

# Domestic diversion: Selective targeting of minority out-groups

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## Abstract

Domestic political use of force is a strategy for political leaders to divert the public's attention away from economic instability and rebuild political capital. But, diversionary incentives are not the only motivation; the targeted vulnerable minority's capabilities are important. We analyze how the combination of diversionary incentive and out-group mobilization capabilities influences leaders' decision-calculus. Embattled leaders make strategic decisions about both the target and the adequate severity of force to accomplish diversion without risking conflict escalation. We empirically test the resulting hypotheses using the Minorities at Risk dataset from 1998 to 2003 and find support for our expectations. Incentive alone does not determine domestic political use of force; the same incentive produces variance in the severity of force dependent on the targeted out-group's mobilization capability. Governments match the severity of domestic force to political survival goals and the costs and risks of political use of force.

## Keywords

Coercion, domestic diversion, in-group–out-group, mobilization, political use of force, political violence

The June 2015 Turkish Parliament election results weakened the incumbent Justice and Development Party (AKP) and threatened the leadership's political survival. In response, AKP announced new elections for November 2015 and in the interim dramatically changed its policies toward the Kurdish minority (Andy-Ar Survey, 2015; Girit, 2015; Tures, 2015). AKP replaced negotiations with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) with bellicose rhetoric and use of force. Opposition parties and dissidents claim that the policy shift was an attempt

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