# Protecting in an era of change: The UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy

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*The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.*

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I dedicate this thesis to all those efforts to prevent and protect populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes with the hope of a more peaceful world.

# Abstract

This dissertation assesses the UK's commitment to human protection from mass violence and atrocity crimes in the context of its transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. A transitional foreign policy is defined in relation to changes in the UK's geopolitical interests, policies, and international engagements, which is examined between 1997 and 2020. It is shaped by the adaptation of successive governments to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, the UK's membership, leadership, and influence in multilateral organisations, and the UK's position within the evolving international order. A transitional foreign policy has implications for the nature of the UK's commitment to human protection as successive governments attempt to strategize the UK's international relations, including the relationship between its many foreign policy interests and values.

The dissertation argues that there has been a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2015 based around a liberal internationalist approach to protecting populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes. However, from 2016 to 2020 this commitment to human protection has been in tension with the UK's other geopolitical and economic interests such as international trade, which is part of a broader difficulty in defining the UK's place in the world in the 21st century. Brexit in particular has renewed attention amongst academics and policymakers to the UK's relative international power decline. In turn, successive governments have reasserted the UK's post-Brexit role in the world as a 'Global Britain', with economic and geopolitical relations at the core of this approach.

These arguments are evidenced by an analysis of 1,055 primary documentary materials, semi-structured interviews, and secondary scholarship. The dissertation utilises theory on foreign policy change to develop an original analytical framework to assess sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy, which is applied to the crises in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Libya, Syria, Myanmar, and Yemen. This dissertation contributes to research on UK foreign policy and human protection, assessments of foreign policy change, and UK leadership and influence amid its post-war relative international decline.

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# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| BRICS | Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa |
| CAAT | Campaign against Arms Trade |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus disease 2019 |
| CSSF | Conflict, Stability and Security Fund |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| EU | European Union |
| FCO | Foreign and Commonwealth Office |
| FCDO | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office |
| G8 | Group of 8 |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GNI | Gross National Income |
| HM | Her Majesty |
| ICISS | International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty |
| ICC | International Criminal Court |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IS | Islamic State |
| ISIS | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria |
| MoD | Ministry of Defence |
| MPs | Members of Parliament |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation |
| ODA | Overseas development assistance |
| OPCW | Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons |
| PoC | Protection of civilians |
| R2P | Responsibility to Protect |
| RUF | Revolutionary United Front |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations Refugee Agency |
| US | United States |
| WMD | Weapons of Mass Destruction |

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

> "Twenty years ago we would not have been fighting in Kosovo. We would have turned our backs on it. The fact that we are engaged is the result of a wide range of changes - the end of the Cold War; changing technology; the spread of democracy. But it is bigger than that. I believe the world has changed in a more fundamental way."
>
> *Tony Blair, Doctrine of the International Community speech, 1999*

From humanitarian crises to Brexit, governments in the United Kingdom (UK) are continuously shaping, adapting, and responding to changes in its foreign policy. Yet a constant feature in the foreign policy of successive governments is that the UK *is* and *will* remain a significant actor in international relations capable of demonstrating its credentials for global leadership. Whether through alliances with other states, membership of international organisations, or promoting a 'Global Britain', UK governments have challenged longstanding debates on the UK's post-war relative international decline (Gamble, 1994; Bernstein, 2004; McCourt, 2014; Gaskarth, 2016; Oppermann et al., 2020).

A defining feature of these government efforts to assert the UK's global role is a defence of the post-1945 rules-based international order and the protection of liberal values at its foundations, including freedom, democracy, and human rights (Wright, 2020, pp.40-41). Part of the UK's defence of these liberal values has been its willingness in some cases to protect populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes in the post-Cold War era, which has characterised important elements of the UK's foreign policy (Ralph, 2014a, p.4). This includes instances of inaction or a delayed response in Rwanda (1994) and Bosnia (1995) and direct coercive action in crises such as Kosovo (1999), Sierra Leone (2000), Libya (2011), and Syria (2015, 2018). The UK's willingness to protect populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes in the post-Cold War era is most notable following the election of the New Labour government in 1997 and its commitment to an internationalist foreign policy based on a concern for domestic and

international human protection (Blair, 1999a; Blair, 1999b; Blair, 2009; Blair, 2011; Cook, 1998).[1]

Throughout the period between 1997 and 2020 however, UK governments have been contributing to human protection whilst grappling with the challenges of a broader transitional foreign policy. Throughout this thesis, a transitional foreign policy is defined in relation to changes in the UK's geopolitical interests, policies, and international engagements, with a focus on the period between 1997 and 2020. It is during this period where several important transitions occurred in the UK's foreign policy, including a shift from a traditional conservative approach to foreign policy to an internationalist position under the Labour Party, the acceleration of globalisation and pressure on an active UK role in the world, the emergence of international threats including terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), the sovereignty-intervention dilemma and the humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in 1999, the intervention in Iraq in 2003, and Brexit.

Changes in the UK's geopolitical interests are principally conceptualised in two main ways. The first is the discourse and material reality of globalisation, especially government perceptions of the globalised nature of national security threats including from WMD and international terrorism. The second is the UK's geopolitical and economic relations with other states, which includes the overlap with situations involving human protection crises. A transitional foreign policy is also shaped by the adaptation of successive governments to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, the UK's membership, leadership, and influence in core multilateral organisations, and the UK's position within the evolving international order. A transitional foreign policy in turn has implications for the UK's commitment to human protection as successive governments attempt to strategize the UK's international relations, and in particular, the relationship between its foreign policy interests and its values. This includes the UK's geopolitical interests, particularly in protecting national security, and economic interests such as trade, alongside upholding a commitment to liberal values of freedom, democracy, and human rights protection. A transitional foreign policy is expressed by changing patterns of policy behaviour, changing administrative apparatus, and elite UK political rhetoric.[2]

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[1] 'New Labour' refers to the brand of politics under the leadership of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown between 1997 and 2010. It was originally coined in the party's 1997 manifesto *New Labour because Britain deserves better* (see Dale, 2003).

[2] See chapter 3 for a detailed explanation of the analytical framework used to assess the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy.

As chapter 4 and 5 will show, the initial stages of a transitional foreign policy precede 1997 with regards to how the previous Conservative government engaged with human protection as part of the Conservative foreign policy tradition, which is distinct from the internationalist stance of the New Labour government that succeeded the Conservatives in 1997. From 1997, a transitional foreign policy is evident in several important ways, including New Labour's appeal to an internationalist foreign policy amid accelerating globalisation, the rise of international threats in the form of international terrorism and WMD, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, the human protection crisis in Kosovo, and domestic and international debates on the relationship between sovereignty and humanitarian intervention.

A renewed scrutiny of the UK's global 'role' following the decision to leave the European Union (EU) in 2016, the changing balance of international power between states, and a broader crisis in international human protection (Bellamy, 2020), encapsulates some of the fundamental challenges facing UK governments as they adapt to a transitional foreign policy. A transitional UK foreign policy thus exposes a fundamental puzzle between the UK's commitment to international human protection, its changing international power position relative to other states, and the geopolitical and economic pressures of defining a post-Brexit place in the world which conveys with confidence the UK's ambitions for leadership and influence in the evolving international order.

The remainder of this chapter addresses the contextual foundations of the thesis, including the background, research puzzle, the research structure, and its core arguments and original contributions.


## 1.1 Background: Domestic and international changes on human protection

In 1997, the newly elected Labour government immediately focused its attention on defining "a new role" in the world for the UK (McCourt, 2011, p.36). This was shaped by Tony Blair's dismissal of isolationism and in its place an emphasis on the UK as a capable international leader (Blair 1997 cited in Blair 1997 cited in McCourt, 2011, p.36). This formed a central pillar of the New Labour government's overarching commitment to an internationalist foreign policy based on the idea that the *national* is interconnected with the *international* (Cook, 1999; Kitchen and Vickers, 2013).

Whilst the Labour Party has historically appealed to an internationalist foreign policy (Cook, 1999, p.894; Dunne, 2004), an important element of the post-1997 New

Labour government was the prominence of domestic and international human rights protection (Cook, 1997). Blair (1999a) articulated this commitment through challenging conventional norms of state sovereignty in instances of mass atrocity crimes. Wheeler and Dunne (1998, p.850) suggest that New Labour's approach during the party's first term in office represented an important change in UK foreign policy. In particular, Blair and Cook's promotion of human rights and the ethical dimension provided a framework to now assess the UK's commitment to human protection (Dunne and Wheeler, 2001, p.184).

It is equally important to understand New Labour's commitment to human protection in the broader context of international debates on the relationship between sovereignty and humanitarian intervention (Deng et al., 1996; Wheeler, 2000; Badescu, 2011; Peltner, 2017). In the aftermath of the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia in 1994 and 1995, international debates focused on the sovereign responsibility of states to protect their own populations from mass atrocity crimes (Deng et al., 1996; Wheeler, 2003, p.37; Badescu, 2011, pp.1-2). One outcome of these debates was the emergence of humanitarian intervention based on the idea of states intervening by force into another state without its consent for human protection purposes (Welsh, 2003, p.3; Wheeler, 2003, p.37).

Following disputes over the legality of humanitarian intervention, human protection debates evolved into creation of various other international human protection norms (Nasu, 2012, p.128; Jones, 2017, p.145). The first is the protection of civilians (PoC) which focuses exclusively on armed conflict (Popovski, 2011; Breakey, 2012; Hultman, 2012; Keating, 2017). The second is the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) which addresses the four atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, and is further guided by the three pillars of a state's responsibility to protect its own population, international assistance and capacity building, and timely and decisive action (UN General Assembly, 2005, p.30; UN General Assembly, 2009b, pp.1-2). The third is atrocity prevention, which is concerned with the preventative mechanisms to halt mass atrocities before they occur (Bellamy, 2011, p.2; Straus, 2016, pp.131-148).

This thesis therefore applies the concept of human protection throughout as an umbrella term for the R2P, PoC, atrocity prevention, and humanitarian intervention.[3]

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[3] For conceptual discussions on the concept of human protection see: Bellamy, A.J. 2016. The humanisation of security? Towards an International Human Protection Regime. *European*

Whilst acknowledging some important differences between these norms, this thesis is concerned with the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy, rather than on the debates about the relationship and compatibility between them.[4] Instead, this conceptualisation of human protection is intended to capture the multifaceted ways in which the UK communicates and practices its commitment to protect populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes.

## 1.2 The research puzzle

As a permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, and a state in principle committed to international human rights protection, the UK appears ideally placed to contribute to the protection of populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes. However as the opening section of this introduction suggested, between 1997 and 2020 the UK's commitment to human protection has occurred amid the challenges posed by a transitional foreign policy, and in particular, its impact on the efforts of governments to strategize the UK's international relations and its broader commitment to human protection.

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4   For debates on the relationship between R2P, PoC, and humanitarian intervention see: Breakey, H., Francis, A., Popovski, V., Sampford, C., Smith, M.G., Thakur, R. and Evans, G. 2012. *Enhancing Protection Capacity: Policy Guide to the Responsibility to Protect and the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*. [Online]. Brisbane: Griffith University. [Accessed: 26 June 2018]. Available from: https://i.unu.edu/media/unu.edu/publication/31142/R2P_POC_Policy_Guide.pdf; Nasu, H. 2012. Peacekeeping, civilian protection mandates and the responsibility to protect. In: Francis, A., et al. eds. *Norms of protection: Responsibility to protect, protection of civilians and their interaction.* New York: United Nations University Press, pp.117-133, Sampford, C. Ibid.A tale of two norms. In: Francis, A., et al. eds., pp.98-116. Shesterinina, A. 2016. Responsibility to Protect and UN Peacekeeping: A Challenge of Particularized Protection. *AP R2P Brief.* **6**(4), pp.pp.1-7. Thakur, R. 2016. The Responsibility to Protect at 15. *International Affairs.* **92**(2), pp.415-434. Williams, P. 2016. The R2P, Protection of Civilians, and UN Peacekeeping Operations. In: Bellamy, A. and Dunne, T. eds *The Oxford handbook of the responsibility to protect.* Oxford Oxford University Press. Rhoads, E.P. and Welsh, J. 2019. Close cousins in protection: the evolution of two norms. *International Affairs.* **95**(3), pp.597-617. Hunt, C.T. 2019. Analyzing the Co-Evolution of the Responsibility to Protect and the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations. *International Peacekeeping.* **26**(5), pp.630-659.

**1.2.1 Relative decline, Brexit and the crisis in the UK's global role**

There is significant debate on the UK's relative hard power decline in the post-1945 era of international relations (Acheson, 1962 quoted in Brinkley, 1990, p.599; Gamble, 1994; English and Kenny, 1999; Bernstein, 2004; Pumberton, 2004; Harvey, 2011; Morris, 2011; McCourt, 2014; Gaskarth, 2016; Gill and Oates, 2017; Rogers, 2017; Ogden, 2020; Oppermann et al., 2020). Scholars have supported this assessment through evidence of the UK's economic performance in terms of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and purchasing power (Pumberton, 2004; Ogden, 2020), its military spending, size, and capabilities for deployment relative to other states (Harvey, 2011; Gaskarth, 2016; Ogden, 2020), and changes in its membership of international organisations, especially in the context of Brexit (Gill and Oates, 2017; Gifkins et al., 2019a).

Despite this post-war relative decline, the UK retains an important global role through its economic power, defence capabilities especially in the form of its nuclear deterrent, soft power influence, and its permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Bernstein, 2004; Morris, 2011; Hill and Beadle, 2014; McCourt, 2014; MacDonald, 2018; Gifkins et al., 2019a; Niblett, 2021). This is why it is essential to understand the UK's decline as relative rather than absolute because states such as the United States (US) and China have witnessed a significant growth in their economic and military power relative to the UK. Yet the UK has also grown in economic terms, but just not to the extent of other powers such as the US and China.

Brexit has once again drawn attention to academic and policy debates on the UK's relative decline because the UK's alliance with Europe has been one important pillar of its global role since joining the Common Market in 1973 (Dee and Smith, 2017). As a result, the decision to leave "has forced an unusually raw and in-depth interrogation of the UK's twenty-first century place and function" (Turner, 2019, p.732). Gill and Oates (2017, p.3) regard Brexit as an opportunity for the UK to reassess its international engagements. Yet in an attempt to reorientate the UK's foreign policy following its departure from the EU, policymakers have promoted various national role conceptions which has "only increased uncertainty" about the post-Brexit role the UK intends to pursue in terms of its core international alliances and foreign policy interests (Oppermann et al., 2020, p.133). This has led some to argue that there is a "role crisis" in UK foreign policy due to the ambiguity surrounding its post-Brexit international position (Beasley et al., 2018). The emergence of Global Britain in 2016 is the most visible attempt by UK governments to adapt to Brexit by reasserting the UK's ambitions for a global leadership

role (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2016a).[5] However, Global Britain's message is equally confusing because an important part of the UK's global approach was its membership of the EU (Niblett, 2021, p.6).

### 1.2.2 The crisis of liberal international order

The UK's transitional foreign policy is also evident beyond the EU. Scholars argue that the post-1945 liberal international order is in crisis, whilst the emergence of other powers is leading to an evolving pluralist world order (Ikenberry, 2018a; Paris, 2019; Acharya and Plesch, 2020; Babic, 2020; Lee et al., 2020).[6] A concern amongst academics is that the emergence of a pluralist world order may lead to states contesting some of the ideas that embody the liberal international order, including human protection norms (Newman, 2013b; Newman, 2016; Newman and Zala, 2018). For instance, Hopgood (2015, p.9) has argued that the world is "on the verge of the imminent decay of the Global Human Rights Regime". This perspective is based on the emergence of powers which appeal to a pluralist conception of state sovereignty alongside the argument that the US is in decline as the hegemon of the post-1945 liberal international order (Hopgood, 2015, p.13). An evolving pluralist world order thus places additional significance on the UK's attempts to uphold its foreign policy commitment to liberal values on the domestic and international protection of human rights.

### 1.2.3 A crisis in international human protection

Another compelling reason why the UK's commitment to human protection remains critical are the number of human protection crises in the 21st century. Writing on the 15th anniversary of the R2P, Bellamy (2020) argued that there is a "global crisis of protection" characterised by mass atrocities being committed by "states of good standing and even some champions of human protection". In June 2021, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect listed 18 countries currently experiencing or at risk of mass atrocity crimes, which includes the superpower of China (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2021b). This shows the serious challenges still facing international human protection in the 21st century, in addition to the broader pressure on the UK's international values and interests in protecting populations from mass atrocities

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5   Herein FCO.

6   See chapter 2 for a review of the distinction between international and world order.

on the one hand, and pursuing post-Brexit trade deals with countries such as China on the other.

These issues generate a significant puzzle in UK foreign policy in terms of the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy. This includes how governments and policymakers strategize the UK's international relations in the context of a transitional foreign policy, and in turn, the implications of this strategizing for the nature of the UK's contributions to human protection.

## 1.3 Thesis aim and objectives

This thesis aims to investigate the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020.

The thesis objectives are:

1. The development and application of an analytical framework to assess changes to the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020.

2. Using this framework to hypothesise and test three scenarios of the relationship between the UK's place in the world and sustained changes in its commitment to human protection.

3. The development and classification of a quantitative and qualitative dataset to examine sustained changes to the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020.

4. Synthesising findings on the relationship between the UK's place in the world and its commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020.

## 1.4 Research questions

The following theoretical and empirical questions and sub-questions are addressed throughout this thesis in order to fulfil the research aim and objectives:

1. Theoretical: What is the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy?

   a. Sub-question: To what extent does this reflect broader theoretical research on foreign policy change?

2. Empirical: Have adjustments in the UK's place in the world between 1997 and 2020 translated into sustained changes in its foreign policy rhetoric and action on human protection?

    a. Sub-question: What are the main continuities and changes in the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020?

The core theoretical research question captures the focus of this thesis on the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. To restate the definition provided earlier in this introduction, a transitional foreign policy is defined in relation to changes in the UK's geopolitical interests, policies, and international engagements between 1997 and 2020. It is shaped by the adaptation of successive governments to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, the UK's membership, leadership, and influence in core multilateral organisations, and the UK's position within the evolving international order. The UK's transitional foreign policy in turn has significant implications for its commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action because governments attempt to strategize the nature of the UK's place in the world.

       This strategizing includes addressing the relationship between the UK's geopolitical and economic interests on the one hand, and its commitment to liberal values of freedom, democracy, and international human rights protection on the other. A transitional foreign policy is expressed by changing patterns of policy behaviour, changing administrative apparatus, and elite UK political rhetoric. This relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy is specifically assessed through the development and application of an analytical framework in chapter 3. This framework draws on theoretical research on foreign policy change, which will contribute to addressing the sub-theoretical research question on how the thesis contributes to broadening theoretical research on foreign policy change.

       This core relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy is then addressed empirically. The empirical research question focuses on an assessment of the relationship between changes in the UK's place in the world and in its commitment to human protection. The UK's place in the world is conceptualised according to a transitional foreign policy in being shaped by the adaptation of successive governments to the UK's post-war relative decline, the UK's membership, leadership, and influence in multilateral organisations, and the UK's position within the evolving international order. Sustained changes in the UK's foreign policy are assessed

according to the same analytical framework developed in chapter 3. This empirical question thus draws on the core thesis themes of the UK's commitment to human protection, UK leadership and influence on human protection, and the UK's place in the world amid debates on Brexit and the UK's post-war relative international decline. This empirical focus is supplemented by the sub-question on the continuities and changes in the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020. Together, these questions will address the aim and objectives of this thesis.

**1.5 Research hypothesis: Three scenarios of change on human protection**

In order to further address the aim and objectives, this thesis proposes to test a hypothesis based on the outcome of three possible scenarios of UK foreign policy change on human protection as part of a transitional foreign policy. These three scenarios aim to capture the fundamental ways in which the relationship between the UK's place in the world and its commitment to human protection is expressed in its foreign policy, which in turn helps to address the empirical research questions.

Gaskarth's (2014) research on strategizing the UK's international engagements through role theory is used to conceptualise these three scenarios because it neatly captures the different approaches that policymakers may pursue in order to define the UK's place in the world. The foundation of role theory is that a country's international engagements are a product "of the expectations that emerge about the appropriate behavior" of that country (McCourt, 2014, p.1). The UK's role in the world is not simply constructed by domestic policymakers and applied to the international, but rather its construction is a product of the interconnection between domestic and international expectations of the UK's place in the world (McCourt, 2011; Gaskarth, 2014; Oppermann et al., 2020). The outcome of this conceptualisation of the UK's international engagements is a specific "role orientation" for UK foreign policy, which is formed "by making choices from a range of more specific national role conceptions" (Gaskarth, 2014, p.563).

These national role conceptions are vast. For instance, Gaskarth (2014, p.565) lists seven role conceptions for the orientation of an "influential actor in the international system", which range from a "reliable ally" to a "human rights defender". These role conceptions are subsequently performed through various foreign policy outputs, such as the UK's membership of multilateral organisations as a means of performing its conception of a human rights defender, or its intelligence sharing and defence relationship

with the US as performing the role conception of a reliable ally. Together the performance of these role conceptions in foreign policy form the UK's role orientation in international relations. Gaskarth's (2014) research is thus an analytically useful lens to conceptualise the following three scenarios on the relationship between changes in the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020.

### 1.5.1 Scenario one: A trading partner

This role orientation is based on the idea of promoting and pursuing the national self-interest through a prioritisation of the UK's geopolitical and economic interests in international trade. Brexit in particular has led to significant attention from policymakers on the UK's national interest in a Global Britain (FCO, 2016a; Prime Minister's Office, 2020c). Whilst an isolationist role orientation is contrary to the UK's conventional foreign policy outlook (Gaskarth, 2014, p.568), the role orientation of a trade partner proposes that events such as Brexit will lead the UK towards a more inward-looking and self-interested foreign policy in terms of securing its geopolitical and economic interests. However, to secure these interests the UK will have to continue playing an important role as a partner and ally with other international actors. Some relevant role conceptions include being a reliable ally and economic partner, which are principally performed through bilateral trade deals, economic agreements, and reductions in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) as the UK allocates funds directly to its core economic interests.

This scenario for the UK's role orientation has significant implications for its commitment to human protection. This is because an integral element of being a global partner is to trade with countries around the world, some of which have poor human rights records. In turn, this places the relationship between the UK's commitment to the defence of human protection and the pursuit of trade deals under intense scrutiny. The UK's arms trade industry is another example which exposes the fundamental contradictions in the commitment of successive UK governments to upholding human protection, while simultaneously producing and licensing significant arms transfers to other countries (Wickham-Jones, 2000, p.10; de Moraes, 2018). This scenario therefore suggests that the UK's geopolitical and economic interests are prioritised, particularly on the basis of the self-interested benefits for the UK's economic prosperity.

### 1.5.2 Scenario two: A pragmatic liberal internationalist

Pragmatic internationalism is the idea that the UK will continue to pursue an outward-looking foreign policy based on the interconnection between the domestic and the international interest (Vickers, 2004a, p.197). A core component of this approach is a commitment to international human rights protection and the UK's willingness to intervene in other sovereign states in order to protect populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes. The pragmatic element of this scenario captures the relationship between the UK's attempts to maintain global influence and leadership on human protection in the post-war era (Daddow, 2019a, p.6), but equally being realistic about the UK's relative decline as a hard military power which limits its capacity to militarily intervene in every situation involving humanitarian suffering.

This role orientation is thus most attuned to that of an "opportunist-interventionist", which is defined by Gaskarth (2014, p.577) as "those who seek to exploit current disruptions in the international system to advance liberal ideas about human rights, democracy and good governance, even at the expense of existing frameworks of international law". This emphasis on advancing liberal ideas is a clear point of departure from scenario one in placing greater emphasis on human rights protection. The relevant role conceptions for a pragmatic liberal internationalist include being a "reliable ally", "military power", "global leader" and "beacon of democracy", and are performed through diplomacy within multilateral institutions, relationships with other states, and military intervention (Gaskarth, 2014, p.578). These role performances have important implications for human protection because they demonstrate the willingness of the UK to intervene in other sovereign states to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes, even if such action is beyond the conventional channels of international law.

This scenario of a pragmatic internationalist power is not to imply that liberal values alone will dictate the UK's foreign policy, but that human rights and democracy for example, would form an important part of the equation in the UK's political and economic relations with other states. This may include drawing attention to human rights abuses, condemning abuses, and requiring certain human rights standards as part of trade negotiations.

### 1.5.3 Scenario three: A global soft power leader and influencer

The third scenario is based on the UK's aspirations to retain an important place in the world amid a relative decline in its hard power. In this scenario, the UK aims to lead and

influence on human protection through its role within the post-1945 rules-based international order. This role orientation is most comparable with being an "influential actor in the international system" (Gaskarth, 2014, p.565). This is because it recognises that the UK is no longer able to exert its hard power capabilities in a similar manner to a superpower, but that it is still able to utilise its experience and influence in the international system to shape and lead on international issues through its soft power. Some relevant role conceptions include upholding international law, defending human rights, being an "aid superpower", democracy promoter, and a "reliable ally" (Gaskarth, 2014, p.565). These role conceptions are subsequently performed through actions such alliances with the US and other European states, increased levels of defence spending, diplomacy through multilateral institutions, and maintaining the UK's 0.7% commitment to ODA (Gaskarth, 2014, p.565).

This thesis conceptualises this scenario as being largely orientated around the use of soft power influence and leadership, which the UK is able to utilise through its existing multilateral networks and its contributions to ODA. For example, the UK's membership of the UN Security Council provides an advantageous position for the UK to demonstrate international leadership and influence by being part of an exclusive group of five states with veto powers (Hughes, 2017, p.467; Gifkins et al., 2019a, p.1350; Wright, 2020, p.40). Whilst the UK has not used its veto powers since 1989 (Security Council Report, 2015, p.3), it can still draw on its diplomatic experience and expertise of leading on human protection through the practice of penholding on human protection resolutions (Ralph and Gifkins, 2017, p.642; Gifkins et al., 2019a, p.1350). Similarly, the UK has been able to draw on its substantial contributions to ODA as a demonstration of its leadership and influence on development initiatives, especially post-2010 (Lightfoot et al., 2017, p.519). These aspects enable the UK to lead on human protection in spite of its relative hard power decline through taking advantage of its remaining soft power capabilities in its membership of international organisations and significant ODA capacity.

Whilst these three scenarios have some overlap in their role conceptions, the fundamental orientation and performance of each one is essentially different from the other. For instance, a reliable ally is an important role conception of scenario one and two, but the orientation and performances of the respective scenarios have completely different implications for defining the UK's place in the world and the nature of its commitment to human protection. For example, scenario one of being a trading partner

may impact on the UK's commitment to human protection when this involves alliances with countries which have poor human rights records, whilst scenario two of being a pragmatic internationalist suggests that the UK will place core liberal values, including international human protection, as a central pillar of UK foreign policy. The way each scenario is expressed is thus essential for assessing sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020.

### 1.5.4 Research hypothesis

Based on the three scenarios of the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy, the hypothesis *assesses whether the UK's awareness of its changing position in the world between 1997 and 2020 led to sustained changes in its rhetoric and action towards a strengthened commitment to human protection.*

This proposes to analyse whether the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy supports either the scenario of a pragmatic liberal internationalist or a global soft power leader and influencer on human protection. The concept of transitional foreign policy is captured in the hypothesis by the UK's changing position in the world. This is because the UK's changing position in the world is shaped by how successive governments have adapted to the UK's post-war relative international decline, the UK's membership, leadership, and influence in multilateral institutions, and the UK's position within the evolving international order. Chapter 3 develops an analytical framework in order to assess sustained changes in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection, which will be used as the analytical framework to test the hypothesis throughout the empirical chapters.

### 1.6 Arguments

The central argument of this dissertation is that the way successive governments conceptualise the UK's place in the world is fundamental for determining the nature of its commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. More specifically, it argues that the pragmatic liberal internationalist foreign policy of the post-1997 New Labour government laid the foundations for sustained changes in the UK's foreign policy rhetoric and action on human protection between 1997 and 2015. Upon entering office, the New Labour government seized the opportunity to recast the UK's place in the world amid increasing globalisation and the pressure on state sovereignty following mass violence and atrocity crimes in the 1990s. The New Labour government responded to

these changes in the international environment by dismissing UK isolationism and decline and directing UK foreign policy towards an appeal to liberal internationalism and its component norms and values of freedom, democracy promotion, the international rule of law, and human rights protection. It later expressed this commitment to human protection through its contribution to the military interventions in Kosovo in 1999 and Sierra Leone in 2000.

The Conservative-led Coalition government attempted to repackage the pragmatic liberal internationalism of New Labour through its doctrine of liberal conservatism between 2010 and 2015. Despite this shift, it is argued that New Labour's pragmatic internationalism has remained a core underlying feature of successive government approaches to human protection until 2015. Informed by this pragmatic liberal internationalism, the post-2010 Conservative-led Coalition government has continued to challenge the idea of UK decline and argue that it retains an important place on the international stage. The Coalition government largely achieved this through drawing on similar resources and national role conceptions as the New Labour government, such as international alliances and coalitions on humanitarian intervention, being a military power, and demonstrating rhetorical leadership and influence on human protection. The Coalition government subsequently performed this commitment to human protection in action through contributing to the military intervention in Libya in 2011 and its unsuccessful attempt to intervene in Syria in 2013.

In contrast to the sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2015, the dissertation argues that UK's place in the world is in a state of flux following Brexit. It is argued that there is limited evidence of a consensus in domestic and international environments on the UK's post-Brexit place in the world, aside from the significance attached to securing its geopolitical and economic interests as part of a 'Global Britain'. Brexit is therefore a particularly damaging aspect of the UK's transitional foreign policy because of the absence of a coherent worldview and how this translates into the UK's present and future contributions to human protection. In particular, the UK's post-2015 geopolitical interests, policies, and international engagements reveal tensions in the relationship between its geopolitical and economic interests and the protection of liberal values, especially human rights. This is evident in practice through the UK's response to the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Myanmar (2016-2017) and the civil war in Yemen (2015-2020). Both crises expose a tension in the relationship between the UK's foreign policy interests and its values. The tension in

Myanmar is primarily between democracy promotion and the protection of the Rohingya from mass atrocities, whilst in Yemen it is between the UK's economic and geopolitical interests with coalition forces and addressing the serious humanitarian crisis. These examples therefore show the challenges facing the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy as governments grapple with protecting the UK's various foreign policy interests and values.

## 1.7 Contributions

This thesis makes original contributions to three bodies of scholarship on UK foreign policy and human protection, foreign policy change, and former great power leadership and influence in international relations from the perspective of the UK. These three original contributions of this thesis are at the heart of the relationship between the theoretical and the empirical study of UK foreign policy and international human protection.

The first contribution is to scholarship on UK foreign policy and international human protection. There is already a wealth of existing research on UK foreign policy and human protection both from the perspective of human rights more broadly (Beech and Munce, 2019) and that which has a specific focus on the R2P and humanitarian intervention (Daddow, 2013; Daddow and Schnapper, 2013; Beech and Oliver, 2014; 2015; Ralph, 2014a; Peltner, 2017; Butchard, 2020). The original contribution of the thesis to these debates lies in the analysis of the UK's 'transitional foreign policy'. As outlined earlier in this introduction, a transitional foreign policy is defined according to changes in the UK's place in the world between 1997 and 2020. This thesis thus assesses the UK's commitment to human protection in the context of this transitional foreign policy, which includes testing the nature of this relationship according to the three scenarios of sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection.

This analysis of changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy is an important contribution to the research fields of UK foreign policy and human protection. This is because there has yet been a detailed assessment of the relationship between UK foreign policy, human protection, and the UK's place in the world, and in particular, long-term changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. This is despite the impact that changes in the UK's relative international power position, its membership of multilateral organisations, and shifts in the global balance of power have on the UK's subsequent approach to international

human protection. This especially includes the extent of its hard military capabilities, diplomatic strength, soft power reach, and economic capacity to contribute to the protection of populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes, whilst simultaneously securing its own domestic security and stability.

The second contribution of this thesis is to broaden theoretical and empirical research on why the foreign policy of a state changes and how to identify and assess this change. As a sub-field of foreign policy analysis, there is a wealth of theoretical and empirical research examining foreign policy change (see chapter 3). This body of research includes examining the domestic and international sources of foreign policy change, the reasons why change occurs, and the structures and agents which influence change (Smith, 1981; Levy, 1994; Stein, 1994; Kaarbo, 1997; Hermann and Hagan, 1998; Hermann et al, 2001; Carlsnaes, 1993; 2002; Hudson, 2005; Doeser and Eidenfalk, 2013; Brazys et al, 2017).

This thesis provides an important contribution to this research on foreign policy change at two interconnected levels. The first is through its analysis of UK foreign policy change on human protection in a transitional foreign policy. As defined throughout this chapter, a transitional foreign policy incorporates an analysis of both structures and agents according to how successive governments adapt to the UK's relative international decline, changes in its membership of international organisations, and changes in the UK's position within the evolving international order. As the previous paragraph suggests, this thesis argues that a transitional foreign policy has significant implications for the UK's commitment to human protection as governments strategize the UK's place in the world.

The second level of this contribution is the development of a novel framework to assess sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. As will be shown in chapter 3, there lacks a sufficient framework to assess foreign policy change that can be applied to an analysis of UK foreign policy on human protection. This is despite the development of frameworks which aim to examine foreign policy change (Hermann, 1990; Holsti, 1998; Gustavsson, 1999; Welch, 2005). To address this gap, this thesis uses a framework created specifically for this research based on the relationship between rhetoric and action with the aim of capturing the full extent of sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection.

The third contribution is an assessment of the leadership and influence of former 'great powers' in international relations. Using the UK as its case study, this thesis conceptualises the UK as a former great power in the sense that its hard capabilities have

declined relative to other states in the post-war era, but that it continues to exert global leadership and influence on human protection. This is an important contribution amid the wealth of post-war academic and policy debates on the UK's relative hard power decline and the alternative sources of UK power on the world stage (Acheson, 1962 quoted in Brinkley, 1990, p.599; Gamble, 1994; English and Kenny, 1999; Bernstein, 2004; Pumberton, 2004; Harvey, 2011; Morris, 2011; McCourt, 2014; Gaskarth, 2016; Gill and Oates, 2017; Rogers, 2017; Ogden, 2020; Oppermann et al., 2020). Since the UK's decision to leave the EU in 2016, the Foreign Affairs Committee has launched six inquires related to the UK's place in the world, including the implications of Brexit for the UK's world role, the UK's influence at the UN, Global Britain, R2P and humanitarian intervention, and the future of the UK's international policy (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016a; Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018e; Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018c; Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018b; Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018a; Foreign Affairs Committee, 2020). Alongside this, the UK government published its Integrated Review into the UK's place in the world in March 2021, which is a major document outlining the UK's foreign policy strategy for the next 10 years (HM Government, 2021). This thesis is thus a timely contribution to research on the UK's commitment to human protection in what it defines as being a transitional foreign policy.

## 1.8 Thesis structure

The thesis is structured around seven chapters. Chapter 2 reviews existing theoretical and empirical scholarship on the core thesis themes in order to present the original contributions of the thesis. Chapter 3 then details the theoretical framework and methodological approach of the thesis. This includes developing an original framework to assess sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy in order to fulfil the stated research aim and objectives. The methodology part of chapter 3 details the combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques which are used as part of a triangulation of data from semi-structured interviews, primary documentary material, and secondary scholarship.

Chapter 4 establishes the empirical groundwork for the remainder of the thesis through addressing the background on New Labour's liberal internationalist commitment to human protection from 1997 to 2010. It is the first chapter to apply the analytical framework for assessing sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. In doing so, chapter 4 makes an important contribution to

fulfilling the aim and objectives of the research, answering the two theoretical and empirical research questions, and beginning to test the research hypothesis. To support this contribution, the chapter analyses two examples of the UK's commitment to human protection in action according to the UK's interventions in Kosovo in 1999 and Sierra Leone in 2000.

Chapter 5 and 6 build on the foundations of chapter 4 in analysing the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy between 2010-2015 (chapter 5) and 2015-2020 (chapter 6). These chapters are fundamental to supporting the argument of this dissertation that sustained changes have occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection since 1997. This is supported through an assessment of elite political rhetoric on human protection alongside four empirical examples of Libya, Syria, Myanmar, and Yemen. As with chapter 4, chapter 5 and 6 contribute significantly to addressing the aim and objectives of the thesis, as well answering the theoretical and empirical research questions, and continuing to test the hypothesis.

Chapter 7 brings the analysis of chapters 4 to 6 together to assess the relationship between the UK's place in the world and its commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. It argues that between 1997 and 2015, successive governments remained consistently committed to a broadly liberal internationalist commitment to human protection based on protecting core liberal values on human rights and democracy. However, the post-2015 period of UK foreign policy reveals a tension between the UK's geopolitical and economic interests and its commitment to liberal values, which is part of a broader difficulty in defining the UK's place in the world.

Chapter 8 concludes with the main findings and contributions of the thesis, and tests whether the hypothesis holds that the UK strengthened its commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action as part of a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020.

# Chapter 2 - World order and liberal internationalism: Transition, the UK's place in the world, and its commitment to human protection

This chapter identifies the original contributions of the thesis by reviewing academic scholarship on world order and liberal internationalism, shifts in the global balance of power between states, and the UK's place in the world and commitment to human protection. The premise of this chapter is that understanding the UK's place in the world and its commitment to human protection is incomplete without examining the broader international context in which UK foreign policy is practiced. This is because the very notion of the UK's place in the world is not only shaped by domestic governments, but equally the broader distribution of power between states in the international system.

For these reasons, this chapter reviews four main bodies of scholarship. First, it begins with broader debates on the nature of world order and the emergence of liberal internationalism in the post-1945 era of international relations. This leads to the second section on liberal internationalism, the UK's role in the world, and its internationalist commitment to human protection. Having reviewed research on the relationship between the domestic and the international in the UK's commitment to human protection, the third section engages with literature on the crisis and transition of the post-1945 liberal international order and its implications for human protection. The final section then reviews research on the components of the UK's transitional foreign policy in preparation for the remainder of the thesis.

Following the review of existing academic scholarship, the chapter outlines three main theoretical and empirical contributions of the thesis. To briefly summarise, its first contribution relates to research on UK foreign policy and human protection through a specific focus on the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. There is considerable discussion on the UK's commitment to human protection, the UK's post-war relative power decline, Brexit, and Global Britain, but a gap in the research on the relationship between these changes in a transitional foreign policy and the impact on the UK's commitment to human protection more specifically. Second, it contributes to broadening theoretical and empirical research on foreign policy change using the case of the UK's commitment to human protection as part of a transitional foreign policy. Thirdly, this chapter shows how debates on a transitional world order, liberal internationalism, and the implications for human protection, relies heavily on the 21st century superpowers of the US and China. As a result, the leadership and influence

of 'former great' powers on human protection has been neglected. This dissertation uses the UK as an example of the leadership and influence that it exercises on human protection in spite of a post-war relative hard power decline. This shows that even if it is generally accepted that the UK is suffering from a sustained period of relative international decline, this is far from absolute and has not prevented the UK from making some significant contributions to international human protection.

## 2.1 World order and liberal internationalism

It is difficult to fully understand the UK's place in the world without identifying the nature of the world it exists and operates in. This section therefore reviews scholarship on the notion of international and world order, which it finds are both contested concepts in academic scholarship. The post-war liberal hegemony of the US is the clearest manifestation of international order, whilst the concept of world order is concerned with relations between states that go beyond the US-led international order. However, the overwhelming focus of debates on the US and China means that non-superpowers are often neglected in this literature. This is despite debates on international and world order being essential for locating and understanding the UK's place in the world and its subsequent commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020.

### 2.1.1 Defining international and world order

Conceptualising world order is no straightforward task because even the concept of order is ambiguous. Lascurettes (2020, p.7) suggests order constitutes a system "where a common set of rules is observed by a majority of that system's polities". According to this definition, order requires the two components of rules and then actors to agree on and follow these rules. By extension, the concept of world order is inherently contested by scholars due to its socially constructed nature (Hall and Paul, 1999; Bull, 2002; Hurrell, 2007; Kissinger, 2014; Acharya, 2018; Acharya and Plesch, 2020; Lascurettes, 2020). As a consequence, world order is defined in various ways. Hall and Paul (1999, p.2) define world order as encompassing ideas "about how social, political, and economic systems are and ought to be structured". World order thus combines both the reality of what is said to exist and the normative on what *should* exist.

Acharya and Plesch (2020, p.227) outline a more expansive definition of world order as "the broad interplay of power distribution, ideas, institutions, and interactions that characterize a significant portion of the world at a given time". Similar to the

perspective of Lascurettes (2020), a critical aspect is the role of actors in the construction of the ideas and institutions that form a world order. The approach of Acharya and Plesch (2020) is broadly reflective of Hedley Bull's work in *the Anarchical Society*, with world order defined as "those patterns or dispositions of human activity that sustain the elementary or primary goals of social life among mankind *as a whole*." (Bull, 2002, p.19, emphasis added). Bull (2002) understands world order as an overarching organisation of human interactions, which captures the world in its entirety, rather than the differences which may exist within a world order (Kissinger, 2014, p.9; Acharya, 2018, p.11).

What emerges from this conceptualisation of world order is the need to distinguish it from international order (Bull, 2002; Kissinger, 2014; Acharya, 2018; Acharya and Plesch, 2020). This is because according to Bull (2002, p.19), "international order is order among states". Building on this, Kissinger (2014, p.9) and Acharya (2018, p.11) make a fundamental distinction between international and world order. Whilst the premise of world order is "applicable to the entire world", international order applies "to a substantial part of the globe – larger enough to affect the balance of power" (Kissinger, 2014, p.9). Similarly, Acharya (2018, p.11) argues that international order is characterised by "the role of a hegemonic power, or a select group of established powers and the institutions they have created and dominated". Instead of a universal world order then, it is acknowledged that the post-1945 order is more reflective of an international order in being "largely limited to a group of like-minded states centred on the Atlantic littoral" (Nye, 2017, p.12).

According to Newman (2013b, p.239), "international order concerns the norms and institutions that characterise the international system, constituted most importantly by the behavior of states, legal principles, regimes, and the exercise of power". This definition neatly captures how international order is a combination of ideas, norms, institutional design and material power, which together, form an order (Philips, 2011; Goh, 2013; Reus-Smit, 2017). The institutions in question are further split into primary institutions related to the foundations of international order, and secondary institutions, which help govern that order (Newman and Zala, 2018, p.872). These perspectives are valuable for conceptualising the post-1945 order as being international rather than universal in scope (Newman, 2013b; Kissinger, 2014; Acharya, 2018; Acharya and Plesch, 2020).

Accordingly, this thesis draws on the notion of international order to capture the broader international context in which UK foreign policy on human protection has

operated from 1997 to 2020. More specifically, the type of order in question is the liberal international order which has dominated post-Cold War academic debates on the nature of order between states (Ikenberry, 2009; 2018b; Dunne and McDonald, 2013; Acharya, 2018; Acharya and Plesch, 2020; Cooley and Nexon, 2020; de Graaff et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020). What makes this international order characteristically *liberal* is the hegemonic dominance of the US and its subsequent liberal norms, ideas, power, and institutions that govern this order (Ikenberry, 2009, p.72). This includes the founding of liberal institutions such as the UN, World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and norms and ideas on freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (Ikenberry, 2018a, p.17; de Graaff et al., 2020, p.192; Lee et al., 2020, p.52; Nuruzzaman, 2020, p.54).

### 2.1.2 Liberal internationalism: Sovereignty and humanitarian intervention

Liberal internationalism captures the ideas, norms, and institutions that constitute the US-led liberal international order. Although frequently referenced in academic debates, Dunne and McDonald (2013, p.7) argue that the concept of liberal internationalism requires further theoretical development. As with world order, liberal internationalism is a broad field lacking a single universal theoretical standpoint (Ikenberry, 2009, p.72; Dunne and McDonald, 2013, p.7). According to Ikenberry (2009, p.71), liberal internationalism has evolved in three stages, the first being liberal internationalism 1.0 which existed during the pre-WW2 Woodrow Wilson era of international relations; the second being liberal internationalism 2.0 during the post-WW2 period; and the third being liberal internationalism 3.0 based on the "post-hegemonic" period of liberal international order.

Of particular relevance for this thesis is liberal internationalism 2.0 because it captures the period of UK foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. This stage of liberal internationalism is based on a form of "modified sovereignty" (Ikenberry, 2009, p.73); which is reflected in the conditional emphasis placed on state sovereignty (Bohm, 2018). Jahn (2018, p.143) argues that this liberal internationalist emphasis on conditional sovereignty "aim to spread all three core dimensions of liberal norms" on democracy, justice, and humanitarian intervention. It is this latter concern with humanitarian intervention which attracts particular academic, legal, and policy attention given "there remains significant divisions among sovereign states and within global public opinion as to the appropriate response to governments engaging in widespread atrocity crimes" (Dunne and McDonald, 2013, p.2).

For instance, Ralph (2014b, p.7) suggests that this relationship between liberal internationalism and humanitarian intervention exposes "internal tensions in the liberal internationalist position". This is because the liberal internationalist commitment to the rule of law on one hand, and human rights protection on the other, is particularly challenging when protecting human rights may invoke humanitarian intervention which is legally contentious (Ralph, 2014b, p.7). Ralph's (2014b, p.7) perspective thus draws attention to the idea that the goals of liberal internationalism are not necessarily harmonious when it comes to the rule of law and humanitarian intervention. Ralph (2014b) also examines liberal internationalism in UK foreign policy, which is largely neglected in the existing research on liberal international order. It therefore provides an important starting point for analysing the UK's liberal internationalist commitment to human protection as part of a transitional foreign policy.

## 2.2 Liberal internationalism and the UK's place in the world

Whilst the existing literature on international and world order neglects the role of powers which have suffered from a relative decline, the scholarship provides an important foundation for understanding the nature of the world in which UK foreign policy is shaped and practiced. This section therefore reviews research on the UK's place in the world, UK leadership attempts as a liberal internationalist power, and the relationship with the UK's commitment to human protection. The review finds a wealth of research on both the UK's role in the world and its commitment to human protection, but not on the connections between these two bodies of literature which reveals a contribution of this thesis.

### 2.2.1 The UK's place in the world

The UK's place in the world has received notable academic attention (Gamble, 1994; Bernstein, 2004; McCourt, 2011; McCourt, 2014; Gaskarth, 2014; Hill, 2016; Oppermann et al., 2020). In particular, scholars have drawn widely on the sub-field of foreign policy analysis of role theory. The seminal work in role theory is Holsti's (1970, p.239) idea of national role conceptions which relate to how a state interprets its own role in international relations. As Oppermann et al. (2020, p.135) suggest, the basis of role theory is "a theatrical metaphor, seeing states in the international arena – like actors on a stage – playing roles that follow certain scripts". These roles and their performance are not only shaped by a state's own perspective of its role, but also the expectations of other

states, which captures the interplay between the domestic and international in the construction of a state's place in the world (McCourt, 2012, p.34; 2014, p.1; Oppermann, Beasley and Kaarbo, 2020, p.135). In theory then, a state is presented with some limited choices in the international role it can play, which is further constrained by what others expect of it.

An important work on role theory in UK foreign policy is McCourt's (2014) *Britain and world power since 1945*. McCourt (2014, p.1)  argues "that state action in international politics is fundamentally role-based". These roles are socially constructed through the agency of governments and policymakers with the outcome determining the role of a state in international relations. The strength of this argument lies in the recognition of the domestic and international sources which together construct a state's role in the world. McCourt (2014, p.2) argues that since 1945 the UK has been a "*residual great power"* (emphasis in original) where despite the acceleration of its relative material decline, "policymakers have nonetheless viewed their state as continuing to have a prominent part to play in world politics". This perspective is reinforced by its membership of core multilateral institutions of the post-war international order, such as the UN Security Council.

McCourt (2011, pp.33-34) however, contests the concept of a 'role' because it works "to dissolve discussion about British foreign policy in clichés and sound-bites". Rather than providing freedom of choice, "future choices for UK foreign policy are usually collapsed into a limited number of seemingly fundamental choices" (McCourt, 2011, p.34). For example, in strategizing the UK's role in the world, Gaskarth (2014, p.561) shows how the concept of roles assumes that a state only has limited number of options which are influenced by history and international relations. The result is that the UK has played several roles in the post-war period, such as "bridge, pivotal power, beacon of democracy or reliable ally of the United States" (Gaskarth, 2014, p.561). This may explain why successive governments have promoted the UK's 'role' as a significant international power amid debates on its post-war relative decline.

This role theoretical application to UK foreign policy is thus an important body of research as it facilitates debate on how the UK's place in the world is constructed, and fundamentally constrained, by the interaction between historic and present domestic and international relations. Building on this research, Strong (2019) applies role theory to the case of parliamentary debates on whether the UK should have intervened in Syria in 2013. The research finds that the government's position on intervention was challenged through

parliamentary contestation over the role that the UK should play in Syria (Strong, 2019, p.388). This research is a noteworthy contribution to theoretical scholarship on domestic role contestation (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2012; Brummer and Thies, 2015), which challenges the idea that constructing a national role conception is far from straightforward because governments may face opposition from other domestic political actors.

Returning to the UK's place in the world, Opperman, Beasley and Kaarbo (2020, p.133) again draw on role theory to argue that following the 2016 EU referendum, the UK "has projected a disorientated foreign policy containing elements of partially incompatible roles" which have not successfully translated into a clear national role conception, but rather had the opposite effect of pushing the UK closer to an isolationist place in the world. This research therefore shows that the UK's transitional foreign policy is characterised by significant incoherence on its place in the world.

This review of notable works on role theory and UK foreign policy shows that is it difficult, if not impossible, to detach the domestic construction of the UK's place in the world from international expectations of the role the UK is permitted to play by other states. Using this as a starting point, the following three subsections review scholarship on the UK's post-war place in the world through debates on the UK's post-war relative hard power decline and former great power status, government counter-role conceptions of the UK as a leader in the liberal international order, and the UK's liberal internationalist commitment to human protection. This review provides the groundwork for determining the nature of the UK's place in the world between 1997 and 2020, the historical influence on this construction, and its consequences for the UK's commitment to human protection. These sub-sections will show that existing research has analysed the components of the UK's relative decline, the changes in its post-war power status, and its membership of multilateral institutions, but has not examined these aspects together in an analysis of the UK's commitment to human protection.

**2.2.2 UK relative decline: From 'great' to 'former great' power**
It is argued that the UK's place in the world is in a state of relative decline post-1945 (Gamble, 1994; Bernstein, 2004; Morris, 2011; Hill, 2016; Rogers, 2017). However, some caution against generalising the concept of decline in relation to the UK (Self, 2010, p.8). The UK's nuclear capacity, military capabilities, and economic power, mean that it still exerts considerable hard power capabilities, especially through being able to draw on

its nuclear arsenal (Bernstein, 2004, p.1; Cargill, 2018, p.2). Others however, argue that the UK's conventional hard military power is equally in decline (Roberts, 2020, p.2).

As Bernstein (2014, p.1) acknowledges, it is essential that any analysis of the UK's international power decline "must distinguish between relative and absolute decline". The basis of this argument is that "power…is relative not absolute; its sources are intangible as well as tangible" (Reynolds, 2013, p.5). This suggests that even if the UK's power declines relative to the growth of other states, this does not necessarily render its decline absolute. Whilst Bernstein was writing back in 2004, their argument still has relevance for analysing the UK's place in the world amid a relative hard power decline. The concept of relative decline recognises that the UK retains a role on the international stage, but that the nature of this role is fundamentally different to what it once was because the UK is no longer a superpower in the league of the US and China.

This has led some to argue that the UK's relative international position is more reflective of a middle power (Rachman, 2018; Murray and Brainson, 2019; Paris, 2019). However, what constitutes a middle power is also widely debated in the literature (Higgott and Cooper, 1990; Chapnick, 1999; Jordaan, 2003; Behringer, 2005; Beeson, 2011; Patience, 2014; Robertson, 2017; Karim, 2018). The reason for these debate is because the notion of a middle power is ambiguous (Chapnick, 1999, p.73; Cooper, 2011, p.323; Patience, 2014, p.210; Robertson, 2017, p.335). According to Chapnick (1999, p.73), the referent object of middle power analysis is the state "which is neither a great nor a small power" and is thus relative to these two positions. Using a similar definition, Jordaan (2003, p.165-166) distinguishes middle powers further through two categories of traditional and emerging. Traditional middle powers mainly rose to prominence in the Cold War era and are a core part of the global economy, but are unable to fundamentally "shape global outcomes in any direct manner" (Jordaan, 2003, pp.168-169). Oosterveld and Torossian (2018) equally adopt the concept of established middle powers to refer to those states in international order which lack the capacity to shape it alone.

Some suggest the UK's material resources and capacity to influence international relations resemble a middle power state (Rachman, 2018; Murray and Brainson, 2019, p.1435; Paris, 2019, p.2). In regards to Brexit, Murray and Brainson (2019, p.1435) suggest that even with its membership of the UN Security Council in the background, "the price of exit from the EU is a reduction in London's capacity to influence events beyond the UK's borders, and that the country has become a middle power". This perspective defines the UK's middle power status according to a decline in its ability to

influence as a result of its departure from a central multilateral institution. However, this assessment is largely based on the notion of declining influence, which opens the opportunity to dispute this argument on the basis of the UK's other capabilities in leadership, diplomacy, and its remaining hard power for example.

Some therefore argue that it is vital to scrutinise the benchmark used to determine the UK's place in the world. Morris (2011, p.331) argues that the UK has declined quite considerably if judged against the status of other superpowers such as the US, but that comparisons such as this overestimates the extent of the UK's relative decline given the sheer scale of US power and dominance of international order. From this perspective, the UK still retains elements of a great power through its powerful economic position measured in terms of GDP, soft power capabilities, and its permanent membership of the UN Security Council (Morris, 2011, pp.331-333). In a similar vein, it is argued that the UK's UN Security Council membership, defence and aid budget, and contributions to interventions in Kosovo, Libya, and Syria mean that the UK "remains much more than a middle power" but is not a superpower (Chalmers, 2015, p.2). In an comparative analysis of the UK and France, Hill (2016, p.394) suggests that both countries "are in limbo" regarding their place in the world because the UK and France are "neither 'great powers' in the nineteenth-century sense nor average states of the middling rank".

As the literature in the next sub-section shows, UK governments do not openly endorse the notion of the UK as a middle power. Brexit is one important factor influencing this rejection of a middle power status because the government sees it as an opportunity to project the UK's post-Brexit global role (Murray and Brainson, 2019, p.1435). The significance of these domestic perspectives is that "within government the idea that Britain is a great power is prevalent and an influential factor in determining British foreign and defence policy" (Morris, 2011, p.326). This is important because the government is responsible for the output of UK foreign policy, so an awareness that the UK is a great power ultimately impacts on the nature of its international relations.


## 2.2.3 UK internationalism: A counter to relative decline

As the literature in the previous sub-section shows, there is the perspective that a relative international hard power decline does not mean a reduced place in the world for the UK (Niblett, 2010; Harvey, 2011; Morris, 2011; Chalmers, 2015; Hill, 2016; Rogers, 2017). Niblett (2010, p.2) argues that the UK "possesses strengths that give it the potential to influence the international context in ways that advance its national interests" by drawing

on its existing political, economic, diplomatic, institutional, and military capabilities. An example of this perspective is the literature on the UK's commitment to liberal internationalism. The literature suggests that liberal internationalism has witnessed somewhat of a resurgence as a vision for UK foreign policy following the election of the New Labour government under the leadership of Tony Blair (Williams, 2005; Vickers, 2011; Kitchen and Vickers, 2013; Ralph, 2014b).

The basis of the UK's liberal internationalist foreign policy is the connection between the domestic and the international in which "the stability of any one state and the peace and stability of the international system as a whole are inexorably linked" (Vickers, 2011, p.17). This is the idea that the UK's national interest is inherently linked to international relations and that securing it means ensuring stability beyond borders (Kitchen and Vickers, 2013, p.300). William's (2005, p.7) suggests that the UK's liberal internationalist approach has four key aspects of multilateralism, an alliance with the US according to "Atlanticism", neoliberal economics, and "moralism" based on an "explicit rejection of *realpolitik"* (emphasis in original). By fleshing out the core components of the UK's liberal internationalist foreign policy, Williams (2005) identifies some consistent aspects which form the UK's place in the world since 1945. This centres on Atlanticism and the UK's efforts to stand by the US as the dominant hegemonic power of liberal international order. A more significant finding for this thesis is the moralism of the UK's liberal internationalist worldview because of its relationship with liberal values such as human rights protection.

Although the literature does not explicitly discuss the relationship between the UK's liberal internationalist commitment to human protection and its credentials for leadership in the liberal international order, it does identify important ways in which the UK has demonstrated its leadership and influence as part of its liberal internationalist foreign policy. This has been typified by the UK's position within the liberal international order which has enabled it to retain leadership and influence in spite of its relative decline more broadly. The vast literature on UK foreign policy shows that it has managed to demonstrate its place in the world through its membership and contribution to numerous political and economic institutions of the liberal international order, such as the UN Security Council, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Group of 8 (G8), and the EU (Gaskarth, 2013; Hill and Beadle, 2014; Dee and Smith, 2017; Hughes, 2017). In particular, the UN Security Council is interpreted as an important avenue for UK leadership and influence. For Hughes (2017, p.467), the UK's permanent seat forms part

of "the self-perception of the British political and military establishment that the UK remains a world power" in being part of an exclusive group of five states with the power of a veto.

The literature shows that the UK has conveyed its awareness of this exclusive position at the UN through its role within the organisation (Dee and Smith, 2017, p.528). In particular, Gifkins et al. (2019a) suggest that the UK has drawn on considerable soft power capabilities to demonstrate its leadership and influence on the UN Security Council. Both perspectives are important contributions to research on UK foreign policy in advancing a nuanced understanding of the UK's place in the world and how it retains influence and leadership beyond hard power. The scholarship in this section shows how UK governments have attempted to adapt to a transitional foreign policy through drawing on the liberal internationalist sources of the existing US-led liberal international order. When faced with relative hard power decline, the UK has adopted a leadership role whilst being conscious that it is no longer a 'great power' which dominates international order.

### 2.2.4 The UK's liberal internationalist commitment to human protection

The literature in the previous sub-section shows that the UK retains a leadership role within institutions of liberal international order. However, existing scholarship is yet to analyse UK leadership in relation to the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. This sub-section thus identifies existing notable works on the UK's commitment to human protection in order to identify this gap.

### 2.2.5 The UK and humanitarian intervention

In order to understand the literature on the UK's commitment to humanitarian intervention, it is important to address the broader historical context. In *Saving Strangers* Wheeler (2000, p.2) outlines a fundamental dilemma in international relations between protecting populations from mass atrocity crimes on the one hand, and the protection of state sovereignty and non-interference on the other. Drawing on the English School of International Relations theory, Wheeler (2000, p.53) argues for a "solidarist theory of humanitarian intervention" based on the cosmopolitan notion of common humanity. Later building on this work, Wheeler (2003, p.30) argues that a norm of humanitarian intervention is emerging. This is because whilst sovereignty "remains the dominant legitimating principle" of international order, it is no longer absolute in the face of mass atrocities (Wheeler, 2003, p.38). Although this norm of humanitarian intervention has not

reached fruition, Wheeler's (2000; 2003) research is notable for introducing a core debate on the relationship between Westphalia sovereignty and the protection of populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes.

Peltner (2017, p.745) explains this change in the relationship between state sovereignty and humanitarian intervention in UK foreign policy through the case study of the New Labour government. Following an initial reluctance to draw on humanitarian intervention in Rwanda, Angola, and Bosnia, the UK showed increasing support for humanitarian intervention beginning with the 1999 intervention in Kosovo (Peltner, 2017, pp.750-751). Peltner (2017, pp.753-754) explains this shift in UK foreign policy according to a change in government, the increasing attention attached to human protection at the international level following Rwanda and Bosnia, and the emergence of new human protection norms, such as the R2P. Peltner (2017) thus shows that change has occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection. However, this research falls short of examining the relationship between the UK's commitment to humanitarian intervention and its place in the world as part of a transitional foreign policy.

A similar theme is present in the literature on the UK's commitment to humanitarian intervention, which primarily focuses on legal debates. Jahn (2013, p.3) notes how despite the pursuit of humanitarian intervention in the 1990s, this has not facilitated the creation of a norm of humanitarian intervention. Similarly, Williams (2004, p.926) acknowledges the UK's willingness to draw on humanitarian intervention as a justification for action despite it lacking the necessary international legal mechanisms. As a result, the UK is interpreted as endorsing the idea of a doctrine of humanitarian intervention, despite its questionable legal grounding (Buys and Garwood-Gowers, 2019, p.17; Butchard, 2020, p.22).

Beyond the legality of humanitarian intervention, the literature implicitly draws attention to changes that have occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection beyond New Labour (Daddow, 2013; Beech and Oliver, 2014; Oliver, 2015; Beech and Munce, 2019). Daddow and Schnapper (2013) compare the UK's commitment to human protection in the foreign policy of the Tony Blair and David Cameron governments. They argue that despite the distinct differences between a Labour and a Conservative foreign policy, there is a striking similarity in their approach to humanitarian intervention since the Blair years (Daddow and Schnapper, 2013, p.333). Accounting for this is the underlying commitment to "bounded liberalism" in UK foreign policy, which entails a "scepticism of grand schemes to remake the world; instinctive Atlanticism; security

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through collective international endeavour; and anti-appeasement sentiment" (Daddow and Schnapper, 2013, p.333). It is plausible to argue that bounded liberalism reflects the liberal internationalism that has shaped the UK's approach to the world since at least 1997. Daddow and Schnapper (2013) thus challenge the idea that the Conservative-led coalition government presented a significant shift in their foreign policy outlook, but rather followed a similar underlying approach to the UK's place in the world and the nature of its commitment to human protection as a result.

Similarly, Beech and Oliver (2014, p.105) argue that Cameron's approach to human protection as Prime Minster is markedly similar to Tony Blair's. They argue that despite changes in foreign policy from the previous New Labour government, the UK's commitment to humanitarian intervention has remained largely unchanged (Beech and Oliver, 2014, p.105). In supporting this assessment, Oliver (2015, p.112) argues that "the Conservative party leadership have become considerably more pro-interventionist" compared with previous Conservative administrations. Oliver (2015, p.144) supports this argument through the examples of the intervention in Libya (2011) and arguments in favour of intervention in Syria (2013). This leads to the conclusion that humanitarian intervention has become an entrenched aspect of UK foreign policy on human protection (Oliver, 2014, p.116).

In analysing the Conservative government's commitment to human rights more broadly, Beech and Munce (2019, pp.119-120) suggest that "humanitarian intervention is now an established facet of Britain's global role" and is "rooted in Cameron's beliefs in Britain as a responsible power". These perspectives show that what started as an idea on the conditional nature of sovereignty in instances of mass violence and atrocity crimes in the 1990s has now become a core element of the UK's commitment to human protection. Whilst these perspectives engage less with the role of a transitional foreign policy in this change, they evidence a shift that has occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection since 1997 and how this approach has been internalised by successive governments.

### 2.2.6 The UK's commitment to R2P

The R2P reflects another way in which the UK has pursued its foreign policy commitment to human protection. As Gaskarth (2013, p.6) notes, the R2P's evolution on the world stage was influenced in part by the UK's earlier advocacy on humanitarian intervention. As Badescu (2011, p.4) argues, the R2P is born out of the dilemma between protecting

state sovereignty and humanitarian intervention to protect humans from mass violence. Whilst humanitarian intervention lacks legal consensus, the R2P is built on a respect for international law in requiring authorisation from the UN Security Council for the use of force without host state consent (Badescu, 2011, p.4).

It has since been argued by Crossley (2018, p.415) that the R2P "has successfully replaced humanitarian intervention in international discourse". However, this is far from true in the case of the UK. Ralph (2014a, p.22) suggests that R2P has become "equated in UK foreign policy discourse with humanitarian intervention". The UK's role in the eventual endorsement of the R2P at the 2005 UN World Summit is acknowledged, but it is argued that the UK's support hinged on the idea that it complemented, and arguably provided some legitimacy, for its existing commitment to humanitarian intervention (Brockmeier et al., 2014a, p.431). These perspectives are important contributions to this thesis in identifying changes that have occurred in UK foreign policy rhetoric and action on human protection since 1997, which centre on this relationship between state sovereignty and humanitarian intervention. Despite the R2P introducing a framework for intervention which has legal grounding in international law, the research in this section shows that the UK has still opted for a rhetorical commitment to humanitarian intervention to justify some of its foreign policy actions on human protection.

## 2.3 The transition of liberal international order

This section reviews the academic debates which suggest that liberal international order is in transition as part of a broader crisis in liberal internationalism (Cox, 2012; Hurrell, 2013; Acharya, 2014; 2018; Acharya and Plesch, 2020; Terhalle, 2015; Stuenkel, 2016; Ikenberry, 2018a; Andersen, 2019; Paris, 2019; Babic, 2020; Cooley and Nexon, 2020; Lascurettes, 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Nuruzzaman, 2020). The literature reviewed shows that this potential transition of power away from the liberal model of international order has significant implications for human protection as shifting power balances suggest a resurgence of a pluralist conception of order based on a respect for state sovereignty and non-intervention (Newman, 2013b; Hofmann, 2015; Hopgood, 2015; Kappel, 2015; Petrasek, 2019; Newman and Stefan, 2020). It is therefore essential to conceptualise the UK's transitional foreign policy in the context of these broader changes occurring in liberal international order because of the implications for human protection.

The literature on a transitional international order begins with the argument that the existing US-led liberal international order is increasingly under challenge from what

are commonly labelled as the non-Western BRICS powers consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (Hurrell, 2013; Terhalle, 2015). For Hurrell (2013, p.190) a transitional international order is characterised by changes in the balance of power between the post-1945 US-led liberal international order and non-Western powers. Similarly, Newman and Zala (2018, p.872) suggest that a transition from the existing US-led international order "might be a consequence of a sustained shift in the perceived distribution of power, especially with a pattern of rising and falling powers". Newman and Zala's (2018) perspective is important because it recognises how a transition of international order has been a sustained process over time as power has diffused to other states beyond the hegemonic dominance of the US.

The literature also questions the defining features of a transitional international order. Terhalle (2015, p.7) argues that it centres on the relationship between the great powers of the US and China and their differing perspectives on order. The outcome of these differences is "a new process of order transition understood as system-relevant changes in the main practices pertaining to the nature of world order's governance" (Terhalle, 2015, p.7). This perspective suggests that changes in the balance of power between Western and non-Western powers has generated contestation of the basic governing principles of the US-led liberal international order. Similarly, in *Post-Western World,* Stuenkel (2016, pp.10-11) outlines "the constructive role" of rising powers in the present and future international order. Stuenkel (2016, p.11) thus argues that rising powers are more likely to work within the existing order as "they will seek to change the hierarchy in the system to obtain hegemonic privileges". Non-Western powers are thus not viewed as potentially spoiling world order (Schweller, 2011), but rather their aim is to enhance their position within the existing one (Nuruzzaman, 2020, pp.52-53). These more nuanced perspectives support the argument that rising powers are challenging "who is setting and overseeing the rules of the game rather than the content of the rules themselves and the kind of order that they underpin" (Newman and Zala, 2018, p.871).

The issue, Acharya (2018, p.2) argues, is that International Relations theory has largely neglected "contestations, variations, and constructions of order-building ideas and institutions". As a result, the agency of non-Western powers in the original construction of what became the liberal international order is often overlooked. An evolving international order thus represents a change from the dominance of an hegemonic power towards "a more pluralistic or multiplex world order" with power and agency distributed and shared among a range of Western and non-Western powers (Acharya, 2018, pp.2-3).

This is because material power and dominance is not the only source of international order, but also requires legitimacy (Reus-Smit, 2017, p.853). Reus-Smit (2017) suggests that legitimacy cannot simply be attained through using material power alone, but is also dependent on being able to peacefully bring a diverse group of states together. To achieve this, states may well establish some common values, rules, norms, and institutions that both allow for cooperation, while helping to sustain order by aiming to resolve any conflicts between states (Philips, 2011, p.5). In this sense, a transitional international order is a more inclusive entity than the post-war US-led international order (Acharya and Plesch, 2020, p.229; Cooley and Nexon, 2020, p.11; Lee et al, 2020, p.53). These perspectives are an important contribution to academic debates on international order and its transition through challenging the idea that there is a strict dichotomy between the existing international order and a new world order. Rather, they show that a transitional international order is not characterised by a complete breakdown of the existing one, but rather changes to the norms, institutions, and leadership of the existing one.

The review of the literature in this section so far risks assuming that the transition of international order is a one-way process with existing Western powers being passive. However, literature suggests that Western powers are playing an important role in the demise of the liberal international order (Ikenberry, 2010; 2018; Ikenberry et al., 2018; de Jonquières, 2017; de Graaff and van Apeldoorn, 2018; Jahn, 2018; Paris, 2019; Babic, 2020). According to Ikenberry (2010, p.511), the US is facing a crisis in its leadership of the liberal international order. This crisis has been intensified by domestic political developments, such as the former election of Donald Trump as President and their emphasis on "America First", which includes questioning the benefits of being a significant contributor to liberal international organisations, such as NATO and the UN (Paris, 2019, pp.2-3). Similarly, De Jonquières (2017, p.552) examines whether the most serious challenge to the liberal international order are Western states themselves by drawing on the notable examples of former President Trump's approach to international relations and developments in other states such as Brexit. Whilst it is not entirely clear whether these changes will have profound long-term impacts, these academic perspectives reveal a concern that the existing liberal international order is unstable, which is being somewhat accelerated by the existing powers of this order, such as the US and UK.

A similar line of argument is adopted in a 2018 special issue on *liberal internationalism in theory and practice* which debated the challenges facing liberal

internationalism in the twenty-first century. Again, Brexit and former President Trump are regarded as being reflections of "a sense of deep crisis in the United States-led liberal international order" (Ikenberry, Parmar and Stokes, 2018, p.1). In fact, Ikenberry (2018, p.7) appears to have revised his 2010 stance in arguing that a crisis in international order is deeper than merely an emphasis on the US. That said, Ikenberry (2018, p.17) suggests that any changes in power dynamics are "simply a gradual diffusion of power away from the west". Significantly, China's rise is interpreted as being relatively peaceful in the sense of not challenging the existing order *per se* or breaking away from it (Ikenberry, 2018, p.23). For Smith (2012, p.186), this is primarily due to a range of constraints that China faces, including the importance of domestic politics and managing broader regional dynamics. Similarly, de Graaff and van Apeldoorn's (2018, p.130) analysis of US-Chinese relations finds that a co-existence between these powers seems the most likely outcome at present, especially since states like China "do not yet observe a wholesale replacement of America's post-Cold War globalist and liberal engagement". Although de Graaff and van Apeldoorn's (2018) argument is speculative in using a combination of existing and historical US-Chinese relations, it questions the narrative of rising powers as completely challenging and/or dismantling liberal internationalism, although still pointing to the possibility of a broader transition occurring between Western and non-Western states.

Following these contributions, Jahn (2018, p.44) argues for an investigation into liberal internationalism beyond the decline of US hegemony and Western powers more broadly. Jahn suggests that a crisis of liberal internationalism reflects a deeper problem with the international implementation of domestic liberal ideas and principles. This argument is supported through interrogating the liberal domestic-international distinction whereby achieving domestic liberal values at the international level may lead to inherent flaws, particularly if this involves liberal-led interventions into other sovereign states to implement these values (Jahn, 2018, p.59). Jahn (2018) thus shifts the debate away from an immediate concern with a crisis of liberal internationalism and US hegemony to identifying a fundamental issue with the principles upon which a liberal internationalist order is practiced.

Similar to Jahn (2018), Duncombe and Dunne (2018, p.31) argue for greater nuance in analysing the perceived crisis of liberal internationalism through the example of interventionism. They argue that humanitarianism reveals the core tensions in the existing liberal international order based on its implications for other core norms, such as

sovereign integrity and non-interference (Duncombe and Dunne, 2018, p.35). Using the Syrian civil war as an example, Duncombe and Dunne (2018) identify its implications for liberal organisations, such as the UN, where there appears to be deep divisions between the liberal-Western powers on the UN Security Council (US, France and the UK) and non-Western powers (China and Russia) which have adopted a stricter stance on humanitarianism (Duncombe and Dunne, 2018, p.37). Although Duncombe and Dunne (2018, p.41) conclude that "liberal world order is in a state of flux", they caution against the idea of a complete decay of the existing order.

### 2.3.1 Pluralism and the resurgence of sovereignty

Writing on the EU's engagement with the R2P in a transitional international order, Newman and Stefan (2020, p.481) suggest that the EU operates "in an increasingly pluralistic normative world". If pluralism is interpreted according to Acharya's (2018) idea of a more diverse world of powers and ideas, then it has important implications for debates on state sovereignty. Commenting on the rise of the BRICS powers in international relations, Laïdi (2012, p.615) argues that they "form a coalition of sovereign state defenders". This attachment to state sovereignty suggests that the BRICS aim to retain their right to non-interference. Similarly, Kappel (2015, p.8) suggests that the BRICS are "the most vocal proponents of the notions of sovereignty and non-interference". Although these arguments are challenged by examples such as Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Laïdi (2012) and Kappel (2015) address a fundamental issue with the relationship between liberal internationalist ideas pertaining to international intervention and non-Western perspectives on the protection of state sovereignty.

In *the endtimes of human rights* Hopgood (2015, p.9) argues that international human rights are in decline. The elements of this decline stem partly from the US, but also the rise of the BRICS and the subsequent emergence of a "neo-Westphalian" era of protecting state sovereignty (Hopgood, 2015, p.13). However, Petrasek (2019, p.104) counters this argument on the decline of human rights for two main reasons. First, the relationship between human rights and liberal internationalism assumes that human rights are principally a liberal exercise dependent on the liberal international order for their implementation, which Petrasek (2019, p.104) argues is not the case. Second, Petrasek (2019, p.106) suggests that the US as conventional leader of the liberal international order has pursued a very inconsistent and selective approach to human protection which shows its "conditional commitment to global human rights" (Petrasek, 2019, p.106). Whilst

providing an important qualification on the idea that human rights are in decline, Petrasek is speaking on human rights more broadly, rather than specifically on human protection from mass violence and atrocity crimes.

The clearest example of this debate between sovereignty and intervention to protect populations from mass violence is the R2P. In engaging with these debate at length, Newman (2013, p.236) argues that "some of the controversies associated with R2P are indicative of broader tensions in international politics related to world order, in particular regarding norms". The task for the R2P does not relate to persuading states to protect populations from atrocity crimes, but instead navigating the tensions inherent in different understandings of international order between largely Western and non-Western states on sovereignty and human protection (Newman, 2013, p.242). Rather than arguing that the BRICS dismiss the R2P outright, Newman (2013) shows how the core normative tensions surrounds R2P's third pillar on non-consensual military intervention. This perspective is shared widely in the R2P literature (Morris, 2013; Thakur, 2013; Fiott, 2014; Paris, 2014; Stuenkel, 2014; Hofmann, 2015; Hehir, 2017).

Stuenkel (2014, p.3) argues that the BRICS largely embrace R2P's pillar I and pillar II, but contest non-consensual intervention under pillar III on the basis of its implications for the protection of state sovereignty. Hofmann (2015, p.298) suggests that the "norm contestation around R2P is partially grounded in unresolved conflicts between different fundamental norms" of sovereignty and humanitarian intervention. The 2011 intervention in Libya is a frequent illustration of this debate where R2P was originally proclaimed as being an important element in NATO's decision to intervene to protect the Libyan population (Evans, 2011; Bellamy, 2013, p.19). Despite arguments that R2P in fact had considerably less impact on the decision by the UN Security Council to authorise action (Davidson, 2013; Morris, 2013, pp.1272-1274), it is argued that R2P's linkages to the action taken in Libya had a profound impact on the norm following the implementation of pillar III and the subsequent removal of the Gaddafi regime (Morris, 2013).

Morris (2013, p.1279) thus concludes that "a realignment of global power in favour of those normatively predisposed towards sovereign rather than individual rights is likely…to augur badly for R2P". This point raises questions about a state's engagement with human protection in a transitional world order, particularly if such a shift involves a move towards those rising powers advocating for a pluralist interpretation of state sovereignty. That said, following the 2011 intervention in Libya, Brazil proposed its own

framework for addressing the controversy surrounding the use of R2P's pillar III through responsibility while protecting (RwP). At the time, Brazil's engagement with the R2P through RwP was interpreted as evidence of non-western norm entrepreneurship on human protection (Stuenkel, 2013; Tourinho et al., 2016; Stefan, 2017). However the Brazilian government abandoned the initiative soon after it was proposed, which ended a notable moment of constructive contestation of the R2P from a member of the BRICS.

The review of scholarship in this section reveals the complex international environment in which the UK practices its foreign policy and the challenges for its commitment to human protection. However, the lack of research on non-superpower states shows the urgent need to analyse their role and leadership in the international order, and in particular, their commitment to human protection amid the arguments of an emerging pluralist world order and a decline in international human rights.

## 2.4 The UK's transitional foreign policy

The pre-occupation with the rise and fall of superpowers means that other states which once held the status of a great power, but have since declined, are often overlooked. Literature has drawn attention to the challenges that the UK is facing as a result of a transitional foreign policy (Beasley et al., 2018; Glencross and McCourt, 2018; Daddow, 2019a; Gifkins et al., 2019b; Jarvis et al., 2019; Oppermann et al., 2020). It is argued that "Brexit has generated a 'role crisis' for the UK with tensions between the UK's conception of its own roles in the world and the expectations of other actors on the international stage" (Beasley et al, 2018). Brexit raises significant questions about the role the UK intends to adopt as its foreign policy transitions (Beasley et al, 2018). According to Glencross and McCourt (2018, p.583), Brexit has generated a fundamental "status anxiety regarding the nature of the UK's interactions with the international system". Similar to the arguments of Beasley et al (2018) and Oppermann et al (2020), Glencross and McCourt (2018, p.585) argue that this status anxiety is compounded by the fact that the nature of Brexit also "unsettles other countries' expectations about the UK's role in the world".

Critically, these issues have broader implications for the UK's status and role within some of the core institutions of international order. Gifkins et al. (2019a, pp.1353-1354) find that Brexit has intensified "the perception among other states that the UK is in decline". The consequences of these perceptions are evident in the UN Security Council, where the UK faces increased pressure to demonstrate its continued relevance, especially

as a permanent member (Gifkins et al., 2019a, pp.1350-1351). According to a Foreign Affairs Committee report on Global Britain, "the time is right to take stock of the UK's role in the world, not only in the light of domestic developments but also in light of long-term changes in the international system and global balance of power" (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018a).

The government has attempted to respond to the challenges facing its place in the world through the promotion of a 'Global Britain'. The notion of Global Britain is primarily a means of demonstrating that Brexit does not signal the UK's intention to step back on the international stage, but rather intends to play an even more global role (Glencross and McCourt, 2018; Hill, 2018; Daddow, 2019a). However, the academic literature has already identified significant limitations with Global Britain. Daddow (2019b) argues that Global Britain is "lacking a firm basis in policy achievements and an even less development narrative" on the UK's post-Brexit world role. Similarly, Gifkins et al. (2019b, p.8) found that Global Britain is ambiguous, which in turn has made "it more difficult for the UK to project clarity of purpose abroad". Amid its changing place in the world, the literature suggests that the UK has proved largely unsuccessful so far in establishing a clear post-Brexit strategic vision for its foreign policy.

This thesis aims to capture these attempts by successive governments to readjust the UK's place in the world as part of a transitional foreign policy through the case of its commitment to human protection. An area of research which brings attention to this is Gaskarth's (2016) study of the 2013 parliamentary vote on intervention in Syria. Gaskarth (2016, pp.719-720) finds that the labelling of the event as a "fiasco" was a useful means of "avoiding the trauma of Britain's decline". This places the vote on intervention in Syria within the broader context of the challenges facing the UK's place in the world amid its relative hard power decline. This is an important contribution in combining debates on the UK's place in the world with the constraints on its ability to exert military force in order to protect populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes. This in turn raises broader questions about the relationship between adjustments in the UK's place in the world as part of a transitional foreign policy and its subsequent commitment to human protection, which this thesis will focus on.

## 2.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has reviewed academic scholarship at the core of the relationship between the domestic and the international in UK foreign policy. At the international level,

research on world order, liberal international order, and its transition, has predominantly focused on the superpowers of the US and China. As a result, the implications of shifting power balances for countries such as the UK are largely overlooked in these debates despite the important role that states such as the UK still play in international order.

The review of the literature shows that some research has addressed debates on the UK's place in the world amid a transitional foreign policy. This includes the UK's post-war decline in power relative to other states in international relations, significant foreign policy events such as Brexit, and attempts by domestic governments to reaffirm the UK's global role through initiatives like Global Britain. However, there is significantly less research on the implications of a transitional foreign policy for changes in the nature of the UK's commitment to human protection. This chapter has reviewed a wealth of existing scholarship on UK foreign policy towards human protection, in addition to international human protection more broadly. This literature shows the central role of the UK in international human protection since at least the 1990s and the considerable challenges of protecting populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes in the 21st century. Yet there has been a lack of analysis so far on the relationship between changes in the UK's commitment to human protection and a transitional foreign policy, which this thesis aims to address.

In light of these gaps in existing scholarship, this thesis makes three main contributions to research on UK foreign policy and human protection, foreign policy change, and UK leadership and influence in international relations as a 'former great power'. Firstly, this thesis contributes to research on UK foreign policy on domestic and international human protection. The beginning of the thesis timeframe in 1997 marked an important era in UK foreign policy on human protection as policymakers continued to grapple with domestic and international debates on humanitarian intervention and state sovereignty, and the subsequent development of the PoC and R2P. Whilst this chapter has reviewed numerous significant contributions to these debates, scholarship so far has not addressed in detail the broader relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and a transitional foreign policy. This includes the implications of changes in the UK's relative international power in the post-war period, changes in its membership of the core multilateral organisations of international order, and shifts in the global balance of power for the nature of the UK's contributions to human protection.

Second, it contributes to research on the leadership and influence of powers which have faced a post-war relative international decline in power through the perspective of

the UK's commitment to human protection. This is an important contribution to the fields of international order and its transition, liberal internationalism, and human protection because there has been a tendency within this research, especially on international order, to focus on either superpowers or middle power states. This is at the neglect of states such as the UK which does not neatly fall into either category of power status, but yet continues to demonstrate considerable leadership and influence on international human protection. It is thus critical to analyse the role of states like the UK in the evolving international order, including its contributions to addressing the crisis of international human protection.

The third contribution of the thesis is to broaden theoretical and empirical research on why a state changes its foreign policy and how to assess this change. The thesis makes this contribution by analysing the relationship between sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection and a transitional foreign policy.[7] It achieves this through developing a novel analytical framework to assess sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection in a transitional foreign policy. This framework is based on an analysis of the relationship between elite political rhetoric and actions in order to identity any long-term changing patterns of policy behaviour, changing administrative apparatus, and changes in elite UK political discourse. This approach is critical to examining how the UK reconciles the changes in its core interests and relationships on the one hand, and its commitment to liberal values including human protection on the other. This is a particularly timely contribution in the context of Brexit as the UK is compelled to negotiate its current and future political and economic partnerships at a time when mass violence and atrocity crimes continue to be committed with impunity.

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[7]    See chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the theoretical and conceptual contributions of the thesis to the sub-field of foreign policy analysis on foreign policy change.

# Chapter 3 - Theoretical framework and methodology

This chapter details the theoretical framework and methodological approach of the thesis. Section 3.1 outlines the theoretical framework of foreign policy change and develops an analytical framework to assess sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. Section 3.2 then explains the methodological approach based on a triangulation of methods, which includes an integrated content analysis of 1,055 primary documentary materials, semi-structured interviews, and secondary literature. The chapter contributes to addressing the aim and objectives of the thesis through developing a framework to assess changes in the UK's commitment to human protection from 1997 to 2020 (objective 1), and the development and classification of a quantitative and qualitative dataset to examine the UK's commitment to human protection between 2010 and 2020 (objective 3).

## 3.1 Theoretical framework: Foreign policy change

This section outlines the theoretical framework of this thesis on foreign policy change, which is defined as a distinct sub-field of foreign policy analysis. The section begins by defining the core concepts of policy and foreign policy as used throughout the thesis and then proceeds to examine the wealth of scholarship on foreign policy change. The section then conceptualises and constructs an analytical framework to assess sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection between 1997 and 2020 according to the relationship between elite UK government rhetoric and its human protection actions.

### 3.1.1 Defining UK domestic and foreign policy

Whilst frequently cited in political, diplomatic, and academic circles, the definition of policy is ambiguous. At its most basic, policy has been defined as "a set of principles to guide actions to achieve a goal" (British Ecological Society, 2017). This perspective suggests that policy acts as a guide in order to reach a particular outcome. On the other hand, the UK government's official website has defined policy as "statements of the government's position, intent or action" (GOV.uk, 2012). This suggests that policy is a form of communication, but its precise definition still remains unclear. The UK government's previous conceptualisation of policy-making provides some clarification of what constitutes policy. Policy making is defined as "the process by which governments translate their political vision into programmes and actions to deliver 'outcomes' –

desired changes in the real world" (Cabinet Office, 1999, p.15). Policy is therefore the product of the government's ideas and a means of articulating its perspective into carefully defined actions. For Green (2014) then, "policy is about obtaining an outcome which otherwise would not be obtained *but for* that policy being in place" (emphasis in original). This supports the idea that policy is an output aimed to prescribe actions to address a certain issue. There are a number of ways the UK government may practice policy, including policy papers, consultations, and dialogue through speeches, statements, media interviews, statements, and conferences (Waller et al., 2009, pp.9-11). Accordingly, this thesis adopts an all-encompassing approach to policy (figure 1).
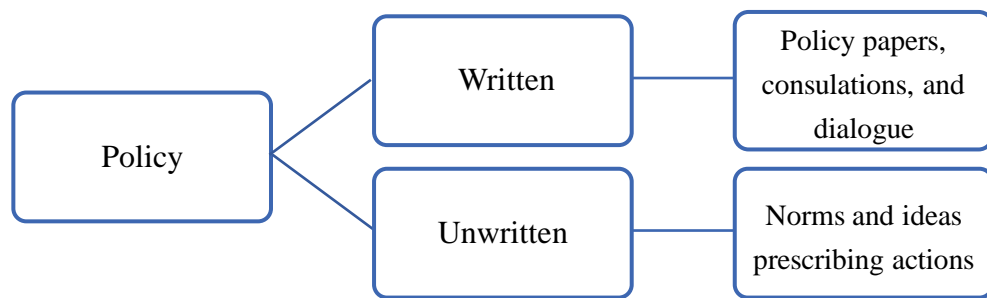


**Figure 1. Thesis conceptualisation of UK government policy**

This conceptualisation aims to account for the different origins and expressions of UK policy. It includes conventional written forms of policy through papers, consultations, and dialogue which are often published by the government and parliamentary committees. However, figure 1 also incorporates norms and practices which are not necessarily documented in the same way as policy papers and parliamentary committees, but may still influence the government's approach on an issue. For instance, the notion that the UK should not commit gross human rights violations against its own population is represented in policy, but also represents norms and practices in defining "a standard of appropriate behavior" that the UK should not violate human rights (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p.891). It is thus important to account for unwritten norms and ideas because of their overlap and interaction with written policy, particularly in the process of initiating the decision to turn an idea or norm into a concrete policy proposal, which may then lead to certain government actions according to this policy.

As with policy, there is ambiguity in the definition of foreign policy. The most basic feature of foreign policy is relations between states (Hill, 2003; Beach, 2012, p.3). As for a  general definition, Morin and Paquin (2018, p.3) suggest that foreign policy is

*"a set of actions or rules governing the actions of an independent political authority in the international environment"* (emphasis in original). As with the definition of policy, foreign policy concerns actions by different political authorities, which means it is not exclusively the domain of states, but rather a range of other political actors, such as international organisations, non-governmental organisations, and other individuals and groups. Although broad in scope, this thesis conceptualises domestic and foreign policy as originating from a combination of written and unwritten sources in domestic and international environments which together provide a framework for the UK's international relations with other state and non-state actors.

### 3.1.2 British foreign policy traditions

Alongside defining UK foreign policy, it is also important to conceptualise the role and significance of traditions when interpreting UK foreign policy, particularly when aiming to identify changes over time and shifts from previous administrations. The notion of traditions originates from an interpretivist approach to UK domestic policy, which places greater emphasis on the role of agency in the construction and practice of policy (Bevir and Rhoads, 1999; 2003). Bevir and Rhodes (1999, pp.244-225) define a tradition "as a set of theories or narratives and associated practices that people inherent, which provide the background against which they form beliefs and perform actions. Traditions are contingent, constantly evolving, and necessarily located in a historical context". This approach to traditions therefore draws attention to how the UK government and its policy does not exist independently from the past but is fundamentally shaped and influenced by it (Bevir and Rhoads, 2003, p.33). This definition by Bevir and Rhoades is also significant in recognising that traditions are not simply fixed and "independent of the beliefs and actions of individuals" (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003, p.33), but are liable to change and modification over time according to different agents and governments.

In comparison to the study of traditions in UK domestic policy, Bevir et al (2013, p.163) suggest that the application of an interpretative approach to foreign policy traditions has been limited. In a similar manner to earlier research by Bevir and Rhoads (1999; 2003), Bevir et al (2013, pp.167-168) emphasise the importance of the historical context that has shaped and influenced the approach of UK governments to foreign policy, but also that traditions evolve and change because policymakers have agency. Whilst there are a number of UK foreign policy traditions, such as conservatism, realism, liberalism, and socialism (Bevir et al, 2013, p.167; Gaskarth, 2013, p.200; Daddow and

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Schnapper, 2013, p.333), this thesis focuses on two particular, and widely acknowledged, UK foreign policy traditions of conservatism and internationalism.[8] The empirical chapters in particular conceptualise and engage at length with these different traditions, their evolution, and change and modification by UK foreign policy agents over time. This is in order to account for sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020 as foreign policy traditions have shifted from traditional conservatism and internationalism to liberal internationalism and liberal conservatism. The reminder of this section thus focuses on the concept of foreign policy change and development of a framework to identify and assess sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection as part of a transitional foreign policy.

### 3.1.3 Conceptualising foreign policy change

Research on foreign policy change has emerged as a sub-field of foreign policy analysis and is concerned with conceptualising and explaining shifts in a state's external relations. The following sub-sections examine theoretical scholarship on foreign policy change, the primary debates in the field regarding definitions of change, the role of structures and agents, leadership, and learning, and outline a definition and analytical framework to assess sustained foreign policy change in the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020.

The immediate challenge with the concept of foreign policy change is that there is no universal agreement on its definition in the theoretical literature. Holsti (1982, ix) defines foreign policy change as "the dramatic, wholesale alteration of a nation's pattern of external relations". This perspective suggests that foreign policy change entails a substantial reorientation of a state's foreign policy defined in terms of shifts in the patterns of its whole relations, rather than just specific policies (Holsti, 2016, p.104). Similarly, Doeser and Eidenfalk (2013, p.402) focus on "major foreign policy change" which is more significant and widespread than episodic shifts in a state's foreign policy orientation. Blavoukos and Bourantonis (2014, p.484) define foreign policy change in relation to "fundamental changes in the conceptualization of a foreign policy

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8    Hall and Rengger (2005); Dodds and Elden (2008); Beech (2011); Beech and Oliver (2014) have written extensively on conservative foreign policy traditions, while Vickers (2004; 2011); Atkins (2013); Bevir et al (2013) Daddow and Schnapper (2013); Kitchen and Vickers, 2013; Ralph (2014) have written at length on liberalism and *liberal* internationalism in UK foreign policy, and Ikenberry (2009; 2011; 2018) and Dunne and McDonald (2013) discuss liberal internationalism more broadly beyond UK foreign policy.

problem/goal or to the strategic positioning of a country in the international system". According to this definition, change exists on a spectrum from specific policy shifts to changes in a state's foreign policy as a whole. Building on this approach, Blavoukos and Bourantonis (2017) conceptualise foreign policy change as "the *redirection* to a lesser or greater extent of a state's foreign policy" (emphasis in original). Whilst this definition provides greater scope in accounting for a range of possible foreign policy changes from relatively minor policy adjustments to more substantial shifts, it adds to the challenge of conceptualising foreign policy change through its focus on lessor or greater changes. However, it does account for how foreign policy change does not necessitate changes in a state's entire foreign policy orientation, which is important for the focus of this thesis on human protection as a specific component of the UK's foreign policy. A more detailed definition of foreign policy change is provided by Haesebrouck and Joly (2021, p.5) as

> "the replacement of a continuous pattern of action towards external actors or the rules guiding such actions with a new continuous pattern or rules that pursue different goals and/or use different methods. The latter can be the result of a dramatic break with the past or cumulative effect of smaller changes. Foreign policy change can be limited to a specific foreign policy issue or a bilateral relation, more extensively involving a broader foreign policy domain like security or aid policy, or pertain to a simultaneous change across different foreign policy domains and relations, amounting to a fundamental redirection of the actor's entire orientation towards world affairs." (Haesebrouck and Joly, 2021b, p.5)

At an abstract level, this suggests that foreign policy change is evident from shifts in the foreign policy patterns that are followed by a state. This perspective also conceptualises change in relation adjustments in a state's goals and methods, although it is not clear how to identify these changes. This definition also accounts for change in a similar manner to Blavoukos and Bourantonis (2017) in that it may involve minor changes or fundamental adjustments to a state's external relations and may also be specific to a policy rather than leading to changes in a state's foreign policy as a whole.

Prior to outlining the definition and framework for assessing UK foreign policy change in this thesis, the next sub-sections address the different structures, agents, and levels of foreign policy change through a focus on the structure and agency debate in

foreign policy analysis, leadership and learning, and research on some of the mechanics of change.

### 3.1.4 Structure and agency in foreign policy change

The emergence of constructivist International Relations theory in the 1980s and 1990s generated significant attention on the role, importance, and interplay between structures and agents in international relations and foreign policy (Wendt, 1987). In theoretical research on foreign policy change, structural perspectives interpret the state as a static entity with foreign policy change influenced by the structure of the international system (Smith, 1981; Carlsnaes, 2002, p.336-337; Doeser and Eidenfalk, 2013, pp.391-392). However, a recognition of the domestic construction of foreign policy change opened up space for the role of agency (Kaarbo, 1997; Hermann and Hagan, 1998; Hermann et al., 2001; Doeser and Eidenfalk, 2013). A focus on agency shifts attention towards individual and group decision making and their influence on the foreign policy choices and orientation of their state (Gustavsson, 1999, p.84; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2012; Davies and True, 2017).

Yet research on agency is not an outright rejection of structures of foreign policy change on the basis that "human agents and social structures are in a fundamental sense interrelated entities, and hence that we cannot fully account for one without invoking the other" (Carlsnaes, 1993, p.13). Rather, it is important to acknowledge the previous neglect of agency in foreign policy debates and to recognise its analytical importance to the study of foreign policy change. This is based on the idea that "all that occurs between nations and across nations is grounded in *human decision makers acting singly or in groups*" (Hudson, 2005, p.1, emphasis in original). In the UK for example, human decision makers include agents operating within domestic governmental and parliamentary structures, such as Ministers of State and Members of Parliament (MPs). It is these agents which contribute to the creation and promotion of UK foreign policy using the structures at their disposal such as the government, media, Parliament, and international organisations among many other institutions.

### 3.1.5 Leadership and foreign policy change

The emerging focus on agency in foreign policy change also led to a proliferation of research on the importance of individual leadership amongst Presidents (Hermann and Hermann, 1989; Hermann and Hagan, 1998; Hermann et al., 2001) and Prime Ministers

(Kaarbo, 1997; Kaarbo and Hermann, 1998). Hermann and Hermann (1989, p.363) identified the role of "predominant leaders" which have the power to control foreign policy decision making. Similarly, Hermann et al. (2001, p.84) suggested that individual leaders become central decision making agents when they have "power to make the choice concerning how a state is going to respond to foreign policy problems". Through an examination of leadership style, Herman et al (2001, pp.118-119) found a variation in the outcome of foreign policy change when the process involves "a single, powerful individual" with control over foreign policy in comparison to a number of individuals competing for the position of a predominant leader.

In a similar way to Hermann et al. (2001), Hermann and Hagan (1998) analysed the significance of leadership in international decision making. They found that the agency of a leader is fundamental in processes of foreign policy change and that a leader's approach to foreign policy stems from "their experiences, goals, beliefs about the world, and sensitivity to the political context" they find themselves in (Herman and Hagan, 1998, p.126). In this sense, the worldview of a leader may influence subsequent changes in foreign policy in order to fulfil their vision. In the next chapter for instance, it is shown how Tony Blair's leadership placed a conscious effort on distancing from his predecessors through the promotion of an alternative vision for the UK's place in the world. Leadership is thus another core component for explaining and analysing foreign policy change, especially when a government is dominated by a predominant leader with an ability to largely dictate the trajectory of their country's foreign policy output.

### 3.1.6 Learning and foreign policy change

Historical context also has an important influence on leadership in foreign policy change. Levy (1994, p.283) defines learning as "a change of beliefs (or the degree of confidence in one's beliefs) or the development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience". Learning is an active process that places the agency of leaders at its core. This means that it does not guarantee that foreign policy change will occur given the different perspectives and worldviews of leaders (Levy, 1994, p.283). This is in addition to broader domestic and international structural constraints which may prevent a leader's ability to initiate change (Levy, 1994, p.290).

Stein (1994, p.155) provides an empirical illustration of learning amongst foreign policy leaders through the case of Gorbachev and the end of the Cold War, which represented a considerable deviation from the approach of previous Soviet leaders. Whilst

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it is important to consider the broader political context that led to the end of the Cold War and dismantling of the Soviet Union, Stein's (1994) research shows that the agency of leaders and their willingness to learn from the past are also important in explaining foreign policy change. This provides an important contribution to the empirical focus of this thesis because the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020 is characterised by changes in leadership across the ideological spectrum of UK politics, which includes instances of governments attempting to distance their foreign policy from the approach of their predecessors.

### 3.1.7 Push-pull factors and foreign policy change

The interaction between structures and agents draws attention to the relationship between domestic and international environments in foreign policy change. This relationship is analysed in research by Brazys et al. (2017) who established a conceptual framework to examine the international norms and foreign policy change. The framework suggests that foreign policy change on international norms is influenced by a combination of domestic and international "push-pull" factors in structures and agents (Brazys et al., 2017, pp.662-663). Domestic (push) factors include changes in governments, institutions, and lobbying, while international (pull) factors include international pressure to adhere to global norms and international organisations (Brazys et al., 2017, p.663). This framework has been applied to several empirical studies, including the impact of domestic coalition governments on foreign policy change (Kaarbo, 2017); foreign policy change of states towards the International Criminal Court (Dukalskis, 2017); and changing UK foreign policy on humanitarian intervention between 1997 and 2005 (Peltner, 2017).

This push-pull framework is especially relevant for theorising changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. This is on the basis that shifts in the UK's commitment to human protection is part of the push-pull process of foreign policy change according to structures and agents in both domestic and international environments. Domestic push factors may include changes in governments and their approach to human protection, pressure from MPs, political parties, and lobbying groups for the UK to retain a prominent international position post-Brexit and to lead on human protection. International pull factors may include upholding the existing rules-based international order through the promotion of human rights protection, retaining influence and leadership in institutions to underscore the UK's aspirations for

global leadership, and pressure from international organisations for states to act in order to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes.

This push-pull framework is therefore timely considering the proliferation of debates on the UK's place in the world (Niblett, 2010; Harvey, 2011; Gaskarth, 2014; McCourt, 2014; Hill, 2016); Brexit, the promotion of Global Britain, and the emphasis on retaining UK influence and leadership on the world stage (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018a; Gifkins et al., 2019b; Seely and Rogers, 2019). This is in addition to the crises in Syria (Momani and Hakak, 2016; Ralph et al., 2017), Yemen (Buys and Garwood-Gowers, 2019; French, 2019; Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2020; Guterres, 2019), and Myanmar (UNA-UK, 2018a; Staunton, 2017; Staunton and Ralph, 2020). Together, these issues reveal the relationship between the domestic and the international in the UK's commitment to human protection and the challenges posed by a transitional foreign policy.

### 3.1.8 The causes and mechanics of foreign policy change

The literature on structure and agency, leadership, learning, and pull-pull factors demonstrate the different influences on foreign policy change. A core puzzle which remains for any study of foreign policy change is to assess how, when, and why it occurs, the extent, and the primary indicators of change. There is a wealth of literature which aims to address the causes and mechanisms of foreign policy change. Gustavsson (1999, p.83) examines three interrelated factors, including the role of structures, leadership, and the notion of a crisis which encourages a state to redirect its foreign policy. Welch (2005, p.8) argues that foreign policy change is most likely when a state's existing approach is resulting in "continued painful losses". In a similar approach, Walsh (2006, pp.490-491) focuses on the relationship between the components of policy failure and policy change to explain why UK security policy changed during the Cold War due to the failure of the UK's policy approach. These three perspectives are therefore similar in that the cause of change is when the existing approach of a state is no longer viable as it is either incurring a loss or there is some form of domestic or international crisis which necessitates change. Although this research is helpful for identifying some of the causes that lead to foreign policy change, there lacks an operationalisation of change particularly in terms of its extent and timeframe.

As Kleistra and Mayer (2001, p.397) suggest, the challenge for analysing foreign policy change is not the causes (the independent variable), but rather what is changing

and the degree to which it is changing (the dependent variable). For example, Holsti (1998, p.3; 2004, p.6) argues that conventional approaches to International Relations theory have failed to identify "*how we can distinguish* minor change from fundamental change, trends from transformations, and growth or decline" (emphasis in original). Hermann (1990, p.5) suggests that there are levels of change from the more minor to "the redirection of the actor's entire orientation toward world affairs". This latter focus on a state's entire reorientation is a more significant form of foreign policy change in that it accounts for a state's foreign policy as a whole (Holsti, 2016, p.104). In their research on foreign policy change during the Donald Trump Presidency, Ashbee and Hurst (2020, p.5) are also concerned with more fundamental foreign policy shifts in the form of "transformational change". However, there lacks a more specific framework that allows for an assessment of the extent of change over time and its significance.

In order to account for why change occurs in international relations, its nature, and its extent, Holsti (2004, pp.8-11) suggests there are three main markers of change identified as trends, major events, and "significant social/technological innovations". These markers of change are supplemented by different conceptions of change, including the notion of change as a replacement, as something added or taken away from existing foreign policy, a change in complexity, transformation, and change as replacing outdated "behaviors, practices, ideas, norms, and rules" (Holsti, 2004, pp.13-17). This provides further support to the complexity of the concept of foreign policy change and may well contribute to explaining why there is a lack of a "general theoretical framework of change" (Haesebrouck and Joly, 2021a, p.482). This is because there are numerous causes, markers, and conceptions of change which differ according to the state, actors, time period, and the policies which may change from a single to more profound shift in a state's orientation. For this reason, the next sub-section outlines a theory and definition of change to be utilised in this thesis and develops an analytical framework to specifically assess sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020.

### 3.1.9 Theory of change and analytical framework for assessing sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection

Throughout this thesis, sustained change is defined as a shift in the UK's foreign policy goals and/or methods on human protection which endures over time in the approaches of successive governments and is continually shaped, maintained, and reinforced by a

combination of UK government rhetoric – what is said by elite political agents in government – and its actions – the means and methods of protection in practice. Sustained change is distinct from minor or episodic shifts in UK foreign policy since it is assessed according to changes in the rhetoric and actions of successive governments across the ideological spectrum of domestic UK politics. This is in order to evidence that UK foreign policy change on human protection is lasting rather than simply replaced when a government leaves office. In line with the approach of existing research on foreign policy change (Walsh, 2006; Welch, 2005; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014), this definition is concerned with changes in a specific policy area and timeframe, which in this case is human protection from atrocity crimes between 1997 and 2020.

In order to demonstrate and assess sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection, the concept of sustained change is operationalised by accounting for the different levels of foreign policy change according to the international, domestic, and individual and group, the different actors initiating change, and the significance of this change(Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014). By utilising the relationship between government rhetoric – what foreign policy actors within government say – and actions – the means and methods used to fulfil the UK's commitment to human protection – the analytical framework identifies when sustained changes occur using two primary indicators.

The first is a change in a particular foreign policy goal and/or method on human protection or the predominance of new or alternative foreign policy goals. For example, a shift from human rights being one aspect of UK foreign policy to it becoming a central component of the UK's external relations. This indicator can be identified both in the rhetoric of core foreign policy agents, including the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, and UK foreign policy ambassadors, such as through frequent rhetorical references to the concept of human rights in foreign policy speeches and in relation to specific humanitarian crises, and also the way in which this language is expressed in foreign policy speeches and statements, such as suggesting that human rights are central to UK foreign policy which is then sustained in the rhetoric and policy of successive governments. A shift in a foreign policy goal and/or method on human protection can also be identified in the UK's actions such as committing to the protection of human rights through a direct humanitarian response, the supply of humanitarian aid, and broader diplomatic efforts for example.

The second indicator in identifying a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection is when a change in goals and/or methods is maintained, and possibly built upon, by successive governments across the ideological spectrum, such as a Conservative government adopting the approach of a previous Labour government. This is an especially important indicator since the two main political parties which have a realistic prospect of winning an election under the existing electoral system may hold fundamentally different foreign policy ideas and traditions, such as internationalist and conservative. The framework operates on the assumption that a sustained change has occurred when a goal and/or method is maintained by at least one successive government for its duration in office since this provides sufficient time for a government to adjust its foreign policy on human protection away from its predecessor. If at least one successive government maintains and builds on the initial change of their predecessors by incorporating it in their foreign policy rhetoric and actions, this will provide further evidence of the significance of the sustained change that has occurred. For instance, if a government decides to make humanitarian intervention a more predominant aspect of its foreign policy rhetoric and actions, and this is approach is similarly maintained and practiced in the foreign policy of their successors, this supports the evaluation that this shift towards humanitarian intervention is a significant sustained change, especially amid the vast debate on the legality of humanitarian intervention.

The analytical framework recognises that sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection occurs due to changes at three levels as identified in Haesebrouck and Joly's (2021, pp.487-488) review of literature on foreign policy change. The first is the international level (Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014, p.488), such as the emergence and promotion of new norms, major international events which require a change in the UK's approach to human protection, or the emergence of new or existing humanitarian crises which require an immediate response from states. The second is domestic level changes, including changes in government and the promotion of new and/or alternative foreign policy goals on human protection. The third is changes at the group and individual level, including predominant government actors such as the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary and policy entrepreneurship (see: Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014, p.488) . This allows the thesis to evaluate the multifaceted sources of sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection rather than drawing the conclusion that change only originates from one level or that UK policymakers are passive receivers of foreign policy change. The remainder of this sub-section outlines the definitions and relationship

between rhetoric and action as an empirical assessment of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy.

As discussed in this section, the framework for identifying and assessing sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection consists of two components. The first is an assessment of UK government rhetoric as expressed in speeches, statements, media interviews, government news reports, conferences, policy documents, and reports. The second is government action which is identified according to both coercive and non-coercive international interventions, advocacy and entrepreneurship, policy, and financial support and humanitarian assistance. Some research has analysed the relationship between rhetoric and action, but this has relied on the assumption that the reader fully understands the relationship in the absence of any clear definitional parameters (Mayer, 2008). The framework developed in this begins on the basis that rhetoric and action are largely ambiguous concepts which need to be conceptualised in the context of UK foreign policy on human protection in order to have any analytical value.

Whilst precise definitions of rhetoric vary in the literature, there is some common ground on both the object of rhetoric in terms of written, visual, and oral communication, and the aims and objectives of rhetoric in persuading an audience (Reisigl, 2008; Toye, 2013; Andrews, 2014; Jones, 2018). Toye (2013, p.2) for example describes rhetoric as "the art of persuasion" aimed at convincing an audience through the use of spoken language, written texts, and visual demonstrations. However, Krebs and Jackson (2007) have challenged the idea of rhetoric as persuasion because it is inherently difficult to quantify and qualify motives, as well as measure the outcome of whether an audience was persuaded by the use of government rhetoric.

For this reason, the framework for assessing UK foreign policy change on human protection utilises rhetoric in its most basic sense as incorporating "all speech acts – whether they are oral or written" (Krebs and Jackson, 2007, p.36). It is not the goal of the framework to examine if an audience is persuaded by UK foreign policy speeches on human protection, but rather to identify references to human protection, the context of these references, and access any sustained changes in this rhetoric over time. The rhetorical component of the framework is thus concerned exclusively with written and oral political communication from elite UK foreign policy agents. This group is selected due to their central role in forming and communicating government foreign policy on human protection to domestic and international audiences.

This focus on elite UK foreign policy agents is also informed by the wealth of research on the importance of political leaders in the creation, decision making, and direction of foreign policy (Hermann and Hermann, 1989; Hermann et al., 2001; Hermann and Hagan, 1998). Elite UK foreign policy agents are thus defined as those operating in high government office, which includes the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and government Ministers, alongside UK representatives at the United Nations in New York and Geneva, which express government foreign policy in relation to human protection and specific international crises. The assessment of elite political rhetoric also includes communications from parliamentarians because of their role in creating, scrutinising, and passing UK foreign policy, as well as their increasingly significant influence on human protection decision making as shown by the government's defeat by MPs on whether to intervene in Syria in 2013 (Strong, 2015; 2018; 2019; Gaskarth, 2016; Bew and Elefteriu, 2017).

A challenge of focusing on the rhetoric of UK foreign policy elites is that they often operate in a time-limited position. For example, during the period of analysis between 1997 and 2020, the UK had five different Prime Ministers and nine Foreign Secretaries alone, in addition to a considerable turnover of MPs and changes in the composition of Parliament. That said, changes in governments, Prime Ministers, and Foreign Secretaries does not necessarily hinder the analysis of elite political communication in this thesis. In fact, a turnover of elite agents in high government office has advantages for assessing sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection. For instance, if a change in government is not proceeded by a shift in UK foreign policy rhetoric and action on human protection, then this would provide evidence that sustained change has occurred over time and across governments. The opposite is also true if a new government enters office and then changes UK foreign policy on human protection.

Another challenge with assessing the rhetoric of elite UK foreign policy agents is whether such rhetoric is genuine (Chandler, 2003). It is one thing to rhetorically say that your country is fully committed to human protection and then another to translate this into action. For instance, speaking on the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, former US President Barack Obama suggested that "a red line for us [US] is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized…and that there would be enormous consequences if we start seeing movement on the chemical weapons front" (The White House, 2012). Following the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria in 2013, Obama's rhetoric on the red line did not translate into enormous consequences,

such as an immediate intervention. This case shows how there is no guarantee that what is said in elite political rhetoric is translated into what is done in practice.

A further issue is the negative connotations associated with UK political rhetoric. The very concept of rhetoric can be used as a means to criticise inaction by disconnecting words from practice. Rhetoric can equally be used to distance from previous actions. According to O'Shaughnessy (2014, p.25), "rhetoric gives permission to politicians to be evasive, to avoid a direct responsibility for the consequences of action by wrapping policies in a cling-film of ambiguity". Yet the question of whether rhetoric is genuine is at the core of the assessment of sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection. This is because if rhetoric on human protection is not matched by practical actions, then logically this raises questions about the seriousness of the government's commitment to human protection. The framework used in this thesis accepts that rhetoric may well be portrayed and utilised in a negative light, but this is again precisely why it assesses sustained change in both rhetoric and action.[9]
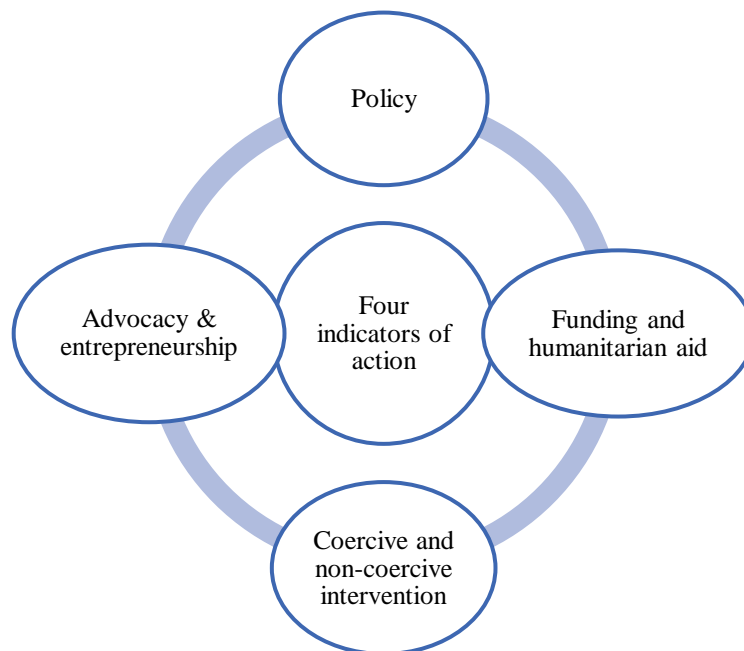


**Figure 2. The four indicators of UK foreign policy action**

As figure 2 shows, action is assessed according to the four indicators of policy, funding and humanitarian aid, coercive and non-coercive intervention, and advocacy and

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9   See section 3.2.5.1. for a discussion of the methodological approach to assessing the rhetoric and action of elite UK foreign policy agents on human protection.

entrepreneurship. The first indicator of policy is defined and assessed according to figure 1 on written and unwritten forms of policy. The written forms of policy include policy papers, consultations, and dialogue among elite UK foreign policy agents. Unwritten policy refers to norms and ideas that prescribe actions, such as normative ideas that states should protect their own populations from mass atrocity crimes. Whilst policy is expressed through rhetoric, the actual substance of the output is aimed at influencing and changing actions towards a specific issue. For instance, if elite UK foreign policy agents argued that peacekeeping was a core means of achieving long-term sustainable peace and developed a policy paper on this, its actions would be translated through its contributions of peacekeeping troops, technical assistance, and financial support for UN missions.

The second indicator of funding and humanitarian aid refers to the considerable UK monetary and logistical support provided in human protection crises. This indictor is assessed according to bilateral and multilateral aid, equipment and infrastructure development, and retaining the UK's 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) pledge to ODA. As the empirical chapters in this thesis show, the UK government has pledged significant financial contributions to human protection crises, including Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar. These financial pledges are thus an important indicator on whether elite political rhetoric has been translated into tangible actions. The third indicator for assessing UK government action on human protection is its contribution to humanitarian crises through forms of coercive and non-coercive intervention. This includes actions across the spectrum of intervention, such non-coercive early warning, the deployment of peacekeepers and technical assistance, humanitarian aid, and atrocity and conflict prevention, and coercive measures, such as the use of force through deploying troops, military intervention and equipment supplies, and air and drone strikes. There is some important overlap with the second indicator on funding and humanitarian aid because both are forms of intervention by the UK on the ground.

The fourth indicator of action is advocacy and entrepreneurship. This indicator is broad in scope in order to capture the different ways the UK may lead and influence on international human protection. This includes raising awareness and drawing attention to human protection crises, including through its membership of the UN Security Council, and more specifically, its penholding on thematic agendas and cases concerning human protection, leading on the creation of human protection agendas, and leading international debate on human protection. Each of these four indicators of action are intentionally broad

in order to capture the various ways the UK translates its rhetorical commitments to human protection in action and to assess any sustained changes.

The advantage of this framework is its applicability across time in order to provide a consistent assessment of any sustained changes in action. It is equally important to note the limitations of this framework. It is a subjective interpretation of rhetoric and action, both in terms of the selection of materials and the focus of the analysis. That said, by carrying out an extensive integrated content analysis of primary and secondary materials, the research has a high degree of research and analytical rigour.[10] In addition, the assessment of change may be liable to contestation since this is one interpretation of the concept. Yet the framework is broad in scope in order to ensure that it is as methodical and evidence-based as possible. Finally, this framework is focused on a particular policy and country, which has its own very specific institutional context. This assessment of sustained foreign policy change is thus not necessarily generalisable across different country and policy contexts, especially given the different theoretical debates on what constitutes foreign policy change (Alden and Aran, 2012). However, the basic definitions and assessments of rhetoric and action may provide broader insights into how to assess changes in a state's foreign policy towards certain issues and some of the potential lessons learned from this approach.

This sub-section has outlined the definition of sustained foreign policy change in this thesis as well as an original framework to assess such sustained changes in UK foreign policy on human protection. This framework is specific to an assessment of the UK's foreign policy on human protection between 1997 and 2020 and therefore does not suggest that it is a solution to the challenge of assessing foreign policy change more generally which has been a debate for decades. Rather, it aims to provide an original framework for one potential method for assessing foreign policy change, which may well be applicable to other cases, but is beyond the scope of this immediate thesis.

## 3.2 Methodology

This section details the methodological approach to address the research aim, objectives, questions, and hypothesis. It begins by briefly outlining the ontological and

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[10] See section 3.2.4 of the methodology for a detailed discussion of the approach to content analysis in this thesis.

epistemological foundations of the thesis and is followed by the research strategy and a discussion of the methods of data collection and analysis.

### 3.2.1 Ontological, epistemological, and methodological approach

The approach of this thesis is influenced by prior beliefs about what exists in the world (ontology), our knowledge of it (epistemology), and how to obtain this knowledge (methodology) (Hay, 2002, p.63; Bryman, 2004, p.3; Pierce, 2008, p.17; Lamont, 2015, p.24). This thesis draws primarily on an interpretivist approach to social scientific research, which is informed by interpreting the meanings actors give to concepts, norms, and ideas (Bryman, 2016, p.375), while recognising the subjective role of the researcher in the process of collecting, interpreting, and analysing data. Concepts of foreign policy, human protection, and foreign policy change are socially constructed by agents, and thus, are potentially interpreted differently according to the agent in question, such as the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Members of Parliament (MPs), scholars, or the wider public.

Similarly, foreign policy traditions of conservatism and internationalism are part of this interpretivist approach to research. As outlined in section 3.1.2, scholarship on foreign policy traditions places agents at the forefront of its analysis. According to Bevir et al (2013, p.167), an interpretivist approach considers "individuals not as the passive supports of institutions or discourses but as agents who can modify inherited norms and languages for reasons of their own". This shows how agents such as policymakers can adapt to evolving foreign policy traditions based on the circumstances of domestic and foreign policy at the time, and that foreign policy traditions are not fixed (Bevir et al, 2013, p.168). The empirical focus of the thesis therefore engages with foreign policy traditions in the form of conservatism and internationalism and shows how these traditions have evolved, changed, and been modified by agents as the domestic and international context has evolved (Vickers, 2004; 2011; Atkins, 2013; Daddow and Schnapper, 2013; Gaskarth, 2013; Beech, 2011; Beech and Oliver, 2014, Ralph, 2014b).

The theoretical framework on sustained UK foreign policy change is also informed by certain ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations. Analysing foreign policy change involves interpreting the role of structures and agents in both domestic and international settings, which may influence UK foreign policy change towards human protection. This is in addition to selecting particular materials in order to analyse changes in the UK's commitment to human protection. For these reasons, it is

essential that the research and analysis in this thesis is based on a rigorous methodology, which is outlined in the following sub-sections.

### 3.2.2 Research approach and methods

This thesis adopts a mixed methods approach through combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques. It combines primary documentary materials, secondary documents, and interview material for a high degree of analytical rigour through triangulation (see figure 3). The approach to triangulation is important for examining issues from different analytical perspectives, for cross-comparing findings and increasing validity, enhancing reliability, and revealing any additional research findings that another method may have overlooked (Lilleker, 2003, pp.211-212; Lamont, 2015, p.114; Bryman, 2016, p.386).
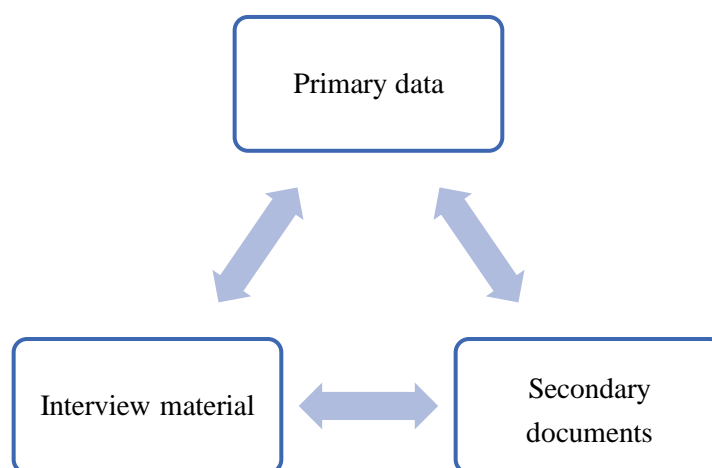


**Figure 3. The triangulation of research methods**

### 3.2.3 Primary data collection and analysis

Primary data is "original, unedited and first-hand" material (Pierce, 2008, p.80). In order to assess the rhetoric of elite UK foreign policy agents on human protection, the thesis collected 1,055 primary documentary materials speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports (figure 4). In accordance with the framework on sustained change, these materials focus exclusively on elite political communication from the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, government ministers, and UK foreign policy diplomats, ambassadors and representatives. This is alongside speeches and statements by MPs and Members of the House of Lords.
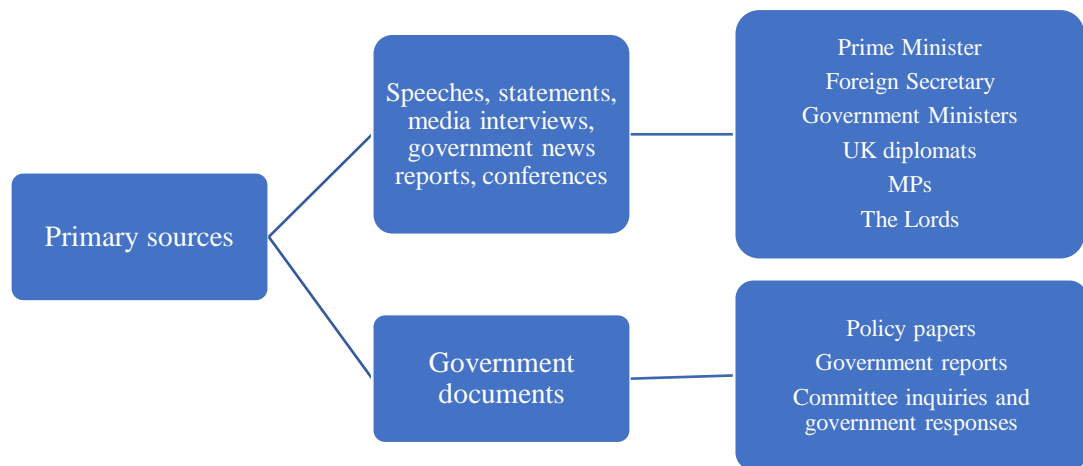
**Figure 4. Sources of primary material**

The first batch of 23 primary documents were collected for chapter 4 through online archival research of speeches by Tony Blair, Robin Cook, Jack Straw, Margaret Beckett, Gordon Brown, David Miliband, and speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports from UK representatives at the UN. The collection of this material was challenging in the absence of a single database which hosted all of this speech material, which is explained by the fact that earlier speeches between 1997 and 2001 were not digitised on a specific government platform. These materials were therefore sourced through a combination of keyword searches on UK foreign policy speeches between 1997 and 2010, their identification in existing secondary materials, and through page-by-page searches using the online National Archives website and United Nations online meeting records. The keyword searches focused on foreign policy speeches defining New Labour's vision for the UK's place in the world and its commitment to international human protection, including Robin Cook's mission statement and Tony Blair's doctrine of the international community, the crises in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, the ethical dimension, international development, and human protection, including the R2P and PoC.

The second batch of 355 documents were collected for chapter 5 through detailed speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by David Cameron, William Hague, Nick Clegg, Philip Hammond, David Lidington, Alistair Burt, Justine Greening, Tobias Ellwood, and UK representatives at the UN: Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Jeremy Browne, and Dame Karen Pierce between 11 May 2010 to 6 May 2015. These primary documents were sourced through page-by-page searches on the news and communications section of the FCO website, the Prime Minister's Office website, and

the online National Archives. The searches identified materials relevant to the overarching thesis themes and the direct focus of chapter 5, including key foreign policy speeches defining the UK's place in the world, its influence and leadership on the crises in Libya and Syria, and references to freedom, democracy, and human rights, the R2P and PoC, and initial references to the emerging crisis in Myanmar in preparation for chapter 6. Material which was not directly relevant to these themes were excluded from the findings in order to prevent analysing thousands of unnecessary materials. The same searches were applied to parliamentary debates during the same period using the online Hansard debate database for both the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

The third batch of 700 documents were collected for chapter 6 using the same approach as chapter 5, but with the timeframe adjusted to between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. This part of the research gathered speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports from David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Philip Hammond, Jeremy Hunt, Dominic Raab, Priti Patel, Penny Mordaunt, and UK representatives at the UN: Jonathan Allen, Matthew Rycroft, Dame Karen Pierce, Dame Barbara Woodward. The searches identified the same themes as chapter 5, but with an addition of the crises in Yemen and Myanmar and the exclusion of Libya. The inclusion of the crises in Yemen and Myanmar and the continuing crisis in Syria explain the significant increase in the number of primary documents in comparison to the period between 2010 and 2015. These materials were again gathered from page-by-page searches on the news and communications section of the FCO website until 21 August 2020 when any new speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports were hosted by the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) website following the merging of the FCO and the Department for International Development in August 2020. This is in addition to keyword searches of debates in both the House of Lords and House of Commons using the online Hansard search database.

Alongside these materials, a combination of government reports, policy documents, committee inquiry reports, and UN documents were collected from the Prime Minister's Office, FCO, FCDO, Parliament UK, the UN, and the Security Council Report websites. These searches again focused on the core themes as identified throughout chapters 4-7 and provided important evidence of the UK's foreign policy commitment to human protection in action. This is because government policy documents detail the output of government and parliamentary deliberations on UK foreign policy with the intention of detailing subsequent actions. In addition, reports from parliamentary

committee inquiries are essential for scrutinising the government's approach to specific foreign policy issues and receiving an official response from the government in order to further explain, and often defend, its policy position on a given issue.

A limitation with collecting primary documentary material from government speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports are the "secrecy and access issues" in elite political communication (Daddow, 2015, p.305). Due to a lack of access to inner government circles, it is difficult to fully understand the policy making process in private and the motivations underlying the government's approach to foreign policy. However, analysing the wealth of primary data collected for this research provides some important insights into the foreign policy approach of successive governments based on patterns in their rhetorical statements and subsequent actions, such as a consistent reference to particular concepts over time. This allows for an examination of any changes over time in order to find out whether there has been a sustained change in UK government rhetoric and action on human protection. In collecting this primary data, it is also recognised that this is interpretative material and may contain some bias since it is "produced by human beings acting in particular circumstances and within the constraints of particular social, historical or administrative conditions" (Finnegan, 2006, p.144). This is why triangulation is important in order to draw out any similarities and differences across the material to enhance the validity of the research.

### 3.2.4 A fully integrated content analysis of primary data

An integrated content analysis was conducted in order to analyse the 1,055 primary documentary materials. Content analysis is a method "for analysing the content of communications" (Burnham et al., 2008, p.259). The aim of a content analysis is to analyse data methodically to identify key themes and patterns related to set research questions (Bryman, 2016, p.562; Schreier, 2012, p.1; Pashakhanlou, 2017, p.449). Content analysis is often separated into quantitative and qualitative forms. Yet this dichotomy risks creating the assumption that quantitative and qualitative methods must remain separate in the process of collecting, coding, and analysing data. Alternatively, Pashakhanlou (2017, p.453) proposes a "fully integrated content analysis" in international relations research, which combines both quantitative and qualitative and computer-assisted and manual coding methods. This is on the basis that focusing on one method alone leads to an incomplete content analysis in limiting its boundaries from the outset, which may overlook the strengths of alternative methods (Pashakhanlou, 2017, p.453).

For instance, qualitative content analysis is primarily concerned with interpreting the content of data, such as the meanings contained within the text (Burnham et al., 2008, p.259; Schreier, 2012, p.1; Bryman, 2016, p.563). Conversely, quantitative content analysis focuses on the idea of producing "more objective, reliable, and replicable findings" through quantifying the data using numbers, figures, and statistical analysis (Pashakhanlou, 2017, p.453).

Both quantitative and qualitative content analysis have their own unique strengths and limitations. A fully integrated content analysis proposes to use quantitative and qualitative approaches as a whole in order to fully code and analyse the data (Pashakhanlou, 2017, p.453). The advantage of a fully integrated content analysis for this thesis is that it "is suitable for the analysis of both manifest and latent meaning" (Pashakhanlou, 2017, p.454). An integrated content analysis allows for an analysis of what is said in the primary text through counting the frequency of particular words or phrases (quantitative), as well as interpreting the broader context in which these words or phrases are used (qualitative). This approach enriches the research through adopting a more complete analysis of the primary data. For example, computer software can be used to conduct word frequency searches to establish how many times a particular word or phrase is used in the primary data and then quantify the numbers. It can be equally deployed as a qualitative method through locating the use of these words within the broader text of a foreign policy speech.

Using computer-assisted software alongside this combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches also significantly enhances the reliability of the analysis. This is important because a core limitation of content analysis is data reliability. Reliability issues exist for several reasons, including issues and mistakes with coding, mistakes in the code book or unclear rules and guidance on the chosen coding methods, particularly as data is being interpreted by the researcher (Krippendorff, 2009, p.350). By conducting a fully-integrated analysis, each part followed several logical steps in order to ensure the results and analysis were both reliable and rigorous. The first of these steps was the development of a codebook, which details all the relevant information with regards to the codes and sub-codes used to categorise the data (see appendix 2). In addition, a process of double-coding was used, which involved repeating the codebook on more than one occasion in order identify any missing data, as well as seeing if similar or the same results were obtained. This in turn provides a strong indication of the reliability of the content

analysis used in the research. For these reasons, a fully integrated content analysis was used to code and analyse the 1,055 primary documentary materials.

To prepare for the fully-integrated analysis, several steps were followed according to Manheim et al. (2008). Manheim et al. (2008, pp.181-185) identify three primary stages of conducting a content analysis, which includes (1) identifying the population from which you will be analysing the communications of; (2) deciding on the unit of analysis; (3) using computer-based content analysis techniques. Firstly, the population of this research was taken from politicians, namely, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, Ministers, and UK diplomats and representatives, and MPs since these were identified as the elite UK foreign policy agents for this research. Secondly, the unit of analysis concerned speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports given that these official channels of information and communication provided sufficient literature for the analysis in addition to helping to address the core research questions and hypothesis.

Finally, NVivo software was used to code the material in preparation for analysis. By code, this is referring to "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, 4). For example, human protection may be used to capture a range of language on this issue, such as war crimes, genocide, human rights violations and so on. Codes therefore provide a useful means to capture key research themes and to organise a wide-range of words under one coding hierarchy (figure 5).

### 3.2.5 Computer-assisted content analysis using NVivo

NVivo software was used in order to conduct a content analysis for chapter's 5-7. There are several advantages of using NVivo for carrying out this research. Firstly, computer-assisted software provides "unrivalled reliability" (Pashakhanlou, 2017, p.553). A content analysis was traditionally undertaken manually which relied heavily on human input in categorising and preparing data for analysis. Conversely, a computer-assisted approach can significantly strengthen reliability because "machines do not suffer from individual idiosyncrasies and human errors rooted in fatigue, loss of concentration, or the like" (Pashakhanlou, 2017, p.450).

Secondly, using computer-assisted software supports the process of categorising and coding primary data in preparation for analysis. With 1,055 primary materials, NVivo

was critical for organising and managing this large quantity of material. Whilst NVivo is no substitute for data analysis, a significant advantage of the software is that it allows for improved management and categorisation of the research data by displaying it in an organised way. In chapter 6, for instance, the research results found 700 primary materials with NVivo providing a useful platform through which to neatly organise, visualise, and code the data. Using software in this way "ensures that the user is working more methodically, more thoroughly, more attentively" by incorporating and coding all the available data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013, p.3). Finally, the usability of the software also made it straightforward to identify key research themes as the coding progressed ensuring that potentially important data was not overlooked.

### 3.2.5.1 NVivo coding cycle 1

The content analysis was uniform throughout the thesis. To enhance the reliability and validity of the data, two coding cycles were used in NVivo. During the first coding cycle, several different methods were applied. Firstly, provisional coding was used as a means to establish several foundational (primary) codes based on the research questions, hypothesis, and the initial findings at the beginning of the content analysis (Saldana, 2015, p.168). This included codes such as "Global" "leadership", "influence", "human rights" and "democracy" among many others (see appendix 2). Provisional coding was a useful starting point for managing and coding the wealth of primary data. Secondly, each primary code was supported by several sub-codes (see appendix 2).[11] This method resulted in several code hierarchies with each primary code having several sub-codes in order to capture the nuances of the primary data (Saldana, 2015, p.91).[12] As figure 5 shows, under the liberal conservative code (node), there were several sub-codes (child-nodes), such as "human rights", "democracy", and "freedom". Using this approach ensured that the data analysis accounted for the main components of the government's definition of liberal conservatism.

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[11] In NVivo, primary codes are known as "nodes" and sub-codes as "child nodes".

[12] See appendix 2 for full details of the coding hierarchies for chapters 5-7.
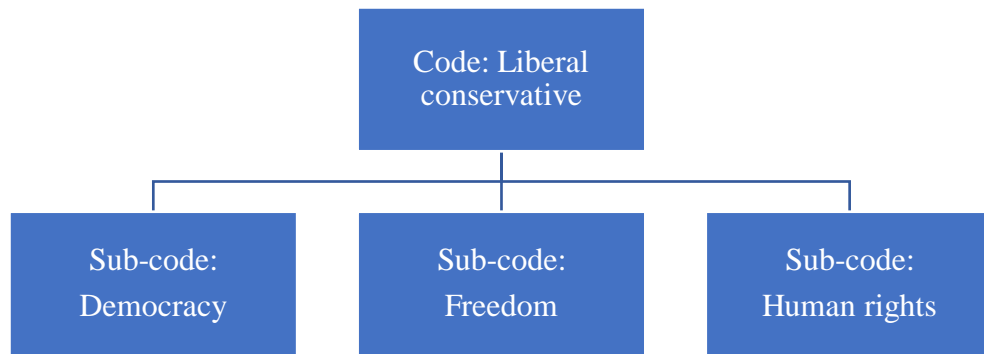
**Figure 5. Example coding hierarchy**

Descriptive coding was the final method used in the first coding cycle. Descriptive coding is where key words or phrases are coded from a piece of text which conformed to the primary or sub-codes (Saldana, 2015, p.102). Descriptive coding was supported through simultaneous coding or "splitting", which identifies several codes in the same piece of text (Saldana, 2015, p.24). For example, when coding a Prime Ministerial speech on foreign policy there is often a considerable amount of detail and several sub-sections in each speech, which may cover different primary and sub-themes. NVivo in turn provides a significant advantage for splitting data since the user is able to code several pieces of the same text and conveniently place these under the separate primary or sub-codes, while maintaining the overall organisation of the coding structure.

**3.2.5.2 NVivo coding cycle 2 and the codebook**

Following the first cycle, a process of second cycle coding was undertaken to further strengthen the reliability and validity of the content analysis. Second cycle coding is helpful for identifying any new material that may have been missed during the first coding cycle. Each primary code and sub-code was then logged in a comprehensive codebook (see appendix 2). The codebook is critical for both the reliability and validity of the content analysis by providing instructions on how to repeat the coding process to achieve the same results. For this reason, the codebook contains detailed information on the code description, its inclusion and exclusion criteria, and an example of the code drawn from the existing materials that were used in the content analysis. By using this integrated content analysis, the thesis aims to generate rigorous and original research findings that are reliable, valid, and fully uphold the principle of research integrity.

### 3.2.6 Addressing the research questions and testing the hypothesis

The computer-assisted content analysis provided a significant contribution to addressing the theoretical and empirical research questions and hypothesis according to the core research themes. For example, the UK's place in the world was coded according to keyword searches on concepts and phrases, such as "global role", "decline", and "Global Britain". This enabled phrases from the research questions and hypothesis, such as "place in the world" and "Global Britain" to be fully articulated and addressed through the integrated content analysis. Conducting keyword searches on these concepts also revealed the broader context in which they were mentioned in order to then provide a detailed qualitative analysis of the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its changing place in the world as part of a transitional foreign policy.

The computer-assisted integrated content analysis also contributed to the assessment of sustained UK foreign policy change towards human protection by comparing the rhetoric and actions of UK governments over time. This primary data also contributed to assessing sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection through detailing several human protection crises that the UK contributed to between 1997 and 2020. This data provided important insights into the translation of government rhetoric into action, the differences between cases, and the assessment of whether this contributed to sustained changes in both the rhetoric and actions of the UK on human protection.

### 3.2.7 Data collection and analysis: Secondary materials

Complementing primary data are secondary materials which are "second-hand, edited and interpreted" (Pierce, 2008, p.80). Secondary materials were collected from several sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and reports from non-governmental organisations. The collection of these secondary materials was split into three broad bodies of literature to examine the UK's commitment to human protection. This included (1) theoretical literature on international order, liberal internationalism, and foreign policy change; (2) empirical literature on UK foreign policy and its place in the world; and (3) specific literature on the UK's commitment to human protection.

This approach ensured that the secondary material was focused specifically on supplementing the primary data and interview material in order to address the research questions and hypothesis. The literature on foreign policy change, world order, and liberal internationalism contributed to addressing the theoretical research question: *what is the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional*

*foreign policy?* While also providing important theoretical and empirical context for the hypothesis to *assess whether the UK's awareness of its changing position in the world between 1997 and 2020 led to sustained changes in its rhetoric and action towards a strengthened commitment to human protection*.

The two other bodies of research on UK foreign policy, its place in the world, and its commitment to human protection provided an important foundation for assessing sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection, particularly in action. It enabled the thesis to chart important developments in UK foreign policy, such as the transition from a liberal internationalist foreign policy outlook under the Blair and Brown governments to the liberal conservative outlook of the Cameron and May governments. It is suggested in chapters 4, 5 and 6 that these changes in the foreign policy outlook of these different governments impacted on the construction and conceptualisation of the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. These insights provided an important contribution to addressing the second research and sub-research questions: *have adjustments in the UK's place in the world between 1997 and 2020 translated into sustained changes in its foreign policy rhetoric and action on human protection? What are the main continuities and changes in the UK's framing of its commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020?* This emphasis on the changing foreign policy outlook of governments also had important implications for the analysis of the research hypothesis by recognising how different governments were aware of, and responded to, the UK's changing position in the world and its relationship with sustained changes in the UK government's rhetoric and action on human protection.

Each body of literature was collected using keyword searches in relation to the core thesis themes, such as human protection, foreign policy change, world order, liberal internationalism, UK leadership, UK influence, and the UK's commitment to human protection among others. Whilst acknowledging that there is inevitably some overlap in this literature, the advantage of splitting the research into three core bodies of scholarship is ensuring a degree of research rigour through searching the core thesis themes. As this literature provides an interpretation of events, there is awareness of the bias contained in this material and thus the need to triangulate with other methods.

### 3.2.8 Semi-structured interviews

Primary and secondary data analysis is combined with material from 11 elite semi-structured interviews (see appendix 1). By elites, this research is broadly referring to those

"who hold, or have held, a privileged position in society and, as such…are likely to have had more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public" (Richards, 1996, p.199). This broad definition provided the necessary scope to interview individuals relevant to the research. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to the degree of flexibility in discussing the key themes and allowing interviewees to elaborate on these responses (Bryman, 2016, p.466-467). This was an important advantage during the interview process since it provided scope to explore issues beyond the immediate question by asking participants to elaborate on their response.

The interviews provided data from a cross-section of actors, while also taking into considerations the logistics of the research, issues with access, and factoring in time taken in transcribing and analysing the material. The interview topics corresponded with the core research themes on the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy, which includes UK leadership, influence, its contribution to specific protection crises in Libya, Myanmar, Syria, and Yemen, development assistance, and the UK's place in the world. The strength of using semi-structured interviews was that they allowed for the flexibility that may be required in instances when the researcher is faced with issues of party politics, representativeness of views, question avoidance, and power relations. For instance, it allowed the researcher to change the subject or probe deeper into the issues being discussed without losing focus of the interview topics.

The interviews were thus an important means of assessing the interpretations of actors involved on some of the key issues covered in this thesis. This approach was supported through using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify participants. Purposive sampling is based on identifying participants "in a strategic way" to fulfil the core aims, hypothesis, and research questions (Bryman, 2016, p.408), while snowball sampling involves requesting recommendations from existing participants. Throughout the interview process, participants were selected on the basis of their experience of the issues contained in the research. These techniques were invaluable for the research in identifying participants that would have otherwise not been approached to participate in the research.

These interviews were another crucial element of the triangulation process. It enabled the ideas put forward in primary and secondary materials to be further validated through interviews with elites. In this sense, the combination of interviews, primary data, and secondary documents provides important validation of the arguments in this thesis

through drawing on, and comparing, different research techniques in order to substantiate the findings and develop arguments and conclusions from this.

A challenge with these interviews was the accessibility of officials, which is widely acknowledged in the literature (Richards, 1996; Aberbach and Rockman, 2002; Harvey, 2010; Bryman, 2016). For this research, the issue of access was due to a combination of factors, including gaining sufficient responses from interview requests, participants having the available time, and reaching individuals especially in government office that were difficult to reach. One way of trying to limit issues with accessibility was communicating with potential interviewees in advance to begin building rapport and discussing their availability. Snowball sampling helped to build a broad list of other potential interviewees and/or relevant lines of contact the researcher might not have initially considered.

### 3.2.9 Interview ethics

Several key steps were followed in preparing and conducting the elite semi-structured interviews (Halperin and Heath, 2017, pp.162-163). First, each interviewee was provided with a detailed information sheet regarding the research aims and objectives, as well as explaining why the interviewee had been chosen to participate in the research, and that their responses would be anonymous. Once interviewees agreed to their participation in the research, they were once again informed about research anonymity and agreed that any personal details would remain fully confidential, while their responses would be anonymised in order to protect their identity in the research. The decision was made to anonymise the interviews for two reasons. The first was working on the assumption that elites would be more willing to participate in the research if this was on a confidential basis to prevent any potential risks from the information they provided. Second, anonymising the interviews allowed for greater depth into the topics because interviewees knew that no direct quotes would be attributed to them in the thesis. For these reasons, any reference to the interview material will be anonymised in numerical form in order of the dates that the interviews were conducted, so interview 1, interview 2, interview 3 and so on, with a fully anonymised list available in appendix 1 (see appendix 1 on interview subjects).

## 3.3 Chapter conclusion

This chapter contributes to the theoretical and methodological foundations of the thesis. It provides the starting point for addressing the research aim of investigating the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020 by outlining the analytical framework which will be used to assess this relationship throughout the following empirical chapters. The chapter also contributes to addressing the first thesis objective because it developed a framework to assess changes in the UK's commitment to human protection from 1997 to 2020, in addition to objective three of creating a quantitative and qualitative dataset to examine the UK's commitment to human protection between 2010 and 2020. The remainder of the thesis applies this framework in order to empirically assess sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020 in order to fulfil the research aim, objectives, answer the research questions, and test the research hypothesis.

# Chapter 4 - New Labour's liberal internationalist commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action, 1997-2010

"As the world grows smaller, national interests and global interests are converging. The International community is moving towards the principle that when crimes are committed against humanity, it is in the interests of the whole of humanity to deal with them."

*Robin Cook, Speech on Guiding Humanitarian Intervention (2000a)*

By the mid-1990s, UN member states were confronted with a recent history of mass atrocities committed in Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnia in 1995. In response, the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan (1997-2006), called on the international community to agree on more effective ways to protect populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes (United Nations, 1999). This period also coincided with changes in UK domestic and foreign policy following the election of a Labour government in 1997 led by the new Prime Minister, Tony Blair. In foreign policy terms, *New* Labour was characterised as a break from past Conservative and Labour governments, as well as a rejection of UK international isolationism (Blair, 1999a; The Labour Party in Dale, 2000, p.381). Prior to entering office, the Party's manifesto committed "to restore Britain's pride and influence as a leading force for good in the world" (The Labour Party in Dale, 2000, pp.381-382). Once in office, New Labour placed human rights as a central feature of its internationalist vision for UK foreign policy (Cook, 1997; Blair, 1999a).

Beginning with this rhetorical commitment to human rights, this chapter traces the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action during New Labour's time in office between 1997 and 2010. New Labour is an analytically significant starting point for several reasons. First, Tony Blair and his Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, openly communicated New Labour's internationalist foreign policy as something distinct from their Conservative predecessors. In the backdrop of the crisis in Kosovo in 1999, Blair (1999a) argued that the international community should no longer allow absolute sovereignty to act as a shield to prevent intervention when a state is committing mass atrocities against its population. This idea was also proposed during a period of international soul-searching more broadly in which the UN was attempting to address the

impasse on non-intervention among states, the absolute protection of state sovereignty, and political will in the face of mass atrocities.

Second, the government's promotion of human rights could be seen at that time "as a major change in the rhetoric of foreign policy" (Gaskarth, 2006, p.51). Under Robin Cook (1997-2001), the government made human rights an important domestic and foreign policy concern, which was continued under his successors. Third, New Labour entered office amid decades of debate on the UK's relative hard power decline on the international stage (Acheson, 1962 cited in Brinkley, 1990; Gamble, 1994; English and Kenny, 1999). However, New Labour were also confronted with an increasingly globalised world in the post-Cold War era. The UK's response was led by Tony and centred on reasserting the UK's leadership on the international stage through the pursuit of an outward-facing internationalist foreign policy. This period starting from 1997 is therefore where the focus on a transitional foreign policy begins in this thesis. This is because successive governments attempted to adapt to the UK's changing role in the world amid its post-war relative international decline, articulated the UK's leadership and influence in multilateral organisations, and revealed the UK's position in the post-war international order. In terms of human protection, this internationalist approach was translated into UK foreign policy practice during its interventions in Kosovo in 1999 and Sierra Leone in 2000.

The central argument of this chapter is that New Labour's commitment to a liberal internationalist foreign policy laid the foundations for sustained changes in the UK's rhetoric and actions on human protection between 1997 and 2020. Rhetorically, the New Labour governments between 1997 and 2010 placed notable emphasis on the protection of international human rights, condemned mass violence and atrocities in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, contributed to the evolution and endorsement of the R2P, and proposed criteria to guide humanitarian interventions. These sustained changes in rhetoric were also translated into government actions on human protection according to the four indicators of foreign policy action. This includes policy on humanitarian intervention and R2P, coercive interventions in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, and international advocacy and entrepreneurship on humanitarian intervention and international human protection more broadly. This commitment to liberal internationalism marked an important departure from the conservative tradition in foreign policy, particularly with regards to the UK's rhetoric and action on humanitarian intervention and human protection more broadly.

To support this argument, sustained changes in New Labour's foreign policy on human protection are assessed according to rhetoric and action. As shown in chapter 3,

these two categories of sustained change capture both what is *said* and what is *done* in UK foreign policy. This relationship is important because it recognises that rhetorical commitments may not be sufficient alone to constitute sustained UK foreign policy change without some form of action. Moreover, translating rhetoric into action is an important manifestation of how a policy is articulated and whether this deviates from the original commitment in terms of its application. This assessment of sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection is supported by evidence in primary and secondary materials, including 23 archival speeches and statements from Prime Ministers (Tony Blair and Gordon Brown) and Foreign Secretaries (Robin Cook, Jack Straw, Margaret Beckett, and David Miliband), UK diplomats, UK government reports and policy documents, and expert analysis from academic scholarship.

The chapter is split into five sections. The first examines the brief historical context of human protection in Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnia in 1995 in order to argue that the UK's response to these crises had a critical influence on New Labour's response to Kosovo in 1999. The second section shifts the focus to New Labour's period in office and examines the liberal internationalist underpinnings of its approach to foreign policy, human protection, and the UK's place in a globalised world. New Labour's rhetorical commitment to human protection is examined through the ethical dimension, the prioritisation of human rights, and Blair's doctrine of the international community, and in practice using the examples of Kosovo in 1999 and Sierra Leone in 2000.[13] The third and fourth sections analyse New Labour's liberal internationalism post-2001, which includes humanitarian intervention, debates over the Iraq war, and the broader international context following the endorsement of the R2P in 2005. The final section examines the UK's commitment to human protection during the Gordon Brown government between 2007 and 2010. The chapter concludes with its contributions to the thesis and discusses the implications of its findings for the following empirical analysis.

This chapter is a significant contribution to the empirical assessment of the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. This is because it begins to analyse the New Labour government's commitment to human protection in a

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[13] This chapter does not assume that humanitarian concerns alone were the decisive factor when identifying humanitarian justifications for action. Rather, the emphasis on humanitarianism in elite political communication fulfils the primary focus of this thesis in assessing the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action.

transitional foreign policy. In doing so, it identifies and analyses several important transitions in the UK's foreign policy between 1997 and 2020, including a shift from a traditional conservative foreign policy outlook to a liberal internationalist one, the acceleration of globalisation and the importance of the UK playing an active rather than isolationist role in the world, the emergence of global threats particularly international terrorism and WMD, the relationship between sovereignty and humanitarian intervention especially in the aftermath of Rwanda and Bosnia, the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo in 1999, and the decision to intervene in Iraq in 2003.

## 4.1 UK foreign policy on human protection in Rwanda and Bosnia

An analysis of New Labour's commitment to human protection requires first an understanding of how their Conservative predecessors engaged with the same foreign policy issue and the broader international context at that time (Schreiner, 2008; Daddow, 2009; Gaskarth, 2013). The Conservative government's engagement with human protection under the leadership of John Major (1990-1997) was characterised in particular by the crises in Rwanda (1994) and Bosnia (1995). On Rwanda, Melvern and Williams (2004, p.2) argue that John Major's government "adopted policies that helped facilitate and prolong" the genocide committed against the Tutsi, Twa, and moderate Hutu. The UK's response was therefore deemed ineffectual in carrying out its responsibility to protect the population of Rwanda as part of the Genocide Convention (Gaskarth, 2013, p.107). It is important to note that the UK was not alone in failing to prevent the Rwandan genocide, with Kofi Annan acknowledging how "the whole international community…failed to honour that obligation [under the Genocide Convention]" (United Nations, 1999).

A year later, the UK and international community were faced with another humanitarian crisis unfolding in Bosnia (1995), the result of which led to 20,000 people being killed in what were meant to be UN safe areas in Srebrenica. In the Secretary General's subsequent report, Kofi Annan reflected on his "deepest regret and remorse" that the UN and its Member States "failed to do our part to help save the people of Srebrenica from the Serb campaign of mass murder" (UN General Assembly, 1999b, p.111). As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK's response to Bosnia was again criticised (Schreiner, 2008; Gaskarth, 2013). The UK "was seen as an obstructive actor in attempts to confront human rights abuses aggressively" (Gaskarth, 2013, p.107). This criticism is not exclusive to the Major administration, since the

opposition Labour party also failed to pressure the government to adopt a more decisive response to the conflict (Schreiner, 2008, p.190; McCourt, 2013, p.250). Although the UK did eventually intervene in Bosnia, this was deemed a delayed response to a crisis that had been ongoing for a period of time prior to the UK's involvement (Peltner, 2017, p.751).

The UK's approach to Rwanda and Bosnia was therefore an important element of New Labour's own foreign policy on human protection, and its commitment to liberal internationalism more broadly, which is explained by both domestic and international factors. Domestically, the Conservative tradition continued to have an important role in the UK's approach to foreign affairs. The conservative tradition has been described as "cautious prudence" (Hall and Rengger, 2005, p.72) and sceptical (Bevir et al., 2013, p.167) particularly of interventions in other sovereign states which extends beyond the national interest. This emphasis on a cautious, prudent, and sceptical approach to foreign policy, especially on interventions which fall outside the UK's national self-interest is thus the conceptualisation used to refer to the conservative tradition throughout this thesis. An analysis of the Conservative tradition in UK foreign policy requires nuance because firstly, the conservative tradition was based on an active engagement with the world in the post-war era (Beech, 2011, p.357), and second, it is not an outright rejection of international interventions, but rather being cautious about actions which are not perceived by policymakers as being in the immediate national interest of the UK, such as protecting national security (Dodds and Elden, 2008, pp.348-349).

Whilst the Major government eventually acted in Bosnia, its approach in the lead up to action received notable attention in literature on UK foreign policy (Simms, 2002; Dodds and Elden, 2008; Beech, 2011; Beech and Oliver, 2014; Daddow and Schnapper, 2013; Gaskarth, 2013; Peltner, 2017). For instance, the UK's response to Bosnia was seen as "one example of Conservative government hesitance (alongside other European governments) with regard to providing a more robust form of humanitarian intervention" (Dodds and Elden, 2008, p.349). Simms (2002) goes further in arguing that "political leaders became afflicted by a particularly disabling form of conservative pessimism" regarding a military response to Bosnia. Although the Major governments response is strongly called into question on Bosnia, there was not consensus on this approach with some Conservative MPs supporting humanitarian intervention (Beech and Oliver, 2014, p.106).

However, as the next sections in this chapter argue, the New Labour government sought to break away from the UK's response to Bosnia and Rwanda and recast the UK's foreign policy on human protection, which more broadly entailed a significant shift from traditional conservatism. Following the UK's intervention in Kosovo in 1999, Cook (2000b) argued that "if our predecessors in Government had acted as decisively to stop him [Milosevic] in the past decade then we would have never seen the tragedy of Kosovo". Cook's perspective captures the nature of changes that occurred in UK foreign policy rhetoric under the New Labour government on human protection, which was characterised first and foremost by distancing themselves from previous Conservative foreign policy traditions.

Internationally, the cases of Rwanda and Bosnia generated significant scrutiny over the relationship between sovereignty and human protection (Peltner, 2017). The UN and its Member States debated sovereignty and protection in earnest leading to the eventual creation of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS, 2001, p.8) and its adoption of "sovereignty as responsibility" as earlier coined by Deng et al. (1996) and Cohen (Cohen, 1991 quoted in Cohen and Deng, 2016, p.80). Domestic changes and their impact on UK foreign policy, alongside this emerging international debate on the relationship between sovereignty and responsibility, are thus essential to understanding the changes that occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection under the New Labour government (1997-2020) and form the basis of the remainder of this chapter.

## 4.2 New Labour's liberal internationalist foreign policy, 1997

Following its 1997 election victory, the New Labour government immediately set to work on establishing its vision for the UK's place in the world (McCourt, 2011, p.36). In one of his earliest foreign policy addresses as Prime Minister, Tony Blair dismissed an isolationist approach to international relations in favour of "a Britain confident of its place in the world, sure of itself, able to negotiate with the world and provide leadership in the world" (Blair, 1997 quoted in McCourt, 2011). Whilst Blair made no explicit reference to the UK's post-war relative international decline, it was this emphasis on rejecting isolationism which came closest to acknowledging that the UK needed to maintain an active and influential place in the world. Instead, New Labour wanted to make "British presence in the world felt" (Blair, 1999b). Blair (2000) acknowledged that "there is a new world order like it or not, and we need to decide our place in it".

An essential part of this conception of a new world order is the role and importance of globalisation (Atkins, 2013, p.179). Globalisation broadly refers to "a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions…generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power" (Held et al., 1999, p.16). Globalisation therefore draws attention to the global nature of relations between states and non-state actors and the role of cross-cutting issues which are no longer necessarily confined to the borders of one state. This perspective on globalisation is captured in Blair's (1999a) doctrine of the international community in which he suggests that globalisation is not merely "just economic – it is also a political and security phenomenon" and because "problems become global….so the search for solutions becomes global too". This interpretation is important because globalisation is not only seen as significant, but is also perceived as giving way to fundamental challenges in terms of what Blair (1999a) defined as global problems in which previous domestic issues become global in nature.

As part of Blair's vision for the UK's role in this new world order, he identified the UK's place in this world as a "pivotal power" (Blair, 1999 quoted in BBC, 1999; Blair, 2000). According to Blair, the UK should "use the strengths of our history to build our future *not as a superpower* but as a *pivotal power*, as a power that is at the crux of the alliances and international politics which shape the world and its future" (Blair, 1999 quoted in BBC, 1999, emphasis added). This quote accepts that the UK no longer has the power status it once did, which hints at the UK's post-war decline, but also the importance of building and maintaining strong alliances in a new globalisation world order. A pivotal power thus suggests that the UK remains a fundamental international actor able to draw on alliances and institutions of the post-war US-led international order (Blair, 1999 in BBC, 1999). An essential part of this pivotal power role was internationalism with Blair (1999a) declaring that "we are all internationalists now".

Internationalism has historically been a foundational principle of the Labour Party's foreign policy (Vickers, 2004a, p.193; Atkins, 2013, p.176). At its most basic, it "is the desire to transcend national boundaries in order to find solutions to international issues" (Vickers, 2004a, p.193). This definition shows that internationalism is broad and accompanied by various strands (Atkins, 2013, pp.176-177). New Labour in particular appealed to "a form of liberal internationalism that states should work in the international interest as well as the national interest" (Kitchen and Vickers, 2013, p.300). This approach

accepts the liberal idea of an anarchical international system in which cooperation between states is possible (Vickers, 2004a, p.194), and essential, due to globalisation. For example, Cook (1999) suggested that New Labour "recognise [that] globalisation demands a new internationalism. And our internationalism recognises that we cannot deliver our domestic programme working alone in the world". As a result, Blair (2000) suggested that "it is necessary to make the case for engagement not isolation as the basis of British foreign policy in the 21st Century".

Of particular relevance for this chapter is New Labour's commitment to *liberal* internationalism. The immediate difficulty with liberal internationalism is that it has lacked development in both theory and practice (Dunne and McDonald, 2013, p.7). The essence of liberal internationalism is that "democracy and human rights should be reflected externally and pursued in relations with other states" (Vickers, 2004a, p.194). Similarly, Ralph (2014, p.5) conceptualises liberal internationalism as an approach to foreign policy which "accepts the universal applicability of substantive liberal values, such as human rights protection and democracy promotion, and also transposes the procedural norms of democratic deliberation to the international level". This thesis therefore adopts the conceptualisations of liberal internationalism according to Vickers (2004a) and Ralph (2014) as this captures the core themes of New Labour's foreign policy commitment to human protection as addressed throughout this chapter, especially human rights and humanitarian intervention.

Underlying this stance on democracy and human rights protection is that the UK must "demonstrate moral leadership" in the pursuit of these international interests (Kitchen and Vickers, 2013). For Cook (1999), New Labour's "internationalism recognises that rights belong to the people not to their governments. We ignored Milosevic when he tried to tell us that atrocities were an internal matter. Gross breaches of humanitarian law are the business of all humanity". In drawing on the humanitarian intervention in Kosovo as an example (see section 4.2.4), Cook supported New Labour's liberal internationalist stance of moral leadership and a conviction to protect populations from atrocity crimes. What emerged from this perspective was a change in the UK's orientation based on a commitment to "advance liberal ideas about human rights, democracy and good governance" (Gaskarth, 2014, p.577). It is this liberal internationalist engagement with human rights that forms the basis of the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action, which is returned to in the following sections.

However, as this chapter will show, liberal internationalism may expose fundamental disagreements among policymakers in the Labour Party. According to Kitchen and Vickers (2013, p.304), there is a tension in Labour's traditional internationalism regarding the issue of militarism and whether to use force against another sovereign state. In turn, they suggest that Blair's doctrine of the international community can be seen as "a new iteration in the tradition of the wing of the party most comfortable with the use of force" (Kitchen and Vickers, 2013, p.304). As such, the election of New Labour did not bring an end to this debate between militarism and anti-militarism, but rather shifted the focus of the government more in the direction of the former. In particular, Atkins (2013, p.188) finds that "Blair and his supporters rejected the formal multilateralism traditionally associated with internationalism in favour of a more *ad hoc* approach, while maintaining a commitment to strong international organisations". The difference between these two primary strands of Labour's internationalist tradition may thus lead to differences in the perspective of policymakers on foreign interventions, an issue which is returned to later in this chapter in the discussion of the Iraq intervention.

Any explanation of New Labour's appeal to liberal internationalism on human protection is incomplete without an appreciation of the broader context of international relations at the time. This is because the sources of liberal internationalism extend well beyond the UK and have deep historical roots in the post-war period (Ikenberry, 2009). The most relevant of these is the second form of internationalism outlined by Ikenberry (2009, p.71) based on the post-1945 liberal hegemony of the US. Part of this form of internationalism is an "unfolding human rights and responsibility to protect revolution" (Ikenberry, 2009, p.79). It is this context where New Labour's commitment to human protection in a liberal internationalist foreign policy is most evident, and thus, is the crucial starting point for analysing sustained changes in UK rhetoric and action on human protection. For this reason, the remaining focus of this chapter is on New Labour's leadership and commitment to human protection in a liberal internationalist foreign policy through a focus on the ethical dimension, the prioritisation of human rights, Blair's doctrine of the international community and the UK's commitment to human protection in Kosovo (1999) and Sierra Leone (2000).

### 4.2.1 The ethical dimension

Robin Cook's (1997) assertion that UK "foreign policy must have an ethical dimension" is one of the most recognisable aspects of New Labour's early foreign policy. While

vague on the articulation of the ethical dimension in action, at a rhetorical level it was a noticeable attempt to distance New Labour's foreign policy from that of its Conservative predecessors (Williams, 2002, pp.54-55; Honeyman, 2017, p.46). Whilst broader ethical considerations in foreign policy did not simply begin with the Labour Party post-1997, Cook's introduction of the ethical dimension does bring attention to the idea that their predecessors did not attach as much significance to ethics as they might have done. According to Wheeler and Dunne (1998, p.850), New Labour's ethical dimension displayed elements of a "marked shift in the content and conduct of British foreign policy". Although this assessment was written during the very early stages of the ethical dimension, Wheeler and Dunne (1998) capture the surprise announcement that a New Labour government intended to incorporate an ethical aspect into their foreign policy.

Whilst the influence of the ethical dimension on changes in UK foreign policy is disputed (Chandler, 2003), it did open more rhetorical space for ethical considerations in foreign policy (Williams, 2002, p.63). Alongside this, the ethical dimension was one important means of evidencing the UK's commitment to human protection (Mumford and Selck, 2010, p.295). In particular, it captured the moralism in New Labour's commitment to liberal internationalism, especially the interconnection of the domestic and international interest (Atkins, 2014, p.182). The ambiguity which surrounded the ethical dimension does imply a lack of understanding on the complexity of what it meant for UK foreign policy, but that said, it signalled Robin Cook's intent as Foreign Secretary to implement New Labour's stated commitment to a liberal internationalist foreign policy in which human protection concerns would form a central pillar.

Yet a downfall of the ethical dimension from the beginning was the lack of clarity in its message. Immediately, the ethical dimension was confused with an ethical foreign policy, with the latter becoming the means of judging New Labour's approach (Williams, 2002, p.57; Vickers, 2011, p.164). Vickers (2011, p.164) argues that this misinterpretation had consequences since it heightened "expectations for change" and provided a means to wrongly evaluate and critique New Labour's foreign policy, which was "much to Blair's annoyance" in identifying a potential weakness in his government's foreign policy. An example of this misinterpretation of the ethical dimension was what Wheeler and Dunne (2004, p.17) term the "arms trade/ethical foreign policy dilemma". What was now interpreted as an ethical foreign policy was under attack for the failure to withdraw arms licenses granted under the Major government (Vickers, 2011, p.166). The dilemma for the New Labour government was that the ethical dimension was announced

at a time when the value of the UK arms industry was substantial at around £5 billion per year in 2000 (Wickham-Jones, 2000, p.10). This apparent commitment to the continuation of granting arms licenses was thus seen as unethical (Cooper, 2000), as well as evidencing the "organized hypocrisy" of the commitment to ethics in foreign policy whilst still selling arms (Perkins and Neumayer, 2010).

Whilst Cook attempted to address these criticisms through legislation such as the Export Control Act 2002, it is argued that two years earlier, "the UK had reverted to being a major exporter of weapons to autocracies" (de Moraes, 2018, p.494). With the ethical dimension at least, the attempts to translate the government's rhetoric fell flat in action where New Labour largely continued the trajectory of their predecessors on trading in arms (Williams, 2004, p.921). On arms licenses, the ethical dimension revealed a contradiction in the relationship between the national and international interest in a liberal internationalist foreign policy. It created a potential trade-off between promoting the ethical dimension of its foreign policy and promoting its domestic interests with regards to protecting jobs and economic prosperity. For example, the UK was criticised for shying away from China's human rights record during talks thereby raising questions about whether "the government's ethical dimension was subordinate to commercial concerns" (Wickham-Jones, 2000, p.25). China is not an isolated case, with arms sales to several other countries continuing during New Labour's time in office, including with Pakistan, Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Sri Lanka (Smith and Light, 2001, p.2; Vickers, 2004b, p.259). Indonesia in particular revealed a critical flaw between New Labour's rhetorical commitment to an ethical dimension by continuing to sell arms to Indonesia during the conflict in East Timor (Dunne and Wheeler, 2001, p.175; Wheeler and Dunne, 2004, p.17). These limitations raise questions about whether a pursuit of an ethical dimension is possible due to systematic constraints deeply entrenched in UK foreign policy, such as the primary pursuit of political and economy interests in relations with other states. The ethical dimension thus arguably formed "a new global *idealpolitik*" (Heins, 2007, p.52, emphasis in original) in which the ethical dimension might appear well-intentioned rhetorically, but with serious limitations in action.

### 4.2.2 Prioritising human rights in UK foreign policy

A much less controversial aspect of New Labour's liberal internationalism was its commitment to human rights. This is because human rights in foreign and domestic policy existed well before New Labour. However, human rights received much more significant

foreign policy attention under the guidance of Robin Cook (Vickers, 2011, p.164). In his foreign policy mission statement as Foreign Secretary, Cook (1997) outlined his intention to "put human rights at the heart of our [New Labour] foreign policy". This commitment to human rights gradually became a core element of New Labour's liberal internationalist approach of combining the national and the international interest on human protection. Cook (1999) openly dismissed the idea "that human rights in other countries is none of our business". Rather, he argued "robustly that British national interests are promoted, not hindered, by a commitment to human rights" (Cook, 2002). Three years after his mission statement, Cook (2000b) reflected that the New Labour government had "put human rights at the heart of our foreign policy". According to Gaskarth (2006, p.51) Cook's emphasis on the centrality of human rights "really can be seen as a major change in the rhetoric of foreign policy". Throughout Cook's tenure as Foreign Secretary, he devoted consistent attention to the primacy of human rights, which was not substituted at the expense of other liberal internationalist principles such as democracy and therefore helped to galvanise the idea that human rights were a significant concern of a New Labour foreign policy (Gaskarth, 2006, p.52-55).

Cook's strong rhetorical commitment to human rights had important implications for a more specific focus on human protection from mass atrocity crimes. Writing on the role of human rights in foreign policy, Cook (2002, p.50) argued that "no one can claim any longer that massive violations of humanitarian law or crimes against humanity are solely an internal matter". Whilst acknowledging the "real dilemma for an organisation created to protect national sovereignty", Cook (2002, p.51) argued that the UN cannot simply stand back and allow mass atrocities to occur. This underlined his conviction that "it is far better to prevent genocide than to punish the perpetrators after the grisly evidence and mass graves are discovered" (Cook, 2000a). As evidenced later in this chapter shows, these ideas were translated through the UK's interventions in Kosovo (1999) and Sierra Leone (2000), which demonstrated New Labour's commitment to turn its rhetoric on human protection into tangible action. This rhetorical commitment to human rights under Cook was further entrenched through its contribution to international justice by supporting the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which was another central pillar of bringing those committing mass atrocities to account (Cook in UN General Assembly, 2000, p.9; Cook, 2002, p.47).

### 4.2.3 The Blair doctrine of a liberal internationalist foreign policy

The clearest illustration of New Labour's rhetorical commitment to human protection was Tony Blair's doctrine of the international community. Blair's articulation of the doctrine, which coincided with the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo, was crucial for outlining his "view of the world and the role that Britain should play within it" (Vickers, 2011, p.168). It was "a manifesto for a proactive, muscular approach to international politics" (Dyson, 2009, p.61) based on UK leadership. According to Blair, the world was transitioning towards globalisation, which gave rise to new challenges and responsibilities for the international community (Blair, 1999a). It was Blair's conviction that foreign policy in this new globalised world order can incorporate both a national and international interest underpinned by an appeal to protecting liberal values including human rights (Blair, 1999a).

In order to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes, Blair defended a notion of humanitarian intervention into other sovereign states since "acts of genocide can never be a purely internal matter" (Blair, 1999a). Blair was attempting to reframe international debates on state sovereignty and humanitarian intervention by outlining the broader responsibility of the international community not to simply stand by when faced with genocide. Later reflecting on the doctrine, Blair argued that it "sought to justify intervention, including if necessary military intervention, not only when a nation's interests are directly engaged; but also where there exists humanitarian crisis or gross oppression of a civilian population" (Blair, 2009, p.5). This supports the liberal internationalist defence of the projection of domestic human rights on to the international stage and the morality of foreign policy (Kitchen and Vickers, 2013, p.304), in addition to the idea that the UK is potentially willing to forgo its immediate interests and protect populations threatened by atrocity crimes (Blair, 2011, p.248). This perspective on the relationship between sovereignty and humanitarian intervention marked the beginning of a significant period of sustained change that occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action from 1999-2020, which was influenced by changes in both domestic politics and on the international stage more broadly following the crises in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

### 4.2.4 Rhetoric and action on human protection in Kosovo, 1999

The 1999 humanitarian crisis in Kosovo was the first time Tony Blair's liberal internationalist stance on human protection was articulated in action. Prior to the North

Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) intervention in Kosovo in 1999, the New Labour government constructed a clear rhetorical case for humanitarian intervention. Speaking at the UN General Assembly, Blair outlined the imperative of humanitarian support for refugees in Kosovo to thwart an anticipated "humanitarian disaster" (UN General Assembly, 1998, p.30). In condemning alleged atrocities in Kosovo, Cook subsequently argued that this "should be of concern to all members of humanity" (Hansard HC Deb., 19 October 1998). From the outset, Cook was attempting to identify the international community's clear responsibility to prevent mass atrocity crimes in Kosovo through drawing on a moral appeal to common humanity.

The failure to prevent an escalation of the mass atrocities in Kosovo led to a more assertive stance from the UK. In highlighting "ethnic cleansing, systematic rape, and mass murder" in Kosovo (Blair, 1999b), Tony Blair began the process of attempting to persuade the international community to intervene in Kosovo on the grounds of human protection. In his doctrine of the international community speech, Blair argued that Kosovo was "a just war, based not on territorial ambitions but on values. We cannot let the evil of ethnic cleansing stand. We must not rest until it is reversed" (Blair, 1999a). Similarly, Blair justified the NATO-led intervention in Kosovo as being "for the sake of humanity and for the sake of the future safety of our region and the world" (Blair, 1999b). He further argued that "the murder, rape and terror that he [Milosevic] has visited on innocent people – provides ample justification for military action" (Hansard HC Deb., 13 April 1999).

Blair and Cook were thus adamant throughout in justifying UK foreign policy in Kosovo as legitimate based on claims for human protection from ethnic cleansing (Hansard HC Deb., 26 May 1999; Hansard HC Deb., 18 January 1999; Hansard HC Deb., 19 April 1999; Hansard HC Deb., 8 October 2001; Bair, 2011, p.228). By constructing a rhetorical case for intervention on the basis of humanitarian concerns and common humanity, Blair again revealed his liberal internationalist belief that national interests could be reconciled with an international interest in upholding liberal values, including human protection. Significantly, Blair identified an explicit relationship between protecting populations from mass violence, and at the same time, protecting the future security and stability of Europe. It is through this relationship that the national and international interest in Blair's liberal internationalist approach to human protection is most evident.

Blair's belief in the connection between the UK's national interests and the international interest was also central to the government's rhetoric in the aftermath of

NATO's airstrikes in Kosovo (Hansard HC Deb., 24 March 1999). On a visit to Kosovo, Blair (1999c) argued that NATO "fought this conflict for a cause and that cause was justice". Cook argued that the UK and NATO "were left with no other way of preventing the…humanitarian crisis from becoming a catastrophe" (Hansard HC Deb., 25 March 1999). According to Cook (1999), "what prompted us to intervene…was our values - freedom, justice, compassion - basic human decency". Drawing on a similar concern for the UK's humanitarian values was Blair's view that "ours is a battle to protect and strengthen the values and freedoms we hold most dear. On our doorstep no civilised country could stand by and watch such brutality without acting" (Blair, 1999d). In Blair and Cook's justifications for the UK's contribution to the NATO-led intervention in Kosovo, there is a sustained rhetorical commitment to implement fundamental liberal internationalist principles in action, especially on human protection from mass atrocity crimes. Both the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary thus appealed to the core values in Ikenberry's (2009) second form internationalism in the post-war era with regards to the fundamental protection of human rights.

However, New Labour's approach to Kosovo revealed a serious tension within liberal internationalism on the use of force in another sovereign territory (Dunne and Wheeler, 2001, pp.176-177). According to the UK's permanent representative to the UN, Sir Greenstock,

> "The action being taken is legal. It is justified as an exceptional measure to prevent an overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe…Every means short of force has been tried to avert this situation. In these circumstances, and as an exceptional measure on grounds of overwhelming humanitarian necessity, military intervention is legally justifiable." (UN Security Council, 1999, p.12)

The UK's legal stance was contrary to the prevailing opinion that the NATO-led intervention was illegal without the appropriate consent of international law (The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, 2000, p.4). The UK's position reflected the notion that "UN Security Council authorization, while desirable, is not necessary for the collective use of force for so-called humanitarian intervention" (Williams, 2004, p.926). The UK's commitment to what was viewed by the Independent Kosovo Commission as an illegal intervention was the hallmark of this emerging appeal

to humanitarian intervention as a proposed legal basis for action in UK foreign policy. This is because "when faced with a choice between strict adherence to legal rules or breaking them to protect human rights, they [the New Labour government] opted for the latter" (Wheeler and Owen, 2007, pp.96-97).

This position was reinforced by Robin Cook's *guiding humanitarian intervention* speech, which outlined the importance of preventing atrocity crimes, while setting out "the conceptual and legal basis for intervention" (Cook, 2000a). Cook outlined six principles to guide future humanitarian interventions, including: (1) an immediate emphasis on prevention (2) force as a "last resort"; (3) the primary responsibility of a state to protect its people; (4) the responsibility of the international community to prevent mass atrocities; (5) using proportionate force; and (6) that such force should be conducted by a coalition of actors (Cook, 2000a).

Yet, the UK's position on humanitarian intervention shows a more fundamental clash between the core features of adopting a liberal internationalist stance, in particular, the relationship between protecting human rights and upholding the rule of law (Ralph, 2014b, pp.3-4). Upholding the rule of law logically means respecting international law, but in the case of Kosovo, countries such as the UK argued strongly in favour of humanitarian intervention even at the expense of being granted the necessary legal permission. Although Sir Greenstock attempted to frame the intervention as legal, the UK was, and remains, very much in the minority in this regard.[14] The UK's stance on Kosovo therefore revealed a significant dilemma "of how to balance the norms articulated in the UN Charter with the defence and promotion of substantive liberal values" (Ralph, 2014b, p.9). This thesis argues that Kosovo is the beginning of a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action that has been fundamentally shaped through this commitment to humanitarian intervention. The clear tension in the relationship between the core values of the UK's liberal internationalist approach have persisted throughout successive governments, which have continued to appeal to humanitarian intervention as a legal basis for action, despite the lack of evidence and legal consensus that a customary international law of humanitarian intervention exists (Butchard, 2020; Kleczkowska, 2020; Newman, 2021).[15]

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[14] The UK's legal position on humanitarian intervention is further discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

[15] See chapters 5 and 6 for a detailed analysis of the Conservative-led coalition government's use of humanitarian intervention to justify intervention in Syria in both 2013 and 2018.

The UK's commitment to human protection in both rhetoric and action in Kosovo represented a striking departure from the previous foreign policy stance under the Conservative government and Labour opposition Party on Rwanda and Bosnia. Cook (2000b) was well aware of this in outlining his "regret…that the last Tory government wasted years in Bosnia refusing to stand up to ethnic cleansing"; and that "if our predecessors in Government had acted as decisively to stop him in the past decade then we would never have seen the tragedy of Kosovo" (Cook, 1999). Cook was attempting to create clear ground between the *old* Conservative and Labour governments and *New* Labour on foreign policy. Similarly, Blair acknowledged that "there were many who said we should stand aside, that we shouldn't get involved in other people's quarrels", but that he was "in no doubt that had we not taken the action we did in the spring of last year, Milosevic would still be there and we would be faced with mounting instability in South Eastern Europe" (Blair, 2000).

With the crisis in Kosovo having roots long before New Labour's election, Blair and Cook evidenced the significance of learning in foreign policy change (Levy, 1994; Stein, 1994). Whilst appreciating the broader complexity of the crisis in Kosovo, in condemning the previous government's approach to Bosnia, Blair and Cook arguably attempted to redress this through humanitarian intervention. For instance,

> "Blair felt that the situation in Kosovo carried the potential to spiral into one comparable with Bosnia in the mid-1990s, and the lesson he took from that war…was that the humanitarian intervention had been well intentioned but inadequate, and should have been supported by greater military weight."
> (Phythian, 2007, p.120)

The historical context of UK foreign policy and international relations is thus significant for analysing sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection. This thesis argues that the New Labour government entering office in 1997 was the beginning of a sustained rhetorical shift in the UK's commitment to human protection. As discussed earlier, the New Labour government articulated a new direction for the UK's place in a globalised world based a liberal internationalist commitment to human rights protection. For Peltner (2017, p.746), New Labour's rise to power presented a "domestic push factor" in UK foreign policy change. As Prime Minister, Tony Blair set to work in articulating his belief in the UK's credentials for international leadership on human protection. This conviction

for UK leadership was evident from the fact that he was the only leader "pushing forcefully for an invasion of Kosovo to halt Serbian ethnic cleansing operations" among NATO members (Dyson, 2009, p.47). This includes "serious and sustained lobbying" of the US President Bill Clinton who was initially reluctant to engage militarily in Kosovo (Dyson, 2009, p.51). This in turn hampered Blair's aspirations for action given the role of the US as a major military power and the hegemon of the liberal international order (McCourt, 2013, pp.255-259). Although it is difficult to isolate the main trigger of the NATO-led intervention, the scholarship shows that Blair did have some influence on the process of foreign policy change towards human protection in Kosovo.

That said, no analysis of sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection is complete without understanding the broader international context which influenced the UK's position and response to Kosovo. According to McCourt (2013, pp.249-250), the international response to Kosovo was influenced by a change that had occurred following the decision from the US to lead during the response to Bosnia in 1995. The US as the hegemon of the post-1945 liberal world order was thus crucial element of the UK's support for humanitarian intervention in Kosovo. McCourt (2013, p.258) argues that Atlanticism was especially significant for action without UN Security Council authorisation given US leadership of international order. This goes someway to explaining why Blair had to place considerable effort into persuading President Clinton of the case for humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in order for the NATO-led intervention to happen. Despite this, it is acknowledged that Blair was not simply acting as a mouthpiece of the US on Kosovo and that his "commitment to the NATO campaign was genuine and not forced upon him from Washington" (McCourt, 2013, p.259).

The UK's contribution to the intervention in Kosovo was thus one significant illustration of the willingness to match a rhetorical commitment to human protection with tangible action. It evidenced the UK's willingness to engage in an intervention even at the expense of the appropriate legal channels of international law. There was some debate over whether the NATO-led intervention in Kosovo received "implicit authorisation", particularly in the aftermath of the intervention (Simma, 1999; The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, 2000, p.173). As noted earlier in this section, the NATO-led intervention in Kosovo was not granted explicit authorisation from the UN Security Council through a Chapter VII resolution, with the subsequent action then drawing attention to whether the authorisation was a more implicit one. However, it has been argued that "to endow the NATO campaign with an aura of legality on the basis of

"implicit" authorization to use force by the UNSC seems an undesirable precedent" (The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, 2000, p.173). This is especially because the implicit authorisation argument may work to reinforce the use of the UN Security Council's veto powers if states become concerned that any form of authorisation may lead to "expensive subsequent interpretations" of UN Security Council resolutions (The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, 2000, p.173).

Beyond debates on legal authorisation, the UK's approach to Kosovo embodied a liberal internationalist commitment to the fusion of the national and international interest in order to protect human rights (Vickers, 2011, p.168). For Blair

> "Kosovo marked a shift in his thinking. His doctrine of the international community heralded a liberal internationalist approach which saw Britain as a leading player in an international community that had common interests and values and which required intervention and engagement. This was a more ambitious view of Britain's role in the world, and of Blair's role as a global statesman." (Vickers, 2011, p.180)

The intervention in Kosovo was therefore closely tied with Blair's vision for the UK's liberal internationalist place in the world, where the UK would seek to protect liberal values. The outcome of this approach was the emergence of an international commitment to humanitarian intervention, and the UK's belief that there was a customary law of humanitarian intervention in the event that conventional legal channels, such as the UN Security Council, were blocked. This commitment to humanitarian intervention is recurrent theme throughout this thesis and illustrates a sustained change because of the way it has continued to influence the foreign policy of successive governments on human protection crises.

**4.2.5 Rhetoric and action on human protection in Sierra Leone, 2000**

Following the Revolutionary United Front's (RUF) attempts to seize power from President Ahmad Kabbah in 2000 (Fanthorpe, 2003, p.53), the UK was faced with the prospect of a military intervention in its former colony of Sierra Leone. With suggestions that Freetown was about to fall to RUF rebels, the UK deployed approximately 700 troops and military support with the immediate aim of protecting UK nationals (Kampfner, 2003, p.70). After fulfilling this objective, the Blair government decided that UK troops would

remain in Sierra Leone to try and stabilise the country in order to reinstall the government, which included instances of directly countering the RUF by force (Kampfner, 2003, p.71). This is despite arguments that the UK had no real immediate strategic interests in Sierra Leone (Williams, 2001, p.154; Pickering, 2009, p.23).

A primary justification for the UK's intervention in Sierra Leone beyond the protection of its nationals was humanitarianism based on evidence of civilian atrocities committed by the RUF (Fanthrope, 2003, p.53). For Williams (2001, p.155), an important motivation for the UK's intervention was therefore "the humanitarian impulse to 'do something'". This includes implementing Robin Cook's ethical dimension on the basis of the atrocities being committed against civilians (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2001, p.252; Seldon, 2008; Harris, 2013, p.109). Reflecting these arguments, Cook (2000) suggested that the UK intervened in Sierra Leone "out of simple human decency". Similarly, Blair (2000) argued that the UK should "do what we can to save African nationals from barbarism and dictatorship and be proud of it". Commenting on the intervention six years later, Blair underlined Sierra Leone as an example of an "effective military intervention for humanitarian purposes" (Hansard HC Deb., 28 November 2006). In the backdrop of the NATO-led intervention in Kosovo a year earlier, the UK's action in Sierra Leone had "confirmed the UK's willingness to assume responsibility to intervene militarily for humanitarian reasons" (Coates and Krieger, 2004, p.153). The UK's intervention was therefore interpreted as being consistent with Tony Blair's doctrine of the international community with regards to protecting populations from mass atrocity crimes (Porteous, 2005; Dorman, 2009). This humanitarian argument is particularly persuasive considering the UK's willingness to deploy hundreds of troops and engaging with the RUF in order to maintain stability in Freetown (Kampfner, 2003, p.71).

Yet, there is some caution in relying on humanitarian factors as the only explanation for the UK's intervention in Sierra Leone (Kargbo, 2006, p.304). Alongside humanitarian concerns, Kampfner (2003, p.349) identifies the UK's "colonial burden" to intervene to protect its former colony. Others point to the UK's aspirations to retain broader political influence in sub-Saharan Africa, where Sierra Leone is deemed "a pawn in the historic Franco-British rivalry" on the basis that France at the time was seeking to "spread their influence in diamond-rich Sierra Leone" (Shaw, 2010, p.278). The plausibility of these two motivations are questionable, since the UK could have chosen to intervene militarily years earlier, such as when President Kabbah was overthrown in

1997. The third alternative motivation for the UK's intervention was resorting UN credibility in peacekeeping (Ero, 2001, p.56; Williams, 2001). Sierra Leone revealed the challenges facing UN peacekeeping on the back of Bosnia and Rwanda (Ero, 2001; Connaughton, 2002, p.84; Pickering, 2009, p.28). This motive is persuasive since the UN mission was struggling prior to the UK's involvement in Sierra Leone (Kampfner, 2003, p.69).

Although the UK's intervention in Sierra Leone was not exclusively about ethics and humanitarian concerns alone, it formed a core element of the UK's justification for its intervention. While Cook (2000a) and Blair's (2000) humanitarian justifications for action drew on very simplistic narratives of the UK as a saviour, the underlying commitment to liberal internationalism in New Labour's foreign policy is evident in Sierra Leone. Again, Cook and Blair made the interconnection between the national and international interest to argue that the intervention in Sierra Leone is about upholding the UK's liberal principles of human rights protection and democracy, with the UK taking a leadership role through its military intervention.


## 4.2.6 International development

The final pillar of New Labour's liberal internationalist commitment and leadership on human protection was its contribution to international development through ODA. The government's 1997 White Paper on International Development incorporated its commitment to protecting human rights, which were deemed important for its approach to international development (HM Government, 1997, p.70). Whilst greeted with initial scepticism about the longevity and motivations of the while paper (White, 1998, p.158), the New Labour government underlined its commitment to ODA through the creation of the new Department for International Development (DFID) in 1997 as well as significant budgetary support to demonstrate its rhetorical commitment in action (Honeyman, 2009, p.91). According to Vickers (2011, p.179), the New Labour government showed its commitment to international development through its leadership role on "dealing with poverty, debt, humanitarian crises and conflict prevention". The New Labour government skilfully recognised the interconnection between the morality of ODA contributions and the UK's national interest on the basis that "many of the world's biggest challenges…are caused or exacerbated by global poverty and inequality" (The Labour Party, 2001, p.40). For Blair (2003), international stability and order were thus inexorably linked to poverty reduction.

Although the government is less explicit on the humanitarian impact of international development, the emphasis on poverty reduction and preventing conflict are integral to stability and preventing future outbreaks of mass violence and atrocity crimes. According to the UN framework of analysis for atrocity crimes, one risk factor of atrocity crimes is "economic instability caused by acute poverty" (United Nations, 2014, p.10). Even though it is important to acknowledge the complexity of poverty reduction, by aiming to reduce poverty through contributions to international development, the UK is also contributing to reducing the risk of future mass atrocity crimes. The UK's approach to international development is thus another way New Labour established the foundations for a broader commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action, which has remained part of the foreign policy of successive governments.

## 4.3 Liberal internationalism and the Iraq war, 2001-2005

Robin Cook's replacement as Foreign Secretary following New Labour's 2001 election victory marked the disappearance of the ethical dimension from UK foreign policy rhetoric. Although this "did not suddenly render UK foreign policy an ethics-free zone" (Williams, 2005, p.31), there is a sense that the ethical dimension was Cook's rather than Blair's policy (Vickers, 2011, p.164). Blair was much more concerned with promoting his doctrine of the international community as part of his liberal internationalist foreign policy. The appointment of Jack Straw as Robin Cook's replacement as Foreign Secretary heralded a return back to Blair's attempts to define the UK's place as an important international actor (Williams, 2002, p.54). Rhetorically, Straw removed any reference to the ethical dimension, but the liberal internationalist underpinnings of UK foreign policy were still present on the basis that "our party's commitment to internationalism means we are best placed to confront the challenges of our complex, interdependent world" (Straw, 2003).

The New Labour government also continued to connect the national and international interest since "it is a guiding principle of UK foreign policy that to promote our national interests and values we need to be active and engaged around the world" (FCO, 2003b, p.1). Blair (2002) for instance intended to "advocate an enlightened self-interest that puts fighting for our values right at the heart of the policies necessary to protect our nations". New Labour's foreign policy post-2000 thus retained its focus on the promotion and protection of international human rights. The government's vision for

the connection between the national and international interest on human rights was captured by its 2003 annual report on human rights which suggested that

> "The UK Government's view is that the promotion and protection of human rights is both self-evidently morally right and firmly in our national interest. There is an increasingly clear link between respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic norms on the one hand, and stability, prosperity and progress on the other." (FCO, 2003a, p.15)

This extract is significant in identifying New Labour's conception that human rights, the rule of law, and democracy are fundamentally interconnected in its foreign policy. It is also notable that human rights are no longer given the individual primacy they received under Cook, which at the time, was perceived as an important indicator of the Foreign Secretary's rhetorical commitment to human rights (Gaskarth, 2006, p.51). That said, human rights were still given a greater profile under New Labour since 1997 (Gaskarth, 2006, p.55).

The government's commitment to humanitarian intervention is one aspect of human protection which has been consistent with a sustained change in UK foreign policy rhetoric and action. Since the 1999 intervention in Kosovo, the New Labour government has sought to further clarify the relationship between state sovereignty and international human protection. For example, the Blair government outlined a policy paper on international action in response to humanitarian crises, which built on Cook's (2000a) principles for humanitarian intervention. The paper reinforced the UN Security Council's role and responsibility for the prevention and response to mass atrocity crimes and established the conditions for the use of force (FCO cited in Marston, 2001, p.696). These conditions largely reflected Cook's six principles with the addition that "if the consequences for human suffering of non-action would be worse than those of intervention" then this fulfils another pillar in favour of a humanitarian intervention (FCO cited in Marston, 2001, p.696). Following these policy commitments, the UK is described as "by far, the strongest advocate of humanitarian intervention in the post-Cold war era" (Butchard, 2020, p.22). According to Butchard (2020, p.22), through the UK's appeal to humanitarian intervention in speeches and policy, the New Labour government acted as a "norm-entrepreneur" based on its aim "to build humanitarian intervention into more of a doctrine".

It is also significant that the UK has been willing to defend its doctrine of humanitarian intervention as reinforcing, rather than violating international law (UN General Assembly, 1999a). By this reading, the UK is not exposing tensions in liberal internationalist thinking as identified by Ralph (2014b, p.4) on the relationship between the rule of law and human rights. That said, as shown throughout this thesis, the UK has been largely acting alone in promoting the legality of its doctrine of humanitarian intervention. More fundamentally, New Labour's establishment of a doctrine of humanitarian intervention marks the beginning of a sustained change that has occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action between 1997 and 2020. As examined in chapter 5 and chapter 6, successive UK governments have continued to draw explicitly on this doctrine of humanitarian intervention as a basis for intervening in another sovereign state without a Chapter VII resolution from the UN Security Council or under Article 51 of the UN Charter. Underlying this doctrine of humanitarian intervention is the liberal internationalist vision first espoused by New Labour in UK foreign policy according to the promotion of domestic and international human rights protection.

Beyond humanitarian intervention is the broader international geopolitical context of New Labour's liberal internationalist foreign policy with regards to the globalisation of security threats, particularly international terrorism and WMD. These global threats and the importance of cooperating with other states to address them is especially pertinent in the post-9/11 era. The UK's decision to join the US-coalition's intervention in Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent outbreak of war has received significant and widespread academic attention (Bluth, 2004; Kennedy-Pipe and Vickers, 2007; Ralph, 2011; Deudney and Ikenberry, 2017; Porter, 2018). At a theoretical level, scholars are divided over whether the Iraq war was a product of a realist or liberal approach to international relations. Deudney and Ikenberry (2017, pp.7) argue that the suggestion that the Iraq war was influenced by liberalism is deceptive. In suggesting that "most liberal internationalists opposed the war", they argue that the war was "the result of the pursuit of American hegemonic primacy", which reflects a realist rather than liberal position. Conversely, Porter (2018, p.334) contests the perspective of Deudney and Ikenberry (2017) in arguing that "liberals and liberalism were deeply implicated in the decision to strike Iraq".

At an empirical level, there are debates on the reasoning behind the UK's decision to join the US-led coalition, the role of Blair's doctrine of the international community,

and the subsequent tensions between strands of the Labour Party's internationalist tradition. According to Bluth (2004, p.875), the foundations of Blair's decision to support the US in going to war in Iraq was a concern for maintaining his conception of an international order based on support and respect for international norms and the UN, which required the support of the US as the hegemon of the post-1945 liberal international order. Similarly, Ralph (2011, p.309) suggests that there was a concern that the "United States would ignore the multilateral institutions of the post-1945 liberal order and thereby threaten Blair's efforts to cultivate the idea of community at the international level", alongside the threat of international terrorism, especially post-9/11.

Even if the UK's decision to intervene in Iraq was principally driven by these motivations to uphold the international order and its institutions amid US unilateralism, the UK's contribution subsequently led to significant debate and division in government, which exposed specific tensions in New Labour's commitment to liberal internationalism regarding the role of multilateralism and collective action on the use of force. This was visible following the resignation of the former UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, in the lead up to the war citing the lack of domestic support and international agreement on the intervention in Iraq (BBC, 2003). As the intervention unfolded, the UK's Secretary for International Community, Clare Short, announced their resignation primarily because assurances about "the need for a UN mandate to establish the legitimate Iraqi government have been breached" (Short in The Guardian, 2003). This demonstrates a tension between the Labour Party's internationalist position and New Labour's liberal internationalist approach. This is because traditional internationalists within the Labour Party, such as Cook, argued that action outside multilateral institutions such as the UN could undermine the role of these institutions (Atkins, 2013, p.180). Thus, it is not a case of Cook outright rejecting intervention in Iraq (Vickers and Kennedy, 2007, p.206), but rather about maintaining the internationalist tradition of upholding multilateralism and international institutions, including in situations involving the use of force.

The UK's decision to contribute to the US-led coalition in Iraq thus shows the tension between the Labour Party's internationalist tradition and the liberal internationalist approach pursed by the Blair government, which demonstrated a willingness to utilise "*ad hoc* coalitions in situations where multilateralism based on formal organisations was ruled out" (Atkins, 2013, p.181). However, this modified view places it at odds with the tradition of internationalism in UK foreign policy where collectivism and multilateralism is at the heart of this tradition, which is shown in the

debate and resignations from both Cook and Short, the former of which was Foreign Secretary during the NATO-led operation in Kosovo in 1999. Whilst the Kosovo intervention was without authorisation from a UN resolution, it was based on a strong multilateral response from NATO member states. The Iraq intervention shows how New Labour's commitment to liberal internationalism is far from a harmonious approach to foreign policy when action is contrary to multilateralism.

The globalisation of security threats and the Iraq War also reveal the broader geopolitical context of New Labour's internationalist foreign policy. Whilst the UK's commitment to the intervention in Kosovo was characterised by a human protection response, the Iraq War shifted the focus of intervention into another state in the face of perceived threats posed by WMD and its impact on domestic and international security. This demonstrates how changes in the UK's commitment to human protection are part of a broader push-pull domestic and international context in which governments are required to respond to a range of foreign policy challenges in a globalised world, including international terrorism and threats from WMD.

## 4.4 The international context of human protection, 2005-2007

As discussed in introduction to this thesis, the UK's doctrine of humanitarian intervention emerged from the dilemma in the relationship between respecting state sovereignty and protecting human populations from mass atrocity crimes. Whilst the UK's proposed solution was humanitarian intervention, the UN and its Member States promoted the idea of a responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. The R2P is distinct from humanitarian intervention in requiring a Chapter VII resolution from the UN Security Council for non-consensual intervention into another sovereign state under its pillar III mechanism (UN General Assembly, 2005, p.30; UN General Assembly, 2009b, p.22). Although evidence points to UK support for the R2P in speeches prior to its endorsement by UN Member States, there remained a division between the UN's and UK's position over use of force without prior state consent and international legal authorisation. In his 1999 address to the UN, Robin Cook emphasised the "shared responsibility" of the international community "to act when we are confronted with genocide, mass displacement of people or major breaches of humanitarian law" (UN General Assembly, 1999a, p.35). Similarly, Straw (2004) supported conditional sovereignty because "where those responsibilities are manifestly ignored, neglected or abused, the international community need to intervene".

The UK endorsed the R2P at the 2005 World Summit as on paper it reinforced many of New Labour's liberal internationalist commitments to human rights since entering office in 1997. Commenting on R2P's endorsement, Straw suggested that "if we follow through on the responsibility to protect, then never again will genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity be allowed to take place under our noses with nothing done." (United Nations General Assembly, 2005, p.27) . This positive sentiment on the prospects for R2P was shared by Straw's successor, Margaret Beckett, who continued to reflect on the importance of protecting populations from atrocity crimes (Beckett, 2006). Speaking on behalf of the UK at the UN General Assembly in 2009, Lord Malloch-Brown also referenced "an R2P culture" focusing on embedding the prevention of atrocity crimes in the work of the UN (UN General Assembly, 2009a, p.7).

Whilst the endorsement of the R2P in 2005 appeared to signal an important change in international rhetoric and action on the relationship between state sovereignty and human protection, it still did not fit comfortably with the UK's doctrine of humanitarian intervention. As Daddow (2009, p.559) rightly argues, to endorse an idea does not compel a state to necessarily implement it in its own foreign policy. It is questionable whether any state would rhetorically deny a basic commitment to protecting their population from atrocity crimes. However, endorsing the R2P did not say that states *must* enforce it since it is a normative, rather than a legal framework. According to Welsh (2019, p.54), the R2P "was deliberately institutionalized….as a *political,* rather than legal principle" (emphasis in original). This was because Member States did not want to become embroiled in further legal commitments under international humanitarian law (Welsh, 2019, p.54).

Instead of fundamentally redefining the UK's commitment to human protection, it is argued that the UK's endorsement of the R2P was a continuation of its liberal internationalist commitment to human protection. In particular, the UK was "seeking international confirmation of R2P as a political signal to mobilise and enable international (military) action in the face of mass atrocities, according to their traditions of…*liberal interventionism*" (Brockmeier et al., 2014b, p.437-438, emphasis in original). This suggests that the UK's endorsement of the R2P was instrumentally driven in providing a framework to continue the pursuit of humanitarian intervention in its foreign policy. The emergence of R2P thus echoed the UK's commitment to a liberal internationalist approach to human protection, but there remained a significant gap between the UK and UN concerning the legality of the use of force. This gap is something which has remained

in UK foreign policy under successive governments, as chapters 5 and 6 will illustrate in the context of the crisis in Syria.

**4.5 The Gordon Brown years, 2007-2010**

On becoming Prime Minister, Gordon Brown inherited a New Labour foreign policy portfolio with a rich recent history on human protection. Whilst Brown did not comment much on foreign policy as Prime Minister (Vickers, 2011, p.185) his government still provided some important rhetorical indicators of their understanding of liberal internationalism and how it applied to human protection. Brown outlined his approach to foreign policy as being based on "hard-headed internationalism", which recognised the importance of a globalised world and the need to intervene where necessary "to give expression of our shared interests and shared values" (Brown, 2007a). In this sense, Brown embodied a similar liberal internationalist perspective to Blair's in underlining the significance of globalisation, in addition to the merging of the national and international interest in the pursuit of New Labour's view of playing an active and important international role.

On human protection, it is suggested that the Brown doctrine of foreign policy "sought to recast the philosophy underpinning interventionism" (Lunn et al., 2008, p.47) by recognising that coercive force alone is not the only, nor even the most desirable, option for human protection. However, this did not translate into the removal of New Labour's doctrine of humanitarian intervention. The Brown government continued to use humanitarian intervention rhetoric as the UK's approach to human protection. In his 2008 *reinventing humanitarian intervention* speech, Gordon Brown detailed the UK's approach to implementing the R2P, which he suggested was influenced by the 1999 humanitarian intervention in Kosovo (Brown, 2008). In outlining that "in practice, the UK has been a strong supporter of the Responsibility to Protect within the UN", Brown revealed a broader interpretation of the R2P beyond the use of force (Brown, 2008). However, as the title of the speech suggests, underlying this commitment to the R2P was the UK government's continued preference for humanitarian intervention, which the Brown government had not removed from UK foreign policy rhetoric.

Rather, UK foreign policy on human protection under Brown was characteristic of the approach adopted primarily under Robin Cook. As Foreign Secretary, David Miliband (2008b) defended liberal internationalism as the UK's foreign policy doctrine. He argued that a lot of Blair's Doctrine of the International Community "remains valid",

but that it requires a rethink based on prioritising prevention (Miliband, 2008). Miliband did not dismiss humanitarian intervention, but advocated for a much earlier response, which could potentially save more lives and prevent a full-scale outbreak of war. On R2P, Miliband similarly suggested that the UK must "improve our capacity to prevent the emergence of conflict" (UN General Assembly, 2007, p.47).

As for the UK's place in the world, Miliband (2008a) argued that UK "must resist the arguments on both the left and right to retreat into a world of realpolitik". Rhetorically then, the Gordon Brown years are further evidence of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection. Underlying this commitment is a continued appeal to a liberal internationalist perspective on the UK's place in the world, which mirrors Blair's approach to UK foreign policy on human protection. The only slight difference between the Blair and Brown governments on human protection is the greater emphasis on prevention over immediate humanitarian intervention. However, it is important to acknowledge the broader international context on the prevention of atrocity crimes as the response to Kenya generated greater attention on the preventative aspects of R2P (Miliband, 2008b). Moreover, humanitarian intervention remained part of New Labour's foreign policy rhetoric under the Gordon Brown government, which is important evidence that the UK had not fundamentally altered its stance on the pursuit of human protection through its doctrine of humanitarian intervention.

A limitation for examining the extent of this sustained change is that Brown's government did not contribute to any humanitarian interventions. That said, as the next chapter shows the Conservative-led Coalition government's decision to continue using humanitarian intervention as legal justification for action in Syria is even stronger evidence of a sustained change that has occurred in UK foreign policy rhetoric and action on human protection. Despite attempting to distance from liberal internationalism, the Conservative-led coalition government has used the exact same rhetoric on humanitarian intervention as Tony Blair did on Kosovo in 1999. It is therefore argued that the foreign policy of successive governments is underpinned by a commitment to liberal internationalist values, including human rights protection, as a basis for an outward-looking and active foreign policy.

**4.6 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has provided the empirical foundations for assessing the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. This includes

using the analytical framework developed in chapter 3 in order to assess sustained UK foreign policy change in rhetoric and action on human protection. The chapter presents three main findings. The first is that New Labour's commitment to liberal internationalism was an important change in the UK's international relations as part of a transitional foreign policy. The chapter argued this approach to a liberal internationalist foreign policy was a product of the government's fundamental recognition of globalisation in a new world order, as well as rejection of international isolationism amid the decades of attention on the UK's relative international decline. Rather, Blair attempted to assert the UK's place in the world as a pivotal power in order to demonstrate its continued credentials for international leadership and influence in a globalised world, especially in its relationship with the US and Europe.

Second, New Labour's commitment to liberal internationalism was significant in distancing the government from their predecessors, especially on human protection. New Labour came to power in the backdrop of the international community's inaction in Rwanda in 1994 and the mass atrocities committed with impunity in Bosnia a year later in 1995. On entering office *New* Labour immediately set to work on changing the basic principles of the UK's foreign policy interests and values, which led to a gradual change in the UK's commitment to human protection in both rhetoric and action and marked an important departure from the conservative tradition, especially regarding the UK's conception of its national interest. Rhetorically, New Labour placed liberal values at the centre of its internationalist foreign policy, including human rights. This was articulated in the government's foreign policy rhetoric on human protection in condemning mass violence in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, promoting the ethical dimension up until 2001, questioning the premise of absolute sovereignty in the face of mass atrocities, proposing criteria in order to guide humanitarian intervention post-Kosovo, and contributing to international debate on the R2P at the international level. Some of this rhetoric was subsequently translated into government actions through its contributions to the coercive interventions in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, both of which had a core humanitarian component and continued the UK's advocacy and entrepreneurship on humanitarian intervention.

Third sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020 requires an analysis of the interaction between the national and the international context of the UK's foreign policy. New Labour's electoral victory and the Party's subsequent commitment to liberal internationalism while in power is one

important factor which initiated a sustained change in the UK's foreign policy on human protection from 1997. However, the international context at the time is just as significant amid globalisation and the idea that sovereignty entailed the responsibility of a state to protect its population (Deng et al., 1996). New Labour was thus able to articulate a vision for its foreign policy based on a willingness to take the lead on vital issues, including human protection, which appeared to fit with changes in international relations at that time on the relationship between state sovereignty and human protection.

However, the challenges of globalisation in relation to international terrorism and WMD had an important impact on New Labour's perception of its geopolitical interests, especially in relation to protecting the UK and international security and building alliances in order to address the threats posed by terrorism and WMD. This was illustrated by the Iraq war, which generated intense domestic and international debate on the US-led coalition's commitment to intervention. Some of the literature highlighted how the UK's decision to join the US-coalition showed the challenges of fulfilling Blair's doctrine of the international community, especially the attempts to maintain a collective international order in a globalised world (Bluth, 2004; Ralph, 2011). However, domestically the intervention exposed some tension in liberal internationalism, particularly on the issues of multilateralism and collective intervention. The Iraq war and broader debates over liberal internationalism and the use of force thus reveals the fluid nature of international relations in a globalised world and the changing role of the UK's geopolitical interests as part of domestic and international push-pull factors in foreign policy. This shows how sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection do not exist independently of other geopolitical interests such as countering terrorism and the WMD in the post-9/11 era as part of addressing broader challenges amid globalisation.

As the next two empirical chapters show, these findings are a significant contribution to the assessment of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. This is because in spite of the attempts by successive governments to distance from elements of New Labour's foreign policy on intervention, a commitment to the protection of core liberal internationalist values has remained central to UK foreign policy between 2010 and 2020. This leads to the argument that sustained changes have occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020, which is presented in the evidence and analysis of the following empirical chapters.

## Chapter 5 – A liberal conservative approach to human protection, 2010-2015

> "Of course I recognise that many have long been committed to non-intervention. But my argument is that where action is necessary, legal and right, to fail to act is to fail those who need our help."
>
> *David Cameron, Speech to the UN General Assembly (FCO, 2011k)*

The formation of a Conservative-led Coalition in the spring of 2010 marked the end of over a decade of New Labour governments. As the new Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron immediately set to work on implementing a vision for UK foreign policy founded on liberal conservatism. According to Cameron, a liberal conservative foreign policy was committed to similar liberal principles as their New Labour predecessors on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, but cautious about simply imposing these principles from the outside by recognising the complexity of the world that exists (Cameron, 2006; Cameron, 2019, pp.145-146). In this sense, liberal conservatism was the Conservative-led Coalition's approach to distancing UK foreign policy from the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan that had arguably tarnished New Labour's foreign policy under Blair (Cameron, 2006; Cameron, 2019, p.146; Hague, 2006).

This chapter builds on chapter 4 through continuing the empirical analysis of the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy between 2010 and 2015. The chapter continues to define a transitional foreign policy in relation to changes in the UK's geopolitical interests, policies and international engagements between 1997 and 2020. It is shaped by the adaptation of successive governments to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, the UK's membership, leadership, and influence in core multilateral organisations, and the UK's position within the evolving international order, and is expressed by changing patterns of policy behaviour, changing administrative apparatus, and elite UK political rhetoric.

The central argument of this chapter is that in spite of the shift to liberal conservatism, the core liberal values espoused by New Labour remained at the forefront of the Conservative-led Coalition's foreign policy on human protection. Throughout the period between 2010 and 2015, UK political elites rhetorically supported the protection of core international liberal values on freedom, democracy, and human rights, which were brought to the forefront of UK foreign policy amid the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 and

subsequent human protection crises in Libya and Syria. In Syria in particular, the government showed its willingness to bypass conventional legal channels of a Chapter VII resolution through advocating for humanitarian intervention. This chapter argues that the period between 2010 and 2015 therefore presents evidence of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy.

To support this argument, this chapter draws extensively on a triangulation of primary and secondary materials from a combination of 355 speeches, statements, and media interviews from the Prime Minister, David Cameron, and Foreign Secretaries William Hague and Philip Hammond, and UK diplomats and representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 to 6 May 2015, government reports and policy documents, parliamentary debates, semi-structured interviews, and secondary literature. Foreign policy speeches from central government focus overwhelmingly on the Conservative Party because it controlled coalition foreign policy, which was evident throughout the process of data collection (Honeyman, 2017, p.43; Beech and Munce, 2019, p.117). The chapter uses the same assessment of sustained foreign policy change as established in chapter 3 and initially applied in chapter 4, which distinguishes episodic adjustments in UK foreign policy on human protection from sustained changes which are defined as shifts in the UK's foreign policy goals and/or methods on human protection which endure over time in the approach of successive governments and is continually shaped, maintained, and reinforced by a combination of UK government rhetoric - what is said by elite political agents in government - and its actions – the means and methods of protection in practice. The latter is assessed through the four indicators of foreign policy action in chapter 3: policy, funding and humanitarian aid, coercive and non-coercive intervention, and advocacy and entrepreneurship.

The chapter is split into three main sections. Section one addresses the foundations of the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its place in the world according to the government's liberal conservative approach to foreign policy. Sections two and three then assess the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy through an analysis of the crises in Libya in 2011 and Syria from 2011. The chapter concludes with its findings, contributions, and their implications for the research aim, objectives, questions and hypothesis.

This chapter makes three contributions to the thesis. The first is to the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy. In

particular, it addresses the research aim and objectives 2 and 3 by applying the framework developed in chapter 3 in order to assess sustained changes in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection. Its second contribution is the analysis of the UK's leadership and influence on human protection in international relations in light of its relative international hard power decline. The third contribution is providing a wealth of empirical evidence between 2010 and 2015 in order to test the research hypothesis on whether adjustments in the UK's place in the world between 1997 and 2020 led to sustained changes in the UK's rhetoric and action towards a strengthened commitment to human protection.

## 5.1 A liberal conservative foreign policy doctrine and human protection

David Cameron's idea of a liberal conservative foreign policy began as leader of the opposition. In a speech to the British American Project in 2006, he declared that "I am a liberal conservative, rather than a neo-conservative. Liberal - because I support the aim of spreading freedom and democracy, and support humanitarian intervention. Conservative - because I recognise the complexities of human nature, and am sceptical of grand schemes to remake the world" (Cameron, 2006). This initial idea increasingly became the foreign policy blueprint of a future Cameron government following the 2010 manifesto commitment that the Party's "approach to foreign affairs will be based on liberal conservative principles" (Conservative Party, 2010, p.109). This commitment was reaffirmed following the election of the Coalition government in 2010. In a speech detailing the foreign policy framework of the Coalition, the newly appointed Conservative Foreign Secretary, William Hague, conceptualised liberal conservatism according to "a belief in freedom, human rights and democracy with a scepticism of utopian schemes to remake the world" (Hague, 2010b). According to Daddow and Schnapper (2013, p.331), this commitment to liberal conservatism is an articulation of "bounded liberalism" which aims to strike a balance between progress in human nature and a realistic perspective on the nature of the world that exists.

Whilst liberal conservatism may appear an articulation of the Conservative tradition pre-dating New Labour, especially with the emphasis on a scepticism of attempts to remake the world, there are important differences which support the argument in this chapter that liberal internationalism remains an underlying feature of a liberal conservative approach to human protection. According to Dodds and Eldon (2008, p.359), the David Cameron government have adopted a similar approach to Tony Blair's

New Labour governments based on "a form of idealism moderated by realism". This is evident in Hague's (2010b) definition of liberal conservatism in moderating the liberal commitment to democracy, human rights, and freedom, with restraint on overt attempts to spread these values through military intervention. As a foreign policy tradition then, liberal conservatism is faced with a dilemma because "on the one hand it seeks to distance itself from traditional conservative policies; on the other to temper the more aggressive neo-conservatism of the Bush administration" (Dodds and Eldon, 2008, pp.359-360). This can be seen again in the liberal side of liberal conservatism as distancing from conservative traditions, and the conservative side in being cautious about attempts to remake the world.

A significant difference between conservative traditions and liberal conservatism is shown in UK foreign policy on human protection, and specifically humanitarian intervention. The liberal conservative approach to humanitarian intervention has been shaped in part from debates over the UK's response to Bosnia during the Major government which witnessed the initial emergence of a Conservative position on humanitarian intervention (Beech and Oliver, 2014, p.107). Whilst it is argued that liberal conservatism emphasises the need to move beyond a narrowly defined self-interest in foreign policy to one which recognises the importance of humanitarian protection, it is slightly different from New Labour's liberal internationalist approach in terms of the government appearing "less willing to use robust rhetoric and they are likely to employ a more cautious approach" (Beech, 2011, p.360). However, it is also argued that "the Conservative Party of today is more open to humanitarian intervention than ever before", and that "the issue of humanitarian intervention marks a significant discontinuity" with conservative traditions in foreign policy (Beech and Oliver, 2014, pp.103-105). Although the Major government tentatively embraced human protection through the government's eventual action in Bosnia, the lack of a robust immediate humanitarian response draws an important difference with the liberal internationalist approach of the New Labour government, which as this chapter will argue, has continued during the Cameron government under the guise of liberal conservatism.

This combination of *liberal* and *conservative* in foreign policy is essential for locating and understanding the government's perspective of the UK's place in the world between 2010 and 2015, and by extension, its relationship with the government's commitment to human protection. Based on evidence from primary and secondary material, this chapter argues that there are two important sources which shaped the

government's view of the UK's place in the world and its subsequent commitment to human protection. These sources are learning lessons from previous foreign policy interventions under New Labour and an awareness of the UK's relative international decline and the government's attempts to assert the UK's credentials for international leadership.

### 5.1.1 Foreign policy Learning: The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq

The first significant challenge of the government's liberal conservative foreign policy was how to address New Labour's legacy (Daddow, 2013, p.113; Daddow and Schnapper, 2013, p.346; Gilmore, 2014, p.111; Honeyman, 2017, p.59). The New Labour government's commitment to the international War on Terror and the subsequent fallout in the aftermath of the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq had overshadowed the earlier humanitarian interventions in Kosovo and Sierra Leone (Wheeler, 2000; Krisch, 2002; Schmitt, 2004; Chinkin, 2012). Liberal Conservatism was an ideal opportunity for the Cameron government to pursue a clean break from the past without losing its commitment to the core liberal values that had guided the foreign policy of their predecessors. Cameron had arguably triggered this process whilst in opposition in suggesting that a Conservative government "should replace the doctrine of liberal interventionism…with the doctrine of liberal conservatism" (Cameron, 2007). Once in office, the government sought to rhetorically distance itself from New Labour in its foreign policy rhetoric (figure 6).

**Figure 6. Government rhetoric on learning from the past, 2010-2015**
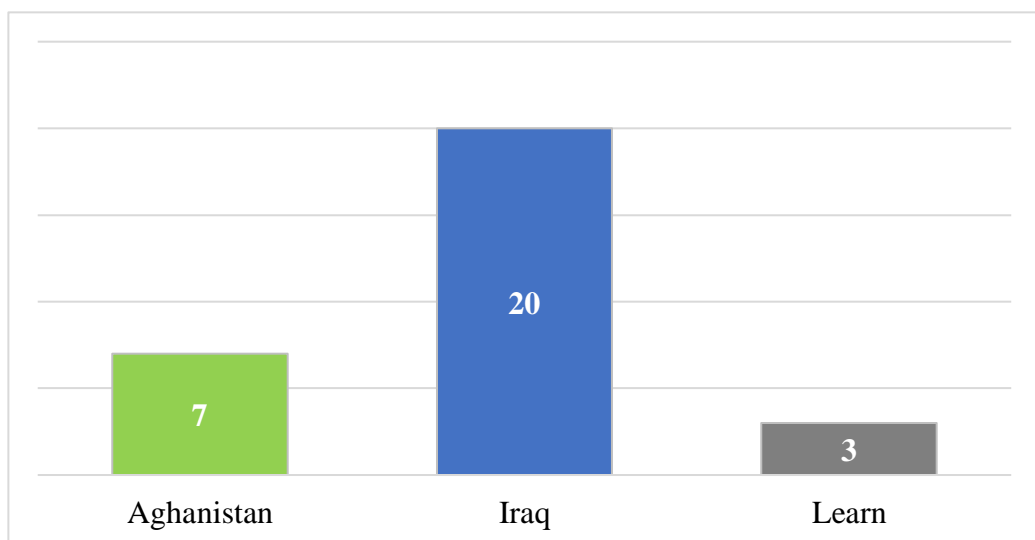


*Source: Gov.uk and Digital National Archives*

Figure 6 presents the results from a content analysis of 355 speeches, statements, government news reports, and media interviews between 2010 and 2015. From keyword searches on Iraq, Afghanistan and learn, the results identified 30 references to each concept by government ministers and representatives.[16] A closer examination of this data shows that New Labour's interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the need to learn from them, were a prominent feature of the UK's rhetoric on its liberal conservative foreign policy. In an annual address at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, Cameron (2010) mentioned Afghanistan as a reason why "as a new government, we should learn the lesson [of the intervention] and make changes". Equally, in a speech to the UN Security Council, Cameron (2014) acknowledged that "it is absolutely right that we should learn lessons from the past, especially of what happened in Iraq a decade ago". By consistently emphasising rhetoric such as *learn the lessons* and *the past,* the government was attempting to establish clear ground with the foreign policy of their predecessors on these intervention. Daddow (2013, p.117) uses the example of the "Blair's wars thesis" to emphasise how the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are directly attached to Tony Blair rather than a specific government. This serves an important purpose in allowing successive governments to detach themselves from the foreign policy of their predecessors.

There is a similarity in Cameron's rhetoric on learning from the past to the findings in chapter 4 on Blair and Cook's attempts to recast New Labour's foreign policy following the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia. On both occasions, there is evidence of a clear attempt to distance foreign policy from previous governments on the basis of learning. This supports the theoretical framework on foreign policy change in which agents try and learn from mistakes made in the past and thus change their foreign policy orientation (Levy, 1994; Stein, 1994). The significance of this is that the Blair and Cameron government's show that foreign policy learning is an ongoing process and reveals how governments draw on their predecessors in order to readjust their foreign policy on particular issues, such as controversial military interventions.

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16 Following keyword searches on Afghanistan, Iraq, and learn/learning/learned in NVivo, a qualitative content analysis was conducted in order to include only relevant results in figure 6. See appendix 2 for full details of the inclusion and exclusion criteria for these three codes.

### 5.1.2 Countering relative decline in a transitional foreign policy

This rhetoric on learning from past foreign policy interventions is closely intertwined with the government's liberal conservative view of the UK's place in the world. Writing on his time as Prime Minister, David Cameron suggested that "it was clear to me, alongside our economic rescue, reassuring Britain's global status would be one of our biggest missions in government" (Cameron, 2019, p.145). Just as New Labour had aimed to counter the UK's relative decline by rejecting isolationism, the post-2010 government faced similar pressures. From keyword searches on speeches addressing the UK's place in the world, figure 7 reveals the government's focus on the UK's relative *decline*, which accounted for 68% of references in comparison to 32% on the UK's *global* role.[17]

**Figure 7. Government rhetoric on the UK's global role, 2010-2015**
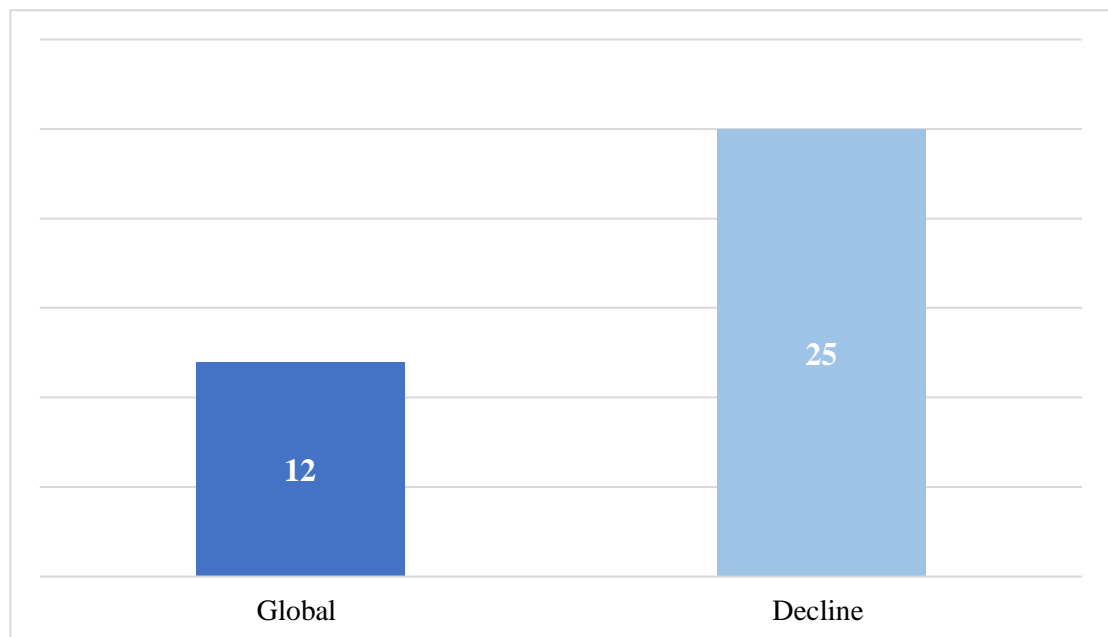


*Source: Gov.uk and Digital National Archives*

From a qualitative content analysis of 355 speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports between 2010 and 2015, it is clear that the Conservative-led Coalition government was well aware of debates on the UK's relative decline in making 26 references to the concept in comparison to 12 on global. Critically, an analysis of the

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[17] Following keyword searches on decline and global in NVivo, a qualitative content analysis was conducted in order to include only relevant results in figure 7. See appendix 2 for full details of the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each code.

content of this primary documentary material showed how both Cameron and Hague were attempting to dispel any notion of UK decline on the world stage. In the early stages of his tenure as Prime Minister, Cameron (2010) recognised that "there are some who say Britain is embarked on an inevitable path of decline". He also acknowledged arguments that the UK had a choice between "sink or swim. Do or decline" in its foreign policy (Cameron, 2012b). Cameron (2019, p.144) later wrote that he "didn't accept the idea that Britain was facing inevitable relative decline". This was evident in the government's counter perspective of the UK's place in the world, especially under the leadership of William Hague. The basis of Hague's approach was that "we [the UK] do not need to accept sleepwalking into decline" (Hague, 2013a). Rather "our vision for Britain in the world is of a nation committed to an international, global role" (Hague, 2013a). At the centre of this argument was the government's promotion of the UK's influence whether through international organisations or on promoting democracy and human rights protection (Cameron, 2010; FCO, 2013a; Hague, 2010a).

Whilst attempting to supress the idea of the UK's relative international decline as a global power, Hague (2013a) did acknowledge that UK foreign policy was being practiced "in a challenging period of global transition". The government recognised that the rise of non-Western-liberal powers made it paramount that the UK continued to uphold the principles of the existing liberal international order. For Hague (2010b), retaining a global role "is an indispensable part of the British character" citing examples as far back as Britain's role in the campaign to end the slave trade, the end of the Cold War, and its contributions to international development. It is the government's awareness of debates on the UK's relative decline and a transitional international order that in turn generated its counter perspective that the UK *is* and *will* remain an essential actor on the international stage through drawing on the historical narrative of the UK being a global power.

This approach to conceptualising the UK's place in the world is strikingly similar to the rhetoric of Tony Blair and Robin Cook in the previous chapter in which countering the idea of the UK's relative decline was at the core of the New Labour government's promotion of the UK as a leading actor in the liberal international order. These similarities across governments show that the UK's place in the world is at the forefront of the minds of successive Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries. The fact that these governments have placed constant rhetorical emphasis on the importance of the UK's international role, and felt the need to explicitly downplay the notion of its decline, does evidence an

awareness that the UK's place in the world is changing, and potentially declining, which requires efforts to counter this. The remainder of the thesis shows the significant role that this awareness has had on successive UK government commitments to human protection.

### 5.1.3 Fusing democracy, human rights, and the national interest

Identifying the components of a liberal conservative foreign policy from 2010 to 2015 is important for understanding whether sustained changes have occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection. This is because it shows the relative role and importance of human rights, and by extension, the government's narrower commitment to human protection in its foreign policy. Keyword searches were thus conducted on the concepts of freedom, human rights, and democracy according to definition of liberal conservatism by Hague (2010b). The content analysis also included the UK's reference to the national interest, which frequently featured in its foreign policy rhetoric and captured important linkages with the liberal conservative commitment to freedom, democracy, and human rights.

The results of word frequency searches on democracy, freedom, and human rights supported Hague's (2010b) perspective on the components of a liberal conservative foreign policy having featured amongst the most referenced concepts in the dataset of 355 speeches.[18] Figure 8 presents the findings from keyword searches on each concept.

**Figure 8. Government liberal conservative rhetoric, 2010-2015**
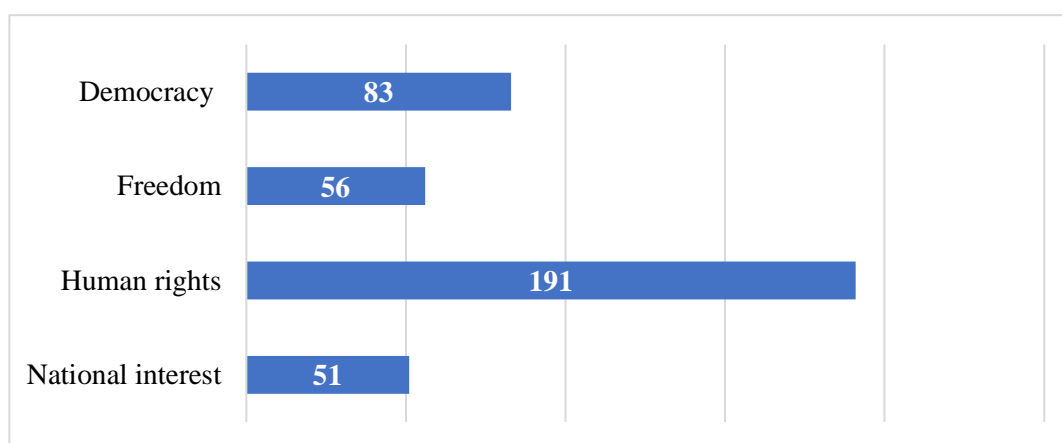


*Source: Gov.uk and Digital National Archives*

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[18] Freedom, democracy, and human rights featured as the most frequently used words in the 355 speeches alongside more general references to concepts of world, Britain, foreign, policy, international, national, people, country.

From the 381 references to the four concepts in total, figure 9 shows that democracy accounted for 22%, freedom 15%, and the national interest 13%. The most significant finding was that human rights accounted for 50% of the total with 148 references in speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports covering government ministers and representatives. On entering office, William Hague outlined the government's "pledge to put consistent support for human rights at the heart of our foreign policy" (Hague, 2011). Rhetorically at least, the 191 references to human rights in figure 8 evidences this commitment to human rights. Furthermore, this focus on human rights at the *heart* of UK foreign policy recycles the same commitment made in Cook's foreign policy mission statement in 1997, and thus, shows some continuation of the sustained change that has occurred at a rhetorical level on openly positioning human rights as an essential element of the UK's foreign policy.

**Figure 9. % Share of government liberal conservative rhetoric**
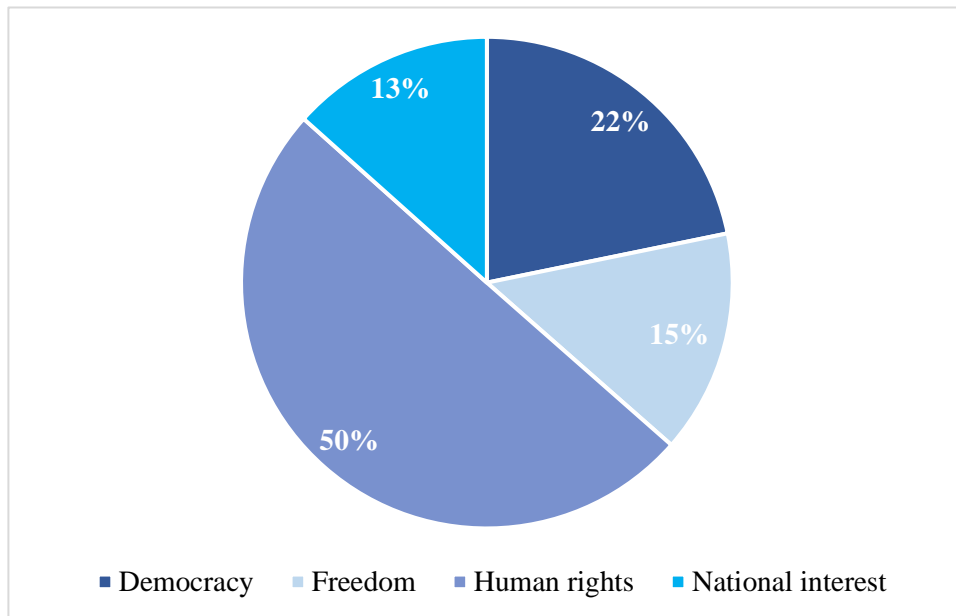


An important difference with New Labour's first term in office is the increasing fusion between human rights and democracy, which the Conservative-led Coalition government sees as complementary in a liberal conservative foreign policy. This is presented in government rhetoric, including Hague's suggestion that the UK "support democracy, human rights and economic freedom" (FCO, 2011i). Whilst Gaskarth (2006, p.51) argued that Cook's exclusive emphasis on human rights was evidence of a rhetorical change, the post-2010 has since combined human rights with democracy. That said, as figures 8 and

9 illustrate, human rights are still mentioned much more in government rhetoric than freedom and democracy put together, alongside the annual publications of the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy reports. This emphasis on human rights in particular is evidence of a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection more broadly, which began in earnest in 1997 and has remained a consistent theme of UK foreign policy despite a change in government and a reorientation to liberal conservatism.

Whilst the national interest is not explicitly part of Hague's (2010b) conceptualisation of a liberal conservative foreign policy, the content analysis of government speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports showed frequent references to it. The issue with the concept of the national interest is that it is not abundantly clear what it means. This is because the national interest "is a social construct, one in which state policy-makers have an instrumental role" (Gilmore, 2014, p.542). Through qualitative keyword searches, it was clearer that the UK's national interest between 2010 and 2015 is integrated as part of the government's liberal conservative commitment to democracy, freedom and human rights. The Coalition government's 2010 National Security Strategy suggested that

> "Our [UK] national interest requires us to stand up for the values our country believes in – the rule of law, democracy, free speech, tolerance and human rights. Those are the attributes for which Britain is admired in the world and we must continue to advance them, because Britain will be safer if our values are upheld and respected in the world." (HM Government, 2010, p.4)

The national interest thus performs an important function in being the government's overarching mechanism for its commitment to freedom, democracy, human rights, and by extension, human protection from mass violence and atrocity crimes.

**Figure 10. The domestic-international interest**

As figure 10 illustrates, this interpretation of the national interest is firmly based on the idea that protecting these components in other countries will ultimately support the short and long-term domestic protection of freedom, democracy, and human rights within the UK. This approach provides evidence of yet another reorientation of the UK's place in the world since 1997 according to New Labour's liberal internationalist focus on the connection between the national and international interest in UK foreign policy. The post-2010 government is simply following the same roadmap by framing its foreign policy commitments through the ultimate pursuit of the national interest in order to protect first and foremost the UK's own domestic security and stability.

**5.1.4 Liberal Conservatism and human protection**

Human protection is a crucial element of a liberal conservative approach to foreign policy and its component commitment to the national interest. This is because human protection from mass violence and atrocity crimes is part of the government's broader commitment to human rights. If it is generally accepted that some of the roots of mass violence and atrocity crimes lie in instability, then upholding human rights and preventing broader international instability in the short, medium, and long-term should protect the UK's own domestic security. In this sense, the promotion of the national interest does not necessarily come at the expense of a commitment to human protection (Ralph, 2014a, p.14).

Prior to entering office, Cameron (2006) commented that "I believe that we should be prepared to intervene for humanitarian purposes to secure people from genocide" and outlined his commitment to humanitarian intervention. This commitment is not entirely

unsurprising since his speech was made following the endorsement of the R2P by UN member states in 2005, and thus reflected the broader international concern with protecting populations from atrocity crimes. However, the Conservative Party's 2010 manifesto under the leadership of Cameron declared that it "will support humanitarian intervention when it is practical and necessary" (Conservative Party, 2010, p.109). In office, the government set to work on incorporating this rhetorical commitment to human protection through humanitarian intervention in its foreign policy action. The fourth edition of the British Defence Doctrine acknowledged that "non-intervention in another state's affairs is a principle of customary international law" but that there were three criteria for when a state could militarily intervene without the consent of the host state (Ministry of Defence, 2011, pp.1b-1-1b-2). This criteria was based on self-defence according to Article 51 of the UN Charter, a UN Security Council Chapter VII resolution, and significantly, "to avert an immediate and overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe" (Ministry of Defence, 2011, pp.1b-1-1b-2). The fifth edition of the doctrine published in 2014 updated this latter criteria "to promote national interests across the entire spectrum of military activities, including support to diplomacy, military assistance, humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping operations, through to major warfighting" (Ministry of Defence, 2014, p.72). Through this doctrine, the government was making the case that the UK could intervene militarily without consulting the other appropriate legal channels of self-defence or a Chapter VII resolution in situations of humanitarian suffering.

This position was echoed in the government's official response to the Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry on when, why, and how an international intervention may occur where the government acknowledged that the UK may use force "for humanitarian purposes" (HM Government, 2014). The evidence given by FCO Minister, Hugh Robertson, suggested that "nothing has changed with regard to the basis for the government's position [on intervention], which predates 2000" (Robertson quoted in HM Government, 2014). This continued commitment supports the argument that "humanitarian intervention is now an established facet of Britain's global role" (Beech and Munce, 2019, p.119). Section 5.3 in particular shows how this commitment to humanitarian intervention in rhetoric and action evidences a sustained change that has occurred in the relationship between human protection and the UK's role and leadership on the international stage since 1997. It is argued that this position is strikingly similar to New Labour's pragmatic liberal internationalist worldview and its subsequent

commitment to protecting populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes as part of the fusion between the national and international interest.

Beyond humanitarian intervention, the liberal conservative commitment to human rights is evident in the government's publication of the first UK strategy on the PoC in 2011, which aims to match its rhetorical support for human protection with practical steps (FCO, 2011l). Similarly, the government endorsed the preventative and assistance elements of the R2P (FCO, 2011j, p.64; FCO, 2012j, p.96 ). Together, the PoC, R2P, and humanitarian intervention form the central pillars of the government's overarching approach to human protection between 2010 and 2015. The following two sections on Libya and Syria continue this analysis of the relationship between the government's liberal conservative view of UK foreign policy, its active place in the world to counter domestic perceptions of relative decline, and its resulting commitment to human protection.

## 5.2 A liberal conservative approach to the intervention in Libya, 2011

Less than a year after officially taking office, the Conservative-led Coalition government faced its first major international crisis following mounting regime violence against civilians in Libya in 2011. The Arab Spring uprisings that emerged in Egypt in January 2011 reached Libya by mid-February (Adams, 2016, p.769). A wave of protests in the city of Benghazi soon spread around the country, with the government responding through the use of force and killing of protestors (Adams, 2016, p.769). Amid the increasing violence and instability, the UK government's initial response was to evacuate its nationals (FCO, 2011b). As the violence continued to escalate however, the UK led the UN Security Council's response through drafting Resolution 1970. This was followed by the government outlining its position on human protection in Libya which was eventually pursued through a Chapter VII mandate from the UN Security Council which authorised the use of force to protect civilians (UN Security Council, 2011a, p.3).

This section focuses specifically on the UK's response to the crisis in Libya, particularly the role of human protection as the Coalition government's justification for action. It shows how human protection was a critical part of the UK's response alongside its broader commitment to the national interest, international leadership, and its view that the UK retains an important place in the world. It argues that the connection between these aspects of the UK's response demonstrates the specific relationship between the UK's awareness of its changing place in the world and sustained changes in its commitment to

human protection. Whilst the UK's commitment to human protection and the Chapter VII authorisation of force meant that it would automatically contribute to the response, it was not compelled to adopt a leadership role. Rather, the UK's leadership at the UN was part of the government's view that the UK still had a leading and active role to play on the international stage.

### 5.2.1 Liberal conservative human protection rhetoric on Libya

The condemnation of regime violence against protestors and the subsequent passing of resolution 1970 were central to the UK government's response in Libya. Figure 11 presents the breakdown of the government's foreign policy rhetoric on the crisis from a content analysis of 355 speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports covering government ministers and UK representatives at the UN. The results show that the government's rhetoric was shaped according to core liberal conservative themes of democracy, human rights, and human protection more broadly in relation to Libya.

**Figure 11. Government references to the crisis in Libya, 2011[19]**
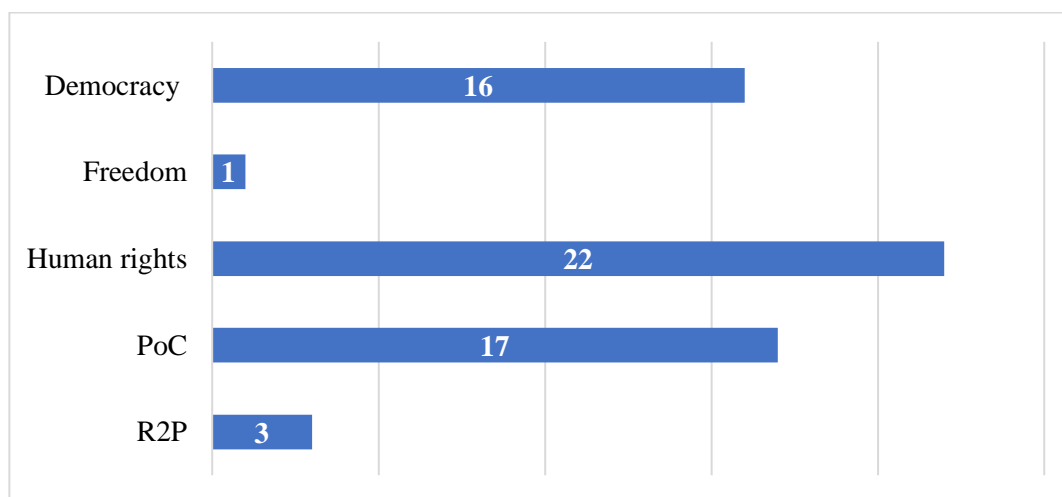


*Source: Gov.uk and Digital National Archives*

Whilst freedom was mentioned on only one occasion, the results show that democracy and human rights were amongst the most frequent references to liberal conservative

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[19] Following keyword searches in NVivo on human rights, freedom, responsibility to protect, protection of civilians/protect civilians/civilian protection, and democracy/democratic/democratic within the primary code of Libya. See appendix 2 for full details of the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each code and sub-code.

principles in the government's rhetoric on Libya. As figure 12 shows, democracy and human rights accounted for 27% and 37% of the total rhetorical references to liberal conservative themes on Libya by the government (figure 12). A qualitative content analysis of these references presented a high-degree of similarity with the government's general understanding of liberal conservatism based on a commitment to human rights and democracy. Cameron (2011c) outlined his aim for a "democratic and inclusive Libya"; in addition to his pledge to "support the building blocks of a democratic society" (Cameron, 2011a). Similarly, Hague emphasised the importance of a "democratic future" for Libya (Cameron, 2011g). This government rhetoric is part of its broader liberal conservative belief that democracy is one important element of stability given that in Libya it would provide the alternative to Gaddafi's repressive regime that had generated instability in the first place. This approach is thus similar to New Labour's position on Sierra Leone, which brought an end to the conflict and helped protect civilians with the ultimate aim of reinstalling what the UK perceived as a legitimate democratic government.

**Figure 12. % breakdown of government references on Libya, 2011**
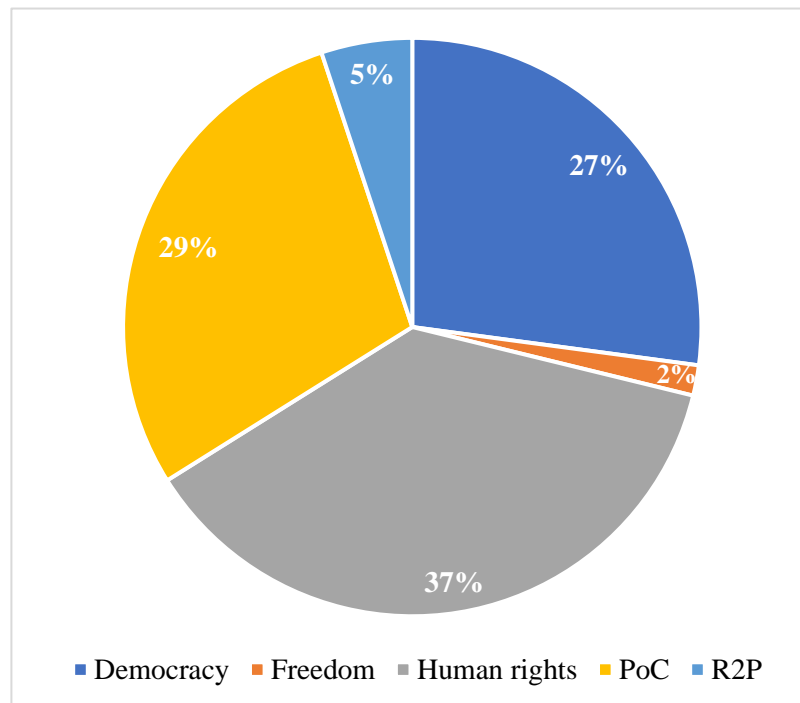


Alongside this commitment to democracy, the UK government's rhetorical references to human rights and human protection more broadly are revealing. The results of keyword searches of the government's speeches on Libya show references to either human rights, the PoC or the R2P. Human rights and the PoC accounted for 66% of the total references

to democracy, freedom, human rights, PoC, and R2P in Libya. On human rights, government rhetoric highlighted the need to hold those committing "human rights abuses in Libya" to account (FCO, 2011f). This includes investigations of human rights abuses from the ICC and UN Human Rights Council (FCO, 2011e). On human protection more specifically, the results from keyword searches evidence that the PoC was the dominant rhetorical framework for the UK's human protection response. From the outset, Cameron was clear that any action in Libya was on the basis of protecting civilians from the Gaddafi regime (Hansard HC Deb. 21 March 2011).

In comparison, government rhetorical references were limited on the R2P and did not mention humanitarian intervention. Accounting for just 5% of references in figure 12, the R2P was mentioned on just two occasions by the government and its representatives, and tellingly, in the aftermath of the intervention. Hague mentioned the broader R2P of states in reference to Libya (FCO, 2011a), while Cameron acknowledged the UK's R2P in a House of Commons debate over six months after resolution 1973 (Hansard HC Deb., 24 October 2011). This suggests that the R2P was not at the forefront of the government's rhetorical justification for human protection in Libya. Similarly, a research interview suggested that R2P rhetoric was not part of the immediate response, but rather discussed following the intervention.[20] The official government response to the Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into Global Britain and the R2P seven years later reinforces this idea. The government stated that "the intervention in Libya was authorised by the UN Security Council through resolution 1973 (2011), which has *now come to be seen* as an example of the Responsibility to Protect in action" (HM Government, 2018c, emphasis added). The reference to *come to be seen* is far from a convincing argument that the R2P was at the core of the government's human protection response in 2011.

It is plausible to argue that the R2P did not feature predominately in the government's rhetoric due to the role of the PoC, which had already defined the international community's response. However, the next sub-section on Syria argues that the government's lack of attention on the R2P in Libya is indicative of its broader prioritisation and commitment to humanitarian intervention, which is significant because it exposes a disconnect between the UK's and international community's commitment to human protection, especially the legality of intervening without consent into another sovereign state.

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[20] Author interview 10.

Humanitarian intervention was absent altogether from the UK's rhetoric on human protection in Libya. However, this does not necessarily signal the government's rejection of humanitarian intervention altogether. Rather, this thesis argues that the main explanation for why humanitarian intervention does not feature in government's human protection rhetoric on Libya is because the intervention already had the necessary legal authorisation through a Chapter VII resolution. This in turn meant that the intervention had met one of the three criteria in the British Defence Doctrine (Ministry of Defence, 2011, p.1b-1). There was no UN Security Council deadlock on Libya that would have compelled the UK to resort to humanitarian intervention nor was the UK required to draw on Article 51. As section 5.3. on Syria will show, Libya was thus more of an exception than the rule when it came to the government's rhetorical justification of human protection in relation to international crises.

### 5.2.2 Government action on human protection in Libya

The UK's response to the crisis in Libya is a significant example of the government's rhetorical references to human protection being matched with its actions. This is because it fulfilled at least three of the four indicators of foreign policy action on human protection according to policy, intervention, and funding and humanitarian aid. The following section addresses these areas of UK government action on human protection through two important stages of the broader international response according to resolutions 1970 and 1973. These examples show the continuation of a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection in action based on the government's awareness of the need to continue playing a leading role on the international stage in response to humanitarian crises.

As Tony Blair did in relation to Kosovo, the post-2010 Cameron-led government was similarly quick to assert its credentials for an international leadership role on human protection in Libya. Following the withdrawal of UK nationals from Libya, the government proceeded to try and address the Libyan regime's violence against civilians. The UK's first step was to lead as penholder on the drafting of resolution 1970, which illustrates its policy action on human protection. The resolution demanded "an immediate end to the violence" and underlined that the Libyan government must "respect human rights and international humanitarian law, and allow immediate access for international human rights monitors" (UN Security Council, 2011a, p.2). This was part of the UK's commitment to the protection of human rights in Libya amid growing concern of violence

against civilians (Cameron, 2011f). Adopting such a leadership position allowed the UK to outline its own specific terms for human protection in Libya and gain a unanimous endorsement for these from Member States (Cameron, 2011f). From the outset, the UK was demonstrating its willingness to adopt a central leadership role in international response to Libya, particularly through its permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Following the Libyan regime's failure to end violence against civilians in accordance with resolution 1970, Member States returned to the UN to discuss further action. For Cameron (2011d), the main issue which warranted immediate action was evidence of the Libyan regime's intention to attack civilians in Benghazi. In response, the UK continued its foreign policy action at the UN Security Council through leading on resolution 1973. Cameron (2011d) commented that "it is absolutely right that we [the UK] played a leading role on the UN Security Council to secure permission for this action". Hague also praised the UK for taking "the lead in drafting the resolution" (FCO, 2011c). Resolution 1973 was unanimously endorsed on March 17, 2011 and provided a Chapter VII mandate for UN Member States and regional organisations "to take all necessary measures…to protect civilians and populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi" (UN Security Council, 2011b, p.3).

The UK responded to resolution 1973 through direct military contributions to the broader NATO-led intervention, which included 2300 soldiers, "eight warships, a hunter-killer submarine and 36 aircraft", with over 3000 missions and 2000 sorties (Cameron, 2011b). Cameron (2011d) was unequivocal in stating that this direct action was taken in response to the threat posed by the Gaddafi regime and its failure to halt mass violence against civilians. Beyond the UK government's direct military contributions in Libya, it also provided substantial financial support. The UK contributed over £40 million towards stabilisation and reform in Libya post-Gaddafi (FCO, 2011h). In addition, the government deployed "an international stabilization response team to Benghazi to advise and assist the Council [interim government] on its longer-term needs" (Cameron, 2011g). Alongside this, the UK supplied significant equipment to civilians in Libya. This included basic living necessities, while also providing broader military equipment, such as armour, and supplying humanitarian aid and assistance (Cameron, 2011g).

The scale of the UK's contributions in action and its leadership in drafting resolutions 1970 and 1973, provided evidence for Hague's claim that "Britain has continued to take a leading role in international efforts to protect civilians in Libya" (FCO, 2011g). In particular, the government demonstrated its willingness to translate its liberal

conservative rhetoric on human protection into action through the adoption of its leadership role on the UN Security Council and through its actions on the ground by preventing the Gaddafi regime from committing further violence against civilians. The government's rhetorical commentary on its actions, especially UK leadership, shows how it was aware of the importance of leading on the crisis as previous governments had done before it, such as in Kosovo and Sierra Leone.

### 5.2.3 The UK's place in the world and human protection in Libya

As argued in the previous two sections, the UK's commitment to human protection in action in Libya demonstrated its ability to adopt a leading role on the international stage, especially through drawing on its penholding responsibilities to draft resolutions 1970 and 1973. Commenting on the situation in Libya, Cameron argued that the UK "will remain at the forefront of Europe in leading the response to the crisis" (FCO, 2011b). It is plausible to argue that the government recognised the importance of projecting the UK's leadership and remaining military capacity to demonstrate that the UK is fully committed to international human rights protection, while simultaneously countering the idea of the UK's relative international decline. In particular, Hague's rhetorical emphasis on the UK's "leading role" on human protection in Libya (FCO, 2011g), resonates with the notion that the UK remains an important international actor with an ability to contribute to addressing humanitarian crises. Thus, it is here where the relationship between sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection and the government's awareness of the need for the UK to continue playing an important role in international affairs is most evident.

A fundamental challenge for the government's articulation of this relationship was to justify the need for intervention in Libya to a domestic audience. It is essential to draw on the broader context of UK foreign policy to explain the importance of domestic support for the intervention in Libya. At the time of the proposed intervention in 2011, the UK government was in the final stages of withdrawing troops from Iraq after over seven years of service. To therefore propose the deployment of thousands more troops in another international conflict with public support was a significant dilemma for the government. Findings from a qualitative content analysis of government foreign policy speeches on the intervention in Libya show that making a direct link to the UK's national interest was thus an essential part of making the case for the deployment of more troops.

Beyond the immediate intervention in Libya, Hague had made the case that a "foreign policy with a conscience is the right thing to do and is in the long term

enlightened national interest of our country" (Hague, 2011). This is a similar emphasis to the claims made in New Labour's justification for action in Kosovo through drawing on the connection between human protection as a moral concern and the protection of the national interest based on the domestic and international relationship in UK foreign policy (Blair, 1999b). On Libya, Cameron (2011e) placed significant effort on justifying the UK's intervention by fusing human protection and the national interest. In a statement to the House of Commons immediately prior to the deployment of UK forces, Cameron stated the following

> "Mr Speaker, there are some who question whether Britain really needs to get involved at all. Some people have argued that we should leave it to others because there isn't sufficient British national interest at stake. I believe that argument is misplaced. If Gaddafi's attacks on his own people succeed, Libya will become once again a pariah state, festering on Europe's border, a source of instability, exporting terror beyond her borders. A state from which literally hundreds of thousands of citizens could seek to escape, putting huge pressure on us in Europe…I am clear: taking action in Libya, together with our international partners, is in our national interest." (Cameron, 2011e)

Cameron's speech directly articulates the relationship between the national and the international interest in figure 10. This is based on the argument that UK action not only protects Libyan civilians in the short, medium, and long-term through protecting them against the violent Gaddafi regime, but that it is also helps to protect the interests of UK nationals by preventing a potential spread of instability in Europe. To strengthen this case, in a speech to UK service personnel, Cameron (2011b) referenced that the UK "are no strangers to what Gaddafi was capable of. He murdered the police officer on the street of London; he managed to blow up an airliner over the skies of Lockerbie; he gave Semtex to the IRA". Cameron thus drew an immediate relationship between intervention in Libya against the Gaddafi regime which had committed acts of violence within the borders of the UK.

It is also significant that Cameron (2011e) addressed whether Libya was "another Iraq". He drew important distinctions between Iraq and Libya on the basis that the intervention in Libya will not involve "an occupation force", its clear Chapter VII mandate, and the backing from Arab states (Cameron, 2011e). This shows how the

government was still learning from the legacy of New Labour's foreign policy and its attempts to distinguish itself from previously controversial interventions, such as Iraq. Later reflecting on this subject, Cameron (2019, p.275) acknowledged that "Iraq casts a shadow over all foreign policy – every intervention is seen through the prism of its failures. But it was Bosnia that was at the forefront of my mind as I discussed with Ed Miliband how to respond to the crisis". This shows the challenge UK governments faced in justifying interventions in the backdrop of the Iraq War. It is also an important dimension of UK foreign policy change on intervention where the post-2010 government was explicitly attempting to distance from previous controversial interventions in order to make the case for action. Cameron's direct reference to the differences between the Iraq and Libya interventions is testament to this change in presenting how the government had learned from what happened through being clearer on the basis and nature of its actions.

### 5.2.4 Regime change and the national interest

The UK government has been quick to dismiss any suggestions that regime change was an objective from the outset of the intervention (FCO, 2011m).[21] Yet the government is highly unlikely to openly accept that regime change had been a motivation for action from the beginning, especially because of the political and diplomatic implications of this. The findings from a Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry on the Libya intervention suggested that "a intervention to protect civilians drifted into a policy of regime change by military means" (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016b, p.5). Whilst not an initial target, this suggests that regime change was a chance that intervening forces took advantage of following their intervention.

Giving evidence to the same inquiry, the Chief of the Defence Staff, Lord David Richards, suggested that "at some point regime change, in shorthand, became the accepted means of ensuring that the civilian population of Libya would not be threatened into the long term, so it became, as I said, an ineluctable change of mission, for me" (Lord Richards in Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016c). This statement supports the government's official position that regime change was a fluid part of the intervention as it progressed rather than an objective from the beginning. It is possible to draw out the broader role of

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[21] The suggestion that regime change was an objective from the beginning was also rejected in a research interview (author interview 10), which adopted a similar stance to Lord Richards.

the national interest in regard to the evidence from Lord Richards, since the view that the *civilian population of Libya would not be threatened into the long term* is part of the same government rhetoric on its national interest in Libya. That is, securing the immediate protection of civilians against the Gaddafi regime equally contributes to the long-term protection and the security of the UK and the international community more broadly.

A further issue with the removal of the Gaddafi regime was the ambiguity of resolution 1973, which did not specify that regime change would occur, but equally did not rule it out (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016b). Although the protection of civilians was a clear rhetorical objective of the UK's intervention in Libya, it is still important to consider the role of other motivations for the intervention because of the removal of the Gaddafi regime following the NATO-led intervention and its potential consequences for future interventions, including in Syria (see section 5.3).

To conclude this section, the Libya case shows that there is an important connection between the UK's commitment to human protection and the government's awareness of projecting its perspective that the UK retains its status as a central actor on the international stage. This was demonstrated through the UK's leadership on drafting resolutions 1970 and 1973 alongside its military provisions for the NATO-led intervention. The UK government was not compelled to lead on the response to Libya, which is a further demonstration of its attempts to show that the UK remains an important international actor. To achieve this, the UK government's liberal conservative approach to the crisis reflected several role conceptions (ally, military power, global leader) and performances (military intervention and diplomacy in multilateral institutions) (Gaskarth, 2014, p.578), which were consistent with the position of a pragmatic liberal internationalist. Whilst liberal conservatism was the government's attempt to distance from the legacy of New Labour's foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, the core underlying features of its commitment to human protection have remained as strong as the period under New Labour government from 1997. This demonstrates a sustained change that has occurred in UK foreign policy in which its commitment to human protection since New Labour has been strengthened in rhetoric and action during the government's contributions to the Libya intervention in 2011.

## 5.3 Liberal conservatism and human protection in Syria, 2011-2014

A month after the outbreak of protests in Libya, the Arab Spring uprisings had spread to Syria. Similar to the peaceful protests against the Gaddafi regime in Libya, the protests by

Syrian civilians against President Assad's administration were met with brute force (Momani and Hakak, 2016, p.896). What started as protests turned into one of the most pressing foreign policy concerns for the remainder of the Conservative-led Coalition government and for successive Conservative governments (see chapter 6). This section analyses the UK government's approach to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, with a particular focus on the period between 2011 to 2014 which charts the initial outbreak of the violence to the government's parliamentary defeat of its proposal for humanitarian intervention in Syria on 29 August 2013 and the aftermath of this decision. The central argument is that human protection debates on Syria revealed the government's preference for humanitarian intervention as its legal basis for action, which ultimately proved an important aspect of its subsequent downfall in failing to gain authorisation from parliamentarians. Whilst prevented from conducting a humanitarian intervention, the UK government performed actions on humanitarian assistance that reflected its willingness demonstrate human protection leadership beyond direct coercive action.

This section first examines the core UK government rhetoric on Syria, which is followed by a specific focus on the government's human protection rhetoric and a comparison to its position on Libya in 2011. It then analyses parliamentary debates on the government's approach to human protection in Syria on the basis that parliament had a critical role through voting against humanitarian intervention in 2013. This latter focus on humanitarian intervention is discussed at length according to the argument that it had a significant impact on the decision not to intervene by force in Syria in 2013 based on both domestic and international constraints on the UK government's actions. The section finishes with an analysis of the broader themes of the UK's place in the world, human protection, and the national interest in Syria.

### 5.3.1 Core UK government rhetoric on Syria

The complexity of the UK's response to Syria is shown in the range of government rhetoric on the crisis. Figure 13 presents the findings from word frequency and keyword searches on the government's rhetoric in 355 speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports covering government ministers and UK representatives.[22]

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22 Following keyword searches in NVivo on (1) Assad/Asad; (2) Democracy/democratic; (3) End violence/end to the violence/ending violence; (5) Transition; and (6) Chemical weapons.

**Figure 13. Core government rhetoric on Syria, 2011-2014**
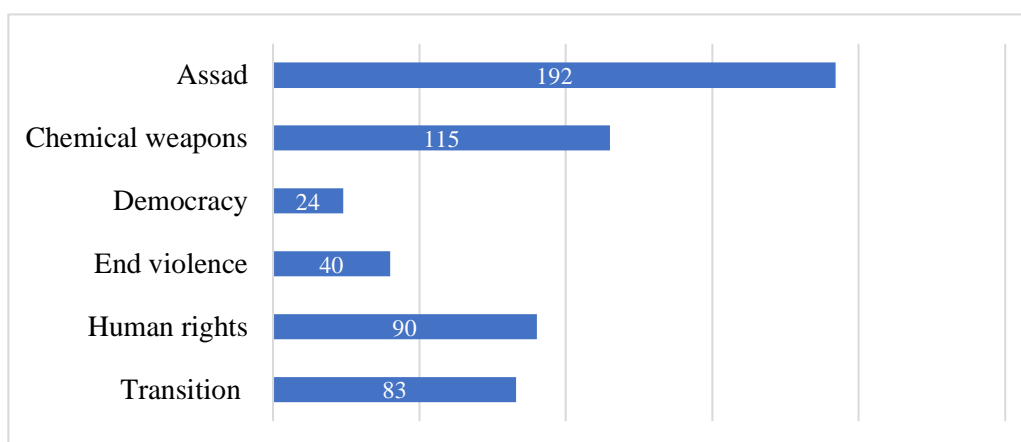


*Source: Gov.uk and Digital National Archives*

As figure 13 shows, there are 6 keywords that the UK referred to on the crisis between 2011 and 2014. Whilst human rights and democracy are reflective of the government's liberal conservative foreign policy, frequent references to transition, end violence, chemical weapons, and Assad are part of the UK's broader response to the crisis. The UK government's initial response was to condemn the violence against protestors through drawing on references to "end the violence", which accounted for 7% of the references to the keywords in figure 14 (FCO, 2012c; FCO, 2012f; FCO, 2012h; Hague, 2012).[23] This rhetoric was intertwined with the UK government's condemnation of human right abuses which featured in 17% of the 544 keyword references (figure 14). Hague, for instance, commented that the UK "condemn unequivocally the human rights violations and abuses committed by all parties, including those by armed rebels" (FCO, 2012i); and the need to "deter human rights violations and atrocities" (FCO, 2012b).

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[23] Note: Hague did make reference to a "responsibility to protect demonstrators" FCO. 2011d. *Foreign Secretary condemns the killing of demonstrators by the Syrian security forces.* [Online]. [Accessed: 6 Feburary 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-condemns-the-killing-of-demonstrators-by-the-syrian-security-forces - This was excluded from the findings as it was not in reference to R2P, but simply a rhetorical overlap. See appendix 2 for full details of the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each code and sub-code.

**Figure 14. % share of government rhetoric on Syria, 2011-2014**
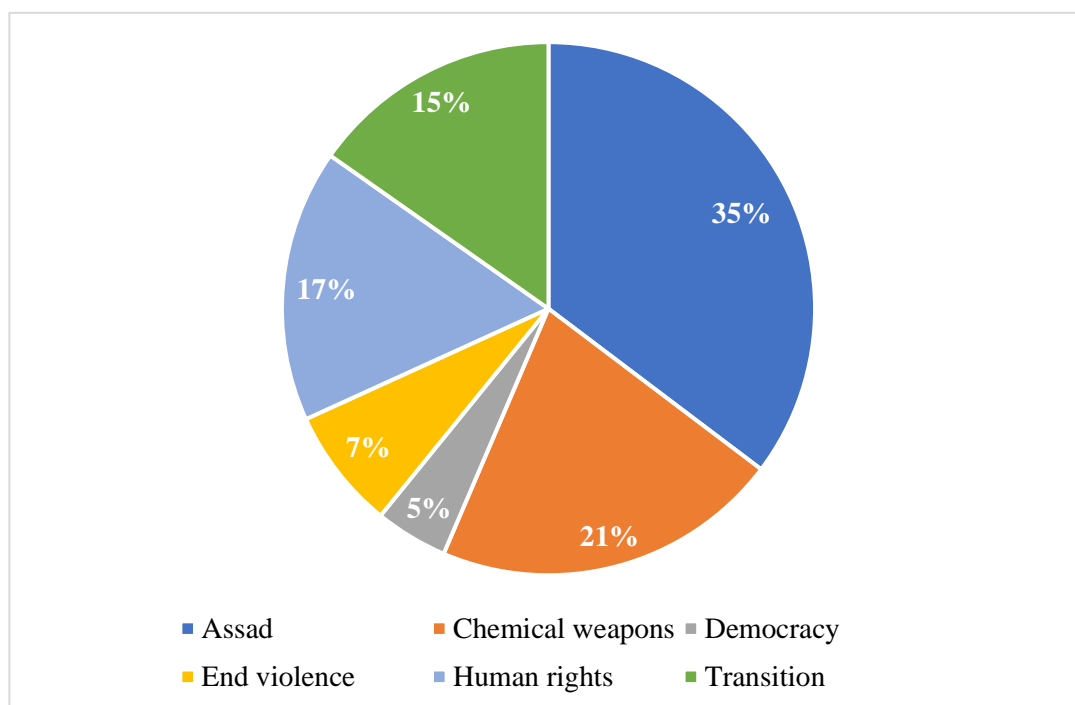


Connected with this rhetoric on ending violence and protecting human rights is another predominant aspect of the UK government's core rhetoric on democracy, Assad, and transition. As regime violence against civilians escalated, UK rhetoric shifted from its immediate focus on ending violence towards the non-violent removal of the Assad regime (FCO, 2012g). To achieve this, Syria would undergo a political transition from the Assad regime to an eventual democratic government, hence the important connection between the three concepts of Assad (35% of references), transition (15%) and democracy (5%). According to Cameron (2012a), "the only way out of Syria's nightmare is to move forward towards political transition". The outcome was to allow Syrian civilians "to develop their vision for a stable, democratic Syria" (FCO, 2012k). According to Ralph et al. (2017, p.881), it was during this period that UK "policymakers accepted regime change as inevitable". As the evidence so far shows, the UK government saw the situation in Syria as following several steps from a transition of power, an end to violence, and the election of a democratic government, which would involve a change in regime from the Assad government.

### 5.3.2 The government's rhetoric on human protection in Syria

This optimistic government rhetoric that a democratic transition of power could occur in Syria was ultimately misguided. It is essential to understand the UK government's rhetoric

on a peaceful transition of power from Assad within the broader context of the Arab Spring uprisings from 2010.[24] The UK had already been part of the military intervention in Libya that had resulted in the removal of the Gaddafi regime. It is plausible to argue that the UK government subsequently had the impression that they could also remove another repressive regime from power in Syria following the events in Libya.

However, as figure 13 illustrated, chemical weapons in particular had a significant role in the complexity of the crisis in Syria in comparison to Libya in 2011. The qualitative content analysis of 355 foreign policy speeches on Syria show that chemical weapons were the basis of the UK's commitment to human protection. In accounting for 21% of the references in figure 14, chemical weapons were frequently mentioned. The UK government's primary concern was the threat that the stockpiling and potential use of these weapons posed for Syrian civilians and broader international peace and security. Hague suggested that the "use of chemical weapons would be utterly unacceptable" (FCO, 2012a); and called on the UN to launch an investigation into "allegations of the use of chemical and biological weapons" (FCO, 2012a). Later writing on this issue, Cameron (2019, p.459) suggested that it was the chemical weapons attack in Ghouta on 21 August 2013 that triggered the UK's resort to pushing for a military intervention in Syria, particularly because he believed this use of chemical weapons crossed Obama's red line on action.

In an interview two days prior to the parliamentary vote on intervention, Cameron (2013b) set out his position that "any action we take or others take would have to be legal, would have to be proportionate. It would have to be specifically to deter and degrade the future use of chemical weapons". In this sense, Cameron proposed another limited intervention like the one in Libya two years earlier. As figure 15 shows, the government's reference to the PoC was consistent with its approach to Libya in remaining at the forefront of its human protection rhetoric on Syria (FCO, 2012k; Hague, 2013b; Hague, 2013c).

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24 Author interview 10.

**Figure 15. Comparing government protection rhetoric on Libya and Syria**
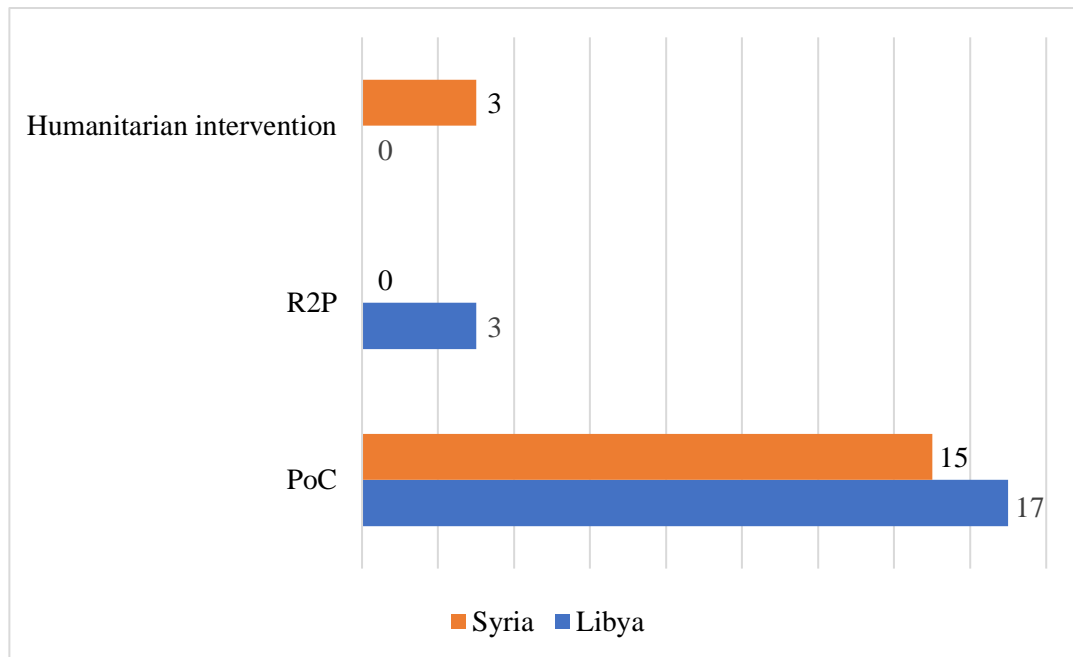


*Source: Gov.uk and Digital National Archives*

The critical difference with Libya, however, are the 3 government references to humanitarian intervention in Syria. Whilst small in number, these references had a significant impact on the UK government's rhetorical framing of the intervention in Syria and the presentation of its case to parliament following its recall in August 2013. Addressing parliament on 29 August 2013, Cameron noted "that the use of chemical weapons is a war crime under customary law and a crime against humanity, and that the principle of humanitarian intervention provides a sound legal basis for taking action" (Hansard HC Deb., 29 August 2013). Cameron was thus arguing that there is a connection between the use of chemical weapons and the humanitarian suffering they inflict, which leads to the argument that a humanitarian intervention should be authorised in order to remove these weapons, and thus, protect Syrian civilians and the broader international community.

It is essential to understand the importance of this appeal to humanitarian intervention within the broader geopolitical context of Syria. The removal of the Gaddafi regime in Libya in 2011 generated controversy among the powers on the UN Security Council between the US, UK, France (P3) and Russia and China (P2) (Paris, 2014, p.540; Garwood-Gowers, 2016, p.89). When Syria reached the UN Security Council, this divide between the positions of the P3 and P2 came to the fore again (Morris, 2013, p.1275). Russia's position on Syria was a major issue for states favouring intervention because it

"implicitly supported the Assad narrative of terrorists causing insecurity and civilian death" (Momani and Hakak, 2016, p.897). This is in addition to Russia's "strategic, geopolitical, economic relations with Assad" (Momani and Hakak, 2016, p.897). Russia has subsequently used its veto power on 14 occasions so far on Syria (Security Council Report, 2020), which has ultimately prevented direct coercive measures being taken against the Assad regime.

This broader international dynamic explains the UK's pursuit of humanitarian intervention as its legal basis for action. The government's official legal position on Syria was that

> "If action in the Security Council is blocked, the UK would still be permitted under international law to take exceptional measures in order to alleviate the scale of the overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe in Syria by deterring and disrupting the further use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. Such a legal basis is available, under the doctrine of humanitarian intervention" (Prime Minister's Office, 2013).

The government's legal position thus activated the third principle of the 2011 Defence Doctrine that "a limited use of force may be justifiable without the UN Security Council's express authorisation where that is the only means to avert an immediate and overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe" (Ministry of Defence, 2011, pp.1b-1). This position on humanitarian intervention was markedly similar to New Labour's intervention in Kosovo in 1999, where Blair adopted the same stance in calling for humanitarian intervention outside of the conventional legal channels of self-defence or a Chapter VII resolution (Blair, 1999a).

### 5.3.3 Parliamentary debate on the government's approach to Syria

In contrast to the Chapter VII mandated intervention in Libya in 2011, the UK government sought permission for its limited humanitarian intervention in Syria from parliament. As figure 16 shows, human protection was discussed significantly more in parliament given the size of the House of Lords and the House of Commons as well as the open forum for debate on these issues.

**Figure 16. Parliamentary rhetoric on human protection in Syria, 2011-2014**
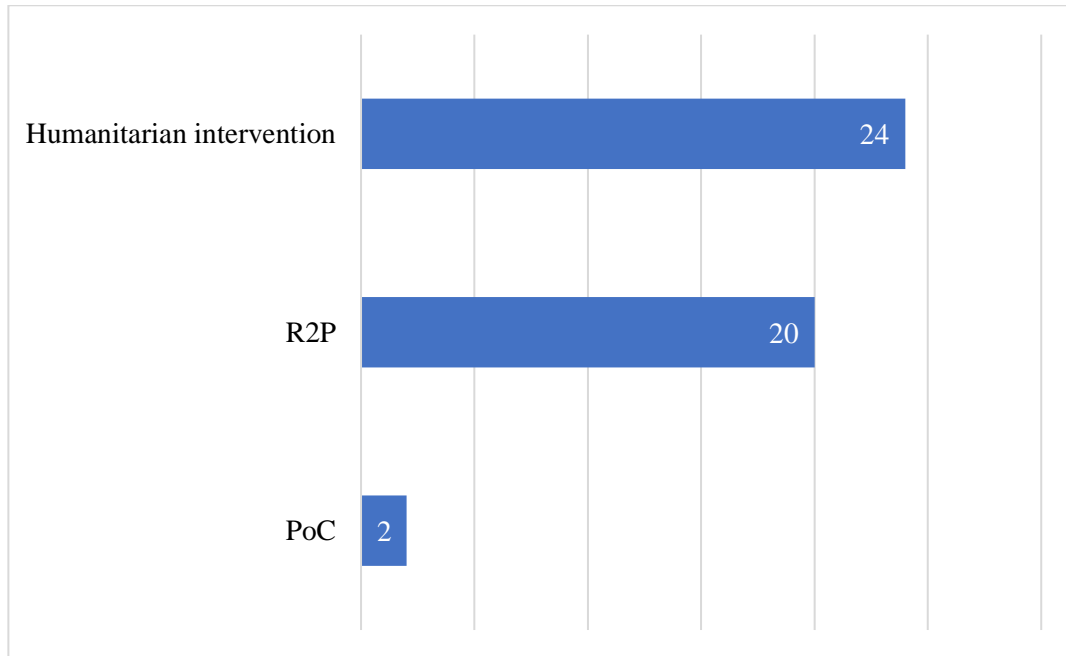
The results of keyword searches on parliamentary rhetoric in figure 16 are interesting because the PoC hardly features in the rhetoric of parliamentarians compared to humanitarian intervention and the R2P. On human protection in Syria then, a significant element of debate was the relationship between the R2P and humanitarian intervention. The initial position from MPs was that the Syrian regime had failed to uphold its R2P (Hansard HC Deb., 29 August 2013). John Baron MP declared that the R2P "could have been invoked 100,000 lives ago" (Hansard HC Deb., 29 August 2013); while Lord Hannay declared that "inaction would make a complete mockery of the international norm of the responsibility to protect" (Hansard HC Deb., 29 August 2013). The fundamental issue amongst parliamentarians was the confusion and conflation in the relationship between the R2P and humanitarian intervention (Newman, 2013a). Sir Menzies Campbell MP commented that on Syria "we turn to what was once called humanitarian intervention and now is called responsibility to protect" (Hansard HL Deb., 29 August 2013); and Lord Carlile mentioned "the government's legal advice that the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, or responsibility to protect, as it is sometimes called" (Hansard HL Deb., 29 August 2013). These MPs were thus unaware that coercive intervention through the R2P must have a Chapter VII resolution from the UN Security Council, which is not required with humanitarian intervention.

Those MPs that recognised this distinction emphasised the legally dubious grounding of the government's position. Conservative MP, Richard Ottaway, suggested that "There is no precedent for an intervention in what is essentially a civil war" (Hansard HC Deb., 23 May 2013); and later that "Taking sides in what is essentially a civil war has no legal precedent and no legal authority" (Hansard HC Deb. 11 July 2013). Labour MP, John McDonald, stated that according to humanitarian intervention "It must be objectively clear that there is no practical alternative to the use of force if lives are to be saved. I do not believe that it has been demonstrated that all practical alternatives have been exhausted" (Hansard HC Deb., 29 August 2013). The UK government thus faced notable legal challenges to its position on humanitarian intervention, which was unconvincing to some MPs. As Newman (2013a) suggests, the UK's legal position "appears to rest upon a customary norm of humanitarian intervention: but this is absolutely *not* generally accepted as a tenant of international law" (emphasis in original). Similarly, Ralph (2014a, p.25) acknowledges "a strong moral argument for by-passing the Security Council when it fails to authorise measures, including the use of force, that are necessary to prevent or end mass atrocity". Whilst Ralph (2014a, p.25) suggests that "for some the UK may be seen to be acting as a 'norm entrepreneur'" through advancing its own legal stance on humanitarian intervention, the UK's legal position on humanitarian intervention remains disputed both domestically and internationally as discussed in chapter 4 (Henderson, 2015; Betti, 2020; Butchard, 2020; Kleczkowska, 2020; Newman, 2021).

In the case of Syria, the UK government was adamant of its legal basis for intervention, despite its significant legal implications. Yet according to Merle (2005, p.62), "humanitarian interventions lack *prima facie* the legitimacy of international law". Whilst there is a case for intervention without a chapter VII mandate through self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, humanitarian interventions without such a basis are considered as violating international law. As the previous chapter showed, the most notable example was the 1999 NATO-led Intervention in Kosovo without a Chapter VII mandate, which was deemed illegal (The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, 2000, p.4). Whilst the UK was attempting to strongly commit to human protection in the face of mass atrocities in Syria, its continued pursuit of humanitarian intervention against prevailing legal opinion risks undermining its claims on the importance of "abiding by international laws" (Hague, 2012).

### 5.3.4 The government's human protection actions in Syria

Although immediate coercive intervention was prevented in Syria following the government's parliamentary defeat in August 2013, the UK continued to lead on the response to the crisis through alternative means, including trying to gain humanitarian access in Syria. Cameron (2013a) was "proud…that Britain is leading an international effort at the United Nations to secure unfettered humanitarian access inside Syria". While Hague (2013d) was "determined to encourage and lead international efforts to alleviate human suffering in Syria and the region". The UK did illustrate its leadership on Syria through its non-coercive intervention in the form of funding and humanitarian aid. The UK provided its largest ever humanitarian contribution of £400 million to Syria, which was double its previous record at the time (DFID, 2013). This support included £8.5 million for medical supplies (FCO, 2012e); over £30 million on refugee protection (FCO, 2013c); and £20 million contribution to various civil society and activist groups in Syria (FCO, 2013d).

Beyond direct military intervention, the UK was able and willing to demonstrate international leadership on Syria through drawing on its aid capacity in order to provide human protection. According to Cameron (2019, p.467), Syria was "the great humanitarian cause of the decade, and Britain was not found wanting". A particularly important aspect of his later comments on Syria was that "while it is fashionable to talk about the UK's shrunken role in the world – even more so after we lost that Commons vote in August 2013 – we cannot underplay the importance of our leadership on these other vital things" (Cameron, 2019, p.467 ). Cameron was thus well aware of the broader debates that the 2013 parliamentary defeat had generated on the UK's place in the world, especially his reference to the idea of the UK's relative international decline and the need to show that it was still capable of international leadership.

### 5.3.5 The UK's place in the world and human protection in Syria

This concern from Cameron on the implications of the government's defeat on Syria is significant for the broader relationship between the UK's place in the world and sustained changes in its commitment to human protection. As outlined in section 5.1.2, an essential aspect of the government's liberal conservative foreign policy between 2010 and 2015 was challenging domestic and international perspectives on the UK's relative decline through demonstrating its continued leadership credentials on the international stage. It subsequently emphasised this commitment to leadership through its contributions to

human protection and humanitarian assistance. When it came to Syria, Cameron's (2019) perspective shows that the government was acutely aware of the importance of the UK's response to human protection in Syria as a demonstration of its broader commitment to leadership. For instance, during a Chatham House (2014, p.4) working group meeting on the implications of the 2013 parliamentary vote for UK foreign policy, "some argued that the government considered military action in Syria in part because of the notion that the United Kingdom ought to take such actions, commensurate with its international role as a major power". This is similar to the "great power" role orientation based on the role conceptions of being a "military power", "reliable ally" and "global policeman" through the UK's attempts to intervene in Syria (Gaskarth, 2014, p.590).

More fundamentally however, Gaskarth (2016, p.719) argues that the framing of the 2013 parliamentary vote as a "fiasco" and debating the political reasons why action did not occur "are understandable as ways of avoiding the trauma of Britain's decline". The government's defeat brought attention to the relationship between the perspective of political elites that the UK should demonstrate its leadership and influence on the international stage as a military power, and domestic and international factors, including economic challenges, the failure to generate consensus amongst the public on military action, and the broader politics of the UN Security Council veto all constraining the UK's ability to militarily intervene (Gaskarth, 2016, pp.730-731). The framing of the vote as a fiasco thus enables the UK government to evade having to face these broader challenges of a transitional foreign policy, whilst drawing on its non-coercive actions in Syria to demonstrate its continued leadership role. Whilst Strong (2015, pp.1138-1139) argues that the parliamentary defeat does not signal an end to UK interventions, it shows that "public and parliament alike will back military action only if they think it is consistent with a fairly conservative account of Britain's global role, if it looks both necessary and justifiable under international law, and if they think it will work". This perspective further supports Gaskarth's (2016) thesis on the broader implications of the 2013 Syria vote for the challenges facing UK foreign policy and its place in the world after the Syria vote.

As in Libya, the UK government did attempt to draw on the national interest as a defence of its actions in order to generate public and parliamentary approval for action in Syria. Chemical weapons were vital in this regard, with the government arguing that these weapons posed a significant threat to international peace and security, and more specifically, UK security (Hague, 2013b). However, this rhetoric on the national interest proved insufficient to gain public and parliamentary approval in the case of Syria.

Following the parliamentary defeat, Cameron (2019, p.465) suggests that he, Nick Clegg, and George Osbourne were "not wide-eyed liberal interventionists, but people who believed a line had been crossed by a chemical-weapons attack. We were militarily, legally and morally entitled to respond. But democratically we were not". However, Syria evidenced how UK foreign policy on human protection was in transition as part of the increased difficultly in persuading a domestic and international audience on the need to military intervene, and the broader view of the UK's relative international decline as a military power (Gaskarth, 2016).

**5.4 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter contributes to the assessment of the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy between 2010 and 2015 through an integrated content analysis of 355 primary materials. Its main finding is that adjustments in the UK's place in the world as part of a transitional foreign policy have translated into sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human in rhetoric and action since 1997. The first piece of evidence in support of this finding is the Conservative-led government's attachment to a liberal conservative foreign policy as distinct from New Labour's liberal internationalism. The chapter has argued that despite this shift to liberal conservatism, its approach to human protection has retained an underlying commitment to the same core liberal values championed in the foreign policy of successive New Labour government's between 1997 and 2010.

Section 5.1 argued that liberal conservatism was part of David Cameron and William Hague's efforts to learn and distance a Conservative foreign policy from their New Labour predecessors following the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This foreign policy distancing occurred while simultaneously attempting to counter the notion of the UK's relative international decline by not ruling out future UK involvements in international interventions. However, this chapter finds that this consistent commitment to core liberal values in UK foreign policy across the ideological political spectrum is evidence of an underlying sustained change that has occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection since 1997 and has continued throughout the period between 2010 and 2015.

An important finding which strengthens the argument that there has been a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection from New Labour to the Conservative-led Coalition is the implementation of these core liberal values in action

during the crises in Libya and Syria. Section 5.2 showed that the UK government's rhetoric and actions on Libya were attuned to a liberal internationalist approach to democracy and human rights protection. For example, the UK was central to the drafting of resolutions 1970 and 1973, the latter of which authorised all necessary measures to protect civilians, in addition to providing military support to the NATO-led operation. The government thus largely matched its rhetorical commitment to human protection through its practical actions on the UN Security Council, its military capacity through troop and equipment supplies, and its financial assistance. The UK government was unequivocal in its leadership role on Libya and the demonstration of its status as an important international actor on human protection, and military intervention more broadly.

In contrast to Libya, the UK's commitment to human protection in Syria was inherently more complex because it did not follow a similar process or lead to a coercive intervention despite the government's efforts. While the Libya intervention was authorised through a Chapter VII mandate, Syria lacked the domestic and international consensus on intervention amid deadlock on the UN Security Council. This led the Cameron government to draw on humanitarian intervention in a similar manner to New Labour in Kosovo in 1999. The government argued that it had a clear legal basis for action according to humanitarian intervention, which was fundamentally against existing customary international law. The difference in Syria in 2013 as compared to Kosovo in 1999 is that the government sought prior parliamentary approval for action, but its subsequent defeat ended any hopes of coercive humanitarian intervention at that time. Whilst the UK attempted to recover from the defeat through emphasising its leadership beyond coercive intervention, section 5.3 illustrated how the UK government in 2013 was at a critical juncture in the relationship between its commitment to human protection and attempts to demonstrate its active and important place on the international stage. Unlike Kosovo in 1999, the UK was unwilling to bypass the UN Security Council to intervene in Syria, which may suggest that the UK government was aware of the relative decline in its capacity to act without support from parliament.

Beyond the failure to gain the necessary approval to intervene in Syria, the government's willingness to use humanitarian intervention as a legal basis for action is evidence of sustained change that has occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection since 1997. The government's legal justification provided some evidence in support of scenario two of a pragmatic liberal internationalist approach in being willing to intervene in spite of failing to receive a Chapter VII authorisation for action. The

findings in the next chapter reinforce this evidence of a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action through a further legal justification of humanitarian intervention in Syria in 2018. This is in addition to a sustained change in the UK's leadership and influence on human protection in a transitional foreign policy as successive governments continue to adapt to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, changes in the UK's membership of multilateral organisations, and the UK's position within the evolving international order. In comparison to 1997 to 2015, the next chapter shows how the UK's commitment to human protection, and in particular, the relationship between the UK's foreign policy interests and values are inherently more complicated as policymakers grapple with the challenges posed by a transitional foreign policy.

# Chapter 6 - The Conservative government's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action, 2015-2020

> "[A]fter the military interventionism at the beginning of the century, people question the rationale – and indeed legitimacy – of the use of force and involving ourselves in crises and conflicts that are not ours. While at the same time being repelled by the slaughter in Syria and our failure to end it."
>
> *Theresa May, Speech to the UN General Assembly (FCO, 2018m)*

The 2015 UK general election returned a Conservative majority government for the first time since John Major. However, David Cameron's tenure lasted little over a year before being replaced as Prime Minister by Theresa May following the result of the 2016 EU referendum. Theresa May's appointment marked the beginning of many years of debate over Brexit, which came to dominate UK domestic and foreign policy throughout the period between 2015 and 2020. In the background, liberal conservatism remained the bedrock of the UK's international outlook, with Theresa May (2018) repeating David Cameron's rhetorical commitment to the liberal values of "respect for human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy and equality". The government's rhetorical promotion of these values was soon put to the test with the emergence of several humanitarian crises, including Myanmar, Syria, and Yemen.

This chapter continues with the analysis from chapter 5 by focusing on the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 2015 and 2020. A transitional foreign policy is again defined in relation to changes in the UK's geopolitical interests, policies, and international engagements between 1997 and 2020, which is shaped by the adaptation of successive governments to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, the UK's membership, leadership, and influence in core multilateral organisations, and the UK's position within the evolving international order. A transitional foreign policy is expressed in changing patterns of policy behaviour, changing administrative apparatus, and elite UK political rhetoric.

The UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy is therefore analysed through a content analysis of 700 primary documentary materials drawn from speeches, statements and debates from government ministers and UK representatives at the UN, and parliamentarians in both the House of Lords and the House

of Commons, with a timeframe between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. This is in addition to semi-structured interviews and a wealth of secondary literature from academic sources. Sustained change continues to be defined in relation to a shift in the UK's foreign policy goals and/or methods on human protection which endures over time in the approach of successive governments and is continually shaped, maintained, and reinforced by a combination of UK government rhetoric – what is said by elite political agents in government – and its actions – the means and methods of protection in practice.

The central argument of this chapter is that the period between 2015 and 2020 provides further evidence of some sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action as part of a transitional foreign policy. The first of these changes is the government's willingness to continue using humanitarian intervention as a legal basis for action amid international deadlock on the crisis in Syria. Additionally, the government continued to support core liberal values in its foreign policy on human rights and democracy, which it attempted to implement in Syria and Myanmar. There is also evidence of the government's adaptation to a transitional foreign policy in attempting to lead the international response to the crises in Myanmar and Syria, while being aware of the government's limited capacity for direct military action. This includes drawing on alternative avenues for foreign policy action in the form of substantial financial support, humanitarian aid, and refugee protection.

The chapter also argues that there are some significant challenges to the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 2015 and 2020. The crises in Yemen and Myanmar expose inherent tensions in the relationship between the UK government's domestic and international values and interests. In particular, the government's pursuit of domestic security and prosperity shows some conflict with its commitment to international law, human protection, and a defence of the rules-based international order. For example, the crisis in Yemen shows a strain between the UK's geopolitical and economic interests in trade and the protection of civilians from mass violence and atrocity crimes. This is in addition to issues with the prioritisation of some liberal values at the expense of others as shown by the relationship between democracy promotion and human rights protection in Myanmar. Domestic interests are integral to UK foreign policy, yet the previous New Labour and Coalition governments have managed to combine these domestic interests with international liberal values.

The chapter is split into five main sections. The first addresses the continuation of liberal conservatism in UK foreign policy and the government's commitment to human

protection. The second then applies this focus to the first case study on the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action in Syria between 2015 and 2018. Sections three and four address the empirical cases of human protection in Myanmar (2016-2017) and Yemen (2015-2020), with the final section then analysing the broader significance of the relationship between human protection, trade, and the UK's place in the world in order to conclude on the implications of the chapter for the research aim, objectives, research questions, and hypothesis.

This chapter makes three significant contributions to the thesis. Firstly, it continues to apply the analytical framework of sustained foreign policy change to empirically assess the UK's commitment to human protection in its transitional foreign policy. This in turn contributes to fulfilling the research aim on the relationship between human protection and the UK's transitional foreign policy, the four research objectives, the theoretical and empirical research questions, and continues to provide evidence to test the research hypothesis. Secondly, the chapter contributes to research on the leadership and influence of the UK as it adapts to its changing place in the world by showing the different ways in which the UK has contributed to human protection amid its declining military capacity in the post-war era. Thirdly, the chapter shows the complexities which face the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy as governments grapple with Brexit and the subsequent need to secure their geopolitical and economic interests in the evolving international order, which in turn, places pressure on the relationship between foreign policy interests and a commitment to liberal values.

## 6.1 A liberal conservative foreign policy

Following the election of a majority Conservative government in 2015, liberal conservatism was retained as an underlying feature of UK foreign policy. Using the same definition of liberal conservatism as chapter 5 according to freedom, democracy, human rights, and the national interest, keyword searches of the 700 primary materials returned 257 separate references to these concepts in speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports covering Conservative ministers and representatives between 2015 and 2020.

**Figure 17. Government liberal conservative rhetoric, 2015-2020**
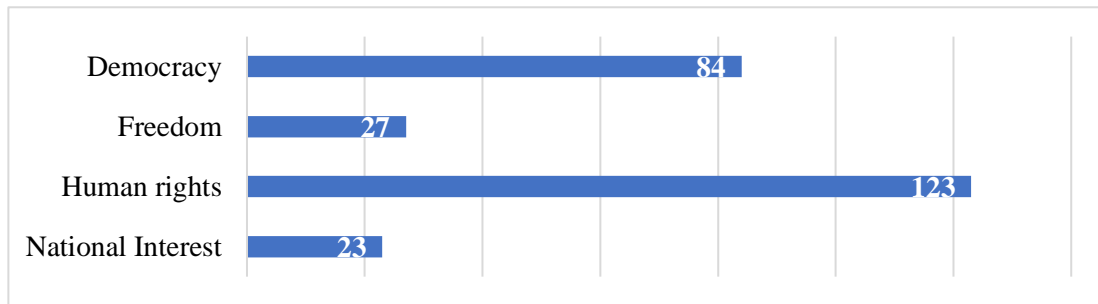


*Source: Gov.uk*

As figures 17 and 18 show, rhetoric on democracy was frequently mentioned in these documents and accounted for 33% of the total 257 references to the four concepts. Rhetorical references to democracy remained consistent with the approach of the Conservative-led Coalition government, such as emphasising the importance of establishing the "building blocks of democracy" as being vital to a country's stability (FCO, 2015f); and supporting a transition to democracy in countries which have been under dictatorship (FCO, 2015b; FCO, 2016h; FCO, 2018j). Closely intertwined with this commitment to democracy are the liberal conservative values of freedom and human rights. Jeremy Hunt for example suggested that "human rights and democracy are fundamental to the values the UK champions on the world stage" (FCO, 2019b).

**Figure 18. % share of government liberal conservative rhetoric, 2015-2020**
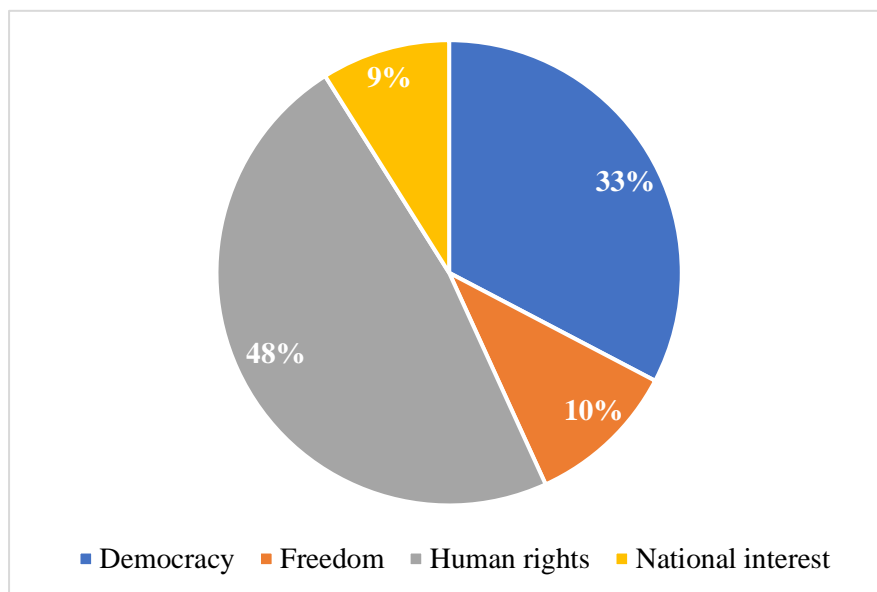
In particular, the national interest retains a central focus in the UK's foreign policy. In a 2017 BBC interview, Theresa May outlined how "the May doctrine of foreign policy is that everything we do is in our British national interest" (Theresa May in BBC, 2017a). May defined this national interest as building and sustaining strong international relations with states in order to form economic partnerships and cooperate to protect against global threats (Theresa May in BBC, 2017a). This is the same emphasis on the national interest as identified in chapter 5 according to the interconnection between the domestic and the international protection of human rights, freedom, and democracy.

As figures 17 and 18 also show, human rights remained an important feature of government rhetoric between 2015 and 2020 in accounting for 48% of the overall total. Far from human rights being downgraded in UK foreign policy between 2015 and 2020, human rights were firmly part of the foreign policy rhetoric of the post-2015 Conservative government and evidenced important consistency with the period during the Conservative-led Coalition. It is telling that there was no reference to liberal conservatism in keyword searches of the 700 primary materials, which suggests that it has either been abandoned by the Theresa May and Johnson governments or that it has simply become internalised in a Conservative UK foreign policy. The results from figures 17 and 18 suggest it is more a case of the latter since the content analysis shows that freedom, democracy, human rights, and the national interest still remain core features of the rhetoric of a Conservative-led foreign policy between 2015 and 2020.

### 6.1.1 The Conservatives and human protection, 2015-2020

The UK's more specific commitment to human protection is further evidence of the government's continued emphasis on the importance of human rights between 2015 and 2020. The results from keyword searches on the PoC, R2P, and atrocity prevention, evidence some consistency with the Conservative-led Coalition government's rhetorical commitment to human protection. However, the difference with the post-2015 period is that the overwhelming majority of references to human protection were made by UK foreign policy agents beyond the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary.

Out of the 700 primary materials, the PoC was directly mentioned on 70 occasions by government ministers and diplomats.[25] These actors emphasised that the POC "is a

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[25] PoC code variations included protecting civilians/protection of civilians/civilian protection/protect civilians

vital tool in ensuring humanity remains even in the worst of conflict situations" (FCO, 2019j). Although being mentioned on only 14 occasions, government ministers and diplomats underlined the UK's support for the R2P (FCO, 2016i; FCO, 2016k; FCO, 2019f). Speaking at the UN General Assembly, UK ambassador Peter Wilson outlined that "the United Kingdom has been a strong advocate of responsibility to protect ever since the 2005 World Summit" and continues to uphold this commitment (FCO, 2015h). In its 2019 policy paper on atrocity prevention, the UK government declared that it "remains an active supporter of the principle of the Responsibility to Protect" (FCO, 2019i). Alongside the PoC and R2P, atrocity prevention also started to receive attention in UK rhetoric on protection in the post-2015 period. Whilst it did not feature in UK foreign policy rhetoric between 2010 and 2015, atrocity prevention featured in the Conservative Party's Kigali Declaration against Genocide and Identity-Based Violence (The Conservative Party, 2017, p.31). Similarly, the 2017 Human Rights and Democracy Report outlined the government's "support for mass atrocity prevention" (FCO, 2018i, p.19). This was proceeded by the publication of the government's 2019 policy paper on atrocity prevention, which continued to outline a very similar position to the one previously adopted on the R2P in terms of its full rhetorical endorsement (FCO, 2019i).

Rhetorically at least, human protection thus remained part of UK foreign policy with the government and its representatives reinforcing the UK's commitment to protecting populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes. The remainder of this chapter focuses on this rhetoric on human protection and its translation into foreign policy actions through drawing on the cases of Syria (2015-2018), Myanmar (2016-2017), and Yemen (2015-2020).

**6.2 UK Rhetoric and action on human protection in Syria, 2015-2018**

Over four years since it started, the civil war in Syria remained central to UK foreign policy on human protection from 2015 to 2018. During this period, the UK government conducted two limited interventions in Syria, which presented a marked change from the parliamentary vote against intervention in 2013. This section focuses on government rhetoric and action according to two periods: the first from 2015-2017, and the second in 2018. It finds that between 2015 and 2017, human protection was part of the government's rhetoric, but that the national interest was the primary rhetorical means through which the government justified the use of force against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In 2018, the government used humanitarian intervention as the legal

basis for airstrikes against chemical weapons facilities in Syria, which is markedly similar to its unsuccessful attempt to intervene on humanitarian grounds in 2013. This shows consistently with a sustained change that has occurred since at least 1997 in the UK's willingness to use humanitarian intervention as a basis of its foreign policy action to protect populations from atrocity crimes. It is argued that this commitment to humanitarian intervention is an element of UK leadership on human protection, despite the political and legal contestation over whether states have a right to intervene in other sovereign states without a Chapter VII resolution or through self-defence under Article 51.

### 6.2.1 Core UK government rhetoric on the Syria crisis, 2015-2017

As chapter 5 also showed, the government's rhetoric on the crisis in Syria focused on a combination of democracy promotion, human rights protection, an end to the violence, and chemical weapons. By comparison however, the period between 2015 and 2017 presented an important change in government rhetoric on the crisis in Syria. As figure 19 shows, the government between 2015 and 2017 placed considerable emphasis on countering ISIS which had emerged in Syria.[26] Keyword searches of 700 government foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports found 68 references to ISIS in 120 documents. Cameron suggested that ISIS posed an additional threat in Syria alongside the Assad regime in declaring that Syrians "now face 2 enemies at home – Assad and ISIL" (FCO, 2015g). Similarly, Philip Hammond identified what he argued were "the twin evils of Assad's murderous regime and the brutality of ISIL" (FCO, 2015e).

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[26] Keyword searches on ISIS also included its variations of ISIL/IS/"Daesh, which were used interchangeably in the rhetoric of government ministers and representatives.

**Figure 19. Core UK government rhetoric on the Syria crisis, 2015-2017**



| Category | Value |
| --- | --- |
| Assad | 89 |
| Chemical weapons | 64 |
| ISIS | 73 |
| PoC | 11 |
| Russia | 41 |
| Transition | 27 |
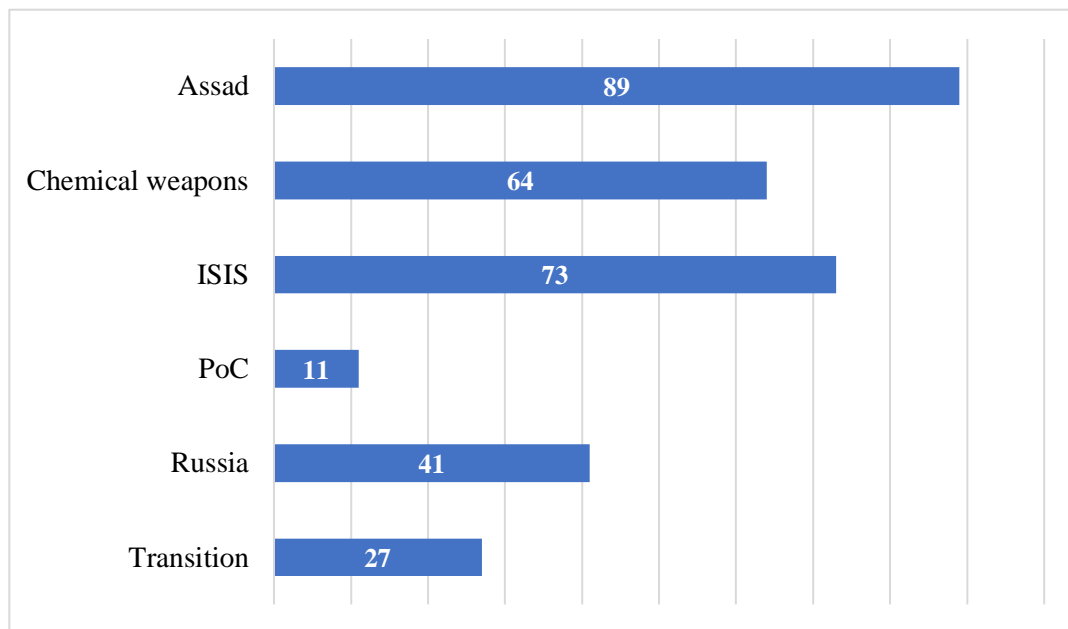
**Source: Gov.uk**

The government's rhetoric on Assad was intertwined with an emphasis on the UK's vision of a "transition away from the murderous regime of Assad" (FCO, 2015d). This is a similar stance to the rhetorical focus on a transition to democracy during the Conservative-led Coalition government between 2011 and 2014 in the previous chapter. Beyond ISIS, chemical weapons remained a consistent feature of UK rhetoric across governments since 2011. This was because there were further allegations of the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime throughout this period of the civil war. As Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson condemned the use of chemical weapons as "horrific, and a breach of international law" (FCO, 2016g). Theresa May argued that the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime meant "we [the international community] have a responsibility to stand up, to hold the Syrian regime to account" (FCO, 2017j).

However, the post-2015 Conservative government faced the same dilemma of deadlock in the UN Security Council on Syria, despite the UK arguing in favour of accountability for the Syrian regime's alleged use of chemical weapons (FCO, 2016g; FCO, 2017f; FCO, 2017j). In this regard, Boris Johnson mentioned his frustration on Syria because "Russia has consistently chosen to cover up for Asad" through using its veto power (FCO, 2017c). Whilst only a snapshot of the government's rhetorical references, this focus on Russia's actions at the UN Security Council is particularly significant for two main reasons. First, the UK placed Russia on the side of Syria, which

draws a clear line between *us* trying to protect populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes (US, UK and France) and *them* (Russia and Syria), which are preventing action. Second, highlighting Russia's use of the veto draws increasing attention to the deadlock in the UN Security Council and that potentially alternative routes for action have to be considered. As the two later examples of UK intervention in 2015 and 2018 show, the UK had to take actions without the prior authorisation of the UN Security Council amid its paralysis on how to resolve the civil war, which shows how this framing of Russia's position on the UN Security Council was critical for the government's legal position on military action in 2015 and 2018.

### 6.2.2 Government rhetoric on protection in Syria, 2015-2017

In terms of the UK's rhetorical commitment to human protection in Syria between 2015 and 2017, this focused exclusively on the PoC. As figure 20 shows, the PoC was mentioned 16 times in the 700 speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports analysed for chapter 6. Boris Johnson for instance reminded all actors involved in the siege of Aleppo to "change course to protect civilians" (FCO, 2016b); that the international community's "first priority [in Syria] must be the protection of civilians" (FCO, 2016d); and that actors within Syria should uphold resolution 2328 by protecting civilians (FCO, 2016f). Such rhetorical statements remained consistent with the Coalition government's emphasis on the PoC in relation to the crises in Libya in 2011 and Syria in 2013. As figure 20 shows, the government's rhetorical focus on the PoC has remained consistent when compared to the period between 2011 to 2013, but that the R2P and humanitarian intervention were notably absent.

**Figure 20. Comparing government rhetorical references to protection in Syria**
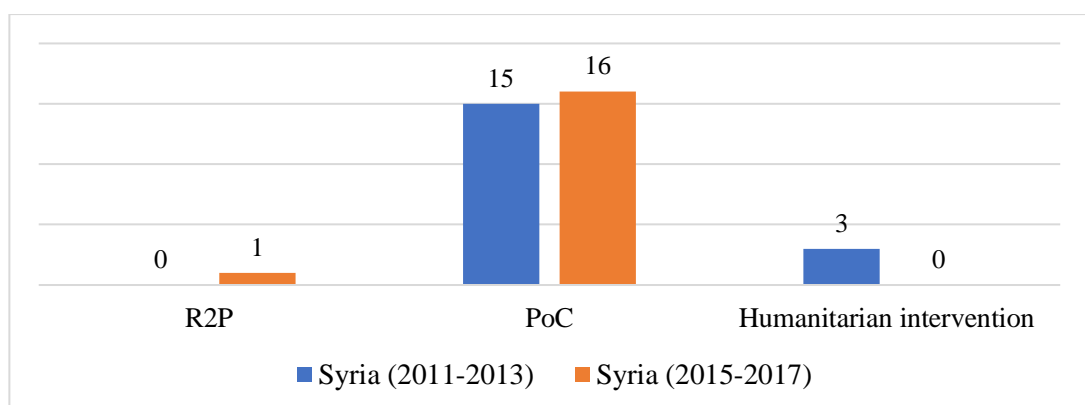


*Source: Gov.uk*

It is plausible to explain the absence of references to humanitarian intervention on the basis that between 2015 and 2017 it was not required as a legal justification for UK action beyond the UN Security Council, which means there was no real added value in mentioning it. This is similar to the situation in Libya in 2011, which already commanded authorisation through a chapter VII mandate in resolution 1973. On the R2P, the UK's Permanent Representative to the UN, Matthew Rycroft, emphasised that "we [UN member states] must redouble our efforts on R2P for their [Syrian civilians] sakes" (FCO, 2016i). Whilst successive UK Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries primarily focused their rhetoric on the terrorist threat posed by ISIS, the alleged atrocities of the Assad regime, chemical weapons, and Russia, human protection remained a feature, albeit a more limited one in UK government rhetoric on Syria. This finding is important because it shows how the UK's commitment to human protection in Syria is functioning alongside a range of other concerns. Whilst the underlying human protection dynamic remains in Syria, namely from the threat posed by chemical weapons, ISIS, and the Assad regime, the rhetoric of Cameron, May, Hammond, and Johnson, has principally focused on these immediate threats as contributing to a broader human protection crisis in Syria.

### 6.2.3 Parliamentary rhetoric on human protection in Syria, 2015-2017

Parliament's engagement with Syria between 2015 and 2017 shows that human protection remained an important feature of UK foreign policy rhetoric beyond the government. As argued in chapter 5, Parliament's view on the UK's commitment to human protection is particularly important following its decision to vote against approving military action on humanitarian grounds in Syria in 2013. It is an important environment for MPs and Members of the House of Lords to scrutinise UK foreign policy on human protection and debate the government's humanitarian response. As figure 21 shows, when compared to the government's rhetorical references to human protection, parliamentarians made direct reference to the R2P and PoC much more frequently in debates. These references stemmed from the failure to implement the R2P in Syria to its legal basis for action. The Shadow Foreign Secretary, Hillary Benn MP, underlined how Syria is what the R2P should have been focused on addressing but that "in Syria, no responsibility has been taken and nobody has been protected" (Hansard HC De., 9 September 2015). In referencing the alleged use of chemical weapons against civilians in Syria, Mary Creagh MP, suggested that "the UN doctrine of the responsibility to protect allows military

intervention to protect civilians from genocide and war crimes by their state and provides a valid legal basis for intervention" (Hansard HC Deb., 11 October 2016).

**Figure 21. Comparing government and parliamentary rhetoric on Syria**
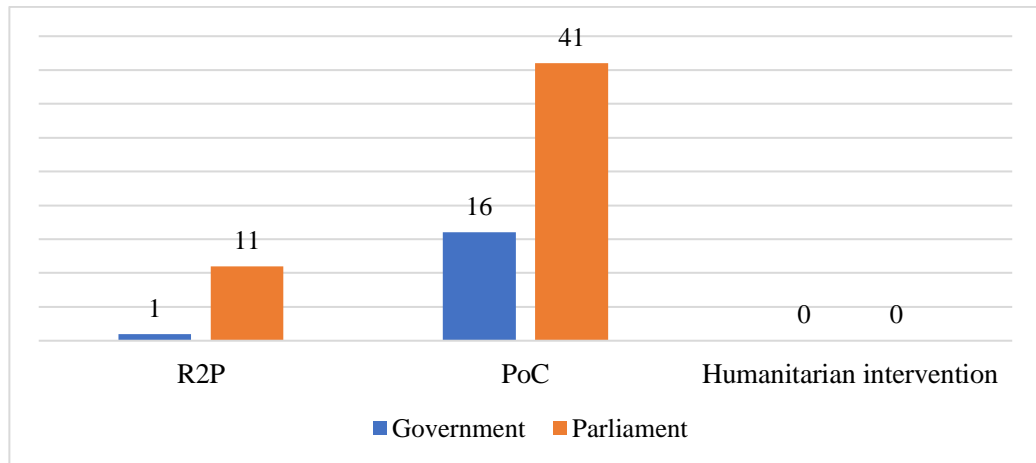


*Source: Gov.uk and Hansard online*

As for the PoC, which was mentioned on 41 occasions in both houses, Jo Cox MP, mentioned that "our [UK's] failure to intervene to protect civilians left Assad at liberty to escalate both the scale and the ferocity of his attacks on innocent Syrians in a desperate attempt to cling to power" (Hansard HC Deb., 12 October 2015). Alison McGovern MP suggested that the "Government need an urgent strategy to protect civilians" (Hansard HC Deb., 28 November 2016). With both the R2P and PoC, these examples show a concern that the UK government and the international community more broadly is not discharging its human protection responsibilities in Syria despite the humanitarian crisis.

Despite the lack of rhetorical references to human protection from the government, these findings show that human protection was still being widely referenced and debated in regard to the ongoing crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 among parliamentarians. This is important because of Parliament's role in the authorisation of force post-August 2013 and presents a counter to any suggestion that the lack of direct UK government rhetoric on human protection was indicative of a relative decline in the role and importance of human protection in UK foreign policy beyond central government.

**6.2.4 Government human protection actions in Syria, 2015-2017**

The UK government indirectly contributed to human protection in Syria in three important ways. The first was the decision to extend UK airstrikes against ISIS into Syria following Parliamentary approval on 3 December 2015. In contrast to the August 2013 vote, David Cameron received a strong mandate for action based on limited airstrikes against ISIS on the basis of "collective self-defence" under Article 51 (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2015, p.3). In justifying the UK's response, David Cameron argued that "ISIL poses a clear threat to our own national security. We should not stand back and let others carry the burden and the risks of protecting our country" (Prime Minister's Office, 2015, p.8). This was a clear appeal to the liberal conservative national interest in which the short-term action against ISIS should logically lead to the long-term aim of protecting the UK's domestic security through countering terrorist threats to both Syrian and UK civilians.

The government also had a stronger legal basis for action through Article 51 (Prime Minister's Office, 2015, p.15). Here, the UK is very specific in its legal justification for action because it recognised that any attempts to intervene through the channel of a UN Security Council resolution would have been immediately vetoed by Russia. Whilst there is no immediate reference to human protection in its legal position on the 2015 airstrikes against ISIS, the government had consistently recognised the threat that ISIS posed against civilians in Syria (FCO, 2015e; FCO, 2015f). By taking action to remove this threat, the UK government logically contributed to protecting the Syrian population from further mass violence and atrocity crimes that were being committed by ISIS, as well as the broader international community.

The government's second indirect action was its contribution to protecting Syrian refugees. According to David Cameron, "it is absolutely right that Britain should fulfil its moral responsibility to help…refugees" (FCO, 2015i). Such morality derived from the humanitarian suffering in Syria, as well as the UK's historical role in refugee protection (FCO, 2015i). The UK's immediate prioritisation for the protection of Syrian refugees was a strategy of containment largely within Syria or neighbouring countries (Gilgan, 2017, p.367; McGuinness, 2017, p.3).[27] This was supported by "over £1.1 billion in humanitarian aid towards the Syrian crisis and neighbouring countries hosting refugees" (FCO, 2015a).

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[27] Author interviews 1 and 2.

Gradually, the UK's policy on containment was supported by efforts to resettle refugees within the UK through the creation of the Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's resettlement schemes (Hough, 2018). The government set a target of resettling 20,000 Syrian refugees, which had reached 19,353 by February 2020 (Home Office, 2020). Whilst the acceptance of 20,000 refugees is still not a large number relative to the approximately 5.5 million registered Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2020), it is still an important contribution to human protection beyond direct coercive action in Syria. So while some argue that the UK's commitment to refugee resettlement "may not be enough on the moral scale", it "may be all that is required by R2P in terms of 'helping' to protect populations from mass atrocities" (Gilgan, 2017, p.391). The UK government has thus been able to translate its human protection rhetoric into practical action in some instances through its large financial contributions and resettlement programmes amid the civil war in Syria.

The third government contribution was its financial support to human protection efforts on the ground. The UK government founded the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) in 2015, which had an original annual budget of £1.26 billion to support the government's response to issues of conflict and stability in states around the world (Conflict Stability and Security Fund, 2021). The 2016/17 CSSF annual report outlined how the Fund contributed to the training and supply of equipment to the White Helmets in Syria which is a humanitarian volunteer group that carries out a significant human protection role from searching and rescuing civilians to providing first aid (HM Government, 2017, p.6; The White Helmets, 2021). This demonstrates how the UK is able to sustain its commitment to human protection in Syria in spite of the deadlock at the UN Security Council which prevents a direct response from the UK and others.

### 6.2.5 Government rhetoric and action on protection in Syria, 2018

On 14 April 2018, the UK joined a coalition with the US and France in order to carry out limited airstrikes on suspected chemical weapons facilities in Syria in response to evidence of the use of chemical weapons in Douma a week earlier. Figure 22 presents the results of keyword searches on the government's rhetoric on the 2018 airstrikes in Syria, with the primary focus being on the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. A week prior to the UK's contribution to the airstrikes, Theresa May commented on the 75 fatalities in Douma, which indicated "that this was a chemical weapons attack" (FCO, 2018m). This provided the core humanitarian basis for the UK's willingness to use

limited coercive force in Syria. For example, following the action, May argued that "we [coalition forces] needed to intervene rapidly to alleviate further indiscriminate humanitarian suffering" (FCO, 2018o). In this manner, Theresa May emphasised that the UK's intervention needed to be swift, which is significant on the basis that the Prime Minister only consulted parliament after the action was taken.

**Figure 22. Government rhetorical references to the airstrikes in Syria, 2018**
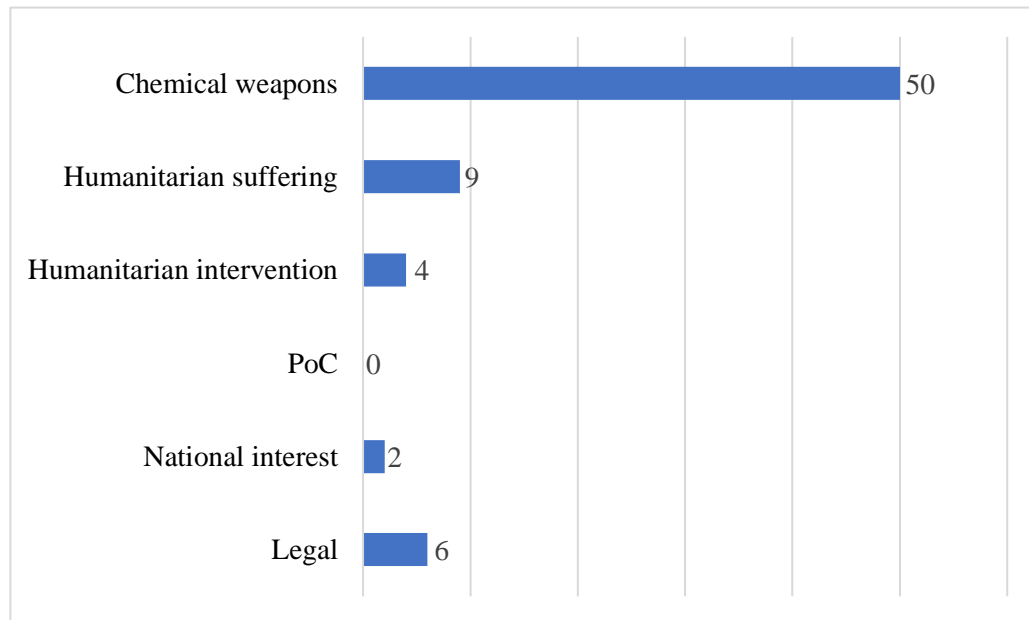


*Source: Gov.uk*

It is plausible to argue that through their rhetoric, the Prime Minister was attempting to establish a level of legitimacy and legality for the airstrikes by highlighting the significant humanitarian consequences of the use of chemical weapons, and thus, the subsequent need for action on human protection. At the time of the airstrikes, the UN Security Council remained in deadlock on Syria, which means that any attempt from the UK, US, or France to propose a resolution in order to intervene by force without the Syrian regime's consent would be automatically vetoed by Russia and China.

Theresa May later confirmed that the UK had contributed to "military action to degrade the Syrian regime's chemical weapons capability and deter their use" (FCO, 2018n). The UK's decision to participate in the airstrikes alongside the US and France is significant for this chapter for two main reasons. The first is the Prime Minister's decision to bypass Parliament, with Theresa May only addressing the House of Commons two days after the airstrikes had taken place and justified the limited intervention according

to the need "to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people" (Hansard HC Deb., 16 April 2018). This is in comparison to David Cameron's parliamentary defeat on the government's proposed action to deter the use of chemical weapons in August 2013. It is unclear why the UK government acted without prior Parliamentary approval. One possible explanation is that the Theresa May government was exerting its executive power over Parliament in order to demonstrate that it remains the leader of UK foreign policy action and is not required to call upon Parliament for its permission. A more plausible reason is the government's justification for action according to humanitarian intervention which Cameron failed to convince Parliament on in 2013.

This leads to the second reason why the UK's contribution to the airstrikes in Syria is significant. The UK government's official legal position was that it "is permitted under international law, on an exceptional basis, to take measures in order to alleviate overwhelming humanitarian suffering. The legal basis for the use of force is *humanitarian intervention*" (Prime Minister's Office, 2018, emphasis added). This stance on the UK's legal basis for intervention was based on the same three criteria as the proposed action in 2013:

> "(i) there is convincing evidence, generally accepted by the international community as a whole, of extreme humanitarian distress on a large scale, requiring immediate and urgent relief; (ii) it must be objectively clear that there is no practicable alternative to the use of force if lives are to be saved; and (iii) the proposed use of force must be necessary and proportionate to the aim of relief of humanitarian suffering and must be strictly limited in time and in scope to this aim (i.e. the minimum necessary to achieve that end and for no other purpose)." (Prime Minister's Office, 2018)

According to the government's legal position, all three criteria had been met in Syria on the basis of (i) the extreme humanitarian suffering as a result of the persistent use of chemical weapons since 2013, the use of which "constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity"; (ii) the deadlock in the UN Security Council meaning that a legal alternative for action was required amid Russia's consistent use of the veto; and (iii) that the airstrikes were limited to specific targets and thus "an exceptional measure on the grounds of overwhelming humanitarian necessity" (Prime Minister's Office, 2018). Despite the 2013 decision against intervention, humanitarian intervention still remained

the core basis of the UK's legal position in situations where the UK was unable to draw on Article 51 of collective self-defence or a Chapter VII resolution from the UN Security Council. The UK's legal position on humanitarian intervention in 2018 thus remained consistent with the government's view that there is a third legal avenue available for action as per the 2011 and 2014 editions of the UK's Defence Doctrine.

Addressing the House of Commons, May argued that on the basis of the legal "advice, we agreed that it was not just morally right but legally right to take military action, together with our closest allies, to alleviate further humanitarian suffering" (Hansard HC Deb., 16 April 2018). May was explicit that "the same three criteria used as the legal justification for the UK's role in the NATO intervention in Kosovo" had been used in regard to the airstrikes in 2018 (Hansard HC Deb., 16 April 2018). This supports the argument in this chapter that there has been a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection since 1997. More specifically, successive governments across the ideological spectrum of UK politics have been willing to draw on humanitarian intervention to legally justify UK intervention to protect populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes. With humanitarian intervention at least, UK foreign policy evidences a continuation of the government's willingness to strengthen its commitment to human protection in cases of extreme humanitarian suffering, even amid a deadlocked UN Security Council and a lack of legally permissible avenues for action.

### 6.2.6 Humanitarian intervention and UK leadership in Syria, 2018

The willingness of successive governments to commit to humanitarian intervention as a legal basis for action raises an important point on whether this could be considered an aspect of UK leadership on human protection (Ralph, 2014a; Henderson, 2015; Butchard, 2020). This is the idea that the justification of action on the basis of humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in 1999 and Syria in both 2013 and 2018, indicates the UK's willingness to challenge the overwhelming legal arguments against unilateral humanitarian intervention. This is based on the UK's conviction that there is such a customary international law which states can draw on as an alternative basis to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes when the UN Security Council is divided and there is no plausible action under Article 51. As identified by the 2018 Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry into the UK government's response to Syria in 2018, humanitarian intervention "is a contested concept in international law" (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018c, p.3). The Inquiry further concluded that "there is very little support by states for

this legal position" (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018c, p.8). However, the UK's official response disagreed with the Inquiry's conclusion by restating that "humanitarian intervention remains a legitimate and lawful basis for intervention" (HM Government, 2018c).

The insistence by successive UK government's that there is a legal basis for humanitarian intervention therefore challenges existing legal opinion. The UK's position also corresponds with some arguments in defence of unilateral humanitarian intervention as the "least best alternative" in the face of UN Security Council deadlock (Trahan, 2017). This deadlock and the willingness of some states to draw on humanitarian intervention as a result has led some to argue in favour of an "improved legal framework" in specific instances of the use of chemical and biological weapons (Bell, 2018). Hughes (2018) thus suggests that there may be a "potential shift" in legal justifications for unilateral humanitarian intervention through appealing to "narrow exceptions" that warrant action, including the use of chemical weapons. This is reflective of the UK government's position on airstrikes in Syria, which were justified explicitly on the basis of limited airstrikes to protect the Syrian population against the use of chemical weapons (Hansard HC Deb., 16 April 2018). Rather than UK intervention being illegal, the UK's Permanent UN Representative, Karen Pierce, argued that "it cannot be illegal to use force to prevent the killing of such numbers of innocent people" (FCO, 2018l). The government is thus drawing on the argument of extreme humanitarian suffering to support its legal claim that it should be able to intervene to protect the Syrian population through a humanitarian intervention.

This supports the argument that "the UK has now unequivocally established itself as *the* norm entrepreneur in the context of humanitarian intervention" (Henderson, 2015, p.194, emphasis in original). On successive occasions from Kosovo to Syria, the UK has pursued humanitarian intervention despite the "little or no explicit support for the legal basis of unilateral humanitarian intervention among the international community" (Buys and Garwood-Gowers, 2019, p.20). The UK's willingness to draw on humanitarian intervention in spite of the lack of support from the international community potentially shows that it "may be at the forefront of a political and legal shift" (Newman, 2021, p.23). This shift is characterised by situations in which the deadlock on the UN Security Council leads to an environment in which states are increasingly willing to draw on humanitarian intervention beyond the UN Security Council as a basis for action. From this perspective, the UK has been able and willing to continue demonstrating its international leadership

on human protection as a form of norm entrepreneurship, even to the extent of pursuing humanitarian intervention against the opinion of the international community.

That said, some legal scholars argue that the UK's position sets a problematic precedent for international law on intervention. Butchard (2020, p.27) acknowledges that the deadlock in the UN Security Council "is certainly a warning to the international community to find a path that avoids inaction. But this itself does not make an unlawful act become legally permissible". The challenge again for the UK's position on humanitarian intervention is that any notion of an international law cannot depend on the UK's actions alone to become customary (UNA-UK, 2018b). For some, the 2018 airstrikes are still perceived as "illegal" (Milanovic, 2018). Milanovic (2018) argues that "the UK's humanitarian intervention argument is so bad even on its own terms that it is clear why the US and France chose to stay silent - no legal argument is in their view a better option that a palpably bad one". This suggests the UK is far from generating the consensus for its legal position on humanitarian intervention amongst other states in the international community. Even if the UK is leading on humanitarian intervention, it exposes a fundamental tension in its support for a rules-based international order based upon a respect for international law (Newman, 2021, p.2).

A further challenge to the UK's humanitarian justification for its airstrikes in Syria in 2018 is the underlying motivations for its action. It has been argued that the basis of the UK's response was not necessarily humanitarian concerns but rather securing "geopolitical objectives" in preventing states producing and using chemical and biological weapons (Hughes, 2018). Chinkin and Kaldor (2018) also question the UK's 2018 humanitarian intervention in Syria and whether it led to human protection. Prior to the airstrikes, states including the UK, US and France were aware of the mass atrocities committed against the population in Syria but had failed to intervene in 2013 and had only taken limited action in response to the rise of ISIS in 2015. Chinkin and Kaldor (2018) thus suggest that "the symbolic character of the air strikes suggest that there was never any serious intention to help Syrians. It was a frivolous action aimed at assuring public opinion that western leaders are strong" (Chinkin and Kaldor, 2018). Instead of human protection leadership, they argue that UK action was more a demonstration of its ability to use military force where it deemed necessary. For instance, Theresa May was unequivocal that the UK's action was "absolutely in Britain's national interest" (FCO, 2018m) on the basis of preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons and protecting Syrian nationals. Whether the UK's humanitarian motivations for action are convincing,

if the intervention did help protect the population from further mass atrocity crimes then it could reasonably be considered as contributing to human protection (Wheeler, 2000, p.40).

The legal debates aside, the UK's leadership in response to the use of chemical weapons in Syria was also extended to its diplomacy on chemical weapons, including at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The UK took the lead in pushing for a special session to be held in order to enhance the powers of the OPCW (FCO, 2018c; Wintour, 2018). The resulting agreement increased the powers of the OPCW which consists of identifying and investigating those responsible for the use of chemical weapons including in Syria. According to the FCO (2018c), the Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, played an active role in at the special session where he "personally lobbied Ministers from 25 countries" as part of the broader 82 states which supported the proposal. This is an important demonstration of UK leadership on Syria beyond the use of force in which it pursued other methods of action in the form of diplomacy to maintain sustained pressure on accountability for the use of chemical weapons, including in Syria in April 2018.

The UK's rhetoric and action on humanitarian intervention in Syria in 2018 provides evidence of a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection since 1997. Both the David Cameron and Theresa May governments have been willing to draw on the same justification for the use of force as used by the Blair government on Kosovo in 1999 in order to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes. Despite this thesis arguing that liberal conservatism presented an alternative to the liberal internationalism of the Blair and Brown governments, Conservative-led governments have demonstrated a willingness to follow a similar pursuit of human protection amid domestic and international barriers in the form of parliamentary and UN Security Council deadlock. This exemplifies a sustained foreign policy change as this commitment to humanitarian intervention is not episodic, but has endured in UK foreign policy between 1997 and 2020 as one example of a strengthened commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action.

## 6.3 UK rhetoric and action on Myanmar, 2016-2017

In 2015, democratic elections were held in Myanmar (formerly Burma) for the first time in decades. Both David Cameron and Philip Hammond welcomed the elections as a significant first step in Myanmar's transition to democracy after decades of military rule

(FCO, 2015b; FCO, 2015c). Less than two years later, Myanmar faced international condemnation following violence predominantly against Rohingya Muslims residing in Rakhine State, which led to a serious humanitarian crisis with over 742,000 refugees fleeing the country (UNHCR, 2019). This section focuses specifically on the UK's commitment to human protection in Myanmar following the first reports of atrocity crimes committed against the Rohingya on 25 August 2017, which according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights at the time, "seems a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" (Human Rights Council, 2017).

Whilst the initial outbreak of mass violence is traced back to 2016, the violence and atrocities against the Rohingya is deeply rooted in the history of Myanmar (Haacke, 2016, p.806). Rohingya Muslins had faced serious discrimination from the state through various legislative acts, such as the 1982 citizenship law, which led to groups including the Rohingya being excluded from claiming citizenship in Myanmar despite being settled for centuries (Haacke, 2016, p.806). The violence against Rohingya Muslims was thus a "violent expression of decades long efforts to stigmatise, delegitimise, and dehumanise Muslims in the country" (Ferguson, 2017). The UN Human Rights Council (2018a) found that the "othering" of the Rohingya had been ongoing for some time in Myanmar as part of citizenship legislation. This discrimination and othering reached the point where Rohingya Muslims were being attacked (Human Rights Council, 2018a, p.1). The result was thousands of deaths and the mass displacement of Rohingya Muslims (UN General Assembly, 2018). The subsequent evidence of atrocity crimes committed against the Rohingya led to the ICC prosecutor proceeding with an investigation into these crimes in 2019 (ICC, 2020).

The UK's rhetoric on the situation in Myanmar between 2016 and 2017 shows a combination of a concern for human rights and democracy. Figure 23 presents the findings from keyword searches of foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports from the government and its representatives on Myanmar from 2016 to 2017 in 700 primary documents. Their response to the crisis in Myanmar was in two stages. The first was during the initial outbreak of violence in which UK foreign policy rhetoric on Myanmar was focused on the country's transition to democracy following the election of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2015. Philip Hammond recognised how the UK "has actively supported Burma's transition to democracy" (FCO, 2016h). His successor, Boris Johnson, further declared that "the Burmese transition to democracy is an historic achievement" and reiterated that the "UK is pleased to have played an

important role in bringing about Burma's emergence from decades of repression and isolation" (FCO, 2016e).

**Figure 23. Core UK government rhetoric on the crisis in Myanmar, 2016-2017**
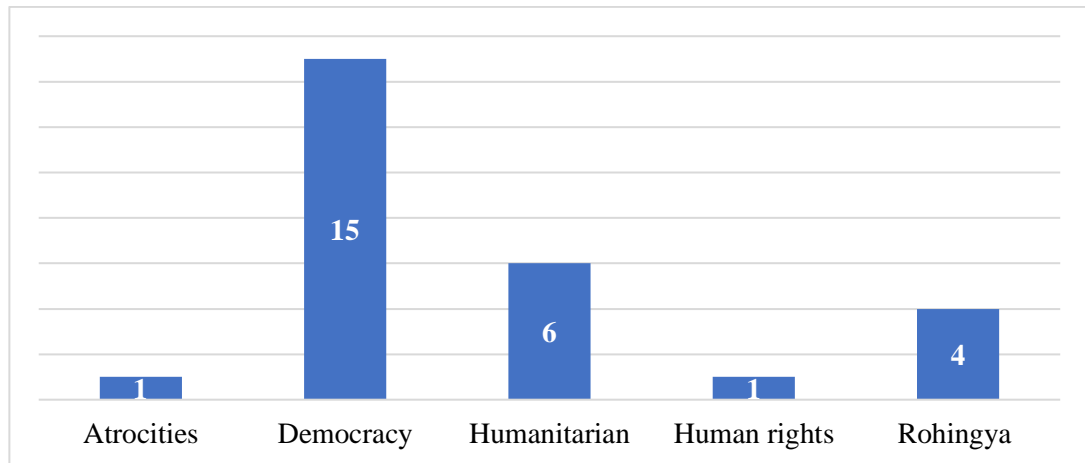


*Source: Gov.uk*

However, by 2017 the UK's rhetoric on Myanmar shifted to the second stage of condemning the violence in Rakhine state. Johnson acknowledged that "while Burma has undoubtedly made encouraging progress towards democracy in the last few years, the situation in Rakhine, the terrible human rights abuses and violence are a stain on the country's reputation" (FCO, 2017e). This change in the UK's position in 2017 is illustrated in figure 23 through the references to the humanitarian situation, human rights, the Rohingya, and atrocities. Whilst the only immediate reference to atrocities was made by Jeremy Hunt in relation to ensuring "the perpetrators of any atrocities are brought to justice" (FCO, 2018k), the government placed greater attention on human rights protection and the humanitarian situation. Johnson commented that "Aung Sang Suu Kyi is rightly regarded as one of the most inspiring figures of our age but the treatment of the Rohingya is alas besmirching the reputation of Burma" (FCO, 2017a). This is in addition to calling for accountability for those that had committed human rights violations (FCO, 2017e; FCO, 2018d; FCO, 2018b). The Foreign Secretary's response to Myanmar draws parallels with the government's reaction to the violence in Libya and Syria in being unequivocal in its condemnation of the Gaddafi and Assad regimes and calling on them to end the violence and bring the perpetrators to justice. This element of the UK's rhetorical response to Myanmar is therefore consistent with the UK's broader position on human protection crises between 2010 and 2017 where successive governments have

recognised that mass violence is being committed, reminding the state of its responsibility to stop the violence, and calling for justice and accountability for grave human rights violations.

Whilst Johnson only directly mentioned human protection on one occasion based on the responsibility of the "Burmese security forces to protect all civilians" (FCO, 2017b), other government Ministers were explicit in their belief that atrocities had been committed in Myanmar. The Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field, suggested that "the government has concluded that the inexcusable violence perpetrated on the Rohingya by Burmese military and ethnic Rakhine militia appears to be ethnic cleansing" (DFID and FCO, 2017). Similarly, International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, later suggested that the crimes committed against Rohingya Muslims constituted ethnic cleansing (DFID, 2019b).

Despite the UK government's recognition of atrocity crimes being committed against the Rohingya, its subsequent human protection actions have been questioned. It is suggested that the UK's foremost concern with Myanmar's elections and democratic transition overshadowed its focus on the historical discrimination of the Rohingya. For instance, a 2017 Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry into the UK's response to violence in Rakhine state concluded that "there was too much focus by the UK and others in recent years on supporting the 'democratic transition' and not enough on atrocity prevention and delivering tough and unwelcome messages to the Burmese Government about the Rohingya" (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2017a, p.3). A particularly telling piece of evidence are Mark Field's comments during the Inquiry. In being questioned about the predictability of the violence in Rakhine state and whether on reflection the FCO could have responded sooner, his response was the following

> "As I say, it is very easy to be wise with hindsight. I think all of us bear responsibility. The international community as a whole wanted to see Burma coming away from decades of military dictatorship, with Aung San Suu Kyi regarded as a leader rather like, as I say, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King: some, in the international community's view, of unimpeachable ethics who alone would be able to lead this" (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2017).

This statement shows that the UK and international community more broadly had become primarily concerned with democracy promotion even to the extent that it potentially

impacted on its failure to act sooner to protect the Rohingya. This is also despite the argument that a real democratic transition is not actually taking place in Myanmar due to the military's central role and unwillingness to relinquish its power.[28] The Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry on violence in Rakhine State thus concluded that "as the 'penholder' on Burma in the UN Security Council, the UK bears some responsibility for failing to turn international outrage into tangible action and improvements on the ground" (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2017a, p.3). As the penholder in particular, the UK had an important leadership position on the crisis in terms of being in charge of drafting the UN Security Council's humanitarian action (Staunton, 2017).

In response to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry, the UK government acknowledged that "the acts of ethnic cleansing taking place in Burma may amount to crimes against humanity" (HM Government, 2018d). However, the government also outlined its belief that its "strategy is credible and that we have, through our diplomatic activity, set a clear sense of direction" on resolving the crisis (HM Government, 2018d). Alongside its rhetorical condemnation of the violence, the UK provided significant funding and humanitarian aid to try and address the immediate humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. This included £59 million in financial assistance, which made the UK "one of the largest bilateral donors to the crisis" (FCO, 2018p). It also contributed a further £3 million for northern Rakhine and £8 million towards addressing the refugee crisis (HM Government, 2018d). Based on the four indicators of foreign policy action, it is plausible to argue that in meeting the indicator of funding and humanitarian aid, the UK did contribute to human protection in Myanmar in some way, even if this support was limited to financial aid after the atrocities had taken place. Although the Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry suggests the UK could have done more through its leadership on the UN Security Council, in Myanmar it followed a similar trend to its commitment to human protection in action in Libya and Syria through financial contributions, including support for refugees.

Beyond this contribution of funding and humanitarian aid, the UK's rhetoric and action in Myanmar does show an issue with its commitment to human protection from mass violence and atrocity crimes, especially when compared to the pursuit of other liberal foreign policy values. This section shows that prior to the violence, the UK's relations with Myanmar were about the elections and democratic transition, despite the evidence of

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28 Author interview 5.

historic discrimination against Rohingya Muslims. In the case of Myanmar, the UK's liberal commitment to democracy was initially prioritised, especially since the UK government could have also raised the historical and present plight of the Rohingya more strongly as part of its diplomatic relations with Myanmar. By not being more forthright in its concerns about the protection of Rohingya Muslims and ensuring the Myanmar government is held to account, this challenges the research hypothesis that there has been a sustained change in UK foreign policy towards a strengthened commitment to human protection. This is because the evidence that the UK could have acted sooner and more assertively (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2017a) does not present a compelling case that the UK placed human protection as its foremost concern in Myanmar. A sustained change in UK foreign policy towards a strengthened commitment would plausibly entail drawing on all of its diplomatic capacity to lead international efforts to address the mass violence, which includes, potentially intervening by force. The UK's response to Myanmar suggests that the opposite occurred and that the government, along with the international community, could have done more to protect the Rohingya from atrocity crimes.

**6.4 Government rhetoric and action on protection in Yemen, 2015-2020**

Along with its response to Myanmar, the UK government encountered another humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The Yemen civil war started in march 2015 when rebel Houthis seized control of the capital and forced Saudi-backed President, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, into exile (House of Lords, 2019, p.4). Saudi Arabia subsequently led a coalition of states to regain control of Yemen and reinstate Hadi as President (Buys and Garwood-Gowers, 2019, p.2). Whilst the UK is not part of this coalition of states, Theresa May made it clear from the outset that the government supported the Saudi-led coalition (BBC, 2017a). However, the civil war resulted in "the world's worst humanitarian crisis" (Guterres, 2019), with thousands of civilian casualties (Human Rights Council, 2016; 2018b; 2019). This section focuses on the UK's response to the civil war in Yemen and the role of its human protection rhetoric and action. It argues that the UK's commitment to human protection in Yemen reveals a tension in its national and international interest between promoting and protecting the UK's domestic security and prosperity and its commitment to human protection, with the UK's arms sales to Saudi Arabia being the focal point of this tension.

**6.4.1 Core UK government rhetoric on the civil war in Yemen**

According to the FCO's 2017 Human Rights and Democracy Report, "the UK will continue to lead international efforts to end the conflict and restore the legitimate Government of Yemen" (FCO, 2018i, p.58). As figure 24 shows, this commitment to end the conflict in Yemen became the primary focus of the government's rhetoric on the civil war. This was based on a combination of rhetoric on finding a political solution, achieving peace, protecting civilians, and upholding international humanitarian law.

**Figure 24. Core UK government rhetoric on the crisis in Yemen, 2015-2020**
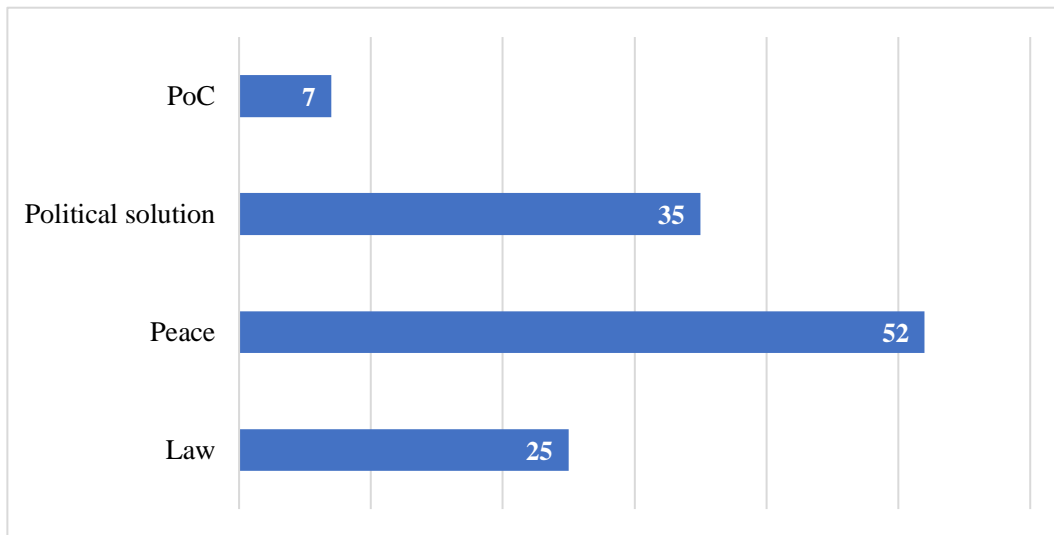


*Source: Gov.uk*

The government's rhetoric suggested that achieving peace through a political solution was the primary means of addressing the humanitarian crisis and ending the civil war (FCO, 2016c; FCO, 2017d). The government's notion of a political solution was to "help create the conditions for the legitimate Government to protect the human rights of Yemenis" (French, 2019). The legitimate government in this case was one led by the Saudi-backed President Hadi. This would secure what Hunt argued was the need for "lasting peace" in Yemen (FCO, 2018h). In terms of the UK's human protection rhetoric, the PoC was mentioned by the government on 7 occasions and had important overlap with references to the respect for international humanitarian law. While Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson called "on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and prioritise the protection of civilians" (FCO, 2018e). Human protection does feature in the UK's rhetoric, but the overwhelming focus is on achieving peace in Yemen through a political solution to the conflict.

### 6.4.2 The UK's human protection actions in Yemen

At the intersection of the government's rhetorical commitment to address the humanitarian situation through a political solution was its approach to human protection in action. The primary means of achieving this was through committing substantial financial support to address the humanitarian situation. This included a contribution of £112 million for 2016/2017 and £205 million for 2017/18 from DFID, which the UK government proudly announced as making them "the third-largest humanitarian donor to Yemen" (FCO, 2018i, p.58). This humanitarian aid was further increased in 2018, which brought the UK's overall financial contribution to £570 million (FCO, 2019c). Jeremy Hunt and Penny Mordaunt announced that the UK would contribute a further £200 million, which meant that the UK had provided over £700 million to Yemen since 2015 (FCO, 2019g). Through these actions, the UK maintained its commitment to human protection in action through its response to the humanitarian crisis. This is similar to its position in Libya, Syria, and Myanmar where beyond its broader diplomatic efforts to end the crisis, the UK still provided vital financial assistance in order to contribute to the protection of civilians in Yemen.

### 6.4.3 The UK's human protection – trade dilemma in Yemen

As the penholder on Yemen, the UK had primary responsibility and authority to draft resolutions detailing the UN Security Council's response to the crisis. Jeremy Hunt for example, described the UK as being in "a unique position, both as pen-holder at the UN Security Council and as a key influencer in the region" (FCO, 2018f). In this sense, it was a significant opportunity to demonstrate UK leadership on human protection and turn its commitment to end the humanitarian crisis into tangible action.

Despite this position to influence and lead on the international response to Yemen, research interviews suggests progress was initially slow. According to one interview, the UK's position as penholder is best understood according to two stages. In the first stage from 2015 to mid-2018, progress was limited in terms of UN Security Council resolutions to guide the response of the international community. In the second stage from mid-2018, the UK adopted a leadership role more reflective of its position on human protection by drafting resolutions and presidential statements.[29] The interviews suggested that one

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[29] Author interview 9.

explanation for this gradual shift towards active UK leadership on the crisis in Yemen was the broader geopolitical and economic issues involved in the crisis.[30]

One relevant aspect of this geopolitical and economic context is the UK's relationship with Saudi Arabia and latter's involvement in leading coalition forces in Yemen. Alongside the UK's significant humanitarian assistance, evidence suggests that the UK has also licensed "at least 4.7bn of arms exports to Saudi Arabia and £860m to its coalition partners" since the beginning of the Yemen civil war in 2015 (Full Fact, 2018). An International Development Committee on the crisis in Yemen described this dual commitment to arms sales and financial assistance as "a paradox of arms and aid" (International Development Committee, 2016a, p.28). This is the idea that on the one hand, the UK government argues that it is helping to address the humanitarian crisis through its financial support to Yemen, especially through humanitarian aid, while on the other hand its "arms exports to Saudi Arabia could be undermining the protection of civilians and be inconsistent with the UK's support for the humanitarian response" (International Development Committee, 2016a, p.28). This captures the broader human protection – trade dilemma in UK foreign policy, particularly in the case of Yemen (figure 25).



**Human rights** → The UK's **domestic** and **international** interests ← **Trade**

**Figure 25. The human protection – trade dilemma**

The UK is entitled to license and sell arms to other countries and has a history of exporting arms to Saudi Arabia since the 1960s according to the Campaign against the Arms Trade (CAAT, 2016). The UK has provided approximately £100 billion in arms exports to Saudi Arabia since 2010 and during this period was only behind the US as the second largest exporter of arms in total (BBC, 2020c). The controversy of this relationship in Yemen lies in the suggestion that some of these arms were "used against Yemeni civilians"

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30 Author interviews 8 and 12.

(House of Lords, 2019, p.19). This places the UK government in a precarious position as pen holder on Yemen, a significant financial donor, and an upholder of international humanitarian law. During the initial stages of the Yemen civil war, a UK Committee Inquiry into the use of UK-manufactured arms in Yemen suggested that

> "The UK's support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, primarily through arms sales in the face of evidence of IHL violations, is inconsistent with the UK's global leadership role in the rule of law and international rules-based systems. The very rules the UK championed – represented by the Arms Trade Treaty – are at risk of unravelling" (Business Innovation and Skills and International Development Committees, 2016, p.33).

This showed a potential contradiction in the UK's commitment to upholding international law on the one hand, and its geopolitical and economic interests on the other through continuing to supply weapons to Saudi Arabia. The UK has remained consistent in its response to these inquires. For example, in response to the 2016 International Development Committee on Yemen, the government acknowledged that it had "played a leading role in the provision of humanitarian assistance" (International Development Committee, 2016b, p.1). In response to its arms exports, the government suggested that "it takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world", and thus, rejected claims "that the Saudi-led Coalition is engaged in an indiscriminate bombing campaign" in Yemen (International Development Committee, 2016b, p.13). According to Lablanco (2017), the UK has placed considerable effort into supporting its continued sale of arms to Saudi Arabia, particularly on the basis of having "influence on the buyers' behaviour". For example, Boris Johnson, argued that if the UK did not sell arms to Saudi Arabia "we would be vacating a space that would rapidly be filled by other western countries that would happily supply arms with nothing like the same compunctions, criteria or respect for humanitarian law" (Hansard, HC Deb., 26 October 2016). However, this claim is refuted because it is unlikely that the state which sells arms also has control over their use (CAAT, 2016).

The UK government thus remains consistent in its position of continuing to export arms in spite of the criticisms levelled against it. As Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond argued that the government should continue to export arms to Saudi Arabia, particularly because of its economic benefits to the UK (Hammond quoted in Stone, 2015). Similarly,

Theresa May commented more broadly on the UK's close economic relationship with Saudi Arabia (FCO, 2017i). On the UK's relationship with Saudi Arabia, David Cameron (2019, p.272) argued that his government "made pragmatic judgements about how best to promote our interests and values", which is based on a combination of interests regarding security, the economy, and international peace and stability. However, as Gilmore (2014, p.554) argues, this relationship between the UK's foreign policy interests and values is far from harmonious in relation to arms exports. This is because exporting arms may well be part of the UK's national interest in terms of economic prosperity, but the use of arms may potentially lead to humanitarian suffering.

The UK's relationship with Saudi Arabia in relation to the civil war in Yemen thus exposes a tension between its national interests and its commitment to the protection of liberal values. On the one hand, the government has promoted its liberal conservative foreign policy on international human rights protection through its considerable level of financial assistance. However, on the other hand, the UK has pursued its geopolitical and economic national and international interest through its arms exports and maintaining its broader regional relationship with Saudi Arabia. The allegations of these weapons being used against civilians in Yemen (House of Lords, 2019, p.19), in addition to the limited progress on the crisis in the UN Security Council between 2015 and 2018, is problematic for its commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action. UK governments have been exporting arms for decades, but the situation in Yemen exposes a tension in this relationship when the export of such weapons are potentially harming the civilians the UK is aiming to protect through its financial contributions to addressing the humanitarian crisis.

As with Myanmar, the UK's response to the civil war in Yemen does not entirely support the research hypothesis that the UK's changing place in the world between 1997 and 2020 led to sustained changes in its commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action. The UK did contribute significant financial support to the humanitarian crisis, but it also continued to export arms to Saudi Arabia. In this context, the UK has appealed more to scenario one of the research hypothesis in being a trading partner over scenarios two and three. The government has illustrated its prioritisation of trade and geopolitical interests in its relationship with Saudi Arabia at the expense of a liberal internationalist stance or a global soft power leader and influencer.

**6.5 Human protection, trade and the UK's role in the world**

The UK's approach to the situation in Yemen reveals a challenge in the government's attempt to balance its national and international interest between human rights protection and other geopolitical and economic interests. This dilemma in the relationship between trade and human protection in Yemen is a microcosm of a broader geopolitical and economic dilemma that some suggest the UK is beginning to face in the post-Brexit era. In preparation for Brexit, a 2018 Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry on human rights and the rule of law in a Global Britain found that post-Brexit, "the Government will have conflicting priorities between human rights and other Government policies, especially trade deals" and that this may "create short-term conflicts" between the two (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018b, p.16). The Inquiry recommended that "human rights clauses" should be part of future trade deals to ensure that the UK upholds its commitment to international human rights protection (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018b, p.16). Similarly, a Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry into the UK's relationship with China raised concerns of potentially "prioritising economic considerations over other interests, values and national security" (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2019, p.3). Whilst not explicit, the values and national security appear to reflect the importance the UK has previously attached to human rights and securing the national interest, and thus, a concern that the UK government's commitment to human rights may become less of a priority in comparison to negotiating and securing post-Brexit trade deals.

One research interview suggested that the UK's membership of the UN Security Council post-Brexit would be an important test of its influence on human protection issues, especially with its need to also secure trade agreements with other Member States.[31] For example, research by Jarvis et al. (2019) found that at the UN Security Council, there are growing "concerns over both the UK's future material capacity and apprehensions around its potential willingness to compromise on its commitment to liberal values in the name of trade deals". The UK is thus faced with the dilemma of maintaining its liberal commitment to human protection at the international level, whilst simultaneously being under increasing pressure to secure trade agreements.

It has been reported that "Britain has received demands to roll back its human rights standards in exchange for progress on post-Brexit trade deals" (Partington, 2019). Similarly, Choukroune (2019) argues that "as the UK goes about making its own post-

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[31] Author interview 2.

Brexit treaties, it looks like human rights are being abandoned as a result of its weaker bargaining power". This argument is based on the example of a post-Brexit agreement on trade signed with South Korea in August 2019, which "fails to cover as much ground as the clauses that are now commonplace in EU treaties" (Choukroune, 2019). Indeed, this is only one example so it is impossible to generalise more broadly across UK foreign policy on trade and human rights.

The 2019-21 Trade Bill, which aims to establish details of the UK's post-Brexit trade regulations, has generated some domestic contestation on the role of human protection in any present and future trade deals. Through amendment 3B, the House of Lords proposed a genocide clause, where the UK High Court would be able to determine whether a UK trade "agreement represents a state which has committed genocide" (UK Parliament, 2021). This is a significant development in the UK's commitment to human protection because it shows domestic attempts to ensure the government's trade agreements with countries, particularly with poor human rights records, are fully scrutinised and uphold human protection from mass violence. However, the government's consistent response has argued that the role of the High Court in determining matters of genocide "is inappropriate and would carry harmful unintended consequences". This was justified on the basis of the difficulty to prove that a genocide has been committed, and that if the Court did not reach a clear verdict on whether genocide had been committed by a state it could provide "a huge propaganda win for the country in question, effectively allowing that state to claim that it had been cleared by the UK courts" (Hansard HC Deb., 9 February 2021). This is not the government's outright rejection that human protection considerations should be part of a trade negotiation and agreement, but rather the specific details of the amendment and the potential consequences of trying to determine whether a state has committed atrocity crimes. As the next chapter shows, this combination of UK interests and the potential tensions between them is part of what kind of power the UK *is* and *aspires to be* at the international level.

## 6.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter contributes to the empirical assessment of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 2015 and 2020. It argues that there is evidence of some sustained changes that have occurred in the UK's rhetoric and actions on human protection, which is shown in the analysis of 700 primary documentary materials. The UK's contribution to coalition airstrikes in Syria in 2018

evidenced a continuation of a sustained change that has occurred in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection since at least 1997. This is according to the willingness of successive governments to justify UK interventions on the basis of humanitarian intervention, despite significant contestation over its legal implications. It is particularly telling that the UK's legal justification of humanitarian intervention acknowledged that it was the same basis as the New Labour government in Kosovo in 1999. The fact that this occurred across governments on different sides of the political spectrum thus adds further weight to the argument that the commitment of successive governments to humanitarian intervention is evidence of a sustained change in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection. Although the previous chapter showed the government's attempts to distance from New Labour in relation to Iraq and Afghanistan, this did not necessarily represent a shift from the idea of humanitarian intervention. Whilst it is difficult to predict the UK's future involvement in international crises, successive UK governments show signs that humanitarian intervention will endure as the UK's core legal framework for action in the absence of Article 51 or a Chapter VII resolution, in addition to its willingness to lead internationally in the pursuit of humanitarian intervention without international consensus on its legality.

In addition to this sustained change towards humanitarian intervention, the UK's financial and humanitarian assistance in Syria, Myanmar, and Yemen presents some evidence of the UK government's adaptability to its changing place in the world amid the gradual post-war relative decline in its military capabilities. This was shown in all three cases in the backdrop of the lack of political will from the international community to intervene militarily in order to prevent mass violence and atrocity crimes. For example, the UK continued its attempts to advocate on international human protection in Syria and contributed to the protection of refugees, it condemned the violence and human rights violations in Myanmar, and it provided substantial levels of financial support to addresses the humanitarian crises in Syria, Myanmar, and Yemen. This chapter argues that this is consistent with the changes that have occurred in UK foreign policy since 1997, including UK leadership and influence on the protection of liberal values such as democracy and human rights, drawing on its soft power capabilities to address the roots of humanitarian crises through ODA and other forms of bilateral and multilateral aid, and advocating in favour of human protection.

The chapter also provides evidence of the inherent challenges facing the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. In particular, the chapter

highlights the government's unsuccessful attempts to reconcile its geopolitical and economic interests and its commitment to liberal values in its foreign policy. Whilst this chapter does not assume that the UK's approach to each crisis is informed by human protection concerns alone, the crises in Myanmar and Yemen expose a conflict in the prioritisation of its multitude of domestic and international interests and values. The UK's rhetoric and action on Myanmar illustrated a combination of democracy promotion and human protection from mass violence. However, the analysis of Myanmar shows that the government had been prioritising the country's elections and democratic transition, with its response to the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya being largely reactionary than a preventative response. As the wealth of evidence from the UN, non-governmental organisations, and secondary literature shows, the Rohingya had faced discrimination for decades in the lead up to the mass violence and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya in Rakhine State in 2017. On the basis of its relationship with Aung San Suu Kyi and its role on the UN Security Council, the UK was in an important international position to influence and lead on the situation, such as pressuring the Myanmar government to address the deep-rooted discrimination against the Rohingya.

The findings from the section on Yemen illustrate a similar pattern in the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action alongside other geopolitical and economic interests with regards to its political and economic relations with Saudi Arabia. Whilst the evidence shows the UK's considerable financial contributions to alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, it was simultaneously continuing its trade relationship with coalition states. The government is entitled to export arms to countries around the world, but the issue in Yemen was the serious humanitarian situation as a result of the civil war. This chapter has argued that this exposes a fundamental human protection and trade dilemma in which the UK government has attempted to pursue two irreconcilable interests and values. Yemen is thus one noteworthy example of the broader challenges facing the UK's transitional foreign policy in the post-Brexit era in terms of how policymakers protect both the UK's foreign policy interests and protection of liberal values.

To draw some initial conclusions on the research hypothesis, the period between 2015 and 2020 shows a complex interaction of all three scenarios on the relationship between the UK's place in the world as part of a transitional foreign policy and its commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action. This includes a trading partner, a pragmatic liberal internationalist, and a soft power leader and influencer on human

protection. For instance, the UK's rhetoric and actions in Yemen show elements of a trading partner based on the UK's willingness pursue its economic interests amid concerns of its implications for human protection; its rhetoric and actions in Syria evidence the scenario of a pragmatic liberal internationalist according to the government's commitment to humanitarian intervention; and there is evidence of the UK's global soft power influence and leadership in Syria, Myanmar, and Yemen according to its financial support and instances of leadership.

The next chapter argues that this complex interaction between these three scenarios is indicative of a broader crisis in the UK's place in the world as part of its transitional foreign policy (Beasley et al., 2018; Oppermann et al., 2020). It argues that this crisis in turn has significant implications for the UK's commitment to human protection as governments continue to wrestle with protecting the UK's interests and liberal values. This crisis in the UK's place in the world is compounded by a particularly turbulent era of UK foreign policy between 2016 and 2020 in terms of the major foreign policy change of Brexit and the high-degree of discontinuity in the core agents of UK foreign policy with shifts in Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries.

# Chapter 7 - A 'Global Britain': The UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy, 1997-2020

"I believe that the only way for us to respond to this vast array of challenges is to come together and defend the international order that we have worked so hard to create and the values by which we stand. For it is the fundamental values that we share, values of fairness, justice and human rights, that have created the common cause between nations to act together in our shared interest and form the multilateral system."

*Theresa May, Speech to the UN General Assembly (FCO, 2017j)*

Between 1997 and 2020, the foreign policy of successive governments has been based on the fundamental notion that the UK is an important and influential international actor. This includes maintaining the UK's position at the forefront of the multilateral institutions of the liberal international order, while extending its international influence through significant soft power contributions to ODA and its leadership and advocacy on human protection at the global level. However, the post-2015 period of UK foreign policy has intensified academic and policy debates on the UK's place in the world following both the decision to leave the EU in 2016 and the broader challenges facing the post-war liberal international order (Ikenberry, 2018a). In response, the UK government has promoted the idea of Global Britain in order to argue that the UK will remain centre stage in its post-Brexit international relations (FCO, 2017g). Yet others have argued that the UK is facing a "role crisis" (Oppermann et al., 2020, p.145) in which governments are struggling to present a clear strategy for a post-Brexit foreign policy.

This chapter brings the overall empirical analysis of the thesis together through an assessment of the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. Whilst the previous three empirical chapters focused on an assessment of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection, this chapter addresses the broader thesis themes of the UK's place in the world and its international leadership and influence on human protection amid its post-war relative decline. Its central argument is that the nature of the UK's place in the world is fundamental for determining its commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action. Whether through liberal internationalism or liberal conservatism, the empirical

chapters so far have argued that the UK's commitment to human protection has been influenced by the adaptation of successive governments to a transitional foreign policy in the form of the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, changes in its membership, leadership, and influence in core multilateral organisations, and the UK's position within the evolving international order.

However, the post-2015 period of the UK's foreign policy is in a state of flux as policymakers and academics attempt to define the nature of the UK's post-Brexit international engagements. This in turn raises challenges for the nature of the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy as governments attempt to balance between its economic and political interests and its liberal values including democracy and human rights protection. Despite the challenges facing the post-Brexit era of UK foreign policy, this chapter argues that the sustained changes witnessed between 1997 and 2015 have continued to influence UK foreign policy on human protection between 2016 and 2020. In particular, the UK's considerable capabilities for soft power leadership and influence allow the UK to make substantial contributions to international human protection in other ways which require less dependence on the use of force and significant troop deployments.

The chapter continues to define sustained change in relation to a shift in the UK's foreign policy goals and/or methods on human protection which endures over time in the approach of successive governments and is continually shaped, maintained, and reinforced by a combination of UK government rhetoric – what is said by elite political agents in government – and its actions – the means and methods of protection in practice. Sustained change is therefore assessed through a content analysis of the 1,055 primary documentary materials used throughout the empirical analysis so far, in addition to the government's actions in terms of policy, funding and humanitarian aid, coercive and non-coercive intervention, and advocacy and entrepreneurship. In addition, the chapter draws on findings from semi-structured interviews and expert secondary scholarship. These research methods aim to attain a high-level of analytical and research rigour through triangulating primary and secondary material in order to cross-examine and validate the research findings.

The chapter is split into two main sections. The first analyses the UK's changing place in the world from 1997 to 2020 according to a transitional foreign policy. This includes a focus on the UK's post-war relative decline and how successive governments have attempted to tackle this change, changes in the UK's membership of multilateral

organisations using the example of Brexit, and the UK's place within the evolving international order. The second section focuses on UK's soft power leadership and influence on human protection using the examples of the UN Security Council and ODA. The chapter draws on the examples used throughout this thesis on Kosovo (1999), Sierra Leone (2000), Libya (2011), Syria (2011-2018), Yemen (2015-2020) and Myanmar (2016-2017).

The chapter finds that adjustments in the UK's place in the world since 1997 have translated into sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection from 1997 to 2020. It finds that successive governments have tried to adapt to the UK's accelerating post-war relative decline by defending the liberal international rules-based order, and by extension, its components of human rights, democracy promotion, and the rule of law. However, it also finds that the government's commitment to Global Britain as a means of strategizing the UK's post-Brexit place in the world suffers from limitations. This is because Global Britain is based on a largely ambiguous and superficial historical and political narrative aimed at presenting a concrete vision and policy to a domestic audience on the UK's post-Brexit place in the world (Daddow, 2019a; Turner, 2019; Niblett, 2021).

Beyond Global Britain, the chapter finds that UK's commitment to human protection through multilateral institutions and humanitarian intervention have been important elements of the UK's attempts to underline its credentials to retain both leadership and influence in international relations. It is this ability to draw on soft power leadership and influence, in spite of a relative decline in hard power, which has formed an important part of the efforts from policymakers to promote the UK as an important international actor. It is argued that underlying these approaches is a broader appeal to a pragmatic foreign policy tradition (Honeyman, 2017; Daddow, 2019), in which UK foreign policymakers are aware of the UK's changing place in the world and the need to adjust accordingly. However, this thesis shows how in the case of human protection, this pragmatism has given way to sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in both its rhetoric and actions.

This chapter is an important contribution to addressing the theoretical and empirical research questions and testing the hypothesis through bringing together the assessment of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection. It also contributes to research on UK foreign policy and human protection, the leadership and influence of former great powers in the post-war era, and foreign policy change through the case of the redirection in the UK's approach to human protection.

**7.1 Brexit, Global Britain, and human protection**

This section analyses adjustments in the UK's place in the world since 1997. It focuses in particular on the post-2015 context of UK foreign policy due to the argument that the UK is facing a crisis in its post-Brexit international position (Oppermann et al., 2020). It aims to address the core theoretical and empirical research questions, as well contribute to testing the thesis hypothesis that the UK's awareness of its changing position in the world between 1997 and 2020 led to sustained changes in its rhetoric and action towards a strengthened commitment to human protection. Drawing lessons from role theory in UK foreign policy (Gaskarth, 2014; McCourt, 2014; Oppermann et al., 2020), it argues that domestic and international perspectives of the UK's position in the world are essential for examining how this translates into sustained changes in its foreign policy commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action. This is based on the argument that being aware of domestic and international notions of the UK's relative decline creates pressure for the government to demonstrate that the UK retains an important international position. This includes drawing on the UK's influence and leadership in the international response to humanitarian crises according to its commitment to the liberal international order. It finds that whilst there has been a consistent underlying commitment to liberal internationalism on human protection since 1997, the Brexit era of UK foreign policy raises fundamental challenges for conceptualising its place in the world and subsequent commitment to human protection. This challenge also stems from the limitations of Global Britain as a policy for conceptualising the UK's place in the world because it is orientated more towards a domestic audience than an international one, and thus, appears to have no significant bearing on international views of the UK as a global actor (Daddow, 2019a; Turner, 2019; Niblett, 2021).

**7.1.1 Adjusting to post-1945 relative international decline**

An important contribution to conceptualising the UK's place in the world since 1997 has been role theory. As discussed in chapter 2, the theoretical basis of role theory is that a state performs its role in the world according to both domestic and international perspectives on what is considered appropriate for that state (McCourt, 2011; McCourt, 2014; Gaskarth, 2014; Oppermann et al., 2020). These perspectives ultimately influence the nature of the UK's foreign policy, especially regarding its relations with other states (Gaskarth, 2014, p.561). These subsequent role conceptions are not static and are

therefore liable to change over time according to the domestic and international environment in which UK foreign policy is created and practiced.

An issue for UK foreign policy in the post-1945 era is that these role conceptions have undergone fundamental changes amid domestic and international views on the UK's hard power international decline. Whilst the UK retains its nuclear status as one crucial component of its hard power (Bernstein, 2004, p.1; Cargill, 2018, p.2), its broader military and economic power has declined relative to the growth of other states (Roberts, 2020, p.2). The result of this relative hard power decline in the post-1997 period has been continuous domestic attempts from the government to convince a domestic audience and other states that the UK retains an important international role. As shown in chapter 4, Tony Blair argued against UK isolationism in favour of an active global role (Blair, 1997 quoted in McCourt, 2011, p.36). This was characterised by attempts to cast a leadership role for the UK in order to underline its global leadership credentials.

The Blair government's attempts to translate this perspective into its foreign policy on human protection was most visible in Robin Cook's much publicised ethical dimension and commitment to human rights (Cook, 1997) and Blair's (1999) doctrine of the international community. According to Hill (2018, p.185), Blair's approach to foreign policy reflected a "sense of moral superiority about both the right and duty to take a central role in world politics". Through this internationalist approach to the UK's place in the world, the New Labour government positioned the UK according to what Gaskarth (2014, p.577) terms an "opportunist-interventionist power". This role is based on a combination of implementing liberal internationalist norms such as human protection through international interventions (Gaskarth, 2014, p.577). The UK's intervention in Kosovo subsequently "represented a major development in the use of force to promote human rights" based on the willingness to exert force against another sovereign nation especially without the authorisation for action through conventional channels of international law (Gaskarth, 2014, p.577). Blair's New Labour government was thus able to reconcile its liberal internationalist place in the world with a commitment to human protection.

Whilst the UK's intervention in Kosovo is not devoid of controversy, chapters 5 and 6 evidenced how this role conception of an opportunist-interventionist has largely influenced the approach of successive governments to conceptualising the UK's place in the world and its commitment to human protection (Daddow and Schnapper, 2013; Beech and Oliver, 2014; Oliver, 2015; Beech and Munce, 2019). The Conservative-led Coalition

government continued to advance its domestic belief that the UK "can and should play a leading role" on the international stage (FCO, 2013a). On human protection, David Cameron recognised the need for intervention in instances of mass violence (FCO, 2011k). Successive UK governments therefore continued a trend of defining and defending the UK's foreign policy commitment to human protection as part of an active engagement with the world.

## 7.1.2 Brexit and the crisis of the UK's place in the world

With the UK's internationalist place in the world being relatively consistent between 1997 and 2015, the 2016 decision to leave the EU has added a considerable layer of complexity to the government's efforts to promote the idea of the UK as an important international actor. Following the resignation of David Cameron in the aftermath of the referendum result, the incoming Theresa May government was quick to dispel the notion that Brexit inflicts a major blow for domestic and international perspectives of the UK's position on the international stage. The Foreign Secretary was the government's primary outlet for communicating the UK's intent to remain committed to an active international role. Boris Johnson's first move as Foreign Secretary was to declare that Brexit "emphatically does not mean a Britain that turns in on herself" (FCO, 2016a). Similarly, Johnson's successor, Jeremy Hunt, argued that Brexit was "about going global" and "re-engaging this country with its global identity" (FCO, 2018q). Instead of signalling decline, "Britain will retain all the capabilities of a global power" (FCO, 2019a). These quotes are unsurprising since the government is striving to continue promoting its belief that the UK will remain an important player in international relations. However, these statements also implicitly evidence the government's acknowledgment that leaving such a significant political and economic union opens space both from within and outside the UK to question its credentials as an actor in the liberal international order.

The government's attempts to promote the UK as an important actor post-Brexit have been subsequently contested by alternative perspectives at a domestic and international level. According to the former UK diplomat, Sir Simon Fraser, Brexit constitutes a "far-reaching dislocation of our international role and relationships" (Fraser, 2017). Similar concerns were revealed in research interviews on Brexit and the UK's place in the world. Brexit was perceived as potentially detrimental to the UK's

international reputation in deciding to depart from an important European institution.[32] This is because being a member of the EU was interpreted as a fundamental element of the UK's outward-looking foreign policy and that leaving therefore challenged outside perspectives on the active international role the UK had traditionally adopted as part of its EU membership.[33]

Brexit is therefore interpreted by some in the domestic and international sphere as drawing greater attention to the UK's relative international decline (Gill and Oates, 2017; Gifkins et al., 2019a; Oppermann et al., 2020). Whilst Brexit is not the only factor that has led to the UK's relative decline, it is seen as one major component quickening this process.[34] Similarly, Gifkins et al's (2019, pp.1353-1354) research on Brexit and the UK's place on the UN Security Council identifies how the decision to leave the EU "took place within the context of long-term trends of British decline". However, a particular issue with Brexit is its impact on "the perception among other states that the UK is in decline" (Gifkins et al., 2019, pp.1353-1354). By leaving a powerful institution, it is difficult to project that this will translate into an even greater place for the UK in the world, since it was formerly a member of significant free trade bloc of states (Niblett, 2021).

Despite this, some research interviews cautioned against overstating the implications of Brexit for the UK's place in the world. For example, it is important not to overlook the UK's relationship with the EU on important issues, such as international security, which will endure in some form post-Brexit.[35] The UK's historical role in the world was also used to illustrate how it has relied on important relationships in its foreign policy that will continue regardless of Brexit.[36] Findings from two further interviews suggested that following the UK's decision to leave the EU, there was a positive sense from UK diplomats that this would translate into greater UK engagement and focus at the UN given the pressure to retain international leadership and influence post-Brexit.[37] These contributions draw attention to the pragmatism and resilience of UK foreign policy amid

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[32] Author interview 4.

[33] Author interview 6.

[34] Author interview 8.

[35] Author interview 10.

[36] Author interview 6.

[37] Author interviews 7 and 12.

challenges to its place in the world, whilst also showing how the UK has other multilateral avenues to maintain leadership and influence, such as the UN (see section 7.2).

On the other hand, when asked to describe the UK's place in the world, research interviews suggested that this was reduced by Brexit.[38] However, it was suggested in the research interviews that the UK still has important capabilities to draw on, especially through its membership of the UN Security Council.[39] The fundamental issue for the UK's commitment to human protection is the broader lack of consensus that these perspectives illustrate on the UK's post-Brexit place in the world. This leads to Beasley et al. (2018) and Oppermann et al. (2020, p.145) to argue that UK foreign policy is witnessing a "role crisis". In aiming to construct the UK's post-Brexit role in the world, policymakers have inadvertently "projected a disorientated foreign policy containing elements of partially incompatible roles" from allying with the US to leading the Commonwealth (Oppermann et al., 2020, p.133). This perspective shows that the government has only further complicated the UK's place in the world by drawing on various national role conceptions. By arguing that the nature of the UK's commitment to human protection is a fundamental product of its place in the world, the subsequent lack of a clear position on the international stage is a problem for addressing human protection. For example, adopting a global foreign policy has implications for human protection if this means free trade relationships with states around the world, some of which may commit human rights abuses. Conversely, pursuing a foreign policy based on protecting the existing rules-based liberal international order may entail following a similar approach to New Labour's liberal internationalism.

The interplay between these domestic and international expectations for the UK's place in the world, and the various national role conceptions that have emerged as a result, shows the significant influence of broader changes in the external international environment on UK foreign policy. As argued throughout this dissertation, UK foreign policy increasingly operates in an uncertain international environment characterised by the gradual demise of the liberal international order (Ikenberry, 2018a), and the emergence of a broader world order with power more diffuse amongst states (Acharya, 2018). Changes in the global balance of power is an additional pressure on the attempts from domestic governments to conceptualise the UK's place in a world. This is because

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38 Author interviews 4 and 8.
39 Author interviews 9 and 12.

it involves engaging with powers which may not so easily conform to the UK's conventional appeal to liberal internationalism defined in terms of democracy promotion and human rights protection. A transition in world order entails "changes as states with different normative worldviews rise or decline in power and influence" (Newman, 2016, p.37). In response, the approach of Theresa May's government was to "defend the international order that we have worked so hard to create and the values by which we stand" (FCO, 2017j). This idea of defending the liberal international order was supported by Jeremy Hunt's idea that the UK should act as "an invisible chain that links the world's democracies" (FCO, 2018j; FCO, 2019e). The UK's immediate response to what policymakers viewed as a changing international order was to thus uphold and defend their commitment to the post-war liberal international order.

### 7.1.3 Global Britain: Defining the UK's post-Brexit global role

Using Theresa May's appointment as Prime Minister on July 13, 2016 as a starting point, the content analysis of 700 foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports from UK government elites on the nature of UK's place in the world showed an overwhelming focus on Global Britain (figure 26).

**Figure 26. Post-2015 references to the UK's world role**
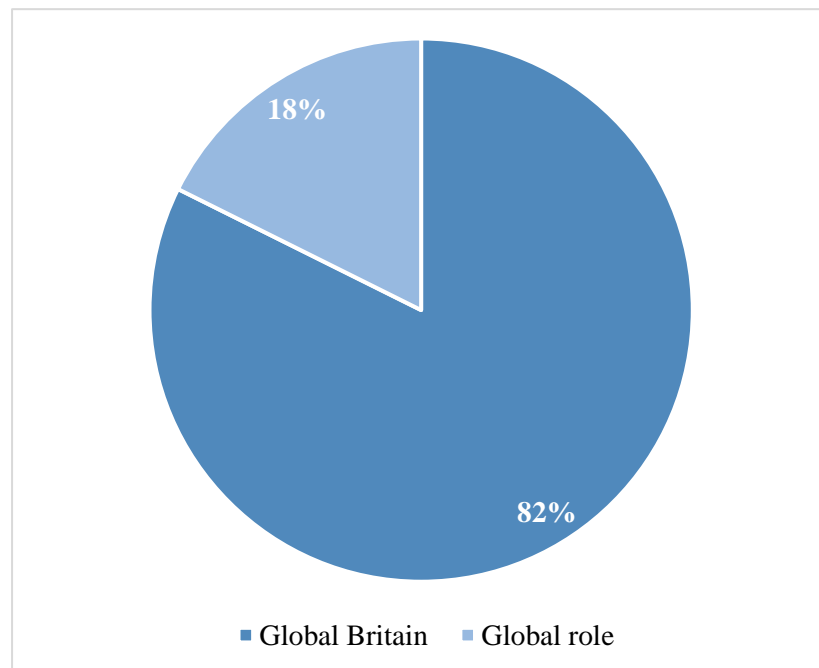


*Source: Gov.uk*

Global Britain accounted for 82% of the total with 42 direct references from government ministers and representatives, while the UK's global role was mentioned 9 times (18%). In comparison to the Cameron government, there was no direct reference to the notion of UK decline in the world. Rather, the principle focus was on communicating the idea that the UK remained an important actor in spite of Brexit, with Global Britain being central to this perspective (FCO, 2016a).

Beyond the numerical data, the government's statements on Global Britain encompassed many of the same principles of the UK's liberal internationalist position since 1997. The Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, suggested that a Global Britain would "be more outward-looking and more engaged with the world than ever before" and identified "the need for us to commit ourselves to the peace and prosperity of the world" (FCO, 2016a). Theresa May suggested that a core aspect of Global Britain was to "defend the rules-based international order against irresponsible states that seek to erode it. To support our partners in regions of instability and repelling the threats they face and to back their vision for societies and economies that will prosper in the future" (FCO, 2017g). According to Johnson's successor, Jeremy Hunt, Global Britain also means "leading by example as a force for good in the world" (FCO, 2019d). Finally, the government's official response to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on Global Britain was to reiterate that it was a "signal of the UK's intent to maximise our presence, influence and impact" (HM Government, 2018b). These statements from the Prime Minster and successive Foreign Secretaries suggest that Global Britain is not a radical departure from the government's attempts to conceptualise the UK's place in the world since 1997. This is because it is based on defending the liberal rules-based international order, building alliances, and ensuring international peace and security. The following sub-sections therefore analyse the implications of Global Britain for defining the UK's post-Brexit place in the world.


### 7.1.4 Conceptual limitations of Global Britain

On the surface, the government's rhetoric suggests that Global Britain is the UK's vision for its post-Brexit role, and yet, it has been beset by serious conceptual limitations. The Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on Global Britain concluded that "the only thing that is clear about Global Britain is that it is unclear what it means, what it stands for or how its success should be measured" (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018a, p.5). It is telling that this conclusion was reached over a year after Global Britain had first

appeared in the government's foreign policy rhetoric and thus shows the lack of success in communicating a clear Global Britain strategy. The academic literature equally finds that Global Britain lacks clear definitional boundaries (Turner, 2019, p.728; Boussebaa, 2020, p.483) and has led to a haphazard conceptualisation of how the government intends to express it in practice (Gilmore, 2020, p.26). This lack of domestic clarity also has implications for the government's international projection of Global Britain. In their research on Global Britain in the UN, Gifkins et al. (2019b, p.8) found that the lack of domestic understanding of Global Britain "has a knock-on effect, making it more difficult for the UK to project clarity of purpose abroad". In this sense, it is plausible to argue that Global Britain is yet another component of the UK's post-Brexit role crisis, with the lack of domestic consensus on the UK's place in the world translating to the international level as well.

It is also possible to draw important comparisons between the definitional limitations of Global Britain and New Labour's ethical dimension. As argued in chapter 4, a serious issue with the ethical dimension from the outset was the lack of clear parameters, which opened space for others beyond the government to contest and add content to the ethical dimension to the point of it being framed as an ethical foreign policy (Williams, 2002; Vickers, 2011). The ethical dimension was therefore a lesson in how not to communicate a foreign policy without first identifying its basic message. However, Global Britain is following a similar path in lacking a clear outline for the UK's place in the world. A compelling example of this is a statement from the International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, who suggested "members of the Cabinet are scratching our heads and thinking about Global Britain" (DFID, 2019). Giving evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on Global Britain, Sir Simon Fraser suggested that it does not represent anything dramatically different from past attempts to define the UK's world role, but that it provided a blank canvas from which to attach meaning according to your stance on the UK's present and future role in the world (Fraser in Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018d).

An outcome of this has been the emergence of different connotations of the UK's place in the world according to Global Britain. According to Daddow (2019a, p.6), Global Britain represents a continuation of the UK's foreign policy pragmatism based fundamentally on maintaining its place at the "top table" by drawing on its "bilateral and multilateral bargaining" power (Daddow, 2019a, p.6). Similarly, Niblett (2021, p.6) suggests that Global Britain is about underlining the UK's credentials for engaging with

the world beyond the EU. Even if it is accepted that Global Britain is part of a business-as-usual pragmatic foreign policy, the reference to *Global* Britain has been perceived as reminiscent of the British Empire. Boussebaa (2020, p.484) argues that Global Britain provokes "a nostalgia for the Empire of yesteryear" through its promotion of the UK as a global power which has not been the case since empire. Turner (2019, p.727) details a more nuanced perspective on Global Britain as being part of "the narrative of empire". From this perspective, Global Britain is a means of national soothing "in anticipation of domestic trauma following the loss of EU membership" (Turner, 2019, p.727). This perspective suggests that Global Britain is the primary way for the government to show a domestic audience that the UK intends to retain its status as an important power following Brexit.

### 7.1.5 Global Britain as a domestic role orientation

Turner's (2019, p.728) argument that Global Britain is intended for a domestic audience and "was never envisaged as a viable foreign policy programme" is the focus of this section. In consulting academic research and interview material, it is argued that Turner's (2019) perspective is the most persuasive account for the limitations of Global Britain in defining the UK's place in the world. It is explained by both the lack of international clarity on Global Britain and the increasing importance of public opinion on the UK's place on the international stage.

Internationally, it was considerably challenging to identify any non-UK perspectives on Global Britain. Research by Gifkins et al. (2019b, p.9) found that diplomats at the UN "were in agreement that the policy of 'Global Britain' was not of much relevance or was simply not discussed" and as a result "it was often characterised by diplomats as simply a slogan with very little behind it".[40] Similar perspectives were conveyed in research interviews. When asked about Global Britain, responses suggested that it was a brand lacking any serious substance; at risk of becoming an empty idea without any serious policy outputs; and generating confusion over its meaning and policy implications.[41] Other responses expressed serious concern with the message of Global Britain, since *global* implies that the UK was in some way not global prior to leaving the

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[40] Approaches were made to interview participants on non-UK perspectives of Global Britain, but without success.

[41] Author interviews 2, and 11.

EU.[42] The outcome is that the UK's attempts to generate a consensus on Global Britain were judged as being largely unsuccessful so far.[43] This supports the idea that Global Britain is a more inward-looking approach to convincing a domestic audience of the UK's post-Brexit role.

This argument is strengthened by drawing on the importance of UK domestic opinion on the UK's place in the world, which was particularly brought to the surface with Brexit. According to Gaskarth (2020, p.31), the government's parliamentary defeat on Syria in 2013 and the 2016 referendum on EU membership, demonstrate the growing importance of domestic public opinion on foreign policy. With the 2016 referendum in particular, the public voted against the Prime Minister's position that the UK should remain within the EU. This case shows that it is "imperative to align foreign policy with public opinion in advance" (Gaskarth, 2020, p.31). As Gilmore (2020, p.27) argues, the result of the 2016 EU referendum has led to significant polarisation among the domestic public on the UK's place in the world, principally between an appeal to UK post-Brexit sovereignty and an emphasis on maintaining the UK's existing status in the world. For instance, opinion poll research on public attitudes towards the UK's place in the world presented a mixed response according to different roles the UK should play, such as operating a foreign policy that is principally concerned with the national interest, a values-based approach, or a combination of these (Elliot and Gaston, 2019, p.3). In turn, Global Britain "appears to be an attempt to provide a unifying narrative, directed at a polarised internal audience" to reconcile these different perspectives on the UK's post-Brexit place in the world (Gilmore, 2020, p.28).

Instead of a coherent foreign policy strategy, Global Britain is concerned with addressing the UK's post-1945 internal "identity crisis" which Brexit has merely brought to the surface (Turner, 2019, p.731). Consequently, it is argued that Global Britain

> "is an autobiographical narrative about what Britain is and what it envisions the world and its actors to be. This is an important distinction, because narratives are not simply descriptive and they rarely stand alone; they are performative and interconnected, written to construct particular realities and shape policy choice. Global Britain provides a narrative of a world of

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[42] Author interviews 3, 4 and 6.

[43] Author interview 8.

opportunity which an entrepreneurial UK is ready to embrace. It does this to calm public unease in anticipation of (especially economic) trauma in the form of Brexit" (Turner, 2019, p.733)

Global Britain as a narrative is important because it shows its underlying historical construction based on domestic and international perspectives and expectations of the UK's role in the world. Brexit has led to a redoubling of the government's efforts to show that the UK wants to retain an important international role. The FCO's memorandum to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on Global Britain evidences this attempt to construct a post-Brexit domestic narrative through creating a grand vision for the UK as "a successful global foreign policy player, and to resist any sense that Britain will be less engaged in the world in the next few years" (FCO in Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018a). However, there is less detail on how the UK government intends to fulfil its aspirations of being a global foreign policy player, which only serves to reinforce Global Britain as a domestic narrative.

### 7.1.6 Human protection and the Integrated Review

So far, this chapter has argued that the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020 has been driven by how governments conceptualise the UK's place in the world. Yet the promotion of Global Britain under Theresa May and Boris Johnson has lacked substance on the role of human protection. According to the Foreign Affairs Committee (2018b, p.3) report on Global Britain, human rights and the rule of law, "promoting human rights, the rule of law, and strengthening the rules-based international system are essential to the foreign policy of Global Britain". This commitment to upholding human rights, the rule of law, and the rules-based international system is particularly important since the foreign policy of successive governments "have been shaped around the promotion of liberal values" (Gaskarth, 2020, p.25). This thesis has argued that these liberal values, including democracy and international human rights protection have been central features of UK foreign policy throughout the period between 1997 and 2020, but the issue is how these values are conceptualised in the foreign policy of a Global Britain and whether there is any fundamental shift in the government's approach.

In February 2020, Boris Johnson launched an Integrated Review of the UK's foreign and security policy in an attempt "to define Britain's place in the world" (Prime

Minister's Office, 2020a). There was no mention of Global Britain during the launch and lead up to the publication of the Review. Instead, Boris Johnson appealed to similar historical ideas on the UK's place in the world to show that in the post-war era "Britain tipped the scales of history and did immense good for the world" (Prime Minister's Office, 2020b). This was followed by a rallying call that the UK now has "a chance to follow in this great tradition, to end the era of retreat, transform our armed forces, bolster our global influence, unite and level up across our country, protect our people, and defend the free societies in which we fervently believe" (Prime Minister's Office, 2020b). There is a striking similarity between Johnson's statement and Tony Blair's emphasis on asserting the UK's place in the world during his own first term in office. As chapter 4 showed, Tony Blair openly rejected isolationism and argued that the UK should play a central role on the world stage (Blair, 1999a; 1999b; Blair, 1999 quoted in BBC, 1999). Boris Johnson's comments on the Integrated Review are therefore a continuation of asserting the UK's active place in the world, which in turn also attempts to dispel the notion of the UK's relative international decline.

The Integrated Review was published in March 2021 and outlined the government's foreign policy strategy for the next 10 years, including an updated strategic framework to replace the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review. At the core of the report was the government's strategic shift "from defending the status quo within the post-Cold War international system to dynamically shaping the post-COVID order" (HM Government, 2021, p.21). On the surface, this commitment to shaping the evolving international order appears to be a dramatic shift in the UK's foreign policy strategy. However, the government's proposals for shaping this new order are founded on familiar UK foreign policy terrain. For example, the Review states that the UK "will sit at the heart of a network of like-minded countries and flexible groupings, committed to protecting human rights and upholding global norms" (HM Government, 2021, p.6). The Review also details the UK's "global perspective and global responsibilities" through being a member of the core multilateral institutions of international order (HM Government, 2021, p.60). This shows that the liberal values that have underpinned UK foreign policy from 1997 to 2020 will remain largely the same, including its commitment to international human protection, as will the UK's diplomatic voice in bodies such as the UN Security Council. The Review therefore appears to represent a continuation of the UK foreign policy pragmatism by recognising that in order to retain an active role on the

world stage, the UK has to keep pace with developments in international relations as the global balance of power changes.

The challenge for international human protection at the time of writing is how the UK balances between its geopolitical and economic interests on the one hand and its commitment to human rights on the other. The case of Yemen in chapter 6 exposed the inherent tensions in the relationship between the UK's economic and political interests through its trade relationship with Saudi Arabia and its commitment to human protection. A similar issue is visible in the UK's relationship with China and how it addresses its duel commitment to upholding human rights but building significant trade ties with a global superpower. The Integrated Review partially referenced this challenge in acknowledging that

> "In the years ahead we will need to manage inevitable tensions and trade-offs: between our openness and the need to safeguard our people, economy and way of life through measures that increase our security and resilience; between competing and cooperating with other states, sometimes at the same time; and between our short-term commercial interests and our values." (HM Government, 2021, p.17)

This statement leaves much open to interpretation, but the final part of the paragraph in particular outlines the possible trade-offs between the UK's economic interests and its values, which the government interprets as being inevitable. However beyond this it is unclear how the UK proposes to reconcile the two, particularly in an international environment facing significant economic and humanitarian challenges in the aftermath of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the broader crisis in international human protection, and the imperative of international trade in the UK's post-Brexit political and economic engagements.

### 7.1.7 The UK as a hybrid great-middle power

To conclude this section, it has been shown that there is considerable domestic debate on the nature of the UK's place in the world, which is illustrative of a broader role crisis in the post-2015 era of UK foreign policy. Brexit in particular has drawn attention to defining the type of power the UK is, in addition to the awareness of the May and Johnson governments on the need to promote an active place for the UK on the international stage.

The subsequent pursuit of Global Britain shows that the government is refusing any notion that the UK is a middle, which is arguably reflective of the broader post-1945 attempts by successive governments to demonstrate that relative decline is not something absolute that renders the UK unable to exert power on the international stage.

Yet in the pursuit of this approach, the UK's post-Brexit place in the world is fundamentally unclear. The analysis in this section leads to the idea that the UK is in some sense a *hybrid great-middle power* existing on a spectrum between the status of a great and middle power. This supports research by Hill (2016, p.394) on the "anomalous position" of the UK in international relations in which it is difficult to categorise the type of power that it is. The result of this is that the UK remains active on the international stage, but is unable to draw on significant hard power capabilities (Hill, 2016, pp.407-408). In terms of intervention "caution is the watchword on both political and financial grounds, while geography acts as a powerful constraint" (Hill, 2016, p.414). The Integrated Review adopts a similar approach to previous UK governments since at least 1997 in aiming to strike a delicate balance between a commitment to core liberal values, including democracy and human rights, while also protecting the UK's geopolitical and economic interests as the balance of international power shifts between states.

## 7.2 UK Leadership and influence on human protection

This section argues that international leadership and influence have been two fundamental sources of the UK's commitment to human protection as part of its post-1997 place in the world. These sources are significant amid a transitional foreign policy because they form part of the attempts of successive governments to convey both leadership and influence in order to maintain the UK's place in the world as an important international actor. This is achieved through drawing on several sources of soft power leadership and influence, including its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, contributions to human protection in action, and its considerable support through ODA. These sources have gradually translated into a sustained change in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection beginning in earnest in 1997. With the government increasingly aware of the UK's relative hard power decline, it has attempted to strengthen its commitment to human protection through drawing on its existing soft power capabilities.

These sources of soft power leadership and influence are used to empirically support the hypothesis that the UK's awareness of its changing position in the world between 1997 and 2020 led to sustained changes in its rhetoric and action towards a

strengthened commitment to human protection. Whilst acknowledging that leadership and influence are distinct concepts, both are addressed in tandem in the following sub-sections on the basis that the UK illustrates leadership and influence together in its human protection actions. The first sub-section introduces the conceptualisation of soft power, which is then used in following sub-sections to analyse UK leadership and influence on human protection through the UN Security Council, contributions to humanitarian crises, and ODA.

### 7.2.1 Conceptualising soft power in UK foreign policy

Joseph Nye (1990, p.166) originally conceptualised soft power as "when one country gets other countries to *want* what it wants" (emphasis in original). Rather than the use of hard power to force compliance, soft power "uses an attraction to shared values, and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values" (Nye, 2004). According to Hill and Beadle (2014, pp.11-12), soft power success comes from two sources; the first being the nature of the soft power state itself, such as the ideas, identity, and values which constitute its foreign policy; and the second being the ability to convey this to other states.

As argued throughout this thesis, the UK has witnessed a relative hard power decline in the post-war period. To use defence as one example, the UK was estimated to have spent 4.1% of GDP on defence in 1990, which subsequently decreased to 2.7% in 1997, 2.5% in 2010 and then to 2.1% in 2018, which is just above NATO's 2% defence spending target (MoD, 2019; Statista, 2020). In 2019, the UK's provision of armed forces was still 10,000 less than the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review's target of 144,000 (Dempsey, 2019, p.5). It has been suggested that one reason for this decline is a trade-off between maintaining the UK's nuclear capacity and its other hard power capabilities (Roberts, 2020, p.2). Although only one example, it is part of the broader and gradual relative decline in the UK's post-war hard power capabilities. In turn, increasing attention has been placed on the UK's soft power capabilities, which are considered important for preserving the UK's place in the world (McClory, 2010, p.1; House of Lords, 2014, p.7). Jeremy Hunt, for instance, called for "a holistic view of British soft power and to recognise that it is part of British power and influence" (Hunt cited in House of Lords, 2018).

However, another challenge for the UK are domestic perspectives from former government ministers, officials, and academics that the UK's soft power international

influence is also declining (Evans and Steven, 2010; Smith and Laatikainen, 2016; Fraser in Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018d; Gifkins et al., 2019a).[44] Prior to becoming Foreign Secretary, Hague (2009) warned "that it will become more difficult over time for Britain to exert on world affairs the influence which we are used to". This was largely in response to the changes facing the future stability of the liberal international order amid international conflict, terrorism, and changes in the global balance of power. Years later, the decision to leave the EU generated a renewed focus on the implications of Brexit for UK influence in the world. Hague for example suggested that the UK "will have to compensate a bit for the logical loss of influence that we face" (Hague in BBC, 2017b). This emphasis on a *logical loss* frames Brexit as leading to an inevitable decline that the UK is unable to halt. Similarly, Sir Simon Fraser (in Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018c) argued that the implications of Brexit is "a reduction in our influence and leverage". In a research interview, this loss of UK influence post-Brexit was viewed as being the result of leaving a cooperative European institution in a world where maintaining strong and close relations with countries was more important than ever.[45]

As the following sub-sections show however, it is important to further analyse these arguments that UK soft power influence is in decline. This is because the UN Security Council, the UK's financial contributions to humanitarian crises, and its commitment to ODA at the time of writing, evidence crucial areas through which the UK has maintained and even enhanced its soft power leadership and influence on human protection.

### 7.2.2 UK Leadership and influence in the UN Security Council

The UK is "widely considered to be one of the most influential members of the UN" (Dee and Smith, 2017, p.528). It has retained a permanent seat on the UN Security Council since its formation through the UN Charter in 1945. Over the years, the UK has managed to build a reputation through its strong level of institutional experience, competence, and expertise (Gifkins et al., 2019a).[46] This combination provides "capital that enables the UK to purchase influence" (Gifkins et al., 2019a, p.1350). The UK's position on the UN Security Council is thus an important source of its soft power in building a reputation

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[44] Author interview 6.
[45] Author interview 6.
[46] Author interview 9.

through which it can promote and defend its values of international order, and subsequently influence the approach of the UN Security Council. The Security Council is an important example of UK soft power leadership and influence on human protection for two main reasons. The first is the exclusivity of its membership in being only one of five members with a permanent veto power (Gaskarth, 2013, p.90). In fact, research interviews suggested that the UK's permanent membership is increasingly challenging as it does not reflect the UK's current position as an international power.[47] So whilst the UK's permanent seat provides it with an opportunity to demonstrate soft power leadership and influence, equally there is an expectation for the UK to legitimise a role that does not support its relative power position (Gegout, 2016; Gifkins et al., 2019b, p.6). The second reason why the UN Security Council is an important source of UK soft power influence and leadership is its role as penholder on several high-profile protection agendas and cases, which allow the UK to lead and influence on the Security Council's framing of protection norms and its response to humanitarian crises, which the following sub-section addresses.

### 7.2.3 Penholding as UK soft power leadership on human protection

Penholding is a form of agenda-setting power which gives the holder of the pen responsibility for leading the drafting of resolutions and statements on the UN Security Council (do Monte, 2016, p.675; Ralph and Gifkins, 2017, p.642).[48] The UK has increasingly taken on penholding responsibilities to the point where it "is a dominant and effective actor" in this process (Gifkins et al., 2019a, p.1357). The UK's commitment to penholding is further facilitated by the mechanics of the Security Council as the language of resolutions and the majority of negotiations are conducted in English, which enables the UK to fully articulate its position and draw on its wealth of diplomatic skills and expertise (Gifkins et al., 2019a, p.1357). It is suggested that the UK has taken advantage of this through the appointment of skilled drafters and negotiators.[49]

Penholding provides one of the tools for demonstrable UK leadership and influence on human protection through the Security Council. As figure 27 shows, the UK was the primary penholder on several human protection agendas and county-specific

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[47] Author interviews 7 and 9.
[48] Author interview 9.
[49] Author interview 11.

cases in 2020, which includes Libya, Yemen, the PoC, peacekeeping, and Sudan and South Sudan.

**Figure 27. UK penholding responsibilities on human protection, 2020**
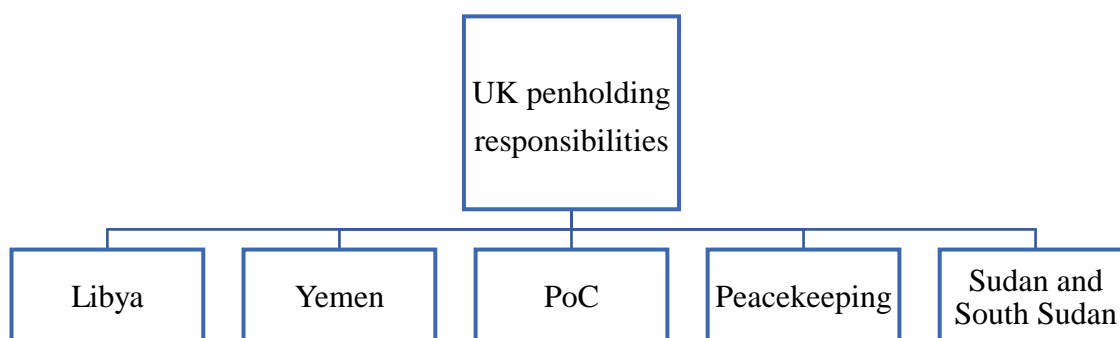


*Source: Security Council Report (2021)*

The situation is Yemen is an important illustration of both the strengths and limitations of the UK's influence and leadership on human protection through penholding. As shown in the previous chapter, the UK was not initially strong in fulfilling its penholding responsibilities on Yemen.[50] The UK's penholding did lead to some achievements on human protection such as drafting a resolution in 2016 in order to end the violence, beginning negotiations between both sides of the civil war, and working on providing accountability for violations of international law (FCO, 2016j). These contributions formed part of the UK's broader aim to secure a political solution to the conflict (FCO, 2017h). However, contrary to the UK's statements on its contributions to Yemen through its work on the Security Council, it is argued that following resolution 2216 in 2015, action from the UK thereafter was limited until 2018.[51] This limited engagement with Yemen is primarily explained according to two factors. The first relates to the complexity of the conflict on the ground and debates over the response from the UN Security Council.[52]

The second is the clash between the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the UK's broader geopolitical and economic interests and relations with coalition states involved

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50 Author interviews 7 and 9.

51 Author interview 9.

52 Author interview 9.

in the conflict.[53] At the time, the UK had been supplying weapons to Saudi Arabia, which led to domestic legal challenges against the government (Campaign Against Arms Trade, 2019).[54] Yemen thus revealed the potential limitations of UK leadership through penholding given "tensions between the UK's role as 'penholder' and its substantial trade relationship with Saudi Arabia" (Gifkins et al., 2019a, p.1351). This has significant implications for the UK's commitment to human protection through the UN Security Council in showing "the difficulty diplomats on the Council face in defending their reputation as leaders on humanitarian intervention and human rights issues when the requirements of that role clash with the national interest in promoting UK business" (Gifkins et al., 2019a, p.1351). As mentioned in the introduction to this section, penholding allows leadership and influence over "what is going to be said" (do Monte, 2016, p.675). This logically allows states to use the pen in a way that furthers promotes their national interests.

Whilst penholding is an opportunity for UK leadership and influence on human protection, it also requires responsibility. The second stage of the UK's leadership and influence on Yemen from 2018 witnessed an important change in the humanitarian response to Yemen. One outcome was the adoption of Resolution 2451 in 2018, which was "a UK-led resolution to bolster the UN Yemen peace process" (FCO, 2018g). Resolution 2451 detailed the Stockholm Agreement based on trying to bring a peaceful end to the conflict and humanitarian crisis, as well as reiterating the need to protect civilians and allow access for humanitarian support (UN Security Council, 2018, pp.1-2). Following this, the UK led on the drafting of resolution 2452 (FCO, 2019c). Resolution 2452 established the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement in order to fulfil the Stockholm Agreement, which was renewed through resolution 2534 (UN Security Council, 2019, p.1; UN Security Council, 2020) In this way, the UK was able to leverage its penholding responsibilities on Yemen in order to trigger the peace process and begin trying bring an end to the humanitarian crisis. This shows how the UK has been able to strengthen its commitment to human protection, despite the initial challenges.

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53 Author interviews 7 and 9.

54 CAAT led a successful legal challenge at the UK Court of Appeal in 2019. It deemed that the UK government's weapons supply to Saudi Arabia was "unlawful". See: Sabbagh, D. and McKernan, B. 2019. UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia unlawful, court of appeal declares. *The Guardian*. [Online]. 20 June 2019. [Accessed: 8 June 2020]. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/law/2019/jun/20/uk-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-for-use-in-yemen-declared-unlawful.

Whilst the UK has managed to establish itself as one of the leading penholders on human protection agendas and crises, the Yemen case also shows the downside of holding an influential and leading role in this process. With it being argued that "the decline in UK influence is palpable" at the UN (Martin cited in Day, 2018), the UK is increasingly under pressure to justify its position on the UN Security Council.[55] This sub-section has evidenced one means through which the UK is able to demonstrate its leadership and influence on the world stage through its penholding responsibilities on humanitarian crises. However, Yemen in particular also reveals an inherent tension between the UK's liberal internationalist commitment to human rights protection on the one hand, and its broader foreign policy commitment to securing its domestic prosperity on the other. The fundamental dilemma in this relationship is that a prosperous UK economy is arguably essential to its ability to continue contributing to multilateral organisations and to preventing humanitarian crises on the ground.

### 7.2.4 UK leadership and influence beyond the Security Council

As shown in chapter 4, UK leadership on human protection has origins in the post-1997 New Labour government.[56] Leadership was a core component of New Labour's underlying commitment to a liberal internationalist worldview, which was mostly notably illustrated through Tony Blair's doctrine of international community speech (Holland, 2013, p.58). The speech outlined Blair's understanding of the world according to globalisation and the increasing erosion of state sovereignty norms in the face of mass atrocity crimes (Blair, 1999a). This rhetorical commitment to UK leadership on human protection was soon demonstrated in practice through Blair's advocacy for intervention in Kosovo and the subsequent NATO-led operation (Dyson, 2009, p.51).

Only a year later and the UK was again at the forefront of a human protection response in Sierra Leone. Unlike Kosovo, the UK's intervention in Sierra Leone was without NATO support and was thus seen as underlining the UK's moral commitment and leadership on human protection (Williams, 2001, p.155) and was later deemed Blair's

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55 Author interview 9.

56 The thesis includes examples from 1997 in accordance with the research timeframe (1997-2020), but does not discount UK leadership on human protection prior to 1997. It also refers to UK leadership beyond the UN Security Council so excludes Libya on the basis that this response was authorised by the UN Security Council as part of the UK's leadership on resolutions 1970 and 1973.

successful war (Dorman, 2009). These interventions in Kosovo and Sierra Leone provided the foundations of UK leadership on human protection. It is through leadership in particular which connects the UK's commitment to human protection together with its aspirations to remain an important international actor. This is because it enables the UK to show its support to protect the core components of the liberal international order, including human rights, democracy promotion, and the international rule of law.

Chapters 5 and 6 showed how the UK also played an important leadership role in the international response to the crisis in Syria. While the government was unsuccessful in receiving parliamentary approval for action in 2013, it led in the response to Syria in 2018 through its humanitarian intervention as part of a coalition of forces alongside the US and France. This example illustrated the UK's willingness to intervene by force into another sovereign state under the umbrella of humanitarian intervention, even in the absence of a customary international law on humanitarian intervention. It has therefore been argued that the UK was acting as a norm entrepreneur in being willing to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes despite the lack of legal avenues to justify this approach.

### 7.2.5 Leadership and influence on funding and humanitarian assistance

This sub-section argues that the UK has strengthened its commitment to human protection in rhetoric and action through its leadership on financial contributions and humanitarian assistance. To support this argument, it draws on examples from Libya (2011), Syria (2011-2018), Myanmar (2016-2017), and Yemen (2015-2020).[57] As figure 28 shows, the UK's financial commitment to human protection has been considerable across a number of crises.

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[57] Kosovo (1999) and Sierra Leone (2000) are excluded from this analysis as the majority of empirical data was collected post-2010.

**Figure 28. UK financial contributions to human protection in action[58]**
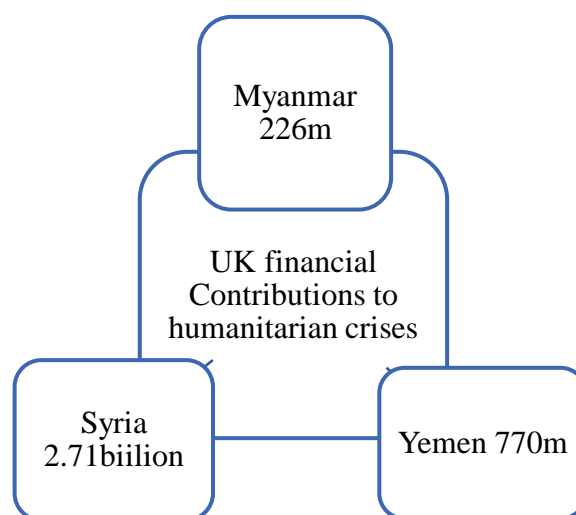


*Source: Gov.uk*

On Syria, the UK was second in terms of financial contributions of bilateral aid in 2012 (FCO, 2012d). This support increased substantially in the next 6 years to the point where the UK had provided "over £2.71 billion in humanitarian funding" by 2018 (DFID and FCO, 2018). This includes contributing a further £450 million "to alleviate extreme suffering in Syria", as well as contributions to supporting refugees within the region (DFID, 2018b). Moreover, the UK "have delivered 27 million monthly food rations, 10 million relief packages, 10 million vaccines against deadly diseases and 12 million medical consultations for those in need in Syria." (DFID and FCO, 2018). In financial terms, Syria was the UK's "largest ever response" to a humanitarian crisis (FCO, 2019h). The annual CSSF report outlines how the UK continued to provide financial support for the White Helmets, which received £11 million from the CSSF in 2017/18 and made the UK the largest financial supporter to the volunteer organisation which operates on the ground amid the civil war in order to protect civilians and provide critical assistance (HM Government, 2018a, p.19). In addition, the 2018/19 annual CSSF report shows that the UK contributed to human protection in action through allocating £35.7 million to areas which range from national and local prevention and peacebuilding to Women, Peace and Security (HM Government, 2019, p.27).

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58 Estimates are based on the available evidence in speeches, statements, and government news reports.

With the UN Security Council in deadlock over its response to Syria, the UK's financial contributions to humanitarian assistance are a considerable demonstration of its leadership on human protection. It represents a continuation of the UK's commitment to human protection since 1997, where the UK has been willing to contribute significant levels of humanitarian aid beyond direct military engagement.

Similarly in Yemen, the UK provided £103 million in response to the crisis in 2017, which made the UK the "fourth largest donor to the Yemen in terms of humanitarian aid" (May in BBC, 2017a). Furthermore, the UK announced approximately $125 million towards trying to address malnutrition (FCO, 2018a). In 2019, the UK government provided another £200 million, which meant an overall contribution of over £770 million since the conflict began (DFID and FCO, 2019). In response to the 2017 crisis in Myanmar, the UK government notes that "through UK leadership and lobbying we were able to secure a further £260 million from a range of donors" (DFID and FCO, 2017). In terms of the UK's own personal contribution, it provided £12 million, particularly towards the prevention of sexual violence (DFID and FCO, 2017). Moreover, the UK delivered an addition "£8 million to address the humanitarian suffering of the Rohingya" (FCO, 2017a); contributed "£129 million in funding to the refugee crisis" (DFID, 2019b); and as of 2019, its contributions total £226 million (DFID, 2019a).

Despite a perceived relative decline occurring in the UK's hard military capability, these cases illustrate how it has been able to demonstrate leadership on human protection through its substantial financial contributions. It is essential to note that financial support alone is not necessarily sufficient to justify a significant UK commitment to human protection in Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar. However, the UK was not compelled to contribute such significant levels of financial support to address humanitarian suffering. Its targeted assistance shows that UK leadership on human protection does not have to be reduced to direct humanitarian intervention, but can also be expressed through a combination of other methods, including financial assistance. It is thus important to view these financial contributions as one component of the UK's broader commitment to human protection in its internationalist foreign policy alongside its other actions on humanitarian intervention, advocacy, and policy.

### 7.2.6 The UK's commitment to ODA

Following New Labour's commitment to ODA and the formation of DFID in 1997, successive governments have recognised the importance of ODA as a soft power

capability to demonstrate UK influence in the world. David Cameron suggested ODA was "something we are right to stand up for in the world" (Prime Minister's Office, 2011); whilst William Hague suggested that the UK was "proud that we are living up to our commitment" (FCO, 2013b). An outcome of this was the 2015 International Development Act which legally enshrined the UK's commitment to spend 0.7% of its GNI on ODA (HM Government, 2015). This legal commitment to ODA is seen as "a substantive change in policy" since even the New Labour government did not enshrine its ODA commitment into law (Heppell et al., 2017, p.907). The scale of the UK's contribution to ODA has thus been described as "a major source of soft power and influence" (Gifkins et al., 2019b, p.4). A similar perspective was found in a research interview, with the scale of the UK's commitment to ODA evidencing its global soft power research and influence.[59] This commitment to overseas development enables the UK to have influence across the world arguably in a way that it is unable to do so through direct military contributions alone (Policy Exchange, 2018, p.9).

The UK's financial contribution to ODA is substantial with a total spend of £14.5 billion in 2020 (FCDO, 2021). ODA enables the UK to contribute to short and long-term human protection by donating to government efforts such as through the CSSF, with conflict prevention and the UK's crisis response being some of its core objectives (Lunn et al., 2020, p.24). ODA also opens an opportunity for the UK to contribute to long-term human protection through addressing some of the potential causes of instability and conflict, which may lead to mass violence. Whilst a much broader view of human protection, logically speaking ODA is a useful means of protecting populations without the need for significant military capacity or hard power in the future, and yet, the returns are potentially significant for maintaining the UK's soft power influence on the world stage.

Importantly, the UK is able to link its ODA commitment to the national interest (Lightfoot et al., 2017, p.520; Mawdsley, 2017, p.229). As outlined in chapter 5, the emergence of liberal conservatism brought with it a renewed attention to justifying contributions to human protection through an appeal to the national interest. The government argues that preventing instability and conflict overseas in turn contributes to the immediate and longer term stability of the UK by reducing outside threats. With ODA, the government has framed it as a "shield" to protect countries against issues such as

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[59] Author interview 6.

poverty and instability, which in turn, contribute to the immediate and longer term security and stability of the UK (DfID, 2018a).

However, the UK's commitment to ODA is not devoid of tension (Henson et al., 2010, p.3; Seely and Rogers, 2019, p.8). Even though the government can argue that ODA is in its national interest, arguments are also made that it is not in the national interest to spend significant sums of money outside the UK. Whilst this perspective may overlook the specific benefits of ODA for short and long-term UK stability, Lightfoot et al (2017, p.517) suggest that the government is struggling to convince the public at large that ODA is in the national interest. The concern post-Brexit is that the government will be "less committed to foreign aid" (Mawdsley, 2017), particularly with the increased scrutiny on government spending.

The first significant challenge to ODA was Boris Johnson's decision to officially merge DFID and the FCO in 2020 (Prime Minister's Office, 2020c). Whilst both institutions remained separate since DFID's founding in 1997, Johnson argued that the merger aimed "to safeguard British interests and values overseas", whilst suggesting that the UK will continue to meet the 0.7% of GNI target (Hansard HC Deb., 16 June 2020). However, the merger was immediately interpreted as transition from DFID's conventional development efforts to a focus on securing and protecting the UK's more narrowly defined geopolitical interests (Jennings, 2020). This is significant because DFID's budget was traditionally sizable in comparison to the FCO and other departments (Brien, 2020). An implication of merger to protect the UK's national interests is that "considerations over the need in developing nations will likely become a secondary consideration to the national interest of a Global Britain" (Honeyman and Lightfoot, 2020, p.31).

In November 2020, the government announced its intention to cut UK's ODA contribution to 0.5% of GNI following pressure on government spending following the COVID-19 outbreak (FCDO, 2020). In defence of the government's position the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, suggested that the UK remained second in ODA contributions from the G7 and that the UK would "return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows" (Sunak, 2020), but with the omission of a more specific timeframe for increasing ODA back to 0.7%. This reduction is estimated to the save the treasury £4b billion per year (BBC, 2020b). However, to say that the reduction is due largely to the impact of COVID-19 on the UK economy contradicts the government's decision to increase defence spending during the current parliament as one outcome of the Integrated Review (BBC,

2020a). According to Honeyman (2020, p.58), COVID-19 is thus not sufficient alone to explain the decision to reduce the UK's ODA spending because of the broader political debates and pressure on the government from the ideological right of the party to cut ODA spending.

Although the UK has reduced its budget, the government continued to underline the importance of ODA in the Integrated Review. In particular, ODA is part of the government's foreign policy vision for the next 10 years of "shaping the international order of the future" by continuing to contribute to the same areas of ODA as part of its 2025 Strategic Framework (HM Government, 2021, p.46). This appears to support the government's position that ODA will remain an important element of its foreign policy in spite of the temporary reduction in spending. For human protection, this would largely entail a similar commitment to that witnessed under the Cameron and May governments based on a continued contribution to ODA as a critical means of projecting global soft power influence and leadership, in addition to securing the UK's long-term security.

## 7.3 Chapter conclusion

This chapter contributes to the overall analysis of this thesis on the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and its transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. Drawing on a combination of 1,055 primary documentary materials, semi-structured interviews, and a wealth of scholarly and policy evidence, it argues that the nature of the UK's place in the world as part of a transitional foreign policy is essential for assessing sustained changes in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection. From the beginning of the thesis timeframe in 1997, successive New Labour and Conservative governments have adapted to a transitional foreign policy in their commitment to human protection by defending the post-war rules-based international order and the component liberal values of human rights protection, democracy promotion, and in some cases, the international rule of law.

This chapter shows that the liberal rules-based international order allows the UK to retain a high degree of international leadership and influence through its membership of the core multilateral institutions of this post-war order, especially its permanent membership of the UN Security Council. This expression of the UK's soft power influence and leadership has been part of a sustained change that has occurred in the UK's commitment to human protection since 1997. In particular, the UK has been able to demonstrate its leadership and influence in areas where it has the capacity to excel on,

including its diplomatic skills in penholding on humanitarian crisis, advocating on human protection, and providing significant targeted financial support to protection crises. This chapter thus argues that successive UK governments have been able to adapt to a transitional foreign policy through a greater focus on soft power amid a decline in its relative hard power capabilities. The UK's commitment to ODA is another important illustration of its significant soft power influence and leadership on human protection. Since the New Labour's White Paper on International Development, both the New Labour and Conservative governments have remained committed to ODA contributions, which the Cameron government enshrined in law in 2015.

To return to the findings in chapters 4-6, the assessment of sustained change according to the combination of elite political rhetoric in 1,055 primary materials and its foreign policy actions show some important consistencies over time in the UK's commitment to human protection. The assessment of UK rhetoric and action showed that the first stage of sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection was the election of the New Labour government in 1997 and the subsequent emphasis by Tony Blair and Robin Cook on the promotion and protection of core liberal values on the international stage, including human rights. The New Labour government protected these liberal values in practice through the humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in 1999 and the intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000. Kosovo was a notable moment in the UK's endorsement of humanitarian intervention as an alternative legal basis for action because it has remained a feature in the foreign policy of successive governments between 2010 and 2020 in situations of UN Security Council deadlock on Syria, and even to the point where the UK has been described as a norm entrepreneur on humanitarian intervention (Butchard, 2020).

Besides humanitarian intervention, the assessment of sustained changes in the UK's rhetoric and action in chapters 4-6 provides evidence that successive governments have adapted to a transitional foreign policy and drawn on other actions short of direct military intervention in their commitment to human protection. In particular, New Labour under Tony Blair defined the UK's engagement with the world as that of a pivotal power, which on human protection was expressed in the government's international leadership on protection in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, human rights, and contributions to guide the criteria for intervention in human protection crises. A similar approach was followed by the Coalition government between 2010 and 2015, with the UK taking a lead on the drafting of resolutions 1970 and 1973 in Libya, as well as drawing international attention

to the crisis in Syria and trying to galvanise international action. The government's actions on Syria did not end with parliamentary defeat in 2013, but continued through other means, including non-coercive humanitarian assistance and financial aid.

It is equally important to acknowledge the limitations of the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. The findings from chapter 6 in particular identified issues with the UK's diplomacy on Yemen where the evidence suggests that its penholding responsibilities were caught up in broader power politics in its relations with coalition states. In addition, the UK's commitment to ODA is increasingly under challenge following the decision by the Boris Johnson government to temporarily reduce the UK's ODA contribution to 0.5% of GNI without a timescale of when the government intends to return to 0.7%.

These challenges to the UK's commitment to human protection are characteristic of the challenging post-Brexit context of UK foreign policy. Brexit in particular has revealed a lingering "identity crisis" in the UK's place in the world (Turner, 2019, p.731). The lead up and result of the 2016 referendum has drawn attention to the fundamental disagreement among politicians and the public on the future direction of UK foreign policy. The subsequent efforts from the Theresa May government to recast the UK's place in the world through Global Britain has proven largely futile. Rather than presenting a coherent strategy, the evidence from research interviews, elite political rhetoric, and secondary scholarship is that Global Britain is more about reassuring the public on the UK's intentions to play an active global role post-Brexit than about defining the type of power the UK intends to be on the world stage.

Beyond Global Britain, this chapter argues that the UK's place in the world is more reflective of a hybrid great-middle power in which the UK does not sit comfortably in a pre-determined category to describe its relative power position. This is because the UK no longer retains the hard power capabilities of superpower states such as the US and China, but it has a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and with it an exclusive position in the leadership of the post-1945 international order, as well as boasting a strong diplomatic core and soft power influence. This makes the UK's adaptability to a transitional foreign policy even more complex as it balances between its varying relative hard and soft power capabilities.

Returning to the scenarios of sustained UK foreign policy change, between 1997 and 2015 the UK's commitment to human protection supported a combination of a pragmatic liberal internationalist and a global soft power leader and influencer on human

protection. The position of a pragmatic liberal internationalist was shown in the UK's humanitarian interventions in Kosovo in 1999 and attempts to gain parliamentary authorisation for intervention in Syria in 2013. In both instances, the New Labour and Conservative-led governments demonstrated their willingness to bypass conventional channels of international law in pursuit of their commitment to liberal values on human rights. The role of a global soft power leader and influencer on human protection was evident in the UK's diplomatic leadership on human protection on the international stage, including within the UN. This is in addition to the UK's substantial contributions of financial assistance in humanitarian crises and its ODA.

However, between 2016 and 2020 the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy has evidenced all three scenarios of a trading partner, a pragmatic liberal internationalist, and a global middle power leader and influencer. Whilst these scenarios may overlap in action, chapter 6 showed inherent tensions in the relationship between a pragmatic liberal internationalist commitment to human protection and the position of a trading partner, and thus exposed a more fundamental tension between the UK's economic and political interests and its liberal foreign policy values on human rights. In the absence of a coherent foreign policy vision which addresses the tensions and contradictions between these different scenarios in the post-Brexit era, the government will find it increasingly challenging to balance between its economic and political interests and its commitment to human protection.

Together, these empirical chapters meet the three main original contributions of the thesis as outlined in the introduction. First, each empirical chapter contributes to the assessment of sustained changes in the UK's rhetoric and actions on human protection in a transitional foreign policy. From the perspective of a transitional foreign policy, this thesis contributes to research on foreign policy change, especially the adaptability of governments to changes in the UK's post-war relative international power, changes in the UK's membership of multilateral organisations using the example of Brexit, and changes in the UK's place within the evolving international order as it adjusts to shifts in the international balance of power. Second, it contributes to research on UK foreign policy towards human protection, its place in the world, and a transitional foreign policy. This is a novel analysis since research is yet to analyse these connections in relation to UK foreign policy on human protection, despite accepting that the UK's place in the world is changing.

Finally, it contributes to research on the leadership and influence of former 'great powers' in international relations through the case study of the UK. Whilst the UK is not a superpower it is equally not a middle power according to its membership of the post-war international order. However, research on the leadership and influence of states has tended to focus on either the superpowers, emerging powers, or middle powers at the expense of countries such as the UK which does not neatly fall into either of these three categories of power status. The next chapter proceeds to discuss these original contributions in more detail, tests the research hypothesis, and identifies areas for future research.

# Chapter 8 - Conclusion

This thesis has assessed the UK's commitment to human protection in the context of its transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. It has argued that the way successive governments since New Labour have conceptualised the UK's place in the world has been critical for determining the nature of the UK's foreign policy commitment to human protection. The concept of a transitional foreign policy has been at the core of this argument because it captures the multitude of changes in the UK's geopolitical interests, policies, and international engagements between 1997 and 2020 and its relationship with the UK's commitment to human protection. To revisit the concept, a transitional foreign policy is shaped by the adaptation of successive governments to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, the UK's membership of multilateral institutions, and the UK's position in the evolving international order. This transitional foreign policy in turn has implications for the UK's commitment to human protection as successive governments strategize the nature of the UK's international relations, including the relationship between its primary foreign policy interests in terms of its geopolitical and economic relationships with other states, and its liberal values including human rights and democracy.

The UK's transitional foreign policy has been assessed throughout this dissertation according to changing patterns of policy behaviour, changing administrative apparatus, and in elite UK political rhetoric. This includes drawing on an extensive integrated content analysis of 1,055 primary documentary materials containing details of the government's rhetoric and actions on human protection, in addition to policy documents, committee reports, semi-structured interviews, and a wealth of secondary scholarship. This rich empirical evidence shows that successive UK governments since New Labour in 1997 have encountered significant foreign policy hurdles from domestic and international pressure to maintain an important role in the liberal international order amid a post-war relative hard power decline to strategizing the UK's post-Brexit approach to international relations. This is while grappling with an international human protection crisis in which mass violence and atrocity crimes are still being committed with impunity in the 21st century (Bellamy, 2020).

This chapter concludes on the findings and original contributions of the thesis and assesses the implications of these for the research hypothesis. It then revisits the research methods, and discusses the implications of this dissertation for future research

in the field of foreign policy change, the relationship between the UK's foreign policy interests and values, and a transitional foreign policy.

**8.1 Findings, contributions, and the research hypothesis**

This section addresses the main findings, arguments, original contributions, and their significance for wider scholarship on foreign policy change, the UK's transitional foreign policy and its relationship with human protection, and the leadership and influence of former 'great powers' through the case study of the UK. After briefly revisiting how the dissertation has addressed the aims and objectives of the research, the section then discusses the three main original findings and contributions and their implications for the research hypothesis.

**8.1.1 Revisiting the research puzzle, aims and objectives**

The original starting point of this thesis was the puzzle of the UK's membership of the post-1945 international order and its commitment to international human protection, but the increasing challenges posed by a transitional UK foreign policy. This transitional foreign policy has led to the attempts of successive UK governments to adapt to changes in its place in the world, its membership of multilateral institutions, shifts in the international balance of power, and a crisis in international human protection.

This thesis therefore aimed to investigate the relationship between the UK's commitment to human protection and this transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020. This aim has been addressed through the four empirical chapters which examined how governments have adapted to changes in the UK's place in the world and the subsequent nature of its commitment to human protection. To support this analysis, the dissertation fulfilled four objectives. The first three objectives were to develop and apply a framework to assess changes to the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy between 1997 and 2020; to use this framework to hypothesise and test three scenarios of the relationship between adjustments in the UK's place in the world and changes in its commitment to human protection; and to develop and classify a dataset to examine sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection. These three objectives were achieved in two ways. First, through creating a framework to assess sustained change in UK foreign policy rhetoric and action on human protection according to a combination of elite political rhetoric in a dataset of 1,055 primary documentary materials, and foreign policy practices of policy, coercive and non-coercive

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intervention, financial support and humanitarian assistance, and advocacy and entrepreneurship. Second, this framework was then applied to the foreign policies of successive governments on human protection between 1997 and 2020 throughout chapters 4 to 7. The fourth objective was to analyse the findings on the relationship between the UK's place in the world and its commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020, which was achieved during the empirical chapters and is revisited in the following sub-sections.

### 8.1.2 Findings and original research contributions

The following sub-sections detail the three main findings and contributions of this thesis. To summarise, the first finding is that adjustments in the UK's place in the world between 1997 and 2020 have translated into sustained changes in the UK's foreign policy rhetoric and action on human protection in a transitional foreign policy. Second, there is a disconnect between the liberal internationalist commitment to human protection by the New Labour and Coalition governments between 1997 and 2015 and the period between 2016 and 2020. This is because the post-2016 period of UK foreign policy has been characterised by discontinuity in the UK's place in the world and its subsequent commitment to human protection following the 2016 EU referendum. Third, successive UK governments since 1997 have gradually adapted to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline through an appeal to the UK's global soft power capabilities for leadership and influence on human protection. This global soft power approach captures the hybrid great-middle power status of the UK in international relations in the post-1997 era, which is conceptualised according to the UK's position within core institutions of the post-1945 liberal international order while acknowledging the UK's limited capacity to contribute militarily to every humanitarian crisis. This includes the government's commitment to establishing an "integrated approach to government work on conflict and stability", which includes atrocity prevention (HM Government, 2021, p.79), which is integral to protecting populations from atrocity crimes. Global soft power means the UK is still able to lead and influence on human protection issues and crises, including drawing on its diplomacy in the UN Security Council, its funding and humanitarian aid, and ODA contributions.

These findings contribute to three main bodies of scholarship on UK foreign policy and human protection through the analytical lens of a transitional foreign policy; to theoretical research on foreign policy change and how to assess this in practice; and to

research on 'former great' power leadership and influence in international relations using the case of the UK and its commitment to human protection. The following sub-sections address each of these three findings and contributions in detail prior to assessing the research hypothesis.

### 8.1.3 The UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy

The first finding of this dissertation is that adjustments in the UK's place in the world have translated into sustained changes in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection between 1997 and 2020. The conceptualisation of a transitional foreign policy lies at the heart of this finding because it captures the adaptation of successive governments to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, changes in the UK's membership of multilateral institutions, and the UK's position in the evolving international order. The empirical chapters have found that this transitional UK foreign policy in turn has implications for how successive governments commit to human protection as they strategize the UK's international engagements, and in particular, the relationship between the UK's foreign policy interests and liberal values.

Based on the wealth of evidence utilised in each empirical chapter, this dissertation has argued that this relationship between the UK's place in the world as part of a transitional foreign policy and its commitment to human protection is shown in the interaction between the domestic and the international in UK foreign policy. This argument was first supported in chapter four, which used New Labour's election in 1997 as a significant starting point for the analysis of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection for four main reasons. The first was the immediate context of the international community's response to the mass atrocities committed in Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnia in 1995, with secondary research showing that the UK government was part of a broader failure to protect both populations from mass atrocity crimes. The second was the election of the New Labour government in 1997 under the leadership of Tony Blair as Prime Minister and Robin Cook as Foreign Secretary. The New Labour government attempted to reposition the UK's place in the world towards a pivotal power to account for a combination of maintaining the UK's international alliances, a rejection of UK isolationism, and a recognition of US superpower leadership of the post-1945 liberal international order. Third, New Labour came to power at a significant moment of international normative debate on the relationship between state sovereignty and non-intervention, which accelerated in the aftermath of Rwanda and

Bosnia and would eventually lead to the development and practice of the UK's commitment to humanitarian intervention in Kosovo and beyond. Finally, the election of the New Labour government was in the background of the discourse and reality of globalisation, which as Blair (1999a) acknowledged, brought a global dimension to challenges in international relations. This includes the challenges and threats of conflict, instability, terrorism and WMD. In such a globalised world, the New Labour government under Blair committed to an outward looking foreign policy.

Chapter 4 argued that New Labour's foreign policy was most accurately described as liberal internationalist based on a commitment to the domestic and international interest and the protection of core liberal values on freedom, human rights, and democracy. This appeal to a liberal internationalist foreign policy outlook was fundamentally influenced by changes at the international level in the post-war era, which led to the ascendance of the US as a hegemon of a liberal international order (McCourt, 2013; 2014). This US-led liberal international order is built on core liberal principles of democracy, freedom, and human rights (Ikenberry, 2009; Cooley and Nexon, 2020). The UK's commitment to liberal internationalism was thus a reflection of the broader international normative changes that had occurred in international order. It is New Labour's commitment to liberal internationalism that helps explain the increasing rhetorical attention that the UK government placed on human protection in the post-1997 era.

The New Labour government initiated three main sustained changes in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection in its transitional foreign policy. Firstly, a willingness to draw on humanitarian intervention as a legal basis for action in the absence of an Article 51 justification or a Chapter VII resolution from the UN Security Council. Secondly, a commitment to alternative forms of humanitarian action beyond direct coercive measures as an important contribution to the growth of the UK's soft power leadership and influence on human protection. Thirdly, a liberal internationalist commitment to the protection of core liberal values, including human protection. Each of these findings and their original contributions to scholarship are now addressed in turn.

The first sustained change in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection was the UK's willingness to commit to humanitarian intervention as a legal means of protecting a population from mass atrocity crimes in the absence of an Article 51 basis for action or a Chapter VII resolution from the UN Security Council. The UK's clearest attempt to outline and defend its approach to humanitarian intervention was Tony Blair's

rhetoric on the doctrine of the international community, which endorsed the idea of conditional sovereignty. The doctrine suggested that if a state fails to protect its population, then states such as the UK would intervene without the target state's consent in order to prevent mass atrocity crimes. This rhetoric was swiftly translated into action with the UK's contribution to the NATO-led coercive intervention in Kosovo in 1999, which both Blair and Cook supported on the basis of protecting the population of Kosovo from ethnic cleansing (Blair, 1999a; Blair, 1999b; Blair, 2011; Hansard HC Deb., 13 April 1999; Hansard HC Deb., 26 May 1999; Hansard HC Deb., 18 January 1999; Hansard HC Deb., 19 April 1999; Hansard HC Deb., 8 October 2001). A year later, the UK intervened in Sierra Leone, which was also partly justified as a means of preventing RUF atrocities and reinstalling President Kabbah (Blair, 2000; Williams, 2001, p.155; Hansard HC Deb., 28 November 2006). The UK followed these interventions in Kosovo and Sierra Leone by setting the future groundwork for humanitarian intervention. This included Robin Cook's speech on guiding humanitarian intervention which set out criteria in order to determine whether the UK should intervene to protect a population from mass atrocity crimes, in addition to the FCO's policy paper on humanitarian intervention (Cook, 2000a; FCO cited in Marston, 2001, p.696).

The analysis between 2010 and 2020 reveals sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection with regards to a continued appeal to humanitarian intervention as a legal basis for action. Beginning with the Conservative-led Coalition government in chapter 5, the UK updated its position on humanitarian intervention in the British Defence Doctrine (Ministry of Defence, 2011; 2014). The Coalition government subsequently attempted to practice humanitarian intervention in a similar manner to Kosovo in 1999 because of UN Security Council deadlock on Syria and the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons. Whilst the government's hopes of humanitarian intervention were defeated by Parliament in 2013, in 2018 Theresa May justified UK airstrikes against Syrian chemical weapons facilities on the same legal basis of humanitarian intervention as used by former governments in 1999 and 2013 (Blair, 1999a; Prime Minister's Office, 2013; Prime Minister's Office, 2018).

Yet, the thesis equally found that this commitment to humanitarian intervention has significant implications for the international development of the R2P, which the UK has consistently proclaimed to support (Ralph, 2014a). The foundation of the R2P was to address the dilemma between sovereignty and *illegal* humanitarian intervention, and so the UK's support for humanitarian intervention reveals a tension with its other

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commitment to the R2P. This findings supports the perspective of Ralph (2014a) that the UK's willingness to keep drawing on the conventional approach to humanitarian intervention is at risk of undermining its own commitment to the R2P because of the clear legal boundaries between the two. This finding is significant because it shows the UK's readiness to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes even if this is against the majority legal opinion of the international community and the R2P.

This finding of sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection contributes to two main bodies of scholarship. The first is to research on UK foreign policy and human protection through its original angle of the relationship between UK foreign policy, human protection, and a transitional foreign policy. This body of research has placed considerable attention on UK foreign policy and human protection through the perspective of human rights, R2P, and humanitarian intervention but has largely focused on specific governments, Prime Ministers or Foreign Secretaries (Daddow, 2009; 2013; Daddow and Schnapper, 2013; Oliver, 2013; 2015; Beech and Oliver, 2014; Beech and Munce, 2019). This thesis brings the analysis of UK foreign policy and human protection together across governments in order to identify any sustained changes that have occurred over time and their significance. The second contribution is to the wealth of scholarship on the UK's commitment to humanitarian intervention and its implications for legal debates on human protection (Krisch, 2002; Henderson, 2015; O'Meara, 2017; Milanovic, 2018; Buys and Garwood-Gowers, 2019; Butchard, 2020; Betti, 2020; Kleczkowska, 2020; Newman, 2021). The evidence from this thesis suggests that the UK will continue to use humanitarian intervention as its legal justification for action when it is unable to draw on Article 51 or when the UN Security Council is deadlocked. Whilst creating legal controversy, the UK's consistent commitment to humanitarian intervention is important evidence of a sustained change in its commitment to human protection.

The second sustained change initiated by New Labour is the commitment of successive governments to human protection by alternative means beyond direct coercive action. The first stage in this change was the creation of DFID following the White Paper on International Development and the subsequent commitment to ODA. This is alongside further financial contributions and equipment supplies to humanitarian crises, as well as leading on the international response to crises through the UK's membership of institutions such as the UN Security Council. Both chapter 5 and 6 strengthened this evidence of a sustained change through the examples of the UK's leadership on the response to Libya through its penholding on the UN Security Council, and its financial

contribution and equipment supplies to the crises in Syria, Myanmar, and Yemen. In addition, the Conservative-led Coalition government enshrined the UK's 0.7% commitment to ODA into law through the 2015 International Development Act. This is an important finding because it shows one way in which successive UK governments have adapted to the UK's more limited capacity to contribute militarily to all humanitarian crises by providing support in other ways, which is equally a demonstration of its international leadership and influence in response to humanitarian crises.

The third sustained change in UK rhetoric and action on human protection lies in the influence of New Labour's commitment to a liberal internationalist foreign policy as defining the UK's place in the world between 1997 and 2015. As argued earlier in this section, New Labour's liberal internationalism was significant for the UK's more specific commitment to human protection because of the appeal to the values of freedom, democracy, and human rights. The evidence from chapter 4 shows that the New Labour government explicitly appealed to an internationalist foreign policy as part of their rejection of UK isolationism from the world (Blair, 1997 quoted in McCourt, 2011; Blair, 1999a; 1999b). At the heart of this internationalism was the liberal commitment to the protection of human rights, and by extension protecting populations from mass atrocities (Cook, 1997; Blair, 1999a; 2000; 2009, p.5; 2011, p.248; Vickers, 2004a, p.193; Atkins, 2013, p.176; Kitchen and Vickers, 2013, p.300).

When the Conservative-led Coalition government succeeded the New Labour government, their foreign policy shifted from liberal internationalism to liberal conservatism. The early foreign policy rhetoric from both David Cameron and William Hague suggested that liberal conservatism was a means of distinguishing from New Labour, especially with the addition of a conservative tone in being prudent about the world that exists (Cameron, 2006; 2019, pp.145-146). However, the assessment of elite political rhetoric in 355 primary documents, in addition to the government's actions on Libya and Syria, showed that this liberal conservative approach to foreign policy did not represent any radical departure from the liberal internationalism of their predecessors. In fact, the Conservative-led Coalition's rhetoric and actions on human protection were guided by an underlying liberal commitment to the same components of freedom, human rights, and democracy. This included a willingness of the government to intervene by force on humanitarian grounds in order to protect populations from atrocity crimes, as occurred mostly notably in Libya in 2011.

This chapter also found that David Cameron and William Hague paid particular attention to defining the UK's place in the world, which includes openly dispelling the notion that the UK was suffering from an irreversible relative power decline in a transitional foreign policy. Yet the findings in chapter 6 supported the argument of Gaskarth (2016) that the government's 2013 parliamentary defeat on intervention in Syria masked a broader concern with the UK's relative international power decline and capacity to contribute to direct coercive interventions in the aftermath of Libya in 2011. On the occasions when the UK was unable to act through direct military intervention, including Syria in 2013, it still provided significant humanitarian assistance rather than backtracking on its engagement with the crisis despite its parliamentary defeat.

However, the thesis found that the post-2016 period of UK foreign policy has been inconsistent with the period between 1997 and 2015. Based on the nature of the UK's commitment to human protection in chapters 4 and 5, the expectation in this thesis was that the Conservative majority governments under Theresa May and Boris Johnson would follow a similar consistent path of sustained change, even despite Brexit and the shift in the UK's international engagements. Yet the post-2016 environment fully exposes the challenges posed by a transitional foreign policy for the UK's commitment to human protection as the UK grapples with Brexit and the reorientation of its global role amid a crisis of the liberal international order more broadly (Acharya, 2018; Acharya and Plesch, 2020; Ikenberry, 2018a; Paris, 2019; Babic, 2020; Lee et al., 2020), alongside a crisis in international human protection (Hopgood, 2015; Bellamy, 2020). Chapter 7 thus argued that this period between 2016 and 2020 was indicative of the broader crisis in defining the UK's post-Brexit place in the world (Beasley et al., 2018; Oppermann et al., 2020). Global Britain was manifest of this crisis in representing more of a domestic narrative to convince the public, businesses, and policymakers that the UK would retain an important global role post-Brexit (Turner, 2019).

The thesis argued that this transitional foreign policy and the crisis in defining the UK's place in the world has implications for the UK's commitment to human protection as UK governments attempt to strategize the country's place in the world, which includes striking a delicate balance between its foreign policy interests and values. Yet chapter 6 showed that the UK's commitment to human protection in the cases of Myanmar and Yemen showed an inherent tension between some of the UK's values and interests, such as its commitment to human protection on one hand and its trade relationships on the other (See Gilmore, 2014; Gilmore, 2020). In Myanmar, the evidence showed a trade-off

between the UK's commitment to democracy following the election of Aung San Suu Kyi and the decades of discrimination against the Rohingya which led to mass atrocity crimes being committed in Rakhine State in 2017. Although the UK condemned the atrocities, the historical roots of the mass violence were evident in citizenship polices enacted decades earlier. In Yemen, the government was committed to human protection through its financial assistance, but simultaneously exported arms to coalition forces which were alleged to have led to further civilian harm.

These findings make several original contributions to scholarship on UK foreign policy, human protection, the UK's place in the world, and foreign policy change. Firstly, there is a wealth of research on UK foreign policy on human protection from the perspectives of R2P, humanitarian intervention, and human rights more broadly (Daddow, 2009; 2013; Daddow and Schnapper, 2013; Oliver, 2013; 2015; Beech and Oliver, 2014; Beech and Munce, 2019; Ralph, 2014a), but there is yet to be a detailed assessment of the relationship between foreign policy, human protection, and the UK's place in the world, and in particular, an assessment of long-term changes in the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. This is despite the impact that changes in the UK's relative international power status, changes in its membership of multilateral organisations, and shifts in the global balance of power have on the UK's subsequent approach to international human protection. This includes the nature and extent of its hard military capabilities, diplomatic strength, soft power reach, and economic capacity to contribute to human protection whilst simultaneously securing its own domestic security and stability.

Secondly, the findings on the UK's relative international decline, and attempts to conceptualise the UK's place in the world post-Brexit, contributes to empirical scholarship on the UK's place in the world (Gaskarth, 2014; McCourt, 2011; McCourt, 2014), and in particular the crisis in the UK's role post-2016 (Beasley et al., 2018; Turner, 2019; Oppermann et al., 2020). The thesis also provided further evidence of the limitations of Global Britain through drawing on the UK's commitment to human protection.[60] This includes illustrating the dilemma that an incoherent worldview has for the UK's contributions to protecting populations from mass violence and atrocity crimes. Its findings on the relationship between the UK's place in the world and its commitment to human protection support research by Morris (2011) Chalmers (2015) and Hill (2016)

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[60] Author interviews 2, 4, 6, 8, and 11 revealed the limitations of Global Britain.

where the UK is neither strictly a great nor middle power. This led to the idea that the UK is a *hybrid great-middle power* based on a recognition of a relative decline in its capabilities, but its ability still lead and influence through its membership of core multilateral institutions of international order, particularly the UN Security Council.

Finally, the findings on sustained UK foreign policy change on human protection in a transitional foreign policy contributes to theoretical research on foreign policy change. In particular, the role of domestic and international structures and agents in processes of foreign policy change (Brazys et al., 2017; Brazys and Panke, 2017; Kaarbo, 2017; Peltner, 2017), and how governments react to significant foreign policy shifts, such as the UK's exit from the EU. The next sub-section provides further details of these theoretical contributions to foreign policy analysis and its sub-field of foreign policy change.

### 8.1.4 An assessment of foreign policy change

The findings in this thesis on sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection contribute to broadening theoretical and empirical research on identifying and assessing foreign policy change over time. The specific contribution of this thesis to literature on foreign policy change is its definition of sustained change and the analytical framework used to identify and assess it. Chapter 3 examined a wealth of scholarship in the field of foreign policy change, including the different concepts of change at an abstract level (Holsti, 1998; 2004; Doeser and Eidenfalk, 2013; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014; 2017; Haesebrouck and Joly, 2021), the role of structure and agency, leadership, and learning (Smith, 1981; Holsti, 1982; 1998; Hermann, 1990; Carlsnaes, 1993; 2002; Levy, 1994; Stein, 1994; Hermann and Hagan, 1998; Gustavsson, 1999; Hermann et al, 2001; Welch, 2005; Doeser and Eidenfalk, 2013; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2017; Brazys et al., 2017; Brazys and Panke, 2017; Kaarbo, 2017; Peltner, 2017). This is in addition to examining research on some of the causes of foreign policy change and how to identify change in a state's external relations (Gustavsson, 1999; Welch, 2005; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2017; Brazys et al., 2017; Brazys and Panke, 2017; Kaarbo, 2017; Peltner, 2017).

Although there is a wealth of literature on foreign policy change, its causes, and its definition, chapter three showed that there was no clear framework in these studies to neatly apply to an assessment of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection as part of a transitional foreign policy. In turn, this thesis has made a novel

contribution to theoretical and empirical research on foreign policy change through its specific focus on sustained change in order to define and assess shifts in the UK's foreign policy which occur and endure over time to identify long-term patterns of changing elite UK political discourse and foreign policy actions.

The starting point for the development of the analytical framework to assess change was to conceptualise the concept of change and what constitutes a sustained change in UK foreign policy. This approach was informed by earlier research on conceptualising foreign policy change (Holsti, 1998; 2004; Doeser and Eidenfalk, 2013; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014; 2017). This particularly includes Blavoukos and Bourantonis' (2017) work on foreign policy change as encompassing a spectrum of changes from minor to more significant and Holsti's (1998, 2004, 2016) research on the distinction between minor and fundamental adjustments in a state's foreign policy behaviour. These perspectives therefore provided the basis of the definition of sustained change as a shift in the UK's foreign policy goals and/or methods on human protection which endures over time in the approach of successive governments and is continually shaped, maintained, and reinforced by a combination of UK government rhetoric – what is said by elite political agents in government – and its actions – the means and methods of protection in practice. A distinguishing feature of this conceptualisation is that sustained change is distinct from minor or episodic shifts in UK foreign policy since it is assessed according to changes in the rhetoric and actions of successive governments across the ideological spectrum of domestic UK politics between 1997 and 2020. This is in order to evidence that UK foreign policy change on human protection is enduring rather than simply replaced when a government leaves office. Through the specific focus on human protection, the thesis has contributed further to research which has examined foreign policy change in relation to specific policy areas (Walsh, 2006, Brazys et al, 2017; Dukalskis, 2017; Kaarbo, 2017; Peltner, 2017). However, it builds on this scholarship through its focus on change over time according to the concept of sustained change, which in turn is also a contribution to Holsti (1998, 2004, 2016).

Throughout the thesis, this definition of change was applied according to two main indicators. The first is a sustained change in a specific foreign policy goal and/or method on human protection or the predominance of new or alternative foreign policy goals. The second is when a change in goals and/or methods is maintained, and built upon, by at least one successive government. This change is further strengthened in instances where a government is replaced by another on the opposite side of the ideological

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spectrum, such as a Labour administration being succeeded by a Conservative administration. This is because parties across the ideological spectrum may hold fundamentally different conceptions regarding the nature and means of contributing to human protection as part of UK foreign policy. In order to find evidence of this criteria and assess it according to the analytical framework of sustained change, the thesis examined a combination of elite UK political rhetoric through an integrated content analysis of 1,055 primary documentary materials and an assessment of the UK's actions on human protection according to changes in policy, coercive and non-coercive intervention, financial support and humanitarian assistance, and advocacy and entrepreneurship.

This conceptualisation and criteria for sustained change was applied and met by UK governments in a number of ways between 1997 and 2020, which was traced and assessed through each empirical chapter. Chapter 4 was the starting point for applying and assessing the conceptualisation and criteria for sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection. The first change was the emergence of human rights as a core component of the UK's approach to foreign policy (Cook, 1997). Whilst human rights have been part of the foreign policy of predecessor governments, chapter 4 argued that the change with the New Labour government between 1997 and 2020 was the greater emphasis placed on human rights in its foreign policy rhetoric (Gaskarth, 2006). This in turn represented the initiation of a sustained change as the emphasis on human rights demonstrated the predominance of an alternative foreign policy goal. Chapter 5 and 6 showed how this initial change was subsequently translated into a sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection as the Coalition and Conservative governments between 2010 and 2020 continued to maintain and build on this commitment to human rights in its foreign policy rhetoric. This includes the commitment to the underlying foreign policy tradition of liberal conservatism, the publication of the human rights and democracy reports which monitored human rights progress, challenges, and steps forward, and the rhetoric of UK political elites in relation to protecting human rights in crisis situations such as Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar.

The second sustained change was the commitment of successive governments to humanitarian intervention. Whilst the history of humanitarian intervention pre-dates 1997 (Newman, 2021), chapter 4 argued that under New Labour – and as a result of the broader international context of debates on sovereignty and humanitarian intervention following the crises in Rwanda (1994) and Bosnia (1995) – humanitarian intervention became a

predominant focus of UK foreign policy on human protection. This was evident in UK government rhetoric, including Blair's (1999) doctrine of the international community speech, the policy paper on humanitarian intervention, and the humanitarian intervention in Kosovo. This change in the goals of UK foreign policy under New Labour demonstrated a sustained change in being applied in the rhetoric and actions of the Coalition and Conservative governments between 2010 and 2018. Rhetorically, the Coalition government published the UK defence doctrine, which outlined a willingness to draw on humanitarian intervention in the absence of other legal avenues of intervention. In practice, the government used humanitarian intervention as its legal basis for action in its attempt to intervene militarily in Syria in 2013 (Prime Minister's Office, 2013), while the Theresa May government used humanitarian intervention as justification for the UK's contribution to coalition airstrikes on chemical weapons facilities in Syria in April 2018 (Prime Minister's Office, 2018). This in turn met the criteria for a sustained change as humanitarian intervention become a predominant foreign policy concern in the UK's foreign policy on human protection during the New Labour government, which was maintained and built upon by successive governments across the ideological spectrum between 2010 and 2020.

The third way that sustained change in the UK's commitment to human protection was met between 1997 and 2020 was the commitment to alternative forms of human protection beyond coercive intervention. A notable change in this regard was the promotion of international development following New Labour's creation of DFID, which was maintained and built upon by the Conservative-led Coalition government through legally enshrining the 0.7% GNI commitment. This shift meets both indicators of a sustained change in demonstrating the emergence of a new foreign policy goal (indicator one), and its maintenance and development by successive governments (indicator two).

This concept of sustained change and its indicators is thus an important contribution the literature which has attempted to account for the extent of change (Kleistra and Mayer, 2001; Holsti, 1998; 2004; Ashbee and Hurst, 2020), especially the role of more enduring changes in foreign policy as distinct from minor adjustments which may occur in time limited circumstances (Holsti, 1998, 2004, 2016). However, the focus in this analytical framework is on a specific aspect of foreign policy (human protection) in a particular country (the UK), which in turn is not necessarily applicable to all foreign policies and country cases. That said, it provides an important contribution to research on

foreign policy attempt by aiming to establish and apply a conception and assessment of change as something which occurs and is maintained over time in a government's foreign policy rhetoric and actions.

Alongside the analytical framework on sustained change, the conceptualisation of a transitional foreign policy in relation to changes in the UK's geopolitical interests, policies, and international engagements is an essential part of this theoretical contribution because it required an analysis of both the structures and agents in UK foreign policy at a domestic and international level. The findings showed that the UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020 was moulded by a combination of push-pull domestic and international changes. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the election of the New Labour government represented a domestic push factor for foreign policy change (Peltner, 2017), which was an important starting point of sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection.

However, this foreign policy change on human protection was equally influenced by structural pull factors at the international level, including the shifting normative setting following debates on the relationship between sovereignty and non-intervention in the aftermath of Rwanda and Bosnia and the dominance of the US as the hegemon of the liberal international order. The findings in chapter 6 presented the challenge of UK foreign policy change on human protection as the Theresa May and Boris Johnson governments addressed the major structural shift of Brexit and exposed the volatility of the UK's place in the world as being shaped by a combination of domestic governments and international structures, including multilateral organisations. These findings show that the UK's commitment to human protection does not exist in a vacuum, but is shaped according to these domestic and international push-pull factors, which are only intensified in the event of a significant change in the UK's geopolitical interests, policies, and international engagements, such as exiting the EU. The concept of a transitional foreign policy is thus an analytically important contribution to research in foreign policy analysis and its sub-field of foreign policy change (Hermann, 1990; Carlsnaes, 1993; Gustavsson, 1999; Welch, 2005; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2017; Brazys et al., 2017; Brazys and Panke, 2017; Kaarbo, 2017; Peltner, 2017). This is because it combines an analysis of both structures and agency in order to account for changes in the UK's foreign policy on human protection more specifically.

Beyond the specific conceptualisation and analytical framework, the thesis also contributes to research on the role of leadership in foreign policy change, particularly the

role of predominant leaders and foreign policy learning (Herman and Herman, 1989; Levy, 1994; Stein, 1994; Hermann et al, 2001). An important finding from the qualitative analysis of these materials was the role of leaders in initiating and directing sustained changes in the UK's foreign policy on human protection. Chapter 4 showed the significance of both Tony Blair and Robin Cook in triggering sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection through shifting UK foreign policy towards a liberal internationalist outlook and away from isolationism. This leadership evolved in several stages, which started with the rhetorical emphasis on human rights, the ethical dimension, and Blair's doctrine of the international community (Blair, 1999a; Cook, 1997; 1999; 2000b; 2002; Wheeler and Dunne, 1998; Williams, 2002; Gaskarth, 2006; Dyson, 2009; Mumford and Selck, 2010; Atkins, 2014). The next stage was UK leadership in the implementation of this liberal internationalist foreign policy through the interventions in Kosovo in 1999 and Sierra Leone in 2000, as well as policy contributions on humanitarian intervention (FCO in Marston, 2001).

Despite being in Coalition, chapter 5 showed that UK foreign policy was led by the Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron and his Foreign Secretary William Hague. Both continued to demonstrate similar leadership credentials to Tony Blair and Robin Cook in remaining committed to human protection and setting out the UK's willingness to intervene by force to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes, which culminated in the military action in Libya in 2011 and attempts to convince parliament of the UK's case for intervention in Syria in 2013. It was during the Theresa May administration that the UK took coercive action alongside the US and France in 2018 without parliamentary approval in order to prevent the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people (Hansard HC Deb., 16 April 2018; FCO, 2018m; 2018n; Prime Minister's Office, 2018). Whilst chapter 6 found that some question the UK's motivations for airstrikes in Syria in 2018 (Chinkin and Kaldor, 2018), the significance of this action was both the underlying humanitarian justification which closely followed the same position as New Labour on Kosovo in 1999 and the Coalition on Syria in 2013, in addition to Theresa May's bypassing of Parliament which was only informed after the action had been taken. Even though this was limited action, it still challenged Parliament's role in authorising force and reasserted the government's royal prerogative over the use of force.

These findings thus contributes to the theoretical research in foreign policy analysis on the importance of leaders in foreign policy change. In particular, the empirical findings in chapters 4 to 7 show that Tony Blair, Robin Cook, David Cameron, William

Hague, and Theresa May acted as predominant leaders on human protection in certain instances as demonstrated by their willingness to authorise UK military action in crises, including Kosovo (1999), Libya (2011), and Syria (2018). In Kosovo and Syria, Tony Blair and Theresa May demonstrated their willingness to both lead on humanitarian intervention, despite its contestation in international law and without domestic parliamentary approval. This provides further evidence to support research on the role of leadership in foreign policy analysis, which remains a significant theoretical research agenda (Hermann and Hermann, 1989; Hermann and Hagan, 1998; Hermann et al., 2001; Aggestam and True, 2021; Aran et al., 2021; Brummer, 2021; Kaarbo, 2021; Wivel and Grøn, 2021).

Chapters 4 and 5 presented another important finding in the analysis of foreign policy change. In chapter 4, it was argued that an integral component of New Labour's liberal internationalist foreign policy on human protection was the attempt to distance from the failures of both the Labour and Conservative Party in relation to the mass atrocities in Rwanda and Bosnia. This was explicit in the rhetoric and actions of both Tony Blair and Robin Cook who made direct reference to the inactions of their Conservative predecessors when discussing the UK's contribution to the intervention in Kosovo to prevent ethnic cleansing (Cook, 1999; 2000b). This is an important finding because it evidences the role of foreign policy learning in both the rhetoric and the actions of the central agents of UK foreign policy. It is noteworthy that this approach to foreign policy learning continued during the Conservative-led Coalition government where chapter 5 revealed David Cameron and William Hague's attempts to establish clear distance from New Labour's interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, which includes explicit references to the concept of learning (figure 6).

This finding contributes to theoretical research on the importance of learning in foreign policy change (Levy, 1994; Stein, 1994). Whilst there has been less attention on the theoretical and empirical value of studying foreign policy learning since the 1990s, the findings in this thesis show that it remains an important element of analysing a state's foreign policy. This research on learning is therefore analytically useful for demonstrating the role of agency in foreign policy change, especially as a result of changes in governments, foreign policy leadership, and foreign policy doctrines. This equally includes the influence of broader structured changes with regards to how the international community attempted to learn from the past, such as its failures to protect populations in Rwanda and Bosnia.

### 8.1.5 Former 'great power' leadership and influence on human protection

As established throughout this thesis, a transitional foreign policy is shaped by the adaptation of successive governments to the UK's post-war relative hard power decline, its position, leadership, and influence within multilateral organisations, and its position in the evolving international order. It therefore found that successive governments have placed considerable rhetorical and practical efforts into asserting the UK's global role. Chapter 4 showed how Tony Blair and Robin Cook were adamant that the UK will not resort to an isolationist role, which was similarly reflected by David Cameron and William Hague in the analysis of the Coalition government in chapter 5, and Theresa May and Boris Johnson's time in office in chapter 6. The rhetoric from successive Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries showed their awareness that the UK's place in the world was changing (Cameron, 2019, p.145). This led to a conscious effort to counter notions of the UK's accelerating post-war hard power decline (Cameron, 2012b; Hague, 2013a) based on the fact that the post-war liberal international order was increasing volatile amid changes in the global balance of power (Hague, 2013a). The Cameron-led government thus accepted that the way to address these changes was to promote a consistent vision of the UK as an influential power capable of demonstrating leadership on the world stage, including on human protection (Blair, 199a; Hague, 2013a; Cameron, 2019).

However, it also found that the emergence of Global Britain as a post-Brexit vision for reasserting the UK's global role has so far lacked a coherent policy at the time of writing. Rather, this dissertation has found that Global Britain contributes more evidence to the idea that the UK's relative power position in the world is unclear (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018b, p.5; Gifkins et al, 2019b, p.8; Turner, 2019, p.728; Boussebaa, 2020, p.483; Gilmore, 2020, p.26; Interview1; 3; 14). It was argued in chapter 7 that the UK's role in the world is in a state of flux because it is neither a great power judging by its relative post-war decline in its hard power capabilities, but it is also not a middle power. This led to the suggestion that the UK's place in the world is a hybrid of a great and middle power status. The idea of the UK as a hybrid great-middle power is that it is able to exert international leadership and influence through its membership of the post-1945 institutions of the liberal international order, while accounting for a relative decline in its hard power capabilities.

The UK's commitment to human protection between 1997 and 2020 presents a compelling case for greater attention on the role of states like the UK, which have undergone a transition away from great power status but do not necessarily reflect the position of a middle power. Using the example of the UK's global soft power leadership and influence on human protection through its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, its contributions to humanitarian assistance, and its substantial ODA provisions, chapter 7 argued the UK is evidence of the important role that states can play on the international stage amid a broader reduction in their hard power capabilities.

However, this dissertation also finds that the UK's hybrid great-middle power status is not necessarily harmonious with its international commitment to human protection. In a transitional foreign policy, the UK is constantly grappling with its liberal commitment to human protection, whilst on the other hand securing its geopolitical and economic interests in order to maintain its hard economic position. This has been evidenced especially in the case of Yemen, which revealed a tension in the dual commitment to human protection and its broader aspirations to maintain its diplomatic and economic relationship with regional actors. Another example is the relationship between the UK's commitment to its economic interests and ODA, which has resulted in the government's decision to make temporary cuts to the latter. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic is one aspect of this decision to reduce ODA spending indefinitely, it fails to capture the broader historical debates within the UK on the domestic value of contributing significant levels of ODA to other countries (Henson et al., 2010, p.3; Seely and Rogers, 2019, p.8; Honeyman, 2020, p.58; Honeyman and Lightfoot, 2020, p.31). Yet the thesis has argued that the UK's substantial ODA contributions are a niche aspect of its global soft power capabilities to lead and influence on human protection amid a relative decline in its hard military capabilities.

These findings are important contributions to three main bodies of literature. The first is to research on the role of middle powers and the aspects of the UK's middle power status (Higgott and Cooper, 1990; Chapnick, 1999; Jordaan, 2003; Behringer, 2005; Beeson, 2011; Cooper, 2011; Patience, 2014; Robertson, 2017; Karim, 2018; Oosterveld and Torossian, 2018; Andersen, 2019; Murray and Brainson, 2019; Paris, 2019). The second is to research on the UK's soft power leadership and influence, especially through its membership of the UN Security Council and the significance of its ODA contributions (Dee and Smith, 2017; Lightfoot et al., 2017; Ralph and Gifkins, 2017; Gifkins et al., 2018; Jarvis et al., 2019; Gifkins et al., 2019a; Honeyman, 2020; Honeyman and

Lightfoot, 2020). This is a timely contribution in the context of Brexit and reductions in the UK's ODA contributions because both changes have implications for how governments define the UK's place in the world and the nature of its subsequent commitment to human protection, especially as a soft power capability. Finally, it contributes to research on the UK's changing power status in international relations in the post-war era through the UK's hybrid great-middle power approach to human protection (Morris, 2011; Chalmers, 2015; Hill, 2016).

**8.1.6 Revisiting the research hypothesis: The three scenarios of change**

The introduction to this dissertation outlined a hypothesis in order to test three different scenarios of UK foreign policy change on human protection in a transitional foreign policy. These scenarios were a trading partner, a pragmatic liberal internationalist, and a global soft power leader and influencer. Based on these scenarios, this dissertation has tested the following hypothesis which *assesses whether the UK's awareness of its changing position in the world between 1997 and 2020 led to sustained changes in its rhetoric and action towards a strengthened commitment to human protection*. This proposed that the UK's commitment to human protection will reflect either scenario two or three of a pragmatic internationalist or global soft power leader and influencer as opposed to scenario one on prioritising the role of a trading partner.

Based on the empirical findings throughout the empirical chapters, this dissertation provided evidence in support of the hypothesis between 1997 and 2015. During this period, the sustained changes that occurred in a transitional foreign policy were consistent with a strengthened commitment to human protection according to scenarios one and two. As discussed in section 8.1.2.1 sustained changes in the UK's commitment to human protection were initiated by New Labour in the form of a commitment to a liberal internationalist foreign policy and its component parts of human rights; a willingness to militarily intervene in order to protect populations from mass atrocities even in the absence of an Article 51 or Chapter VII resolution; and a commitment to alternative avenues of human protection, including soft power contributions of financial support and equipment supplies, alongside the UK's diplomatic leadership and contributions of ODA.

These aspects were then implemented in the foreign policies of the Conservative-led Coalition government, which despite the shift to liberal conservatism, maintained an underlying commitment to the protection of core liberal values on human protection in

UK foreign policy. This was evidenced through the UK's diplomatic leadership and contribution to the intervention in Libya in 2011, its attempts to receive parliamentary approval for humanitarian intervention in Syria in 2013, the creation of the International Development Act in 2015, and its soft power contributions through financial support and humanitarian assistance. This particular commitment to humanitarian intervention was similarly continued when the Theresa May government used it as a justification for airstrikes in Syria in 2018. This latter emphasis on humanitarian intervention is an important feature in support of the pragmatic liberal internationalist approach to human protection because it confirmed the UK's willingness to intervene in spite of the vast debates on the legality of humanitarian intervention (Gaskarth, 2014, p.577). The UK's ODA contributions were also evidence of an "aid superpower" in which the UK continued to exert its considerable influence in this area of its foreign policy (Gaskarth, 2014, p.565).

However, the findings between 2016 and 2020 provided evidence against the hypothesis. This is because there was a combination of all three scenarios in the UK's rhetoric and action on human protection. This is explained through a transitional foreign policy in which governments between 2016 and 2020 attempted to adapt to changes in the UK's membership of multilateral organisations following Brexit, in addition to grappling with a crisis in the post-war liberal international order following shifts in the global balance of power. These challenges were exposed in the UK's commitment to human protection as political elites tried to balance between the UK's geopolitical and economic interests on the one hand, and the underlying liberal commitment to foreign policy of successive governments since 1997 on the other. The result was inherent tensions in this relationship, particularly in relation to international trade. The UK's response to the crisis in Yemen exposed the relationship between its political and economic international relations through it supply of arms to coalition forces, and its simultaneous commitment to human protection amid the vast humanitarian suffering in the country (Business Innovation and Skills and International Development Committees, 2016, p.33; Human Rights Council, 2016; 2018b; 2019; House of Lords, 2019, p.19).

This issue extends beyond the crisis in Yemen to the UK's other international relations, including with superpowers such as China, which at the time of writing is under the international spotlight for the alleged atrocities against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim minorities (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2021a). This places the UK in a challenging diplomatic position in the post-Brexit era in which it is balancing

between its economic interests in terms of securing trade deals through tough negotiations and its commitment to human protection. Whilst this has been an issue countered throughout UK foreign policy since at least 1997 (Wickham-Jones, 2000, p.10; Wheeler and Dunne, 2014, p.17; Vickers, 2004b, 259; 2011, p.166), the post-Brexit period is especially significant because of the need to secure trade agreements alongside the broader role crisis in terms of how UK policymakers strategize the type of power the UK is going to be in the next decade (Beasley et al, 2018; Oppermann et al, 2020). The results of the hypothesis thus add weight to the importance of analysing the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy because of the impact that this transition has on the nature of the UK's commitment to human protection.

## 8.2 Research methods

The dissertation has reached these findings through its fully integrated analysis based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The purpose of this methodology has been to attain a high-degree of analytical and research rigour in order to evidence the central arguments, findings, and their significance. To achieve this, the dissertation has utilised a triangulation of research methods through combining a fully integrated content analysis, elite semi-structured interviews, primary documents and reports, and secondary literature.

The advantage of applying this approach throughout in defence of the thesis is that it helped validate the results by cross-examining and comparing material from different sources to identify any possible overlap and/or contradictions in the data, which has led to some important analytical findings. For instance, based on the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary's rhetoric on Yemen alone, it would be plausible to argue that it contributed significantly to the UN Security Council's efforts to secure peace and a political solution to the civil war. However, combining these findings with the elite semi-structured interviews and secondary literature presented an alternative perspective which suggested that the UK's approach was more nuanced with regards to its economic relationships with coalition forces. This shows the importance of triangulating the material in order to identify any anomalies across the data and thus strengthen the analytical significance of the findings. The same applies for locating consistencies across the data, which help to enhance the validity of the research findings.

With the research returning 1,055 primary materials on the core thesis themes, a fully integrated content analysis was used in order to code specific themes, identify

important trends, and present numerical and written data. This approach was based on the work of Pashakhanlou (2017), which argues for a fully integrated content analysis through a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The advantage of this method is that it enabled a numerical presentation of the data alongside a qualitative interpretation of it in order to understand the broader context in which the keywords and phrases were being mentioned. The use of NVivo software complemented this fully integrated content analysis through providing an important tool to compile such as vast dataset and to then code the data in preparation for its qualitative analysis. This in turn helped to enhance the reliability of the results through having a clear record of the data and establishing a codebook with instructions on how the material was coded (see appendix 2).

This dissertation acknowledges the potential use of alternative research methods, such as discourse analysis. Using discourse analysis would have enabled an in-depth examination of the manifest and latent content of the material to interrogate the construction of language in government speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports, and examine their implications for foreign policy discourses on human protection. However, the purpose of using a fully integrated content analysis was to identify the core rhetorical themes in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports, rather than analysing their construction. This is in addition to the logistical challenges of conducting a discourse analysis of 1,055 primary materials as a sole researcher in a short period of time. The fully integrated content analysis allowed the dissertation to capture the key research themes in a wealth of primary documents in order to address the research aim, objectives, questions, and hypothesis.

## 8.3 Implications and future research

The findings of this dissertation have several important implications for future research. The first is that it draws attention to the challenges facing the UK's commitment to human protection in a transitional foreign policy. Whilst a wealth of research has focused on the fragility of the UK's place in the world amid decades of relative decline, this dissertation shows that these changes also have a significant impact on the nature of the UK's commitment to human protection as successive governments grapple with the multitude of the UK's foreign policy interests and liberal values. The issues this dissertation addresses are therefore timely in the context of debates over the present and future

direction of UK foreign policy following the publication of the Integrated Review, as well as debates over the UK's strategy for its post-Brexit geopolitical interests, policies, and international engagements for at least the next decade.

The research also has implications for the analysis of UK leadership and influence in a transitional foreign policy. It shows that a relative international decline does not mean a retreat from human protection, but rather that the UK's seat on the UN Security Council, its contributions to ODA, and its remaining military capacity, are important ways that the UK commits to human protection in rhetoric and action. However, the issue in UK foreign policy is that the preoccupation of governments with defending the notion of the UK as being an important international actor or a Global Britain means that there is limited evidence to suggest that UK government agents have come to terms with the idea that the UK is no longer a great power. The consistent appeal to humanitarian intervention as a legal framework for action is significant for how the UK interprets, and arguably challenges, existing international law. Whilst this may well be a form of UK leadership on human protection, this is still against the overwhelming international legal opinion. This risks the UK contradicting its parallel commitment to the R2P in the pursuit of the same principle of humanitarian intervention that the R2P norm attempts to distance from.

The research findings and their implications show that there is still important further research required in the field of UK foreign policy, international human protection, and the role of former great powers in international relations. Some further questions and research agendas raised by this research include: how is the self-identity of states, in particular powers which have suffered from a post-war hard power decline, conditioned by historical experiences and how does this shape foreign policy? How do policymakers defend their idea of the UK as a great power? As the UK enters a significant period of its post-Brexit foreign policy as it pursues trade relations with other states, how can the UK reconcile its trade interests and human rights values? What are the implications of the Integrated Review for the UK's commitment to human protection in the next 10 years? In what ways can the UK contribute to addressing the international human protection crisis, particularly through its soft power capabilities? Whilst some of these questions are speculative at the time of writing, they contribute to important emerging domestic and international debates as the Boris Johnson government sets to work on implementing the UK's foreign policy vision for the next decade and beyond.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview subjects

| **Code** | **Institution/position** | **Date** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Interview 1 | Activist at protection NGO, UK. | 21 January 2019 |
| Interview 2 | Director of a human rights protection NGO, UK. | 23 January 2019 |
| Interview 3 | Analyst at the FCO, UK. | 1 February 2019 |
| Interview 4 | Member of the House of Lords, UK. | 1 March 2019 |
| Interview 5 | Activist for protection NGO, UK. | 5 March 2019 |
| Interview 6 | Member of Parliament, UK. | 18 March 2019 |
| Interview 7 | Director of protection NGO, US. | 19 March 2019 |
| Interview 8 | UN Official, US. | 11 April 2019 |
| Interview 9 | Analyst for International NGO, US. | 3 June 2019 |
| Interview 10 | Analyst at the FCO, UK. | 13 June 2019 |
| Interview 11 | Manager in International NGO, US. | 22 July 2019 |

**Appendix 2: Content analysis code book for chapters 5-7**

This codebook was designed according to the fully integrated content analysis of 1,055 primary materials as outlined in chapter 3 and followed several important stages. The first was identifying the data population, which was political communications from elite UK government officials between 2010 and 2020. This included the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, government ministers, officials and diplomats representing the UK at the UN, and parliamentarians from both the House of Lords and the House of Commons.[61] The second was establishing the unit of analysis, which was speeches, statements, media interviews, government news reports, written reports, policy documents and debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords on human protection, the UK's place in the world, and its engagement with specific human protection crises in Libya, Myanmar, Syria, and Yemen. The third was selecting the method for coding the data, with NVivo being chosen as the most appropriate software. This is because NVivo provides space for categorising vast amounts of data, while incorporating a number of tools to guide the coding process, such as word frequency searches, keyword searches, and in-text coding.

Once in NVivo, the coding process followed two cycles. The first searched and categorised the codes and sub-codes according to the code hierarchies and non-hierarchies in part 1 of this section. The second then repeated the coding process in order to identify any data which may have been missed during the first cycle and to account for any changes in the original coding hierarchies, such as additional sub-codes that were identified during the first cycle coding process or after, and thus, did not feature at the beginning of the first coding cycle.

This section is split into two parts. The first outlines the coding hierarchies used to categorise the data in the first and second coding cycles for chapters 5-7. The second then details the codes and sub-codes in-depth according to their name, description, inclusion and exclusion criteria and an example of the code/sub-code as taken from the findings of the integrated content analysis.

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[61] Government ministers and representatives include: David Cameron, William Hague, Nick Clegg, Philip Hammond, David Lidington, Alistair Burt, Justine Greening, Tobias Ellwood, and UK representatives at the UN: Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Jeremy Browne, and Dame Karen Pierce (2010-2015). Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Philip Hammond, Jeremy Hunt, Dominic Raab, Priti Patel, Penny Mordaunt, and UK representatives at the UN: Jonathan Allen, Matthew Rycroft, Dame Karen Pierce, Dame Barbara Woodward (2015-2020).

**Part 1: Coding hierarchies for chapters 5-7**

The following details the coding hierarchies used in chapters 5-7 of the thesis. The top of the hierarchy represents the primary code, whilst the additional levels are the sub-codes. Part 2 outlines the selection criteria for the codes used in these hierarchies.

**Code hierarchies for chapter 5**
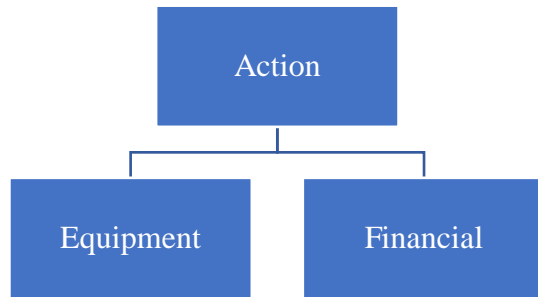


**Hierarchy for UK actions on human protection**[62]
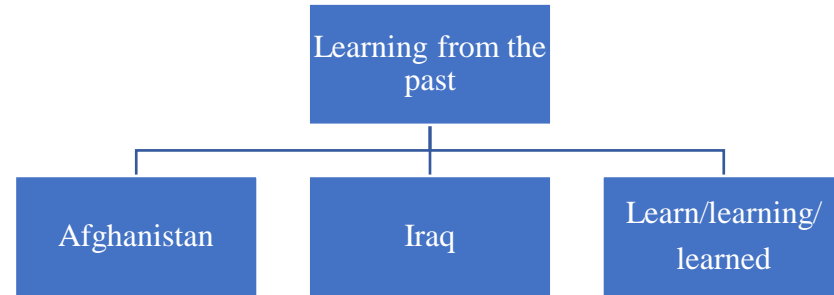


**Hierarchy for figure 6**
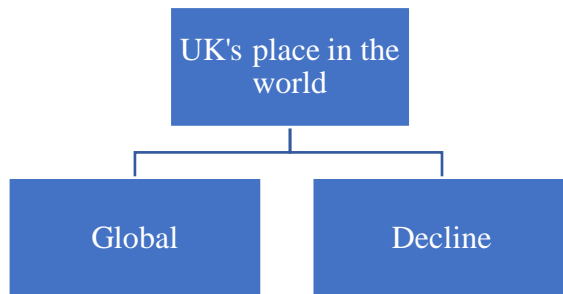


**Hierarchy for figure 7**
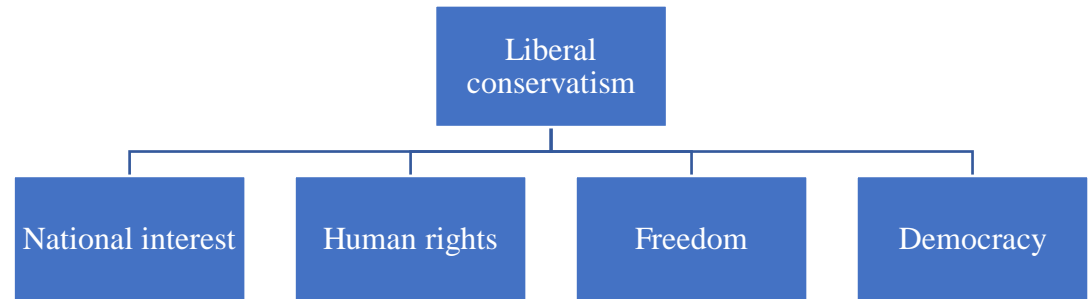


**Hierarchy for figure 8**

---

[62] This code and sub-codes are used in both chapters 5 and 6.
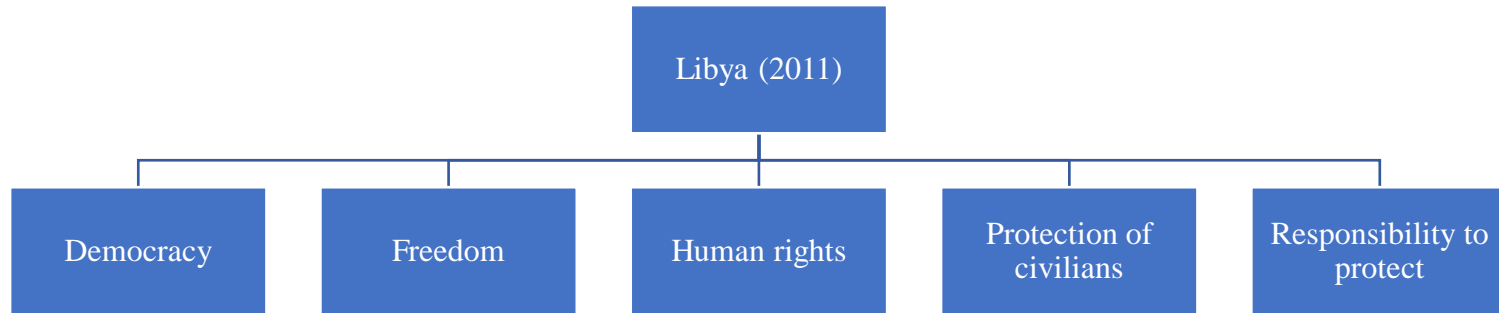
**Hierarchy for figure 11**
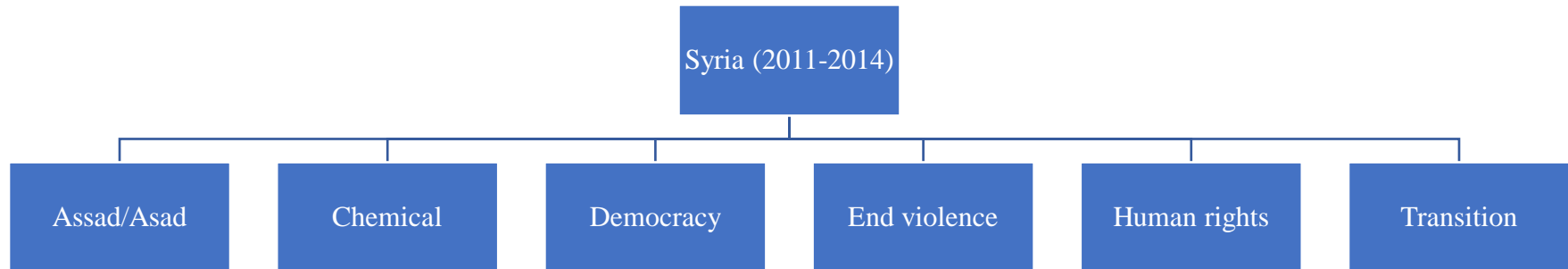


**Hierarchy for figure 13**
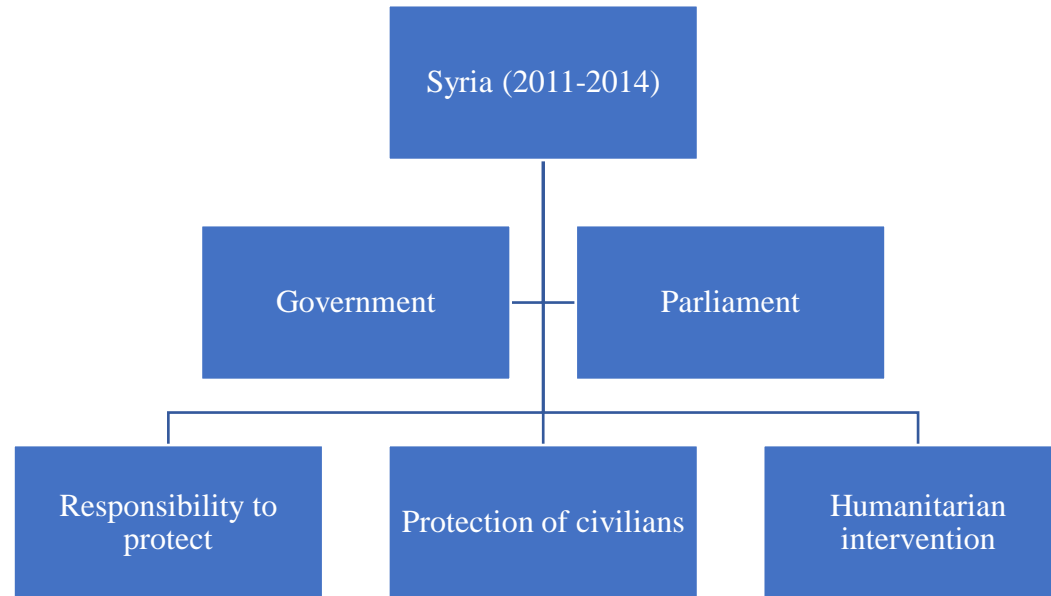
**Hierarchy for figures 15 and 16**

**Non-hierarchical codes for chapter 5**

Leadership, influence, Myanmar (Burma), protection of civilians, responsibility to protect, and humanitarian intervention

**Code hierarchies for chapter 6 and 7**

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │     Liberal      │
                    │  conservatism    │
                    └─────────────────┘
        ┌───────────────┬───────────────┬───────────────┐
┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐
│ National interest │ │ Human rights │ │   Freedom    │ │  Democracy   │
└───────────────┘ └───────────────┘ └───────────────┘ └───────────────┘
```

**Code hierarchy for figure 17**

```
                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │ Syria (2015-2017)│
                        └─────────────────┘
   ┌───────────┬───────────┬───────────┬───────────┬───────────┐
┌─────────┐┌─────────┐┌─────────────┐┌─────────────┐┌─────────┐┌─────────┐
│Assad/Asad││Chemical ││ISIS/IS/Daesh││ Protection of││ Russia  ││Transition│
│         ││         ││             ││  civilians  ││         ││         │
└─────────┘└─────────┘└─────────────┘└─────────────┘└─────────┘└─────────┘
```
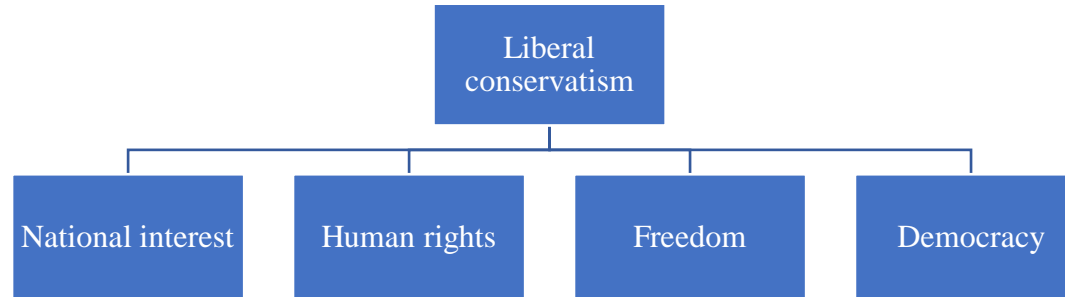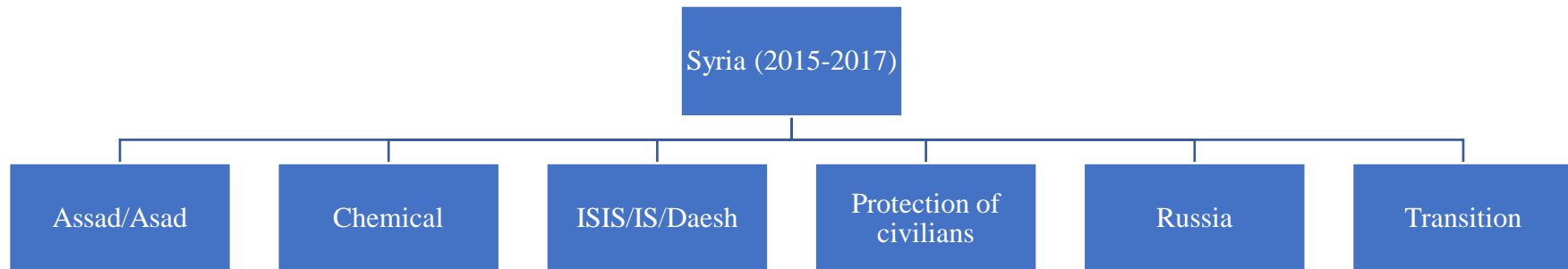
**Code hierarchy for figure 19**
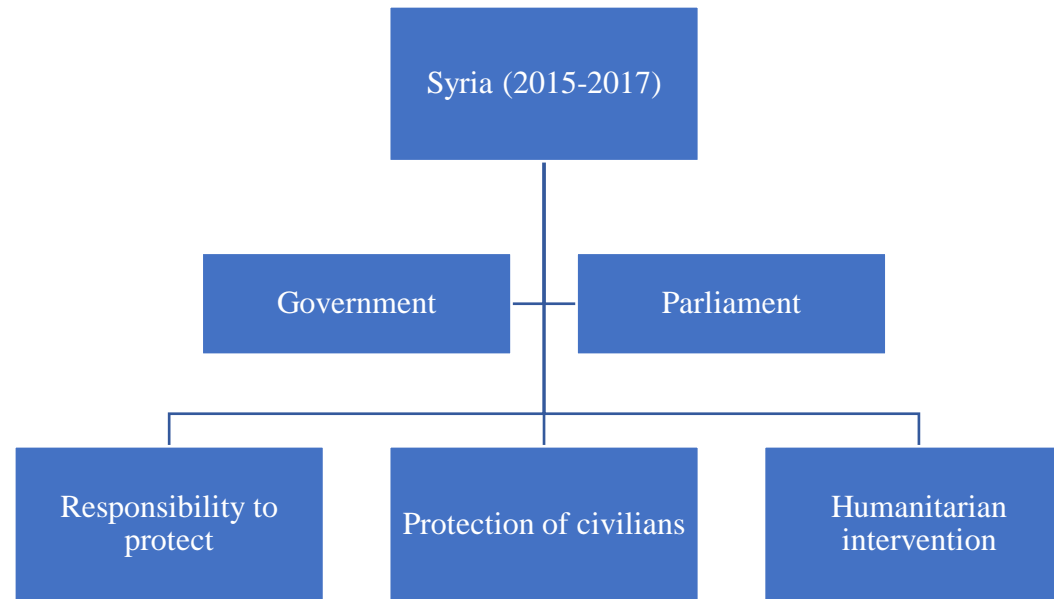
**Code hierarchy for figures 20-21**
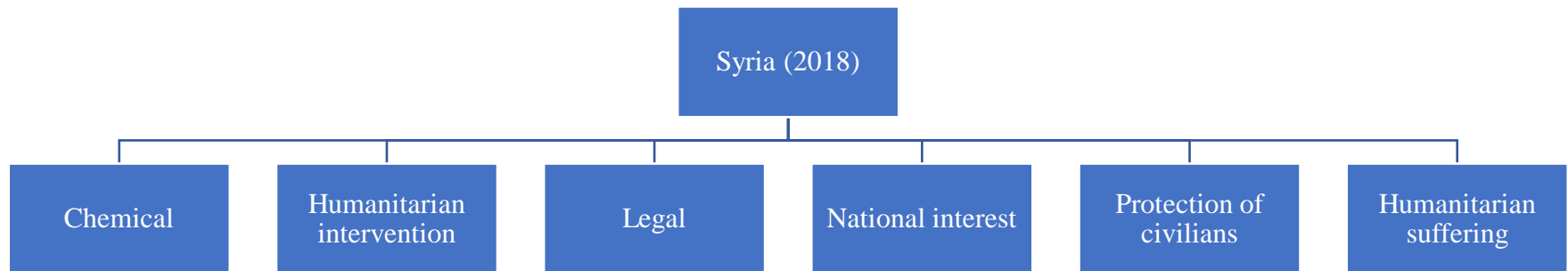


**Code hierarchy for figure 22**
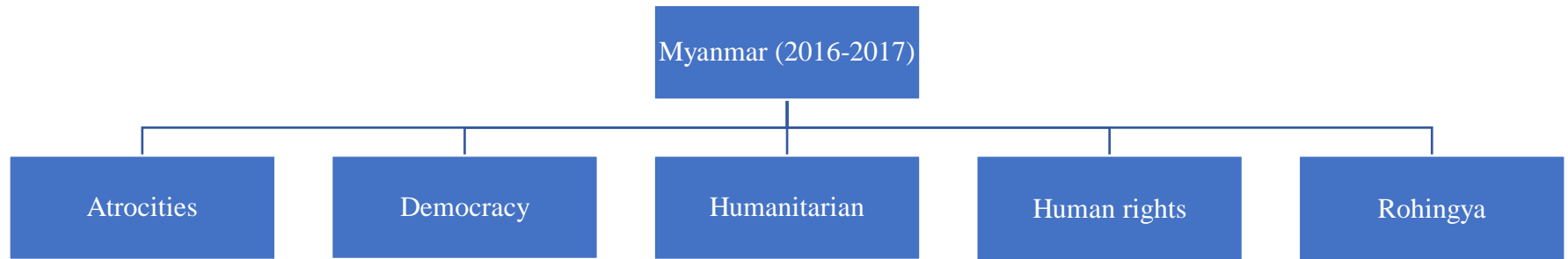
**Code hierarchy for figure 23**
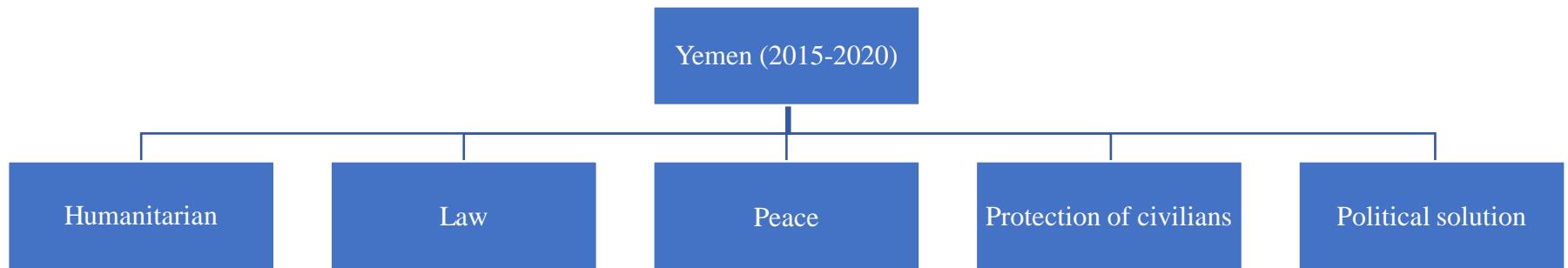


**Code hierarchy for figure 24**

**Non-hierarchical codes for chapters 6-7**

Atrocity prevention, responsibility to protect, protection of civilians, humanitarian intervention, leadership, development.

**Part 2: Codebook for chapters 5-7**

The following table provides detailed information on each code and *sub-code* used throughout the integrated content analysis for chapters 5-7. Some codes appear throughout the chapters, whilst others are specific to sections of the thesis, which is identified under the 'thesis location/figure' criteria.

   As outlined in the introduction to this appendix, the materials collected and coded included speeches, statements, media interviews, government news reports, and parliamentary debates from 11 May 2010 to 31 December 2020. These sources were gathered from a combination of the gov.uk websites, in particular, the Prime Minister's Office and FCO websites, the online National Archives, and the online Hansard database for House of Commons and House of Lords debates. Each code and cub-code includes a description, inclusion criteria, an example of what would be included as part of the code, and the exclusion criteria for irrelevant data.

| Thesis location/ figure | Code/*sub-code* | Description | Inclusion criteria | Example | Exclusion criteria |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chapters 5 and 6 | Action/ *equipment* | Reference to equipment provided by the UK to humanitarian crises between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | Qualitative references to military and non-military equipment supplied by the UK in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports, between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2020. Statements must be made by government ministers or UK representatives at the UN. | "Our diplomatic team and our military advisers have already coordinated a range of support, including the supply of 1,000 sets of body armour, satellite telephones and humanitarian aid, including funding the evacuation of 4,000 people from Misrata and providing 30 metric tonnes of medical and emergency | References that do not refer to the provision of military and non-military equipment between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2020. |

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| | | | | food supplies to that besieged town." (Prime Minister's Office, 2011).[63] | |
| Chapters 5 and 6 | Action/ *financial* | Reference to UK financial assistance provided to humanitarian crises between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | References to financial assistance in both numerical and non-numerical form in relation to humanitarian crises in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2020. | "As part of this effort, the UK is today announcing an additional £52 million" (Cameron, 2013).[64] | References that do not refer to the provision of financial assistance between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2020. |
| Chapter 5 | Influence | References to UK influence in its international relations between May 2010 and 6 May 2015 | Direct reference to the concept of influence in relation to the UK's international relations in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN | "There is no reason why the rise of new economic powers should lead to a loss of British influence in the world, and neither is there any reason why our military power should be diminished" (Cameron, 2010).[65] | References to influence which are not in relation to the UK's international relations and/or do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |

[63] Prime Minister's Office. 2011. *Statement between the PM and the Chairman of the Libyan NTC*. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: [ARCHIVED CONTENT] Statement between the PM and the Chairman of the Libyan NTC - Number 10 (nationalarchives.gov.uk)

[64] Cameron, D. 2013. G20 Summit: Prime Minister news conference. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: G20 Summit: Prime Minister news conference - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[65] Cameron, D. 2010. Speech to Lord Mayor's Banquet. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-to-lord-mayors-banquet

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| Chapter 5 | Leadership | References to leadership in UK foreign policy between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | Direct reference to leadership (including its variations of lead and leading) in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "Britain is leading an international effort at the United Nations to secure unfettered humanitarian access inside Syria" (Cameron, 2013).[66] | References to leadership/lead/leading which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015 and/or are not in reference to the UK's own leadership in foreign policy. |
| Chapter 5 | Myanmar (Burma) | References to UK foreign policy in Myanmar between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015 | Direct reference to either Myanmar or Burma in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "The UK remains committed to the people of Burma, and has never wavered in its calls for the granting of full human rights to all of its people, including the Rohingya" (FCO, 2012).[67] | References to Myanmar which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Chapter 5 | Protection of civilians (PoC) | Reference to the protection of | Direct reference to the protection of civilians (including | "We will also now provide new types of non-lethal equipment for the | References to the PoC and its variations |

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[66] Cameron, D. 2013b. 25th anniversary of the Holocaust Educational Trust: Prime Minister's speech. [Online]. [Accessed: 11 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/25th-anniversary-of-the-holocaust-educational-trust-prime-ministers-speech

[67] FCO. 2012a. Foreign Secretary stresses need to end violence in Burma. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-stresses-need-to-end-violence-in-burma

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| | | civilians (PoC) in the UK's foreign policy between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | its variations of 'protect civilians' 'civilian protection', and 'protecting civilians') in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | protection of civilians, going beyond what we have given before" (FCO, 2013).[68] | which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Chapter 5 | Responsibility to protect (R2P) | Reference to the responsibility to protect in UK foreign policy between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | Direct reference to the responsibility to protect in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "They do not share our sense of a Responsibility to Protect, or readiness to intervene militarily as a last resort when human rights are violated on a massive scale" (FCO, 2013).[69] | References to the R2P which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Chapter 5 | Humanitarian intervention | References to humanitarian intervention in UK foreign policy | Direct references to humanitarian intervention in UK foreign policy beyond the immediate cases of Libya and | "When we talk about humanitarian intervention but mean military intervention, that puts at risk those people who are doing purely | References to humanitarian intervention in relation to Libya and Syria |

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[68] FCO. 2013. Foreign Secretary Statement to Parliament on Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-statement-to-parliament-on-syria

[69] FCO. 2013. Foreign Secretary speech on rejecting decline and renewing Western diplomacy in the 21st century. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-speech-on-rejecting-decline-and-renewing-western-diplomacy-in-the-21st-century

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| | | between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | Syria in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | humanitarian work" (Hansard HC Deb., 26 September 2014).[70] | and/or do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 6 in section 5.1.1 | Learning from the past/ *Afghanistan* | References to the lessons of the UK's contribution to the 2002 intervention in Afghanistan. | Direct references to the lessons of the UK's intervention in Afghanistan in 2002. This is referred to in the past tense in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "Now there is not one person in this hall who will view this challenge without reference to the past. Whether in Iraq. Whether in Afghanistan" (Cameron, 2014).[71] | References to the UK's involvement in Afghanistan in the present. For example: "I have said that our combat forces will be out of Afghanistan by 2015" (Cameron, 2010)[72] and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 6 in section 5.1.1 | Learning from the past/ *Learn/* | References to learning from the past international | Direct references to learn (including its variations of 'learning' and 'learned) | "Now of course it is absolutely right that we should learn the lessons of the past, especially of what happened | References to learn/learning/learned which are not |

[70] Hansard HC Deb. vol.585 col.1281. 26 September 2014 [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140926/debtext/140926-0001.htm#1409266000001

[71] Cameron, D. 2014. PM speech at the UN General Assembly 2014. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-the-un-general-assembly-2014

[72] Cameron, D. 2010. Speech to Lord Mayor's Banquet. [Online]. [Accessed: 7 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-to-lord-mayors-banquet

| | *Learning/ Learned* | interventions by the New Labour government, specifically in relation to Afghanistan and Iraq. | specifically in relation to the UK's past interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) during the New Labour government. Sources include UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | in Iraq a decade ago" (Cameron, 2014).[73] | mentioned within the context of either Afghanistan (2001) or Iraq (2003). For example: "The UK does not have reactors of the design of those in Fukushima and neither does it plan any. Nor are we in a seismically sensitive zone. But if there are lessons to learn, then we will learn them" (FCO, 2011b)[74] and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
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| Figure 6 in section 5.1.1 | Learning from the past/*Iraq* | Direct references to the lessons learned from the UK's | Direct references to the lessons learned in UK foreign policy in relation to the Iraq war in 2003. Sources include UK foreign | "This is a very different situation from anything that happened over Iraq" (FCO, 2013)[75] | References to the UK's involvement in Iraq in the present. For example: "The UK is |

[73] Cameron, D. 2014. PM speech at the UN General Assembly 2014. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-the-un-general-assembly-2014

[74] FCO. 2011. "Britain will remain at the forefront of Europe in leading the response to this crisis". [Online]. [Accessed: 7 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-will-remain-at-the-forefront-of-europe-in-leading-the-response-to-this-crisis

[75] FCO. 2013. Foreign Secretary calls for strong international response to chemical attack in Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-calls-for-strong-international-response-to-chemical-attack-in-syria

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| | | contributions to the Iraq War in 2003. | policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | | providing £8.5 million for food, medical care, shelter and other essential support to tens of thousands of people in need in Syria as well as to help refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq" (FCO, 2012).[76] In addition, references which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 7 in section 5.1.2 | UK's place in the world/ *Global* | Direct references to global in relation to describing the UK's place in the world. | Direct references to the global in relation to the UK's place in the world in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "Britain remains a global power" (FCO, 2011).[77] | References which are not in relation to the UK's global role, such as a 'global summit' and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |

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76 FCO. 2012. Foreign Secretary updates Parliament on Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 7 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-updates-parliament-on-syria

77 FCO. 2011. Navigating the new world order: The UK and the emerging powers. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/navigating-the-new-world-order-the-uk-and-the-emerging-powers--2

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| Figure 7 in section 5.1.2 | UK's place in the world/ *Decline* | References to decline in relation to the UK's place in the world. | Direct references to decline in relation to the UK's place in the world in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "Without change we will decline" (FCO, 2011).[78] | References to decline that are not in relation to the UK's place in the world and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 8 in section 5.1.3 | Liberal conservatism/ *Democracy* | References to democracy between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | Direct reference to democracy (including the variation of 'democratic') in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "Our belief in democracy, our values of tolerance, fairness" (FCO, 2011).[79] | References not directly related to democracy, such as the "human rights and democracy report" and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |

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[78] FCO. 2011. Navigating the new world order: The UK and the emerging powers. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/navigating-the-new-world-order-the-uk-and-the-emerging-powers--2

[79] FCO. 2011. "Our belief in democracy, our values of tolerance, fairness and justice all compel us to act when others are denied the rights that we enjoy". [Online]. [Accessed: 7 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/our-belief-in-democracy-our-values-of-tolerance-fairness-and-justice-all-compel-us-to-act-when-others-are-denied-the-rights-that-we-enjoy

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| Figure 8 in section 5.1.3 | Liberal conservatism/ *Freedom* | Direct references to freedom between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | Direct references to the UK's freedom in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "the strong tradition of this country's championing of human rights and freedom" (FCO, 2013).[80] | References that are not directly on freedom and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 8 in section 5.1.3 | Liberal conservatism/ *Human rights* | Direct references to human rights between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | Direct references to human rights in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "We want an active foreign policy that is staunch in its support for democracy and human rights" (Cameron, 2010).[81] | References which are not directly on UK foreign policy towards human rights, such as the Human Rights Council and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 8 in section 5.1.3 | Liberal conservatism/ *National interest* | Direct references to the UK's national interest between 11 May | Direct reference to the national interest in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK | "So the third key choice that we make is to keep our promises to the poorest in the world by spending 0.7% of our Gross National Income on aid. I have made the argument many times before that this is the | References which are not directly on the national interest, such as "public interest" and/or which do not |

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[80] FCO. 2013. Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. [Online]. [Accessed: 7 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/preventing-sexual-violence-in-conflict

[81] Cameron, D. 2010. Speech to Lord Mayor's Banquet. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-to-lord-mayors-banquet

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| | | 2010 and 6 May 2015. | representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | right thing to do morally and I've made the argument that it's in our national interest" (Cameron, 2015).[82] | fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 11 in section 5.2.1 | Libya/ *Democracy* | References to democracy in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya. | Direct references to democracy (including the variation of 'democratic') in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "support the building blocks of a democratic society" (Prime Minister's Office, 2011).[83] | References to democracy not in relation to the crisis in Libya and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 11 in section 5.2.1 | Libya/*Freedom* | References to freedom in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya. | Direct references to freedom in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN | "Of course there'll be many jolts and bumps along the road but basically we helped that country to get rid of one of the most brutal dictators of the last century and give that country a chance of freedom and democracy and the things that we take for | References to freedom not in relation to the crisis in Libya and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |

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[82]  Cameron, D. 2015. Lord Mayor's Banquet 2015: Prime Minister's speech. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/lord-mayors-banquet-2015-prime-ministers-speech

[83]  Prime Minister's Office. 2011. PM's speech at London Conference on Libya. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20111205193021/http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-at-london-conference-on-libya/

| | | | | between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015.. | granted in this country" (Prime Minister's Office, 2011).[84] | |
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| Figure 11 in section 5.2.1 | Libya/*Human rights* | References to human rights in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya. | Direct reference to human rights in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "Today we have signalled that crimes will not be condoned, will not go unpunished, will not be forgotten and this is a warning to anyone contemplating the abuse of human rights in Libya" (FCO, 2011e).[85] | References to human rights not in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 11 in section 5.2.1 | Libya/ *Responsibility to protect* | References to the responsibility to protect in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya. | Direct reference to the responsibility to protect in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. | "In the case of Libya, if we thought there was any other way left of protecting the lives of those people in Benghazi in the middle of March, other than passing a UN resolution and taking immediate military action, then of course we would have done something else, but that was the only option left to us. And so I would argue, from the point of view of governments with a responsibility to protect the millions of people who | Direct reference to the responsibility to protect not in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |

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[84] Prime Minister's Office. 2011. PM's speech to service personnel returning from Libya. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from:
https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121205130416/http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/libya-servicemen-and-women/

[85] FCO. 2011e. Foreign Secretary attends UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-attends-un-human-rights-council-in-geneva

| | | | | live in their countries, that sometimes it is necessary to do these things" (FCO, 2011).[86] | |
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| Figure 11 in section 5.2.1 | Libya/ *Protection of civilians* | References to the protection of civilians in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya. | References to the protection of civilians (including its variations of 'protect civilians', 'civilian protection', and 'protecting civilians') in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015.. | "And the wider NATO mission which is to protect civilians – that will continue for as long as it is needed" (Prime Minister's Office, 2011).[87] | References to the protection of civilians and its variations not in relation to the 2011 crisis in Libya and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 6 May 2015. |
| Figure 13 in section 5.3.1 | Syria/*Assad* | Reference to President Assad in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 | Direct references to Assad (including the variation of 'Asad') in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, | "This worsening situation has been caused by the actions of the Assad regime" (FCO, 2012).[88] | References to Assad and its variation of 'Asad' beyond the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 and/or which do not fall |

[86] FCO. 2011. Britain abroad must temper idealism with pragmatism. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2013]. Available from:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-abroad-must-temper-idealism-with-pragmatism
[87] Prime Minister's Office. 2011. PM's statement on Libya. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from:
https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20111205192544/http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-statement-on-libya/
[88] FCO. 2012. Foreign Secretary calls for urgent action on Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-calls-for-urgent-action-on-syria

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| | | | and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | | between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |
| Figure 13 in section 5.3.1 | Syria/*Chemical weapons* | References to chemical weapons in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 | Direct reference to chemical weapons in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2013 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | "And let's not pretend that Syria would now be giving up its chemical weapons if we and our allies had looked the other way" (Prime Minister's Office, 2013).[89] | References to chemical weapons beyond Syria and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |
| Figure 13 in section 5.3.1 | Syria/ *Democracy* | References to democracy in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 | Direct references to democracy (including its variation of democratic) in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK | "The United Kingdom will continue to work closely with the Syrian political opposition, encouraging them to develop their vision for a stable, democratic Syria where all communities are respected and secure" (FCO, 2012).[90] | References to democracy beyond Syria and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |

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[89] Prime Minister's Office. 2013. Lord Mayor's Banquet 2013: Prime Minister's speech. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/lord-mayors-banquet-2013-prime-ministers-speech

[90] FCO. 2012c. UK Intervention at the United Nations Security Council meeting on Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-intervention-at-the-united-nations-security-council-meeting-on-syria

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| | | | representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | | |
| Figure 13 in section 5.3.1 | Syria/*End violence* | References to ending the violence in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 | Direct reference to ending violence in Syria (including its variations of 'end to violence', 'end to the violence', and 'ending violence) in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | "I urge the Syrian government to implement rapidly and fully their commitments under the six point plan. And I call on the opposition to take all steps necessary to bring about a sustainable end to the violence" (FCO, 2012).[91] | Referencing to ending violence and its variations in general beyond Syria and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |
| Figure 13 in section 5.3.1 | Syria/*Human rights* | References to human rights in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014. | Direct references to human rights in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by | "Our two nations are also determined to help hold to account those responsible for human rights abuses in Syria" (FCO, 2012).[92] | References to human rights in general beyond Syria and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 |

[91] FCO. 2012e. Foreign Secretary condemns bomb attacks in Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-condemns-bomb-attacks-in-syria

[92] FCO. 2012d. Foreign Secretary's remarks with French Foreign Minister Fabius in New York on the situation in Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretarys-remarks-with-french-foreign-minister-fabius-in-new-york-on-the-situation-in-syria

| | | | government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | | and 31 December 2014. |
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| Figure 13 in section 5.3.1 | Syria/ *Transition* | References to transition in the context of the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014. | Direct references to the concept of transition in the context of the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | "President Assad and the Syrian regime must heed the call of the international community and allow a peaceful political transition to resolve the crisis" (FCO, 2012).[93] | References to transition that are not referring to the crisis in Syria, the removal of the Assad regime or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |
| Figure 15 in section 5.3.2 | Syria/ *Government/ Humanitarian intervention* | References to humanitarian intervention in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014. | Direct references to humanitarian intervention in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN | "That is why it is important that we have the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, which is set out in the Attorney-General's excellent legal advice to the House" (Hansard HC Deb., 29 August 2013).[94] | References to humanitarian intervention in general beyond Syria and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |

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[93] FCO. 2012b. Statement on Syrian UN resolution. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-on-syrian-un-resolution

[94] Hansard. HC Deb. vol.566 cols.1426-1427, 29 August 2013. [Online]. [Accessed: 18 April 2018]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2013-08-29/debates/1308298000001/SyriaAndTheUseOfChemicalWeapons

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| | | | between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | | |
| Figure 15 in section 5.3.2 | Syria/ *Government/ Protection of civilians* | Reference to the protection of civilians in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014. | Direct references to the protection of civilians (including its variations of 'civilian protection', 'protecting civilians', and 'protect civilians') in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | "This is necessary to minimise the risks to regional and international security; to protect civilians inside Syria and to lay the foundations for longer-term stability" (FCO, 2012).[95] | References which are referring to the PoC and its variations more generally and not in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |
| Figure 15 in section 5.3.2 | Syria/ *Government/ Responsibility to protect* | Reference to the responsibility to protect in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014. | Direct references to the responsibility to protect in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by | "It is clear that the regime is shamefully failing in its in responsibility to protect its people" (FCO, 2011).[96] | References which are referring to the responsibility to protect more generally and/or do not fall between 11 May 2010 |

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[95] FCO. 2012. UK Intervention at the United Nations Security Council meeting on Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-intervention-at-the-united-nations-security-council-meeting-on-syria

[96] FCO. 2011. UK at the UN Human Rights Council on Libya: "We are and will continue to take action". [Online]. [Accessed: 2 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-at-the-un-human-rights-council-on-libya-we-are-and-will-continue-to-take-action

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| | | | government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | | and 31 December 2014. |
| Figure 16 in section 5.3.3 | Syria/ *Parliament/ Humanitarian intervention* | Direct references to humanitarian intervention in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in both the House of Lords and House of Commons. | References must be made to humanitarian intervention by members of either the House of Lords or House of Commons in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 according to Hansard's online records between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | "It is possible, whatever my views about non-humanitarian intervention at all, that it may have to be prayed in aid in the circumstances of Syria if parliamentary approval is obtained" (Hansard HL Deb., 1 July 2013).[97] | References to humanitarian intervention in either the House of Lords or House of Commons which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |
| Figure 16 in section 5.3.3 | Syria/ *Parliament/ Responsibility to protect* | Direct references to the responsibility to protect in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in both the House of | References must be made to the responsibility to protect by members of either the House of Lords or House of Commons in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 according to Hansard's online records between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | "I agree with the Attorney-General— we turn to what was once called humanitarian intervention and now is called responsibility to protect. It is a fundamental of that doctrine that every possible political and diplomatic alternative will have been explored and found not to be | References to the responsibility to protect in either the House of Lords or House of Commons which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 and/or which |

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[97] Hansard. HL Deb. vol. 746 col.1013, 1 July 2013. [Online]. [Accessed: 11 March 2021]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2013-07-01/debates/1307012000328/SyriaAndTheMiddleEast

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| | | | | capable" (Hansard HC Deb., 29 August 2013).[98] | do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |
| | | | | Lords and House of Commons. | |
| Figure 16 in section 5.3.3 | Syria/ *Parliament/ Protection of civilians* | Direct references to the protection of civilians in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 in both the House of Lords and House of Commons. | References must be made to the protection of civilians (including its variations of 'civilian protection', 'protecting civilians', and 'protect civilians') by members of either the House of Lords or House of Commons in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 according to Hansard's online records between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. | "We are also providing technical assistance for the protection of civilians. That includes advice and training on how to maintain security in areas no longer controlled by the regime, on how to protect civilians and minimise the risks to them" (Hansard HC Deb., 11 July 2013).[99] | References to the protection of civilians and its variations in either the House of Lords or House of Commons which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2011 and 2014 and/or which do not fall between 11 May 2010 and 31 December 2014. |
| Chapter 6 | Atrocity prevention | References to atrocity prevention in relation to UK foreign policy between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | Direct references to the concept of atrocity prevention in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN | "does the Secretary of State agree that the Government would benefit from applying a mass atrocity prevention lens in order better to | References to atrocity prevention in UK foreign policy which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |

[98] Hansard. HC Deb. vol.566 col.1457, 29 August 2013. [Online]. [Accessed: 18 April 2018]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2013-08-29/debates/1308298000001/SyriaAndTheUseOfChemicalWeapons

[99] Hansard. HC Deb. vol.566 cols.625, 11 July 2013. [Online]. [Accessed: 18 April 2018]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2013-07-11/debates/13071159000002/ArmsToSyria

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| | | | between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | focus their policy?" (Hansard HC deb., 16 December 2015).[100] | |
| Chapter 6 | Development assistance | References to the UK's commitment to development assistance between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | References to the UK's contribution to overseas development assistance, including its 0.7% commitment in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "0.7% is often spoken about as though spending it is the goal. The public want a greater focus on the outcomes" (DFID, 2018b).[101] | References to development aid in UK foreign policy which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Chapter 6 | Humanitarian intervention | References to humanitarian intervention in UK foreign policy between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | Direct references to humanitarian intervention in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "but we cannot allow this report to send out the message that under no circumstances will the United Kingdom be available for humanitarian intervention, even though we have had a very sharp | References to humanitarian intervention in UK foreign policy which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |

[100] Hansard HC Deb. Vol.603 cols.1542, 16 December 2015. [Online]. [Accessed: 27 March 2020]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2015-1216/debates/15121619000017/TopicalQuestions?highlight=atrocity%20prevention#co ntribution-15121619000102

[101] DFID. 2018b. *International Development Secretary on UK aid - The Mission for Global Britain.* [Online]. [Accessed: 2 February 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/international-development-secretary-on-uk-aid-the-mission-for-global-britain

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| | | | | lesson in its risks." (Hansard HL Deb., 12 July 2016).[102] | |
| Chapter 6 | Leadership | References to leadership in UK foreign policy between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | Direct reference to leadership (including its variations of lead and leading) in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "Because British leadership is already playing a pivotal role in meeting so many of the global challenges that affect our security and prosperity" (FCO, 2016a).[103] | References to leadership/lead/leading which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Chapter 6 | Protection of civilians | Reference to the protection of civilians (PoC) in the UK's foreign policy between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | Direct reference to the protection of civilians (including its variations of 'protect civilians' 'civilian protection', and 'protecting civilians') in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by | "Therefore, aside from the clear moral reasons for doing so, it is within its core mandate that this Council should act to protect civilian populations affected by conflict" (FCO, 2018).[104] | References to the PoC and its variations which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |

[102] Hansard HL Deb. Vol.774 cols.173, 12 July 2016. [Online]. [Accessed: 27 March 2020]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2016-07-12/debates/B49FA0A2C2A9-4468-9A5B1075E77AB0BE/IraqInquiry?highlight=humanitarian%20intervention#contributionEF22C59A-E956-4DCB-A42C-C43F90B8F109

[103] FCO. 2016a. PM speech to the Lord Mayor's Banquet: 14 November 2016. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-to-the-lord-mayors-banquet-14-november-2016

[104] FCO. 2018. *Acting within the core Security Council mandate to protect civilian populations affected by conflict.* [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/acting-within-the-core-security-council-mandate-to-protect-civilian-populations-affected-by-conflict

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| Chapter 6 | Responsibility to protect | Reference to the responsibility to protect in UK foreign policy between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | Direct reference to the responsibility to protect in foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "I would like to reaffirm at the outset the United Kingdom's commitment to implementing the R2P doctrine" (Rycroft, 2016).[105] | References to the R2P which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 17 in section 6.1. | Liberal conservatism/ *Democracy* | References to democracy in UK foreign policy between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | Direct reference to democracy (including the variation of 'democratic') in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "Secondly there is a growing threat to democracy and democratic values. It's now clear that the spread of democracy has slowed, gradually come to a halt, in some respects even gone into reverse" (FCO, 2018).[106] | References not directly related to democracy, such as the "human rights and democracy report" and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |

[105] Rycroft, M. 2016. "Part of our Responsibility to Protect lies in ensuring that those who seek to harm civilians know that impunity is not an option.". [Online]. [Accessed: 27 December 2017]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/part-of-our-responsibility-to-protect-lies-in-ensuring-that-those-who-seek-to-harm-civilians-know-that-impunity-is-not-an-option

[106] FCO. 2018c. An Invisible Chain: speech by the Foreign Secretary. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/an-invisible-chain-speech-by-the-foreign-secretary

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| Figure 17 in section 6.1. | Liberal conservatism/ *Freedom* | Direct references to freedom in UK foreign policy between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | Direct references to the UK's freedom in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "The war will not end with the fall of Aleppo. Asad will never control the hearts or minds of those Syrians crying out for freedom" (FCO, 2016).[107] | References that are not directly on freedom and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 17 in section 6.1 | Liberal conservatism/ *Human rights* | Direct references to human rights in UK foreign policy between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | Direct references to human rights in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "Promoting and protecting those rights, and standing up for the inherent dignity of individuals around the world, is a fundamental part of the British foreign policy. Indeed, a foreign policy that does not have human rights at its core is unimaginable" (DFID, 2018).[108] | References which are not directly on UK foreign policy towards human rights, such as the Human Rights Council and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 17 in section 6.1 | Liberal conservatism/ *National interest* | Reference to the UK's national interest in its foreign policy between 7 May | Direct reference to the national interest in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK | "And they look to us, grown-ups, people with families, people who know about them, people with university degrees, to set aside our differences and any selfish sense of strategic national interest, and to put | References which are not directly on the national interest, such as "public interest" and/or which do not fall between 7 May |

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107 FCO. 2016. This is a dark day for the people of Aleppo, surely the darkest of the past five years. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/this-is-a-dark-day-for-the-people-of-aleppo-surely-the-darkest-of-the-past-five-years

108 DFID. 2018. Lord Ahmad's Human Rights speech. [Online]. [Accessed: 27 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/lord-ahmads-human-rights-speech

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| | | 2015 and 31 December 2020. | representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | the people of Syria first" FCO, 2016).[109] | 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 19 in section 6.2.1 | Syria/*Assad* | References to Assad in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017. | Direct references to Assad or Asad in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | "Chemical weapons inflict excruciating pain and suffering. The Assad regime's indiscriminate and sustained use of them against their own people, including children, is horrific and must stop" (FCO, 2016).[110] | References to Assad or Asad beyond the crisis in Syria between 2015-2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |
| Figure 19 in section 6.2.1 | Syria/*Chemical weapons* | Reference to chemical weapons in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017. | Direct references to chemical weapons in Syria between 2015 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN | "The UK condemns the use of chemical weapons wherever and by whomever they are used and we will continue to lead international efforts to hold perpetrators to account" (FCO, 2016).[111] | References to chemical weapons in Syria beyond the immediate timeframe of 2015 to 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |

[109] FCO. 2016. "There can be no political process without a genuine ceasefire.". [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/there-can-be-no-political-process-without-a-genuine-ceasefire

[110] FCO. 2016. Foreign Secretary statement on United Nations chemical weapons report. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-united-nations-chemical-weapons-report

[111] FCO. 2016g. Foreign Secretary comments on reports of chemical weapons attack in Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-comments-on-reports-of-chemical-weapons-attack-in-syria

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| | | | between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | | |
| Figure 19 in section 6.2.1 | Syria/*ISIS* | References to the extremist group ISIS specifically in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017. | References to ISIS (including its variations of ISIL, IS, and Daesh) between 2015 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | "We have seen how vital drones are in the fight against ISIL so with this extra money we are doubling our fleet of drones" (FCO, 2015).[112] | References to ISIS and its variations which are not in the context of the Syria crisis and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |
| Figure 19 in section 6.2.1 | Syria/ *Protection of civilians* | References to the protection of civilians in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017. | References to PoC (including its variations of 'protect civilians' 'civilian protection', and 'protecting civilians') between 2015 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | "So let us call on all parties to the conflict to protect civilians, not abduct or attack them as they leave" (FCO, 2016).[113] | References to the PoC and its variations which are not in the context of the Syria crisis and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |

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[112] FCO. 2015b. Lord Mayor's Banquet 2015: Prime Minister's speech. [Online]. [Accessed: 27 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/lord-mayors-banquet-2015-prime-ministers-speech

[113] FCO. 2016. "Did they need to reduce Aleppo to rubble to defeat terrorism?". [Online]. [Accessed: 2 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/did-they-need-to-reduce-aleppo-to-rubble-to-defeat-terrorism

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| Figure 19 in section 6.2.1 | Syria/*Russia* | References to Russia's position on the Syria crisis, including but not exclusive to its membership of the UN Security Council, between 2015 and 2017. | Direct reference to Russia in the context of the crisis in Syria between 2015-2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | "If Russia genuinely believes in the commitment we have all just made to protect medical workers, then they will bring their full influence to bear to restrain the Asad regime and bring these merciless attacks to an end" (FCO, 2016).[114] | References to Russia which are not specifically in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015-2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |
| Figure 19 in section 6.2.1 | Syria/ *Transition* | Reference to transition in the context of the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017. | Direct reference to transition in the context of the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | "Syria to the negotiating table and to a transition away from the Assad regime to an inclusive Syrian government" (FCO, 2015).[115] | References to transition that are not referring to the crisis in Syria and/or the removal of the Assad regime between 2015 and 2017. This is in addition to references which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |

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[114]  FCO. 2016. A Hospital should be a safe haven, not a target. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-hospital-should-be-a-safe-haven-not-a-target

[115]  FCO. 2015a. Foreign Secretary welcomes progress towards ending the conflict in Syria. [Online]. [Accessed: 27 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-welcomes-progress-towards-ending-the-conflict-in-syria

| Figure 20 and 21 in section 6.2.3 | Syria/ *Government/ Humanitarian intervention* | Direct reference to humanitarian intervention in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017. | Direct references to humanitarian intervention in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | "Daesh poses no less a threat. For the Opposition, the spirit of internationalism, humanitarian intervention and solidarity with people across the world is one of the longest and proudest traditions of the British left, which is why we must not fall into the mindset of isolationism" (Hansard HC De., 2 December 2015).[116] | References to humanitarian intervention in general beyond Syria and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |
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| Figure 20 and 21 in section 6.2.3 | Syria/ *Government/ Protection of civilians* | Reference to the protection of civilians in relation to the crisis in Syria 2015-2017. | Direct references to the protection of civilians (including its variations of 'civilian protection', 'protecting civilians', and 'protect civilians') in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government | "So let us call on all parties to the conflict to protect civilians, not abduct or attack them as they leave" (FCO, 2016).[117] | Direct references to PoC and its variations which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |

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[116] Hansard HC Deb. Vol.603 cols.463, 02 December 2015. [Online]. [Accessed: 27 March 2020]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2015-1202/debates/15120254000002/ISILInSyria?highlight=humanitarian%20intervention#c ontribution-1512031000086

[117] FCO. 2016. Did they need to reduce Aleppo to rubble to defeat terrorism? [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/did-they-need-to-reduce-aleppo-to-rubble-to-defeat-terrorism

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| | | | ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | | |
| Figure 20 and 21 in section 6.2.3 | Syria/ *Government/ Responsibility to protect* | Reference to the responsibility to protect in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017. | Direct references to the responsibility to protect in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | "We agree with him that this Council should call on all the parties, and especially the regime, which has the primary responsibility to protect Syrians" (FCO, 2016).[118] | Direct references to responsibility to protect which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |
| Figure 21 and section 6.2.3 | Syria/ *Parliament/ Humanitarian intervention* | Direct references to humanitarian intervention in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 in both the House of Lords | References must be made to humanitarian intervention by members of either the House of Lords or House of Commons in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 according to Hansard's online | "Daesh poses no less a threat. For the Opposition, the spirit of internationalism, humanitarian intervention and solidarity with people across the world".[119] | References to humanitarian intervention in either the House of Lords or House of Commons which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 |

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[118] FCO. 2016. "Starving civilians as a method of warfare is inhuman, unacceptable and prohibited under international humanitarian law." [Online]. [Accessed: 2 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/starving-civilians-as-a-method-of-warfare-is-inhuman-unacceptable-and-prohibited-under-international-humanitarian-law

[119] HC Deb. Vol.603 cols.463, 02 December 2015. [Online]. [Accessed: 27 March 2020]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2015-12-02/debates/15120254000002/ISILInSyria

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| | | and House of Commons. | records between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | | and 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |
| Figure 21 and section 6.2.3 | Syria/ *Parliament/ Responsibility to protect* | Direct references to the responsibility to protect in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 in both the House of Lords and House of Commons. | References must be made to the responsibility to protect by members of either the House of Lords or House of Commons in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 according to Hansard's online records between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | "As the direct threat posed by ISIL to the UK increases, so too does our responsibility to protect our country and our citizens. ISIL is extreme and must be isolated. We need military action, not inaction" (Hansard HC Deb., 2 December 2015).[120] | References to the responsibility to protect in either the House of Lords or House of Commons which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |
| Figure 21 and section 6.2.3 | Syria/ *Parliament/ Protection of civilians* | Direct references to the protection of civilians in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 in both the House of Lords | References must be made to the protection of civilians (including its variations of 'civilian protection', 'protecting civilians', and 'protect civilians') by members of either the House of Lords or House of Commons in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and | "Indeed, our failure to intervene to protect civilians left Assad at liberty to escalate both the scale and the ferocity of his attacks on innocent Syrians in a desperate attempt to | References to the protection of civilians and its variations in either the House of Lords or House of Commons which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria between 2015 and 2017 and/or |

120 Hansard HC Deb. Vol.603 cols.455-456, 02 December 2015. [Online]. [Accessed: 26 March 2020]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2015-1202/debates/15120254000002/ISILInSyria?highlight=responsibility%20protect#contrib ution-1512031000038

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| | | and House of Commons. | 2017 according to Hansard's online records between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. | cling to power" (Hansard HC Deb., 12 October 2015).[121] | which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2017. |
| Figure 22 in section 6.2.5. | Syria/*Chemical weapons* | Reference to chemical weapons in Syria in 2018. | Direct references to chemical weapons in Syria in 2018 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN in 2018. | "Syria's chemical weapons program must be ended and the chemical weapons stockpiles destroyed once and for all" (FCO, 2018).[122] | References to chemical weapons in Syria beyond the immediate timeframe of 2018. |
| Figure 22 in section 6.2.5. | Syria/ *Humanitarian intervention* | Direct reference to humanitarian intervention in Syria in 2018 | References to humanitarian intervention must be in direct relation to the crisis in Syria in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK | "But something else is necessary to enable humanitarian intervention in Syria, and that is the military's guaranteeing the safety of aid convoys getting into besieged areas. It meets the Government's test" (Hansard HC Deb., 16 April 2018).[123] | Direct references to humanitarian intervention which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria in 2018. |

[121] Hansard HC Deb. Vol.600 cols.135-136, 12 October 2015. [Online]. [Accessed: 25 March 2020]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-0416/debates/92610F86-2B91-4105-AE8B78D018453D1B/Syria?highlight=responsibility%20protect#contribution-29D47FAEA6DC-46D7-907B-5D57D07CFAF4

[122] FCO. 2018. Our military action will degrade the Syrian regime's chemical weapons use: statement by Karen Pierce. [Online]. [Accessed: 1 May 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/our-action-will-degrade-the-syrian-regimes-chemical-weapons-use

[123] Hansard HC Deb. Vol.639 cols.74-75, 16 April 2018. [Online]. [Accessed: 27 March 2020]. Available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-0416/debates/92610F86-2B91-4105-AE8B78D018453D1B/Syria?highlight=humanitarian%20intervention#contribution16864031-39A3-457C-9207-2D3AA8AC9953

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| | | | representatives at the UN in 2018. | | |
| Figure 22 in section 6.2.5. | Syria/*National interest* | Direct reference to the national interest in Syria in 2018 | References to the national interest must be in direct relation to the crisis in Syria in 2018 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN in 2018. | "We must reinstate the global consensus that chemical weapons cannot be used. This action is absolutely in Britain's national interest." (Prime Minister's Office, 2018).[124] | Direct references to the national interest which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria in 2018. |
| Figure 22 in section 6.2.5. | Syria/*legal* | Direct reference to legal in Syria in 2018 | References to legal must be in direct relation to the crisis in Syria in 2018 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN in 2018. | "And based on this advice we agreed that it was both right and legal to take military action, together with our closest allies, to alleviate further humanitarian suffering by degrading the Syrian Regime's Chemical Weapons capability and deterring their use." (Prime Minister's Office, 2018).[125] | Direct references to legal which are not in relation to the crisis in Syria in 2018. |
| Figure 22 in section 6.2.5. | Syria/ *Humanitarian suffering* | Reference to humanitarian suffering with | Direct references to humanitarian suffering in the context of the use of chemical | "The action was carried out to alleviate further humanitarian suffering by degrading the Syrian | References to humanitarian suffering not directly in relation |

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[124] Prime Minister's Office. 2018. PM's press conference statement on Syria: 14 April 2018. [Online]. [Accessed: 2 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-press-conference-statement-on-syria-14-april-2013

[125] Prime Minister's Office. 2018. PM's press conference statement on Syria: 14 April 2018. [Online]. [Accessed: 2 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-press-conference-statement-on-syria-14-april-2013

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| | | regards to use of chemical weapons in April 2018 in Syria. | weapons in April 2018 in Syria in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN in 2018. | Regime's chemical weapons capability and deterring their use" (FCO, 2018).[126] | to the use of chemical weapons in Syria in April 2018. |
| Figure 23 in section 6.3 | Myanmar/ *Atrocities* | References to atrocities in relation to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017. | Direct references to atrocities in relation to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "What is essential now is that the perpetrators of any atrocities are brought to justice" (FCO, 2018).[127] | Direct references to atrocities in relation to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 23 in section 6.3 | Myanmar/ *Democracy* | References to democracy in relation to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017. | Direct references to democracy and its variation of democratic in relation to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by | "Burma's transition to democracy is not yet complete but it is worth reflecting on just how far Burma has come since Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy | Direct references to democracy and/or democratic in relation to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 |

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[126] FCO. 2018e. PM statement on Syria: 16 April 2018. [Online]. [Accessed: 1 May 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-syria-16-april-2018

[127] FCO. 2018. Jeremy Hunt's statement to media on his September 2018 visit to Burma. [Online]. [Accessed: 2 June 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-to-media-on-his-visit-to-burma

| | | | government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | party took office just 9 months ago" (FCO, 2016).[128] | and 31 December 2020. |
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| Figure 23 in section 6.3 | Myanmar/ *Humanitarian* | References to humanitarian in Myanmar between 2016 and 2017. | Direct references to humanitarian in relation to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "The UK has repeatedly called on the Burmese security forces to protect all civilians and act now to stop the violence and allow humanitarian aid to urgently reach all those who need it" (FCO, 2017).[129] | References to humanitarian which are not in reference to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 23 in section 6.3 | Myanmar/ *Human rights* | References to human rights in Myanmar between 2016 and 2017. | Direct references to human rights in relation to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK | "While Burma has undoubtedly made encouraging progress towards democracy in the last few years, the situation in Rakhine, the terrible human rights abuses and violence are a stain on the country's reputation" (FCO, 2017).[130] | References to human rights which are not in reference to Myanmar between 2016 and 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May |

[128] FCO. 2016. Foreign Secretary to meet Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-to-meet-aung-san-suu-kyi-in-burma

[129] FCO. 2017. Foreign Secretary comment on UN Security Council Presidential Statement on Burma. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-comment-on-un-security-council-presidential-statement-on-burma

[130] FCO. 2017. Foreign Secretary hosts key summit on Burma. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-hosts-key-summit-on-burma

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| | | | representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | | 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 23 in section 6.3 | Myanmar/ *Rohingya* | References to the Rohingya in Myanmar between 2016 and 2017. | Direct references to the Rohingya in Myanmar specifically in relation to the crisis between 2016 and 2017 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "Aung Sang Suu Kyi is rightly regarded as one of the most inspiring figures of our age but the treatment of the Rohingya is alas besmirching the reputation of Burma" (FCO, 2017).[131] | References to the Rohingya, which are not directly in regard to the crisis between 2016 and 2017 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 24 in section 6.4.1 | Yemen/ *Humanitarian* | References to humanitarian in Myanmar between 2015 and 2020 | Direct references to humanitarian in relation to Myanmar between 2015 and 2020 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN | "The UK is the fourth largest humanitarian donor to Yemen, and we have increased our funding this year to £155 million" (FCO, 2017).[132] | References to humanitarian which are not in reference to Myanmar and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |

[131] FCO. 2017e. Foreign Secretary calls for an end to violence in Rakhine. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-calls-on-an-end-to-violence-in-rakhine

[132] FCO. 2017. Foreign Secretary hosted meeting on Yemen. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-hosted-meeting-on-yemen

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| | | | between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | | |
| Figure 24 in section 6.4.1 | Yemen/ *Humanitarian Law* | References to law in relation to the crisis in Yemen between 2015 and 2020. | Direct references to law in relation to the crisis in Yemen between 2015 to 2020 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "That means all parties must uphold their obligations under International Humanitarian Law" (FCO, 2017).[133] | Direct references to law, which is not in direct relation to the crisis in Yemen and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 24 in section 6.4.1 | Yemen/ *Protection of civilians* | Reference to the protection of civilians and its variations in relation to the crisis in Yemen 2015-2020. | References to the PoC (including its variations of civilian protection, protecting civilians, and protect civilians) in direct relation to the crisis in Yemen between 2015-2020 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK | "The UK has repeatedly called on the Burmese security forces to protect all civilians and act now to stop the violence and allow humanitarian aid to urgently reach all those who need it" (FCO, 2017).[134] | Direct references to PoC and its variations which are not in relation to the crisis in Yemen (2015-2020) and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |

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[133] FCO. 2017. "More than 20 million men, women and children risk starving to death in the next six months.". [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/more-than-20-million-men-women-and-children-risk-starving-to-death-in-the-next-six-months

[134] FCO. 2017f. "More than 20 million men, women and children risk starving to death in the next six months.". [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/more-than-20-million-men-women-and-children-risk-starving-to-death-in-the-next-six-months

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| | | | representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | | |
| Figure 24 in section 6.4.1 | Yemen/ *Political solution* | References to political solution in regard to the crisis in Yemen between 2015 and 2020. | Direct references to political solution as a means to end the crisis in Yemen between 2015 and 2020 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "Only a political solution can bring an end to the conflict in Yemen" (FCO, 2016).[135] | Direct references to political solution which are not in relation to the crisis in Yemen between 2015 and 2020 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |
| Figure 24 in section 6.4.1 | Yemen/ *Humanitarian Peace* | References to peace in relation to the crisis in Yemen between 2015 and 2020. | Direct references to peace in the context of the crisis Yemen between 2015 and 2020 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "The group also discussed the destabilising effect of Iran on Yemen and the wider region, and how to put in place confidence-building measures following the breakdown of the Geneva peace talks" (FCO, 2018).[136] | Direct references to peace, which is not in direct relation to the crisis in Yemen between 2015 and 2020 and/or which do not fall between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. |

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[135] FCO. 2016. Foreign Secretary statement on Yemen peace talks. [Online]. [Accessed: 29 April 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-yemen-peace-talks

[136] FCO. 2018. Foreign Secretary urges allies to commit to Yemen peace process. [Online]. [Accessed: 1 May 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-urges-allies-to-commmit-to-yemen-peace-process

| Figure 26 in section 7.1.3 | UK's place in the world/ *Global Britain* | References to the UK government's Global Britain agenda. | Direct references to Global Britain, which appeared in UK government rhetoric from 2016 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "Global Britain is the margin of victory in delivering the Global Goals and a more peaceful, prosperous and secure world" (DFID, 2018).[137] | References to Global Britain prior to its emergence in 2016. |
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| Figure 26 in section 7.1.3 | UK's place in the world/ *Global role* | References to the UK's global role from 2015-2020. | Direct references to global role in UK foreign policy speeches between 2015 and 2020 in UK foreign policy speeches, statements, media interviews, and government news reports by government ministers and UK representatives at the UN between 7 May 2015 and 31 December 2020. | "We are a global nation – enriching global prosperity through centuries of trade, through the talents of our people and by exchanging learning and culture with partners across the world" (May, 2018).[138] | References to global role prior to 7 May 2015. |

[137] DfID. 2018a. The Great Partnership: Delivering Global Britain. [Online]. [Accessed: 10 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-great-partnership-delivering-global-britain

[138] May, T. 2018. PM speech at Munich Security Conference: 17 February 2018. [Online]. [Accessed: 1 May 2020]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-munich-security-conference-17-february-2018