



A production of H-Diplo with the journals *Security Studies*, *International Security*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, and the International Studies Association's Security Studies Section (ISSS).

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H-Diplo | ISSF Essays, Number 9

Review Essay on John M. Owen. *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510-2010*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780691142388 (cloth, \$78.50); 9780691142395 (paper, \$32.50).

Published by H-Diplo/ISSF on **27 July 2012**

<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF/PDF/RE9.pdf>

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The *Clash of Ideas in World Politics* is an excellent book. It possesses a persuasive, detailed argument and compelling case study evidence that spans 500 years of diplomatic history. It will be of enduring interest to analysts of international relations.

The book has numerous strengths, though three in particular stand out. First, the book reveals the shortcomings of realist theories of international relations by documenting the centrality of ideologies to leaders' foreign policies. Specifically, Owen demonstrates that ideologies are frequently critical to how leaders' understand the threats to their most important domestic and international interests. These threat perceptions, in turn, will tend to have major effects on states' core security policies, including choices of allies and enemies and efforts to promote by force particular institutions and beliefs in other countries. This last set of choices is the primary focus of Owen's analysis.

Ideologies affect two sets of threat perceptions, which Owen labels “internal” and “external” security (4). Internal security involves dangers to leaders’ most fundamental domestic objectives, namely the preservation of elites’ political power and the particular regime type they support. The existence in the system of states dedicated to rival ideological beliefs frequently threatens these core domestic interests by increasing the likelihood of ideological subversion at home. When a state governed by leaders who are dedicated to Ideology A confronts another country dedicated to Ideology B, both sets of elites will at times fear that the existence of the other will spur co-ideologues in their country to try to overthrow the current regime and replace it with one based on different ideological principles. These fears are not unreasonable. Ideological groups are frequently inspired by the success of their brethren in other states. Hence the tendency for revolutions to cluster in time, including the “color” revolutions that spread across much of eastern Europe in the 2000s, as well as the spread of large-scale political uprisings across the Arab world beginning in 2011.

External security fears add to these domestic dangers. Leaders dedicated to rival ideological beliefs frequently view one another in antagonistic terms. They believe that the others’ international intentions are hostile and that their interests are fundamentally opposed, thereby making conflict between them highly likely.

Because of the major effects that large ideological differences often have on leaders’ threat perceptions, policymakers confront powerful incentives to try to use force to preserve and promote particular ideological beliefs abroad. Because leaders tend to believe that hostilities with ideological enemies are in the long run unavoidable and cooperation with ideological allies likely, they will view regime exportation as a way of reducing the number of enemies in the system and increasing the number of allies. Fears of subversion to the principles of international ideological enemies add domestic incentives to work for the spread of one’s principles abroad. Taken together, these beliefs explain why politicians of virtually all ideological beliefs—monarchical, liberal, fascist, communist, and religious fundamentalist—have attempted to export their defining ideological principles and institutions. Owen finds that since 1510, states have used force on over 200 separate occasions to alter or preserve the ideological principles and institutions of another country (2). The frequency with which states have engaged in this behavior leads Owen to conclude that forcible regime promotion is a normal tool of statecraft to protect states’ international and domestic security. Ideology and ‘interests’ are thus not always opposed, as analysts often assert. Ideologies are instead frequently central to both how leaders understand threats to their interests and how they respond to try to alleviate these dangers.

Realists, who attribute states’ foreign relations primarily to the effects of international power distributions and responses to other countries’ actions, cannot explain Owen’s main findings. Why leaders would understand their threat environment to a large degree in ideological terms, and especially why leaders would dedicate precious resources to the preservation and promotion of ideological principles in other countries, are inexplicable

based on materialist understandings of international relations. It is also worth stressing that Owen finds that leaders are most likely to engage in forcible regime promotion during times when they perceive security to be scarce, which is a tendency that again runs counter to realist predictions, but not to Owen's argument. Because leaders frequently believe that the exportation of their ideological principles will provide a major boost to their security, it makes sense that these individuals will engage in this behavior during particularly dangerous times.

The second main contribution of *The Clash of Ideas* is to articulate the conditions under which the book's argument is most likely to accurately describe states' international relations. Owen admits that there are extended periods of history when leaders adhere to the logic of realpolitik. In these eras, the existence of rival ideological beliefs is not a primary source of high threat levels. Indeed, at these times cooperation among ideological rivals is likely to be more common than policies of forcible regime promotion. Why are some eras highly ideologically charged and others not?

To Owen, the mere existence of states dedicated to rival ideological beliefs is not sufficient to create high levels of ideologically-based threats and the resulting incentives for ideological exportation. These outcomes tend to obtain only during periods that Owen labels high "ideological polarization," which he defines as the "progressive segregation of a population into two or more [ideological] sets, each of which cooperates internally and excludes externally" (40). Ideological polarization is most likely to occur when elites in various countries are dedicated to different ideological beliefs (i.e., there is not large agreement that one particular set of ideological principles is clearly superior to others), and states are either vulnerable to regime change or wars occur that makes such domestic change more likely. In the absence of regime vulnerability and great power war, ideologies, to Owen, are unlikely to play a central role in the formulation of states' security policies.

Variations in the intensity of ideological polarization explain not only why some eras are dominated by realpolitik and others by highly ideological behavior, but also why the number of forcible regime promotions over the last 500 years have tended to cluster in three periods of history: from 1520 to 1650, 1770 to 1850, and 1917 through the present day. Explaining why leaders' ideological identities are more or less salient to their perceptions and policies under different conditions is a major advance to the study of ideologies and international relations.

Third, Owen offers a coherent set of explanations of how ideological conflicts end. Two pathways are particularly noteworthy in this process. Building on the analysis in the previous point, ideological conflicts can end when the level of ideological polarization diminishes. If, for example, leaders' fears of ideological subversion lessen due to enhanced domestic stability (which could occur due a number of developments, such as increases in a government's legitimacy or repressive capacity, or a lowering of the domestic and/or international appeal of an ideological rival), their ideological identities

will tend to become less salient to their policies. In these instances, ideological differences among states' leaders may remain in place, but they become much less important to international politics.

Ideological conflicts can also end due to ideological convergence between ideological rivals, such as occurs when the defining ideological beliefs in one of the antagonists are replaced by principles much closer in identity to another, or when former ideological enemies transcend their differences and agree on a hybrid ideology that emphasizes ideological similarities more than differences. As Owen points out, the latter type of convergence may be the way in which the current ideological struggle in the Islamic world will end. A secular-Islamist hybrid—perhaps similar to that espoused by Turkey's governing Justice and Development Party—could emerge that derives its principles from Islamic sources, but whose content (in terms of political prescriptions) is consistent with political liberalism.

Although ideological convergence has frequently resulted in states' domestic and international interests being better protected, it is worth emphasizing that efforts to bring about this outcome generate significant risks. Indeed, policies of ideological exportation are bound to generate an 'ideological security dilemma' in which outcomes that make one state more secure—the conversion of a rival—obviously make the latter extremely insecure. The result is a significant increase in hostilities between the two countries. Major improvements in security in the long run (i.e., after regime conversion of one state in a pair of ideological rivals) are thus likely to increase threats for both countries in the short run.

Despite the book's major strengths, *The Clash of Ideas* has a few weaknesses, or at least some areas that could have benefited from further development. First, Owen at times underestimates the impact that ideologies are likely to have on leaders' foreign policies. To Owen, ideologies are likely to be salient to international relations only when there is an intense dispute over the best type of regime among elites in at least two states. If leaders in one of these states are confident in the clear superiority of their ideological principles, ideology-based threats and hostilities will be low. According to Owen, "Today monarchist societies thread across the world, loosely linked to one another; their members, when noticed at all by outsiders, are regarded as harmless eccentrics precisely because monarchism has no magnetic power in most non-monarchical societies today" (60). In an earlier historical example, Owen claims that "in the 1860s, in country after country, liberals and conservatives accepted one another as legitimate contenders within a lawful order, and regime change ceased to be the goal of most elites. International politics was not to become ideological again until the latter stages of the First World War" (160).

The problem with this analysis is that it assumes that fears of ideological subversion must be high in both members of an ideological rivalry before ideologies matter to leaders' choices. Ideology A may be clearly the 'wave of the future' because of its superior

political, economic, and social performance. This reality will make supporters of Ideology A confident in their power, for both the present and future. This is not the case, however, for members of Ideology B. Indeed, Ideology A's success is likely to make proponents of Ideology B highly insecure about their fate. It is true that A's confidence is likely to lower the incentives for A to engage in forcible regime promotion, which is obviously a benefit to B. But the manifest superiority of Ideology A will make proponents of B very worried about the likelihood of domestic revolution independent of foreign aid. The fact, for example, that the British experience of 'reforming conservatism' was the clear winner in a transnational ideological contest in Europe after 1860 did not make the fifty years before World War I a non-ideological period, at least for the ideological losers in this struggle, contrary to what Owen claims. Ideology played an important role most notably in Russia's foreign policies. The tsars and their closest advisors were for many years staunchly opposed to an alliance with republican France despite massive power incentives to form such a coalition because they feared the subversive effects on Russian society of associating with France. Relatedly, there remained an influential 'pro-German' group in Russian policymaking circles until the outbreak of the First World War. Members of this group argued for alliance with Germany, a fellow conservative monarchy, against liberal Britain and France. Although Russia's allies and enemies eventually diverged from ideology-based choices, this does not mean that ideologies did not have major effects on Russian foreign policies in this era, including delays in alliance formation and trust among co-ideologues (prominent realists, including John Mearsheimer, claim that from a power standpoint, it made much more sense for Germany to war against Russia in 1905—when Russia was greatly weakened by the Russo-Japanese War—than in 1914; the effects of common ideological principles played an important role in avoiding conflict between Germany and Russia at this earlier date).¹ Lack of an intense dispute across states over the best type of regime, in sum, is likely to make one side in a great power ideological rivalry secure in its position, the other insecure. This fact will continue to create incentives for ideology-based foreign policies for the latter.

A second issue in *The Clash of Ideas* that could have been more fully developed concerns the relationship between power and ideologies on leaders' security policies. Owen recognizes that the effects of power variables can trump the incentives created by ideologies (e.g., 83). It would have been beneficial to have had more systematic analysis on this subject. How strong do power-based incentives have to be before they overwhelm the effects of ideologies? Is the threshold when power trumps ideology fairly low (in which case realist arguments are largely vindicated) or high (in which case ideology-based arguments are largely supported)? These questions are by no means easy to

¹ On the power-based incentives for Germany to attack Russia in 1905, see John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 10. Other prominent realist works include Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War: Hegemonic Rivalry and the Fear of Decline* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

answer, and I have struggled to do so in my own work. Addressing them, though, would have been a valuable contribution to the literature.

Finally, Owen's argument could have made an even larger advance to the study of ideologies in international relations by examining in greater detail the conditions under which policies of forcible regime promotion are likely to be successful. Particularly useful on this subject would have been a more extensive analysis of the relative strength of leaders' transnational ideological and nationalistic identities. When leaders' transnational ideological identities are central to their threat perceptions and policies, elites in one state are likely to welcome efforts by co-ideologues in other countries to shape domestic politics in the former. Working against these outcomes, however, are leaders' nationalist identities, which privilege loyalty to state and opposition to foreign interference in domestic politics over transnational ideological ties. Which identity is likely to be more powerful under what conditions? Owen's understanding of ideological polarization goes a long way in answering this question, but not completely so. Nationalistic sentiments frequently remain very powerful even in highly polarized eras. The United States, for example, remains unpopular in many Muslim-majority countries, even among those groups that are sympathetic to political liberalization in their states. This widespread hostility has made some reformist groups reluctant to receive aid from the U.S. Reformers in a number of Middle Eastern countries have claimed that American support would hurt their cause because it would make them choose between liberalization backed by the U.S. and anti-Americanism and nationalist sentiments, both of which were widespread and powerful.

These relatively minor weaknesses do little to obscure the major strengths of *The Clash of Ideas* and its contributions to the study of international politics. No book can address all issues. This one address critical subjects that lie at the heart of states' security policies, and it should be read by both academics and policymakers alike.

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