6 *Neoclassical realism and domestic interest groups**

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Neorealists, with their focus on the international structure and the relative capabilities of the great powers, have tended to neglect the impact of domestic political forces – such as public opinion, the legislature, and privileged interest groups – on foreign security policy. Recently, however, a new generation of realists has begun to draw upon the comparative political economy literature to account for the impact of domestic political considerations and to introduce the problematique of state autonomy to security studies. As chapter 1 indicates, though, this neoclassical realist literature is still underdeveloped. In particular, it needs to address five critical questions about the role of domestic actors in determining policy: (1) Which domestic actors matter most in the construction of foreign security policy? (2) Under what international circumstances will they have the greatest influence? (3) Under what domestic circumstances will domestic actors have the greatest influence? (4) In what types of states will they matter most? (5) How is their influence likely to manifest itself? In this chapter, I provide preliminary answers to these questions with the goal of building a theory of domestic actors and the national security state, although I do not build such a theory here. Specifically, I explain when domestic political factors affect foreign security policy and which domestic groups and actors matter most.

A few assumptions guide my approach. First, although public opinion, the legislature, the media, and organized interest groups are usually treated separately, they share common aspects that make it appropriate to treat them together in a comprehensive theory of

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domestic political actors. For example, public opinion usually influences policy, when it does, indirectly through its representatives in the legislature, rather than directly through the foreign security policy executive. The media, which seek primarily to mold public opinion, ultimately travel the same causal path. Similarly, while organized interest groups can make representations directly to the political leadership,[1] they frequently have easier access through the legislature. Thus a theory that specifies the extent and nature of the legislature's influence on policy will be relevant to all of these domestic political actors.

Second, although democratic and non-democratic governments will differ in the manner in which they interact with domestic actors, even non-democratic states must take into account the demands of powerful political actors, such as the military, economic elites, and even, occasionally, the public as a whole, if they wish to remain in power. Thus it is useful to build a theory that accounts not only for the differences between domestic pressures in these two types of regimes, but also the common domestic political incentives and costs they face. Below, I argue that relative state autonomy matters more than regime type.

Third, I make the assumption, as I do elsewhere, that policy is conducted by a foreign security policy executive, comprised of the head of government and the ministers and officials charged with making foreign security policy, and that all other domestic actors – including members of the legislature, political allies, and even members of the cabinet that are not in national security-related ministries – may try to influence the decisions of that executive.[2] This assumption allows us to separate the

[1] See, for example, Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 32–9.

[2] Norrin M. Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies: The Effect of Structural Autonomy on the Post-World-War Settlements* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002), pp. 43–4. This definition is similar to the "ultimate decision unit" of Margaret G. Hermann et al. which they describe as "a set of authorities with the ability to commit the resources of the society and, with respect to a particular problem, with the authority to make a decision that cannot be readily reversed." See Margaret G. Hermann, Charles F. Hermann, and Joe D. Hagan "How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy Behavior," in Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, and James N. Rosenau, eds., *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), pp. 309–36, at p. 309.

dominant neorealist influences on policy from the domestic influences. The executive, aware as it is of all the relevant information available on international strategic affairs, determines its preferences largely in accordance with international constraints and incentives. When domestic actors, who are frequently unaware of the intricacies of the policy environment, attempt to intervene in security policy, they are primarily motivated by personal, parochial, or domestic political motivations.

This is, of course, a simplified assumption, as members of the executive also bring personal motives to the table, and domestic actors can be motivated by concern over the state's security too. Indeed, these additional motives are reflected in my discussion below. Moreover, as Benjamin Fordham's chapter argues, it is possible that the interpretation of international threats may have a lot to do with the composition of the governing coalition – e.g. if the Communist Party had been in power in France or Italy during the early Cold War, they would not have perceived the Soviet Union as threatening – and not simply objective international circumstances. Therefore, some would object to my decision to treat the states as distinct from society, with distinct preferences.[3] Indeed, Benjamin Fordham's chapter in this volume contends that the economic and political interests of the governing coalition exert considerable causal weight over the threats the state responds to and the policies it chooses to counter them. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that if, as realists contend, international imperatives are the primary inputs into national security policy, then these imperatives should be best reflected within the executive. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence does suggest that the world looks different to those in power. In part because of access to privileged private information, in part because of the heavy responsibilities of office, leaders share a "view from above" that is qualitatively different from the viewpoints of private citizens and political interest groups, which often leads people who achieve power to adopt policies that diverge sharply from their previously expressed preferences.[4] Thus, for example,

[3] Colin Dueck's chapter, like mine, adopts a top-down model of the state.

[4] For this reason, I would argue that Benjamin Fordham's focus in his chapter on political parties in Congress is misplaced. We should expect the foreign policy preferences of domestic actors to be influenced by domestic political and economic interests. What matters, however, is how the executive determines its policy preferences.

Conservative Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden judged that Labour Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin – a former union leader who was the ideological opposite of the aristocratic Eden – pursued a policy that was completely in line with his own views of the realities of Cold War Europe.[5] Similarly, when Bill Clinton was running for office, he opposed the George H. W. Bush administration's policy of constructive engagement with China, preferring a more aggressive strategy of promoting human rights. After winning the 1992 election and meeting with the outgoing administration, however, he comprehended the wisdom of constructive engagement.[6] Consequently, there is evidence that what Fordham calls an additive model can be more appropriate than an interactive model, which may overstate the degree to which parochial domestic considerations affect the way governments evaluate geostrategic developments once in power. Finally, if, as domestic political analysts contend, domestic actors can influence policy-making, that should be best measured by looking at the impact of actors outside the national security executive. Thus the simplified separation of the national security executive from other domestic actors is warranted on analytical grounds, and it can allow us to examine the conditions under which domestic actors can influence the policies selected by the executive.

Finally, although I assume that the executive is more attuned to international imperatives than other actors, I also acknowledge that it has an important domestic political motivation that could have an impact on its policy decisions as well, namely its interest in preserving its own power position. When national leaders feel their hold on power is slipping, they may be more responsive to domestic preferences and may choose riskier security policies in order to secure themselves domestically.[7] Some might object that bringing such considerations into a theory of foreign security policy is distinctly unrealist, as realist theories should privilege the international system over

[5] See Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden* (London: Cassell, 1960), p. 5.

[6] See Ramon H. Myers, Michel C. Oksenberg, and David Shambaugh, eds., *Making China Policy: Lessons from the Bush and Clinton Administrations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

[7] Indeed, this is the logic behind the diversionary theory of war, which assumes states may engage in risky war to shore up domestic political support. See Jack S. Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War," in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., *The Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 259–88.

domestic political considerations.[8] As I elaborate below, however, it is perfectly consistent with neoclassical realism, which assumes that the international system plays the dominant role in shaping national security decisions, but international imperatives are filtered through the domestic political environment, which can lead to variations in the way states respond to common international pressures.[9]

In the next section, I will briefly overview existing realist approaches to the state and the recent efforts to incorporate domestic politics into the security studies literature. I then proceed to assess the types of actors that matter, as well as the international and domestic political circumstances under which they can have the greatest impact on national security policy.

Neorealism, neoclassical realism, and the state

Neorealist theory typically views the state as a strong entity that is largely unaffected by domestic pressures when conducting foreign security policy. For neorealists, the international system conditions state behavior, and states respond as they must in an anarchic international system or they may perish. Therefore, all states are socialized to behave in a similar manner, regardless of their political regime type and domestic politics.[10] While defensive structural realists attribute some causal weight to domestic political factors, they agree that most states and most regimes conduct foreign security policy without much attention to domestic political forces. In their judgment, all states behave rationally internationally and avoid excessively aggressive policies, except for those with regimes founded on dysfunctional ideologies, such as imperialistic cartel regimes and those led by militaristic general staffs.[11] These are largely ideological issues, however,

[8] I thank Brian Rathbun for this line of criticism.

[9] Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (October 1998), pp. 144–72.

[10] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. 118–28. For Waltz's conclusion that democratic states perform no differently from other regimes, see Waltz, *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics: The American and British Experience* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), pp. 306–11.

[11] See, for example, Snyder, *Myths of Empire*; Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay," *International Security* 17, no. 1 (summer 1992), pp. 177–98; Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy:

rather than domestic political factors, that affect policy choices.[12] Neorealism, thus, has typically excluded domestic actors, such as legislators, public opinion, interest groups, and the media, from the discussion of national security policy.[13]

Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that domestic political considerations can indeed affect national security policy. The public reaction to the March 2004 terrorist attack in Spain and the consequent election of the Socialist Party led that country to withdraw its troops from the American- and British-led coalition in Iraq. The food riots in Egypt in the late-1970s played a significant role in President Anwar el-Sadat's decision to visit Jerusalem and seek a peace treaty with Israel.[14] While British, American, and French leaders in 1950 all feared a Soviet challenge in central Europe, and all agreed that German rearmament was desirable, British and American leaders were able to push the plan forward, while French leaders were stymied by public and legislative opposition which caused them to delay the plan for five years.[15] It is significant that even Kenneth Waltz recognized the importance of domestic politics. While he stressed that the third image was the only coherent basis for a systematic and internally consistent theory of international politics, to explain why a given state took a given foreign policy decision at a given time, the analyst would also need to consider first- and second-image factors.[16]

For these reasons, realist-oriented scholars have begun to broaden their understanding of national security policy-making to acknowledge the impact of domestic politics. While some, such as Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, might question whether these are

Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (winter 2000), pp. 128–61.

[12] Randall Schweller's chapter in this volume contends that ideology actually is a domestic factor that can affect the ability of states to implement, rather than make, policy.

[13] In contrast, traditional realists did assume that domestic politics could cause leaders – especially leaders of democratic states – to pursue suboptimal policy choices. See Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*, pp. 30–4.

[14] Melvin A. Friedlander, *Sadat and Begin: The Domestic Politics of Peacemaking* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1983), pp. 2–9.

[15] Norrin M. Ripsman, "The Curious Case of German Rearmament: Democracy and Foreign Security Policy," *Security Studies* 10, no. 2 (winter 2001), pp. 1–47.

[16] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 232.

truly realist approaches, I contend that they remain realist in their acceptance of core realist assumptions about international politics.[17] These neoclassical realists believe that anarchy and the distribution of power condition the pursuit of security, that security is the most important value in an anarchic international system, and that states are the most important actors in the international arena. Nonetheless, they accept that, since leaders are interested not only in securing the state from without but also holding power at home, domestic political conditions can also affect security policy. More precisely, they assume that domestic political arrangements act as intervening variables through which systemic imperatives are translated into foreign policy responses.[18] Thus, according to Jack Levy, "greater recognition of the role of domestic factors by political scientists would increase the explanatory power of their theories and provide more useful conceptual frameworks for the historical analysis of individual wars."[19] Let us briefly explore a few of these domestic political avenues of inquiry.

One observation is that national security policy may be targeted at a domestic audience, rather than an international one. The diversionary war theory thus contends that leaders do not only wage war for international strategic reasons. Occasionally, domestically beleaguered leaders who fear defeat or overthrow at home may initiate a war in order to alter the domestic political landscape and preserve their hold on power. Their premise is that war inspires a "rally-around-the-flag" effect, which silences opposition on nationalistic grounds and even co-opts opponents to support the regime in the national interest.[20] If this is correct, then to predict wars we would have to supplement a

[17] Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, "Is Anyone Still a Realist?" *International Security* 24, no. 2 (fall 1999), pp. 5–55. Like Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, I view the inclusion of domestic political variables as an enhancement of realism, rather than a rejection of it. See Peter D. Feaver et al., "Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm? (Or Was Anybody Ever a Realist?)" *International Security* 25, no. 1 (summer 2000), p. 181.

[18] See, for example, Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy"; Randall L. Schweller, "The Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism," in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 311–47.

[19] Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (spring 1988), pp. 653–73, at p. 653.

[20] See Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War"; Alastair Smith, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Democratic Systems," *International Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1996), pp. 133–53.

third-image theory of international politics with second-image variables capturing the stability of the government.

Another strand of the new realist writings focuses on the impact of domestic political institutions and practices on the national security policy choices states make. Inspired by democratic peace theory, Susan Peterson posits that crisis bargaining outcomes depend not only on relative power considerations, but also on the nature of the governments involved. She argues that the institutional structures of a state and the strategic beliefs of key actors in the domestic theater play the principal role in determining whether crises end in war or not.[21] Building on Peterson's work, Miriam Fendius Elman operationalizes institutional structure by subdividing the category of democracy into majoritarian parliamentary democracies, coalitional parliamentary democracies, and presidential democracies, and represents strategic beliefs with an assessment of the relative hawkishness or dovishness of the executive and the legislature. She argues that in majoritarian parliamentary democracies executive preferences trump legislative preferences; thus a hawkish executive will pursue belligerent policies and a dovish cabinet will behave peacefully. In coalitional parliamentary democracies and presidential democracies, however, the executive is non-autonomous and public preferences trump executive preferences.[22] And my own research concludes that executive autonomy derives not merely from the form of democracy (i.e. its institutional structure), but also from the decision-making procedures and procedural norms that govern the conduct of foreign security policy. States with structurally autonomous executives behave as structural realists expect in response to international threats; those whose domestic decision-making environments deny autonomy to national security executives are often paralyzed in the face of domestic opposition and are unable to respond effectively to systemic imperatives.[23] Thus, to understand national security decisions fully, we must

[21] Susan Peterson, "How Democracies Differ: Public Opinion, State Structure, and the Lessons of the Fashoda Crisis," *Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (autumn 1995), pp. 3–37; Susan Peterson, *Crisis Bargaining and the State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

[22] Miriam Fendius Elman, "Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Theories of Democratic Peace," *Security Studies* 9, no. 4 (summer 20001), pp. 91–126.

[23] Ripsman, "The Curious Case of German Rearmament"; Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*.

complement third-image theory with a theory of the domestic decision-making environment.

Yet another avenue of inquiry that has opened recently is how broad domestic social coalitions affect the pursuit of security. Some, such as Benjamin O. Fordham, Peter Trubowitz, and Etel Solingen, argue that the grand strategies that states pursue may be shaped by the international system, but are heavily influenced by the constellation of domestic political and economic interests that comprise the governing coalition. In their view, then, the dictates of the international system are not as clear as neorealists would seem to imply; the governing coalition must interpret the national interest and decide upon the means with which it is pursued.[24] Building on this approach, Steven Lobell constructs a model of the grand strategy choices made by declining hegemons that includes the distribution of capabilities, the behavior of rising challengers, and the domestic coalition politics of the hegemon. While his "second image reversed plus second image" theory privileges international factors, it asserts the importance of the domestic political processes through which they are translated.[25] This branch of theory suggests that an understanding of the underlying domestic interest group and coalition structure will be essential if we wish to explain and predict how states respond to international threats and opportunities.

Drawing on the latter two traditions, scholars have constructed neoclassical realist theories to explain surprising deviations from the expectations of standard neorealist theories. Randall Schweller, for example, has advanced a theory of underbalancing that hinges on the level of elite and societal divisions in the state facing a rising challenger.[26] Jack Snyder uses regime type to explain why some states,

[24] Benjamin O. Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus: The Political Economy of US National Security Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Peter Trubowitz, *Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Etel Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century's Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[25] Steven E. Lobell, *The Challenge of Hegemony: Grand Strategy, Trade, and Domestic Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

[26] Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing," *International Security* 29, no. 2 (fall 2004), pp. 159–201; Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

principally those run by imperialistic cartels and militaristic general staffs, engage in campaigns of dangerous overexpansion.[27] And William Wohlforth explains the superpower clash during the Cold War as a product of their differing elite perceptions of the international balance of power.[28]

I argue that these new twists on realism represent an advance, rather than a step backward, because the domestic political variables they employ expand the explanatory power and precision of realist theory. They also represent an important advance on *Innenpolitik* approaches that view foreign policy largely as the product of domestic political competition. Thus, for example, pluralist models and Marxist approaches, which treat foreign policy as the product of the dominance of particular classes or interest coalitions in particular states, obscure considerable areas of commonality, resulting from similar international pressures, that unite states with different regimes and governing coalitions.[29] As Mark Brawley's chapter indicates, for example, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France all acknowledged the threat posed by Germany's power potential in the 1920s and 1930s and constructed policy accordingly. Domestic political differences led them to select different responses, but it is clear that international dynamics drove threat perception and set the parameters of policy-making. Thus, neoclassical realism adds both depth to structural realist theories and an appropriate frame for *Innenpolitik* approaches. Nonetheless, we lack a systematic theory to explain when domestic political factors affect national security policy and which domestic groups and actors matter most. In the next sections, I address each of these issues preliminarily.

Which interest groups and domestic actors matter most?

A large number of domestic actors have at least some interest in foreign security policy. At a minimum, the public is interested in any

[27] Snyder, *Myths of Empire*.

[28] William Curti Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[29] See, for example, the approaches in Martin J. Smith, *Pressure, Power, and Policy: State Autonomy and Policy Networks in Britain and the United States* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993); and Gabriel Kolko, *The Roots of American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

policies that could affect the likelihood of war and privation, tax rates, or the potential for a military draft. Members of the legislature, of course, are interested in all aspects of the state's business, and national security is no exception. Many businesses, industrial sectors, labor unions, and other organized economic interests have vested interests in decisions that affect the levels of defense spending, the procurement of specific weapons systems, or access to foreign markets. Key domestic political institutions, such as the military and the aristocracy, have an interest in national security decisions that might affect their societal power and privilege. Ethnic groups that have sustained ties to a mother country may have an interest in decisions affecting that country. And the media justify their existence by probing all aspects of national policy. Which of these groups are likely to have any actual influence over national security policy?

In general, domestic actors should have less influence over national security policy than over any other issue area. This is the case for two key reasons. First, because of the importance of national security policy and the high costs that could accrue to the state were it to be mishandled – potentially defeat in war and perhaps even the loss of sovereignty – the public, the legislature, and societal interests should be willing to give the government more leeway in its conduct. This is especially the case since the government is acknowledged to have access to more (often secret) information on national security than other domestic actors, making it a better judge of the nation's long-term interests.[30] Indeed, it may even be considered unseemly to interfere with compelling national interests for private gain.[31]

Second, both the costs and the benefits of most aspects of national security policy tend to be rather widely distributed across society as a whole. Most sectors of society share, although perhaps unequally, in the tax burden and the recruitment burden to meet a foreign

[30] Steven Lobell's chapter concurs on this point. See also Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 17.

[31] Such, for example, was the case in Israel prior to the 1982 Lebanon War. Because of the intensity of the security dilemma the country faced, it was viewed as improper to challenge the government on matters of national security. See Tamar Hermann, "Grassroots Activism as a Factor in Foreign Policy-Making," in David Skidmore and Valerie M. Hudson, eds., *The Limits of State Autonomy* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993), pp. 127–47.

challenge. Although the costs and opportunities of alliance decisions could conceivably impact some business sectors and firms more than others, very few of the organized societal interests that typically exert influence in domestic political coalitions have significant direct interests at stake in alliance politics. And all elements of society benefit from the enhanced security provided by prudent national security policy decisions. As James Q. Wilson contends, when the costs and benefits of policy are diffuse, strong interest groups tend not to form and interest groups consequently have little motivation to interfere with policy choices.[32] This suggests that, except for issues of defense spending and procurement, which we shall touch upon below, the direct interests of domestic actors in, and their willingness to interfere with, foreign security policy-making, should be low.[33]

Nonetheless, there are still opportunities for certain types of societal actors to influence policy. Let us now consider which types of groups are most likely to exert influence. In order to influence policy, domestic actors need to be able to provide a sufficient payoff to policy-makers if they construct policies in the desired direction, or to impose sufficient penalties if they do not. Since the policy executive is dominated, above all, by individuals who wish to retain their hold on power, and secondarily to pass their preferred policy agendas, they should be most receptive to influence from domestic actors who can provide or deny electoral support or, in non-democratic states, preserve the leader's position or topple him/her. Therefore, in democratic states, interest groups should be most successful if they have large membership rolls. Size, however, should not always translate into greater influence. A large interest group that does not have a significant degree of control over its members' voting behavior is not as

[32] James Q. Wilson, "The Politics of Regulation," in James Q. Wilson, ed., *The Politics of Regulation* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), pp. 357–94, at pp. 367–8. Theodore J. Lowi similarly links the range of societal actors that a particular policy affects and the magnitude of the personal stake to the manner in which they are resolved. "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies, and Political Theory," *World Politics* 16, no. 4 (July 1964), pp. 676–716; and Theodore J. Lowi, "Four Systems of Policy, Politics, and Choice," *Public Administration Review* 32, no. 4 (July/August 1972), pp. 298–310.

[33] It is, perhaps, for this reason that in his classic treatment of the societal influence on policy, Lowi deliberately excludes foreign policy, which he describes as "in many ways not part of the same universe" as domestic policy. "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies, and Political Theory," p. 689.

likely to wield as much influence as one that can rely on its members to vote as a bloc. In this regard, single-issue groups whose members are passionately committed to that issue above all others – as, say pro-choice and anti-abortion supporters tend to be – should have greater credibility than those whose members are likely to consider a wider range of domestic political issues when voting.[34] Thus, in the foreign policy issue area, we might expect ethnic diaspora communities to have greater member voting consistency than, say, groups who favor greater military preparedness but whose members might be divided over a host of other cross-cutting economic and political issues. Moreover, groups that have a significant voter base in strategic regions (e.g. in political districts or states that are competitive and pivotal) should have greater potential influence than those who are scattered or concentrated in less important locales. For example, the influence of Cuban émigrés in the United States over American Cuban policy can be attributed to their concentration in Florida, a populous swing state that has been pivotal in at least one US federal election. Finally, in rare cases when it is sufficiently intense and united on a particular issue, public opinion as a whole may persuade the national security executive to alter its national security policies. Thus, for example, strong public opposition, particularly in Quebec, to participation in George W. Bush's "coalition of the willing" against Iraq led Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to remain on the sidelines, despite initial indications that he would send a token Canadian force.

In non-democratic states or quasi-democratic regimes that lack institutionalized democratic stability, the leadership's desire to retain power should make it more receptive to influencing attempts from two types of actors. First, they should pay more attention to kingmakers, or those with decisive power to select, back, or eject leaders. Indeed, during the 1996 tensions with Taiwan, there is evidence to suggest that Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping was compelled to adopt a softer stance by powerful provincial leaders and Shanghai business-minded elites, who were growing increasingly influential in the party.[35] Second, they should be especially attentive to groups, such as the military,

[34] Eugene R. Wittkopf, Charles W. Kegley and James M. Scott, *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process*, 6th en, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003), p. 298.

[35] I thank Jean-Marc F. Blanchard for bringing this episode to my attention.

that have the capability to lead a coup or organized revolt against the regime. Thus, for example, the new Islamist government of Turkey – a state which has seen numerous coups by a military seeking to guarantee a secular constitution and a stable policy – has shied away from moves such as outright termination of Turkey's cooperative relationship with Israel. And in very rare cases when public sentiment is so completely charged and leaders fear a revolution or widespread unrest, leaders may change or tailor their policies to public preferences. Indeed, such would appear to be Egyptian President Mubarak's policy toward Israel after Sadat's assassination. He retained the peace treaty with Israel, but kept it a cold peace, rather than a constructive one, to minimize domestic hostility.

Aside from a direct electoral payoff, political leaders are also interested in those domestic actors who can provide resources that can be used either to retain power or, in cases of corrupt regimes, to line their pockets. In this regard, we might expect that wealthier groups would have more influence than those with only limited resources. Nonetheless, money and resources should be of only limited utility, since – unlike direct, coherent electoral clout – they tend to be spread across interest groups. Thus, while one group may offer a large material payoff for pursuing its preferred policy option, it is conceivable that one or more actors that oppose the policy will be able to provide a countervailing payoff that, even if smaller, would allow the executive to select its preferred policy without forgoing the bulk of the payoff.

For this reason, I do not expect so-called "military-industrial-complex" (MIC) or "iron triangle" interest groups to have any significant influence over foreign security policy.[36] These groups, particularly firms that produce armaments or otherwise supply the military, and those engaged in defense-related research and development, are supposed to exert – together with the military and their allies in the government – a decisive influence over issues ranging from defense spending and weapons procurement to decisions of war and peace. Yet it is not clear why they must do so. To begin with, on individual procurement decisions, firms compete against each other and can raise countervailing rewards for the executive; therefore, the

[36] See C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

government should be able to choose its own preferred option independently of MIC interest groups at little cost. Furthermore, on those issues where the MIC interest groups are united (say in favoring higher overall defense spending or encouraging the use of force), firms and interest groups in other sectors of the economy that would lose out as a result can coalesce to offer a countervailing reward. So it seems unreasonable to privilege this one cluster of economic interests over other well-endowed interests.[37]

Beyond the ability to keep the government in power or defeat it, domestic actors with the ability to obstruct the government's agenda should also be able to bargain with the executive over the content of security policy. In a democratic state, this means that the legislature, either as a whole or through its key legislative committees on foreign affairs or defense policy, can impact upon policy choices, since it can act as a veto player over policy if no concessions are made to its preferences.[38] This is particularly the case, as it is in the United States, when the legislature controls the implementation of policy through its control over budgetary allocations. Thus, prior to the Persian Gulf wars of 1991 and 2003, the administration spent much time and effort garnering congressional declarations authorizing the use of force and was willing to bargain with Congress to receive them. In addition, in a democratic state with powerful and independent courts that can issue binding advisory opinions, the executive may also take judicial preferences into account when making policy, although this phenomenon is rare.[39] Finally, in non-democratic states, where courts and legislatures have little role, other potential veto players, such as

[37] For related critiques, see Jerome Slater and Terry Nardin, "The Concept of the Military-Industrial Complex," in Steven Rosen, ed., *Testing the Theory of the Military-Industrial Complex* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1973), pp. 27–50; Steven Rosen, "Testing the Theory of the Military-Industrial Complex," ibid., pp. 1–25.

[38] On veto players, see George Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[39] The Canadian Supreme Court, for example, issued an opinion in 1985 on whether testing American cruise missiles in Canada was constitutional. In this case, the court's ruling did not constrain the government's subsequent behavior, but it could have done. Moreover, the decision explicitly asserted the court's right to review matters of foreign and defense policy, giving it an important veto in the foreign policy process. *Operation Dismantle* v. *The Queen* [1985] 1 SCR 441. I thank James Kelly for bringing this case to my attention.

powerful bureaucratic actors, religious leaders, professional guilds, or the military, can also manipulate their power to obstruct to extract policy concessions. Indeed, in Iran – where the power of the Shiite clerics extends into all facets of daily life – the mullahs effectively blocked former President Mohammed Khatami's efforts to moderate Iranian foreign and domestic policies.

Finally, domestic actors may influence policy choices not by exchanging something of value for a policy payoff, but by shaping the interpretation of international circumstances and helping define the national interest. In this sense, they can act as epistemic communities, shaping the mind-set of the national security executive.[40] In this regard, the US media, and think tanks such as the Council on Foreign Relations or the Brookings Institution, may be able to influence American security policy by framing the elite debate.

Therefore, in democratic states, we should expect the greatest influence from well-organized, coherent, vote-rich, single-issue interest groups that can provide an electoral payoff, the legislature that can act as a veto for the government's policy agenda, groups that can frame executive thinking on foreign affairs, and, occasionally, the public as a whole. A lesser and less frequent influence may be expected from wealthy or resource-rich groups, simply because of the countervailing resources of opposing groups. In non-democratic states, kingmaker societal groups, and those such as the military that can lead a revolt against the leader, should have the greatest influence on national security policy, followed by bureaucratic or economic actors that have the potential to obstruct policy implementation, and in unusual circumstances, public opinion as a whole.

One final issue pertains to the scope of the domestic actor's demands.[41] If the group demands minor modifications or tailoring of policy, it will be more likely to influence outcomes, for the costs to national security of these minor changes will likely be low. In

[40] On epistemic communities in the international arena, see Ernst Haas, *When Knowledge is Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization* 46, no. 1 (winter 1992), pp. 1–36.

[41] See Robert H. Trice, "Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process: US Policy in the Middle East," *Sage Professional Paper in International Studies* 4, no. 02–047 (1976), p. 8.

contrast, an actor that demands programmatic change to national security policy should have great difficulty achieving its goals if the international incentives point to a different strategy. Similarly, those actors that mobilize for basic continuity of policy should be more successful than those who agitate for policy change, although it would be difficult to attribute policy continuity to the influence of domestic actors, rather than other factors such as continuity in the external environment, constant executive preferences, bureaucratic inertia, etc.[42]

Having determined which domestic groups have the greatest potential to impact upon national security decisions, I will now consider the circumstances under which they should have the greatest influence.

Under what international circumstances will domestic actors have the greatest influence?

We should expect domestic actors and interest groups to have the greatest influence over foreign security policy during stable periods when the state faces a low-threat international environment. In high-threat environments, the risks to the state and its survival are paramount, since war is always likely and potentially imminent. Under these circumstances, when the margin for error is minimal, the national security executive will have powerful incentives to ignore domestic political interests and formulate security policy with the overriding goal of securing the state. Conversely, in a low-threat environment, the costs of allowing domestic actors to contribute to the making of national security policy are low. Consequently, the national security executive will be more attuned to its domestic political environment and, in particular, more willing to make concessions to powerful actors and interests that could potentially either assist it in maintaining its hold on power or contribute to its overthrow.[43]

[42] Wittkopf et al., *American Foreign Policy*, p. 298.

[43] Bernard C. Cohen puts this another way. "Private interest thus seems generally to yield to public – or national – interest when the latter is clearly formulated. The political question then turns more on the formulation of 'national interest' in threatening circumstances than it does on the accommodation of private interests in non-threatening circumstances." "The Influence of Special-Interest Groups and Mass Media on Security Policy in the United States," in Charles

In the American context, there is some evidence that interest groups have more influence during periods of relative security. During the Cold War, when global security competition with a nuclear-armed Soviet Union raised the stakes of foreign policy, Lester W. Milbrath concluded "that interest group influence on foreign policy is slight."[44] Another study of US foreign policy similarly concluded that:

> While interest groups seek to persuade, their mere presence, indeed, ubiquity, does not guarantee their penetration of the foreign policy-making process ... Interest groups may be effective on certain special issues. More often, foreign policy making is relatively immune to interest group influence.[45]

Nonetheless, as James McCormick's more recent study indicates, interest groups have gained some traction in the post-Cold War era.[46] As McCormick suggests, this phenomenon can be linked to, amongst other factors, the increasing prominence of trade issues and the declining focus on traditional national security matters, and a shift from crisis management to a long-term approach to foreign policy. In other words, when security is not immediately at stake, interest groups have a greater say in foreign policy-making. To be sure, McCormick also points to institutional changes in Congress that give more lobby groups greater access. These reforms themselves, however, may be at least partially attributable to the stability of the early post-Cold War world which made a more transparent, less autonomous foreign policy process safer.[47] It remains to be seen what effect the new post-9/11 security environment will have on the influence of interest groups and other domestic actors.

W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf, eds., *Perspectives on American Foreign Policy: Selected Readings* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 222–41, at pp. 224–5. Mark Brawley's chapter in this volume similarly concludes that the time frame within which a threat is likely affects the intensity of balancing strategies and, consequently, the degree to which domestic difficulties are accommodated.

[44] Lester W. Milbrath, "Interest Groups and Foreign Policy," in James N. Rosenau, ed., *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 231–51, at p. 251.

[45] Wittkopf et al., *American Foreign Policy*, p. 299.

[46] James McCormick, "Interest Groups and the Media in Post-Cold War US Foreign Policy," in James M. Scott, ed., *After the End: Making US Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 170–98.

[47] See, for example, Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*, pp. 237–8.

Under what domestic circumstances will domestic groups have the greatest influence?

In principle, domestic political actors should gain the most policy traction when the government is vulnerable. If the government expects that an electoral defeat, a military coup, or some other form of de-selection is potentially imminent, it will be far more likely to shore up its position by buying off a powerful interest group or the public at large. Thus a democratic national security policy executive might be most willing to bargain with domestic interests over national security policy as an election approaches and public opinion polls show that reelection will be difficult. This might explain, for example, why George W. Bush accelerated the pace of the handover of power to an interim Iraqi regime in June 2004, prior to the November election campaign. A non-democratic regime should be more willing to make national security policy with an eye toward domestic actors when a crisis looms that could topple the government. The Argentine junta's decision to invade the Falkland Islands in 1981 could thus be seen as an attempt to buy off domestic opposition dissatisfied with the regime's economic performance.[48]

Aside from governmental vulnerability, the degrees of both executive certainty and national consensus about policy should also affect the importance of domestic actors. When the executive is decided about the course of national security policy, there is little room for domestic actors with other agendas to influence policy choices. Similarly, when there is a national consensus, such as there was in favor of containment during much of the Cold War, groups with divergent views have little room to maneuver.[49] Only when ambiguity or confusion reigns in the policy environment can a domestic actor most effectively emerge as a policy entrepreneur and shape policy.

[48] See the discussion in Richard Ned Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, eds., *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 89–124.

[49] Cohen, "The Influence of Special-Interest Groups and Mass Media on Security Policy in the United States," p. 224. Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack similarly argue that the ability of individual leaders to shape policy also increases with ambiguity or confusion in the policy environment. "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (spring 2001), pp. 141–2.

Even though he makes different assumptions about the nature of state–societal relations, Steven Lobell comes to similar conclusions in his chapter.

In what types of states will domestic actors matter most?

Simply put, domestic actors should have the greatest influence in states whose national security policy executives possess low levels of structural autonomy. As I argue elsewhere, a state's domestic decision-making environment – comprised of its institutional structures, decision-making procedures, and prevailing procedural norms – determines the degree to which its national security policy executive is insulated from its domestic opposition.[50] All things being equal, the more structurally autonomous an executive is, the lesser the ability of domestic actors to interfere with the government's foreign policy agenda. Autonomy varies not only across states, but also within the same state over time. For example, American governments varied in their independence from legislative opposition in forging postwar peace settlements in 1919 and after 1945. In 1919, Woodrow Wilson was constrained by opponents in the Senate because of an unresolved constitutional division of foreign policy powers and procedural norms that favored the full use of senatorial power. In contrast, Harry Truman's and Dwight Eisenhower's governments after World War II were able to act with substantial independence from domestic opposition because of judicial interpretations of the division of powers that privileged the president, the procedure of non-partisanship, and the emerging norm that, because of the Soviet threat, foreign policy was far too important to allow congressional interference.[51]

Since autonomy is the key variable affecting the influence of domestic actors on national security policy it should not matter that much whether they inhabit a democratic state or a non-democratic one. After all, both democracies and non-democratic states vary in the level of autonomy they possess in the national security area. It would

[50] Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*. As I indicate there, structural autonomy is calculated a priori based on a uniformly applied set of questions about state structure. Therefore, autonomy can be separated as a distinct independent variable from actual observed policy independence (the dependent variable) to avoid tautology.

[51] Ibid., chaps. 2–4.

be difficult to argue, for example, that after the Cuban Missile Crisis Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev had anywhere near the national security policy autonomy from the Supreme Soviet that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had from Iraqi society and institutions. Similarly, the executives of Fourth Republic France or contemporary Israel, both of which are/were comprised of fragile coalitions of poorly disciplined parties, have/had less foreign policy autonomy than postwar Great Britain, with its strong one-party majorities.[52] Thus we might expect that a structurally constrained non-democratic leader, such as Khrushchev, might possess even less autonomy to conduct policy than a highly autonomous democratic foreign security policy executive, such as the American national security state during the early Cold War. Relative autonomy, therefore, matters more than regime type.

It is easy to see how structural autonomy affects the influence of domestic groups. When a democratic executive is independent of the legislature, it minimizes the interference of individual parliamentarians, legislative committees, and the legislature as a whole. Furthermore, it reduces the impact of public opinion, which usually filters through to the executive indirectly through the legislature. Since interest groups typically have greater access to – and greater influence over – the legislature than the executive,[53] an autonomous executive is insulated from them to a greater extent as well. And the media's influence, flowing mostly through the public to the legislature, is similarly curtailed. In a non-democratic state, autonomy is even more profound, as insulation from societal elites and institutions directly shields the leader from their policy demands. In contrast, a non-autonomous national security executive is constantly bombarded by the demands of a vast array of domestic actors, each of which has the potential, subject to the conditions discussed above, to influence policy choices.

Another related aspect of the state that can affect the impact of domestic actors, particularly specific sectors or classes, is what Peter Evans calls the embeddedness of the state.[54] To the extent that the state has close ties to certain classes or sectors of society – to the point that state leaders and managers are typically drawn from those circles

[52] Ibid., chap. 2. [53] Wittkopf et al., *American Foreign Policy*, p. 298.
[54] Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

and socialized by them – those sectors will be able to shape the state's attitude to national security, and thereby influence the policy choices made by state leaders.[55] Nonetheless, the effect of embeddedness should not be overstated. Since the state is potentially autonomous and since, as I argued earlier, the view from above is different from the view out of office, we can expect leader preferences to deviate considerably from their societal cohorts, particularly when national security is at stake. Thus the degree of state autonomy is a more important factor than state embeddedness in determining the influence of domestic actors.

What are domestic actors most likely to affect when they have some influence?

When domestic actors are able to influence policy choices, what exactly do they help determine? Do they affect the way states define their national interests, the means that are used to implement those interests, or merely the timing and style of the response?

In general, the likelihood of influencing each of these aspects of foreign security policy declines considerably with the magnitude of influence. Thus it is only under a very restricted set of circumstances that domestic interests can determine the definition of the national interests that states pursue. Only when the security environment is very stable and the costs of faulty decisions are likely to be low can the state afford to allow the direction of national security strategy to be determined for domestic political reasons. In contrast, when weighty matters of war and peace threaten the state, domestic groups are likely to have a more restricted influence, affecting only the means employed to achieve a clearly defined end or the manner in which the response is crafted. Thus, as Colin Dueck's contribution to this volume indicates, domestic interests are unlikely to drive decisions of war and peace, but may affect the timing of war and the manner in which it is conducted.

Conclusion: domestic actors and foreign policy

Neorealists are correct to emphasize that the international system conditions national foreign policy choices and is their primary

[55] I thank Marie-Jöelle Zahar for bringing this line of argument to my attention.

determinant. But that does not mean that domestic political factors are unimportant. As neoclassical realists contend, at times domestic actors can exert a decisive influence on how the state interprets international threats and opportunities, and how it responds to them. In this chapter, I considered which domestic actors are likely to have the most influence on foreign security policy and the domestic and international conditions under which they are most likely to exert influence. In general, the domestic actors that can be most influential are those that have sufficient power to remove the leader or executive from office, those that can use their veto to obstruct the government's programmatic goals, or those that can shape the definition of national interests. These actors are more likely to have a significant impact on policy choices, principally when the international threat situation is low, when the leader's hold on power is weak, and when the national security executive lacks structural autonomy. On the whole, though, domestic actors are far more likely to influence the timing and style of a state's national security policies than the definition of the national interest, which is usually determined from without, unless the state inhabits a stable environment.

The implications of my chapter, then, are consistent with the overall thrust of this volume. To begin with, neoclassical realism presents a more nuanced and appropriate guide to the security choices that states make than either the externally driven neorealist model or the internally driven societal *Innenpolitik* models. While the international system sets the stage for policy choice and shapes the policy environment, as neorealists contend, its causal influence on national policy responses is tempered, and sometimes thwarted, by domestic political competition and institutions. Similarly, internal politics does not play as decisive a role in directing foreign policy as *Innenpolitik* theories assume, since domestic groups are forced to contend with the constraints of the international system, which when severe limit choices and compel certain policy alternatives. By asserting the primacy of the international system, moderated by domestic political competition within a potentially autonomous state, neoclassical realism provides a richer portrait of the dynamism and complexity of foreign policy-making.

In addition, this chapter underscores the utility of neoclassical realism as an approach to foreign policy, rather than merely as an explanation of suboptimal policy choices. Certainly, in a turbulent international system, when security is scarce, domestic actors have

limited ability to influence foreign policy and interfere with the executive policy, potentially at the expense of the national interest.[56] When the security environment is more stable, however, states have a greater degree of freedom in choosing policies, and domestic actors have a greater role in directing the national foreign policy choices without serious consequences. In these circumstances, neoclassical realism can shed light on the ordinary foreign policy choices states make, rather than simply the dysfunctional errors they occasionally make.

[56] See, for example, Hans J. Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958), p. 326.