

Political utilisation of scholarly ideas: the ‘clash of civilisations’ vs. ‘Soft Power’ in US foreign policy

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Abstract. This article discusses how and under what conditions ideas coming from International Relations (IR) scholarship are used in foreign policy. We argue that the focus on policy relevance, which dominates the IR literature on the research-policy interface, is limited. Focusing instead on political utilisation highlights types and mechanisms of political impact, which are overlooked in studies on policy relevance. The fruitfulness of this change in focus is showed in an analysis of how Samuel Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ notion and Joseph Nye’s ‘soft power’ concept have been used in US foreign policy. George W. Bush’s explicit critique and reframing of ‘the clash’ thesis should not be interpreted as absence of impact, but as a significant symbolic utilisation, which has helped legitimate US foreign policy. Likewise, in the few instances in which the notion of ‘soft power’ has been used explicitly, it has played a conceptual and symbolical rather than instrumental role. More generally, this article argues that accessible framing and paradigm compatibility are essential for political utilisation of ideas.

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Introduction

Two of the most widespread ideas that have come from International Relations (IR) scholarship in the last fifteen years are Samuel Huntington’s notion of ‘the

clash of civilizations' and Joseph Nye's 'soft power' concept.¹ References to both the 'clash' and to 'soft power' are plentiful not only in academic writings, but also in the media, in policy documents, and in political speeches in many countries – whether in the form of critique or praise. The analysis of how 'the clash' thesis and the 'soft power' concept have appeared in US foreign policy illustrate the more general point we wish to make: That the study of the research-policy interface in IR would benefit from moving away from its almost exclusive focus on *policy relevance*,² to an approach focusing on *political utilisation*.³ In our view, focusing on policy relevance is limited for two main reasons. Firstly, this perspective only includes instrumental usage; how research is directly applied and implemented. Secondly, it assumes that research almost by definition improves the quality of policy, neglecting the subjective nature of determining what qualifies as poor and good policy. Instead we suggest applying a typology developed by Beyer, who has studied the political utilisation of social science in general, though not IR scholarship specifically. Beyer distinguishes three types of research utilisation; *instrumental*, *conceptual*, and *symbolic*:

Instrumental use involves applying research results in specific direct ways. Conceptual use involves using research results for general enlightenment; results influence actions but more indirectly and less specifically than in instrumental use. Symbolic use involves using research results to legitimate and sustain predetermined positions.⁴

This article shows how and under what conditions the 'clash' and 'soft power' have been used in US foreign policy, with a focus on the George W. Bush administration. Critics of the Bush administration's foreign policy, including Nye,⁵ claim

¹ Samuel Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations', *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (Summer 1993), pp. 22–49. This influential article was later expanded into a book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). For an updated review of the critique that this notion has attracted and Huntington's reply, see an interview with Huntington in, 'The Clash of Civilizations Revisited' *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 24:1, available at: {http://www.digitalnpg.org/archive/2007_winter/14_huntington.html} accessed 30 August 2007. Joseph Nye's concept of 'soft power' first appeared in *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). In 2004, Nye elaborated his by then quite influential concept in *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs).

² Alexander L. George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington: US Institute of Peace Press, 1993); Joseph Leppgold and Miroslav Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower: International Relations Theory and the Issue of Policy Relevance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Bruce W. Jentleson, 'The Need for Praxis: Bringing Policy Relevance Back In', *International Security*, 26 (2002), pp. 169–83; William Wallace, 'Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 22 (1996), pp. 301–21; Stephen M. Walt, 'The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in International Relations', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8 (2005), pp. 23–48.

³ Carol H. Weiss, *Organizations for Policy Analysis: Helping Government Think* (London: Sage, 1992); Carol H. Weiss, 'Policy Research: Data, Ideas or Arguments?', in P. Wagner, C. H. Weiss, B. Wittrock and H. Wollman (eds), *Social Sciences and Modern States: National Experiences and Theoretical Crossroads* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 307–32; Carol H. Weiss, 'Policy Research as Advocacy: Pro and Con', *Knowledge and Policy*, 4 (1991), pp. 37–55; Carol H. Weiss, *Using Social Science Research in Policymaking* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1977); Martin Bulmer, *The Uses of Social Research: Social Investigation in Public Policy-Making* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982); Janice S. Beyer, Research Utilization: Bridging the Gap between Communities. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 6 (1997), pp. 17–22; Nabil Amara, Mathieu Ouimet and Réjean Landry, 'New Evidence on Instrumental, Conceptual, and Symbolic Utilization of University Research in Government Agencies', *Science Communication*, 26 (2004), pp. 75–106.

⁴ Beyer, 'Research Utilization', p. 17; cf. Amara et al., 'New Evidence...', pp. 75–7.

⁵ Nye, 'The Decline of America's Soft Power'.

that policymakers have not understood the significance or usefulness of ‘soft power’. Some critics also hold that US foreign policy after the 11 September 2001 attacks has spurred rather than defused a ‘clash of civilizations.’⁶ Our analysis shows, contrary to such expectations, that Nye’s ‘soft power’ concept has at least a partial paradigm compatibility with US foreign policy, which however has not been sufficient for instrumental utilisation, given the few instances of explicit usage we have observed. We argue also that it is misleading to interpret the explicit critique of Huntington’s thesis by US policymakers, including George W. Bush, as a lack of utilisation. In this instance, it is used symbolically, as is highlighted by the way US policymakers have reframed the concept of ‘civilization’ in terms of liberal modernity as opposed to Huntington’s essentialist notion of religiously based communities. Moreover, we wish to emphasise that symbolic utilisation even if primarily conceptualised as legitimatisation of already existing policies, can also have subsidiary effects of strengthening the position of specific ideas as reference points in wider policy debates. This we argue has certainly been the case with the ‘clash of civilizations’.⁷

With this study, we also wish to contribute to theory building and systematic inquiry on a topic which has been surprisingly underdeveloped in IR. There is a tendency in the IR literature to treat the research-policy interface as an ‘extracurricular’ activity not worthy of theory-building and empirical inquiry.⁸ This has not stopped scholars from writing on this topic, but the implication is that the views being expressed are often unsubstantiated. IR scholars writing on this relationship claim they know both how it works and what it should be like, without providing systematic studies of what, how and when scholarship is politically utilised.

⁶ Michael Rose, ‘Change Attitudes, not Regimes: The War on Terror’, *International Herald Tribune* (4 August 2004); Mark Landler, ‘Facing Terror after London’, *The New York Times*, (10 July 2005); Joseph S. Nye, ‘Round by Round: Winners and Losers in the Post-9/11 Era’, *The Daily Star* (6 September 2006).

⁷ For instance, on 14 September 2006, a Subcommittee hearing in the House of Representatives took place with the title, ‘Is there a Clash of Civilizations? Islam, Democracy, and US-Middle East and Central Asia Policy’, 109th Cong. 2nd Session (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 2006). Thus, in spite of the explicit refutations of the ‘clash’ concept by the administration, whether or not there is clash going on is still an open question in other parts of the US government.

⁸ The research-policy interface is a recurrent theme in IR. See for instance George, *Bridging the Gap*; Robert L. Rothstein, *Planning, Prediction, and Policymaking in Foreign Affairs: Theory and Practice* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1972); A. J. R. Groom, ‘Practitioners and Academics: Towards a Happier Relationship?’, in M. Banks (ed.), *Conflicts in World Society* (London: Wheatsheaf, 1984), pp. 192–208; Christopher Hill and Pamela Beshoff (eds), *Two Worlds of International Relations: Academics, Practitioners and the Trade in Ideas* (London: Routledge, 1994); Michel Girard, Wolf-Dieter Eberwein, and Keith Webb (eds), *Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy-Making: National Perspectives on Academics and Professionals in International Relations* (London: Pinter, 1994); Ken Booth, ‘Discussion: A Reply to Wallace’, *Review of International Studies*, 23 (1997), pp. 371–7; Steve Smith, ‘Truth and Power: A Reply to William Wallace’, *Review of International Studies*, 23 (1997), pp. 507–16; Steve Smith, ‘International Relations and international relations: The Links Between Theory and Practice in World Politics’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 6:3 (2003), pp. 233–9; Lepgold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*; Paul Sharp, Paul, et al. (eds), ‘Academics, Practitioners and Diplomacy: An ISP Symposium on the Theory and Practice of Diplomacy’, *International Studies Perspectives*, 3 (2002), pp. 139–75; Johan Eriksson and Bengt Sundelius, ‘Molding Minds That Form Policy: How to Make Research Useful’, *International Studies Perspectives*, 6:1, pp. 51–71; Christian Büger and Frank Gadinger, ‘Reassembling, and Dissecting: International Relations Practice From a Science Studies Perspective’, *International Studies Perspectives*, 8:1 (2007), pp. 90–110.

In what follows, we present firstly a framework for analysing the utilisation of IR scholarship in the politics of foreign policy. This framework draws on two bodies of literature that are rarely applied in IR: the science-policy literature on research utilisation, and the public policy literature on the politics of expertise. We focus on the significance of framing activities and how ideas resonate with policy paradigms. Subsequently, this framework is applied in an analysis of how and under what conditions the ideas of the ‘clash’ and ‘soft power’, respectively, have been used in the foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration.

The political utilisation of scholarly ideas: an analytical framework

Any analysis of the utilisation of scholarly ideas in foreign policy boils down to three questions: *what* is being used, *how* is it used, and *when* is it used? The first question pinpoints the unit of analysis, which in this study is about scholarly ideas, understood here in the broadest sense as encompassing concepts, worldviews, and beliefs of both a normative and empirical character.⁹ Not all types of scholarly output can straightforwardly be characterised as ideas, for example empirical data.¹⁰ The second question addresses types of utilisation, which helps establishing the position of a specific idea in the policy process. The third question helps to specify the conditions under which ideas become proliferated and used in the formulation of policy.

As Carol Weiss has demonstrated in several empirical studies, policymakers find social science useful not so much for the empirical data it provides, but more so because of its concepts and generalisations.¹¹ We apply a general definition of ideas as concepts and beliefs that structure political processes and shape public policies.¹² Thus, we are concerned with ideas which are communicated and shared among political actors – particularly as they become part of societal debate and policymaking. Ideas expressed by scholars reflect and interact with a larger societal context, including the realm of public policymaking.¹³ We hold that there is variety in terms of how, and to what degree, scholarly ideas are transformed when becoming part of policy debates. Thus, when we speak of how scholarly ideas are politically utilised, we refer simply to observations of how particular concepts coined by academics are used in the formulation of policy, whether those concepts reflect dominant beliefs in society or not.

⁹ Cf. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, ‘Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework’, in J. Goldstein and R. O. Keohane (eds), *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 5; Jeffrey Legro, ‘The Transformation of Policy Ideas,’ *American Journal of Political Science*, 44:4 (2000), pp. 19–32 at p. 420.

¹⁰ Walt, ‘The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in International Relations’, pp. 25–34.

¹¹ Weiss, *Social Science research and Decision-Making*, p. 269; cf. Bulmer, *The Uses of Social Research*; George, *Bridging the Gap*.

¹² Cf. Peter A. Hall, ‘The Movement from Keynesianism to Monetarism: Institutional Analysis in British Economic Policy’, in S. Steinmo, K. Thelen and F. Longstreth (eds), *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 91–2; Goldstein and Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, pp. 13–7; Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behaviour and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 5.

¹³ Büger and Gadinger, ‘Reassembling and Dissecting’, p. 95.

How are scholarly ideas utilised?

IR scholars concerned with the ‘gap’ between the ‘two worlds’ complain about the allegedly limited impact their research has on the practice of foreign policy.¹⁴ They express a noteworthy dissatisfaction, on the one hand with the apparent lack of interest for ‘policy-relevant’ research in their own discipline, and on the other with a lack of concern for relevant research among practitioners of foreign policy.¹⁵ Although they are not concerned with IR, the available empirical studies of how other social sciences have been politically utilised confirm that research only very rarely leads to direct implementation of policy recommendations.¹⁶

For two reasons, however, the prevailing dissatisfaction with the lack of discernable policy effects of research is misguided. Firstly, it expresses a traditional ‘engineering’ perspective, based on unrealistic assumptions of rationality in social science and public policy.¹⁷ Secondly, as public policy theorist Tim Booth has argued, it is far too limiting to conceive of ‘policy relevance’ in terms of effects that ‘will be *concrete* [...] and open to *direct* and *objective* appraisal’.¹⁸ Expectations of a strictly ‘rational’ or ‘undiluted’ usage of scholarly ideas will only lead to disillusionment.¹⁹ In contrast, a perspective focusing on political utilisation takes

¹⁴ Groom, ‘Practitioners and Academics’; George, *Bridging the Gap*; James N. Rosenau Burton M. Sapin, ‘Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy-Making and Practitioners: The American Experience’, in M. Girard, W-D. Eberwein and K. Webb (eds), *Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy-Making: National Perspectives on Academics and Professionals in International Relations* (London: Pinter, 1994), pp. 126–35 at p. 131; Wallace, ‘Truth and Power’; Leggold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*; Jentleson, ‘The Need for Praxis’; Walt, ‘The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in International Relations’.

¹⁵ Past studies show that the political influence of think tanks generally is very limited: Richard Higgot and Diane Stone, ‘The Limits of Influence: Foreign Policy Think Tanks in Britain and the USA’, *Review of International Studies*, 20 (1994), pp. 15–34; Diane Stone and Andrew Denham (eds), *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Analysis Across Nations* (New York and Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ Bulmer, *The Uses of Social Research*; Pal (1990), pp. 140–41; Weiss, ‘Policy Research as Advocacy’, p. 38; Erik Albaek, ‘Between Knowledge and Power: Utilization of Social Science in Public Policy Making’, *Policy Sciences*, 28(1995), pp. 79–100.

¹⁷ Bulmer, *The Uses of Social Research* (1982), pp. 43–6; Leslie Pal, ‘Knowledge, Power, and Policy: Reflections on Foucault’, in S. Brooks and A-G Gagnon (eds), *Social Scientists, Policy and the State* (New York: Praeger, 1990), pp. 139–58 at p. 139; Albaek, ‘Between Knowledge and Power’; Mark Laffey, Mark and Jutta Weldes, ‘Beyond Belief: Ideas and Symbolic Technologies in the Study of International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 3 (1997), pp. 192–237; Frank Fischer, ‘Beyond Empiricism: Policy Inquiry in Postpositivist Perspective’, *Policy Studies Journal*, 26 (1998), pp. 129–46 at p. 129.

¹⁸ Tim Booth, ‘Researching Policy Research: Issues of Utilization’, *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization*, 12 (1990), pp. 80–100 at p. 81. Emphasis in original.

¹⁹ Harold L. Wilensky, ‘Social Science and the Public Agenda: Reflections on the Relation of Knowledge to Policy in the US and Abroad’, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, 22 (1997), pp. 1241–65 at p. 1242; Claire Donovan, ‘The Governance of Social Science and Everyday Epistemology’, *Public Administration*, 83 (2005), pp. 597–615; Claire Donovan and Phil Larkin, ‘The Problem of Political Science and Practical Politics’, *Politics*, 26 (2006), pp. 11–7. This is obviously still the focus in several studies of the role of ideas, particularly those based on mainly rationalist perspectives: Goldstein and Keohane, ‘Ideas and Foreign Policy’; Albert S. Yee, ‘The Causal Effects of Ideas on Policies’, *International Organization*, 50 (1996), pp. 69–108; Craig Parsons, ‘Showing Ideas as Causes: The Origins of the European Union’, *International Organization*, 56 (2002), pp. 47–84. This perspective however has received criticism, particularly from writers more inclined toward constructivism: Laffey and Weldes, ‘Beyond Belief’; Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change*; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); John K. Jacobsen, ‘Duelling Constructivisms: A Post-Mortem on the Ideas Debate in Mainstream IR/IPPE’, *Review of International Studies*, 29 (2003), pp. 39–60.

into account a much wider array of possible connections between research and policy, which includes instrumental as well as conceptual and symbolic usage.

Clearly, the distinction between instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic usage is analytical rather than empirical, and the three categories are not mutually exclusive. Thus, an idea may at the same time have an instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic function in politics, or be utilised in only one or two of these ways. The theory of interdemocratic peace,²⁰ for example, can be interpreted as a ‘roadmap’²¹ for US foreign policy. Not only does this usage suggest concrete policy recommendations (for example, support general elections as a peace-building measure), but also imply a particular concept of the world (universal liberalism) with obvious symbolic implications (legitimizing foreign policy actions with authoritative scholarship).

Several observers of the research-policy interface argue that if anything, scholarly ideas are of greatest value when used *conceptually*.²² In supplying concepts, scholars can serve an ‘enlightenment’ function, which does not solve policy problems, but which supplies ‘the intellectual conditions for problem solving’.²³ Thus, the impact of IR scholarship and indeed of social science research more generally, has had little to do with the presentation of empirical evidence and providing policy recommendations, and a lot more to do with restructuring and reorganising knowledge.²⁴ We argue, however, that even if instrumental usage is unusual, it should not be dismissed.

Symbolic usage is more specifically about reinforcing commitments, bolstering support, shifting responsibilities, legitimating decisions already made, and defending against criticism by referring to respected researchers.²⁵ When policymakers describe how they make use of social science they use graphic words: ‘support’, ‘back up’, ‘sell’, ‘justify’, ‘document’ and ‘counter’.²⁶ In short, legitimisation and blame avoidance²⁷ are two symbolic ways of utilising scholarship which are

²⁰ On interdemocratic peace theory as a case of politically utilised IR scholarship, cf. Lepgold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*, ch. 5; Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), ch. 2.

²¹ ‘Roadmap’ is one three functions of ideas suggested by Goldstein and Keohane, ‘Ideas and Foreign Policy’, pp. 10–13. See also Craig Parsons, ‘Showing Ideas as Causes: The Origins of the European Union’, *International Organization*, 56 (2002), pp. 47–84; and Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change*. The other two functions are ideas as ‘focal points’ and ideas as elements of institutionalisation. The latter corresponds with our notion of paradigmatic ideas, see Peter A. Hall, ‘Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain’, *Comparative Politics*, 25 (1993), pp. 275–96; Beyer, ‘Research Utilization’; Amara et al., ‘New Evidence on Instrumental, Conceptual, and Symbolic Utilization’.

²² Weiss, *Social Science Research and Decision-Making*, p. 269; cf. Weiss, *Organizations for Policy Analysis*; George, *Bridging the Gap*.

²³ Janowitz, ‘Professionalization of Sociology’; cf. Bulmer, *The Uses of Social Research*, p. 48; Stephen Krasner, ‘Sovereignty: An Institutional Perspective’, *Comparative Political Studies*, 21:1 (1988), pp. 66–94.

²⁴ Alback, ‘Between Knowledge and Power’, p. 92.

²⁵ Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago: Institute for Research on Poverty, 1971); Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics: With a New Afterword* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Robert Jervis, *The Symbolic Nature of Nuclear Politics* (Urbana: Department of Political Science, University of Illinois, 1987); Frank Fischer, *Technocracy and the Politics of Expertise* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1990); Krasner, ‘Sovereignty: An Institutional Perspective’; Weiss, *Using Social Science Research in Policymaking*, p. 11.

²⁶ Weiss, *Using Social Science Research in Policymaking*, p. 165, cf. pp. 140 ff.

²⁷ Mark Bovens and Paul ‘tHart, *Understanding Policy Fiascoes* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

particularly noteworthy. Policymakers use science in accordance with their own interests and demands, but there are also transformative effects of communication, diffusion, and interpretation. Once an idea has been incorporated in the formulation of policy individual policy makers have little or no control of how it is interpreted or used by other actors in the policy process. Thus, we also want add to this typology by arguing that even if strategically employed for the purpose of legitimisation, the inclusion of research ideas in policy formulations tend to make such ideas a part of the general vocabulary of policy makers. Thus, the symbolic use of ideas often has wider implications than those that were calculated as part of the initial strategy, highlighting the need to take seriously this particular type of research utilisation.

When are scholarly ideas politically utilised? Obstacles and opportunities

When – or under what conditions – is IR scholarship politically utilised? Drawing on the literature on ideas and agendas, the public policy literature on the relationship between social science and public policy, and past IR writings on this relationship, we focus on two conditions that arguably are particularly benign for political utilisation of scholarship:

1. If scholarship is framed in a way that is easily accessible for policymakers: This concerns both the ‘packaging’ and ‘marketing’ of ideas.
2. If scholarship is compatible with established policy paradigms: That is, the degree to which an idea is able to ‘install’ itself within institutionalised ways of conceptualising problems and solutions.

These two conditions are sufficiently specific to be empirically studied, yet broad enough to incorporate basic building blocks of political analysis – actors and their framing strategies, underlying ideas, and institutional context.²⁸

Framing matters

It is often argued that if scholars are able to popularise their findings and arguments and tweak them for the audience they have in mind, the chances of getting audience attention increase. On the highest level of generality, this also means conforming to the characterisation of policy making as preoccupied with ‘objectives’ and ‘objectivity’.²⁹ More specifically, this might imply excluding lengthy

²⁸ Cf. Kathryn Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions: Developmentalism in Argentina and Brazil* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Hugh Hecló, ‘Ideas, Interests, and Institutions,’ in L. C. Dodd and C. Jilson (eds), *The Dynamics of American Politics: Approaches and Interpretations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change*; Mark Rhinard, *Ideas, Interests, and Policy Change in the European Union: The Mobilization of Frames by Actors in the Agricultural and Biotechnology Sectors* (PhD Thesis. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2002).

²⁹ Raymond Apthorpe, ‘Writing Development Policy and Policy Analysis Plain or Clear: On Language, Genre and Power,’ in C. Shore and S. Wright (eds), *Anthropology of policy: Critical Perspectives on governance and power* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 43–58 at p. 56.

theoretical and methodological exercises and instead moving directly to the points that policymakers might find most useful. Much of the ‘scientific paraphernalia’ gets lost, or has to get lost, in order to become politically utilised.³⁰ In contrast to researchers, practitioners are rarely interested in what methods or theories are used to produce a particular observation or argument.³¹ In short, packaging matters. This point can be further developed by drawing on the framing literature.³² Depending on how a situation or idea is framed, the chances of resolving intractable policy controversies can change dramatically.³³ More generally, the point could be made that both science and politics are practices of argumentation, and that ‘strategic framing’ is therefore essential for the saliency of an idea.³⁴

The power of policy paradigms

The literature on the power of ideas highlights the significance of institutionalised ideational frameworks, which correspond to policy paradigms, doctrines, policy schemes, and other descriptors of these overarching conceptual and cognitive structures in policy systems.³⁵ Policy paradigms are maintained by networks of centrally placed actors – what Baumgartner and Jones call ‘policy monopolies.’³⁶ Put simply, if scholarly ideas are not compatible with the ruling policy paradigm, the chance of any form of research utilisation is very small.³⁷ Ideational impact within an unchanged policy paradigm should not be dismissed, however.³⁸ We suggest this observation is qualified by clarifying that non-compatible ideas can be used as targets of critique, and, as noted earlier, for the purpose of blame avoidance.³⁹

If policymakers do not see any need to consider scholarly (or indeed any other type of ideas), but are in fact satisfied with the status quo, then the chances for

³⁰ Weiss, ‘Policy Research as Advocacy’, p. 311.

³¹ George, *Bridging the Gap*; Leggold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*.

³² Applying the framing concept is also a way of taking into account the potential causal mechanisms and effects of the scholarly ideas themselves – both of which, according to Albert Yee, have been largely ignored in past studies of the role of ideas in policymaking. Yee, ‘The Causal Effect of Ideas on Policies’, p. 12.

³³ Robert M. Entman, ‘Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,’ *Journal of Communication*, 43 (1993), p. 4, pp. 51–58; Martin Rein and Donald Schön, *Frame Reflection: Toward the Resolution of Intractable Policy Controversies* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); David A. Rochefort and Roger W. Cobb (eds), *The Politics of Problem Definition: Shaping the Policy Agenda* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1994).

³⁴ Albaek, ‘Between Knowledge and Power,’ p. 91; Rhinard, *Ideas, Interests, and Policy Change in the European Union*.

³⁵ Annika Björkdahl, ‘Constructing a Swedish Conflict Prevention Policy Based on a Powerful Idea and Successful Practice’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 42:2 (2007), pp. 169–85; Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, ‘International Norms Dynamics and Political Change’, *International Organization*, 52 (1998), pp. 887–917; Margareth Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 35.

³⁶ Frank R. Baumgartner, Bryan D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

³⁷ Hall, ‘Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State’; Barbara Czarniawska and Guje Sevón, (eds), *Translating Organizational Change* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996); Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions*, p. 26.

³⁸ Mark M. Blyth, ‘Any More Bright Ideas? The Ideational Turn of Comparative Political Economy’, *Comparative Politics*, 29 (1997), pp. 229–50, at p. 245.

³⁹ Bovens and ‘tHart, *Understanding Policy Fiascos*.

influencing policy are meager, *ceteris paribus*. This is a point addressed, for instance, in epistemic community theory.⁴⁰ If on the other hand there is uncertainty in the policy community on how to approach certain policy issues, there will be a political ‘demand’ for new ideas, including those produced in the academic community. However, a ‘demand’ caused by a general uncertainty has to be expressed and acted upon. Without ‘policy entrepreneurs’⁴¹ who know how and when to act to make a difference, not even the most golden opportunity will result in policy change.

When policymakers do not see any need for new input of ideas, for example because their style of decision making is action-oriented and based on ‘gut feeling’ rather than on research and lengthy intellectual deliberations, this can prevent even the most fervent advocacy coalition from breaking a policy monopoly. If, however, an advocacy coalition can be formed with key actors inside the governmental apparatus itself, the possibility that ideas will be utilised is increased. Such coalitions can also have significance for the shaping of demand for new ideas.⁴² Institutionalised communication allows policy entrepreneurs to get involved at a fairly early stage in the policy process. Later in the process, issues tend to ‘solidify’ around more or less fixed positions, decreasing the room for conceptual discussions, and hence, for scholarly ideas to become utilised.⁴³

Tracing ‘the clash of civilizations’ and ‘soft power’ in US foreign policy

Applying the framework we have presented, this section will discuss, firstly, what types of ideas ‘the clash thesis’ and ‘soft power’ are; secondly, how they were used in the foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration; and finally, when and under what conditions.

What?

The notions of ‘the clash of civilizations’ and ‘soft power’ both emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War. As we shall show, they occupy very different positions in US foreign policy. To a certain degree, this can be attributed to how they were positioned in the normative struggle regarding the role of the US in the world system after the Cold War, as well as the definitional struggles regarding the reasons behind the end of this period. Huntington’s account is not only an image

⁴⁰ Peter M. Haas, ‘Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination’, *International Organization*, 46 (1992), p. 1.

⁴¹ In the words of Kingdon, policy entrepreneurs are actors willing to invest time, reputation or money to push an issue onto the agenda. In principle, anybody can be a policy entrepreneur, inside as well as outside of the governmental apparatus. Scholars can, but do not necessarily have to be, policy entrepreneurs pushing for their ideas. This role may also be played for instance by the media, think tanks and policymakers themselves. See John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, 1995).

⁴² Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*; Paul Sabatier Hank C. Jenkins-Smith, *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Framework* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

⁴³ Weiss, ‘Policy Research as Advocacy’, p. 42.

of the state of the post-Cold War period, it is also an attempt to explain the end of the Cold War as a consequence of the Soviet Union being ripped apart by 'civilizational struggles'.⁴⁴ By contrast, Nye argues that the 'soft power' of the United States, the attraction of its values and its popular culture, contributed to 'victory in the Cold War'.⁴⁵ Huntington's idea was also a reply to Fukuyama's ideas about the 'end of history' – the ultimate victory of liberalism and democracy worldwide.⁴⁶

What, then, are the ideas behind the notions of 'the clash' and 'soft power' respectively? Huntington's argument, in short, is that the major conflicts in the post-Cold War world will no longer be about ideology (liberalism vs. communism), but about incompatible cultural identities, particularly those based on religion, which changes the dynamic of international conflicts altogether. In Huntington's words:

In class and ideological conflicts, the key question was 'Which side are you on?' and people could choose sides and change sides. In conflicts between civilizations, the question is 'What are you?' That is a given and cannot be changed.⁴⁷

Huntington places particular emphasis on religion as the common denominator of a 'civilization' and thus the 'root cause' of conflicts between civilisations. This implies that lines of conflict and sense of community are seen as potentially encompassing more than one nation, or, by contrast, dividing nations internally.⁴⁸ Accordingly, US foreign policy should be geared at promoting unity and cooperation within the 'Western civilization' and, in the longer term, maintaining military and economic strength to protect its interests in relation to other civilisations.

Nye's notion of 'soft power' is about 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies.' Moreover, 'Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others.'⁴⁹ Hence, 'soft power' is similar to Steve Lukes' 'third face of power' – the ability to make others want what you want.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, 'If Not Civilizations, What? Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World', *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (1993), pp. 186–94, at p. 187.

⁴⁵ Nye, *Soft Power*, p. 49.

⁴⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989). Huntington explicitly addresses the question of universality of Western values as well as calling for the unification of the west to balance the rising power of other 'civilizations' in a 1996 article: Samuel P. Huntington, 'The West: Unique, Not Universal', *Foreign Affairs*, 75 (1996), pp. 28–46. See also Tony Smith, *A Pact with the Devil: Washington's Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (New York: Routledge, 2006). On the role of ideas more generally for the end of the Cold War, see for example Brooks, Stephen and Wohlforth, William, 'Power, Globalization and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, 25:3 (2000/2001), pp. 5–53.

⁴⁷ Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations', p. 27.

⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that Huntington's concern for a *domestic* clash of civilisations within the US and other countries, has not gained as much attention as his analysis of civilisation struggles on the global level (but see (Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, p. 307); Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004); Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? America's Great Debate* (London: Free Press, 2005); Emad El-Din Aysha, 'Samuel Huntington and the Geopolitics of American Identity: The Function of Foreign Policy in America's Domestic Clash of Civilizations', *International Studies Perspectives*, 4 (2003), pp. 113–32 at p. 125.

⁴⁹ Nye, *Soft Power*, pp. x, 5.

⁵⁰ The conceptual similarity between Nye's 'soft power' and Luke's preceding notion of the third face' of power seems not to have been acknowledged by Nye. Cf. Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

'Soft power' is clearly associated with the battle for minds, based on intangible, non-military resources. Yet, Nye does not condemn hard power as generally ineffective or counterproductive, but rather sees the two forms of power as complementary to each other. Nye's 'soft power' implies policy recommendations geared at diplomacy rather than force; trade and cultural exchange rather than threats and militarism; and internationalism rather than isolationism. In contrast to Huntington, a central assumption underlying Nye's concept is the 'thin' liberalist understanding of culture, an embracement of the universality inherent in the liberal conception of the rational individual, unconstrained by culture or religion. Despite the apparent distance between these two ideas, they share a central preoccupation with ways in which US global leadership can be sustained⁵¹ albeit for quite different reasons.

How?

How, then, have the notions of 'the clash' and 'soft power' been used in current US foreign policy? Two immediate observations are that (a) neither one of them has played any core role in US foreign policy, and (b) we have not found any evidence that either notion has been used explicitly in an instrumental way. That is, there are no indications that these ideas have led to discernable changes in the goals and means of foreign policy. For instance, public diplomacy funding have only risen about 15 per cent in constant dollars since 1980, only recently regaining this level after severe cutbacks in the late 1990s.⁵² 'The clash' thesis stands in stark contrast to the expansionary foreign policy agenda of the Bush administration and its emphasis on spreading democracy by all means available. As we have argued, however, though focusing strictly on instrumental usage is common in most rationalist accounts of the impact of ideas, and generally also in the IR literature on the research-policy interface, this is not the only way in which scholarly ideas can be politically utilised. By adopting a more comprehensive perspective including not only instrumental, but also conceptual and symbolic utilisation, several more substantive observations can be made.

'The clash' notion has not changed the goals or means of US foreign policy, yet it was recurrently and explicitly referred to in statements made by the Bush administration. This was done mainly in terms of refutation rather than agreement. Of this a very clear example is how President Bush made the following statement on 'the war on terrorism': '[T]his struggle has been called the clash of civilizations. In truth, it is a struggle *for* civilization'.⁵³ This explicit refutation is a recurrent feature and a theme also deployed by then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her predecessor Colin Powell as well as other members of the administration.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Cf. T.V. Paul, 'Soft Balancing in the Age of US Primacy', *International Security*, 30:1 (2005), pp. 46–71; Smith, *A Pact with the Devil*.

⁵² Susan B Epstein, 'US Public Diplomacy: Background and the 9/11 Commission Recommendations', p. 4, *CRS Report for Congress* (Washington: Congressional Research Service 2006).

⁵³ George W. Bush, *The President's Address to the Nation* (11 September 2007), {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/print/20060911-3.html>} accessed 23 August 2007.

⁵⁴ Collin L. Powell, 'Remarks to the UN Security Council' (12 November 2006), {www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/6049.htm} accessed 21 March 2007; Condoleezza Rice, 'Interview

'The clash' was used symbolically, as a target of critique, legitimating existing policy, and responding to critics claiming that US foreign policy is counterproductive. Moreover, this usage implies an understanding of 'civilization' which is very different from how Huntington uses the word. In the Bush administration's usage, 'civilization' did not mean cultural community based on religion, but stood for distinctively liberal values such as freedom and democracy, which were seen as being of a universal rather than community-based nature. This liberal interpretation of 'civilization' was further elaborated by repeatedly emphasising that the 'war on terrorism' is about ideology rather than religion, and thus something which is based on attitudes of individuals rather than on attributes of communities. Terrorism is an 'ideology that justifies murder' being 'based on enslavement',⁵⁵ an ideology that gains momentum not because of some inherent qualities of Islam or Muslim culture, but because of the lack of freedom and democracy.⁵⁶ Thus, the 'force of human freedom' will stop the 'rise of tyranny'⁵⁷ and as stated in the 2007 State of the Union Address: 'Free people are not drawn to malignant ideologies – and most will choose a better way when given the chance'.⁵⁸ Likewise, the 2006 National Security Strategy states that '[T]he War on Terror [...] is not a battle of religions',⁵⁹ instead, it is framed as a 'great ideological struggle'.⁶⁰ Thus, in contrast to Huntington, the Bush administration viewed terrorism as the result of a choice to support certain ideas, rather than as an inescapable tragedy reflecting unchanging and incompatible religions.

As well as explicitly refuting Huntington's notion of a 'clash of civilizations', the National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2002 also states that the war on terrorism is 'a struggle of ideas'⁶¹ or, as in the 2003 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, 'a war of ideas'.⁶² Other members of the administration have also employed the notion of a war of ideas. The Under Secretary of state For Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs called this 'war' one of the central elements of his mission.⁶³ High ranking members of the military establishment also explicitly rejected 'the clash' thesis and instead emphasised the significance of the 'struggle

with Hamid Mir of GEO TV', Islamabad (17 March 2005), {www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/43605.htm} accessed 21 March 2007; Paul Wolfowitz, 'Remarks at the American-Turkish Council' Washington DC (18 March 2002), {<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=199>} accessed 29 July 2008.

⁵⁵ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy of the US of America*, The White House (2006). {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>} accessed 13 February 2007.

⁵⁶ Roxanna Sjöstedt, 'The Discursive Origins of a Doctrine: Norms, Identity, and Securitization under Harry S. Truman and George W. Bush', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 3 (2007), p. 3, pp. 233–54 at p. 244.

⁵⁷ George W. Bush, *The President's State of the Union Address* (2 February 2005). {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/02/print/20050202-11.html>} accessed 15 February 2007.

⁵⁸ Bush, *The President's State of the Union Address* (2005).

⁵⁹ Bush, *National Security Strategy of the US of America* (2006), p. 9.

⁶⁰ George W. Bush, *The President's State of the Union Address* (31 January 2006), {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/01/print/20060131-10.html>} accessed 15 February 2007.

⁶¹ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy of the US of America*, The White House (2002), {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>} accessed 13 February 2007, p. 31.

⁶² George W. Bush, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, The White House (2003), {http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/counter_terrorism/counter_terrorism_strategy.pdf} accessed 27 June 2007, p. 23.

⁶³ Cf. James K. Glassman, 'US Diplomacy and the War of Ideas', {<http://fpc.state.gov/107034.htm>} accessed 30 July 2008). James K. Glassman, 'Opening Statement of James K. Glassman' Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Hearing on Nomination as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (30 January 2008).

for hearts and mind' and the 'war of ideas' in winning the 'war on terror'.⁶⁴ This is also clearly spelled out in the NSS of 2006: '[T]he War on Terror has been both a battle of arms and a battle of ideas – a fight against the terrorists and their murderous ideology.'⁶⁵ This duality in the representation of the 'war on terror' not only serves as a counter-position to 'the clash' perspective, but also displays a clear similarity with Nye's reasoning, in regarding 'hard' and 'soft' power as complementary, and not mutually exclusive.⁶⁶

Terrorism seen as ideology serves two main functions in the foreign policy discourse: Firstly, it uses a well-tried logic that somewhat ironically is rooted in the Cold War foreign policy doctrine, where 'ideology' is framed as pertaining to the oppositional camp while freedom and democracy are represented as non-ideological, natural, and universal categories. Secondly, it frames conflicts as resolvable, as opposed to the intractability of civilisational conflict; as the Cold War was 'won', the war against terror can be 'won'. In contrast to this liberal idea of the possibility for change and universal values stands another well documented and much discussed theme employed by the former president himself as well as other members of the administration; the classical 'good' versus 'evil'.⁶⁷ This theme was especially prevalent in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 but is still playing a role in how the perceived enemies of the US are represented.⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the explicit refutations of 'the clash' thesis, the underlying idea of a world consisting of more or less coherent cultural communities based on religion is elsewhere implicitly embraced. This indicates an indirect conceptual usage of the 'the clash' notion, contributing to the representation of the universe of international relations as 'civilizations'. Although ideology rather than religion is seen as the root cause of terrorism, a clash is nevertheless identified, and it is located elsewhere: 'The war on terrorism is not a clash of civilizations. It does, however, reveal the clash inside a civilization, a battle for the future of the Muslim world.'⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Gerry J. Gillmore, 'Anti-Terror War is Struggle of Ideas, Vice Chairman Says' American Forces Press Service (29 March 2006), {<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=15016>} accessed 29 July 2008); Paul Wolfowitz, 'Remarks as delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz at the Turkish Economic and Social Studies', Istanbul (14 July 2002), {<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=267>} accessed 30 July 2008.

⁶⁵ Bush, *National Security Strategy of the US of America* (2006), p. 9.

⁶⁶ This similarity might be completely accidental – we are not arguing that it was Nye or his ideas which influenced this reasoning. Yet this similarity implies compatibility between Nye's ideas and the policy paradigm of the Bush administration, which facilitates explicit utilisation of the 'soft power' concept.

⁶⁷ Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Smith, *A Pact with the Devil*.

⁶⁸ George W. Bush *The President's State of the Union Address* (23 January 2007), {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070123-2.html>} accessed 15 February 2007. Noticeable is also how President Obama stated upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, 'I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world.' Barack H. Obama, 'Remarks by the president at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize' (10 December 2009), {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize>} accessed 10 February 2010.

⁶⁹ Bush, *National Security Strategy of the US of America* (2002), p. 31. Joseph Nye, outspoken critic of George W. Bush's foreign policy, applied this theme in a 2004 *Foreign Affairs* article stating that 'The current struggle against Islamist terrorism is not a clash of civilisations; it is a contest closely tied to the civil war raging within Islamic civilisation between moderates and extremists': Joseph S. Nye, Jr., 'The Decline of America's Soft Power: Why Washington Should Worry', *Foreign Affairs*, 83(2004), pp. 16–20 at p. 17. See also Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The US National Security Strategy: A*

In contrast to 'the clash', the notion of 'soft power' did not appear explicitly either in presidential speeches or in high-profile policy documents such as the National Security Strategies, and only occasionally in statements by individual policymakers. In the presidential campaign running up to the 2004 elections, the position of the idea of 'soft power' became more explicit as the foreign policy platform of the Democratic candidate John Kerry was largely built around restoring multilateralism and generally strengthening ties with the international community. Kerry was condemned by critical commentators as being a 'soft realist', with clear connections being made with the Clinton administration, and with Nye himself.⁷⁰ Moreover, when asked by a journalist what he thought about the usefulness of 'soft power', former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld replied frankly: 'I don't know what it means.'⁷¹ Arguably, Rumsfeld represented a more 'hawkish' approach, and was particularly critical of the 'soft' security approach of 'Old Europe'.⁷² For hard-line neoconservatives with which Rumsfeld has often been identified, diplomacy and 'soft power' measures has more often been regarded as 'coaxing and cajoling' replacing 'toughness and credibility'.⁷³ As vice-president Cheney put it in a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in 2002 on the alternatives at hand in dealing with *Al-Qaeda*: 'Such a group can not be held back by deterrence, nor reasoned with through diplomacy. [...] This conflict can only end in their complete and utter destruction.'⁷⁴

Despite such refutations of 'soft power', the underlying logic of the concept is not regarded as controversial in many parts of the policy making environment, especially within the State Department. In the second term of the Bush administration more emphasis was put on public diplomacy and its budget has been somewhat strengthened.⁷⁵ The 'soft power' concept also started to appear in the statements of senior officials of the administration. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell and his successor, Condoleezza Rice, on occasion explicitly embraced 'soft power' as a concept with positive connotations, symbolically linked to concepts such as democracy and freedom, and civilisation as a universal concept.

Interestingly, this understanding of 'soft power' resembles Bush's talk about a 'clash for civilization'. When confronted with critique of the US as depending too much on 'hard power', both Powell and Rice defended US foreign policy by claiming that, on the contrary, it is depending heavily on 'soft power'. Indeed, they

Debate (25 September 2004). Washington: Council on Foreign Relations, {<http://www.cfr.org/publication.html?id=6309>} accessed 22 August 2007.

⁷⁰ Max Boot, 'Bookshelf: The Force of Friendly Persuasion', *The Wall Street Journal* (6 April 2004); Daniel Henninger, 'Bush and Kerry Better Clarify the World Tonight', *The Wall Street Journal* (8 October 2004); George Melloan, 'Kerry's Foreign Policy: Clinton without Charm', *The Wall Street Journal* (April 2004).

⁷¹ Nye, *Soft Power*, p. ix.

⁷² Joseph S. Nye, Jr., 'Donald Rumsfeld and Smart Power', *Project Syndicate* (2006), available at: {<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/nye32>} accessed 27 September 2007.

⁷³ David Frum and Richard Perle, 'Beware the Soft-Line Ideologues', *The Wall Street Journal* (7 January 2004).

⁷⁴ Richard B. Cheney, 'Remarks by the Vice President to the Council on Foreign Relations' (12 February 2002), {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/vicepresident/news-speeches/speeches/vp20020215.html>} accessed 30 July 2008.

⁷⁵ Epstein, 'US Public Diplomacy: Background and the 9/11 Commission Recommendations'. Nye himself has also noted the slight change of tone in the second term of the Bush administration, Joseph S. Nye Jr, 'President Bush goes Soft' Project syndicate (February 2005), {<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/nye18>} accessed 31 July 2008.

framed the use of sanctions or military force as exceptions, as the rare but inevitable answer to extraordinary situations.⁷⁶ Powell also used this concept to call attention to the soft power aspects of US foreign policy in several speeches as well as calling explicitly for more 'soft power' in a 2004 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed.⁷⁷ Likewise, in a Q&A session at the 2003 World Economic Forum in Davos, Powell argued that the US government has a long tradition of using 'soft power' as a complement to 'hard power', using as his examples the Marshall Plan and the similar venture in Japan.⁷⁸ Even former Secretary Rumsfeld seemed to have reconsidered when answering questions after a remark made in 2005, emphasising the need to consider 'soft power' measures stating that 'the use of force is always the last choice and soft power in all its various manifestations clearly is what is needed and what is appropriate.'⁷⁹ His successor Defense Secretary Robert Gates surprisingly sailed up as one of the administration's most overt supporters of the 'soft power' concept delivering a speech in November 2007 making the case for 'strengthening our capacity to use soft power' arguing for more funding for what he referred to as 'civilian instruments of national security' such as diplomacy and strategic communication, thus pointing to the possibility of instrumental use of this concept⁸⁰ especially in light of the fact that Gates was asked to remain in office in the Obama administration.⁸¹

In addition to these rare but explicit utilisations, striking similarities can be observed between the underlying ideas of 'soft power' and US foreign policy. This indicates paradigm compatibility, a benign condition for political utilisation. In contrast to Huntington, both Nye and the Bush administration expressed a belief in the power of attraction (that is, 'soft power') inherent in American liberalism. Both emphasised the possibility of democratising autocratic states and thus doing away with sentiments spurring terrorism. Both also insisted that the principles of

⁷⁶ Collin L. Powell, 'Remarks at the World Economic Forum', *Davos* (26 January 2003), {<http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2003/16869.htm>} accessed 21 March 2007; Nye 2004a, p. ix; Condoleezza Rice, 'Remarks at the Indonesia World Affairs Council', Jakarta (15 March 2005), {<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/63160.htm>} accessed 21 March 2007.

⁷⁷ Collin L. Powell, 'Secure Borders, Open Doors', *The Wall Street Journal* (21 April 2004). Colin L. Powell 'Remarks at the Southern Center for International Studies', Atlanta (1 October 2004), {<http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/36694.htm>} accessed 30 July 2008. Colin L. Powell 'Keynote Address of the 60th Anniversary dinner of the School of Advanced International Studies', Washington DC (13 October 2004), {<http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/37087.htm>} accessed 30 July 2008.

⁷⁸ Charles Wolfson, 'Soft Power and Hard Power. CBS's Charles Wolfson Examines Powell's Remarks in Davos', *CBS News* (28 Jan 2003), available at: {<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/28/opinion/diplomatic/main538320.shtml>} accessed 27 September 2007.

⁷⁹ Donald H Rumsfeld, 'Remarks to the International Institute for Strategic Studies', Singapore (4 June 2005), {<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3216>} accessed 29 July 2008.

⁸⁰ Robert M. Gates, 'Landon Lecture', Kansas (26 November 2007), {<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199>} accessed 29 July 2008. In his speech Gates also pointed out that the whole foreign affairs budget of the State Department is less than what the Pentagon spends on health care.

⁸¹ Apart from Gates other leading figures in the Department of Defense have acknowledged the power of ideas and the importance of diplomacy. In a 2009 speech the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy stated in that the building of international institutions such as the UN and the Bretton-Woods system was the core in creating stability in the post-world war period and not as is often stated, the strategy of containment. Michèle Flournoy, 'Rebalancing the Force: Major Issues for QDR 2010' (29 April 2009), {http://policy.defense.gov/sections/public_statements/speeches/usdp/flournoy/2009/April_27_2009.pdf} accessed 10 February 2010.

liberalism are of a universal nature, applicable everywhere in the world.⁸² Believing in attraction and the possibility of change, it can be argued, is a fundamentally liberal idea, as opposed to the realist essentialism expressed by Huntington. This ideational compatibility may seem surprising, given the common critique implying that the Bush administration relied far too much on 'hard power' and had not fully understood the usefulness of 'soft power', let alone applied it in practice.⁸³

It can also be the case that, since Nye was an outspoken critic of Bush's foreign policy, the administration was less keen on utilising Nye's ideas. The more recent utilisation of the concept even by members of the military establishment, however, signals that 'soft power' has gained saliency in policy debates even among Republicans. This being said, public diplomacy has been an official, albeit at times marginal, part of US foreign policy since the late 1940s, with the Marshall Plan as the foremost example. Nye's more recent advocacy for 'soft power' should rather be seen as a response to cutbacks in public diplomacy after the end of the Cold War.

When?

Under what conditions have the observed utilisations of 'the clash' and 'soft power' come about? Applying the analytical framework outlined earlier, we will focus on the significance of framing activities, and how these notions relate to the established policy paradigm.

The concepts of 'the clash of civilizations' and 'soft power' share two framing features, both of which have facilitated political utilisation. Firstly, both of them are 'catchy' frames, being both provocative and easily comprehended. The provocative capacity of 'the clash' is undisputed, considering the manifold voices of critique this has stirred, within both academia and the policy world. We have also shown that 'soft power' can be interpreted as a controversial concept, in that it is framed as an alternative (or complement) to 'hard' military power, and in that it can be perceived as weak and idealistic. Both notions are also easily comprehended, as they are expressed with generic everyday words rather than technical, unusual, or awkwardly academic terms.

⁸² In the 2002 *National Security Strategy*, the use of diplomacy is seen as essential 'to promote the free flow of information and ideas to kindle the hopes and aspirations of freedom of those in societies ruled by the sponsors of global terrorism' (p. 6). These ideas have also been echoed in the announcements of new efforts to reinforce the Voice of America broadcasts in Persian and Arabic: George W. Bush, *The President's State of the Union Address* (20 January 2004), {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/print/20040120-7.html>} accessed 15 February 2007. Nye's ideas are still alive in the less visible (and considerably less funded) parts of US foreign policy, for example that of cultural diplomacy. See State Department, 'Cultural Diplomacy: The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy', *Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy* (2005), {<http://www.publicdiplomacywatch.com/091505Cultural-Diplomacy-Report.pdf>} accessed 14 February 2007. On democracy promotion in the Bush doctrine, see also Jonathan Monten, 'The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in US Strategy', *International Security*, 29:4 (2005), pp. 112–156.

⁸³ Nye, *Soft Power*.

Secondly, both ‘the clash’ and ‘soft power’ are ambiguous notions. As argued by social movement theorists Snow and Benford,⁸⁴ ‘elaborated’ as opposed to ‘restricted’ frames allow a much greater variety in interpretation, which facilitates broader utilisation. Our analysis has shown that ‘soft power’ has been interpreted both in terms of being a ‘smart’, long-term approach, directly concerned with the ‘battle for the hearts and minds’. On the other, emphasising ‘soft power’ has occasionally been considered as a sign of weakness and indecisiveness, in effect endangering national security interests.

Likewise, the word ‘civilization’ is notably ambiguous, thereby allowing the Bush administration to co-opt and reframe Huntington’s notion about ‘the clash’. While Huntington defines ‘civilization’ as faith-based cultural community, the Bush administration reframes the concept in direct opposition to Huntington, equating it with universal liberal values of freedom, democracy, and modernisation. Moreover, this reframing emphasises action, explicitly with reference to the ‘war on terror’. In short, it can be argued that frame ambiguity is a necessary condition for a varied and indeed contradictory usage of ideas.

Frames in themselves do not imply that ideas are utilised. Policy entrepreneurs⁸⁵ first have to interpret frames and focusing events as opportunities, and then act upon them. Huntington and Nye were both the primary entrepreneurs of their own respective ideas, as highly esteemed Harvard professors with unusually successful academic careers. Nye has noteworthy experience of working inside government and has extensive outreach in the media. Huntington also had experience in this field, serving as an advisor in the late 1960s for Lyndon Johnson and as director of security planning for the National Security Council in the Carter administration. Nye served as the Deputy to the Under Secretary of State, also in the Carter administration, and as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs in the Clinton administration, as chairman of the National Intelligence Council, and as a member of the National Security Council. Thus, Huntington’s and Nye’s first-hand experience of political practice and in-depth understanding of the channels through which foreign policy is shaped, informed the way they marketed their ideas. They have also been active contributors in widely circulated policy-oriented publications, such as *Foreign Affairs*, and as authors of op-eds in various newspapers. Both of them have also periodically been affiliated with influential US think tanks.⁸⁶ Moreover, for a great many years, in Huntington’s case from 1949 to 2007, they have been teaching and tutoring a significant part of the US foreign policy elite.

These actor characteristics and bridge-building careers have arguably facilitated the dissemination of their ideas not only in academia but also in policy circles. Nye also forged a coalition with former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage with

⁸⁴ David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, ‘Master Frames and Cycles of Protest’, in A.D. Morris and C. McClurg Mueller (eds), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 139–40 at pp. 133–5.

⁸⁵ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*; Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change*.

⁸⁶ Nye has been associated with *inter alia* the Carnegie Council as well as the Council on Foreign Relations, which also publishes the journal *Foreign Affairs*, a journal widely read in US foreign policy circles. Only in the first half of 2008 he published almost ten op-eds in various newspapers including the *Financial Times* and *Newsweek International*. Huntington has been associated with the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, as well as founding in 1970 (with Warren Demian Manshell) the magazine *Foreign Policy*.

whom he testified before a House Committee, arguing for a series of ‘soft power’ measures and ways in which ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ power measures can be combined.⁸⁷ The support of Armitage, being a former member of the Bush administration, can be seen as a significant step in making the ‘soft power’ concept usable in wider policy circles instead of being branded as part of an exclusively Democrat foreign policy agenda. As noted above, Defense Secretary Gates embraced the concept as well as the slightly reframed concept of ‘smart power’, signifying the combination of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power.⁸⁸ Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has also taken up this concept, even stating explicitly that she prefers it over ‘soft power’.⁸⁹ There is still no noticeable explicit *instrumental* utilisation of either ‘soft’ or ‘smart’ power, however. Thus, it may very well be that institutionalised communication of theory and research is significant for policy impact,⁹⁰ yet it is apparently not a sufficient condition.

In addition to framing activities, past theory and research strongly indicate that a necessary condition for ideas to have any policy impact is that they are compatible with the established policy paradigm.⁹¹ This is a convincing argument, especially from the point of view of people advocating ideas in opposition to the ruling policy paradigm, and who have a hard time even getting their ideas on the agenda, not to speak of influencing policy change.⁹² Our empirical observations suggest, however, that the proposition on paradigm compatibility needs to be qualified in two particular ways.

Firstly, concepts can actually be politically utilised even when they contrast with policy paradigms – not conceptually or instrumentally – but symbolically. This is shown by the ways the Bush administration explicitly used ‘the clash’ thesis, as a target of critique, which legitimates established policy.⁹³ Indeed, this kind of negative symbolic utilisation, it can be argued, while not making conceptual and instrumental usage impossible, does make such usage less likely. Yet contradictory

⁸⁷ Joseph S. Nye and Richard Armitage, ‘Smart Power and the US Strategy for Security in a post-9/11 World’, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Hearing on Smart Power and the US Strategy for Security in the Post-9/11 World, (7 November 2007).

⁸⁸ Steve Benen, ‘Smart Power’, *The Washington Monthly* (13 January 2009), available at: {http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/archives/individual/2009_01/016425.php} accessed 10 February 2010; Robert M. Gates, ‘Remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies’, Washington DC (26 January 2008), {<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1211>} accessed 31 July 2008.

⁸⁹ Hillary Rodham Clinton, ‘Remarks at the Global Philanthropy Forum Conference’ (22 April 2009), {<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/04/122066.htm>} accessed 10 February 2010.

⁹⁰ Thomas Risse-Kappen, ‘Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies’, *World Politics*, 43 (1991), pp. 479–512; Thomas Risse-Kappen, ‘Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures, and the End of the Cold War’, *International Organization*, 48 (1994), pp. 185–214; Haas, ‘Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination’; Wilensky, ‘Social Science and the Public Agenda’; Sheila Jasanoff, *The Fifth Branch: Science Advisors as Policymakers* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁹¹ Björkdahl, ‘Constructing a Swedish Conflict Prevention Policy’; Blyth, ‘Any More Bright Ideas?’, p. 234; Finnemore and Sikkink, ‘International Norm Dynamics and Political Change’; Hall, ‘Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State’.

⁹² Baumgartner and Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, *Policy Change and Learning*; Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*.

⁹³ The general absence of references to the ‘clash of civilizations’ in foreign policy statements in the first year of the Obama administration points to how the need to produce this counter-image to legitimise policy have largely disappeared, with Obama taking office. However, in his 2009 speech in Cairo, themes similar to that of ‘the clash’ – thesis were addressed with Obama stating that ‘America is not-and never will be – at war with Islam’, Barack Obama, ‘Remarks on a New Beginning’ (4 June 2009), {http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-president-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09}.

usage is not impossible. It is, after all, politics that we are observing, in which the outcomes arguably are not the result of a purely rational process.

Secondly, despite its compatibility with the liberal dimension of the US foreign policy paradigm, the *explicit* utilisation of 'soft power' has been limited. 'Soft power' is explicitly based on traditional American ideas about universal liberalism, which are also part of the discourse legitimating current foreign policy, 'the war on terror', and the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁹⁴ As stated most clearly in the NSS of 2006⁹⁵ and similarly in the State of the Union Address of 2002: 'America will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere.'⁹⁶ In theoretical terms, this shows that paradigm compatibility is not a sufficient condition, not even for symbolic utilisation. It may still be a necessary condition for conceptual and instrumental usage, but it is arguably not sufficient for any type of usage. Moreover, as suggested elsewhere, the linkage between policy as statements and policy as practice is significant for the impact of ideas,⁹⁷ although this goes beyond the scope of the present study.

Conclusion

Our analysis supports the observations of past theory and research that the use of research ideas might be unexpected and indeed contrary to the objectives for which they were conceived. While Huntington's notion has become politically untenable to the degree that US foreign policy is formulated explicitly in opposition to it, this development indicates a noteworthy symbolic usage, particularly through the cunning reframing of 'civilization' as modernity in the American liberal sense, as

⁹⁴ Cf. Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge), 2005, p. 80; Smith, *A Pact with the Devil*.

⁹⁵ Bush, *National Security Strategy of the US of America* (2006), p. 2.

⁹⁶ George W. Bush, *The President's State of the Union Address* (29 January 2002), {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/print/20020129-11.html>} accessed 15 February 2007; cf. George W. Bush, *The President's State of the Union Address* (28 January 2003), {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/print/20030128-19.html>} accessed 15 February 2007. This also hitches on to the rather different explanations offered by Nye and Huntington respectively at the end of the Cold War, a historical event that has become an important point of reference in legitimating the current policy. As Huntington's thesis is a call for a Cold War-like world order of inter-civilisational power politics, Nye regards the end of the Cold War as an opening for the US to consolidate its leading position in the world system by continuing to exert its attraction on the rest of the world, winning hearts and minds. Thus from this perspective it is Nye, along with the Bush administration, that presents the dynamics of world politics in terms of a continuation from the Cold War era, as they hold that the values and ideas that brought down the Wall will also lead to victory in coming struggles. In contrast, Huntington's position, that the Cold War was in fact not won at all but ended partly as a result of the revival of inter-civilisational conflicts within the Soviet Union, effectively represents a negation of the idea of the end of the Cold War as a victory. This alternative conceptualisation of the fall of the Soviet Union constitutes a significant line of conflict between the 'clash thesis' and US foreign policy. The end of the Cold War in terms of a 'victory' has gained an important symbolic position in US foreign policy and serves as recurrent theme of the framing of the 'war on terror'. This is also affirmed by the recurrent formulation of 'the war on terror' as a struggle against a vaguely defined 'ideological' adversary. This formulation not only contrasts the ideas forwarded by Huntington but signals an important commonality with the assumptions underlying Nye's account.

⁹⁷ Björkdahl, 'Constructing a Swedish Conflict Prevention Policy', pp. 133–5; Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change'.

opposed to religious community in Huntington's sense. The intractability of civilisational conflict is refuted and replaced by another aspect of Cold War rhetoric in the framing of terrorism as an 'ideology' and 'the war on terror' as a battle of ideas complemented by the theme of intrinsic evil. Similarly, 'soft power' has attained an ambiguous position, with its meaning changing depending on the context, sometimes being used as a means of countering the image of the US as a brutal bully. In other situations, however, 'soft power' has been taken to connote indecisiveness and an inability to deal effectively with imminent threats.

In order to comprehend the political impact of scholarly ideas, we have pointed to the fruitfulness of moving from a focus on policy relevance to a perspective emphasising political utilisation, and we have illustrated how political utilisation is affected by framing, and how ideas resonate with established paradigms. The empirical analysis also suggests that the common assumption that compatibility with policy paradigms is necessary for political utilisation, should be qualified in two ways. Firstly, when ideas are incompatible with a policy paradigm, it can nevertheless be utilised symbolically, as a target of critique, helping to legitimate policy. Secondly, paradigm compatibility might be a necessary condition for instrumental and conceptual usage, but it is apparently not a sufficient condition for any kind of usage, as illustrated by the limited and inconsistent utilisation of 'soft power'.