Autocratic regimes and diversionary uses of force

Olga Chyzh
olga-chyzh@uiowa.edu

Brian Lai
brian-lai@uiowa.edu

Sara McLaughlin Mitchell
sara-mitchell@uiowa.edu

Department of Political Science
341 Schaeffer Hall
University of Iowa
Iowa City, IA 52242

Abstract: This paper analyzes variance in autocratic regimes' propensity to use force for diversionary purposes while controlling for states' external opportunities to use force. Theoretically, we expect military regimes to use diversionary force more frequently than party regimes and for strongman regimes that combine characteristics of military control and personalist leaders to be most belligerent in the face of domestic turmoil. Empirical analyses of politically relevant directed dyads from 1960-2001 provide strong support to the theory, showing that military regimes and strongman regimes are much more likely than other autocratic regimes to initiate the use of force when inflation is high. These effects are conditioned by opportunities for states to use force, as diversionary motives manifest themselves most clearly in the context of interstate rivalry.

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Conflict scholars have long been intrigued in understanding if and when leaders might employ

military force abroad when facing domestic turmoil at home, such as protests, riots, or bad

economic conditions. Such tactics have been used to describe the behavior of autocratic regimes,

such as Argentina's motives in the Falklands War, and the actions of democratic regimes,

including President Clinton's bombing of Iraq in 1998 during the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

Diversionary behavior has found empirical support in a variety of quantitative studies. States are

more likely to use military force when inflation and unemployment rates rise (Ostrom and Job,

1986; DeRouen, 1995; Fordham, 1998; Morgan and Anderson, 1999; Bennett and Nordstrom,

2000) and when they face domestic violence in the form of ethnic violence, riots, protests, or

coups (Enterline and Gleditsch, 2000; Trumbore, 2003; Sobek, 2007; Tir and Jasinki, 2008;

Gleditsch, Salehyan, and Schultz, 2008). On the other hand, tests of diversionary hypotheses in

broader cross-section time series samples produce more mixed results (Leeds and Davis, 1997;

Miller, 1999; Enterline and Gleditsch, 2000; Trumbore, 2003; Gleditsch, Salehyan, and Schultz,

2008; Tir and Jasinski, 2008). Some of the variance in uses of diversionary force has been

attributed to differences in opportunities for states to use force abroad (Meernik, 1994, 2000;

Meernik and Waterman, 1996; Mitchell and Prins, 2004; Mitchell and Thyne, 2010). Another

source of variation in diversionary behavior stems from differences in domestic political

institutions, with debates ensuing about whether democratic leaders are more or less likely to use

diversionary force in comparison to their autocratic counterparts.

This paper considers the effect of regime incentives and external opportunities on a

leader's decision to use force in response to domestic troubles at home. While existing research

has looked at the effect of different incentives across and within democracies and non-

democracies (Miller, 1995; Gelpi, 1997; Dassel and Reinhardt, 1999; Enterline and Gleditsch,

2000; Pickering and Kinsagani, 2005; Oneal and Tir, 2006; Pickering and Kisangani, 2009; Brule and Williams, 2009) and considered variance in external opportunities (Meernik, 1994; Bennett and Nordstrom, 2000; Mitchell and Prins, 2004; Foster, 2006; Mitchell and Thyne, 2010), these factors have not been considered interactively. We focus on variation in autocratic institutions and how this creates incentives for leaders to use force when faced with domestic problems. We specifically examine how variation in institutional control over society influences a leader's decisions to use force abroad. We argue and show empirically that military regimes are the most prone to engage in diversionary behavior. We also find that the effect of autocratic regime characteristics on the use of diversionary force is strongest when a state has an interstate rival to target.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. We begin by summarizing work in the diversionary conflict literature, focusing on variation across different types of domestic political institutions. We then present our theoretical argument explaining variation in autocratic regimes' use of diversionary force. This is followed by a description of the data used to test our hypotheses and a presentation of our empirical findings. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings.

Literature review

We focus our literature review on the two factors most crucial to our theoretical argument: 1) how variations in domestic political institutions influence incentives for diversionary uses of force, and 2) how differences in opportunities to use force condition diversionary behavior. We begin by describing differences between democratic and non-democratic regimes. We then talk about how regime maturity/change and leaders' potential for losing office influence the use of

force. This is followed by a discussion of differences in the likelihood of using force among autocratic countries. We conclude the section by describing the findings on strategic conflict avoidance and opportunities to use force.

Regime type and diversion

Some of the puzzling cross-national time series findings on diversionary behavior have been explained by focusing on distinctions between the institutional features of democratic and non-democratic regimes. Some studies point to heightened risks of interstate conflict for autocratic regimes in the face of domestic turmoil. Wilkenfeld (1968) shows that authoritarian regimes are more apt to go to war if they face a potential revolution at home. Enterline and Gleditsch (2000) find that autocratic regimes are more likely to engage in diversionary force relative to democratic regimes. Davies (2002: 675) argues that 'domestic strife will threaten authoritarian leaders because it will have a negative effect on the economic performance of the state and the ability of the state to extract resources from the population'. His results confirm the pattern uncovered in Enterline and Gleditsch's study that authoritarian regimes are more likely to initiate an international conflict when they are experiencing violent strife domestically. When taking into account whether states have potential targets for diversionary purposes, the evidence suggests that autocratic regimes are more likely than democratic regimes to initiate force against their rivals when inflation is high (Mitchell and Prins, 2004). In a study of directed dyads in Italy from 1250-1494, Sobek (2007) finds that oligarchies were more likely to initiate wars in response to domestic unrest in comparison to republics. Sobek also finds that republics were more likely to initiate wars against city-states experiencing regime transitions from republics to oligarchies, supporting the liberal peace hypothesis. All of these studies show evidence for autocratic states using diversionary force more frequently than democratic states.

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Other empirical studies posit the reverse pattern, namely that democratic states have a higher proclivity to use military force for diversionary purposes than autocratic states. Russett (1990) found that democratic states were more likely to use force when faced with declining GDP per capita levels, while authoritarian states were more likely to use force in times of economic expansion. The democratic findings were driven strongly by the behavior of the United States and the United Kingdom (to a lesser degree), while the authoritarian results were driven mostly by the conflict behavior of Germany and the Soviet Union. Gelpi (1997) also asserts that democratic states will be more prone to use force for diversionary purposes, finding empirically that democratic states use more force and engage in a higher level of force in interstate crises when experiencing more protests and rebellions at home. Oneal and Tir (2006: 766-768) estimate a model of dyadic conflict interacting economic growth and democracy scores, showing that democracies are more likely than autocracies to initiate a fatal militarized dispute when their economies are performing poorly, while approaching elections have no effect on the use of force. While they find in general that these effects are driven mostly by democratic major powers and that they are small substantively, they do show a pattern of diversionary behavior more consistently for democratic states. Pickering and Kisangani (2007) find that while autocracies are not likely to use force during times of domestic troubles, democracies are likely to use more benevolent uses of force to address domestic problems. Studies have also found differences in the likelihood of diversion among democratic regimes (Brule and Williams, 2009; Kisangani and Pickering, 2011). Differences across these studies can be attributed in part to varying measures of domestic turmoil and variation in the unit of analysis, with dyadic data showing stronger evidence for diversion (Miller and Elgun, 2011).

Other work connecting regime characteristics and diversionary uses of force considers the influence of regime changes, regime maturity, and leader tenure. Chiozza and Goemans (2003) assert that democratic leaders are less likely to initiate diversionary force relative to autocratic leaders. Yet they find that this result is driven largely by the heightened probability of losing office for democratic leaders relative to their autocratic peers. Pickering and Kisangani (2005) focus on the maturity of political regimes, expecting consolidating autocratic regimes to be more belligerent in response to domestic turmoil, while mature autocracies will not condition the use of force on mass protests or riots. Their empirical results, however, are consistent with Russett's analyses (1990), showing that mature autocratic regimes tend to use diversionary force more often in times of strong economic performance. Boehmer (2007) also finds a positive relationship between economic growth and the onset of interstate conflicts with fatalities. Finally, some scholars have argued that the risk of a coup prompts leaders to engage in diversionary behavior either to generate domestic support or as a tactic to limit the military's influence at home (Belkin and Schofer, 2005; Miller and Elgun, 2011).

Autocratic institutions and conflict

The debate about the relationship between domestic institutions and uses of force has also played out in the literature that focuses on the variance in the types of domestic institutions that characterize autocratic regimes. Peceny, Beer, and Sanchez (2002) seek to determine if there is evidence for a dictatorial peace by comparing the conflict behavior of single party, military, and personalist dictator regimes. In a dyad-year analysis, they find that single party regimes tend to have less conflict with other single party regimes, while other autocratic regime types are more conflict prone overall. Lai and Slater (2006) confirm the latter results, showing that military regimes are more likely to initiate disputes than single-party regimes. Weeks (2008) shows that

differences in autocratic states' propensities to use force can be attributed to varying degrees of audience costs, which are higher for single party and monarchy regimes. Weeks (2012) also argues that the ability to hold autocratic leaders accountable and the preferences of civilian elites implies that personalist and military regimes should be the most conflict prone; she finds that the only regimes that are as peaceful as democracies are non-personalist civilian regimes (machines), a result that is different than Lai and Slater (2006).

Pickering and Kisangani (2010) examine how autocratic institutions might condition the likelihood of diversion. They challenge Lai and Slater's argument by developing a political incentive theory that focuses on the size of the selectorate and winning coalition. They argue that single party regimes have greater incentives to use diversionary force because they are more beholden to a larger winning coalition and selectorate group. The larger the winning coalition of the autocracy and the greater reliance on public goods provisions, the more likely is an autocratic state to use diversion to respond to domestic problems. As the size of the winning coalition increases, the resources available to buy support for a leader are relatively smaller because of the increase in the size of the winning coalition, making it more difficult to simply buy support during tough domestic times. Yet Pickering and Kisangani's (2010) empirical results are more in line with Lai and Slater's (2006) study, suggesting that military regimes are the only type of autocratic government to initiate force in response to higher inflation domestically.

Strategic conflict avoidance and diversion

When comparing democratic and autocratic states' propensities to engage in diversionary force, we must also consider the strategic environment in which interstate conflict occurs. Potential targets could make greater concessions to states with higher opportunities for diversionary force, which could then create a selection effect whereby states with high

opportunities use diversionary force less often than low opportunity states. This is the logic of strategic conflict avoidance, whereby democracies might have the strongest motives for diversion, but the fewest opportunities (Smith, 1996; Leeds and Davis, 1997; Miller, 1999; Heldt, 1999; Mitchell and Prins, 2004; Pickering and Kisangani, 2005; Fordham, 2005; DeRouen and Sprecher, 2006; Gent, 2009). While this hypothesis finds support in a broad sample of democratic regimes (Leeds and Davis, 1999), some research on diversionary behavior shows that several democratic countries like the United States (Ostrom and Job, 1986; Foster, 2006), United Kingdom (Morgan and Anderson, 1999; Moore and Lanoue, 2003), and Israel (DeRouen and Sprecher, 2002, 2006) have high chances for initiating a militarized dispute when domestic economic conditions sour. Pickering and Kisangani (2007) argue that democracies will divert by using benevolent force like humanitarian missions, which are not as prone to strategic conflict avoidance. These varied findings could reflect the debate about how regime type conditions diversion because the samples used to test strategic conflict avoidance arguments often focus on a heavily democratic sample of states.

To tease out the effects of regime characteristics on diversionary uses of force, we think it is important to control for opportunities to use force. We can think about strategic conflict avoidance as one form of the opportunity set, whereby democratic or single party authoritarian states might desire to turn domestic attention away from economic or political problems, but may find themselves in an opportunity poor international environment if potential targets anticipate their behavior. Meernik (1994) thinks about opportunities to use force in terms of international situations that present themselves as plausible crises for countries like the United States to become involved in. Mitchell and Prins (2004) extend this to the set of enduring rivalries, showing that states are much more likely to use force when inflation is high if they have one or

more enduring rivals to target. Mitchell and Thyne (2010) show a similar pattern using data on contentious issues, whereby states are more likely to use militarized force to gain advantage over a territorial or water issue when inflation is high. Foster (2006) also shows that major powers have a much more opportunity rich environment relative to minor powers, and thus that rivalry may condition the diversionary behavior of minor powers more strongly than major powers.

Theory

Drawing on the existing literature, we develop an argument about the effect of authoritarian institutions on the incentives of leaders to initiate militarized disputes for diversionary purposes and consider how this behavior is influenced by the existence of an interstate rivalry. We develop our argument using Slater's (2003) two dimension typology of authoritarian institutions (Figure 1). The first dimension is infrastructural power, the regime's institutional control over society which is derived from a party or a military based system (Slater, 2003). In party regimes, the government is effectively run by a single party. Career advancement is through the party and the party has strong control over society (Brooker, 2000). To justify this level of control, parties adopt ideologies that can be used to legitimize their rule and mobilize popular support. This ideology is often spread by political organs of the state that are created by the party (Kasza, 1995). This ideology and mass penetration into the state generates support and loyalty to the regime, as well as providing the regime with the ability to monitor and prevent dissent (Slater, 2003; Brooker, 2000). Examples include Malaysia, China, Kenya, and Zimbabwe (Slater 2003).

Conversely, military regimes rely on their protection of the state as the basis for their legitimacy. Military regimes eschew non-security oriented ideologies and instead rely on defense against internal and external threats as the basis for their regime. They also generally do not form

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societal organizations, limiting their ability to informally monitor and control the broader state. Their rule is based on military power and protection of the state from armed threats. Examples include Burma, Thailand, Pakistan, and Nigeria.

The other dimension in Slater's typology is despotic power, which is the degree to which decision-making is centralized within an autocracy. Personalist leaders (e.g. Marcos, Musharraf, Mugabe) have a high degree of despotic power and can act without support or negotiation with other elites. Conversely, in oligarchic systems, decision making is more collective, where a single leader requires the support of other elites in order to make a decision (Slater 2003).

Drawing on this typology, Lai and Slater (2006) argue that military regimes are more likely than party systems to initiate force. Military leaders use external force as a way of legitimating their rule. Conflict with other states allows the military to demonstrate the necessity of their rule and can also occupy potential coup plotters by forcing them to deal with an opposing military and potentially branding them as threats to the state during a time of military crisis. Conversely, the legitimacy and societal control afforded to leaders of party regimes insulates them from needing to use force to legitimate their domestic rule.

This infrastructural argument produces some important arguments for when autocratic leaders will respond to domestic problems at home (e.g. a worsening economy) with the use of force. Starting from the premise that leaders of a regime want to stay in power, the standard diversionary argument focuses on leaders using force during times of domestic troubles to divert attention from these problems, generating increases in support from a rally around the flag effect (Levy, 1989). Drawing on the infrastructural argument and the institutional difference in the ability of a leader and regime to stay in power, leaders of military regimes should be more likely to engage in diversionary behavior than leaders of party based systems.

When a state experiences domestic problems like a worsening economy, military leaders are particularly vulnerable because they lack a strong institutional base to resist popular calls for reform.[1] In other words, because the source of a state's problems is not an armed group, the basis for military rule falls back to their raw coercive power.[2] However, coercion has its limits and military leaders, like all leaders, are likely to prefer staying in power without having to directly repress citizens. Repression could fuel further dissent and even possibly mobilize an armed opposition and condemnation from the international community (Young, 1994; Rasler, 1996; Wintrobe, 1998). Economic downturns can prompt fractures within the military coalition that can trigger mobilization and protest from movements within society. This is particularly acute for military regimes that often come to power on the promise of reforming a state's economy and combatting inflation and recession.

This pattern can be seen in Latin American military regimes of the 1970s, particularly in Argentina. An inability to provide good economic policy led to internal splits, prompting public mobilization and an eventual collapse of the regime itself (Epstein, 1984; Pion Berlin, 1985). Under these conditions, repression is difficult because of a mobilized populace and divided military. A worsening economic situation can mobilize the upper class and economic elites whose support can be critical for military regimes. Repressing the working class may not induce tremendous domestic costs, but repressing the upper class may have serious repercussions. Military regimes tend to fall when faced with declining support from within the military as well as from the ranks of the elites in society. This pattern occurred in the military regimes of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (Epstein, 1984). The other choice for military leaders is to use force

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[1] Paldam (1987) also shows that in Latin America, military regimes are more likely to experience high inflation.
[2] Military regimes may generally be ill-equipped to promote expansionary economic policies given that their expertise does not translate to the civilian institutions necessary to protect free market exchanges. However, comparative politics scholars have debated the exact form of the relationship between military regimes and economic performance (McKinlay and Cohan, 1976; Remmer,1978).

abroad. Conflict with another state can highlight the importance of military rule and discredit

domestic dissent as agents of a foreign state. While the Greek and Argentinian juntas were both

ultimately unsuccessful in their uses of force abroad, declining domestic situations prompted

them to try to justify their rule through the use of force externally. The military juntas tried to use

a foreign threat to legitimate their rule in the face of declining economic fortunes.

Conversely, leaders in party based systems have better institutional mechanisms to

control and regulate dissent based on domestic turmoil. The wide penetration of the party into

society provides them with greater surveillance and control over the populace. Also, their

governing ideologies allow them to generate legitimacy even in the face of domestic crises.

Thus, party based leaders can survive rough economic times because of the level of control of

society that their institutions provide them. This is not to say that party based systems are

unassailable or that they never fail. Rather, their greater societal penetration and legitimating

ideologies make them more durable domestically than military regimes. When faced with a

domestic problem, like rising inflation levels, party based leaders have less costly mechanisms in

place to deflect and limit dissent than military leaders, who are more likely to turn to external

conflict to legitimize their rule. This leads to the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: During periods of domestic troubles, military regimes are more likely to use
external force than party regimes.

Recent work has focused on the effect of despotic power, noting that oligarchic regimes

should be more conflict prone than personalist regimes, arguing that as the size of the winning

coalition increases, the likelihood of diversion goes up as well (Pickering and Kisangani, 2010).

The evidence for this argument is mixed as Pickering and Kisangani find that single party,

military, and personalists all divert when facing unrest and that diversion does not reduce unrest

for any authoritarian regime. One reason for this mixed support is the conflation of all personalist

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and oligarchic regimes as having the same levels of infrastructural power. Pickering and Kisangani (2010) use Geddes' three category classification of autocratic regimes (personal, single party, military). This approach assumes that all personalists have the same underlying infrastructural abilities (Lai and Slater, 2006). The ability of personalist or oligarchic leaders to address domestic problems is likely to vary by the type of infrastructural institutions in place.

One factor that might condition the effect of despotic power or who makes decisions in an authoritarian government is the type of infrastructural power. First, examining those regimes with the smallest winning coalitions, party based personalist leaders are likely to be more secure domestically than their military counterparts. While personalist leaders are likely to have smaller winning coalitions, the stability of those coalitions is going to vary by the institutions that actually keep them in power. Personalist party leaders have small winning coalitions that are buttressed by the legitimacy and social control that these institutions provide. Domestic discontent can then be resolved at the elite level through the use of private goods through the strong party institution and at the mass level through party based organizations that exist throughout the state. Conversely, personalist military leaders do not benefit from these similar mechanisms. Threats from the elite level are not as easily resolved through the provision of private goods to a smaller winning coalition. Because the basis of power for the personalist military leader is their command of the military, internal plots from within the military and possibly from within the winning coalition are likely. Unlike party leaders, control of the state is based on the support of the armed forces whose loyalty may not be very strong given that the provision of private goods to the military is not likely to change from one military leader to another.

Even more problematic for personalist military leaders is dissent from the masses. The only domestic policy tool available is widespread repression, which as previously discussed, has its limits. Alternatively, personalist military leaders can use force to try and legitimate their rule to the masses and discredit potential rivals as threats to the state. The result is that while personalist party leaders should tend to refrain from force during periods of domestic unrest, personalist military leaders have the opposite reaction. Because their policy tools are limited and the jeopardy to their tenure is high, they should be very likely to use force abroad in response to domestic unrest at home. For example, 1988 US economic sanctions of the strongman Manuel Noriega produced domestic economic turmoil in Panama, prompting several border skirmishes with Costa Rica and Argentina (Branigin, 1988). The conditioning effect of whether a regime uses party or military based institutions on the conflict propensity of personalist regimes should be similar for oligarchic ones as well. Party institutions provide a mechanism to control dissent, while those in military systems require more forceful approaches including the external use of force to mobilize public support. Unlike existing work (Pickering and Kisangani, 2010), we do not make any claims about which type of despotic regime will be more likely to use diversionary force, rather that within despotic types, there is likely to be differences based on infrastructural power. This leads to the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: During periods of domestic troubles, personalist military regimes (strongmen) are more likely to use external force than personalist party regimes (bosses) and personalist oligarchic regimes (juntas) are more likely to use external force than oligarchic party regimes (machines).

Finally, another theoretical issue that is central to understanding when state leaders are likely to use force in the face of domestic troubles is the behavior of potential targets. Because targets can observe an opposing state's declining domestic situation and foresee a potential use of diversionary force, they can act strategically and reduce the likelihood of being targeted by

becoming more cooperative with the opposing state. This strategic conflict avoidance makes it difficult for states with declining domestic situations to find appropriate targets to engage in conflict (Fordham, 2005; Chiozza and Goemans, 2004; Leeds and Davis, 1997; Miller, 1999). However, states in certain types of conflictual relationships are likely to have readily available targets. Mitchell and Prins find that diversion is more likely when a state is in a rivalry with an opposing state (2004). Rivals will have a harder time reducing the likelihood of being targeted given past conflict relations and leaders of rivals risk being removed from office if they engage in unreciprocated cooperation with a rival (Colaresi, 2004). Thus, rivals provide targets of opportunity for leaders seeking to use external force. Also, leaders using force during periods of domestic troubles are less likely to be viewed as opportunistic if the target of that force has a history of conflict with the state. The public is already likely to have a negative image of the rival state and is thus likely to view uses of force against that state as legitimate. This leads to the final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Uses of force during periods of domestic troubles are more likely for all types of regimes when the potential target is a rival.

Empirical analysis

Our conflict dataset is taken from Mitchell and Prins' (2004) cross-national time series study of states' decisions to initiate militarized disputes. We use their empirical model as our baseline model, including the same set of control variables: relative capabilities, peace years, geographical distance, and joint democracy. The unit of analysis in the Mitchell and Prins dataset is the politically relevant directed dyad year from 1960-2001, which captures dyads that contain contiguous states (via a direct land border) or at least one major power as defined by the Correlates of War (COW) project. Dyads are coded in both directions (A to B and B to A) to

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capture the effects of domestic political and economic conditions on states' decisions to initiate the use of force. The source of the dispute data is the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) project (Jones, Bremer, and Singer, 1996). Mitchell and Prins (2004) consider a state to be the initiator of a new militarized dispute if the state fights on side A and fights on the first day of the dispute (e.g. the state is coded as an originator of the militarized dispute). There are a total of 1,097 militarized disputes in the directed dyad year sample that we analyze from 1960-2001.

We also employ the measure of domestic turmoil used in Mitchell and Prins' (2004) study, the inflation rate. Their data on economic conditions comes from the 2001 World Development Survey, which provides information on 207 countries from 1960 to 1999. Mitchell and Prins measure inflation as the percentage change in the consumer price index, thus the variable can be interpreted as a first difference, with increasing values indicating rising inflation and decreasing values indicating declining price levels. In our sample, the average inflation value is 0.11.

Data on regime characteristics for authoritarian regimes comes from Lai and Slater (2006), a study that updates and modifies Geddes' (1999) typology of authoritarian regimes using data from the Banks' Cross National Time Series Archive and the Polity III dataset. The executive constraints measure in the Polity dataset (XCONST) is used to distinguish personalist from collective (oligarchic) authoritarian regimes, while Banks' variable for civil or military control of the government is used to distinguish military from party regimes. The distinctions between party and military regimes capture variance in infrastructural power (or who executes), while distinctions between oligarchic and personalist regimes captures variation in despotic power (or who decides). In our sample, when we consider state A's regime type in the dyad, we find that 16% of authoritarian regimes are military regimes versus 84% that are party regimes;

58% are oligarchic regimes and 42% are personalist regimes. When considering the combined typology, 55% are machine, 29% are bossism, 2% are junta, and 13% are strongman.

Figure 1 provides information on the frequency of disputes across the different types of authoritarian regimes (machine, bossism, junta, and strongman) in our sample. We see that machines have the most frequent dispute initiations (307), while bosses (214) and strongmen (162) have the next most frequent disputes. However, we should keep in mind that machine and bossism regimes make up a much larger percentage of state autocratic years relative to junta and strongman regimes (Lai and Slater, 2006: 116). Thus it is not surprising that the number of dispute initiations is more frequent overall for machine and bossism regimes. We estimate models for each dimension separately (infrastructural power and despotic power) and then use the combined typology in our analyses below. Our theoretical argument (Hypothesis 1) anticipates that we will see greater differences in diversionary uses of force when comparing military and party regimes (along the infrastructural power dimension). However, we also expect more uses of force by strongman regimes relative to bossism regimes and juntas relative to machines (Hypothesis 2) when considering the despotic power dimension.

Our third hypothesis focuses on variation in diversionary uses of force depending on opportunities to use force in rival versus non-rival contexts (Hypothesis 3). We follow Mitchell and Prins' (2004) study and employ a dichotomous enduring rivalry measure that equals one if the two states in the dyad are enduring rivals based on Diehl and Goertz's (2000) coding criteria. Rather than estimate triple interaction terms, we split the empirical samples into rivalry dyads and non-rivalry dyads. Our expectation is that diversionary behavior will be more likely in the rivalry dyads because these states have more opportunities to use force. In our sample, 1.7% of the dyadic cases are comprised of enduring rivals.

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We assess the relationship between authoritarian regime type and diversionary conflict initiation using a general estimating equation (GEE) model, a pooled time-series estimator that corrects for temporal non-independence among observations (Zorn, 2001). The quasi-likelihood GEE model employs a population-averaged approach to estimation and allows for the specification of a within-group correlation structure, addressing temporal dependence within panels and reducing the probability of Type I error. In each of the estimated GEE models, we control for temporal dependence using a peace-years count variable and cubic splines (Beck, Katz, and Tucker, 1998).

We begin by estimating a model for all potential initiators in politically relevant dyads. To facilitate interpretation of the results, we present separate results for the rivalry and non-rivalry directed dyadic subsamples. In Table I, we present the estimation results from a GEE model with annual MID initiation as the dependent variable, regime type interacted with differenced CPI (natural log) and each of the component variables, as well as the control variables. Models 1 and 4 present the estimated effects of the infrastructural power dimension, Models 2 and 5 show the effects of the despotic power dimension, and Models 3 and 6 combine the effects of all four resulting regime sub-types. Models 1-3 contain the results for enduring rivalries, while Models 4-6 include the corresponding estimates for the sub-sample of non-rivalries.

Our primary variables of interest are interactive in nature, so the regression table does not allow for a direct interpretation of the direction and significance of the estimated parameters' effects (Brambor, Clark and Golder, 2006). We created a series of graphs to facilitate our interpretation. Figures 2.1 - 2.3 present a visual presentation of the effect of regime type on

conflict initiation, conditional on logged CPI for rivalries (corresponding to Models 1-3, Table I), and Figures 2.4 -2.6 show the same effects for non-rivalries (Models 4-6, Table I).

In Figure 2.1, authoritarian regimes are separated along the infrastructural power dimension (military vs. party), in Figure 2.2, along the despotic power dimension (personalist vs. oligarchic), and in Figure 2.3, the effects for all four autocratic regime types are presented. We see that the 90 percent confidence interval for the effect of military regimes crosses zero at the CPI level of -5 and remains significant as CPI increases to 10. This supports hypothesis 1; military regimes with interstate rivals are more likely to initiate conflict than democracies (the reference category); this effect increases as inflation rises from -5 to 10. In contrast, we see from Figure 2.2 that neither oligarchic nor personalist regimes show any difference from democratic regimes (the reference category) in their propensity for dispute initiation as inflation rises (in rivalries).[3]

Figure 2.4 allows us to assess whether the effects are similar in non-rivalry contexts. Recall that hypothesis 3 anticipates that diversionary uses of force are most likely in an opportunity rich environment of rivalry. We see that in non-rivalries, the CPI coefficient is statistically significant for a large chunk of the data not only for military regimes, but also for party regimes and for oligarchic regimes. This effect is distinct from Mitchell and Prins' (2004) results, where they found no significant effect of CPI in the non-rivalry context. However, the substantive effects in the non-rivalry environment are extremely small. We can see this in Figure 4 which shows the first differenced effects of regime type on conflict initiation, while varying CPI one standard deviation below and above the mean, holding all other variables at their mean and modal values. The effects of interest maintain substantive significance only in rivalries

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[3] Inflation may increase as a result of a growing economy rather than a bad economic shock. We account for such possible effects by adding GDP growth per capita to the set of control variables and we find that our results are robust to this specification. These results are available from the authors upon request.

(represented by the lower lines on the graph), where military regimes are associated with an eight percent increase in the probability of dispute initiation as CPI increases. All the effects for non-rivalries (represented by the higher lines on the graph), on the other hand, are very close to zero. This provides some support for hypothesis 3, as all regime types are more likely to divert in favorable strategic environments.

In Figures 2.3 and 2.6, authoritarian regime types are subdivided into four types: bossism, machine, junta, and strongman. Hypothesis 2 anticipates that personalist military regimes (strongmen) are more likely to use force than personalist party regimes (bosses). For strongmen, this coefficient reaches significance at CPI=-3, increases until CPI reaches 3, and then becomes insignificant. This indicates that in rivalries, strongmen are increasingly more likely to initiate conflict as domestic economic turmoil increases compared to democracies. Conversely, the mean effect for Bosses is close to 0 and the confidence interval always includes 0, providing support for the first part of hypothesis 2. For juntas, the effect of CPI is significant in the range from -5 to -3. Notably, the effect of CPI on conflict initiation for juntas is *positive but decreasing* as CPI increases*,* suggesting that juntas are more likely to initiate conflict than democracies when changes in inflation are negative (or the economy is improving), yet this effect diminishes as CPI increases. Similar to bosses, the mean effect for machines is close to 0 with zero always in the confidence interval. The second part of hypothesis 2 does not receive empirical support as higher inflation does not prompt diversionary behavior for either juntas (collective-military) or machines (collective-party). Perhaps the restraint imposed by multiple decision-makers limits the ability of leaders in collective institutions to use force for domestic gain just as it is hypothesized to do in general (Weeks 2012).

Figure 2.6 shows the same effect for bosses and strongmen in non-rivalries. The effect is slightly difference for the machine-junta comparison. For both regimes, there are periods where the effect of inflation is positive and significant. A quick look at Figure 5, which presents substantive significance of these effects, however, shows that these effects are sizable in rivalries only, effectively equaling zero in the context of non-rivalries. In rivalries, the probability of strongmen initiating conflict increases 10% as CPI increases one standard deviation above its mean, while all other variables are held at their mean or modal values. The same probability for juntas decreases 30%. This last result should be interpreted cautiously because of a wide confidence interval. These results provide support for hypothesis 3 which posited that rivalries will create favorable conditions for diversionary uses of force.

Table II and Figures 3.1-3.6 and 6 and 7 show the results of the empirical analysis when we limit our sample to autocracies only. We can see that our results are similar to those in the full sample when democratic states are included. Hypothesis 1 garners support in Figures 3.1 and 6, whereby military regimes are more likely to initiate militarized disputes against rival states than party regimes when inflation is rising. As for hypothesis 2, in rivalries, the same effect is found in the all regime set as seen in Figure 3.3. Strongman regimes are more likely to use force in response to inflation than bosses, while there is no difference between juntas and machines.[4] However, for non-rivals, we see more consistent support for hypothesis 2 as evidenced in Figures 3.6 and 7. Strongmen are more likely to use force than bosses in response to inflation and juntas are more likely to use force than machines when inflation is greater than zero. In short, variations in infrastructural power give us a great deal of purchase for understanding when autocratic regimes are more likely to use force, especially in opportunity

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[4] The comparison group is machines (collective-party). When we make Bosses the reference (not presented), the effect of strongmen is positive and statistically significant.

rich international or regional environments. Finally, Figures 6 and 7 again show that the

substantive effect for rivalries is much greater than those in non-rivalries, supporting hypothesis

3 that diversion is more likely in rivalry contexts.

Robustness Checks[5]

Pickering and Kisangani (2010) model the likelihood of intervention and domestic

outcomes simultaneously, arguing that this controls for the potential reciprocal relationship

between declining domestic fortunes and the use of external violence. We re-examine our data

analysis using a three stage least squares approach similar to Pickering and Kisangani (2010).

We find that for states in rivalries, the results are similar to what we presented. Military regimes

are more likely to use force as inflation increases (hypothesis 1), strongmen are more likely to

use diversionary force than bosses (hypothesis 2), and there is no difference between machines

and juntas. Hypotheses 1 and 2 are not supported for the non-rival models. In all of these models,

inflation either has no effect or reduces the likelihood of using force across all regime types.

However, this provides support for hypothesis 3 because diversionary conflict is more likely in

rivalry contexts than non-rivalry ones.

In addition to poor economic indicators, domestic unrest is often conceptualized in terms

of political factors, such as demonstrations, protests, and violence. We re-estimate our results

using elite and mass unrest indices (Banks 2012). We find that elite and mass unrest have very

different effects on authoritarian diversions. As authoritarian leaders' survival depends on their

ability to buy off their elite supporters rather than the masses (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2001),

our results show that elite unrest interacts with regime type in ways predicted by our theory.

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, we find that military regimes have a greater probability of

diversion at higher levels of elite unrest, compared to democracies, while there is no similar

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[5] These results are available from the authors upon request.

evidence for party regimes. This effect holds both for rivalries and for non-rivalries. In contrast, variation on the despotic power dimension uncovers no such differences for rivalries. Exploring the effects of the combined authoritarian typology provides further support for Hypothesis 2: both within and outside of rivalries, juntas and strongmen exhibit increasing likelihoods of diversion with increases in domestic elite unrest, while there are no such effects for either bosses or machines, who are statistically indistinguishable from democracies.

Exploring the effect of mass unrest uncovers quite different dynamics. Within rivalries, military regimes exhibit a declining likelihood of military diversions with increases in mass unrest.[6] The results produced by the combined regime typology show that this effect is driven by strongmen regimes. This suggests some support for policy substitutability arguments: it is possible that when faced with mass unrest, military regimes direct violence towards domestic enemies rather than foreign enemies, engaging in domestic repression rather than diversions. We leave it to future research to explain why this effect is conditional on having a foreign rival. The effect of mass unrest is opposite for party regimes, who show increasing likelihoods of diversion with increases in mass unrest, both within and outside rivalries. The results also show variation on the despotic power dimension: in the rivalry context, oligarchic regimes have a higher likelihood of diversion at higher levels of mass unrest, while personalist regimes show no such trend. Outside of rivalries, both oligarchic and personalist regimes have increasing chances for diversionary uses of force at higher levels of mass unrest. Finally, a combined regime typology reveals that, outside of rivalry situations, both types of military regimes (juntas and strongmen) exhibit increasing tendencies of diversion with increases in the levels of mass unrest, while the two party-based regimes (bosses and machines) are not statistically different from democracies.

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[6] In separate analyses using the Political Terror Scale, we find that military regimes are more likely to use force abroad and repression at home; thus these two strategies are complements rather than substitutes. States are more likely to engage in repression when economic problems are acute, consistent with the logic of diversionary theory.

Variation of the effect of different types of domestic problems was also found by Pickering and Kisangani (2010) and suggests that leaders may view the use of force in response to domestic problems based on what they think force will achieve (Sirin, 2011). This highlights the need to better theoretically model how leaders view and respond to different types of domestic problems.

Conclusion

This paper analyzes the difference in autocratic regimes' propensity to use force for diversionary purposes while controlling for states' opportunities to use force. Theoretically, we argue that military regimes use diversionary force more frequently than party regimes and that within despotic power types, infrastructural institutions will influence the propensity to engage in diversion. Empirical analyses of politically relevant directed dyads from 1960-2001 provide strong support to the theory, showing that military regimes and strongman regimes are much more likely than their party counterparts to initiate the use of force when inflation is high. However, these effects are conditioned by opportunities for states to use force, as diversionary motives manifest themselves most clearly in the context of enduring rivalry.

There are several implications of our findings. First, our research demonstrates the utility in thinking about institutional variation in non-democratic regimes. Congruent with existing research, this paper shows that variation in non-democratic institutions has important effects on autocratic states' foreign policies. In addition to the general findings that variation in autocratic regimes influences the general propensity of a regime to engage in conflict, this paper finds that autocratic variation produces differences in the likelihood of conflict in a particular type of situation that is likely to induce conflict, economic troubles in rivalry situations. Not only are military regimes more prone to conflict generally, they are also more prone to engage in diversionary conflict.

Second, this paper demonstrates the importance of looking at infrastructural power as a significant source of variation in understanding the foreign policies of authoritarian states. The infrastructural power approach provides a theoretically driven understanding of the regime incentives in autocracies that are supported empirically in this paper. We also theorize how this approach can explain the inconsistent findings in past literature. While other typologies of autocratic regimes can provide an understanding of their behavior, the findings presented here continue to demonstrate the important role that infrastructural institutions have for understanding conflict. Our results contrast with the arguments made by Weeks (2012) who finds that only non-personalist civilian or party led autocracies are generally as peaceful as democracies; she argues that leadership removal and the preferences of a winning coalition drive conflict decisions. Her constraints argument is similar to Pickering and Kisangani (2010) in that constrained leaders should be more likely to divert to avoid being removed from power. Our results show variation in diversionary conflict behavior to be driven by differences in infrastructural power rather than the degree of domestic constraints. Future work should investigate the differences in the measures of autocratic institutions employed in these studies and the effect of such measurement decisions on empirical results across all research on authoritarian institutions and conflict.

Finally, this research has several policy implications. One is that the United States should be concerned about the conflict proneness of military regimes, especially during periods of domestic discontent. As threats to military rule rises, these governments may be more likely to use force against neighbors. This is also most likely in situations where the military can legitimately be claiming to be defending the state through the use of force, such as in rivalry situations. When these situations arise, the United States and other great powers can head off military regimes in several ways. Major powers can deter these states by sending strong signals

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of support to potential targets. Failure in a crisis could jeopardize the tenure of military regimes

given that military success is one of their overriding claims of legitimacy. They can also try and

provide military leaders with ways to end their rule that does not jeopardize their lives or careers.

This may be potentially difficult if the regime has used repression to maintain control. In general,

the United States and its allies can either try to reduce the domestic benefit for engaging in

conflict or they can try to raise the costs of fighting, making losing a conflict and office more

likely for military leaders.

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Table I: The Effect of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation, Full Sample

	Rivalries			Non-Rivalries		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Military*Inflation	0.05 (0.05)			0.05 (0.03)		
Party*Inflation	0.04 (0.05)			0.04 (0.03)		
Personalist*Inflation		0.04 (0.05)			0.03 (0.03)	
Oligarchic*Inflation		0.04 (0.05)			0.02 (0.04)	
Boss*Inflation			0.04 (0.07)			0.03 (0.04)
Machine*Inflation			0.04 (0.06)			0.00 (0.04)
Junta*Inflation			-0.12 (0.13)			0.44 (0.30)
Strongman*Inflation			0.06 (0.05)			0.04 (0.04)
Military Regime	0.94** (0.36)			0.83** (0.21)		
Party Regime	0.34 (0.34)			0.32 (0.16)		
Personalist Regime		0.56 (0.34)			0.32 (0.20)	
Oligarchic Regime		0.55 (0.35)			0.61** (0.16)	
Bossism			0.18 (0.39)			0.04 (0.27)
Machine			0.34 (0.40)			0.41* (0.17)
Junta			0.98 (0.57)			1.07* (0.54)
Strongman			0.91* (0.38)			0.67** (0.23)
Inflation	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.10** (0.03)	-0.10** (0.03)	-0.10** (0.03)
CINC Ratio	0.57 (0.47)	0.64 (0.48)	0.71 (0.48)	1.02** (0.19)	0.87** (0.19)	0.99** (0.20)
Yrs Since Last MID	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.06** (0.01)	-0.06** (0.01)	-0.06** (0.01)
Distance (logged)	0.07 (0.13)	0.08 (0.13)	0.06 (0.13)	-0.45** (0.05)	-0.43** (0.05)	-0.46** (0.05)
Joint Democracy	0.08 (0.36)	-0.00 (0.36)	0.00 (0.37)	-0.27 (0.19)	-0.31 (0.19)	-0.28 (0.19)
Constant	-2.57* (1.03)	-2.68* (1.05)	-2.49* (1.04)	-1.27** (0.41)	-1.17** (0.41)	-1.13** (0.42)
chi2	18.14	15.81	21.42	394.62	403.31	407.87
N	846	846	836	36111	36081	35933

Democracy is the reference category.
*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table II: The Effect of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation, Autocracies Only Sample

	Rivalries				Non-Rivalries	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Military*Inflation	0.06			0.04		
	(0.05)			(0.03)		
Personalist*Inflation		0.02			0.04	
		(0.05)			(0.03)	
Boss*Inflation			0.03			0.06
			(0.07)			(0.04)
Junta*Inflation			0.09			0.43
			(0.24)			(0.30)
Strongman*Inflation			0.07			0.08*
			(0.05)			(0.04)
Military Regime	0.90**			0.79**		
	(0.31)			(0.21)		
Personalist Regime		0.23			-0.06	
		(0.30)			(0.20)	
Bossism			0.16			0.06
			(0.41)			(0.29)
Junta			1.20*			1.12*
			(0.60)			(0.55)
Strongman			1.05*			0.68**
			(0.41)			(0.26)
Inflation	0.00	0.01	-0.02	-0.08**	-0.10**	-0.12**
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
CINC Ratio	0.43	0.58	0.59	0.97**	0.86**	1.02**
	(0.63)	(0.65)	(0.64)	(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.31)
Yrs Since Last MID	-0.03	-0.03	-0.02	-0.07**	-0.07**	-0.07**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Distance (logged)	0.04	0.06	0.03	-0.33**	-0.28**	-0.32**
	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Constant	-2.24	-2.28	-2.44	-1.94**	-1.65**	-1.94**
	(1.19)	(1.30)	(1.28)	(0.57)	(0.58)	(0.63)
chi2	14.36	9.11	16.66	165.82	163.90	176.51
N	442	442	432	12338	12328	12180

Party, Oligarchic, and Machine are reference categories in Models 1 and 4, 2 and 5, 3 and 6, respectively.
* $p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$

Figure 1: Slater's (2003) Institutional Typology of Authoritarian Regimes' Dispute Initiation

		Despotic Power (Who Decides?)	
		Oligarchic	Personalist (Slater calls Autocratic)
Infrastructural Power (Who Executes?)	Party	Machine (307)	Bossism (214)
	Military	Junta (29)	Strongman (162)

Numbers in Parentheses are the total number of nondemocratic dispute initiator years from 1950-2000 in each category. The dataset also includes 266 disputes for democracies as a reference category.

Figure 2.1: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table I, Model 1 (Rivalries, Infrastructural Power), Full Sample
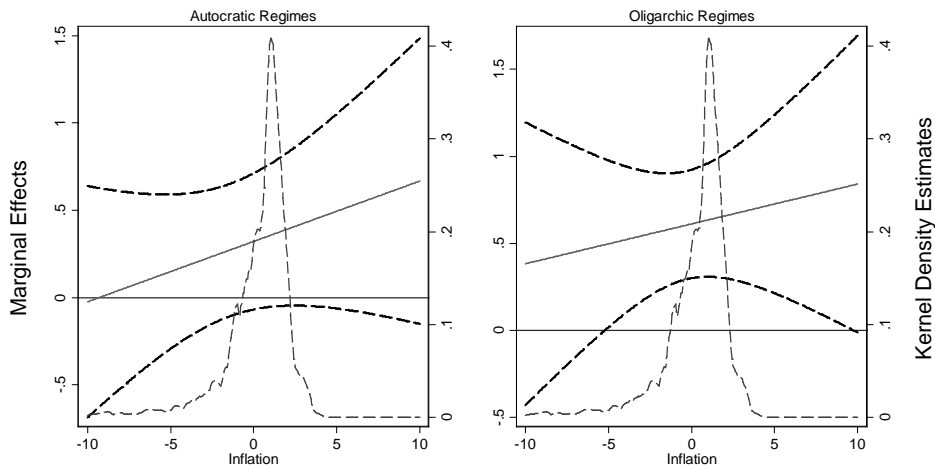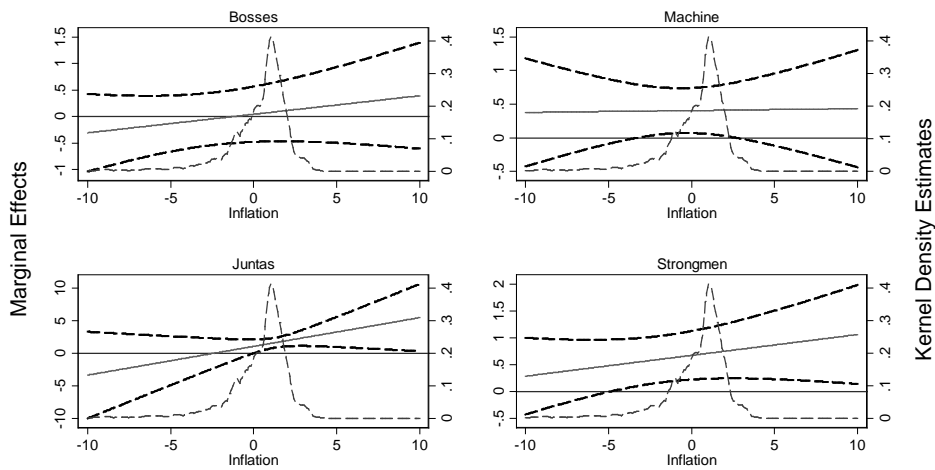

Thick dashed lines give 95% confidence interval.
Thin dashed line is a kernel density estimate of Inflation.
Democracy is the baseline category.
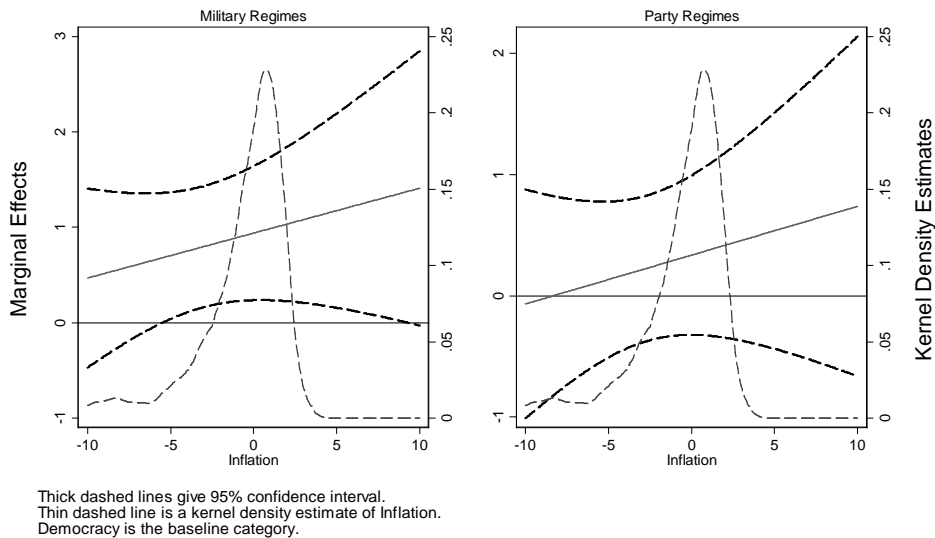
Figure 2.2: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table I, Model 2 (Rivalries, Despotic Power), Full Sample

Thick dashed lines give 95% confidence interval.
Thin dashed line is a kernel density estimate of Inflation.
Democracy is the baseline category.
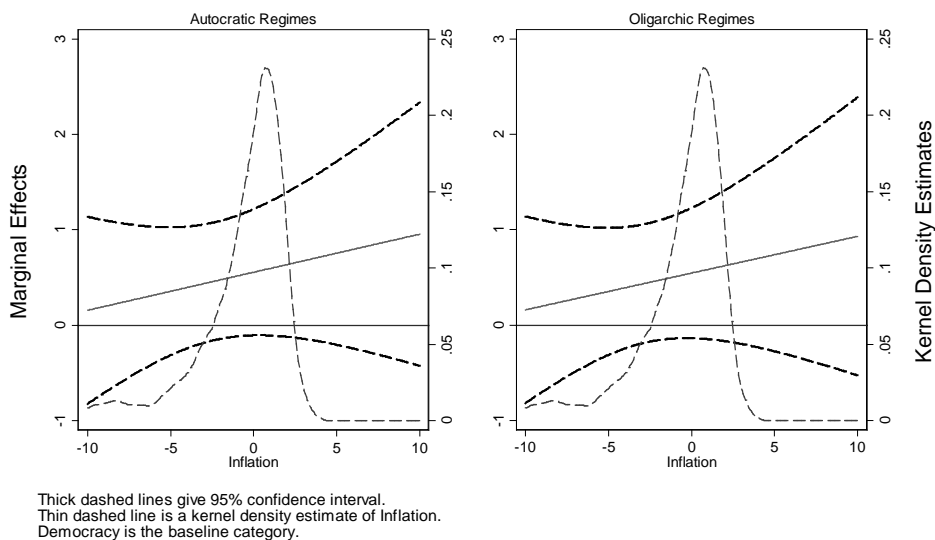
Figure 2.3: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table I, Model 3 (Rivalries, Combined Typology), Full Sample
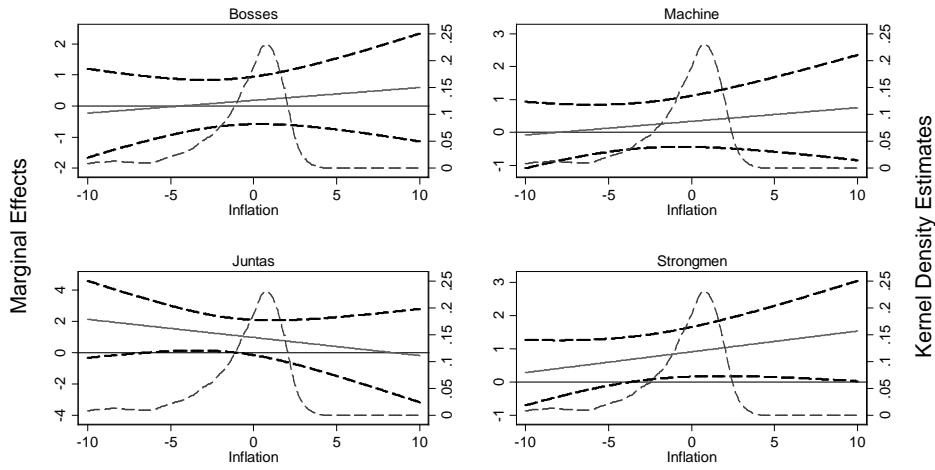
Thick dashed lines give 95% confidence interval.
Thin dashed line is a kernel density estimate of Inflation.
Democracy is the baseline category.

Figure 2.4: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table I, Model 4 (Non-Rivalries, Infrastructural Power), Full Sample
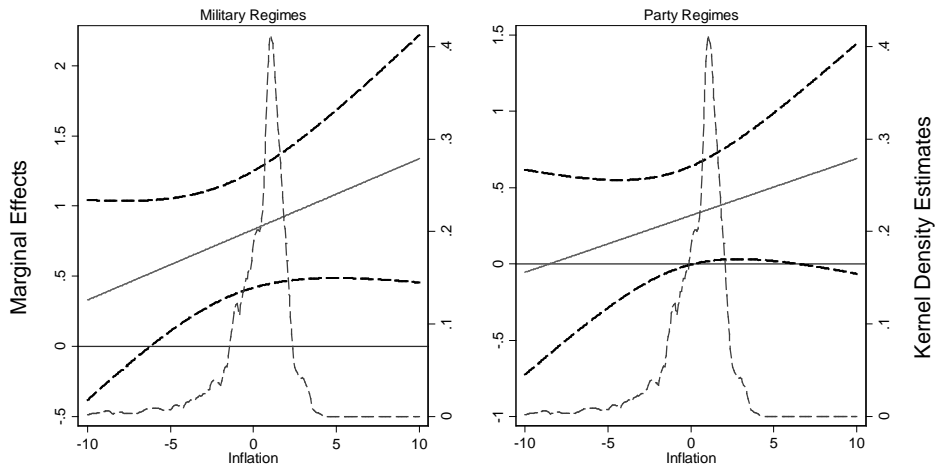
Thick dashed lines give 95% confidence interval.
Thin dashed line is a kernel density estimate of Inflation.
Democracy is the baseline category.

Figure 2.5: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table I, Model 5 (Non-Rivalries, Despotic Power), Full Sample

Thick dashed lines give 95% confidence interval.
Thin dashed line is a kernel density estimate of Inflation.
Democracy is the baseline category.

Figure 2.6: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table I, Model 6 (Non-Rivalries, Combined Typology), Full Sample

Thick dashed lines give 95% confidence interval.
Thin dashed line is a kernel density estimate of Inflation.
Democracy is the baseline category.

Figure 3.1: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table II, Model 1 (Rivalries, Infrastructural Power), Autocracies Only Sample
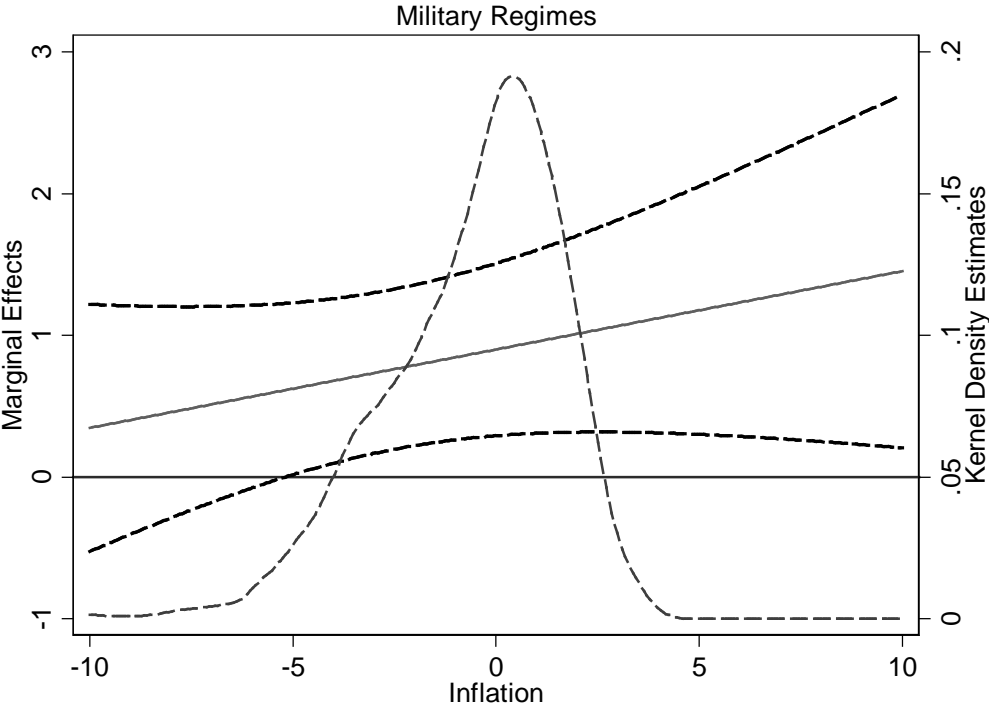
Figure 3.2: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation—Table II, Model 2
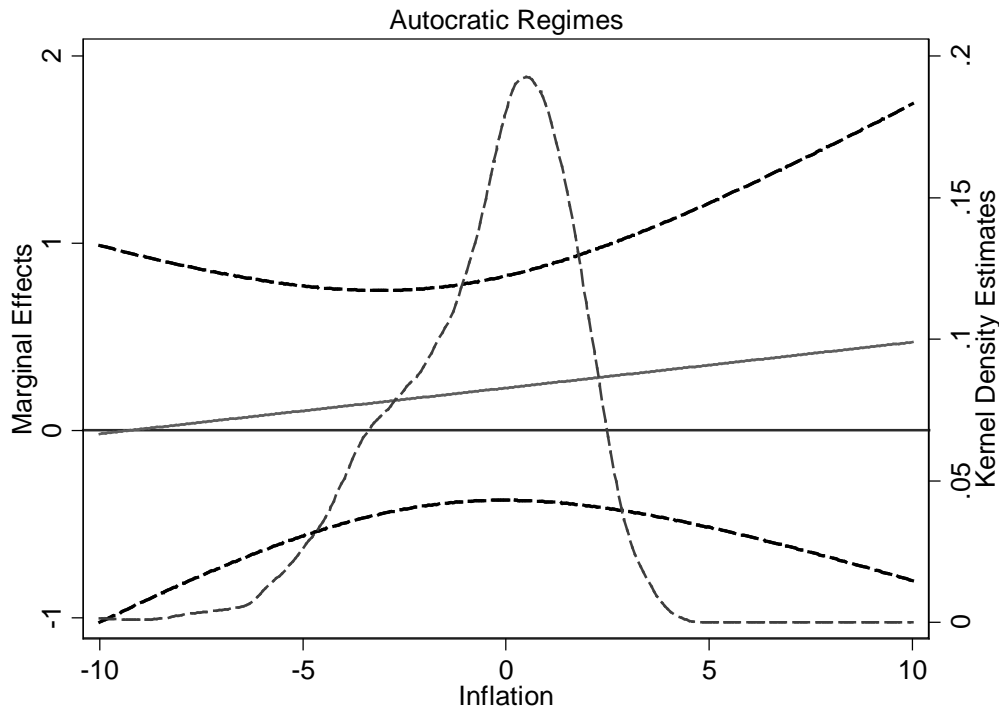(Rivalries, Despotic Power), Autocracies Only Sample
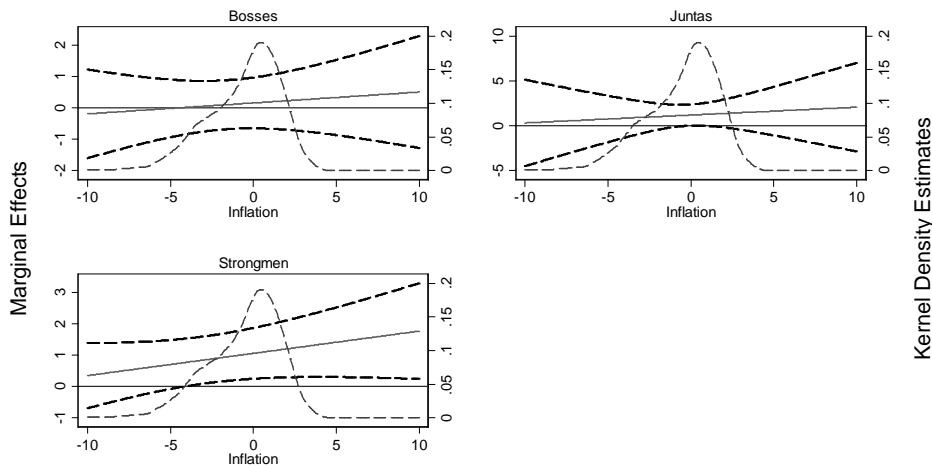

Figure 3.3: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation—Table II, Model 3
(Rivalries, Combined Typology), Autocracies Only Sample

Thick dashed lines give 95% confidence interval.
Thin dashed line is a kernel density estimate of Inflation.
Machines are the baseline category.

Figure 3.4: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table II, Model 4 (Non-Rivalries, Infrastructural Power), Autocracies Only Sample
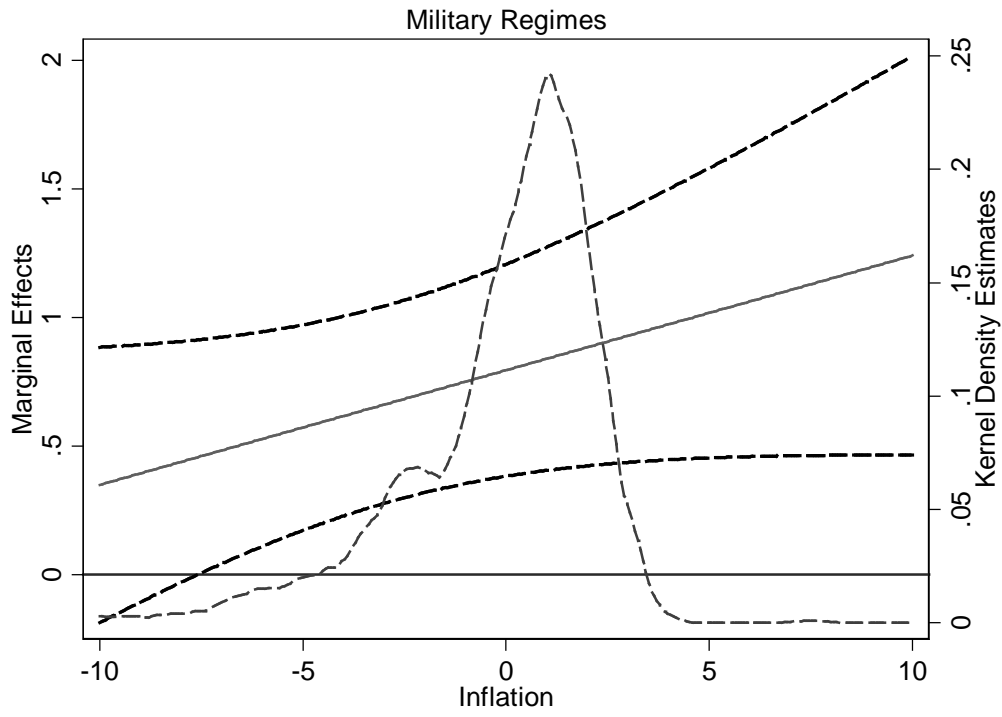

Military Regimes

Figure 3.5: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table II, Model 5 (Non-Rivalries, Infrastructural Power), Autocracies Only Sample
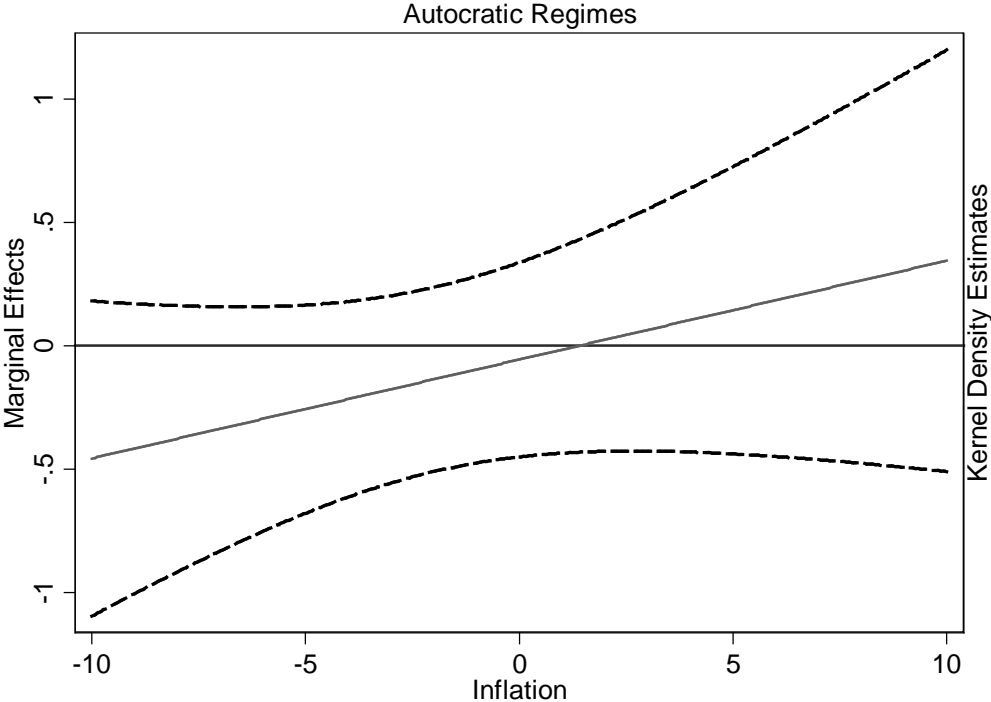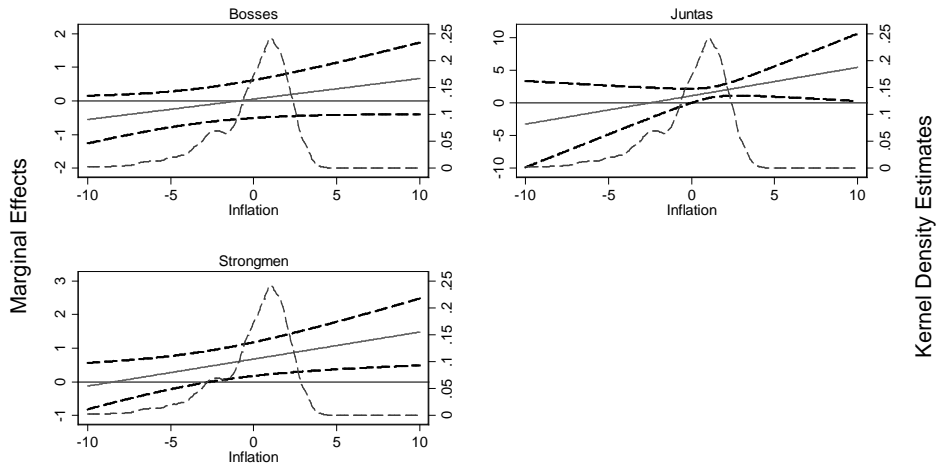

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Figure 3.6: Marginal Effects of Regime Type on Dispute Initiation-- Table II, Model 6 (Non-Rivalries, Combined Typology), Autocracies Only Sample

Thick dashed lines give 95% confidence interval.
Thin dashed line is a kernel density estimate of Inflation.
Machines are the baseline category.

Figure 4: First Difference for Inflation on the Probability of Dispute Initiation, Infrastructural and Despotic Power Dimensions, Full Sample

First difference represents a change in Inflation from one standard deviation below its mean to one standard deviation above its mean. Higher and lower lines respresent point estimates with 90% CIs for non-rivalries and rivalries, respectively. Solid lines resresent statistically significant effects.
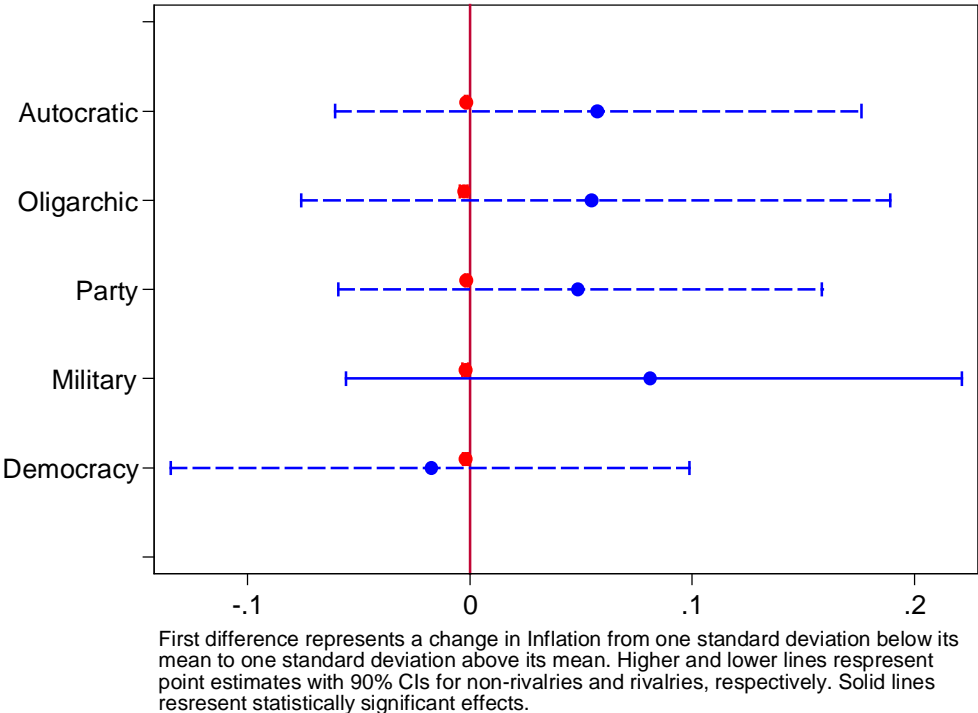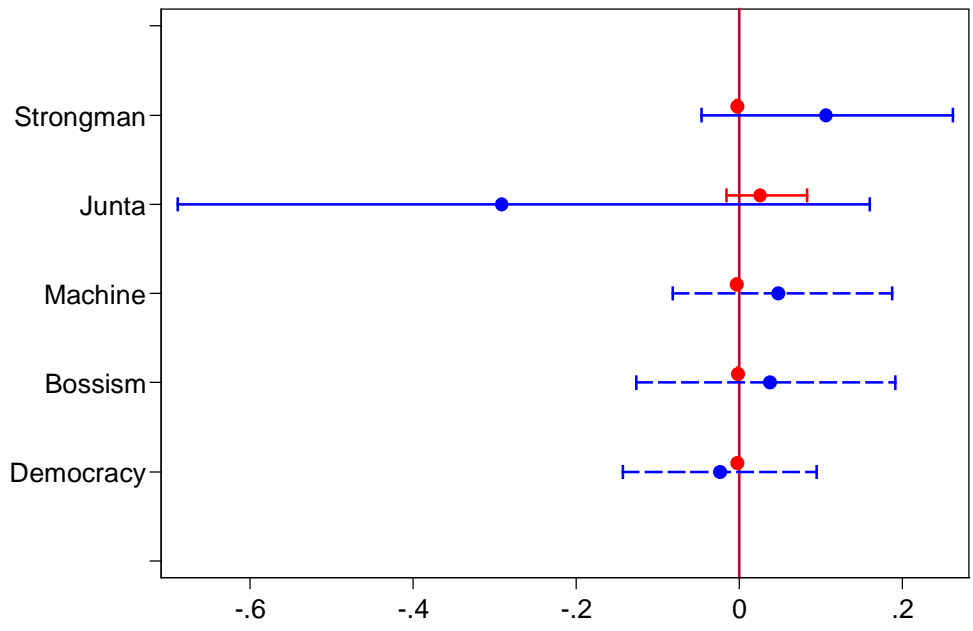
Figure 5: First Difference for Inflation on the Probability of Dispute Initiation, Combined Regime Typology, Full Sample

First difference represents a change in Inflation from one standard deviation below its mean to one standard deviation above its mean. Higher and lower lines respresent point estimates with 90% CIs for non-rivalries and rivalries, respectively. Solid lines resresent statistically significant effects.

Figure 6: First Difference for Inflation on the Probability of Dispute Initiation, Despotic Power, Autocracies Only Sample

First difference represents a change in Inflation from one standard deviation below its mean to one standard deviation above its mean. Higher and lower lines respresent point estimates with 90% CIs for non-rivalries and rivalries, respectively. Solid lines resresent statistically significant effects.
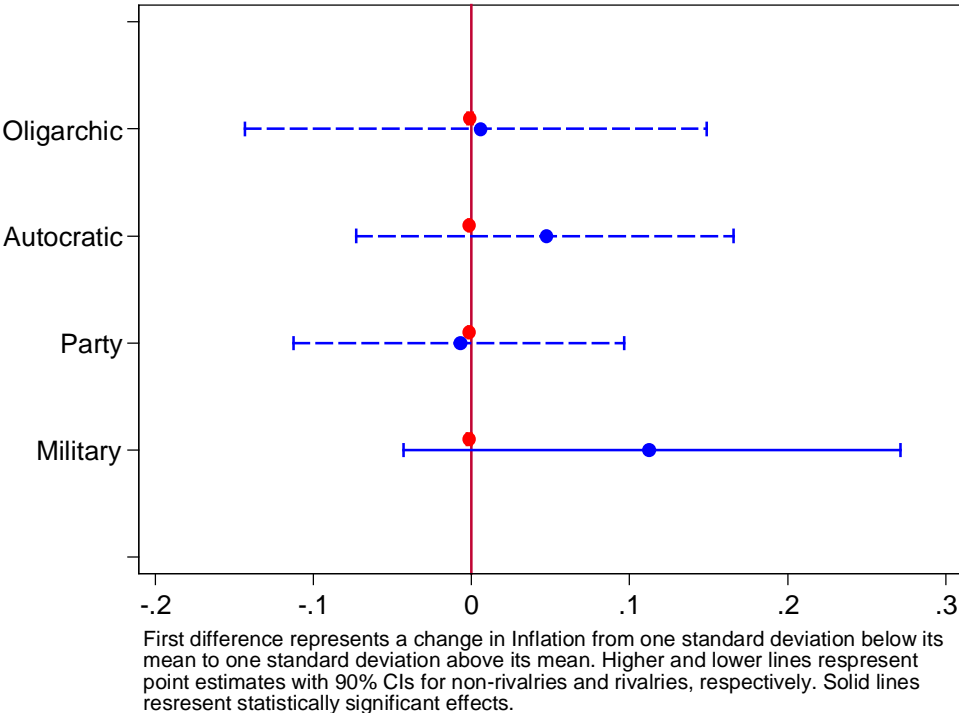
Figure 7: First Difference for Inflation on the Probability of Dispute Initiation, Combined
Regime Typology, Autocracies Only Sample

First difference represents a change in Inflation from one standard deviation below its
mean to one standard deviation above its mean. Higher and lower lines respresent
point estimates with 90% CIs for non-rivalries and rivalries, respectively. Solid lines
resresent statistically significant effects.