

THE POLITICS OF DIVERSION: AUTOCRATIC REGIMES AND
THE USE OF FORCE IN TIMES OF DOMESTIC PREDICAMENTS

A Master's Thesis

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May 2024

ALİ SEVİNDİK THE POLITICS OF DIVERSION: AUTOCRATIC REGIMES AND THE USE OF FORCE IN TIMES OF DOMESTIC PREDICAMENTS BILKENT UNIVERSITY 2024

To my family



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The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
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By Ali Sevindik

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope
and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

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ABSTRACT

THE POLITICS OF DIVERSION: AUTOCRATIC REGIMES AND THE USE OF FORCE IN TIMES OF DOMESTIC PREDICAMENTS

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When faced with a hard-to-solve domestic crisis, leaders may appeal to work around the predicament instead of trying to solve the issue to ensure their survival as the political authority. One of the instrumental ways of overcoming the challenges of the domestic crisis through diverting the attention of public opinion could be using force against an ethnic or political group within the borders or against a country. The literature is dominated by research that heavily focuses on the diversionary motivations of democracies as they have electoral processes that give an opportunity to citizens to reward or punish the leaders for their successes or failures. However, very few studies examine the diversionary motivations of autocracies. In this thesis, I aimed to address this gap and contribute to the literature by examining the diversionary motivations of different types of autocratic regimes. I hypothesized that personalist and military autocracies are more conflict-prone than other autocracies in times of domestic crises. I constructed monadic and dyadic datasets by compiling available data. The monadic dataset consists of 258 observations of 59 countries between 1990-2001 whereas the dyadic dataset contains 123,819 observations of dyad-years between 1990-2001. To test my hypotheses, I conducted logistic regression analyses. My findings from the analyses demonstrated mixed results for the

relations among domestic crises, regime type, and external and internal use of force but affirmed that personalist autocracies are more inclined to use force when faced with a domestic crisis vis-à-vis non-personalist autocracies.

Keywords: Diversionary use of force, autocracy, personalist, military, domestic crisis.



ÖZET

SAPTIRMA POLİTİKASI: OTOKRATİK REJİMLER VE İÇ AÇMAZLARIN YAŞANDIĞI DÖNEMLERDE GÜÇ KULLANIMI

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Çözülmesi zor bir iç krizle karşı karşıya kaldıklarında liderler, siyasi otorite olarak hayatta kalmalarını sağlamak için sorunu çözmeye çalışmak yerine çıkmazın etrafından dolanmaya çalışabilirler. Kamuoyunun dikkatini başka yöne çekerek iç krizin zorluklarının üstesinden gelmenin etkili yollarından biri, sınırlar içindeki bir etnik veya siyasi gruba ya da bir ülkeye karşı güç kullanmak olabilir. Literatürün büyük bir bölümü, vatandaşlara liderleri başarıları veya başarısızlıkları için ödüllendirme veya cezalandırma fırsatı veren seçim süreçlerine sahip oldukları için demokrasilerin saptırma motivasyonlarına odaklanmaktadır. Ancak, çok az sayıda çalışma otokrasilerin saptırma motivasyonlarını incelemektedir. Bu tezde, farklı otokratik rejim türlerinin saptırma motivasyonlarını inceleyerek literatüre katkıda bulunmayı ve bu boşluğu gidermeyi amaçladım. Kişiselci ve askeri otokrasilerin iç kriz dönemlerinde diğer otokrasilere kıyasla çatışmaya daha yatkın olduğu hipotezini öne sürdüm. Mevcut verileri derleyerek monadik ve dyadik veri setleri oluşturdum. Monadik veri seti 1990-2001 yılları arasında 59 ülkeye ait 258 gözlemden oluşurken, dyadik veri seti 1990-2001 yılları arasında 123.819 gözlemden oluşmaktadır. Hipotezlerimi test etmek için lojistik regresyon analizleri gerçekleştirdim. Analizlerden elde ettiğim bulgular, iç krizler, rejim tipi ve dış ve iç güç kullanımı

arasındaki ilişkiler için karışık sonuçlar ortaya koymuş, ancak kişiselci otokrasilerin kişiselci olmayan otokrasilere kıyasla bir iç krizle karşı karşıya kaldıklarında güç kullanmaya daha meyilli olduklarını teyit etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Saptırıcı güç kullanımı, otokrasi, kişiselci, askeri, iç kriz.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In a utopian world, leaders are expected to protect their states' interests and take action to secure the welfare of their nations no matter what the conditions are. Nonetheless, in a rather down-to-earth scenario, this would not always be the case. As the rational actor model implies, leaders are rational utility maximizers whose principal aim is to stay in power (Bueno de Mesquita et. al., 2003). In light of this assumption, in the times of a hard-to-solve domestic crisis even though it could be at the expense of the national interests, leaders may act in accordance with their career ambitions such as being re-elected in the upcoming elections or enjoying high rates of presidential approval rates. For the people in the command, political survival is the main target in their political life. Thus, a potential danger that might imperil the political survival of a leader could have an important influence on that leader's actions regarding the decision-making process (Young, 2012). To lengthen their time in office, leaders may engage in the use of force against another country or a political, ethnic, or religious minority within the borders as diversionary conflict theory asserts. This behavior cannot be attributed only to the leaders in democracies but this line of demeanors can be observed in the leaders of non-democratic regimes too. The

following Chinese case is an example of diversionary behavior by a leader of a country that is governed by an autocratic regime.

Throughout the 1990s, the Chinese public opinion was planted with negative opinions towards the Western states and Japan. The Chinese political elite did this through ultra-nationalist education programs to scapegoat the aforementioned actors for domestic incompetent governance and to divert public opinion from domestic predicaments by creating an imagined external other that endangered the interests of the Chinese nation. Nevertheless, after starting to improve political and economic association with the West and Japan in the 2000s and developing collaboration with the United States after the 9/11 incident, blaming external actors for domestic failures proved to be the less fruitful choice for the Chinese political elite. After the Hainan Island incident in which a Chinese fighter jet and an American intelligence aircraft crashed near the Chinese Hainan Island, Chinese nationalists protested against Western countries, especially the United States and Japan.

Initially, the Chinese government tolerated and even supported the demonstrations. However, the demonstrations turned into protests where people severely criticized Chinese foreign policy in general and specifically the Chinese government's incapability to deal with this crisis. Thanks to the Internet, the protests spread all over China quickly. Due to the participation of radical nationalist groups and the rapid spread of the protests, the Chinese government had difficulty in subduing the public mobilization (Kanat, 2012). In addition, these kinds of nationalist protests against the West and Japan might threaten not only the newly-building Chinese image as a peace-

promoting and collaborative country in the international arena but also the future opportunities for trade relations with Western countries. While the high cost of scapegoating the West for domestic failure was challenging the Chinese government, the political elite found a way out of this hard-to-control domestic and international crisis to divert the public opinion and rally the citizens around the government's flag: creating an out-group within the borders.

After the 9/11 attack, China had waged its war on terror over certain ethnic groups within the country while the Chinese political elite framed China as a victim of international terrorism. Instead of scapegoating external actors as before, China directed its blame against internal others and framed these groups as the root cause of the domestic problems. Through the state-commanded media, the Chinese war on terror gained an ethnic aspect. The Uyghur minority has been a historical internal other for the Chinese state but after 9/11, the situation for the Uyghurs exacerbated. Targeting the Uyghur minority was a feasible option for the Chinese government because Uyghurs were Muslim, and they could be associated with Islamic terrorism easily. Under the name of the war on terror campaign, the Chinese government framed nonconformist Uyghurs as Islamic fundamentalists and secessionists who have ties with al-Qaeda and other global terrorist networks (Kanat, 2012). Since then, China has continued its campaign against the Uyghur minority with increasing intensity of violence towards the group. This is an example of an authoritarian state engaging in a domestic diversionary strategy against a disadvantaged minority group within the borders to unify the society, rally them behind the Chinese leadership, and deflect citizens' attention from domestic predicaments.

The diversionary use of force literature is mostly dominated by studies on the United States. Since the United States has an advantageous position in terms of projecting power over countries in different parts of the world thanks to its extensive material capabilities, it is plausible to have numerous studies examining the diversionary uses of force of the United States. As a reflection of this trend, Fordham (2005) states that diversionary use of force is peculiar to the United States presidency. Some other studies regarding democracies engaging in diversionary use of force focus on Israel (Sprecher and DeRouen, 2002) Great Britain (Morgan and Anderson, 1999), and France and India in large-N studies (Oneal and Tir, 2006). Apart from studies focusing on democracies, some other works examine the diversionary use of force by non-democracies. Wilkenfeld (1968) demonstrates that authoritarian countries are more prone to initiate war if the risk of having a domestic revolution increases. Similarly, Enterline and Gleditsch (2000) show that autocratic regimes have a greater tendency to employ diversionary use of force compared to democratic countries. While working on the relations between regime type and diversionary use of force, some other studies focus on the impact of regime change, leader's tenure, and regime maturity. Pickering and Kisangani (2005), basing their argument on the maturity of political regimes, assert that consolidating autocratic regimes are expected to be more combatant in responding to domestic upheaval, whereas mature autocratic regimes do not usually require resorting to force against dissidents. Apart from Pickering and Kisangani's (2005) work which classifies autocracies as consolidating and mature autocracies, there is not much study about autocracies' diversionary use of force that does not treat different autocratic regimes as they are identical political entities. Since there are numerous institutional differences between particular autocratic regimes, treating all autocracies as if they are the same is an oversimplification. In this thesis,

by categorizing autocratic regimes in accordance with the leader's background (if he/she is a military officer or civilian) and whether the leader is constrained by a political elite or not (personalist or non-personalist), I avoid this oversimplification and aim to come up with more valid and encompassing results.

Most of the time, using force against another country to divert public opinion has more costs than benefits in diverting public opinion from an ongoing crisis. Using force against another country violates international law so it could antagonize the international society and pave the way for sanctions or even military interventions. In addition to this, unintended consequences arising from uncertainties regarding the initiator's or target's allies' moves and both the initiator's and target's unforeseeable performance in a possible armed conflict bring more costs to the leaders' gamble in drawing the public's attention to somewhere else than the ongoing internal predicaments. So, as some scholars state, leaders may be incentivized to engage in domestic diversionary use of force on political, religious, or ethnic minorities within the borders (Tir and Jasinski, 2008) instead of external diversionary use of force in which the initiator uses force against a target state. There is some research incorporating large-N analysis regarding the domestic diversionary uses of force (Machain and Rosenberg, 2016; Klein and Tokdemir, 2019) and some case studies of Russia (Petersson, 2009) and China (Kanat, 2012). However, there is no study that systematically analyzes the incidents of autocratic countries' domestic diversionary uses of force.

In this thesis, I focus on autocratic regimes and their domestic and external diversionary uses of force. As stated earlier, former works revolve around the diversionary use of force by democratic countries against external targets and diversionary use of force by some states against some groups such as ethnic or religious minorities or political communities within the borders. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the systematic examination of the external and domestic diversionary behaviors of autocratic regimes. This thesis aims to address this gap. My research question is why some autocracies are more prone to use force against external targets or certain domestic groups in times of a domestic crisis vis-à-vis other autocracies. I argue that there is a discrepancy in behaviors of different autocratic regimes in terms of diversionary uses of force due to different dominant interest groups within each of them such as civilian government elites and military officers and due to the leader's background as he/she is a civilian or a military officer. In accordance with this logic, I argue that, compared to non-personalist autocratic regimes and civilian autocratic regimes respectively, personalist autocratic regimes and military autocratic regimes are more inclined to engage in a diversionary use of force in the times of a domestic crisis.

The research question of this thesis is important for three reasons. First, the findings of this thesis contribute to the diversionary use of force literature by focusing on an alternative type of classification of authoritarian regimes. The classification of autocratic regimes that I use in this thesis is useful in understanding the motives of these countries in light of the distribution of power among the ruling elite and this elite's background in terms of being a military officer or a civilian. Secondly, this research question necessitates a systematic and encompassing approach to

diversionary incentives of autocratic regimes, an approach that exists very rarely in the literature when it comes to autocratic regimes' diversionary uses of force. Finally, the answer to this research question establishes a step towards understanding the relations between the domestic-level diversionary use of force and external diversionary conflict. There is a lack of research that systematically examines the relationship between domestic and external diversionary use of force in terms of finding an answer to the question of whether one of them could be an efficient alternative to the other one to successfully divert public opinion and have the least costs and the maximum benefit at the same time. By answering the research question, this thesis can be a first step for future studies to examine whether there is a substitutability between these two diversionary strategies.

In this study, I use the labels in Slater's (2003) classification of authoritarian regimes. Although I use Slater's labeling of authoritarian regimes, I benefit from Weeks's logic of the same classification. In the categorization of the regimes, Slater (2003) concentrates on infrastructural power or whether the regime is backed by civilian or military institutions whereas Weeks (2014) concentrates on whether the leader has a military or a civilian background and is restrained by a political elite or not. As the factors in Weeks's (2014) logic are easier to observe and measure compared to Slater's logic in the categorization of autocracies, and function as well as Slater's (2003), I benefit from Weeks's (2014) rationale. In light of this logic, I have four categories in this classification: personalist civilian – personalist military and non-personalist civilian – non-personalist military authoritarian regimes.

In personalist regimes, there is a high level of dependence of regime elites on the leader since the leader usually appoints his/her family members, cronies, or people who have some relations with the leader other than kinship. The power is highly concentrated on the leader and the punishment and rewarding mechanism works at his/her will. Thus, the regime elite's political survival is highly dependent on the leaders in the personalist authoritarian regimes. Since this is the situation, these people are restrained in terms of questioning the decisions of the leader or discouraged from disobeying the orders. On the other hand, non-personalist regimes have some different features. The regime elite is not necessarily appointed by the leader by himself/herself and does not have to have kinship or friendship relations with the leader in order to maintain his/her duty in politics or to promote. So that the regime insiders are not necessarily highly dependent on the leader as in the situation of the personalist regimes. Thanks to a certain level of independence, the regime insiders can form a powerful domestic audience and to some extent put pressure on the leader during the decision-making process. This pressure can increase in times of policy failure and may end up with the leaders being removed from office. When the low level of domestic audience costs in times of a military defeat is taken into consideration, there are a few factors that restrain the personalist authoritarian leader from engaging in a militarized dispute. Non-personalist leaders, however, may not be encouraged to start a conflict to divert attention from an ongoing domestic crisis for several reasons. The political elite would be resistant to being manipulated by patriotic sentiments, and thanks to their closeness to the decision-making process they may evaluate the leader's action as a strategy for finding a way for himself/herself out of the domestic predicament. Considering the opportunities that personalist leaders have and the restraints that non-personalist leaders suffer from, I argue that

personalist leaders are more inclined to use diversionary force both in the domestic and international realm compared to non-personalist leaders.

The second principle that I benefit from in the classification of authoritarian regimes is about the leader's being civilian or having a military background. Members of the military are socialized in an environment in which most of the members of the community have perceptions regarding the usefulness of the use of force in policymaking (Sechser, 2004). Probably, army members have a more tendency vis-à-vis civilians in terms of seeing the use of force as an important alternative to diplomacy, if not superior to it, since as some scholars state, military officers sometimes perceive diplomacy as a waste of time in the path to realization of state interests (Weeks, 2012). In non-personalist military authoritarian regimes, the leader would be surrounded by military officers who probably hold the aforementioned sentiments regarding diplomacy and the use of force in times of disputes. Thus, the regime insiders that surround the leader may put pressure on to use of force in times of crisis. In light of this logic, I argue that whether it is personalist or non-personalist, military authoritarian regimes would be more inclined to use force with respect to civilian authoritarian regimes in order to divert public opinion from an ongoing domestic crisis.

To answer the research question and examine the relation between autocratic regime type and the tendency to engage in a diversionary use of force, I conduct logistic regression analyses of the use of force against another country and state violence directed against local groups from 1990 to 2010. My independent variable is a

domestic crisis. The domestic crisis is operationalized as the number of protests and the inflation rate in a given country in a given year. The intervening variable of this study is type of autocratic regime. My dependent variables, on the other hand, are external and internal diversionary use of force. Militarized interstate disputes are considered as the external diversionary use of force, whereas internal diversionary use of force is operationalized as the state-led violence against groups within borders. I created my dataset by integrating data from previously published datasets comprising information about autocratic regime types, number of protests, inflation rate, militarized interstate disputes, and state-led violence aimed at local groups. Additionally, for my control variables, my analysis includes state capacity, sharing a common border or not, distance between capitals, being a minor power, existence of a pact of alliance between the states in the dyad, trade interdependence, rivalry between the states in the dyad, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, the number of armed non-state actors within the borders, ethnic fractionalization, and relative power between the states in the dyad. The dataset utilized for this thesis is assembled from several congruous datasets such as the Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions Dataset (Geddes et. al, 2014), the Mass Mobilization Data Project (Clark and Regan, 2015), Inflation as GDP Deflator Dataset (World Bank, 2022), the Dyadic Militarized Interstate Disputes Dataset (Maoz, 2008), and the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et. al, 2002).

I conduct two different logistic regression analyses: one for the monadic dataset, and one for the dyadic dataset. The units of analysis in this thesis are country-year for monadic analysis and dyad-year for dyadic analysis. The period I cover in this study is between 1990-2001. The main reason for focusing on this period is that all the

variables I compile from different datasets have only one common period that is the 1990-2001 era. However, covering this period is important as the outcomes might suggest valuable insights for the first years of the post-Soviet era. For the monadic analysis, my dataset consists of 258 observations from 59 countries. The reason for the constrained number of observations in the monadic dataset is that the data on state-led violence against the organized groups within the borders was very limited. In the dyadic analysis, on the other hand, I have a dataset that has a total of 123,819 observations of dyad-years. The dyadic dataset only focuses on the external use of force while the monadic dataset also covers the data on the internal use of force. Although I could only use the monadic dataset for the analysis as it focuses on both external and internal use of force, I benefit from the dyadic dataset not only because I aim to control the conflict cases between dyads in times of a domestic crisis but also because the dyadic dataset has way more observations than the monadic dataset. Also, the monadic dataset serves as a crosscheck for the findings of the analysis of the dyadic dataset.

After the introduction chapter, the thesis is organized as the following. In Chapter 2, I review the literature about the diversionary use of force in terms of external and domestic level diversionary uses of force by democratic and autocratic regimes. After presenting the perspectives and arguments in the diversionary use of force literature, I demonstrate the gap in the literature. Then, I construct my theoretical basis by using Slater's (2003) classification and Weeks's (2014) logic regarding this categorization of authoritarian regimes and situate my thesis in the literature. Moreover, in light of the logic I mention in Chapter 2, I introduce my hypotheses. Afterwards, Chapter 3 presents the research design, and elaborates on the data and the operationalizations of

the variables utilized for the hypothesis testing in this thesis. In Chapter 4, I will demonstrate my empirical analysis and deliberate on the findings from this analysis. Lastly, Chapter 5 consists of the concluding remarks, limitations of this study, and discussions for future research.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

In this chapter, I will sum up the literature and position my study in the existing research on the diversionary use of force. I will also highlight the gaps in the literature and the contributions of my thesis to address these gaps. The gaps and the contribution will be followed by the theoretical mechanism, the logic, and the hypotheses of this study.

2.1. Diversionary use of force theory

The literature about the diversionary use of force is a burgeoning one and it consists of a wide variety of examinations to answer many questions like who diverts, when to divert, who could be the potential victim of a diversionary use of force, and what kind of strategies would countries assume in order to avoid a possible diversionary behavior by another country, etc. In this thesis, I examine the diversionary behaviors of autocratic regimes and attempt to understand the discrepancies among different autocracy types in terms of the propensity to engage in a diversionary use of force and which type of diversionary force.

2.1.1. External Diversion

At the international level, the diversionary use of force theory aims to explain the attempts of leaders who are in desperate straits to distract public opinion away from economic or political domestic predicaments to focus on the actual or perceived threat posed by another state. As Coser (1956) argues in his book, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, coherence at home would probably be strengthened when there is a conflict with out-group. A possibility of a strengthening in the internal cohesion favoring a leader's political survival because of a conflict with external others, could incentivize the leader to engage in a diversionary conflict in the times of a domestic crisis. In addition to this, there is another factor that could motivate a leader to initiate a diversionary conflict with another state. As Smith (1996) states, leaders' appeal to engage in a diversionary use of force is rooted in a process in which the citizens evaluate the incumbent leader's competency in governing the country based on concrete achievements especially in the areas of economy and foreign policy. Addressing a hard-to-solve domestic issue may take a long time and the means to solve the problem may create consequences that would increase dissatisfaction towards leaders among citizens. The 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) shows that it is not easy to revive a severely damaged economy. Reconstruction necessitates time and measures like austerity policies to address the economic predicaments may prove to be highly disliked among citizens (Foster, 2006).

To admit, not all of the domestic predicaments are as severe as the GFC, and generally they do not need measures as drastic as the GFC necessitated. However, an issue smaller than a deep economic crisis at home can be a catalyst for a series of developments that may end up with leaders being removed from office. In addition to

this, a small and seemingly unimportant domestic problem can be coupled with other predicaments, or that domestic issue may lead to some unintended consequences detrimental to leaders' political survival. Thus, a problem that could be perceived as a trivial one may challenge leaders to take some measures that may worsen citizens' life standards or hurt their patriotic emotions which could increase dissatisfaction among citizens. Provided the citizens perceive the leader as the cause of the outgrowth of domestic crisis or if they see the leader as he/she is unable to tackle the difficulties, then the citizens are likely to punish the leader by supporting another candidate in the upcoming elections (Smith, 1996; Duch and Stevenson, 2010). To prevent this from happening, embattled leaders might strategically opt to use force against another country in times of economic hardship, an approaching election, or a political crisis (Levy, 1989; Meernik, 1994; Ostrom and Job, 1986; DeRouen, 1995; Levy, 1998).

In the face of a threat, whether it is created by the leader or not, starting a conflict or participating in one could lead the citizens to perceive their leader as a qualified statesperson while being inactive can be a signal of inefficacy. Affirming this, Smith (1998) asserts that electors evaluate a leader's competency through outcomes in a crisis. He states electors would assume that a capable leader actively enters into relations with others in international politics because the leader has such a character that paves the way for victory in a conflict for the state (Smith, 1998). The leaders who are seen as qualified and popular, may not be incentivized to deflect public opinion from a crisis through diversionary use of force whereas the leaders who are considered unqualified and/or unpopular may undertake diversionary use of force to reclaim the trust of the citizens by drawing an image of a capable leader who can deal with an imminent threat effectively. The embattled leaders may opt for diversionary

tactics to prevent being unseated and to boost popular support with the help of the rally around the flag effect (Russett, 1990). Within the diversionary use of force literature, some empirical studies make comparisons between the diversionary behaviors of democratic and autocratic regimes by focusing on different aspects such as domestic challenges to regime institutions, the maturity of the institutions, or the government's economic performance. In the following pages, this thesis delves into details of the abovementioned works in the following order: firstly, the empirical studies argue that democracies are more prone to engage in a diversionary use of force vis-à-vis autocracies. This is to be followed by the studies asserting the contrasting scenario, indicating that the autocracies have a greater tendency to use a diversionary force than the autocracies.

2.1.1.1. Democracies as diverters

As some other theories in the international relations literature state, diversionary use of force theory has deeply contested issues within itself. One of these issues emerged from the question that asks who is more prone to engage in a diversionary use of force. In their studies, some scholars argue that due to some discrepancies in the domestic politics between democracies and autocracies such as politically more attentive citizens in democracies, and lack of institutions that would ensure checks and balances on autocratic leaders, democratic leaders would be more inclined to initiate a diversionary conflict to open a room for himself/herself in an ongoing domestic crisis. In the following paragraphs, this thesis presents some of these empirical studies.

After analyzing 180 conflict initiation cases in between 1948-1982, Gelpi (1997) puts forward that compared to autocratic states, democratic countries would have a more tendency to initiate a conflict with other countries to divert public opinion from an internal crisis when suffering from demonstrations and unrests in domestic politics. Actually, he frames diversionary foreign policy as “a pathology of the democratic systems” (Gelpi, 1997). He empirically finds support for the argument which asserts that the authoritarian states would just repress the dissidents when there is a rising unrest instead of waging a war against another country. Moreover, one other reason for democracies’ being more prone to diversionary use of force vis-à-vis autocracies is that the population in autocracies would not identify themselves with the state due to constrained political participation so that rally around the flag effect would be less efficient (Gelpi, 1997).

Regarding the relationship between leaders’ conflict initiation behavior and the constituency, Davies (2002) presents another reason for democracies’ being more prone to engage in diversionary use of force. In times of internal strife, compared to autocracies, democratic countries would be more inclined to initiate an external conflict instead of repressing the dissidents because there is a considerable level of electoral costs in democracies whereas the autocratic leaders would not be constrained by an electoral cost (Davies, 2002). Therefore, instead of initiating a conflict with another country, autocracies would opt for repression in times of a domestic crisis which makes them to be appear more benign compared to democracies in terms of initiating a militarized international conflict (Davies, 2002). Although repression appears to be a viable option for a democratic country in the times of a domestic crisis as the abovementioned scholars state, I assume that diversionary use of force can be

more profitable for an autocratic leader. After each repressive action because of a domestic crisis, a level of dissidence among citizens towards the political elite would increase, a case that paves the way for the rising of costs in future repressions. The case of a diversionary war, on the other hand, has a lower risk of growing dissatisfaction among citizens due to the use of force.

In their article, Oneal and Tir (2006) create a model that demonstrates patterns in dyadic conflict by taking economic growth and democracy scores into consideration to observe whether the diversionary use of force threatens democratic peace or not. They argue that, compared to autocracies, democratic countries have a greater tendency to start a fatal militarized conflict even with another democratic country when they have poor economic performance (Oneal and Tir, 2006). According to their model, although bad economic performance has an impact on the decisions of the leaders in terms of engaging in diversionary use of force, upcoming elections do not have any significant influence over leaders (Oneal and Tir, 2006). With this finding, Oneal and Tir (2006) challenge the widely accepted argument in the diversionary use of force literature which implies that electoral processes may encourage the leaders to engage in the diversionary use of force to rally the people around the flag and strengthen their positions in the elections.

Some other scholars assert claims similar to the arguments of the aforementioned studies in essence. After analyzing incidents in 140 countries between 1950-1996, Kisangani and Pickering (2007) demonstrate that democracies and mixed regimes are more likely to engage in benevolent use of force for socioeconomic interventions to

deflect public attention from domestic predicaments. According to them, autocracies do not have a tendency to use force against others in times of internal trouble (Kisangani and Pickering, 2007). In addition to agreeing with the abovementioned assumptions regarding the democracies' belligerence in times of bad economic performance, Russett (1990) demonstrates a reverse pattern for autocracies. He explored that democracies are more prone to engage in the use of force when experiencing a decrease in the GDP per capita, whereas autocracies have a greater tendency to resort to force when experiencing positive economic development (Russett, 1990). He draws these results by looking at the conflict behaviors of the United States and the United Kingdom for democratic countries; and Germany and the Soviet Union for autocratic countries (Russett, 1990). Although Russett's (1990) argument seems as a viable one, there are some issues in terms of generalizability. Focusing on the two most powerful representatives of both democracies and autocracies can be problematic since these countries do not symbolize all of the democratic and autocratic countries. So, reaching an all-encompassing theoretical mechanism by examining a very small number of countries with no significant differences in terms of power capabilities, would be far from possible. This thesis aims to overcome this challenge by examining a large number of countries with various discrepancies in terms of power, institutions, and neighboring countries' profiles including their regime types, alliances, and the existence of a rivalry.

Unlike the scholars mentioned in the previous paragraphs, some other empirical studies assert that the reality is contrary to the abovementioned studies' assertions, in other words, they argue that autocratic countries have a greater propensity to resort to

military force to divert public opinion compared to democratic countries. In the following part, these studies are to be discussed.

2.1.1.2. Autocracies as diverters

Scholars who argue that autocracies are more prone to engage in a diversionary use of force compared to democracies, base their arguments on several aspects such as economy, domestic political opportunities, and restraints like possible election results in times of a failure of the use of force, having no checks and balance system, having strong or weak domestic audience or rising dissatisfaction among political elite or citizens.

Mitchell and Prins (2004), emphasizing an economic aspect of a war initiation, state that autocratic countries are more likely to engage in a militarized interstate dispute than democratic states in times of high inflation. Even though their examinations reveal that the leaders of democratic countries have more opportunities that would make them incentivized to engage in a diversionary use of force, due to the higher level of regime transparency compared to an autocracy, democratic leaders are more constrained in initiating an external conflict for diverting public opinion (Mitchell and Prins, 2004). Along with the economic side of the war initiation, anticipated election results in times of defeat after a conflict initiation may discourage democratic leaders from initiating a diversionary war. Chiozza and Goemans (2003) argue that the leaders of democratic countries have a less propensity to engage in a diversionary use of force vis-à-vis the leaders of autocratic countries because if the use of force ends with a failure, democratic leaders' not being reelected would be more probable than

the autocratic leaders' being toppled. So, it is not wrong to say that, war initiation, and specifically diversionary use of force for this thesis, is not only determined by international conjuncture but also by domestic factors. Resonating this conclusion, in their study, Enterline and Gleditsch (2000) examine the global sample of political leaders between 1948 and 1982 to see whether repression or participating in an external dispute are substitutes and/or complementary to each other. According to them, internal political restraints determine leaders' preferences to opt whether for repression or engagement in the external use of force (Enterline and Gleditsch, 2000). They show that autocratic regimes have a greater tendency to employ diversionary use of force compared to democratic countries.

Another internal political restraint that has a significant influence over the decision on diversionary use of force is leaders' unpopularity rising from the dissatisfaction among the political elite or among the citizens. Especially the rising dissatisfaction among citizens would have a detrimental effect on the internal cohesion of a given state if different groups within the society have highly discrepant perspectives about political issues such as a leader's performance. Some scholars state that violent domestic friction jeopardizes the political survival of authoritarian leaders since it would have a detrimental impact on the state's economic functioning and might decrease the resource extraction capability of the state (Levy and Vakili, 1993; Morgan and Bickers, 1992; Davies, 2002). In times of domestic strife, a leader would initiate a conflict if dissatisfaction arises from within the leader's supporting group (Morgan and Bickers, 1992). On the other hand, if dissatisfaction arises among the citizens, the leader would not assume the risks and costs of initiating a conflict with another country because there is a risk of weakening in the internal cohesion since not

all of the ethnic or political groups within the borders would share the similar ideas in terms of initiating a militarized conflict with another state (Morgan and Bickers, 1992).

As seen above, most of the research in terms of the diversionary use of force focuses on modern times. There is little research on the diversionary theory of war that examines the wars that took place before the 19th century. Aiming to address this gap, Sobek (2007) examines the dyadic relations between Italian city-states between 1250 and 1494. According to his study, the trend of autocracies' being more prone to engage in a diversionary use of force compared to democracies can also be observed in the late Middle Ages. In times of domestic unrest, oligarchies had more tendency to initiate an interstate conflict vis-à-vis republics due to a low level of domestic constraints (Sobek, 2007).

In addition to the abovementioned arguments which assert that either democracies are more prone to initiate an external conflict to divert public opinion from an ongoing domestic crisis or autocracies are more inclined to do so compared to democracies, some other scholars claim that certain types of autocracies and democracies demonstrate similar behaviors regarding conflict initiation. In the following section, these scholars and their arguments will be mentioned.

2.1.1.3. Certain democracies and autocracies as diverters

Unlike the scholars mentioned above, some others do not adopt a particular attitude that asserts that all democracies have a greater tendency to engage in a diversionary

use of force than all autocracies or vice versa. Rather, according to these scholars, certain types of democracies and autocracies have a higher probability of engaging in diversionary behavior than other democracies and autocracies due to certain factors such as institutional formation. For example, Weeks (2012) states that some of the autocratic regimes are no more bellicose than the democracies. She classifies autocratic regimes in terms of the regime's being personalist/non-personalist and civilian/military and she states that non-personalist civilian autocracies have a similar level of belligerence as democracies (Weeks, 2012). Weeks (2012) explains the reason for this phenomenon by demonstrating that like in democracies, leaders of some autocratic regimes are held accountable since domestic institutions give opportunity to regime insiders to question, influence, and even restrain leaders' policies in the international realm. Since the leaders of non-personalist civilian autocracies are restrained by the domestic audience, they are expected to be incentivized to use force against external others similar to the democratic leaders (Weeks, 2012).

While working on the relations between the regime type and the diversionary use of force, in addition to the previously mentioned institutional formation, some other studies focus on the impact of regime change, leader's tenure, and regime maturity. In the study which shows the importance of the type of nation and nature of conflict in determining the association between domestic and international conflict, Wilkenfeld (1968) demonstrates that authoritarian countries are more prone to initiate a war if the risk of having a domestic revolution increases. Similar to Wilkenfeld's argument, Enterline and Gleditsch (2000) find that the leaders of authoritarian states are more prone to start a conflict with another country when they are suffering from intense

domestic friction. While these scholars focus on the aspects mostly related to citizens, in their study, Chiozza and Goemans (2003) focus on the relationship between leadership tenure and the initiation of an international conflict. They argue that a rise in the danger of losing the seat would discourage the leaders from starting an external conflict and a rise in the danger of an occurrence of an international crisis increases the probability of leaders' losing their seats (Chiozza and Goemans, 2003).

While examining the diversionary use of force theory in their study, Pickering and Kisangani (2005) base their argument on the maturity of political regimes. Instead of adopting the approach that classifies countries as democracies and autocracies, they differentiate mature democracies and autocracies from the consolidating versions of these regimes. Pickering and Kisangani (2005) assert that consolidating autocratic regimes is expected to be more combatant in responding to domestic upheaval, whereas mature autocratic regimes do not usually require resorting to force against dissidents. Resonating Russett's (1990) argument, they argue that mature autocratic regimes are more likely to use diversionary force against another state instead of dissidents when the country has a favorable economic performance. In addition to this, there are some differences between mature and consolidating democracies too. Leaders of mature democracies would not be incentivized to initiate an external conflict at the first sign of domestic strife and when this internal upheaval reaches a level that disrupts domestic cohesion (Pickering and Kisangani, 2005). However, the leaders of mature democracies may engage in diversionary use of force to react against a moderate level of domestic upheaval (Pickering and Kisangani, 2005). Nonetheless, the consolidating democracies may engage in diversionary use of force more than the mature democracies since the authors assume that the former ones are

not as tolerant as the mature democracies towards moderate levels of domestic unrest (Pickering and Kisangani, 2005).

The discussion regarding the association between domestic institutions and the use of force in the literature which revolves around the discrepancies in the domestic institutions that identify autocracies is also worth mentioning here. Peceny et. al. (2002) attempt to reveal whether there is an autocratic peace by contrasting the tendencies to conflict of personalist, single-party, and military autocracies. After analyzing the wars between autocracies between 1945 and 1994, they suggest that single-party autocracies engage in less conflict with other single-party autocracies whereas other autocracy types have more tendency to initiate a conflict (Peceny et. al., 2002). Affirming the latter part of Peceny et. al.'s findings, Lai and Slater (2006) demonstrate that military autocracies are more prone to start a conflict compared to single-party autocracies. According to them, since military autocracies are less successful than single-party autocracies in terms of improving domestic institutions, they more often fall back upon drastic measures as a response to domestic threats to their political survival (Lai and Slater, 2006). Furthermore, in her analysis, Weeks (2012) examines the conflict proneness of different autocratic regimes by comparing the audience costs in each of the autocratic regimes. She reveals that the discrepancies in autocracies' conflict proneness can be accredited to differing levels of audience costs which are more in single-party and monarchy autocracies. Moreover, Weeks (2012) claims the capability to hold the leader responsible and a certain level of independent agenda of regime insiders points out that the personalist and the military autocracies are expected to be more war prone whereas the non-personalist civilian

regimes are as pacific as democracies, a finding that contests Lai and Slater's (2006) arguments.

In another study, Pickering and Kisangani (2010) investigate the impact of autocratic institutions on the probability of diversionary use of force. They contest Lai and Slater's (2006) claims by constructing a political incentive theory that concentrates on the scope of the electorate and winning coalition. Pickering and Kisangani (2010) assert that since they are more indebted to a bigger winning coalition and electorate group, single-party regimes are more prone to engage in diversionary use of force. The greater the winning coalition of the autocratic regime and the bigger dependence on providing public goods, the higher the probability that an autocratic country to engage in diversionary conflicts to address internal predicaments (Pickering and Kisangani, 2010). However, their findings approve Lai and Slater's (2006) work proposing that the military autocracy is the only one among other autocracies to start an external conflict as a reaction against rising inflation rates (Pickering and Kisangani, 2010). Moreover, some scholars assert that the high probability of being toppled by a coup encourages leaders to resort to diversionary use of force to increase popular support or to restrain the army's impact in domestic politics by dividing the military into different subdivisions that are cautious against each other (Miller and Elgun, 2010; Belkin and Schofer, 2005).

As it is seen, most of the studies mentioned here adopt an understanding that has a dichotomous scale of regime types. Pickering and Kisangani (2005) aim to address this classification gap in the literature by categorizing the regimes further in

accordance with their maturity level. Similarly, Slater (2003) and Weeks (2012) have an approach that further classifies autocracies in light of institutional differences. Having been inspired by Slater (2003) and Weeks (2012), I intend to conduct a study by embracing an understanding that categorizes autocracies further to demonstrate differences among discrete autocracy types in terms of initiation of an external conflict to divert public opinion from an ongoing domestic crisis. Although Slater (2003) and Weeks (2012) demonstrate the overall conflict proneness of different autocracies, there is a lack of research regarding the diversionary behaviors of personalist civilian–personalist military and non-personalist civilian–personalist military authoritarian regimes. In this thesis, I aim to address this gap.

Despite the diversionary war theory has some credible assumptions, it is not always easy to see this phenomenon in international politics. It should be noted that even though the different regime types, domestic challenges to regime institutions, maturity of the institutions, or the government's economic performance are to be left aside, still, the probability of observing a diversionary use of force is still non-constant. Apart from the previously mentioned factors, strategic conflict avoidance is another determinant agent in the diversionary use of force. Fordham (2005) puts forward that in light of strategic conflict avoidance, a state may become less war-prone in relations with the potential diversion-motivated state so that the former may prevent giving excuses to the latter for initiating a conflict to divert public opinion from a domestic crisis. To address this challenge, some scholars come up with another type of conflictual behavior that may predict states' behaviors better in times of a crisis, which is targeting a group within borders when there is a domestic predicament. In

the following part, this important component of the diversionary use of force literature is mentioned: domestic diversion.

2.1.2. Domestic diversion

Although diverting public opinion from an ongoing domestic crisis through initiating a conflict with another country can be plausible in theory and seems to be smooth at first sight, the situation would not be that simple in the real world. There are numerous factors that increase the costs of any diversionary action, intensify the complexity of interactions between the initiator and the target, and deepen the uncertainty in terms of the consequences of the diversionary tactics. Deflecting the public's attention from a continuing domestic predicament through initiating a militarized conflict with another country might be costly regarding the political and economic links with the target state, material capabilities of the target's allies and allegiances, relative power distribution between the initiator and the target, and the restrictions over the geographical proximity (Tir and Jasinski, 2008).

Initiating a conflict with a country that has important diplomatic, commercial, and security relations with the initiator could be problematic for the country that is planning to engage in a diversionary use of force (Maoz and Russett, 1993; Russett and Oneal, 2001). A militarized conflict probably spoils trade relations between the initiator and the victim which could end up with a dramatic decrease in capital flow to each country. If the leader of the perpetrator state resorts to force due to a domestic political predicament, the leader may suffer from a newly emerged economic crisis due to a decline in revenues from trading with an important partner. Another possible

motivator for the leader to resort to force could be a domestic economic crisis. In this case, diversionary use of force could deepen the internal economic crisis of the initiator so that the dissatisfaction among the citizens could increase more and it might threaten the leader's political survival, the scenario which brings down the very reason for engaging in a diversionary use of force.

In addition to this, although it is not frequently stated, diversionary use of force is not strictly contained in bilateral relations. Consequences of the diversionary use of force can easily spill out to the relations with third parties. The target state's allies and countries that have allegiances with the target state could attempt to deter the initiator from conducting a diversionary use of force or compel it to terminate the diversionary attack by imposing economic sanctions, initiating a militarized conflict short of war or waging a war. If the target state's partners would not deter or compel the initiator from giving up the diversionary attack, their credibility and commitment to the agreements of partnership could be questioned, a situation that would force these states to stand against the initiator. If the leader of the possible initiator country calculates the costs of being forced or even being attacked by the target state and its allies because of resorting to a diversionary force, the leader may be motivated to engage in a domestic diversion. Moreover, there is a high probability of a military operation against a country that is riddled with numerous failures and unforeseen developments so an external diversionary use of force with these handicaps could worsen the condition for the embattled leaders.

Furthermore, one must note that apart from a very limited number of countries in international politics, all other states would suffer from great limitations in logistics and projecting material capacities on another state. Resonating this fact, Tir and Jasinski (2008) state that apart from the case of the United States, there is little empirical affirmation that endorses the diversionary conflict hypothesis. Fordham (2005) takes one step further and argues that a diversionary war is unique to the American presidency. On the other hand, some scholars state that an embattled leader of a country could initiate a militarized conflict with a neighboring state if there is an enduring rivalry between the two states (Thompson, 2001; Enterline and Gleditsch, 2000; Mitchell and Prins, 2004). I disagree with Fordham's argument which indicates that the diversionary war is peculiar to the United States. I am more in line with some scholars who state that there is a higher probability of observing a conflict when geographical proximity increases (Most and Starr, 2015; Bremer, 1992; Foster, 2006; Foster and Keller, 2014) and there is a rivalry between the neighboring states (Mitchell and Prins, 2004). The high probability of conflict between countries when they are geographically adjacent and there is a rivalry between them is also applicable to the external diversionary use of force.

However, still, the power that is necessitated to be exerted over an internal target would more likely be lesser than the capabilities required for a militarized conflict with another country. Also, unlike the scarcity of desirable external victims; ethnic minority groups are omnipresent nearly in every country since there are only a couple of countries that are ethnically homogenous (Ra'anan et. al., 1991). In addition to these, as Weber states, (if the United Nations Security Council would be disregarded) a modern state is the only political entity that has the legitimate monopoly on violence

within determined boundaries (Waters and Waters, 2015). Thus, the consequences that emerge from the reactions of the international society that the aggressor would face after initiating a militarized conflict would be more severe than the consequences after starting a campaign to scapegoat and repress a minority group. All of the aforementioned factors are taken into consideration, an embattled leader might prefer internal diversion over external diversion to deflect the public opinion from a domestic crisis.

There are some limitations in the external diversionary use of force literature such as having little empirical support for the hypothesis which may occur from the reasons of handicaps of initiating a conflict with another country. Arguments that revolve around the domestic diversionary use of force not only expand the scope of the diversionary literature but also generate more empirical support for the diversionary theory. In their study, Tir and Jasinski (2008) detect that fifteen of the states examined in the study resorted to force against a minority within the borders every year within the scope of the study. Moreover, forty-three states, including democracies and autocracies, resorted to force against a minority within the borders in most of the years within the scope, an observation which recommends that the domestic diversionary use of force is not contained only to the democracies (Tir and Jasinski, 2008).

While a conflict between states permits each belligerent to exhibit its side of the story to the international community via diplomacy or media, targeting an ethnic minority for diversionary purposes gives an opportunity to the government to be advantageous

in the war of image compared to the targeted ethnic minority group since the group often do not have efficient sources to present its side of the events. Thus, a state could disguise its domestic diversionary incentives under the name of counter-terrorism operations like China's actions towards Uyghurs mentioned in the introduction. So, since it is a less precarious and a less pricy option, embattled leaders may be incentivized to engage in a diversionary use of force on a marginalized group within the borders (Tir and Jasinski, 2008), put differently, out-groups in the community (Coser, 1956).

To deflect the public's attention from an ongoing domestic crisis such as economic failures or protests that may signify leaders' unpopularity, the leaders may exploit historical grievances to spark aggression between the in-group and the internal other or incite imagined or artificially magnified perils posed by ethnic outgroups (Tir and Jasinski, 2008; Klein and Tokdemir, 2019). A leader could blame an ethnic minority group for being a fifth-columnist who is cooperating with the external enemy to bring down the state of residence. After a minority community is labeled as constituting a peril to the in-group, the majority of the citizens would likely rally around the flag of the leader and grant their support to him/her for the actions, especially if the leader guarantees the in-group's protection from the "perilous" marginalized groups (Tir and Jasinski, 2008; Wright, 2014).

Tir and Jasinski (2008) argue that the number of minority groups, the size of these groups, state capabilities, and the existence of a continuing military conflict have a significant effect on leaders' decisions on whether to resort to force against those

minority groups or not. They demonstrate that in countries that are riddled with ethnic strife and unable to exercise military superiority over the potential target states, domestic diversionary use of force is not only attainable but also the appealing course of action when the leader desperately needs an exit from the domestic economic, political or social predicaments. Furthermore, they state that economic development is more determinant than the regime type on leaders' motivations to engage in domestic diversionary force. On the other hand, they could not find strong support for the hypothesis which suggests that the leaders may be incentivized to use diversionary force in the times of an approaching elections.

Moreover, Tir and Jasinski (2008) show that the embattled leaders do not choose their minority targets haphazardly but rather select them strategically among those who are disfavored, discriminated, and marginalized. In addition to these, if an out-group demonstrates organizational abilities and capabilities regarding the mobilization in times of an economic predicament, then that group appears as an appropriate subject of scapegoating, antagonism, and even bigotry (King and Wheelock, 2007). When the in-group perceives that its well-being is threatened by the out-group, members of the in-group may have a deeper negative perception about the out-group and they may back up government policies that are hostile against the out-group (Kaiser and Wilkins, 2010). Transformations in a state's economy determine the in-group's threat perceptions regarding the out-group, regularly, the members of the in-group are receptive to the threats posed to their current economic conditions especially if the members of the out-group experience an improvement in their economic conditions on the expense of the in-group (King and Wheelock, 2007).

Also, the leader has to target an ethnic minority against which the military could get a decisive victory. Being troubled with a long-lasting, costly, unpromising, or deadlocked conflict with a minority group probably not only harms the leader's reputation (Bueno de Mesquita et. al., 2003) but also hurts the impression of being the strongest candidate to safeguard the in-group's interests (Tir and Jasinski, 2008). However, targeting an ethnic minority that does not have enough capacity and resources to threaten the in-group's interests in order to have a decisive military victory would not be a viable option for diverting the public opinion because weak targets may not generate significant rallying impact around the embattled leader (Tarar, 2006). Sometimes, the leader may not find the necessary excuse to engage in the use of force against an ethnic minority although the minority is resourceful due to the strategic conflict avoidance. Similar to the avoidance by a potential target from a potential diverter, an ethnic minority may be motivated to be less combatant and more cooperative with the government in times of domestic predicaments such as an economic crisis (Tokdemir and Klein, 2021). Furthermore, a leader should be aware of the reactions of society towards his/her actions against the minority group. If the leader is seen as behaving in light of greed and against the constituted social norms regarding the peaceful co-existence among different ethnic groups, then the diversionary use of force, even if it is a triumphant military operation, might backlash and pave the way for a rally among the opposition which may end up with the leader's being forced to leave the office.

Some scholars raise criticisms of the domestic diversionary use of force theory. For example, Swagerty (2013) asserts that the leader of a democratic country would not be incentivized to project diversionary force over minorities within borders if there

are some other plausible ways of increasing popular support. Although this seems logical, Swagerty (2013) misses one of the main premises of the diversionary theory: a leader is embattled because the domestic crisis is a very hard one to solve and other options would prove to be very costly for the leader. In addition to this, Kisangani and Pickering (2007) argue that public approval for a leader in a democratic state would not simply improve due to disentangling the domestic crises. Moreover, Machain and Rosenberg's (2016) work can be considered another answer to Swagerty's (2013) criticism. They state that diversionary use of force would be engaged as a last resort alternative, which means a leader would not appeal to it until all other choices are exhausted.

One other critique of the domestic diversionary use of force theory arises from Mueller. Mueller (1970) points out that the rally around the flag effect would not be effective in conflicts within borders. According to him, a conflict between groups within borders would tear the society apart whereas a fight with an external other would pave the way for citizens to come closer and unify under the leadership for a common goal asserted by the leader (Mueller, 1970). Nonetheless, there are some incidents in which citizens unify and there is a rise in nationalistic sentiments when there is a conflict with internal others. For instance, in the conflict against Chechens, Russian leadership initiated a media war to scapegoat and dehumanize Chechen separatists raising patriotic sentiments and boosting popular support for the leadership among Russians (Russell, 2005). Thus, this successful campaign against Chechen insurgents helped Vladimir Putin to be elected as the president in the elections of 2000 (Petersson, 2009). Moreover, China's hostile policy against Uyghurs (Kanat, 2012) constitutes another incident of a successful domestic diversionary strategy.

In addition to these, India under the Modi administration can be another example of a country that engages in domestic diversionary use of force. A year before the local elections for the Chief Ministry of Gujarat, the then Chief Minister Narendra Modi began to target the Muslim minority in his speeches by exploiting the historical grievances between the Hindu community and the Muslims and accusing Muslims of the backwardness of the Hindu society. In the same year, the infamous Gujarati communal violence in which thousands of Muslims were killed took place (Murphy, 2011). In recent years, after failing to tackle economic and social problems, Modi has toughened his demeanors against Muslims again by increasing the number of counter-terrorism operations against Islam-associated terrorist groups and adopting aggressive policies to marginalize and discriminate against Muslims more (Chowdhury, 2021, Tharoor, 2021, Regan et. al., 2019).

Apart from the works mentioned above, to my knowledge, there is a very limited number of studies that focus on the domestic diversionary use of force by autocratic regimes. In addition to addressing the gap regarding the external diversionary behaviors of personalist civilian–personalist military and non-personalist civilian–non-personalist military authoritarian regimes, with this thesis, I intend to contribute to the literature in terms of the domestic diversionary use of force by these authoritarian regimes. In the following part, the theoretical mechanism of this thesis will be thoroughly discussed.

2.2. Theoretical Mechanism

2.2.1 Classification of Autocracies

Some studies classify states as a democracy or a non-democracy while making a comparison among the countries in terms of foreign policy behaviors, domestic politics, economy, etc. As seen above, apart from some studies, this is also the case in the diversionary use of force literature. Classifying countries as democratic or non-democratic and treating all democracies and non-democracies as if they are identical within their categorizations, is an oversimplification. Although this approach has some benefits for methodological reasons, disregarding nuances within democracies and autocracies for the sake of simplicity may lead to results that do not have much in common with reality. To avoid this reductionist approach and to end up with a more valid and all-encompassing analysis, I adopt a method from modern scholarship that further categorizes countries in accordance with additional institutional factors. Contemporary scholarship has come up with two aspects integral to grasping the internal reasoning of autocracies: whether the autocratic regime is governed by the military or a civilian/s, and the extent of the power of the person in charge (Geddes, 2003; Weeks, 2014). For this classification, I benefit from Slater's (2003) labeling of authoritarian regimes. Although I use Slater's categorization of authoritarian regimes, for the sake of simplicity, I benefit from Weeks's (2014) logic of the same classification.

In the categorization of autocratic countries, Slater (2003) concentrates both on the level of institutionalization that amasses power at the hands of the leader through strengthening infrastructural power and whether the regime is backed by civilian or military institutions. There are some issues regarding putting forward a result by

examining institutions' support of the regime. Looking for whether the regime is supported by civilian or military institutions can be a challenge due to a lack of data because of numerous reasons like confidentiality issues or problems in data gathering procedures of states. Sometimes a civilian or a military institution may back the regime but this may be an implicit phenomenon and the weight of regime backing between the military or civilian regimes may not be known precisely. Lack of data may lead to imprecise results in academic studies. Due to these challenges, I do not adopt Slater's (2003) approach in this thesis.

On the other hand, instead of examining the support of military or civilian institutions to the regime, Weeks (2014) concentrates on whether the leader has a military or a civilian background. Weeks's (2014) rationale has an advantage in seeing whether the military or civilians have the upper hand in the regime since it is looking at leaders' careers and backgrounds instead of the support of those groups which may sometimes be implicit. In Weeks's classification of authoritarian regimes, there are two main dimensions, derived from Geddes's (2003) abovementioned study: the range to which the regime is personalist or non-personalist, plus whether the regime is governed by a military officer/s or by a civilian/s. The categorization consists of four types: a personalist regime governed by a civilian (boss), a personalist regime governed by a military officer (strongman), a non-personalist civilian regime (machine), and a non-personalist military regime (junta) (Slater, 2003; Weeks, 2014).

Table 2: Classification of Authoritarian Regimes

	Personalist leader	Non-personalist leader
Military leader	Strongman	Junta
Civilian leader	Boss	Machine

All of these regimes have their own dynamics within themselves. In accordance with the power distribution among different interest groups in different institutional orders, every one of these regimes may have discrepant policies and challenges both in domestic and international politics. In light of this logic, I argue that autocratic regimes with different institutional formations have different levels of proneness to the diversionary use of force. In the upcoming two parts, I explain the rationale behind my argument and demonstrate the theoretical mechanism.

2.2.1.1. Personalist vs. Non-Personalist Regimes

Especially in liberal democracies, one can observe that there is a strong domestic audience that can reward a leader by re-electing him/her or punish by removing him/her from office, after evaluating his/her performance in domestic and international politics. Similarly, although it is not always as strong as the democratic regimes have, there is a firm domestic audience comprised of regime elites in non-personalist authoritarian regimes too (Weeks, 2008; 2012). Some studies have demonstrated empirically that the majority of autocratic leaders who lose power are ousted by the regime elites (Svolik, 2009). Since the regime elites have information about the decision-making processes, the opportunity to cooperate with other powerful actors within the regime elites, power to put pressure on the leader and even punish him/her for a failure, they typically be more important actors vis-à-vis ordinary

citizens in leaders' calculations about actions in domestic or international politics such as a dispute initiation. The presence or non-existence of a domestic audience is one of the determinant factors in a leader's decision whether to engage in the use of force or not. This domestic audience draws a conclusion regarding the leader's competence by contrasting the consequences of a given international conflict with the counterfactual scenario in which the leader had not taken that course of action and ended up with a different result.

Like leaders, the domestic audience also makes some calculations about using force against a country in times of a domestic crisis. After all, leaders and regime insiders are rational utility maximizers to stay in power and guarantee their political survival (Bueno de Mesquita et. al., 2003) so they make some calculations to ensure utility maximization. This calculation includes the costs of fighting, the costs of defeat, and the benefits of winning (Weeks, 2012). Firstly, the leader and the domestic audience consider the possible costs of fighting and whether it could worsen the ongoing domestic predicament. Secondly, in addition to the costs of fighting and the ongoing internal crisis, the same actors would think about the incremental costs of defeat in a possible conflict that is initiated by them. Lastly, international opportunities would be evaluated by the leader and the domestic audience and there could be a calculation in terms of the benefit of victory. All these three factors are important components of an equation in the leader's and the domestic audience's calculations.

In non-personalist authoritarian regimes, government elites generally ascend the ladder of ranks in accordance with their merit and/or seniority level more than their

personal or kinship ties to the leader. In addition to this, leaders cannot routinely monitor every government official working under his/her command and cannot liquidate them always at his/her will if he/she notices any disobedience (Weeks, 2012). Thus, regime insiders' obedience and commitment to the leader are rather fragile; if elites in the regime could topple the unqualified leader, they are probably to outlast in the political realm. The capability to penalize or expel the leader is not peculiar to non-personalist civilian authoritarian regimes. In numerous military-dominated autocracies, officers and other junta insiders do not rely on the existing leader to continue their political life. As in the case of Leopoldo Galtieri's expulsion in 1982 by the Argentine military after the defeat in the Falklands War with the United Kingdom, upper-level members of a non-personalist military regime could penalize or in some cases oust the leader for political inefficacy.

Naturally, the rate of being ousted due to policy failures or other reasons is lower in non-personalist autocracies with respect to democracies (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2017), the condition that decreases the probability of being penalized. However, the possibility of experiencing exile or being faced with severe punishment including imprisonment or even death after being ousted is higher in non-personalist autocracies than in democracies. So, the leader's pleasure thanks to the bigger probability of staying in office might be nullified by the concern about his/her destiny after being toppled (Goemans, 2000). In addition to this, the dynamics of the domestic audience consists of regime elites and the domestic audience that is comprised of ordinary citizens have some differences that may play an important role in the leader's decision whether to initiate a diversionary conflict or not. Due to several reasons like lack of information about the decision-making process of the inner circle, ordinary citizens in

democracies or autocracies can be mobilized through the exploitation of patriotic sentiments or manipulation of threat perception. Regime elites in non-personalist authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, would have a higher level of resistance to diversion compared to ordinary citizens. Instead of being led by emotions, regime elites typically move in light of their political agenda in the political realm which is riddled with power struggles. A leader would acknowledge this because, in the past, probably he/she ascended to the top through the path in which the regime elites are proceeding today. Observing this phenomenon, a leader would be more cautious during the decision-making process and might be rather hesitant to initiate a militarized conflict to divert the domestic audience from a domestic crisis since the probable costs of the conflict would surpass the expected benefits from initiating a diversionary conflict.

In personalist regimes, on the other hand, the regime insiders ascend through the ranks thanks to the personal and familial ties with the leader. The leader can assign his/her friends, kin, and cronies to significant positions. These appointed political elites are highly induced to stay devoted and noncritical of the incumbent leader not to endanger their political survival (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1994). The inability and unwillingness to question and punish the leader in times of defeat would decrease the audience cost, if not totally eliminate it, for the leader. In addition to this, there is a difference between personalist and non-personalist authoritarian regimes in terms of the probability of being punished after experiencing a military defeat. Some scholars find that the probability of being severely punished is higher for personalist authoritarian regimes than the non-personalist ones (Debs and Goemans, 2010). However, history has very few cases of personalist dictators being ousted and

severely punished due to policy failures, so these fears are improbable to overcome the lack of accountability that the personalist leaders take advantage of. In her article, Weeks (2009) demonstrates that of the personalist authoritarian leaders that suffer from a defeat in a war, only 12.5% were ousted in the upcoming two years, a rate which is much less than the leaders of democracies and non-personalist autocracies for whom a vanquishment in a war generally paves the way for losing the office.

These differences between non-personalist authoritarian regimes and personalist ones may lead to different behaviors. Although there is a little pressure from the domestic audience in personalist authoritarian regimes, personalist leaders may be more incentivized to use force vis-à-vis non-personalist leaders to cancel out even the low probability of being ousted by the regime elite due to political incompetency through having a victory from a militarized conflict. When the low level of domestic audience costs in the times of a military defeat is taken into consideration, there are few factors that constrain the personalist authoritarian leader from initiating a militarized conflict. Non-personalist leaders, on the other hand, may not be encouraged to initiate a conflict to divert attention from an ongoing domestic crisis since the domestic audience would have a low level of exposure to the leader's exploitation of patriotic sentiments and manipulation of the actual threat level.

This process could be applicable not only for external diversionary use of force but also for diversionary use of force directed to a group within the borders. Being free from political restrictions, personalist leaders could initiate state-led violence directed at the organized opposition within the borders in times of a hard-to-solve domestic

crisis. Leaders in the non-personalist regimes, on the other hand, might be restrained by the members of the political elite who may consider state-led violence against an internal group as contrary to their interests. Using the advantage of being close to the decision-making process and having a considerable amount of information about the leader's exploitative incentives in internal diversionary use of force, some members of the political elite would be motivated to put pressure on the leader and try to prevent a state-led militarized action against an internal group. Because of these restraints, a non-personalist leader might be discouraged from engaging in an internal diversion. In light of these assumptions, below are my hypotheses:

H1.a: When faced with a domestic crisis, personalist authoritarian regimes (bosses and strongmen) are more inclined to engage in a diversionary force targeting another country compared to the respective non-personalist authoritarian regimes (machines and juntas).

H1.b: When embattled with a domestic predicament, personalist authoritarian regimes (bosses and strongmen) are more likely to use force against certain groups within the borders compared to the respective non-personalist authoritarian regimes (machines and juntas).

Table 2: Proneness to Diversionary Use of Force according to Personalist/Non-personalist Classification

	External Diversion	Domestic Diversion
High Tendency	Personalist Regimes (boss, strongman)	Personalist Regimes (boss, strongman)
Low Tendency	Non-personalist Regimes (machine, junta)	Non-personalist Regimes (machine, junta)

2.2.1.2. Military vs. Civilian Regimes

Military authoritarian regimes (juntas and strongmen), as obvious from its labeling, are dominated by military officers as the regime insiders. Military officers are socialized and trained in an environment in which the majority of the community holds positive views about the usefulness and convenience of military force as an agency of policy making (Sechser, 2004). Like any other individuals who are members of a community, military officers gain beliefs through socializing with other military personnel and internalizing the norms and values of the military. In addition to the outer factors, pre-existing beliefs play a determinant role in an individual's preferences regarding courses of action through determining anticipations about the purposes of the counterparts.

When compared to civilian policymakers, military officers are more inclined to perceive military force as an effectual and routine course of action as a state behavior. In his influential book about the belief systems of soldiers, Huntington (1957) states that there is a military ethic that sees the fight as a ubiquitous feature of nature and

views violence as being deep-seated in the everlasting biological and psychological heritage of humanity. In the same book, he asserts that military officers are more likely to frame the military capabilities of other states as a threat rather than their intentions (Huntington, 1957). In light of this, military officers may have a less tendency to trust the militarily capable countries even though they demonstrate their goodwill in the relations. Also, military officers are fraternized in an environment in which the members are more sensitive vis-à-vis civilians to the possible threats posed by another country. Similarly, military decision-makers are inclined to overemphasize the likelihood of war because they see war as an inescapable and innate phenomenon of humanity. This mindset of the military officers increases the perceived net profit of victory and decreases the perceived expenses of engaging in the use of force since there could be a lower resistance against using force and a higher level of tendency to frame inactivity as incompetency compared to civilian authoritarian regimes. So, thanks to the pessimism about human nature and optimism about the prospective casualties and the outcome of the war, military officers may have a tendency to engage in a preventive war (Sagan and Waltz, 2003).

In addition to this, military authoritarian regimes are less successful at establishing and improving efficient authoritarian institutions compared to civilian authoritarian regimes. So, they are not only deficient in institutional maturity to preserve elite cohesion and sociopolitical influence over citizens but also have a rather short life and a more unstable regime. Military regimes generally aim to safeguard and ensure the unity of the military to maintain the military's agenda (Geddes, 2003). Furthermore, military leaders are not prone to soften or weaken their governance when they are challenged with social, political, or economic challenges like demonstrations and

economic crises because these leaders give importance to the unity and the maintenance of the military might over the political authority (Geddes, 2003). Moreover, military regimes do not have an institutionalized and deep-rooted sociopolitical influence and authority over citizens. Thus, in order to compensate for the vulnerability of a regime due to its weak institutions, a military regime is more inclined to refer to desperate actions compared to a civilian authoritarian regime in responding to domestic threats to their political survival (Lai and Slater, 2006). These aforementioned desperate actions might include repression on many occasions so that the probability and the tendency of a military authoritarian regime to engage in the use of force against a domestic challenge might be higher compared to a civilian authoritarian regime.

Moreover, military officers may see diplomacy as an inefficient way of dealing with issues in international politics because they could think that diplomacy squanders valuable time and might pave the way for civilian intervention in military issues (Weeks, 2012). This mindset causes military officers to have a propensity to depreciate the importance of diplomatic and economic factors whereas they overestimate the significance of military power in international relations. The constraining effect of a domestic audience in a non-personalist military regime in terms of using force to achieve political goals would be minimal because the domestic audience consists of military officers who would probably favor military force over diplomacy. In a personalist regime, like the civilian leader, the military leader also enjoys from lack of high pressure from the domestic audience so that he/she has more liberty to engage in a military force to realize policy aims. In light of these assumptions, below are my hypotheses:

H2.a: Whether it is personalist or non-personalist, in times of a domestic crisis, compared to a civilian authoritarian regime, a military authoritarian regime is more prone to engage in a diversionary force in the international realm.

H2.b: Whether it is personalist or non-personalist, in times of a domestic crisis, vis-à-vis a civilian authoritarian regime, a military authoritarian regime has a greater tendency to use force in the domestic realm against an organized opposition within borders.

Table 3: Proneness to Diversionary Use of Force according to Military/Civilian Classification

	External diversion	Domestic diversion
High tendency	Military regimes (strongman, junta)	Military regimes (strongman, junta)
Low tendency	Civilian regimes (boss, machine)	Civilian regimes (boss, machine)

2.2.2. Overall Conflict Propensity Order

Between regimes being military or civilian and personalist or non-personalist, I assume that the military/civilian classification is more influential than the personalist/non-personalist categorization in determining the given regime's propensity to engage in a conflict. Unlike liberal democracies, in authoritarian regimes, the person or the group in power has extensive opportunities to influence the regime dynamics. So, individual aspects such as having a military background may

become more important than structural factors such as institutional restraints over the political power of a leader to determine any authoritarian country's behaviors.

Among the authoritarian regimes, the most conflict-prone regime arises from the combination of personalism and militarism whereas the most peaceful regime is the product of non-personalist and civilian lines of governance. For the ordering between two extremes (most belligerent and least belligerent), in accordance with the logic presented in the previous paragraph, the military or civilian background of the ruling person/group is more important than the power distribution among the leader and the political elite within the regime. In light of this line of argument, below is the gradation of authoritarian regimes' propensity to engage in a diversionary conflict:

Strongman > Junta > Boss > Machine

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research aims to answer why some autocracies are more prone to use force against external targets or certain domestic groups in times of a domestic crisis vis-à-vis other autocracies. In the former section, I presented several works and stances about this issue in the literature and positioned my theoretical model and hypotheses accordingly. Ahead of testing the hypotheses presented in the previous section, this chapter elaborates on the data to be used for the analyses and explains the variables. In the preceding chapter, I argued that although the underlying reasons would be different from democracies that are engaging in a diversionary use of force, autocratic regimes may also resort to diversionary force.

Moreover, in the previous chapter, I introduced the theoretical mechanism that discusses which autocratic regimes are more prone to engage in the use of force against an external or an internal group in times of a domestic crisis. I contend that, compared to the non-personalist authoritarian regimes, personalist autocracies are more inclined to engage in domestic or external diversionary use of force due to institutional opportunities such as a high level of regime insiders' obedience and

commitment and low probability of being ousted due to a military failure. In addition, vis-à-vis non-military authoritarian regimes, militaristic autocracies have more tendency to engage in a diversionary use of force due to institutional challenges, pre-existing beliefs, and socialization of the military officers.

3.1. Data

In order to answer the research question of this thesis and conduct necessary hypothesis testing procedures, this thesis is grounded on a large-N quantitative analysis which will be expected to reveal the proposed relation in the previous chapter between the authoritarian regime type and proneness to engage in an external and internal diversionary use of force in the times of a democratic crisis. The data necessary for this thesis is obtained from existing datasets on authoritarian countries, and I integrate some other datasets in order to observe the relationship which is proposed in this thesis between different autocratic regime types and proneness to diversionary use of force. Hence, the dataset utilized for this thesis is assembled from several congruous datasets such as the Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions Dataset (Geddes et. al, 2014), the Mass Mobilization Data Project (Clark and Regan, 2015), Inflation as GDP Deflator Dataset (World Bank, 2022), the Dyadic Militarized Interstate Disputes Dataset (Maoz, 2008), and the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et. al, 2002).

My independent variables are domestic crises (economic crisis and/or political crisis). The types of autocratic regimes are considered as an intervening variable in the theoretical mechanism. My dependent variables, on the other hand, are external and

internal diversionary use of force. The availability of data in the aforementioned datasets determines the scope of the time period and a number of countries that have an autocratic regime. For the uses of force targeting at other states, after omitting the observations with missing information about the regime type classification, mass mobilization, annual inflation rate, and military interstate disputes my final dataset consists of 123,819 observations of dyads from 1990 to 2001. The unit of analysis of the dyadic analysis is dyad-year.

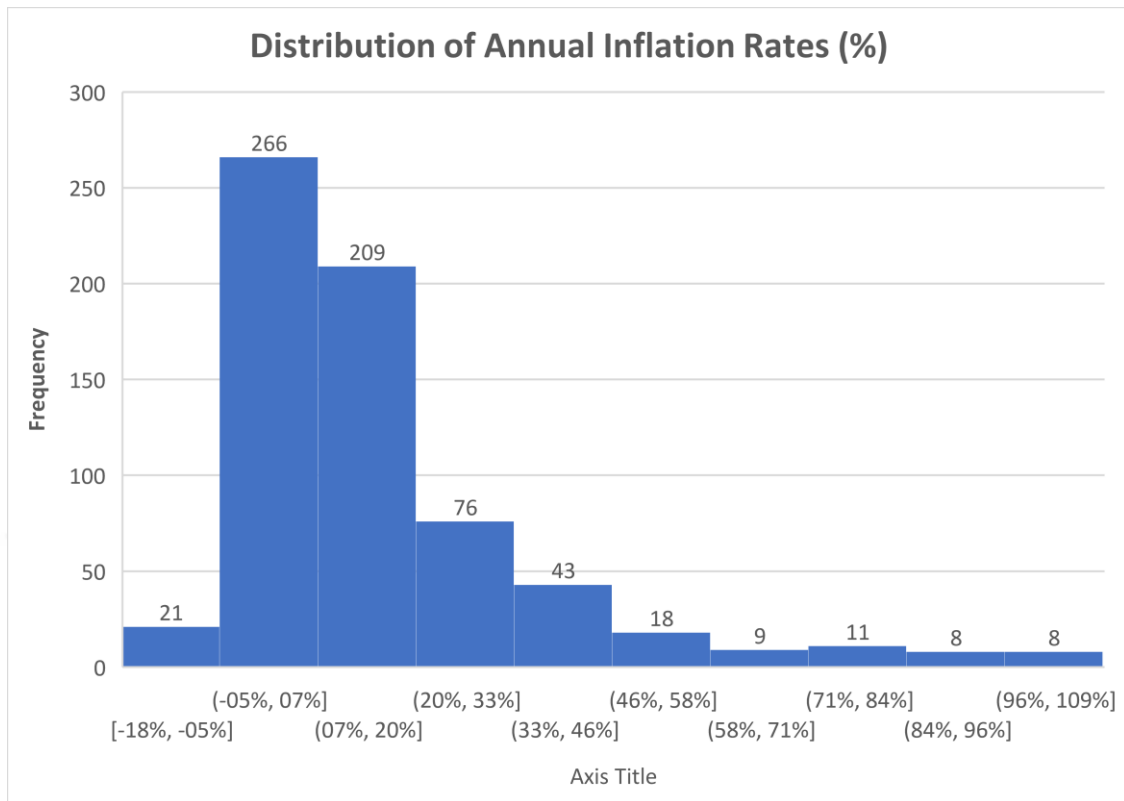
In addition to the dyadic analysis, I conduct a monadic analysis to confirm the results from the dyadic analysis. In monadic analysis, my dataset has 258 observations of 59 countries in between 1990-2001. For the monadic analysis, the unit of analysis is country-year. The country-year observation is operationalized in line with the calendar year. Most of the studies in the diversionary use of force literature examine this phenomenon with case studies with small samples. Thanks to extensive data about the examined countries, these studies conduct their analyses in accordance with monthly or quarterly timelines. Conducting an analysis on the basis on monthly or quarterly data has several advantages such as demonstrating the diversionary actions of the embattled leaders more precisely in terms of time. This thesis, on the other hand, conducts a quantitative analysis with more than 50 countries as its sample. For the majority of the countries, there is a lack of monthly or quarterly data for the determined variables. In order not to severely restrain the scope of this study due to this limitation, I decided to use country-year and dyad-year as the units of analysis. In the upcoming paragraphs, independent, intervening, and dependent variables will be explained in further details and the datasets which are used for the analysis will be presented.

3.1.1 Independent Variables

The independent variables of this thesis are the existence of a domestic crisis and the autocratic regime type. In this thesis, a domestic crisis is considered as an economic and/or a political crisis. Although I acknowledge that there are several indicators to make an evaluation about a situation whether it is an economic crisis or not, for the sake of simplicity and its strength in predicting a crisis, I use the inflation rate as a proxy for an economic crisis. To measure the inflation rate, I benefit from the GDP deflator rather than the consumer price index (CPI). The CPI is “the weighted average of the prices of goods and services purchased by a typical urban household” (Edgmand et. al, 1996). Although it is the most widely used index to measure the inflation rate, the CPI suffers from several drawbacks such as overrepresenting the increases in the living cost since the index is founded on an established set of goods and services and mostly disregarding the changes in the quality of goods and services (Edgmand et. al, 1996).

On the other hand, the GDP deflator is “a weighted average of the prices of all final goods and services produced in the economy” (Edgmand et. al, 1996). So, the GDP deflator is the most comprehensive and the most precise indicator for measuring the given state’s inflation rate. For the advantages mentioned in this comparison, I use the GDP deflator as a proxy for the inflation rate. I draw my data from the World Bank (2022) and OECD National Accounts Dataset (2023) which comprises nearly all countries’ annual inflation rates between 1960-2023. For my inflation rate variable, I coded the GDP deflator as percentages. For ease of reference, below is a histogram that consists of a distribution of annual inflation rates for the whole dataset:

Figure 1: Histogram for the Annual Inflation Rates



The second indicator of a domestic predicament is a political crisis. Similar to the economic crisis, there are several factors that can be considered significant indicators of a political crisis such as regime failure, government failure, or the release of a scandal about an individual or a group in the ruling elite. Although these are viable symptoms for a domestic political crisis, in this thesis, I use mass mobilization as the indicator of a political predicament. Thanks to the easiness of observing, measuring, and reporting; the number of protests in a given year is considered as a proper proxy for a domestic political crisis. In addition to this, as the diversionary use of force literature demonstrates, one of the greatest factors that encourage the embattled leader to engage in a diversionary conflict is the dissatisfaction among citizens and the rising popular dissent targeting government policies. These factors feature the mass

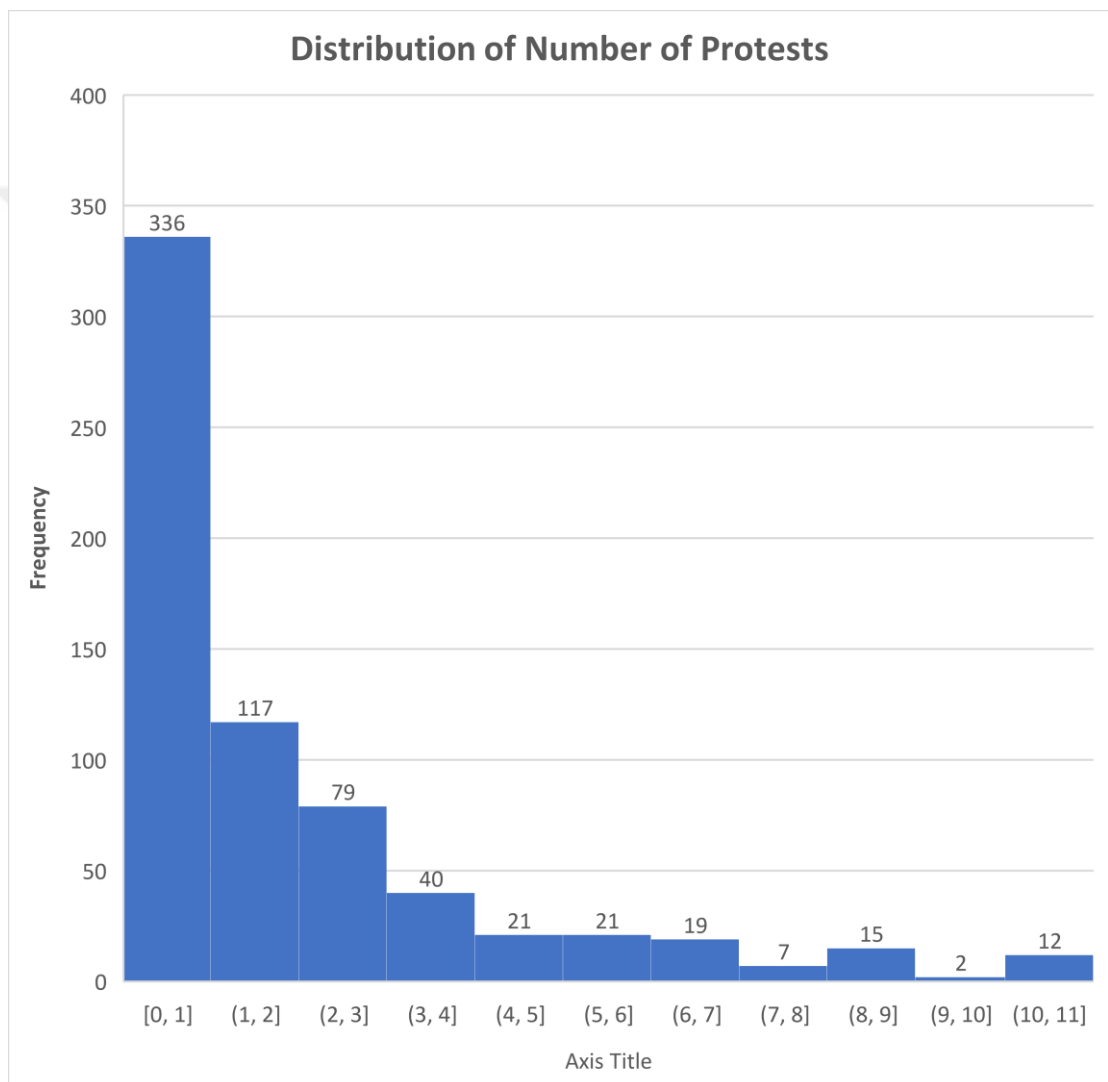
mobilization targeting government policies as a suitable representative for a domestic political crisis.

For the protest variable, I benefit from the Mass Mobilization Data Project (Clark and Regan, 2015) which covers all protest events all around the world from 1990 to 2014. According to the Mass Mobilization Data Project, a protest is a public gathering that consists of at least 50 participants to request any kind of policy change/reform from the government (Clark and Regan, 2015). In this project, none of the protests that are aimed at any country other than the host country or mass mobilization due to a community dispute are coded. Similarly, in this thesis, my population regarding the mass mobilization consists of the protests that are only aimed at the governments in the host states. So, the data in the Mass Mobilization Data Project is highly in line with the necessary information this thesis needs.

In this thesis, I do not have any procedure to code the protests differently on the basis of protester violence, that is to say, I code all the protests as the same no matter whether it is a violent protest or a peaceful one. Similarly, I do not make any differentiation among protests in accordance with the number of participants. So, a protest that has 50 participants is considered the same as another protest with more than 5000 participants. Moreover, I do not differentiate between distinct identities of groups that have participated in the demonstrations and/or have organized the protests. In other words, in this study, it is not important whether armed non-state actors or peaceful civil society organizations have participated in a given demonstration. Lastly, for the sake of simplicity, I do not take the categorization of

protester demands into consideration and view them as having no weight in my coding. Briefly, I code a mass mobilization as a protest only if it has more than 50 participants and targets the host state's policies. For ease of reference, below is a histogram for the distribution of the number of protests for all countries in the dataset.

Figure 2: Histogram for the Number of Protests



For the regime type variable, I benefit from the Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions Dataset (Geddes et. al, 2014). This dataset covers all autocratic regimes throughout the world from 1946 to 2010. In their dataset, Geddes et. al. (2014) only coded the countries with more than one million population which were independent,

non-democratic, and not occupied and had only one government (not a provisional one) in a given year. So, countries that have a provisional government (i.e., Georgia in 2004), are governed by a warlord (i.e., Afghanistan from 1993 to 1996), or occupied by foreign parties (i.e., Syria from 1959 to 1961) omitted from the dataset. Geddes et. al. (2014) consider an autocratic regime to be established in a country if one of the following events has happened: the leadership grasps the governance through undemocratic ways (any means other than free and fair elections), or the military puts pressure for policy change or prohibits one or more parties which are supposed to get a significant amount of vote, or after a competitive election the government modifies the policies to restrain the competition in the upcoming elections.

In this dataset, Geddes et. al. (2014) categorize autocratic regimes as monarchy, personal, military, party, party-personal, party-military, military-personal, party-personal military, oligarchy, and indirect military. They classify these regime types under four main categories: party-based regimes, military regimes, personalist regimes, and monarchical regimes. The table illustrating Geddes et. al.'s (2014) classification is as the following:

Table 4: Geddes et. al.'s (2014) Classification of Autocratic Regimes

Party-based regimes	Personalist regimes	Military regimes	Monarchical regimes
Party-based	Personal	Military	Monarchy
Party-personal		Military- personal	
Party-military		Indirect-military	
Party-personal- military			
Oligarchy			
Iran (1979-2010)			

The demonstrated classification of the autocratic regimes in this dataset is not totally in line with the purposes of this thesis. So, I made the following modifications to the data I obtained from this dataset. First, I re-coded the party-based regimes as non-personalist autocracies since the countries with these regimes are governed by a group of people, not by a person. In addition to this, I put monarchical regimes under personalist regimes because a monarchy is a political system that is based on the intact power of an individual ruler (Kostiner, 2020).

In their dataset, Geddes et. al. (2014) coded some countries as “party-personal-military” and “party-personal” and classified them under party-based regimes. When I examine the countries coded as party-personal-military and party-personal, I see that these states have been governed by a group of people led by a leader. Unlike the leaders in personalist autocracies, these leaders do not act autonomously from the ruling elite. Rather, they are constrained by the political elite like the leaders in non-

personalist autocracies. In this sense, countries coded as party-personal-military and party-personal have more in common with the non-personalist autocracies than the personalist ones. So, I coded these countries as non-personalist autocracies in my dataset. Moreover, in the dataset, Geddes et. al. (2014) disregarded the personalist component of the “military-personal” autocratic countries and coded them as if they were only military regimes. Similarly, they coded “party-personal-military” autocratic regimes as military and did not categorize them under party-based regime type. For the purposes of this thesis, I re-coded these countries and along with the military categorization, I included them under personalist and non-personalist classification respectively.

In addition to these, Geddes et. al. (2014) examined Iran and classified it as a party-based autocracy separately from other party-based autocracies. Although it is not stated in the codebook of the dataset, a possible reason for this coding is Iran’s theocratic autocratic regime. However, in this study, features of any autocratic regimes other than being personalist/non-personalist or civilian/military are not considered as the factors of categorization. So, I coded Iran as a non-personalist civilian autocracy since the country was governed by a group led by Ali Khamenei between 1990-2010 and did not make any differentiation between Iran and other non-personalist civilian autocracies.

Finally, in their dataset, Geddes et. al. (2014) coded two countries (Guatemala 1990-1995 and El Salvador 1990-1994) as an indirect military regime. When I examine the political structure of these countries for the given years, I see that these countries have

been governed by a civilian political party in appearance but the military has been dictating most of the decisions to the incumbent governments. In this context, the military is influential in deciding to use force against external or internal targets. So, I coded these two countries in the given years as non-personalist military autocracies.

Below is the table for the classification of autocracies in this thesis in light of the mentioned alterations and number of country-years and countries in which the specific categorization is observed and the example countries.



Table 5: Classification of Autocratic Regimes

Non-personalist civilian regimes (machine)	Non-personalist military regimes (junta)	Personalist civilian regimes (boss)	Personalist military regimes (strongman)
Party-based 268 country-years (30 countries) Mexico (1990-2000) Senegal (1990-2000) Ivory Coast (1990-1999) China (1990-2001) Cambodia (1990-2001)	Party-military 12 country-years (3 countries) Rwanda (1995-2001) Republic of the Congo (1990-2001) Algeria (1990-1992)	Personal 283 country-years (36 countries) Russia (1994-2001) Mauritania (1990-2001) Libya (1990-2001) Bangladesh (1990) Kazakhstan (1992-2001)	Military-personal 31 country-years (9 countries) Sierra Leone (1993-1996) Burundi (1997-2001) Pakistan (2001) Ethiopia (1990-1991) Central African Republic (1990-1993)
Party-personal 67 country-years (7 countries) Cuba (1990-2001) Gabon (1990-2001) Eritrea (1994-2001) Uzbekistan (1992-2001) Afghanistan (1990-1992)	Party-personal-military 38 country-years (4 countries) Paraguay (1990-1993) Egypt (1990-2001) Syria (1990-2001) Indonesia (1990-1999)	Monarchy 74 country-years (7 countries) Swaziland (1990-2001) Morocco (1990-2001) Saudi Arabia (1990-2001) Nepal (1990-1991) United Arab Emirates (1990-2001)	
Oligarchy 5 country-years (1 country) South Africa (1990-1994)	Military 37 country-years (7 countries) Haiti (1992-1994) Nigeria (1990-1993) Burundi (1990-1993) Algeria (1993-2001) Myanmar (1990-2001)		
	Indirect Military 11 country-years (2 countries) Guatemala (1990-1995) El Salvador (1990-1994)		

Hypothesis 1.a and Hypothesis 1.b of this thesis are about the non-personalist and personalist regimes' proneness to engage in an external or internal diversionary force in times of a domestic crisis. In this sense, I coded non-personalist autocracies as 0 and personalist autocracies as 1. There is a similar operationalization for Hypothesis 2.a and Hypothesis 2.b. These hypotheses are about the tendencies of the civilian and military autocracies in terms of the external and internal diversionary force when they are embattled by a domestic predicament. In this context, I coded civilian autocracies as 0 whereas military autocracies as 1.

3.1.3 Dependent Variables

The dependent variables of this thesis are external use of force against another country, and internal use of force targeting a group within the borders of the belligerent country. For the external use of force variable, I benefit from the latest version of the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data (MID) generated by the Correlates of War (COW) (Palmer et. al, 2020). The MID 5.0 Dataset covers all militarized interstate disputes from 1816 to 2014. The dataset has several versions that include essential attributes of every militarized interstate dispute (MID) and incident (MII) and the parties that have taken part in these disputes and incidents. The dispute component of the MID dataset codes one or more separate disputes with the same party about the same issue as one dispute if these disputes happen within 6 months. On the other hand, the MII version of the MID dataset counts incidents between the same actors over the same issue as separate events if there are 3 days between these incidents (Palmer et. al, 2015). In this thesis, I examine whether there is a threat to the use of force, display, or use of force by a given country in a given year rather than detecting the number of disputes a given country has taken part in a given year. For

the purposes of this study, I use the MID component of the dataset rather than the MII version due to the MID component's practicality in demonstrating the aggregation of disputes in a given year.

The MID dataset classifies MIDs into the following categories: no militarized action, threat to use force, display of force, use of force, and war. The diversionary theory of war literature traditionally examines war cases to test whether the embattled leaders have diversionary intentions or not in times of a domestic crisis. However, as seen in the following table, the phenomenon of war is considerably scarce compared to other forms of MIDs.

Table 6: Hostility Levels and Dispute Participants (Palmer et. al., 2015)

	1816–1992	1993–2001	2002–2010
No Militarized Action	24.46%	29.52%	29.70%
Threat to Use Force	4.77%	3.77%	1.32%
Display of Force	19.88%	30.28%	29.70%
Use of Force	44.57%	34.67%	38.91%
War	6.33%	1.76%	0.38%

Focusing only on wars may prevent a thorough theory that explains states' conflict behaviors. The reason for the diversionary theory of war literature's at best mixed findings for diversionary motivations of the embattled leaders may be attributed to only focusing on wars rather than other types of militarized disputes. Furthermore, some scholars indicate that diversionary use of force does not include waging a war against another country because it is a very costly and uncertain option for an

embattled leader to divert the public's attention from an ongoing domestic crisis (Fordham, 2005).

In light of the previously mentioned drawback and discussion, this study does not consider “no militarized action” and “war” in the operationalization of a militarized interstate dispute. In this thesis, I argue that the embattled leaders engage in a use of force, the threat to use force, or a display of force targeting an external or an internal party to find a way out of a domestic crisis. In other words, I consider actions in which states are engaging with force short of war as the observation of this thesis. So, “no militarized action”, and “war” are out of the scope of this thesis. I consider the categories of “use of force”, “threat to use force”, and “display of force” as the observation of my external use of force variable and code them as “1” in a given year for a given dyad, whereas the categories of “no militarized action”, “war” are coded as “0” in a given year for a given dyad.

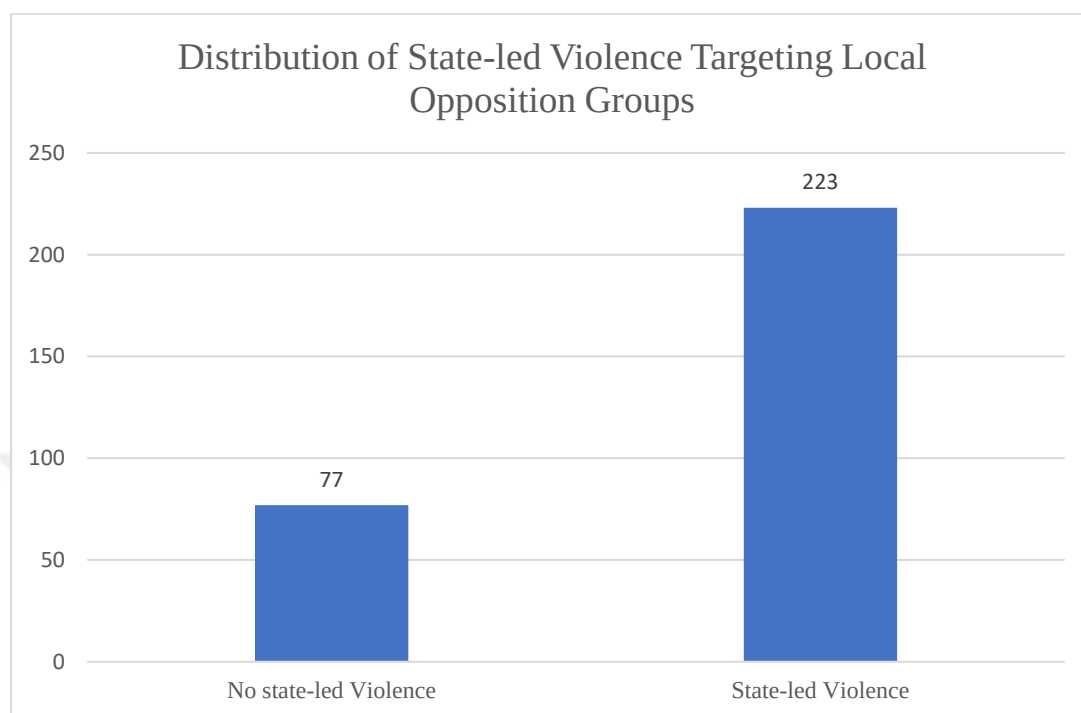
Another dependent variable in this study is the use of force by a given country against an organized opposition within borders. To create the conflict sample for this variable, I depend on the datasets of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), and the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO), particularly the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD) (Gleditsch et. al., 2002). The UCDP/PRIO ACD has the conflict year as the unit of analysis which is compatible with the calendar year starting with January 1st and ending with December 31st. The latest version of the UCDP/PRIO ACD covers the conflict incidents from 1946 to 2021. As defined by the UCDP/PRIO ACD, an armed conflict is “a contested incompatibility that concerns

government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year” (Gleditsch et. al., 2002).

On the domestic groups targeted by the home states’ governments, I disregard any kind of impromptu use of force by states against an unorganized group of people who gather to protest any kind of event. Rather, I focus on the use of force by a given state against the opposition that is formally organized. The UCDP/PRIO ACD defines the opposition organization as “any non-governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force to influence the outcome of the stated incompatibility” (Gleditsch et. al., 2002). The mentioned dataset includes only formally organized opposition and it concentrates on the militarized conflict comprising deliberately devised and practiced political campaigns instead of unpremeditated use of force. So, the data included in the UCDP/PRIO ACD serves well for the purposes of this thesis. For ease of reference, below is a figure that demonstrates the distribution of the use of force by a state targeting an organized opposition within the borders.

Figure 3: Distribution of State-led Violence Towards the Organized Opposition

Groups within the Borders



In addition to this, see below a table that includes a small part of the data from the UCDP/PRIO ACD.

Table 7: Use of force by States Against Domestic Organized Opposition Sample

Extracted from the UCDP/PRIO ACD

Location	Side A	Side B	Side B Full Name	Year
Myanmar	Government of Myanmar	NSCN-K	National Socialist Council of Nagaland	1991
Guatemala	Government of Guatemala	URNG	Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity	1992
Iraq	Government of Iraq	SCIRI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq	1994
Laos	Government of Laos	LRM	Lao PDR Resident Mission	1990
Ethiopia	Government of Ethiopia	EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front	1990
Nepal	Government of Nepal	CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist	2003
DR Congo (Zaire)	Government of DR Congo (Zaire)	AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Kinshasa	1997
Burundi	Government of Burundi	CNDD	National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy	1996
Peru	Government of Peru	Sendero Luminoso	Shining Path	1996
Cambodia	Government of Cambodia	KR	Red Khmers	1994
Angola	Government of Angola	UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola	1995
Ethiopia	Government of Ethiopia	ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front	2001
Indonesia	Government of Indonesia	GAM	Free Aceh Movement	1991

Below is the table for operationalization and sources of the independent and dependent variables:

Table 8: Operationalizations and the Sources of the Independent and Dependent Variables

Variable Type	Variable	Coding	Source
Independent Variable	Domestic Crisis (Inflation rate)	The Gross Domestic Product deflator as the inflation rate in a given year for a given country as a percentage score.	World Bank (2022) and OECD National Accounts Data (2023)
Independent Variable	Domestic Crisis (Number of Protests)	Count variable, the number of public gatherings with at least 50 participants in a given year aiming at the policies of the government of the host state	Mass Mobilization Data Project (Clark and Regan, 2015)
Intervening Variable	Autocratic Regime Type	Dichotomous variable, for Hypothesis 1.a and Hypothesis 1.b; coded as 1 if a given country is governed by a personalist regime, and 0 if the regime is a non-personalist autocracy. For Hypothesis 2.a and Hypothesis 2.b; coded as 1 if a given country is governed by a military regime, and 0 if the regime is a civilian autocracy.	Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions Dataset (Geddes et. al., 2014).
Dependent Variable	Use of Force Aiming at Another Country	Dichotomous variable, coded as 1 if the autocratic country engaged in a use of force against another country in a given year, and coded as 0 if it did not.	Militarized Interstate Dispute Data (Palmer et. al, 2020).
Dependent Variable	Use of Force Aiming at Organized Opposition within Borders	Dichotomous variable, coded as 1 if the autocratic country engaged in a use of force against the organized opposition within borders in a given year, and coded as 0 if it did not.	The UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et. al, 2002)

3.1.3 Control Variables

Other than the factors I identified in the theoretical mechanism, there can be more determinants that may facilitate the initiation of a militarized conflict by a state against another state or an organized opposition within the borders. Hence, there can be some possibly confounding factors that necessitate to be checked in order to avoid any spurious relation in the study. The control variables used in this study are the elements recognized by the prior studies as the determinants that have an impact on the war initiation and the conflictual behaviors of states.

Apart from the domestic crises mentioned in the theoretical mechanism, there might be some other factors that may influence the ruling elite's decision-making process about external or internal use of force. One of these factors is the number of all armed non-state actors targeting the given state in a given time. The existence of an armed non-state actor within the borders of a state has a significant impact on the conflict proneness of the state since this group may constitute a viable target for the state. If the number of armed non-state actors increases, the state has more opportunity to claim a legitimate target to use force against so the probability of state-led violence targeting the opposition groups may increase. Therefore, the number of all armed non-state actors targeting the given state may be a significant confounding factor for the theoretical mechanism presented in this thesis. Hence, I include the control variable *Number of all Armed Non-state Actors* and retrieve the data from Cunningham et. al.'s (2013) Non-State Actors in Armed Conflict Dataset (NSA).

Another control variable in this study is the *Ethnic Fractionalization* in a given country. As the literature indicates, ethnic diversity in a given country may influence the frequency of the occurrence of conflicts between the state and different ethnic groups. Similar to the logic in the introduction of the previous control variable, the existence of more ethnic groups within the borders may give more opportunity to the incumbent government to use force as there are more groups to target due to any kind of conflictual motivations. For this variable, I benefit from the Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization Dataset (HIEF) (Drazanova, 2019). The ethnic fractionalization index refers to the possibility of two randomly picked persons being members of different ethnic groups (Fearon, 2003 cited in Drazanova, 2019). The dataset covers 165 countries' annual ethnic fractionalization indices from 1945 to 2013. The index spreads from 0, if there exists only one ethnic group and all the population belongs to this ethnicity, to 1, where every person is a member of his/her ethnic community.

GDP per capita is another important control variable for this study. GDP per capita may impact the decision of a state to initiate a militarized conflict against another country. GDP per capita can be considered as a significant component of development not only of the country but also of the citizens. If an anticipated war is thought to have a severe negative impact on GDP per capita, that state may reconsider its decision to initiate a militarized conflict due to several reasons along with a possibility of a mass mobilization among the citizens against the government policies. So, apart from the factors mentioned in the theoretical mechanism of this thesis, GDP per capita may have an impact on the states' decision to engage in the use of force with another country. For this control variable, I benefit from the World Bank (2022) and OECD

National Accounts Data (2023). I coded the GDP per capita annually for a given country.

Moreover, state capability and relative power are other significant factors in conflict initiation in dyadic relations. Many studies have claimed that vis-à-vis minor powers, more powerful countries have greater interests in their region or around the globe and they have more opportunities in projecting power compared to minor powers so that the latter group is more prone to engage in a militarized conflict with other countries. Traditionally, the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) Score is one of the most preferred indicators for measuring state capability. The CINC scores are drawn from the National Material Capabilities (NMC) Data by the Correlates of War Project (Singer and Bremer, 1972). With the latest update, the NMC data covers from 1816 to 2016. The CINC takes the average of the share of the system total for six different parts of national material capabilities (military personnel, military expenditures, total population, urban population, iron and steel production, and primary energy consumption) and combines them into one value for a given country for a given year. For the *relative power* variable, I divided the CINC score of the stronger state by the weaker state's score within the given dyad.

Apart from the relative power, some factors like whether the two countries within a dyad share a common border may play an important role in whether a militarized conflict breaks out or not. It is stated in the literature that there is a higher probability of conflict between countries that share borders compared to countries that are not neighbors. For controlling whether the two states within the dyad share a border or

not, I benefit from the Direct Contiguity Data: 1816-2006 (Stinnett et. al., 2002). Moreover, as a control variable, I include the distance between the capitals of the states in a given dyad. I assume that when the distance between the capitals of states in a dyad gets smaller, the probability of a conflict between these two states increases. For the *distance between capitals* variable, I use the Direct Contiguity Data: 1816-2006 (Stinnett et. al., 2002). Also, all else being equal, I assume that there are fewer conflicts between minor powers than in a minor power-major power dyad because the major power is in a favorable position to exert power to the minor power within the dyad. To control whether the given two countries within a dyad are both minor powers or not, I benefit from the State System Membership List (Correlates of War Project, 2016). I coded as “1” if both countries within the given dyad were minor powers in a given year, and coded as “0” if the situation does not satisfy this condition.

The *existence of a pact of alliance* such as a neutrality, a defense agreement, or an entente decreases the probability of a militarized conflict between states. There would be less incentive to engage in a use of force between allies or countries that have an allegiance between themselves due to possible damage to the credibility of the initiator country. Engaging in diplomacy in international politics for a less credible country would be costlier because it is harder for these countries to gain the trust of others compared to other countries. In order to negate this challenge, less credible countries may be forced to compromise more. In addition to the decrease of credibility, belligerent countries may be sanctioned and alienated from the international society. So, entering into relations with other countries would be costlier than before for these countries. In light of this logic, countries in alliances would be

disincentivized to engage in a militarized dispute with their counterparts. For the existence of a pact of alliance control variable, I benefit from the COW's Alliance Dataset (Gibler and Sarkees, 2004). I coded "1" if there is a pact of alliance between countries within the given dyad in a given year, and coded as "0" if there is no such an entente.

In addition to all these factors, *rivalry* between states is another determinant factor in conflict initiation between states. Strategic or territorial rivals have more tendency to engage in conflict with each other compared to the countries that do not have a rivalry with other countries. Generally, rivals do not have considerable dependence on each other so they are not discouraged by the loss of anticipated benefits from the relations with the counterpart. As some scholars state, especially in times of a domestic crisis, rivals are more prone to engage in a militarized conflict with each other (Mitchell and Prins, 2004; Tir, 2010). For the rivalry variable, I benefit from the International Rivalry Dataset created by Thompson and Dreyer (2012). I coded as "1" if there is a rivalry between the states in a given dyad in a given year, and coded as "0" If there is no rivalry between these states in a given year.

Finally, *trade interdependence* is another important factor that may serve as an inhibitor for conflict initiation between countries. It is widely accepted in the literature that strong trade relations between countries may prevent conflict initiation between these states because the costs of the conflict such as losing an important chunk of a trade with a trusted commercial partner could be greater than the benefits of the stakes of a conflict. On the other hand, if there is no significant trade relation

between two countries, these actors may feel less restrained and be less disincentivized to engage in a militarized conflict with their counterparts because the benefits from the stakes of a conflict could be greater than the costs of it for the belligerent country. For the trade interdependence variable, I benefit from Hegre et. al.'s (2010) dataset, which computes bilateral trade volume. To calculate the trade dependence of each state on its counterpart, I divide the values from Hegre et. al.'s (2010) dataset by each country's GDP in a given year.

Below is the table for operationalizations and the sources of the control variables:

Table 9: Operationalizations and the Sources of the Control Variables

Variable	Coding	Source
Number of non-state armed groups	Count variable, the number of armed non-state actors that are operating against the given country.	Non-State Actors in Armed Conflict Dataset (NSA) (Cunningham et al., 2013)
Ethnic fractionalization	Continuous variable, an index that demonstrates the probability that two randomly selected individuals would be the members of separate ethnic communities (Fearon, 2003). Ranges from 0 to 1.	Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization Dataset (HIEF) (Drazanova, 2019).
GDP per capita	Gross Domestic Product per capita.	World Bank (2022) and OECD National Accounts Data (2023)
Relative power	Continuous variable, the CINC score is considered as a proxy, and the CINC score of the stronger state is divided by the weaker state's score.	National Material Capabilities (NMC) Data by the Correlates of War Project (Singer and Bremer, 1972)
State capacity	Continuous variable, CINC score	National Material Capabilities (NMC) Data by the Correlates of War Project (Singer and Bremer, 1972)
Border share	Dichotomous variable, coded as 1 if the states within a dyad share a border, and coded as 0 if there is no common border between given countries.	Direct Contiguity Data: 1816-2006 (Stinnett et. al., 2002)
Distance between capitals	Continuous variable. Natural logarithm of the distance between the capitals of the countries within a given dyad.	Direct Contiguity Data: 1816-2006 (Stinnett et. al., 2002)
Joint minor powers	Dichotomous variable. Coded	State System Membership List (Correlates of War Project, 2016)
Existence of a pact of alliance	Dichotomous variable. Coded as 1 if there is a pact of alliance between the given states in a given year, and coded as 0 if there is no such a pact.	Correlates of War Alliance Dataset (Gibler and Sarkees, 2004)
Trade interdependence	Continuous variable. Dyadic trade volume is divided by each country's GDP in a given year.	Hegre et. al. (2010)
Rivalry	Dichotomous variable. Coded as 1 if there is a rivalry between the states in a given dyad in a given year, and coded as 0 if there is no rivalry.	International Rivalries Dataset: 1494-2010 (Thompson and Dreyer, 2012)

In this thesis, I have dyadic and monadic analyses to test my hypotheses on the relationship among a domestic crisis, an external/internal diversionary force, and an autocratic regime type. The period covered by this thesis is between 1990-2001. The main reason for focusing on this period is that all the variables I compile from different datasets have only one common period that is the 1990-2001 era.

Nevertheless, examining this period is significant as the findings might demonstrate important insights of the first years of the post-Soviet era. For the monadic analysis, my dataset consists of 258 observations from 59 countries. The reason for the limited number of observations in the monadic dataset is that the data on state-led violence against organized opposition groups within the borders was quite constrained.

In the dyadic analysis, on the other hand, I have a dataset that has a total of 123,819 observations of dyad-years. As seen in Table 10, I lost some observations due to the inclusion of control variables such as *trade interdependence*, *relative power*, *alliance*, *joint minor*, and *rivalry*. The reason for the occurrence of the loss of data is because of combining existing datasets that cover different time periods. The dyadic dataset only focuses on the external use of force whereas the monadic dataset also covers the data on the state-led use of force against a group within the borders. Although I could only use the monadic dataset for the analysis as it focuses on both external and internal use of force, I benefit from the dyadic dataset not only because I aim to control the conflict cases between dyads in times of a domestic crisis but also because the dyadic dataset has way more observations than the monadic dataset. Also, the monadic dataset serves as a crosscheck for the findings of the analysis of the dyadic dataset.

Finally, Table 10 presents the descriptive statistics for domestic crises and external and internal diversionary use of force in addition to the control variables incorporated in the model.



Table 10: Summary Statistics

VARIABLES	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Protest	123819	1,937	3	0	35
Inflation	123819	2	12	-18%	109,2%
Conflict Initiation	123819	0,001316	0,03613461 8	0	1
Trade Dependency 1	103437	868659265, 1	1741557062	0,0001000 1	999699987 0
Trade Dependency 2	103437	1293427587	2189680171	0,0001000 3	999699987 0
Relative Power	121655	19701240	19719545,8 8	1	159922085
Alliance	121825	0,05553	0,22271893 7	0	1
Joint Minor	121825	0,9372	0,03613461 8	0	1
Border	123819	0,02384187 7	0,15255691 6	0	1
Distance	123819	21486030,0 4	27912379,5 3	8133	93758545
Rivalry	91041	0,00500283	0,07055389 3	0	1
Inside Violence	258	0,7326	0,4434851	0	1
Number of Rebel Groups	335	0,8627	1,071799	0	6
Ethnic Fractionalization	648	0,52874421 8	0,2616347	0,014	0,889
GDP Per Capita	647	2076,32878 6	4975,172	30	31855
State capacity	646	0,005190	0.01879793	0.000041	0.165467

In the next chapter, I will present the analyses and results in addition to the examination of the results to evaluate whether or not the arguments of the hypotheses proposed in the theory chapter can be observed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I demonstrate the results of the analyses and clarify the results to understand if the hypotheses of this study are valid. Firstly, I examine the outcomes of the dyadic analysis to inspect the relationship among a domestic crisis, an external diversionary use of force, and an autocratic regime type. Secondly, I discuss the results of the monadic analysis to seek a statistically significant relationship among external/internal diversionary uses of force, a domestic crisis, and an autocratic regime type.

4.1. Empirical Strategy

To test my hypotheses, I conduct two separate analyses: binary logistic regression analyses for dyadic and monadic datasets. In the next subsection, I talk about the appropriateness of the logistic regression analyses for this thesis.

4.1.1 Logistic Regression

Why some autocracies are more prone to use force against external targets or certain domestic groups in times of a domestic crisis vis-à-vis other autocracies? To answer

this question, I adopt the approach from the diversionary use of force literature and aim to examine the tendency of different autocratic regimes to use force. The dependent variables of this thesis (external and internal uses of force) are coded as dichotomous variables so it is appropriate to conduct logistic regression analyses. The reason behind running a logistic regression is that this analysis is beneficial in modeling variables with binary outcomes that do not have normal distributions. I am running logistic regression analyses to create models that show the approximated probabilities of external and internal uses of force with reference to the measures of the independent variables.

Before providing the findings of the analyses, it is worth presenting table that shows the expected relations among a domestic crisis, regime type, and external/internal uses of force that were mentioned in the hypotheses of this study:

Table 11: Expected Significant Relations Among Independent, Intervening, and Dependent Variables per Hypotheses

Expected Significant Relations Among Variables			
Hypothesis	Independent/Intervening Variables	Dependent Variable	
		External Use of Force	Internal Use of Force
Hypothesis 1.a	Domestic Crisis (Number of Protests (+) /Inflation Rate (+))	+	
	Regime Type (Personalist Autocracy)	+	
Hypothesis 1.b	Domestic Crisis (Number of Protests (+) /Inflation Rate (+))		+
	Regime Type (Personalist Autocracy)		+
Hypothesis 2.a	Domestic Crisis (Number of Protests (+) /Inflation Rate (+))	+	
	Regime Type (Military Autocracy)	+	
Hypothesis 2.b	Domestic Crisis (Number of Protests (+) /Inflation Rate (+))		+
	Regime Type (Military Autocracy)		+

In all of my hypotheses (H1.a, H1.b, H2.a, H2.b), I expect a positive and significant relation between domestic crisis (number of protests or inflation rate) and external/internal use of force. In other words, the higher the number of protests or the inflation rate, the higher the probability of an autocracy engaging in an external/internal use of force. Also, I expect a positive and significant relationship between autocracies being a personalist (H1.a, H1.b) or military (H2.a, H2.b) and

external/internal use of force. Put differently, *ceteris paribus*, compared to non-personalist and civilian autocracies, personalist and military autocracies are more inclined to use force against another state or within the borders.

4.2. Findings

4.2.1 Logistic Regression Analysis 1 (Dyadic Dataset)

Table 12 demonstrates the results of the logistic regression analysis which is based on the dyadic dataset. The results of the analysis are mixed as some of the outcomes confirm the hypotheses of this study while some are contradictory.

Regarding the domestic crisis (inflation rate/number of protests) in a given year, only in Model 3, the coefficient of the inflation rate is positive and has a statistically significant effect on the external uses of force. The possibility of exercising the use of force against another country increases with a log odds of 0.23 ($p < 0.001$). When necessary coding is done, it is seen that in the baseline model which is represented by “intercept”, the log odds of -6.62 corresponds to a 61.2% probability of use of force whereas the log odds of 0.23 for inflation rate corresponds to a 71.6% probability of use of force. Also, the coefficient of the regime type focuses on military autocracies. So, from this model, it can be inferred if there is one unit increase in the inflation rate in a given year, the possibility of a military autocratic regime’s engaging in an external use of force increases from 61.2% to 71.6%. This result confirms Hypothesis 2.a of this study. Apart from this model, even though the coefficient of the inflation rate has a positive effect, there is no statistically significant effect on the use of force by autocracies. Similarly, the coefficient of the number of protests does not have a

statistically significant effect on the use of force by an autocracy against another country.

In terms of the regime type of an autocratic country, in all the models (Model 1, 2, 5, 6) where it is taken into account, the coefficient on the regime type (indicated as “Personalist_Aurocracy”), is positive and has a statistically significant effect on the external uses of force. Autocratic regimes’ being personalist increases the possibility of engaging in the use of force against another country in Model 1 with log odds of 0.47 ($p < 0.01$), in Model 2 by 0.53 ($p < 0.001$), in Model 5, and Model 6 by 0,89 ($p < 0.001$). When the log odds are converted into proportions, it is observed that the probability of personalist autocracies engaging in an external use of force increases;

from 24.5% to 28.8% in Model 1,

from 23.9% to 28.1% in Model 2,

from 37.8% to 64.2% in Model 5,

from 42.2% to 62.4% in Model 6

As seen from the probability ratios, all else being equal, it is more probable that the personalist autocracies engage in an external use of force. These outcomes validate Hypothesis 1.a of this thesis. The coefficient of autocratic regimes’ being military, on the other hand, does not have a statistically significant effect on external use of force in any of the models.

On the control variables, only *border share*, *joint minor powers*, and *rivalry* have statistically significant effects on the behavior of external uses of force of the autocracies. The coefficient of countries' both being minor powers within the dyad has a significant and negative effect on the external uses of force whereas, sharing a common border and rivalry between the states have a positive and a statistically significant effect on the external uses of force.



Table 12: Logit Models (Dyadic Dataset – Effects on External Uses of Force

Key Explanatory Variables: Domestic Crisis (Inflation Rate (H1.a, H1.b, H2.a, H2.b), Number of Protests (H1.a, H1.b, H2.a, H2.b)), Regime Type (Personalist Autocracy (H1.a, H1.b), Military Autocracy (H2.a, H2.b))

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
(Intercept)	-6.91 *** (0.12)	-6.91 *** (0.12)	-6.62 *** (0.08)	-6.59 *** (0.08)	-6.11 *** (0.29)	-6.09 *** (0.29)	-5.47 *** (0.22)	-5.45 *** (0.22)
Inflation_Rate	0.06 (0.12)		0.23 *** (0.06)		0.27 (0.19)	0.27 (0.19)	0.16 (0.08)	0.15 (0.08)
Personalist_Autocracy	0.47 ** (0.16)	0.53 *** (0.16)			0.89 *** (0.24)	0.89 *** (0.24)		
Inflation_Rate:Personalist_Autocracy	0.23 (0.14)				-0.19 (0.21)			
Number_of_Protests		-0.06 (0.12)		-0.02 (0.08)		-0.09 (0.14)		-0.10 (0.13)
Number_of_Protests:Personalist_Autocracy		0.15 (0.16)						
Military_Autocracy								
Inflation_Rate:Military_Autocracy			-0.49 (0.32)	-0.44 (0.30)			-0.41 (0.46)	-0.43 (0.46)
Number_of_Protests:Military_Autocracy			0.15 (0.35)				0.30 (0.47)	
Trade_Dependence_1				0.31 (0.32)				
Trade_Dependence_2								
Relevant_Power								
Alliance								
Minor_Powers								
Sharing_Border								
Capital_Distance								
Rivalry								
Personalist_Autocracy:Inflation_Rate								
Military_Autocracy:Inflation_Rate								
N	123818	123818	123818	123818	87347	87347	87347	87347

4.2.2. Logistic Regression Analysis 2 (Monadic Dataset)

Table 13 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis of the monadic dataset. This analysis searches the relations among external/internal diversionary uses of force, a domestic crisis, and an autocratic regime type. Models 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, and 14 examine the effect of a domestic crisis and the regime type on the external use of force whereas Models 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, and 16 investigate the effect of a domestic predicament and the autocratic regime type on use of force within the borders. Similar to the analysis of the dyadic dataset, the analysis of the monadic dataset has mixed results.

In terms of the domestic crisis (inflation/protest) in a given year, the coefficient of inflation does not have a statistically significant effect on external/internal use of force in any of the models. The coefficient of number of protests, on the other hand, has a negative and statistically significant influence on internal use of force in Model 4, and Model 8. The possibility of exercising the use of force within the borders is decreasing with log odds of 0.46 ($p < 0.01$), and 0.34 ($p < 0.05$) respectively. When the necessary conversions were done, log odds of 0.46 in Model 4 corresponds to the probability of 66.1% for internal use of force by a personalist autocracy, whereas log odds of 0.34 in Model 8 refers to the probability of 73.3% for internal use of force by a military autocracy. On the other hand, the baseline models within Model 4 and Model 8 have 70.2%, and 76% respectively. In Model 4, I examine the effect of the number of protests on personalist autocracies' tendencies to exercise internal use of force whereas Model 8 inspects the influence of the number of protests on military autocracies' proneness to use force within the borders. So, if there is one unit increase in the number of protests in a given year, the possibility of a personalist autocracy

engaging in an internal use of force decreases from 70.2% to 66.1%, and the probability of a military autocracy targeting a group within the borders decreases from 76% to 70.2%. These results contradict the hypotheses of this study.

Regarding the regime type of an autocratic country, in all models (Model 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12) where it is taken into account, the coefficient of the regime type (indicated as “Personalist_Aurocracy”), is positive and has a statistically significant effect on the external and internal uses of force. Autocratic regimes’ being personalist increases the possibility of engaging in the use of force against another country in Model 1 by 0.34 ($p < 0.05$), in Model 2 by 0.36 ($p < 0.05$) in Model 9 by 0.88 ($p < 0.01$), and in Model 10 by 0.89 ($p < 0.01$) After converting the log odds in these models to proportions, it is observed that: if an autocracy is a personalist one, the probability of exercising an external use of force increases;

from 24.5% to 28.8 in Model 1,

from 23.9% to 31.6% in Model 2,

from 37.8% to 64.2% in Model 9,

from 42.2% to 62.4% in Model 10

These results resonate with the outcomes of the dyadic analysis. Also, the coefficient of autocratic regimes’ being personalist increases the likelihood of exercising force within the borders in Model 3 by 1.36 ($p < 0.001$), in Model 11 by 1.12 ($p < 0.05$), and in Model 12 by 1.20 ($p < 0.05$). When the log odds were translated into

proportions, it is seen that if an autocracy is governed by a personalist regime, the possibility of engaging in internal use of force increases;

from 61.2% to 86.6% in Model 3,

from 36.6% to 70.7% in Model 11,

from 49.9% to 76.4% in Model 12

Briefly, the analysis confirmed my hypotheses which state that, compared to a non-personalist autocracy, a personalist autocratic regime has more tendency to engage in the use of force against a group within the borders or a country.

Contrary to the abovementioned outcomes, the coefficient of the regime type (indicated as “Military_Autocracy”) has a statistically significant but negative influence on the external uses of force. As seen in the below table, autocratic regimes’ being military decreases the likelihood of engaging in a use of force against a country by 1.23 ($p < 0.001$) in Model 13 and by 1.26 ($p < 0.001$) in Model 14. When the log odds are converted into probability ratios, it is seen that if an autocracy is governed by a military regime, the probability of engaging in external use of force decreases from 67.9% to 32.1% in Model 13, and from 68.7% to 35.2% in Model 14. The results are not in line with Hypothesis 2.a of this study.

In terms of the control variables, GDP per capita has a statistically significant and negative effect on the external and internal use of force of the autocracies. So, the higher the GDP per capita, the lower the possibility of an autocracy entering into a conflict with a group within the borders or with a country. The ethnic fractionalization index has also a statistically significant and negative impact on the occurrence of the use of force against a country. In other words, if an autocracy has an ethnically more diverse population, the likelihood of that country engaging in an external use of force is lower. The number of rebel groups inside the borders and state capability, on the other hand, have a positive impact on the conflictual tendencies of autocracies. The higher the number of rebel groups inside the country, the higher the possibility of an autocracy exercising an internal use of force. The state capability coefficient has a statistically significant impact on the external use of force as a state is stronger the likelihood of that state entering into a conflict with another state is higher.

Table 13: Logit Models (Monadic Dataset) – Effects on Internal Uses of Force

Key Explanatory Variables: Domestic Crisis (Inflation_Rate (H1.a, H1.b, H2.a, H2.b), Number of Protests (H1.a, H1.b, H2.a, H2.b)), Regime Type (Personalist_Autocracy (H1.a, H1.b), Military_Autocracy (H2.a, H2.b))

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
(Intercept)	0.55 ** (0.17)	0.54 ** (0.17)	0.90 *** (0.17)	0.92 *** (0.17)	2.67 *** (0.46)	2.51 *** (0.43)	2.77 *** (0.45)	2.75 *** (0.45)
Inflation_Rate	0.12 (0.21)		0.14 (0.16)		0.45 (0.43)		0.23 (0.25)	
Personalist_Autocracy	1.36 *** (0.33)	1.41 *** (0.34)			1.12 * (0.53)	1.20 * (0.52)		
Inflation_Rate:Personalist_Autocracy	-0.06 (0.33)				-0.38 (0.52)			
Number_of_Protests		-0.46 ** (0.18)		-0.34 * (0.16)		-0.22 (0.32)		-0.20 (0.25)
Number_of_Protests:Personalist_Autocracy		0.21 (0.30)				0.03 (0.42)		
Military_Autocracy			0.37 (0.31)	0.32 (0.31)			0.65 (0.58)	0.31 (0.51)
Inflation_Rate:Military_Autocracy			0.20 (0.53)				0.86 (0.80)	
Number_of_Protests:Military_Autocracy				-0.01 (0.28)				-0.00 (0.39)
GDP_Per_Capita					-0.72 ** (0.27)	-0.68 * (0.27)	-0.63 ** (0.23)	-0.60 ** (0.23)
Ethnic_Fractionalization					-0.14 (0.23)	-0.16 (0.24)	0.09 (0.24)	0.04 (0.24)
Number_of_Rebel_Groups					3.02 *** (0.53)	2.84 *** (0.52)	2.75 *** (0.46)	2.61 *** (0.46)
CINC					0.31 (0.43)	0.41 (0.48)	0.14 (0.27)	0.21 (0.29)
N	258	258	258	258	219	219	219	219
AIC	287.46	279.55	305.20	299.98	140.74	141.02	144.28	146.65
BIC	301.67	293.76	319.41	314.19	167.85	168.13	171.39	173.77
Pseudo R ²	0.11	0.15	0.01	0.04	0.54	0.54	0.52	0.51

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Note: CINC=Composite Index of National Capability

Table 14: Logit Models (Monadic Dataset) – Effects on External Uses of Force

Key Explanatory Variables: Domestic Crisis (H1.a, H1.b, H2.a, H2.b), Number of Protests (H1.a, H1.b, H2.a, H2.b), Regime Type (Personalist Autocracy (H1.a, H1.b), Military Autocracy (H2.a, H2.b))

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
(Intercept)	-1.10 *** (0.12)	-1.10 *** (0.12)	-0.95 *** (0.10)	-0.95 *** (0.10)	-1.02 *** (0.20)	-1.03 *** (0.20)	-0.14 (0.19)	-0.16 (0.19)
Inflation_Rate	0.03 (0.13)		0.14 (0.09)		0.23 (0.20)		0.03 (0.13)	
Personalist_Autocrac y	0.34 * (0.17)	0.36 * (0.17)			0.88 ** (0.29)	0.89 ** (0.29)		
Inflation_Rate:Perso nalist_Autocracy	0.16 (0.17)				-0.24 (0.26)			
Number_of_Protests		0.09 (0.12)		0.05 (0.09)		-0.08 (0.22)		-0.04 (0.19)
Number_of_Protests:P ersonalist_Autocracy		-0.05 (0.17)				0.11 (0.28)		
Military_Autocracy			0.11 (0.22)				-1.23 *** (0.36)	-1.26 *** (0.36)
Inflation_Rate:Milit ary_Autocracy			-0.12 (0.30)				0.32 (0.41)	
Number_of_Protests:M ilitary_Autocracy				0.04 (0.22)				0.21
GDP_Per_Capita								
Ethnic_Fractionaliza tion					-0.97 ** (0.31)	-0.96 ** (0.31)	-1.13 *** (0.30)	-1.11 *** (0.32)
Number_of_Rebel_Grou ps					-0.27 * (0.14)	-0.25 (0.15)	-0.39 ** (0.15)	-0.38 * (0.18)
CINC					0.15 (0.13)	0.15 (0.13)	0.17 (0.13)	0.18 (0.13)
					0.89 ** (0.31)	0.88 ** (0.32)	1.18 ** (0.38)	1.12 ** (0.38)
N	669	669	669	669	304	304	304	304
AIC	798.80	801.53	803.48	805.61	375.89	377.01	372.49	372.70
BIC	816.82	819.55	821.50	823.63	406.75	406.75	402.23	402.43
Pseudo R ²	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.17	0.17	0.19	0.19

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Note: CINC=Composite Index of National Capability

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As the rational actor model suggests, leaders are rational utility maximizers whose prior objective is safeguarding the status quo and staying in power (Bueno de Mesquita et. al., 2003). When faced with an economic, social, or political dead-end in the country, leaders, in general, would be incentivized to break the deadlock to evade any threat to their authority in the state. Breaking the deadlock does not have to be always about resolving the crisis that potentially poses a threat to the political survival of the leader. Sometimes, overcoming a crisis can be very costly and complicated, and this may force leaders to consider other actions for a way out of the hard-to-solve problem.

One of the ways that could help leaders avoid any menace rising against their political survival is the use of force. Having been cornered by a hard-to-solve domestic crisis, embattled leaders could be motivated to use force against another country or a political, ethnic, or religious minority residing inside the borders of the country. Apparently, the use of force has unforeseen and unexpected economic, political, and diplomatic ramifications that have a significant impact on the political survival of a

leader. However, in spite of the uncertainty that is caused by the use of force, leaders may see it as an instrumental policy to concentrate power on himself/herself through rallying people around their flag.

The literature on diversionary conflict mostly focuses on the diversionary incentives of the leaders in the democratic countries. In democratic countries, electoral processes are enabling citizens to punish or reward a leader for his/her performance during the time in power. So, leaders in democratic countries are more incentivized to divert public opinion from the ongoing domestic crisis in order to avoid punishment from the citizens in the upcoming elections. As stated earlier, one of the ways to divert public's attention from the crisis and rally the public opinion around their flag is engaging in use of force. In light of these assumptions, most of the studies focus on democratic countries and they argue that vis-à-vis authoritarian countries, democratic states have more tendency to engage in the use of force for diversionary purposes. Compared to the number of studies on diversionary incentives of democratic leaders, research on authoritarian leaders' diversionary use of force can be considered minuscule.

In addition to this, nearly all of the diversionary studies on authoritarian leaders do not differentiate among authoritarian regimes as if they have the same dynamics. Considering all authoritarian regimes as the same and building the theory on this assumption may lead to ending up with conclusions that fall short of explaining the phenomena in world politics. In order to avoid this, I adopted an approach that classifies autocracies in terms of the extent of the power of the person in charge and

whether the regime is governed by the military or a civilian/s. For this approach, I benefitted from Slater's (2003) labeling of different autocratic regimes and Weeks's (2014) logic of the same classification. I ended up with four autocratic regimes to analyze their diversionary incentives: personalist – civilian (boss), personalist – military (strongman), non-personalist – civilian (machine), and non-personalist – military (junta).

Furthermore, like there is little research about different authoritarian regimes in terms of their diversionary incentives, there are a few studies on domestic diversionary use of force. In this thesis, I aimed to address these gaps as I adopted an approach to examining both the external and domestic diversionary use of force behaviors of different authoritarian regimes which are mentioned in the previous paragraph.

To answer the research question that I posed in this thesis and to test my hypotheses, I ran two logistic regression analyses: one for dyadic and one for monadic data. Although the logistic regression analysis that focused on dyadic data could be enough to observe the differences in diversionary incentives of different autocratic regimes, I believed that the analysis based on monadic data could serve as a complementary analysis that contributes to the validation of the first analysis.

The independent variables of this thesis are the existence of a domestic crisis and the autocratic regime type. In this thesis, a domestic crisis is considered an economic and/or a political crisis. For the sake of simplicity and its strength in predicting a crisis, I used the inflation rate as a proxy for an economic crisis. To measure the

inflation rate, I benefitted from the GDP deflator rather than the consumer price index (CPI). The second indicator of a domestic predicament is a political crisis. In this thesis, I used the number of protests in a given year as the indicator of a political crisis. To have a simple procedure that is not complicated with the mobilized group's identity, and demand, the nature of the mobilization, and the number of participants, I coded a mass mobilization as a protest only if it has more than 50 participants and it targets the host state's policies.

The intervening variable of this study is the type of autocratic regime. For this, I benefit from the Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions Dataset (Geddes et. al., 2014). In this dataset, Geddes et. al. (2014) classified autocratic regimes as monarchy, personal, military, party, party-personal, party-military, military-personal, party-personal military, oligarchy, and indirect military. They categorized these regime types under four main categories: party-based regimes, military regimes, personalist regimes, and monarchical regimes. This classification of the autocratic regimes in this dataset does not completely serve the purposes of this thesis. So, I made the necessary changes that I mentioned in the research design section and put them under the categories of the personalist – civilian (boss), personalist – military (strongman), non-personalist – civilian (machine), and non-personalist – military (junta).

The dependent variables of this thesis, on the other hand, are external use of force against another country, and internal use of force targeting a group within the borders of the belligerent country. For the external use of force variable, I benefitted from the

latest version of the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data (MID) generated by the Correlates of War (COW) (Palmer et. al., 2020). The dataset categorizes the disputes into the following categories: no militarized action, threat to use force, display of force, use of force, and war. The diversionary theory of war literature traditionally examines war cases to test whether the embattled leaders have diversionary intentions or not in times of a domestic predicament. However, since the phenomenon of war is considerably scarce compared to other forms of MIDs and war can be very costly not only for the belligerent country but also for the leader's political survival, I focused on the cases of threat to use force, display of force, and use of force to analyze the diversionary incentives of the embattled leaders.

Another dependent variable in this study is the use of force by a given country against an organized opposition within borders. To create the conflict sample for this variable, I used the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD). While analyzing the domestic use of force, I focused on the use of force by a country against a formally organized opposition inside the boundaries. As the ACD consists of only the formally organized opposition groups and it concentrates on deliberate and organized militarized conflict instead of abrupt attacks, the dataset fits well for the objectives of this study.

Lastly, the control variables of this theoretical mechanism are numerous as there can be many factors that may trigger a militarized conflict by a state against another state or an organized opposition group within the borders. The control variables considered in this thesis are the factors recognized by the previous studies as they were seen as influencing the war initiation and the conflictual behaviors of states.

The first of these factors is the number of armed non-state actors targeting the given state at a given time. The existence of an armed non-state actor inside the boundaries of a state has a big influence on the conflictual tendencies of the leader/group in charge as this group might present a practical objective for the state. Therefore, the number of all armed non-state actors targeting a state could be an influential confounding factor for the theoretical mechanism of this study. Furthermore, ethnic fractionalization in a state is the second control variable in the analysis. As the literature indicates, ethnic diversity in a given country may influence the frequency of the occurrence of conflicts between the state and different ethnic groups, so ethnic fractionalization within the borders is a factor that should be considered as a control variable in the analysis.

Thirdly, GDP per capita is another important confounding factor for the theoretical mechanism in this thesis. If an anticipated war is thought to have a serious detrimental effect on GDP per capita, the leader or the ruling political elite could re-evaluate their decision to initiate a militarized conflict. Moreover, state capability and relative power are other important factors in conflict initiation in dyadic relations. Many scholars argue that compared to less powerful countries, major powers have greater interests in their region or in world politics and they are more advantageous in exercising power on other countries so more powerful countries have more tendency to engage in a militarized conflict. In this thesis, the CINC score was taken into consideration in the calculation of the state capability and relative power.

Apart from the relative power, some factors like whether the two countries within a dyad share a common border can be a decisive circumstance for the breaking out of a militarized conflict. The literature shows that compared to the countries that do not share a border, neighboring states have more likelihood of getting into a militarized conflict. Similarly, the distance between capitals can be another important factor that plays a role in the conflictual tendencies of the states so, I added this as a control variable to my analysis.

In addition to these, I presume that there are fewer militarized conflicts in a minor power-minor power dyad than between a minor power and a major power because the major power is in a rather advantageous position to exert power on the minor power whereas the minor powers would be forced to consider more on use of force to other country. As I consider these scenarios would have an impact on the conflict behaviors of states and leaders, I added the existence of a minor power-minor power dyad as a control variable to the analysis. Also, a pact of alliance is another factor that is influential in decreasing the probability of a militarized conflict between the states. The states may be discouraged from engaging in a conflict with their alliance as they could be sanctioned and alienated from the international society and the damage to their credibility could frustrate their efforts in founding good relations in world politics. Furthermore, rivalry is another important determinant of the conflict tendencies of states. Compared to the alliance, the rivalry between states may have a reverse impact on leaders' decisions to engage in a military conflict with another state. As stated earlier, usually, rival states do not have great dependence on each other thus they would not be deterred by the loss of expected benefits from their relations.

Lastly, trade interdependence is the final control variable in the theoretical mechanism of this study. Trade interdependence may serve as an inhibitor for conflict initiation between countries. Strong trade relations between countries may prevent militarized conflict initiation between these states because the costs of the clash like losing an important chunk of a trade volume with a trusted commercial partner could be greater than the benefits of the stakes of a conflict. In light of these assumptions, I added all the aforementioned factors as the control variables for my analysis.

5.1. Summary of Findings

In this thesis, I conducted dyadic and monadic analyses to test my hypotheses on the relationship among a domestic crisis, an external/internal diversionary use of force, and an autocratic regime type. The dyadic analysis tested the relation among a domestic crisis, an external diversionary use of force, and an autocratic regime type. The monadic analysis, on the other hand, focused on the relation among both external and internal diversionary uses of force, a domestic crisis, and an autocratic regime type. In this way, the monadic analysis served as a complementary analysis that incorporates the diversionary uses of force within the borders and brings an additional approach to the external diversionary use of force analysis done from a dyadic lens.

The outcomes of the logistic regression analyses are mixed at best. The analyses revealed that there is a significant and positive relation between personalist autocracies and their tendency to engage in a conflict with another country or with a group inside the borders. This result validates Hypotheses 1.a and 1.b. Also, in some of the models, there is a significant and positive association between the inflation rate

and the likelihood of military autocracies exercising the use of force against another country, which confirms Hypothesis 2.a.

However, some of the results exposed contrary relations between independent and dependent variables. The analysis of the monadic data showed that if an autocracy is governed by the military, the likelihood of that country engaging in an external or internal use of force is lower compared to a non-military autocracy. This result contradicts with Hypotheses 2.a and 2.b. In addition to this, one model in the analysis demonstrated if the number of protests increases in a given country in a given year, all the autocracies would be discouraged from exercising force targeting a group inside the borders. This result opposes all the hypotheses of this study.

5.2. Implications

This study aimed to present an alternative interpretation of the incidents of external and internal use of force exercised by autocracies. First, in times of a domestic predicament, a personalist autocracy is expected to engage in a use of force more possibly compared to a non-personalist autocracy. The determinant in the discrepancy may be related to the different political structures in these regimes. Since the leaders in non-personalist autocracies are more restrained by the regime elite, they may be more prudent, if not discouraged, while considering exercising the use of force. With more observations covering a longer period of time, a future study can adopt an alternative way of classifying autocracies and examine the relation between autocratic regime type and the use of force in times of a domestic crisis.

Second, while a higher inflation rate may incentivize autocracies to use force against another country, the higher number of protests has the contrary effect as this discourages autocratic countries from engaging in internal use of force. Leaders may think that they can scapegoat other countries for the economic predicament in their country. The severance of relations may work as a catalyst for a conflict between the countries. Regarding the protests, on the other hand, leaders may be discouraged from using force against opposition groups inside the borders as they may refrain from inciting the groups and spreading protests all over the country.

Third, the reason for the lower probability of military autocracies engaging in an external use of force compared to civilian autocracies can be related to the army's past experiences and witnessing atrocities in conflicts. This may make the military autocracy more prudent and considerate in the calculation for engaging in a use of force against another country. Granted that the conclusions in the above paragraphs are not incontestable, further studies can be conducted to examine the validity of these assumptions. In order to have a more complete picture, these findings should be introduced with the limitations of this thesis.

When the whole International Relations literature is considered, this thesis mainly contributes to the fields of Foreign Policy Analysis, and Conflict Studies as it examines the conflictual behaviors of different types of autocracies. Also, since I argue that the leaders may be motivated to engage in the use of force due to a hard-to-solve domestic crisis and different dominant groups within the decision-making processes in domestic politics play an important role in whether or not engaging in the

use of force, my study contributes to the domestic politics literature. Last but not least, this thesis is on the agent side of the ongoing debate on the agent-structure problem in international relations theory as I argue that one of the reasons for the occurrences of conflicts is leaders' background.

5.3. Limitations

Even though I have a sound theoretical mechanism and informative findings, my thesis is not a definite study as it suffers from several limitations. To test my hypotheses, my analysis is based on the available data which is very restricted. My dataset was constrained to the 1990-2001 period, a very limited time period that falls short when it comes to explaining the conflictual incentives of countries. Also, integrating countries exercising the use of force against a group within the borders further decreased the number of observations in my dataset. This led to uneven statistical distribution in some of the models.

Another limitation of this study is that not having a more detailed classification of protests. For the sake of simplicity of the operationalization of a protest, I did not conduct the following steps. First, I did not differentiate between distinct identities of groups that have participated in the demonstrations and/or have organized the protests. Also, I did not take different types of protester demands into consideration and viewed them as having no weight in my coding. Lastly, a protest that had 50 participants was considered the same as another protest with more than 5000 participants.

Similarly, the dependent variables, especially the external use of force, could have been operationalized in a different way. I took the MID dataset into consideration while I was coding the external use of force. As stated earlier, the MID dataset codes one or more separate conflicts with the same country about the same issue as one dispute if these disputes happen within 6 months. On the other hand, the MII version within the MID dataset counts incidents between the same actors over the same issue as separate events if there are 3 days between these disputes. However, using the MII dataset was not viable as there were some problems in merging the datasets. It is apparent that to have more robust operationalization in the analysis and end up with more sound findings, there is more to be done in future studies.

In addition to the improvement of operationalization in the analysis, there may be a need to add more factors that could have an impact on internal or external use of force. Not including all factors in the analysis might lead to insignificant relations between the independent and dependent variables in this study. This can be considered as a limitation of this thesis and it can be addressed by including some predictors such as total population, number of neighbors, and number of rival neighbors of a given country in a given year. Especially for the last predictor, I could not find a dataset to benefit from. Due to time constraints, I could not create my dataset regarding the neighbors that have a rivalry with a given country. So, one can address this limitation by adding new predictors to the analyses whether through combining existing datasets or creating a new one.

Furthermore, due to time constraints and a lack of data, I could not analyze whether there is substitutability between external and internal use of force in times of a domestic predicament. One of the aims of this study was to shed light on this relation that could lead to an important finding in diversionary use of force literature. Although this study serves as a first step in understanding whether there is substitutability between external and internal diversionary use of force, there is a lot to be done to have a more systematic and sound analysis and findings. In the last section, I will give my humble suggestions to overcome some of the limitations of this study for future studies.

5.4. Future Studies

In spite of the limitations, my thesis makes a significant contribution to the diversionary use of force literature and encourages more research. The theoretical mechanism I created in this study, the outcomes, and more research in the future may shed more light on the relations among a domestic crisis, regime type, and conflict.

As mentioned in the limitation part, future studies should have a closer look at the types of protests and have a more detailed categorization in the analysis by including parameters like protester groups' identities, different types of protester demands, and the number of participants in a given protest. This may lead to a more elaborate analysis that has more explanatory power on the relation between the protests within the borders and leaders' tendency to engage in a conflict. Similarly, as stated in the limitations section, a different type of operationalization of the military interstate incidents can be another viable way of examining the effects of a domestic crisis and

the regime type on the external uses of force. Instead of the MIDs, one can benefit from the MIIs and have a more elaborated approach to the operationalization of militarized interstate incidents.

Secondly, future studies should benefit from more data to cover longer period of time and to have more observations. More data may give more explanatory and predictive power to the research so that a future study that analyzes a considerable amount of data that covers more years and observations will be more advantageous in explaining the conflictual behaviors of states. Additionally, as stated in the limitations section, in future studies, one should add more predictors such as the population, the number of neighbors, and the number of rival neighbors of a given state while examining the conflictual behaviors of the leaders in times of a domestic crisis. In this way, the study would have more explanatory power in more cases of the use of force.

Similarly, a future study should support the analysis with qualitative analysis too.

Although I provided several cases of diversionary use of force by different countries in this thesis, I only conducted a large-N analysis which explains some parts of the story. To have a more complete picture, in addition to a large-N analysis, one should benefit from a qualitative analysis such as case studies.

Furthermore, it is suggested that future studies should test the relation among domestic predicaments, use of force, and regime type by conducting a different categorization for the autocratic regime types. In this way, there will be more

advancement in the research for understanding whether some autocracies behave differently than others and if so under which conditions.

Finally, to address the limitation on the substitutability between external and internal use of force, future studies should lean on the timing of the use of force and external and internal factors that could influence the behavior of a leader such as the number of rival countries, and the number of armed non-state actors targeting the belligerent state. While searching if there is substitutability, one can take this study as a useful reference point since there are some insightful findings regarding external and internal uses of force.

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