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This is an author-formatted, electronic version of an article published in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 35 (3). pp. 703-723, September 2007. © Sage Publications. The definitive version is available online at:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/03058298070350030301>

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# Hollow Hegemony: Theorising the Shift from Interest-Based to Value-Based International Policy-Making<sup>1</sup>

David Chandler

*Today, attempts to explain the post-Cold War shift away from interest-based to value-based policy-making are increasingly caught in a cleft stick between Post-Realist (e.g. neo-Gramscian and post-structuralist) revelations of hegemonic power relations and Post-Liberal (essentially Constructivist) assertions of the transformative power of ideas, communicative networks and emerging international norms. This paper suggests that neither Post-Realist nor Post-Liberal approaches are able to tell us much about the interrelationship between interests and ideas in the current historical conjuncture. This is because neither framework can easily countenance a disjunction between material 'interests' and the discursive forms in which power is projected internationally. Using the ontological focus and epistemological framework adopted in Karl Marx's study of the crisis of political subjectivity, and the consequential retreat into idealism, of the German Ideology, this paper argues that a materialist grounding of ethical declarations of value-based policy does not necessarily lead back to the direct, or even indirect, interests of hegemonic powers. Rather, it indicates an era of 'hollow hegemony' marked by the lack of instrumental policy-making and the inability to construct a clear political project cohering values frameworks and strategic interests.*

## Introduction

On 1 August 2006, UK prime minister Tony Blair made a major speech on foreign policy to the World Affairs Council in Los Angeles<sup>2</sup> in which he declared that, looking back, the West's response, in launching the 'war on terror', had been a

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Vanessa Pupavac and Christopher J. Bickerton for their suggestions and critique in the preparation of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Blair, 'Future Foreign Policy', speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, 1 August 2006. Available at: <http://www.lawac.org/speech/2005-2006/Blair,%20Tony%202006.pdf>.

momentous one; one that was not fully recognised at the time: ‘The reason I say our response was even more momentous than it seemed at the time, is this. We could have chosen security as the battleground. We didn’t. We chose values.’<sup>3</sup> For Blair, it was values that shaped the overthrow of the Afghan and Iraqi regimes: ‘The point about these interventions, however, military and otherwise, is that they were not just about changing regimes but changing the value systems governing the nations concerned. The banner was not actually “regime change” it was “values change”.’<sup>4</sup> The ‘war on terror’, which has shaped many people’s understanding of international relations in the present decade, is seen by Blair to be more a battle over values than territory or geopolitical influence.

While Blair puts a positive gloss on the ‘value-based’ approach to the war on terror, many other commentators have stressed the negative aspects of the US’s ‘ideological’ approach to international affairs. The 2003 war and consequent occupation of Iraq has been increasingly condemned for its neglect of interest-based policy-making and for the White House’s alleged ‘ideological’ refusal to plan ahead or to consider facts on the ground which challenged their idealised view of events.<sup>5</sup> Despite the problems of Iraq, the ‘value-based’ approach to international affairs, proffered as much by Tony Blair as the Bush administration, has appealed across the political spectrum. The themes were taken up by liberal internationalists in Britain with the Westminster launch of the Henry Jackson Society, with cross-party support, in November 2005, and the formation of the democratic progressive alliance under the rubric of the Euston Manifesto in March 2006.<sup>6</sup> The transatlantic appeal of the neoconservative ideologues in the Bush administration can be clearly seen in *The Times* columnist Oliver Kamm’s book, *Anti-Totalitarianism: The Left-Wing Case for a Neoconservative Foreign Policy*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 2; see also Blair, ‘A Battle for Global Values’, *Foreign Affairs* 86, no.1 (2007): 79–90.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, George Packer, *The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2005) and Larry J. Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> The website of the Henry Jackson Society can be found at: <http://www.henryjacksonsociety.org.uk/> and that of the Euston Manifesto at: <http://eustonmanifesto.org/joomla/>.

<sup>7</sup> Oliver Kamm, *Anti-Totalitarianism: The Left-Wing Case for a Neoconservative Foreign Policy* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 2005).

In many ways, the emphasis on values, *vis-à-vis* interests, has been the dominant theme of international relations since the end of the Cold War. The decade of the 1990s was shaped by the experiences of intervention and non-intervention in relation to human rights abuses, closing with the Kosovo War in 1999, which Blair famously described in similar terms as a war fought ‘not for territory but for values’.<sup>8</sup> It would seem that the Cold War world of *realpolitik*, in which interests of state security were considered primary, has been transformed into the post-Cold War world of value-based policy-making in which security has been redefined in terms which see the security of regions of the world as interdependent, rather than conflictual, and the issues of concern extended away from external threats in the military sphere to internal questions of democracy, good governance and relief from poverty.<sup>9</sup>

During the Cold War, only small, relatively wealthy, Western states which lacked a large independent military capacity and had few interests at stake overseas, such as the Scandinavian states, took an ethical or values-based approach to international affairs, which presumed that there was little distinction between domestic and international political perspectives. Today, it appears that what was once a marginal position is now mainstream, with major Western military powers, projecting their power in apparently disinterested value- or norm-based terms as if they were merely ‘nuclear Norways’. This approach is probably best captured by Robert Cooper, former adviser to UK prime minister Tony Blair and currently policy adviser to Javier Solana, the European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy. He vociferously argues that leading European states have a post-national or postmodern approach to foreign policy, one that makes no distinction between domestic and international concerns:

Lying behind the postmodern international order is the postmodern state ... state interest becomes less of a determining factor in foreign policy ... The postmodern state is the opposite [of the statist projects of Communism and Fascism]. The

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<sup>8</sup> Tony Blair, ‘A New Generation Draws the Line’, *Newsweek*, 19 April 1999.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the regular UN reports, such as: *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility, Report of the Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change* (New York: United Nations, 2004), available at: <http://www.un.org/secureworld/>; *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, Report of the Secretary-General (New York: United Nations, 2005), available at: <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/add2.htm>.

individual has won and foreign policy is the continuation of domestic concerns beyond national boundaries and not vice versa.<sup>10</sup>

Here, power is no longer projected as an act of interest-based hegemony but as an ethical or value-based act. This view of the disinterested projection of military and diplomatic power is reflected in the Barcelona Report, *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe*, commissioned by Solana, which argues that: ‘A Human Security approach for the European Union means that it should contribute to the protection of every individual human being and not focus only on the Union’s borders, as was the security approach of nation-states’.<sup>11</sup> Power has consistently been projected in terms of values, rather than interests, by the European Union and debate over Europe as a ‘normative power’ has been ongoing over the current decade.<sup>12</sup>

This paper seeks to elucidate briefly the impact of the shift from interests to values on theorising the international, highlighting the reaction against the interest-led methodological approach of Realism, and shift to approaches within the Constructivist framework. It suggests that, although providing a useful description and exploration of the new policy discourses, Constructivist approaches have been of limited use in explaining the reasons for this shift. This is because their ‘anti-foundational’ approach has consciously avoided the need to ground the shift to values historically and materially.<sup>13</sup> In highlighting the one-sidedness of both the current Post-Realist<sup>14</sup> and the Post-Liberal,<sup>15</sup> Constructivist, approaches the paper suggests

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 50–3.

<sup>11</sup> *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe: The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe’s Security Capabilities*, presented at Barcelona, 15 September 2004, 9. Available at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Publications/HumanSecurityDoctrine.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> For a summary, see Ian Manners, ‘European Union, Normative Power and Ethical Foreign Policy’, in *Rethinking Ethical Foreign Policy: Pitfalls, Possibilities and Paradoxes*, ed. David Chandler and Volker Heins (London: Routledge, 2007), 116–36.

<sup>13</sup> Steve Smith, ‘Reflectivist and Constructivist Approaches to International Relations’, in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, ed. John Baylis and Steve Smith (2nd edn) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 227.

<sup>14</sup> I use the term ‘Post-Realist’ to group together a variety of critical approaches that seek to assert the importance of power relations for understanding the discursive forms in which international policy-making is expressed. These approaches tend to see values as serving the interests of power, whereas traditional Realist theorists have a much more ambiguous approach, tending to see an emphasis on values or ethics as problematic and potentially undermining national self-interest. See further, Heins and Chandler, ‘Ethics and Foreign Policy: New Perspectives on an Old Problem’, in *Rethinking Ethical Foreign Policy*, ed. Chandler and Heins, 3–21.

that a useful way forward for theorising the international today could be to reconsider the relevance, in terms of both ontological focus and epistemological framework, of Karl Marx's study of the crisis of political subjectivity and the consequential retreat into idealism of the German bourgeoisie in early nineteenth-century Germany. The concluding sections draw out the importance of this approach for materially reconnecting the relationship between interests and values, but in a much more mediated way than that offered by either Post-Realist or Constructivist approaches.

### **What's at Stake for Theorising the International?**

#### *IR, the Cold War Discipline*

IR was very much a Cold War discipline, founded on the creation of a 'world of states', not just with the end of empire and the decolonisation process - termed the 'empire of civil society' in Justin Rosenberg's critique of Realist theory<sup>16</sup> - but also the integration of the Soviet Union into the international system.<sup>17</sup> The precondition of the abstract structuralist framework of neo-Realism was the creation of an 'anarchical society', a set of shared norms of diplomatic and international political protocol, symbolised by the UN Security Council's inclusion of the Soviet Union and later of China. Ironically, the structure of anarchy appeared to be the determining factor precisely because there was not an anarchy but an integrated international system; symbolically captured in the 'super-power summits' between the US and the Soviet Union and, after the Korean War, the permanent presence of the Soviet Union at the Security Council.

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<sup>15</sup> I use the term 'Post-Liberal' to describe approaches, such as Constructivism, which no longer view state action within the rationalist framework of liberal institutionalism and regime theory. For Wendt, the importance of Constructivism was that it freed the study of state interaction from the structuralist, neoliberal, focus on fixed identities in the form of national interests (Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It', *International Organization* 46, no.2 (1992): 394-419; 393; 417; see also the Introductions to the various editions of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (3rd edn) (New York: Longman, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* (London: Verso, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> See further, Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

Kenneth Waltz's 1979 book *Theory of International Politics*, which established the theoretical grounding of neo-Realism, made an impact because its simplicity seemed to capture what was relevant to the international sphere: interests that were exogenously determined by the structure of the system itself. Values or ideas seemed to be of little importance in their own right as, regardless of the internal domestic politics of state actors (whether they were communist or capitalist) all states appeared to act similarly in the international sphere:

In defining international-political structures we take states with whatever traditions, habits, objectives, desires, and forms of government they may have. We do not ask whether states are revolutionary or legitimate, authoritarian or democratic, ideological or pragmatic. We abstract from every attribute of states except their capabilities.<sup>18</sup>

National governments had clear conceptions of policy-ends which framed, and limited, policy discussions and in the context of the Cold War divide the IR vision of states as self-interested rational instrumental actors seemed to be well grounded. The task of the theorist of the international sphere was to understand the interests of states - in securing themselves through forms of self-help, particularly by maintaining, or responding to shifts in, the balance of power - and thereby seek to ameliorate conflict.

Prior to Waltz's 1979 masterwork, the Classical Realist and English School perspectives also took a view that it was the understanding of state interests that was the key to stabilising world order and avoiding conflict. The critique of 'utopianism' or 'idealism' in the interwar period took the form of a stark materialist analysis in the work of E. H. Carr, who held that: 'Theories of international morality are ... the product of dominant nations or groups of nations.'<sup>19</sup> The founder of Realism as a US academic discipline, Hans Morgenthau, focused on 'power politics', taking a cautionary approach to the pursuit of values and ideas in isolation from an understanding of the operation of state interests, drawing on a number of historical

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 99; see also Waltz, *Man the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, 2nd rev. edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 74.

examples to argue ‘the practical impossibility of founding a successful foreign policy upon ideological affinities rather than upon a community of political interests’.<sup>20</sup> Hedley Bull, the most developed theorist in the English School, similarly took a highly materialist approach, summarily dismissing the constitutive ideas of Richard Falk, for theorising a more cosmopolitan world order, as a dangerous ‘confusion of description and prescription’.<sup>21</sup>

### *The Challenge to IR*

The narrow focus on the structure of anarchy and the pursuit of self-interests of Realism was widely challenged, as an explanatory framework, in the wake of the events of 1989 and the end of the Cold War. As Christian Reus-Smit noted: ‘the end of the Cold War undermined the explanatory pretensions of Neo-Realists and Neoliberals, neither of which had predicted, nor could adequately comprehend, the systematic transformations reshaping the global order’.<sup>22</sup> Jack Donnelly, for example, argues in his comprehensive study of Realist approaches:

Neo-Realism ... cannot comprehend change. During the Cold War, this theoretical gap seemed acceptable to many. But when the Cold War order collapsed seemingly overnight, even many otherwise sympathetic observers began to look elsewhere – especially because the collapse was intimately tied to ideas ... and processes ... that were excluded by Neo-Realist structuralism.<sup>23</sup>

There was a shift in values and ideas, initially in the Soviet Union, with the implosion of the ruling bureaucracy, and with repercussions in the discrediting of traditional Left/Socialist state-based projects of change and, more slowly, the crisis of traditional Conservative/Christian Democratic approaches framed in opposition to Communism.

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<sup>20</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 58; see also Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, ed. rev. K. W. Thompson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 224–49.

<sup>21</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1995), 266.

<sup>22</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, ‘Constructivism’, in *Theories of International Relations*, ed. Scott Burchill *et al.*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 216.

<sup>23</sup> Jack Donnelly, *Realism in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 31.



It was little surprise that the shift in values, ideas and identities internationally led to an increasing interest in Constructivist approaches, which challenged the Realist view that interests were the determining factor in understanding the international sphere.<sup>24</sup>

Where Realists saw values as being a product of interests (consciously or unconsciously), Constructivists saw self-perceptions of interests as products of changing, intersubjectively constructed norms and values. Interests became secondary concerns and lost the causal agency associated with the Realist framework in which states were rationalist self-determining actors. Constructivism posed a challenge to Realism, but in the early 1990s the Constructivist framework was still squeezed into the ontological concerns of Realist theory – state interaction – for example Alexander Wendt’s focus on state interaction is central to his thesis that ‘anarchy is what states make of it’.<sup>25</sup> Inevitably, however, the focus on values rather than interests tended to undermine the specificity of the international once values were dissociated from geopolitical, territorial, understandings of the world.<sup>26</sup> Where Rationalist approaches were based on the assumption that states pursued (relatively fixed) national interests, Constructivist theorists argued that national interests should be seen as flexible and indeterminate. Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink write:

Actors’ interests and preferences are not given outside social interaction or deduced from structural constraints in the international or domestic environment. Social constructivism does not take the interests of actors for granted, but problematizes and relates them to the identities of actors.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> As Alexander Wendt stated, inverting the rationalist framework: ‘Identities are the basis of interests’, in Wendt, ‘Anarchy is What States Make of It’, 398.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.; see also Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink, ‘The Socialization of International Human Rights Norms into Domestic Practices: Introduction’, in *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*, ed. Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8–9.

As Risse and Sikkink note, ‘This new emphasis has resulted from the empirical failure of approaches emphasizing material structures as the primary determinants of state identities, interests and preferences.’<sup>28</sup> They continue:

We do not mean to ignore material conditions. Rather, the causal relationship between material and ideational factors is at stake. While materialist theories emphasize economic or military conditions or interests as determining the impact of ideas in international and domestic politics, social constructivists emphasize that ideas and communicative processes define in the first place which material factors are perceived as relevant and how they influence understandings of interests, preferences, and political decisions.<sup>29</sup>

In an apparently fluid context of post-Cold War change, identities and interests were no longer seen to be constrained by structural material conditions; ideas, identities and their expression and communication become the focus of study. In this case, the strategic interest-based interaction of states was no longer crucial for understanding policy developments in the international sphere. This is well captured in the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty’s *Responsibility to Protect* report, which suggests that rationalist approaches dissimulate international policy possibilities, whereas value-based understandings clarify them:

The notion of responsibility itself entails fundamental moral reasoning and challenges deterministic theories of human behaviour and international relations theory. The behaviour of states is not predetermined by systemic or structural factors, and moral justifications are not merely after-the-fact justifications or simply irrelevant.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 6–7.

<sup>30</sup> International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *Responsibility to Protect: Research, Bibliography, Background* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001), 129. See also, Wendt, ‘On Constitution and Causation in International Relations’, in *The Eighty Years’ Crisis 1919–1999*, ed. Tim Dunne, Michael Cox and Ken Booth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Theo Farrell, ‘Constructivist Security Studies: Portrait of a Research Program’, *International Studies Review* 4, no.1 (2002): 49–72.

For example, if ideas were more important than military or political power then moral agencies and actors, such as international NGOs or ‘global civil society’, would be able to have a major influence merely through ‘the power of persuasion’.<sup>31</sup> Once the focus was no longer on securing state interests, as traditionally understood, then interest-based politics – an instrumentalist understanding of policy-making – could no longer serve to explain international actions.

The rejection of instrumentalist understandings of the international sphere, which necessarily follows from removing the ontological centrality of political interests, makes any deeper, contextual or structural explanation of current trends problematic. Ideas and values necessarily become increasingly dealt with on their own terms and ascribed the agency which was previously associated with interest-bearing state actors. However, the shift from interests to values as the explanatory factor in international developments necessarily elides the concept of power, previously at the centre of Realist theorising. This paper suggests that for theorists of the international sphere to follow the ideas – the declarations of government spokesmen and policy think-tanks - rather than political interaction is problematic. This would be to renege on the task of critique: the attempt to explain and understand events, rather than just reflect the views of participants. In this regard, one of the most important issues in need of critical analysis would appear to be precisely that of the post-Cold War shift from interests to values.

### **Grounding Values**

As Zaki Laïdi has pointed out, the Cold War era appeared to be one of a clear clash of interests, not because interests were self-obviously pre-given but because the understanding of interests was intimately tied up with values: the ideological struggle between Left and Right.<sup>32</sup> The Cold War intimately tied values with the territorial

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<sup>31</sup> William Korey, ‘Human Rights NGOs: The Power of Persuasion’, *Ethics and International Affairs* 13 (1999): 151–74; see also Susan D. Burgerman, ‘Mobilizing Principles: The Role of Transnational Activists in Promoting Human Rights Principles’, *Human Rights Quarterly* 20 (1998): 905–23.

<sup>32</sup> He states that: ‘Indeed, it managed to combine two absolutes: meaning, symbolized by the ideological combat between two universal and competing value-systems; and power, carried by the absolute weapon, the nuclear bomb.’ Zaki Laïdi, *A World without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Relations*, trans. June Burnham and Jenny Coulon (London: Routledge, 1998), 15.

division of the world into states: it was a geopolitical divide, a division that was at once both ideological and territorial. Rather than values being a secondary product of interests, it is possible to look back on the Cold War era as one where values and interests were codeterminate with each other. In fact, it is clear that there can be no interests without values, without conscious political decisions as to what the ends and aspirations of government and society are. As Constructivists are right to suggest, without a clear sense of self-identity and clear values, it is not possible to have clear strategic interests.

The lack of interests and rejection of instrumentality in policy-making in the post-Cold War era seems to reflect an uncertainty of values codeterminate with an uncertainty over what interests or goals should be pursued in the international sphere.<sup>33</sup> Despite offering some detailed descriptions of policy changes,<sup>34</sup> Constructivist theorists tend to counterpose values to interests, rather than seeing them as being intimately connected. Rather than problematising the shift from interest-based to value-based policy-making and inquiring into why Western policy-makers should be increasingly rejecting instrumental interest-based approaches, Constructivists have tended to accept this development uncritically. Tim Dunne, for example, views Cold War instrumentality as flawed, both conceptually and morally, precisely because it separated ends and means. This, for Dunne, ‘implies a positivist view of knowledge in which “reality” is produced by a set of identifiable antecedent conditions’.<sup>35</sup> Dunne states that:

Instrumentalist thinking not only runs a risk of treating contexts as though they are immutable, it runs the parallel moral problem of instrumentality. Locked in the

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<sup>33</sup> This uncertainty was well expressed by Condoleezza Rice’s statement that: ‘The United States has found it exceedingly difficult to define its “national interest” in the absence of Soviet power.’ See, Rice, ‘Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest’, *Foreign Affairs*, Jan/Feb 2000. Available at: <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20000101faessay5/condoleezza-rice/campaign-2000-promoting-the-national-interest.html>.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Christian Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Michael Edwards and John Gaventa (eds), *Global Citizen Action* (London: Earthscan, 2001); Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (eds), *The Power of Human Rights*.

<sup>35</sup> Tim Dunne, “‘Fighting for Values’: Atlanticism, Internationalism and the Blair Doctrine’, paper presented to the ISA Convention, Hawaii, 1–5 March, 2005, 5. Available at: <http://www.huss.ex.ac.uk/politics/research/readingroom/dunneValues.doc>.

mind-set of a strategic game, it is too easy to treat individuals and communities as means and not ends.<sup>36</sup>

For Constructivists, policy-making and theorising are constitutive acts rather than rationalist ones.<sup>37</sup> Nicholas Wheeler and Alex Bellamy, for example, assert that Realism's claim to objectivity is easily falsified because 'it is the Realist mindset that has constructed the very practices that Realist theory seeks to explain'.<sup>38</sup> In which case it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish the declaration from the deed, and subjective intentions and individual self-understandings become more important than seeking for any deeper social or contextual explanation.<sup>39</sup> The focus on surface appearances inevitably leads to an uncritical understanding of the shift towards value-based policy-making. In his critique of such approaches, Ronen Palan succinctly argues that:

[Constructivism] effectively conflates a methodology with a theory ... general theories of interactionist order cannot provide an explanation for the specificity of an order ... There is a phlegmatic society – a harmonious society based on laws and norms ... [W]hy are there variations in social constructions?... When ... constructivism ... is used as a theory of international relations, it exorcise[s] any form of social critique from the narrative. It tells us that while Neo-Realists think that world politics are 'mean and nasty', in fact it is not.<sup>40</sup>

The critical response to the constructivist challenge has sought to reassert the instrumentalist link between values and the interests of power. Left-leaning Post-Realist theorists assert the power interests which lie behind the shifting discourses of the international: neo-Gramscians tend to focus on hegemonic ideologies and Foucauldian approaches focus on the role of values and norms in the mechanics of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Thomas Diez, 'Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering "Normative Power Europe"', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no.3 (2005): 613–36.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholas J. Wheeler and Alex J. Bellamy, 'Humanitarian Intervention and World Politics', in *The Globalization of World Politics*, ed. Baylis and Smith, 90.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher J. Bickerton, unpublished paper, 'Ideological Power Europe? The Social Origins of Europe's Normative Power'.

<sup>40</sup> Ronen Palan, 'A World of their Making: An Evaluation of the Constructivist Critique in International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 26, no.4 (2000): 575–98; 592–3; see also Chandler, *Constructing Global Civil Society: Morality and Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004).

governmentality. These main ‘materialist’ alternatives to Constructivist theorising all see power relations as reproduced through dominant discourses which directly or indirectly coincide with the interests of ruling political elites. For neo-Gramscians and Foucauldians we need not look any further than power (either in terms of explanatory interests or disciplinary techniques and practices) to understand discourses of values and ideas as instrumental products of hegemonic forces. There is no contradiction between the ideological appearances and the instrumental workings of the hegemony of Western power: for Post-Realists, the focus on values can be seen as legitimising the broad regulatory sweep of the ‘war on terror’,<sup>41</sup> for neo-Gramscians the ideology of liberal democracy and the market reinforces the hegemony of capital, particularly through ‘disciplinary neoliberalism’,<sup>42</sup> and for neo-Foucauldians the ideological discourses of nationalism,<sup>43</sup> the freedom of the market,<sup>44</sup> or of ‘participatory poverty reduction’<sup>45</sup> interpolate subjects willing to accept their own subjection.<sup>46</sup> However, these approaches remain, with the Constructivists, at the level of appearances. Despite the alleged instrumentalism of hidden ‘interests’, it is the ideas, the ideological appearances that do the work of enforcing the hegemony of power. While, for Constructivists, the focus on values challenges hegemony, for Post-Realists value frameworks reinforce it. However, neither framework convincingly grounds the shift from interests to values.

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<sup>41</sup> For example, Tariq Ali, ‘Re-colonizing Iraq’, *New Left Review* no.21 (May–June 2003): 5–19.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Robert Cox, ‘Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 12, no.2 (1983): 162–75; Cox, *Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Stephen Gill, ‘Globalisation, Market Civilisation and Disciplinary Neoliberalism’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 24, no.3 (1995): 399–423; Gill, *Power and Resistance in the New World Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

<sup>44</sup> Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars* (London: Zed Books, 2001); Duffield, ‘Social Reconstruction and the Radicalization of Development: Aid as a Relation of Global Liberal Governance’, in *State Failure, Collapse and Reconstruction*, ed. Jennifer Milliken (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Rita Abrahamsen, ‘The Power of Partnership in Global Governance’, *Third World Quarterly* 25, no.8 (2004): 1453–67.

<sup>45</sup> David Craig and Doug Porter, ‘Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: A New Convergence’, *World Development* 31, no.1 (2003): 53–69. Draft available at: <http://www1.worldbank.org/wbiep/decentralization/afrib/craig.pdf>; Alastair Fraser, ‘Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: Now Who Calls the Shots?’, *Review of African Political Economy* no.104/5 (2005): 317–40.

<sup>46</sup> Foucault himself often demonstrated a more problematising approach to the workings of power, distancing his position from his followers’ attempts to read his work as a ‘monotonous assertion of power’ and distinguishing disciplinary techniques from liberal governmentality. See the forthcoming publication, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977–78* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), particularly lecture 3.

An alternative way forward, suggested here, is to be found in the work of Karl Marx, not in his study of the struggle of collective class interests, to be found throughout his major works, or his work specifically on capitalist ideology and the alienation of labour, which is most fully articulated in the section on ‘commodity fetishism’ in Volume I of *Das Kapital*, but in his study of the disjuncture between interests and ideas, particularly with reference to Germany in the 1840s. This was a subject touched upon in much of his early work, for example, in the *Deutsch-Französischer Jahrbücher* (1844), *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (written 1843–4), *The Holy Family* (written 1844–5), and the *German Ideology* (written 1845–6).

The German bourgeoisie are described by Marx, at the time, as lacking any clear consciousness of their collective interests. While the French and the British elites were transforming the world in their image at the end of the eighteenth and in the early nineteenth centuries, modernising their societies within and projecting their power into Europe and around the globe, the German bourgeoisie took refuge in the idealised theorising of philosophers such as Immanuel Kant. As Marx describes:

Kant was satisfied with ‘good will’ alone, even if it remained entirely without result ... Kant’s good will fully corresponds to the impotence, depression and wretchedness of the German burghers, whose petty interests were never capable of developing into the common, national interests of a class ... These petty, local interests had as their counterpart, on the one hand, the truly local and provincial narrow-mindedness of the German burghers and, on the other hand, their cosmopolitan swollen-headedness.<sup>47</sup>

Marx suggests that the focus on values, dislocated from the interests which gave rise to them, was a sign of the political incapacity and weakness of the German bourgeoisie. Where the more developed and cohered bourgeois classes in Britain, France and the United States were confident in the promotion of their collective national interests in the framework of universal values, in the early 1840s, the fragmented and weak German bourgeoisie could not project their interests in the form

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<sup>47</sup> Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, ed. C. J. Arthur (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982), 97.

of a collective future-orientated project except in an idealised form. As Marx stated in 1842:

We have to register a definite protest against this endless, nebulous and unclear ratiocination of those German liberals who think they honour liberty by relegating it to the starry heaven of imagination instead of basing it on the firm foundation of reality ... [T]hese masters of imaginary ratiocination, ... these masters of sentimental enthusiasm ... are afraid lest their ideal be desecrated by its coming in touch with profane reality.<sup>48</sup>

Here there was the language of liberalism, of democracy and freedom, but without the content of a forward-looking and economically and politically dynamic modernising political class. Rather than reflecting the confidence of a political elite determined to engage with and transform the world, the idealisation of liberal forms reflected the political incapacity of the German bourgeoisie, their inability to formulate a coherent political programme and their unwillingness to take the responsibility for moving beyond Germany's feudal and aristocratic past:

Kant, therefore, separated this theoretical expression from the interests which it expressed; he made the materially motivated determinations of the will of the French bourgeoisie into pure self-determinations of 'free will', of the will in and for itself, of the human will, and so converted it into purely ideological conceptual determinations and moral postulates. Hence the German petty bourgeoisie recoiled in horror from the practice of this energetic bourgeois liberalism as soon as this practice showed itself, both in the Reign of Terror and in shameless bourgeois profit-making.<sup>49</sup>

The German bourgeoisie took up the banner of liberal modernity solipsistically, in an idealised form, as they were unable to forge their own expressions of collective political purpose. In this respect, ideological forms which once expressed clear material interests were accepted 'merely as abstract ideas, principles valid in and for

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<sup>48</sup> Cited from the *Rheinische Zeitung*, 19 May 1842, in Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 137.

<sup>49</sup> Marx, *The German Ideology*, 99.



themselves, pious wishes and phrases'.<sup>50</sup> The problem, for Marx and those concerned with the potential bourgeois revolution in Germany at the time, was that ideas and values dissociated from a clear view of interests incapacitated rather than energised the German middle classes: 'Their attitude, therefore, to these forms was far more moral and disinterested than that of other nations, i.e. they exhibited a highly peculiar narrow-mindedness and remained unsuccessful in all their endeavours.'<sup>51</sup> As Marcuse noted, this flight into idealism was premised on a rejection of engagement in practical political problems; here there was 'morality before practical justice, the inner life before the social life of man'.<sup>52</sup> The consequence of a rejection of practical engagement, of the rejection of the responsibilities of political leadership, was a moralised and moralising outlook on international affairs:

This idealistic culture, however, just because it stood aloof from an intolerable reality and thereby maintained itself intact and unsullied, served, despite its false consolations and glorifications, as the repository for truths which had not been realized in the history of mankind.<sup>53</sup>

The focus on values rather than interests was, in the case of the German bourgeoisie, not a direct reflection of their interests but a reflection of their inability to collectively conceive of and act on their interests. This case suggests that ideological outlooks or moral beliefs can have a much more mediated relationship with lived experience than suggested by Realist theorists or by the neo-Gramscian focus on hegemonic ideologies or Foucauldian approaches to governmentality. More importantly, the flight to ethics and values is seen by Marx as a reflection of the weakness and incapacity of the political class in Germany, suggesting that there is much more room for political agency (and it was this that made Marx and Engels call for a much more radical stance in relation to the German political malaise, seeing the proletariat as the only class capable of emancipating German society<sup>54</sup>).

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.100.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1995), 15.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Marx's *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, in *Marx: Early Writings*, ed. Lucio Colletti (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984).

Similarly, Marx's understanding of German idealism offers an alternative to Constructivist approaches, which see ideas as driving reconceptions of interests rather than focusing on real lived social relations. The German bourgeoisie's idealism, their flight into abstract values was understood to be dislocated from their interests because of Marx's study of the specific material conditions prevailing in Germany. For Marx, the key to unlocking the idealist self-consciousness of the German bourgeoisie could not be found in the ideas themselves but only in the social context in which they were generated. In a direct critique of idealist approaches, and one which could be equally applied to approaches within the Constructivist framework today, Marx states:

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive ... in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life processes we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process ... In the first method of approach the starting point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life; it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as *their* consciousness.<sup>55</sup>

Rather than study the ideological appearances - for example, the self-proclaimed rejections of narrowly conceived national interests and attention to global problems of humanity - to understand the change of interests of states or the transformation of the international system, Marx suggests studying the actors themselves. In the case of the German bourgeoisie, Marx concludes that it is their weakness and fragmentation, squeezed between the remnants of the *ancien régime* and the developing industrial proletariat, which explains their ideological flight into values. Rather than take on political responsibility for overthrowing the old order, the German bourgeoisie denied their specific interests and idealised progress in the otherworldly terms of abstract philosophy, recoiling from the consequences of their liberal aspirations in practice.

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<sup>55</sup> Marx, *The German Ideology*, 47.

## Power and Interests Today

The malaise of the German political sphere in the first half of the nineteenth century was one which Marx, at the time, considered to be unique, noting that:

German history prides itself on having travelled a road which no other nation in the whole of history has ever travelled before, or ever will again. We have shared the restorations of modern nations without having shared their revolutions.<sup>56</sup>

The German bourgeoisie was caught in an international context where events seemed to happen beyond their control, the centre of politics having shifted with the French Revolution and English industrialisation. The bourgeoisie seemed powerless in the face of broader global forces and its inability to cohere society around a political programme domestically. In this context, its inability to formulate or pursue a political programme based on its own interests, or to project this in universal terms, was seen as an aberration by Marx and Engels, where there was a generalised crisis of political subjectivity. Neither the *ancien régime*, nor the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were strong enough politically to stamp their authority on society: ‘all classes lack that breadth of spirit which identifies itself, if only for a moment, with the spirit of the people’.<sup>57</sup> In this political malaise no section of society was able to articulate an ‘idea of the state’ clearly: to generalise the interests of society in terms of the national interest.<sup>58</sup>

It is suggested here that Marx’s acute analysis of the crisis of political subjectivity in relation to German idealism is of more than merely historical interest. In the very different context of today’s post-political world, similar questions of the governing elite’s capacity to cohere and project political authority are raised. The exercise of power increasingly appears to be vitiated by political incapacity, both domestically and internationally. Western elites seem to be increasingly isolated from their own societies and unable to develop or cohere forward-looking political programmes in the aftermath of the end of the ideological conflict of the Cold War.

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<sup>56</sup> Marx, *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, 245.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>58</sup> ‘The idea of the state’ is a concept developed by Barry Buzan in *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Harlow: Pearson, 1991), 69–82.

Rather than focus on the ethical rhetoric of world leaders, or the reflection of this idealism in many of the Normative and Constructivist commentaries in international relations, it is the real experiences of Western elites which give content to their idealist reflections. Rather than a Foucauldian, Realist or neo-Gramscian focus on the capacities of Western elites to further their interests under the banner of ethics, it seems that it is the incapacities of these elites that provide the specific content for twenty-first-century ethical or values-based agendas. This is captured well in the work of Alain Badiou, who argues:

Whether we think of it as the consensual representation of Evil or as concern for the other, ethics designates above all the incapacity, so typical of the contemporary world, to name and strive for a Good ... [T]he ‘concern for the other’ signifies that it is not a matter – that it is never a matter – of prescribing hitherto unexplored possibilities for our situation, and ultimately for ourselves. The law (human rights, etc.) is always *already there*.<sup>59</sup>

The ethical agenda, for Badiou, is a conservative one, which cannot see beyond the status quo. He suggests that the key to understanding the rise of ethical or values-based projections of power in the West is the incapacity of ruling elites to formulate a collective project and the retreat from political responsibility for taking society forward. In fact, the rise of ethics, the stated rejection of self-interest in exchange for ‘global concerns’ or the ‘good of the other’, marks the inability of the political class to act as such: ‘For from the beginning it confirms the absence of any project, of any emancipatory politics, or any genuinely collective cause.’<sup>60</sup> The hollow nature of the domestic political process, where a narrow bureaucratic mentality reduces politics to administration<sup>61</sup> is matched by an idealism, projected mainly into the international sphere, both being two sides of the same coin which no longer perceives of political interests and therefore seeks to remove politics from the earthly realm of a struggle over interests into an idealised realm of the struggle over ‘values’.

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<sup>59</sup> Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2002), 30; 33.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>61</sup> As Badiou argues: ‘Parliamentary politics as practised today does not in any way consist of setting objectives inspired by principles and of inventing the means to attain them.’ (*Ethics*, 31.)

The themes articulated so sharply by Badiou, were first raised by another French theorist, Zaki Laïdi, in his seminal book *A World without Meaning*.<sup>62</sup> Laïdi argued that the post-Cold War era has been marked by ‘the gap between power and meaning’, i.e. that political subjectivity, the capacity of Western political leadership, has been fundamentally undermined with the end of the geopolitical divide of the Cold War. Without a forward-looking political project the projection of power in the international sphere lacks any ends-based meaning or purpose. Instead it is the subjective intentions of state-actors which are prioritised above any broader strategic or long-term policy-making:

There is no longer any distance between what one does and what one aspires to. This confusion is of great concern because it appears to give states authority to be free of political perspective ... Thus our societies claim that the urgency of problems forbids them from reflecting on a project, while in fact it is their total absence of perspective that makes them slaves of emergencies.<sup>63</sup>

Rather than justifying policy in terms of practical ends – the traditional interest-based understandings of the past – policy is increasingly justified in moral or value-based terms, giving legitimacy to the actions in and of themselves. Here we have the transition from interests to values, grounded in an understanding of Western political elites’ own crisis of subjectivity, of political purpose. Power is still projected internationally (and enforced domestically) but it is power which increasingly lacks a clear purpose and therefore seeks to engage idealistically rather than practically with the world.

For Laïdi, the flight into idealism is the flip-side of this strategy of avoidance of political responsibility. The key point is that, in today’s social and political context, power, or at least the bearing of the responsibilities of power, is transformed from an asset into an embarrassment or a risk:

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<sup>62</sup> Laïdi’s *A World without Meaning* was first published in French in 1994.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

Power – understood in its widest sense – is conceived and experienced less and less as a process of taking over responsibilities, and more as a *game of avoidance* ... Social actors avoid taking on their own responsibilities or some responsibilities because, in the absence of a project of meaning, responsibilities are measured only in cost terms.<sup>64</sup>

Without a cause, a sense of purpose or political meaning it is difficult to engage in the making of policy. Policy cannot be formulated without a future-orientated vision of society, to which the government is committed. As Paul Williams argues: ‘In short, policy puts an emphasis on discerning what a desirable world would look like and how it may be brought about through conscious action.’<sup>65</sup> This is because policy-making entails taking responsibility for making choices dependent upon having a conviction in a political goal. It is only a strong conviction in the political ends of a policy that enables governments and societies to justify and legitimise the inevitable costs (whether in terms of money, soldiers/civilian lives, or other resources) of achieving these policy-ends.

Today, Western political elites lack a strong political vision and therefore have a transformed perception of and relationship to political power. Governments and policy-makers are much more likely to experience their policy-making power as a ‘risk’ or a cause of potential embarrassment than as an opportunity. They often seek to reject, rather than welcome, the responsibilities of power. Rather than claiming the rights of power, many governments seem to be happier when they are disclaiming them, seeking to devolve policy-making responsibilities either to regional and local authorities or to higher bodies such as the European Union or international institutions. There is a crisis of political legitimacy at the level of the nation-state which is at the heart of the shift away from the projection of power in the framework of national interests. This is not so much because political elites have taken up new ideas, and thereby understand their interests as ‘global concerns’ rather than national ones, as much as the lack of an organising collective ideology.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Williams, ‘How Can We Improve the Formulation and Implementation of UK Foreign Policy?’, paper for IPPR and LSE event on ‘Progressive Foreign Policy for the UK’, London School of Economics, 15 July 2006.

As Barry Buzan argues, the creation and projection of state interests is not possible without ‘a distinctive idea of some sort which lies at the heart of the state’s political identity’.<sup>66</sup> As Buzan suggests there is an intimate link between the domestic capacity of the political elite to generate and express a forward-looking project and the ability of a state to project its power in the international sphere, in terms of self-interest or national interest. It seems to be this lack of perceived legitimacy that drives government policy-making, rather the confidence of a popular mandate.<sup>67</sup> The desire to formulate policy without taking responsibility for the outcomes has engendered a shift of focus to the international sphere where the relationship between policy aims and results is a much more mediated one. However, the shift in focus to the international realm is a product of governmental weakness and disconnection from society, rather than a sign of having a clear sense of a collective or ‘national’ interest or purpose to project.<sup>68</sup>

What is projected internationally is not a clear set of interests but a set of idealised aspirations. This makes both the formulation of policy and any strategic or long-term coherence problematic and results in both the development of policy and its implementation taking an irrational and ad hoc character. This is expressed in the contradictory process where political elites are keen to express the rhetoric of high moral responsibility in the international sphere but are reluctant to take responsibility for either policy-making or policy outcomes. This is reflected in four trends. There is space here to mention three of them only briefly in order to dwell slightly longer on the fourth. First there is the desire to act collectively, rather than unilaterally, to evade policy responsibility; this is seen most clearly in attempts to talk-up the importance of ‘global’ problems and pass organisational responsibility to the UN or other transnational actors. Secondly there is the tendency for government leaders, think-tanks and policy pundits to focus on problems beyond the capacity of the particular institution, government or agency; in this regard, rhetoric comes cheaply and blame can easily be passed to more powerful or resourceful actors, such as the US or the UN. Thirdly there is an increased tendency to pass responsibility on to those with

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<sup>66</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 70.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, James Heartfield, ‘European Union: A Process without a Subject’, in *Politics without Sovereignty: A Critique of Contemporary International Relations*, ed. Christopher J. Bickerton, Philip Cunliffe and Alexander Gourevitch (London: UCL Press, 2007), 131–49.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000).

least influence, seen clearly in World Bank and IMF claims of ‘country ownership’ and in the focus on state capacity-building, where increased external intervention is repackaged as strengthening the ‘sovereignty’ of non-Western states.<sup>69</sup>

Of more interest here is the fourth trend, already touched upon above: the separation of ends and means. We increasingly see Western diplomatic and military interventions presented as justified on the basis of value-based declarations, rather than in traditional terms of interest-based outcomes. This was as apparent in the wars of humanitarian intervention, in Bosnia, Somalia and Kosovo - where there was no clarity of objectives and therefore little possibility of strategic planning in terms of the military intervention or the post-conflict political outcomes – as it is in the war on terror campaigns, still ongoing, in Afghanistan and Iraq. As Laïdi explains:

[W]ar is not waged necessarily to achieve predefined objectives, and it is in waging war that the motivation needed to continue it is found. In these cases – of which there are very many – war is no longer a continuation of politics by other means, as in Clausewitz’s classic model – but sometimes the initial expression of forms of activity or organization in search of meaning ... War becomes not the ultimate means to achieve an objective, but the most ‘efficient’ way of finding one.<sup>70</sup>

In this sense, the ‘wars of choice’, alleged to be fought for values not traditional national interests - humanitarian intervention in the 1990s and the wars of ‘regime change’ under the rubric of the ‘war on terror’ in the present decade - *were essentially wars which expressed both the lack of interests and the lack of values*. They were fought under the banner of abstract values and vacuous moral claims not because they were a projection of interests, but because Western elites found it difficult to develop or project a political programme with positive goals. In other words, Western governments lacked both interests and clear values. In fact, it would appear that whereas the Cold War era marked the confluence of clear values *and* distinct interests, reflected in instrumental policy-making, the post-Cold War period has seen the

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<sup>69</sup> See Chandler, *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-Building* (London: Pluto, 2006).

<sup>70</sup> Laïdi, *A World without Meaning*, 95.



collapse of a value/interest framework, leading increasingly to ad hoc, non-instrumentalist policy-making.

## Conclusion

International policy-making in the post-Cold War era would therefore seem to be an idealised projection of the Western self, rather than the instrumental projection of strategic interests. Power is being projected internationally, but this is the production of ‘hollow hegemony’. Western hegemony is increasingly a hollow one, lacking the content and purpose reflected in and reproduced through a cohering framework of values and interests. The implications of these idealised reflections of elite incapacity, at the root of moralised visions of the international sphere, cannot be captured unless a theoretical framework is developed which goes beyond the value-based discourses of policy actors, grounding an understanding in the materiality of the real lived experiences of policy elites. What this reveals is that, counter-intuitively perhaps, international politics is becoming less ‘global’ and, in fact, more inward-looking and solipsistic.<sup>71</sup> The retreat to ethical or value-based forms of legitimising policy is a reflection of the rejection of long-term strategic policy-making and the desire to disavow political responsibility when interventions are made.<sup>72</sup>

The shift from interests to values reflects governing elites’ highly limited perception of their capacity to engage instrumentally in the outside world. It is this lack of capacity which explains why Western elites seem to be more interested in policy declarations of intent than practical outcomes. This is borne out in the rejection of traditional instrumental forms of policy-making and policy judgements, with the act itself being judged on the basis of ‘good intentions’ rather than results.<sup>73</sup> This is clearly reflected in the ‘war on terror’, where despite the Manichean language of good

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<sup>71</sup> Highlighted by the ongoing crisis over the role of government foreign offices’ in policy-making. See, for example, Charles Grant and Mark Leonard’s interview with Michael Jay, *Prospect* no.126 (September 2006): 26–8. See also, Chandler, ‘Building Global Civil Society “from Below”’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no.2 (2004): 313–39.

<sup>72</sup> This approach is termed ‘anti-foreign policy’ in Heins and Chandler, ‘Ethics and Foreign Policy’, 13.

<sup>73</sup> See further Max Weber’s useful distinction between the ‘ethics of responsibility’ and the ‘ethics of conviction’, ‘Politics as a Vocation’, in Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, ed. David Owen (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 2004), 83.

and evil and the call for international collaboration, there seems to be no framework which can give policy-making a structure and purpose beyond declaratory statements. As the former US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, famously commented, there are no metrics to measure success or failure in what is speculatively being called the 'Long War'.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, in the human security and development-security nexus policy discussions there is a notable lack of any coherent framework for policy-planning or assessment.<sup>75</sup>

Once we 'ascend from earth to heaven' in an attempt to ground the shift towards values in a material context, it becomes clear that the relationship between interests and ideas is a much more mediated one than that expressed in either the Realist or Post-Realist reading of values as an expression of hegemonic interests or the radical separation between interests and value-based policy-making made by Constructivists. We are witnessing neither the interest-based projection of hegemonic power nor the value-led challenge to hegemony and traditional forms of power. Rather, idealised policy discourses and practices reflect today's 'hollow hegemony' - the hollowing-out of the traditional frameworks of meaning which reflected and structured Western power.

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<sup>74</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, 'Rumsfeld's War-on-Terror Memo', 16 October 2003. Available at: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> For example, an International Peace Academy panel discussion on the incoherence of the 'security-development nexus' concluded that 'a model or rationale that would justify the ever-expanding mandates of security and development institutions was still needed', International Peace Academy, 'Strengthening the Security-Development Nexus: Assessing International Policy and Practice Since the 1990s' (New York: IPA, April 2004).