The Limits of Diversion: Rethinking Internal and External Conflict

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M. Taylor Fravel

The diversionary hypothesis offers a powerful alternative to rationalist explanations of war based on the state as a unitary actor. Most recently, it has been used to explain why democratizing states are more likely to initiate the use of force. In the past two decades, however, quantitative tests have produced mixed and often contradictory empirical results regarding the relationship between domestic unrest and external conflict. This article uses a modified "most likely" case study research design to test the hypothesis. Examination of Argentina's seizure of the Falkland Islands and Turkey's invasion of Cyprus, two cases that should be easy for diversion to explain, provide surprisingly little empirical support for the hypothesis, raising doubts about its wider validity as well as the relationship between democratization and war.

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DEBATE OVER DIVERSION

The diversionary hypothesis offers a seductive explanation for why states initiate crises or go to war. The notion that a desperate leader might provoke conflict with another state to deflect attention from problems at home is intuitively compelling and seems to reflect commonsense. Capturing this view, Quincy Wright noted many years ago that "foreign war as a remedy for internal tension, revolution, or insurrection has been an accepted principle of government."[1] More recently, Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder have invoked the diversionary motive to argue that democratizing states are more prone to initiate the use of force than other types of states.[2]

Support for diversionary logic pervades the news media, perhaps more than any other theory of conflict. During the 1991 Gulf War, for example, press reports stressed how President George H. W. Bush sought to deflect attention from a ballooning budget deficit and other domestic challenges.[3] Likewise, President Bill Clinton's 1998 authorization of cruise missile strikes against terrorist targets only three days after admitting to an affair with Monica Lewinsky was widely seen as "wagging the dog."[4] Finally, President George W. Bush's move to invade

[1] Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 140.
[2] Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995), 5-38; Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Snyder, "Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength and War," *International Organization* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 303-304; and Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 35-36.
[3] Michael Oreskes, "Bush Trying A New Topic; Is Talk of War Driven By Policy or Politics?" *New York Times* [hereafter, *NYT*], 31 October 1990, A21
[4] Todd S. Purdum, "U.S. Fury On 2 Continents: Congress; Critics Of Clinton Support Attacks," *NYT*, 21 August 1998, A1. "Wagging the dog" is a euphemism for diversionary behavior, whereby private or parochial interests (the tail) determine state policy (the dog). The term gained popularity following the 1997 release of the movie *Wag the Dog* in which a presidential aide hired a movie producer to manufacture a war in Albania to deflect attention from a sex scandal that erupted during a presidential election.

Iraq amid the 2002 midterm elections and a faltering position in the polls has been cast as diversionary.[5]

The stakes in the validity of the diversionary hypothesis are deceptively high. As a domestic-level explanation of international conflict, it offers one of several important alternatives to rationalist explanations of war based on the state as a unitary actor.[6] Strong empirical support for diversion would confirm another pathway to international conflict, complementing those based on rationalist approaches. By contrast, limited support for diversion would cast doubt on one class of second-image theories of international conflict.

Despite two decades of renewed research, cumulative knowledge on diversion remains elusive. Quantitative studies contain mixed and often contradictory empirical results regarding the relationship between internal and external conflict. Some studies find a positive relationship between indicators of domestic dissatisfaction and threats or uses of force in analysis of U.S. behavior[7] and in cross-national studies.[8] By contrast, other research identifies a weak or

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[5] Dan Milbank, "Democrats Question Iraq Timing; Talk of War Distracts From Election Issues," *Washington Post*, 16 September 2002, A1

[6] James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 379-414.

[7] Karl DeRouen, "Presidents and the Diversionary Use of Force: A Research Note," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (June 2000): 317-28; Karl DeRouen and Jeffrey Peake, "The Dynamics of Diversion: The Domestic Implications of Presidential Use of Force," *International Interactions* 28, no. 2 (April 2002): 191-211; Benjamin O. Fordham, "Partisanship, Macroeconomic Policy and U.S. Uses of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 4 (August 1998): 418-30; Benjamin O. Fordham, "The Politics of Threat Perception and the Use of Force: A Political Economy Model of U.S. Uses of Force," *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (September 1998): 567-90; Gregory D. Hess and Athanasios Orphanides, "War Politics: An Economic, Rational Voter Framework," *American Economic Review* 85, no. 4 (September 1995): 828-47; Patrick James and Athanasios Hristoulas, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy: Evaluating a Model of Crisis Activity for the United States," *Journal of Politics* 56, no. 2 (May 1994): 327-48; Patrick James and John R. Oneal, "The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President's Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35, no. 2 (June 1991): 307-32; T. Clifton Morgan and Kenneth N. Bickers, "Domestic Discontent and the Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 1 (March 1992): 25-52; and Charles W. Ostrom and Brian L. Job, "The President and Political Uses of Force," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 2 (June 1986): 541-66.

[8] D. Scott Bennett, "Foreign Policy Substitutability and Internal Economic Problems," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 1 (February 2000): 33-61; Kurt Dassel and Eric Reinhardt, "Domestic Strife and the Initiation of Violence at Home and Abroad," *American Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 1 (January 1999): 56-85; Graeme A. M. Davies, "Domestic Strife and the Initiation of International Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 5 (October 2002): 672-92; Andrew J. Enterline and Kristian S. Gleditsch, "Threats, Opportunities and Force:

nonexistent relationship between these same variables.[9] Indeed, the gap between the intuition underlying diversion as a motive for conflict and existing quantitative research that Jack Levy noted in 1989 continues to characterize this research program today.[10]

Given the mixed empirical results in recent quantitative research, this article offers a different type of test of the diversionary hypothesis. In particular, I extend efforts to employ case study methods to test the hypothesis systematically and against alternative explanations in

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Repression and Diversion of Domestic Pressure," *International Interactions* 26, no. 1 (January 2000): 21-53; Dennis M. Foster, "State Power, Linkage Mechanisms and Diversion Against Nonrivals," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 23, no. 1 (February 2006): 1-21; Christopher Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions: Governmental Structure and the Externalization of Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 2 (April 1997): 255-82; Biger Heldt, "Domestic Politics, Absolute Deprivation and the Use of Armed Force in Interstate Territorial Disputes, 1950-1990," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 4 (August 1999): 451-78; Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 61-82; Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*; Ross A. Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force," *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 3 (August 1995): 761-85; Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and Brandon C. Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (December 2004): 937-61; John R. Oneal and Jaroslav Tir, "Does the Diversionary Use of Force Threaten the Democratic Peace? Assessing the Effect of Economic Growth on Interstate Conflict, 1921-2001," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (December 2006): 755-79; Jeffrey Pickering and Emizet F. Kisangani, "Democracy and Diversionary Military Intervention: Reassessing Regime Type and the Diversionary Hypothesis," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (March 2005): 25-43; and Bruce Russett, "Economic Decline, Electoral Pressure, and the Initiation of Interstate Conflict," in *Prisoners of War?* eds., Charles S. Gochman and N. Sabrosky (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990), 123-40. On medieval Italy, see David Sobek, "Rallying Around the Podesta: Testing Diversionary Theory Across Time," *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 1 (January 2007): 29-45.

[9] Giacomo Chiozza and H. E. Goemans, "Peace Through Insecurity: Tenure and International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 4 (August 2003): 443-67; Dennis M. Foster and Glenn Palmer, "Presidents, Public Opinion, and Diversionary Behavior: The Role of Partisan Support Reconsidered," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2, no. 3 (July 2006): 269-87; Joanne Gowa, "Politics at the Water's Edge: Parties, Votes and the Use of Force," *International Organization* 52, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 307-24; Brett Ashley Leeds and David R. Davis, "Domestic Political Vulnerability and International Disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 6 (December 1997): 814-34; Bradley Lian and John R. Oneal, "Presidents, the Military Use of Force and Public Opinion," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37, no. 2 (June 1993): 277-300; James Meernik, "Presidential Decision-Making and the Political Use of Force," *International Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (March 1994): 121-38; James Meernik, "Modeling International Crises and the Political Use of Military Force by the USA," *Journal of Peace Research* 35, no. 2 (2000): 547-62; James Meernik, *The Political Use of Military Force in US Foreign Policy* (London: Ashgate, 2004); James Meernik and Peter Waterman, "The Myth of the Diversionary Use of Force by American Presidents," *Political Research Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (September 1996): 573-90; and Will H. Moore and David J. Lanoue, "Domestic Politics and U.S. Foreign Policy: A Study of Cold War Conflict Behavior," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65, no. 2 (May 2003): 376-96. For single-country studies not finding support for diversion, see Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949-1992: A First Cut at the Data," *The China Quarterly* no. 153 (March 1998): 1-30.

[10] Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique," in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus I. Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989). For a detailed review of the recent literature, see Meernik, *The Political Use of Military Force in US Foreign Policy*.

specific episodes of historical interest.[11] Adopting a modified "most likely" approach to theory testing pioneered by Harry Eckstein, I examine two cases that should be easy for diversionary theory to explain: Argentina's 1982 seizure of the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands and Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus. In these episodes, high levels of domestic political unrest preceded the escalation of salient disputes that leaders could manipulate to rally public support or demonstrate their competence as statesmen.

These cases should be homeruns for the diversionary hypothesis, but they are in fact quite difficult for it to explain. In these cases, the relationship between domestic political conflict and dispute escalation is weak at best, as the onset and magnitude of social unrest was only linked loosely with decisions to use force. Leaders' statements and reasoning provide little evidence for diversion as a central motivation for escalation. Instead, a standard realist model of international politics and the dynamics of coercive diplomacy offer a more compelling explanation of Argentine and Turkish decision making.[12] Leaders in these states chose force in response to external threats to national interests, not internal threats to their political survival.

This article proceeds as follows. The first section reviews briefly the literature on diversion and the core causal mechanisms of rallying and gambling. The second section outlines a modified most likely case study research design for testing the effects of domestic unrest on external conflict. The next sections analyze two most likely cases for diversion in Argentina and Turkey. The final section discusses implications of the analysis for the diversionary hypothesis, democratization and war, and the relationship between internal and external conflict.

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[11] For recent qualitative tests of diversion, see Jane Kellett Cramer, "'Just Cause' or Just Politics? U.S. Panama Invasion and Standardizing Qualitative Tests for Diversionary War," *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 2 (January 2006): 178-201; Ryan C. Hendrickson, "Clinton's Military Strikes in 1998: Diversionary Uses of Force?" *Armed Forces & Society* 28, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 309-32; and Amy Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3 (July 2006): 431-63.

[12] The purpose of this article is to offer a new type of test of the diversionary hypothesis, not to demonstrate the explanatory power of realist approaches to international politics. A standard realist model was chosen because it offers a clear and plausible alternative explanation for decisions to use force.

THE DIVERSIONARY HYPOTHESIS

The basic claim of all diversionary arguments is straightforward: national leaders pursue aggressive, belligerent, or escalatory foreign policies when faced with internal social, economic, or political problems that threaten their domestic political survival. Leaders pursue conflict abroad to increase public support at home by diverting attention from domestic troubles through rallying around the flag or by demonstrating their competence as statesmen. The sole or essential purpose of such diversionary action is to enhance domestic political survival—to counter internal threats to political power, not external ones to state survival, security, or other national interests.

The research inspiring the diversionary hypothesis is social-psychological, widely known as the conflict-cohesion or ingroup/outgroup logic developed by Georg Simmel and Lewis Coser.[13] Within international relations, the diversionary hypothesis asserts that leaders recognize that external conflict can increase societal cohesion and will pursue conflict abroad when domestic political survival is at risk. Based on the conflict-cohesion logic, the first mechanism by which leaders divert is to persuade the public to "rally around the flag," setting aside parochial interests to unite for the greater good of the nation.[14] The rally effect is sometimes described as scapegoating, where leaders justify a belligerent foreign policy by blaming internal difficulties on foreign enemies.[15] In either case, leaders initiate or use force in response to domestic threats to deflect attention away from themselves and onto an external adversary, thereby using symbolic politics to increase national unity and enhance their domestic political support.

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[13] Lewis A. Coser, *The Function of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1956); and Georg Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations* (Glencoe, Il: The Free Press, 1955).
[14] Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War."
[15] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1988); and Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War."

The conflict-cohesion logic also underpins recent arguments about democratization and war. In a series of publications, Mansfield and Snyder argue that leaders in authoritarian regimes transitioning to democracy will pursue strategies to increase national prestige by engaging in assertive or provocative behavior abroad.[16] More generally, they assert that leaders are more likely to invoke nationalism to foster ingroup identity to support their continued rule and seek to strengthen this identity through external conflict with an out-group. Incentives for diversion such as social unrest are especially common for leaders of regimes in the often uncertain process of democratization, which explains why such states might pursue aggressive foreign policies.

A second causal mechanism of diversion outlined in the literature is "gambling for resurrection." When faced with the prospect of an upcoming defeat at the polls, unpopular leaders may initiate or escalate a foreign crisis to demonstrate their competence to be reelected. Faced with likely removal from office, leaders have nothing left to loose by pursuing an assertive or belligerent foreign policy. If successful, an assertive foreign policy will pay dividends at the polls, when voters update beliefs about the competency of their leaders.[17] Although this mechanism was developed to explain the behavior of leaders in states with competitive elections, it has been applied to all types of regimes. The label for this mechanism, however, is somewhat imprecise because leaders may "gamble" on their political future and start a crisis either to generate a rally effect or demonstrate competence (or both).

In both mechanisms of diversion, domestic variables do all the heavy causal lifting. As Levy and others note, although diversion offers only a partial explanation for war, it is one of

[16] Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War"; Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength and War"; and Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*.
[17] George W. Downs and David M. Rocke, "Conflict, Agency and Gambling for Resurrection: The Principal-Agent Problem Goes to War," *American Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 2 (May 1994): 362-80; Diana Richards et al., "Good Times, Bad Times and the Diversionary Use of Force: A Tale of Some Not-So-Free Agents," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37, no. 3 (September 1993): 504-35; and Alastair Smith, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Democratic Systems," *International Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (March 1996): 133-53.

only a few second-image or societal theories of international conflict.[18] Put simply, the actions and behavior of opposing states should be unimportant or at least secondary in explaining leaders' decisions to provoke crises or use force. Instead, the logic of diversion is monadic: leaders choose force in response to internal threats to their political or personal survival, not external threats to their state's security and interests.[19] In this way, domestic unrest, by definition, is a necessary condition that must be present in any particular case for that case to be coded as diversionary.[20] If present, domestic unrest must create a "diversionary motive" to deflect the public's attention away from domestic sources of dissatisfaction through the threat or use of force. The intuition behind diversion also requires that domestic unrest be the most prominent or influential condition in decision making classified as diversionary.[21] If domestic unrest is absent, or if it is present but does not create a diversionary motive, then a particular case cannot be described as diversionary.

Domestic unrest and the diversionary motive that it creates are, however, insufficient for a state to pursue an aggressive foreign policy. Importantly, diversionary arguments are premised on two scope conditions that must be present for the theory to operate as hypothesized. The first condition is the presence of an opportunity for escalation, namely a salient issue around which leaders can increase social cohesion or demonstrate their competence and frame the use of force as legitimate, serving national and not private interests. The second condition is the possession of

[18] Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War," 259. On diversion as a partial theory of international conflict, for example, see Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force"; and T. Clifton Morgan and Kenneth N. Bickers, "Domestic Discontent and the Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 1 (March 1992): 25-52.

[19] At the same time, not all theories that posit a relationship between internal and external conflict should be subsumed under diversionary war theory. A theory of internal and external conflict is diversionary if the presence of domestic strife creates incentives for leaders to rally or gamble.

[20] On domestic unrest as a necessary condition for diversion, see Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands."

[21] One limit of a necessary conditions approach in the study of diversion is the causal equivalence assigned to each condition identified as being necessary, which can downplay and dilute the role of domestic unrest that lies at the theoretical core of the logic of diversion.

military capabilities sufficient for the execution of a limited aims operation (short of war) over the salient issue, which depends on assessments of military hardware and strategy.[22] When these two conditions are present, leaders should be more likely to respond to the onset or intensification of domestic strife by pursuing conflict abroad. When these conditions are weak or absent, diversion is unlikely even when domestic conflict occurs.

Efforts to reconcile the inconsistent empirical results in quantitative tests of the diversionary hypothesis probe the first scope condition or the types of opportunities that can create a window for leaders to pursue diversion. One line of inquiry suggests that strategic interaction reduces potential opportunities for external conflict. These studies indicate that leaders experiencing unrest or at risk of losing office are less likely to be targeted by opposing states and thus have fewer opportunities to take assertive action even if they have a strong domestic incentive to do so.[23] Another line of inquiry focuses on identifying specific types of opportunities for diversion when domestic conflict occurs, such as involvement in an enduring rivalry, territorial dispute, or international crisis.[24] These modifications, however, give much greater weight to the role of external factors that may create different incentives for leaders to use force apart from simply providing an opportunity to deflect attention away from domestic

[22] Importantly, this scope condition includes using force against a state with greater overall capability. On limited aims and asymmetric conflits, see T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Some scholars assert that only states with dominant relative capabilities can engage in diversionary activity, as it represents a "discretionary" use of force. See, for example, Benjamin O. Fordham, "Partisanship, Macroeconomic Policy and U.S. Uses of Force, 1949-1994" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 4 (August 1998): 418-39.

[23] Giacomo Chiozza and H. E. Goemans, "Avoiding Diversionary Targets," *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 4 (July 2004): 423-43; David H. Clark, "Can Strategic Interaction Divert Diversionary Behavior? A Model of U.S. Conflict Propensity," *Journal of Politics* 65, no. 4 (November 2003): 1,013-39; Benjamin O. Fordham, "Strategic Conflict Avoidance and the Diversionary Use of Force," *Journal of Politics* 67, no. 1 (February 2005): 132-53; and Leeds and Davis, "Domestic Political Vulnerability and International Disputes."

[24] Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions"; Heldt, "Domestic Politics, Absolute Deprivation and the Use of Armed Force in Interstate Territorial Disputes"; and Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force."

conflict.[25] That is, these modifications suggest that external threats and not internal ones may account for decisions to threaten or use force. A third line of inquiry examines other scope conditions for the theory. Regime type, for example, is often mentioned in the literature, but neither deductive logic nor empirical studies have demonstrated conclusively whether democratic or authoritarian leaders are more likely to engage in diversionary behavior.[26] Additional scope conditions that other scholars have examined include a state's extractive capacity and leadership selection mechanisms.[27]

RESEARCH DESIGN

Given the mixed empirical results in quantitative studies of diversion, this article uses case study methods to test the strength of the diversionary hypothesis. Such methods are well suited to testing the diversionary hypothesis for several reasons. First, they can identify spurious correlations between domestic unrest and decisions to use force. Second, case study methods can be used to trace the process by which leaders choose force in order to assess the effect of domestic political considerations.

Below, I use a modified most likely case study research design. Under this method pioneered originally by Eckstein, a most likely case is one that a theory should explain easily if the theory is valid at all because of the high value of the treatment variable. A failure to find

[25] Other explanations for the inconsistent findings are based on the specification of quantitative models. See Meernik, "Modeling International Crises and the Political Use of Military Force by the USA."
[26] Davies, "Domestic Strife"; Enterline and Gleditsch, "Threats, Opportunities and Force"; Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions"; Ross A. Miller, "Regime Type, Strategic Interaction, and the Diversionary Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 3 (June 1999): 388-402; Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force"; Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force"; Oneal and Tir, "Does the Diversionary Use of Force Threaten the Democratic Peace"; Pickering and Kisangani, "Democracy and Diversionary Military Intervention"; and Bruce Russet, *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
[27] Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands"; Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions"; and H. E. Goemans, "Which Way Out?: The Manner and Consequences of Losing Office," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no. 6 (December 2008): 771-94.

strong support for diversion in such cases should cast broader doubt on the theory.[28] Following a modification employed by Daryl Press, cases for this project were selected specifically based on values of the scope conditions for the diversionary hypothesis as well as the primary treatment variable of domestic unrest.[29] I include a second modification, namely choosing cases not only with a high value on the treatment variable but also the expected value of the dependent variable. This modification allows for the investigation of the hypothesized effects of the treatment variable through a detailed examination of the underlying causal logic of diversion. If the presence of unrest correlates with decisions to use force, then leaders should choose force because they seek to deflect attention away from the domestic sources of unrest through symbolic politics or a demonstration of unexpected competence.

One objection might be that case studies are inappropriate for testing probabilistic theories such as the diversionary hypothesis. Cases that fail to support the theory might just be part of the error term and not affect broader statistical results in existing studies. Nevertheless, a most likely case is not selected because it represents a larger population. Instead, it is used precisely because it has a high probability of providing empirical support for the theory being tested. Although a failed test can still be attributed to random error, it has a much higher chance of resulting from the underlying weakness of the theory being tested, especially when many observations are examined within each case.

Another objection might be that case studies of any type cannot be used to test the diversionary hypothesis. The claim here is that researchers will be unable to find smoking gun evidence, as leaders are unlikely to justify actions that sacrifice national blood and treasure in

[28] Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in *Handbook of Political Science*, eds., Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley, 1975); and Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2005): 120-23.
[29] Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 33-36.

terms of private or personal gain. Although speech evidence affirming the hypothesis may be hard to find in the historical record, researchers can still conduct other types of analysis to test the strength of the diversionary hypothesis.[30] First, one can use congruence procedures to identify an empirical association between the frequency and intensity of domestic unrest and decisions to escalate a dispute or use force when the scope conditions are present. Second, researchers can also identify evidence consistent with the causal mechanisms of rallying or gambling, such as the manipulation of public demonstrations. Third, if data is available, one can examine leaders' statements and reasoning for assessments of domestic conditions that would be consistent with diversion, such as a fear of losing office.[31]

Four criteria were used to select the cases below. The first two are drawn from the scope conditions under which diversion is a likely option for embattled leaders to pursue. The first was the presence of an issue salient in domestic politics for which leaders could justify the use of force and mobilize society to either rally support or demonstrate competence as leaders. I have chosen the existence of a territorial dispute between two states, as such disputes resonate easily with domestic audiences.[32] Other types of issues between states could also be used to meet this scope condition, including the presence of a strategic or enduring rivalry.

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[30] For a useful discussion of testing arguments where speech evidence may be hard to find, see Kevin Narizny, *The Political Economy of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 36-38.

[31] Hendrickson offers an alternative case-based methodology that seeks to identify circumstantial evidence that is likely to be associated with diversionary action. Although it allows researchers one method for accepting or rejecting the diversionary hypothesis, the indicators in this method are not exclusive to the use of force for diversionary purposes. See Hendrickson, "Clinton's Military Strikes in 1998." For a modification, see Cramer, "'Just Cause' or Just Politics." On leadership statements and reasoning, see Press, *Calculating Credibility*.

[32] On territorial disputes, see Paul R. Hensel, "Contentious Issues and World Politics: The Management of Territorial Claims in the Americas, 1816-1992," *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (March 2001): 81-109; Paul K. Huth, *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Paul K. Huth and Todd L. Allee, *The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); John Vasquez and Marie T. Henehan, "Territorial Disputes and the Probability of War, 1816-1992," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 2 (March 2001): 123-38; and John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

This criterion may bias the results in favor of explanations drawn from the international level of analysis, such as a standard realist model. As territorial disputes or other salient issues are viewed as legitimate interests for the use of force, the escalation of these conflicts might be explained by bargaining failure and coercive diplomacy, not domestic unrest.[33] This potential for bias reflects the tension in the diversionary hypothesis between the scope conditions necessary for the theory's operation—the presence of a salient issue around which leaders can justify the use of force and mobilize societal support—and alternative explanations that may be linked with a state's defense of its security interests. Such potential for bias, however, is inevitable, as any issue over which leaders may seek to use force for diversionary purposes will be cast as part of the national interest and thus potentially explained by factors other than domestic unrest.[34]

Case study methods provide one strategy for addressing such potential bias. Through within-case comparisons, researchers can isolate the effects of domestic unrest from other factors in decisions to use force. Although territorial disputes provide a salient issue over which leaders can use force, they often lie dormant for many years. The escalation of a territorial dispute during a period of high domestic unrest and low tensions in the dispute with the opposing state would provide strong support for the diversionary hypothesis. Likewise, if decisions to use force covary closely with bargaining failures and high tensions in the dispute, then diversionary arguments would be weakened even when domestic political conflict is intense.

The second criterion for selecting cases was the presence of military capabilities necessary to execute a limited aims military operation over disputed territory. This ensures that a

[33] On coercive diplomacy, see Robert J. Art and Patrick M. Cronin, eds., *United States and Coercive Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2003); and Alexander L. George, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994).

[34] This research design would be even stronger if it was both a "most likely" test for diversion and a "least likely" test for a standard realist model. Again, as the purpose of this paper is to provide an empirical test of diversion against a plausible alternative, such a research design is adequate for assessing confidence in the diversionary hypothesis. See Jack S. Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (March 2008): 1-18.

leader seeking to divert possesses the means to threaten or use force to achieve a favorable outcome in the dispute and thus achieve his or her domestic political objectives.

The third criterion was the presence of high levels of domestic dissatisfaction, the variable at the core of the diversionary hypothesis. Indicators commonly used in existing studies include mass unrest, such as protests or strikes, and economic volatility, including declining growth rates and rising inflation. This ensures that diversion is a most likely motive for decisions to escalate a dispute or conflict with another state. With motive and means, the onset of domestic strife should then explain escalation decisions more than any other factor in the case. The presence of unrest also permits detailed process tracing of the causal mechanisms of the diversionary hypothesis.

The fourth and final criterion was that other scholars viewed the case as best explained by diversion. This criterion reflects the intuition of what constitutes a most likely case and offers a reality check, guaranteeing that the cases are commonly believed to be diversionary and not selected as straw men. If a case is widely seen as diversionary, then it meets the standard of being a most likely case for the theory to explain.

Below, two cases satisfying these criteria are examined. The first is the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands in April 1982, while the second is the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Both cases provide numerous within-case observations that offer further opportunities to test the diversionary hypothesis against a standard realist model. The Argentine invasion of the Falklands is examined in more depth because it is the most widely accepted contemporary example of diversion. In a detailed study of the invasion, for example, Amy Oakes concludes that “the conflict over the Falkland Islands is the archetypal case of diversionary

war."[35] A recent survey of the causes of war reaches a similar conclusion, noting that the Falklands War "is usually cited as a classic modern example" of diversionary war.[36] Levy likewise notes that "similar [diversionary] motivations have been widely attributed to the Argentine junta in their 1982 attempt to seize the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands from Britain."[37] Finally, numerous quantitative studies cite the Argentine case as an example of diversion.[38] Indeed, given the widespread belief among scholars that the invasion was a diversionary gambit, the Argentine case comes close to what Eckstein would call a crucial or paradigmatic case for the theory.

The second case is the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The Turkish use of force satisfies the scope conditions of the diversionary hypothesis. The dispute over Cyprus was an issue salient among society and Turkey's political elite, especially given the rivalry between Greece and Turkey. With one of the largest ground forces in NATO, Turkey possessed the military means to project power over the island, which was located only forty-three miles from its coast but more than six hundred miles from Greece. Although this case has received less attention than the Falklands, scholars such as Mansfield and Snyder point to the central role of domestic unrest in Ankara's decision making.[39] Although perhaps a weaker most likely case than the Falkands, the Turkish case offers an additional set of observations with which to test the

[35] Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands," 432.
[36] Greg Cashman and Leonard C. Robinson, *An Introduction to the Causes of War: Patterns of Interstate Conflict from World War I to Iraq* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 10.
[37] Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," in *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars*, eds., Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 94.
[38] See, for example, Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions"; Stephen E. Gent, "Scapegoating Strategically: Reselection, Strategic Interaction, and the Diversionary Theory of War," *International Interactions* 35, no. 1 (January 2009): 1-29; Goemans, "Which Way Out?"; Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force"; Heldt, "Domestic Politics, Absolute Deprivation and the Use of Armed Force in Interstate Territorial Disputes"; Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force"; and Morgan and Bickers, "Domestic Discontent and the Use of Force;" Richards et al., "Good Times, Bad Times and the Diversionary Use of Force."
[39] Fiona B. Adamson, "Democratization and the Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis," *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 281-85; Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength and War," 306-308; and Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*, 224-25.

effects of domestic strife on external conflict, thereby increasing confidence in the results (which, based on two case studies, remain only suggestive nevertheless).

In the case studies, the diversionary hypothesis is tested against a standard realist model. The same dependent variable—the decision to use force in a territorial dispute—is examined in each case. By "use of force," I refer to the decision to execute combat operations over a particular issue at a particular time. Although a diversionary explanation stresses the centrality of internal threats to the survival of political leaders in such decisions, a standard realist model focuses on external threats and security challenges to national interests.[40] As a necessary condition for diversion in any specific case, domestic unrest must precede the use of force and be shown to create the motivation to use force. Proponents of the theory must not only demonstrate the necessary and central role of domestic unrest in such decisions, but must also show that force was not used for reasons unrelated to the theory and its scope conditions.

ARGENTINA SEIZES THE FALKLANDS

After a year of growing economic difficulties and social unrest, Argentina invaded the disputed Falkland Islands in April 1982. Although the invasion is an instructive case of failed coercive diplomacy, it is, in fact, a poor example of diversionary war. Despite the correlation between domestic unrest and crisis escalation, Argentina invaded the islands to compel British concessions at the negotiating table, not deflect attention from the junta's domestic woes. Frustration with Britain's unwillingness to negotiate over the island's sovereignty and perceptions of a declining British commitment to defend its interests in the South Atlantic led the junta to seize the Falklands to negotiate from a position of strength. Analysis of Argentine

[40] For the use of a standard realist model in the study of territorial disputes, see Huth, *Standing Your Ground*.

decision making indicates that domestic unrest had only a minor and conditional effect on the decision to use force.

Before reviewing the evidence for the diversionary hypothesis and a realist alternative explanation for the same decisions, a brief summary of Argentine decision making is required. The decision to escalate its dispute with Britain over the Falklands began in early January 1982. On 5 January, a new junta under General Leopoldo Galtieri resolved at its first official meeting to adopt a more assertive posture in its ongoing negotiations with Britain over the Falklands. Importantly, no decision to invade and no date for invasion were determined at this meeting. Instead, the junta agreed to increase diplomatic pressure for a final settlement while simultaneously planning for the use of force if diplomacy failed. The rationale for the potential use of force was to gain sovereignty over the islands by the end of 1982 through a limited military operation to seize the islands, place them under trusteeship, and then hold talks with Britain over final sovereignty.[41]

Implementation of the plan began almost immediately. On 12 January, a military planning group was established to develop contingency plans for using force. Importantly, the junta had not yet decided to seize the islands by force, only to draft contingency plans for this option.[42] On 27 January, the Foreign Ministry issued a paper declaring its goals for talks with Britain previously scheduled for the end of February. The paper called for settling sovereignty over the islands "peacefully, finally and rapidly" through the establishment of a permanent negotiating commission that would meet monthly for one year.[43]

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[41] Michael Charlton, *The Little Platoon: Diplomacy and the Falklands Crisis* (New York: Basil Blackwell Books, 1989), 111-12.
[42] Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 105.
[43] Oscar R. Cardoso, Ricardo Kirschbaum, and Eduardo van der Kooy, *Falklands: The Secret Plot* (Surrey: Preston Editions, 1987), 34.

After the February talks with Britain, military planning shifted into a new phase. On 16 March, the planning group began to develop a campaign plan for seizing the islands through a bloodless maneuver. Again, however, no decision to use force had been made. In the previous two months, the planning group had focused on political objectives and potential obstacles that Argentina might face. On 23 March, the junta ordered the planning group to focus on detailed planning necessary to launch an operation within seventy-two hours notice. Three days later, on 26 March, the junta issued the order to invade. The task force departed on 28 March and attacked key points on the island on 2 April.[44]

The Limits of Diversion in Argentina

Diversionary explanations of Argentine behavior cite the correlation between the growing domestic challenges for the junta, including a sharpening economic crisis and societal agitation for political liberalization, and the decision to seize the disputed islands. Because these domestic challenges precede the invasion, scholars conclude that diversion best explains Argentine behavior.[45]

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[44] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 104-107.

[45] The number of scholars and journalists who attribute diversionary motives to the junta is vast: Jimmy Burns, *The Land That Lost Its Heroes: The Falklands, The Post-War and Alfonsin* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1987); Cardoso, Kirschbaum, and van der Kooy, *Falklands*; Juan E. Corradi, *The Fitful Republic: Economy, Society, and Politics in Argentina* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985); Alejandro Dabat and Luis Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the End of Military Rule* (London: Verso, 1984); Daniel K. Gibran, *The Falklands War: Britain Versus the Past in the South Atlantic* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998); Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (London: Michael Joseph, 1983); and Richard Ned Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," in *Psychology and Deterrence*, eds., Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 89-124; Jack S. Levy and Lily I. Vakili, "Diversionary Action by Authoritarian Regimes: Argentina in the Falklands/Malvinas Case," in *The Internationalization of Communal Strife*, ed. Manus I. Midlarsky (London: Routledge, 1993), 82-107; Paul Lewis, "The Right and Military Rule, 1955–1983," in *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910–Present*, ed. Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1993), 147–80; Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict: The War for the Malvinas* (New York: Praeger, 1989); Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*; Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands"; David Pion-Berlin, "The Fall of Military Rule in Argentina, 1976-1983," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 55-76; David Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1982: From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Richard C. Thorton, *The Falklands Sting: Reagan,*

In the two years preceding the invasion, the junta experienced economic and political challenges. In March 1980, the collapse of Banco Intercambio Regional sparked a run on other major financial institutions, which then triggered a rash of corporate bankruptcies. Although the crisis abated temporarily when the junta announced that General Roberto Viola would succeed President Jorge Videla in March 1981, economic conditions continued to deteriorate. In 1981 alone, the peso dropped by more than 600 percent against the dollar, national debt increased by 30 percent to 35 billion dollars, and inflation grew from double to triple digits.[46] Unemployment remained high, while high interest rates threatened the manufacturing sector.[47] Simultaneously, social groups began to press for change. In July 1981, the five main political parties removed from power in the 1976 coup formed a loose alliance, the *Multipartidaria*, to press the junta for elections. Labor unions and other societal groups began to call for demonstrations and general strikes to pressure the junta for political liberalization. Within the junta itself, divisions arose over the direction of economic policy and the pace of any future political reform.[48]

In response to these economic and political challenges, General Leopoldo Galtieri, the Army representative on the junta, led a palace coup in December 1981. He removed Viola from office and installed himself as president. Galtieri vowed to return to the Videla's economic policies and terminated dialogue over elections with the *Multipartidaria*.[49] These policies,

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Thatcher, and Argentina's Bomb (Washington: Brassey's, 1998); and Gary M. Wynia, *Argentina: Illusions and Realities* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1986). Although Lebow includes external factors in his analysis, diversionary motives play a central role in his model of brinksmanship and in his application of the model to the Falklands case. Regarding the junta's calculations, Lebow writes that "Spurned by London, facing growing opposition at home, the distraught, anxious men of the junta must have found the idea of military action more and more attractive." See Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic," 99. In his model of brinksmanship, Lebow highlights domestic sources of aggressive behavior consistent with different variations of diversionary theory, including instability of a state's political system, leadership vulnerability and intra-elite competition. One cause of brinksmanship, for example, is "the time-honored technique of attempting to offset discontent at home by diplomatic success abroad." See Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, 66.

[46] Burns, *The Land That Lost Its Heroes*, 28; and Thorton, *The Falklands Sting*, 58.

[47] Rock, *Argentina*, 374.

[48] Pion-Berlin, "The Fall of Military Rule in Argentina."

[49] Ibid.

however, did not seem to stem public dissatisfaction. On 30 March, fifteen thousand people demonstrated against the regime under the slogan of "peace, bread, and work."[50] A mere three days later, Argentine commandos landed on the Falklands. As the Argentine newspaper *La Prensa* observed in February, "the only thing that can save this government is a war."[51] Likewise, after the assault, British Foreign Secretary Francis Pym concluded that "the regime turned desperately to a cynical attempt to arouse jingoism among its people."[52]

Domestic Strife

If rallying or gambling best account for the Argentine decision to invade the Falklands, then the onset and magnitude of domestic unrest should be linked with foreign policy assertiveness over the Falklands. In the years preceding the invasion, however, little evidence exists for such a relationship between internal and external conflict that lies at the heart of the diversionary hypothesis. Social unrest was a common feature of military rule, but the policy of escalation was only pursued during one period in early 1982. Moreover, the scope conditions for diversionary action were present during this period, as the dispute over the Falklands was active and the Argentine military possessed the means to conduct a limited aims military operation.

Long before 1982, the junta experienced economic difficulties that might have created incentives for diversionary action. Inflation, for example, topped 400 percent in 1976. From 1977 to 1979, it grew at over 150 percent each year. In 1981, inflation fell to its second-lowest level since the junta assumed power, 104 percent. Economic growth rates reveal a more complicated pattern, but 1982 was hardly the first year of negative growth since the junta took

[50] Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina*, 75.
[51] Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 160.
[52] Lowell S. Gustafson, *The Sovereignty Dispute over the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 114.

power. The economy shrunk by 2 percent in 1976 and 5 percent in 1978.[53] Indeed, the high inflation and negative economic growth in 1981 reflected similar conditions in 1978—conditions that did not produce aggressive behavior.

Well before the 30 March 1982 demonstration that symbolized the junta's lack of popular support, the military government experienced other episodes of mass unrest that failed to result in diversion. The first was a general strike called in April 1979 that involved perhaps 30 percent of the labor force, three years before the invasion. Numerous industry-specific strikes also occurred during this period, with 188 recorded in 1979 and 261 in 1980.[54] The second was a general strike called by the General Confederation of Workers (CGT) in July 1981, which involved perhaps 50 percent of the work force.[55] The third was a demonstration of approximately ten thousand people against the regime in November 1981 under the same slogan of "peace, bread, and work."[56]

The junta's handling of the 30 March demonstration itself is inconsistent with the mechanism of rallying. The demonstration was first announced on 20 March, but the junta made no effort to block the action. Moreover, the junta also made no effort to manipulate the demonstration, even after deciding on 26 March to invade the Falklands. Instead, the junta responded with violence, arresting around two thousand demonstrators, including prominent union leaders.[57] This violent repression after the decision to invade is inconsistent with efforts to rally public opinion around the flag over the Falklands. The junta's handling of the demonstration also questions the degree of threat to the junta posed by growing societal agitation.

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[53] World Bank, World Development Indicators, online database, http:// www.worldbank.org/data.
[54] Ronaldo Munck et al., *Argentina: From Anarchism to Peronism: Workers, Unions and Politics, 1855-1985* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 216, 229.
[55] Burns, *The Land That Lost Its Heroes*, 29.
[56] Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina*, 74.
[57] "Argentine Dies of Wounds Received in Political Protest," *NYT*, 5 April 1982, A6; and Edward Schumacher, "Domestic Issues Led to Argentine Move," *NYT*, 7 April 1982, A5

Likewise, the pace of military planning for the invasion is inconsistent with mounting domestic unrest. Although the junta agreed to pursue a more assertive approach to the Falklands in January 1982, the initial plan was to increase diplomatic pressure on Britain to negotiate a final settlement while preparing for the potential use of force in case diplomacy failed. The original military directive issued in January envisioned a possible use of force sometime between July and December 1982.[58] As the domestic situation was not much worse at the end of March than in early January, the junta's willingness to wait up to a year before taking military action contradicts the notion of internal pressure ballooning against the regime, forcing an external conflict to avoid likely removal from office.[59] Instead, the junta preferred one more round of diplomacy even though, as discussed below, they had little reason to expect such diplomacy would be successful.

Similarly, embattled President Viola never pursued diversion, yet he was the one Argentine leader who had the strongest incentive to gamble for his political resurrection. After all, dissatisfaction with his administration both within the junta and among key elements of society ultimately led to his removal from office in the December 1981 palace coup that installed Galtieri. As Viola openly pursued dialogue labor and political leaders, conflict abroad might have reduced the challenges he faced from these groups. Nevertheless, Viola never considered escalation despite the real benefit that he might have gained. He faced the precise situation that the diversionary hypothesis predicts, especially in the final months of his term in office, but failed to roll the dice.[60]

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[58] Cardoso, Kirschbaum and van der Kooy, *Falklands*, 32-34, 56-57; Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 106; and Oriana Fallaci, "Galtieri: No Regrets, No Going Back," *The Times*, 12 June 1982, 4.
[59] On this point, see John Arquilla and Maria Moyano Rasmussen, "The Origins of the South Atlantic War," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 33, no. 4 (November 2001): 748.
[60] By mid-1981, signals of Britain's declining resolve, discussed in the next section, were clear.

In a detailed and important diversionary explanation of the Argentine invasion, Amy Oakes highlights the role of a state's extractive capacity in limiting the policy options available to leaders for dealing with domestic unrest. In particular, Oakes argues that the junta chose diversion because it was the only policy option left with which the military leaders could increase their low levels of support.[61] According to the argument, the junta lacked the resources to either repress society as it had during the "dirty war" in the late 1970s or stimulate the economy through further reforms. As a result, the only option left was a diversionary use of force.

The junta's actions, however, indicate that it believed that a range of policy options remained available. In particular, the policies that the Galtieri administration adopted reflected not short-term worries and the lack of options, but long-term time horizons that are at odds with diversion. When the invasion occurred, the members of the junta were at the start of their respective terms in office. One goal of the new junta was to return to the conservative economic policies of the Videla administration, which were viewed as successful in the first three years of the junta. In the first quarter of 1982, these policies were seen as gaining traction as inflation decreased.[62] Another goal was to create a civilian-military alliance, perhaps even a new political party, to lay a foundation for eventual elections in which Galtieri himself might run. The plans for holding elections ranged from two to ten years, but were not imminent.[63] These efforts all required time and indicate that Galtieri neither feared likely removal from office nor believed that the junta had no option for staying in power other than diversionary action.

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[61] Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands." In addition the inability of the state to either repress or reform, Oakes also notes the role of perceptions of declining British resolve, perceived support from the United States and the availability of the Falklands as a symbolic target for diversion.
[62] Rudiger Dornbusch, "Argentine Economic Policy, 1976-1981," in *The Political Economy of Argentina, 1946-83*, eds., Guido di Tella and Rudiger Dornbusch (London: MacMillan Press, 1989), 299.
[63] Burns, *The Land That Lost Its Heroes*, 30; and Pion-Berlin, "The Fall of Military Rule in Argentina."

Leaders' Statements and Reasoning

If diversion explains the junta's decisions to escalate, then their statements and reasoning should be consistent with such motives. Direct evidence is probably impossible to find. Unsurprisingly, the historical record of the Falklands contains no leadership statements that refer openly to rallying or gambling as reasons for the invasion.[64] Nevertheless, leadership statements can be used to identify reasoning that would be consistent with diversion as a motive for escalation. In particular, leaders considering diversion might display a strong concern about levels of popular support for their regime. Likewise, leaders should express a fear of losing office or an urgent need to address the sources of popular unrest. Finally, leaders should believe that a successful military operation would increase their popularity.

At one level, the junta appeared to care little about popular support. Since 1976, it had ruled largely through repression, not popular legitimacy, killing roughly ten thousand people during the "dirty war."[65] Upon assuming office, Galtieri adopted conservative economic policies that he knew were unpopular with labor groups and the *Multipartidaria*. Likewise, the junta suppressed the 30 March labor demonstration with violence and mass arrests despite possessing the means to manipulate the invasion to leverage this event for domestic gain. This behavior is inconsistent with the rallying mechanism based on strengthening the identification of citizens with their leaders through external conflict.

After the invasion, the junta expressed surprise at the level of popular support that it had generated. Although a rally effect might be consistent with diversion, the leadership's surprise that a rally occurred at all suggests that diversion was not their goal. No observer of Argentine

[64] The historical record does contain denials, but these are easily discounted. See Fallaci, "Galtieri."
[65] Arquilla and Rasmussen, "The Origins of the South Atlantic War," 747-48.

politics during this period expected such a rally, either.[66] As one senior Argentine official confidentially recalled Galtieri's response, "He did not expect this [support]. He knew that he was unpopular with the people."[67] Oscar Camilion, Argentine foreign minister before Costa Mendez, echoed this view, stating that "from the point of view of discontent with the economy, the islands mean nothing."[68] After the invasion, Galtieri himself noted after that "this conflict does not help the inflation and the debt," key sources of social unrest and dissatisfaction with the junta.[69]

The small size of the rally effect that did occur is consistent with the junta's own perceptions of the level of public support that it enjoyed. On 3 April, only a few thousand people joined a gathering at the presidential palace.[70] The largest rally, held on 10 April, yielded perhaps one hundred thousand people, but this was only one-tenth the size of the rallies held after Argentina's victory in the 1978 World Cup.[71] Approximately two weeks later, as a British task force arrived in the South Atlantic, the public mood shifted. Leaders of the *Multipartidaria* prepared to issue a public declaration calling for a reversal of the junta's conservative economic policies.[72] A 26 April rally in front of the presidential palace drew only perhaps ten thousand people.[73]

In another diversionary explanation of the Argentine invasion, Jack Levy and Lily Valiki suggest that the junta may have sought to rally the armed forces in addition to society. During the

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[66] Ibid., 747-48.
[67] David A. Welch, "Culture and Emotion as Obstacles to Good Judgment," in *Good Judgment in Foreign Policy: Theory and Application*, eds., Stanley A. Renshon and Deborah Welch Larson (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 198.
[68] "Argentine Activists Call A Brief Truce," *NYT*, 6 April 1982, A6.
[69] Fallaci, "Galtieri."
[70] Chris Hedges, "Invasion of Falklands Evokes Little Enthusiasm Argentina," *Globe and Mail*, 6 April 1982, 10.
[71] James M. Markham, "In Argentina, No Sense of a War in the Making," *NYT*, 13 April 1982, A16.
[72] Jackson Diehl, "Argentine Leaders Try to Shore Up Wavering Internal, External Support," *Washington Post*, 21 April 1982, A16.
[73] James M. Markham, "Argentine Crowd Shouts Defiance: But Turnout After the Setback is Much Smaller Than for Jubiliant Rally Earlier," *NYT*, 27 April 1982, A11.

period before the invasion, there were reports of disunity and divisions within the Argentine military, especially over domestic policy.[74] No evidence exists, however, that the junta sought to unite the officer corps to overcome divisions among the service branches. When the invasion was ordered, four of the five army corps commanders—the senior officers that would have likely been key in resolving differences within the Argentine military—had not yet been informed of the invasion plans.[75] In addition, the campaign planning process that started in mid-March had not yet been completed when the invasion order was issued. As a result, units key to the defense of the islands had not yet begun to train for the military operation. Although both may be explained by the need for operational security, they are also inconsistent with the argument of reinvigorating the sense of unity of the officer corps.[76] Finally, officers involved in the planning voiced early skepticism of the operation. General Mario Benjamin Menendez, who was tapped to be governor of the islands after the invasion, repeatedly expressed concerns about the military feasibility of the operation, especially the potential for British intervention.[77] Military defeat over such an important nationalist objective would be far worse for the unity of the Argentine military than not invading at all.

Coercive Diplomacy in the South Atlantic

Despite the correlation between domestic unrest and escalation in early 1982, the Argentine case provides little evidence to support the diversionary hypothesis. Although domestic unrest is a necessary condition for the use of force in diversionary theory, it cannot satisfactorily explain Argentine decision making. Instead, a realist model and the dynamics of coercive diplomacy

[74] Levy and Vakili, "Diversionary Action by Authoritarian Regimes."
[75] Alexander M. Haig, *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: MacMillan, 1984), 277.
[76] Horacio Mir Gonzalez, "An Argentine Airman in the South Atlantic," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On: Lessons for the Future*, eds., Stephen Badsey, Rob Haver and Mark Grove (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 75.
[77] Cardoso, Kirschbaum, and van der Kooy, *Falklands*, 53.

offer a more compelling explanation of the Argentine decision to use force and seize the Falklands. Growing frustration with British intransigence increased Argentine willingness to consider seizing the Falklands while British policies demonstrated a declining commitment to the South Atlantic, indicating that escalation might produce diplomatic results. A crisis in March 1982 over Argentine scrap metal workers on a nearby island created a fleeting window of opportunity for the junta to send this signal.[78]

Growing Frustration

When Galtieri assumed the presidency in December 1981, Argentine leaders were nearing a breaking point with Britain in the Falklands dispute. From the Argentine perspective, almost seventeen years of negotiations over the islands had failed to produce any progress toward the resumption of sovereignty, a long-standing goal for Argentine leaders, military and civilian alike.[79] Early indications of a British willingness to transfer sovereignty were the basis for this frustration, which ultimately increased the utility of using force. After a 1965 UN General Assembly resolution called upon Britain and Argentina to settle the Falklands dispute, the two sides initiated talks. In August 1968, Britain agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to recognize Argentina's sovereignty over the islands as part of a final settlement of the dispute. When the MOU became public, however, a lobby for the islanders successfully persuaded Parliament to reject support for the government's plan.[80]

[78] This section builds upon Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*. Other non-diversionary explanations include organizational biases and psychology. See Arquilla and Rasmussen, "The Origins of the South Atlantic War"; and David A. Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[79] Lebow also notes Argentine frustration with the British, but he gives greater causal weight to the domestic factors associated with diversion as well as the junta's psychological biases. Regarding domestic unrest, for example, he notes that "in the aftermath of the 30 March demonstration the generals faced a stark choice: step down or do something dramatic to restore public confidence and their own legitimacy. The obvious choice in the latter regard was recovery of sovereignty over the Falklands." See Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic," 99.
[80] Lord Franks, *Falkland Islands Review: Report of a Committee of Privy Counsellors* (London: HMSO, 1983), 5-7.

Over the next fifteen years, the islanders blocked efforts to restart talks over sovereignty, becoming an effective veto player in the process. Instead, discussions between Argentina and Britain focused on pragmatic issues. In 1971, the two sides signed a Communications Agreement that increased transportation links between Argentina and the islands, but achieved no progress on sovereignty. Protesting the lack of progress in the mid-1970s, Argentina withdrew its ambassador from London in 1976. The situation appeared to improve when the new Margaret Thatcher government raised the option of leaseback in 1980. Under this scheme, Argentina would assume sovereignty but lease the islands back to Britain. After a British minister visited the Falklands, vociferous opposition in Parliament in December 1980 scuttled these plans. When official talks resumed in February 1981, Britain further increased Argentine frustration by proposing that the two sides freeze discussions of sovereignty and address functional issues instead.[81]

The clear change in British willingness to discuss sovereignty posed a clear threat to Argentina's interests in the dispute, increasing the utility of coercive diplomacy. The 1968 MOU created an expectation Argentina would regain sovereignty over the islands, but Britain never delivered on its commitment. Moreover, between December 1980 and February 1981, Britain not only scuttled the leaseback proposal that would include a notional transfer of sovereignty to Argentina, but it also sought to remove the issue of sovereignty from the negotiating agenda—both clear challenges to Argentina's claim. Moreover, the reversals in the British position explain the absence of coercive diplomacy in early periods: before 1981, Argentina could expect the possibility of regaining sovereignty through diplomacy alone.

Frustration increased further after another round of talks in February 1982. Although Argentina had proposed a monthly timetable for negotiations over sovereignty, Britain only

[81] Ibid., 23-24.

agreed to study a joint commission with no fixed schedule of meetings or a specific agenda. In response, foreign minister Costa Mendez issued a unilateral communiqué stating that Argentina would terminate bilateral talks "to choose freely the procedure which best accords her interests" if Britain did not agree to negotiate.[82] Internally, the junta then decided to wait one month for Britain to respond before deciding its next move. At the same time, military planning that had previously examined political objectives shifted to planning for a military campaign to seize the islands.[83] As a January 1982 National Strategy Directive explained, the junta's more assertive policy reflected "the evident and repeated lack of progress in the negotiations with Great Britain to obtain recognition of our sovereignty over the Malvinas."[84] Importantly for the diversionary hypothesis, external factors best explain this policy decision, not internal ones.

Leadership statements and reasoning reflect this frustration as a key consideration in the Argentine decision to escalate. In July 1981, well before social unrest increased at the end of the year, Argentina clearly signaled its dissatisfaction with the British desire to shelve the question of sovereignty. As Foreign Minister Camilion informed the British Ambassador, "The next round of negotiations cannot be another mere exploratory exercise, but must mark the beginning of a decisive stage towards the definitive termination of the dispute."[85] Likewise, the Argentine foreign ministry issued a communiqué noting that "the acceleration of negotiations on the Malvinas, with resolution and with clear objectives in view, had become an unpostponable priority for its foreign policy."[86] Admiral Carlos Busser recalled that "we had long experience of negotiations which never achieved a solution, and so we drafted a military plan in case those

[82] Ibid., 41.
[83] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 64.
[84] Ibid., 12.
[85] Franks, *Falkland Islands Review*, 27-28.
[86] Ibid., 27-28.

negotiations failed."[87] Similarly, Galtieri remarked after the invasion: "As negotiations did not work, we had to find another way out."[88]

Importantly, outside observers confirm the Argentine frustration and its potential effect on a decision to use force. In July 1981, the British Joint Intelligence Committee produced an assessment of the dispute, which noted Argentine determination to regain sovereignty over the islands and impatience with the lack of progress in negotiations. Moreover, the assessment identified "Argentina's perception of the Government's willingness to negotiate genuinely about, and eventually to transfer, sovereignty" as the key factor in Argentine decision making.[89] The assessment observed that "if Argentina concluded that there was no hope of a peaceful transfer of sovereignty, there would be a high risk of its resorting to more forcible measures."[90] Presciently, it stated that if by early 1982 Argentina "concludes that we are unable or unwilling to [negotiate], we must expect retaliatory action."[91]

The 150th anniversary of British occupation on 3 January 1983 added urgency to achieving progress in the negotiations. Argentine leaders often referred to the importance of regaining sovereignty by this date. In a May 1981 Army Day speech, for example, Galtieri noted that "nobody can … say that we have not been extremely calm and patient …. However, after a century and a half [these problems] are becoming more and more unbearable."[92] Likewise, in his private discussions with Haig after the invasion, Costa Mendez argued that "it is absolutely essential that negotiations will have to conclude with a result on December 31, 1982. The result

[87] Charlton, *The Little Platoon*, 111.
[88] Fallaci, "Galtieri."
[89] Franks, *Falkland Islands Review*, 27. The Franks report summarizes the content of the July 1981 intelligence assessment and does not provide direct quotations.
[90] Franks, *Falkland Islands Review*, 27
[91] Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign, Volume 1: The Origins of the Falklands War* (London: Routledge, 2007), 137. Freedman quotes directly from the assessment.
[92] Franks, *Falkland Islands Review*, 25.

must include a recognition of Argentinian sovereignty over the islands."[93] Although Argentine leaders may have been seeking to preempt increased domestic opposition in a way consistent with diversion, the emphasis on the anniversary also highlights the intensity of the junta's preference for resumption of sovereignty noted by British intelligence.

In a diversionary account of the conflict, Amy Oakes argues that Argentine frustration cannot explain the decision to use force. According to Oakes, the decision to invade the islands was made in December 1981 before frustration with Britain peaked following the breakdown in negotiations in late February 1982.[94] This argument, however, overlooks two factors. First, the junta did not decide to invade the islands in December 1981.[95] As discussed above, the new junta held its first formal meeting on 5 January 1982, when it decided to consider using force only if diplomacy failed. At that meeting, it did not decide to invade.[96] States consider possible military actions all the time, but such considerations do not reflect a decision to use force.[97] The decision to use force, taken on 26 March, reflects the culmination of Argentine frustration from 1981 that continued to grow in 1982. Second, even if one focuses on the 5 January decision to consider using force, an important reason for this decision is often overlooked: the junta needed to decide what approach to take in the upcoming negotiations with Britain that had already been scheduled for early 1982. In light of the frustration created by the abandonment of leaseback in December 1980 and the British move to freeze the discussion of sovereignty in February 1981, the junta

[93] Haig, *Caveat*, 289-90.
[94] Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands," 441, 445.
[95] Three of the sources that Oakes cites as evidence of a December 1981 decision to invade are problematic. They include Cardoso, Kirschbaum, and van der Kooy, *Falklands*, 32; Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 7; and Wynia, *Argentina*, 10. Yet neither Moro nor Wynia in fact state that any decision was made in December, much less a decision to invade. Cardoso, Kirschbaum, and van der Kooy describe an informal meeting of the junta that occurred on 29 December after an award ceremony at the Air Force headquarters in which Galtieri and Anaya reportedly discussed regaining sovereignty by the end of 1982. The authors note, however, "the junta advanced toward its crucial move …. [but] the essential decision was not taken." See Cardoso, Kirschbaum, and van der Kooy, *Falklands*, 26.
[96] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 104-107.
[97] The Argentine Navy, for instance, developed a contingency plan for seizing the Falklands in 1977.

chose a more assertive approach. Thus, Argentine frustration accounts for both the decision to use force in March 1982 and the decision to consider using force in January 1982.

Declining British Resolve

While Argentine frustration grew, a perception of declining British resolve to defend the Falklands indicated that coercive diplomacy might compel Britain to return the islands. As discussed above, the junta's plan called for seizing the islands through a bloodless invasion, withdrawing all but a token force and then negotiating with Britain. One assumption of this plan, clearly faulty, was that Britain would not attempt to retake the islands through force once under Argentine control, an assumption stemming from perceptions of British resolve.

A number of British policies indicated that the South Atlantic, including the Falklands, was an area of decreasing importance to London. In June 1981, the British Ministry of Defence announced that the HMS *Endurance*, an ice patrol vessel with a small detachment of marines that was the only ship deployed to the region, would be withdrawn from service in 1982. At the same time, proposals were floated to close the British Antarctic Survey station at Grytviken on South Georgia Island, one of the Falkland dependencies 1,400 kilometers to the east. In October 1981, the Nationality Act passed by Parliament denied U.K. citizenship to residents of the Falklands and instead granted them status as British Dependent Territories citizens. Foreign Minister Costa Mendez later recalled that "all these actions led Argentina to believe that Britain would not deploy major forces to protect the islands."[98] If these perceptions are accurate, then the junta had reason to believe that coercive diplomacy might yield progress at the negotiating table.

[98] Nicanor Costa Mendez, "Beyond Deterrence: The Malvinas-Falklands Case," *Journal of Social Issues* 43, no. 4 (1987): 120.

Two additional factors reinforced this view of British resolve. First, Argentine leaders viewed the British as adopting a flexible attitude toward other colonial territories. In particular, they viewed the independence of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1980 and Belize in 1981 as reflecting a British spirit of pragmatism toward the remnants of its empire, an attitude that might also extend to the Falklands.[99] Second, Argentine leaders believed, incorrectly, that the United States would either ally with it during a military conflict with Britain or, at a minimum, remain neutral, leaving Britain with few options apart from negotiation. Senior Argentine leaders widely shared this view, believing that Washington felt grateful for their staunch anticommunist stance. Galtieri in particular believed that he had established a new strategic relationship through his personal meetings and phone calls with President Ronald Reagan.[100]

One objection might be that such Argentine perceptions of resolve are also consistent with diversionary theory and thus fail to provide strong evidence for an explanation based on a standard realist model. One scope condition necessary for diversionary action is adequate military capabilities for executing a limited aims operation. Perceptions of an opponent's declining resolve imply a favorable shift in the local military balance and a greater opportunity to use force. Nevertheless, such perceptions offer stronger support for a realist explanation. First, the scope condition for diversionary action was present earlier. Although Argentina's position in the local balance of forces was improving, it already possessed the means for such a limited aims operation well before 1982.[101] Second, although the perception of opportunity is consistent with both diversionary motives and bargaining in a standard realist model, the increase in such

[99] Welch, "Culture and Emotion as Obstacles to Good Judgment," 200.
[100] David Lewis Feldman, "The United States Role in the Malvinas Crisis, 1982: Misguidance And Misperception In Argentina's Decision to Go to War," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 1-22.
[101] Argentine defense spending, doubled in real terms from 1971 to 1981, focused on strengthening air and naval power. See Arquilla and Rasmussen, "The Origins of the South Atlantic War," 756.

perceptions during Videla's term in office in 1980 and 1981 failed to result in the use of force as a diversionary argument might expect. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, perceptions of an opponent's resolve is a key variable in coercive diplomacy in a standard realist model, playing a much greater causal role in creating incentives to use force than just being a scope condition required for other variables to exert a causal effect.

Closing Window of Opportunity

As the junta waited for a British response to their unilateral communiqué, a crisis erupted in mid-March over scrap metal workers on South Georgia Island, a dependency of the Falklands that was also under British control. As the crisis unfolded, Argentine leaders perceived a short-term reversal in British resolve and a more assertive position toward the Falklands, which opened a narrow window of opportunity to seize the islands and maintain the ability to negotiate from a position of strength.

On 20 March, Britain objected to the presence of Argentine workers that had landed two days earlier in Leith Harbor on South Georgia Island. The workers were employed by an Argentine businessman, Constantine Davidoff, who had contracted with a British firm to salvage scrap metal from abandoned whaling stations. Davidoff had previously visited the island in December 1981 without incident and had informed the British embassy in Buenos Aries about his plans.[102] The Falklands' governor, Rex Hunt, viewed this March trip with suspicion because the Argentine ship disregarded established navigation procedures for visiting South Georgia and erroneous reports were received stating that Argentine soldiers had arrived with Davidoff's

[102] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 40-48.

workers. Fearing that Argentina might be seeking to seize territory, Hunt alerted the Foreign Office, which issued a strong protest.[103]

The crisis escalated when workers remained on the island after the Argentine ship departed. In response to the initial British protest, Argentina assured Britain that the Argentine transport ship would vacate the area. Upon receiving news of the continued Argentinean presence, the Foreign Office issued a stern warning through Ambassador Williams on 23 March: that the HMS *Endurance* had been dispatched from Port Stanley to remove any Argentineans still on the island.[104] In response to what was viewed as an ultimatum, the junta ordered another naval transport, *Bahia Paraiso*, to deploy marines to protect the workers. The junta also ordered military planners to advance the timetable of the contingency plan for seizing the Falklands, even though planning for such a campaign had only begun the week before.[105] British actions, not domestic politics, clearly account for this change in military planning.

As a tense standoff occurred between the HMS *Endurance* and *Bahia Paraiso* in Leith Harbor, the junta viewed Britain's position toward the Falklands as hardening. On 23 March, debate in parliament focused on reassessing the withdrawal of peacetime forces from the South Atlantic and signaled support for increased British commitment to the islands much more generally.[106] On 25 March, the junta received intelligence reports, ultimately erroneous, that Britain had dispatched additional ships to the area, including a nuclear submarine. If true, these

[103] Several sources also speculate that the Davidoff mission was part of a naval plan, known as Project Alpha, to strengthen Argentina's presence in the Falklands dependencies through subterfuge. See, for example, Thorton, *The Falklands Sting*. Nevertheless, this fails to provide strong support for diversionary arguments, as there is no evidence that the timing of Davidoff's trip was linked with domestic unrest or that the mission was ordered by the junta (not the navy). Instead, if anything, it reflected long-standing ambitions within the Argentine Navy to seize the Falklands.
[104] Franks, *Falkland Islands Review*, 51-53.
[105] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 64.
[106] Franks, *Falkland Islands Review*, 49-55.

ships would have prevented the execution of a limited aims strategy to seize the islands that required Argentine control of the sea.[107]

In response to these events, the junta authorized an invasion of the Falklands on 26 March. Leadership statements and reasoning indicate that a preventive logic best explains the timing of this decision. Admiral Busser recalled that "Argentina therefore had a very short period in which to act, and during that period Great Britain could *not* act. *After* that the position would be absolutely the opposite."[108] As junta member Admiral Jorge Anaya testified after the war, "by using the Georgias incident, London was in fact deciding on a non-negotiation with Argentina and on the sending off of a war fleet to the South Atlantic waters … Georgias had been left behind, clearly the objective was now the Malvinas."[109] Finally, according to Galtieri, the British ultimatum "was more than another demonstration that Great Britain did not want to negotiate, to discuss. It was the straw that breaks the camel's back."[110]

Summary

In the Argentine case, the diversionary hypothesis fails to pass a most likely test. The onset and magnitude of domestic unrest are related only loosely to decisions to escalate the dispute and seize the Falklands. Argentine leaders' statements and reasoning indicate that neither rallying nor gambling were primary motives for the invasion. Instead, the need to show resolve in response to Britain's backsliding at the negotiating table provides a superior explanation for the junta's actions. Growing frustration with British intransigence increased the junta's willingness to

[107] Charlton, *The Little Platoon*, 114; Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 73-76; and Virginia Gamba, *The Falklands/Malvinas War: A Model for North-South Crisis Prevention* (Winchester, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 126.
[108] Charlton, *The Little Platoon*, 114; italics in the original.
[109] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 71.
[110] Fallaci, "Galtieri."

display such resolve with force, while perceptions of declining British commitment in the South Atlantic increased the odds that Britain would not fight to defend the islands. Moreover, domestic unrest was not a necessary condition for the use of force, as proponents of diversionary theory must demonstrate for the case to be explained as diversionary.

Domestic conflict played only a minor and conditional role in Argentine decision making. The 150th anniversary of the British occupation of the islands created a potential moment for the public to assess the junta's performance in foreign policy. Given the junta's unpopularity, failure to make progress in negotiations with Britain by the anniversary might have provided a focal point for the opposition to mobilize support against the regime. Nevertheless, domestic political conflict only played a causal role because of the deadline in the bargaining process created by the anniversary and Britain's steadfast refusal to discuss sovereignty in prior rounds of negotiations. Argentine frustration with Britain was clear from the abandonment of leaseback in late 1980. Without domestic unrest, the potential backlash for failing to regain the islands by 1983 might have been easier for the junta to manage, perhaps reducing the imperative to achieve sovereignty by this date. Domestic conditions increased the value of preventing failure in the dispute, but not the conclusion since 1980 that diplomacy had failed and that Britain would negotiate only if coerced. The principal cause of the conflict remains rooted in the external environment, not domestic politics.

TURKEY ASSAULTS CYPRUS

On 20 July 1974, Turkish forces invaded the island of Cyprus. Although this event intensified one of the most intractable ethnic conflicts of the postwar era, it is a poor example of diversion or democratization causing war. Instead, a Greek-sponsored coup that replaced the island's elected president opened a window of vulnerability that Turkey sought to close through the

invasion. Domestic instability associated with the fragility of the left-right coalition in power after the restoration of electoral democracy in 1973 was largely irrelevant.

The Limits of Diversion in Turkey

The diversionary explanation of the Turkish invasion invokes the mechanism of rallying. In the preceding decade, Turkey experienced rapid political liberalization and economic growth. Following the introduction of the 1961 constitution, the growth of public participation in politics overwhelmed the existing institutions through which to channel this activity. One result was an increase in the number of political parties, which relied on nationalist or extremist issues such as Cyprus to mobilize support. Growing political instability including labor agitation and political violence resulted in a military-led coup in 1971 that deposed Prime Minister Suleiman Demirel, leader of the right-leaning Justice Party. Although elections were held in 1973, the fragmentation of political parties resulted in continued political instability and the formation of a coalition between the left-leaning Republican People's Party led by Bulent Ecevit and the right-leaning Islamic National Salvation Party led by Necmettin Erbakan.[111]

If a desire to rally Turkish society around the issue of Cyprus accounts for the 1974 invasion, then the onset of domestic turmoil associated with democratization should be linked with the decision to use force. Previously, in 1964 and 1967, Turkish leaders threatened to use force over Cyprus. Although the timing of these threats overlapped with the process of democratization, Turkish leaders in both cases reacted to Greek-Cypriot attacks on Turkish enclaves designed to achieve enosis or unification with Greece.[112] The June 1964 threat of invasion and August 1964 airstrikes occurred after Greek-Cypriot efforts to remove

[111] Adamson, "Democratization and the Sources of Foreign Policy," 281-85.
[112] Glen D. Camp, "Greek-Turkish Conflict over Cyprus," *Political Science Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (Spring 1980).

constitutional protections for the Turkish minority increased violence targeting this group. The November 1967 threat followed the Greek-Cypriot occupation of Turkish towns amid the infiltration of more than ten thousand Greek army troops after the 1964 crisis. The conflict on Cyprus and the desire of Greek-backed forces to achieve unification with Athens best explain these threats, not domestic politics in Turkey.

If rallying explains the Turkish decision, then the severity of domestic unrest should be linked with the 1974 invasion. Although the Ecevit-Erbakan coalition was certainly fragile, Turkish politics were relatively stable following the military's 1971 coup.[113] In the three years preceding the invasion, for example, the Turkish economy grew on average at 5 percent annually.[114] Moreover, if any contemporary Turkish leader had incentives to divert attention from domestic woes, it was Demirel himself. After all, the instability and right-wing political violence associated with his rule was one of the primary reasons for his removal by the military in 1971. Similar to Viola in Argentina, he failed to gamble for resurrection.

Coercive Diplomacy in the Mediterranean

A standard realist model of international politics offers a more compelling and straightforward explanation of Turkish behavior. Turkey invaded and occupied part of Cyprus to secure its long-standing interests on the island that the Greek-sponsored coup deposing Cypriot President Archbishop Makarios III threatened, not to maintain the unity of a fragile ruling coalition and rally a divided society around a nationalist issue.

Even before Cyprus gained its independence in 1960, Turkey had consistently favored a partition or geographic federation of the island. Partition would enable Turkey to achieve two

[113] William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 184-214.
[114] World Bank, World Development Indicators, online database, http:// www.worldbank.org/data.

goals. The first was the prevention of the unification of Cyprus with Greece, which would result in the stationing of Greek troops on Turkey's southeastern flank close to its coast. The second was the protection of the Turkish-Cypriots, who accounted for roughly 18 percent of the population.[115] As discussed above, a desire to protect this population resulted in threats of force in 1964 and 1967.

On 15 July, a coup on the island deposed Makarios and threatened to achieve enosis. The Cyprus National Guard, commanded by the Greek army in Athens, led the coup. Makarios was replaced by Nikos Sampson, an ardent supporter of enosis, a former member of the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) guerillas and a key figure in past violence against Turkish-Cypriots. The next day, Ecevit convened a meeting of the Turkish National Security Council, which agreed to launch an amphibious landing on 20 July under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee to which Turkey was a party.[116]

Leaders' statements and reasoning reflect a concern with the threat posed by Greece and the growing window of vulnerability created by the Sampson coup. During the 16 July meeting of the National Security Council, the foreign minister noted the key implication of the coup was "the inevitability that Greece would soon become [Turkey's] southern neighbor. Greece is about to take this step. This should be prevented."[117] Likewise, Ecevit observed that the coup "is clearly intended as a step toward enosis. The situation is extremely grave and ... serious setbacks to Turkey will result. There is no alternative to energetic action."[118]

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[115] Tozun Bahcheli, "Cyprus in the Politics of Turkey Since 1955," in *Cyprus: A Regional Conflict and Its Resolution*, ed. Norma Salem (Ottawa: Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, 1992), 62-88.
[116] William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 150-56. Also, see Mehmet Ali Birand, *30 Hot Days* (London: K. Rustem & Brother, 1985).
[117] Suha Bolukbasi, *The Superpowers and the Third World: Turkish-American relations and Cyprus* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America: 1988), 188-89.
[118] Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 3.

In addition to the severity of the threat posed by the Sampson coup, two additional factors unrelated to domestic politics help explain why Turkey decided to take strong military action in 1974. First, unlike 1964, the Turkish military now possessed greater amphibious lift capabilities necessary to deploy sufficient troops on the island, with one hundred landing craft and one hundred helicopters that it lacked a decade earlier.[119] Second, the United States did not seek to twist Turkey's arm and block the use of force. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson blocked a Turkish invasion by stating that the United States would not defend Turkey if attacked by the Soviet Union after assaulting Cyprus.[120] By the early 1970s, as Turkey had improved ties with Moscow, who did not oppose the invasion, Ankara was less dependent on Washington for its security.

Domestic strife, much less diversion, is not required to explain Turkish decision making. Mansfield and Snyder offer the counterfactual argument that Turkey might have been more willing to use diplomacy to reverse the coup and protect its interests on the island if it had strong political institutions and more stable domestic politics.[121] Nevertheless, given the strategic imperative of limiting Greek influence on the island and the history of violence against Turkish-Cypriots, this argument is hard to sustain. As one scholar concludes, "any Turkish government would have felt bound to prevent Cyprus' union with Greece."[122] One possibility is that the popularity of the initial intervention and the need to maintain the left-right coalition explains the move in early August to seize more than 30 percent of the island and effectively partition the territory.[123] Nevertheless, Turkey had favored partition since the 1950s, and its National Security

[119] Bolukbasi, *Superpowers and the Third World*, 189.
[120] Camp, "Greek-Turkish Conflict over Cyprus," 50.
[121] Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*, 224-25.
[122] Bahcheli, "Cyprus in the Politics of Turkey," 67.
[123] Adamson, "Democratization and the Sources of Foreign Policy."

Council had decided to occupy this territory before the July invasion if a negotiated settlement could not be reached.[124]

Summary

In the Turkish case, the diversionary hypothesis fails to pass a second most likely test. The instability of elite politics and the need to maintain coalition unity appears to be largely irrelevant to the decision to invade in July 1974. Instead, Turkey consistently threatened to use force in response to events on the island favoring enosis and attacks on Turkish-Cypriots. Not only was the threat grave in 1974, but Turkey also possessed the means to launch an assault and was less susceptible to U.S. pressure that had prevented the use of force a decade earlier. Moreover, domestic unrest was not a necessary condition for the use of force, as proponents of diversionary theory must demonstrate. Instead, the Greek threat to Turkey offers a more accurate explanation of the decision to use force.

Domestic unrest played only a minor and conditional role in the dispute by further increasing the importance of achieving policy success in the Cyprus conflict when boldly challenged by its rival, Greece. Even though Turkey would have probably responded with force if the domestic political situation had been more stable, failure to protect Turkish interests would have been even more costly for Ecevit given the political dynamics in 1974. The Greek-led coup provided a moment in which the Turkish people could assess their leaders' performance in an issue with a broad base of support. The Ecevit-led coalition did not launch the invasion to deflect attention away from their domestic problems, but the fragility of the governing coalition increased the odds of punishment if they failed to counter the Greek threat that clearly called into question their competence as rulers. As a Turkish naval commander noted before the invasion of

[124] Bolukbasi, *Superpowers and the Third World*, 30.

Cyprus, "if, as in the past, we draw back at the last minute, neither we as commanders, nor you as Prime Minister, can survive."[125] Nevertheless, Athens, not Ankara, picked the fight.

RETHINKING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONFLICT

The diversionary hypothesis offers one of the most powerful alternatives to rationalist explanations of war based on the state as a unitary actor. Strong empirical support for diversion would identify a more complete set of causal mechanisms underlying international conflict. The cases investigated in this article, however, raise doubts about the strength of the diversionary hypothesis as well as the empirical validity of arguments based on diversionary mechanisms, such as Mansfield and Snyder's theory about democratization and war.[126] In Argentina and Turkey, the hypothesis fails to pass two most likely tests. In neither case was domestic unrest a necessary condition for the use of force as proponents of diversionary theory must demonstrate. Instead, external security challenges and bargaining over disputed territory better explain Argentine and Turkish decision making. The historical record, including leadership statements and reasoning, offers stronger evidence for a standard realist model and the dynamics of coercive diplomacy.

Drawing definitive conclusions about diversion from just two cases is impossible. Nevertheless, the modified most likely research design used in this article weakens confidence in the strength of diversionary arguments. Diversion as a principal or primary source of some conflicts may be much less frequent than scholars assert. These two episodes should be among the easiest cases for diversion to explain. Not only did embattled leaders escalate disputes into

[125] Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 15.
[126] For a critique of Mansfield and Snyder's statistical analysis, see Vipin Narang and Rebecca M. Nelson, "Who Are These Belligerent Democratizers? Reassessing the Impact of Democratization on War," *International Organization* 63, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 357-79.

crises and then use force, but scholars have also viewed these cases as being best explained by diversionary mechanisms. If diversion cannot account for these decisions, it is unclear what the hypothesis can in fact explain.

My findings have several implications for the literature on diversionary war theory. At the most general level of analysis, the lack of support for the diversion hypothesis in Argentina and Turkey complements those quantitative studies of diversion that do not identify a systematic and significant relationship between domestic politics and aggressive foreign policies, including the use of force.[127] In addition, the modified most likely research design used in this article raises questions about those quantitative studies that do provide empirical support for diversion because it demonstrates that despite the presence of domestic unrest, the underlying causal mechanisms of diversion may not account for the decisions to use force.

The lack of support for diversion raises a simple but important question: why is diversion less frequent than commonly believed, despite its plausible intuition? Although further research is required, several factors should be considered. First, the rally effect that leaders enjoy from an international crisis is generally brief in duration and unlikely to change permanently a public's overall satisfaction with its leaders.[128] George H. W. Bush, for example, lost his reelection bid after successful prosecution of the 1991 Gulf War. Winston Churchill fared no better after the Allied victory in World War II.[129] Leaders have little reason to conclude that a short-term rally will address what are usually structural sources of domestic dissatisfaction.

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[127] See the references in footnote 9.

[128] On rally effects and their duration, see, for example, Richard A. Brody, *Assessing the President: The Media, Elite Opinion, and Public Support* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Marc J. Hetherington and Michael Nelson, "Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 1 (January 2003): 37-42; John Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (New York: Wiley, 1973); and Sarah Sled and Chappell Lawson, "Priming and Framing Can Explain Rally Effects" (unpublished manuscript, Massachussetts Institute of Technology, 2005).

[129] Goemans, "Which Way Out?" 776.

Second, a selection effect may prevent embattled leaders from choosing diversion. Diversionary action should produce the largest rally effect against the most powerful target because such action would reflect a leader's skills through coercing a superior opponent. At the same time, leaders should often be deterred from challenging stronger targets, as the imbalance of military forces increases the risk of defeat and thus the probability of losing office at home. Although the odds of victory increase when targeting weaker states, success should have a much more muted effect on domestic support, if any, because victory would have been expected.[130]

Third, weak or embattled leaders can choose from a wide range of policy options to strengthen their standing at home. Although scholars such as Oakes and Gelpi have noted that embattled leaders can choose repression or economic development in addition to diversionary action, the range of options is even greater and carries less risk than the failure of diversion. Weak leaders can also seek to deepen cooperation with other states if they believe it will strengthen their position at home. Other studies, for example, have demonstrated that political unrest facilitated détente among the superpowers in the early 1970s, China's concessions in its many territorial disputes, support for international financial liberalization, and the formation of regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian States and the Gulf Cooperation Council.[131]

The findings from these two cases also carry implications for future empirical tests of the diversionary hypothesis and the broader relationship between internal and external conflict. To start, given the common view within the field of international relations that some past conflicts

[130] A similar logic might be applied to long-standing rivals.
[131] Scott Cooper, "State-Centric Balance-of-Threat Theory: Explaining the Misunderstood Gulf Cooperation Council," *Security Studies* 13, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 306-49; M. Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation: Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes," *International Security* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 46-83; Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia* (London: Routledge, 1988); Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Christopher R. Way, "Political Insecurity and the Diffusion of Financial Market Regulation," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 598, no. 1 (March 2005): 125-44.

are best explained by diversionary motives, additional case studies are needed to test diversionary claims against plausible alternative explanations. In other cases that scholars have cast as diversionary, for example, evidence exists that casts doubt upon the hypothesis. Historian Arno Mayer, among others, is often cited as providing support for diversion through his argument that domestic crises accounted for key decisions leading to the outbreak of World War I (as well as other conflicts) in Europe.[132] Yet in his analysis of German decision making before 1914, Dale Copeland finds leadership statements that disconfirm the diversionary hypothesis. As early as 1905-06, for instance, Admiral Tirpitz concluded that war in Europe would only "cause chaos at home," not increase societal cohesion.[133] Similarly, the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war is often mentioned as another example of diversion. One of the key pieces of evidence to support his claim comes from a memoir of a Russian official, Count Sergei Witte, who quotes V. K. Pleve, minister of the interior at the time, as stating that "we need a little victorious war to stem the tide of revolution."[134] Geoffrey Blainey notes, however, numerous problems with this statement as evidence of Russian decision making: the quote appeared in a memoir that was penned eight years later, Witte and Pleve were rivals, and Witte in other parts of the memoir that analyzes the war includes no other statements that would support a diversionary explanation.[135] These two examples suggest that a thorough audit of other diversionary cases would be helpful.

In addition, although smoking-gun evidence in leadership statements may be impossible to find, scholars can use case study methods to test diversionary arguments against alternative explanations. In particular, scholars can trace changes in the domestic political environment with

[132] For example, Arno J. Mayer, "Domestic Causes and Purposes of War in Europe, 1870-1956," in *The Responsibiltiy of Power*, eds., Leonard Krieger and Fritz Stern (London: Macmillan, 1968); and Arno J. Mayer, "Internal Causes and Purpose of War in Europe, 1870-1956," *Journal of Modern History* 41, no. 3 (September 1969): 291-303.
[133] Dale C. Copeland, *Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 77.
[134] Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 76.
[135] Ibid., 76-77.

foreign policy decision making to identify a clear relationship between domestic political strife and plans to threaten or use force. Scholars can also examine leadership statements for evidence consistent with diversion, such as concern about their domestic political standing or the anticipated effects of an external conflict on domestic politics.

At the same time, my findings also underscore the importance of including appropriate international-level variables in quantitative models of diversion. The inclusion of such variables not only ensures that appropriate scope conditions for the diversionary use of force are present, but they can also control for alternative explanations driven by changes in a state's international environment. In some cross-national studies, for example, international-level variables are excluded.[136] Those studies that do include such variables use them as controls for a state's ability to engage in diversionary behavior such as relative capabilities and major power status or opportunity structures for diversion such as an enduring rivalry or ongoing crisis.[137] Very few studies include variables that measure a state's threat environment or other states' efforts to change the status quo, actions that might also account for dispute escalation.[138]

Finally, even though external security challenges explain the Argentine and Turkish decisions better than diversion, the presence of domestic unrest in both episodes suggests a new avenue for research on the relationship between internal and external conflict. Drawing upon Hein Goemans' study of war termination, leaders with low levels of public support may have

[136] See, for example, Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force"; Heldt, "Domestic Politics, Absolute Deprivation and the Use of Armed Force in Interstate Territorial Disputes"; and Leeds and Davis, "Domestic Political Vulnerability and International Disputes."

[137] See, for example, Davies, "Domestic Strife and the Initiation of International Conflicts"; Dassel and Reinhardt, "Domestic Strife and the Initiation of Violence at Home and Abroad"; Enterline and Gleditsch, "Threats, Opportunities and Force"; Foster, "State Power, Linkage Mechanisms and Diversion Against Nonrivals"; Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*; Mitchell and Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force"; Oneal and Tir, "Does the Diversionary Use of Force Threaten the Democratic Peace?"; Pickering and Kisangani, "Democracy and Diversionary Military Intervention"; and Sobek, "Rallying around the Podesta."

[138] Gelpi includes several international variables in addition to relative capabilities and alliance ties such as value of the issue at stake for the challenger and whether the challenger in a crisis was defending the status quo. See Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions." Paul Huth's study of escalation in territorial disputes, for example, includes a variable to measure efforts to change the status quo. See Huth, *Standing Your Ground*.

additional incentives to use force when confronting external security threats than leaders with comparatively high levels of support.[139] If weak leaders fail to defend their states' interests abroad, they are even more likely to face punishment at home. In this way, the degree of domestic support that a leader enjoys might function as an intervening or mediating variable that increases the magnitude of the incentive to use force when threatened or challenged by another state. This possible effect, however, is not a diversionary one, as domestic unrest does not create an independent incentive for leaders to deflect attention abroad through the use of force.

If the effect of domestic conflict is to magnify or enlarge existing incentives for escalation created by the international environment, new specifications of quantitative models of diversion should also be considered. In current models, indicators of domestic conflict are usually included as a separate variable, suggesting that diversionary factors exert linear additive effects on the odds of conflict. If, however, the effect of domestic strife is conditional, then diversionary factors are perhaps more appropriately modeled as a multiplicative interaction term.[140] New specifications might account for the mixed results that past quantitative tests have revealed. Diversion itself, however, may have its limits.

[139] H. E. Goemans, "Fighting for Survival: The Fate of Leaders and the Duration of War," Journal of Conflict Resolution 44, no. 5 (October 2000): 555-79; and H. E. Goemans, *War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[140] I thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.