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Introduction

Until relatively recently, Western foreign policy as pursued by major states and international institutions was cohered by the project of furthering the national interest. National interests were conceived in terms of the geo-political framework of the cold war, in which development and financial aid were granted on the basis of the political allegiances of governing elites or on their ability to pay back loans from international financial institutions. In the 1990s, the policies of both national governments and international institutions underwent substantial changes. The pursuit of 'narrow' views of national and financial interest was transformed by the development of what were seen as 'ethical' policy-making frameworks. Broader, 'people-centred', security and development concerns came to the fore which questioned established foreign policy approaches and the structural adjustment policies of the World Bank and the IMF. Emphasis was, instead, placed on promoting the democracy, human rights, and social and welfare needs of other populations.

This chapter argues that, since the end of the 1990s, we have witnessed a convergence of both national foreign policy and international financial institutional frameworks, a new shared agenda, which has taken the human-centred developments of 'ethical foreign policy' to a new level of engagement with non-Western states: one where interest-based frameworks of understanding the international sphere no longer appear to have any firm purchase. Whether the issue of concern is post-9/11 security threats or the pursuit of the poverty and development agenda, the policies forwarded tend to focus on mechanisms of capacity-building and social empowerment, targeted at non-Western states and societies. The needs of non-Western states and societies would seem to have assumed centre

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stage. Today, the language of 'interests' has been superseded by that of Other-regarding ethics which appears to have taken the politics of power and interests out of foreign policy.

For some commentators, the focus on the needs of others is, indeed, potentially empowering for non-Western states and their citizens, many of whom are currently excluded from the new globalizing order; for others, the language of capacity-building and empowerment merely hides the traditional practices of empire. This chapter analyses how Other-regarding practices constitute highly invasive forms of external regulation but suggests that these practices cannot be fully understood merely as mechanisms designed to enforce the traditional self-interest of Western actors. Instead, the new centrality of the 'Other' in ethical foreign policy practices is considered as a central construct of *Empire in Denial*: the attempt by Western states and international institutions to deny the power that they wield and to evade accountability for its exercise.

From Schmitt to Lévinas: the primacy of the Other

In 2005 it was not the war on terror which occupied the international summits and meetings of the European Union, the UN, the World Bank, the IMF, the G8 and the World Trade Organization, but the global causes of poverty reduction, debt cancellation and international aid. The focus on the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the international campaign to 'Make Poverty History' has mobilized people, non-governmental organizations, governments, and international institutions around an ethical foreign policy that has been much less divisive than that of humanitarian war and intervention. In Britain alone, ten million people bought white wristbands, while across the globe it is estimated that three billion people watched the Live 8 concerts (Hertz, 2005). It would seem that the international agenda had been transformed in a way that would have been unlikely according to traditional views of foreign policy priorities.

In traditional political understandings of international relations, the formulation of foreign policy was based upon the self-interest of states and the international sphere was one in which these interests were articulated (see, for example, the key texts of post-Second World War international relations theory, Morgenthau, 1993; Waltz, 1979; Bull, 1995). Conceptual frameworks for analysing foreign policy and international relations were based on clear conceptions of power politics, the interests of states, and calculations of geo-

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political, strategic and economic interests. States were understood as the political subjects of international relations and to be acting on a rationalist understanding of their interests (Smith, 2001). The interests of states were, therefore, particularist and exclusivist ones, derived from their own societies, and potentially counter-posed to those of other states in a 'friend/enemy' framework which Carl Schmitt understood to be the essence of politics (Schmitt, 1976: 35). For Schmitt, it was the fear of the Other, the potential threat posed by the Other, which generated political community and constituted and legitimized political authority. There could be no international politics, no inclusive national Self without the excluded foreign Other (see Mouffe, 2005).

Today, the international sphere is no longer understood as constructed in the relationship of Self and Other. The Other has been transformed and is now increasingly represented as both the agent and object of foreign policy while the Self has been greatly diminished. 'Our interests' or 'national interests' are no longer central to the construction or the legitimization of foreign policy practices. Where national interests appear in the speeches of Western leaders and in policy documents they are generally constructed as secondary, achieved as the by-product of meeting the security and development needs of the Other. There is no longer a context of 'friend/enemy': the Other – the object of foreign policy – is more likely to be defined on the basis of needs. Even where the language of threats is used, the threat is not a traditional one but is framed in the context of unmet needs: the threat stemming from the weakness and incapacity of the Other (see, for example, Abrahamsen, 2005). Even more remarkably, the Other has increasingly assumed the role of the subject or agent of policy, with 'pro-poor' policy-making, African 'leadership' and 'country ownership' of World Bank and IMF poverty-reduction strategies.

The Other has become central to frameworks of international policy-making at precisely the point when Western leadership faces the collapse of obstacles to the spread of democracy and the market with the end of the cold war. Yet, since 1989, it would appear that the victory of the West has been increasingly talked down. Rather than the possibilities that have opened up with 'The End of History' – the collapse of alternatives to Western hegemony – it seems that just at the point where the promissory notes are to be cashed the game has changed (Fukuyama, 1989). The ideological mainstays of the cold war, the belief in the capacities for political and economic progress have been increasingly undermined and disparaged. It is not

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just that democracy and development have been reinterpreted and ambitions lowered, to take into account the newly discovered constraints of global norms of good governance and the need for environmental and social sustainability – even the location of power and responsibility appear to have shifted. Rather than grasping the opportunities to positively reshape a new international order in the wake of cold war division, Western states and international institutions would appear to be embarrassed by their power and influence.

Rather than asserting power in a confident fashion, the West's interaction with the non-Western world takes the form of a denial. It will be suggested below that Western denial of responsibility and accountability in relation to the non-Western world is resulting in the development of new mechanisms of intervention and regulation which separate policy-making power from political discussion and debate. Agency and responsibility are located increasingly in the Other – non-Western states and societies – while the power of Western states and international institutions is increasingly understated. In this context of denial and evasion, it would appear that Western states and international institutions have taken postmodern ethics to heart in their claims to be acting on the basis of their 'responsibilities to the Other' rather than being guided by self-interest (for example, Der Derian, 1995). The leading theorist of 'Other-regarding' ethics in the twentieth century was Emmanuel Lévinas who argued that legitimacy should be derived from our 'fear *for* the Other': that the rights of a subject derived from ethical responsibilities to the Other (Lévinas, 1989: 82). For Lévinas, ethics preceded politics and – in the formulation of putting responsibilities to the Other prior to the freedom of the Self – he inverted Schmitt's conception of foreign policy-making and political identity. As David Campbell notes: 'Lévinas's thought is appealing for rethinking the question of responsibility . . . because it maintains that there is no circumstance under which we could declare that it was not our concern' (Campbell, 1998b: 176). Putting responsibility before self-interest and ethics prior to politics fundamentally reworks traditional conceptions of foreign policy priorities.

Western states and international institutions appear less as external or coercive forces and more as facilitators, empowerers and capacity-builders. This form of ethical foreign policy has obfuscated the projection of Western power – making the projection of power appear as an act of empowerment rather than of domination – and, in the process, has transformed the appearance of the international sphere from one of power, coercion, and contestation into one where it

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appears that non-Western states have 'ownership' of policies that are externally imposed and where it is the poorest and most excluded sections of non-Western societies that are the agents of policy.

More needs, less interests and less accountability

With the end of the cold war, questions were posed over the legitimization of Western hegemonic power in the international sphere. Security interests, so dominant in the cold war – in a clearly expressed struggle between two different superpower-led blocs with different ideological aims – waned as a justification for interventionist and regulatory frameworks through which the exercise of Western power could be articulated (see, for example, Laïdi, 1998). Problems of the articulation of a positive self-interest, as opposed to the expression of self-interest as a struggle for cold war survival, were difficult to address for Western political elites. Western governments and leading political parties had increasingly little connection with their own societies and were undergoing their own struggle to reconceive their political purpose and coherence in the wake of the crumbling political framework of Left and Right. In this context, a positive political programme that could allow Western elites to take political responsibility for their international dominance proved illusive.

In the cold war period, national interests in the West were fairly easily articulated against the security threat of the communist Other (Laïdi, 1998; Campbell, 1998a). A diverse range of values and aspirations were tied into this dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' and the underlying problems of articulating a positive collective vision (expressed clearly in the anti-Vietnam war protests and 'Culture Wars' from the late 1960s onwards) were ameliorated as long as the cold war framework held (see Coker, 2001). With the end of the cold war, it was much more difficult to both substantiate the basis of the common interests expressed in national foreign policy-making and the basis upon which any distinction could be made between an 'us' and a 'them'.

In the absence of the geo-political divide of the cold war, the foreign policy interests of Western political elites increasingly appeared as narrow ones of self-interest: the narrow political concerns of supporting political allies in other countries or the promotion of the interests of big banks and corporations in protecting their loans and investments. The everyday concerns and interests of foreign policy-makers appeared to be very distant from those of the public. Nevertheless, the international sphere became increasingly central to

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the self-identity of Western governments. It was in relation to the international that political elites sought to address the question of mission and coherence that was increasingly problematic in the domestic sphere. In the 1990s, concerns of human rights and practices of humanitarian intervention, particularly in the Balkans, made international policy-making central to the process of defining the values of US and British governments. In the words of Michael Ignatieff:

when policy was driven by moral motives, it was often driven by narcissism. We intervened not only to save others, but to save ourselves, or rather an image of ourselves as defenders of universal decencies. We wanted to show that the West 'meant' something.

(1998: 95)

It was the distance that the international sphere provided that enabled values and higher aims to be more easily articulated (see Morgenthau, 1993: 49). Governments could declare their commitments to ethical causes which appeared to remove the accusation of petty self-interestedness and restore a sense of larger purpose (see Chandler, 2003). At the same time, the distance involved meant that there was less accountability if ethical foreign policy interventions failed to achieve their aims. As Ignatieff described, the attraction of ethical foreign policy was that there was always the get out clause, the moral exculpation, of 'we tried but they failed' (1998: 99).

The experience of using foreign policy to achieve largely self-serving domestic ends – of outlining a larger purpose and mission to government – was a mixed one. The distance and mediations of the international sphere were not adequate to enable governments to entirely avoid responsibility for the consequences of their interventions. In fact, the attempt to argue that 'we tried but they failed' was met with demands that we should not 'allow' them to fail and that the ethical imperative of meeting the needs of Others should not be restricted by outdated views of international law and should extend beyond impartial aid provision or neutral peacekeeping and even beyond a limited commitment to the 'risk-free' use of armed forces which prevented the deployment of ground forces (see, for example, Kaldor, 1998; Ignatieff, 2000; Wheeler, 2000). The clear power imbalance between Western powers and non-Western states made it difficult to avoid 'mission creep' – the extension of overt forms of regulatory control. Yet, the more international mandates

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and remits were extended, the more the problems of matching ethical aspirations to results in practice were exposed. The 1990s experience of Somalia, Bosnia, and then of Kosovo, demonstrated the problems of taking direct responsibility for the outcomes of international intervention (a lesson that was reinforced with the debacle of the Coalition Provisional Administration in Iraq).

The ethical discourse of the 1990s was still clearly a discourse of 'us' and 'them' and suggested that only a select group of interventionist Western states were ethical enough to safeguard the interests of others (see also, Held, 1995: 232; Shaw, 1994: 180–1; Kaldor, 1998). The political responsibility was firmly placed on the shoulders of the intervening powers who inevitably failed to live up to the expectations generated by the rejection of traditional interests for Other-orientated ethical values. The defensive shift away from attempts to articulate interests merely resulted in strengthening the critique that it was the narrow self-interests of Western powers that prevented greater consistency in the practise of ethical foreign policy. In the 1990s, ethical foreign policy practices, particularly humanitarian intervention, came under sustained criticism for not being ethical enough. Not enough concern was held to be expressed with regard to intervening and providing support to fragile societies prior to collapse and civil conflict and neither was there felt to be adequate concern paid to post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building. These concerns were broadly articulated in the Brahimi report on UN peacekeeping reform in 2000 (UN, 2000) and in the ICISS *Responsibility to Protect* report, at the end of 2001, which called for greater attention to the 'responsibility to prevent' and the 'responsibility to rebuild' (ICISS, 2001).

Since the late 1990s, the ethical grounding of 'liberal imperialism' has been challenged from within (Cooper, 2002). It has been Western states and international institutions that have made the running in shifting away from the antagonistic and divisive ethics of the 'interventionist' 1990s. In the 1990s, selected concerns of human rights and selective practices of humanitarian intervention seemed to conflict with Western self-interest and highlight these self-interests as a limiting factor. Other-regarding ethics in the following decade have recast the relations of Self and Other. The promises and aspirations on the part of the Western states, donors and international institutions have become much more ambitious than the selective ethical goals of the 1990s. In the following decade, the ethical claims multiplied exponentially, to 'saving Africa', 'eradicating poverty',

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‘combating HIV/AIDS’ and ‘promoting education/health/women’s equality/youth rights everywhere’. In this extension of the object of need – in fact, in the universalizing of this object – there is the appearance, at least, of a genuinely global agenda based on the needs of ‘common humanity’. Central to this has been the merging of the self-interested concerns of security and the Other-regarding concerns of development and poverty reduction. This has led to the expansion of the ethical focus to the needs of a generalized Other.

The merging of development and security can be seen in the origination and the mainstreaming of the conception of ‘human security’ in the 1990s. First emerging with the holistic paradigm of human development articulated in the early 1990s within the UN Development Programme by Mahbub ul Haq, originator of the Human Development Reports, first issued in 1990, and given intellectual foundation by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (see, for example, Sen, 1999). The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) *Human Development Report 1994* was the first major international document to articulate the emerging consensus on the merging of security and development: the shift away from security perceived as the protection of Self- (national) interest to the needs (economic, health, environmental, security, etc.) of the Other (UNDP, 1994: 22–5). In the late 1990s, the human security approach was increasingly mainstreamed by national governments and international institutions. In 2001, Sen chaired the International Commission on Human Security established by the UN. The 2003 commission report, *Human Security Now*, asserted that human security was not merely about meeting the security needs of the Other rather than the Self, but about empowering the Other (UN, 2003: 2). With the merging of security and development in the discourse of human security, the relations of power and interest are erased as the ‘freedom’ and ‘empowerment’ of the Other take centre stage. As Gordon Brown, the UK government’s Chancellor of the Exchequer, has argued: ‘A century ago people talked of “What we could do to Africa”. Last century, it was “What can we do for Africa?” Now in 2006, we must ask what the developing world, empowered, can do for itself’ (Brown, 2006).

It is ‘fear *for* the Other’ as much as ‘fear *of* the Other’ that is alleged to drive the foreign policy of ethics rather than interests. The common aspect is that of fear, but this should not blind us to the fundamental difference between foreign policies driven by a rational state subject to meet politically and ideologically cohered ends, and foreign policy in which the policy maker has disappeared as a rational

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subjective actor and merely reacts to the threats of the Other or acts only as facilitator and empowerer with no articulated and clear agenda or mission of its own. The less clearly articulated any foreign policy aims are the more needs and threats blur into an amorphous mass of Otherness.

This explains the prevalent approach where all problems are related to each other: poverty leads to human rights vulnerability and instability; insecurity from war or terrorism undermines economic development; and good governance, which safeguards human rights, helps prevent conflict and overcome obstacles to development (UN, 2005: 5–6). Everyone is exposed to these risks and, therefore, all actors (state or non-state) share the same interest in addressing them. Acting in enlightened self-interest, therefore, means acknowledging the needs of Others. Global cooperation means that 'every country's policies take into account not only the needs of its own citizens but also the needs of others' (UN, 2005: 6).

The greater, and more universal, the needs of the Other, the less focus there has been upon the Western Self. Rather than coercively highlighting particular examples, ethical projections of Western power have shifted to highlighting much more general problems, such as 'failed' and 'failing' states, poverty and exclusion. The Other has become generalized, less as a Schmittian threat, more as a generalized Lévinasian need; a need that is so great that no country can alone take the responsibility for acting upon this ethical imperative. With the extension of 'needs' both the interests of Western powers and their particular or individual responsibility or accountability have been eroded.

From external relations to partners in governance

The ethical goals expressed in the mantra of development, security and human rights are writ large and express the ethical imperative of responsibility to Others while lacking a concrete, high-profile focus that could entail a risk of more awkward questions being posed of Western governments. It seems that there is a division of responsibility; while the declaration of these ambitious goals is the task of government leaders, often made at inter-governmental forums, the translation of these abstract goals into policy is taken out of the political sphere of international relations. At the country-to-country level there has been a marked shift in emphasis away from foreign policy-making, or the articulation of clear external interests, to partnership assistance in the form of technical and administrative advice and

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expertise in state-building: strengthening, empowering and capacity-building non-Western state institutions.

It is the need to externally transform the governance of non-Western states which is the central theme that emerges from the global needs-based agenda. As UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's Commission for Africa report, *Our Common Interest*, states:

Africa's history over the last fifty years has been blighted by two areas of weakness. These have been capacity – the ability to design and deliver policies; and accountability – how well a state answers to its people. Improvements in both are first and foremost the responsibility of African countries and people. But action by rich nations is essential too . . . Without progress in governance, all other reforms will have limited impact.

(CFA, 2005: 14)

The UN 2005 Sachs report on the implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals, similarly argued that poor governance in non-Western states and the lack of state capacity were the key reasons for ongoing problems in meeting the Goals and suggested greater attention to capacity-building state institutions (UNMP, 2005: 43). External capacity-building would, therefore, build on the aid given to countries that qualify for assistance under the US Millennium Challenge Account, have been involved in the HIPC process, are engaged in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) or have World Bank and IMF approval under the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) process. As the UN notes:

However well crafted on paper, investment strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals will not work in practice unless supported by States with transparent, accountable systems of governance, grounded in the rule of law, encompassing civil and political as well as economic and social rights, and underpinned by accountable and efficient public administration. Many of the poorest countries will need major capacity-building investments to put in place and maintain the necessary infrastructure and to train and employ qualified personnel. But without good governance, strong institutions and a clear commitment to rooting out corruption and mismanagement wherever it is found, broader progress will prove elusive.

(UN, 2005: 13)

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Partnerships, with the goal of good governance and the capacity-building of non-Western states, are the framework through which the pursuit of ethical aspirations assumes the form of consensual mechanisms of the empowerment of Others. In this framework it is assumed that there are no political 'interests' involved, in the case of either Western states, donors and institutions or non-Western states. The Commission for Africa calls for 'a new kind of partnership', one that is no longer based on conflicting interests but technocratic management: 'In the past, contractual and conditional approaches were tried, and failed. What we are suggesting is a new kind of development, based on mutual respect and solidarity, and rooted in a sound analysis of what actually works' (CFA, 2005: 17).

In this regard it is often held that '[d]onors must change their behaviour and support the national priorities of African governments rather than allowing their own procedures and special enthusiasms to undermine the building of a country's own capacity' (CFA, 2005: 14). New approaches to good governance are held to stand 'in marked contrast to the approach of the 1980s and much of the 1990s, when aid was often . . . aimed primarily at advancing the interests of the donor (CFA, 2005: 94). Aid was often 'tied', coming with a requirement to buy goods or services from the donor country, which often led to aid being expended on unsuitable or high-cost outlays (CFA, 2005: 92). As UK Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn stated in 2005, the key concern of the UK government was to 'make a clean break from past practice which sought to enforce particular policy choices' (Benn, 2005: 1). The UK Department for International Development has particularly emphasized the importance of intervention to 'support policy leadership by developing countries without imposing our own views' (DFID, 2005: iii):

In recent years the UK has been moving away from traditional approaches to conditionality. We believe that it is inappropriate and has proven to be ineffective for donors to impose policies on developing countries. Instead, we believe that successful aid relationships must be based on mutual commitment and dialogue, transparency and accountability.

(DFID, 2005: 4)

The Monterrey summit and subsequent UN documents have been very quick to highlight that 'each developing country has primary responsibility for its own development' (for example, UN, 2005: 12).

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‘Country ownership’ has been central to post-1990s calls for ethical people-centred policy interventions. As the Commission for Africa report claims in its introduction:

Our starting point was the recognition that Africa must drive its own development. Rich nations should support that, because it is in our common interest to make the world a more prosperous and secure place . . . But what is clear is that if Africa does not create the right conditions for development, then any amount of outside support will fail.

(CFA, 2005: 1)

The idea of African ‘ownership’ through international ‘partnership’ has been the motivating factor behind regional as well as national initiatives. In this regard, the New Partnership for African Development, established in 2001, has been widely welcomed by Western governments as ‘the most significant thing that has come out of Africa . . . because it is an African made, African owned and African driven process’ (Benn, 2003: 7). The US aid and development policies operate on a similar basis of promoting external engagement as a product of developing country-led partnership. Partnership is the key principle of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), established in 2004, and is heralded as one of the lessons learned from development aid over the past fifty years:

Operate as Partners: Working closely with the MCC [Millennium Challenge Corporation], countries that receive MCA assistance will be responsible for identifying the greatest barriers to their own development, ensuring civil society participation, and developing an MCA program. MCA participation will require a high-level commitment from the host government. Each MCA country will enter into a public Compact with the MCC that includes a multi-year plan for achieving development objectives and identifies the responsibilities of each partner in achieving those objectives.

(MCA, 2005)

In the past, the relationship of external donors and non-Western states was a contractual one between two or more ‘partners’. Contractual relations at the level of state governments made the lending and grant conditions the subject of international relations, i.e., they were officially negotiated between independent contracting

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subjects. This clarity and separation of international and domestic accountability has become increasingly blurred. Graham Harrison has used the term 'post-conditionality' to describe this blurring of the 'outside' and the 'inside' (2001):

post-conditionality [is] one aspect of the politics of adjustment, a more encompassing framework which is based on the ongoing power of the IFIs [international financial institutions] by virtue of the 'permanent crisis' of indebtedness . . . post-conditionality is . . . a useful characterization of a set of significant developments within donor-state relations, based on . . . forms of donor intervention which are not merely based on the threat of sanction which is at the heart of the conditionality mechanism.

(Harrison, 2001: 658)

Overt and clearly stated contractual relations between non-Western states and Western states and international institutions, such as those under the World Bank and IMF structural adjustment programmes, open the relationship to political accountability, bringing responsibility to bear on both the non-Western government and the bilateral or international donor. The Commission for Africa argues that:

We do not advocate a partnership where there is a narrow set of specific contracts between African countries and outside bodies. That risks becoming adversarial and unpredictable and does not show the trust and mutual respect which is vital for a deep partnership to work. Similarly a partnership based on heavy conditionality set by outsiders will fail. It too is destined to lose the solidarity which should bind a partnership together. The binding forces must be solidarity and mutual respect.

(CFA, 2005: 89)

Here, the informal mechanisms of post-conditionality are argued for on the grounds of trust and respect for the Other, but the Commission's report also suggests other grounds for avoiding the formal contractual relationship – the fact that 'excessive conditionality together with demands for constant reporting risk making African governments feel more accountable to foreign donors than to their own people' (CFA, 2005: 92). If non-Western governments 'felt' that they were more accountable to external actors and were highly conscious of their limited capacity to further the interests of

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their societies against these external pressures, this was because the mechanisms of external pressure were clear. Under more informal mechanisms, where external pressures operate within the policy-making processes of the non-Western state, rather than at the level of sovereignty – where governments have to publicly confront external actors – political clarification of the role of external influence is prevented.

External intervention is exercised in ways that blur traditional understandings of external and internal interests. Donor engagement no longer confronts non-Western states solely as an external imposition but as internal capacity-building, through a much closer and more intimate engagement with governing institutions, especially Ministries of Finance. Harrison acutely observes that the orthodox internal-external distinctions are less useful and that the ‘national-international boundary has been rendered so much more porous’ (2001: 661). The extension of the ‘non-political’ technocratic ethics of the World Bank to the fields of good governance and state capacity-building has meant the depoliticizing of, and external regulatory intervention in, areas once considered to be the preserve of domestic regimes.

External regimes of governance have become internalized through state capacity-building in conjunction with debt reduction or increases in external aid in exchange for a more direct role for external actors in domestic policy processes. For example, in July 2005, the Paris Club of rich Western countries announced the biggest single debt relief in Africa’s history with a plan to exchange Nigeria’s foreign debt for the international regulation of its government’s spending. Central to this was the establishment of a key policy coordination role for Nigeria’s Millennium Development Committee. The committee, chaired by the president, Olusegun Obasanjo, internationalized the domestic policy-making process in Nigeria by including representatives of the World Bank and IMF along with representatives from international NGOs Action Aid and Oxfam (Elliott and Wintour, 2005). In the case of international development, capacity-building has often been focused on the Ministry of Finance. In Uganda and Tanzania, for example, the Ministry of Finance has received a lion’s share of external funding for administrative reform programmes which have focused both on ‘soft’ capacities, i.e., the administrative and technical skills training of personnel, and ‘hard’ capacities, i.e., information systems and technologies. This external support has enabled the Finance Ministry to become the most powerful sector of government, in terms of capacity and influence

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(the Ministries of the Interior, in contrast, lack computerized systems and access to reliable information) (Harrison, 2001: 664–6). It is the sectors of government that have been capacity-built which are, then, the main conduits for external influence, leading the negotiations with the international financial institutions and being the authorizing authorities for all project and programme funding regardless of the policy sector involved.

The process of capacity-building goes beyond the restructuring of government ministries to direct regulatory control over the policy-making process itself:

In fact, rather than conceptualizing donor power as a strong external force on the state, it would be more useful to conceive of donors as part of the state itself. This is not just because so much of the budgeting process is contingent on the receipt of donor finance, but also because of the way programmes and even specific policies are designed and executed . . . [D]onor sub-groups meet [with government officials] every fortnight or every month . . .; there is a group for each major industry which receives donor funding . . . the purposes of which are to discuss policy progress, monitor the disbursement of funds, and consider further funding options. These meetings have become a routine part of the way the government works . . .

(Harrison, 2001: 669)

In this context, it is difficult to conceive of the institutions of many non-Western states as having a 'domestic' existence. The civil service is trained and assisted by external experts and produces reports not just for government ministers but also for external donors and international institutions and foreign states. The government ministries develop policy in close cooperation with external bodies and often with the policy aim of influencing these authorities to continue or to extend their assistance. The institutions and mechanisms of governance of non-Western states are often no longer in any sense separable from the international mechanisms of governance with which they are engaged.

As Harrison notes, the focus on good governance and non-Western state capacity as the key to development and security 'lays culpability for the general failure of adjustment on the states themselves, not on SAP [Structural Adjustment Programmes], or the nature of global economic change' (2001: 660). As Western governments and international institutions, then, have little responsibility for political

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decision-making or accountability for outcomes – the everyday management of foreign policy and foreign development aid is a task of bureaucrats and administrative experts. And, if they fail, this does not reflect on the Western states and institutions involved. As Michael Ignatieff argues in his more recent work, with Simon Chesterman and Ramesh Thakur:

States cannot be made to work from the outside. International assistance may be necessary, but it is never sufficient to establish institutions that are legitimate and sustainable . . . international action should be seen first and foremost as facilitating local processes, providing resources and creating the space for local actors . . .

(Chesterman *et al.*, 2005b: 384)

For these authors the ‘key insight is that states cannot be made to work from the outside’ and they stress that ‘for international actors, this is a humbling conclusion’ which puts the emphasis on the local actors who must ‘seize responsibility – “ownership” in the present jargon’ (Chesterman *et al.*, 2005a: 9). The emphasis is on non-Western states to bear the accountability in the case of their failure to live up to the ambitious ethical claims made by Western states and international institutions.

The projection of Western power takes the form of a non-political discourse, where political interests are held to be subservient to the technical expertise of administration, focused on the objective of facilitating, empowering and capacity-building non-Western states. Most importantly, the desire to deny Western influence and agency means that non-Western state institutions are increasingly colonized by external policy actors as international institutions seek to informalize their role in policy-making. This creates artificial state institutions that have a much more attenuated relationship with their own societies but also little influence with regard to policy-negotiations with external actors. The close liaison between international institutions and international NGOs and leading government ministries has been driven by the informalization of the regulatory process and the desire to avoid an open inter-governmental discussion of economic policy. It is this desire for evasion that would appear to be driving the shift from international to domestic discussion and the focus on state capacity, rather than any shift in the content of the policies or any desire to open up policy-making to wider consultation and involvement.

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Despite the rhetoric of 'country ownership' there has been little change in the basic policy approach of international institutions, or, of course, in the power relations involved. All national PRSPs must first be screened by joint-staff assessments from the staff of the World Bank and IMF. The approval of PRSPs is the fundamental condition for securing credit extensions, grants and debt relief, from other donors as well as new credits under the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) – the successor to the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility – and the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Support Credits (Rowden and Irama, 2004: 7–12). It would appear that the state capacity-building impetus stems from the need to present the process as one of partnership or poor state 'leadership' and 'country ownership' rather than Western imposition.

The shift from the projection of Western influence as a coercive external relation to a relationship of domestic partnership, removes the emphasis on external accountability for policy and its outcomes. This has made state-building the central sphere of intervention for Western assertions of ethical purpose or mission and, in the course of this process, both the foreign policy-making of Western states and the political sphere of non-Western states have been increasingly reduced to narrow technocratic and administrative concerns. The governance sphere of non-Western states is both the target for Western Other-regarding interventions and the excuse for ethical rhetoric not being matched by reality.

The participatory imperative

Power legitimated on the basis of the needs of the Other has resulted in new mechanisms and practices of legitimization. Many of these have sprung from the participatory imperative, the externally imposed need not just to claim 'country ownership' but also to demonstrate that the policies that are 'owned' are derived from the participation and consultation of those in need. Country-ownership it appears is not enough to distance policy-making in the West from the responsibilities of power. At the same time as non-Western states are becoming increasingly infiltrated by external agencies and core areas of governance internationalized, the ethical discourse of Western regulation stresses the 'opening up of new spaces for participation' and the increasing accountability and transparency of non-Western state policy-making. While good governance is increasingly being redefined as pro-poor accountability and efficiency, politics is increasingly displaced in non-Western states by externally framed spending

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plans which insist on 'needs-based' and 'goal-orientated' policy-making. Ironically, the more artificial the 'partnership' between the international institutions and the non-Western state the more the process of denial is extended, pushing the dynamic of capacity-building and empowerment into societies themselves.

In the past, the demand for public consultation and participation in policy-making was proclaimed by social movements that sought to challenge the interests of powerful elites and to forward popular interests. Today, it is Western states and international financial institutions that are leading the demand for the extension of participation in the political process, for transparency and for consultation. It is important to recognize that the participatory framework which is being institutionalized under external guidance has little connection with forms of political participation being generated from within non-Western states themselves. The shift towards participatory regimes of needs assessment, policy consultation, and monitoring of implementation comes from external institutions seeking to legitimize their technocratic agendas ethically informed by the focus on those socially and economically excluded. As the UN Sachs report outlines, the integration of poverty reduction with the Millennium Development Goals necessitates the mapping out of needs according to locality and gender, followed by needs assessments which then have to be worked up into a framework of policy deliverables; the process from start to finish depending on an accountable and efficient public administration which involves participation, 'especially by poor people' (UNMP, 2005: 36).

The 'Other-regarding' ethics of Empire in Denial insist that today's regulatory 'package is not to be applied in a top-down fashion', but instead be 'designed locally with strong participation' and even emphasizes 'the importance of culture in shaping development goals and instruments' (CFA, 2005: 95). Rather than an external influence on the affairs of non-Western governments, pro-poor intervention is couched in the language of empowerment, against the 'interests' of both Western 'experts' and non-Western governing elites and favouring the traditionally excluded voices of women and youth (CFA, 2005: 141). International NGOs, such as Oxfam, Save the Children and Concern International, have been heavily supported by bilateral donors, such as USAID and DFID, in their capacity-building work. Participatory poverty assessments (PPAs) and poverty and social impact analyses (PSIAs) are often held to inform policy practices and put the needs of 'the poor' to the forefront. As Jeremy

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Gould and Julia Ojanen note: 'The legitimacy of post-SAP policies is being sought through the establishment of direct channels of communication between the policy elite and "the poor" – a sort of "fast-track" democracy based on localized forms of "participatory" and "consultative" interaction (2003: 15).

The participatory framework, focused on consensus around technical 'pro-poor' approaches, ensures that little disagreement is possible. As David Craig and Doug Porter note:

PRSPs provide a unique framing of poverty apparently amenable to diverse, often conflicting interests – in their preparation, ministries of finance sit together with ministries of local government, education or social welfare, and bilateral donors and IFIs commune with representatives of local and international NGOs, engineering contractors and private entrepreneurs. But the PRSP aims to be far more than a forum for exchange about priorities; rather, in practice, PRSPs must be administered according to globally prescribed budget management and accountability arrangements through which available resources are, and are seen to be, converted into measurable changes in agreed indicators of need. PRSP re-framing of poverty, via the combination of poverty assessments, macro-planning and budgeting with debt relief, plurally-funded poverty alleviation approaches and decentralized governance is now a fact of life in the bulk of poor countries . . .

(2002: 10)

The context and the top-down nature of the participatory imperatives would have to be ignored for these schemes to be made out to be more than decorative measures. As discussed above, the framework is premised on the prior acceptance of a range of policies and reforms deemed necessary for debt sustainability and the acceptance that the debt-relief will be channelled into 'pro-poor' frameworks. The fact that these frameworks are then held to be decided by participatory mechanisms of decision-making seeks to obscure the relations of policy-making power. PRSPs are held to enhance 'country ownership' of economic and adjustment and reform programmes but as Craig and Porter note, they are a means of ensuring the depoliticization of the policy process, taking poverty reduction outside the formal relations of government, through ring-fencing resources to particular needs in accordance with negotiated agreements (2002).

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Conclusion

Many commentators focus on the power relations behind the new 'consensual' approaches (for example, Pender, 2005; Fraser, 2005; Harrison, 2004; Abrahamsen, 2004). However, the question that this chapter has sought to address is not whether power relations exist but, rather, why the exercise of power is expressed in these specific practices; why the mechanisms of regulation take the form they do. In doing this it has engaged with the Other-regarding ethics that appear to be increasingly influential in shaping Western foreign policy. It has suggested that Western governments and international institutions find it difficult to justify and legitimize their power of regulation over non-Western states, especially where the power relations are so clearly unequal, as with Africa.

It is in response to the current crisis of confidence in Western authority and purpose that there has been a rethinking of Western development policies and a shift towards much more informal relations of regulation, which have enabled greater levels of interference in non-Western states but also enabled Western policy-makers to shift the burden of responsibility for policy outcomes.

The ethics of the Other have enabled the past problems to be rewritten as ones of non-Western state-governing capacity at the same time as denying accountability for present policy strictures. Paradoxically, the attempt to deny power and accountability has driven the extension of external mechanisms of regulation. The reason for this is that needs-based, as opposed to interest-based, legitimacy has depended on the engagement with and, essentially, the creation of the Lévinasian Other in order to legitimize the Western Self. In order for the Other to be given the task of 'policy leadership' it needs to be artificially given shape and externally capacity-built. This process, as considered above, cannot be easily contained. The capacity-building dynamic necessarily extends from the non-Western state to non-Western societies as the Other-regarding ethical imperative of intervention demands legitimacy. This dynamic is key to understanding the particular form that Western regulation and the projection of Western power often assumes today.

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