

# **POLITICAL SURVIVAL AND DIVERSIONARY USE OF FORCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research attempts to improve our knowledge on the study of the use of force for diversionary purposes by addressing three issues that have been left unaddressed. First, I seek to develop a more complete perspective on the diversionary behavior of leaders executing under different institutional constraints by emphasizing issue salience. Empirical results demonstrate that while autocratic leaders divert more regularly under the pressure of domestic unrest, leaders of democratic and mixed regimes are more likely to initiate disputes under deteriorating economic conditions. Second, I explore the effects of domestic unrest on conflict behavior of rivals. Findings demonstrate that while international and strategic rivals are more likely to initiate conflict against their rivals, this relation disappears when international rivals are separated into their enduring and proto components. Finally, this dissertation introduces a new perspective to the study of diversion by associating diversion with corruption. My findings reveal that while corruption has a strong negative effect on the external use of force, the effects of corruption 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.