomatic ties to Israel, Saudi Crown Prince MBS said that “We don’t look at Israel as an enemy”. Furthermore, the Crown Prince has hinted that they are still in favor of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which proposes a complete normalization between the Arab world and Israel if a Palestinian State is formed (with the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and east Jerusalem) and would be open to a full normalization with Israel if an arms deal between the USA and Saudi Arabia is properly facilitated (Crowley, Nereim, & Kingsley, 2023).

While this normalization seems widespread, the motives behind all of the nations’ normalizations are not pure. In the case of Saudi Arabia, for example, Israelis are banned from
entering the country. A representative for the Saudi Arabian Council Foreign Affairs Committee explained “We Muslims have no problems with the Jews… Our biggest problem, as an Arab and Islamic nation, is with the Zionist movement… The Ban must apply only to Israeli citizens because Israel is linked to the Zionist movement…” (Robinson, 2023). To that end, normalization indicates positive change toward stability in Israel but should not be the sole indicator for increasing ministerial stability in the region—some nations’ normalizations rest purely on economic motives and therefore might not represent legitimate policy changes.

One of the benefits of Israeli normalization is that conflicts between Israel and Arab countries are now likely to be lessened because Israel will have neighbors who will try to mitigate or lessen conflicts overall before they spiral against Israel. Despite increased normalization, which will likely lead to less foreign instability overall, Israel will likely still have significantly more volatile reactions in response to exogenous shocks. Put simply, the political and religious climate in the nation might make Israelis more politically invested in coalitions and political outcomes. While Israel’s foreign policy situation might lead to less instability through normalization, it will likely have more internal instability overall than England through persisting challenges to its democratic structure and identity-tied coalitions.

While Israel is experiencing significant and volatile changes in their foreign policy relationships with other nations, England’s lack of mobility and change in its foreign policy likely will lead to more weight in its ministerial instability being tied to economic concepts. England’s involvement in Brexit means that even more than ever, England’s instability will be tied mostly to economic gain, even when it is a foreign policy crisis. According to an economic study done by DeLyon and Dhingra (2021) about the initial economic impacts of Brexit on businesses, over 61% of firms report experiencing at least one Brexit- related issue, including
export cost increases and increased trade barriers (p. 1). Given how instability in England mostly forms through industry and price-related declines, the nation is likely prone to experience more instability. Furthermore, other nations’ dependence on England’s economy helped to insulate and lessen the blow of such economic instability, thus rallying the country around a prime minister. As Brexit shows, however, England’s economic interconnectedness is on the decline, foreshadowing that some of the insulation might be fading. Importantly, however, the insulation from foreign policy conflicts will likely remain to some degree. While England’s economic position might be fading, the nation will likely maintain a more paternalistic role in conflicts, meaning the instability will remain than Israel.

While both England and Israel have different prognoses in ministerial instability in the nations, one remaining question that underlies the entire paper is whether a rise in instability over time is inevitable. Both nations have experienced a rise in ministerial instability in the past ten years. This instability can be attributed to unpredictable major events, including the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but can also be attributed to political trends like increased domestic polarization. While England and Israel could try to mitigate instability within their nations, international conflict from increased globalization will likely cause a baseline of ministerial instability and general leader turnover. While foreign policy and economic shocks were not significantly nor individually linked to ministerial instability, an analysis of all of these cases helps to show how both parliaments operate, what members prioritize, and how leaders can ensure stability for as long as possible.
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Ministerial Instability in Parliamentary Democracies

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Appendix

Table 3: Cases of Ministerial Instability in Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>Manner of Early Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>David Ben-Gurion</td>
<td>Vote of no confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>David Ben-Gurion</td>
<td>PM resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Golda Meir</td>
<td>PM resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Yitzhak Shamir and Shimon Peres</td>
<td>Snap Election, PM Resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Yitzhak Shamir</td>
<td>Snap election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Yizhak Shamir</td>
<td>Snap election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Shimon Peres</td>
<td>Snap election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu</td>
<td>Vote of no confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Ariel Sharon</td>
<td>Vote of No confidence, Parliament dissolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu</td>
<td>PM resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu</td>
<td>Parliament dissolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu</td>
<td>Parliament Dissolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu</td>
<td>Snap election, Parliament Dissolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Naftali Bennett</td>
<td>Parliament Dissolved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Cases of Ministerial Instability in England

Note: The unit of analysis for these tables is by year, but in some years, there were more than early elections (ministerial instability). In other years, one case of ministerial instability triggered other actions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>Manner of Early Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Clement Attlee</td>
<td>Snap Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Clement Attlee</td>
<td>Snap Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Anthony Eden</td>
<td>Parliament Dissolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Alec Douglas-Home</td>
<td>Snap Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Edward Heath</td>
<td>Vore of No Confidence, Snap Election, Parliament Dissolved, PM Resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Margaret Thatcher</td>
<td>Snap Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Tony Blair</td>
<td>Parliament Dissolved, PM Resigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>David Cameron</td>
<td>Vote of No Confidence, Snap Election, PM resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Theresa May</td>
<td>Vote of No Confidence, Snap Election, Parliament Dissolved, PM Resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Boris Johnson</td>
<td>Parliament Dissolved, PM Resigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Lizz Truss</td>
<td>PM Resigned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>