

Public Abstract

First Name:Imran

Middle Name:

Last Name:Demir

Adviser's First Name:A. Cooper

Adviser's Last Name:Drury

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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In this dissertation, I study diversionary use of force, which suggests that political leaders, who face domestic political and economic problems, use external conflict to divert attention away from domestic problems. More specifically, I attempt to address three major questions. In the first place, I seek answer whether leaders of different regime types tend to use external conflict for diversionary purposes under the pressure of different domestic political and economic pressures. My findings demonstrate that while autocratic leaders divert more regularly under the pressure of domestic political unrest, leaders of democratic and mixed regimes tend to use force when they face economic problems. Second, I explore whether international rivals use their rivalry for domestic political purposes by initiating conflict against each other when they face domestic political and economic problems. Empirical findings produce mixed results for the contention that international rivals use their rivalry for domestic political purposes. The findings are contingent upon how rivalry is defined and measured. Finally, I seek to explore the relation between corruption and external use of force. My inquiry into the relation between corruption and diversion reveal that while corruption has a strong negative effect on the external use of force, the effects of corrupt on the external use of force in combination with domestic unrest appear to be positive. I also observe that corruption has a strong positive effect on militarized interstate dispute initiation in enduring rivalry settings. Likewise, prevalence of corruption in democratic regimes increases latitude towards belligerent foreign policies.