SCAPEGOATING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: RECIPROCAL RELATIONS AMONG SOCIETAL UNREST, ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE, AND DIVERSIONARY MILITARY FORCE

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ABSTRACT
Although the diversionary theory of war has received considerable empirical support, the type of nuanced, broadly applicable understanding of the phenomenon that Levy (1989) and others have called for has yet to emerge. This study initiates the process of crafting such an understanding. Using Leamer’s (1983) extreme-bounds analysis, we test for non-linear, reciprocal relationships among interstate military force, societal unrest, and economic growth across 140 democratic and autocratic states from 1950 to 1996. We find evidence of both reciprocal and non-linear relations. Autocracies are significantly more likely to divert than democracies, largely for political reasons. Inflation tends to reduce the likelihood that interstate military force will be used, while negative economic growth has little impact on decisions to use force. Our results underscore the need to take simultaneity, non-linearity, and sample size seriously in studies of diversionary force.

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