

Distributive domestic response

JENNIFER MORRISON TAW*

Abstract. When former US ambassador to Pakistan, Wendy Chamberlin, said of the US, ‘We are a player in the Pakistani political system’, she was pointing out how challenging it is to achieve US policy goals under the kinds of volatile political conditions engulfing that country. In late 2007, the Bush administration was banking on the political future of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who had recently returned to Pakistan, and was still providing President Pervez Musharraf with the substantial aid and support it had been giving him since 9/11. And yet by early 2008, Benazir Bhutto was dead, assassinated as she rose from her car to greet crowds of supporters, and Pervez Musharraf was a political liability, since his party had suffered a resounding defeat in the February 2008 election. These events demonstrated that even the foreign policies of a country as powerful as the US can be scuttled by the flux and flow of local power politics.

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Introduction

Former US ambassador to Pakistan Wendy Chamberlin said of the US, ‘We are a player in the Pakistani political system’, but continued, ‘This is Pakistan, and Pakistan is a very dangerous and violent place.’ Chamberlin acknowledged that the US has played a role in Pakistan’s domestic politics, but emphasised how challenging it is to achieve US policy goals under the kinds of volatile political conditions engulfing that country.¹ Indeed, in late 2007, the Bush administration was banking on the political future of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who had recently returned to Pakistan, and was still providing President Pervez Musharraf with the substantial aid and support it had been giving him since 9/11. And yet by early 2008, Benazir Bhutto was dead, assassinated as she rose from her car to greet crowds of supporters, and Pervez Musharraf was a political liability,

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¹ Helene Cooper and Steven Lee Meyers, ‘Salvaging US Diplomacy Amid Division’, *The New York Times* (28 December 2007).

since his party had suffered a resounding defeat in the February 2008 election. These events demonstrated that even the foreign policies of a country as powerful as the US can be scuttled by the flux and flow of local power politics. Unpredictable and complicated, local politics can affect all states' abilities to exercise influence abroad.² This is no less the case for great powers.³

Yet, with the exception of Putnam's two-level games and a significant body of work on the democratic peace (which assesses how democracy within states affects relations among them),⁴ International Relations theories only consider domestic politics in terms of how foreign policy is initiated and sustained within the policy-originating country and how that, in turn, affects conflict and cooperation internationally.⁵ The domestic politics in the country or countries towards which

² Actually, local politics can affect all international actors' abilities to exercise influence, not just state actors'. Transnational terrorist organisations like *Al-Qaeda* and international organisations like the UN see their efforts at influence distorted by local politics.

³ This is an issue frequently recognised by practitioners but overlooked by policymakers who think of International Relations in terms of states' rational interests and thereby fail to take into account, all too often, the effects of a target state's local politics on an external power's policy's ultimate outcome. In political science, theory has gone even further, ignoring these dynamics completely. Realist analyses dominated studies of foreign relations for decades, taking the state – as a rational, unified actor – to be the appropriate unit of analysis. At the apex of such works, scholars frowned upon reductionism and gave the structure of the international system primacy as the explanatory variable in world politics. The costs of including domestic variables in theories of international politics were considered high: diminished parsimony, reduced generalisability, and less predictive ability. Considerations of domestic factors meant a theory was overly descriptive and inadequately explanatory. See, Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

⁴ Steve Chan, 'In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise', *Mershon International Studies Review*, 41:1 (May 1997), pp. 59–91; John MacMillan, 'Beyond the Separate Democratic Peace', *Journal of Peace Research*, 40:2 (March 2003), pp. 233–43; Bruce Russett, Christopher Layne, David E. Spiro, Michael W. Doyle, 'The Democratic Peace', *International Security*, 19:4 (Spring 1995), pp. 164–84; Michael W. Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 12:3 (Summer 1983), pp. 205–35. Studies of the democratic peace do consider whether the democratic peace (if accepted) is better understood as monadic (a democracy is less likely to engage in war) or dyadic (democracies are less likely to engage in war with other democracies). Analyses assuming the dyadic proposition presume a resonance (in terms of norms, institutions, etc.) between democratic states that diminishes the likelihood that they will go to war against each other.

⁵ Many theorists did begin to reject the realist assumption of the state as a rational, unitary actor, but their focus was on how domestic factors influence the making of foreign policy and thereby International Relations more generally. These theorists recognised the explanatory utility of domestic actors and of the dynamics by which their preferences are consolidated into foreign policy. For an excellent overview of realism, neo-realism, and challenges to their simplifying assumptions about the state as rational, unitary actor, see, Helen V. Milner, 'Rationalizing Politics: The Emerging Synthesis of International, American, and Comparative Politics', *International Organization*, 52:4, *International Organization at Fifty: Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics* (Autumn 1998), pp. 759–86. An early study looked at 'internal politics and their relation to the foreign policy of the various states that became involved in the Corinthian War.' See, Charles D. Hamilton, *Sparta's Bitter Victories: Politics and Diplomacy in the Corinthian War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979). Kalevi Jaakko Holsti wrote that 'The problem of contemporary and future politics, it turns out, is essentially a problem of domestic politics.' Kalevi Jaakko Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 15. And many other theorists began to study the domestic inputs that influence the objectives, means, and effects of a country's international behavior, with examinations of how a country's governmental structure, balance of public opinion, bureaucratic organisation, and civil society affect its foreign relations. Among these are: Melvin Small, *Democracy & Diplomacy: The Impact of Domestic Politics on US Foreign Policy, 1789–1994* (Johns Hopkins University Press: 1994); James D. Fearon, 'Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1:1, pp. 289–313; Michelle R. Garfinkel, 'Domestic Politics and International Conflict', *The American Economic Review*, 84:5 (December 1994), pp. 1294–1309; Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics*

the policy is aimed are not taken into account. It can be argued, however, that our understanding of foreign relations in general – and of the interdependence of International Relations and domestic politics more specifically – is not complete without knowing how the outcome of a state's foreign policies are affected by target states' local politics. Just as understanding the domestic processes that lead to a policy is valuable – effectively relaxing the rational actor assumption – it is useful to understand the internal processes that affect policy outcomes. We know, practically, that all states – great powers included – often are unable to influence even the weakest states, but we have difficulty explaining this with traditional systemic or even domestic-level theories. Looking at target states' internal dynamics, however, offers useful insights into how those filter external powers' efforts at influence.

Distributive domestic response

Distributive domestic response refers to the filter effect caused by competing local actors influencing the outcome of a foreign policy. The effects of distributive domestic response are evident across the full range of foreign policy goals, including external attempts to influence states' foreign policies as well as efforts to affect their domestic politics (structure, development, or focus). Local politics can slow, block, or pervert altruistic efforts like humanitarian operations, disaster relief, development projects, nation-building, peacekeeping, and democratisation. They can affect policies aimed at cooperating to achieve mutual interests, such as combating terrorism and promoting regional security, and they can impinge upon means of influence, from economic sanctions to the threat and/or use of force. No foreign policy, regardless of intent, is immune to the effects of internal politics; a policy's success will depend to at least some extent – and sometimes entirely – on how the many actors within the country at which it is directed respond. It

and Foreign Policy (Brookings Institution Press, 1974); Kevin H. Wang, 'Presidential Responses to Foreign Policy: Rational Choice and Domestic Politics', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 40:1 (March 1996), pp. 68–97; Alastair Smith, 'International Crises and Domestic Politics', *American Political Science Review*, 92:3 (September 1998), pp. 623–38; David Lumsdaine, 'The Intertwining of International and Domestic Politics', *Polity*, 29:2 (Winter 1996), pp. 299–306. For some excellent work on the role of domestic politics in the making of foreign policy, see, Helen V. Milner, *Interests, Institutions and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations* (Princeton University Press, 1997); Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games', *International Organization*, 42:3 (Summer 1988), pp. 427–60; Peter B. Evans, Harold K. Jacobson, and Robert D. Putnam (eds), *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993); Randall L. Schweller, 'Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In', *International Security*, 19:1 (Summer 1994), pp. 72–107; Brian M. Pollins and Randall L. Schweller, 'Linking the Levels: The Long Wave and Shifts in US Foreign Policy, 1790–1993', *American Journal of Political Science*, 43:2 (April 1999), pp. 431–64; Patrick M. Regan, 'Substituting Policies During US Interventions in Internal Conflicts: A Little of This, A Little of That', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44:1 (February 2000), pp. 90–106; Patrick M. Regan, 'Conditions of Successful Third-Party Intervention in Intrastate Conflicts', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 40:2 (June 1996), pp. 336–59; Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Robert Keohane and Helen Milner, 'Internationalization and Domestic Politics', in Keohane and Milner (eds), *Internationalization and Domestic Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 3–24; Beth A. Simmons, *Who Adjusts? Domestic Sources of Foreign Economic Policy during the Interwar Years 1923–1939* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

is important to note that distributive domestic response can be deliberate, unintentional, or a combination of the two.

This is not consistent with how theorists and observers usually portray countries' responses to external actors' policies. More often than not, they describe states' actions as rational expressions of their national interest, which is compatible with the rationalist assumptions Graham Allison describes in his article, 'Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis'.⁶ Allison notes that most analysts apply the 'rational policy model', in which it is assumed that national governments' actions are purposeful and calculated responses to strategic problems. Using this model, we would expect both rational policies and rational responses to policies. In other words, 'governments select the action that will maximize strategic goals and objectives'.⁷ This model applies equally to policy-initiating and policy-receiving countries. Indeed, if one presumes a cycle of action, reaction, and reaction, and so forth, it becomes impossible to distinguish between the two.

And yet, Allison presents the rational policy model critically, providing evidence and analysis to demonstrate that policy in the US actually is the product of organisational processes and, perhaps most importantly, bureaucratic politics. He reveals how these reductivist approaches yield valuable insights into the policy-making process. Allison's observations are focused on US foreign policy and the specifics of the organisational process and bureaucratic politics models are unique to the American political structure. Nonetheless, the utility of examining domestic level political dynamics is evident when considering the other side of International Relations: policy responses.

Just as policies are products of domestic processes within the policy-producing countries, responses – and foreign policy outcomes more generally – are the result of domestic processes within target countries. To facilitate predictions, or even understanding, of how domestic structures and politics will influence foreign policy outcomes, it is useful to develop a model of the characteristics within target states that are most likely to filter foreign policies' effects. The distributive domestic response model used here employs concepts familiar from international level analysis. For example, we can assume that domestic political actors are seeking to ensure their own relative influence and the protection of their interests. When a foreign policy is introduced, local actors will weigh whether or not it is in their benefit and whether or not it provides them with an opportunity for relative gains in domestic influence and authority. Those who are unaffected or see no political gains to be made from taking a stand on the issue will be disinterested in the policy. But those who are affected by the policy and/or consider it an instrument for drawing attention and perhaps increasing their own relative influence will seek to coopt it. Which of these actors will wield influence – and how much influence they will have – will depend on the nature of the state's political system, its stability, and the number and relative power of political actors engaged on any particular issue.

Domestic political systems can be broadly cast as democratic, authoritarian, or anarchic. In democracies, political influence is shared by and across political

⁶ Graham T. Allison, 'Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis', *The American Political Science Review*, 63:3 (September 1969), pp. 689–718.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 694.

parties, governmental branches, special interests, and civil society, and the system is carefully structured to balance these various actors' interests and power. In authoritarian systems, political power resides with a single leader, an oligarchy, or a party. Civil society is usually excluded. There is little overt competition for influence, though there will always be behind-the-scenes jockeying for power within the ruling faction. The military may or may not be influential; it might be adequately compensated so that it simply does the bidding of the rulers (as is apparently the case in North Korea) or it might itself rule (as in Burma). In failed states, there is no functioning government or national authority. Factions, parties, tribes, criminal organisations, drug cartels, warlords, or other identity groups seize and control territory and then compete violently for resources and the population while seeking territorial and resource gains. Failed states are perfect microcosms of the anarchic international system as Hobbes saw it: brutish and nasty.

Which of these systems is in place will in part determine the nature of a target state's response to a foreign policy. In a democratic system, the response will be mediated by the political structures in fairly predictable ways. In an authoritarian system, the processes leading to the outcome will be less transparent and the policy-producing country will be less certain about which domestic actors will be most influential. In a failed state, where the competition for power and control is very fluid, immediate, and chaotic, anticipating how a policy will be received and how it will play out is extraordinarily challenging.

Another way to differentiate between domestic systems is in terms of stability. Democratic and authoritarian states have different means of providing stability. In the former, stability occurs when the existing political structures create enough opportunities for voice and influence to satisfy opposition groups; in the latter, opposition is simply quashed. In both cases, the effect is predictability. Systems are destabilised when the opposition becomes an existential threat to the existing government. In democratic and authoritarian states, instability occurs when governmental or non-governmental opposition groups seek – and have the potential – to overthrow the political structure. In a failed state, where the government has collapsed, instability is a given as factions compete for control. In terms of the effects on foreign policies' outcomes, stable states will clearly be more predictable than will unstable countries. Moreover, if a foreign policy is perceived as being able to affect the relative balance of power among domestic actors, then it is more likely to be coopted and/or seriously challenged in an unstable state, with unpredictable effects not only on the policy's outcome, but potentially on the local balance of power, with broad repercussions not only in the target state, but for the interests of the policymaking state, as well.

The third element we can borrow from international analysis is the terminology related to the numbers of actors. We can think of the domestic actors responding to a foreign policy in terms of polarity: unipolar (authoritarian with no strong opposition or, in a democracy, an unopposed political actor), bipolar (only two actors have the potential to affect the outcome of a foreign policy), and multi-polar (three or more political players are affected by and likely to respond to a given foreign policy). Each of these has different implications to be taken into account by a policy-producing country. A unipolar response, whether it is acceptance, opposition, or disinterest, is relatively simply dealt with. At least the terms are clear. A bipolar response creates both challenges and opportunities. On the one

Variables

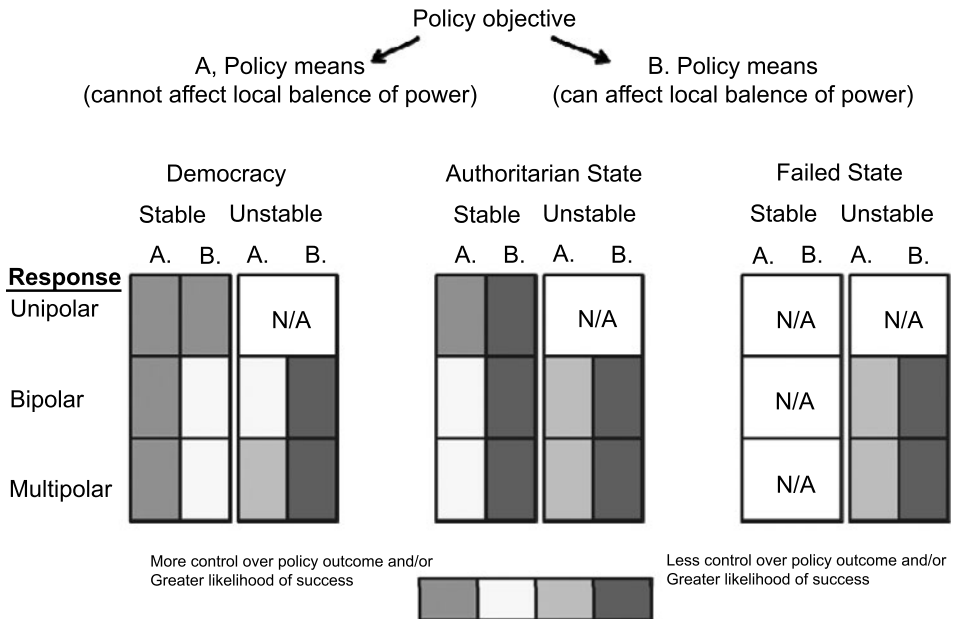


Figure 1.

hand, a foreign policy can destabilise a balance of power between two relatively equal actors; on the other, it can be used to deliberately play one against the other for the interests of the policymaking state, assuming the two have different responses to the foreign policy. A multi-polar response is the most complex and the local balance of power among the actors will be important in determining which among them can affect a policy outcome and in what ways.

Although these three target-state characteristics help indicate circumstances under which foreign policies are more likely to go awry, the one last but important variable is the nature of the foreign policy itself. If the policy is perceived by relevant and powerful enough domestic actors to be a threat to their relative power – politically or literally – they will likely coopt, oppose or undermine the policy. On the other hand, if powerful local actors believe the policy will benefit them in terms of their relative domestic power, they might well ensure that it is carried through (as the Northern Alliance did in Afghanistan when it supported the US effort to overthrow the Taliban immediately after 9/11), though in doing so they may change the local balance of power in ways ultimately contradictory to the initiating country’s interests. These various factors with the potential to affect a foreign policy’s outcome are depicted graphically in Figure 1.

As the figure illustrates, the political systems variable represents transparency at the very least and, under the best of circumstances, enhanced trust and communication between similar systems. The policy filter in democracies is more readily anticipated, understood, and adjusted for than that in authoritarian or failed states. The actors are known, their relationships are clearly delineated by the political

structure, and their relative influence is fairly clear. Authoritarian states are opaque, in contrast, with their internal machinations hidden from external actors. And failed states involve such a jumble of actors, such shifting dynamics, that trying to develop a clear picture of the local power structure or the nature of politics is nearly impossible. Stability as a variable represents the level of local competition for power, and whether it is controlled or existential. The nature of control, if it exists, is related to political system (opposition will be channelled into constructive politics in a democratic structure or simply quashed under an authoritarian regime), but instability as used here represents the rise of opposition with the potential to overthrow the existing political order – or the aftermath, where there simply is no system of governance, as in a failed state. It is with this variable that the nature of the foreign policy – whether it can upset the local balance of power – most resonates. Where there is stability, the nature of the policy itself will be less significant; where there is instability, however, the introduction of a policy that could shift domestic power from one actor to another becomes more important. Under such circumstances, the policy is much more likely to be coopted and/or violently opposed. Finally, the balance of power among relevant domestic actors on any given issue represents the complexity of the policy response and the predictability of the outcome; the more actors involved, the more distributed the response, the less predictable the policy outcome and the more difficult for the policy-producing country to control it.

Implications

Being able to anticipate when it will be challenging for a policy-initiating country to control the implementation of a foreign policy is only half the battle. Understanding how to adjust policies for varying types of filters is equally important. Consistent with the Democratic Peace Theory,⁸ the distributive domestic response model suggests that successfully implementing foreign policy in a stable democracy will be less challenging than in an authoritarian or a failed state, because of greater transparency but also, when the policy-initiating state is a democracy as well, because of shared values and interests and enhanced communication. Yet even in a democracy, indeed even in a stable democracy, and even if the policy-initiating state is also a democracy, if the introduction of a foreign policy can upset the balance of power among local political actors, one or more of them may seek to either coopt or undermine the policy. For example, when, in February 2005, the US government sought Canadian participation in its Ballistic Missile Defense programme, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, who had been deeply supportive of Canadian involvement during his campaign, nonetheless rejected the Americans' overtures for fear that his minority government would be brought down over the issue. Although this rebuff undermined US-Canadian relations, and although the Americans had every reason to believe that the Prime Minister was in favour of Canadian involvement,

⁸ *Ways of War and Peace*, Michael W. Doyle (New York: W. W. Norton), 1997; Charles Lipson, *Reliable Partners: How Democracies Have Made a Separate Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); R. J. Rummel, *Power Kills: Democracy As a Method of Nonviolence* (Somerset, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003).

Canadian domestic politics – specifically, the likelihood that accepting the proposal would empower the opposition enough to lead to a change in government – forced rejection of the American proposal.⁹ The US policy means in this case, a simple request for cooperation, created a political opportunity for the opposition to differentiate itself from the Prime Minister. In the model used here, this case would have fallen into Democracy column, on the Stable side, on the Bipolar row (because those Canadian politicians with influence fell into very clear-cut pro and con categories), in the ‘B’ column (representing a foreign policy that can affect a local balance of power). As such, it would be classified as presenting some challenge to success and allowing less initiating-country control over the policy’s outcome. In this case, the Americans had every reason to know who did and did not support the policy, would have understood the Canadian government’s political dynamics and likely anticipated some strong opposition to the proposal, but they ultimately underestimated the Prime Minister’s political weakness. What might the Americans have done differently? A public relations push in Canada in support of missile defence might have helped, or perhaps employing more vigorous diplomacy with politicians across the political spectrum or promising economic or political incentives for cooperation. In any event, absent efforts to contain the filter effect, the US policy was scuttled by Canadian domestic politics in a way that the model would have predicted.

If foreign policy can be scuttled by local politics even in a stable democracy, what hope then for efforts in unstable states or in authoritarian countries with little transparency and ongoing jockeying for power to one degree or another within the regime itself? The first step in retaining control is anticipating the filter. All too often policy is made on the basis of domestic politics in the initiating country, with little thought to the politics in the target country.¹⁰ Clearly there is general recognition on a practical level that target states’ domestic politics will affect the outcome of a policy, but experience shows that policies nonetheless frequently are made without taking target states’ domestic politics into account. In the worst cases, policies are rooted in ideology or crude assumptions (for example, ‘axis of evil’) rather than in a strong sense of either the producing or target state’s interests and politics. More frequently, policies are the product of bargaining and negotiation among stakeholders in the policy-producing country, focused on specific interests rather than broader national interests in the target country and not attuned to the target country’s domestic politics. Consider, for example, the long list of bilateral economic sanctions placed on countries since the end of the Cold War.¹¹ Sanctions have been demonstrated to be ineffective precisely because of the conditions in the target countries. Politics in sanctioned countries are usually

⁹ Kim Richard Nossal, ‘Defense Policy and the Atmospherics of Canada-US Relations; The Case of the Harper Conservatives’, *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 7:1 (Spring 2007).

¹⁰ For a few examples of analysis of the effects of American domestic politics on US foreign policy, see, Will H. Moore and David J. Lanoue, ‘Domestic Politics and US Foreign Policy: A Study of Cold War Conflict Behavior’, *The Journal of Politics*, 65:2 (May, 2003), pp. 376–96; Vinod K. Aggarwal, Robert O. Keohane and David B. Yoffie, ‘The Dynamics of Negotiated Protectionism’, *The American Political Science Review*, 81:2 (June 1987), pp. 345–66; Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s World Role* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 1998; Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, ‘Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations’, *International Organization*, 50:1 (Winter 1996), pp. 109–39.

¹¹ Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Kimberley Ann Elliot, Jeffrey J. Schott, Barbara Oegg (ed.), *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, 3rd edition (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute), 2007.

dominated by a single authority that suppresses opposition and sees sanctions as an opportunity to further strengthen itself at a cost to its constituents (in the model, it is the Authoritarian State column, the Stable side, the Unipolar row, and the 'B' column, representing a strong authoritarian government taking advantage of a policy with the potential to affect the local balance of power). And yet despite their lack of success, sanctions are imposed, strengthened, and renewed time and again because they are symbolic, cheap, and easy to agree on. To better commit to a policy's successful outcome, the policymaking dynamic must change. When bargaining over policy objectives and means, the means element should take into account the effect of distributive domestic response.

The next step is collecting intelligence and information to ensure that policymakers are working with an adequate understanding of local politics in the target state, some familiarity with the key actors and the power dynamics among them. An essential element of this part of the process is anticipating the local political effects of working with the various actors. Does foreign recognition shift the domestic balance in favour of an actor and, if so, does that work in the policy-initiating country's interests? Is it possible to effectively play one actor against another or others in order to secure a policy's success? What are the broader repercussions of such an effort? In other words, policymakers need to know how to work with the local actors to ensure the attainment of their policy objective – and of their broader agenda in the country. These two things, by the way, might prove to be mutually incompatible, in which case policymakers need to rethink their means, if not their objective itself.

A stark example in which this step was not taken was the US-led effort to protect the provision of humanitarian assistance in Somalia in the 1990s. When American troops first hit the ground in that country, neither they nor US policymakers (nor, to be fair, the various non-governmental organisations attempting to provide emergency relief) understood the famine as a by-product of the deadly competition between Somali warlords for control of Mogadishu. The various international actors realised far too late that the relief supplies they were infusing into the country – and, in fact, their very presence – were serving to exacerbate the conflict as each of the competing factions sought to coopt, steal, extort, or otherwise profit from the foreigners' being there with resources. Had there been recognition of the vicious local conflict prior to the policy decision to support humanitarian activities in that country, the US and its partners would have realised that the policy as it stood would not work; either the foreign military presence would have had to be stepped up to provide real protection to the population and effective control over the distribution of aid or it would have had to be scaled back to reduce the foreign 'footprint' in the country, thus making it less possible for the Somali factions to control the influx of resources. Either approach would have reflected an understanding that foreign involvement would be perceived as both a threat and an opportunity by the local competitors. Choosing between the two would have involved, early in the process and before the commitment of lives and treasure, consideration of the real options, given the local politics, and the costs and benefits of each.

Third, policymakers need a sense of what kinds of issues are more or less likely to be sidetracked when they are seen as opportunities for aggrandisement (or as threats) by local political players. Clearly, any foreign policy is susceptible to the

effects of local political competition, but there will be some kinds of policies and some policy issues that will be more vulnerable than others. As in the example above, for instance, any direct infusion of resources (food, arms, medical equipment, and so forth) or financial aid or investment has the potential to upset the local balance of power. The same is true of policies that acknowledge or legitimise selected actors or factions. These will inevitably alienate opposing actors or groups – the political effects will vary depending on the distribution of power among the players. Knowing which issues are most likely to be filtered through a target state's domestic competition is thus an important element of foreign policymaking.

But what if a policy-initiating state simply does not have adequate intelligence or information on target states' domestic political actors or if it is unclear how a policy will be received? Using the model, barring some exceptional intelligence work or unique insights into a country, this would likely be the case in authoritarian states with any level of internal opposition and in failed states in general. In such cases, the policy-producing country will have to take several steps to ensure not only the success of its policy (or at least its retention of control over the policy), but also the protection of its broader interests in the target state. Thus, for example, the policy-producing state would have to remain flexible, constantly monitoring the effects of its policy as best as possible and being willing and prepared to stop, adjust, or even abandon as necessary. The policy-producing state would also do well, in such cases, to have a dossier of several potential strategies, so that, in the event one failed, another could be substituted. This would require intensive internal governmental coordination to ensure that all possible instruments of policy could be brought to bear in as sensitive and specific a way as possible. This, in turn, would require significant work within the policy-producing country to ensure that the public would allow such flexibility. A policy judged too quickly to be a failure or censured for being too changeable could die domestically, within the policy-initiating country itself, before being given an adequate chance to survive in the target country.

Pakistan

The Government of Pakistan continues to demonstrate its commitment to cooperating with US counterterrorism efforts and has successfully aided our efforts in a number of important areas. Pakistan has developed, with US support, a multi-pronged strategy to strengthen governance, promote economic development and improve security, which is aimed at reducing extremism and thereby eliminating the Taliban presence in areas bordering Afghanistan.¹²

The above quote, from a 2007 official Bush administration statement, reflects an optimistic view of Pakistani-American cooperation in combating terrorism within Pakistan's borders and in the region more generally. And yet, such cooperation, though ongoing several years later, has been severely hindered by Pakistan's domestic instability. US policy in Pakistan offers the opportunity to take a

¹² 'Statement of Administration Policy : *H.R. 1 – Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007*', Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget (9 January 2007), p. 6, {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/sap/110-1/hr1sap-h.pdf>}.

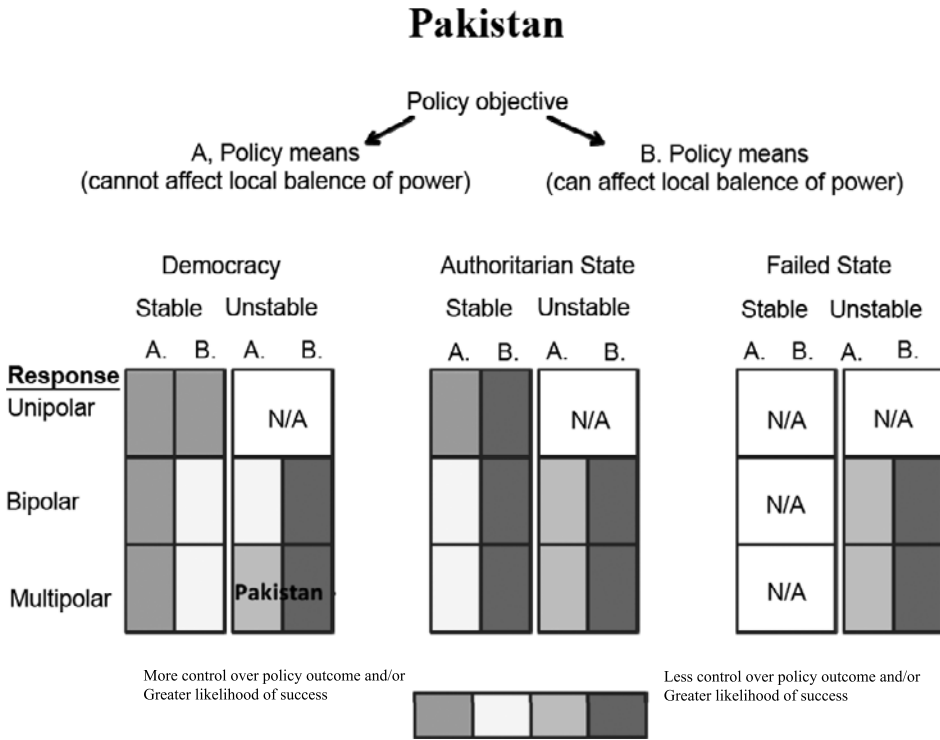


Figure 2.

revealing look at distributive domestic response as it applies in a single example. Using the distributive domestic response model, Pakistan would fit in the bottom left-hand quadrants of the Democracy column, indicating that it is an unstable democracy with multiple actors seeking control over domestic power. These local players are likely to attempt to influence the implementation of any foreign action in their own favour, making Pakistan a challenging place for external actors to control their policies and ensure their effectiveness (see Figure 2).

Washington views Pakistan [...] as an important component of American policy toward Afghanistan. But Pakistan is an extraordinarily frail ally – an impoverished nation with a history of political separatism and instability, governed precariously by a military strongman who faces mounting domestic opposition. The last point was underscored [...] when massive anti-government crowds greeted the return from exile of Benazir Bhutto [...] Pakistan seems destined for yet another period of acrimonious confrontation and domestic turmoil. By placing so much reliance on a weak and unstable ally, the US risks the collapse of its entire South Asian policy.¹³

Just as the previous quote illustrates optimism about Pakistan’s potential as an ally, the quote above should serve as a caution. Although it could have been ripped from the headlines in 2007, it was actually written 20 years earlier when the military strongman in question was Zia ul-Haq, not Pervez Musharraf. The instability in Pakistan today will not readily abate. It has characterised Pakistani politics from

¹³ Ted Galen Carpenter, ‘A Fortress Built on Quicksand: US Policy Toward Pakistan’, *Policy Analysis*, 80 (5 January 1987), {http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=946}.

the outset. Indeed, despite a strong popular desire for democratic rule, since Pakistan's establishment in 1947, political control has alternated between civilian governments and military control. Martial law has been imposed three times, not including the state of emergency under former President Musharraf.¹⁴ Each national leader has stepped forward claiming that he or she could curb the rampant corruption, reinstate effective governmental institutions, and put democracy on more solid footing, even if it took, in the short term, a strengthened governmental hand. Yet most of these erstwhile reformers took measures to consolidate their own control over the economy and political institutions. Two things were evident in this cycle. On the one hand, each corrupted leader paid lip service to the value of a functioning democracy and each eventually was turned out electorally or deposed. This demonstrates the constant pressure for popular rule and the country's unwillingness to settle for long-standing autocratic leadership. On the other hand, the frequent changes in government were really just a few well-known actors trading places time and again. Consider Bhutto's and Sharif's multiple terms as prime minister, for example, or that three Chiefs of Army Staff have run the country. These were not shifts in control to new political players. In fact, until recently, Pakistan's government has been predictably unstable as a known cast of characters reluctantly hand authority back and forth among themselves.

This political dynamic has been a product of the confluence of the Pakistani government's structure, the duelling pressures for socialism and capitalism, globalisation butting up against conservative Islam, civilian and Army competition for authority, and the feudal, distributive nature of Pakistan's political culture in which a few prominent families and their supporters competed fairly fluidly for control, aligning and realigning as each seek relative political advantage.¹⁵ The structure cannot effectively mediate, represent, and satisfy the variety and disparity of political interests, actors, agendas and demands, but it never really has had to, as long as either the Army or the aristocracy retained control. All of that has begun to change, however. Although the newest government is led by Benazir Bhutto's widower Asif Ali Zardari, maintaining the pattern of shifting political power between the army and the key political parties, new political actors now are on the scene, creating even greater instability than existed in the past and presenting new options for internal alliances as the various players jockey for influence. Among the competitors for political power have always been the military, the intelligence services, the country's many political parties and, to some extent, regional authorities (including tribal leaders). These last, however, have gained more prominence with the rise, in their territories, of the newest and most destabilising players on Pakistan's political scene: the Afghan Taliban, the nascent Pakistani Taliban,¹⁶ and *Al-Qaeda*.¹⁷

¹⁴ For a good, very brief history of Pakistan, see M. Ilyas Khan, 'Pakistan's Circular History', *BBC News* (11 August 2007), {http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6940148.stm}; for a more in-depth look, see 'Pakistan: Country Study', Library of Congress – Federal Research Division, {<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pktoc.html>}.

¹⁵ For an excellent overview of Pakistan's politics, see, John R. Schmidt, 'The Unraveling of Pakistan', *Survival*, 51:3 (June–July 2009), pp. 29–54.

¹⁶ 'Q+A: Who are the Pakistani Taliban Insurgents?', Reuters (15 June 2009), {<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE55E0KV20090615>}.

¹⁷ C. Christine Fair, 'US-Pakistan Relations: Assassination, Instability, and the Future of US Policy', Testimony presented before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, on 16 January 2008.

Thus, although this most recent transition from Musharraf's military rule to civilian governance under a familiar leader seems in keeping with previous political dynamics, the addition of the Islamic extremists, the rise of tribal militias to fight them, and the involvement of *Al-Qaeda* have elevated the usual instability in Pakistan to powder-keg proportions, leading to both domestic and international concern about the ability of Pakistan's government to withstand the extremists' challenge, a concern further heightened by Pakistan's nuclear weapons. In a December 2007 interview, when asked about the nuclear threat Pakistan might pose to the international community, scholar George Perkovich surprised his interviewer by responding that he had few concerns about the nuclear threat, given the generals' expertise and focus on nuclear issues: 'What I've been worried about for years has not been Pakistan's nuclear weapons at all; it's been the domestic situation in Pakistan, the growing political violence in Pakistan [...] that's the real worry [...] it's not nuclear weapons, it's the future of politics in Pakistan.'¹⁸

Intensified American involvement in Pakistan has occurred in tandem with the spread of extremists from Afghanistan and the rise of militant groups. Whereas the US policy towards Pakistan was inconsistent in the past, concerns about the spread of terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and the failing war in Afghanistan have refocused US attention.¹⁹ Yet Americans have not been sure how best to deal with Pakistan. Their policy goals (since 9/11) have been clear: promote political and economic development and human rights, ease tensions with India (especially over Kashmir), combat regional and international terrorism, prevent nuclear proliferation, and work with Pakistan to win the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.²⁰ To these ends, the US has employed a variety of means. During the Bush administration, it developed close diplomatic relations with President Musharraf; provided the government with more than \$10 billion in assistance between the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and Musharraf's resignation; sent American troops to train Pakistani soldiers in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism techniques; and agreed to the sale of high-profile military systems, notably F-16 aircraft. The

¹⁸ K. Alan Kronstadt, 'Pakistan-US Relations', CRS Report for Congress, updated 6 February 2009, Order Code RL33498; 'The National Security Strategy of the US of America', The White House (March 2006), p. 39.

¹⁹ George Perkovich, interview, Day to Day, National Public Radio (28 December 2007).

²⁰ US policy towards Pakistan in the past was more a function of US interests in other countries in the region than in Pakistan itself. American support for Afghanistan's Mujahideen in their war against the Soviets, in particular, led to US complicity with the Pakistani military and intelligence organisations as they provided assistance to the Afghan fighters. Though the US had supported Pakistan's military during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Americans were deeply concerned about the country's nuclear aspirations. In 1985, Congress passed legislation requiring annual proof that Pakistan had no nuclear weapons for the fiscal year in which aid would be provided. In 1990, the US began a process of disengagement from Afghanistan and Pakistan that to this day rankles Pakistanis. That year, President Bush suspended aid and the US decided not to deliver F-16 fighter aircraft that the Pakistanis had bought in 1989. US sanctions were again imposed in 1998 after Pakistan's nuclear test and in 1999 after the coup that brought General Pervez Musharraf to power. After 9/11, however, the US relaxed many of the sanctions against Pakistan and began working with Musharraf – and supporting him politically – as part of the US strategy in the War on Terror. The Americans supported Musharraf up until it was clear that he could not survive politically and then pressured him to resign. Very recently, on 20 May 2009, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton admitted in a press conference that American policy towards Pakistan has been 'incoherent': 'US Past Pakistan Policy Incoherent, Says Hillary', *The Hindu* (21 May 2009), {<http://www.thehindu.com/2009/05/21/stories/20090521160851900.htm>}.

US also, in ‘the spirit of democracy’,²¹ strongly enjoined Musharraf to give up his position as Army Chief and encouraged cooperation between him and the opposition parties who won the February 2008 legislative elections. After Musharraf’s resignation, it appeared that the Bush administration was focusing on relations with his successor as Chief of Army Staff, Ashfaq Parvez Kayani.²² Since President Obama’s election, the US has appointed a Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, shifted diplomatic attention to President Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani (as well as opposition leader, Nawaz Sharif), met quietly with Kayani, increased conditionality on military aid, intensified economic development and programmes intended to improve the general quality of life in the country and significantly increased non-military assistance, apologised for past American ‘incoherence’ in policy, and escalated drone attacks against the Taliban.²³

The distributive domestic response model would lead us to ask very specific questions in assessing the likely success of these US policies. How have these methods been received in Pakistan? On each issue, who are the key actors (those who wield influence), what are their objectives, and how do American policies play into – or undermine – them? Finally, how can the Americans adjust their policies in light of this domestic filter, if need be, to ensure that they retain control over them and, ideally, attain their objectives?

Political development

With regard to democratisation, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace analyst Josh Kurlantzick describes the situation pessimistically:

[. . .] years of a political vacuum under Musharraf meant that young Pakistani democrats, exactly the type of people the country needs to escape its feudal past, could not organize or build grassroots movements. When Musharraf finally agreed to allow greater political freedoms this year, the only politicians who could move into the vacuum were two feudal dinosaurs, former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. Neither are paragons

²¹ ‘Pakistan: Is a Coup in the Wings?’ Farhan Bokhari, *CBS News* (15 March 2009), {<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/03/15/world/main4866701.shtml>}.

²² Qudssia Akhlaque, ‘US Wants Civilian Rule: Boucher: Need for Free, Fair Polls Stressed’, *Dawn* (6 April 2006), {<http://www.dawn.com/2006/04/06/top1.htm>}.

²³ Working closely with Kayani made sense in many ways. A graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College, Kayani already had established relationships with some prominent American military leaders. Also, the Pakistani army traditionally has played a strong role in Pakistani politics, especially when the civilian governments have faltered; working with Kayani would presumably provide the US with, at the very least, some transparency, hopefully an ‘in’ in the event of a coup, and, at best, the opportunity to promote good governance with a strong ally who could exert leverage over the civilian actors. The downside, obviously, was establishing another alliance with an army leader immediately after the failure of Musharraf and the bad impression left in Pakistan of the US’s willingness to support a dictator if doing so would protect its interests. David Rohde and Carlotta Gall, ‘In Musharraf’s Shadow, A New Hope for Pakistan Rises’, *The New York Times* (7 January 2008), {<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/07/world/asia/07kayani.html>}; Yochi J. Dreazen and Matthew Rosenberg, ‘Army Chiefs’ Bond Bolsters US Hopes in Pakistan’, *The Wall Street Journal* (21 March 2009), {<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123759845485301419.html>}; Eric Schmitt, ‘Army Chief in Pakistan Wins Honor from US’, *The New York Times* (2 April 2008), {http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/02/washington/02policy.html?_r=1&sq=army%20chief%20in%20pakistan&st=nyt&adxnll=1&scp=1&adxnllx=1207224188-e8mBn0CA9VgrF8JFY8ktdQ&oref=slogin}.

of democracy: Under Bhutto, Pakistan suffered an endemic [stet] of extrajudicial executions and torture, while Sharif was dismissed as prime minister for alleged massive corruption.²⁴

Since that assessment, Bhutto was assassinated, the country became engulfed in violent and deadly turmoil in the last months of 2007, and Musharraf resigned. The alliance of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the parties of Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif respectively, came together to push Musharraf from power, but fell apart soon after his resignation, with the PML-N withdrawing from the coalition. Bhutto's widower Asif Ali Zardari became president and Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, also from the PPP, became Prime Minister. In February 2008, the Supreme Court banned Nawaz Sharif and his brother, both leaders in the opposition PML-N party, from running for office. Sharif accused Zardari of orchestrating the move. Then, in May 2009, the Supreme Court reversed itself and reinstated the Sharif brothers as legitimate candidates. In the course of these few months, Zardari's popularity declined precipitously. New elections are not due until 2013, but the fact that the same old players from the PPP and the PML-N have reasserted themselves in Pakistan's government and have already manipulated governmental institutions in their competition for control leaves little reason for hope for a new and improved civilian governance.

Given Pakistan's history, there is clearly some concern among observers that the Army will step in as it has done in the past to assert order,²⁵ though in the aftermath of Musharraf's rule, the Army is extremely unpopular among the Pakistani public and, to date, General Kayani appears to be supporting the civilian government. Indeed, in May 2009, when tensions between Zardari and Sharif came to a stand-off over the leadership of Sharif's home province, Punjab, and over the reinstatement of Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry, the Supreme Court Chief Justice fired by Musharraf in 2007, Kayani brokered an agreement between the two political leaders.²⁶

Just as civilians were reasserting fragile command over the national government, they were faced with tremendous challenges in the north-western Swat district and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). In Spring 2009, the government made a major concession to the Islamic extremists in Swat by allowing the imposition of *Shari'a* law in the district. The agreement soon broke down, but not before Taliban forces had further consolidated their control of that area. Now the Pakistani government has stepped up its military offensive against the Pakistani Taliban.

These politics, unfortunately, are typical for Pakistan. Civilian leaders time and again have used the military in their own partisan battles while allowing themselves to be used in turn. The motivations of class privilege and militarism, respectively, have led to the suppression of education, elite control of the economy, and the

²⁴ David Montero, 'Pakistan Drone Attacks to Intensify, Obama Officials Say', *Christian Science Monitor* (8 April 2009), {<http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0408/p99s01-duts.html>}.

²⁵ Josh Kurlantzick, 'Time's Up: The US Needs to Abandon Musharraf Today', *The New Republic* (5 November 2007), {<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=print&id=19693>}.

²⁶ That the situation had come to the brink of a military coup, however, is probable. US Special Representative Richard Holbrooke and other British and American diplomats reportedly worked very hard with Kayani, Zardari, and Sharif to prevent a military takeover. 'General Ashfaq Kayani Pushes Feuding Leaders Close to a Deal', Zahid Hussain and Jeremy Page, *The Times* (14 March 2009), {<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5904413.ece>}.

preclusion of democratic practices.²⁷ As is evident from the short history above, ultimately, a small coterie competes within itself for influence and advantage, but never enough to allow those (or their assets) to devolve to the population more generally. In the face of these dynamics, US efforts to promote democracy in Pakistan have been unsuccessful. Although in the very short term, US ties to General Kayani may be leveraged to prevent a military takeover, the cyclical nature of Pakistan's politics – not to mention the inherent instability of a civilian political system rooted in infighting and nepotism – suggests that the civilians will likely fail and the military, the only stable institution in the country, will likely reassert control.

The challenges in promoting democracy today are made worse by the Americans' previous dealings with Pakistan, in which American priorities were not always consistent with democratisation in that country. Whether it was using the country as a bulwark against the Soviets or as a foothold in South Asia, the US has not hesitated to support military governments. The Americans provided military and financial assistance to General Zia when he ran the country; they supported Musharraf up until the bitter end, when it became clear that he could no longer hold on. Under Musharraf, American aid to Pakistan was 'not money intended to transform the nature of the Pakistani state or society or to strengthen Pakistan's internal stability. In effect, it [was] politically determined assistance, a "thank you" to Musharraf's regime for the critical role Pakistan has played in Operation Enduring Freedom.'²⁸ Americans' priorities have been obvious to the Pakistan public and to the civilian leaders; a US emphasis on democratisation, therefore, is perceived as a short-term American political expedient at best and as hypocrisy at worst. In other words, US efforts to promote democracy in Pakistan are generally understood in terms of America's longer history with the country and its behaviour as a realist power seeking its own interests.

Local actors – civilian and military – have observed over time that the American efforts to promote democracy are secondary to American interests in counter-terrorism, stability in Afghanistan, and the prevention of war between Pakistan and India. It is in these realms, therefore, that domestic players are more likely to be responsive to American requests and suggestions, since it is in these realms that they will be more rewarded for their behaviour. Moreover, even if the US democratisation efforts were long-established and perceived as genuine, Pakistan's established political cycle – rooted in feudalism and militarism – leaves little room for American influence. There are no viable alternatives to the PPP and PML-N and their compromised leaders other than the military – and that has not proven to be a force for democratisation in the past. Under these circumstances, the Americans' half-hearted efforts – greater conditions on military assistance, cultural exchanges, and promised new resources for the provinces most embattled by extremists – simply have nowhere to gain traction.

The somewhat feeble pressure for improved governance could well reflect Americans' appreciation for the challenges that a stronger push would involve. The

²⁷ Frédéric Grare 'Rethinking Western Strategies Toward Pakistan: An Action Agenda for the US and Europe', Carnegie Endowment Report (July 2007), {http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/grare_pakistan_final.pdf}.

²⁸ Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, 'When \$10 Billion Is Not Enough: Rethinking US Strategy toward Pakistan', *The Washington Quarterly*, 30:2 (Spring 2007), pp. 7–19.

American policy as it currently stands poses very little threat to any of the political players, but an earnest attempt to democratise Pakistan's government would threaten the elite who have long run the country. If political development remains a secondary US interest in Pakistan, then it makes no sense to rattle the local balance of power. If, however, it is determined that improved governance is a requirement of achieving gains in the US's primary interests – regional stability and counter-terrorism – then the Americans will have to proceed with an understanding that they are in for a very long-term challenge, given how fortified the political system and culture are, and will face strong and likely destabilising resistance.

Counter-terrorism and Afghan stability

[W]hat I want to do is to create the kind of effective, strategic partnership with Pakistan that allows us, in concert, to assure that terrorists are not setting up safe havens in some of these border regions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. So far President Zardari has sent the right signals. He's indicated that he recognizes this is not just a threat to the US, but it is a threat to Pakistan as well [. . .] I think this democratically-elected government understands that threat and I hope that in the coming months that we're going to be able to establish the kind of close, effective, working relationship that makes both countries safer.²⁹

US counter-terrorism efforts in Pakistan are comprised of a variety of diplomatic, economic, and military initiatives, including the provision of training and equipment for the Pakistani military; non-military aid; diplomatic linkage with Afghanistan; and US military direct action.³⁰ Diplomatic initiatives include the revival of a US-Pakistan Defense Consultative Group, a US-Pakistan-Afghanistan Tripartite Commission, and the naming of Richard Holbrooke as Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Economic initiatives include non-military assistance in support of development, education, health, law enforcement, and other quality of life initiatives as well as development initiatives focused specifically on the FATA. Military initiatives include both support (extensive arms sales and grants, training, funding for logistics projects like road-building) for the Pakistani military and direct US military action in the form of drone attacks on Taliban strongholds and, by some accounts, some special forces operations within Pakistan.³¹

Despite all of this effort – and while a 2004 State Department country report included the observation that: 'Pakistan continues to pursue *Al-Qaeda* and its allies aggressively through counterterrorist police measures and large-scale military operations' – *Al-Qaeda* and groups associated with the Taliban not only remain entrenched, but have expanded their training, operations, and fund-raising.³² It is thus reasonable to ask whether or not the intensive US counter-terrorism efforts in Pakistan have resulted in any notable successes.

²⁹ Barack Obama, transcript, 'Meet the Press' (7 December 2008), {<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28097635>}.

³⁰ K. Alan Kronstadt, 'Pakistan-US Relations', CRS Report for Congress, updated 6 February 2009, Order Code RL33498; 'The National Security Strategy of the US of America', The White House (March 2006), p. 49.

³¹ 'Secret Order Lets US Raid *Al-Qaeda* in Many Countries', *New York Times* (10 November 2008).

³² Josh Kurlantzick, 'Time's Up: The US Needs to Abandon Musharraf Today', *The New Republic* (5 November 2007), {<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=print&id=19693>}.

Many of the US policies have the potential to affect the local balance of power. The huge amounts of American money flooding into Pakistan are fungible and hard to control. The arms, intelligence, funds and training going to the military clearly bolster that institution's relative power. They can be diverted to tribal militias and to the Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (ISI) that allegedly has been complicit in supporting militias in Afghanistan or they can, as they also have been, be diverted to Pakistan's own strategic priority, the border with India, in which case, two American objectives are undermined in one blow. The efforts to develop the tribal areas are vulnerable to corruption; the broader development initiatives are too vast to allow for effective American oversight and those monies can easily be channelled into the domestic political competition or simply embezzled.³³ More subtly, even American discussions with political actors can be perceived as influencing domestic politics and thereby lead to backlashes. US efforts to keep opposition leader Nawaz Sharif in the loop, for example, have been perceived as threatening by the PPP and its supporters. The Americans' connection to Kayani, likewise, raises hackles among his civilian opponents, who have called for US reassurance that it does not intend to support a coup. And direct American action on Pakistani territory also feeds into the political competition. The government's adversaries – especially Islamic extremists – decry its complicity in the US encroachment on Pakistani sovereignty and in the civilian casualties that have taken place. The drone attacks thus become a rallying point, stoking nationalism, anti-government backlashes, and recruitment to the extremist groups. Meanwhile, the government, while benefiting from the attacks' effects on the Taliban groups and *Al-Qaeda*, distances itself from the political fall-out by chastising the US in strong rhetorical terms for its lack of respect for Pakistan's borders.

In pursuing a counter-terrorism strategy in Pakistan, the US has been constrained severely by the domestic political situation. While Musharraf still held the reins, the US had no option but to work with him if it wished to combat the Taliban and *Al-Qaeda* within Pakistan's borders. This, despite the obvious hypocrisy of promoting democracy while supporting a dictator, despite the militants' ability to recruit on the basis of American support for the military regime,³⁴ and despite Musharraf's own long-standing ties to the Afghan Taliban³⁵ to whom he offered safe haven³⁶ even as he authorised rigorous (though relatively ineffective) operations against the new Pakistani Taliban and *Al-Qaeda*. And yet, many observers argued that, even if it were necessary to work with Musharraf, steps could have been taken to mitigate the fall-out and to retain some control over

³³ 'US Aid "Failing to Reach Target"', *BBC News* (16 May 2008); 'Doubts Engulf an American Aid Plan for Pakistan', *New York Times* (25 December 2007); 'Pakistan Military "Misspent" Up to 70 per cent of American Aid', *The Guardian* (28 February 2008); 'Combating Terrorism: Increased Oversight and Accountability Needed over Pakistan Reimbursement Claims for Coalition Support Funds', *US General Accounting Office*, GAO-08-806 (June 2008).

³⁴ Samina Ahmed, 'The US and Terrorism in Southwest Asia', *International Security*, 26:3 (Winter 2001/02), p. 90 (pp. 79–93).

³⁵ C. Christine Fair, '*US-Pakistan Relations*', p. 2.

³⁶ Ashley Tellis, 'Pakistan's Mixed Record on Anti-Terrorism', Interview by Bernard Gwertzman, *Council on Foreign Relations* (6 February 2008), <http://www.cfr.org/publication/15424/>; C. Christine Fair, '*US-Pakistan Relations*', p. 2; Ashley Tellis, 'US-Pakistan Relations: Assassination, Instability, and the Future of US Policy', Congressional Testimony, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, Washington, DC (16 January 2008), p. 7.

the policy (and the funds). The fact that this was not done is blamed in large part on the Bush administration. One analyst described the administration's expectations as relying 'upon a number of erroneous assumptions about Pakistan's capabilities', and then called for 'reflection about US expectations and how well [the US] understands the capacities of this important partner'.³⁷ In fact, the Americans did seem slow to adjust to the local political situation, even when it offered an opportunity to conduct more palatable policy. With the elections of February 2008, for example, and the resounding defeat of the Islamist parties in Pakistan, the referendum against Musharraf, and the Pakistani public's clear support for the secularists,³⁸ the US response – very unpopular within Pakistan – was initially to ask the winning parties to work with the then-Chief of Army Staff.³⁹ Retaining the focus on Musharraf, however, was unproductive. No matter how often the US appealed to the shared interests of the Musharraf camp and the Bush camp in fighting extremism, Musharraf's hands were tied by his connections to the Afghan Taliban and the domestic political challenges he faced. Supporting him alienated Pakistan's democrats. Providing fungible funding to him and the military reduced American control over the outcome of their policy.

The Bush administration did recognise that winning against the militants would require playing in the local politics in the contested areas in Pakistan, especially the FATA and Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). In an effort to balance the influence of the militants and to raise support for the central government, the administration proposed the establishment of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) in the FATA and pressured the US Congress to provide an intensive aid plan for the region to promote education, healthcare, and micro-finance enterprises.⁴⁰ Congress, however, concerned about an overall lack of accountability and corruption, killed the ROZ proposal in committee. It did provide generous funding for development in the FATA, although that money has only just begun to trickle into the region years later. Part of the challenge facing the Bush administration was that Pakistan's central government had abdicated responsibility for these territories; bringing it back in, in any effective way, was inimical to the local political authorities and disagreeable to the central government itself.

Upon coming into office, US President Barack Obama faced Pakistan with a new and unstable civilian government and rising extremism. The new American administration explicitly linked resolving the crisis in Afghanistan to dealing with the militants in Pakistan and began implementing diplomatic, economic, and military changes immediately to that end. Drone attacks were escalated, military assistance was given only with conditions, economic assistance was bolstered to more promote development in the most affected areas, and special representative Holbrooke was assigned to the region. The administration also appeared to make a deliberate effort to mitigate the filter effect of distributive domestic response. Administration officials met with all the key local players, including Kayani, Sharif, and Zardari, to avoid leaving the impression that they were strongly backing one

³⁷ C. Christine Fair, 'US-Pakistan Relations', p. 2.

³⁸ Saeed Shah, 'Islamic Fundamentalists Lose Big in Pakistan Vote', McClatchy Newspapers (19 February 2008), {<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/homepage/story/28113.html>}.

³⁹ David Rohde, 'American Embrace of Musharraf Irks Pakistanis', *The New York Times* (29 February 2008), pp. A1, A6.

⁴⁰ K. Alan Kronstadt, 'Pakistan-US Relations', p. 86.

or the other. The conditions placed on military assistance were intended to enhance accountability and control. The enhanced economic assistance reflects an understanding that the extremists are gaining ground in many areas in part because the central government does not provide enough services or have an adequate presence there.

Yet, it is important to note that even such careful efforts to retain control over US policy can nonetheless be filtered, especially in cases where competition is intense, as it is in Pakistan. Thus, despite the Americans' attempt at even-handedness in dealing with each of the key political entities, the US has constantly been put in the position of clarifying its relationship with each. Zardari's camp expressed concern that the Americans were not supporting his government after they met with Sharif; the civilian parties expressed concern that the Americans would support a military coup after they had a meeting with Kiyani. Tensions are so high and competition for power is so intense that whatever steps the Americans take are likely to be misinterpreted. On the upside, however, the lines of communication are remaining open, allowing clarification and even adjustment of the Americans' position as they attempt to work their policies through the confusion and paranoia that permeate Pakistani politics.

Has this openness and effort to respond to and deal with local politics helped the Americans effectively implement their counter-terrorism policy? To the extent that there is cooperation between Pakistan, the US, and Afghanistan, yes. To the extent that the American drones are not being shot down by the Pakistanis, yes. To the extent that the Pakistani military forces are engaging more consistently and more effectively with the militants, yes. How much of this admittedly minor progress is due to the Americans' deliberate mitigation of the filter effect is open to debate. The Pakistani population is turning against the militants, which gives the national government more incentive and more freedom to pursue counter-terrorist operations. This, coupled with the clear threat the militants pose to all of the traditional power players in Pakistan, could be enough to explain the minor improvements in counter-terrorism that are taking place. Nonetheless, the Americans have positioned themselves to take advantage of these changes.

Counter-proliferation

Counter-proliferation is unique among the US policy objectives in that there does not appear to be significant internal competition on the issue nor is there much opportunity for relative gains from US policy. In this case, the domestic response is unilateral insofar as it is unified, with both civilian and military leaders intent on preventing the re-emergence of a proliferation network like that of A. Q. Khan. There is no private sector involvement in the nuclear field in Pakistan, and the government controls all of the sensitive materials about which there are proliferation concerns.⁴¹

⁴¹ 'Pakistan's Nuclear Oversight Reforms', ch. 5 in *Nuclear Black Markets: Pakistan, A. Q. Khan and the Rise of Proliferation Networks*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, {<http://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-dossiers/nbm/nuclear-black-market-dossier-a-net-assessment/pakistans-nuclear-oversight-reforms/>}.

The lack of internal competition was not always the case. In fact, Khan was able to establish his network precisely because of internal competition, although it was not between political entities, but among scientists. When Pakistan was trying to develop the bomb, the government's two prominent nuclear development labs were encouraged to compete against each other, to run illicit deals through which they could attain nuclear materials on the international market, and to maintain the utmost secrecy with as little oversight as possible so as to reduce the chances of foreign infiltration. Between these circumstances and the secretiveness and corruption that had enveloped Pakistan's import and export regime as the country became a conduit for the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, Khan was able not only to develop nuclear capabilities for his country, but to export centrifuge technology and, in one instance, plans for a bomb, for a profit.⁴²

Since the discovery of Khan's network, it has been, for the most part, eradicated. Both Pakistani and American officials have stated that the network was shut down.⁴³ Khan's was not the only network. Weeks after 9/11, American intelligence learned that two prominent retired Pakistani nuclear scientists were in talks with *Al-Qaeda* and Libya. The Americans passed the information along to Pakistan's ISI which quickly arrested the two scientists and placed them under house arrest.⁴⁴

Since the discovery of these plots, Pakistan's government has, on its own volition, put in place much more stringent export controls, established institutions to provide accountability and oversight, and created transparency by working with the Americans and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to prevent further proliferation. The Americans, for their part, have contributed expertise and funds to help secure Pakistan's nuclear weapons and better control exports, and they sanctioned a handful of individuals who were personally involved in Khan's network, but they appear to be relatively confident that the Pakistani government has taken the necessary steps to ensure that there is no further problem.

Economic development

Efforts to promote economic development are exceptionally vulnerable to manipulation by domestic actors seeking relative gains locally. The infusion of resources and investment, the provision of jobs, the creation of profit opportunities – where there is domestic competition for power, these are plums to be fought over. If a group can claim credit for, dole out, or otherwise control such riches, it will benefit; if its adversaries can do so, it will lose. It is precisely because of this that militant groups worldwide make a point of offering goods and services to local populations. For the US, the ability to provide these plums is an opportunity for influence, as long as it can control the distribution.

⁴² 'A. Q. Khan and Onward Proliferation from Pakistan', ch. 3 in *Nuclear Black Markets: Pakistan, A. Q. Khan and the Rise of Proliferation Networks*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, {<http://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-dossiers/nbm/nuclear-black-market-dossier-a-net-assement/aq-khan-and-onward-prolifertion-from-pakistan/>}.

⁴³ 'Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons: Proliferation and Security Issues', Paul K. Kerr, Mary Beth Nikitin, RL34248, Congressional Research Service (9 May 2009).

⁴⁴ 'Pakistan's Nuclear Oversight Reforms'.

Although the US promotes economic development as a general policy, in order to create markets and to gain access to resources, goods, and services worldwide, sponsoring economic development in Pakistan is an element of the Americans' counter-terrorism strategy there. The Americans provide foreign assistance to reinforce their local allies – the government – with funds and the means of improving Pakistanis' quality of life. The US thus pits the government directly against the militants in the FATA and NWFP in the competition for hearts and minds. This is not lost on the militants who have taken to killing aid workers and American officials in the tribal regions, threatening Pakistanis who accept the 'sweet poison' of American aid, and attacking projects funded by the US. As one analyst stated, 'It is in the interests of the militants to make sure that the state isn't seen to deliver services.'⁴⁵ These challenges threaten the success of the Americans' economic development efforts. Funding is diverted through corruption; more has to be spent on consultants and contractors; the militants attack and take over projects; locals are frightened away from jobs and resources.

Even if the Americans could control the funding and secure the projects in the tribal areas, economic development assistance to Pakistan is more generally threatened by the political structure, dominated as it is by a small elite that has run the country's politics and economy for decades. By 1965, '80 per cent of the banking, 70 per cent of the insurance, and 60 per cent of the industrial assets of Pakistan' were controlled by 20 families. The army, 'by now in its own right the top elite in the country, became the great defender of the propertied classes.'⁴⁶ Little has changed in 45 years. Eighty per cent of the wealth today is controlled by 200,000 people, less than one per cent of the population (some analyses show that 90 per cent of the wealth is controlled by 50,000 people), while nearly half the population lives in poverty (over 44 per cent in 2005).⁴⁷ Moreover, the elite is rife with corruption, has a history of absorbing foreign aid, and has little to gain from spreading the wealth. Yet it is with precisely these people – Zardari, Sharif, and Kayani today, for example – that the Americans have to work in order to implement economic development.

Overcoming these challenges in order to ensure that economic development policy is implemented successfully will require a long-term commitment; smaller, easily controlled projects; intensive diplomacy; improved intelligence; and a coordinated effort to combine economic development with pressure for more responsible, constituent-oriented governance.⁴⁸ As the US places greater emphasis on development and economic growth,⁴⁹ it will have to anticipate the filter effect, understand the temptations its policy engenders, and compensate for both.

⁴⁵ 'US Aid Under Fire in Pakistan Border Area', Associated Press (26 February 2009), {<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29415610/>}.

⁴⁶ Arvind K. Jain (ed.), *The Political Economy of Corruption* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), p. 148.

⁴⁷ 'Workers in Unity at All Pakistan Labour Conference', Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (January 2007), {<http://www.ptudc.org/content/view/full/110/36/>}; 'Economic Disparity in Pakistan: An Analysis', *Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan* (January 1998), {<http://www.jamaat.org/issues/economic.html>}; 'Country Profile: Pakistan', op. cit.

⁴⁸ For a thoughtful analysis on how to improve foreign assistance, taking into account the filter effect of local politics, see, Lawrence J. Korb, 'Reassessing Foreign Assistance to Pakistan', *Center for American Progress* (2 April 2009), {http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/04/pakistan_korb.html}.

⁴⁹ Karen DeYoung, 'Pakistan Wants More From US', *Washington Post* (11 February 2009), p. A11.

Easing tensions with India, especially in Kashmir

Both civilian and military political leaders have tacitly (and sometimes actively) approved terrorist operations in Kashmir and resisted American pressure to make serious concessions to India. That said, there has been a negotiated reduction in tension tied to the benefits of increased trade and a desire for international legitimacy.⁵⁰ On this issue, there is a fairly unified domestic response, a shared interpretation of what needs to be done, and very little in American policy over which to compete internally.⁵¹

Summary

In Pakistan, the US represents resources and international legitimacy that the political factions have coveted and aggressively vied for. Take the period immediately before Bhutto's assassination as a case in point. By that time, in 2007, the US recognised Musharraf's vulnerability and was supporting his government with huge aid packages, assistance re-scheduling the country's debts, and lifting economic sanctions.⁵² At the same time, as soon as American policymakers knew she was a serious alternative, they also courted Benazir Bhutto. This was an approach Bhutto not only welcomed, but actively cultivated, appearing before the US Congress to persuade American leaders to support her bid for power against Musharraf, whom she depicted as an ineffective dictator whose rule 'fueled extremism'.⁵³ On the other hand, as much as Musharraf and Bhutto sought American assistance and attention, the local public perceived US involvement as tainted and illegitimate and deeply opposed the way the War on Terrorism was being fought in Pakistan,⁵⁴ a fact opposition leader Nawaz Sharif used to discredit Musharraf, accusing the Pakistani president of "blindly following America" and leaving the country 'drowned in blood'.⁵⁵ For his part, Musharraf was completely aware of the public's feelings and, when addressing them, he depicted his relationship with the US as one of convenience, a short-term, practical

⁵⁰ Rajesh Rajagopalan, 'The US and the South Asia Tangle Opinion', *The Hindu*, (9 May 2003), {<http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2003/05/09/stories/2003050900531000.htm>}. This is a very compelling article about the limitations of US pressure on Pakistan *vis-à-vis* India, given the country's own obduracy and America's strategic priorities; Syed Talat Hussain, 'A Game of Nerves', *Newsline* (May 2005), {<http://www.newsline.com.pk/newsMay2005/cover1may2005.htm>}.

⁵¹ This may change, however. Even the minor negotiations Musharraf undertook with India were lambasted by the religious extremists. In the February 2008 elections, these people and their political party, the MMA, lost significant ground but if analysts' worst-case scenario comes true and fundamentalists gain political ground, they may force a return to elevated tension between Pakistan and India.

⁵² Leon T. Hadar, 'Pakistan: Strategic Ally or Unreliable Client?', *USA Today* (1 January 2003).

⁵³ Suzanne Goldberg, 'Bhutto Pitch for Power Urges US to See Her as Best Ally Against Terror', *The Guardian* (26 September 2007), {<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/sep/26/usa.pakistan>}.

⁵⁴ 'Poll: Bin Laden Tops Musharraf in Pakistan', *CNN.com* (11 September 2007), {<http://edition.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/09/11/poll.pakistanis/index.html>}; 'Less than Half of Pakistani Public Supports Attacking Al Qaeda, Cracking Down on Fundamentalists', *WorldPublicOpinion.org* (31 October 2007), {http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_page/424.php?lb=hmpg1&pnt=424&nid=&id=&gclid=CMHq-uu7wJICFRFBFQod6BIUcg}.

⁵⁵ 'Sharif Slams Alliance with US', *CNN.com/asia* (14 January 2008), {<http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/01/14/pakistan.sharif.ap/index.html>}.

accommodation as Pakistan gathered strength.⁵⁶ Under the volatile political circumstances, achieving American influence in Pakistan was inevitably challenging, but it became more so as the local factions moderated and manipulated US involvement in the pursuit of their own agendas.

The situation in Pakistan⁵⁷ also demonstrated how internal politics can raise the costs of external powers' policies. By late 2007, the US had spent in excess of \$5 billion to underwrite Pakistani military efforts to fight terrorism, infusing the country with fungible resources that American officials later acknowledged were largely diverted by local actors, in part to support the government's arms build-up against India, but also, according to opposition leaders in Islamabad, to prop up Musharraf's regime.⁵⁸ Appropriation of resources is a typical element contributing to the effects of distributive domestic response. Once resources are delivered to a country, the initiating state tends to lose control of their dispersal; when they are coopted by locals, their utility for the initiating state is not only reduced (thus reducing the likelihood the country's policy will be successful), but how they are used locally can even work directly against the external power's desires. Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island from the Armed Services Committee, was quoted in *The New York Times* as saying "The situation in the tribal areas seems to be getting worse, not better, and that's despite a billion dollars in aid [...] Just pouring the money in and asking them to do this is not producing the results that we need."⁵⁹

Assuming that foreign policies' life-spans run inverse to their costs because of the initiating powers' own domestic politics, local political dynamics can reduce the life-span of external powers' policies. In other words, if distributive domestic response raises the costs of a policy, the initiating country's own public may lose patience or even demand the policy's abandonment. In the case of the US approach toward Pakistan, this assumption was borne out in late 2007 by the increasingly critical public and legislative response to the Bush administration's policies towards the country. Following the passage of Congressional legislation condemning the murder of Benazir Bhutto, Democratic Congressman Gary Ackerman declared in January 2008: 'What is clear is that before Pakistan devolves any further in chaos and violence, US policy has to change.'⁶⁰

Noting how little has altered in Pakistan in the two years since these events – or indeed, over the course of Pakistan's history – it would be tempting to observe the distributive domestic response and come to the same conclusions as the Cato Institute's Malou Innocent, who admonished in an opinion piece in *The Washington Post*:

⁵⁶ Leon T. Hadar, 'Pakistan: Strategic Ally or Unreliable Client?'

⁵⁷ Jayshree Bajoria, 'US Scrambles to Remake Pakistan Policy', *Council on Foreign Relations, Daily Analysis*, (21 February 2008), {http://www.cfr.org/publication/15520/us_scrambles_to_remake_pakistan_policy.html}.

⁵⁸ David Rohde, Carlotta Gall, Eric Schmitt and David E. Sanger, 'US Officials See Waste in Billions Sent to Pakistan', *The New York Times* (24 December 2007), {http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/24/world/asia/24military.html?_r=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=all}; Robin Wright, 'US Payments to Pakistan Face New Scrutiny: Little Accounting for Costs to Support Ally's Troops', *Washington Post* (21 February 2008), p. A01 {http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/20/AR2008022002741_pf.html}.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ 'Call for Shift in US Policy Toward Pakistan', AFP (16 January 2008), {<http://afp.google.com/article/ALEqM5gAhcImABf-fUqLJDvdxpqFzQ9DYQ>}.

So what is left for US policy toward Pakistan? History provides us with a practical alternative to either supporting Musharraf or trying to identify and back a democratic successor: the British colonial policy of masterly inactivity. Throughout the mid – and late-19th century, the British government in India assumed the role of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Pashtun tribes in what is today the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of modern-day Pakistan. The British assumed this policy because interference only exacerbated conflict and increased anti-British sentiment. American policymakers should assume a similar role by becoming more modest in their ambitions for Pakistan.

Rather than push, prod and encourage Pakistan to do what the US wants, US policymakers should not interfere in that country's political affairs. Given that country's proximity to the war in Afghanistan, the cauldron of conflict in its border region, and the fear that Pakistan's nuclear weapons could fall into the wrong hands, some continued cooperation with whatever government holds power in Islamabad is important. But that does not mandate that Washington become embroiled in Pakistan's political dynamics.⁶¹

And yet US interests preclude this kind of stand-off approach. Instead, the US would do better to retain control by understanding the filter effect and compensating for it. Countries armed with enough intelligence and information, patience, and flexibility can mitigate the filter effect of domestic distributive response.

Conclusion

To date, studies of internal factors' effects on International Relations have focused on under what circumstances, by what means, and with what kinds of success countries involve themselves in others' domestic affairs. They do not, however, consider the other side of the equation: how domestic variables in the target countries filter and ultimately affect the external actors' policies. This article attempts to demonstrate that this dynamic is worth considering; that in a world where even the ostensible hegemon's policies can be undermined or coopted by the internal politics of a target country, it is important to understand how, and under what circumstances, that happens. The distributive domestic response model introduced here is a first stab at identifying under which conditions it will be most challenging to implement foreign policies successfully. When policies challenge local balances of power in the target country, retaining control over them will be harder. When policies are targeted at an unstable state, ensuring their success will be more difficult. When there is less transparency and less predictability, trying to avoid or anticipate the local political filter will be tougher. The factors that will determine these conditions include the target states' political structure and stability, the number of local actors and the balance of power among them, and the nature of the foreign policy itself, that is, the extent to which it will be perceived as an opportunity or a threat in the context of the target country's domestic competition for power.

In practical terms, to ensure a policy's success, distributive domestic response must be understood so that it can be mitigated. Moreover, the potential costs must be expected and politically protected (in effect, increasing the life-span of the policy by increasing public acceptance of the costs). In short, internal power politics can

⁶¹ Malou Innocent, 'The Shah of Pakistan?', *The Washington Post* (23 January 2008), {<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/23/AR2008012303393.html>}.

trump international power politics. Even great powers, indeed even the global hegemon, must respect and compensate for local power dynamics if a policy is to be successful.