

Further, at the very moment when Australian foreign policy is celebrating a resurgence of a homogenised value-system globally, there is a great deal of empirical evidence suggesting that precisely the opposite phenomenon is most characteristic of the global arena in the 1990s. As one commentator has recently concluded, in terms entirely prescient to the Westphalian context, the likelihood is that Western perspectives and political structures will struggle to survive in the 21st century as, around the world:

there is a growing recognition that the universal authority which Western societies have claimed for their institutions and values are based on nothing more substantial than the global power western states exercised during their brief period of hegemony from the 16th century to the present.⁴⁸

Thus, while in the traditional heartland of Westphalian realist concern, the elite forums of North America and Western Europe (and the odd Pacific middle-power) the convergence case might well be plausibly (if problematically) made, its essentialist and universalist perspective begins to pale rather rapidly beyond these parameters. The reason for this goes beyond any new/old acknowledgement of "uneven development" to be found in works such as Cooperating for Peace. It goes to the conceptual weaknesses at the core of a Westphalian model which frames the world from the perspective of ruling elites and the homogenising experiences to be found within this milieu.

Pointing more directly to the dangers of this conceptual weakness in its Australian foreign policy context, Peter Lawler has proposed that the 'cooperative security' policy might well "facilitate dialogue at the elite level between states, producing significant gains for global security in the narrow sense". But it cannot assume that this kind of elite dialogue will necessarily facilitate a consensus throughout the global community. Rather, "in some aspects it may have precisely the reverse effect".⁴⁹ This "reverse effect" issue is one I want to explore shortly in relation to Australia's 'open regionalism' policy. The point for now is that on the basis of the only developed argument for the 'cooperative security' theme in Australian foreign policy there is room for real doubt as to its conceptual and operational adequacy. This fact

and the capital transfer figures from Susan George, The Debt Boomerang (Boulder, Colorado: Pluto Press, 1992) p. xv

⁴⁸See J. Gray "The West no Longer Calling the Shots" in The Canberra Times, February 11, 1997

⁴⁹See P. Lawler, The Core Assumptions and Presumptions of 'Cooperating For Peace' in S. Lawson ed. The New Agenda for Peace: Cooperating for Peace and Beyond (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995) pp. 56-57