

# Reign-Fall : Drought and Political Instability in Ancient Rome

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**ABSTRACT** : We investigate whether drought caused political instability in Ancient Rome (27 BC - 476 AD). We hypothesize that drought caused Roman troops to mutiny, which in turn heightened the risk of assassination to the Roman emperor. Using PDSI data from the Old World Drought Atlas, we find evidence consistent with our hypothesis: drought along the Western frontier, where the bulk of Roman troops was concentrated, increased both mutinies and regicide. These results do not appear to be driven by general economic angst, or another potential mechanism: barbarian raids. We buttress our econometric results with case study evidence.