

Diversionsary Diplomacy:
Domestic Political Effects on US-Directed Foreign Policy in Russia

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ABSTRACT

This paper applies the concepts found within diversionary theory to a lower level of international conflict outside the United States. Specifically, it tests whether changes in Russian domestic political contention cause corresponding changes in diplomatic conflict with the United States.

Relying on both a quantitative model spanning 1990-2004 and a qualitative case study of the 2011 and 2012 political protests in Russia, the paper finds evidence for differing short and long-term effects of domestic contention. In the short term, diversionary tactics appear to be a cheap and effective way for a regime to manage domestic contention. However, in the long term, it appears that domestic politics has little impact on Russia-US relations, implying several strategies for the creation of US foreign policy.