

# The security–development nexus and the rise of ‘anti-foreign policy’

David Chandler

Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster, 32–38 Wells Street, London W1T 3UW, UK.

E-mail: D.Chandler@Westminster.ac.uk

Current debates and discussions of the emerging security–development nexus tend to portray this as signifying the increased importance of the problems of non-Western states to Western policy-makers. This article seeks to challenge this perspective and analyses how the policy ‘nexus’ reflects a retreat from strategic policy-making and a more inward-looking approach to foreign policy, more concerned with self-image than the policy consequences in the areas concerned. Rather than demonstrating a new seriousness of approach to tackling the security and development problems of the non-Western world, the discussions around this framework betray the separation between policy rhetoric and policy planning. This reflects the rise of *anti-foreign policy*: attempts to use the international sphere as an arena for self-referential statements of political mission and purpose, decoupled from their subject matter, resulting in *ad hoc* and arbitrary foreign policy-making. *Journal of International Relations and Development* (2007) **10**, 362–386.  
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## Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, security and development concerns have been increasingly interlinked. Governments and international institutions have stated that they have become increasingly aware of the need to integrate security and development programmes in policy interventions in post-conflict situations and in their relations with the growing category of failed and potentially ‘failing’ states. Two previously distinct policy areas are now increasingly overlapping in terms of the actors and agencies engaged and the policy prescriptions advocated. Since the end of the 1990s, and particularly after 9/11, the framework of the ‘security–development nexus’ has been hailed as a way of cohering national and international policy-making interventions in non-Western states. The policy documents talk about the joining of practices and theories in these two policy areas as a way of creating ‘joined-up government’ or of facilitating multilateral intervention under new ‘holistic’,



‘coherent’ or ‘comprehensive’ approaches to non-Western states (e.g. Anderson and Olson 2003; CSDG 2003; Lund 2003; Smith 2003; de Zeeuw 2004; Picciotto *et al.* 2004; OECD 2005).

Over the last few years, there has been a debate between commentators and analysts who argue favourably for the merging of the concerns of security and development as potentially the best way to achieve coherent and well-managed policy with regard to the combined and complex problems facing many ‘at-risk’ states and societies today, and those who are more cautious, suggesting that this new agenda risks sacrificing development and poverty reduction to the security needs of the major powers, especially the United States, in its leadership of the Global War on Terror (e.g. IPA 2004b; Picciotto 2004; DFID 2005b; Beall *et al.* 2006). On the margins of this ‘problem-solving’ debate, some critical security theorists suggest that the development and poverty-reduction agenda is already one that has been subordinated to Western security concerns, and that the shift from macro-development approaches to ‘good governance’, ‘pro-poor’ policy-making, sustainability and poverty reduction already contains within it the desire to contain these regions of potential instability and signifies the securitization and subordination of the development agenda (e.g. Duffield 2001, 2003, 2006; Harrison 2001, 2004; Craig and Porter 2003; Abrahamsen 2004, 2005; Fraser 2005).

This article seeks to suggest that critical theorists could be in danger of taking the rhetoric of ambitious agendas and coherent policy perspectives of international security/development actors for good coin and might gain from a greater engagement with the work of ‘problem-solving’ policy units, such as the International Peace Academy, the Overseas Development Institute and the UK government Department for International Development among others, who indicate that there is a major gap between policy rhetoric and the implementation of policy on the ground. This article seeks to bridge this gap and apply a critical perspective to the problems of matching rhetoric with reality in this area. Not in order to ‘problem-solve’ but to highlight that the dynamic behind the security–development nexus is not based so much on the desire of leading Western states, such as the United States, to regulate and control peripheral non-Western states but rather the desire to use the international sphere as an arena for grand policy statements of mission and purpose — from the ‘Global War on Terror’ to the desire to ‘Make Poverty History’ — while simultaneously disengaging from serious policy-making in these regions and passing responsibility to other actors, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international institutions.

Rather than there being a shared interventionist agenda, shaped by the security–development nexus, it is suggested here that policy discussions around this issue reveal a lack of policy focus and a tendency towards the collapse of



policy frameworks in which policies are directed to clear political ends. The disconnection between policy rhetoric and political interests is captured by the concept of *anti-foreign policy*, indicating that policy is no longer framed by an interest-based instrumental relationship between the policy actor and the ostensible object of concern. This lack of framework has resulted in the *ad hoc* and incoherent proliferation of actors and policy perspectives driving the policy crisis which discussions of the security–development nexus seek to address.

This article stakes out three linked claims in relation to the security–development nexus:

First, that the security–development nexus is not driven by any new ‘lessons learned’, with regard to international policy intervention, nor by any new scientific consensus or proof as to ‘what works’ established within the policy community. Rather, it suggests that the dynamic driving the policy consensus is the loss of a policy-making framework that previously provided a strategic framing for concepts of development and security. In short, that we are witnessing the loss of a strategic framework rather than the creation of one. This is reflected in both institutional and ideational shifts, which reflect and institutionalize the shift in policy accountability away from its traditional centres, towards a diverse range of policy actors and to the subjects of intervention themselves.

The second claim is the institutional one: that in response to the loss of strategic thinking and policy-making, there has been a reorganization of policy-making mechanisms both within states and at the inter-state level. Rather than understanding this reorganization as reflecting the ‘scaling up of institutional capacity’, in order to facilitate more meaningful and regulatory intervention, this article suggests that the driver for reform has been the desire to pass the buck for policy responsibility: ‘democratizing’ or sharing the policy-burden and diversifying the number of actors involved, from international institutions to private policy contractors. The impact of the security–development nexus therefore is not to be observed so much ‘on the ground’, in the alleged new forms of coordination of international intervention, as ‘at home’, where responsibility for policy-making and accountability for outcomes has been widely diffused.

The third claim is the ideational one: that the security–development nexus, far from being an instrument of far-reaching intervention, seeks to stress the limits of what can be achieved by external policy-making. An understanding of security–development as withdrawal from traditional strategic policy-making could thus enable us to better situate the prioritizing of security within the nexus as a reflection of ideas of limits rather than as the subordination of one set of existing policy practices or policy interests to another. Rather than a framework of coherent intervention we are witnessing a framework of *ad hoc*



intervention mixed with the limiting of expectations, more mediated political engagement, and the disavowal of external or international responsibilities.

Each of these three claims will be given specific consideration in the following sections. In conclusion, the article will reassert the need to understand the security–development nexus as an *anti-foreign policy*, whereby policy-makers seek to evade responsibility for strategic policy-making. *Anti-foreign policy* as a concept focuses on the shift towards non-instrumental and non-strategic policy-making where ambitious policy claims bear little relationship to practice on the ground and policy is driven by self-image and can be better grasped in terms of performative or simulated techniques (Baudrillard 1983; Campbell 1998; Weber 1998; Debrix 1999) rather than as practices concerned directly with the object of policy concerns.

### **The Rise of the Security–Development Nexus**

The security–development nexus has become the fashionable way of describing the linking of security and development concerns over the last 10 years. While it would be wrong to argue that security and development were entirely separate policy areas prior to the end of the Cold War, their linkage was much more mediated, through the geo-political concerns of the time. Security concerns were largely focused on military threats to the geo-strategic interests of Western states while development policy was concerned with both supporting political allies and demonstrating confidence in market-based solutions to development blockages. While security and development policies were linked by shared overall geo-political concerns, each field projected these concerns in a clearly distinct way.

Today, it appears that these distinctions are much less relevant. Both state and institutional policy documents have used non-Western state failure, through conflict or economic weakness, to argue that the policy links between security and development have previously been poorly understood or that the question has taken on an increased importance with the rising incidence of civil conflict since the end of the Cold War (UN 2004; PMSU 2005; NSS 2006). The arguments for the need to reconsider security–development linkages are based on empirical work that makes a correlative link between the two policy goals or simply asserts their shared desirability, rather than work that demonstrates the existence of causal relations. For example, according to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development:

Twenty of the world’s poorest countries are engaged in an armed conflict. This statistic shows that the poorer a country, the greater its risk of violent conflict. Research by the World Bank and others also reveals that a country with an annual per capita income of 250 US dollars has a 15 percent chance



of civil war within five years, whereas in a country with an annual per capita income of 5,000 US dollars, the probability is less than 1 percent (FMECD 2004).

While, in public statements, governments and international institutions tend to uncritically take on board the need for a policy 'nexus', in policy circles caution about the grounding of policy coexists uneasily with assertions that linkages are essential. It is rare to find any studies of the issue that do not argue that 'more research is needed on the conceptual underpinning of the security–development linkage and on its implications for project analysis, planning and implementation' (IPA 2004a: 3). A panel discussion organized by the International Peace Academy (IPA), in New York in April 2004, 'concluded that a model or rationale that would justify the ever-expanding mandates of security and development institutions was still needed' (IPA 2004a: 3).

In fact, the growth of research in this area has tended to reveal that assumptions about the links between development and security are based on very little empirical evidence of causation; even the assumption that there is a positive correlation between security and development has been questioned by leading experts in the field (IPA 2004a: 3). It is clear that some external interventions that provide development assistance or promote market relations may well contribute to intensifying conflict or inflaming grievances while conflict, and social and economic insecurity, can equally lead to social and political changes that are a spur to development rather than a retarding factor (e.g. Marren 1997; Uvin 2002; Paris 2004; Stewart 2004; Cramer 2006). For this reason, research findings in this area typically suggest that it would be better to understand development and security as 'equally desirable and *potentially* mutually reinforcing goals', and emphasize that this is only a 'potential' as: 'The security–development nexus does not apply automatically across policy arenas (prevention, state-building, peace-building) or across levels of policy implementation (global, national, local)' (IPA 2006: 2).

It would seem that the fact that there is no security–development nexus in terms of clear policy frameworks has been no barrier to the question of the inter-linkages becoming the key issue for policy-makers and an apparent spur to new forms of international collaboration and intervention in non-Western states and societies. In fact, the lack of any clear relationship indicates that the 'nexus' relies more on rhetorical claims than on considered policy-making.

Rather than a 'nexus', a merging or joining together of pre-existing development and security approaches, it would appear that current policy frameworks could be seen more accurately as a rejection of traditional policy-



led approaches to both development and security. Development has been redefined, taking the emphasis away from traditional economic indicators of GDP and trade and broadening out the concept to take in psychological and material factors related to the measurement of human well-being. One of the central policy actors in the shifting definition of development has been the World Bank, whose series of studies, *Voices of the Poor*, surveyed over 60,000 people from 60 poor countries, and highlighted that the number one priority for the poor was security, even above other basic needs such as food and shelter (e.g. Narayan-Parker and Patel 2000).

Meanwhile, security has been redefined to encompass not merely the security of people rather than the security of states, but also to redefine security concerns much more broadly than merely the threat of violence: to include economic and social concerns such as welfare, employment and the distribution of national wealth. The central policy actor engaged in the redefinition of security has been the United Nations, in particular the UN Development Programme, which in the 1990s developed the concept of ‘human security’ to encompass the broader and non-military nature of security concerns. As the UN’s Commission on Human Security states:

Human security in its broadest sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict (UN 2003: 4).

The redefinition and broadening of the meanings of both security and development indicate that the ‘nexus’ has not necessarily got anything to do with events on the ground or developments in either cohering or developing theory or practice in this area. Once these concepts have been emptied of their traditional content, it is not easy to make any distinction between them. Therefore, it is little surprise that leading policy advisers, such as Frances Stewart, can observe that: ‘development and security are ... linked in themselves, even in the absence of the causal connections between them’ (Stewart 2004: 4). As a recent report argues, the concept of the security–development nexus highlights a lack of clarity and conceptual confusion rather than a stronger sense of purpose or a higher level of understanding in these areas:

Both policy and academic debates face a common problem: how to define development and security, which are broad and elusive concepts. Development has multiple dimensions from human rights to environmental sustainability, from economic growth to governance. Similarly, the concept



of security has gradually expanded from state security to human security and now includes a range of military as well as non-military threats that recognize no borders. This naturally leads to a dilemma: What should be integrated with what? As a result, there is a panoply of theory, policy, and practice on the interplay between security and development (IPA 2006: 2).

A 'panoply of theory, policy, and practice' in this case would appear to indicate a state of confusion and incoherence. This is hardly surprising as the growing awareness of complex independencies between every possible issue, from the environment to minority rights, seems guaranteed to incapacitate any clear way of prioritizing policy requirements. Rather than clarity, the security–development nexus sets up a framework where any external regulatory or interventionist initiative can be talked up by the proposing government or institution as being of vital importance.

The redefinition of the policy mandates of Western states and international institutions clearly reflects the much less restricted capacity for intervention in non-Western states with the end of the Cold War. In the past, both security and development policies assumed that non-Western states were independent and autonomous actors. Today, with the extension of international intervention in situations of internal conflict, the security and development agendas have expanded in situations where states are much less able to prevent the internationalization of their domestic governance processes (Keohane 2003; Chesterman 2004; Harrison 2004; Chesterman *et al.* 2005; Krasner 2005; Chandler 2006a, b). The problems of policy coherence have arisen as the new forms of intervention have developed in an *ad hoc* and unplanned way, not directly based upon clear expressions of the political interests and policy needs of either national or institutional actors.

These new, more invasive forms of regulation and intervention therefore do not necessarily reflect a more thought-through, engaged or reflexive policy approach, but the more direct relationships of power exposed with the collapse of the international institutional framework of the post-Second World War order. This is why the extension of these international mandates has been reflected, not in greater coherence and centralization of policy power but in a greater diversification of actors involved in policy-making and the wholesale privatization or contracting out of policy-making to international institutions, NGOs and management consultants.

Rather than a coherent set of policies, the security–development nexus covers a wide range of contradictory policy statements that read more like rhetorical wish lists than seriously considered policy options. The difficulties in developing let alone agreeing and coordinating international policy-making often appear to overwhelm policy advisers and practitioners, who are left



behind by the fact that ‘practice is running ahead of meaningful debates to support it’ (IPA 2004b: 6).

### **Institutional Change: ‘Policy Coherence’ and ‘Burden Sharing’**

The security–development nexus highlights the problems of making policy without a clear political framework. The discussions around policy formulation do not so much indicate an attempt to depoliticize existing policy agendas (in terms of being attempts to hide or make palatable the ‘real’ policy interests) but the lack of real cohering political interests at stake. The issue most regularly raised in studies of the emerging security–development nexus is the problem of ‘coherence’: that of coordinating the burgeoning number of agencies involved in this area, both within states and on an international level. There seems to be more of a focus on the problems that Western governments and international actors face in technically formulating policy and coordinating policy frameworks than there is on the policy content itself.

The focus on ‘coherence’ is not a sign of policy confidence and clarity, but its opposite. There is a crisis of policy-making, which policy actors seek to evade by shifting responsibility to other actors. This is achieved by posing the problem at the level of coordination rather than as their own incapacity to develop or politically argue for a strategic framework in relation to the state or region concerned. Clare Lockhart, in an Overseas Development Institute background paper, reflects this policy vacuum, when she argues:

It is not clear that greater ‘coherence’ within a particular donor government, or within a domain (e.g. the security sector in a particular country), will lead to a coherent approach at [non-Western state] country level. Policy coherence in a donor capital may actually undermine inter-donor coherence at country level (Lockhart 2005: 6–7).

Here, the striking aspect is the assumption of the lack of any shared policy framework, which means that there is no guarantee that any institution drawing up policy within the security–development nexus would take a similar approach. Greater ‘coherence’, that is, a more shared approach, by one set of actors would be likely to openly reveal a clash with another policy actor. This is not because actors are articulating and projecting particular self-interests, but rather the lack of clear policy interests has meant that the projection of Western power and new forms of international regulation have taken an arbitrary and *ad hoc* character, with different projects and areas prioritized. This lack of cohesion potentially brings into question the claims made for the importance of any specific donor-backed project.



In this respect, the call for ‘coherence’, central to the security–development nexus, is a bureaucratic substitute for politically coherent policy-making, where the clarity of goals enables instrumental policy-making. Rather than justifying a policy in terms of policy goals, the desire for ‘coherence’ symbolizes the lack of belief that any policy or project can be defended on the basis of policy outcomes. It would appear that the particular project or issue focus is less important than the symbolic show of taking the problems of the non-Western state and society seriously.

The symbolic rather than practical strategic importance of prioritizing the problems of the non-Western state is more clearly demonstrated in the organizational changes initiated on the basis of policy ‘coherence’. National governments, particularly those of the OECD states (following the Policy Coherence for Development initiative, launched in 2002), have pledged to improve the coherence of their policies through new institutional mechanisms requiring a number of government departments to work together practising ‘joined-up’ approaches (DAC 2004; Lockhart 2005: 4). Of course, the more coordination there is between domestic or international policy actors, the less policy responsibility lies with any one of them, and there has been no shortage of experimentation in this area.

For example, both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands have developed new inter-ministerial committees and funding mechanisms (DAC 2004: 4). In the UK, the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of International Development came together under the Global Conflict Prevention Pool following a government-wide policy review in 2003, overseen by a cabinet committee and managed by an inter-departmental steering team. The Canadian government has developed a similarly integrated ‘3-D’ approach (linking Defence, Development and Diplomacy) based on cooperation between the departments of National Defence, Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canadian International Development Agency (Fitz-Gerald 2004: 13–14).

In July 2004 the US government established the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (OCRS). Its mission was to give much needed coherence to US policy-making in the area of intervention and post-conflict reconstruction: ‘To lead, coordinate and institutionalize US Government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife, so they can reach a sustainable path towards peace, democracy and a market economy’ (OCRS 2006). However, it was not the OCRS that was tasked with an alternative strategy following the failure of US post-conflict policy in Iraq. The US government instead set up the Baker–Hamilton Commission to postpone public policy-discussion and float policy alternatives that could enable the Whitehouse to evade responsibility for a policy shift (ISG 2006).



The view that institutional fixes can provide solutions to problems of international intervention or come up with policies that no one has thought of before is clearly inane (e.g. Kinsley 2006 on the Baker–Hamilton Commission). It often appears that at the institutional level it is preferable to engage in internal reorganization, ‘reorganizing the deck-chairs’, with the claim to be taking a policy issue seriously, than it is to actually engage with the policy area itself. The emphasis on internal and international collaboration — from involving Iran and Syria more in Iraq policy to more generally applicable US plans to institutionalize state-building links with the World Bank, IMF, UN and the OSCE (Dobbins *et al.* 2007) — appears designed to evade policy-making responsibility rather than to ensure a centralized focus on shared policy priorities. Without a clear political objective there is little likelihood that policy could be better coordinated or ‘good practices’ distilled from international programmes in this area.

At the international level, institutional policy-making incapacity stands more clearly exposed. There is little demand for international cooperation around a clear set of policy goals promoted by a particular state or institution but, in fact, the opposite: the attempt to substitute cooperation for policy leadership. Every major international institution has taken up the ‘new challenges’ alleged to be posed by the security–development nexus to evade its own policy responsibility by opening policy processes to a range of other actors, including NGOs and international financial institutions.

This has been highlighted in the importance given by the United Nations Secretary-General to new institutional arrangements, especially the establishment of an inter-governmental Peacebuilding Commission, with a Peacebuilding Support Office within the United Nations Secretariat. What is essentially a bureaucratic attempt to evade criticism of the UN (by promising a new, improved institution) and evade responsibility for acting (by bringing on board a wide range of state and inter-state agencies) has been talked up by the Secretary-General as the solution to the problems of policy-making, coordination, implementation and follow-up in this area, even before the institutions have been established (e.g. UN 2005).

With the rise of *anti-foreign policy*, international institutions, such as the UN, are used as stages for world leaders to issue rhetorical sound-bites rather than as serious policy forums. Where once all the politics went on in the backrooms, and agreement was secured before anything happened in public, now the platform of the conference floor is the centre of attention and international institutions, like the UN, have become glorified NGOs issuing programmes and statements that have little relationship to policy in practice. In this context, it would seem vital that security analysts avoid conflating rhetorical appearances with their underlying political content.



The potential confusion in taking policy statements at face value is well illustrated by the international governmental consensus of support for the 'Responsibility to Protect' (for the original report, see ICISS 2001). At the UN's 60th anniversary high-level summit in September 2005, the unanimous support given by heads of state to the declaration was widely greeted as the summit's 'one historical achievement' (e.g. Oxfam 2005). This process is one that seems to have taken on its own dynamic, evidenced in April 2006, when the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1674 on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, which contained the first official Security Council reference to 'the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity' (UN 2006).

However, this agreement cannot be understood in traditional policy-making terms: for example, as a commitment taken by the Security Council to a new more overtly interventionist order in which human rights would be clearly prioritized over the rights of state sovereignty, and Western states would be much more willing to commit military resources for humanitarian purposes. The glorified, and highly abstract, rhetoric stands in opposition to the underlying dynamics, in which empty statements without content increasingly stand in for clear policy commitments. The fact that no leading states would be willing to commit themselves to any formally accountable 'responsibility to protect' code of intervention indicates just how far rhetoric has been removed from reality (e.g. IDC 2005).

This was highlighted well in August 2006 when the UK government forwarded a draft UN Security Council resolution calling for the UN's largest peacekeeping deployment to the Sudan Darfur region at the same time as stating that Britain was unlikely to commit any troops itself (Burkeman and MacAskill 2006). The growing disjunction between UN Security Council resolutions and its practices have been highlighted by a number of commentators. For example, Simon Chesterman notes that between 1946 and 1989 the UN Security Council met 2,903 times and adopted 646 resolutions, averaging at fewer than 15 per year. Between 1990 and 1999 it met 1,183 times, adopting 638 resolutions, averaging at 64 per year (Chesterman 2002: 121; also see Chandler 2005; Cunliffe 2007). The activism of the UN would appear to bear little relation to any increase in the UN's international authority nor in its capacity to mobilize international consensus, recalling Carl Schmitt's views of the League of Nations' capacity for rhetoric having an inverse relationship to its political power (Schmitt 2003: 259–80).

Rather than focusing on non-Western states (the nominal object of the UN's activism) it seems that the achievements have been internal to the UN, relating to the reorganization of policy-making mechanisms and international coordination, particularly in the division between Western states' rhetoric at the Security Council and the fact that the work of intervention under UN



mandates from Haiti to Darfur is carried out by regional actors and troops from a growing number of non-Western states (e.g. Cunliffe 2007). The one recent exception to the trend was the US pressure forcing European actors to see through their rhetoric of concern with regard to the UN Security Council resolution on Lebanon in August 2006. Neither France nor Italy wanted full responsibility for leading the EU force and the largest EU troop commitment to the UN was made on the basis that they would be a symbolic contribution, not to be involved in fighting either the Israeli army or Hezbollah (Owen 2006; Rose 2006).

With little connection between policy rhetoric and political commitment or accountability for policy outcomes, policy-making and judgements of policy success have been highly self-referential. This desire to prioritize rhetoric over policy responsibility is also reflected in the shift away from the focus on particular policy issues to broader and more declaratory projects, such as ‘saving Africa’, ‘preventing state failure’, not just ending conflicts but ‘resolving the causes of conflicts’, or ‘eradicating poverty’. Governments and international institutions seem to have taken on board the single-issue campaigning that was previously the preserve of NGOs, as highlighted by the focus in 2005 on the ‘Make Poverty History’ campaign. For the UK government, for example, it appears that 2006 was the year of campaigning against corruption in Africa (DFID 2006; Elliott 2006). While non-Western states are the focus of declarations by Western leaders and international institutions, the lack of connection between rhetoric and strategic policy-making indicates less a demand to revive colonial practices of domination and more the *anti-foreign policy* desire to see the non-Western world in symbolic rather than practical policy-making terms.

This retreat from any serious consideration of policy-making in relation to the problems or needs of non-Western states is also highlighted by the contrast between the rhetoric of ‘empowerment’, ‘capacity-building’ and ‘country ownership’ and the lack of any real local input into policy frameworks that tend to be generated by generic thinking of the ‘one size fits all’ variety (Chandler 2006b; IPA 2006: 7). It would appear that the language of empowerment is used to mask the fact that Western states and international institutions lack a clear policy agenda, or lack the confidence to openly advocate and impose specific sets of policies, preferring instead to shift policy responsibility onto non-Western actors. In this respect, Stanford international relations professor turned Head of the Policy Planning Unit at the US State Department, Stephen Krasner, has put forward an illuminating set of arguments about the need to ‘obfuscate’ relations with non-Western states: to talk up their state sovereignty and emphasize policy ‘partnerships’ and ‘shared sovereignty’ to ensure policy responsibility is less easily pinned on Western actors (Krasner 2004: 118).



This historic lack of a sense of mission and purpose on behalf of Western powers is most clear in relation to Africa, where the language of empowerment has gone furthest with ‘African leadership’ and assertions that African states now own their own development programmes rather than being subordinate to the constraints of the international financial institutions (e.g. CfA 2005; DFID 2005a; Brown 2006; for a critique, see Harrison 2001, 2004; Pender 2002; Rowden and Irama 2004; Chandler 2006b). One of the first open disavowals of strategic policy-making with regard to Africa was made with the UK government’s Department for International Development’s December 2000 White Paper *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalization Work for the Poor*, which announced the government’s intention to make all UK aid no longer tied to British interests but only to the technocratic needs of ‘poverty elimination’ (DFID 2000: 94–95). Zöe Marriage’s work describes well the ‘denial and fantasy’ involved in UK government-funded humanitarian aid work based on symbolic ethical ideals and no methods for turning universalist values into workable principles (Marriage 2006: 196). William Easterly similarly demonstrates how the ambitious goals of international institutions and aid bureaucracies have little in common with the outcomes, despite the talk of ‘best practices’ or of ‘local ownership’ (Easterly 2006).

As noted above, the lack of policy goals and the attempts to evade questions of policy responsibility that pervade the projection of international policy frameworks should not be equated with the lack of external regulatory power. Since the end of the Cold War there have been less and less opportunities for non-Western states and their citizens to impact on international policy prescriptions, and policy research has highlighted the lack of attention paid to local input in the generation of policy frameworks shaped by the security–development nexus (e.g. Chopra and Hohe 2004). ‘Problem-solving’ critiques of the lack of local ownership are often based on a technical or organizational understanding of the problems involved, usually involving pressures of time and the need to have policy-frameworks established prior to a crisis situation (IPA 2004a: 9). However, the key question for this article is why so little attention is usually paid to the framing of a security–development nexus where policy is increasingly developed in isolation from practice or to the needs on the ground. The following section considers this disjunction between policy and practice to be at the heart of the security–development nexus dynamic.

### **No Power, No Responsibility**

The security–development nexus seeks to moderate the disparity between Western policy claims and the incapacity to act strategically in relation to them. It uses its ambitious and all-encompassing programmatic aims not to



achieve a major transformation of non-Western societies (or of Western policy interventions in these societies) but to justify why such a transformation is virtually impossible. Rather than a clear focus on policy priorities and the need for structural social and economic change to overcome conflicts over basic needs and resources, the complexity of the security–development nexus is used to argue that the forward-looking aspirations connected with the Western development and security agendas during the Cold War are misplaced today. The one thing that is clear is that Western states and international institutions no longer hold out the promise of escape from either poverty or conflict. To quote Mark Malloch Brown:

... despite heading [the] UNDP, I have been very worried about the basic statement that conflict is created by poverty, therefore solve poverty and solve conflict. I am also very cautious about accepting that broad-based economic development strategies were in themselves a sensible, realistic, time-bound way to avert conflict. To my mind, this invited so many questions it was in danger of undermining the very real case for a development strategy as part of conflict resolution (IPA 2004a: 15).

Addressing poverty through broad-based economic development might not guarantee the prevention of conflict, but this goal, in the past, was pursued for its own end, as a good in itself and as a vital precondition for human progress. Collapsing development strategy into conflict resolution would appear to be little more than a scaling back of expectations as to what international policy-making can achieve in non-Western states. The conflation of security and development, in effect, privileges security over development on the basis that this support of the *status quo*, rather than fundamental change, is the desire of the people in poor countries, as evidenced, for example, by the comprehensive surveys of the World Bank’s *Voices of the Poor* project.

Importantly, some commentators have suggested that the shift from development to security has been a projection of Western institutional concerns rather than a response to poor country demands. As John Pender argues, the *Voices of the Poor* results were the consequence of the World Bank’s predetermined research agenda, which was already focused on well-being as a key theme. This research relied on evading the question of poor people’s policy priorities, on the selective use of interview material rather than on quantified results and on the reinterpretation of material desires in non-material and psychological terms (Pender 2002: 104–5). The policy shift in relation to Western policy, in particular the downplaying and redefinition of development and the focus on good governance, state capacity-building, anti-corruption and transparency, belies a shift from active policy-making in relation to non-Western states to shifting policy responsibility to non-Western state governments and societies. Rather than making policy, Western



governments and international institutions are more at ease when distancing themselves from the consequences of earlier international policy-making and lecturing non-Western states for their failures (Chandler 2006c). What at first sight appears as policy-making is often a symbolic initiative, showing an 'awareness' of a problem (like global warming, failed states or world poverty) rather than taking responsibility for addressing it.

The security–development nexus is less a policy nexus than a critique of past policy goals, which seeks to 'discover' or highlight the risks of development in the non-Western context, and seeks to blame this lowering of expectations on non-Western states and societies. As Frances Stewart argues, the asserted 'nexus' between security and development works well only as a negative relationship, not as a positive policy-guide:

... vicious cycles of lack of development leading to conflict leading to lack of development can readily emerge. We can observe this situation in many countries in Africa. Conversely, virtuous cycles should also be possible ... unfortunately the virtuous cycle can more readily be broken because it is easy to have relatively high levels of security without necessarily experiencing economic growth, or to have high levels of security and economic growth, but not inclusive growth so the potential for conflict remains (Stewart 2004: 19).

The failure of international intervention in Iraq has only added to the wise voices learning the lessons of the complexity of engagement in non-Western societies and added to the warnings that 'states cannot be made to work from the outside', recasting the panoply of external interference as 'first and foremost as facilitating local processes, providing resources and creating the space for local actors' (Chesterman *et al.* 2005: 384). The RAND corporation's conclusion to its published series of case studies, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building* (2007), warns that the promised external transformation of Western-led state-building can only work in small societies, and that the 'transformational objectives of interventions in larger societies should be sharply restrained'; the lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq warn that intervention of this sort would be 'even more difficult' in Iran and 'nearly impossible' in Pakistan (Dobbins *et al.* 2007: xxxvii, 258).

The security–development nexus posits that the complexities of societal level policy-making make broader policy-making problematic; rather it is the coordination of micro-level policies that matters. Once the question is the security or well-being of individuals, social progress is no longer on the agenda; in its place is the management of poverty and the institutionalization of the *status quo*. A clear example of the scaling down of expectations is the discussion around poverty reduction at the heart of the security–development nexus. In the past, viewed as a social question, the eradication of poverty



would have involved major social and economic programmes of reconstruction and modernization. Today, viewed as an individual question, within the security–development nexus, the goal is securing the life chances of those most at risk; therefore, ‘ending poverty’ by 2015 is redefined as meaning not having to live on less than USD 1 a day (Sachs 2005). With the average American already living on about USD 114 per day and the average Briton on USD 83 per day, it is clear that the focus is merely on the most extreme levels of poverty (held to be a security risk) rather than ending poverty or overcoming the wealth and income gap between rich and poor (either domestically or internationally) (Ben-Ami 2005; see also Kiely 2005: 103–5). The policy goal is not development or the eradication of poverty but the legitimization of *anti-foreign policy*. The redefinition of the categories of the security–development nexus (poverty, development, security, democracy, human rights, etc.) effectively takes them off the policy agenda at the same time as putting them to the fore rhetorically.

The redefinition of both development and security in terms of outcomes on the most marginal sectors of society reflects the reduced aims of international policy-making, reducing foreign policy to the level of policy rhetoric rather than practical consequences. It is therefore unsurprising that commentators often highlight the ‘stark asymmetry between the resources that are assigned to sectoral programming and the expectations that accompany it’, with the agencies involved lacking both resources and capacity, and therefore ‘can barely make an identifiable dent in the problem with which one is grappling’ (IPA 2004a: 9). The merging and redefinition of the ambitious aims of development and security programmes down to a narrow focus on the governance and administration of the non-Western state and to the immediate conditions of marginalized groups has meant that larger questions of economic and social transformation have been removed from the agenda.

This shift in development focus away from societal development towards individual coping strategies follows the work of Amartya Sen, which redefined development away from material indicators, such as income or GDP, and instead focused on the ‘individual capabilities’ of the most marginal members of society (see further Sen 1992, 1999). This has encouraged the proliferation of initiatives that have little coordination and little lasting impact because they ignore the structural problems in non-Western states. The security–development nexus has, in effect, institutionalized the emerging trend within the international policy community towards the complete separation between policy-making and outcomes through removing the conceptual framework from policy programmes. Once ‘well-being’ becomes the measurement of development — and security an important constituent of well-being — then development can be done in a multitude of ways with a multitude of indicators.



In this way any policy initiative can be held to be contributing to the most ambitious of transformative objectives and yet have little observable impact on the ground. Where the security–development nexus starts out with bold declarations of transforming the security and development situation for people in non-Western states, it ends by turning the transformation of material circumstances into a matter of psychological analysis open to therapeutic interventions at the level of the non-Western state and society (Pupavac 2005). The security–development nexus drives external interventions, which inevitably operate in a vacuum both in relation to the poor country society and in relation to other international actors.

The interventions of international actors in the complex security–development nexus in the non-Western world are often posed counter to the much more direct military and security-led interventions of the US in the Global War on Terror (e.g. IPA 2004b: 4; Beall *et al.* 2006). However, from the perspective of the rise of *anti-foreign policy* it appears that the similarities far outweigh the differences. Despite the Manichean language of good and evil and the call for international collaboration, there seems to be no framework that can give policy-making a structure and purpose beyond declaratory statements. As US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, has famously commented, there are no metrics to measure success or failure, in what is increasingly being called the ‘Long War’ (Rumsfeld 2003). There is a fundamental separation between means and ends and the transformation of means into ends, as valuable in and of themselves. This seems to mirror the *anti-foreign policy* approaches at the heart of the security–development nexus, within which every policy initiative can claim rhetorical success but there is an evasion of political responsibility with the rejection of any link between policy practices and outcomes and little expectation of being able to radically alter any policy scenario.

This brief comparison with the Global War on Terror (if indeed it is possible to separate it from the all-encompassing security–development nexus; see, for example, Stewart 2004; NSS 2006) would indicate that the implosion of policy-making capacity, the inability to link means and ends, highlighted in the security–development nexus discussions, is reflective of broader trends towards *anti-foreign policy* in the international sphere. In fact, the similarities (and overlapping themes) in the two security discourses indicate that the roots of the problem do not lie in the technical and organizational side of policy-making, or in the balancing of the focus between security and development concerns. Rather than either discourse being driven by the threats, problems or needs of the non-Western world, they both seem to reflect the internally generated desire to use the international sphere for standing and a sense of political purpose. It is the domestic origins, of both the focus on the international sphere and the attempt to evade political responsibility, that make foreign policy impossible to grasp in traditional interest-based analytical frameworks



and highlight the need for a new research agenda, one that this article hopes to contribute to.

### **Conclusion: The Rise of ‘Anti-Foreign Policy’**

*Anti-foreign policy* is driven by a self-referential political agenda rather than foreign policy concerns. This is the opposite of traditional foreign policy in that the foreign object of policy is merely a cipher for a statement of political purpose. Western states and international institutions are in a position of international power and authority, yet this power increasingly seems bereft of political purpose. It is this lack of purpose that, as discussed above, incapacitates the policy-making process. Anti-foreign policy issues are usually flagged up by utopian rhetorical claims of moral purpose that are rarely backed by resources or strategic policy-making. The exposure of the rhetorical nature of this political grandstanding usually takes the form of the critique of the ‘lack of political will’ without a critique of the gesture politics that initiated the policy discussion (for an exception, see the critique made in Cunliffe 2007).

Rather than challenging the *ad hoc* policy approaches, picked up in the policy reports arguing for a ‘coherent’, ‘comprehensive’, ‘holistic’ approach to policy-making, the security–development nexus institutionalizes the arbitrary and non-strategic policy-making process. In viewing the problems of non-Western states from the micro-perspective of individuals and the solutions as ones of bureaucratic, technical coordination of international donors and actors, no broader policy framework can emerge. There is no way of linking individual projects to a broader strategy, or of measuring the success or failure of these policy initiatives. In the framework forwarded here, of *anti-foreign policy*, the security–development nexus could be seen as a ‘nexus’ between increased declaratory ambitions with regard to peace, security and development in non-Western states, such as those in Africa, and the desire to evade policy-making responsibility on the ground.

Foreign policy, the projection of power externally, often tells us more about the foreign policy actor than any external object (see e.g. the path-breaking Foucauldian analysis forwarded in Campbell 1998). It is not only power that is projected but a certain framework of ideas and values and political purpose. To this extent, social constructivist theorists in international relations are right to argue that the interests of any actor cannot be separated from their political identities (e.g. Wendt 1992). Social constructivism has become increasingly dominant in the security studies literature because it appears to capture the fluidity of policy-making and the seemingly free-floating nature of the concept of ‘security’ since the end of the Cold War (e.g. Buzan *et al.* 1997; see also Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2002, 2004). The meaning of ‘security’ has been hollowed out



as it increasingly stands in for policy-making without a strategic context. As French theorist Zaki Laïdi has noted, the lack of clear policy frameworks, since the beginning of the 1990s, has made reactive and *ad hoc* policy-making the norm (Laïdi 1998; see also Coker 2001).

At the international level, there seems to be no clear framework of international ordering to replace that of the geo-political division that ended in 1989. Despite the US's dominance in military terms, America has not been able to shape a new order comparable to that of the post-World War Two institutional order based on the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions (Reus-Smit 2004: 2; see also Bacevich 2002; Kupchan 2002). Rather than setting their own strategic and forward-looking policy agendas, leading Western states and international institutions appear to have settled for a security discourse that emphasizes the powerlessness of policy-makers in the face of globalization or the threats from global warming, acts of terror or failing states.

It would be no exaggeration to say that governmental approaches to the international sphere have never been less future-orientated than today. It seems that the end of superpower competition has left the remaining power exhausted, without a mission or a sense of purpose. There is little doubt that the absence of great power conflict appears to have removed a framework of meaning in which the international sphere was highly politicized. Niall Ferguson makes the point that the lack of any international project poses the risk that, rather than the choice being between 'realist' views of 'unipolarity' or 'multipolarity', there is a real risk of a 'generalized impotence — or, if you like, apolarity' (Ferguson 2004: 296). When those with power lack a clear framework through which to exercise it, then as Laïdi writes:

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 framework of meaning, responsibilities are measured only in cost terms (Laïdi 1998: 13).

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 (2006) 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.' 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 legitimize 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.

It seems to be this lack of perceived legitimacy that drives government policy-making rather than the confidence of a popular mandate (Bunting 2006). 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 (Chandler 2003). 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 (Ignatieff 2000). 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 reflected 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. It has been suggested above that it is this process that provides the security–development nexus with a dynamic that appears to be independent of either theorization or practice on the ground.

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### About the author

**David Chandler** is Professor of International Relations, Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster. He is the editor of the *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* and author of a number of books, including *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-Building* (2006), *Constructing Global Civil Society: Morality and Power in International Relations* (2004), *From Kosovo to Kabul (and Beyond): Human Rights and International Intervention* (2002, 2006), and *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton* (2000).