AN ASSESSMENT OF HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION BASED ON CASE STUDIES BY THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DEBATES ON LIBYA AND SYRIA IN THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS, 2010-2014

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis was to address the problem of the contradiction between the putative aims of humanitarian intervention and the harmful outcomes seen in intervention sites such as Libya (Hobson, 2016; Sensini, 2016; Cunliffe, 2020). The thesis contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence and contextual analysis of serious flaws in the contemporary theory and practise of humanitarian intervention, including the responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001).

Case studies of parliamentary debates on Libya and Syria from 2010 to 2014 permitted examination of arguments around intervention in the context of political debate and reported outcomes of intervention or non-intervention. From 2011, the British government supported coerced regime change in both countries on humanitarian grounds, but adopted different strategies in each case.[1] Analysis of differences between British responses to Libya and Syria provided evidence of limited humanitarian motivation for intervention.[2] Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) was chosen as a pragmatic method (Morgan, 2014) for identifying themes in the debates, assessing their relative predominance, tracking them over time, and analysing them in context.

The case studies identified weaknesses in the R2P doctrine which suggest that it may be inherently counter-productive (Cunliffe, 2020), possibly due to problematisation of how to do more, rather than better, humanitarian intervention. The evidence indicates that the USA, France and Britain, the states most likely to be tasked with humanitarian military intervention, particularly under the R2P doctrine (Cunliffe, 2020), are not suitable for the role (Dunford and Neu, 2019a). This thesis did not identify a suitable and capable R2P intervention force. However, the evidence was insufficient to support a conclusion that R2P is defunct.

The military intervention in Libya in 2011 was initially praised as an exemplar of the R2P in practise (Evans, 2011; Ban, 2012). Paradoxically, with the lessons of Western dissimulation and inhumane outcomes that emerged in Libya, and are evidenced in this thesis, informing Security Council decisions (United Nations Security Council, 2011a), R2P as amended by the General Assembly (United

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[1]   See Chapters 5 and 6.
[2]   See Chapters 7 and 8.

Nations General Assembly, 2005) may survive as a restraint against abusive humanitarian intervention.

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Abbreviations Used in the Text

BRIC   Brazil, Russia, India, China.

CE   Common era.

CW   Chemical weapons.

DUP   Democratic Unionist Party (Northern Ireland, UK).

EEC   European Economic Community.

EU   European Union.

FRY   Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

FSA   Free Syrian Army.

ICC   International Criminal Court.

ICISS   International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty.

IR   International relations.

IS   Islamic State, also known as Da'esh.

ISIS   Islamic State in Syria.

KLA   Kosovo Liberation Army.

LIFG   Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.

LNA   Libyan National Army.

MENA   Middle East and north Africa.

MP   Member of Parliament (UK).

NATO   North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

NFZ   No-fly zone.

NGO   Non-governmental organisation.

P3   Permanent three Western members of the United Nations Security Council: France, UK, USA.

P5   Permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council: China, France, Russia, UK, USA.

R2P   Responsibility to protect.

RPF   Rwandan Patriotic Front.

RtoP   Responsibility to protect.

SNC   Syrian National Council.

TNC   Transitional National Council (Libya).

UN   United Nations.

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

UNPROFOR United Nations Protection Force.

UNRWA United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the
Near East.

UNSC United Nations Security Council.

USG   United States government.

VCT   Vindiciae contra tyrannos.

WMD Weapons of mass destruction.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the aims, methods, literature, and data studied for this thesis, the theoretical foundations, and a summary of the thesis structure. The aim of the thesis was to investigate and critique coercive humanitarian intervention, utilising case studies of parliamentary debates relating to Libya and Syria during a period of conflict, to examine arguments for and against such intervention, in the context of political debate and reported outcomes of intervention or non-intervention. The problem addressed by the thesis is the contradiction between the protective aims expressed by supporters of humanitarian intervention and the harmful outcomes of interventions premised upon humanitarian objectives.

The thesis built on work that identified the need for humanitarian intervention (Smith and Light, 2001; Kaldor, 2012; Weiss, 2018); that acknowledged flaws, sometimes extremely grave, in its implementation (Hobson, 2016; Sensini, 2016; Hehir, 2019; Cunliffe, 2020); that considered it pernicious and possibly irredeemable (Wertheim, 2010; Cunliffe, 2020); and that suggested solutions which scholars have contended may enable successful humanitarian intervention (Bellamy, 2004; Kaldor, 2019; Bellinger, 2020). The thesis examined the viability of proposed solutions, and critiqued the recently created doctrine of responsibility to protect (R2P or RtoP) (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001), arguing that it may be inherently flawed as a result of its construction as a solution to obstacles to humanitarian intervention, rather than as a solution to mass atrocity crime.

The methodology was a pragmatist (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020) thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of all debates containing substantial references to Libya and Syria in the British House of Commons and Westminster Hall (UK Parliament, 2017) from May 2010 to January 2014,[1] a period during which major conflicts developed in both states. The analysis provided insights into the strong support of the British government and opposition, apart from a few backbenchers (UK Parliament, 2011), for British military action in support of revolution in Libya, and their cautious support for revolution by means other than direct military intervention in Syria, in what appeared to be very similar circumstances in both states (Zifcak, 2012). The thesis includes an assessment of the R2P concept, said by United

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[1]   Appendices III and IV.

Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (2012) to have been applied to the conflicts in Libya and Syria.

Thematic analysis was selected as the most effective established methodology for identifying themes in a substantial body of text and providing a means of coding them for measurement, comparison, and tracking over time, while recognising that the necessary interpretation introduces a margin of error. The method entailed, in brief: (1) labelling the text with codes, each identifying a theme found in the text and judged relevant to the research topic; (2) counting and ranking the themes to create data on dominant themes and trends; and (3) using the theme data as a guide to further, contextualised analysis of the debate content rooted in theoretical and historical literature and contemporary reportage. The findings of the thematic analysis are presented and discussed in Chapters 5 to 9.

The investigation of how arguments and policies developed, or did not develop, over the years studied, provided indications of insincerity in the British government's claimed humanitarian motives for intervention, as did the government's attitude to refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict.[1] The examination in context of the evidence in Chapters 5 to 9 revealed by the thematic analysis informed a critique of the modern principles of humanitarian intervention, the doctrine of the R2P, the liberal foundations of these principles and doctrine, realist opposition to them, constructivist insights, and postcolonial perspectives.

This thesis draws on theories of international relations (IR) to underpin the critique of humanitarian intervention. Liberalism (Burchill, 2009) was the predominant political philosophy reflected in arguments in support of humanitarian intervention by Members of Parliament (MPs) in the debates analysed for this work, in themes such as promoting liberal values, supporting democracy, aiding campaigners for democracy, and opposing repressive governments. For example, 182 occurrences of the theme of supporting democracy were identified in the Libya debates, and 132 in the Syria debates.[2] Themes more typical of realist theory (Donnelly, 2009), such as national security, the national interest, stability, and access to natural resources, sometimes complemented the liberal arguments for intervention,[3] and were sometimes posed against them as reasons for caution in, or abstention from,

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[1]   See Chapter 8.
[2]   See Appendix I for ranked lists of themes.
[3]   Appendix III: paras 1116, 2257, 2524; Appendix IV: para 15004.

intervention.[1] This thesis utilises liberal IR theory (Burchill, 2009) and realist IR theory (Donnelly, 2009) to explain and challenge liberal and realist arguments for and against intervention, and attempts to assess the relative merits of each theoretical stance towards humanitarian intervention. The analysis and commentary also draw upon constructivist (Phillips, 2007) and postcolonialist (Young, 2003) viewpoints to acknowledge the social construction of political discourse and the legacies of imperialism in the modern era.

The definition of humanitarian intervention followed in this thesis is that drawn from their review of literature by historians Brendan Simms and D.J.B. Trim (2011: 4):

A humanitarian intervention is:

1. Carried out in, or intended to affect events within, a foreign state or states - it is an intervention;
2. Aimed at the government of the target state(s), or imposed on and only accepted reluctantly by it/them - it is thus coercive, albeit not necessarily involving use of force;
3. Intended, at least nominally (and at least to some extent actually), to avert, halt, and/or prevent recurrence of large-scale mortality, mass atrocities, egregious human rights abuses or other widespread suffering caused by the action or deliberate inaction of the de facto authorities in the target state(s).

This definition is broad enough to include intervention by non-state actors, but this thesis is focused on action conducted or directed by states, for example by the provision of funding or training to rebels. State action, especially by powerful states against those much weaker than themselves, has the greatest potential impact, due to the extent of the coercive instruments available to powerful states, and therefore the greatest risk of harm if misused. The actual intentions of politicians proposing intervention are unverifiable, therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, *actually* was interpreted as *credibly*.

The data analysed for this thesis comprised British political discussion of two theatres of conflict during the same period, Libya and Syria, from late 2010 to early 2014. In both cases the British government and official opposition favoured regime

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[1] Appendix III: para 3180; Appendix IV: paras 4901, 12005, 13160.

change - the overthrow of the incumbent leaders by a revolutionary process.[1] This circumstance presented an opportunity to study and compare the cases for and against intervention in each conflict presented by British politicians, and thus to examine the use of humanitarian arguments, and the viability of humanitarian intervention, including the recently established doctrine of the R2P (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001).

The political arguments and commentary pertaining to intervention in Libya and Syria, and the contrasting approaches by British politicians to these two countries and towards other states in similar circumstances, provided a substantial body of evidence pertaining to motives, strategy, and outcomes. The selection of House of Commons debates with substantial reference to Libya or Syria within the chosen time parameters provided a dataset from the primary British public arena for political debate, with a consistent data category and a clear data boundary.

Literature on humanitarian intervention reviewed for this thesis included works tracing the history of invasive military action presented as humanitarian (Harris, 2007; Tanaka, 2009; Simms and Trim, 2011; Sowerby, 2013), its emergence as an element of liberal philosophy (Mill, 1987), and its appearance as a characteristic of Western imperialism (Sillery, 1971; Mill, 1987; Bricmont, 2006; Heartfield, 2011). Works analysing and critiquing the contemporary principles and recent practise of humanitarian intervention from liberal (Bellamy, 2004; Hehir, 2010; Lynch, 2011; Kaldor, 2012) and realist (Wertheim, 2010; Fiott, 2013; Mearsheimer, 2018; Cunliffe, 2020) perspectives were summarised and discussed. The switch to a more ethical stance in foreign policy claimed by the British Labour government elected in 1997 was reviewed (Brown, 2001; Smith and Light, 2001; Short, 2005; Fiott, 2013), as was the modern humanitarian doctrine of the R2P (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001; Hehir, 2010; Zifcak, 2012; Carati, 2016; Smith, 2018; Dunford and Neu, 2019a; Cunliffe, 2020).

The review of literature concluded with works covering Libya and Syria and the conflicts in those countries that began during a series of revolts dubbed the Arab Spring and which prompted forms of non-consensual intervention by the UK and its allies during the period studied for this thesis (Seale, 2011; Atlas, 2012; Kaldor, 2012; Edmunds, 2014; St. John, 2014; Kuperman, 2015; Leech and Gaskarth, 2015; McCormack, 2016; Malito, 2017). The section on Libya and Syria includes a brief

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[1]   See sections on Regime Change in Libya in Chapter 5 and Regime Change in Syria in Chapter 6.

discussion in historical context of the Arab Spring metaphor and its Arab (Benoist-Méchin, 1959; Antonius, 2001; Krauthammer, 2005; Shields, 2008) and European (Sperber, 2005) antecedents, and a hypothesis that the Arab Spring of 2010-11 marked the demise of postcolonialism (Dabashi, 2012).

In accordance with the principles of critical inquiry (Crotty, 1998; Cannella and Lincoln, 2012), the analysis in this thesis of the range of arguments around intervention in Libya and Syria aimed to include some insights into the instrumentalities of power employing the rhetoric of humanitarianism in the promotion of military intervention by the British state. It is hoped that this thesis may provide some guidance towards foreign policy actions that are humanitarian in outcome and contribute to human emancipation, via a better, fuller understanding of the contexts, intentions, and outcomes associated with actions proposed as humanitarian. A genuinely humanitarian approach to foreign policy should be achievable without compromising national security, and in most conceivable scenarios it seems probable that a more humanitarian approach to global governance would have international security at its heart.

Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 provided a summary of the aims and methods of the research, and outlined the structure of the thesis. It specified the aim of the thesis to investigate and critique coercive humanitarian intervention, the problem of contradiction between protective aims and harmful outcomes from humanitarian intervention (Wertheim, 2010; Hehir, 2019; Cunliffe, 2020), and the methodology of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006) of parliamentary debates on Libya and Syria to examine arguments for and against such intervention in context. An overview of the theoretical basis and academic work built upon by the thesis was provided.

Chapter 2 explains the theoretical basis for the thesis. It covers the principal theories of international relations applied in the thesis to the subject of international humanitarian intervention, which are liberalism and realism, and the additional perspectives provided by constructivism and postcolonialism. It argues that liberalism is the main force underlying the construction and promotion of humanitarian military intervention (Rawls, 1999; Smith and Light, 2001; Kaldor, 2003; MacMillan, 2007), and realism is a productive source of cogent critiques of such action (Wertheim, 2010; Mearsheimer, 2018; Walt, 2018). Constructivism

provides insights into the social construction of humanitarian intervention (Fierke, 2016), and postcolonialism into the controlling and exploitative behaviour of intervening states towards those targeted for intervention (Young, 2003).

Chapter 3 provides a review of literature on humanitarian intervention in historical and contemporary contexts. It begins with a history of the early years of European humanitarian intervention prior to the establishment of the United Nations (Sillery, 1971; Mill, 1987; Bricmont, 2006; Harris, 2007; Hurrell, 2007; Heartfield, 2011; Simms and Trim, 2011; Sowerby, 2013). This concludes with a discussion of ethical foreign policy (Brown, 2001; Smith and Light, 2001; Short, 2005; Fiott, 2013), followed by an overview of the humanitarian crises most frequently cited as precedents in favour of humanitarian intervention in the debates studied for this thesis: genocidal events in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia (Wertheim, 2010; Kaldor, 2012; Cunliffe, 2020). The R2P doctrine is discussed (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001; Hehir, 2010; Cunliffe, 2020), and the chapter concludes with a critical summary of recent literature on humanitarian intervention focussed on Libya and Syria (Dabashi, 2012; Dostal, 2014; Edmunds, 2014; Gaskarth, 2014; Kilcullen and Rosenblatt, 2014; Kuperman, 2015; Leech and Gaskarth, 2015; Puri, 2016; Sensini, 2016; Smith, 2019; Cunliffe, 2020). The body of work on these subjects is too expansive to permit a complete review of its content, so the approach was to seek a range of differing perspectives to give a comprehensive and up to date sample of relevant academic analysis.

Chapter 4 explains the choice of pragmatist thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020) as the methodology for the research, and describes how it was applied in this thesis, with a theoretical foundation of critical inquiry (Crotty, 1998; Cannella and Lincoln, 2012; Shields, 2012; Thompson, 2017). The choice of dataset, and how it was compiled and analysed (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005; Braun and Clarke, 2006), are explained. The case is argued for a pragmatist paradigm, and thence for a predominantly qualitative mixed methods approach with a quantitative element (Cochran, 2012; Morgan, 2014). The benefits and limitations of the pragmatist application of the thematic analysis utilised in this thesis are discussed.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of thematic analysis of the Libya debates. It features critical discussion of the prominent themes and the narratives they reveal in the data. The rhetorical devices are detailed whereby the British government, supported by the parliamentary opposition, misrepresented Security Council

Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b), a humanitarian measure, to give it the appearance of a legal authority for the imposition of regime change by military force, supporting the argument that liberal humanitarian intervention has an inherent bias towards violent regime change (Cunliffe, 2020). Evidence is presented of ulterior motives, a questionable humanitarian case for war, and a lack of attention to negative outcomes which appeared inconsistent with humanitarian aims.

Chapter 6 covers thematic analysis of the Syria debates. It includes evidence that a rigid commitment to regime change, announced simultaneously with victory over Gaddafi in Libya, was not matched by adequate force to defeat Assad, and some of the reasons for this hesitancy. Tracking the dominant themes through the debates reveals a choice of strategies by the British government, usually supported by the opposition, apparently deficient in potential for success, and omission to amend these strategies in the face of failure, except to weaken them by, for example, encouraging rebel forces to fight each other as well as the Syrian government. Evidence is discussed in the chapter of a strong focus by MPs on humanitarian messaging around financial aid to refugees, and an inflexible policy of regime change by escalation likely to have extended the conflict and increased human suffering, challenging the proposition that better British government knowledge of the intractable and atrocity-based nature of contemporary wars would lead to better humanitarian outcomes (Kaldor, 2012). The remarkable case is analysed of the defeat in the Commons in 2013 of government and opposition motions on bombing Syria in response to alleged chemical weapons (CW) use by Syrian state forces (Gaskarth, 2016). The chapter concludes with a brief reference to a contradiction between the British government's focus on humanitarian messaging and its refusal in 2014 to join a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) scheme to relocate especially vulnerable refugees, discussed more fully in Chapter 8.

Chapter 7 analyses differences and similarities between the dominant themes identified in the Libya and Syria debates, augmenting the analyses in the previous two chapters. The method by which differences in theme counts and a rough indicator of their significance were calculated is explained. The findings include evidence of the dominance of humanitarian themes in the approaches to both conflicts by the British government and parliamentary opposition leadership, and of contradictions in policy presentation and reactions to outcomes that cast doubt on the humanitarian motivation of British policy (Cunliffe, 2020). Thematic analysis indicates opportunism in the choice of humanitarian themes to justify support for the

pursuit of violent regime change in Libya and Syria, the primary objective of British policy during the period studied, regardless of inhumane outcomes. Discussion of overall differences in predominant themes between the two sets of debates is followed by a brief presentation of graphically visualised variations over time.

Chapter 8 provides a critical examination of evidence emerging from the analysis in the previous chapters which pertains to the credibility of humanitarian military intervention. This includes a critical discussion of ulterior motives and contradictions in British government and parliamentary opposition arguments which raise significant questions about their presentation of warfare as a humanitarian act. The role of double standards in undermining the credibility of Britain's ethical stance on humanitarian intervention (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015) is discussed, and a notable contradiction is investigated between the British government's emphasis on its humanitarian generosity to refugees and its refusal in 2014 to join a UNHCR scheme to relocate extremely vulnerable refugees, such as victims of sexual violence and orphaned children, from the Middle East to Western states.

Chapter 9 draws overall conclusions from analysis of the data and specifies the contribution to knowledge of this thesis. The evidence of the analysis indicates, alongside genuine humanitarian sentiment, the cynical deployment of humanitarian rhetoric for ulterior strategic objectives by the British government, aided by the support of leading opposition politicians, and contributing to severe humanitarian harm (Gilpin, 1983; Fukuyama, 1992; Bricmont, 2006; Lynch, 2011; Kaldor, 2012; Dietrich, 2013; Morris, 2013; Sensini, 2016; Mearsheimer, 2018; Dunford and Neu, 2019a; Kaldor, 2019). The chapter ends by proposing some directions for further research suggested by the findings of this thesis, notably research into the human rights basis for humanitarian intervention based on an investigation into whose rights have been empirically served by interventions posited as humanitarian, building on Robinson's (2013) work on polyarchy and Perugini and Gordon's (2015) case study of Israel and Palestine, but excluding the assumption that it is the application, not the construction, of human rights that is the fundamental problem (Cunliffe, 2020).

This chapter outlined the purpose, methodology, academic context, and theoretical perspective of this thesis, and a guide to the structure of the thesis. The following chapter explains the theoretical foundations for the research. The principal theories upon which the investigation was based are liberalism, a prime driver of Western humanitarian intervention, and realism, a productive source of criticism of

interventions posited as humanitarian, yet inhumane in practice. The analysis is given additional depth by the inclusion of insights from constructivism and postcolonialism.

Chapter 2: International Relations Theory and Humanitarian Intervention

This chapter introduces the theories of international relations utilised in this thesis and explains their relevance to the research topic. The principal theories are liberalism and realism. References to constructivism and postcolonialism have been included as additional perspectives, with the intention of providing a more complete analysis and commentary. Liberalism supports arguments in favour of humanitarian intervention based on moral imperatives and a belief that the spread of liberal governance will bring an end to grievous human rights abuses and war within and between liberal democracies (Hurrell, 2007). Realism interprets the actions of states as driven by a calculus of national interest (Dyer, 1997), so that war is justified by a material calculation that the benefits outweigh the costs, rather than idealistic impulses inspired by ideological values (Gilpin, 2005). Realism tends to oppose humanitarian intervention as an infringement of state sovereignty, perceived to be the essential foundation of international peace and security in an anarchic - ungoverned by a superior authority - system of nation-states (Cunliffe, 2020).

Constructivism emphasises the role of socially constructed concepts, such as perceptions of national character and aspirations for a better world, on policy and decision making in international relations (Fierke, 2016). Postcolonialist critiques seek to foreground the perspectives of the formerly colonised peoples of the major Western-led empires of recent centuries, particularly those decolonised in the twentieth century. Postcolonialism generally aims to support the emancipation of peoples from forms of exploitation and control retained or imposed by former imperial powers such as Britain and France, and by former colonies where European settlers displaced native populations to create new Western powers, notably the USA (Wilkens, 2017), after the formal dissolution of those empires.

Liberalism

Liberalism is the strand of international relations theory most frequently referenced in the debates studied for this work by MPs arguing in favour of military intervention, with a predominance of themes such as promoting liberal values, supporting democracy, and freeing people and trade from repressive government, over more realist concerns such as national interests in security and access to valuable

resources.[1] Tory MP Robert Halfon made a case for war based on liberal values in a Commons debate on 17 March 2011 on military intervention in Libya, summarising his approach as "muscular enlightenment."[2] He entitled his stance "neoconservative", which he defined as liberalism shaped by reality, but opposed to realism. He attributed to realists the view that: "You can't just drop democracy from a B52 bomber",[3] and rejected it as a negative misrepresentation. In November 2011, when Gaddafi had been killed and a new Libyan government installed with the support of the British government, Halfon changed his assessment of the alleged realist view. Realists, he said, had contended "that democracy cannot be dropped from a B-52 bomber, but actually it can".[4]

Halfon made this claim less than a month after regime change in Libya. Four days after Halfon's speech, *The Telegraph* reported from the capital, Tripoli, that the country was sliding into anarchy due to the absence of an effective government, as the former rebels subjected the civilian population to robbery, extortion, and looting, and fought among themselves. One Tripoli resident (cited in Meo, 2011) remarked that "hundreds" of petty dictators had replaced the overthrown leader.[5]

Halfon judged that the Iraq invasion of 2003 had been beneficial, and that the Blair government's rapprochement with Gaddafi had been a shameful reversal of its Iraq policy.[6] Given the dire human rights situation in Iraq reported in 2011 (Human Rights Watch, 2011), this manifestation of liberalism could be perceived as treating human welfare as less important than the imposition of democratic forms and a free market economy, creating a possible divergence between economic and political liberalism and humanitarian practise.

The rise of liberalism was a feature of the European Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a philosophical movement towards reliance on reason, rather than faith or tradition, for the advancement of knowledge (Burchill, 2009). Liberal philosophers believed that war would be minimised or obsolete in a world of free trade and government controlled by the populace.

Liberals advocated free trade in place of the mercantilist tradition of using military power, funded by trade, to obtain advantages in trade. Free trade offered the

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[1]   See Appendix I for ranked lists of themes.
[2]   Appendix III: para 2178.
[3]   Appendix III: para 2178.
[4]   Appendix III: para 9599.
[5]   See Chapter 8 for outcomes of the Libya intervention.
[6]   Appendix III: para 9601.

prospect of mutual and eventually worldwide economic advantage and growth, rather than the expense and oppression of a violent contest for supremacy. Interdependence and cooperation would build an international community. Thus, a liberal world economy would spread prosperity and peace. Under liberal democracy, the people would see that war was not in their interest and so prevent its occurrence. Ultimately the significance of the nation state, and hence its power in international relations, would wane as the global community developed. These powerful arguments were advanced by philosophers and economists such as Immanuel Kant, David Ricardo, Adam Smith, Thomas Paine, and John Stuart Mill (Burchill, 2009).

The optimistic liberal prognosis rests upon free trade existing between liberal states, upon the efficacy of free trade in creating and distributing prosperity, and upon liberal democracy including the means for populations to prevent war. In the UK, the Prime Minister has the power to go to war using the Royal Prerogative, a remnant of feudal authority that permits action without the consent of Parliament. However, this is constrained by convention and by continuing accountability in Parliament after any war decision (UK Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, 2011). Although there are still illiberal states, and obstacles to free trade, political and economic liberalism had made a huge international advance until at least the final decade of the twentieth century (Gitz and Van Raemdonck, 1997) by when they had become dominant in much of the world.

The collapse of the USSR late in the twentieth century boosted liberal optimism, but some relative retrenchment of liberalism thereafter has provoked pessimistic assessment by liberal analysts. Nascent post-Cold War democracies in eastern Europe have reverted towards a more authoritarian style of governance (Ágh, 2016). Liberal democracy has been displaced in, for example, Thailand and Venezuela. The USA has pursued its campaign against militant Islam in illiberal ways, and liberal state building in Afghanistan and Iraq has failed to produce peaceful democracies sustainable without foreign military occupation (Burchill, 2009).

Karen Smith (2018: 2) has even described the current period as "an illiberal era". The US-led war against anti-Western militant Islam, branded as a "war on terror" by President George W. Bush (2001: n.p.), appears to have illustrated an essential contradiction in liberalism, whereby liberal states have justified illiberal actions by a combination of cultural supremacism - identifying illiberal enemies as uncivilised - and classifying them as an extreme threat (Singh, 2015).

This conundrum, "the illiberal roots of liberalism" (Singh, 2015: 100), has been traced back to western Europe in the nineteenth century, when leading liberal philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill argued for a right of intervention by liberal, civilised states to impose liberal governance upon uncivilised others by military force. Liberals supposed that this would ultimately result in global peace, because universal liberalism would make war obsolete. Thus, illiberal methods of violent coercion and imposition without the people's consent were justified by the goal of a liberal and consequently peaceful world (Singh, 2015).

The illiberal propagation of liberalism appears to have developed during the decades at the end of the eighteenth century and the start of the next, as liberalism mutated from an ideology of anti-feudalist emancipation (MacMillan, 2007) into an ideology of imperial expansion. The founders of liberalism who pre-dated Kant and Mill, such as Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, and Jeremy Bentham, criticised European empires as illiberal in conception and in their impact on the imperial centres as well as the colonised peoples (Pitts, 2005).

When liberalism moves beyond emancipatory struggle it risks becoming a conservative defence of elites empowered by liberal democracy (MacMillan, 2007), as liberals move from rebellion to guardianship of the status quo. Aggressive international promotion of liberalism may also be counter-productive, by provoking defensive reactions in targeted states, for example centralised authoritarian control and increased defence spending. The expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance towards the borders of Russia, while helping to secure liberal governance across Europe, may have had this effect on Russia and Russian allies such as Belarus (Larsen, 2019). Preparing for and engaging in warfare tends to weaken liberal values in society. Liberals tend to see aggressive warfare as irrational, and redundant in a globalised liberal economy as a means of increasing national wealth. However, they consider warfare acceptable in national or collective self-defence and to protect human rights (MacMillan, 2007).

Authoritarianism in the twenty-first century has prompted liberal concern about a growing gap between democratic form and function increasing potential for conflict (Ágh, 2016). However, there has now been peace between most liberal democracies of the world for long enough to render credible, at least, the contention of liberal IR theorist John Rawls (1999) that liberal democratic states do not go to war with each other. Rawls (1999) dated the commencement of the liberal peace to 1800, although arguably no states were fully qualified as liberal democracies in 1800

or for many years afterwards, taking into account policies such as slavery (Williams, 1994), and the exclusion of women from the electoral franchise (Boussahba-Bravard, 2008). Arguably, therefore, the liberal peace has endured considerably longer than the democratic peace.

For Rawls, democratic peace was not due to a moral or cultural superiority of democratic peoples, but to the absence of reasons for war between democracies. Peace between nations is not, however, historically unique to liberal democracies. There have been longer periods of peace among non-liberal countries than the current liberal democratic peace, for example the pre-colonial Asian states system dominated by China, where there were only two wars in nearly 500 years (Kang, 2013), and the peace imposed by the Roman empire (Audard, 2006).

Israel and Lebanon have gone to war (Bottoms, 2009), but this could be discounted as evidence of inter-democracy warfare by defining either or both of the combatants as undemocratic - Israel for excluding Palestinians from the franchise in areas it occupies but which it has not annexed (Brownfeld, 2002), and Lebanon for its sectarian constitution, powerful extra-legal militias, and susceptibility to illiberal foreign influence (Makhzoumi, 2010). Germany was a liberal democracy prior to its war with European democracies in 1939-45, but before the war it had changed into a dictatorship (Shirer, 1991), a particularly dramatic example of the liberal democratic "end of history" hypothesised by Francis Fukuyama (1992: xi) being reversible. Therefore, while these sparse examples of war between states that are or have been to some extent democratic do not disprove the theory of democratic peace, they do indicate that a constant movement towards democracy cannot be taken for granted.

One of the strongest examples of an international relationship built on the principles of liberalism is the free trade area in Europe that grew into the European Union (EU). It was designed to prevent a recurrence of the second world war by creating incentives for the principal west European combatants of the second world war to cooperate and integrate rather than compete (Burchill, 2009). Britain's exit from the EU has been interpreted as a retreat from liberalism to nationalism, and an escape from European regional insularity and over-regulation to a more liberal global engagement (Virdee and McGeever, 2018), with the latter probably a more popular and viable option (Gaskarth, 2014).

Realist theories based on balance of power dominated international relations

during the Cold War, but liberalism was revived by the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent rapid spread of democratic regimes in the 1990s (Burchill, 2009). Francis Fukuyama (1992), a former senior policy official at the US Department of State, gave this renaissance an assertive voice, claiming a novel international consensus on the legitimacy of government by liberal democracy. His contention, condensed in the phrase "the end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992: iii), was that liberal democratic governance manifested the political evolutionary peak of humanity, and that history could therefore be said to have ended in that part of the world governed by such regimes. History in this context did not mean the sequential occurrence of events, but was narrowly defined: "history understood as a single, coherent, evolutionary process, when taking into account the experience of all peoples in all times" (Fukuyama, 1992: xii).

It could be argued that this is a form of confirmation bias (Bordens and Abbott, 2018). If one looks at human history from a liberal perspective - as mankind steadily evolving towards the liberal ideal - one is likely to see the culmination of history as universal liberalism. If it is accepted that evolution may go in unpredictable directions, that "all times" (Fukuyama, 1992: xii) includes the unknowable future, and that the immense resource consumption, pollution generation, and wealth inequality of globalised liberal capitalism may not be sustainable for very long (O'Connor, 1994), Fukuyama's (1992) hypothesis that history will end with liberalism does not appear substantiated.

"The end of history and the last man" (Fukuyama, 1992: iii) was not, however, a work of crude triumphalism. The author was concerned that the completion of history in the form of liberal democracy would remove the rewards of its pursuit. For the last man, life at the end of history would be devoid of emancipatory struggle and, therefore, stripped of meaning. "Human life … seems to require injustice, for the struggle against injustice is what calls forth what is highest in man" (Fukuyama, 1992: 311). This being so, he feared that the triumph of liberalism might be not just tedious, but dehumanising, reducing people to the status of contented animals with no higher purpose than production, consumption, and procreation. In their need to regain their lost humanity, they might then be "ready to drag the world back into history with all its wars, injustice, and revolution" (Fukuyama, 1992: 312).

It could be argued that such atavism is already occurring in the guise of humanitarian military intervention. Alternatively, the fear of dehumanisation due to the loss of liberal campaigning opportunities may be more an expression of Western

liberal attitudes than an immutable fact of human nature. It may be that to a man so devoted to liberal principles that he became a policy planner in the administration of the world's greatest liberal power, as Fukuyama (1992) did, might feel his life bereft of meaning if that function became redundant. However, it is possible that many of the world's population share neither such a passion for liberalism nor such a paucity of options for personal fulfilment. Contented majorities may choose to restrain revolutionaries rather than indulge and celebrate them.

Fukuyama (1992) suggested that human impulses for struggle and triumph could best be satisfied by entrepreneurial capitalism, with its benefits of wealth, jobs, and technology, and, crucially, its potential to keep those who are most powerfully driven by such motives out of politics and government, where they might be prone to do more harm than good. However, he judged that politics would still offer psychological rewards greater than business and would, therefore, attract people inspired to fight for liberal values.

The founders of US democracy predicted the risk of unregulated liberal militancy and designed the constitution to moderate the conduct of government by preventing arbitrary individual rule in the USA. They imposed less restraint on US presidential foreign policy choices, and so it is in this field that presidents have often sought to satisfy their ambitions and establish a legacy (Fukuyama, 1992). Rather than seeing this as a constitutional flaw, Fukuyama (1992) saw it as beneficial to liberal democratic polities that leaders should have their vainglorious impulses diverted elsewhere, and fortunate that developing countries were available for this purpose, but he acknowledged that beneficial outcomes for the target states were uncertain.

From this perspective, humanitarian military intervention could, for interveners restricted to long distance bombardment against weak target states, become a safe outlet for a reforming zeal that is likely to continue inspiring people to seek power in liberal democracies. Moralising campaigns to save victims of tyranny in poor countries could divert such energies overseas, leaving the domestic population in a condition of dull but comfortable order and prosperity, enlivened by news of military prowess abroad and inspired by the nation's global leadership.

Fukuyama (1992) identified theocracy and nationalism as potential remaining obstacles to global acceptance of liberalism, following the terminal defeat of communism, socialism, and fascism, but took an optimistic view of their potency. He considered theocracy unlikely to spread, and nationalism a minor threat that was

reconcilable with liberalism because its primary objective was the emancipation of nations, not the defeat of liberalism.

The contention that there are no surviving serious alternatives to liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992) is challenged by the durability of the Chinese Communist Party, the retreat of leading liberal states from liberal principles under the threat of international terrorism (Singh, 2015), and the regression of some recent democracies from nascent liberalism to illiberal autocracy, e.g. Russia (Horvath, 2016) and Turkey (Aydın-Düzgit, 2020). Such examples also challenge assumptions that a liberal economy necessarily generates a liberal society or that a democratic constitution perpetuates democratic rights and liberal governance.

Scott Burchill (2009) has suggested that Confucianism, understood as a system of hierarchical organisation focussed more on cooperation than competition, may emerge as a potential alternative to liberalism in the Asian regions where it has traditional roots. However, in view of the spread of liberal economies across Asia, perhaps the Confucian tradition is more likely to be an influence on the development of Asian liberalism than a complete alternative.

In contrast to the more optimistic proponents of liberalism, John Rawls (1999: 3) attempted to design a positive but pragmatic model for relations between liberal and illiberal states, "The Law of Peoples". Rawls's (1999) work is relevant to conflict between liberal and authoritarian states because he attempted to adapt liberal idealism to the reality of a world in which not all states are liberal or democratic, but may be reasonably well-governed. States may have illiberal but still "decent" (Rawls, 1999: 3) societies, fit to be admitted to the category of "well-ordered peoples" (Rawls, 1999: 4) which includes liberal democracies.

An implication could be drawn that peoples with bad leaders are not decent, which appears unjust when such leaders lack popular consent, and carries an inherent justification for the type of economic sanctions, and military actions such as infrastructure bombing, which are likely to harm many ordinary people in target states. However, it is important to distinguish between a people perceived as a unit and coterminous with a state, and people as sub-national communities and individuals living in a state. Rawls's subject was the former. He characterised his vision as utopian, but aimed for a "realistic Utopia" (Rawls, 1999: 4), which he intended to be an ambitious ideal, but one towards which it may be reasonable to anticipate substantial progress with good will and appropriate policy.

Rawls (1999: 4) proposed five categories of peoples - societies organised as nations - divided into two groups. The first group comprised two categories: "reasonable liberal peoples", the liberal democratic ideal, and "decent peoples" which are not liberal democracies but have effective societal consultative hierarchies influencing their governance. These categories were termed "well-ordered peoples", which thereby qualify for admittance to "a Society of Peoples". Rawls eschewed a finite definition of national decency, to avoid closing the category to any he had not yet thought to include.

The second group comprised three inadmissible categories: "outlaw states" (1999: 4), "societies burdened by unfavorable conditions" (1999: 4), and "benevolent absolutisms" (1999: 4). However, these categories were not mutually exclusive, and the definitions were outlines rather than operational models. It might, in practise, be difficult to distinguish between, for example, a decent hierarchical society and a benevolent absolutist hierarchical society. Assumption of the right to judge could be taken to imply an assumption of cultural supremacy.

The language of Rawls's classification of states has been criticised for a colonialist resonance, a suggestion of the civilised races judging who is fit to be admitted to their company (Burchill, 2009). Unfavourable conditions, such as borders cutting across territories of ethnic groups, were often imposed by European empires on their colonies (Said, 1994). Relegation of such states by a liberal-decent coalition, including the former European imperial powers, to a secondary status, worthy of aid but excluded from world leadership, could be seen as a way of perpetuating a quasi-imperial relationship.

However, while the colonialist impression cannot be entirely explained away, Rawls's (1999: 3) conception of international society was quite specific: it was not any society of people, but one conforming to a "Law of Peoples" determining just relations between them. Rawls (1999) made an impressive attempt to create a blueprint or framework upon which such a law could be developed. The question of who is fit to legislate and invigilate the laws and membership of the Society could arguably be answered by the legitimacy of democracy, but that would deny decent peoples with undemocratic regimes the equality Rawls sought for them. A more inclusive debate would be needed to prevent the impression that dominant liberal peoples had simply assumed the right to organise the governance of the society of liberal and decent illiberal peoples by virtue of their own approval of their own system of governance.

The relatively small part of *The Law of Peoples* that covers humanitarian intervention appears consistent with the general aim of the work to present a realistic and reasonable grounding for practical progress. Rawls (1999: 37) specified a general duty of non-intervention, but added that it "will obviously have to be qualified in the general case of outlaw states and grave violations of human rights." This suggests that the right to attack outlaw states might not be limited to remedying human rights violations, so that the main practical benefit of membership of the Society of Peoples would be a mutual non-aggression pact. Such an arrangement might be similar in practise to existing alliances between liberal and illiberal states such as the UK and Saudi Arabia (Aburish, 1997).

Rawls (1999: 37) also proposed an obligation similar to the R2P (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001) - "a duty to assist other peoples living under unfavorable conditions that prevent their having a just or decent political and social regime". Fulfilment of the duty could include economic assistance and governance support, but could also extend to economic sanctions and military intervention to protect human rights.

Rawls's (1999) international legal framework would determine how well-ordered peoples must treat the other classes of peoples, not just act among themselves. They would not have a license to intervene in outlaw states similar to the right claimed by John Stuart Mill (1987) in 1859 for civilised states to intervene in the lands of peoples they perceived to be uncivilised. However, the right of legal and decent peoples to intervene in the affairs of others was loosely defined by Rawls (1999), and appears to offer little concrete protection against abusive or imprudent interventions.

The most promising feature of Rawls's (1999) proposed framework from the perspective of seeking to avoid destructive humanitarian interventions is perhaps the author's treatment of coercive intervention as highly exceptional. His view of intervention also focused on outcomes, as it would be authorised for the purpose of improving the target state, to enable it to reach the minimum standards of liberal or decent peoples (Wenar, 2006). In theory this might lead to less harm than authorising intervention on a test of good intentions (Bellamy, 2004).

Rawls has been criticised for seeking too little, including a neglect of domestic justice in favour of international justice, and too much - seeking to apply liberalism universally (Audard, 2006). This may place him in a moderate central position.

However, it could be argued that his liberal vision is simply more hesitant and not more realistic than the most assertive manifestations of cosmopolitanism such as the "muscular liberalism" of Chris Bryant,[1] David Cameron,[2] and Duncan Hames,[3] and Robert Halfon's "muscular enlightenment".[4]

The duty of assistance envisaged by Rawls (1999) might risk producing more intractable conflicts and failed states. The duty to pursue an improved outcome could require continued intervention against an abusive leader, while the subsidiary duties of care to civilians and soldiers, as they are excluded from governance decisions in outlaw states and therefore not guilty, might impede a military solution. Destroying the leadership could risk empowering bad actors to occupy a power vacuum, as happened in Libya after the 2011 NATO intervention.[5] Rawls's (1999) prohibition of paternalism could in practise be indistinguishable from avoidance of responsibility. He made no provision to hold interveners accountable for destructive interventions.

The character of wars in the twenty-first century has been identified by Mary Kaldor (2012) as an obstacle to the success of humanitarian military intervention. A cautious, restrained intervention of the type proposed by Rawls (1999) might prove as damaging, in the scenario Kaldor described, as a full-strength invasion and occupation. Kaldor's (2012: 2) "new wars" hypothesis was not presented as a complete theory of modern warfare, but offered important insights into the conflicts in Libya and Syria analysed in this thesis. Kaldor's (2012) main argument was not that the features of modern conflicts are entirely novel. The novelty lay mainly in the predominance of a particular type of warfare in recent decades - one that is rendered intractable both by self-sustaining dynamics and by the failure of the international community to recognise and respond appropriately to this type of war.

The features Kaldor (2012) ascribed to contemporary warfare include a preference for aerial bombardment with guided weapons by the wealthy powerful states that can afford them, motivated by risk aversion. However, the main characteristics she has identified apply to belligerent factions in weak and failing states, and they are societal rather than technological. Her fundamental analysis is that these wars resemble an anti-cosmopolitan counter-revolution driven by residual

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[1]   Appendix III: para 216.
[2]   Appendix III: para 218.
[3]   Appendix III: para 513.
[4]   Appendix III: para 2167.
[5]   Appendix III: para 16195.

and resurgent ethnic, sectarian, and national identities that cosmopolitan optimists envisage fading away into a liberal global society.

State weakness has facilitated such warfare (Kaldor, 2012), suggesting that it is likely to be exacerbated and extended by economic sanctions, aid to insurgents, and coercive military action by external actors - the instruments of humanitarian intervention. The weakness of states in the poorer regions of Africa and Asia, where this type of war has proliferated, is partly a product of the failure of continual Western humanitarian intervention, in the form of development aid, to generate prosperity and reduce inequality (Kaldor, 2012). The extent to which developing country governments may become dependent on foreign aid (Rist, 2010), and the attachment of conditions to funding (Lang, 2020), challenge the perception of aid as consensual and voluntary (Stiglitz, 2002).

Whereas in the past revolutionary forces have tried to recruit popular support by providing good governance, the modern tendency is to rely on identity to gain control of the population (Kaldor, 2012). Ethnic cleansing is the basic strategy, war crimes are the essential tactics, and fighters rely mainly on light conventional weapons. Rival ethnic militias may cooperate in ethnic cleansing for mutual benefit, carving out territories where each militia is empowered by its community's fear of others. Combatants also cooperate in commercial crime, for example government soldiers and rebels shared opportunities to loot towns in Sierra Leone (Kaldor, 2012).

This type of war has presented a particular challenge to a model of humanitarian intervention reliant upon armed militias as its principal force for regime change from tyranny to liberal democracy. Kaldor (2012) argued that the greatest failing of the international community when intervening in wars has been to overlook the advantages to combatants of avoiding peace.

The solution Kaldor (2012) has proposed relies on the spread of liberal values across the war zone and a change of international intervention paradigm from peacekeeping and regime change to humanitarian policing. As she has acknowledged, this raises difficult issues of practicality and legitimacy which need to be addressed to build a new model of humanitarian intervention. For example, there is the problem of how an international police force can be established with a legal framework and administrative structure to hold it accountable, and a constitutional framework to specify and limit its powers, without a legitimate global government. Without such arrangements, it seems likely that the only form of

legitimacy possible is that arbitrarily awarded to itself and its allies by a dominant global power, such as the USA (Wertheim, 2010). The capacity of the police force for humanitarian action would then be limited by contrary national interests (Cunliffe, 2020) and the absence of internationally acceptable legitimacy and accountability.

Kaldor (2012) opposed the creation of a world government, and appeared to rely on the development of international civil society to manage global humanitarian policing, without the constitutional authority and control applied to police in liberal states. She interpreted the "Arab Spring" (Kaldor, 2012: 79), a series of popular uprisings that spread through the Arab states of the Middle East and north Africa from December 2010 through 2011 (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015), as a powerful manifestation of international civil society. In her analysis, the Arab Spring was a spontaneous liberal revolution unpolluted by biases of sect or nation, and the Libya intervention of 2011 was an exemplar of international action to prevent genocide inspired by the cosmopolitan liberal values of international civil society (Kaldor, 2012). These perceptions may be considered indicative of a liberal inclination to overlay reality with an optimistic veneer. The ineffectiveness of mass international demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq in 2003 may be an illustration of the weakness of international civil society in influencing state policy decisions (Hehir, 2019).

A historical precedent for an international police force could be the imperial police of the British Empire, but Kaldor (2012) condemned the imperialistic attitudes of representatives of international organisations, and noted that the ethnic cleansing campaigns of modern wars resemble the colonial counter-insurgency methods of Western empires. Pending a viable framework for an international humanitarian police force, the change proposed by Kaldor (2012) from peacekeeping to policing may amount to little more than rebranding, similar to describing regime change as "democratic transition",[1] a euphemism employed by MPs in the debates on Libya and Syria studied for this thesis.

A common thread in realist criticism of liberalism, discussed in the following section, is of liberal failure to understand and assess the forces that determine the relationships and behaviour of states (Mearsheimer, 2018; Cunliffe, 2020).

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[1] Appendix III: paras 6671, 7845, 10647; Appendix IV: paras 1614, 2196, 3371, 7889, 10513.

Realist Critiques of Liberalism

A liberal proposition that humanitarian intervention can be improved by taking steps to ensure that interveners have good intentions (Bellamy, 2004) has been challenged by Stephen Walt. Walt (2018) argued that the USA's aggressive campaign to extend liberal governance worldwide after the Cold War has been driven by irreproachable intentions, but has produced very harmful results for other countries and damaged the USA. Rather than setting the national interest aside to pursue an ideological commitment to liberal values, the elites in the powerful US foreign policy institutions, to whom Walt (2018) attributed the campaign of liberal expansion, saw this policy as the best way to advance the national interest and fortify national security.

Walt (2018) posited that the USA's geographical situation, combined with the nation's great wealth and military power, encouraged reckless assertiveness in its foreign policy. The USA has no serious competitors in the Americas, and is protected by oceans to the west and the east. Consequently, it can take considerable risks with the welfare of countries in other continents, without exposing itself to the danger of retribution that might approach the level of an existential threat. The evidence found by thematic analysis of British parliamentary debates in Libya and Syria in this thesis[1] suggests that Britain and France were pushing hard for liberal military intervention, particularly in Libya, although they did not share the USA's level of geographical security. However, the Libya intervention in 2011 was contingent upon US participation (Puri, 2016), and a US sense of physical insulation from the site of conflict may have contributed to its willingness to take part, with the availability of US power then acting to further increase British and French belligerence.

Walt's analysis suggested a democratic deficit in US foreign policy-making caused by the dominance of institutions such as the Department of State and US national security agencies. He argued that the office of US President has limited control over the "foreign policy elite" (Walt, 2018: ix), and cited in evidence the limited ability of President Trump to enact the foreign policy changes he had promised in his 2016 election campaign.

The destructive failure of the endeavour of liberal states, led by the USA from a

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[1]   See Chapters 5 to 9.

position of global dominance after the end of the Cold War, to create a liberal world order based on free trade, human rights and democracy, was due to a mistaken liberal perception of reality, argued John Mearsheimer (2018). The essential reality of international relations is an anarchic global balance of power in which states compete for advantage. This reality determines how states can and will behave. The expressed moral aspirations of national governments may sometimes coincide with the behaviour thus determined, but they are generally incapable of overriding the determining forces of competitive self-interest.

Like Walt (2018), Mearsheimer (2018: 1) based his analysis on the concept of "liberal hegemony", defined as a policy by liberal states of assertive international promotion of liberal values - free trade, democracy, human rights - and liberal governance. The goal of liberal hegemony is to provide the best governance for others, and increasing prosperity and security for the world, by removing the threats and obstacles created by illiberal and tyrannical regimes.

Consequently, proponents of liberal hegemony believe that it can overcome the obstacles that realists argue must determine international relations in the absence of world government (Mearsheimer, 2018). Historically, the aspiration of liberal hegemony has been restrained by multipolarity - there have been several great powers, liberal and illiberal, which have blocked each other from global dominance. The end of the Cold War presented an exceptional opportunity for the USA to pursue liberal hegemony when it became the world's only superpower (Mearsheimer, 2018).

Mearsheimer (2018) argued, however, that liberal hegemony cannot succeed, irrespective of the hegemon's power, and its pursuit is certain to cause great harm. Nationalism and the national behavioural determinants posited by realism are much stronger forces in international relations than liberalism, he asserted, and will always thwart liberal hegemony. The powerful sentiment of identification with the nation and the competition for national advantage reinforce each other and stand against the moral evangelism of liberals, which itself is diluted by the realist calculations of liberal actors.

Liberal nations do not pursue liberal hegemony against their own interests (Mearsheimer, 2018). This can be seen in the considerable exertion of Western powers such as the UK and USA to protect and defend tyrannies in the Middle East with which they have cordial and profitable relationships, such as Saudi Arabia

(Aburish, 1997). The invaders of Iraq in 2003 stood to gain advantageous access to rich petrochemical reserves and planned to install a liberal democratic regime, so that liberal hegemony and commercial interests appeared to coincide. In such cases nationalism is likely to inspire resistance, while realism draws other states into the conflict in pursuit of their national interests (Mearsheimer, 2018), leading to intractable violence and probable state failure.

Thus, the purported liberal emancipation of Iraq encountered fierce resistance from Iraqi nationalists and Sunni insurgents who wished to establish a new Islamic nation (Cockburn, 2015a), while the unity of the state was threatened by Kurdish nationalists seeking secession (Gunter, 2011). Realist factors prompted Russia (Melamedov, 2018) and Iran (Terrill, 2015) to intervene in Syria against the armed insurgency there to defend an ally and asset against strategic competitors, reduce the threat from international Sunni militancy, and prevent a disadvantageous adjustment of the global and regional balance of power.

Western liberal powers led by the USA aided the Syrian insurgency, despite its lack of liberal credentials, to weaken an ally of Russia and Iran (Ahmed, 2018). The British government limited its aid due to concerns about illiberal rebel objectives and behaviour, assisting only rebel groups it judged "moderate" (Black, 2013a: 18), and declining to supply weapons directly to any rebel force. John Bolton (2015), US National Security Adviser in 2018-19 (Rauch, 2020), advocated against the reconstitution of Iraq and Syria within their pre-war borders because this would benefit Russia and Iran. In the absence of any other reasonable rationale for maintaining the brutal status quo of unstable division and dysfunction in both countries, it seems probable that this was at least an effective disincentive to American withdrawal from Syria.

In contrast with Mary Kaldor's characterisation of conflicts in the twenty-first century as anti-cosmopolitan, Philip Cunliffe (2020) classifies modern non-state combatants as anti-liberal cosmopolitans, with the Islamic State (IS) group as the prime example. Cunliffe (2020) analysed Western humanitarian intervention to determine why the intervening powers are not deterred by results that not only fall short of the expressed objectives, but often leave the people of targeted states in a worse condition, the world less stable, and the intervening states less liberal, than before the intervention. His answer, in brief, was the liberal conception of human rights. The protection of basic human rights to which liberals aspire, he argued, is an inadequate vision of human welfare, and its enforcement routinely breaches even

the basic rights it affects to champion, for example the right to life.

Cunliffe (2020) identified characteristics of liberal humanitarian intervention which contribute towards its damaging impact in practise. These can be approximately summarised as follows:

- Perpetuation of war.
- Criminalisation of war.
- Moral hazard.
- State co-option of civil society.
- Neo-imperialism.
- Exclusion of diplomacy.
- Denial of self-determination.
- Denial of state legitimacy.
- Paternalism.
- Propaganda displaces reason.
- Cosmopolitan utopian delusion.
- Human rights.

Liberalism treats non-defensive war as legitimate and potentially humanitarian, thereby perpetuating the environment in which mass atrocities are most likely to occur (Cunliffe, 2020). Liberal states criminalise warfare by threatening state leaders with criminal sanctions at the start of a conflict. This denies the enemy leaders an acceptable exit, making conflicts intractable as they avoid peace deals and continue fighting to keep themselves out of jail. Courts of justice are thereby perverted into instruments of political revolution (Cunliffe, 2020).

The risk of "moral hazard" arises when the prospect of moral action may encourage immoral action (Kuperman, 2008: 49). When rebels are promised or given external assistance to help them win, and the world's leading powers in the Security Council have expressed a commitment to regime change in their state, they may be encouraged to continue violence and avoid negotiation and democratic processes (Cunliffe, 2020).

Contrary to the liberal expectation of selfish state power ceding authority to an enlightened global civil society in an evolutionary process (Kaldor, 2003), humanitarian intervention turns civil society into an instrument of destructive state power, as it is tasked by states with making the moral case for humanitarian war. General Colin Powell, former US Secretary of State, described human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as a "force multiplier" (cited in Cunliffe, 2020:

13) for the US armed forces, i.e. propaganda agents supporting US military action in pursuit of liberal hegemony. The states system is not disempowered by humanitarian intervention, but bisected, with a small dominant group policing the rest (Cunliffe, 2020).

Humanitarian intervention is conducted or controlled by a minority of powerful states, who have effective immunity from enforcement against themselves by virtue of their military strength and their legal position. Under the United Nations Charter (United Nations, 1945) the main humanitarian intervention group comprises the permanent five (P5) members of the Security Council. This elevates the P5 to the effective status of imperial rulers of the world (Cunliffe, 2020), maintaining control over developing countries in a manner that produces very little development (Rist, 2010). In practise, the permanent three (P3), the Western liberal element of the P5 - the USA, UK, and France - are the leaders of liberal intervention, which has severely retarded development in states subjected to humanitarian military action, such as Somalia, Iraq, and Libya (Cunliffe, 2020).

Humanitarian intervention by rich states and NGOs in poor countries in the form of development aid, displacing to some extent the role of national governments in poor states, is now routine in much of the world. Therefore, non-violent intervention is constant, so that a proposal for humanitarian intervention in the UN Security Council tends to imply military action (Dunford and Neu, 2019a).

The logic of liberal humanitarian intervention, Cunliffe (2020) argued, leads inexorably towards the violent imposition of regime change, as liberal interveners believe liberal governance is the best or only way to guarantee respect for human rights. Diplomatic approaches to conflicts such as the Arab Spring uprisings are likely to impede regime change by aiming for a negotiated settlement. Therefore, humanitarian intervention campaigns work to impede negotiation, e.g. by hastening to war and then avoiding ceasefires, or by setting unacceptable conditions for diplomacy, such as regime change before peace talks.

Self-determination of peoples is denied by humanitarian intervention when solutions to disputes between people and government, such as regime change, are imposed by external force, not by the people themselves. Processes of state-building by foreign intervention also impede self-determination, as the interveners tend to impose models of governance that they consider ideal (Cunliffe, 2020).

State legitimacy is undermined by the international community's assumption of

the right to hold governments to account for their fulfilment of governance responsibilities, such as protection of human rights. These responsibilities, it follows, are owed to the international community - in effect the P5 of the Security Council - rather than to the people of the state (Cunliffe, 2020).

Humanitarian intervention which denies agency to the protected people is paternalistic (Cunliffe, 2020). The protected become inert objects of decisions and actions taken by foreign powers in the name of peoples, but without their authority. A principle that people should never be rescued without their consent would be pedantic and callous, but the paternalistic element could be minimised by ensuring that intervention does not go beyond the minimum needed to ensure the reasonable safety of the protected people from mass atrocities. The challenge then would be to devise a means of imposing such restraint on intervening powers.

Propaganda is not unique to liberalism, but instead of promoting decisions taken on a realistic calculus of costs and benefits, propaganda in pursuit of humanitarian military interventions has been used to distort the calculus in favour of the immutable goal of liberal hegemony (Cunliffe, 2020). Propaganda techniques include the use of weak and bogus evidence of atrocities; selective and deceptive invocation of precedents; omitting evidence of the harmful outcomes of previous interventions from debate; traducing critics as treacherous and immoral; and "definitional gerrymandering" (Cunliffe, 2020: 12), the redefining of terms to direct discussion towards support for military intervention. The belief in the ultimate beneficence of liberal hegemony is used to justify the harms of its pursuit (Cunliffe, 2020).

Cunliffe (2020) argued that it is mistaken to assume that a cosmopolitan world order would necessarily be liberal. His evidence was the rise of the group known as Islamic State. This group is cosmopolitan in its composition, drawing members from many countries with different regimes and cultures; in its aims, of establishing governance worldwide wherever it can gain power and erasing previous state boundaries; and in its communications and methods, using modern technologies and multiple languages to spread its message, to recruit members, and to terrorise and defeat opponents. IS, and other jihadi militias in the Arab Spring, shared with liberal proponents of humanitarian intervention a conviction that they had a right and a duty to wage violent revolution on humanitarian grounds (Cunliffe, 2020).

Cunliffe (2020) did not suggest the abolition of human rights, but argued that every approach to solving the problem of counter-productive, harmful humanitarian

intervention has failed. In consideration of this failure, and of the arguments listed above, reconsideration of the ideology upon which humanitarian intervention is founded - the Western conception of universal human rights - has become essential to solution of the harmful intervention problem.

The outcomes of liberal humanitarian interventions, in Cunliffe's (2020) assessment, have been overwhelmingly negative, amounting to the opposite of the intended outcomes of life saving and liberalisation. Negative outcomes include the promotion of nuclear proliferation, as the only way for independent illiberal states to shield themselves against military intervention. Ukraine and Libya were both subjected to destructive military interventions after they had discarded possession or pursuit of nuclear weapons, Ukraine by Russia to seize Crimea, and Libya by NATO to remove Gaddafi. This, Cunliffe (2020) argued, acted as a warning to other potential intervention target states to acquire nuclear weapons to deter intervention.

Cunliffe (2020) maintained, therefore, that the aggressive international promotion of liberal values by humanitarian military intervention produces illiberal results that are also negative in realist terms. Humanitarian interventions have harmed the people they sought to protect, discredited and undermined liberal values, boosted the international threat of terrorism, reversed economic and social development, destabilised international relations, and reduced global security. The cost to interveners has been high, and the benefit undetectable.

While Cunliffe (2020) attributed the failure of humanitarian intervention to the underlying Western conception of universal human rights, John Mearsheimer (2018) argued that Western, US-led humanitarian intervention policy has pursued liberal hegemony on realist grounds. The policy objectives have been liberal because US policy makers perceived a liberal world as the environment most conducive to US security and prosperity, and believed it could be accomplished by force. The consequent liberal labelling of self-interest in humanitarian terms has often had a strong, simple emotional appeal and, therefore, has tended to dominate public political discussion about interventions from sanctions to bombardment.

Whether the fundamental driver of humanitarian intervention is human rights, or an assessment of national interest, the alteration of the language of public debate to bring more transparency to description and discussion of humanitarian crises, might improve assessment of the opportunities for constructive intervention, leading to better outcomes. With the distraction of tendentious rhetoric removed, a more

realistic cost-benefit (Gilpin, 1988) appraisal of humanitarian interventions and their results might help to avoid the tragedy of disasters wrought by putative assistance. However, while a belief in the moral supremacy of liberalism persists in government and opposition parties in the UK, exclusion of liberal rhetoric from policy discussions risks portrayal by MPs as dereliction of moral duty.

Realist scholar Robert Gilpin (1988) perceived states as actors striving to make rational choices determined by their position in the global order and by their calculus of threats and opportunities pertaining to that position. Conflict was, therefore, undertaken on a cost-benefit calculation. Joseph Nye and David Welch (2013: 346) have challenged Gilpin's analysis on the basis that he had "… argued that international politics has not changed over two millennia, and that Thucydides would have little trouble understanding our world today", and that this was clearly not the case, as politics had changed considerably. However, while Gilpin argued that the essential, fundamental character of relations between nations or peoples - competition for material benefit in an anarchic states system - had not changed for millennia, he did not claim international politics had not changed. On the contrary, he was concerned that the world "was entering a period of uncertain political changes" (Gilpin, 1983: 1).

For Gilpin (2005), the primary aims of US foreign policy were twofold: to prevent, by force if necessary, any state developing sufficient strength to challenge US global dominance; and to protect Israel. On this basis, he saw the Iraq war of 2003 as a strategic failure as well as a humanitarian disaster. However, the destruction of states that have expressed defiance towards the USA, and threatened Israel, and are of strategic significance due to their location and natural resource reserves, may be a partly positive outcome if the overriding aim is neutralisation of unfriendly states.

It could be argued, therefore, that Western humanitarian interventions in the Middle East that have failed in liberal humanitarian terms have partially succeeded in realist objectives. Doubt could persist as to whether those objectives were well chosen from a realist national interest perspective. Gilpin (2005) observed that the USA's exercise of hard power in the Middle East, and its biases in favour of Israel and amenable Arab dictators, have substantially weakened US soft power by provoking local popular antagonism. Consequently, US security has been compromised as the same actions and attitudes have inspired violent resistance.

When considered as necessary demolition before reconstruction as a liberal polity, the 2011 Libyan intervention could also be judged a partial success from a liberal perspective. The opportunity still exists for a liberal economy with democratic features to develop from the chaos, and from July 2018 the US administration, represented by US diplomat Stephanie Williams as United Nations Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs in Libya, led the process of Libyan political reconstruction (United Nations, 2018).

Therefore, the humanitarian intervention in Libya could be viewed as a partial success in liberal and realist terms, although it failed in its primary stated aim (Hobson, 2016), the protection of the Libyan population (United Nations Security Council, 2011b). British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson (cited in Buchan, 2017: n.p.) appeared to support such a positive assessment when he praised a scheme by British investors, "to turn Sirte, with the help of the municipality of Sirte, into the next Dubai. The only thing they've got to do is clear the dead bodies."

The Independent reported that Sirte had been seized by the Islamic State terrorist group after the 2011 regime change, and the Libyan assault to recapture the city in 2016 had killed "thousands of civilians" (Buchan, 2017: n.p.). Johnson's callous language suggests a humanitarian deficit, and his choice of model, Dubai, indicates a democratic deficit, in the British government's liberal economic aspirations for Libya. His proposal also manifested the construction of an altered perception of the Libyan conflict, changing from civilian protection to economic development.

Constructivist Insights

Failure to predict major events, including the end of the Cold War and the terrorist attack on the USA of 11 September 2001, has been identified as evidence of the need for a more constructivist approach to international relations (Phillips, 2007). Constructivism, by examining the social construction of assumptions upon which traditional IR thinking has been based, facilitates challenges and corrections to those assumptions, and hence to the research programmes and conclusions based upon them. It would be unreasonable to expect any method of social scientific analysis to enable infallible prediction, but a deeper understanding of the formative attitudes and beliefs informing processes of international relationships and policy making has the potential to substantially improve risk assessment and planning.

Constructivism has been credited with bringing a more pragmatic approach to IR

research, by encouraging researchers to draw from multiple theoretical strands (Phillips, 2007). Critical theorists brought constructivism into IR to expand inquiry from examination of the behaviour of extant actors in a fixed system to questioning the nature, origins, and mutability of the elements considered to be fixed, notably the sovereign state and the anarchic international system. By assuming their immutability, traditional IR theory had helped to make them so, erecting a philosophical barrier against the development of a cosmopolitan global society of rights and equalities. Constructivism aimed to dissolve that barrier (Phillips, 2007).

Constructivism counters rationalism, which sees states as selfish individuals acting rationally rather than morally, constrained in action by an estimation of material resources, costs and benefits, and by other states' desires and strength (Phillips, 2007). In a constructivist view, state actions are guided by norms such as commitment to human rights, welfare, and state sovereignty, and states endeavour to behave in accordance with these potentially conflicting norms which have been socially constructed into elements of national identities (Phillips, 2007).

Thus, for example, if the UK government, representing the state in the global arena, believed human rights and democracy to be definitive national characteristics of the UK, this would propel the UK into foreign policy attitudes and actions focussed on the promotion of human rights and democracy. This could include military interventions on behalf of peoples denied their rights by their governments. Failure of interventions to grant the desired rights need not be perceived as failure; the desire to believe the state to be a champion of human rights and democracy may be satisfied by the taking of action premised on those objectives.

The division between constructivism and rationalism has become less absolute as scholars favouring each approach have responded to criticisms made by the other, e.g. constructivist utopian tendencies and denial of agency, and rationalist superficiality in denying that the process of social construction is a factor in determining what is rational (Phillips, 2007). Although there is interchange between constructivists and rationalists, they remain fundamentally separated, because the basic assumptions of rationalists - such as a realist perception of an atavistic contest between states for power and survival, or a liberal view of states endeavouring to construct a mutually and individually beneficial world order in an anarchic state system - are not shared by constructivists (Phillips, 2007).

John Rawls (1999) used a constructivist method to create his framework for a

legal code to regulate international relations (Martin and Reidy, 2006). His aim was to facilitate justice by the pragmatic construction of rules, rather than by converting a universal code of morality into law and insisting on compliance therewith as a condition of legitimate statehood. This approach underlay Rawls's (1999: 14) requirement for "reciprocity" in establishing the Law of Peoples - people proposing rules must believe them to be sufficiently reasonable to be ordinarily acceptable to free people with equal rights; and people, including those who are not free, to whom the rules are to be applicable, must consider them to be reasonable, as a minimum standard. The objective was to formulate rules that can be consistent with liberal principles and capable of solving international problems (Martin and Reidy, 2006) in the existing pluralist world, rather than simply seeking to impose liberalism as a panacea.

Reciprocity partly addresses the criticism of imperialist imposition of rules by liberal states on those they judge illiberal, because it requires acceptability to the illiberal people as a condition of legitimacy. However, an inequality appears to remain between the liberal and decent peoples in the relationship proposed by Rawls (1999). When liberal democratic peoples are exclusively empowered to create the rules, the decent peoples are left with only a power of ratification or rejection.

Postcolonial Perspectives

It is possibly overstating the case to describe postcolonialism as an IR theory, as it may be more usefully treated as an approach, or perspective (Mahdavi, 2015). Although much postcolonialist analysis has been published, it has not generated a cohesive theory of international relations (Wilkens, 2017).

Critics of liberalism have highlighted an imperialistic tendency among its proponents to identify the West with civilisation, progress, and moral superiority. This attitude, accompanied by a commitment to capitalism and a lack of consistency in foreign policy (MacMillan, 2007), may undermine the credibility and effectiveness of liberal international humanitarian projects.

Gilpin (1983) argued that the rhetoric of great powers has always included ideological or religious justifications for dominating weaker states. This argument has been cited in support of a postcolonialist interpretation of humanitarian intervention, alleging that the promotion of democracy has become the civilising

mission of the modern empire or quasi-empire (Larsen, 2019). The extent to which promotion of democracy is an excuse for domination may perhaps be gauged by the extent of the withdrawal of Western powers from efforts to influence the governance of developing states after they have adopted democratic regimes. Continuing efforts to influence the conduct of governments and outcomes of elections may indicate that self-determined, independent democracy is not the desired end.

Instability in decolonised states and regions such as Africa and the Middle East has been attributed to the legacies of British and French empires, including their arbitrary imposition of borders to serve imperial interests, and their postcolonial efforts to control governments in former colonies (Fildis, 2011). It would be ahistorical and a denial of agency to Arab peoples to claim that the Western empires have been the sole cause of instability or the sole determinant of governance failures in the modern Middle East. However, the impact of Western imperialism has been a powerful factor in shaping subsequent history, and may still be an important factor in determining the suitability of the former imperial powers as enforcers of civilian protection under current doctrines of humanitarian intervention (Dunford and Neu, 2019a).

The postcolonial approach requires the researcher to maintain a consciousness of racial prejudice and the impact of the continuing international dominance of former colonial powers on international relations (Shields, 2012). A practical application of this approach would include vigilance in detecting manifestations of latent and historical colonialism in the foreign policy of the states, such as the UK and France, which built the great empires of recent times. Although postcolonial analysis tends to focus on the West (Young, 2003), a more inclusive approach would encompass the legacies of other great empires such as the Ottoman Empire, Russia and China.

Jean Bricmont (2006: 3) used the term "humanitarian imperialism" to describe action by one state or coalition on the territory of another for national or allied gain carried out under the guise of humanitarian intervention. Bricmont's (2006) examples of humanitarian imperialism include European imperial paternalism in 1815, the American Vietnam War, and the British Boer War. Prime Minister of Britain, Lord Salisbury (cited in Bricmont, 2006: 29), had insisted that the Boer War was "for democracy" and not for gold or land. Bertrand Russell (cited in Bricmont, 2006) indicated the apparent duplicity of this claim by observing that Britain had

nonetheless acquired gold and land by defeating the Boers.

Most women and more than a third of men, mostly working class, were excluded from the franchise in Britain at the time of the Boer war (Thane, 2008). Therefore, the British government was claiming to fight for democracy overseas while denying democracy to British women, arguably an early example of liberal rhetoric in support of military intervention diverging from the government's domestic practise.

Modern imperialism is not the classic occupy-and-administer model, but an indirect form of control that has been classified as "neo-colonial" (Loomba, 1998: 7). It comprises a range of coercive measures applied to states that are legally and constitutionally independent to direct their governance for the benefit of the neo-colonial powers, generally identified as the West (Bricmont, 2006). The theory of humanitarian imperialism posits that because coercive neo-colonialism conflicts with the legitimising ideologies of Western governments - freedom, democracy and human rights - it is disguised as humanitarian assistance (Bricmont, 2006). Thus, it may enable Western populations to benefit materially from state-directed actions that maintain and expand unjust international exploitation, and to benefit emotionally from the belief that such actions are impelled by humanitarian aims.

Bricmont (2006) judged that governments and opinion formers do not generally lie, but adopt perceptions that allow them to view self-interested policies and actions as altruistic. Public opinion in the modern era is guided and formed by a "secular priesthood" (Bricmont, 2006: 31), as the religious legitimacy of earlier centuries has been replaced by democratic and scientific principles. This cohort is most powerful in democracies, where legal and social constraints on the use of coercion render persuasion more essential (Bricmont, 2006). The humanitarian impulse may be a powerful lever of persuasion, even without the supernatural reinforcement of religion.

The failure of decolonisation to bring freedom may not be entirely the fault of the former coloniser (Said, 1994). The nationalism of liberation movements in former colonies may reproduce the authoritarian governance of empires in the newly liberated state, especially those placed by their colonisers within arbitrary borders that combine and divide peoples into administrative imperial units lacking ethnic and cultural cohesion, as is common in sub-Saharan Africa. Repression may be used to maintain the arbitrary borders and force disparate groups into functioning as a state, simultaneously preserving and increasing the privileges of ruling classes

empowered during colonisation (Said, 1994). The tension between such nationalist forces and the desire of ethnic nations for geographic unity and freedom of movement within their historic territories, such as the Tuaregs, whose homeland is now divided by the borders of modern Libya, Algeria, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso (Minahan, 2002), presents a standing challenge to the progress of liberalism.

Postcolonialist analysis aims to restore the agency of the subjects of Western imperialism (Tickner, 2003), and to extend the debate beyond the tendentious dichotomies of Western pro-intervention discourse, e.g. action versus inaction, intervening versus standing by, and protection versus appeasement (Lynch, 2011). Humanitarian interveners are often former Western colonisers, e.g. Britain, France, and the USA, and those intervened upon are often residents of their former colonies or protectorates, e.g. Sierra Leone, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. Focussing on the perspectives of formerly colonised peoples, therefore, indicates an emphasis on outcomes in assessing interventions (Mamdani, 2010), in contrast to Western rhetoric promoting humanitarian intervention, which tends to focus on motives (Bellamy, 2004).

While postcolonialism may help to complete the assessment of human intervention by adding a crucial perspective, that of the people of target states on whose behalf interveners claim to act, it also risks replicating imperialist attitudes. An exclusive regard for the perspective of a single category of peoples is likely to provide a limited and skewed understanding of the relations between them and others. In so doing, postcolonialism risks reproducing the restricted outlook of the imperialists it seeks to critique (Chibber, 2013)

If analysis is further restricted to the impact and legacy of colonisation, it risks denying agency to formerly colonised people, the opposite of one important avowed intention of postcolonialist study (Mamdani, 2010). Postcolonialist writers have portrayed formerly colonised people as inherently different from their colonisers in a presentation very similar to the colonisers' stereotyping of them (Chibber, 2013). Nonetheless, the identification of stereotyping as a powerful element in the justification and imposition of imperial control, constructing for example a parental role for the coloniser and infantile role for the colonised, remains relevant to understanding the context in which contemporary humanitarian military interventions occur (Said, 2003).

Liberal support for humanitarian intervention is not overtly imperialist, but neither

is it necessarily deterred by the acknowledgment of imperialist motives or behaviour. Michael Ignatieff was leader of Canada's Liberal Party and one of the members of the International Commission on Sovereignty and Intervention (2001) which defined the doctrine of the R2P in its report in 2001. He has suggested that a Western romantic appetite for tales of the salvation of innocents from tyranny underlies a selfish drive to enact such fantasies in the real world, a potential "imperial kernel at the heart of the humanitarian enterprise" (Ignatieff, 2002: n.p.).

However, Ignatieff was not dissuaded of the propriety of humanitarian military intervention by this insight. He attributed the imperfect practise of humanitarian intervention to remediable errors by the West in its own actions, and to enemies of the liberal West, notably Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom Ignatieff (2014) accused of parodying the R2P in his claim to have returned Crimea to Russian control to protect civilians. Ignatieff (2014) analysed the contemporary world in realist terms, invoking Thucydides in essentially the same terms as Gilpin (1983) had done, but continued to offer a liberal prescription for the prevention of mass atrocity crimes - the R2P.

The way to avoid R2P interventions causing more harm than good, Ignatieff (2014) argued, was to make them purely protective, and not routes to regime change. He did not specify how this might be achieved. His argument did not address the logic identified by Cunliffe (2020) and Mearsheimer (2018), and exemplified by the NATO-led Libya intervention, that interventions to prevent crimes by tyrants will inevitably become regime change operations, as liberals perceive liberal regimes as the only reliable protection against mass atrocity crimes. Ignatieff (2014) proposed a no-fly zone in Syria to force Assad to declare a ceasefire. With no reciprocal requirements on the rebel militias, this may have been tantamount to enforcing regime change.

One postcolonialist analyst has argued that Western liberal advocates deduce the superiority of liberalism from its global expansion and, therefore, fail to see that the acquisitive aggression of their own states has driven this expansion under cover of humanitarian pretensions (Wai, 2014). It seems probable that, if this hypothesis explained all liberal expansion, humanitarian military intervention would be more widespread and aggressive than is currently the case. However, the perception of humanitarian intervention as occasional acts of violence, rather than continual micromanagement of poor countries by wealthy states using leverage such as development aid (Dunford and Neu, 2019a), may understate how pervasive it has

become in the postcolonial era.

The pressure of public opinion restraining governments from new military interventions deceptively or mistakenly portrayed as humanitarian may be an example of liberalism in the form of democracy curtailing the imperialist impulse. It is possible, therefore, that greater domestic liberalism - more effective, more active, more representative democracy based on a more dynamic, diverse, liberated civil society - can be an effective barrier against aggressive liberal imperialism.

This chapter explained the theoretical basis of the thesis in liberalism as a main foundation of political support in the West for humanitarian intervention, and realism as a main source of critiques of Western humanitarian intervention. Two additional relevant theoretical perspectives informed the work. Constructivism sustains interpretations beneath the surface of events and trends in international relations, acknowledging the social construction of reality and how this enables inhumane actions to be perceived and promoted as humane, by sincere belief or contrived propaganda. Postcolonialism contextualises the study of international relations within the legacy of colonial domination, relevant to Western humanitarian intervention as countries targeted for intervention are often former colonies of Western empires, and the interveners former imperial powers.

The following chapter traces the history of Western humanitarian intervention from its early origins in sectarian interventions in sixteenth century Europe to the secular form manifested in recent conflicts, setting a historical context for the thesis. It reviews the contemporary theory and practice of humanitarian intervention, including the doctrine of the R2P recently adopted by the United Nations, and concludes with a review of selected literature relating to the conflicts in Libya and Syria studied in this thesis.

Chapter 3: Origins and Development of Humanitarian Intervention

This chapter provides a history of notable instances of Western humanitarian intervention by states or coalitions on the territory of other states and a review of literature relating to the R2P and the conflicts in Libya and Syria which form the case studies for this thesis. The examples demonstrate that humanitarian intervention, including military action, has a history dating back at least several centuries. In European politics, professed motivations for intervention have changed over time from a foundation in religious duty to a more secular grounding in human rights. However, from the Protestant Reformation to the present day, the view that states are entitled to use force to protect civilians in other states has been held consistently, and applied selectively, by powerful western European governments (Simms and Trim, 2011). Aerial bombardment has been presented as a relatively humanitarian form of warfare, with doubtful sincerity or outright cynicism, since its emergence as a regular tactic in the 1920s (Tanaka, 2009).

Recent writers on humanitarian intervention have overlooked much of its history and, consequently, tended to treat it as a recent innovation (Simms and Trim, 2011). However, the basic principles of an entitlement or moral obligation to take cross-border military action by states on humanitarian grounds had been accepted among at least some of the rulers of Europe at least as early as the sixteenth century CE.

The word *humanitarian* was not used in its current sense, pertaining to human wellbeing, until the nineteenth century. Previously it had been a theological term denoting belief in Jesus Christ as a human but not as a god (Brown and Little, 1993). Thus, although interventions across national borders, including military action, were justified on grounds that would now be termed humanitarian, they were not contemporaneously labelled as such. The modern usage of humanitarian developed alongside the concept of human rights (Simms and Trim, 2011).

An anonymous author published a treatise in 1579, "Vindiciae contra tyrannos" (VCT) (Trim, 2011: 32), positing a form of responsibility to protect on behalf of Christian rulers. An English translation of part of the original Latin text, published in 1588, maintained that: "If a prince use tyrannie towards his people, we ought to ayde no less, than if his subjectes shoulde raise sedition against him" (cited in Trim, 2011: 29). The use of the word *ought* indicates that the author was asserting a moral obligation, not merely an authority to act. Trim (2011) confirmed that this was the

intention of the treatise, and that it was in the sixteenth century that acceptance of a responsibility or duty to intervene against tyranny first appeared in seminal works of what would later be classified as international law, building on earlier Christian theology asserting the legitimacy of such action.

The religious foundation of the right and duty of humanitarian intervention propounded by the VCT is clear in the title of the volume: "A Short Apologie for Christian Souldiours: wherein is conteined, how that we ought both to propagate, and also ... to defende by force of armes, the Catholike Church of Christ" (Brutus [pseudonym], 1588: n.p.). To modern readers this might suggest a Roman Catholic sectarian manifesto, but the probable authorship of the treatise, the nature of contemporaneous humanitarian interventions, and the likelihood that this English translation of part of the VCT was sponsored by the Protestant Queen Elizabeth I (Trim, 2011) all point towards the usage of *Catholic* current in the mid-sixteenth century, designating the entirety of Christendom (Brown and Little, 1993).

The authorship of the treatise remains uncertain, but it is most frequently attributed to either or both of two Calvinist writers active in their national politics, one French and one German. Both Protestant and Catholic[1] scholars asserted a duty of humanitarian intervention in the sixteenth century. Before the VCT, Spanish Catholic theological lawyers asserted the right to subdue tyrannical leaders whom they considered uncivilised, namely the native leaders of the lands Spain was colonising in South America. However, the mere fact of being judged uncivilised by Spain was insufficient to invoke this right to intervene; it was only applicable to exceptionally harmful leaders (Trim, 2011).

The section of the VCT published in English in 1588 under the title: "A short Apologie for Christian Souldiours" (Simms and Trim, 2011: xv) was probably funded by the court of Queen Elizabeth I (Trim, 2011). The Queen appears to have generally followed the stipulation of the treatise that humanitarian intervention must be limited to the minimum force needed to amend the conduct of malfeasant rulers, and not used to excuse the conquest of foreign lands. However, on at least one occasion she attempted to add territorial expansion - reconquest of a part of northern France formerly ruled by England - to the objectives of a humanitarian intervention (Trim, 2011).

The VCT cited the right of state leaders to aid their foreign counterparts against

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[1] Here and henceforth in this thesis, *Catholic* is used to mean Roman Catholic.

seditious subjects as an example of legitimate military intervention. A significant difference between this and modern humanitarian intervention, found by analysis in later chapters in this thesis of the Libya[1] and Syria[2] debates, is that the British government in 2011 used the rhetoric of democracy promotion to assert a duty to intervene in aid of seditious citizens in the target states. This aid was inhibited in Syria by concerns about the character of the insurgents, and other factors, but not to the extent of abandoning the objective of regime change.[3]

The Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century provided much of the impetus for the development of the principle of a right and duty of humanitarian intervention, as well as significant instances of such interventions (Trim, 2011). It provided both an increase in the number of Protestants at risk of persecution for heresy by Catholic state authorities, and of Protestant governments strong enough to intervene militarily to protect their co-confessionists.

The obligation of humanitarian intervention in sixteenth century Europe was not usually expressed in sectarian terms, but it was generally implemented by Protestant monarchs against persecution of Protestants by Catholic monarchs (Trim, 2011). Although the VCT declared a duty of intervention against tyranny on the part of all Christian leaders, the contemporary definition of tyranny differed considerably from that informing twenty-first century concepts of humanitarian intervention. For the Protestant authors of the VCT and similar treatises, Roman Catholic regimes were tyrannical by nature, proven by their persecution of Protestants (Trim, 2011). However, in contrast to, for example, the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011,[4] they did not deduce a right to overthrow the tyrants, nor to curtail extreme cruelty in general, merely to end the tyrannical treatment of Protestants. However, this narrow conception carried within it a logic which later powered its expansion into a broader doctrine of humanitarian intervention (Trim, 2011).

The tendentious definition of terms, reminiscent of Cunliffe's (2020: 12) "definitional gerrymandering", appears as a practise shared by early Protestant advocates of humanitarian intervention and the British government studied in this thesis. The Protestant advocates argued, in support of the legitimacy of protective

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[1]   See Chapter 5.
[2]   See Chapter 6.
[3]   See Chapter 6.
[4]   See Chapter 5.

military intervention, that it did not constitute invasion, because its purpose was not regime change but behavioural restraint (Trim, 2011). In 2011, British Prime Minister David Cameron stressed in support of the legitimacy of humanitarian military intervention in Libya that it was not invasion,[1] as coalition troops would be restricted to aerial and naval bombardment.

Thus, sixteenth and seventeenth century Protestants and twenty-first century liberals manipulated language in slightly different ways to legitimise humanitarian military intervention. Early Protestant advocates argued that cross-border humanitarian military action was not invasion because it was to restrain tyrants, not remove them (Trim, 2011). The British government appeared to extend the gap between rhetoric and reality by portraying the 2011 intervention in Libya as not being regime change because there was no ground invasion and the Libyan people would choose the new regime, and then justifying regime change as the only way to achieve behavioural restraint and free the people.[2]

In the seventeenth century, Hugo Grotius (cited in Trim, 2011) argued that there was no right of popular rebellion against repressive monarchs. However, other sovereigns had a right to intervene, based on a common responsibility of sovereigns towards all mankind, to protect peoples severely oppressed by tyranny. This right overrode the general duty to respect sovereignty by not intervening. Grotius (cited in Trim, 2011: 40) illustrated the tyranny that might merit military intervention with four examples: "killing children, human sacrifice, feeding men to horses, and cannibalism". This was evidently not an exhaustive list. Grotius (cited in Trim, 2011: 40) held that a sovereign was entitled to take protective military action in another state if the monarch there "… should inflict upon his subjects such treatment as no one is warranted in inflicting …", expounding a general principle based on a common standard of humane governance.

Early cross-border military interventions on protective grounds included several incursions by Elizabeth I of England into France and the Netherlands. The English government justified its actions in France as restraint of persecution of Protestants, and those in the Netherlands as restraint of general tyranny. However, English intervention in the Netherlands was in aid of Dutch Protestant rebels against the ruling Catholic Spanish Habsburg dynasty. Confessional rivalry was a dominant motive, but it was combined with concern to prevent extreme cruelty and general

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 1136, 1184, 1216, 2590.
[2]   See section on Regime Change in Libya in Chapter 5.

disorder detrimental to the welfare of entire region (Trim, 2011).

This concern to prevent the failure of a neighbouring state and major English trading partner (Trim, 2011) was echoed in the British government's arguments in favour of military action in Libya in 2011.[1] The situations differed in that Libya was mostly a potential commercial prize for the UK in 2011, while the Netherlands in the seventeenth century was a major British trading partner. Thus, the threat of state failure in Libya could be used in 2011 to argue for preventive intervention without the risk that, if such failure transpired in consequence of the intervention, it would have a noticeable adverse impact on British prosperity.

The most notorious sectarian massacre of Protestants in France in the sixteenth century was the "St Bartholomew's Day Massacre" (Trim, 2011: 44), which began in Paris and spread to other cities, with 10,000 Huguenot Protestants murdered in a few days. Although Elizabeth I and her advisers were outraged by the murders and despatched material aid to the Huguenots, they did not launch a reactive military intervention. They did not hold the French monarch directly responsible for the crimes, and were worried that weakening the relatively moderate king might strengthen the extremist forces behind the crimes (Trim, 2011).

In the seventeenth century, Cromwell continued the English policy of protecting Protestants in Europe, deploying diplomatic leverage backed up with the threat of military action in France and Savoy, while repressing and dispossessing Catholics in Ireland. The sectarian aspect of humanitarian intervention remained strong, with Cromwell (cited in Trim, 2011: 62) defining his policy as promotion of "the Protestant interest abroad".

The story that Andrew Hurrell aptly calls "the mythology of Westphalia" (2007: 54), and finds characteristic of much international relations theorising, has the rhetorical virtues of clarity, simplicity, and coherence. It attributes the establishment of state sovereignty to the 1648 Treaties of Westphalia, and traces a subsequent trend of increasing challenges to the principle of state inviolability from intervention, driven by the moral evolution of the international community and mainly led by the ruling classes of Western states, towards the universal protection of human rights. It can be an attractive picture of progress. One might extrapolate a trend of Western leadership guiding mankind towards an advanced rights-based global community of cooperative international citizens, or use it to explain slow progress towards that

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[1]   See section on regime change in Libya in Chapter 5.

utopian future, or posit its improbability, as it is obstructed by the enduring interest of states in remaining inviolate. However, it is not consistent with historical evidence (Hurrell, 2007).

It appears from the work of Simms and Trim (2011), their collaborators, and the evidence they cite that the concept of state sovereignty, the norm of non-intervention, and a nascent norm of humanitarian intervention (compromised, as today, by ulterior motives) all pre-dated the Westphalian treaties. It seems reasonable to characterise Westphalia not as the crafting of order from chaos by the invention of state inviolability, but as a negotiated compromise, building dominant values of the time into an international agreement to minimise conflict (Hurrell, 2007).

The development of the modern proposed norm of humanitarian intervention is, therefore, perhaps most accurately interpreted not as an idealist rebellion against realist Westphalia, but as the product of the continuing interplay of enduring forces (Hurrell, 2007). These include state power within national borders, strategic ambitions, domestic political competition, perceived national and regional security imperatives, and moral and religious humanitarian impulses, all influenced by the multifarious interests, prejudices and aspirations of citizens and media.

Brendan Simms (2011) concurred with Hurrell (2007) that, far from being a legal barrier that proponents of cross-border protective intervention needed to breach, the Westphalian treaties authorised intervention and put it on an agreed legal footing. The rights of intervention and sovereignty opposed each other, and state sovereignty, being the primary role and obligation of sovereigns, remained dominant. Consequently, the argument about the legitimacy of protective intervention, and the acceptable point of balance between the opposing rights, continued.

A pivotal military intervention in British history was the 1688 invasion led by Protestant William of Orange, which overthrew the Catholic King James II and replaced him with William and his wife Mary as joint monarchs. Scott Sowerby (2013) contended that the usual historical narrative of these events, that James II was a tyrant overthrown by the enlightened intervention of William and Mary at the behest of the suffering British people, was unjust. He argued that James II was a reformer whose efforts to promote religious tolerance in Britain led to his downfall.

This may seem paradoxical, but Sowerby (2013) argued that revolution is a

probable outcome of reformist despotism, citing the overthrow of communist rule in Russia and eastern Europe after Gorbachev's reforms as a recent example. Sowerby's (2013) explanation of this phenomenon - essentially, that reform which empowers the people tends to lead to expansion of their power beyond government control - is credible. However, generalisation may risk submerging the significance of specifics.

James II was a Roman Catholic king ruling a mainly Protestant (except in Ireland) population, a few decades after a bloody civil war between monarchist and parliamentary forces, in which parliament had prevailed (Harris, 2007). The democratic features of the English parliament at that time were very limited, but the contest could still be reasonably perceived as pitting nascent democracy, pluralist governance, and the rule of law, against monarchist despotism. James II's reforms were made using the royal prerogative, an arbitrary power, to override parliament, undermining the rule of law and potentially signalling the suppression of parliament in favour of the monarchy (Harris, 2007).

Sowerby (2013: 3) noted the inherent bias in the term "Glorious Revolution", which is used, for example, in the national curriculum guidelines for teaching history in secondary schools in England (UK Department for Education, 2013: 3). This may be an example of British state promotion of a positive view of humanitarian intervention. The presentation of the revolution as humanitarian is controversial, especially in Ireland and Scotland. However, the narrative of James II as a tyrant is not baseless. Although he promoted religious toleration, freed many prisoners, and pardoned political exiles, he suppressed a rebellion led by the Duke of Monmouth with notorious ferocity (Sowerby, 2013).

It is not clear how exceptional this ferocity was for the period, but it seems likely that its prominence in the historical narrative reflects its utility in legitimising William and Mary's conquest and reign. It would have been difficult, conversely, for the regime change to have gained and retained the title of Glorious Revolution instead of, for example, the Orange Occupation, or "the Dutch Conquest" (Harris, 2007: 4), had it not been widely accepted in England as a significant improvement. Historians generally agree that the rebellion against James II could not have succeeded without the Dutch intervention, which had been invited by elements of the British ruling class (Harris, 2007).

A precedent may be discerned here both for British sympathy with sectarian

emancipatory movements, and for a British belief in the potential of regime change accomplished by foreign military intervention to end or reduce tyranny and promote the progress of democracy. A century later, after the French revolution, Edmund Burke was inspired by the memory, or perhaps more accurately the mythology, of the Glorious Revolution to call for military intervention in France, to rescue the French from the revolutionary regime and fortify monarchy in Europe (Simms, 2011).

Burke (cited in Simms, 2011: 103) expressed his call to arms in humanitarian terms: "… surely no nation ever called so pathetically on the compassion of all its neighbours". He considered military intervention to overthrow the French government not only legitimate, but obligatory. Additional factors he proposed in favour of military action against the French revolution were British and European security, Britain's place in the world, and the proximity of France to the UK (Simms, 2011).

His argument for intervening in France to reverse the revolution, but not in Algiers to curtail Mediterranean piracy, would not appear to support British humanitarian intervention in the Arab world today: "Algiers is not near; Algiers is not powerful; Algiers is not our neighbour; Algiers is not infectious. When I find Algiers transferred to Calais, I will tell you what I think of that point" (Burke, cited in Simms, 2011: 107). However, it could be argued that the world was more integrated and travel much faster and easier in 2011 than at the end of the eighteenth century, so that Libya might in the twenty-first century be considered near enough to justify intervention under Burke's principles.

The Glorious Revolution may be a misleading precedent or inspiration for modern military interventions, as it was arguably the "least revolutionary revolution" (Harris, 2007: 13). The Orange intervention caused far less disturbance than modern interventions such as those in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya which caused great upheaval and destruction. However, this interpretation relies on excluding from consideration the impact of the intervention on Scotland and Ireland (Harris, 2007). A similar filtration of evidence may be seen in claims that interventions were successful because tyrants were removed and predicted crimes were prevented in Iraq (Bush, 2003) and Libya (Cameron, 2011), with negative impacts omitted from the narrative.

John Stuart Mill (1987: 2) presented England[1] as exceptional in its altruism in 1859: "Not only does this nation desire no benefit to itself at the expense of other, it desires none in which all others do not freely participate. … A nation adopting this policy is a novelty in the world". Mill (1987: 2) lamented that the coincidental accumulation of wealth could prompt unworthy suspicions: "It is a natural supposition that those who win the prize have striven for it". Part of the problem, Mill (1987: 2) found, was the exceptional humility of the English: "Englishmen, beyond all the rest of the human race, are so shy of professing virtues that they will even profess vices instead".

For Mill (1987: 2), the sacrifice of wealth by the abolition of slavery exemplified English virtue:

> The fox who had lost his tail had an intelligible interest in persuading his neighbours to rid themselves of theirs; but we, it is thought by our neighbours, cut off our own magnificent brush, the largest and finest of all, in hopes of reaping some inexplicable advantage from inducing others to do the same.

This description of slave colonies appears discordant with Mill's (1987: 3) vision of the English as selfless humanitarians enriched by providence, and with his praise for the principle of liberal intervention: "There is much to be said for the doctrine that a nation should be willing to assist its neighbours in throwing off oppression and gaining free institutions".

Mill (1987: 5) judged that imposing British aid outside Europe needed no justification beyond innate British goodness and his view that "… barbarians have no rights as a nation, except a right to such treatment as may, at the earliest possible period, fit them for becoming one". Thus, he framed intervention as fulfilment of the only legitimate right of unconquered, unwesternised peoples, a stance reflected in the rhetoric tracked by the people of the enemy state and responsibility to protect themes in analysis of the Libya and Syria debates.[2]

Mill (1987) held that once the British had overthrown a barbarian tyrant, they were obligated to furnish a replacement regime. Acceptance of the substitute was assumed rather than sought, enabling the presentation of imperial expansion as

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[1] In his essay, Mill (1987) made 7 references to Britain or British, but 40 to England or English, giving an additional ethnic flavour to the work.
[2] Appendices III and IV.

humanitarian intervention. It could be argued that although this rationale might appear to have been an excuse for imperial conquest, it had the advantage over some modern putative humanitarian interventions, such as Libya in 2011, that it installed orderly governance instead of withdrawing to leave violent chaos. A longer view, however, might perceive that the post-conquest disorder was often merely postponed until the postcolonial liberation.

Among his assertions of Western rights, Mill (1987: 5) foreshadowed the outcomes of Western humanitarian interventions in the twenty-first century in a description of imperial conduct. In his words, a "civilised government" must suppress its "barbarous neighbours", because they are, unlike the English, aggressive by nature: "… it either finds itself obliged to conquer them, or to assert so much authority over them, and so break their spirit, that they gradually sink into a state of dependence upon itself".

A function similar to that of Bricmont's (2006: 31) postcolonial "secular priesthood"[1] was performed by the Christian priesthood in British colonies, carrying "… the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the heathen" (Sillery, 1971: 5). The work of British missionaries in South Africa has been presented as challenging the racism of the Boers, with the abolition of slavery raised as evidence of innate British humanitarianism (Sillery, 1971), a portrayal that requires the erasure of prior history.

British humanitarian intervention in South Africa took the form of resistance to racism, but it also took the side of the British empire against the Boers (Sillery, 1971). While Britain's "humanitarian Colonial Secretary" (Sillery, 1971: 9) accepted the right of indigenous Africans to resist with armed force the abuses carried out by freelance colonists, he did not extend the same right to the many native insurrections against British imperial rule.

The historical record of humanitarian intervention coinciding with British national material gain is also extensive. When British High Commissioner, Sir Harry Smith (cited in Sillery, 1971: 10), annexed a large portion of southern Africa as British sovereign territory, his stated purpose was "to establish an amicable relationship with the Native Chiefs, to uphold them on their hereditary rights, and to protect them from aggression". Almost incidentally, Smith added that British sovereignty was also intended to provide for the welfare of British colonists in the annexed area (Sillery,

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[1]   See Chapter 2 section on postcolonial perspectives.

1971).

British Secretary of State Earl Grey (cited in Sillery, 1971) praised the humanitarianism of British missionaries as a civilising force in Africa in 1852. However, South Africa was then seen as possessing limited commercial potential, the work of Christian salvation was expensive, and enthusiasm for it waned (Sillery, 1971). A British humanitarian group, the Aborigines' Protection Society, promoted British state annexation of lands colonised by privateers as a means of protecting the indigenous population from the colonists and slavers (Heartfield, 2011). This argument was applied to land in Australasia and Africa, and echoed by other European imperial powers (Heartfield, 2011).

As with modern humanitarian intervention, the putative civilising mission of empire often did more harm than good to the supposed beneficiaries. That does not necessarily demonstrate venal motives among the interveners. It does, however, illustrate the risk of sincere humanitarian sentiment being co-opted in the selfish pursuit of material gain (Heartfield, 2011). The practical extent of such cynicism is perhaps most reliably shown in the relative advancement during and after the colonial era of the helpers - the European powers - and the helped - the colonised peoples.

Dubious claims of humanitarian intent have also been made by Western governments for aerial bombardment since the technology was first developed in the nineteenth century. In 1899 the Russian government proposed an international treaty permanently banning bombing from the first aircraft to be used for the purpose, hot air balloons. The USA argued that military science would soon enable bombing so accurate that it would shorten wars, thereby reducing casualties, and persuaded the parties to agree to a ban with a reduced duration of five years (Tanaka, 2009).

British Air Marshall Salmond (cited in Tanaka, 2009: 26) led a bombing campaign in Iraq in the 1920s devised by Winston Churchill to suppress rebellion, and reported that the "… operation has proved outstandingly effective, extremely economical and undoubtedly humane in the long run". A similar argument was proffered by Adolf Hitler (2001: 178) - "As for humanitarianism, Moltke said years ago that in war it lies in the brevity of the operation, and that means that the most aggressive fighting technique is the most humane."

Salmond presented the bombing to Parliament as designed to minimise civilian

casualties, but declassified secret memos have since revealed that this presentation was contrived to mollify public and political opinion. A commander who expressed the view in 1923 that Churchill's bombing of Iraqi rebels and civilians to restore order was disproportionate and immoral was disciplined, financially penalised, and forced out of the RAF (Tanaka, 2009).

United States Army Air Forces commander General Arnold (cited in Schaffer, 1985: 61) judged that bombing could minimise the inherent cruelty of war: "when used with the proper degree of understanding, it becomes, in effect, the most humane of all weapons". Arnold favoured bombing because it minimised the risk of US casualties and hence negative public opinion at home (Schaffer, 1985).

Ethical Foreign Policy

Chris Brown (2001) used a case study of the New Labour government in 1997 to examine an apparent novelty at the time - the explicit adoption by the government of ethics as an aspect of foreign policy. The phrase "ethical foreign policy" (Brown, 2001: 16) became a common media description of the approach inaugurated by New Labour Foreign Secretary Robin Cook in 1997, although Cook (cited in Brown, 2001: 17) used arguably weaker terminology: "Our foreign policy must have an ethical dimension and must support the demands of other peoples for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves. We will put human rights at the heart of our foreign policy".

A survey of just a few of the diverse approaches to morality in recent Western philosophy revealed that there is no straightforward test of ethical action (Brown, 2001). The two pointers Robin Cook attached to his ethical aspect announcement - support for democracy and human rights - were too broad to provide an auditing framework for ethical action. They were simply a statement of basic liberal principles.

In effect, therefore, Cook stated that the New Labour government would follow a liberal foreign policy, which would perforce possess an ethical dimension. It was not an announcement of radical change, and the ethical dimension was situated firmly in a national interest context, not proposed as divergence therefrom. It was presented as a factor that would be beneficial to the UK in strengthening soft power by reputation enhancement (Brown, 2001). Cook demonstrated the ethical dimension in arms sales policy, which under his government would ban sales of

items likely to be used to repress citizens of the purchaser state. The policy created a conflict with another national interest, the commercial benefit of arms sales (Brown, 2001).

This conflict appears to have been resolved in favour of commerce (Short, 2005), with the Blair government in 2007 selling large quantities of arms to Libya under Gaddafi (Sarrar, 2007). Tim Spicer (cited in BBC News, 2017a), the leader of a mercenary group which, contrary to UK law and a UN arms embargo, imported weapons into war-torn Sierra Leone in 1997, claimed his actions were ethical, because the intervention had restored the elected leader. However cynical and self-serving this claim may have been, it illustrates the importance of the choice of moral code in determining what is ethical (Brown, 2001), the potential for conflict between law and ethics, and hence the destabilising potential of an ethical dimension to foreign policy.

Editors Karen Smith and Margot Light (2001) excluded realist authors from a selection of writing on ethical foreign policy on the grounds that realists would have insisted that there is nothing to discuss because ethical foreign policy does not exist. However, the stance the editors attribute to three of their authors is arguably reconcilable with realist analysis, namely that ethics are an intrinsic element of social questions and that decision-making can only meet ethical standards when it is informed by realistic assessments of conditions and prospects (Fiott, 2013). It should, therefore, be more productive to discuss the inter-relationship of ethics with foreign policy which, all the authors contributing to the book agreed (Smith and Light, 2001) will always be mainly driven by pragmatism, than to argue about whether it has an ethical dimension.

In this view, it appears superfluous for a new government to announce that its foreign policy will have an ethical aspect. Perhaps the most significant impact of the New Labour announcement of an ethical dimension (Brown, 2001) was to invite media and political scrutiny of its foreign policy from an ethical viewpoint (Smith and Light, 2001), at the possibly deterrent cost of a major scandal after less than two years in power (BBC News, 2017a).

Modern Humanitarian Intervention

The humanitarian crises most frequently cited as precedents in favour of humanitarian military intervention in the debates studied for this thesis were Bosnia

(70th in Libya debates and 99th in Syria debates), Rwanda (83rd in Libya), and Kosovo (99th in Syria debates).[1] The Bosnia and Kosovo cases occurred during the post-Cold War disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the Rwanda case was the genocide of 1994. The low ranking of these themes in the debates may have reflected the questionable merits of each scenario as a precedent in favour of military intervention,[2] particularly the type of intervention exemplified in Libya in 2011, aerial bombardment in support of rebels.

Hillary Clinton's deputy as US Secretary of State, James Steinberg (cited in Becker and Shane, 2016: n.p.), judged that: "The thing about Rwanda that's important is it showed the cost of inaction". A longer view of history might have reached the opposite conclusion, pointing to the appointment of one ethnic group to rule over another by the colonial conquerors of Rwanda as a root cause of the conflict (Giblin, 2010). It could be argued that a humane assessment of the 1994 genocide would be likely to emphasise the massive loss of life over the political utility of the event. Showing the cost of inaction is important when the priority is justifying military intervention.

The portrayal of Rwanda as an example of a missed opportunity for an easy intervention to stop a genocide has been challenged by closer examination of the facts (Wertheim, 2010). The genocide grew out of civil war, and it was not immediately apparent from outside when the war became genocide. The myth that the genocide was easily preventable by a small intervention force rested on underestimation of the resources and time needed to stop countrywide killing. It is more likely that a large invasion force would have been needed, especially as the civil war faction fighting against the government and to end the genocide, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) did not want a humanitarian intervention. A foreign intervention would probably have enforced a peace agreement, and the RPF wanted the victory that they ultimately won.

Support in the USA for humanitarian intervention had been reduced by the loss of eighteen US soldiers on a mission in Somalia in 1993 which had expanded from humanitarian aid into peace enforcement. Concern to avoid such unplanned, almost accidental expansion, or "mission creep" (Wertheim, 2010: 152), which risked becoming harmful when ambition overtook ability, influenced the US response to the Rwanda genocide. It was not until several years after the genocide that it was

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[1]   Appendix I.
[2]   See also the section on Invocation of Precedents in Chapter 7.

routinely portrayed as an easy opportunity missed due to cowardice and inhumanity (Wertheim, 2010). Constructivist analysis has argued that this change resulted from the convergence of two trends in US politics, neoconservatism and humanitarian intervention, for the first time during the late 1990s. Neoconservatives favoured military intervention to install democracy, humanitarian intervention protagonists to enforce human rights (Wertheim, 2010).

The rise of these viewpoints to dominance among political elites in the USA and UK propelled the construction of a mythology of Western military power as a force for moral improvement. The mythology had an imperial tenor as it placed the US at the vanguard of civilisation. It combined security with philanthropy by presenting humanitarian intervention as necessary to make the world safe for US citizens. It assumed US omnipotence and beneficence, and ubiquitous legitimacy. In the evangelical language of journalist, activist, academic, and US ambassador to the UN (Munro, 2020), Samantha Power (cited in Wertheim, 2010: 165), speaking of President George W. Bush: "He saw that evil-doers littered the planet; and he saw that, like it or not, if the United States didn't become police chief of the world, Americans, too, would pay a price."

The reality of the Rwanda civil war and genocide, a complex disaster with no cheap, simple, bloodless solution, was crafted into a fable with the moral that we - the international community, the West, the liberal world - must act or we are complicit in the worst of crimes (Wertheim, 2010). The messaging was simplistic, emotive, inflexible, tendentious, and impractical. In its divergence from sober and reliable calculation of the probable benefits and harms of intervention, it was also arguably irresponsible.

A declassified discussion paper prepared by the US Department of Defense for President Clinton (Hamilton, 2011) warned against designating the Rwanda mass killings of 1994 as genocide because lawyers at the State Department of State were concerned that: "Genocide finding could commit USG [United States Government] to actually 'do something'" (US Department of Defense, 1998: n.p.). The paper also advised against the use of language in policy statements that could lead to "… a danger of signing up to troop contributions". However, although the paper cautioned against an increase in US involvement, it suggested concentrating on diplomatic approaches and regional solutions, and prioritising security over humanitarian gestures, rather than doing nothing (US Department of Defense, 1998). It does not necessarily follow from the failure of this approach to avert a slaughter that the

solution would have been a major US-led military intervention.

What can be learned about Libya by studying Rwanda is negligible, as is what can be learned about Syria by studying Kosovo, due to the differences between countries and crises (Puri, 2016). Given the multifarious causes of conflict and the widely varying demographic composition, history, political traditions, cultural contexts and international relationships of states, logic suggests that simply transferring a solution that helped to resolve a conflict in one place and time to another would be highly unlikely to succeed. However, proponents of humanitarian military intervention often treat specific instances as generalisable. James Steinberg (cited in Becker and Shane, 2016), for example, explained the US decision to bomb Libya in 2011 as learning from the examples of Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

A massacre at Srebrenica in 1995 has often been cited as an example of the risks of not intervening in a conflict (Cunliffe, 2020). However, as in Syria, there had been extensive Western and UN intervention in Bosnia. An investigation by *The Guardian* indicated that international intervention had contributed directly to the infamous massacre (Hartmann and Vulliamy, 2015). The UN declared a safe zone at Srebrenica in 1993. However, this status and the presence of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) did not render the city safe, as it remained besieged and under constant assault.

The Western powers - US, UK, and France - who were negotiating with Bosnian Serb forces knew that the Serbs intended to take the safe areas. They had also been warned by the leadership of the besieged Bosnian Muslims that the Serbs planned to massacre Muslim men of fighting age. The UN refused to increase the protection force to a viable size, and then allowed the Bosnian Serb forces, whose leaders had previously threatened to massacre civilians in Srebrenica, to evacuate from Srebrenica the civilians the UN had undertaken to protect (Hartmann and Vulliamy, 2015).

There was considerable intervention by the international community in the Bosnian war, and the way it was conducted may even have facilitated the Srebrenica genocide. The presentation of the case of Srebrenica as proof of the hazards of non-intervention is, therefore, questionable. The complexities of the case emphasise the analytical inadequacy of discussing intervention in binary terms of intervening or not intervening, rather than discussing strategy in terms of probable effectiveness and risks.

The Bosnian precedent may be more useful as an exemplar of the type of conflict that has become characteristic of the post-Cold War period. Mary Kaldor (2012: vi) used the conflict in Bosnia-Hercegovina as a case study for her analysis of "new wars", and attributed the failure of recent humanitarian interventions to a lack of comprehension by intervening governments of the nature of new wars. Far from an absence of intervention, Kaldor (2012: 64) reported that from 1992 Bosnia-Hercegovina had "the most ambitious deployment of UN peacekeeping troops designed to assist and protect the civilian population and to uphold humanitarian law." However, the UN troops were not able to enforce a ceasefire and the worst atrocities occurred when areas under UN protection were occupied by Bosnian Serb fighters, who committed a genocide of men taken from Srebrenica.

Kaldor (2012) judged that if the Bosnian war had been perceived as primarily a genocidal undertaking, this could have led to greater focus on civilian protection and humanitarian action. This may have been based on an unduly optimistic view of the Libya intervention as a model of genocide prevention, as Kaldor's (2012) book was published before Libya's post-intervention disintegration. It is not supported by the international community's reaction to mass killings in Darfur. These were described as genocide in 2004 by the US Congress (Payne, 2004) and Secretary of State General Colin Powell (White, 2015), but no military intervention followed either statement.

No use of the term *genocide* by British government ministers to describe the Libyan revolution and civil war that began in 2011 was found in the parliamentary debates studied for this thesis. However, ministers' arguments for military intervention often focussed on the protection of civilian lives from Libyan government violence, the second most frequent theme in the debates.[1] This focus did not lead to post-intervention stability, nor to protective action to stop the many human rights abuses committed in the anarchic violence that followed the overthrow of Gaddafi (Human Rights Watch, 2013, 2014a).

No civilian protection was attempted by the intervening states after they ended their military action in 2011 (Smith, 2019). The USA even failed to protect its own ambassador, who was murdered in Benghazi (BBC News, 2012). The haste of British MPs to identify the Libyan conflict as primarily a slaughter of civilians led to an error of judgment, as a committee of MPs later confirmed that the threat had

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[1]   Appendix I.

been exaggerated and there had been no real prospect of a massacre (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016). The British government misrepresented the conflict as a slaughter of civilians to obtain Security Council Resolution 1973 authorising protective war (United Nations Security Council, 2011b), then misrepresented Resolution 1973 as an authority for regime change (United Nations Security Council, 2011a), the P3's principal objective in Libya,[1] as it had been in Kosovo (Schulte, 2013).

The first New Labour Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, has been portrayed as an exemplar of moral leadership who brought ethics back into foreign policy (Clark, 2015). The largest military action involving British forces during Robin Cook's foreign office tenure was the NATO bombardment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 1999, presented as a humanitarian intervention to end Serbian repression in Kosovo (Roberts, 1999).

However, the presentation of NATO's bombing of FRY in 1999 as the beginning of a new age of humanitarian intervention appears illusory (Hehir, 2019). There has never been an international consensus in support of the action. Objections have included the weakening of state sovereignty in favour of humanitarian intervention. Human rights activists welcomed this change as evidence of the empowerment of civil society, but international civil society - non-governmental, academic and media organisations and activists promoting human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and liberal values in general - did not have a significant role in the promotion or the undertaking of the intervention. The intervention was widely judged to be illegal. Supporters of the action judged that the humanitarian imperative to intervene overrode the current law (Hehir, 2019).

An excess of confidence in the military power, and commitment to human rights, of NATO skewed the perception by supporters of the Kosovo intervention as a humanitarian success and exemplary precedent. The defence of human rights by Western states since Kosovo has been very uneven. Kosovo's lack of valuable natural resources or strategic location aided NATO's claim of humanitarian motivation (Hehir, 2019). However, the bombing helped the USA fulfil its aim of overthrowing Milošević (Schulte, 2013), which effectively ended Russian influence as a significant factor in the Balkans, and left the former Yugoslavia dissolved into small, weak states.

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[1]   See Chapter 5 section on regime change in Libya.

The US-led coalition, anticipating Russian and Chinese vetoes, did not seek UN Security Council authorisation to bomb FRY in 1999. There was limited support in the international community for intervention in Kosovo and many states opposed it, including the G77 group of developing countries. Thus, the intervention increased the rift between states concerned about the erosion of sovereignty and those eager to promote humanitarian intervention (Hehir, 2019). Arguably it also manifested the neo-colonial character of modern humanitarian intervention, as the rift was, roughly speaking, between Western powers and many former colonies of Western empires.

The US government decided to work towards removing Milošević in 1998, according to Gregory Schulte (2013), who advised President Clinton during the regime change campaign. The US strategy of supporting Milošević's opposition and weakening his support base included sanctions, and propaganda promising that his overthrow would be good for the people of Serbia. The NATO bombing of 1999 "helped set the conditions for Milosevic's removal" (Schulte, 2013: 47), which was accomplished in 2000.

Schulte (2013) emphasised the need for dissimulation during regime change operations, to avoid reputational damage to opposition forces supported by the US, and to forestall obstructive behaviour by states unsympathetic to US aims. A similar reputational concern may underlie Schulte's (2013) dubious claim that the NATO bombing campaign in 1999 was not part of the regime change operation.

An ethnic Albanian militia, the Kosovan Liberation Army (KLA), was given military aid and diplomatic support by the US government, which in its public statements ignored KLA violence and blamed all wrong-doing on Serbs (Lynch, 2011). When the KLA rejected a peace settlement that required it to disarm, the US Secretary of State changed the agreement to allow them to keep their weapons. This was a deliberate ploy, according to British Defence Secretary Lord Gilbert (cited in Lynch, 2011), to offer Milošević terms he could not accept, forcing him into the position of refusing to negotiate, so that war against him would appear to be the only remaining option.

Schulte (2013: 48) indicated that the indictment of Milošević for war crimes was arranged as a tactic in the campaign against him, not in objective pursuit of justice: "The goal was to deny Milošević international recognition that he could use to restore political legitimacy at home." The appearance of impartiality of the judicial process was further undermined by a payment of $1 billion by the US government,

the EU, and the World Bank to the Yugoslav government upon the extradition of Milošević to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (BBC News, 2001).

Schulte (2013) judged the outcome of the overthrow of Milošević to be positive for all parties except Russia, but he offered no evidence of this, and it is unlikely that the Serb people - particularly those currently or formerly resident in Kosovo - see the loss of Kosovo as a benefit. Serbia's post-regime change government does not recognise the independence of Kosovo.

In 2015, 66,880 Kosovo citizens and 19,095 Serbian citizens applied for asylum in the EU (Eurostat, 2016), indicating poor conditions in both countries. In 2016 the Central Intelligence Agency (2016) of the USA listed unemployment in Serbia at 19.3% and Kosovo at 35.3%, with 9.2% in Serbia and 30% in Kosovo living below the poverty line, indicating that separation from Serbia has not brought prosperity to Kosovo.

NATO's 1999 campaign of air strikes continued for 77 days (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1999) and comprised 14,006 individual bombing attacks (Roberts, 1999), yet Schulte (2013: 51) concluded that: "Regime change without force succeeded in Serbia". The original stated purpose of the bombing was civilian protection but, as Schulte (2013: 48) admitted, "NATO air strikes began including regime-related targets such as leadership, state-controlled media, and crony assets that met legal targeting requirements". He did not explain how "crony assets" presented a threat to Kosovo civilians.

Bombing regime-related targets is consistent with the objective of regime change, and even if NATO believed that in attacking the property of Milošević's civilian supporters they were engaging in civilian protection, the bombing also contributed to Milošević's overthrow. Schulte (2013: 48) confirmed this: "NATO's air campaign weakened Milošević. It also strengthened the resolve of the nineteen NATO allies that Milošević had to go. This set the stage for a concerted international effort, after the air strikes, to force him out".

He then drew the contradictory conclusion that this had been "Regime change without force" (Schulte, 2013: 51). His reference to "… a Presidential decision at the outset that U.S. national interests … required the removal of Milosevic" (Schulte, 2013: 51) also directly contradicted UK Foreign Secretary Robin Cook (1999: n.p.), who said during the bombing that:

> … we should always bear very firmly in mind that Milosevic had every opportunity to avert this conflict by negotiation and dialogue, it was he who blocked off that path, if Russia is willing to help us to unblock that path then that is welcome.

If NATO had decided to overthrow Milošević, this statement was clearly false - the path could not be unblocked. It is not clear whether Cook was knowingly misleading the public, or had been excluded from American decisions on NATO strategy.

A substantial military force withdrew from Kosovo after the NATO bombardment of FRY without having sustained significant losses. The NATO assault had, however, caused extensive harm to civilians, with an estimated 495 killed and 820 wounded (Fenrick, 2001), many in attacks of dubious legality against non-military targets (Human Rights Watch, 2000). NATO bombing destroyed all of Yugoslavia's petroleum refining capacity, 70% of road bridges and 50% of rail bridges across the River Danube, and 100% of rail routes linking Kosovo to Serbia and Montenegro (Fenrick, 2001).

It was impossible to tell to what extent the military outcome had been obtained by the NATO bombardment (Fenrick, 2001). If the killing of Serbian civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure in FRY prompted the withdrawal of the federal army from Kosovo, the characterisation of the action as civilian protection becomes problematic. The NATO bombing of FRY in 1999 appears to have been largely ineffective militarily, inflicting only slight harm on FRY forces (Cunliffe, 2020). It initially accelerated forced displacement of Albanians, the crime it was supposed to prevent, and then precipitated forced displacement of Serbs (Kaldor, 2012), making it a poor template for protective military action (Roberts, 1999). Ethnic conflict was not solved but suspended, with the Serbs who remained in Kosovo after the intervention living in guarded, segregated zones for their protection (Kaldor, 2012).

An allegation which the weight of credible evidence has shown to be a fabrication - the presentation by KLA activists of a firefight between FRY police and armed KLA rebels as a massacre of civilians - was given a pivotal role in the campaign for war by US and UK news media. Although contradictory evidence was published in French and German media, this was not reported in the Anglophone press which chose a single partial source, a KLA rebel who claimed to have witnessed the event and that it was a massacre of civilians (Vukasovich and Dejanovic-Vukasovich, 2016). It has been argued that the principal objective of NATO's 1999 assault on

FRY forces was to boost NATO's credibility (Vukasovich and Dejanovic-Vukasovich, 2016). The tactics and consequences of the intervention render this explanation plausible (Hehir, 2019).

The alliance arguably needed a new purpose to justify its continuing existence after the termination of the adversary it was created to resist, the Soviet Union (Hehir, 2019). NATO's expansion towards Russia and attacks on Russian allies in FRY reignited enmity between Russia and the West. Western humanitarian rhetoric was updated to replace protection from communist oppression with protection against mass atrocity crimes. NATO's Kosovo intervention was not a humanitarian breakthrough, but a continuation of the historical tradition of aggression to serve national interests promoted with humanitarian propaganda (Hehir, 2019). Russia cited the Kosovo intervention in justification of its annexation of Crimea (Smith, 2019). The Kosovo action arguably did more harm than good to the reputation of humanitarian intervention by exemplifying it as the use of force to overthrow a government and redraw state borders (Lynch, 2011).

The overwhelming power of nationalism posited by Mearsheimer (2018) was arguably a disruptive factor in the NATO intervention in Kosovo, a liberal humanitarian intervention against forced displacement of Kosovans of Albanian descent which promoted both the displacement it sought to prevent and a greater displacement of Serbs. NATO powers invoked liberal principles to justify as humanitarian an intervention which aided Kosovan nationalists. Liberal states allied with their strongest ideological opponent, nationalism, and portrayed the action, whose main accomplishment was the fulfilment of Kosovan nationalism with de facto independence (BBC News, 2008), as an exemplar of applied liberal idealism so powerful that it overrode international law (Bellamy, 2004).

The crises discussed above in Kosovo, Bosnia, and Rwanda were all cited in the foreword of a report published in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) established in 2000 by the Canadian government to consider the problem of protective international intervention, particularly military intervention (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001). The report was presented as a guide, not as draft legislation, nor as jurisprudential innovation: "Our report has aimed at providing precise guidance for states faced with human protection claims in other states ..." (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: viii). It specified the Rwanda genocide as an archetype of the atrocities that ICISS believed

its specification of the R2P, derived from international law and state practise, could ensure did not recur.

The Responsibility to Protect

The essence of the responsibility to protect (R2P, RtoP), the contested status of which is demonstrated by its description as a "concept" (Kaldor, 2012: 11), "doctrine" (Hobson, 2016: 433), "norm" (Doyle, 2016: 673), "theory of political order" (Cunliffe, 2020: 23) and "a great slogan, though little else" (Hehir, 2010: 234) was defined by ICISS in two points:

A. State sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself.

B. Where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: xi).

The principal obstacle to intervention which ICISS sought to solve with the R2P doctrine was the conflict between international intervention by force on humanitarian grounds and the inviolability of state sovereignty. Its solution was to define "sovereignty as responsibility" (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: 13). This definition was based on a perhaps creative interpretation of the UN Charter that, in signing it, states accepted a change "from *sovereignty as control* to *sovereignty as responsibility* in both internal functions and external duties" (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: 13). This seems to diverge from a more realistic view that sovereignty has always comprised control and responsibility (Carati, 2016). The ability to fulfil the responsibilities of a sovereign would be extremely limited without control. Control, and therefore sovereignty, would be difficult to sustain without fulfilment of responsibility.

Another questionable dichotomy appears in the ICISS finding that "concepts of security must include people as well as states" (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: 15), presented as a recent and continuing advance in the international perception of security. However, given that states are

comprised of people and are the primary providers of human security, the security of both would appear essential to the security of either. Rhetorical separation and opposition to each other of people and state could risk legitimising destruction of the state in the guise of protecting the people.

ICISS judged that the principle of humanitarian intervention was well established, lawful, and desirable, and the main obstacle to its successful operation was perceptual, necessitating a change in descriptive language: "Thus the 'responsibility to protect' is more of a linking concept that bridges the divide between intervention and sovereignty; the language of the 'right or duty to intervene' is intrinsically more confrontational" (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: 17). It could be argued that confrontational language about war - military intervention - would be more appropriate than a bridge-building metaphor, and that positing a gap rather than a direct contradiction between coercive intervention and sovereignty is evading rather than addressing the issue. A similar criticism has been made of the ICISS report's failure to adequately address crucial issues of reforming the Security Council, humanitarian intervention without UN authority, and the level of abuse required to justify intervention (Hehir, 2010).

The risk of moral hazard was acknowledged by ICISS: "When internal forces seeking to oppose a state believe that they can generate outside support by mounting campaigns of violence, the internal order of all states is potentially compromised" (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: 31), casting doubt on Thomas Weiss's (cited in Zifcak, 2012: 67) attribution of this concern to "contrarians" - habitual dissenters from any widely accepted proposition. The ICISS report divided the R2P into three component responsibilities: "to prevent", pre-empting the necessity for intervention; "to react", with measures up to military intervention when prevention has failed; and "to rebuild", especially after military intervention (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: xi). States owed responsibilities both to their populations and to the international community. However, the divisions were not clarified, and as accountability was ultimately to the international community, state responsibilities to populations appear subordinate to state responsibilities to the international community (Cunliffe, 2020).

Arguably, these responsibilities, when combined, approximate to the responsibility to govern which, when appropriated forcibly by a foreign power, resembles imperial conquest (Cunliffe, 2020). Conversely, criticism of inadequate

pre-war preventive efforts by the states leading the 2011 intervention in Libya, a supposed exemplar of the R2P in Libya (Ban, 2012), e.g. weapons sales to Gaddafi by British and French governments (Rogers, 2011), and lack of civilian protection or reconstruction efforts after the regime change (Sensini, 2016), could build pressure for a more responsible approach to future crises.

Notably, in view of the UN Secretary-General's presentation of the 2011 Libya intervention as an exemplar of the R2P in practise (Ban, 2012), the ICISS report appears to exclude the use of the doctrine to justify enforced regime change, "the objective being protection of a population, not defeat of a state" (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: xiii). This is, however, an ambiguous constraint, as states pursuing regime change on humanitarian grounds could argue that they were seeking the defeat of the leader, not the state.

The UN General Assembly adopted the 2005 World Summit Outcome in Resolution 60/1, which included three paragraphs on the R2P, committing the UN to a more restrained version than that recommended in the ICISS report (Carati, 2016). It did not directly endorse a responsibility of the international community to intervene militarily where non-violent methods had failed. Instead, it expressed preparedness to take military action, not an obligation. The responsibility of the international community was to help states fulfil their responsibility to protect their citizens "from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" (United Nations General Assembly, 2005: 30), using appropriate non-violent methods.

Resolution 60/1 portrayed the international community's responsibility as primarily supportive, and distinct from that of states, not a transfer of the same responsibility in cases of state inaction, failure, or abuse. Intervention by force was listed as a possibility, not as a responsibility or duty, and was to be considered only when state failure to protect was clearly occurring, and "on a case-by-case basis" (United Nations General Assembly, 2005: 30), precluding the possibility of one violent intervention being used as a precedent for another (Dunford and Neu, 2019b).

Some supporters of the R2P have contended that it is a new norm in international law (Doyle, 2016), but this has not been a majority view (Hehir, 2019). The R2P is, in Cunliffe's (2020) analysis, a political theory founded on a reordering of international relations that undermines liberal order, denies self-determination, and

disenfranchises peoples by overriding the responsibility of governments to citizens with a responsibility of governments to other, effectively more powerful, governments comprising the dominant element of the international community.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has been credited as the driving force behind the R2P, prompted by revulsion and shame at the failure of the UN to act to stop genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and inspired by the perceived success of the 1999 NATO bombing of FRY, while concerned at its illegality (Cater and Malone, 2016). However, it seems unlikely that the concept would have progressed so far within the UN had the R2P not been a priority for the world's leading states. The impression of African leadership may have helped to divert potential criticism that the R2P was a neo-colonial instrument of control in humanitarian guise.

Journalist Peter Stothard (2003), invited by Tony Blair's communications director Alastair Campbell to shadow the Prime Minister at the start of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and chronicle his war leadership, reported usage of Annan's forename as a metaphor for humanitarian marketing of military action in Iraq by British government minister and Labour peer Baroness Morgan. Stothard (2003: 139) explained that: "'We'd better Kofi this' means we had better obscure this bit of military planning with a good coat of humanitarian waffle." The invocation of Annan's name also encompassed pursuit of UN authority for the occupation of Iraq. In this context, "… in London, the one key word is still 'Kofi'. Backbenchers and European 'partners' want to Kofi as much as they can" (Stothard, 2003: 221).

Stothard (2003) portrays Blair as motivated by sincere liberal aims in the 2003 invasion of Iraq - to overthrow a tyrant, build a democracy, and expand the liberal world. Blair's tactics were guided by political calculations that humanitarian presentation was the best way to win support to enable implementation, and that the national interest and liberal values were best served by unity with the world's most powerful state and international champion of liberalism, the USA.

Canadian Prime Minister, Paul Martin (cited in Cater and Malone, 2016: 287), addressed the concerns of developing countries in 2004 that the R2P would become an instrument of military neo-colonialism with the assurance that: "The responsibility to protect is not a license for intervention; it is an international guarantor of international accountability". Sceptics might have noted that it was a non-license for intervention which offered a license for intervention; a guarantor which gave no guarantee; and a promise of accountability to the international community which

eschewed accountability of the international community (Cunliffe, 2020).

Hence, perhaps, the reduced scope of the R2P adopted by the UN General Assembly. The General Assembly's Resolution 60/1 (United Nations General Assembly, 2005) specified Security Council authorisation as the sole source of legitimacy for military intervention. The ICISS report had recommended the Security Council as the primary authority in such matters, but explicitly left open the issue of whether other authorities could legitimise intervention (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001).

The ICISS report argued that as states would intervene without UN authority in grievous cases, the Security Council should feel obligated to give authority to maintain its credibility (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001). Conversely, it could be argued that the Security Council's credibility as the global peacekeeper might be better enhanced by acting on its own best judgment, rather than being propelled to war by fear of losing international stature in the event of state or regional intervention without its authority. The General Assembly in 2005 refrained from endorsing either unauthorised action or an obligation to intervene militarily (United Nations General Assembly, 2005).

The narrow scope of protection offered by the version of the R2P endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly (2005), covering mass atrocity crimes but omitting many other hazards susceptible to exacerbation by government ineptitude or abuse, e.g. famine, disease, injustice and insecurity (Bazirake and Bukuluki, 2015), may have helped persuade sceptical governments to accept the concept (Hehir, 2019). Therefore, while international acceptance of the R2P may suggest worldwide enthusiasm for a progressive new concept, it may also reflect relief that the latest manifestation of humanitarian imperialism (Bricmont, 2006) has been contained within a relatively restrictive framework (Hehir, 2019).

The paradox of the R2P's political success and practical failure, manifested in increasing instances of the abuses it was designed to reduce, has been attributed to the absence of essential prerequisites, namely unchallenged Western global dominance and strong international civil society (Hehir, 2019). It may also illustrate a contradiction at the base of the concept, whereby the state power required for Western dominance, and the state retrenchment required to empower civil society, are both prerequisites, but act against each other. One resolution of this contradiction that risks weakening civil society as an independent influence on state

action has been the co-option of humanitarian NGOs by governments (Robinson, 2013; Cunliffe, 2020).

Responsibility implies a duty to act (Teimouri, 2015), and this element of the R2P was explicitly rejected by the United States as an infringement of its sovereignty in 2005. The US ambassador to the UN, John Bolton (cited in Teimouri, 2015), submitted a letter in response to the R2P doctrine stating that the US did not consider itself, or any other state or entity, bound by any legal requirement to intervene.

Instead of a legal obligation, the USA proposed a moral responsibility, and expressed a preference for implementation by peaceful means. The USA appeared to accept a moral responsibility to protect as retrospective justification of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 (Teimouri, 2015). Morality is subjective, so legitimising it as a basis for war risks institutionalising a lack of accountability, as it is always open to the interveners to claim that they believed they were doing the right thing.

States may intervene, using the justification of responsibility to protect, for reasons that are not protective or humanitarian. Hardeep Singh Puri (2016), India's representative in the Security Council in 2011-12, reported that while state diplomacy is often presented as altruistic striving to build a better world, this is usually a cynical disguise for the amoral pursuit of self-interest. It is difficult to find a case of purported humanitarian intervention that does not appear to have been partly driven by ulterior motives (Teimouri, 2015), and mixed motives of governments for choosing when and where to use military force overseas are probably inevitable (Cunliffe, 2020).

Agreement never to use the R2P to justify military action has been proposed as a solution to the problem of states using the doctrine as a cover for acquisitive aggression (Morris, 2013). Decisions to use force, and the ensuing military operations, will invariably be contaminated by other national interest priorities (Cunliffe, 2020), such as securing access to resources or markets, building or supporting alliances, or weakening a perceived competitor. Instead, the doctrine could be used to establish an internationally agreed legitimate level of state conduct towards citizens, and the role of the international community limited to non-violent assistance (Morris, 2013).

Ramesh Thakur (cited in Bajoria and McMahon, 2013), a co-author of the ICISS

report on the R2P (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001), argued that if the doctrine cannot be enforced militarily it will become effectively meaningless. However, this stance minimises the importance of diplomacy and aid, the power of political pressure to impel adaptation to internationally accepted standards, and the counterproductive potential of enforcement (Lynch, 2011). Even non-military coercion can conflict with the aim of protection. Economic sanctions are generally presented, at least by sanctioning governments, as non-violent, although their impact is often fatal. For example, sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s were found by UNICEF to have caused increases in excess of 100% in infant and child mortality rates (UNICEF, 1999).

Matthew Bellinger (2020) has chronicled some of the long history of Western states, particularly the USA but also European empires in Africa and Asia, of disguising acquisitive territorial conquest as humanitarian assistance to oppressed peoples. Emotive speeches by politicians featuring lurid and fanciful atrocity stories and the promise of civilising backward peoples, combining racism and paternalism, were a feature of US wars driven by material national interest motives. Early victims of US spurious humanitarian violence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included Cuba, the Philippines, and Haiti. The French and British empires justified colonial possessions on humanitarian grounds, and Adolf Hitler used the rhetoric of civilian protection to justify German conquest of neighbouring territory in the 1930s.

The prerequisites for legitimate military intervention under the R2P - "*right authority, just cause, right intention, last resort, proportional means and reasonable prospects*" (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001: 32) - are drawn from just war theory (Carati, 2016), the origins of which have been traced as far back as the Roman Empire (Brunstetter and O'Driscoll, 2018). However, the ICISS report which enunciated the R2P (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001) did not credit these principles to the just war tradition. It has been suggested that this omission indicates reluctance on the part of the R2P's creators to acknowledge a philosophical lineage connecting their doctrine to the medieval misuse of just war principles to justify sectarian aggression (Carati, 2016). This explanation is speculative, but the omission from the R2P of adequate protection against the cynical deployment of moralising rhetoric to create propaganda for malignant militarism remains a cause for concern, irrespective of motives.

Proponents of the R2P and just war tend to give scant attention to the impacts and outcomes of humanitarian military intervention (Dunford and Neu, 2019b). Contemporary just war theory and the R2P overlook the contribution of the international community to the proliferation of conflict in the modern world, and hence fail to mitigate the risk of handing responsibility for human rights enforcement to the international community (Dunford and Neu, 2019b).

In an attempt to address the problem of harmful intervention outcomes, Bellinger (2020) recommended a new requirement for intervening states to take the views of the people of the target state into account, with a particular emphasis on sensitivity to national culture. Such awareness would help, he argued, to preserve the target country as a unified functional nation-state. Thus, if an intervening state "is motivated by selfish purposes, it will at least be constrained by forced focus on the native country's desires and preferences" (Bellinger, 2020: 386).

The argument that a culturally sensitive assault would be less likely to destabilise the target state does not address the causes of state failure consequent upon intervention - the destruction of infrastructure and administration by the intervener (Cunliffe, 2020). Even if culturally sensitive bombing, invasion, or occupation are possible, the prospect of obtaining the necessary insights while preparing an attack seems remote. It is hard to conceive of a means by which the views of the people of a state so oppressed and disrupted that the international community is considering humanitarian military intervention could be reliably canvassed. On practical and moral grounds, the culturally sensitive option, therefore, would appear to be the avoidance of military action, in favour of constructive diplomatic intervention and support.

Bellinger (2020) attributed the rise of sectarian strife in Iraq after the 2003 US-led invasion to a failure of the invaders to take Iraqi cultural divisions into account, yet the example he gave appears to illustrate the opposite: the US gave cultural divisions excessive prominence by institutionalising them in the constitutional process, dividing power over the country's future on ethnic/sectarian lines and deepening the rifts. Bellinger (2020) observed that the divisions appeared in Iraq after the US-led occupation authority had set up a constitutional commission with members chosen from ethnic and religious communities in apparent proportion to their share of total national population. However, he asserted that the problem arose from the commission's inability to agree, not from its construction by the occupying powers as a group of ethnic/sectarian delegates likely to compete for what each

perceived as the best interests of their group.

Solutions comprising adjustments to current practise, such as Bellinger's (2020) proposal, might be appropriate if humanitarian intervention was generally working well with a few problems, but when it is producing disastrous results, and leaving target states in a worse condition than before the crisis that provoked the intervention, an adjustment approach risks evading the root causes and extent of the problem. The cultural sensitivity condition could be interpreted as a rationale for the USA to avoid intervention in the internal affairs of its repressive allies, such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. In cases where the US and its allies desire intervention, the condition could be met by organising and recognising groups of dissidents as the authentic unified voice of the people.

Bellinger's (2020) solution did not address the fundamental question – who will force the focus? Who will control and hold to account the most powerful nations on earth? He allocated the task to "the international community" (Bellinger, 2020: 389) with no further detail. When this body is dominated by states, notably the P3 with their Security Council veto power, military dominance, and long histories of duplicitous and destructive humanitarian military interventions, this does not seem feasible. The most reliable conclusion from Bellinger's (2020) description of the US effort to impose democracy in Iraq may be that the USA and its allies are not qualified for the role of leaders in humanitarian intervention (Dunford and Neu, 2019a).

Karen Smith (2018: 3) has argued in favour of the EU implementing the R2P, yet described potential EU internal humanitarian intervention as "taking action against a member state", framing it as a hostile act. She also cited an EU representative to the UN asserting that the main objective of the EU was to permit the peoples of Europe to live in security and peace (Smith, 2018). The Treaty of Rome (European Economic Community, 1957), the founding treaty of the EU's forerunner, the European Economic Community (EEC), refers principally to states rather than populations, and is primarily an economic instrument, aiming for security and peace as secondary effects of the primary aims: increased equality, prosperity and cooperation in the economic sphere.

Article 5 of the Treaty of Rome (European Economic Community, 1957) prohibits member states from actions which could obstruct the aims of the treaty. Article 6(2) cautions institutions of the EEC to avoid actions that might destabilise the

economies of member states. The tools of the R2P that have been favoured in practise - economic sanctions and military intervention - would both appear contrary to these Articles. Article 224 requires member states to discuss measures to protect the freedom of trade in the EEC if any member state acts to suppress insurrection or serious disorder, but not to protect civilians in the disordered state.

Smith (2018) contends that the EU has not agreed on the instruments to be used for mass atrocity prevention, and her contention is correct in respect of EU intervention outside its borders. However, the EU does have instruments for use in cases of human rights breaches by its members, which would cover mass atrocities. There is more emphasis on rights and social values in the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union (European Union, 2002) than in the Treaty of Rome. Article 7(1) of the former sets out a mechanism for identifying breaches by member states of the commitments to human rights and democratic freedoms enshrined in Article 6, and for making recommendations to the member state concerned. Article 2(2) sets out a procedure for deciding if such breaches are grave, and Article 2(3) a procedure for withdrawing some EU membership rights from states that persist in grave breaches.

Therefore, instruments exist in EU law for tackling human rights breaches by member states, potentially encompassing a wider range of breaches than the R2P with its focus on mass atrocity crimes (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001). However, EU law does lack an authority for military enforcement of human rights protection by EU institutions against a member state. The absence of such a potentially destructive measure, and the negligible prospect of all member states agreeing to one, may be a gauge of the legitimacy of such measures in general. If EU peoples would not accept such enforcement against each other, it would be implausible for them to argue that such interventions are desired by peoples elsewhere. The argument that liberal democracies do not commit atrocities sufficient to trigger the R2P is challenged by the experience of Germany's Weimar Republic (Shirer, 1991) and other transitions from democracy to dictatorship. Weimar Germany was a constitutional democratic state, and it discarded this polity to go to war. In 1933 the German parliament passed the Nazi legislation which effectively replaced democracy with dictatorship by 441 votes to 94 (Kershaw, 2001: 468).

The concept of the R2P has proved successful in promoting humanitarian military intervention (Hehir, 2010). However, it has not overcome the flaws of the Western

humanitarian intervention traditions from which it grew. These include: unaccountable empowerment of a small group of powerful states to act as lead interveners (Cunliffe, 2020), dominated by states with histories of abusive imperialism (Dunford and Neu, 2019a); susceptibility to abuse by powerful states pursuing material interests under humanitarian cover (Puri, 2016); lack of consistency in intervention (Teimouri, 2015); lack of democratic support for intervention in intervening states (Edmunds, 2014); choice of targets for intervention skewed by biases of news media (Lynch, 2011); denial of agency to protected peoples (Bazirake and Bukuluki, 2015); and ideological distortion by belief in human evolution towards global liberal capitalism (Fukuyama, 1992). The R2P does not include mitigation of moral hazard (Kuperman, 2008), or of the inherent intractability of contemporary wars (Kaldor, 2012).

ICISS (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001) did not fully analyse these flaws, perhaps partly due to the exclusion of realist expertise from the Commission, reportedly on the grounds that its co-chair, Gareth Evans (cited in Fiott, 2013), perceived realists as cynics who do not care about human suffering. In accordance with an overriding objective of increasing the frequency, rather than the quality, of humanitarian intervention, it did not propose controls that might have obstructed this objective by making intervention more hazardous for intervening states.

Such controls might have included, for example, structures and systems for the management and accountability of states providing protection by force under an international community mandate, or for the adjudication and enforcement of reparations for damage done by military intervention to insure protected peoples against having to bear these costs. If, therefore, the R2P as specified by ICISS (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001) comprises a powerful toolkit for marketing a dangerously flawed doctrine of humanitarian military intervention, its political success and practical failure are no longer paradoxical. Superior marketing of a harmful doctrine is likely to increase political support and practical harm, at least until the extent of the latter undermines the former, as seen in the case of the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 (Dietrich, 2013).

Libya and Syria in the Arab Spring

The term Arab Spring, applied to popular protests occurring in many Arab states

from late 2010 through 2011, has been attributed to US academic Marc Lynch (cited in Leech and Gaskarth, 2015) writing in January 2011, but his usage was a revival rather than an invention. The term had previously been attached by US liberal polemicist Charles Krauthammer (2005) to Lebanese protests that were directed mainly against the murder of Rafiq Hariri and the Syrian occupation of Lebanon (Shields, 2008).

Krauthammer (2005) portrayed the 2005 protests as the vanguard of a liberal democratic revolution in the Middle East inspired by the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. However, no political revolution followed in Lebanon or the region after the protestors had achieved their principal aims of expelling Syrian forces and restoring Lebanese sovereignty (Shields, 2008). Jacques Benoist-Méchin (1959: 20), a French nationalist and Nazi collaborator, had used the term Arab Spring - "un printemps Arabe" - earlier, recalling a series of European revolutions in 1848, to describe the liberation of the Arab world from Western colonialism (Elhusseini, 2014). Lebanese author George Antonius (2001: 13) wrote in 1938 of the "Arab awakening" referring to the rise of Arab nationalism, which ultimately led to the establishment of postcolonial Arab governments whose successors included Saddam Hussein and several regimes threatened by the Arab Spring of 2011.

The springtime metaphor is one of several historical characterisations of mid-nineteenth century European revolutions which temporarily displaced some regimes but did not result in a liberal democratic Europe. Other interpretations include dismissal of the rebels as a romanticised irrelevance or aimless discontents exploited by opportunist politicians, and a more persuasive account setting them in their full historical context (Sperber, 2005). Poverty and hunger due to economic failure were significant motives. Liberal democracy ultimately spread across Europe, but only approached stability across the continent one and a half centuries after 1848, following the carnage of the first half of the twentieth century and the end of the Cold War.

The closest parallel between the European and Arab Springs is perhaps their romantic simplification by supporters and their short term failure, although one country, Tunisia, where the Arab Spring began, has succeeded in establishing a democratic regime (Conde, 2017). Tunisia did not experience a Western humanitarian intervention. As with the European revolutions (Sperber, 2005), the full historical significance of the Arab rebellions may lie in the future - the outcomes of the wars that followed the uprisings in Libya, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and the Sahel.

Hamid Dabashi (2012) celebrated the 2010-11 Arab Spring as marking the redundancy of postcolonialism, because Arabs were emancipating themselves in their own way, not in terms imprinted on their cultures by former colonists. However, although hindsight may support a criticism of undue optimism in respect of emancipation, Dabashi reasonably rejected both the Western liberal expectation that Arabs sought only to be like Westerners and build replicas of Western states, and the condescending Orientalism (Said, 2003) of some Western experts on the Middle East such as Bernard Lewis (cited in Dabashi, 2012: 227) who wrote of Arabs that: "They are simply not ready for free and fair elections."

A notable feature of the British foreign policy response to the Arab Spring has been a perception of double standards in the approach to tyranny and repression and the propagation of democracy and liberal values, which has been interpreted as unethical (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015). The appearance of hypocrisy and connivance at repression and state violence in friendly regimes, contrasted with the urgent and relentless assault on sometimes hostile Libya, have called the sincerity of the British state's humanitarian portrayal of military intervention into question. The discrediting of humanitarian intervention by the harmful outcomes of the 2011 Libya intervention has been identified as a factor in limiting public support for a similar intervention in Syria (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015).

A study of official statements by the British government on Arab Spring protests found that Britain gave strong support to anti-government protestors in Libya and Syria and to the government against protestors in Bahrain, and took a mainly neutral stance towards protests in other Arab states (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015). Casualty numbers did not appear to be a credible explanation of the variation in British policy, as although these were relatively low in Bahrain, they were high in Egypt and Yemen as well as Libya and Syria. The researchers investigated the possibility that networks could have determined British policy.

When a Tory and Liberal Democrat coalition government took power in the UK in 2010, Foreign Secretary William Hague signalled a change of policy from his New Labour predecessors, whom he accused of falling short of their own rhetoric. However, he offered no greater clarity on his new approach than Robin Cook had done when he announced his ethical dimension. Hague acknowledged globalisation with a reference to international networks, and proposed that British policy should seek to take advantage of this reality by being more strategic, but omitted to outline a strategy (Gaskarth, 2014).

The strongest correlations Leech and Gaskarth (2015) found between networks and British Arab Spring policy related to security. Economic and elite networks were not significantly correlated with policy. The security benefits for Britain of its security relationship with Saudi Arabia are questionable, given Saudi backing for militant Islam (Baer, 2003; Curtis, 2018). The economic rewards of the security relationship - protected oil supplies at beneficial prices and major Saudi investment in the UK (Aburish, 1997) - are a significant reason for its existence, a possibility obscured by treating networks as discrete when, as Leech and Gaskarth (2015) acknowledged, they are inter-dependent.

The security network may determine policy, but the security network exists to defend the economic network, which sustains and is sustained by elite networks. The conclusion that the networked foreign policy announced by William Hague on behalf of the new Tory and Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010 did not amount to an innovative or concrete policy statement (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015) appears well supported. Arguably, it was no more than a superficial description of the structure of a globalised world, just as Robin Cook's (cited in Brown, 2001: 17) "ethical dimension" announcement could be characterised as more of a recognition of reality than a novel moral aspiration.

NATO's fitness for the role of international humanitarian enforcer was brought into serious doubt by its abandonment of Libya, where it had been the dominant intervention force, almost as soon as Gaddafi was killed and his administration destroyed (Smith, 2019). NATO's apparent disinterest in the security risks of a failed state on the Mediterranean coast as Libya collapsed after the intervention also brings into question NATO's utility, or at least its flexibility, as a defensive alliance.

NATO succeeded in 2011 in overthrowing Colonel Gaddafi in Libya, but with very harmful consequences for the civilian population (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2020), when the sole purpose of the intervention authorised by the Security Council had been civilian protection (United Nations Security Council, 2011b). Judged against the crisis management element of NATO's strategy document published in 2010, the Libya action appears to have been a significant failure. The document acknowledged the threat of external crises to the security of NATO members, and promised that: "NATO will therefore engage, where possible and when necessary, to prevent crises, manage crises, stabilise post-conflict situations and support reconstruction" (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2010: 19). NATO also advised in this document that: "The best way to manage conflicts is

to prevent them from happening" (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2010: 19). However, NATO did the opposite in Libya (Sensini, 2016; Cunliffe, 2020).

NATO was created after the second world war with the core purpose of defending Western liberal democracies (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1949). As such, its mandate has always extended beyond the defence of territory to encompass the defence and promotion of liberal values (Dijk and Sloan, 2020). It may, therefore, seem a natural progression for NATO, after the removal of its greatest adversary by the collapse of the USSR and Warsaw Pact in the 1990s, to move to a more aggressive posture as a promoter of liberalism. Expanding NATO's role as a vanguard of liberal hegemony also countered arguments that the end of the multi-polar Cold War world had rendered NATO obsolete, except perhaps as a diminished European alliance to keep a weakened Russia in check while the USA formed coalitions of convenience to support its management of world affairs as the sole remaining superpower (Rynning, 2012).

However, NATO was not designed as a humanitarian rescue service, and there has not been a consensus among member states on adopting this role (Smith, 2019). Reportedly, many governments in NATO have been relieved at the organisation's retrenchment to a more defensive posture as tension with Russia escalated after the Libya intervention, a change traceable back to the Kosovo intervention of 1999 (Smith, 2019). It appears to follow that the breakdown in relations between NATO and Russia fuelled by NATO's expansion up to Russia's borders, overthrow of Russian allies in the Balkans, abuse of the Russian Security Council abstention on intervention in Libya to turn a protective mission into a regime change war, and proxy war against Russia in Syria, has reduced the utility of humanitarian marketing for NATO. Consequently, there may be a reduction in NATO efforts to commence humanitarian military interventions henceforth.

In 2010, expert opinion tended towards the view that Britain's low rate of economic growth would probably bring a reduced engagement in international affairs, while the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) would become more globally prominent and active (Gaskarth, 2014). Britain's leading role in the NATO intervention in Libya and less direct intervention in Syria appear contrary to this view.

Nations adopt a variety of roles according to context, practical and political constraints, and desired outcomes (Gaskarth, 2014). Roles relevant to humanitarian intervention include protector of human rights, leading military power, and guardians

of national security and prosperity. Constraints may include public hostility, for example opposition to war. British military intervention in Libya and Syria appears to have been opposed by the British people. A poll of the British public in April 2011 indicated that opponents of British military intervention in Libya outnumbered supporters by more than two to one (Gaskarth, 2014), and a poll in 2013 showed clear opposition to a proposal to bomb Syria in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack by Syrian government forces (Edmunds, 2014).

Britain may be unlikely to adopt an isolationist posture in the world due to its commitment to a close strategic alliance with the USA, its history of global engagement, and numerous pressures from within domestic society such as human rights promoters and supporters of British military strength (Gaskarth, 2014). The Brexit vote has been interpreted as isolationist, but is more often characterised as a move to exchange regional orientation for a global outlook. Britain might adopt a more diplomatic role and withdraw from military adventures as the BRIC countries gain power and influence, adapting to their pro-sovereignty posture and hostility to foreign military intervention. This would make good use of Britain's strong diplomatic skills and sustain Britain's perception of itself as a beneficent international actor (Gaskarth, 2014). It could replace destructive military intervention with constructive diplomatic intervention, potentially a more promising route to global influence.

Although British governments have not pursued any new military interventions since the Arab Spring, there is no clear evidence of a British move away from militarism towards a more diplomatic stance. A 2010 survey found that British public opinion favoured maintaining a powerful army but using it as a defence force for the UK, not as an international human rights police force (Gaskarth, 2014).

A BBC investigation found that Britain was increasing and entrenching its military presence in the Middle East in 2013, with an emphasis on protecting allied authoritarian regimes rather than promoting human rights and democracy (Gardner, 2013). In 2016, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson (cited in Scott, 2018) announced that the government was reversing a policy of military disengagement in Asia, confirmed by subsequent investment and asset deployment. In November 2020, Johnson, now Prime Minister, announced a £16.5 billion increase in military expenditure over four years (MacAskill and James, 2020). This followed a reduction of UK GDP by 9.7% since the end of 2019 (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

The British government maintained a high level of support for Saudi military

intervention in Yemen (Merat, 2019). Cunliffe's (2020) analysis of liberalism suggests that Britain will not move away from destructive interventions in the name of human rights. Instead, it is likely to continue to attempt promotion of liberalism by military means when suitable opportunities arise, for example, in weak non-aligned states with illiberal governments, strategic or economic resource significance, and an indigenous insurrection with a good chance of victory if given substantial external military assistance.

Liberal reform may have contributed to the Arab Spring protests (Malito, 2017), in accordance with Sowerby's (2013) theory that reformist despotism risks empowering the people beyond government control. Liberalisation of the state-controlled economies in Libya and Syria began tentatively in the late twentieth century, and accelerated in the twenty-first century with increasing privatisation of industry and services. It included large reductions in consumer price subsidies, for example, removal of $5 billion in subsidies on food and energy supplies in Libya in 2005 (St. John, 2014).

Assad's reforms accorded with Western preferences. They were praised by former European Commissioner and British Labour government minister Lord Mandelson (2001: 4), who called the Syrian leader "a decent man doing a difficult job", and recommended Western assistance to him in his efforts to "spread reform without providing a pretext for rabble-rousers and religious reactionaries to stir the masses and pitch them against his rule." Mandelson's assessment reflected the post-9/11 NATO priority of suppressing international terrorism (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2001). In the same context, Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote to Colonel Gaddafi in 2007 urging continuation of British-Libyan collaboration, "not least in the crucial area of counter-terrorism" (Cobain, 2015).

Libya

Dozens of anti-government protestors were reported killed by government forces in Libya on 17 February 2011 (St. John, 2014). On 17 March 2011, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 imposing a no-fly zone over most of Libya, with a mandate to protect civilians by armed force, and a specific prohibition on military occupation (United Nations Security Council, 2011b). The bombing of Libya under Resolution 1973 began on 19 March 2011,[1] and continued until October 2011 (North

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[1]   Appendix III: para 2547.

Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2011), when Gaddafi was captured, tortured, and assassinated by rebels who reportedly also massacred up to 66 Libyan soldiers taken prisoner with their leader (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

Early commentary on the Libya intervention judged it a success in protecting civilians (Atlas, 2012). However, many civilians were harmed by the intervention, including Saharan and Sub-Saharan migrants who fled the violent fallout of the revolution. In northern Mali, local rebel militias were armed by Libyan rebel militias, fuelling civil war. Niger became a conduit for arms smuggling from Libya, and in northern Nigeria, Islamist militia Boko Haram was supplied with weapons from Islamic State in Libya (United Nations Panel of Experts, 2017).

After the overthrow of Gaddafi, the formal institutions of a democratic regime were established, but the new government failed to gain control of the country. Libya soon collapsed into chaos, stricken by widespread violence, economic collapse, and the empowerment of jihadist militias including IS (Cockburn, 2014). However, there were still some attempts to portray the intervention as a success. Shadi Hamid (2016) of the Brookings Institution stated that it was incorrect to judge the intervention by its consequences. It should, instead, be judged against what would have happened without it, which he intimated would have been genocide. He attempted to disassociate the intervention and its consequences from each other, linking the post-intervention collapse of Libya not to the intervention, but to post-intervention failure by the international community to build a new state.

Thus, in preference to comparing the actual consequences of intervention to the actual stated intentions of the interveners, Hamid (2016) based his judgment on speculation that there would have been a massacre and that the international community could have built a stable new state, and on denial that the post-intervention events were consequent upon the intervention. In common with other writers who had judged the intervention to be a preventive success (Bernstein, 2012; Zifcak, 2012), he did not consider the speculative claim of massacre prevention to be outweighed by the fact of massacres and other extensive human rights abuses by non-government forces during and after the intervention (Human Rights Watch, 2014b).

In his defence of the intervention, Hamid (2016) accused Gaddafi of using genocidal language. However, reports indicate that Gaddafi's successors engaged in genocidal behaviour against Tuareg and sub-Saharan African migrants (Mizner,

2015). There appears to be no more evidence of genocide, as opposed to the routine brutality of a militarised state fighting an armed rebellion, against Gaddafi than against Sisi, the coup leader who seized power in Egypt and subsequently received around $1.5 billion yearly from the US government (Sharp, 2016).

Alan Kuperman (2015) judged that the Libya intervention had been unnecessary, as civilians were not being slaughtered, and the democratic reforms proposed by Gaddafi's son Saif offered a better prospect for liberalisation than the NATO bombing. It was primarily NATO, he judged, rather than the rebels, who overthrew Gaddafi. The rebels had little chance of success until they drew NATO into the war by deploying their representatives around the world to allege the threat of genocide.

The findings of an investigation by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons into the NATO bombing of Libya were more supportive of Kuperman (2015) than Hamid (2016). The committee found that:

> Muammar Gaddafi's forces retreated some 40 miles from Benghazi following attacks by French aircraft. If the primary object of the coalition intervention was the urgent need to protect civilians in Benghazi, then this objective was achieved in less than 24 hours (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 17).

However, the bombing had continued. The committee, composed of British MPs, heard that the French government had been motivated by domestic politics and, perhaps seeking exculpation for their own role in the collapse of Libya, stated that "UK policy followed decisions taken in France" (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 11). Sarkozy's concerns about illegal immigration may have been more presentational than pragmatic, as Gaddafi had blocked migration across Libya to Europe in a deal with the Italian government (Squires, 2010). After the overthrow of Gaddafi, migrant numbers increased and their journeys became more dangerous (Human Rights Watch, 2014b).

The committee reported assessments of Sarkozy's motives shared with the US State Department by French intelligence services. These did not include the welfare of the Libyan people:

> a. A desire to gain a greater share of Libya oil production,
> b. Increase French influence in North Africa,
> c. Improve his internal political situation in France,

d. Provide the French military with an opportunity to reassert its position in the world,

e. Address the concern of his advisors over Qaddafi's long term plans to supplant France as the dominant power in Francophone Africa (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 11).

Ivo Daalder (cited in UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 12), former US Ambassador to NATO, judged that Sarkozy and Cameron "were the undisputed leaders, in terms of doing something", but had not thought the matter through. The US feared a no-fly zone alone would produce a stalemate and, with the UK, pushed for the extension of Resolution 1973 to permit "all necessary measures" (Hague, cited in UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 12), interpreted by the British government as "… assumed authority to attack the entire Libyan Government command and communications network" (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 12).

State-owned broadcasters of Wahhabi dictatorships, Saudi Arabia's Al Arabiya and Qatar's Al Jazeera, published dubious atrocity stories which were relied upon as pro-intervention propaganda by the governments of France, Britain and the USA in place of hard intelligence. Alison Pargeter (cited in UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 15), an expert witness, told the committee that:

> … the Arab media played a very important role here. Al-Jazeera in particular, but also al-Arabiya, were reporting that Gaddafi was using air strikes against people in Benghazi and, I think, were really hamming everything up, and it turned out not to be true.

NATO member states also connived at breach of the weapons embargo included in Resolution 1973, and the selective distribution of these weapons by the suppliers, including Qatar: "The combination of coalition airpower with the supply of arms, intelligence and personnel to the rebels guaranteed the military defeat of the Gaddafi regime" (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 17). The quantity and indiscriminate supply of weapons (BBC News, 2013a) are likely to have increased the bloodshed and disorder which followed the killing of Gaddafi.

The committee concluded that the British government:

> … could not verify the actual threat to civilians posed by the Gaddafi regime; it selectively took elements of Muammar Gaddafi's rhetoric at face value; and it failed to identify the militant Islamist extremist element in the rebellion. UK strategy was

founded on erroneous assumptions and an incomplete understanding of the evidence (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 38).

French foreign minister Alain Juppé (cited in UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 10), pushing for urgent military intervention, warned the Security Council of "the violent re-conquest of cities" by Libyan government forces. However, the recapture by force of cities seized by insurgents is, within the protective limits of international law, an established right of sovereign governments (Cassese, 2005). The Committee found that the urgency had been exaggerated and the retaken cities had not experienced civilian massacres (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016).

Libya had fallen so far into violent chaos within five years of the intervention that Kilcullen and Rosenblatt's (2014: 38) recommendation, "If you are looking for a model for Aleppo's future, Libya's second city of Benghazi is not a bad place to start", had become a stark example of the unrealistic optimism of some liberal commentators. By 2016, Benghazi was approaching a semblance of order after years of war (Tulti, 2016). It had not gained functional democracy, it had lost most of its former wealth, chronic violence continued, and a substantial area of the city remained in the hands of militias (Libya Herald, 2017).

It took a further nine months of urban warfare between the militias and the Libyan National Army (LNA) before Benghazi, the city the intervention was initiated to save, much of it now ruined, was declared secure in July 2017. The country remained split between rival governments in the east and west, and areas of tribal and Tuareg control (BBC News, 2017b). It seems unlikely that many citizens would choose such a model.

Aleppo had also suffered extensive damage and loss of life in conflict following the Arab Spring. However, while fighting continued over the ruins of Benghazi (Tulti, 2016), Syrian government forces regained control of the eastern enclave of the city, which had been occupied by rebels since 2012 (Chulov, 2012). The rest of the city had remained under government control throughout the war, with some damage from rebel shelling and truck bombs, but at least "… halfway normal: bustling with restaurants, parks, hotel swimming pools and commuters" (Barnard, 2016: n.p.). Many buildings in the east and south of Aleppo had been badly damaged or destroyed by war, but most of the pre-war population of the area occupied by rebels had been able to shelter in the relatively safe and orderly north and west of the city (Chulov, 2012). Within four years of the rebel incursion, Aleppo city had been

reunited and was beginning reconstruction (Dean and Associated Press, 2016).

Syria

The official British government view of the Syrian conflict was that President Assad, like Gaddafi in Libya, had forced peaceful protestors into war by choosing violent repression instead of the democratic reforms that the people demanded. Therefore, when he was removed violence would cease, and a pluralistic democracy would emerge after a transitional period (Johnson, 2016).

A brutal state security reaction to anti-government graffiti written by children in Deraa was frequently identified as the action that initiated the Syrian revolution (Macleod, 2011; McEvers, 2012). Al Jazeera interviewed "The boy who started the Syrian war" in 2016 (Doran, 2017: n.p.). He had written the anti-government graffiti, and then fought in the Free Syrian Army (FSA). A variation of the rebellion origin story presented to the House of Commons in 2013 by Tory MP Brooks Newmark differed from the standard version reported by Al Jazeera. In Newmark's rendition, the boy's offence was to urinate on a poster of the Syrian President, the state's reaction was to kill and sexually mutilate him, and his death began the Arab Spring.[1]

However, the Syrian conflict was well advanced by the time the victim referenced by Newmark was killed in May 2011, with more than 200 people killed in an assault on Deraa by Syrian security forces (Macleod and Flamand, 2011). In what became a common pattern, an interested party appears to have taken an actual atrocity, the details of which could not be verified by independent sources, and embellished it, while the Syrian government denied responsibility and blamed Islamists (Macleod and Flamand, 2011).

Western media and political discourse have tended to present Syria as a nation conquered and oppressed by a sectarian Alawite tyrant (Klein, 2013), but this was a distorted and over-simplified portrayal of a complex postcolonial history. It reduced the multifarious elements of civil society and state institutions, and their interrelationships, to inert victims of an omnipotent individual, and marginalised consideration of the people's actual views. In so doing, it simplified the case for war as a struggle for liberty and human rights on behalf of the people against the tyrant.

Hardeep Singh Puri (2016: 103), India's representative at the UN Security Council

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 13216.

in 2011, dissented from this portrayal. He wrote that in Syria,

> … like Libya, the original dissent and resentment to authoritarian rule on the part of unarmed civilians was slowly but surely transformed - through active moral, financial and military encouragement from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the West - into an armed insurrection.

An Israeli news report in March 2011 provided an unusual alternative to the common Western media narrative of peaceful protest, stating that "… police opened fire on armed protesters" (Kahn, 2011: n.p.), and "Seven police officers and at least four demonstrators in Syria have been killed". The government proposed a release of detainees, but the policemen were killed, and government offices burned (Kahn, 2011). It has been reported that organised armed groups were involved in the 2011 Syrian protests from an early stage (Dostal, 2014). However, details of the identities of these groups and their actions remained obscure.

The portrayal by Western governments of Syrian mass protests as demands for greater liberalisation has been characterised as tendentious misrepresentation of the opposite - popular discontent with liberal reforms - aimed at disguising intervention for material gain as humanitarian assistance (Malito, 2017). However, protests against negative impacts of liberalisation administered contrary to the public benefit, e.g. for the corrupt enrichment of ruling elites at excessive cost to the majority, as reported in Syria (Dostal, 2014), do not necessarily constitute rejection of liberalism.

Liberalisation of the Syrian economy from state control began in the 1980s, motivated by failure of the centralised economy, and included periods of strong economic growth. The process was accelerated in 2005, including a series of sharp cuts in welfare state subsidies, based on liberal theory that the private sector would expand to enrich everyone as the state withdrew. However, this enrichment did not occur. Factors exacerbating economic failure and inequality up to 2011 included drought and connections between government and industry that stifled growth and competition (Haddad, 2012).

Climate scientists identified the Syrian drought of 2007 to 2010 as the worst on record. It exacerbated already difficult agricultural conditions partly attributed to inept government (Kelley et al., 2015). Crops failed, animals died, and many destitute people left the countryside to seek employment in towns and cities, settling

on the urban margins (Kilcullen and Rosenblatt, 2014). The drought was not consistent with normal long-term climate patterns, and there was strong evidence of exacerbation by anthropogenic climate change (Kelley et al., 2015).

Economic decline accelerated by drought forced migration within Syria (Dostal, 2014), and popular protest descended into civil war as state brutality and rebel violence escalated, fuelled by jihadist groups and external sponsors. Millions fled abroad. War and poverty interacted, feeding each other to ruin the country by destruction and depopulation. The cycle of destruction was fuelled by the internal and external dynamics of a war economy (Kaldor, 2012), including UN, EU and US sanctions harming civilians and impeding humanitarian aid, jihadists travelling from Western states to join Syrian rebel groups, and massive infrastructure damage (Walker, 2016).

Disorder in Syria may also have been exacerbated by a process of political reform which continued alongside the violent security response to the initial protests. The reforms included prisoner releases (Dostal, 2014), and limited democratisation. The released criminals included jihadist militants and Islamic fundamentalists jailed for non-political violence. Alongside pro-democracy and socialist activism, Syria has had a long history of Islamist revolt. Patrick Seale (2011) traced this back to the emancipation struggle against French colonial rule in the early decades of the twentieth century. Islamist forces were suppressed but never finally defeated, and began to organise clandestine violent insurrection in the 1960s in reaction to the secular socialist dictatorship.

A Syrian regional governor and former security chief told Seale (2011: 323) in 1985 that, in Islamist militias, "A brutal method used to harden young men was to get them to gun down unprotected workers like street-sweepers who because of their job had to be out early. Several were killed in this way". Islamist violence escalated in the late 1970s. A brutal military campaign against Islamist insurgents in the Syrian city of Hama in 1982 killed thousands of people and destroyed much of the city. It left the Islamists severely weakened for decades thereafter, and marked a shift of governance to a firmly entrenched dictatorial security state (Seale, 2011).

Jihadist groups, such as Islamic State and Al Qaeda affiliates Al Nusra (Hasan, 2015), came to dominate the Syrian armed opposition in Syria. The jihadists prevailed in some areas partly because, while harsh and extreme, they reportedly

brought order and security in place of the predatory criminal behaviour of the FSA supported by Western states. One jihadist rebel group active in the Damascus region was created by Saudi Arabia. It favoured despotic methods, and worked to destroy secular rebel forces (Cockburn, 2015a). Turkey and Qatar backed another jihadist faction (Erimtan, 2013; Hersh, 2014). Political rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Qatar added to the intractability of the Syrian war as they supported different Islamist groups (Filiu, 2015). By 2013, the Syrian insurgency appears to have been driven to a significant extent by foreign powers, with the intelligence services of Arab and Western states directing rebel operations (Cockburn, 2015a). Russia and Iran supported the Syrian government (Mockaitis, 2013).

Periodic efforts were made by the Gulf sponsors of Syrian rebel groups to publicise their severance from Al Qaeda, aiming to indicate that they were not a threat to the West. *The Guardian* reported that Saudi Arabia was concentrating its support on a new coalition of Syrian militias called Jaish al Islam - the Army of Islam - which "… excludes al-Qaida affiliates such as the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra, but embraces more non-jihadi Islamist and Salafi units" (Black, 2013b: n.p.). The notion of non-jihadi Salafist fighters resembled efforts by British politicians to portray regime change as not being regime change.[1]

The Al Nusra group, funded and armed by Qatar, was a jihadist militia which controlled much of Idlib province in 2016. It was one of the two main revolutionary groups in terms of territorial control in Syria, the other being ISIS (Islamic State in Syria). ISIS took weapons from Al Nusra by force or purchase, so that both were effectively armed by the same donors (Cockburn, 2015a). The USA was hostile to Al Nusra in principle, but less so in practise, bombing them less often than they bombed ISIS (Cockburn, 2015b).

ISIS and Al Nusra were ideologically similar, the latter being an offshoot of the former, created in 2012 and feuding since 2013 (Cockburn, 2015b). Theo Padnos (2014), an American journalist, was kidnapped by an Al Qaeda faction in Syria. He escaped and sought help from the FSA, who gave him to Al Nusra. Al Nusra held him for about two years, initially in the Children's Hospital in Aleppo which they had converted into a prison and headquarters, and later in a converted school in Deir

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[1]   Appendix III: para 2797; Appendix IV: para 10077. See sections on regime change in Chapters 5 and 6 for discussions of regime change denial.

ez-Zor.

Padnos (2014) learned from conversations with his captors that the armed conflict between ISIS and Al Nusra was for control of Syria's eastern oil fields. A fundamental difference in leadership strategy between ISIS and groups affiliated or sympathetic to Al Qaeda, such as Al Nusra, has also been reported (Turner, 2015). While both relied on violence to seize territory, Al Qaeda sought to project a more moderate profile, partly in reaction to the Arab Spring protests of 2011, aiming to win popular support for their rebellion, while ISIS relied upon brute force and terror. However, personnel and weapons were transferred regularly between groups such as the FSA, Al Nusra, and ISIS, jihadists obtained training from the enemy USA by deception, and rebel groups switched between cooperation and conflict over material resources as well as ideology (Padnos, 2014), exemplifying Kaldor's (2012) analysis of contemporary war.

Padnos (2014) reported numerous divisions within the Syrian population including rifts between religious groups, secularists, supporters and opponents of the Assad government, and the rich and poor. Given the number of revolutionary groups in Syria, the violence between them, competition between their foreign sponsors, and the potential danger of a sectarian Sunni regime to the plethora of ethnic and religious communities outside the Sunni Arab majority (Zifcak, 2012), the prospect of stability following the removal of Assad was minimal.

Basic services in Syria were often destroyed in the fighting, and their denial to enemy forces used as a weapon by all sides (Lossow, 2016), in accordance with Kaldor's (2012) model of new wars where human rights violations are a standard tactic. A summary of conditions in rebel held areas after several years of civil war also conformed closely with Kaldor's (2012) model: "Neighborhood gangs run rampant. Lawlessness is rife. Warlordism is on the rise" (Kilcullen and Rosenblatt, 2014: 38).

Hamid (2016) defended the 2011 Libya intervention on the grounds that it had not done as much harm as had ensued from failure to intervene in Syria. However, this was a tendentious choice of objective and of benchmark, and the allegation that there had been no intervention in Syria was only arguable in the limited sense of intervention as sustained, deliberate, overt, direct military assault on Syrian government forces by hostile states. There had been hostile foreign state intervention in Syria in the form of training and arming rebels (McLeary, 2016), and

British and French lobbying for the 2013 lifting of the EU arms embargo (BBC News, 2013a). Intervention in neighbouring Iraq also had a major negative impact on Syria (Cockburn, 2015a). There was substantial direct intervention in the form of foreign fighters travelling to serve with rebel forces (BBC News, 2015a). Economic sanctions are a form of intervention. In 2012, the EU banned oil imports from Syria, causing a catastrophic decline in the Syrian economy (Dostal, 2014).

Weapons and training to the value of at least US $500 million were supplied to Syrian rebels by the USA (McLeary, 2016). The UK and France lobbied successfully for the lifting of a European Union arms embargo on Syria in 2013 (BBC News, 2013a). Large quantities of weapons then flowed to Syrian rebels, many sourced from the former Yugoslavia, and these caused an escalation in the war. New anti-tank weapons allowed rebels to attack government forces with greater impact than before and seize more territory, but the armaments boost was not sufficient to end the war (Sly and DeYoung, 2013). Thus, it led to an escalation in violence and destruction without a decisive outcome, a situation likely to increase refugee flight.

Western governments also intervened substantially in reporting of the Syrian conflict. Much of their investment went to training anti-government activists in media skills, particularly in investigation and reportage of atrocities (Blumenthal, 2016), harnessing the superficial authenticity of "citizen voice" (Chouliaraki, 2015: 105) in reports that appeared to come directly from independent eyewitnesses. This messaging helped to present the war as a humanitarian crisis, strengthening the case for humanitarian intervention. It excluded crucial factors affecting the prospects for successful intervention, such as geo-political competition between powerful states for control of a strategically important region, and rebel objectives, risking a distortion of cost-benefit calculations (Chouliaraki, 2015). Large sums were also available from the British government to professional journalists willing to support the opposition cause (Cockburn, 2016).

In 2015, the British government sent military trainers to Syria without parliamentary authorisation, an escalation apparently prompted by concerns that the UK was perceived as not participating in the war (McCormack, 2016). In the same year, the British parliament voted to authorise bombing of the ISIS jihadist rebel militia in Syria. Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne (cited in Lister, 2015: n.p.), celebrated this decision with the remark that "Britain has got its mojo back and we are going to be with you as we reassert Western values, confident that our best days lie ahead".

Osborne gave no indication as to why he thought it was appropriate for the West to assert its values in other regions, and no estimation of the anticipated impact of Britain's mojo on the Syrian people. He did not state what authority he had sought or obtained for this imposition of one culture upon another, nor even what he thought Western values comprised. *The Times* commented that "Osborne's mojo has seen him travel to China to woo its rulers there. He has no time for the new Labour leadership who opposed this engagement on human rights grounds" (Shipman, 2015: 10).

A mojo is a talisman or occult talent conveying success, "… often with sexual connotations" (Barber, 2005: n.p.). Osborne's reference to Britain's mojo signalled motivation inconsistent with humanitarian intent. He indicated that Britain, not the Syrian people, was the intended beneficiary of the planned aggression. His comment passed without criticism in the British media, as if it were perfectly ordinary for a leading member of the government to conflate warfare and sex on behalf of the nation.

This chapter concluded the literature review. It outlined the history of Western humanitarian intervention, including the use of humanitarian rhetoric to excuse military aggression pursued for ulterior reasons. The ethical approach to foreign policy claimed by the British Labour government elected in 1997 was found to be primarily presentational, and essentially a commitment to liberal values rather than a new direction in British politics (Brown, 2001). However, it was not consequently insignificant, as it publicised a standard against which critics of the government attempted to hold it to account (Smith and Light, 2001; Short, 2005). Selected literature relating to the conflicts in Libya and Syria forming the case studies for this thesis were reviewed, providing insight into the background to the conflicts and into the similarities and differences between the strategies towards each country by the UK and its allies.

The following chapter explains the methodology of thematic analysis, the research paradigm of pragmatism, and the choice of dataset - debates in the British House of Commons and Westminster Hall from 2010 to 2014 with significant references to Libya and Syria - chosen for this thesis.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Data

This chapter explains the choice of methodology for the thesis, the selection of data, and the application of the method to the data. It makes the case for a pragmatist, mixed methods approach, predominantly qualitative and with a quantitative element in the enumeration, ranking, and comparison of themes featuring in the dataset, the debates on Libya and Syria. It details both the utility of thematic analysis as an investigative and expository tool, and the limitations for quantitative analysis of numerical data obtained by this method. It traces the role of pragmatism in international relations scholarship from its introduction by John Dewey (Cochran, 2012; Morgan, 2014), and argues that humanitarian intervention is essentially a pragmatic problem and, therefore, a pragmatic analysis of its theory and practise is appropriate.

The purpose of the thematic analysis was firstly to identify themes relevant to the subject of humanitarian intervention in the debates and rank them in order of frequency of appearance as an approximate indicator of their predominance in MPs' arguments around humanitarian intervention. The rankings were then used to direct further analysis of the themes in context and development of arguments over time, and to compare the Syria and Libya debates to investigate the differences between them. An inclusive approach was taken to relevance, tracking every theme that was judged to be potentially relevant to humanitarian intervention. This produced numerous themes and, therefore, a comprehensive, granular, ranked subject guide to the debates to inform analysis.

A predominantly quantitative approach would have been inappropriate for this thesis because the data - parliamentary records of debates - would have been largely deprived of significance if expressed quantitatively without qualitative examination. Thematic analysis provided a means of measuring themes in documents, however, it is important to note that the counts of themes are a rough guide to their relative importance in the speeches analysed, not precise measurements with standardised units. The main substance of the analysis was critical qualitative study of the text identified as representative of the themes, in the context of the entire dataset, guided by theme frequencies, how these differed between the debates on Libya and those on Syria, and how they changed over time.

Following the schema enunciated by Salma Patel (2015), the research paradigm

for this thesis is pragmatism. The theoretical basis of the research method is critical inquiry, the methodology is thematic analysis, and the method is the application of this analytical technique to data comprising documents.

The Research Paradigm: Pragmatism

John Dewey introduced pragmatism to international relations in the discipline's formative years but this legacy has been omitted from some histories of IR research, especially in the wake of a "behavioral revolution" (Cochran, 2012: 2) in IR in the 1950s which resulted in a commitment to positivism in pursuit of the verifiability, reliability and credibility of scientific method. Dewey's pragmatism resembled constructivism, seeing experience as formative of beliefs and actions (Morgan, 2014). Critical theorists were among those who began to challenge the dominance of realist thought in IR in the 1980s. Constructivism began to displace positivism in the discipline during this debate (Phillips, 2007). Pragmatism returned to the field of international relations as a consequence of the advance of constructivism (Cochran, 2012).

The aim of pragmatism in IR is to improve "… the management of international society" (Cochran, 2012: 14). This could be interpreted as making pragmatism an instrument of imperialism, but as international affairs can be managed by cooperation as well as domination (United Nations, 1945), imperialism is not inherent in pragmatism. Dewey was an anti-imperialist opposed to military domination or economic inequality that worked to inhibit the development of disadvantaged peoples (Cochran, 2012).

Dewey's pragmatic approach included consideration of the significance of how problems are defined, and a focus on the probable outcomes of action intended to address problems (Morgan, 2014). This is relevant to the issue of humanitarian intervention when obstacles to coercive intervention are problematised, for example, in the doctrine of the R2P (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001). This formulation of the problem risks establishing more, rather than better, coercive intervention as the solution, and may tend to marginalise approaches other than coercion (Cunliffe, 2020). Thus, an important step on the way to solving a problem, such as the tension between harm done by humanitarian intervention and the goal of reducing mass atrocity crimes, may not be a policy prescription but a better question.

Dewey observed that questions, and the choices they imply, often become redundant due to a change of imperative rather than a finite answer (Morgan, 2014). If the imperative becomes pursuit of a more peaceful and humane world, rather than pursuit of the normalisation of humanitarian violence, the question answered by the R2P - how do states that wish to engage in humanitarian violence obtain legal authority and international legitimacy for such action – may be considered obsolete, or at least subordinate to the question of how to tackle mass atrocity crimes.

Pragmatism recognises that research paradigms do not operate as neutral refinements of social science methodology, but as selected systems of perception and comprehension based on, and informing, the beliefs of researchers, shaped by social processes, particularly among communities of researchers (Morgan, 2014). Pragmatism is a favoured paradigm for mixed methods research (Morgan, 2014). As an eclectic paradigm, it does not dictate the use of mixed methods research, nor favour it over purely quantitative or qualitative methods (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). However, pragmatism is a good match for the practical approaches associated with mixed methods. It favours utility over conformity to purist theoretical forms, or oppositional interpretations of positivism and constructivism (Morgan, 2014). Mixed methods researchers seek practical ways to combine the benefits of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, in accordance with the pragmatic paradigm (Morgan, 2014).

Jane Addams, a pioneer of social work and colleague of John Dewey, favoured pragmatism as a research paradigm because of its orientation towards outcomes contributing to the advancement of human welfare. She was committed to liberal values (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). Pragmatism provides a means of analysing liberal policy such as humanitarian military intervention, identifying its failures, and suggesting ameliorative change without discarding or opposing liberal values. It has been strongly associated with the pursuit of social justice and promotion of human welfare (Morgan, 2014; Kaushik and Walsh, 2019), which encompasses the principle of humanitarian intervention (Cunliffe, 2020). Pragmatists have generally had a commitment to equality (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019), which implies opposition to imperialist uses of humanitarian intervention, where the exceptional power of some states, for example, France, the UK, and the USA in the case of Libya, has enabled them to use military force for alleged ulterior motives under the guise of humanitarian intervention (Sensini, 2016; Cunliffe, 2020).

Contemporary pragmatism seeks to apply constructivist insights to the solution

of problems, by focusing on the consequences of actions (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). The foundation of constructivism is the understanding that reality is socially constructed: social actors construct their own reality through interpretation of perception (Denicolo, Long and Bradley-Cole, 2016). As a research paradigm, constructivism was developed to overcome the limitations of positivism, which treated the realities perceived by social actors as constituting an objective phenomenon that could be discovered and analysed by scientific methods analogous to the natural sciences, just as the physical world can be investigated by physics and chemistry. Constructivism rejected the possibility of completely objective knowledge of social phenomena.

In this thesis, the principles of constructivism, applied in a pragmatic paradigm, enabled analysis of the range of meanings within texts. A positivist, reductive process of quantification, such as counting occurrences of certain words and phrases in debates and basing conclusions on that data without contextualised interpretation, would erase these subtleties. In the process of quantification, positivist approaches obscure the internal and external motivational forces that determine individual human behaviour (Scotland, 2012). Although these forces, especially motives and intentions that are not expressed, can only be discerned to a limited extent, adaptation of research methods to account for their impact is an important element of an enquiry into political and social phenomena such as humanitarian intervention.

The important contribution of constructivism to social science was the revelation that what people see as reality is not a repository of facts governed by fixed laws of nature that can be to be discovered by experimentally testing apposite hypotheses (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Reality is conceived by, and influential upon, social actors, individually and communally, in a continual process of perception and interpretation. In less abstract terms, "international relations is a social construction" (Fierke, 2016: 162). Nations and the relationships between them are constructed by societies and social actors in complex mutable interactions of impulses, influences, societal attributes, and material phenomena. The interpretations of international relations by scholars, politicians, diplomats, multinational corporate and NGO leaders, and others who are prominent in the conduct of interactions between nations, are social constructions.

In the field of international relations, constructivism gained ground at the end of the Cold War, an event which realist scholarship based on positivist analysis was

perceived as having failed to predict or adequately explain (Fierke, 2016). The formative scholars of IR as an academic discipline in the US in the mid-twentieth century followed the model of the natural sciences to give their discipline a scientific form. Positivist realism emphasised continuity in international affairs and paid inadequate regard to social context, and was, therefore, criticised for its insufficiency as a framework for the comprehension and management of change (Fierke, 2016).

The social construction of reality in international relations can be seen in the data studied by this thesis in the presentation by British politicians of the conflict in Libya in 2011 as a simple moral contest between good on one side - the people of Libya striving for freedom and democracy,[1] and evil on the other - the brutal dictator, Gaddafi,[2] and his mercenaries.[3] This construction reflected British social values - beliefs in the importance of freedom, democracy, and human rights[4] - and a perception of Britain as a strong and important country in the world which takes a leading role in international affairs.[5] It was sustained by a perception of Gaddafi as an enemy of Britain,[6] by a selection of language used by Gaddafi which was said to prove that he would commit massacres if he was not stopped by force,[7] and by concerns about terrorism and migration[8] - a pairing that was itself a social construction (Saux, 2007; Nussio, Bove and Steele, 2019).

An alternative construction of the Libyan conflict of 2011 was that Gaddafi had been striving to create an alternative, emancipatory form of democracy, direct rather than representative. He had recovered Libya's oil wealth from foreigners to share among Libyans, and consequently, "received the affectionate tributes of his people" (Sensini, 2016: 134). A minority of violent Islamists aided by foreign powers seeking greater access to Libyan oil and termination of Gaddafi's influence in Africa were able to overthrow the Libyan state because of NATO intervention (Sensini, 2016). Neither construction is entirely right or wrong: as is shown in this thesis, both constructions feature claims that can be sustained or dismissed with varying degrees of confidence.

The construction of reality is manifested in the process of reportage by news

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 1184, 2288, 2379.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 83, 289, 462.
[3]   Appendix III: paras 460, 464, 1115.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 915, 947, 1479.
[5]   Appendix III: paras 18, 383, 898.
[6]   Appendix III: paras 1284, 1663, 2495.
[7]   Appendix III: paras 2297, 2624, 2777.
[8]   Appendix III: paras 1116, 2675, 5895.

media. One form of construction is agenda selection, whereby for example one overseas war may be less reported, while others dominate media coverage of foreign affairs, potentially creating an impression among public and politicians and the media themselves that the more reported war is more destructive and a more urgent problem than the overlooked conflict (Gatehouse, 2015). Biased reporting may also construct reality by adopting a narrative that frames enemy state leaders and their supporters as immoral and illegitimate (Herman and Peterson, 2010). Professional and organisational construction of reality occurs as depiction of events conforms to the commercial, managerial, and proprietorial pressures on journalists and the political and societal pressures on news media corporations (Herman and Chomsky, 1994), just as in personal psychology individuals utilise social construction to apprehend the world they experience and help them progress through life (Denicolo, Long and Bradley-Cole, 2016).

A constructivist emphasis on "human design and intent" (Fierke, 2016: 166), the application of meaning to events, thoughts, or material objects by human interpretation, could be interpreted as supporting the stance that humanitarian intervention should be judged by intentions (Bellamy, 2004), rather than outcomes. However, this risks creating an opportunity for malign actors to feign good intentions, and for harm to be done by sincere good intentions coupled with inaccurate data and faulty reasoning (Walt, 2018). The pragmatist paradigm was chosen for this thesis because of its focus on outcomes.

Leanne Kelly and Maya Cordeiro (2020: 3) have proposed three principles for pragmatism as a research paradigm: "(1) an emphasis on actionable knowledge, (2) recognition of the interconnectedness between experience, knowing and acting and (3) a view of inquiry as an experiential process." Their case studies used thematic analysis to investigate NGOs (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020).

This thesis meets these criteria:

1. The thesis sought actionable knowledge to enable reduction of harm from humanitarian military interventions (Sensini, 2016), and to contribute, if possible, to the enablement of effective policies to reduce mass atrocity crimes and the environments that breed them (Kaldor, 2012).

2. Pragmatism enables the researcher "to surface complex themes and issues hidden in formal documentation or rhetoric ... through triangulation of what respondents say and what can be observed" (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020: 4). The

thematic analysis used for this thesis firstly revealed numerous themes relevant to the issue of humanitarian intervention that were expressed by MPs in the British House of Commons.[1] Secondly, it analysed them in the context of the wider debates in which they occurred, and of observed causes and consequences reported by MPs themselves and by sources such as news media, historians, academics, and leading international human rights NGOs.

3. This thesis followed an experiential process in the development of the list of themes, as this was created after reading the debates in their entirety, and expanded throughout the coding process as new themes were discovered. This experience also indicated that pragmatism was the best fit for the project at hand. The experiential aspect of pragmatism also includes an emphasis on real world experience as a guide to action (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020). Therefore, the actual impact of humanitarian intervention was a primary focus of this thesis, acknowledging the permissibility of flexible and innovative policy choices, rather than the restricted choice of action or inaction to which humanitarian intervention debates are often restricted, where action is military and inaction is everything else (Lynch, 2011).

The Theoretical Basis: Critical Inquiry

Critical inquiry is an apposite theoretical framework for this thesis because it is an inquiry into the use of power (Crotty, 1998; Cannella and Lincoln, 2012). Critical theory questions claims and beliefs underpinning societal structures and driving political dynamics through a perspective of power relations, with the aim of emancipatory change, and is, therefore, critical of oppression with a view to its relief (Crotty, 1998). Some researchers have erroneously defined critical inquiry as any sort of research or commentary which includes criticism, but this discards its central focus, emancipatory progress through methodical inquiry (Thompson, 2017).

Critical inquiry has Marxist roots (Crotty, 1998), but has expanded beyond them (Shields, 2012). It supports the pragmatist principle (Morgan, 2014) that the best research methodology is the one that appears best adapted to answering the research question (Crotty, 1998). Critical inquiry takes an expository approach which can include displaying evidence in research outputs (Denzin, 2015), which is a good fit for this thesis, where evidence is displayed on the form of quotations from

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[1]   Appendices I - V.

the analysed debates. The expository approach is appropriate for the debates examined in this thesis because of the inconclusive nature of the evidence. This approach allows the reader to take an active role, reviewing the evidence, interpreting the text of the documentary data, and being enabled to make a critical evaluation of the conclusions presented in this thesis. It is hoped that including a wide range of evidence and allowing readers to form their own judgements can also help to protect against the effects of researcher bias.

Methodologies based on critical theory study a wide range of data (Helyar, 2012). Critical inquiry provides a broader approach than research models characteristic of positivism designed to resemble natural science experiments. Therefore, it is well adapted to research into phenomena that are too complex and fluid for unequivocal explanations, such as humanitarian intervention. It is ideal for research which is part of a process of investigation and challenge, directed by the hope that fuller understanding will inform better policy (Helyar, 2012).

Research within the critical theoretical framework can identify, and test the validity of, assumptions made by those in authority and claiming expertise. It can propose alternative moral interpretations of the policies under examination, and it directs the researcher to prioritise the viewpoints of those upon whom the researched phenomena, such as military intervention, have the most immediate impact (Denzin, 2015).

The appearance of divergence between humanitarian intentions and the harmful outcomes of humanitarian interventions (Walt, 2018) is a principal focus of this thesis. Critical inquiry is rooted in Enlightenment philosophy and equips the researcher to question the difficult concept of humanitarian warfare without discarding it as inherently contradictory (Linklater, 2007). The process of critical inquiry endeavours to avoid partisan bias, to seek understanding through questioning and the evaluation of relevant evidence, and to promote a rational, curious, and critical outlook (Thompson, 2017).

Critical inquiry is an optimistic theoretical framework (Boltanski, 2011). It operates on the assumption that people who are more fully informed, and have analytical tools with which to manage and evaluate the deluge of information, will make decisions that contribute positively to human progress and emancipation (Linklater, 2007). This objective is best achieved by impartial methods of evidence gathering and interpretation, as critical inquiry promotes a critique of the use of language for

deception, and therefore rejects the use of propaganda to direct people towards preferred conclusions (Linklater, 2007). Such manipulation would defeat the aim of critical inquiry, the development and propagation of comprehensive relevant knowledge to optimise decision making for human welfare (Linklater, 2007). Tendentious propaganda, even if it avoids explicit falsehood and is created with benevolent intentions, may direct its recipients towards support of harmful activities such as destructive military intervention (Zollmann, 2017), and may, when the recipients are disabused, promote scepticism with potentially harmful consequences. An example was British public reluctance to believe accurate reports of Nazi atrocities during the second world war, after learning that they had been misinformed by false atrocity reporting in news media during the first world war (Knightley, 2003).

This thesis does not present critical inquiry as the superlative theoretical basis for social research, but as one of many valid potential approaches. It is particularly appropriate for the study of power inequities (Shields, 2012). The relationship between a global power such as the UK, and Syria, a former province of the Ottoman Empire and protectorate of France whose postcolonial borders were determined by negotiations between global powers and imposed by force on the peoples they contain (McHugo, 2015), is a subject well suited to a methodological framework which encompasses critical analysis of unequal and exploitative international power relations (Linklater, 2007).

This thesis critically appraises British political arguments for and against military intervention in Libya and Syria. The repressive nature of the governments of Gaddafi in Libya (Dabashi, 2012), and Assad in Syria (Seale, 2011), is acknowledged. The moral case for revolution is not discussed. The rights of peoples to self-determination, and to resist oppressive governance, are well established (Cassese, 2005). However, evidence of external intervention discussed in this thesis implicitly challenges the extent to which the progress of the revolutions in both countries studied here can be characterised as authentic self-determination.

External military intervention to protect civilians in Libya in 2011 was authorised by UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b). Issues for critical inquiry in this context include the arguments and allegations that informed both the passage of the resolution and its implementation, resulting ultimately in the destruction of the Libyan government and the killing of Colonel Gaddafi (St. John, 2014).

News media reported that Gaddafi had ordered Libyan troops to commit mass rapes and supplied them with the drug Viagra to facilitate the crime (Bowcott, 2011; Hughes, 2011; MacAskill, 2011). Such allegations provided a rationale for regime change, an outcome that exceeded the aims authorised by Resolution 1973 and was potentially unlawful (Cunliffe, 2020). Critical inquiry examines, for example, the role of atrocity allegations in British parliamentary debates, contextual evidence relating to their veracity, such as the debunking of atrocity reports from Libya by Amnesty International several months after they were published (Cockburn, 2011), and the trend in parliamentary discussion of humanitarian support for Libya after regime change.

Emancipatory research involves criticism of oppression, but criticism of one form of oppression may inadvertently appear to promote another (Pasque and Pérez, 2015). For example, critics of Western policy in Syria have been accused of acting as apologists for Assad and tyranny in general (Cunliffe, 2020). This thesis avoids prescriptive conclusions and deterministic assumptions of motivation and behaviour to minimise this form of bias. Thus, in references to foreign influences on rebels (Cockburn, 2015a), no assumption is made as to the extent of the impact of such influences. This thesis assumes that individuals have choices, their options are constrained by objective realities, and their perceptions and choices are influenced by multifarious factors (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019), the nature of which cannot be assumed but may be indicated by statements and behaviour (Linklater, 2007). The selection and application of a research method for this thesis, thematic analysis, reflected this approach by identifying themes directly from the language used by politicians, rather than assuming hidden meanings or attributing them retrospectively by reference to subsequent actions.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen for its utility in the identification, measurement, and examination of relevant themes in the debates studied for this thesis. It has the benefits of rigour offered by a structured approach and flexibility to collate expressions of a single theme under a single label, accommodating unpredictable variations in modes of expression. It allows themes to be tracked chronologically, and their development and significance in context to be analysed. Controlled interpretative analysis identifies themes that cannot be revealed by more positivist approaches such as counting the occurrences of key words, e.g. *humanitarian* and

related terms compiled from a thesaurus. Thematic analysis permits the due consideration of context and relationships between themes that crude counting techniques could not accommodate.

Thematic analysis is a flexible methodology which encompasses literal and interpretative approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The literal approach analyses the explicit meanings of discourse, while the interpretative approach looks for societal influences that shape the explicit meanings and thus for hidden meanings. Between these lies the contextual approach, taking the meanings expressed in the data at face value and using that data to guide contextual analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A contextual approach, consistent with the pragmatism paradigm (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019), was chosen for this thesis. The themes found in the text were analysed with reference to the debate text and social and historical contexts. The context was studied to illuminate, and thus more confidently ascertain, the meanings intended by the speakers, and to inform critical analysis of their arguments and how these developed over time. The methodology used in this thesis was, therefore, a pragmatist thematic analysis (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020).

Flexibility does not imply a lack of rigour. Thematic analysis requires sections of text to be identified as instances of a particular theme consistently and accurately (Boyatzis, 1998), so it must not be assumed that when a person is speaking of one thing, they mean another. Thus, for example, the double standards label was applied only to sections of text where the speaker was discussing double standards, such as inconsistent British government responses to violent repression of popular protest.[1]

If a politician promoted humanitarian action in one context, but cautioned against it in another, the double standards label was not applied, because double standards were not the speaker's subject. Applying the theme label of double standards to one section of speech, because it appeared to contradict a standard the speaker had promoted in another, would be a judgmental, rather than literal, analysis. It would require an assumption that a double standard was the cause of the variation, and not the speaker's consideration of cost-benefit, feasibility, or humanitarian imperative factors. The aim of the labelling process was to identify themes explicitly raised by speakers, not to make assumptions or judgments about their stances, motives, or intentions.

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 997, 1206, 1228.

The coding process necessitated decisions on which themes were present in each section of coded text, involving an element of subjectivity. However, the literal approach to theme coding used in this thesis helped to minimise the risks of bias due to subjectivity and projection - inserting the researcher's own views or motives into the words of the subject of analysis (Boyatzis, 1998).

Attaching a theme label to every section of text containing each theme enabled counting of themes. Labels were created for every theme considered of possible relevance to the discussion of the subject of the thesis. Thematic coding of text facilitated identification of trends in discussion of predominant themes, and approximate comparisons. It enabled the coding of a large amount of text within the time constraints of the research project, which provided a means of identifying the relative predominance of themes in the debates studied and a detailed subject index for analysis of the text.

Counting themes enabled them to be ranked, giving approximate indications of their relative prominence in debates.[1] The numerical data from theme counts was then analysed with reference to its context in the debates. Thematic coding enabled tracking of the development of themes and close study of political arguments over time, including analysis of their adaptation to circumstances. For example, tracking the regime change theme in Libya debates exposed the rhetorical techniques used to justify external enforcement of regime change in Libya and to present it as an autonomous accomplishment of the Libyan people.[2]

Tracking the regime change theme in Syria debates showed how proponents presented violent revolution as a benign process of developmental change, and how British policy did not deviate from the regime change strategy in reaction to its failure by the principal measures posited by British politicians as its primary motivations - civilian protection and improvement of the target state's national governance.[3] The remainder of this section provides a detailed description of how thematic analysis was utilised for this thesis.

Sampling

The sampling phase of this thesis was the selection of text for analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The sampling process can bias results by, for example, selecting

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[1]   Appendices I and II list theme counts and rankings.
[2]   See Chapter 5.
[3]   See Chapter 6.

a sample that contains an over-representation of a particular theme, such as humanitarianism, compared to the wider population of similar texts. Bias was minimised by using selection criteria that were independent of the controversial themes being studied, and by revealing these criteria so that any inadvertent sampling bias will be visible and can be compensated for in conclusions and by readers. Methodological transparency (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005) was further supported by extensive direct quotation from the analysed text in Chapters 5 to 8, where the findings of the thematic analysis are discussed.

In this study, the sampling process for thematic analysis comprised refined title and keyword searches to identify and download all Hansard debates containing substantial references to Libya and Syria during Parliamentary sessions from 2010 to 2016. Searching was limited to House of Commons (including Westminster Hall) debates, because this is the primary chamber, the democratic chamber, and the forum for most important government and opposition speeches (Loughlin, 2013). This limitation also provided consistency in the analysed material.

The date parameters for the study were later narrowed down to the period between the start of the 2010-12 parliamentary session and the end of January 2014, truncating the final, fourth year. This was the maximum practicable with available resources including time.[1] The approximately annual subdivisions of time used to analyse the changes in themes over the full period were based on parliamentary sessions, from state opening to prorogation. The first session in the period lasted for two years, so this was divided into two at the Easter recess to provide periods of equivalent duration.

The date parameters of the parliamentary years were:

Year 1 (2010-11): 25 May 2010 to 5 April 2011;

Year 2 (2011-12): 26 April 2011 to 1 May 2012;

Year 3 (2012-13): 9 May 2012 to 25 April 2013;

Year 4 (2013-14): 8 May 2013 to 31 January 2014.

Coding, Enumeration, and Ranking

The process comprised the following steps:

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[1]   See section below - The practical process: coding and enumeration.

1). Collation of text files into spreadsheets for coding and analysis.

The debate text was imported to spreadsheets so that each paragraph was on a separate row of the sheet. The Libya debates comprise Appendix III, and the Syria debates, Appendix IV. Each of the debate spreadsheets has four columns:

      A. Sequential number denoting paragraph of debate content.

      B. Date and title of debate.

      C. Paragraph of debate content (names of speakers and speech text).

      D. Thematic analysis code label.

2). Reading through the debates, making preliminary notes towards coding as required, but focusing on familiarisation with the material rather than coding at this stage.

Reading alternated between countries by year, i.e. 2010 Libya debates, 2010 Syria, 2011 Libya, etc., to determine what would be manageable within the available time. The resultant date parameters were 25 May 2010 to 31 January 2014.

3). Reading through the debates again and adding theme labels to each paragraph in the debate text where a relevant theme occurs.

A code was created and allocated to every theme occurring in the debates which was judged potentially relevant, even tangentially, to the research topic. Thus, there may be one, several, or no theme labels allocated to each paragraph. The theme labels are words or phrases roughly descriptive of the theme. A theme code comprises a label with a description of the theme and how to identify it to ensure consistency in coding (Boyatzis, 1998).

A list of all theme codes with labels and definitions was maintained to support consistent coding, to aid the subsequent analysis, and to provide clarification for readers of the thesis. This list is Appendix V. The list of codes was expanded continually throughout the coding phase as new themes were found in the text, a process of active identification of themes across the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The creation of theme codes was, therefore, guided by the data, not pre-selected, to ensure the inclusion of relevant themes that were present in the text but were not anticipated before the text was studied, nor noted during the first reading.

To help maintain consistency in the labelling of themes, coding work, like the initial reading, alternated between the Libya and Syria debates, and sections of text

coded with a theme were used as examples in later coding (Boyatzis, 1998). Examples of text labelled with each code are not included in Appendix V, as they would make it long and unwieldy, but can be seen by a simple text search of Appendices III and IV for the relevant theme label. A software programme called DocFetcher (DocFetcher Development Team, 2007) was used for reliable and consistent text searching.

4). Counting the occurrences of each theme label in each set of debates - Libya and Syria - over the entire study period.

A spreadsheet was created ranking themes by frequency of occurrence, and alphabetically to facilitate lookup of frequency of specific themes. This is Appendix I.

5). Counting the occurrences of each theme code in each set of debates - Libya and Syria - per parliamentary year during the study period.

A spreadsheet was created ranking themes by frequency of occurrence in each parliamentary year, and alphabetically to facilitate lookup of specific themes. This is Appendix II.

6). Developing frequency difference rankings for the entire study period, to expose thematic differences between the Libya and Syria debates.

This was done by calculating the arithmetic difference between counts of the same theme in each set of debates in each period. Themes were then ranked by the difference. An additional column was then added showing the ratios of the differences, as a crude indicator of the significance of each difference.

For example, the theme with the biggest difference in occurrences between Libya and Syria overall was WMD (negative) - negative references to weapons of mass destruction - and the second biggest was humanitarian aid. However, the ratio of occurrences for WMD (negative) was 35:1, and for humanitarian aid, 3:1, indicating that the latter difference was less significant. These differences are discussed in the following chapters on the debates. A spreadsheet containing these rankings, and the same data ranked alphabetically, is included in Appendix I.

Analysing and Critiquing Debate Content

This thesis applied thematic analysis to Hansard (UK Parliament, 2017) content relating to Libya and Syria from 2010 to 2014. Debate text was downloaded and

analysed for significant themes indicating the arguments and justifications made around British military intervention in these conflicts. Theme labels were added to each debate paragraph containing an example of each theme.

In the spreadsheets used for adding code labels to the debate text and subsequently for counting the themes,[1] labels comprised words and phrases approximately descriptive of the theme, capitalised and joined by underscores to facilitate searching and counting. For example, the label used for the no-fly zone theme was entered as "NO_FLY_ZONE" in the debate spreadsheets. This formatting made the theme label distinguishable, for searching and counting, from the same phrase in the debate text, as the latter was not in upper case and did not contain underscores. The underscores were removed for ease of reading in the spreadsheets[2] used for ranking themes.

Labels were collated and counted to indicate the relative frequency of themes and bring out trends over time, e.g. alterations in parliamentary enthusiasm for military intervention. The findings were critically analysed by contextual examination of the coded text and comparison of stated motives and objectives with actual behaviour and outcomes, in so far as these can be determined from the debates and other documentary evidence, such as press reports and academic analysis.

In summary, the procedure was:

1. Allocation of theme labels to paragraphs of debate text containing content relevant to the research topic. Contemporaneous construction of a key of the labels used and their definitions.

2. Counting of theme labels and construction of theme rankings for analysis.

3. Analysis of findings related to research objectives within the context established by the literature review, and conclusions.

Researcher attitudes are likely to vary over time and may prejudice interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). This can occur even at a basic functional level, whereby stress or impatience may lead the researcher to miss an important theme in the text. Repeated reading of the same text reduced this risk, as did the literal approach to coding.

It is not possible to test decisively for sincerity when assessing humanitarian

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[1] Appendices III and IV.
[2] Appendices I and II.

motives. However, analysis of statements indicating support for action contrary to humanitarian aims, such as a preference for war over diplomacy, may lead to a conclusion of reasonable doubt, as may evidence of alternative motives. Persistent failure to consider outcomes, including negative outcomes of recent purportedly humanitarian actions, may be evidence of a lack of sincerity, or of a preoccupation with creating an appearance of beneficence rather than producing beneficial outcomes.

The act of indicating that one is a good person has been theorised as "virtue signalling" (Bulbulia and Schjoedt, 2010: 36), an aspect of cooperative social behaviour. The term has also been used pejoratively, with the implication that it is a purely selfish, narcissistic activity. A journalist writing in *The Spectator* claimed inaccurately to have invented the term, and celebrated its newfound popularity among journalists as a pejorative descriptor (Bartholomew, 2015).

However, it is not assumed in this research that narcissism is the cause when a person makes a statement appearing to indicate their own goodness. Virtue signalling is not necessarily either deliberate or cynical. Speakers may be attempting to set a positive example, or to demonstrate their expertise gained by experience and their consequent authority to speak on humanitarian issues. Thus, virtue signalling promotes cooperative behaviour (Bulbulia and Schjoedt, 2010), a fundamental requirement of society.

It may, however, become problematic when it is separated from assessment of behavioural outcomes - when the imperative that something must be done excludes consideration of what happens to those to whom, and purportedly for whom, the something is to be done. When sight is lost, or avoided, of outcomes, the behaviour that is promoted may continue to be cooperative, but when appraised holistically it may be revealed as no longer constructive, and potentially harmful.

Themes emerging from the analysis were assessed comparatively, to determine which were most prominent and how their relative prominence varied over the period studied. This indicated the extent of reliance on humanitarian and security arguments in promoting and opposing the case for war, and the relative prominence of other arguments, such as Britain's international prestige and influence, and other national interest considerations. Many relevant themes emerged. In addition to informing the thematic analysis, these may be useful as pointers towards fruitful directions for future research.

The most prominent themes indicated by the coding, enumeration and ranking process were analysed in the context of the debate text, the literature review, and other documentary evidence retrieved to enable full assessment of political arguments in the light of reported events. The documentary evidence included news reports and academic and professional works of political and historical analysis. Some of these had the intellectual reliability provided by peer review and academic standards, but others did not.

Peer-reviewed journal articles may be considered more reliable in terms of factual reporting than, for example, the state-owned news agencies of authoritarian states, but this is a question of degrees of reliability, not absolute trust or distrust. News reports are not formally peer reviewed and are often weakly referenced. Editorial control may not be relied upon to emphasise accuracy over sensationalism. Total freedom from bias and error is impossible, and seeking it in media and political statements is futile as they conform to business and political agendas (Herman and Chomsky, 1994). Bias and error, particularly in news media, were significant risks to this thesis, and this was addressed by multiple sourcing and consideration of source reliability.

This chapter explained the choices of methodology and data selection made for this research. A pragmatic, mixed methods approach was adopted as the best way to provide sufficient depth and context in the analysis. The utilisation of thematic analysis as a pragmatic method offering the benefits of rigour and flexibility was explained, and the techniques by which it was applied were expounded. These enabled a thorough and detailed analysis of themes relating to humanitarian intervention found in the dataset, debates on Libya and Syria in the British House of Commons and Westminster Hall over a period from 2010 to 2014.

The following chapter provides analysis of the themes identified in the Libya debates by thematic analysis. It identifies the most prominent themes, of which the foremost were regime change and protection of lives, and analyses them in context to provide a detailed critique of political argument by British members of parliament concerning humanitarian intervention in Libya.

Note on Referencing and Theme Ranking

References to sources other than the Hansard (UK Parliament, 2017) records of debates analysed for this project are presented in the Harvard referencing style. The

Hansard debate records are appended to the thesis in electronic form, presented in spreadsheets, with every paragraph (i.e. every segment of text formatted as a paragraph in the Hansard reports) sequentially numbered. References to the content of these debates are presented in this thesis in footnotes identifying the relevant appendices and paragraph numbers. Numerals are used in references to theme ranks to highlight these in the text, e.g. a theme may be described as ranked 1st in the first year, 3rd in the second year, and so on.

Chapter 5: The Libya Debates

This chapter critically discusses the prominent themes revealed by thematic analysis and the narratives exposed by tracking them in the Libya debates. Themes identified as prominent were tracked through the debates by searching for the theme label, e.g. REGIME_CHANGE, and examining each section of text marked with that label in context, considering relevant factors including the adjacent text, speaker, debate title, and contemporaneous events. This enabled observation of the function of themes in the debates, and of the development of arguments before, during, and after military intervention.

Top themes are discussed in order of prominence, followed by analysis of their variation over time. The final part of the chapter focuses on the primary aim of British policy in Libya, the removal of the Gaddafi government, critiquing the various and sometimes contradictory arguments MPs advanced in favour of enforced regime change.

The top two themes were regime change and the protection of lives. Analysis indicated that the USA, UK, and France were committed to regime change by force in Libya before and during the 2011 intervention, and were determined to present the campaign as humanitarian. Additional frequent themes in the debates indicated an emphasis on presentation of the war by MPs as a humanitarian and legal action.

The passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1973 authorising military intervention was relied upon heavily by government and opposition front benches in justification of the war. The rhetorical device whereby the British government presented this humanitarian Security Council measure as a legal authority for violent regime change is explained in this chapter. Evidence is presented of ulterior motives and a dubious humanitarian case for war, and of lack of attention to negative outcomes, which appeared to be inconsistent with humanitarian aims.

Top Themes and Associated Topics

The 1st ranked theme in the Libyan debates was regime change[1]. Details of the strategy are analysed later in this chapter but, in brief, the British government manipulated humanitarian UN Security Council Resolution 1973 to use it as an

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[1]   Appendix I: Frequency sort.

authority to enforce regime change by military intervention. Almost unchallenged by the main opposition party, Labour, led by Ed Miliband, the government presented the intervention as humanitarian. The theme of protection of lives was ranked 2nd.

The 3rd theme emphasised the illegitimacy of the Libyan leadership by referring to it as a regime rather than government or authorities. The theme of leadership losing legitimacy ranked low, 70th of 93,[1] not because it was insignificant but because it was announced early in the campaign and not challenged. The presence of a UN Security Council mandate for military intervention, via Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b), was crucial, ranked 4th, with the linked no-fly zone (imposed by Resolution 1973) theme 5th.

The existence of a coalition for intervention, adding legitimacy and enabling the diversion of responsibility for harm done by intervention from the UK to the coalition, ranked 6th. The 7th theme was the people of Libya, frequently a humanitarian theme portraying the people as beneficiaries of Western assistance,[2] and sometimes an apparent euphemism for rebels. For example, the Labour opposition's shadow Foreign Secretary, Douglas Alexander, said in support of urgent military intervention, "The Libyan people could be facing defeat in a matter of days."[3]

Depicting the rebels and the people of Libya as identical gave an appearance of legitimacy to the insurrection and therefore to its Western supporters. It also served to veil the reality of civil war - a nation's people divided against itself - and to neutralise concerns about taking sides. References to the conflict being a civil war ranked low, at 68th, with 26 occurrences. Direct denial that the conflict was a civil war was rare, ranked 92nd, with 2 occurrences. Clearly not a significant theme in numerical terms, it is remarkable nonetheless that the existence of civil war was denied, and that one of the denials was by the Labour leader of the opposition, Ed Miliband,[4] and the other by the Conservative Foreign Secretary, William Hague.[5] Both framed the conflict as a revolt of the people against a tyrant, casting the NATO intervention as humanitarian.

The themes of supporting democracy, ranked 8th, and accountability for crimes, 9th, were also humanitarian in character. The accountability theme - that the Libyan

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[1] NB dense ranking was used, giving the same rank to themes with equal occurrences, so ranks < themes.
[2] Appendix III: paras 393, 486, 488, 508, 511.
[3] Appendix III: para 1724.
[4] Appendix III: para 2796.
[5] Appendix III: para 5174.

leadership were criminals who would be subjected to justice due to the intervention - was reinforced by references to Libyan crimes against the UK. The most frequently mentioned of these crimes was the Lockerbie bombing, ranked 50th, with the closely related theme of the release of the Libyan convicted of the bombing, Megrahi, adjacent at 51st.

These themes of crimes against the UK suggested an element of retribution, an extra motive for British participation in overthrowing Gaddafi. For many of those seeking war, said Labour MP Yasmin Qureshi, retribution appeared to be the real motive, with the current rebellion used "… as a fig leaf for intervention"[1]. Another UK government motive may have been desire to repair relations with the USA, where objections to the release of Megrahi had reached the level of a Senate investigation.[2] The plane and most of the victims of the bombing had been American.[3] Suspicions that it had not been a Libyan action but an Iranian response to the shooting down of an Iranian civilian airliner by the US Navy (Week, 2014) were not mentioned in the Libya debates analysed here, although they had been published earlier (e.g. in BBC News, 2000).

References in the debates to the release of Megrahi were generally hostile,[4] and some MPs contended that the prisoner had been released and repatriated to Libya in exchange for trade benefits.[5] The only significant defence of the release[6] was given by the MP who had been Justice Secretary at the time (BBC News, 2009), Jack Straw. Most references to the release of Megrahi (33 out of 45)[7] preceded the NATO intervention, so may have been influential in creating support for war.

Other crime themes in the Libya debates were general crimes of the Libyan leadership (crimes and victims unspecified), ranked 34th; the murder of WPC Fletcher, 59th; arming the IRA, 65th; terrorism, 83rd; general crimes against the UK (perpetrator's nationality unspecified), 91st; and 1984 bombing, 93rd. The crimes/terrorism of Libya themes, including the release of Megrahi, totalled 254 references, which as a single theme would rank 5th overall. The crimes of Libya against the UK themes totalled 171, which would have ranked 10th. MPs did not

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[1]   Appendix III: para 3484.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 68, 70.
[3]   Appendix III: para 87.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 16, 48, 87, 134, 176.
[5]   Appendix III: paras 47, 52-62, 74, 105.
[6]   Appendix III: paras 180-185.
[7]   Appendix III: count of occurrences using DocFetcher software.

comment that in giving military assistance to rebels in Libya, the UK was acting similarly to Libya when it had given military assistance to rebels in the UK. Such an observation might have weakened the moral and humanitarian case for war.

The relatively low ranking of arming the IRA, the most harmful of the cited Libyan crimes against the UK in terms of victim numbers[1] and continuing threat,[2] may indicate, albeit weakly, that friendship with the USA, harmed by the release of Megrahi, was more important to British MPs than British national security interests. Perhaps more probably, it may have reflected British reliance on American support and protection for national security - friendship with the USA acting as Britain's primary security guarantee.

Partisan criticism of the British government or opposition parties was moderately frequent in the Libya debates, ranked 36th. Opponents denounced Labour for its previous stance when in government of appeasing and rehabilitating Gaddafi,[3] including the release of Megrahi[4] and licensing arms sales.[5] The latter critique was undermined by the successor Tory-led coalition government's continuation of the same policy,[6] permitting the sale to Libya of "… a panoply of equipment that can be used against civilians".[7]

The specific question of whether to bomb Libya aroused no partisan disputes. An apparent parliamentary aversion to partisan argument over war may be a motivational factor for British prime ministers to pursue conflict overseas as a means of neutralising opposition in the Commons. There was one partisan speech on the humanitarian motive, when Tory MP Kris Hopkins called for future British military intervention to be "… strictly rooted in humanitarian support so that we can start to regain the trust that Labour Members squandered and lost",[8] an example of humanitarian framing with the political aim of regaining trust. The Foreign Secretary agreed,[9] and the Labour front bench refrained from comment.

The acquisition and retention of trust would seem to require evidence that the intervention was in fact humanitarian in intention, in action, and in effects. This would

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[1]   Appendix III: para 7785.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 7787, 17816.
[3]   Appendix III: paras 420, 969, 2786.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 176, 224, 550, 2169.
[5]   Appendix III: paras 476, 566, 568, 592, 1696.
[6]   Appendix III: paras 1704, 17530.
[7]   Appendix III: para 474.
[8]   Appendix III: para 1057.
[9]   Appendix III: para 1059.

require consistent honesty and transparency, constant evaluation, and policy changes in the event of failure, producing demonstrable humane outcomes. Omission to actively evaluate the human impact, and refusal to adapt policy when presented with conclusive evidence that actions were causing more harm than good, would undermine the humanitarian claim and promote distrust.

The 10th ranked theme was the repressive government of Libya, again a humanitarian theme in which MPs presented the intervention as liberation. The theme that the 2011 outbreak of protests in Libya and other Arab states, dubbed "Arab spring" in the West,[1] was a movement for democracy ranked 11th. The British government predicted that the revolution would establish a liberal democracy, and most MPs concurred. Negligible evidence was presented in support of this prediction, and warnings were given against it by some MPs.[2]

Sami Moubayed (2015: 14) reported that in an opinion poll conducted by Gallup in Egypt, Indonesia, Morocco, and Pakistan in 2007, 74% of respondents "… wanted to keep Western values out of Islamic countries". Caveats apply: this is just one poll of a selection of substantially different states, and "Western values" is an indeterminate and subjective category. Values classified as Western in the West may be considered universal in regions with less extensive hegemonic aspirations, as their own by other cultures, or by non-Westerners as atypical of the West. People outside the West who reject "Western values" may be rejecting the label more than the values.

Nonetheless, the poll casts doubt on the assumption that the people of Muslim states inevitably see Western governance as an admirable model. Gallup research in nine Muslim states in 2001-02 had found "… overwhelming disagreement with statements that the West and the United States are trustworthy, are friendly, care about poorer nations, or are willing to share technology" (Newport, 2002: n.p.). However, while Gallup reported in 2008 that "… those surveyed do not favor wholesale adoption of Western models of democracy", there was demand for "… a new model of government - one that is democratic yet embraces religious values" (Esposito and Mogahed, 2008: n.p.).

Humanitarian aid was ranked 12th, followed by praise for the British armed forces at 13th. The latter theme occurred most frequently in a debate on 21 March 2011

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[1]   Appendix III: para 1610.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 3098, 3252, 3463.

discussing a motion to endorse British military intervention in Libya. The scheduling of the debate two days after British forces had begun attacking Libya[1] appears likely to have strengthened MPs' backing for the intervention, because voting against a war in which British forces were already fighting could have been portrayed as voting against British forces, an act of disloyalty to the nation.

The international community, frequently invoked as the legitimising authority for military intervention,[2] was ranked 14th. Some MPs appeared to use the phrase as a euphemism for the military interveners, e.g. "… military options available to the international community regarding Libya",[3] or "… the international community should be able to provide military supplies to the insurgents".[4] The British government relied heavily on the phrase, depicting the intervention as the unanimous action of a united world[5] and presenting the international community as supportive of regime change.[6]

A question from Liberal Democrat MP Martin Horwood indicated that this emphasis on the internationalisation of the intervention was partly intended to spread the blame for potential failures: "… does the Prime Minister agree that there is an urgent need to internationalise the mission as far as possible to cement support across the international community should things not run entirely tidily and also so as not to over-extend our forces?"[7] The Prime Minister did agree.[8]

The international community rhetoric framed intervention as the world doing its duty rather than a selection of dominant Western states exercising quasi-imperial power. This portrayal was cast into doubt by the abstentions in the vote for Resolution 1973 of one third of the Security Council's fifteen members, including two of the permanent five (P5) with veto powers, China and Russia, and three other major states, Brazil, Germany, and India (United Nations Security Council, 2011c). Russia and China did not veto either Resolution 1970 (United Nations Security Council, 2011d) or 1973, therefore they did not block the intervention, but abstention is not support.

Lebanon, the only Arab state in the Council, voted for Resolution 1973 along with the two African delegates from South Africa and Nigeria, but these made it clear that

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 2546 - 3604.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 472, 1115, 1129.
[3]   Appendix III: para 1121.
[4]   Appendix III: para 1142.
[5]   Appendix III: paras 2603, 2617, 2726, 2727.
[6]   Appendix III: para 2755.
[7]   Appendix III: para 2683.
[8]   Appendix III: para 2685.

they sought a peaceful solution. Germany abstained, and stated that it understood the purpose of Resolution 1973 to be regime change, as did Portugal, attributing the decision that Gaddafi must go to "the international community" and to "the will of the Libyan people" (United Nations Security Council, 2011c: 9). Portugal, however, indicated opposition to violent enforcement of regime change, maintaining that the Libyan polity "has to be fundamentally reformed through a peaceful process" (United Nations Security Council, 2011c: 9).

The top 40 themes in the Libya debates were overwhelmingly supportive of military intervention. The only significant contrary theme among them was double standards, ranked 17th. It was only partly contrary, because the theme also included condemnation of appeasement of Gaddafi,[1] failure to condemn or intervene against oppression in UK allied states,[2] allegations of hypocrisy against specific MPs,[3] accusations of double standards against Iran,[4] and denial of double standards in UK policy,[5] as well as a minority of arguments against intervention and UK arms sales to tyrants.[6] Arms sales control was ranked 36th, and this included criticism of arms sales to Libya, but usually as an argument for tightening arms sales control,[7] not against military intervention.

The theme of commercial opportunities in Libya, ranked 31st, appears to contradict the humanitarian presentation. The no invasion theme at 33rd covered explanations of how the Libya intervention differed from the Iraq war.[8] It was related to the theme of the Iraq war as a precedent to do intervention differently, ranked 41st, the most frequent of the themes where previous interventions were invoked as precedents. The no invasion theme was used by Cameron to buttress the extraordinary claim that while he planned to bomb Libya towards regime change, this was not war: he had "… no intention to get involved in another war or invasion".[9] The theme of the Iraq war as a precedent against military intervention was ranked low at 79th.

Themes invoking precedents in favour of military intervention in Libya throughout

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[1]   Appendix III: para 289.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 997, 1206, 1226, 1455, 1794, 1802.
[3]   Appendix III: paras 1704, 1708.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 1502, 1508.
[5]   Appendix III: paras 1228, 1344.
[6]   Appendix III: paras 1025, 1847, 1849, 1866.
[7]   Appendix III: paras 466, 468, 474, 476, 517.
[8]   Appendix III: paras 1136, 1184, 2505, 2638, 2686.
[9]   Appendix III: para 1216.

the period studied totalled 62 references; precedents against, 35; and precedents supporting doing military intervention differently from previous instances, 86. Thus, pro-war precedents predominated, alongside substantial caveats that lessons should be learned from past errors about how, rather than whether, to do military intervention.

The invocation of precedents, like the act of intervention, appears selective. The Vietnam war, arguably the most unsuccessful, unpopular, and morally tainted Western military intervention since the creation of the United Nations, was not mentioned in the Libya debates. A notable case of inaction that was not cited as a precedent was the Ethiopian famine of 1983-86 (Keller, 1992), possibly due to it being less recent than Rwanda. Citing Ethiopia as a precedent might also have raised questions about the reasons for Western failure to intervene to prevent or end starvation until over a million people had died, and about the Western intervention that did occur. For example, the USA had reduced its food aid to Ethiopia from "8,172 metric tons in 1982 to zero in 1984, despite warnings that millions were at risk" (Keller, 1992: 615) apparently due to the US Cold War prerogative of avoiding assistance to Ethiopia's USSR-sponsored socialist government.

Official food aid was, however, of variable benefit to the starving people, as it was diverted by the Ethiopian government which used food deprivation as an indiscriminate weapon of war against Eritrean independence forces and civilians (Keller, 1992). Ethiopia was far from a clear case where a Western military intervention could have prevented a humanitarian disaster, reducing its utility as propaganda in favour of intervention. The Rwandan genocide in 1994 was also not a clear or simple case, but the myth that it was an easy opportunity discarded by the indifference of the international community had been successfully constructed in Western media and politics, particularly in the US and UK, during the 1990s (Wertheim, 2010).

British security was cited infrequently as a reason for military intervention, ranking 80th. British national interest themes ranked 64th (pro-intervention), 88th (general), and 93rd (anti-intervention). A combined UK security and national interest theme would rank 42nd. Adding the security themes of crimes and terrorism by Libya would move its ranking to 5th, still below the protection of lives at 2nd. Crime themes had a humanitarian aspect - saving the people of Libya from the crimes of the tyrant - so that the discourse was framed within security and humanitarian themes.

Terrorist threat themes ranked 60th (Islamist), 74th (general), and 92nd (non-Islamist). These all ranked significantly lower than most of the humanitarian themes, but are significant in evaluating the success of the military intervention, and its impact on the campaign for military intervention in Syria. In addition to the IRA, 1984 bombing and Lockerbie crime themes, there were themes of Libya helping in the Western war on terror, ranked 65th; terrorism by Libya, 83rd; and renunciation of terrorism by Libya, 89th.

In view of the argument advanced under the failed state pro-intervention theme that overthrowing Gaddafi would prevent terrorism,[1] the acknowledgement of his cessation of support for terrorism and his assistance against terrorists is significant. The government appears to have deployed all possible arguments in support of overthrowing Gaddafi, even when they contradicted each other. References tagged with the failed state pro-intervention theme, which ranked 73rd, also confirmed the government's consistent commitment to regime change, and opposition complicity therein, as detailed later in this chapter.

Two frequent themes with security elements were international stability, ranked 16th, and appeasement, ranked 21st. These are significant in evaluating the success of the intervention and its utility as a precedent. The appeasement theme had humanitarian and security aspects and was characterised by phrases such as "cannot stand by",[2] "the world stood by",[3] and "the drumbeat of death if no action is taken".[4] It was challenged by comments coded with the double standards and arms sales themes, e.g. that British condemnation of tyrants was highly selective,[5] and that British governments have frequently authorised the sale of weapons to repressive states.[6]

Explicit calls for humanitarian military intervention had a mid-range ranking of 52nd. The predominance of other humanitarian themes suggests a preference in the Commons for showing that the military intervention was humanitarian by framing it as protecting lives, ending repression, enabling democracy, deterring crimes against humanity, and providing humanitarian aid, rather than calling directly for humanitarian warfare.

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 1284, 1420, 2344, 2522, 2675, 3462, 5034, 7486.
[2]   Appendix III: para 572.
[3]   Appendix III: para 1338.
[4]   Appendix III: para 1812.
[5]   Appendix III: paras 997, 1206, 1226, 1497.
[6]   Appendix III: paras 1025, 1704, 1708.

Theme Variations Over Time

Table 1 below lists the top five ranked themes in the Libya debates in each parliamentary year. The frequency of each theme is shown in parentheses. Where theme frequencies are equal, the themes are listed in alphabetical order.

Table 1: Top Five Themes in Libya Debates Ranked per Parliamentary Year, 2010-2014[1]

Rank	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
1	Protection of lives (208)	Regime change (202)	Atrocities of UK (15)	Weapons lost/misdirected (25)
2	No-fly zone (193)	Leadership = regime (106)	Commercial opps. for UK overseas (14)	Commercial opps. for UK overseas (22)
3	UNSC[2] mandate present (190)	Interim council (104)	Arms sales control (12)	General security (19)
4	Regime change (185)	Accountability (101)	Arab Spring (10)	Stability in region/world (17)
5	Leadership = regime (170)	Protection of lives (95)	Human rights abuses (9); Terrorist threat, Islamist (9)	Coalition for intervention (16)

There were of course many other themes, but analysis of how the top five changed over time provided a revealing picture of the progress of the campaign and its potential for influencing the Syrian campaign.

Year 1

In the first year, humanitarian themes predominated, making the case for military intervention. Protection of lives ranked 1st. The legitimacy derived from UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973, ranked 3rd, was crucial. The resolutions were exploited to create an appearance of legitimacy for enforcing regime change, ranked 4th, via the no-fly zone, ranked 2nd, which had been authorised by Resolution 1973. Most UK MPs supported enforced regime change for a variety of reasons. Many

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[1]   Appendix II.
[2]   UNSC = United Nations Security Council.

sought further legitimacy for Western intervention with the 5th ranked theme, characterisation of Libya's leadership as a regime, a term used to emphasise illegitimacy.

Year 2

In the second year, regime change became the 1st theme. The legitimising theme of leadership as regime was 2nd. The group of exiles and defectors chosen by the UK and allies to establish a new regime, the interim council, ranked 3rd. Another legitimising theme, accountability, was 4th, reflecting numerous promises to bring alleged criminals to justice, mainly those engaged in counter-revolutionary activities in Libya,[1] and including the Gaddafi family.[2]

The humanitarian theme of protection of lives had fallen to 5th. This theme was still important in obtaining support for the war, but the regime change had been concluded halfway through this period. From the end of the war to the end of the period studied, the theme was deployed in retrospective justification of the war[3]; in asserting the ability of British bombing to discriminate in favour of civilians[4]; and in statements that the West had exceeded its mandate,[5] and was therefore untrustworthy.[6]

Year 3

By the third year, all the initially dominant themes had fallen down the ranking, partly because they were related to military intervention, and the intervention had finished. Atrocities of the UK, a powerful contradiction of British governments' humanitarian claims, ranked 1st. Commercial opportunities for the UK overseas ranked 2nd. Although not specific to Libya, the predominance of this theme in Libya debates challenges the credibility of the humanitarian case. If combined with the commercial opportunities in enemy state theme, it would rank 1st in the third and fourth years.

Ranked 3rd was arms sales control, including criticism of Western arms sales to Gaddafi and other tyrants,[7] requests for better control,[8] and defence of Britain's

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1   Appendix III: paras 389, 404, 870, 898, 1126.
2   Appendix III: paras 390, 458, 460, 478.
3   Appendix III: paras 9765, 10620, 12214, 12420, 18183, 18516.
4   Appendix III: paras 9965, 15037.
5   Appendix III: paras 12389, 12420.
6   Appendix III: para 19529.
7   Appendix III: paras 14972, 15007, 17530.
8   Appendix III: paras 15038, 17531.

policy.[1] This theme was related to the Islamist terrorist threat theme, ranked 5th in this year, and the 1st theme of the fourth year, weapons lost/misdirected.[2]

The Arab Spring theme at 4th included continuing optimism that uprisings in Arab states were the birth pangs of liberal democracies,[3] and growing concern about their negative impacts, e.g. jihadist expansion[4] and regional economic decline[5] and destabilisation.[6]

References to human rights abuses, ranked 5th, covered abuses by the British state,[7] abuses by other states using weapons supplied by Britain;[8] a British government claim that "… in 2011, the UK made a significant contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide";[9] and reports of atrocities and crimes after regime change in Libya.[10] Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn reported that "… although the intervention in Libya killed and removed Gaddafi, it has left behind it a series of warring factions, abominable human rights abuses, and lynchings of African people who happened to be living in Libya at the time of the NATO bombardment."[11]

The Islamist terrorist threat theme, also ranked 5th, included several references by David Cameron to a major terrorist attack in the Algerian Sahara near Libya[12] in which seven migrant workers formerly resident in Britain were killed (BBC News, 2016a). He revealed that the terrorist threat from North Africa was increasing,[13] and indicated that regime change had failed as a counter-terrorist measure: "We know that there are real connections between Islamist extremist militants in Algeria and those in Libya".[14]

Terrorists were exploiting the vacuum left by regime change: "… they use whatever available ungoverned space there is in order to plan, build and thrive."[15]

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 14985, 15008, 15072.
[2]   Appendix III: para 15007.
[3]   Appendix III: para 13532.
[4]   Appendix III: para 14833.
[5]   Appendix III: para 13727.
[6]   Appendix III: para 14836.
[7]   Appendix III: para 15771.
[8]   Appendix III: paras 16875, 17530.
[9]   Appendix III: para 17591.
[10]   Appendix III: paras 13981, 14075, 14081.
[11]   Appendix III: para 14075.
[12]   Appendix III: paras 16063, 16087, 16089.
[13]   Appendix III: para 16090.
[14]   Appendix III: para 16195.
[15]   Appendix III: para 16195.

The ungoverned space had, of course, been governed prior to the regime change enforced by Britain and its allies. Cameron indicated that the post-coup government was failing in its basic security role: "We also need to work with the new Libyan Government to reduce the quantity of ungoverned spaces there, and to ensure that there is proper security in that country and that weapons are properly accounted for."[1]

In 2011, Liberal Democrat MP Martin Horwood had promoted Western intervention in Libya, with an international coalition to make it look less like Western intervention, on the grounds that declining to do so could be seen "… as one of the great failures of the international community to intervene on behalf of the people."[2] In 2013 he criticised recent Western policy in North Africa for promoting "… the incursion by foreign al-Qaeda fighters and others" into Mali.[3]

Year 4

The weapons lost/misdirected theme, ranked 1st, predominantly covered weapons supplied to rebels with Western assistance and connivance or previously supplied to Gaddafi by Western and other suppliers.[4] These were removed from state control in huge numbers, and facilitated the expansion of conflict and terrorism in Libya and far beyond, including Syria and the countries of the Sahel. Commercial opportunities for the UK again ranked 2nd, although these were now moving out of reach in Libya, temporarily at least, as violence increased, and the new government lost control.

The 3rd and 4th themes of security and stability mainly covered indications that the regime change in Libya, while touted as a means of improving security and stability, had done the opposite.[5] A government promise to restore security to Libya[6] was supported by Tory MP Daniel Kawczynski as a requirement for British commercial penetration of post-intervention Libya.[7]

The 5th theme, coalition for intervention, included proclamations of the competence of NATO and its suitability for policing the world, e.g.: "NATO is a vital resource and a valuable pool from which coalitions of the willing can be drawn",[8]

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1   Appendix III: para 16195.
2   Appendix III: para 1852.
3   Appendix III: para 17533.
4   Appendix III: paras 17772, 18293, 18295, 18297, 18302, 18306.
5   Appendix III: paras 17643, 18295, 18302, 18304, 18306, 18307, 20425, 20428.
6   Appendix III: para 18460.
7   Appendix III: para 20424.
8   Appendix III: para 18112.

and "… it now delivers the military aspects of the United Nations' work."[1] Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn took the opposite view. He pointed out that NATO was not, in fact, a global force, and questioned its mandate to assume that role, particularly from the viewpoint of non-member states.[2]

The coalition theme also appeared to function as one of the British government's defences as its apparent success in Libya turned to failure. The government reminded critics that it had had allies in the intervention,[3] spreading the blame, although it acknowledged no error. The coalition theme began as justification, and ended as exculpation. Cameron demonstrated a continuing preference for specious euphemism, referring to intervention and military alliances as "… engagement and working with partners".[4] Benefits of the regime change methodology deployed in Libya included "… not putting our soldiers at risk".[5]

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[1]   Appendix III: para 18183.
[2]   Appendix III: para 18213.
[3]   Appendix III: para 17774.
[4]   Appendix III: para 17774.
[5]   Appendix III: para 17774.

Regime Change in Libya

MPs critical of the 2011 NATO-led bombing of Libya complained that while it had started as a lawful humanitarian intervention to save lives, authorised by the UN Security Council, it was later wrongfully changed into a regime change war by the Western powers without notification to Parliament. This allegation was made perhaps most forcefully by Labour MP Sir Gerald Kaufman nearly two years after the overthrow of Gaddafi:

> In Libya, we were told we had to protect the citizens of Benghazi, and I voted in the House to do so. Western air forces - British and French - misused a UN resolution to achieve regime change, which was illegal, and resulted in the murder of Gaddafi, vile dictator though he was, whose corpse was dragged through the streets.[1]

Kaufman and other MPs had made similar complaints earlier. In May 2011 Kaufman, while accepting the subsequently discredited argument (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016) that bombing was necessary to prevent massacres, commented that "… NATO now appears to be stuck, turning to regime-change policies, which are in no way authorised by the resolution."[2]

Just over a month after the start of British military intervention in Libya, on 26 April 2011, Labour backbench MP John McDonnell said "… we have moved from the protection of civilians to regime change".[3] Two months later Plaid Cymru MP Jonathan Edwards said, "Since the original vote in the House on the mission in Libya, it is clear that the objectives have been updated to include regime change."[4] Edwards requested a debate and vote on the perceived policy change.

Tracking government and backbench statements throughout the intervention indicates that although Kaufman[5] was right that the Western powers had misused Resolution 1973, the intention to do this and the means of its accomplishment had been announced at the start of the campaign, in the debate at the end of which Kaufman had voted for the government motion in support of war. The interpretation that the policy had changed from protection to regime change was inaccurate. It had

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[1]   Appendix III: para 19529.
[2]   Appendix III: para 6173.
[3]   Appendix III: para 5430.
[4]   Appendix III: para 7607.
[5]   Appendix III: para 19529.

always been for regime change.

The failure of some MPs to notice this was understandable, given the rhetoric employed by the government to present its actions as legal, and its own denial that it was engaged in regime change. Given the near consensus that regime change was desirable and achievable, albeit under a different name, the failure of attention by others, perhaps particularly the Labour front bench, may be plausibly attributed to active connivance.

Hague replied to McDonnell that the problem he perceived in the Libyan conflict was "… Gaddafi's refusal to depart",[1] indicating that regime change was the objective. Hague leveraged humanitarianism in support of violence. He accused McDonnell of seeking the deaths of thousands of Libyans by preferring a negotiated settlement to war.[2] Mediation could not occur, Hague said, because Gaddafi refused to step down, i.e. no peace talks would be permitted until the war was over.[3] The same inverted logic would later be applied to Assad in Syria, becoming the basis of the Geneva process as interpreted by the UK.[4]

Hague replied to Edwards' intervention in June, "I do not sense that that is the general view in the House. Our military mission in Libya continues to be defined by the UN resolutions".[5] He rejected the request for a debate. Hague's responses illustrate the government's evasiveness, its reliance on Resolutions 1970 and 1973 as authority for regime change, and its reliance on opposition connivance at the deception his government used to transform humanitarian resolutions into authority for regime change. When McDonnell spoke on behalf of "many outside this House",[6] it was, for Hague, neither those outside the House nor the objective facts that were decisive, but "… the general view of the House."[7]

The French, British and US governments began to demand regime change early in the Libyan conflict. Dozens of Libyan protestors were killed by state security forces in anti-government demonstrations on 17 February 2011 (St. John, 2014). On the same day, "President Obama … ordered Muammar Gaddafi to 'step down and leave,' and signalled that the U.S. military would consider intervening if the

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1   Appendix III: para 5432.
2   Appendix III: para 5432.
3   Appendix III: para 5432.
4   Appendix IV: para 11419.
5   Appendix III: para 7609.
6   Appendix III: para 5430.
7   Appendix III: para 7609.

situation there deteriorates" (Win, 2011: n.p.). Britain and France were reported to be seeking a UN Security Council resolution for a no-fly zone over Libya (Win and Neild, 2011). Further announcements followed:

25 February - President Sarkozy (cited in Le Guernigou, Irish and MacSwan, 2011: n.p.) announced that: "Mr Gaddafi must leave".

28 February - UK Prime Minister David Cameron (cited in BBC News, 2011a: n.p.) stated: "Gaddafi must go now". Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair (cited in Webster, 2011: 8) reported after meeting with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: "The strategic objective is that there is a change in leadership in Libya".

1 March - US Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice (cited in United Nations General Assembly, 2011: n.p.), told the General Assembly: "He must go, and he must go now".

2 March - Hillary Clinton (cited in Telegraph, 2011: n.p.) reiterated that "Colonel Gaddafi must go now".

3 March - US President Obama (cited in Landler, 2011: n.p.) said Gaddafi must "step down from power and leave".

Resolution 1970, the first of the two UN Security Council Resolutions, 1970 and 1973, relied upon by NATO and its Gulf partners to overthrow Gaddafi, was adopted on 26 February 2011 (United Nations Security Council, 2011e). It authorised enforcement of an arms embargo on Libya and a travel ban on specified Libyans, but no military intervention in Libya. The no-fly zone, with a crucial additional "all necessary measures" provision that allowed NATO attacks to continue after the destruction of the Libyan air force, was authorised by Resolution 1973, adopted on 17 March 2011 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b). It was, therefore, widely known that three of the security Council's permanent members, the UK, USA, and France, sought to overthrow Gaddafi when the Council authorised humanitarian military intervention in Libya.

As Kaufman[1] observed, the Security Council did not authorise regime change, but even before the adoption of Resolution 1970, which the British government claimed to have drafted,[2] the UK began preparations consistent with a policy of regime change. The first necessity was an evacuation of Western workers from

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[1]   Appendix III: para 19529.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 390, 480.

Libya. People were already fleeing from violent unrest, but the London *Evening Standard* reported an additional motive for government assistance: "There is a fear that acting too soon will put stranded Westerners at risk" (Murphy, 2011: 1).

The British government deployed military and civilian resources to evacuate UK citizens and others from Libya.[1] This was presented as prioritising citizens' safety,[2] but it also removed the risk of negative publicity featuring Western civilian casualties or hostages during regime change operations. It provided a rationale for stationing British military assets, such as HMS Cumberland, off the Libyan coast,[3] and commencement of military coordination with rebel militias.[4] The evacuation was a significant theme in the debates in 2010-11, ranking 28th in that year with 42 references.[5]

By 28 February 2011, the evacuation was nearly complete.[6] Cameron confirmed to the House that his government was working to overthrow the Libyan leader:

> Colonel Gaddafi's regime must end and he must leave. To that end, we are taking every possible step to isolate the Gaddafi regime, to deprive it of money, to shrink its power and to ensure that anyone responsible for abuses in Libya will be held to account. With respect to all those actions, Britain is taking a lead.[7]

Tory MP Richard Ottaway supported the government: "I agree with the Prime Minister that, in view of the complete chaos that has engulfed Libya, there is a real opportunity, together with our European partners, to expedite the downfall of the present regime and create a post-Gaddafi structure in the vacuum."[8]

This was echoed by Tory MP Bernard Jenkin, who acknowledged Labour support: "I am sure that the Government are grateful for the support that Her Majesty's Opposition have given to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on the no-fly zone initiative and the toppling of Gaddafi."[9]

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[1]   Appendix III: para 381.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 386, 403.
[3]   Appendix III: para 385.
[4]   Appendix III: para 382.
[5]   Appendix II: 2010-11 by frequency.
[6]   Appendix III: paras 381-384.
[7]   Appendix III: para 389.
[8]   Appendix III: para 422.
[9]   Appendix III: para 1712.

Cameron and Hague were not as forthright as this until after Gaddafi had been overthrown, particularly about Britain's intention to mould the new regime and the expectation of a post-coup vacuum. However, when the regime change had been accomplished, Cameron abandoned obfuscation and reminded the House of opposition connivance: "… let me say that on Libya, I think it was right to work with others, including the French. There was cross-party agreement to do that and get rid of Gaddafi."[1]

On 14 March 2011, Cameron said that while UN Security Council authority for a no-fly zone was being sought, "There is no intention to get involved in another war or to see an invasion or massive amounts of ground troops".[2] Given his retrospective confirmation of the intention to "get rid of Gaddafi", the phrase "… no intention to get involved in another war" appears to be a falsehood, unless it can be accepted that intensive aerial bombardment on behalf of rebel forces, explicitly aimed at procuring their victory, does not constitute involvement.

Indian Security Council representative Hardeep Singh Puri (2016) reported that the US government was initially reluctant to use force without Arab state participation. However, France was determined to use force, and wanted NATO to be the principal aggressor, led by the USA. President Sarkozy had met a Libyan rebel delegation on 10 March, given them official recognition as Libya's only valid national delegation, and promised "… to bomb three airports when he could" (Erlanger, cited in Puri, 2016: 76). One man outside Sarkozy's inner circle who knew of this meeting, organised by French popular philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy, was "British prime minister David Cameron" (Puri, 2016: 75).

Cameron's assessment of Britain's presence in Afghanistan appeared to illustrate a capacity for distortion beyond the bounds of credibility. He said, "… the mistake of the West was to forget about Afghanistan and take its eyes off that country, rather than building and investing there when it was making progress. Instead we left it alone."[3] This was an extraordinary description of an invasion and thirteen-year military deployment which cost the British taxpayer £40 billion, included 137 UK military bases in a single province, Helmand, and thousands of British troops, of whom more than 450 were killed (BBC News, 2015b).

Immediately after the adoption of Resolution 1970, Cameron signalled that it was

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[1]   Appendix III: para 17774.
[2]   Appendix III: para 1216.
[3]   Appendix III: para 1216.

seen by his government as a step in a process - the UK would "… come forward with fresh Security Council resolutions to tighten further the screw on this dreadful regime"[1] - and that regime change was the objective: "What we want ... is the swift removal of Colonel Gaddafi from his position. If helping the opposition in Libya would help to bring that about, it is certainly something we should consider."[2]

Cameron described Resolution 1973 to the House of Commons on 17 March 2011:

> … the central purpose of this resolution is to end the violence, protect civilians, and allow the people of Libya to determine their own future, free from the brutality unleashed by the Gaddafi regime. The Libyan population want the same rights and freedoms that people across the middle east and north Africa are demanding, and that are enshrined in the values of the United Nations charter. Resolution 1973 puts the weight of the Security Council squarely behind the Libyan people in defence of those values. Our aims are entirely encapsulated by that resolution.[3]

The first of two crucial phrases was: "… allow the people of Libya to determine their own future".[4] This is not present in Resolution 1973. The resolution established a no-fly zone and demanded an end to violence and attacks on civilians, respect for human rights, and compliance with international law. It authorised states and regional bodies to enforce its provisions. It acknowledged the Libyan people's aspirations, but did not define these, nor did it authorise violence to achieve them, calling instead for dialogue towards reforms. In the text of the resolution, the Security Council:

> Stresses the need to intensify efforts to find a solution to the crisis which responds to the legitimate demands of the Libyan people and notes the decisions of the Secretary-General to send his Special Envoy to Libya and of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to send its ad hoc High Level Committee to Libya with the aim of facilitating dialogue to lead to the political reforms necessary to find a peaceful and sustainable solution (United Nations Security Council, 2011b).

The Security Council's rejection of regime change is emphasised in the

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[1]   Appendix III: para 480.
[2]   Appendix III: para 488.
[3]   Appendix III: para 2312.
[4]   Appendix III: para 2312.

resolution: "Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya" (United Nations Security Council, 2011b).

Thus, at the start of the military campaign, Cameron effectively inserted an additional clause into Resolution 1973 that presented it, contrary to the agreement reached by the Security Council and expressed in the resolution text, as an authority for regime change by force. The success of the tactic was assured by a compliant House of Commons. Most MPs appeared to share Cameron's view "… that if we will the end, we should also will the means to that end."[1]

The second crucial phrase was: "Our aims are entirely encapsulated by that resolution".[2] This established the government's defence against any complaint that military action by the Western-led coalition in pursuit of regime change exceeded the terms of the resolutions, and was therefore unlawful. The defence strategy was merely repetition of the assurance that the action was within the terms of the resolutions, a theme that occurs 86 times in the Libya debates, ranking 28th overall.[3]

The device by which the inserted clause operated as an authority for violent regime change was made explicit by the Prime Minister on 4 April 2011, when he stated that: "The world is united in believing that the Gaddafi regime has lost all legitimacy and that he must go, allowing the Libyan people to determine their own future."[4]

Therefore, "allowing the Libyan people to determine their own future" meant overthrowing Gaddafi. In summary, the government's technique for legitimising regime change took this form:

1. Obtain a humanitarian Security Council resolution providing a broad and loosely phrased authorisation for the use of force.

2. Announce that the resolution includes a self-determination clause backed by authority for the use of force.

3. Announce, citing the whole world in support, that self-determination is impossible without a prior coup d'état.

4. When challenged, state that all action is within the terms of the resolution, and

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[1]   Appendix III: para 2489.
[2]   Appendix III: para 2312.
[3]   Appendix I: Frequency sort. Theme label = UNSC resn limit of action.
[4]   Appendix III: para 5139.

is supported by the world.

In reality, Resolution 1973, which authorised military action to protect civilians in Libya (United Nations Security Council, 2011b), did not contain a self-determination clause, and the world did not support violent regime change. Labour MP John McDonnell stated on 21 March 2011, just two days after the start of Western bombing:

> We have heard already that the Arab League is falling apart, with different statements coming out in different languages to hide the dissent. The UN is also dividing, with Russia and China, as we speak, urging that military action cease. They are not abstaining, but are convening the Security Council to try to end the action. NATO itself is displaying divisions as well.[1]

There was no guarantee, or even likelihood, that the Libyan people would be free to determine their own future after the destruction of Gaddafi. However, the "… cross-party agreement … to get rid of Gaddafi"[2] ensured that parliamentary challenges to the government's invention of a self-determination clause in Resolution 1973 were infrequent and came from backbenchers.

No challenge to Cameron's creativity was raised by the opposition front bench, but it was noted by Tory MP James Arbuthnot. He recognised and supported the resolution's authority for civilian protection, and observed that the Prime Minister "… went on to say that it was about giving the Libyan people the chance to determine their own future. I do not see anything in the resolution that says that, but I think we need to be clear about it."[3] He appeared content, therefore, to endorse the insertion as long as it was clear.

Another device used by the government to avoid the charge of regime change was the implicit definition of regime change as the creation of a new regime, rather than merely removal of an existing one, by the rhetorical juxtaposition of regime change and choosing a new government. David Cameron:

> In terms of our broader strategy, what we believe we need in Libya is a transition towards a more open society and towards a better democracy, but we have to be

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[1]   Appendix III: para 3299.
[2]   Appendix III: para 17774.
[3]   Appendix III: para 3034.

clear about our aims. The UN Security Council resolution is absolutely clear that this is about saving lives and about protecting people. It is not about choosing the Government of Libya; that is an issue for the Libyan people.[1]

In this statement, being clear about aims appears to entail taking care not to describe regime change as regime change. This becomes clearer in one of a small number of examples of direct regime change denial (a theme ranked 82nd overall), during the bombing campaign: "It is not about regime change; it is for the people of Libya to decide who governs them and how they are governed."[2]

As he had previously declared that the Libyan people would not be able to decide who governed them until Gaddafi was removed by force, this amounted to stating that it was not about regime change - it was about regime change. Cameron said after this denial: "… it is inconceivable to think of a future for Libya where he is still in a position of authority",[3] underlining the regime change objective.

In a helpful intervention, Tory MP Nadhim Zahawi offered Cameron the opportunity to confirm that regime change was not regime change: "Can the Prime Minister confirm that when we vote on the motion tonight, that does not mean regime change in Libya, because that is up to the Libyan people?"[4] The Prime Minister confirmed as requested.[5] A week later he was offered the same opportunity by the leader of the opposition, Ed Miliband, asking him to "… repeat his reassurance of last week that the UN resolution is aimed at the protection of the Libyan people, not choosing the Libyan Government?"[6] The repetition was duly delivered.[7]

The prohibition of an occupying force by Resolution 1973 was used by Miliband as evidence that the intervention was not regime change: "… we are not intending to occupy Libya or seize her natural resources. This is not a power play or an attempt to install a new Government by force."[8] Again, the denial rested on acceptance that regime destruction is not regime change.

Cameron did not see the prohibition of invasion as an impediment to regime change: "We have set limits on what we are able to do, because we cannot have an

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[1]   Appendix III: para 2335.
[2]   Appendix III: para 7343.
[3]   Appendix III: para 7343.
[4]   Appendix III: para 2596.
[5]   Appendix III: para 2598.
[6]   Appendix III: para 4696.
[7]   Appendix III: para 4710.
[8]   Appendix III: para 2797.

occupying force. I believe that what we are doing can help to protect civilians and can, over time, help to bring about a better future for Libya."[1] There were two aims expressed here. The first, civilian protection, was explicit. The second, regime change, was euphemistic: "… a better future for Libya."[2]

This message was the same as it had been on 7 March 2011, nearly two weeks before Resolution 1973 was adopted, when Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander had said: "The strategic objectives for the West - sustaining pressure on the regime; helping and where we can protecting the Libyan population; and over time working to assist in ensuring that popular revolt becomes more democratic government - do not divide this House."[3] The consensus on regime change appears to have ensured minimal scrutiny of the means to the desired end.

On the same date, 7 March 2011, Labour MP David Winnick had asked Hague whether he understood the:

> … great divide between giving humanitarian aid to the victims of Gaddafi's regime, and military intervention? On the latter, there seems to be in the House and certainly in the country at large - and I believe it is the right attitude to take - no appetite for military intervention in Libya.[4]

The lack of public support for military intervention suggested a need for the humanitarian presentation of regime change. Hague signalled this approach, and demonstrated a tendency towards evasiveness, when he changed *aid* to *assistance*, inserted an additional word, *direct*, into his reply, and qualified that further with *essentially*:

> … of course there is a difference between humanitarian assistance and direct military intervention. As I explained earlier, the options that we are asking NATO to look at are essentially options to protect the civilian population or to deliver the necessary humanitarian assistance. That is different from direct military intervention.[5]

Hague, therefore, avoided acknowledging public opinion as an obstacle to the

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1   Appendix III: para 2485.
2   Appendix III: para 2485.
3   Appendix III: para 888.
4   Appendix III: para 965.
5   Appendix III: para 967.

forthcoming military intervention, which was to use the post-Iraq technique of providing air cover for a ground force comprised of local militias augmented by irregular forces from elsewhere. Impartial observers, and people in the areas to be bombed, would seem likely to perceive the intervention as both direct and military, and Hague's statement as dissimulation in the service of British government propaganda for war.

Cameron also made it clear, in the 21 March 2011 debate on the motion to approve bombing Libya, that his government did not intend to leave the future of Libya to the Libyan people, referring to "… what will happen immediately after the departure of Gaddafi. We need to work very hard on that as well."[1] Cameron then indicated that, as with overthrowing Gaddafi, Britain intended to use the UN as an instrument for influencing the post-war settlement.[2]

Britain avoided a negotiated settlement at the start of the Libyan war by announcing, with France and the USA, three non-negotiable instructions to the Libyan government. Without referral to the Security Council for agreement, the P3 required:

> … that a ceasefire had to be implemented immediately, and that all attacks against civilians must stop. Secondly, we said that Gaddafi had to stop his troops advancing on Benghazi. Thirdly, we said that Gaddafi had to pull his forces back from Ajdabiya, Misrata and Zawiyah. He had to establish water, electricity and gas supplies to all areas, and he had to allow humanitarian assistance to reach the people of Libya.[3]

The standard justification was deployed: "… those non-negotiable conditions are entirely consistent with implementing the UN resolution."[4] Again, the P3 powers had arbitrarily extended Resolution 1973. The resolution did not require Libyan forces to cease advancing on Benghazi, nor did it require them to withdraw from any towns or cities (United Nations Security Council, 2011b).

The P3 set Gaddafi up to fail by ordering him to surrender control of substantial areas of the country including major cities to rebels, and at the same time to assure maintenance of utility supplies in those areas. The withdrawal demand appears to conflict with Resolution 1973's affirmation of Libyan sovereignty. By explicitly ruling

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[1] Appendix III: para 7263.
[2] Appendix III: para 7263.
[3] Appendix III: para 2553.
[4] Appendix III: para 2554.

out negotiation, the P3 acted in opposition to the aims of the resolution, which called for "… facilitating dialogue to lead to the political reforms necessary to find a peaceful and sustainable solution" (United Nations Security Council, 2011b: 2).

The British government interpreted the resolution as applying only to Libyan government forces. Its spokesmen referred to the Libyan army as *Gaddafi*, and both civilians and rebels as *his people*: "… the Security Council resolution is absolutely clear in its first paragraph that there should be a ceasefire and that Gaddafi should stop his attacks on his people."[1] There was no requirement in international law (Cassese, 2005) or Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b) for a state to refrain from the use of force against armed groups staging a violent insurrection. It could have been argued that the doctrine of the R2P obliged governments to protect civilians from armed rebels and violent disorder.

Labour MP Katy Clark commented that: "The wording of the UN resolution is very wide, and the reference to 'all necessary measures' in some ways gives a blank cheque to the powers taking action."[2] She supported regime change but doubted the authority claimed for the resolution: "… it probably does not give those taking action the ability to do what they really need to do in Libya. We could easily end up being involved in a very long conflict but with Gaddafi remaining in power."[3] The obvious political solution was the one actually adopted - use all available military power short of invasion to pursue regime change, but do not label the process as regime change.

Green MP Caroline Lucas called Security Council Resolution 1973 and the government motion for war "dangerously open-ended",[4] and the regime change goal, if limited to Gaddafi's removal "over-simplistic".[5] She noted that the government's proposal for military intervention was, "… in effect, support for regime change, which falls well outside the terms of the UN resolution".[6] Lucas made this point on 21 March 2011, at the start of the British military action. It is surprising, therefore, that the view came to be held after Lucas's clear, evidence-based[7] analysis, that there was a subsequent shift from civilian protection to regime change.

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1   Appendix III: para 2334.
2   Appendix III: para 3132.
3   Appendix III: para 3132.
4   Appendix III: para 3394.
5   Appendix III: para 3394.
6   Appendix III: para 3397.
7   Appendix III: para 3395-3396.

Labour MP Geraint Davies evoked the appeasement theme, ranked 21st overall, and effectively an argument to override cost-benefit and legality concerns by limiting options to military action or collaboration with the enemy tyrant:

> The world could not stand by as Gaddafi used air power, tanks and soldiers to inflict wholesale massacre on those fighting for a peaceful, democratic future for Libya. UN resolution 1973, which sanctions the use of 'all necessary measures' to protect civilians, needs to destroy Gaddafi's military assets.[1]

This appears to classify combatants as civilians. Under an authority "to protect civilians", Davies called for the defence of "those fighting". A resolution to protect lives was recruited as a force of conquest when Davies said the "resolution … needs to destroy Gaddafi's military assets." Again, Libyan state forces were personalised as "Gaddafi's". The call for the destruction of Libyan forces clearly goes beyond the civilian protective measures authorised by Resolution 1973, and shows how the "all necessary measures" phrase could be abused as, in Katy Clark's words, "a blank cheque".[2]

Davies also expressed the view that fighters against Gaddafi were pro-democracy, a theme ranked 11th overall, a prominent element of the case for war. If regime change had not been the goal, and the intervention had been merely to save civilian lives, the political disposition of the rebels would have been irrelevant, except perhaps in gauging the threat to civilians from rebels.

The risk of rebel atrocities and scepticism about the democratic intentions of the rebels were raised by Tory backbench MP Ben Wallace at the start of the NATO intervention,[3] but neither factor appears to have had an impact on government planning. None of these themes was dominant. The atrocities of rebels ranked 72nd. Themes doubting the rebels' commitment to democracy ranked 84th, 88th, and 93rd.

All three democracy-doubting themes combined would have ranked 77th, while belief that the rebellion was a democracy movement ranked 11th. Humanitarian monitors were largely absent from Libya - obstruction of humanitarian access was used to support the British case for war, with a middle to low ranking of 62nd - and

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1   Appendix III: para 3413.
2   Appendix III: para 3132.
3   Appendix III: para 2966.

Cameron had acknowledged the great size of the country.[1] Despite the consequent impossibility of obtaining precise battlefield intelligence, Hague announced on 24 March 2011 that: "The only forces acting indiscriminately or deliberately inflicting casualties are the forces of the Gaddafi regime."[2]

The omission of the word "civilian" from this sentence may have been accidental - Hague had used it in the previous sentence - but even so it suggests a preference for blind faith over realism or evidence. It is notable that by this stage, less than a week after the start of the NATO intervention, the purpose of the no-fly zone had been fully accomplished: "There are no Libyan military aircraft flying."[3] However, this did not lead to a reduction in NATO coalition assaults on Libyan forces, but an escalation.

Hague said: "We continue to engage in intensive diplomatic activity to increase the multilateral pressure on the Libyan regime."[4] This included cutting off all oil revenue, the nation's main source of income (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, 2018). He repeated that the UK would not design the new regime, but stated that the Western-led bombing had made regime change more likely, and used a favoured euphemism to urge the rebel leaders to plan for regime change: "organise a transition process."[5]

A week later, Hague reaffirmed the British government's commitment to regime change, and reported that Britain had persuaded a conference on Libya that it "… must agree the need for a political process, led by the Libyan people, that helps to create the conditions in which the people of Libya can choose their own future, supported by the international community."[6] Again this exceeded the remit of civilian protection.

The British government consistently stated that choosing Libya's next government was a matter for the Libyan people, not for the UK.[7] Simultaneously, however, Hague signalled the UK's intention to influence the outcome by promoting the Transitional National Council (TNC) to replace the Gaddafi administration.[8] Cameron first appointed the TNC as the authentic voice of Libya on 18 March 2011,

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[1]   Appendix III: para 511.
[2]   Appendix III: para 4498.
[3]   Appendix III: para 4498.
[4]   Appendix III: para 4501.
[5]   Appendix III: para 4503.
[6]   Appendix III: para 4944.
[7]   Appendix III: paras 2335, 4677, 4944, 5030, 5750, 6828, 7343, 7816.
[8]   Appendix III: para 4944.

the day before NATO bombing began, with the phrase: "… the people of Libya, through their transitional national council".[1] In June, he declared it "… the only credible diplomatic body that can represent the people of Libya right now."[2]

Later in April 2011 Hague announced that: "Our strategy is to intensify the diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Gaddafi's regime, and since the House last met we have made progress on all those fronts."[3] The steering authority for regime change was the "Libya contact group", whose formation had been announced by Hague on 30 March 2011.[4] Co-chaired at its first meeting in Doha by Hague and the dictatorship of Qatar, it had "… agreed that Gaddafi's regime had lost all legitimacy, that the national transitional council should be offered further support, and that the UN special envoy should take forward an inclusive political process."[5] Again, this fell outside the remit of civilian protection.

The advantage of Resolution 1973 for the Western powers was not, as Cameron had claimed, that: "It is a very clear resolution",[6] but precisely the opposite - it was, as Caroline Lucas had identified,[7] a loosely worded resolution. This facilitated the rhetorical manoeuvres necessary to wrap violent regime change in Libya enforced by the Western powers in a cloak of legality.

The accommodating breadth of the resolution was not accidental, but, in the words of Tory MP Richard Graham, the result of "… the efforts and success of our diplomats in the UN Security Council in ensuring the correct wording of resolution 1973".[8] Even so, creativity had been required to effectively convert the resolution from humanitarian to imperialistic ends, deemed legal on the Attorney-General's advice.[9]

The role of the British Attorney General is problematic (Elvin, 2016) in that it breaches the democratic principle of separation of powers. The post-holder is an elected MP of the ruling party who is a member of the government, but is also the country's senior law officer. Without a constitutional change, the most obvious counter to the conflict of interest created by this dual role would be transparency,

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[1]   Appendix III: para 2299.
[2]   Appendix III: para 7242.
[3]   Appendix III: para 5285.
[4]   Appendix III: para 4945.
[5]   Appendix III: para 5286.
[6]   Appendix III: para 2481.
[7]   Appendix III: para 3394.
[8]   Appendix III: para 2983.
[9]   Appendix III: para 2352.

with due deference to the need, when applicable, for legal advice to be confidential.

The British government rejected transparency on this occasion, producing only, in Cameron's words "… a note on the legal advice"[1], and refusing to publish the advice in full, citing precedent.[2] Thus, it was impossible to challenge the government's assertion that even by its own questionable standards - approval by one of its own members - its arbitrary amendment of Resolution 1973 into a regime change resolution was legal.

In the fifth week of NATO bombing, Tory MP and former Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind confirmed the regime change objective: "… the Government's twin fundamental aims of protecting civilians and requiring the departure of Gaddafi",[3] and opined that achieving regime change would require increasing military support for the rebels beyond air cover. He commended the despatch of military trainers to Libya by the British government.

Hague did not take the opportunity to deny the regime change objective, but did deny that the British military personnel in Libya, arguably in breach of Resolution 1973, were military trainers. They were, he said: "working on headquarters organisation",[4] and only providing: "help with non-lethal equipment".[5] However, it is difficult to envisage a plausible scenario in which military personnel are sent into a war zone to provide active armed insurgents with assistance that has no military application.

According to *The Sunday Times*, British, French and Qatari special forces took a leading role in the fighting to overthrow Gaddafi (Amoore, 2011). Contrary to later British government portrayal of Gaddafi's overthrow as the people's victory, the report asserts that foreign special forces leadership, expertise, and technology had turned stalemate to insurgent victory. Such use of special forces appears a breach of the condition of no occupying forces of any kind in Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b), unless it could be argued that they were not occupying. It seems probable that if the British government had felt able to rely on such a defence, they would have done so, but they did not, leaving Parliament deceived. The reporter was embedded with a group of rebel volunteers who had

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[1]   Appendix III: para 2652.
[2]   Appendix III: para 19009.
[3]   Appendix III: para 5357.
[4]   Appendix III: para 5359.
[5]   Appendix III: para 5359.

been transferred by unspecified means from Britain to Libya to overthrow Gaddafi (Amoore, 2011). The transfer of fighters from the UK was also arguably a breach of the spirit of Resolution 1973.

Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn highlighted anomalies in the government's presentation:

> May I congratulate the Foreign Secretary on delivering an absolutely brilliant piece of Foreign Office speak for the last 10 minutes? He assured us that there was to be no ground intervention, yet military forces are being sent to assist the British diplomatic mission. He assured us that there was no intention of regime change, and then promptly called for a regime change.[1]

John Baron, the only Tory MP to vote against the motion authorising the Libyan intervention on 21 March 2011 (UK Parliament, 2011), showed greater perception than those who alleged a mid-intervention change of policy when he spoke shortly after Corbyn in the same debate:

> The debate and vote on Libya was couched very much in terms of humanitarian aid, but it has since become clear, from the rejection of the African Union peace proposals and from the joint statement, that Britain, the US and France will accept nothing less than Gaddafi's removal. Will the Foreign Secretary sanction a further debate and vote on this issue in Government time?[2]

Hague rejected the request for a debate and vote. Although Baron had not alleged a change of policy, merely that it had become clear, Hague defence was that the government's policy had not changed, and that it was acting within the UN resolutions.[3]

The British government rejected peace negotiations throughout the intervention. At the end of June 2011, Tory MP Joseph Johnson questioned William Hague about an apparent risk to the regime change project, namely:

> … recent statements by Amr Moussa, the outgoing secretary-general of the Arab League and current presidential candidate in Egypt in which he has called for a

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[1]   Appendix III: para 5361.
[2]   Appendix III: para 5434.
[3]   Appendix III: para 5436.

ceasefire and the commencement of peace talks while the existing Libyan leader is in place, and therefore underestimates the unity of purpose in the international community in enforcing the UN resolutions?[1]

This only makes sense if it refers to enforcing Resolution 1973 as amended by the British government to fabricate an authority for regime change, because the resolution as adopted by the Security Council called specifically for a ceasefire and negotiations (United Nations Security Council, 2011e). Hague assured Johnson that the Libyan contact group would keep the campaign on track, and implicitly confirmed that regime change was still the objective by rejecting the possibility of a ceasefire and talks with Gaddafi in power.[2]

MPs' reactions in debates at the start of the intervention indicate that the government's deception had misled, or at least confused, most of the small anti-war minority, if only for a few weeks. It had been accepted by the pro-war majority as an adequate cover story for regime change, an objective they supported. Within three weeks of the start of the Western-led military intervention, some observers outside the British parliament understood that the intervention had been for regime change from the start:

> UN Security Council resolution 1973 provided for a no-fly zone, but military intervention by the U.S. and Europe was much more than that right from the beginning, as was predictable given their history, relationship to North Africa and the Middle East, and imperial appetites. The operation, which is now under NATO command, immediately became a campaign to oust Qaddafi on behalf of Western interests (Harrison and Landy, 2011: n.p.).

As has been shown, Resolution 1973 provided for more than a no-fly zone, but not for regime change. The British government, committed to regime change, had worded it broadly, and exploited this breadth to facilitate the creativity needed to legalise a campaign for regime change. The word *became* might suggest a change, but no change occurred. From at least their perception of the opportunity in February 2011, the Western powers planned and executed a regime change strategy. Whether British MPs were complicit or merely credulous, and there are indications of both, the consistent regime change objective was neither acknowledged nor

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[1]   Appendix III: para 7578.
[2]   Appendix III: para 7580.

challenged by the great majority of them.

The urgency of action theme - the argument that military intervention in Libya must begin immediately - may have helped to obscure the regime change objective at the start of the campaign as haste prevented full scrutiny. This theme was redundant once the NATO bombing had begun, so its medium-to-high ranking of 29th out of 93[1] made it significant. Detailed tracking of the theme, and its frequent companion in early Libya debates, the armed rebellion failing theme,[2] however, confirmed consistent commitment to regime change. Comparison with the Syria debates revealed a double standard that strengthened the impression of expediency in the use of humanitarian arguments.[3]

MPs argued that there was extreme urgency for military intervention in Libya. This began before Resolution 1973, with Cameron's wish for "… the swift removal of Colonel Gaddafi from his position."[4] The reason for urgency specified at this point was the danger of increased oppression by Gaddafi.[5] Cameron then called for an economic siege of the country, likely to harm the Libyan people, especially the poorest (Sponeck, 2006). He presented this as an assault on "… the regime, so that it falls as fast as it possibly can".[6] A fortnight later, still before Resolution 1973, Labour opposition leader Ed Miliband indicated that regime change was urgent: "… the Libyan regime should relinquish power immediately."[7] The next urgency reference, by Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes, referred to regime change and military intervention but did not feature humanitarian objectives.[8] In the next, Labour MP Tony Lloyd equated arming rebels with stopping attacks by Libyan state forces on "innocent people", and connected urgency to legality.[9]

Cameron linked urgency to the success of the revolution: "… it does seem as if the rebels have had some serious setbacks, so time could be relatively short. The international community, therefore, needs to step up and quicken the pace of its response".[10] Urgency also had a propaganda benefit. In a comment on a different subject and not tracked by the urgency of action theme, the Prime Minister noted

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[1]   Appendix I.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 1170, 1252, 1382, 1567, 1724, 1814.
[3]   See Chapter 7.
[4]   Appendix III: para 488.
[5]   Appendix III: para 511.
[6]   Appendix III: para 515.
[7]   Appendix III: para 1122.
[8]   Appendix III: para 1163.
[9]   Appendix III: para 1168.
[10]   Appendix III: para 1170.

that, "… a lie is halfway round the world before the truth has got its boots on."[1]

Tory MP Peter Bone feared that without action it would be too late, but did not say for whom, nor for what.[2] Cameron identified an urgent need "… to increase pressure on the regime and to help people on the ground."[3] Tory MP Julian Brazier advocated arming the rebels "before time runs out".[4] Labour MP Mark Hendrick asked how soon the military intervention would have to begin "… not only to save civilians on the ground, but to change the course of events there?"[5]

On the day the Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011e), Tory MP Bernard Jenkin said in Parliament, "Is not the most important issue in this debate the fact that events in Libya appear to be at a turning point?"[6] He acknowledged cross-party support for "… the no-fly zone initiative and the toppling of Gaddafi", and identified this as "… a crucial test of the credibility of British foreign policy", another non-humanitarian motive for enforcing regime change.

Tory MP Bob Stewart said of Gaddafi on 17 March 2011, "The key point is his rate of progress."[7] If protecting civilians had been the primary aim, surely the civilian death toll would have been the key point. Stewart also said "… we must ensure that whatever we do has the support of those people who oppose Gaddafi",[8] i.e. take a side in a conflict, rather than, as he put it later, "help the Libyan people".[9] He insisted on a Security Council resolution, not because this would manifest the considered judgement of the international community on the legitimacy of and necessity for military intervention, but "… because it gives us top cover."[10]

Later in this debate, Tory MP Robert Halfon highlighted the dishonour of operating behind cover: "With the release of al-Megrahi, the Lockerbie bomber, the previous Government hid behind the fig leaf of devolution to help facilitate the release of a mass murderer."[11] Stewart also identified a "window of opportunity"[12] of

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1	Appendix III: para 1200.
2	Appendix III: para 1222.
3	Appendix III: para 1224.
4	Appendix III: para 1238.
5	Appendix III: para 1252.
6	Appendix III: para 1712.
7	Appendix III: para 2133.
8	Appendix III: para 2135.
9	Appendix III: para 2162.
10	Appendix III: para 2134.
11	Appendix III: para 2169.
12	Appendix III: para 2133.

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about one month, and commented: "It may already be too late."[1] It was clearly not too late to save civilians, so this must have referred to regime change.

The principal evidence used to inject urgency into the case for war was exaggeration of Gaddafi's rhetoric (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016). He had made melodramatic threats of violence which those arguing for urgent intervention treated as literal statements of intent, despite their figurative content. For example, Gaddafi had threatened to kill people "like rats".[2]

Tory MP Christopher Pincher insisted that: "Anybody who calls their people 'rats' cannot 'live in the hearts of millions' other than as a feared and loathed object."[3] However, Tory MP Daniel Kawczynski paid tribute to a friend "… who was a desert rat",[4] and Tory MP Andrew Murrison asked for the Foreign Secretary's assurance that, unlike the Blair government in Iraq, the UK would not to be unduly influenced in its plans for a new regime by Libyan defectors, "… as the rats leave what we hope is Gaddafi's sinking ship?"[5]

Hague gave the requested assurance, but the chairman of the Transitional National Council, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, had occupied the position of Minister of Justice for Gaddafi until he defected at the start of the revolution in February 2011 (BBC News, 2011b). The Council was recognised by Hague in May 2011, without consulting the people of Libya, "… as the legitimate representative of the people of Libya."[6]

At the start of the campaign, the menace of Gaddafi's threats was exaggerated by presentation of the conflict as Gaddafi's "war machine against the people of Libya".[7] This allowed any threat of force from Gaddafi to be interpreted as a threat to all civilians. MPs cited Gaddafi's rat rhetoric two months into the NATO intervention as justification for continuing towards regime change,[8] and at the end of the intervention as retrospective justification.[9] Two contrasting themes - leader rhetoric as *casus belli*, ranked 67th with 27 references, and leader dishonest, ranked 76th with 18 references - indicate that the government exaggerated deliberately,

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[1]   Appendix III: para 2162.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 5895, 6081, 7697.
[3]   Appendix III: paras 6382-6384.
[4]   Appendix III: para 9510.
[5]   Appendix III: para 5248.
[6]   Appendix III: para 5954.
[7]   Appendix III: para 486.
[8]   Appendix III: paras 5895, 6081, 6382.
[9]   Appendix III: para 7697.

and with the approval of the official opposition.

The argument that Gaddafi's lurid threats had to be believed was contradicted by the less frequently made argument that Gaddafi could not be believed, but even those making the latter point failed to note the inconsistency. Several MPs introduced both arguments into the debate, but did not connect them, apparently unaware that they were contradicting their own arguments for urgent war.

Two months into the intervention, Liberal Democrat MP Stephen Gilbert presented both arguments in the same speech as justification for enforced regime change. Speaking of Gaddafi's threats, Gilbert said: "The only person he is fooling with his insane rhetoric is himself."[1] Moments later he concluded that: "We could not have watched from the sidelines and merely grimaced at the slaughter that would inevitably have followed."[2] Perhaps Gaddafi was not the only political figure who, in Gilbert's words, was "… lost in his own propaganda."[3]

The day before Western bombing began, opposition leader Ed Miliband cited Gaddafi's threats as justification for the assault: "The whole world is aware of the urgency of the situation, given the avowed intentions of Colonel Gaddafi."[4] Prime Minister Cameron echoed this message: "He has said chilling words about what he plans to do to his own country and people, and he must be stopped."[5]

Cameron did not amend his assessment of Gaddafi's intentions after acknowledging later in the same debate that: "Gaddafi lied to the international community",[6] and in later debates he claimed that the intervention had helped to prevent a massacre,[7] as did Hague[8] and other MPs.[9] There is no evidence that, at any time during the period researched, Cameron heeded his own warning in respect of Gaddafi's threats: "I think we should have a heavy degree of scepticism about what this man says."[10]

Another MP in the ruling coalition, Liberal Democrat Sir Menzies Campbell, a backbencher who had been foreign affairs spokesman, deputy leader, and leader

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[1]   Appendix III: para 6438.
[2]   Appendix III: para 6440.
[3]   Appendix III: para 6437.
[4]   Appendix III: para 2322.
[5]   Appendix III: para 2501.
[6]   Appendix III: para 2555.
[7]   Appendix III: paras 2548, 2768.
[8]   Appendix III: para 3587.
[9]   Appendix III: paras 2744, 2939, 2953.
[10]   Appendix III: para 4765.

of his party, combined the contradictory arguments in the same speech. In the debate to approve the NATO assaults that had begun 2 days earlier, he said of Gaddafi in support of military action: "The lives of his people have been threatened in recent times by an immediate and chilling promise to go from house to house, from room to room, and to show no mercy."[1]

If the West had not bombed, Campbell averred, its forbearance would have "… allowed a slaughterhouse to take place in Benghazi".[2] His certainty of this outcome was not diluted by his own negative assessment of Gaddafi's honesty a few sentences later: "Deceit, deception and defiance have kept him in power for many, many years."[3]

Tory MP Ben Wallace also produced both arguments, but in separate speeches in the same debate: "We should reflect on the comments of the right hon. and learned Member for North East Fife (Sir Menzies Campbell) about Colonel Gaddafi's statements that he would go from room to room, showing no mercy."[4] He reminded the House that at the time of the Labour government's disarmament deal with Gaddafi in 2003: "Some of us said that Mr Gaddafi could not be trusted",[5] yet he chose not to apply that mistrust to Gaddafi's bellicose rhetoric.

Foreign Secretary William Hague also justified military intervention on the grounds of Gaddafi's threats, invoking "… the broadcast of televised threats to purge whole cities and to hunt down people in their homes",[6] and the "… continued threats by Gaddafi forces to 'massacre' residents in areas under bombardment."[7] He appeared to reverse his own policy when he stated a few sentences later, in the context of ceasefires, that "… the Libyan regime will be judged by its actions not its words."[8]

Hague repeated the latter phrase in a debate at the end of March 2011.[9] However, seven weeks later, he justified the Western-led bombing as action against "… a regime that threatened to 'exterminate like rats' the people who had risen

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[1]   Appendix III: para 2939.
[2]   Appendix III: para 2939.
[3]   Appendix III: para 2941.
[4]   Appendix III: para 2957.
[5]   Appendix III: para 2968.
[6]   Appendix III: para 3582.
[7]   Appendix III: para 4496.
[8]   Appendix III: para 4500.
[9]   Appendix III: para 4946.

against it."[1] Thus, he demonstrated that the British government had judged the Libyan government by its words when deciding to go to war against it, and continued to do so.

Also in May 2011, a statement by Labour MP Paul Flynn posited words, not action, as the actual hazard: "If we did not intervene, we were leaving the people of Benghazi defenceless against the bloodthirsty threats of Gaddafi."[2] It is reasonable to assume that he meant the actuation of the threats rather than the threats themselves, but the phrasing exemplifies the substitution of speculation and rhetoric for the calm assessment of reality in the arguments for war. Furthermore, if rebel-held Benghazi was defenceless, it was remarkable that the defenceless rebels had been able to seize the city from "extremely well-armed"[3] government forces allegedly intent on mass slaughter.

Overall, MPs appear generally to have judged the Libyan government by whatever criteria were best suited, at any given moment, to the pursuit of regime change. Flynn's description of defenceless people also contrasts with an argument introduced by the British government after regime change, the theme that the rebel victory had not been due to foreign intervention. Cameron announced on 5 September 2011 that: "Today, the Libyan people have taken their country back."[4]

He added: "It is the Libyan people who have liberated their country; there was no foreign occupying army",[5] and "… because the Libya operation has not involved an occupying force or an invading army, the Libyan people rightly feel that they have done this largely by themselves."[6] As with the earlier argument that regime change without an invasion force was not regime change, he used the absence of an invasion and occupation force in support of a legitimising misrepresentation, claiming that massive aerial bombardment by the combined forces of NATO and Arab states had not had a conclusive impact on the outcome of the war.

This assertion contradicted arguments made by MPs including Cameron,[7] Hague,[8] and Alexander[9] at the start of the campaign, to the effect that bombing was

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[1]   Appendix III: para 5895.
[2]   Appendix III: para 6316.
[3]   Appendix III: para 1238.
[4]   Appendix III: para 7698.
[5]   Appendix III: para 7717.
[6]   Appendix III: para 7825.
[7]   Appendix III: paras 1170, 1254.
[8]   Appendix III: paras 1382, 1567.
[9]   Appendix III: paras 1679-1684.

needed urgently to save the rebels from defeat. It was also contradicted by opposition leader Miliband at the end of the war: "… change in Libya would not have come about without action from the international community."[1]

Miliband continued to brand the intervention as "action to protect civilians",[2] echoing the government presentation that regime change was the only way civilians could be protected. On behalf of the Labour opposition, he said of the intervention, "… we supported it at the time, we have remained steadfast in our support and we support it now."[3]

As discussed earlier in this chapter, MPs in several parties had realised in the intervening months that the Western-led military action was for regime change, using civilian protection as a cover. Miliband made no such acknowledgement even at the conclusion of the regime change, giving the impression that he had been in favour of the government strategy throughout. He confirmed that the task of the British military had been to obtain regime change, justifying their role with an assumption of rebel beneficence: "It is right that Britain has been on the side of those who are fighting to enjoy the basic social, economic and political rights that we take for granted."[4]

He concluded his speech with a reprisal of the representation of regime change as civilian protection, and a recommendation to the government not to leave the future of Libya to the Libyan people:

> Let me end by agreeing with the Prime Minister that we should take pride in the role we have played in protecting the Libyan people as they claim a better future. We should now help them as they enter the next phase - moving from popular revolt to stable, democratic government.[5]

Although he presented British intervention as "help", he did not allow for the possibility that such help might not be sought. Britain's record of democracy building in Afghanistan and Iraq is hard to see as a compelling advertisement for its governance development services. The predominance of the theme of UK responsibility for the establishment of the new regime suggested a significant

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[1]   Appendix III: para 7719.
[2]   Appendix III: para 7719.
[3]   Appendix III: para 7719.
[4]   Appendix III: para 7729.
[5]   Appendix III: para 7729.

ambition to direct its development.

The theme of UK responsibility for the post-war settlement was 1st of the post-war settlement themes, and 23rd of all themes, with 99 references. The responsibility of the Libyan people for the post-war settlement was 2nd of these themes, and 53rd of all themes, with 42 references. Responsibility for the post-war settlement by the TNC approved and supported by the UK ranked 4th of these themes, after UN responsibility, and ranked only 79th of all themes, with 15 references, suggesting a subordinate role for the TNC.

The massacre theme appears to have been effective in persuading some doubters of the case for war. It was combined with concern that rebel defeat was imminent to add urgency to the campaign to justify the decision to start the war prior to the debate and the vote in parliament. That sequence of events virtually guaranteed parliamentary support for British troops already in action.

Gaddafi's reputation for dishonesty was raised several times as part of a general effort to portray him as iniquitous, and to dismiss his offers of a ceasefire. The omission of MPs to infer that his threats were also unreliable reflected a widely expressed desire in the House to overthrow Gaddafi, and may also be an illustration of the effectiveness of appeals to humanitarian instincts in suppressing rational assessment sufficiently to allow ulterior motives to prevail.

The failed state pro-intervention theme, ranked 74th, tracked the argument that if Gaddafi was not overthrown: "Libya will become once again a pariah state, festering on Europe's border, and a source of instability exporting terror beyond its borders."[1] Thus, the humanitarian argument was augmented with national interest and security grounds for British military action,[2] including the theme of Gaddafi's support for terrorism.[3]

Cameron deployed the failed state pro-intervention argument in 9 of the theme's 20 occurrences.[4] Hague raised it 4 times,[5] and Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Alexander once.[6] The remaining references were by backbenchers: 5 by Tories,[7]

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[1]   Appendix III: para 1420.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 1116, 1192.
[3]   Appendix III: para 1284.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 1116, 1192, 1284, 2344, 2380, 2397, 2675, 2727, 7697.
[5]   Appendix III: paras 1420, 3592, 5034, 7486.
[6]   Appendix III: para 1622.
[7]   Appendix III: paras 1780, 2522, 3069, 3462, 6386.

and 1 by a Liberal Democrat.[1]

Cameron indicated that this was an argument for regime change: "… it is not in our interests that we end up with Gaddafi still in power, in charge of what will become a pariah rogue state on the borders of Europe causing huge amounts of difficulty for everyone else."[2]

Alexander accepted this proposition during the debate on military intervention under Resolution 1973, two weeks later:

> We can, and must, use British influence to support political transitions in north Africa, a region that is just 8 miles from Europe at its nearest point. Europe's security and stability would be better served by having more stable, prosperous and democratic neighbours on its southern border.[3]

It is remarkable that after such clarity and consensus on regime change, the claim was maintained that the intervention was not about regime change.

Opposition leader Miliband asked Cameron in the same debate to "… explain the Government's broader strategy for Libya's future, should we succeed in stopping Colonel Gaddafi's advance, given that last night's resolution is directed towards a specific aim of the protection of the Libyan people, rather than explicitly towards regime change?"[4]

This question could be interpreted as an inquiry into the government's strategy for disguising Resolution 1973 as legal authority for regime change. Cameron's response indicates this interpretation. He invoked the "all necessary measures"[5] clause - the authority for attacks beyond no-fly zone enforcement - and pre-empted the charge of unlawful regime change with a promise that the UK would not choose the new regime,[6] implying that regime removal was not regime change.

This device was accepted by the opposition front bench and most MPs. Opposition shadow Foreign Secretary Alexander asked MPs to sustain the propaganda role of the humanitarian argument, and supported Cameron's

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[1]   Appendix III: para 3103.
[2]   Appendix III: para 1192.
[3]   Appendix III: para 1622.
[4]   Appendix III: para 2323.
[5]   Appendix III: para 2334.
[6]   Appendix III: para 2335.

exculpatory definition of regime change:

> We should all be mindful that this conflict will be fought on the airwaves as well as in the air. To maintain pressure on Gaddafi and sustain international support, the House should be crystal clear that the mission is to protect Libya's population, not to choose Libya's leadership.[1]

When Cameron said, in a debate a week later, "The right hon. Gentleman asked whether the emphasis is still on protecting people, not regime change. That is right",[2] the use of the presentational word *emphasis* rather than an action word such as *purpose*, *objective*, or *goal*, indicated a focus on messaging.

Tory MP Richard Ottaway had dismissed the failed state argument in an earlier debate: "… we have had this pariah state for 42 years, and we have lived with it: we have put up with it; we had to bomb it once; we had Lockerbie; and we are still here and it is still there."[3] However, his main concern was the legality of military intervention, which he considered demonstrated by his government's interpretation of Resolution 1973.

The progress of the failed state pro-intervention theme exemplified the Commons' approach to the Libyan war campaign. The proposition was introduced by the government, stated without supporting argument or evidence except Gaddafi's historic trespasses against the West, weakly echoed by the opposition, more strongly echoed by government backbenchers, and easily debunked, to no effect, by a government backbencher.

The last failed state theme reference was near the end of the bombing campaign, on 5 September 2011.[4] Just over a month later, on 13 October 2011, the weapons lost/misdirected theme first appeared,[5] indicating that the security objective had not been attained, and the revolution had contributed instead to a reduction of stability and an increased risk from terrorism.

This chapter tracked the most frequent themes in the Libya debates and reviewed them in the broader context of the debate text and the impact of the NATO intervention in Libya. It found that a humanitarian presentation of British policy was

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[1]   Appendix III: para 3560.
[2]   Appendix III: para 4710.
[3]   Appendix III: para 1781.
[4]   Appendix III: para 7697.
[5]   Appendix III: para 9089.

predominant, and that saving lives was the emphasised aim. The legality of military intervention in Libya was a frequent theme, indicating that it was highly important to government and opposition that the action had a legal basis as well as a humanitarian appearance. The consistent pursuit of regime change was analysed, discussing the rhetorical manoeuvres used by the British government and accepted by the opposition to make Security Council Resolution 1973 appear to be a legal authority to overthrow the Libyan government by force, supporting the argument that liberal humanitarian intervention has an inherent bias towards violent regime change (Cunliffe, 2020). The prediction of imminent massacres, used to justify urgent military intervention, was critically analysed, indicating that it was a weak and contradictory argument even as it was presented in the Commons, without examination of relevant intelligence on Gaddafi's treatment of recaptured cities and his previous conduct as Libyan leader. The uncritical adoption of the argument by government and opposition suggested unethical opportunism (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015).

The following chapter provides a similar analysis of the Syria debates, in which the British government did not express a commitment to regime change until the completion of the campaign in Libya, but adhered to it thereafter irrespective of humanitarian harm.

Chapter 6: The Syria Debates

This chapter critically discusses the prominent themes revealed by thematic analysis and the narratives exposed by tracking them in the Syria debates. It follows the same structure and approach as the previous chapter on the Libya debates: top themes are discussed in order of prominence, followed by analysis of their variation over time. The final part of the chapter focuses on the primary aim of British policy in Syria, the overthrow of the Assad government, critiquing the arguments MPs advanced in favour of enforced regime change, and the inherent weaknesses and contradictions in British and allied policy. A contradiction is observed between British presentation of its Syria policy as humanitarian, and omission to change the policy in reaction to outcomes contrary to humanitarian aims, except to encourage fighting between rebel groups, thereby increasing the intractability of a conflict which already conformed to Kaldor's (2012) model of a self-sustaining modern war in which human rights abuses were a standard tactic.

Prime Minister David Cameron announced that Britain sought regime change in Syria in the same speech in which he proclaimed victory over Gaddafi in Libya.[1] This commitment remained fixed throughout the remainder of the period studied, irrespective of humanitarian impacts and prospects for success. The policy was not backed by adequate force to overthrow Assad. The reasons for this hesitancy included vetoes of draft resolutions in the Security Council, Syria's alliance with Russia, and concerns about the unity and objectives of rebel militias.

Britain and its allies refrained from direct military intervention in Syria to overthrow the government when they failed to obtain Security Council authority, due to Russian and Chinese vetoes, but they did not respond to the Security Council's decision by ending their pursuit of regime change. The evidence from the analysis indicated that the UK and its allies devised a policy for Syria that was unlikely to succeed, unlikely to result in stability or democracy in Syria, and likely to increase violence, poverty, and human suffering. The policy was nonetheless presented as humanitarian, with an emphasis on British generosity to refugees.

Top Themes and Associated Topics

The theme ranked 1st in the Syria debates was reference to the leadership as a

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 3242.

regime.[1] This was a signal that regime change was desired. Its ranking above the regime change theme, ranked 5th, suggests that more effort was put into signalling the need for regime change than into the active pursuit of regime change. Humanitarian aid was ranked 2nd, indicating a strong desire for British intervention in Syria to be perceived as humanitarian.

The theme of negative references to weapons of mass destruction had a strong humanitarian aspect, emphasising the inhumanity of chemical weapons.[2] The theme did not figure at all in debates in the first parliamentary year of this research, 2010-2011. In the second year there were only 3 references, and in the third year 33 references. The great majority of references, 422, came in the final, truncated, year of the study. This is consistent with the use of chemical weapons in large quantities suddenly appearing in the fourth year of conflict.

However, it is also consistent with acceptance that the initial regime change strategy employed by the UK and allies, of escalating support to rebels to enforce mutual consent, had failed; that Security Council consent to humanitarian bombing had moved from unlikely to impossible; and that a compelling new argument was now needed to overcome growing public and parliamentary resistance to another enforced regime change. From this perspective, the WMD case for bombing Syria in August 2013 represented an escalation in rhetoric, following the failure of escalations in sanctions and indirect military intervention to bring regime change. The introduction of the barrel bomb[3] into rhetoric in favour or intervention in 2014 after the failure of the WMD narrative is also consistent with this approach.

The British government had stated in its Libya campaign that legality was essential and parliamentary consent would be sought for war. However, it had used misrepresentation and evasion to create the appearance of honouring these commitments, and a sceptical environment had ensued in the Commons. Growing scepticism was illustrated by the frequency of MPs' statements opposing arming Syrian rebels.[4] Continuing recurrence of this theme indicated distrust of evasive government responses such as, "It has not so far been our policy",[5] and "Let me

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[1]   Appendix I.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 9720.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 17221.
[4]   Appendix IV: paras 5443, 7944, 7960, 9387, 9963, 10485, 10515, 10626-10628, 10724, 11271, 11570, 12025.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 7946.

make it clear that I have not announced the arming of the opposition".[1]

Tory MP Julian Lewis asked Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt "… for an assurance that before there is any lifting of the arms embargo, there will be a full debate, with a vote, in this House?"[2] Burt repeated the non-committal answer given to the same question previously[3] by Hague: "I regularly come back to the House whenever there is the slightest variation in the situation, so if there are any developments in the Government's policy I would certainly seek to do so".[4]

Growing distrust culminated in a motion tabled by Tory MP John Baron to require the government to seek the prior assent of parliament before arming Syrian rebels. It is arguably a measure of how far trust in the Tory leadership of Cameron and Hague had declined since the Libya war that while only one Tory MP, John Baron, voted against the Tory-led coalition's motion to approve the bombing of Libya in 2011, two years later only one Tory MP, Robert Halfon, voted against Baron's motion imposing the condition of a parliamentary vote on the government.[5]

Factors weakening the case for open British warfare on Syrian state forces included the absence of major Syrian crimes against the UK, much smaller petrochemical reserves than in Libya, concerns about Russian retaliation, and suspicion about the aims and agendas of rebel groups. Themes of Syrian crimes against the UK did not feature in the debates. A generic crimes of the enemy state theme, ranked high at 14th, supported the humanitarian packaging of the regime change campaign, but did not provide a direct retribution motive.

The theme of natural resources in the enemy state - primarily petrochemicals in both countries - ranked 38th in the Libya debates (including a few denials that the war was about oil),[6] but only 96th in the Syria debates. The latter referred mainly to an EU embargo of Syrian petrochemicals, which was escalated throughout the conflict to undermine the Syrian government by harming the economy.[7]

As with Libya,[8] MPs often described Syria's national income as if it only benefited

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1 Appendix IV: para 10688.
2 Appendix IV: para 11495.
3 Appendix IV: para 11281.
4 Appendix IV: para 11499.
5 Appendix IV: para 12925.
6 Appendix III: paras 2797, 6602.
7 Appendix IV: paras 3242, 3263, 3427, 3510, 3535, 3978, 4290, 4986, 5177, 6698, 7905, 7922.
8 Appendix III: para 5160.

the government - "… the financing of the regime"[1] and "… the income of the regime"[2] - and appeared to overlook the suffering of ordinary people due to economic collapse induced by sanctions. One pro-intervention MP, Robert Halfon, did, however, express concern for the impact of conflict in the Middle East on non-Syrians. He praised David Cameron's morality and Britain's humanitarian aid to Syria, and asked about action "… to mitigate the effect of the rising cost of oil on the public around the world".[3] The Prime Minister assured him that the British would not suffer unduly. "Under my hon. Friend's perpetual, aggressive and entirely correct lobbying, we have taken action to keep prices down."[4]

The related theme of commercial opportunities in the enemy state was ranked very low at 108th. The theme of Russia as a military ally of the enemy state ranked medium to high at 42nd. Russia's opposition to intervention had a high ranking of 26th. Rebel unity/discord was a major theme, ranked 12th. The British government frequently acknowledged that the Syrian rebels were not united,[5] and contradicted its commitment to Syrian self-determination by endeavouring to unite and guide them.[6] The Islamist takeover theme was also high at 18th.

The British government was more explicit about the jihadist risk in Syria than it had been in Libya. In June 2012, Hague followed a routine condemnation of the Syrian government with: "There are credible reports of human rights abuses and sectarian attacks by armed opposition fighters, which we also utterly condemn. We also have reason to believe that terrorist groups affiliated to al-Qaeda have committed attacks designed to exacerbate the violence, with serious implications for international security."[7]

Discussions about Israeli security and jihadist fighters in Syria also gave an early indication that chemical weapons use by the Syrian government might not be a reliable pretext for Western assaults. Labour MP Paul Goggins referred to Syria's CW stocks in June 2012, just over a year before the British government sought parliamentary authority for an attack on Syria in response to alleged CW use by the Syrian government, asking Hague whether, "… when the Assad regime falls, the

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 7905.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 7922.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 15046.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 15048.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 4299, 4300, 5032.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 4299, 5032, 5383.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 7883.

international community will be willing and able to secure those weapons to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of Hezbollah or of affiliates of al-Qaeda?"[1]

Tory MP Julian Lewis repeated the question, omitting Hezbollah, in January 2013.[2] Hague replied that he had had "conversations"[3] to that end with the rebel council chosen by the UK and allies to represent the people of Syria. Hague added, "I hope that one thing that will happen in a future Syria will be the destruction and disposal of those weapons."[4]

The government appeared to have changed its stance on this issue when in August 2013 it sought parliament's consent to respond to an alleged Syrian government chemical weapons attack by bombing Syrian forces, not by demanding CW disarmament.[5] Preferring bombing to disarmament was presented as a humanitarian choice by Cameron, who said that the Security Council resolution his government proposed to seek authorising military action "… relates solely to efforts to alleviate humanitarian suffering by deterring use of chemical weapons and does not sanction any action in Syria with wider objectives."[6]

Lewis repeated his question in March,[7] receiving another evasion in reply, this time from Foreign Office minister Hugo Swire.[8] The related theme of ignorance about the rebels, including their composition, motives, agendas, and lines of command, had a medium to low ranking of 69th in the Syria debates. This partly reflected knowledge that the rebels included anti-Western extremists, as indicated by the Islamist takeover theme. Suspicion had been supplanted by certainty.

In the debate on 29 August 2013, the British government also sought parliamentary authority to attack Syria without Security Council authorisation, should the latter prove unobtainable. The government stated its view that "… the principle of humanitarian intervention provides a sound legal basis for taking action".[9] There is, however, a categorical difference between a principle and a law, which cannot be erased by invoking a "legal basis" rather than a law. A humanitarian principle may provide a moral basis, or by persuasion of the public a democratic

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 8018.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 10000.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 10002.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 10002.
[5]   Appendix IV: paras 13361-13372.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 13372.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 10535.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 10537.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 13367.

basis, but only compliance with law can render action lawful.

Green MP Caroline Lucas pointed out that "… many legal experts are saying that without explicit UN Security Council reinforcement, military action simply would not be legal under international law".[1] Labour MP Diane Abbott quoted from a Foreign Affairs Committee report into the NATO bombing of Serbia over Kosovo, which it had found, "… was contrary to the specific terms of what might be termed the basic law of the international community",[2] and that, "… at the very least, the doctrine of humanitarian intervention has a tenuous basis in current international customary law, and … this renders NATO action legally questionable."[3] She concluded: "Those who want to rest the argument for a Syrian war on the Kosovan precedent need to read their law again."[4]

Although the WMD (negative) theme mainly covered condemnation of the Syrian government and allies for alleged CW use, it also included some challenges to the consistency and effectiveness of bombing Syrian forces for using one type of weapon, but not for using others that had caused far more deaths, injuries, and displacement.[5] Justification for the focus on CW tended to cite international consensus and treaties rather than explaining why it was worse than conventional killing.[6] It was stated without further explanation that killing with WMD was especially abhorrent.[7]

This appeared to imply tolerance of killing in Syria with conventional weapons, which had been judged so abhorrent in Libya by most MPs that immediate action to prevent it had been pronounced essential. Barrel bombs, which later became a significant part of campaigns by NGOs such as Human Rights Watch (Roth, 2015), were not mentioned in debates until 2014.[8] The first reference to them was by William Hague, in a statement in which he reiterated that the only permissible solution, despite 125,000 deaths, remained an implausible plan for regime change by mutual consent.[9]

If government and opposition had both been willing to change the regime by

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 13383.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 14392.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 14394.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 14395.
[5]   Appendix IV: paras 9720, 13484, 13917.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 13495.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 14253.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 17221.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 17218.

mutual consent, and the conflict was simply a case of oppressed Syrian people rebelling against their repressive government in pursuit of liberal democracy and universal human rights, it seems unlikely that violence on such a scale as seen in Syria would have endured for so long. The high ranking of the themes of rebel unity/discord at 12th, and Islamist takeover at 18th, show that the Syrian conflict was understood by MPs not to be a straightforward democratic liberation struggle.

British policy was "… to increase the pressure on the regime"[1] to the level at which mutual consent would occur.[2] Its foundation[3] was Resolution 66/253 B (United Nations General Assembly, 2012), adopted by the General Assembly on 3 August 2012. This was the UK's substitute strategy after failing to obtain a war resolution in the Security Council in 2011.[4] There was no significant challenge in the House to the viability of this dubious plan, and the question of how far consent obtained by violence may be credibly presented as consent, rather than coercion, was not raised.

David Cameron stated that the CW attack in 2013 to which his government wished to respond with force was "… the only instance of the regular and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons by a state against its own people for at least 100 years."[5] The killing of millions with chemical weapons in the Nazi Holocaust had ended 68 years earlier, so Cameron's statement appeared to imply that the discrimination in the use of chemical weapons against its own people by Germany made it somehow less heinous. Mussolini's air force used chemical weapons repeatedly during Italy's colonial subjugation of Ethiopia (Tanaka, 2009). These attacks were indiscriminate, so Cameron appeared to imply that because the victims were not Italian, the crime was reduced.

It is hardly conceivable that Cameron intended to diminish the horror of the Holocaust or the wickedness of Mussolini, and it seems probable, therefore, that his aim was to inflate the apparent venality of the Syrian government to justify a Western military assault. Although there was cross-party consensus on the former, there was disagreement on the latter. The inadvertent belittlement of the Holocaust may point to another reason for the government's failure to win support for attacking Syrian government forces - Cameron's declining performance as an advocate, possibly

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 11262.
[2]   Appendix IV: paras 11259-11262.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 8996.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 3509.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 13495.

inhibited by uncertainty as to the desirability of regime change in Syria.

A rhetorical benefit of the focus on CW appeared when the Prime Minister claimed that a military assault on Syrian government forces would be "… about chemical weapons, not intervention or getting involved in another middle eastern war."[1] This argument, essentially that military intervention was not military intervention, resembled the previous British claim that the NATO action to change the regime in Libya was not regime change.

Hague had manifested similar denial by rebranding his regime change plan for Syria earlier in 2013: "What we are calling for at the UN is not regime change but a transitional Government who can include members of the current regime and members of the opposition on the basis of mutual consent".[2] In the August 2013 CW debate, the proposal that an attack on Syrian government forces could be so effective as to deter CW use, but so ineffective as to have no impact on the war, was challenged by several MPs,[3] including opposition leader Miliband.[4]

In support of the bombing proposal, Tory MP Nadhim Zahawi argued that the world did not punish Hussein for Halabja, therefore, "With Saddam emboldened, the gassing of Halabja was followed by the invasion of Kuwait. From Munich to Srebrenica, the lesson of history is that one violation of international law leads to another."[5] This argument could have been applied to the sequence of bombing Kosovo, invading Iraq, and regime change in Libya, none of which were authorised by the Security Council or in self-defence, and all of which were, therefore, arguably breaches of international law.

However, these interventions were not discussed as a progression by MPs. In the Syria debates, the bombing of Kosovo was the most popular precedent cited in favour of military intervention, with 16 references. The most popular precedent against military intervention was the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq, with 51 references. The 2003 Iraq war as a precedent to do intervention differently occurred 56 times, making it the most popular precedent theme in the Syria debates.

The theme of the 2011 Libya war as a precedent against intervention in Syria

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 13509.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 10077.
[3]   Appendix IV: paras 13577, 13730, 14155.
[4]   Appendix IV: paras 13577, 13677.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 14572.

received 9 references, compared to 7 references to it as a precedent for intervention. There were also 3 occurrences of the theme of the Libya intervention as a model for the future, but one of these is also coded under Libya as a positive precedent, so references to Libya as a good and bad precedent are equal at 9. There were also 3 references to Libya 2011 as a precedent to do intervention differently.

The neutral balance of views on the Libya intervention as a precedent is remarkable given that in August 2013 Cameron was still touting the way it was done as: "The very best route to follow".[1] Cameron made no reference to outcomes in this assessment, indicating that it was the legitimacy conferred by the Security Council route to war that was important to his government, not the actual impact on people in Libya. This lack of concern for outcomes undermines the presentation of Britain's policy as humanitarian.

Zahawi posited that a general principle, a "lesson of history",[2] could be drawn from the sequence of Halabja and Kuwait, but generalisation from this example would produce a rule that non-response to chemical warfare is an inducement to conventional warfare, a progression opposite to that usually seen in history. If one breach of law leads to another, it could be argued that the Kosovo intervention, held up as an exemplar of humanitarian intervention, led to Assad's alleged crimes.

The government motion seeking parliamentary consent for military action against the Syrian government in response to alleged CW use required "… that a United Nations process must be followed as far as possible to ensure the maximum legitimacy for any such action."[3] Thus, the test for war was set substantially lower than for Libya. The weaker and more subjective goal of legitimacy replaced legality, and a UN process that could be abandoned when it had got as far as possible was substituted for a resolution or any other concrete authority.

A resolution was desirable, but not essential. Opposition leader Miliband said, "The UN is not some inconvenient sideshow, and we do not want to engineer a 'moment'",[4] but went on to confirm that he, like Cameron, would not consider a Security Council vote against military intervention to be binding.[5] Miliband felt that it

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[1] Appendix IV: para 13418.
[2] Appendix IV: para 14572.
[3] Appendix IV: para 13369.
[4] Appendix IV: para 13590.
[5] Appendix IV: para 13609.

would be sufficient "… to adhere to the principles of international law"[1] rather than, by implication, its laws.

Military intervention against the Syrian government was not authorised by the UN Security Council during the period analysed for this thesis. References to the need for UN authorisation ranked relatively high at 23rd. The mid-placed ranking of the UNSC[2] mandate present theme at 59th refers to Resolutions 2042 (United Nations Security Council, 2012a) and 2043 (United Nations Security Council, 2012b) authorising UN observers as part of a ceasefire plan, usually referred to as the Annan plan.[3] The British government saw this as a step towards Security Council authority for more aggressive action to enforce regime change,[4] but this was prevented by Russia and China.

The opposition of Russia and China to an international assault against the Syrian government was reflected in the themes of Russian opposition to imposed military intervention, ranked 26th; pressing Russia to back intervention, 43rd; Russia as Syria's military ally, 42nd; Chinese opposition to military intervention, 49th; their vetoes of draft resolutions on Syria, 62nd; divisions in the Security Council, 67th; difficulties obtaining a Security Council mandate for military intervention, also 67th; and pressing China to back intervention, 82nd.

Pressing Russia to change its policy (100 references) was discussed substantially more often than doing the same to China (30 references). There was no discussion of this prioritisation. It may have reflected Russia's substantial military involvement in the conflict, based on a calculation that without this aid Assad would fall, or a lack of regard for China's significance. Whatever the reason, it appears inconsistent with the UK's emphasis on the international community, ranked 13th in Syria debates.

The 4th ranked theme, peaceful resolution, included discussion of non-violent methods, including diplomatic pressure against Syrian state repression,[5] a vetoed draft Security Council resolution for regime change,[6] non-violent elements of regime change strategy,[7] and non-lethal support for rebels and therefore for violent regime

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 13590.
[2]   UNSC = United Nations Security Council.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 7885.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 6752.
[5]   Appendix IV: paras 966, 1044, 2072.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 5374.
[7]   Appendix IV: paras 5383, 5396, 5544, 7884, 7897.

change, as well as some statements prioritising pursuit of peace.[1] Hague stated in February 2012 that Britain had not yet "… had contact with the Free Syrian Army",[2] only with those pursuing peaceful change. His government was urging opposition and rebel groups to unite, without apparent consideration of their aims and ideologies, or of the risk of removing the status of peaceful protestors from non-violent groups if they allied with violent militias.

As the campaign continued, the term "peaceful transition"[3] appeared to become the preferred euphemism for regime change. The government rejected "… the violent overthrow of the regime",[4] but after initial hesitation it backed violent rebels to enforce negotiated regime change. Consistent with British escalation policy, non-violent intervention developed from "support ... for non-lethal activities"[5] in 2012 to "… provision of non-lethal military equipment"[6] in 2013, all under the rhetoric of protecting civilians.

The urgent pursuit of peace would have included pressure on all warring parties to cease aggression and enter negotiations with minimal preconditions. Most occurrences of the peaceful resolution theme (370 of 373) came after the Labour opposition had indicated a desire for regime change in Syria with a demand on 7 June 2011 that the Syrian government "… start a serious dialogue to advance a democratic transition."[7]

A Russian proposal for "… not sanctions, not pressure, but internal Syrian dialogue",[8] objectively perhaps the most promising route towards an early peace, was dismissed by Liberal Democrat MP Martin Horwood as "… neither credible nor in Russia's long-term interests".[9] The suspicion voiced by Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn that British wars in the name of peace had done nothing "… but cost us a great deal of money and brutalised our own country",[10] and harmed the UK's international reputation, was a minority view in the House.

There was resistance in the Commons to British involvement in another war, but

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1   Appendix IV: paras 4601, 4901, 4905, 5400.
2   Appendix IV: para 5544.
3   Appendix IV: paras 5540, 7930, 7938, 7958, 7967.
4   Appendix IV: para 6765.
5   Appendix IV: para 6730.
6   Appendix IV: para 10598.
7   Appendix IV: para 2196.
8   Appendix IV: para 4601.
9   Appendix IV: para 4602.
10   Appendix IV: para 4901.

when military intervention was discussed directly, opposition was expressed more in terms of caution than outright rejection. The military intervention caution theme was ranked 15th in the Syria debates, while the anti-military intervention theme was ranked 28th, lower but still relatively prominent. The pro-military intervention theme was considerably lower at 52nd.

When the British government announced in February 2012 that it sought "… a peaceful and lasting resolution in Syria",[1] it also announced that it was seeking the establishment of an "… Arab-led group of Friends of Syria",[2] and was working with Qatar to set this up, following the model used for regime change in Libya, but without the authority to bomb. The Friends of Libya group had been proposed in March 2011 by the Labour opposition[3] days before the start of NATO bombing, and convened by the British government and Qatar in April 2011.[4] Rhetoric used for regime change in Libya was recycled for Syria, e.g.: "… support for the people of Syria and their legitimate demands",[5] and: "… engage with Syrian opposition groups committed to a democratic future for the country".[6]

The British regime change objective was confirmed later in the same debate when Hague complained that "… the Syrian Government are not acting in the interests of a peaceful transition in Syria".[7] At this early stage, Hague was still occasionally using the word *government* to refer to the Syrian leadership, instead of the pejorative *regime*. The British commitment to regime change appeared more tentative than it had been with Libya, but it remained immutable, nonetheless.

The language used may also have reflected a wish to avoid the appearance of bellicosity in the face of mounting opposition, especially outside the House, to voluntary wars. The theme of representation of the public was ranked medium to high at 40th, and many of these references were to public opposition to British intervention in Syria. Labour MP John Spellar noted "… public reticence about international military expedition".[8]

Tory MP John Redwood commented that: "… the British people are uneasy about

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1   Appendix IV: para 5383.
2   Appendix IV: para 5383.
3   Appendix III: para 1723.
4   Appendix III: para 5286.
5   Appendix IV: para 5383.
6   Appendix IV: para 5383.
7   Appendix IV: para 5540.
8   Appendix IV: para 12738.

the interventions made in their name in other places in the last decade".[1] Tory MP Daniel Kawczynski, a prominent supporter of Western-backed violent regime change in Libya,[2] and of British commerce in that country,[3] including his own trading,[4] spoke of "… concerns of residents of Shrewsbury about yet further British military intervention in the middle east".[5] He did not allude to commercial opportunities in Syria.

The British government appeared nervous of the consequences of any party to the war achieving a military victory. However, instead of seeking the least harmful and swiftest route to peace, it sought regime change on behalf of groups it considered moderate, with little apparent knowledge of who they were, how their moderation might be gauged, whom, if anyone, they represented, or what prospect they had of forming a durable and humane government. The British government gave very limited information to Parliament about the political groups it was aiding, naming only the Syrian National Council,[6] and the National Coalition,[7] both based outside Syria.

In September 2012, Hague said that instituting regime change required the cessation of Syrian government violence, but also "… requires Syria's opposition groups to win the trust of the Syrian people".[8] This indicated that the groups the UK had been supporting did not have the trust of the Syrian people. He added that Britain's envoy to Syrian opposition groups had just made "… his first limited contacts with political representatives of the Free Syrian army outside the country",[9] confirming that the group the UK had backed since at least October 2011,[10] the SNC, did not represent the brand of rebel the UK had chosen to support, the FSA.

Nonetheless, just two months later, when a "… National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces"[11] was formed with the SNC as a minority participant, Britain recognised it "… as the sole legitimate representative of the

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1   Appendix IV: para 13238.
2   Appendix III: paras 3136, 9505, 9506.
3   Appendix III: para 19.
4   Appendix III: para 18025.
5   Appendix IV: para 13425.
6   Appendix IV: paras 3511, 7983.
7   Appendix IV: para 9373.
8   Appendix IV: para 8836.
9   Appendix IV: para 8836.
10   Appendix IV: para 3511.
11   Appendix IV: para 9373.

Syrian people".[1] Hague acknowledged in the same paragraph that its members still "… have much to do to win the full support of the Syrian people".[2] This was legitimacy by decree, unfounded on evidence of popular support.

It was, at best, wishful thinking; at worst, a cynical manoeuvre to fabricate legitimacy for enforced regime change. The new coalition was formed after pressure from Western and Arab states for the establishment of a united body to simplify aid distribution, and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had criticised the SNC and urged the creation of a group with wider support in Syria (Associated Press, 2012). This restructuring of the opposition strengthens the impression that the regime change process was being influenced by powers external to Syria who were concerned about the appearance of legitimacy and the ability of their sponsored replacements for Assad to become an effective ally in government.

In June 2012, Hague announced that the UK was "… working intensively to find a peaceful means of resolving the crisis".[3] However, the work did not produce any alteration of the means - regime change by mutual consent, to be achieved by increasing "… the pressure and isolation felt by the regime"[4]. "Political transition"[5] remained the euphemism for regime change.

The government declared that the replacement regime "… must be based on democratic principles and reflect the needs of all Syria's minority communities, including Kurds, Christians and Alawites."[6] The British strategy for accomplishing this aim was never detailed, but included regular exhortations to rebel factions to be inclusive, reported to the House. These were repeated over years until they acquired an air of futility,[7] continuing even after Hague had announced that unspecified "opposition activists"[8] had committed "to protecting minorities"[9] in April 2012.

By early 2013, the objective of unifying rebels into an inclusive, pro-democracy force appeared to have been abandoned. Instead, the British government now classified the rebels as moderates or extremists,[10] supporting the former but

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 9375.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 9375.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 7884.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 7884.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 7885.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 7885.
[7]   Appendix IV: paras 4299, 5384, 5413, 6730, 7889, 8888, 9203, 10097.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 6738.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 6738.
[10]   Appendix IV: paras 10477, 10491, 10594.

remaining vague about which groups were moderate, except to repeat that the external National Coalition was non-sectarian.[1] The only military force named as moderate by backbench MPs was the Free Syrian Army.[2]

The FSA was not explicitly classified as moderate by British government ministers until after the period of this study. David Cameron spoke of "… the moderate opposition, including the Free Syrian Army" (UK Parliament: House of Commons, 2015: col 656) in October 2015, three years after Tory MP Mark Field reported that "… it is the so-called Free Syrian Army and elements of that rag-tag group that are proving a great threat to the Christian population of Syria."[3] Although the FSA's participation in sectarian genocide did not disqualify it from classification as moderate by the British government, it helps to explain Parliamentary resistance to regime change in Syria, as shown by the relatively high ranking at 38th of the theme of protecting Christians.

The moderation of the FSA was cast further into doubt in November 2013, when the BBC reported that a coalition of dominant rebel militias, including the majority of the FSA's troops, had combined to form a new group, entitled: "the Islamic Front" (BBC News, 2014: n.p.). The Islamic Front took over a border crossing between Turkey and Syria called Bab al-Hawa which was a principal supply route for the Syrian revolution, seizing warehouses on the Syrian side, previously controlled by the FSA and "… stuffed full of weaponry donated by Saudi Arabia and Qatar as well as vehicles, body armor, and medical supplies from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and other countries" (Lund, 2013: n.p.).

Therefore, if FSA warehouses were full of weapons in November 2013, Hague's assertion in May 2013, "… that somebody who wants to join an extremist group can get a rifle and training immediately, whereas those who go to support a moderate group cannot",[4] appears doubtful. Aron Lund's (2013) account indicates that the switch of UK and Western policy, from promoting unity to urging rebels to fight each other, so that those designated moderate would kill those designated extreme as well as attacking Syrian government forces and their superpower allies, all in pursuit of "peaceful transition",[5] prompted the defection of most FSA members to the Islamic

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[1]   Appendix IV: paras 12897, 15682.
[2]   Appendix IV: paras 11643, 12941, 13044, 13046, 13062, 13229, 17268.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 9113.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 11302.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 10684.

Front and the latter's takeover of the arms dumps.

The presentation of British policy became a routine of repeating the same unrealistic aspirations, and refusing to amend them, irrespective of the death toll. Hague said "… we will not relent in our efforts to ensure the political transition",[1] echoing his promise of the previous November - "We will not relent in our efforts to support the right of the Syrian people to choose a different future"[2] - which itself echoed the regime change rhetoric from the Libya campaign. The British plan, Hague said, "… requires the Syrian National Council and other opposition groups to put aside their differences, to unite around the common goal of a democratic transition and to assure all Syria's minorities that their rights will be protected in a multi-ethnic and democratic Syrian state."[3]

Thus, before the plan could even become a possibility, almost every major aspect of the Syrian war would have to change. This had not happened after more than a year of intensive pressure from the UK and its allies, yet it was still considered not only viable, not only the best strategy, but the only possible strategy. This level of intransigence in the face of escalating casualties and refugee flight counters the impression British MPs created with their many references to the UK's lead in humanitarian aid, ranked 20th, and humanitarian aid in general, ranked 2nd.

Hague evinced a reluctance to face reality when he observed, after more than a year of civil war, that: "Syria today is on the edge of civil war."[4] Despite this tardy acknowledgement, he continued to present the conflict as comprising only government killers and their victims, an effective legitimisation device in the Libya campaign. A unilateral ceasefire by government forces was presented as a peaceful solution,[5] but it could only become one if the various rebel forces, who had yet to agree on the desirability of democracy and minority rights, were all entirely defensive, a presumption questioned by their seizure of previously government-controlled territory.

The British plan relied upon, firstly, the Russian-backed Assad government surrendering without being defeated; secondly, rebels armed and funded by Arab dictatorships (Lund, 2013) ending combat operations as soon as they ceased to

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 7896.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 4300.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 7889.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 7884.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 7897.

encounter resistance; and thirdly, all the rebel and civil society groups uniting in favour of liberal democracy and minority rights under Britain's guidance, discarding whatever alternative motives had inspired them to take up arms against powerful and brutal state security forces and against each other. It was, in short, absurd - in Swedish researcher Aron Lund's words, "idealistic claptrap" (Lund, 2013: n.p.).

The rapid collapse of the new regime in Libya demonstrated that the British analysis of the conflict there had been crude and misguided. The British government showed some signs of caution in its strategy for regime change in Syria, e.g. its lack of haste to overthrow Assad, but its inflexibility and evasion of inconvenient facts ended the political consensus that had enabled the Libya war. Although opposition remained muted, views began to diverge.

Labour MP Paul Flynn, who had supported the Libya war as massacre prevention,[1] assessed the mood of the Commons in March 2013:

> The House is deeply united on the humanitarian aid but deeply divided on the oversimplified view of the Foreign Secretary, who, on this complex civil war, could not bring himself to mention the al-Nusra Front, a jihadist group that is a vital part of the opposition. It has been accused of some of the most bloodthirsty massacres of civilians.[2]

The phrase "peaceful transition"[3] first appeared in the Syria debates after nearly a year of war, when it was already redundant. The opportunity for peaceful regime change had long passed, if it had ever existed. In British government usage, peaceful transition had effectively come to mean regime change without a rebel military victory, i.e. Syrian government surrender without defeat. The transition would be peaceful in that it would be a transition to peace. It would be a transition accomplished by violent rebellion, aided by external actors, including states, organisations, and individual volunteers, but not by overt military intervention by state enemies of the Syrian government.

Regime change was ranked 5th, followed by the closely related theme of escalation policy at 6th. Regime change by escalating pressure on the Syrian government to step aside and negotiate its replacement remained the British

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[1] Appendix III: para 6316.
[2] Appendix IV: para 10752.
[3] Appendix IV: para 5540.

strategy throughout the period of study. The British government was slower to demand regime change in Syria than in Libya, pursued the strategy with less vigour, and encountered more political resistance. The consensus on humanitarian aid described by Flynn[1] gave the government a strong incentive to present its campaign in humanitarian terms.

Refugee themes were ranked 7th - references to refugees and IDPs that did not attribute blame for their displacement, and 8th - admittance to the UK of Syrian refugees. Both were mainly humanitarian themes. The former was frequently combined with proclamations of British state generosity, i.e. the UK's leading role in humanitarian aid, ranked 20th. The refugee admittance theme occurred most frequently in debates on the British government's refusal to join a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) initiative in 2014 to relocate vulnerable Syrian refugees from Middle Eastern states to the West.

No significant explicit effort was made to use refugees as a means of vilifying the Syrian government. The theme of refugees fleeing repression was rare, ranked 105th, one rank lower than refugees fleeing rebels, ranked 104th, while refugees fleeing conflict ranked 78th. The most frequent of several refugees-as-burden themes was refugees as a burden on the Middle Eastern states, where most had taken refuge, ranked 49th.

The 9th ranked theme was UK support for opposition groups in Syria, the instrument favoured by the British government and its allies to escalate pressure on the Syrian government to accept regime change. SDLP MP Mark Durkan argued that threatening to increase support for rebels if negotiations failed, intended to push the Syrian government into negotiated regime change, instead created a moral hazard (Kuperman, 2008) - a perverse incentive to rebels, which "… would not help the moderates. Instead, it would help those who have a mindset of, 'We're going to be top dog, and top gun.'"[2]

The response from the minister, Alistair Burt, was that increasing the supply of weapons would not change any side's relative strength,[3] a counter-rational argument in support of a policy that included lifting the EU arms embargo to permit more and deadlier arms to reach the rebel side. Burt argued that if the West promised more aid to the rebels in the event of peace talks failing, that would

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 10752.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 11532.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 11534.

persuade them to help make the peace talks work.

This appears to have been based on a hope that all the combatants knew none of them could win, and therefore none would seek a military victory.[1] Here the British government appeared to have confused desire and reality, a tendency repeated in Burt's argument that lifting the arms embargo "… assists the politicians against those who wish to see solely a military solution".[2]

The steering group for regime change, the Friends of Syria, was established in 2012.[3] Britain also worked outside the group, aiming to "… intensify our contact with members of the Syrian opposition",[4] and encourage them "… to come together and to agree a common statement of commitment to democracy, human rights and the protection of all Syria's minorities."[5] It appears, therefore, that after a year of war the rebels were still fragmented and had not committed to Western liberal objectives.

The British response to this policy failure was the extremist/moderate dichotomy. UK support for those it judged moderate is tracked in the debates by the moderate rebels theme, ranked 50th. The threat to Syrian Christians from sectarian rebels was a significant theme in arguments against regime change, with the protection of Christians theme relatively high at 38th, and the theme of rebel threat to Christians at 75th. Recognition that the Syrian government protected minorities was lower at 92nd, reflecting a general antipathy towards saying anything positive about the Syrian government, but still difficult for the British government to ignore.

The 10th to 20th ranked themes fell into the following groups:

- Arguments primarily in favour of regime change: Syria's repressive government, 10th; Crimes of the Syrian state, 14th; Accountability, 19th.

- Arguments primarily against regime change: Commons debate and vote, 11th; Caution about military intervention, 15th; Doubt intervention will help, 16th; Islamist takeover, 18th.

- Arguments for and against regime change: Rebel unity/discord, 12th; International community, 13th.

- Humanitarian arguments: Humanitarian crisis, 17th; UK lead in humanitarian

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 11534.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 11678.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 5383.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 5384.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 5384.

aid, 20th.

Overall, the arguments for regime change were advanced with a lack of conviction, and the arguments against it were forceful and effective. The focus on humanitarian motives remained prominent, but invited criticism of anti-humanitarian impacts such as sectarian murders. The British government's commitment to regime change was tardy, compared to its urgency with Libya, but once announced it became immutable. The delay allowed close scrutiny by the House. The inhumane outcomes of policy marketed as humanitarian were exposed, casting doubt on the policy makers' motives and abilities.

The British government did not acknowledge that it was being intransigent and failing to respond to increasing knowledge and changing reality, thus it never offered an explanation for these behaviours. One possible cause may have been deference to the policy of the United States. The theme of US support for intervention in Syria had a medium ranking of 61st, but some of these references were MPs regretting the lack of US support, so this is a weak indicator of deference to the US.

William Hague's answer to a plea from Tory MP Geoffrey Clifton-Brown in September 2012 for increased international intervention in Syria[1] could be interpreted as implying that Washington determined the UK's policy. Hague said:

> … the policy of the United States on the issue is identical to the one that I have been expressing as the policy of the United Kingdom, and that is a generally common feature across American politics as the United States comes to its presidential election. I have no information that there would be a sharp change in that policy should there be a change of Administration, so we have to continue to do the things that I have set out to keep up the pressure for international unity and action.[2]

Hague did not elaborate on why anticipated consistency in US policy imposed the absolute compulsion expressed in the phrase "we have to continue", rather than *it is in our interest to continue*, or similar. However, the context of the question suggests that he did not expect direct intervention from the USA, so the only way to pursue regime change was the indirect method employed thus far. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that UK policy was constrained, rather than directed, by that of the USA.

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[1] Appendix IV: para 8915.
[2] Appendix IV: para 8917.

A routine political aversion to admitting an error, for fear of aiding the opposition, may be the most likely explanation of British government intransigence. No government would wish to expose itself to the accusation that its error had cost the UK over £500 million and cost tens of thousands of Syrians their lives, especially when the erroneous policy had been volubly advertised as humanitarian.

There is, perhaps unsurprisingly given its politically embarrassing character, scant reference to imperialism in the debates. However, Tory MP Rory Stewart complained, in November 2011, that Britain "… had abandoned not just Mauritania but Tunisia itself to French diplomacy and French policy."[1] This outlook seemed to exemplify a traditional imperialist outlook. Although this would make him something of an anomaly in the Commons, the ambitions he expressed for the expansion of British influence complemented those expressed by other MPs in favour of humanitarian military intervention.

Labour MP Mike Gapes said of Stewart, "… that his vision, which goes back 150 to 200 years, is of a very different world".[2] In reply, Stewart almost literally advocated a revival of the "great game" (Yapp, 2001: 179) mode of Victorian imperialism, when he spoke of Britain as a global power moving "… with our team from the second division into the premier league".[3] In Stewart's analysis, Libya was the second division, and Syria and Egypt were the premier league.[4]

His vision was as sparse in detail as it was grand in ambition. He envisaged a strategy "… for solving the much bigger issues of a dozen countries over the next 20 years".[5] In the debate on the motion to support armed intervention in Libya he said, "We are talking about not one country and one month, but a series of countries and 30 years. We have to keep our eyes on that, or we will find ourselves in a very dangerous and difficult situation."[6]

It was not clear whether this referred to the so-called Arab Spring period of unrest or the proposed intervention. It would be difficult for anyone to keep their eyes on anything so amorphous and ill-defined. In Syria, as in Libya, it was the people who found themselves in very dangerous and difficult situations, despite the oft-expressed devotion of British MPs to their welfare (the people of the enemy state

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 4699.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 4714.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 4718.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 4717.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 2290.
[6]   Appendix III: para 3056.

theme ranked 27th in the Syria debates and 7th in the Libya debates). Neither case provided evidence of British government capacity for solving the problems of other countries. On the contrary, in 2020, Syria and Libya remained impoverished and wracked by violence, and neither was functioning as a national unit.

Theme Variations Over Time

Table 2 lists the top five ranked themes in the Syria debates in each parliamentary year. The frequency of each theme is shown in parentheses. Where there is a tie, themes are listed in alphabetical order.

Table 2: Top Five Themes in Syria Debates Ranked per Parliamentary Year, 2010-2014

Rank	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
1	Killing of civilians (6)	Leadership = regime (106)	Humanitarian aid (151)	WMD: negative (422)
2	Israel-Palestine (5)	Repressive government of enemy state (87)	Regime change (139)	Peaceful resolution (304)
3	Leadership = government (4); Repressive government of enemy state (4)	Escalation policy (58)	Escalation policy (124)	Humanitarian aid (283)
4	Leadership = regime (3)	Sanctions (57)	Leadership = regime (120)	Leadership = regime (282)
5	Crimes of enemy state (2); Partisan disputation (2); Peaceful resolution (2); People of the enemy state (2); Reform option for allied oppressors (2); Reform option for enemy state (2); Stability in region/world (2)	Russia anti-intervention (50)	UK backing opposition/rebels (108)	Admittance of refugees to UK (270)

Year 1

The most significant feature of the themes ranking 1-5 in Syria debates in 2010-11 is their scarcity: a total of 36 references and 13 themes. At this time, despite the killing of civilians - the hazard cited as the main reason for urgent military intervention in Libya - the British government and parliament spent little time discussing Syria. Due to the margin of error in the methodology and the single digit differences between frequencies in each rank, only limited and approximate

conclusions can be drawn from the ranking.

The 1st theme, killing of civilians, indicated an interest that might prompt intervention, but with only 6 references the indication remained weak. The similar number of references to the leadership as a government and as a regime indicated hesitation in deciding upon regime change. In April 2011, as NATO bombs fell on Libya, Syria was still being offered the option of reform.[1] The high ranking of the Israel-Palestine theme suggests one of the reasons for this caution. Early references to Israel and Syria in 2011 drew attention to the killing of civilians by Syrian and Israeli security forces,[2] the latter in Gaza, and the unacceptability of Israel's siege of Gaza.[3]

As the Syrian conflict moved from popular protest towards civil war, concerns were raised about regional stability, and the potential for instability in Syria to spread to Lebanon and harm the Middle East peace process.[4] There was very little evidence of a peace process between Israelis and Palestinians occurring at this time. However, Hague had spoken with the Syrian government to encourage a peace treaty with Israel,[5] so it may be this process to which he referred, with further enhancement of Israeli security as the goal.

Year 2

The theme of Russia's opposition to intervention in Syria, ranked 5th, indicates why the UK government may have felt unable to intervene directly, but Russia's stance was not capable of preventing indirect and covert intervention, condemnation, or debate. Discussion of Syria increased substantially in the second year, but remained far less than discussion of Libya.

The rise to 1st of the leadership = regime theme indicated preparation for a regime change campaign. The repressive government theme at 2nd established a humanitarian motive for regime change. The regime change theme, not present in the first year of debates, was just outside the top five at 7th, indicating that although the desire was present, the pace was still restrained.

The entry of the escalation policy and sanctions themes into the top five indicated

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 1126.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 1059.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 927.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 1073.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 923.

a cautious incremental approach, and a focus on economic methods of coercion rather than direct military action. This was, however, merely the overt element of British policy. The absence of certain themes, such as interdiction of arms supplies into the conflict zone from non-Western states, is also significant. The objective of escalation was regime change.

Year 3

In the third year, humanitarian aid became the 1st ranked theme, indicating a strong desire to present British policy as humanitarian, and reflecting broad parliamentary support for British humanitarian involvement in the Syrian conflict. Regime change was ranked 2nd. This reflected increasing activity in pursuit of regime change in Syria, now that the Libya campaign was over and perceived by the British government to have been an outstanding success, but doubts were also raised under this theme about the viability and desirability of pursuing regime change in Syria.[1]

At the start of the third year, William Hague reaffirmed his government's insistence on regime change in Syria: "The Syrian regime has not yet implemented the six-point plan, nor has it shown any sign of being prepared to begin a credible political dialogue or transition. This is unacceptable."[2]

He established the humanitarian frame: "The Syrian regime should be in no doubt if it thinks it can murder, kill and torture its way back into favour with the Syrian people or that the world will turn a blind eye to its actions, it is mistaken."[3]

Finally, the applicable method: "If the regime does not do that [implement the Annan plan], we will be ready to return to the Security Council, and it will find itself facing mounting international pressure and, ultimately, the long reach of international justice."[4]

Government and opposition MPs consistently presented regime change as a humanitarian project. Hague's comment in September 2012 that "… we could be dealing at some stage with the complete collapse of the Syrian state, a situation of anarchy and the breakdown of all order - there are many anarchic attributes to what

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[1]   Appendix IV: paras 7969, 8018, 8886, 8994, 9012, 9241, 10058.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 6752.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 6752.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 6752.

is happening now"[1] did not prompt a reappraisal of this presentation.

Rather than direct, decisive intervention, Britain threatened a steady escalation of indirect pressures towards the goal of regime change. These pressures appeared at this stage to include "international justice."[2] The threat that punishment for crimes already committed would be pursued if the government did not step aside implies that it might not be pursued if it did.

The threat of punishment, when issued in such terms, appears to become a deterrent against refusal of Western demands for regime change, rather than a deterrent against perpetration of crimes. This followed some references to the perversity of simultaneously threatening to punish Syria's leaders when they lost power and demanding their immediate resignation. Labour MP Tony Lloyd advised that "… it is still necessary to give the present regime an exit strategy,"[3] and Tory MP Mark Pritchard warned that "… dictators, if they feel they have nothing to lose and nowhere to run, are likely to dig in, with more atrocities than there perhaps would have been."[4]

Year 4

The WMD (negative) theme ranked 1st in Syria debates in the final year of the study. More than half of these references, 272 of 458, occurred in a single debate on a government motion seeking Parliamentary consent for an attack on Syria in response to the alleged use of chemical weapons (CW) by the Syrian government.[5]

MPs had occasionally referred to Syria's WMD before this debate. Less than a year earlier, the government had stated that it did "… not have any evidence of the use of chemical weapons",[6] and that such use "… might change some of the international calculations about this crisis".[7] US President Obama had threatened "serious consequences"[8] if the Syrian government used CW.

Hague repeated this threat in December 2012, saying that "… any use of chemical or biological weapons would be even more abhorrent than anything we

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 8958.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 6752.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 5415.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 5494.
[5]   Appendix IV: paras 13354-14746.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 8938.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 8938.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 9720.

have seen so far"[1] - he did not specify whether by government or rebel forces - and "… would draw a serious response from the international community". He added that this message had been conveyed to "the Syrian regime" (not the rebels) with the warning that the international community "would seek to hold them responsible."[2] He reiterated in January 2013 that "… we have sent a very strong warning to the regime about chemical weapons."[3]

This appeared to give rebels an incentive to report CW use by the Syrian state, and Tory MP David Davis suggested that chemical attacks may have been staged by rebels to provoke international intervention to their advantage.[4] Whatever the reality, the creation of such a perverse incentive may be difficult to reconcile with the expressed humanitarian objective for seeking parliamentary authorisation for a military assault.[5]

Although the government motion on 29 August 2013 referred only to prevention and deterrence,[6] Tory MP James Arbuthnot inferred from government statements to the media that, despite the wording of the motion, its aim was "… not deterrence, not self-defence, not protection, but punishment. I believe that, if that is a new doctrine, it needs considerably wider international consensus than currently exists."[7] His comment suggested a lack of trust in his government, as well as scepticism about the legality of potential military action under the proposed motion.

The choice of WMD as a *casus belli* against Assad seems ill-judged in view of the distrust engendered by the reliance on non-existent WMD as a pretext for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Tory MP Richard Ottaway referred in May 2013 to CW use as a pretext for military action: "For those of us who were here in 2003, when we went to war on the strength of an intelligence assessment that none of us had seen, that rings alarm bells."[8]

Ottaway requested that the evidence be shared with the relevant Parliamentary committee or Privy Council,[9] but this was not done. Tory MP Robert Halfon challenged Ottaway's stance in the August debate, saying "… we have seen it on

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 9722.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 9722.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 10069.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 13918.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 13367.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 13365.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 13835.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 11592.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 11592.

BBC television",[1] implying that there was no need for further evidence. Prime Minister Cameron said, "We have multiple eye-witness accounts of chemical-filled rockets being used against opposition-controlled areas. We have thousands of social media reports and at least 95 different videos - horrific videos - documenting the evidence,"[2] and "… there is an enormous amount of open-source reporting, including videos that we can all see."[3]

It seems likely that this preference for television and internet over professional intelligence from Britain's extensive and expensive security services would have reinforced the concerns of intervention sceptics, rather than allaying them. The fact that the British government had been training[4] and paying[5] Syrian opposition activists to produce such material further undermined its reliability as evidence by ordinary legal standards, but this was not raised in debates.

Cameron's claims that intervention was not intervention and "not about regime change"[6] contrasted with remarks he had made two months earlier in a debate about a recent G8 summit. On Syria, he had claimed international agreement on the following: no military solution to the conflict;[7] $1.5 billion in aid for Syria; the Geneva II process for regime change - "… a transitional governing body with, crucially, full Executive authority";[8] G8 to manage the regime change, ensuring a smooth transfer of power; and UN CW inspectors to be admitted to Syria.[9]

He then indicated that the WMD response proposed at that time (UN CW inspectors) and the humanitarian aid were elements of regime change strategy: "All these agreements are fundamental to saving lives and securing the political transition that we all want to see."[10]

The government and its supporters tried to neutralise the Iraqi WMD debacle as a precedent against military intervention by denying that military action against Syrian forces in response to CW use would be military intervention. Cameron claimed that the UK bombing Syria would be "… not intervention or getting

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 11656.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 13390.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 13527.
[4]   Appendix IV: paras 7893, 8032.
[5]   Appendix IV: paras 8837, 9945.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 13374.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 12055.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 12056.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 12057.
[10]   Appendix IV: para 12057.

involved".[1] This contrasts with Cameron's denunciation of Gaddafi's "… support for Northern Irish terrorism that did so much damage in our country."[2] It also appears to miss the point that mistrust had been created mainly by the deception used to obtain parliamentary support for invasion, not by the invasion itself.

Cameron promised that any bombing would "… would be purely and simply about degrading and deterring chemical weapons use",[3] although degrading was not in the government's motion. He claimed further that, "This debate and this motion are not about arming the rebels or intervening in the conflict,"[4] nor would Britain by dropping bombs "… become more involved in this conflict".[5] This proposition was rejected by several speakers,[6] but their objections were ignored by the Deputy Prime Minister, Liberal Democrat Nick Clegg, who echoed Cameron's claim that the motion was "… not about ... entering into the Syrian conflict".[7]

Labour MP and former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who had not opposed the Libyan war, was not persuaded, saying:

> … let us be clear that if we take an active part in military action, which I do not rule out, we shall be taking sides. There is no escape from that. We shall be joining with the rebels, with all the consequences that arise from that, and not maintaining a position of neutrality.[8]

A Labour backbencher, Dai Havard, was more blunt: "We cannot write Assad a letter and say, 'By the way, the TLAM missile was only to give you a spanking over chemical weapons. It didn't mean that we were interfering in your conflict in any way, shape or form. Frankly, that is nonsense."[9]

Havard also rejected another main ground of the government's war proposal, that the chemical attack can only have been done at Assad's command.[10] Tory MP Guy Opperman challenged the limits of credibility when he averred that a debate on a

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1   Appendix IV: para 13509.
2   Appendix III: para 2741.
3   Appendix IV: para 13532.
4   Appendix IV: para 13532.
5   Appendix IV: para 13435.
6   Appendix IV: paras 13730, 14155, 14558, 14617.
7   Appendix IV: para 14658.
8   Appendix IV: para 13730.
9   Appendix IV: para 14155.
10   Appendix IV: para 14155.

motion which, in its own words, "… may, if necessary, require military action"[1] was "not about military action".[2] His rationale for this denial was a reprisal of Cameron's technique in the Libya campaign of implicitly restricting the definition of military action to "boots on the ground."[3] He further undermined his flawed argument by recommending "an exit policy"[4] - superfluous if there was to be no entry.

Concern about the potential loss of Syria's stocks of WMD to rebels, including anti-Western groups like Al Qaeda, weakened the government's case for military action. This had been raised before the August debate, e.g. by Tory MP Julian Lewis in May 2013, when he cautioned against "… the dangerous folly of doing anything to assist an alliance of groups that contain thousands of al-Qaeda fighters to get their hands on Assad's chemical weapons."[5] Tory MP Richard Ottaway worried in July 2013 that Syria's "… chemicals stocks may fall to the rebels",[6] as did Liberal Democrat MP Andrew Stunell.[7]

The argument that failure to respond to CW use in Syria would encourage tyrants everywhere to use chemical weapons was undermined by the fact that three months earlier Alistair Burt had reported "… increasingly persuasive evidence that chemical weapons have been used by the regime"[8] but no response had been made or proposed. Tory MP Richard Ottaway's complaint that not pursuing a military assault on Syria would constitute behaving "like a minor nation"[9] contrasted with the presentation, in his government's motion, of potential bombing as "a strong humanitarian response".[10]

The motion and the opposition amendment were both defeated. Cameron concluded the debate by acknowledging the defeat and indicating that the protestations of his party that the debate had not been about military action had been bogus: "It is very clear tonight that, while the House has not passed a motion, the British Parliament, reflecting the views of the British people, does not want to see British military action."[11]

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 13365.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 14382.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 14382.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 14382.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 11495.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 13096.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 13188.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 11455.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 13804.
[10] Appendix IV: para 13365.
[11] Appendix IV: para 14744.

References to aid, portraying the British government as humanitarian, ranked 3rd in year four. The leadership = regime theme, ranked 4th, reflected continuing portrayal of the Syrian government as illegitimate. The humanitarian aid theme contrasted with the 5th ranked theme, admittance of refugees to the UK, as the latter occurred mainly in debates about the government's refusal to join a UNHCR scheme to repatriate some of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees from states bordering Syria to Western countries.

Regime Change in Syria

Thematic analysis indicated that the British government was slow to commit publicly to regime change in Syria in comparison to the urgency with which it had pursued the overthrow of Gaddafi. The first reference to regime change in Syria identified by this study was by Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn in May 2011, asking whether the regime change policy used in Libya would be applied to other countries, such as Syria.[1]

Hague did not answer the question directly, but referred to differences between countries and emphasised that "Libya's is the one case where we are dealing with a clear call from the Arab League and a United Nations Security Council resolution".[2] The portrayal of the Arab League as the primary force leading international policymaking on Libya and Syria casts doubt on the democratic and humanitarian credentials of the interventions, given that most of the member states were undemocratic.

The president of one Arab League member state, Sudan, had been indicted for war crimes (Rice, 2009). Two others, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, had sent thousands of troops to crush protests by the repressed Shi'a majority in another, Bahrain, at the request of its dictator (Bronner and Slackman, 2011). The British government sought legitimacy for its regime change campaigns from multiple sources, even when these contradicted each other.

Initially the Labour opposition front bench appeared to be more eager for regime change in Syria than the government. In June 2011, the shadow Foreign Secretary, Douglas Alexander cited with approval the US President instructing "the Syrian government" (not regime) to "… start a serious dialogue to advance a democratic transition."[3] While this was a clear call for regime change, it was less peremptory than Cameron's decree on Libya in February 2011: "Colonel Gaddafi's regime must end and he must leave".[4]

At this stage, Foreign Secretary Hague did not take up Alexander's call for regime change, referring instead to divisions in the Arab League[5] and the difficulty of

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1   Appendix IV: para 1603.
2   Appendix IV: para 1605.
3   Appendix IV: para 2196.
4   Appendix III: para 389.
5   Appendix IV: para 2219.

obtaining a resolution in the UN Security Council.[1] He did not express any antipathy to regime change, merely listing extant obstacles. Although MPs cited the Arab League's non-committal stance on the issue early, it was not a significant theme overall, ranked 89th in Syria debates. Considerably more dominant were the themes of Russia and China opposing intervention, the former ranked 26th and the latter 49th.

Hague said, referring to the Security Council, "Russia in particular has expressed ... reservations and some hostility to a resolution." The view that Russia was the stronger obstacle was reflected in the difference between the ranking of relevant themes on Russia and China. The theme of pressing Russia to back intervention in Syria ranked 43rd, while pressing China to back intervention ranked only 82nd. Russia as a military ally of Syria ranked 42nd, with no equivalent theme for China as there was no such alliance.

Hague did not acknowledge the complex interests of Russia and China, and their relationships to the intricacies of the Syrian civil war, producing instead a crude good-versus-bad propaganda scenario. In a typical statement, he announced in October 2011 that Russia and China had vetoed a draft Security Council resolution, 2011/612 (United Nations Security Council, 2011f), condemning the Syrian government, and commented that they had chosen "… to side with a brutal regime, rather than with the people of Syria."[2]

Apparently dismissing China as a follower of Russia, Hague said, without addressing any other consideration: "It seemed that the desire to act with Russia on the Security Council outweighed any other consideration."[3] If, as Hague claimed, "We have a regular and full strategic dialogue with China",[4] his assessment of China's behaviour suggests either that the conversation may have been more of a British monologue, or that Hague did not wish to have a serious discussion on the topic in Parliament.

A statement by Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox in July 2011 may partly explain British reticence on Syrian regime change at that time: "I think it is unlikely that the opposition forces will enter Tripoli in the near future."[5] The government never

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 2217.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 3509.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 5449.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 5449.
[5]   Appendix III: para 7633.

revealed a comprehensive Middle East and north Africa (MENA) strategy in Parliament, although the need for one was often raised by MPs, but it would have been prudent to conclude one regime change war before committing publicly to another that was also likely to be more difficult.

There was early cross-party agreement on the need for urgent action in Libya, but it was not until February 2012, several months after NATO military intervention in Libya had ended, that parliamentary references to the urgency of a solution to the Syrian conflict began.[1] The Syrian death toll had reached "… more than 6,000 people".[2] Parliament had already heard in October 2011 that "2,900 people, including 187 children, have died at the hands of the [Syrian] regime and its armed forces in just seven months",[3] and in November this total had risen to 3,500[4] including "at least 256 children".[5]

Cameron's first parliamentary reference to the urgency of overthrowing Gaddafi was in February 2011,[6] before Resolution 1973, therefore it was urgent before intervention was legal, so the lack of a resolution cannot explain the lack of expressed urgency for intervention in Syria. It could be argued that it was known that a Syria resolution was unlikely, but that does not seem a compelling reason for avoiding statements that the situation needed an urgent solution. When the House was debating Resolution 1973 the day after its adoption by the Security Council, Cameron cited the UN Secretary-General reporting that "… more than 1,000 people had been killed"[7] in Libya. Yet it was not until six times this number had reportedly died in the Syrian conflict that British politicians began to treat a solution as urgent. Hague had portrayed military intervention in Libya as so urgent that a delay of hours would have proved critical,[8] but neither government nor opposition MPs argued that the duration of the conflict in Syria for months, then years, rendered intervention to save lives there obsolete.

The British government's silence before February 2012 on the urgency of a solution for Syria was shared by Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander. The first of his references to urgency found by this analysis occurred at

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1   Appendix IV: para 5382.
2   Appendix IV: para 5372.
3   Appendix IV: para 3509.
4   Appendix IV: para 4472.
5   Appendix IV: para 5030.
6   Appendix III: para 488.
7   Appendix IV: para 2293.
8   Appendix III: para 18516.

the remarkably late date of June 2012. He excluded international disagreement as a cause of his delay: "… the difficulty of the task must not detract from its urgency."[1]

The theme of armed rebellion failing ranked lower in the Syria debates at 83rd, compared to 56th in the Libya debates. The last comment under this theme in Libya debates was in June 2011, but the first in Syria debates was not until July 2012, over a year after the start of the war. The speaker, Tory backbencher Richard Ottaway, did not fear an imminent rebel defeat, but commented that the Syrian "Government are standing their ground".[2] The next reference on this theme was to the Syrian government's possession of stronger forces prolonging the war,[3] and the next to a military stalemate,[4] so again it appears that rebel defeat was not seen as imminent. Urgency to intervene in Libya, but not in Syria, therefore, indicates that regime change was a higher priority for the British government and opposition leadership than civilian protection.

The British government's first clear commitment in the Commons to regime change in Syria was made on 5 September 2011, when Cameron announced to the House that regime change in Libya had been accomplished: "Today, the Libyan people have taken their country back."[5] Towards the end of his statement, Cameron said: "The message to President Assad must be clear: he has lost all legitimacy and can no longer claim to lead Syria, the violence must end and he should step aside for the good of his country."[6]

If the plan had been one regime change at a time, it could hardly have been more tightly coordinated, at least in terms of announcements of intent. The success of the rebellion in Libya freed resources for regime change in Syria, but there was no new humanitarian emergency in Syria. While delay had been prudent, it negated the argument for urgent action on humanitarian grounds that had worked so well in achieving support for bombing Libya.

However, as direct military intervention was not proposed, humanitarian arguments for indirect intervention and the desire for regime change were still serviceable. The continuing improbability of obtaining a Security Council resolution for regime change in Syria had not deterred the British government from seeking

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1   Appendix IV: para 7903.
2   Appendix IV: para 8311.
3   Appendix IV: para 8998.
4   Appendix IV: para 9221.
5   Appendix IV: para 3224.
6   Appendix IV: para 3242.

regime change, merely constrained its methods.

Initially, echoing the government presentation, Labour leader Miliband did not express any sense of urgency for action. His opposition to direct military intervention also accorded with the stance of the government. Miliband made this clear: "We support the use of all non-military means at our disposal in relation to Syria. I have heard the Prime Minister's remarks about President Assad and I share his view."[1]

Labour MP Chris Bryant praised the Prime Minister and added, "I urge him to use the same dedication when it comes to Syria".[2] Labour MP Nick Raynsford agreed that Assad "should stand aside",[3] and urged Cameron to keep campaigning for international authority for the use of force. Both presented their support in terms of human rights and civilian protection. Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Alexander called for regime change in Syria,[4] but reform in British ally Bahrain.[5]

At this stage, the instruments of regime change acknowledged in the House were limited to escalation of economic warfare (sanctions), and moves towards referral of Syrian leaders to the International Criminal Court (ICC). MPs discussed these before the regime change announcement, with, for example, references in June 2011.[6] EU sanctions could be used to significantly harm the Syrian economy without UN authority, a potential loophole in the UN Charter prohibition on aggressive warfare.

EU oil sanctions on Syria were announced in September 2011.[7] In October, Hague said: "As the EU previously imported over 90% of Syria's crude oil, and in 2010 oil revenues accounted for a quarter of all Syrian state revenues, the import ban will have a significant impact."[8] He classified this severe blow to the Syrian economy, likely to inflict the greatest harm on the poorest people (Sponeck, 2006), as "pressure on the regime",[9] and anticipated further imminent sanctions.

Popular discontent in Syria had been partly driven by poverty and drought (Coutts, 2011), exacerbated by the fallout of a Western financial crisis (Spindel, 2011). Action that further impoverished the poor may, therefore, have been effective

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 3254.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 3282.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 3425.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 3535.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 3538.
[6]   Appendix IV: paras 2198, 2219, 2333.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 3242.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 3510.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 3510.

in fuelling rebellion, but does not appear humanitarian. It was supported by the Labour opposition.[1] Labour MP William Bain told the House in November 2011 that, despite recent GDP growth, Syria was "… plagued by staggering unemployment, increasing costs of living, stagnating wages, and widespread poverty. The UN estimates that in eastern Syria alone 800,000 people live in extreme poverty, owing to a sustained period of low rainfall."[2] In conclusion, Bain quoted Syria analyst Joshua Landis: "Eventually things will fall apart."[3]

The impact of economic sanctions was likely, therefore, to have been predictable - things would fall apart faster. They would also increase the mass of desperate people available for the states backing jihadist militias to recruit as fighters. "In April 2012, the governments of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE announced that they were earmarking $100 million to pay salaries to rebel fighters" (McHugo, 2015: 252). It is difficult to see how this policy could be credibly presented as saving lives, or meeting the aspirations of the Syrian people.

The British government complained about the growing strength of Islamist fighters in Syria,[4] but did nothing to impede the powerful boost they received from Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies. This stance had potential advantages as well as risks. The UK was able to maintain good relations with Saudi Arabia, protecting Saudi investment and UK arms sales. The Islamist forces were effective at holding territory taken from the Syrian government (Cockburn, 2015a).

Arming rebels could be left mainly to Arab states and therefore kept out of sight of independent media, minimising the appearance of Western culpability, and circumventing parliamentary scrutiny and public opposition. The Islamist takeover of the uprising could be presented as a product of Syrian government repression. William Hague: "A regime is waging war against its own people, and the longer it goes on, the more extreme will be the forces that are drawn into it".[5]

The risk of Islamist victory justified maintaining military support for rebels at a level where they could not win, and setting them against each other, preserving the Western aim of "… a negotiated end to the conflict that ends the bloodshed and leads to a new transitional Government".[6] It was helpful to this policy to ensure that

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 3535.
[2]   Appendix IV: paras 4938-4939.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 4940.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 6751.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 9223.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 11252.

while no suitable transitional government, amenable to Western interests, could be established in power, neither could any other entity.

Such an approach seems likely to prolong the conflict and increase its destructive impact on lives and property, and this is what happened, contrary to British ministerial claims of a desire to curtail suffering by a rapid resolution.[1] As with Libya, Hague said, "We cannot allow Syria to become another breeding ground for terrorists who pose a threat to our national security."[2] As with Libya, the outcome was the opposite of the announced intention. The only security mitigation was that both also became sites for the destruction of anti-Western militants.

The first major public action by the British government and its allies after Cameron had committed to regime change in Syria[3] was presentation of a draft resolution to the Security Council on Syria. Hague announced on 13 October 2011 that this had been vetoed:

> Along with the United States and our European partners, we tabled a draft UN Security Council resolution condemning the Syrian regime's use of force, calling for an end to violence and threatening sanctions, while ruling out military force. Nine of the 15 members of the UN Security Council voted in favour of that resolution, but Russia and China, regrettably, chose to block it. It is a mistake on their part to side with a brutal regime, rather than with the people of Syria.[4]

Contrary to Hague's statement, the UN record states that draft Resolution 2011/612 was tabled by "France, Germany, Portugal and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" (United Nations Security Council, 2011f: 1), not the USA. Neither did the draft resolution rule out military force. The sole description of potential enforcement measures was: "… options, including measures under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations" (United Nations Security Council, 2011f: 3).

While Article 41 is limited to "… measures not involving the use of armed force" (United Nations, 2016a: n.p.), the word *including* in the draft shows that this was just one possibility, not an exhaustive list. Article 41 is part of Chapter VII of the Charter, which establishes the procedure for authorising the use of force, and Article 42 provides for the use of force, "Should the Security Council consider that measures

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 10594.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 10592.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 3242.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 3509.

provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate" (United Nations, 2016b: n.p.).

In the light of the British government's expansion of Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b) to create the illusion of legal authority for regime change in Libya, it would have been reasonable for the leaders of Russia and China to anticipate similar expansive re-interpretation of Syria resolutions when the Western powers decided Syria had not complied. And they did so anticipate.

The Russian representative to the UN said after the vote: "Our proposals for wording on the non-acceptability of foreign military intervention were not taken into account, and, based on the well-known events in North Africa, that can only put us on our guard" (United Nations Security Council, 2011a: 4). Using the NATO name for the Libya intervention, he added, "It is easy to see that today's 'Unified Protector' model could happen in Syria" (United Nations Security Council, 2011a: 4). He summarised the Western abuse of Security Council Resolution 1973 thus: "… a Security Council resolution was turned into its opposite" (United Nations Security Council, 2011a: 4).

The change of stance from March 2011 to October 2011 by Russia and China on military intervention could be interpreted as a switch from credulous naivety over Libya to shrewd and rigorous scepticism over Syria. This could be explained as the eastern powers learning a lesson, but that would fail to account for the speed of the apparent change, or the uncharacteristic gullibility of states with long experience of Western hostility.

Another explanation was suggested by the Russian representative to the UN, affirming:

> … that the Russian position regarding the conflict in Libya is in no way based on any kind of special ties with the Al-Qadhafi regime, especially since a number of States represented at this table had warmer relations with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. The people of Libya have spoken regarding Al-Qadhafi, and they have determined his fate (United Nations Security Council, 2011a: 4).

Russia thus appeared to accept the claim of the British government and opposition that the people of Libya were united in opposition to Gaddafi. This may, however, have been as expedient a posture for Russia as it was for the UK, in view of the reference to the Gaddafi government's "warmer relations" (United Nations

Security Council, 2011a: 4), presumably with Western states. The British Prime Minister in 2007, Tony Blair, had negotiated agreements with Gaddafi, which led to major arms and oil deals (Sarrar, 2007), and were described by Reuters as "Libya's new ties with West" (Reuters, 2007: n.p.).

Other than the universal benefits of international stability and security, which might have been outweighed strategically for Russia by the inconvenience to the West of chaos across the Mediterranean and interrupted oil supplies, Russia had no substantial interests in the continuation of Gaddafi's rule. Whether by accident or design, when it omitted to veto Resolution 1973, Russia enabled the Western duplicity which then gave it a useful precedent to oppose subsequent Western-led interventions.

The Chinese representative did not refer to Libya, but similarly China had not had a decisive interest in the preservation of Gaddafi. The Chinese representative's concerns about draft Resolution 2011/612 on Syria related to the violation of state sovereignty and the maintenance of order in the Middle East. Like the Russian representative, he considered the draft one-sided and not conducive to a solution (United Nations Security Council, 2011a).

Draft Resolution 2011/612 on Syria resembled Resolutions 1970 and 1973 on Libya in that it barely recognised the existence of an armed rebellion and gave instructions that appeared contradictory. Alongside a list of condemnations of, and orders to, the Syrian government, the existence of armed opposition was only acknowledged indirectly: "*Demands* an immediate end to all violence and *urges* all sides to reject violence and extremism" (United Nations Security Council, 2011f: 2).

Had draft Resolution 2011/612 been adopted, the Syrian government would have been required to "… ensure the safe and voluntary return of those who have fled the violence to their homes" (United Nations Security Council, 2011f: 2), but return which is ensured, as opposed to permitted or aided, by a government cannot be voluntary. The draft expressed the intention "… to review Syria's implementation of this resolution" (United Nations Security Council, 2011f: 3) with a threat of further sanctions, but not to review the conduct of opposition forces.

In November 2011, the Arab League published a plan for Syria that was essentially the same as the US ultimatum to Gaddafi in March. It was a more extreme version of the recently vetoed Security Council draft Resolution 2011/612, and thus did not appear to acknowledge the concerns of Russia and China, who

had vetoed the draft resolution, or Brazil, India, Lebanon and South Africa, who had abstained (United Nations Security Council, 2011a).

When Hague complained shortly after the announcement of the plan that Syria had failed to comply with it, he urged the Arab League "… to respond swiftly and decisively with diplomatic pressure to enforce the agreement, with the support of the international community."[1]

In his earlier comments on draft Resolution 2011/612, Hague had selected a statistic that gave his side a clear majority: "Nine of the 15 members of the UN Security Council voted in favour".[2] However, the extent to which the supporters of the draft resolution represented the world can be seen in Chart 1 below. It shows the proportions of the population of the world resident in each voting bloc in the Security Council, and those unrepresented in the Council, when it voted on draft Resolution 2011/612 on 4 October 2011 (World Bank, 2018). It could be argued that there is a form of representation of non-member states in the Security Council because the non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly, but the discrepancy in representation between a country without its own representative in the Council, and a permanent member with veto power, is clear and stark.

Chart 1: Proportion of World Population Represented in UN Security Council

Proportion of world population represented by Security Council members in vote, 4/10/2011

Legend:
- For
- Against
- Abstained
- Unrepresented

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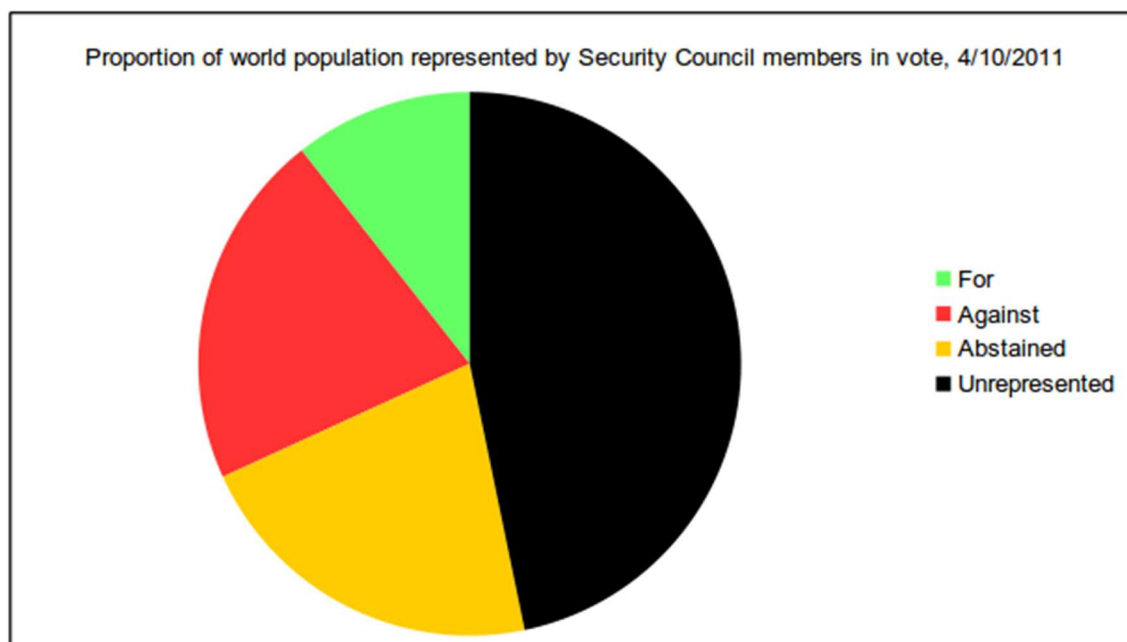
[1]   Appendix IV: para 3977.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 3509.

Hague described the Arab League plan: "That plan required the Syrian Government to implement an immediate ceasefire and end all violence; to withdraw their military from all Syrian cities and towns; to release all prisoners and detainees; to provide access for Arab League committees and international media; and to begin comprehensive engagement with the opposition."[1]

Although the terms as described here essentially constituted immediate surrender followed by negotiations, Hague said the Syrian government had agreed to comply within two weeks. After one week, Hague noted that it had not complied and that: "These developments confirm that President Assad must step aside and allow others to take forward the political transition that the country desperately needs."[2]

The demand "to release all prisoners"[3] is noteworthy because the Syrian government would later be accused of releasing jihadists to present the conflict as a struggle against terrorism. Abu Dhabi news website *The National* reported in January 2014 that, "Syrian intelligence agencies released Islamist militants from prison to deliberately subvert a peaceful uprising and ignite a violent rebellion, according to a former regime security official" (Sands, Vela and Maayeh, 2014: n.p.). This argument was not raised by British ministers in Parliament, who confined themselves to more general accusations of Syrian government-inspired radicalisation.

When William Hague claimed that "Assad's brutality is the best recruiting tool the extremists have",[4] however, he did not refer to his earlier statement that "Syria is now the No. 1 destination for jihadists anywhere in the world today, including approximately 70 to 100 individuals connected with the United Kingdom",[5] nor did he offer any explanation of why the UK under his government's rule had become such a fertile recruiting ground for extremists.

Prior to the announcement of regime change success in Libya, the British government had offered the Syrian government "… a fork in the road",[6] an option of pursuing reform rather than externally leveraged regime change. This option, tracked by the reform option for enemy state theme, had not been offered to Libya.

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1   Appendix IV: para 3976.
2   Appendix IV: para 3977.
3   Appendix IV: para 3976.
4   Appendix IV: para 17228.
5   Appendix IV: para 11250.
6   Appendix IV: paras 1276, 1397.

However, for Western allies, references tracked by the reform option for allied oppressors theme show that it remained open permanently.

The explanation offered for the difference in approach by Alistair Burt was meagre: "… each of these countries is different".[1] In contrast to the British government's frequently expressed wish for a democratic Middle East, the last reference to the reforms of Western allies in the MENA region in the period of this study was a statement by Hague that "… monarchs enjoy greater legitimacy with their populations than many alternative Heads of State".[2]

MPs cited the differences between states as a defence against charges of double standards in British foreign policy, but it was among the least frequent of defences against this charge. The most frequent defence of double standards in the Libya and Syria debates was possibility, i.e. Britain intervenes when it can.[3] This might be credible as an explanation of declining to bomb every oppressive government, but not as an explanation of arming one tyrant while bombing another.

At the end of November 2011, Hague was still trying to shape the Syrian opposition into the form he wanted. To produce an amenable regime change, "… they should put aside their differences and show the people of Syria that there is a clear alternative to the current regime."[4] Perhaps reflecting the unviability in Western eyes of the current opposition, his language softened from "must"[5] to "should": "… the regime should now understand that it has no future, that democracy should be introduced in Syria, and the regime should leave office".[6]

In February 2012, the Arab League plan was incorporated into another draft resolution presented to the Security Council, 2012/77 (United Nations Security Council, 2012c), which received stronger support - 13 in favour - but was again vetoed by Russia and China.[7] Hague insisted that the resolution could not have been used for military intervention or sanctions, which raises the question of why a Security Council resolution was needed if it was simply an expression of desire. Although rebel violence was explicitly, if briefly, acknowledged, and ceasefires sought from all warring parties, in draft Resolution 2012/77 (United Nations Security

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1   Appendix III: para 14731.
2   Appendix IV: para 12879.
3   Appendix IV: paras 1377, 3391, 8851.
4   Appendix IV: para 4299.
5   Appendix IV: para 3977.
6   Appendix IV: para 5020.
7   Appendix IV: para 5376.

Council, 2012c), Hague confirmed to Parliament that the British objective was still regime change: "a political transition."[1]

The British and allied response to the veto setback was escalation. Following the Libyan regime change model, Hague announced that he and the dictatorship of Qatar were working on a plan to create an "… Arab-led group of Friends of Syria … to demonstrate the strength of international support for the people of Syria and their legitimate demands, to co-ordinate intensified diplomatic and economic pressure on the regime, and to engage with Syrian opposition groups committed to a democratic future for the country."[2]

Hague did not explain why Qatar's dictatorship wanted a democratic Syria but not a democratic Qatar. In 2014 Qatar was "… described by some U.S. officials as the region's biggest source of private donations to radical groups in Syria and Iraq" (Weinberg, 2014: 3). The US "Treasury's then-Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen called Qatar and Kuwait 'permissive jurisdictions' for Nusra and Islamic State (IS) finance" (Weinberg, 2017: 7).

In a report for US NGO the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, David Weinberg wrote that while Qatar was a major funder of Islamist militancy and consistently declined to cooperate with US and international efforts to apprehend terrorism suspects, "… Qatar has been perfectly happy to arrest international human rights researchers and even sentenced a Qatari citizen to life in jail for reading a poem that supported the Arab Spring …" (2014: 19). These state actions suggest an antipathy towards political freedom and democracy.

The Independent reported in 2013 that most arms supplied to rebels in Syria were paid for by rich supporters in the Gulf Arab states, principally Qatar, and went to Islamist fighters (Sengupta, 2013). These issues were not raised by the British government in the Libya or Syria debates. The Labour opposition front bench continued to support the government,[3] and Hague continued to be "grateful"[4] for its support.

Fear of the consequences of a post-regime change sectarian government in Syria continued to trouble Commons backbenchers,[5] and Hague's response remained

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1   Appendix IV: para 5373.
2   Appendix IV: para 5383.
3   Appendix IV: para 5395.
4   Appendix IV: para 5402.
5   Appendix IV: paras 5411, 6456.

constant: he was instructing selected opposition groups to be inclusive.[1] Regime change in Syria remained the British objective in March 2012,[2] and escalation of pressure the means of delivery.[3] In April, Hague was still urging the rebels to unite. He doubled the British subsidy to the SNC to promote unity, or at least statements thereof.[4]

Hague announced, in April, the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution which "… embodies the Kofi Annan plan"[5], and provided for UN ceasefire monitors in Syria. This was Resolution 2042 (United Nations Security Council, 2012a). There appear to be no grounds for any reasonable doubt as to Annan's good faith in taking on such a difficult and dangerous task. However, the preference of MPs for referring to the envoy's name rather than the resolution number, in contrast to 1,218 references to the war-enabling "resolution 1973"[6] in the Libya debates, recalled Stothard's (2003: 139) report of British government minister Baroness Morgan emphasising the need "to Kofi now", i.e. to present military action as humanitarian in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, because "Labour MPs like a Kofi plan".

The phrase "Annan plan" was used 54 times by MPs in the Syria debates[7] studied for this thesis, compared to two references by its resolution number, "2042".[8] Both uses of "2042" were by William Hague. One was a brief contribution in which he also used the phrase "the Annan plan" twice.[9] The other was a longer statement,[10] in which he also referred to "the Annan plan" eight times, and "Kofi Annan" three times, suggesting a consistent effort to legitimise British strategy by association with Kofi Annan.

When Annan resigned as UN/Arab League peace envoy for Syria in August 2012, *Time* summarised his mission in terms which accord with the impression of futility suggested by British government statements to the House of Commons:

> … something of a fool's errand in Syria, sent to forge a peace in which none of the
> combatant parties saw any value beyond enhancing their diplomatic position, but to

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1	Appendix IV: para 5413.
2	Appendix IV: para 6497.
3	Appendix IV: para 6499.
4	Appendix IV: para 6730.
5	Appendix IV: para 6702.
6	Appendix III: paras 2301-18293.
7	Appendix IV: paras 6702-13094.
8	Appendix IV: paras 7885, 7979.
9	Appendix IV: para 7979.
10	Appendix IV: paras 7884-7890.

which the international players looked to mask the limits of the leverage they were willing or able to bring to bear on the situation (Karon, 2012: n.p.).

British policy was unchanged in May 2012.[1] Labour MP Andy Slaughter noted that the Annan plan was failing and asked what alternatives the government was considering.[2] Hague claimed that deployment of UN monitors had reduced the level of violence by a factor of ten, but the goal remained fixed, "… only a political transition of the kind set out in the Annan plan is a viable way forward for Syria",[3] and escalation remained the means. No alternative strategy was under consideration.

In June, Hague repeated his wish for rebel unity, regime change - "democratic transition"[4] - and for a new Security Council resolution legalising enforcement of the transition.[5] He announced continuing escalation of economic and diplomatic sanctions.[6] To Hague, if the Security Council agreed to enforce the aims of the West and some Middle Eastern states in Syria, it would be "… fulfilling its responsibilities to protect the people of Syria."[7]

Hague did not explain how Britain was fulfilling this responsibility by escalating the same policy and maintaining that "a peaceful transition"[8] was still possible after over a year of war, while the suffering of the Syrian people increased. At the end of June, Cameron announced further escalation of sanctions,[9] and indicated that Britain considered regime change more important than a ceasefire when he expressed hope for Russian cooperation in "… working to implement, in particular, the parts of the Annan plan that are about political transition".[10]

The additional sanction specified by Cameron was an EU ban on insurance for ships carrying arms to Syria.[11] It is unlikely that this would have had much impact on arms supplies to the Syrian government and its allies, as these mostly came from Russia and Iran. It would have tended, therefore, to weaken the armed opposition,

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 6752.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 6754.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 6756.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 7889.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 7890.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 7891.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 7958.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 7967, 7971.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 8059.
[10]   Appendix IV: para 8089.
[11]   Appendix IV: para 8059.

particularly any groups not favoured by the Islamist leaders of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as the latter could use land routes. Any such effect would, however, not have been severe, due to the covert supply routes used by rebels (BBC News, 2013b).

A theme connected to that of regime change was the Geneva process, which was adopted by the UK and allies as the regime change methodology in July 2012.[1] An Action Group for Syria (2012: 2), comprised of the Secretaries-General and Special Envoys for Syria of the UN and Arab League, the foreign ministers of China, France, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Russia, Turkey, the UK, and the USA, and the EU's foreign policy representative, met in Geneva to devise this process. The objective was implementation of regime change, which was termed transition, by mutual consent. A transitional government was to be formed, comprised of opposition personnel and members of the current government, and given full control over Syria to construct a pluralist democracy (Action Group for Syria, 2012). The Action Group (2012: 2) insisted that the transition: "Is reached rapidly without further bloodshed and violence and is credible". The prevailing conditions were so hostile to the accomplishment of this aspiration that there must be some doubt as to whether the experienced senior diplomats who authored it believed it to be viable.

In September 2012, the unaltered British government commitment to regime change was repeated by Hague: "Our objective remains an end to the violence and a transition to a more democratic and stable Syria."[2] Hague specified in October that the transitional government must not include Bashar al-Assad.[3] The outcome was, as in Libya, precisely what Hague claimed Britain's regime change policy was "… the only way to avoid",[4] namely, "… protracted civil war, the collapse of the Syrian state, an even greater exodus of refugees, and further appalling loss of life."[5] That the Syrian state did not collapse entirely, despite economic disaster and the loss of large portions of its territory, cannot be credited to Western intervention.

In October, Tory MP Sir Peter Tapsell challenged the presentation of the Syrian war as a purely spontaneous and indigenous uprising: "Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as I suggested at the time, it was really a mistake for the west to encourage a civilian rebellion against the dictatorship in Syria?"[6] Hague insisted that

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 8313.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 8832.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 9243.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 8832.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 8832.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 9217.

the war "… was the people of Syria rising up against an oppressive regime, and they did so without any incitement from western leaders of any kind",[1] but he acknowledged sectarian divisions.

He did not explain why the people of Syria were united against Assad but divided against each other, portraying this as a temporary obstacle susceptible to persuasion in 2011,[2] 2012,[3] and early 2013.[4] The focus thereafter was on strengthening moderates against extremists,[5] but at the end of January 2014, UK Home Secretary Theresa May was still maintaining that her government was "supporting the Syrian people".[6]

October 2012 saw another feature of the Libya campaign transferred to the Syrian theatre: regime change denial, following numerous previous commitments to regime change, and with apparent self-contradiction. Hague said, "It is not that the western world has set out on regime change in Syria, but it is certainly our analysis, and it has been for a long time, that peace cannot be brought to Syria without the departure of President Assad."[7]

He confirmed the regime change objective - "… the need for a transitional Government"[8] - but posed Britain as the impartial servant of "the people of Syria"[9] in pursuing regime change. He appeared to suggest, contradicting British policy in other countries and at home, that the mere existence of a rebellion compelled the British government to support the rebels. His classification of anti-government forces as "the people" enabled denial of the by now unavoidable fact that the people of Syria were divided against each other.

Backbenchers had categorised the conflict as civil war in May 2012,[10] June,[11] and September.[12] Hague himself had described the conflict as "… on the edge of civil war"[13] in June. Labour MP Russell Brown reported in July that "… the International

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 9219.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 4299.
[3]   Appendix IV: paras 5384, 7963, 8888.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 10097.
[5]   Appendix IV: paras 10692, 11318.
[6]   Appendix IV: paras 18580, 18889.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 9243.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 9243.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 9243.
[10] Appendix IV: paras 6763, 6960.
[11] Appendix IV: paras 7928, 8022.
[12] Appendix IV: paras 8990, 8994.
[13] Appendix IV: para 7884.

Committee of the Red Cross has stated that the situation in Syria has now developed into a civil war."[1] Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Alexander said in September, "Syria has now descended into full-blown civil war".[2] In this light the British government's insistence in October that the people of Syria were a unified revolutionary force appears fanciful. The British government's pose as an impartial agent of the Syrian populace was contradicted by its efforts to influence both the rebels and the populace. Minister Hugo Swire said: "We want to support moderate groups precisely to boost their appeal …".[3]

Hague repeated the proposition that regime change was not regime change because his government was calling it something else - transition - in January 2013.[4] It was still to be done "by mutual consent", and the UK was still seeking "a chapter VII resolution"[5] for authority to impose the mutual consent by armed force.

Britain retained the regime change objective and the strategy of escalation into 2013. It had helped to impose an EU arms embargo on Syria in May 2011,[6] which limited arms supplies to rebel forces, while the Syrian government was supplied by Russia and Iran.[7] The arms sanctions were expanded in June 2012 "… as a result of UK efforts".[8] Rejecting a request from Sir Malcolm Rifkind to lift the arms embargo, Hague explained that Britain did not want "… to send arms into a region of conflict"[9] and "… it would be very hard to know what some of those arms would be used for. In the long term, there would be at least as great a risk that they would make the conflict greater as reduce it."[10]

Rifkind continued to lobby for lifting of the arms embargo,[11] and for direct arms supplies to rebels by the UK.[12] In December 2012, the UK persuaded the EU to reduce the renewal period of the sanctions package from a year to three months,[13] to enable more rapid escalation. This was done, although the UK knew that, in

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 8826.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 8853.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 10491.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 10077.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 10077.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 1883.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 8998.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 8059.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 9000.
[10]   Appendix IV: para 9000.
[11]   Appendix IV: paras 9419, 9696.
[12]   Appendix IV: paras 9976, 10646.
[13]   Appendix IV: para 9698.

Hague's words, "… the conflict was intensifying on the ground."[1] The escalation was linked to the formation of the Syrian National Coalition, appointed by the UK and allies as the only legitimate voice of the Syrian people.[2]

In March 2013, the UK pressed for a dilution of the arms embargo to permit "… the provision of non-lethal and technical assistance"[3] to rebels, and the EU agreed.[4] Announcing the escalation, Hague packaged regime change as humanitarian, using the rhetoric successfully deployed in the Libyan war: "… helping the opposition is crucial to bringing about a political transition and saving lives, and both must be pursued together."[5] Hague portrayed opposition to UK policy as appeasement: "… we cannot look the other way ... we cannot step back ... height of irresponsibility to ignore potential threats to our own security ..."[6] and signalled future escalation: "… there may well have to be further steps."[7]

The non-lethal equipment which the British government complained it could not supply due to the embargo included "… body armour, helmets and certain types of communication equipment,"[8] "chemical detection equipment",[9] and "technical assistance".[10] Labour MP Mike Gapes pointed out that these were "force multipliers",[11] i.e. they made armed militants more lethal, so the "non-lethal" description was misleading and tendentious.

Hague reiterated Britain's regime change objective in March 2013. His government wanted "… immediate agreement on a negotiated political transition in Syria."[12] He presented the purpose of the dilution of EU arms sanctions as both "to save human lives"[13] and to put "pressure on the regime".[14] Neither aim was accomplished. Nonetheless, in May 2013, the British and French governments began campaigning for further weakening of arms sanctions.[15]

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1   Appendix IV: para 9947.
2   Appendix IV: para 9947.
3   Appendix IV: para 10517.
4   Appendix IV: para 10598.
5   Appendix IV: para 10591.
6   Appendix IV: para 10595.
7   Appendix IV: para 10595.
8   Appendix IV: para 10031.
9   Appendix IV: para 10051.
10   Appendix IV: para 10480.
11   Appendix IV: para 10531.
12   Appendix IV: para 10639.
13   Appendix IV: para 10641.
14   Appendix IV: para 10643.
15   Appendix IV: para 11262.

The stated aim was "… to increase the pressure on the regime and give us the flexibility to respond to continued radicalisation and conflict. We have to be open to every way of strengthening moderates and saving lives, rather than the current trajectory of extremism and murder."[1] How further increasing the killing power of combatants in a conflict already "replete with arms",[2] in Douglas Alexander's words, could contribute to these aims was not explained.

After promising that if Western states did supply arms to rebels they would do it "… in carefully controlled conditions"[3] (the precise opposite, therefore, of the conditions pertaining in war-ravaged Syria), Hague specified the purpose of the pressure: "We must make it clear that if the regime does not negotiate seriously at the Geneva conference, no option is off the table."[4] This gave rebel forces a perverse incentive (Kuperman, 2008) to undermine the Geneva process.[5] It also breached the core agreement of the Geneva process, the Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria: "Action Group members are opposed to any further militarization of the conflict" (Action Group for Syria, 2012: 5).

Abandoning any semblance of acting in concert with the international community, or even the regional community of Europe, Hague undertook to use Britain's veto if necessary to force the EU to further amend arms sanctions.[6] Burt clarified the next day that this meant "… lifting the arms embargo".[7] Tory MP Robert Walter likened his government's strategy to a "… a very high-risk chess move or a game of bluff that could go badly wrong",[8] and Foreign Office minister Burt reinforced this impression:

> It will strengthen the hand of opposition politicians in relation to the fighters, and the hand of the moderates in relation to the extremists. It will also show that we are committed to supporting them and have the flexibility to consider further action if the regime makes a mockery of this chance for a political solution.[9]

Lifting the arms embargo was presented by the British government as

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1   Appendix IV: para 11262.
2   Appendix IV: para 10628.
3   Appendix IV: para 11262.
4   Appendix IV: para 11262.
5   Appendix IV: para 11532.
6   Appendix IV: para 11310.
7   Appendix IV: para 11529.
8   Appendix IV: para 13208.
9   Appendix IV: para 11529.

humanitarian.[1] Cameron announced that the EU had acquiesced and lifted the embargo in June 2013, presenting the action as support for democracy.[2] In the light of the coerced cancellation of the embargo, UK Foreign Office minister Hugo Swire's insistence, in March 2013, "… that this is about non-lethal equipment and technical assistance; it is not about lifting any arms embargo"[3], garnished with a list of British humanitarian actions, appears disingenuous.

Cross-party suspicion that the government was concealing an ambition to arm the rebels led to the "Arms to Syria"[4] debate of July 2013, in which the government was defeated. Labour MP Peter Hain pointed out that the Geneva process appeared designed to fail: "Preventing Iran and also Assad from attending a peace conference means that it will not even get off the ground."[5] However, Hain remained committed to regime change through the Geneva process.[6]

Tory MP Robert Walter informed the Commons that, in response to the amendment of EU arms sanctions Russia and Iran, "… immediately bolstered the Assad regime militarily".[7] Walter feared that in the event of UK policy failing, "We will then not be dealing with 1.5 million refugees, but with perhaps 4 million, 5 million or 6 million people fleeing across the borders".[8]

When Hague reported to the House in October 2013 that "… the number of Syrian refugees has grown by more than 1.8 million in just 12 months, to over 2 million",[9] he declined to acknowledge the failure of UK policy or to amend it accordingly. Instead he continued to insist, despite the opposite outcome, that one of his aims was "to alleviate humanitarian suffering".[10] The UNHCR count of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria reached 6.79 million in 2018 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019a), up from 28,216 in 2010.

Walter also raised the need for Iran to be included in peace negotiations.[11] This had been suggested nearly a year earlier in February 2012 by Labour MP Jeremy

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 11535.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 12086.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 10502.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 12927.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 12999.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 12999.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 13208.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 13212.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 15580.
[10]   Appendix IV: para 15580.
[11]   Appendix IV: para 13212.

Corbyn,[1] and rejected with little explanation by Hague.[2] The proposal was repeated by Tory MP Richard Ottaway in June 2013.[3] Again Hague said no, on the grounds of US refusal and that Iran was an ally of the Syrian government. Corbyn raised the issue again in March 2013, adding that Saudi Arabia and Qatar should also be included, as the principal sponsors of the rebel forces.[4] Hague diverted responsibility for such discussions to the countries of the region.[5]

Tory MP Ben Wallace tried again in May 2013,[6] and Hague said no because Iran had been excluded from the first Geneva conference due to expectations of non-cooperation, and as it had not been at the first one, it should not be at the second one.[7] When pressed by Corbyn, Hague explained that Iran had been excluded from peace talks because it had not agreed to regime change, "… a transitional Government formed by mutual consent."[8] Thus, Iran was excluded from negotiations unless it agreed in advance to terms that made negotiation almost redundant, apart from selecting personnel for the new government.

MPs continued to repeat the proposal and ministers to reject it, even after the election in Iran of a president perceived to be more moderate.[9] Corbyn pointed out that in demanding that Syria agree to regime change before peace talks, and excluding Iran because it disagreed, "… the conference that is being planned looks increasingly like a conference to impose some kind of victorious solution."[10]

Holding a victory conference in advance of victory was a manifest absurdity, yet the British government position remained intransigent. Hague added Iran's nuclear programme to his list of reasons for excluding Iran from Syrian peace talks, then elevated it to "the central point."[11] Thus, progress towards peace in Syria appeared to be undermined by Western ambition to weaken Iran. At the end of January 2014 where this study finishes, Hague was still repeating that Iran could not come to Geneva II because it had not agreed to the Geneva I terms - regime change by

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 5522.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 5524.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 7952.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 10694.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 10696.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 11356.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 11358.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 11362.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 11889.
[10]   Appendix IV: para 11626.
[11]   Appendix IV: para 11891.

mutual consent.[1]

While the Geneva process approached collapse, the British government sought to bomb Syria on WMD grounds, to punish the government for alleged uses of chemical weapons (CW). It claimed that the bombing proposal was entirely unrelated to regime change, but this argument was rejected by a majority of MPs in the House of Commons and the government lost the vote.

Thematic analysis found 89 negative references to WMD in the Syria debates prior to the government motion on a Western military response to Syrian state CW use on 29 August 2013. A number of these were concerns about Syrian CW falling into the hands of militant groups.[2] The government responded that British representatives had asked the group of opposition politicians it had approved to replace Assad to look after Syrian CW stocks,[3] and that it trusted them to do so.[4] Additionally, it suggested peaceful regime change as a solution to the risk of CW being misappropriated during the violent struggle for regime change that was occurring at the time: "Those chemical weapons are best safeguarded through a peaceful transition."[5]

Given that the Syrian opposition leaders supported by Britain were not in Syria and had limited control over an unknown number of loosely organised fighters, it is understandable that reliance on them to safeguard Syrian CW was treated as inadequate by MPs. The question of how Syrian CW stocks were to be kept out of anti-Western terrorist hands "… was not satisfactorily answered, which is why I am asking it again",[6] said Tory MP Julian Lewis in March 2013. When Lewis asked it yet again in May, Hague's answer was that "… strengthening more moderate groups in Syria, rather than letting the extremists gain greater strength"[7] would somehow safeguard the CW, even though UK military aid to allegedly moderate groups was described as "non-lethal equipment"[8] or "non-lethal supplies".[9]

British non-lethal equipment did not enable moderates to overcome extremists,

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 17783.
[2]   Appendix IV: paras 8018, 8932, 10000, 10112, 10535, 10574, 10682, 11316.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 10002.
[4]   Appendix IV: paras 10114, 10537.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 10684.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 10682.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 11318.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 1114.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 17387.

and the supplies had to be suspended in December 2013 and January 2014[1] when the FSA lost control of arms warehouses to Islamists. Apart from the occasional spurious denial that political transition was regime change, the British government constantly presented regime change through escalation as the only solution for Syria, even though its escalation had included a tactical volte-face, from campaigning for an EU arms embargo to coercing its cancellation.

The threat of chemical and biological weapons had been a decisive argument for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Oren and Solomon, 2015). The leading precedent themes in the Syria debates, referring to other British wars or abstentions from war as guides to current or future action, both referenced the 2003 Iraq war. The most frequent, ranked 62nd, treated the Iraq war as a precedent for doing intervention differently; the next, ranked 65th, as a precedent for not intervening. The choice of WMD as a *casus belli*, therefore, does not seem to have been well calculated to overcome the reluctance of Parliament to support a new British military adventure.

This may have been a case where British policy was driven, rather than merely constrained, by the US administration. Labour MP Jack Straw quoted a proposal discussed by US president Obama on the morning of the debate, to attack Syria "… in a clear and decisive but very limited way".[2] Obama's words suggest that he was leading on military action but preferred a gesture to another significant escalation of violence. A "very limited" strike would not be decisive in impact, but might help Obama to appear decisive.

Plaid Cymru MP Elfyn Llwyd suspected that "… the decision on military action has already been made in Washington and agreed by the UK Government".[3] Labour's Kaufman made the same point, adding a critique of double standards: "We are told that we are being bundled into this situation because of President Obama - the same President Obama who sends a stream of drones over Pakistan, violating its sovereignty and murdering its citizens."[4] Tory MP Sir Edward Leigh concurred, judging that Obama's "… credibility is on the line, not the credibility of the British people or ourselves. We do not have to follow him in this foolish gesture."[5] US leadership offers a possible explanation for the counter-intuitive British reprise after

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 17260.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 13728.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 13872.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 13905.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 14450.

the Iraq debacle of WMD as a *casus belli*.

The British government's decision to recall Parliament for a full debate and vote may have been driven, as Respect MP George Galloway alleged, by a "democratic revolt"[1] among MPs and the public against war plans signalled to the media before the debate had been requested. Nonetheless, the decision to hold a debate, the government's acceptance of the negative vote, and the US decision in the wake of the vote not to bomb Syria, all indicate a partnership rather than a dictatorship, albeit an unequal one.

Labour's Douglas Alexander appeared to confirm this when he said in a later debate, "President Obama specifically referenced the British Government's failure to secure the support of Parliament when explaining his decision to delay the use of force in Syria".[2]

The legacy of British government deception about WMD in making the case for war in Iraq in 2003 overshadowed the debate on the motion for a response to alleged Syrian government CW use.[3] The theme of ulterior motives for war appeared 38 times in this debate alone, from a total in all Syria debates of 51 references. Several of these reflected suspicion that the motion was a device to legitimise an attack,[4] and some referred directly to the Iraq precedent.[5]

There was still no dissent from the Labour front bench on the objective of regime change, but there was clear opposition to direct military action. Leader Miliband: "We will not support a Government motion that was briefed this morning as setting out an in-principle decision to take military action."[6] Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Alexander cited "… growing concerns in the country that we are being pushed too quickly towards military action on a timetable set elsewhere".[7]

In line with its compliance over Libya, instead of opposing the government motion, Labour proposed an amendment which several MPs considered insignificant.[8] Liberal Democrat MP Lorely Burt commented, "… quite why they proposed an amendment almost the same as the revised motion is a little beyond me",[9] and

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1   Appendix IV: para 13935.
2   Appendix IV: para 15154.
3   Appendix IV: paras 13354-14746.
4   Appendix IV: paras 13399, 13580, 13785, 13872, 13879, 13905, 14680.
5   Appendix IV: paras 13785, 13879, 14445.
6   Appendix IV: para 13687.
7   Appendix IV: para 14644.
8   Appendix IV: paras 13587, 13607, 13780, 14211, 14358, 14720, 15022.
9   Appendix IV: para 14211.

Green MP Caroline Lucas called it "… very weak; it regards international law as an inconvenience".[1]

Labour MP David Anderson evoked the Iraq war and turned the anti-appeasement argument often used to promote humanitarian warfare on its head:

> … we are being driven by a timetable that has no basis in anything other than appeasing America, which says that the red line that it drew last year has been crossed. We saw the same thing 10 years ago when we were driven by the deadline of an American President - the deadline for him to get re-elected in 2004. We were wrong to follow America then and we would be wrong to follow it now.[2]

There was significant opposition from within the leading party in the coalition government. Tory MP Sir Edward Leigh commended the House for heeding the views of the public, whom he found to be "… completely clear they do not want war. They are scarred by what went on in Iraq. We were lied to in Parliament and we are not going to go down that route again."[3] Tory MP David Davis was sceptical about the government's evidence of Syrian government guilt: "Given where we have been before in this House, we must consider that our intelligence as it stands might just be wrong. It was before, and we must test it rigorously."[4]

SNP MP Angus Robertson accused the government of seeking:

> … a blank cheque that would have allowed UK military action before UN weapons inspectors concluded their investigations and before their detailed evidence was provided to the United Nations - or, indeed, Members of this House. Following our having been misled on the reasons for war in Iraq, the least the UK Government could have done was to provide detailed evidence. Frankly, they have not.[5]

Green MP Caroline Lucas recalled the issue of inspections from the Iraq war, citing Hans Blix, leader of the WMD inspection team in Iraq in 2003. Blix's advice on stocks of WMD unaccounted for in Iraq - "One must not jump to the conclusion that they exist" (Blix, 2003: n.p.) - had been ignored by the then Labour government to make the case for war. Referring to the Western plan to bomb Syria in 2013, Blix

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 14030.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 14581.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 14445.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 13920.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 13785.

had said: "If the aim is to stop the breach of international law and to keep the lid on others with chemical weapons, military action without first waiting for the UN inspector report is not the way to go about it."[1] Labour's Dame Joan Ruddock made a similar point about inspections.[2]

Labour MP Paul Flynn cited a number of CW uses to which the West had not responded in recent decades, and suspected that the call for war was "… a result of the American President having foolishly drawn a red line, so that he is now in the position of either having to attack or face humiliation".[3] Labour's Jim Cunningham felt that "… the public are suspicious about the argument that the issue is not about regime change".[4]

The lack of trust for the government evinced by many speakers from all sides of the House during this debate was expressed in almost brutal terms by Labour MP Sir Gerald Kaufman. He quoted from the motion: "… to alleviate humanitarian suffering by deterring use of chemical weapons and does not sanction any action in Syria with wider objectives",[5] and commented, "Pull the other one".[6] The government, he added, "… do what they want and make all kinds of excuses to justify random, murderous activity that does not even cure the situation."

When Kaufman asked whether Hague would be giving the government's response at the end of the debate, and Hague replied in the negative,[7] Kaufman remarked, "Ah, the Deputy Prime Minister is to reply. In that case, we are on a higher moral level."[8] Hansard did not record, from either the Speaker of the House or any of Hague's colleagues, any dissent from this insult.

Towards the end of the debate, which lasted more than seven hours (UK Parliament: House of Commons, 2013), Tory MP Cheryl Gillan sought assurance that a vote for the motion "… will not be used as a fig leaf to cover any sort of UK military intervention".[9] The assurance clearly did not convince her, and she went on to vote against her government. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, concluding the case for the government, perhaps understated the case when he said that "… there

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 14028: Blix cited by Caroline Lucas.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 13399.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 13851.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 13788.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 13907.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 13908.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 13910.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 13912.
[9]   Appendix IV: para 14680.

is some suspicion about the intentions of the motion".[1]

He sought to allay the suspicion, but he failed. The first vote was on the Labour amendment, which was rejected by 332 to 220 (UK Parliament, 2013). The government motion was defeated by 285 to 272, a small margin but still a remarkable turnaround from the landslide vote for war in Libya.

The first debate on Syria after the defeat of the August 2013 CW response motion began with a renewed commitment to regime change. Defence Secretary Philip Hammond confirmed that: "The UK will continue to press for a political solution to end the bloodshed and we are urging the Syrian regime to enter the Geneva process towards a negotiated transition."[2] In a debate a week later Cameron repeated the government's hostility to negotiation with Iran because it had not accepted the "Geneva I principles"[3] of regime change prior to talks.

The moderate rebels 2-way fight theme first appeared in Syria debates in year three of the analysis, with 5 occurrences. This increased to 34 in the following, truncated, year four. The strategy that this theme tracked had the same air of unreality as the Geneva I demand for the Syrian government to, in effect, shoot itself first and talk afterwards.

As Islamists came to dominate the battlefield in rebel-held areas, the British government appeared to end its efforts to unify Syrian rebels behind a democratic manifesto. Its regime change policy now asked one group of rebels, identified as moderate, to fight another, identified as extremist,[4] as well as fighting the Syrian government and its allies from Russia, Iran, occupied Palestine, and Lebanon, including the air forces of Russia and Syria and Russian naval cruise missile capability.

By any reasonable assessment, if this tactic had been adopted on the battlefield, the chances of a moderate rebel advance, never mind victory, would have been negligible. The British government had repeatedly made it plain that it was working to increase pressure on the Syrian government to negotiate, not for rebel victory. Hague contradicted his government's claims to support the "… aspirations of the Syrian people"[5] as a unified entity when he stated "… that the right choice for the

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 14691.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 14750.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 14869.
[4]   Appendix IV: paras 10692, 11245, 11318.
[5]   Appendix IV: paras 1138, 1632, 7885, 7892, 17218.

United Kingdom is to increase the level of support for people who we would be prepared to see succeed."[1] The strategy of setting rebels against each other appeared, however, to create an incentive for the Syrian government to entrench and wait for the rebels to kill each other, before advancing against the remnants. It would, therefore, have tended to decrease pressure on the Assad administration.

There does not seem to be any credible explanation for this British policy other than reluctance to acknowledge that commitment to regime change had been a mistake, for fear of hearing from opposition MPs what were described in a later debate on refugee policy as: "Those terrible words 'U-turn'".[2] The philosopher John Saul has theorised this aversion: "The essence of rational leadership is control justified by expertise. To admit failure is to admit loss of control" (Saul, 1992: 10–11).

It could be argued that if leadership cannot adapt to events, it has lost control. When the government amended its inhumane policy on refugee resettlement in January 2014, it was praised, not berated, for the alteration.[3] The government's rationale for failing to switch from its failing regime change policy - "… if there is only a murderous regime on the one side and extremists on the other, there can be no peaceful settlement in Syria"[4] - failed to explain how setting rebel militias against each other could lead to a peaceful settlement or even weaken the Syrian government.

However, if the British government had ended its commitment to regime change, it would have risked condemnation by means of the same humanitarian, pro-democracy, and international stature arguments that it, and the official opposition, had deployed constantly in favour of regime change. Maintaining an unviable policy risked increasing human suffering, discrediting democracy in whose name it was done, and demonstrating reduced capability to the world, but this seems to have had less weight in guiding government decisions than the more immediate political risks.

The British government's policy at the end of the study period was essentially the same as it had been at the beginning. Tory MP Alistair Burt, now a backbencher but still supportive of government policy, said at the end of January 2014: "I believe that

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1   Appendix IV: para 10692.
2   Appendix IV: para 18963.
3   Appendix IV: para 18963.
4   Appendix IV: para 17219.

extra pressure needs to be placed on the regime."[1] A year later, far from the British government's stated goal of a free and prosperous Syria,[2] and in stark contradiction of Burt's comment that: "What the United Kingdom is doing to relieve that pain is quite remarkable",[3] it was reported that "82 percent of Syrian people lived in poverty, while 2.96 million people had lost their jobs because of the war" (Al-Mahmoud, 2015: n.p.). The target of the UK's regime change strategy in Syria, President Bashar Assad, remained in office.

This chapter tracked the most frequent themes in the Syria debates and reviewed them in the broader context of the debate text. It revealed that humanitarian presentation of British policy was predominant but differed in emphasis from that in the Libyan debates. In the Syria debates the primary emphasis was on Western humanitarian aid, and on portraying British intervention as moral by highlighting the wickedness of the Syrian government. The chapter analysed the pursuit of regime change in detail, revealing that the commitment was delayed until the Libya war had succeeded. Thereafter, it remained immoveable irrespective of the dire humanitarian consequences, the fears of Islamist takeover and sectarian genocide, and the unwillingness and incapacity of Western powers to pursue military victory with full force. The following chapter investigates similarities and differences in the themes discovered in each set of debates.

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 18945.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 6515.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 18946.

Chapter 7: Comparison of Libya and Syria Debates

This chapter analyses differences and similarities between the dominant themes identified in the Libya and Syria debates, augmenting the analysis in the previous two chapters. It presents evidence of the dominance of humanitarian themes in the approaches by the British government and parliamentary opposition leadership to both conflicts. Different humanitarian themes were prioritised by British political leaders in each conflict, e.g. saving lives in Libya and funding refugees in Syria. Regime change was the primary British policy aim in both countries, and appears to have overridden humanitarian imperatives when assessed by results. Evidence of contradictions in policy presentation and inhumane reactions to policy outcomes identified by thematic analysis casts doubt on the humanitarian motivation of British policy.

The chapter begins with a comparison of theme counts per parliamentary year for each country, indicating discussion of Syria increasing as discussion of Libya decreased. This is followed by analysis of the major differences in theme counts between Libya and Syria debates. Themes were first ranked by the difference between their frequency in each set of debates, so that the WMD (negative) theme, with 458 occurrences in Syria debates and 13 in Libya debates and therefore a difference of 445, ranked highest in differences; the humanitarian aid theme, with a difference of 327, ranked second; and so forth.

A secondary measure of the significance of the difference was added by calculating a ratio between the largest and smallest counts of occurrences of each theme, e.g. for WMD (negative), the ratio = 445/13 = 35, and for humanitarian aid, the ratio was 462/135 = 3. A larger ratio was assumed to indicate a more significant difference. The data produced[1] were very approximate guides, so they are evaluated in the context of the text, the analysis on Chapters 5 and 6, and other evidence. Discussion of overall differences is followed by a concise consideration of variations over time illustrated with graphs showing trends.

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[1]   Appendix I: Freq difference sort.

Chart 2: Total Theme Count per Parliamentary Year, all Debates.[1]
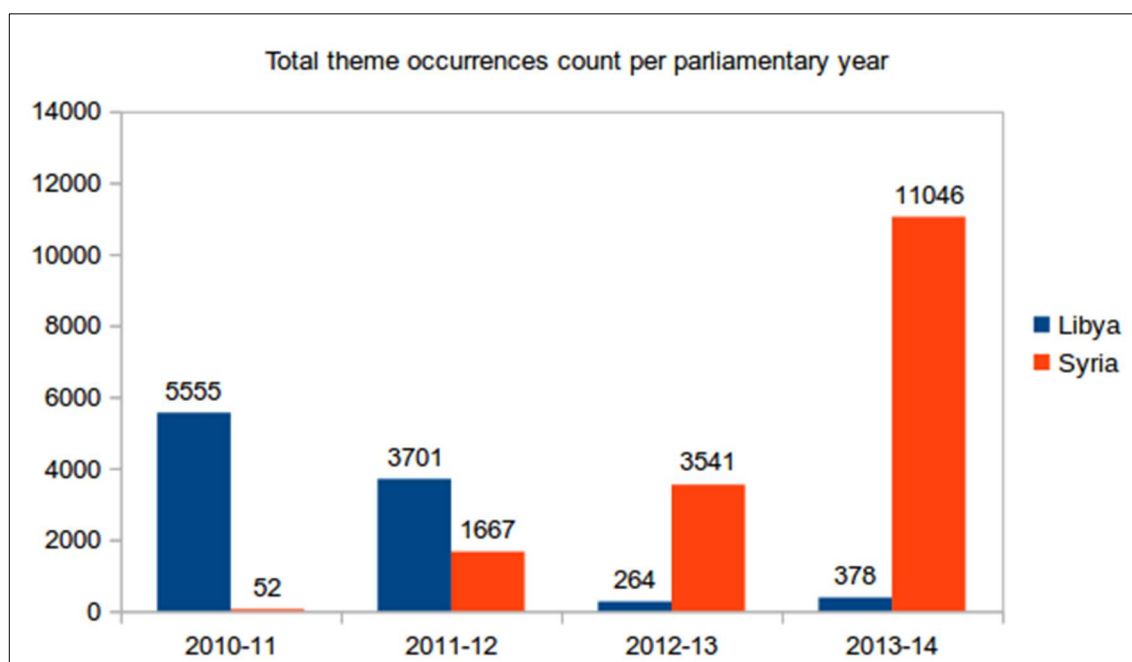
The comparison in the number of themes per year depicted in Chart 2 shows substantial discussion of Libya in the first year, followed by a sharp decline, and the opposite trend for Syria. This occurred although the uprisings in both countries were almost simultaneous, and does not appear consistent with prioritisation of saving civilian lives. The abandonment of Libya at its most vulnerable moment, with the country full of armed groups and devoid of functional government, accords with the view that NATO is not qualified for a humanitarian role (Smith, 2019). The switch of focus from Libya to Syria appears consistent with a policy of conducting regime changes consecutively instead of simultaneously to increase the likelihood of success and minimise NATO's military risk. This does not, of course, demonstrate that there was such a policy.

However, there is some evidence of Western strategic thinking along those lines. Retired US General Wesley Clark related hearing from a senior colleague of a Pentagon plan "… to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran" (Greenwald, 2011: n.p.). Tory MP Rory Stewart said while discussing Libya, "We are talking about not one country and one month, but a series of countries and 30 years."[2]

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1   Appendix II.
2   Appendix III: para 3056.

The substance of Stewart's remarks remained obscure. He may have had a grand imperial vision. He may simply have been estimating the duration of an expected conversion of Arab states to liberal democracy on the European model. Stewart was a backbencher, and there was no evidence of the UK planning a sequence of regime changes in advance. British policy appeared more opportunist than strategic.

Theme Differences and Ratios

The greater frequency of some intervention-related themes in the Syria debates may be explained by the failure to accomplish regime change there, so that the case for war was still being made at the end of the 2010-14 period. After the overthrow and murder of Gaddafi within 9 months of the start of the campaign, Libya regime change arguments were substantially redundant. They were now raised mainly in retrospective justification, and in celebration of perceived success, with a few references to failure.

One exception is the protection of lives theme, which was more numerous in Libya debates, 308 references, than Syria debates, 190 references.[1] This ratio is perverse if the campaign for regime change in Libya was primarily motivated by lifesaving and ended successfully in 2011, as it was presented by British government and opposition, and the campaign for regime change in Syria was also primarily motivated by lifesaving. The Syria campaign was still in progress at the end of the study period in 2014, so if equal priority had been given to lifesaving in both campaigns, the ratio should have been reversed and substantially larger.

The word count of debate content and names of speakers in each debate spreadsheet is 1,158,036 for the Libya debates and 1,038,481 for the Syria debates, a ratio of 1.1:1. The total count of theme references over the period studied is 9,914 for Libya, 16,362 for Syria, a ratio of 0.6:1. This suggests that little of the difference between counts of references with the same theme in Libya and Syria debates can be attributed to the length of the discussions. Consequently, once redundancy has been taken into account, a large difference in theme references suggests a difference in the importance to MPs of that theme between the Libya and Syria campaigns. These differences must be analysed in context to determine their significance, by examination of the coded text.

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[1]   Appendix I: Freq difference sort.

Theme Differences Ranked 1 to 20[1]

1: WMD (Negative)

This theme was not a significant issue in the Libya debates. Its opposite, praise for positive actions relating to WMD, had been raised by Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt in the Libyan context prior to the decision to overthrow Gaddafi. Following negotiations with British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, Gaddafi had agreed in 2003 to end support for terrorism and dispose of weapons of mass destruction, in return for an improved relationship with the UK and the USA (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2004). Burt said that this Libyan action and its reward constituted "… an important lesson for other nations and for the world."[2]

The lesson was apparently reversed by the decision to overthrow Gaddafi six months later, and the British government did not attempt to teach a similar lesson in Syria. Instead of demanding WMD disarmament there, the Western powers sought a violent response to alleged CW use by government forces.[3] Both cases suggest that regime change was considered a more pressing goal than WMD disarmament alone. Hague looked forward to WMD disarmament following regime change in Syria: "I hope that one thing that will happen in a future Syria will be the destruction and disposal of those weapons."[4]

The British government was committed to regime change in Syria. The proposed violent response to WMD use might, Labour MP Dame Joan Ruddock suggested, citing US reports, have been planned by President Obama to damage Syrian forces significantly, "… in order to tip the balance towards the opposition",[5] in pursuit of regime change.

The government may also have feared that Syrian WMD disarmament would be viewed internationally as Syria turning a corner, i.e. ceasing to behave like a rogue state, and that this might undermine the case for regime change. The WMD theme became significant late in the Syria campaign, so it was not a major factor in failure to achieve regime change quickly. However, basing an argument for military intervention on WMD in 2013 may have boosted opposition to such action and

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[1]   Appendix I: Freq difference sort.
[2]   Appendix III: para 39.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 13365.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 10002.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 14813.

further harmed the government's campaign for regime change.

2: Humanitarian aid

This theme had 327 more references in Syria debates than Libya debates. Some of the difference can be accounted for by a greater need for aid in Syria, as the conflict escalated and continued for years, while regime change was enforced with relative haste in Libya. This raises the question of why Britain's Syria policy, putatively driven by humanitarian aims, was not changed when it became clear that it was not even reducing the rate of growth of human suffering in Syria.

Limited discussion by the British government of humanitarian needs in post-coup Libya does not mean they did not exist. The Libyan war for regime change ended in October 2011,[1] but renewed civil war soon followed (Daragahi, 2012a). Aid was sent from Russia to Libya in 2012 (BBC Monitoring, 2012a). Albania planned to send medical aid (BBC Monitoring, 2012b). What had been one of the richest countries in Africa before NATO intervention was now perceived as needing aid from one of the poorest in Europe.

There were evidently considerable difficulties in bringing aid to the war damaged country. Red Crescent workers from Iran were abducted in Benghazi, and the Red Cross stopped work in two cities in Libya after its premises in Misrata were attacked (Interfax, 2012) in 2012 by some of the militias NATO had enabled to take over the country. It was reported that three members of Libyan militias had been arrested for raping and robbing British humanitarian workers travelling through Libya with aid for besieged Gaza (Mail on Sunday, 2013).

The Russian Foreign Ministry called for an end to attacks on humanitarian workers (Interfax, 2012), and the UN mission in Libya urged combatants still fighting to allow humanitarian aid to reach the town of Bani Walid (M2 Presswire, 2012). There were, however, no demands by MPs in Parliament for humanitarian access to Libya after the regime change. The last reference to such demands tracked by thematic analysis was in June 2011.[2] This suggests that British government demands for humanitarian access may have been part of the case for military intervention in support of regime change, rather than purely humanitarian.

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[1]   Appendix III: para 9363.
[2]   Appendix III: para 7117.

3: Refugees from enemy state, cause of flight not specified; 5: Refugees, UK government admittance

Both these refugee[1] themes occurred more in the Syria debates. The displacement of immigrants from Libya received negligible attention from British MPs. Libya's oil wealth had created great employment opportunities for African migrants, with, for example, as many as 1.5 million Egyptian workers in Libya prior to the 2011 regime change, returning $1 billion a year to Egypt in remittances. After the regime change, Egyptian workers were barred from Libya, apparently in reprisal for perceived collaboration with the Gaddafi administration and failure to back the rebellion (Daragahi, 2012b).

Half of approximately 300,000 migrant workers from Chad fled Libya during the revolution. Many of those who remained were imprisoned arbitrarily for long periods and tortured by rebels, before being forcibly deported with no money or possessions (IRIN Africa Service, 2013). The Migration Policy Centre (2013) put the total of immigrants who fled Libya in 2011 at 768,372.

This personal disaster for hundreds of thousands of people, and significant financial loss for fragile African economies, appears to have been a matter of almost total indifference to British MPs. The theme of refugees as a burden on North Africa was found only 3 times in the Libya debates, and ranked 91st. No discussion of the damage to sub-Saharan Africa was found.

The British evacuation of migrant workers before military intervention focused mainly on UK citizens, but some non-UK migrants were also included.[2] Thereafter, the principal concern expressed by MPs about African immigrant communities in Libya was that state failure there might prompt them to attempt entry into Europe, a fear used to promote the case for regime change to prevent a failed state.[3]

Thematic analysis in this thesis used several separate themes for references to the burden of refugees, including one for the Middle East and one for North Africa. Forced migrants from Syria were primarily hosted in Middle East ern countries, so the theme of refugees as a burden on the Middle East occurred more frequently in the Syria debates, 89 references compared to 1 in Libya debates.

However, the theme of refugees as a burden on North Africa occurred only 3

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[1] In this study, the term refugee encompasses all forms of forced migration.
[2] Appendix III: para 616.
[3] Appendix III: paras 1116, 2675, 7486.

times in the Libya debates, and the analysis found no mention of the burden on sub-Saharan Africa of lost employment and the detention, killing and torture of sub-Saharan migrant workers in Libya. Viewed in the context of considerably worse poverty and state fragility in sub-Saharan Africa than in the Middle East, this casts doubt on the commitment of the British parliament and government to African development, and on the credibility of the putative humanitarian motives for regime change intervention.

4: Peaceful resolution

This theme was 4th in differences, with 323 more references in Syria debates. The greater frequency of this theme in Syria debates reflects the swift achievement of the British objective in Libya - the removal of Gaddafi - while Assad remained in office. For the people of Libya, the putative beneficiaries of the intervention, there was no peaceful resolution. Regime change was enforced by war, and efforts to establish a new regime failed and eventually fell into renewed civil war and anarchy. This remained the case in 2018 (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

In Syria, there was no peaceful resolution. The British government pursued a policy of escalation to enforce the resolution it sought - regime change. This policy did not desist from or quell the use of force but, on the contrary, advanced from supporting peaceful insurrection[1] to aiding violent rebellion,[2] tolerated arms supply to jihadists by neighbouring states,[3] facilitated arms supply from Europe by forcing the end of an arms embargo,[4] and then sought to bomb Syria on WMD grounds.[5]

British policy in the Syrian war has been characterised as "non-intervention".[6] This description is only superficially sustainable if the word *intervention* is used in a misleading euphemistic sense to mean only direct military assault. The peaceful resolution theme includes all references to pursuit of a solution by diplomatic or non-violent means, of which occurrences of the phrase *peaceful resolution* are a small but revealing sample.

When, in September 2012, Hague noted the UN Security Council's omission "…

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 5544.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 8836.
[3]   Appendix IV: paras 7938, 9000, 9698.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 12086.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 13365.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 18443.

to put its full weight and authority behind a peaceful resolution of the crisis",[1] his specific objection was to Chinese and Russian refusal "… to adopt a Security Council resolution that would require the regime to begin a political transition".[2] Thus, peaceful resolution was equated in government rhetoric with the threat, at least, of coercion, implying the use of military force.

The British government prioritised regime change over peace. It supported a strategy of rebel violence and economic siege warfare to force the Assad government to agree to leave office. It appeared to envisage a scenario where the complex internecine conflict could be switched off at the appropriate moment and a peaceful transition initiated, to be mediated and directed by the West via the organisation it had nurtured to succeed Assad, the Syrian National Coalition.

6=: Escalation policy; Rebel unity/discord.

The prominence of the escalation policy theme reflects failure to accomplish regime change in Syria, and to obtain a Security Council resolution for war. Escalation was also applied in Libya, but there it rapidly led to war via Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b) and thence to regime change, so that the theme soon became redundant in the Libya debates. In Syria, indirect measures were escalated in place of direct military intervention, and no other approach was taken or considered, despite the mounting humanitarian disaster.

The rebel unity/discord theme had an exceptionally high difference ratio, 60:1. It was a strong theme in the Syria debates, part of the case against direct military intervention. Rebel discord was cited by MPs as a potential risk of regime change in Syria.[3] The theme often occurred alongside the UK influencing rebels theme, which indicated that efforts to unify the opposition behind the Western liberal agenda formed a substantial element of British intervention in the Syrian conflict.[4]

In November 2011, after providing air cover for a violent revolution in Libya, the British government urged Syrian opposition leaders "… to maintain non-violent resistance to the Assad regime, to maintain their support around the world."[5] It was not clear why non-violence was considered a legitimising factor in Syria, but not in

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 8833.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 8833.
[3]   Appendix IV: paras 9115, 14505.
[4]   Appendix IV: paras 4299, 5032, 5441, 9971, 10477-10478, 11431.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 5032.

Libya, and Britain soon escalated its policy to support violent rebellion in Syria. This was consistent with a strategy of incremental expansion of opposition power sufficient to coerce Assad to agree to a negotiated regime change, but insufficient to permit a rebel military victory with the attendant risk to the UK and its allies of losing control of the regime change process.

In the Libya debates, only 4 occurrences of the rebel unity/discord theme were found. Not only were the rebel militias generally presented as a cohesive unit by UK government and opposition, they were also equated with the people of Libya.[1] It rapidly became clear after the regime change, when the militias began to fight against each other and against the transitional government supported by the UK and its allies, that this had been a misrepresentation. In February 2012, *The Observer* reported "Libya in increasing turmoil" as "… the country has descended into rival fiefdoms of competing militias … . Human rights abuses are rife. Corruption is endemic" (Beaumont, 2012: 37).

Three months earlier, Hague had maintained that rebel disunity was a problem in Syria but had not existed in Libya.[2] He had not, however, identified rebel disunity in Syria as a problem during the Libya regime change. The first reference to this theme in any of the debates analysed was in November 2011, after the announcement of regime change success in Libya and the killing of Gaddafi.[3]

The initial British government response to the collapse of Libya focused on milestones. Hague in May 2012: "Libya ... is on course to stage its first democratic elections in 40 years this summer".[4] Later, as the new regime collapsed and the anticipated commercial opportunities failed to materialise, the failure was dealt with in Parliament by avoiding the topic of Libya altogether, as indicated in Chart 2 at the beginning of this chapter.

The British government and opposition appeared to understand the cultural environment in Syria better than they had in Libya, where faulty intelligence and threat exaggeration had been utilised to accelerate Western military intervention (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016). Neither case supports the view that cultural sensitivity would produce better humanitarian intervention (Bellinger, 2020). In the Libyan intervention the minimal efforts by backbench MPs to introduce such

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[1]   Appendix III: para 1724.
[2]   Appendix III: para 10647.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 4299.
[4]   Appendix III: para 13532.

concerns were swept aside.[1] In Syria, sectarian divisions did not deter British pursuit of regime change, merely persuading the British leadership to minimise overt military aid to rebels, although Hague indicated that this led to a military advantage for sectarian rebel forces.[2]

7: Leadership = regime

The count difference for this theme reflects failure to overthrow the Assad government. The term regime was not applied to Libya's new leaders after regime change. Thus, the Libyan leadership was a regime for nine months of the period studied, the Syrian leadership for three and a half years thereof. If the Assad government had been declared a regime as firmly and swiftly as Libya, this difference would have been larger. In the debates, the leadership of each targeted state was described both as a government, authorities, etc., and as a regime. This usage was tracked over the period studied by the leadership = regime and leadership = government themes.

Chart 3: Government or Regime: Libya Debates.[3]
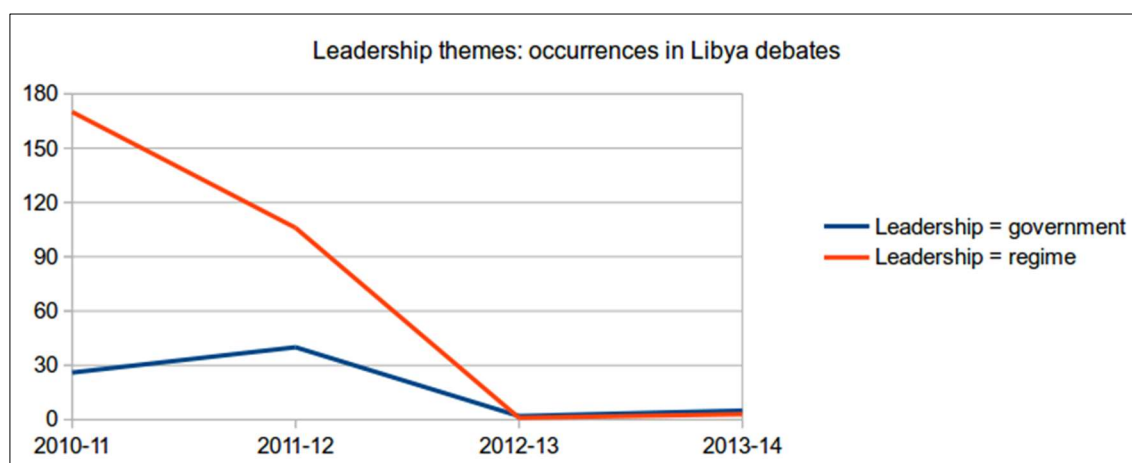
In discussion of Libya, shown in Chart 3 above, regime references during the first year, 2010-11, were ranked 5th and government references 38th, consistent with a swift move to condemnation of Gaddafi's leadership. In the second year, 2011-12, regime was ranked 2nd and government 21st, again a strong identification of Gaddafi as enemy. By the third year, 2012-13, Gaddafi had been overthrown, and

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[1] Appendix III: para 4976.
[2] Appendix IV: para 11302.
[3] Appendix II.

the government theme, ranked 12th, was ahead of regime at 13th, the bottom of the ranking. A total of 3 references to both themes in the third year is consistent with diminishing interest in Libya, hardly changed in the fourth year, 2013-14, with only 5 occurrences of the government theme, ranked 13th, and 3 of the regime theme, ranked 15th of 17 ranks. The relative rise of the government theme indicates bestowal of legitimacy on the new government,[1] while most Libya regime theme references after regime change referred to Gaddafi.[2]

Chart 4: Government or Regime: Syria Debates.[3]
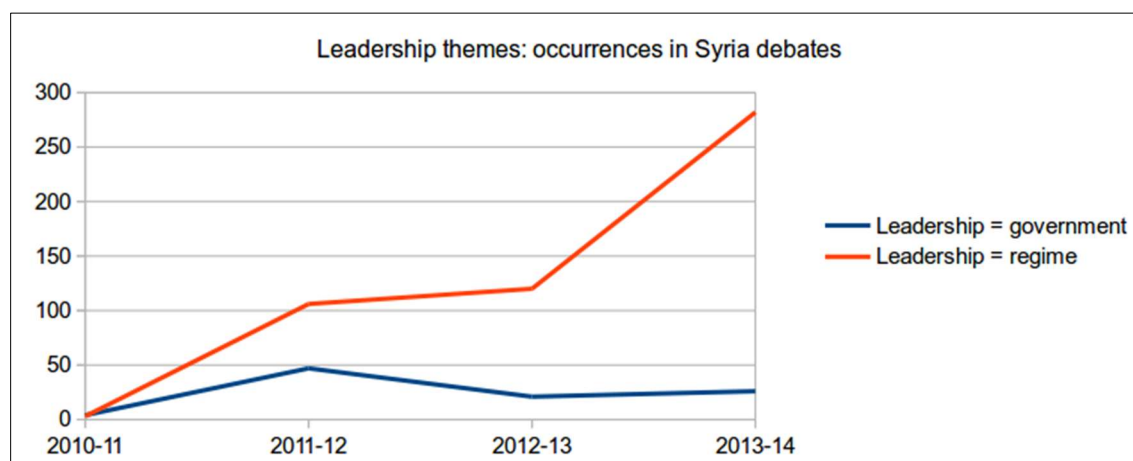
In discussions of Syria, shown in Chart 4 above, the government theme was ranked 3rd during the first year and the regime theme 4th, indicating some initial hesitancy in condemning the Syrian leadership. In the second year, regime references rose to 1st in the Syria ranking, but government references were close behind at 6th. In the third year, the regime theme was ranked 4th and the government theme 37th, suggesting an increase of overt hostility towards the Assad leadership. This does not seem to be aligned with humanitarian concerns, because deaths attributed to Assad had surpassed those attributed to Gaddafi before this period (Zifcak, 2012).

In the fourth year, the regime theme was 4th in the Syria debate ranking, and the government theme 73rd, indicating a strong consensus of hostility to Assad among British MPs. This was not, however, manifested in strong agreement on the manner of intervention, nor on urgency of action. Thematic analysis supports the view that

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 11344, 11348, 11605, 14924, 14928, 18429, 18460.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 11605, 14924, 18292, 18307, 20430.
[3]   Appendix II.

British politicians switched to the use of the term *regime* to describe a government they viewed with hostility when they wished to see it overthrown (Shupak, 2018).

8: UNSC[1] mandate present

This theme was more prevalent in the Libya debates because of the adoption of Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b) and its decisive deployment by the UK and allies to provide the appearance of legality for enforced regime change. The appearance was dubious, but it was sufficiently compelling to satisfy most MPs. The British government's distortion of the resolution gave legal cover to an action heavily promoted as humanitarian, but also pursued for reasons of national revenge, commercial opportunity, strategic advantage, and political ambition.

The abuse of Resolution 1973 influenced Russia's decision to veto Security Council draft Resolution 2011/612 on Syria (United Nations Security Council, 2011a). The theme of Security Council vetoes, with 56 references, occurred almost as frequently in Syria debates as that of UNSC mandate present, with 61. However, UN documentation records that while three draft resolutions relating to aspects of the Syrian war were vetoed during the period of study - 2011/612, 2012/77, and 2012/538 (Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2018a) - six were adopted: 2042, 2043, 2059, 2108, 2118, and 2131 (Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2018b).

The first Syria resolution adopted by the Security Council during the period studied in this thesis, 2042 (United Nations Security Council, 2012a), was celebrated by Hague with a statement indicating that the British government intended to use the resolution for regime change propaganda. For Britain, the purpose of the resolution was to stand as a benchmark "… against which the Assad regime and its behaviour can now be judged."[2] The aim specified by the resolution was implementation of regime change by mutual consent, but that plan was unviable. The resolution did not provide a route to military intervention, limiting its potential as pro-intervention propaganda.

Perhaps the most plausible explanation for the many more references to adopted Security Council resolutions in the Libya debates than in the Syria debates is that the Syria resolutions had little utility for regime change and were too restrictive to be

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[1]   UNSC = United Nations Security Council.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 6702.

remodelled by pro-intervention rhetoric. Consequently, they were of less interest to the British government and MPs than the Libya resolutions. For example, Resolution 2108, adopted in 2013, had unanimous Security Council support but lacked value for regime change propaganda, as it condemned abduction of UN peacekeepers in the Golan demilitarised zone by Syrian rebels (United Nations Security Council, 2013).

9: Doubt intervention will help

Military intervention in Syria was more difficult than in Libya because of Syria's alliances. There was also much greater concern that intervention for regime change might lead to negative outcomes. It does not necessarily follow that MPs genuinely believed that intervention in Libya would lead to a better country for Libyans, although it appears that some did. The difference may also reflect different histories and priorities, and lessons learned from Libya by those who did believe that bombing would help the country.

Overthrowing Assad, allied to Russia and Iran, could have had strategic advantages for the UK and NATO, but the commercial prospects in Syria were not large enough to be decisive, and the anti-Assad campaign lacked the visceral quality of British antipathy to Gaddafi. Gaddafi had been an enemy of the British state for decades, while Bashar al-Assad had been, temporarily, an ally against jihadism (Mandelson, 2001: 4).

The absence of a powerful British grudge against the Syrian leader, combined with the greater time available for cost-benefit evaluation, appears to have led to a more rational appraisal of regime change in Syria by many MPs, if not by the British government, than had been applied to Libya. Rapid progress in the Libya regime change campaign helped to shield the claims of humanitarian motivation from serious scrutiny.

10: House of Commons debate and vote

The greater frequency of this theme in Syria debates, with a ratio of 6:1, reflected growing mistrust of the government including among its own MPs. MPs were concerned that the government would escalate British intervention in Syria towards comprehensive military engagement. However, although MPs expressed greater doubts than in the Libya campaign, the objective of regime change remained popular with them.

11: No-fly zone

The greater presence of this theme in Libya debates reflected the government's success in obtaining Resolution 1973, including a no-fly zone (NFZ) in Libya, that could be used for regime change, albeit by deception. No such resolution was obtained for Syria. Opposition to an NFZ for Syria was tracked by a related theme - no-fly zone risks.

The risks of an NFZ were raised four times by Foreign Secretary Hague in Syria debates,[1] and once by Foreign Office minister Burt.[2] Tory MP Richard Ottaway also cited lack of Arab League support for an NFZ, attributing it to concerns about "… the next domino to fall"[3] - popular, if not democratic, rebellion might spread to the Arab tyrannies that had urged the overthrow of Gaddafi. Although there were more references to NFZ risks in Libya debates, only three of these were by a cabinet member; all three were Cameron acknowledging risks while promoting military intervention in Libya, including the NFZ.[4]

12: Geneva process

This was a major theme in Syria debates as a route to regime change, and there was no such process for Libya, where the West employed direct military assault in support of rebel ground forces.

13: Military intervention - caution

The count gap for this theme reflected both the greater difficulty of intervention in Syria and growing awareness of the failure of the Libya intervention to achieve positive humanitarian results.

14: Humanitarian aid - UK lead; 15: Humanitarian crisis.

Of these humanitarian themes, humanitarian aid - UK lead, covering references to the UK's generous contribution to humanitarian aid, had the largest difference ratio, 28:1. This appears to have reflected the failure of the regime change campaign in Syria, creating a growing need to present evidence that British intervention was humanitarian. While the Libya intervention was presented as saving lives by military

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[1]   Appendix IV: paras 5470, 10672, 11411, 11435.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 11488.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 1820.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 2450, 2528, 2727.

action, Britain's beneficence in Syria was demonstrated by gifts of money to aid agencies.

16: Russia anti-intervention

Russia did not prevent intervention in Libya, but expressed opposition to its extent. This was largely ignored by the British parliament. Thematic analysis recorded only one reference in Libya debates, by Labour MP John McDonnell, reporting on 21 March 2011, within days of the start of NATO bombing, "Russia and China ... urging that military action cease. They ... are convening the Security Council to try to end the action."[1]

17: Children

This theme was more prevalent in Syria debates. Instances of the theme included many references to the cruelty of the Syrian leadership, and some to the cruelty of elements of the opposition. Frequent reference was made to the suffering of child refugees. This became a major issue at the start of 2014, when the House debated the reluctance of the British government to resettle vulnerable refugees, including children, in the UK.

More than half the references in Syria debates to children, 100 of 192, occurred in four debates in January 2014, entitled Syrian Refugees Programme, Syria Humanitarian Support, Syrian Refugees, and UNHCR Syrian Refugees Programme.[2] This controversy brought the government's humanitarian stance into question, demonstrating the risk for propagandists of basing narratives on emotive themes over which sustained control cannot be maintained. It also underscored the propaganda benefit of haste in military intervention for regime change, to reach a point of no return before control of the narrative can be irretrievably lost.

18: Sectarian/ethnic conflict

This theme was ten times more frequent in Syria debates. It was a major source of opposition to direct military intervention and of hesitancy in supporting regime change in Syria, but received very little consideration in debates on intervention in Libya. Not all the 19 references to this theme in Libya debates referred to Libya, but just over half did, acknowledging historical and tribal rivalries, and sectarian

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[1]   Appendix III: para 3299.
[2]   Appendix IV.

persecution.[1]

Tory MP Laura Sandys said, "I know that the Foreign Secretary is well aware of the tribal differences in Libya and the historical divide between east and west",[2] but this knowledge did not feature in statements by government ministers. Backbenchers made contradictory statements in support of varying agendas. In support of the NATO military alliance, Labour MP Hugh Bayley claimed in July 2013 that one result of the Libya intervention had been to "stop ethnic cleansing".[3] To promote the defence of Christians, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) MP Jim Shannon reported in December 2013 that: "In Libya, Christians have been murdered for failing to agree to convert to Islam."[4]

Labour MP Dennis Skinner presciently asked Cameron in March 2011 what was being done "… to avoid an inter-tribal civil war in Libya?"[5] Cameron brushed the concern aside, stating that the Libyan rebel council did not have "sectarian or tribal"[6] intentions, and urged MPs to "… be a little more optimistic."[7] Neither the potential nor actual impact of violent regime change on ethnically diverse African migrant workers in Libya was given significant attention by MPs.

19: UK backing opposition/rebels

The difference ratio for this theme in Syria debates compared to Libya debates was relatively low at 3:1. The British government was committed to supporting opposition groups in both countries. However, it supported them as a whole in Libya, while initially backing only peaceful protesters in Syria, then backing violent factions it deemed moderate, and opposing those it judged extremist. The count difference for this theme largely reflects the different duration of the rebellions.

After October 2011, the Libyan rebels ceased to figure significantly in debates, as regime change had been achieved. As the Libyan state collapsed, most British MPs appeared to lose interest in the country. In its Syria policy thereafter, the British government continued to support rebels it classified as moderate as its principal instrument of regime change. In Syria debates, rebels classified as extremist by the

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 2969, 4779, 5240, 5347, 9017, 9582, 14075, 18088, 20727, 21067.
[2]   Appendix III: para 5240.
[3]   Appendix III: para 18088.
[4]   Appendix III: para 20727.
[5]   Appendix III: para 4779.
[6]   Appendix III: para 4781.
[7]   Appendix III: para 4781.

UK became a significant cause of parliamentary opposition to direct military intervention and, among some MPs, of opposition to regime change.

During the period of this study, Tory MP and former Foreign Secretary Sir Malcolm Rifkind began by urging the government to arm rebels for self-defence against the Assad government,[1] then escalated to asking it to give rebels sufficient arms for victory.[2] Later he switched back to requesting defensive arming of rebels, "… to ensure that the civilian communities in Syria are protected from the merciless onslaught from the present Syrian Government",[3] and finally he reversed his stance and advocated a deal with Russia to end the war and help "… the Syrians get rid of the jihadi terrorists".[4] This was an unusual stance both in its degree of commitment and its flexibility. While Rifkind reacted to the changing situation and humanitarian crisis by moving from an aggressive liberal humanitarian posture to defensive realignment with the Syrian government he had sought to overthrow, the British government and Labour opposition steadily pursued regime change in Syria with minimal operational and reputational risk to the UK, apparently unmoved by actual consequences and realistic prospects.

20: Islamist takeover

The difference ratio for this theme in Syria debates compared to Libya debates was 5:1, not a huge gap, but as with British rebel support the timing is significant. The 200 references under this theme in the Syria debates during the study period all preceded Western bombing of Syrian forces, becoming a significant argument against military action. In the Libya debates, only 3 of the 40 references came before British bombing started on 19 March 2011,[5] and one of these suggested that not intervening in Libya would strengthen Al Qaeda.[6] Most references on this theme in Libya debates, 23 of 40, came after Cameron had announced on 5 September 2011 that "… the Libyan people have taken their country back."[7]

Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander had expressed concerns about the possible involvement of jihadist fighters in the Libyan conflict at the

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[1]   Appendix IV: paras 9419, 9976.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 10646.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 11292.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 17256.
[5]   Appendix III: para 2547.
[6]   Appendix III: para 2045.
[7]   Appendix III: para 7698.

beginning of the NATO intervention, citing the military chief of NATO in Europe.[1] However, this was evidently not enough to counter the pro-intervention arguments or the branding of the rebellion as democratic. Alexander's only policy reaction to concerns about jihadists in Libya was to urge the government not to arm the rebels directly. Hague, for the government, dismissed these concerns, and preferred "… to put the emphasis on the positive side",[2] but appears nonetheless to have heeded the call to avoid the direct supply of British arms to Libyan rebels. Citing leaked diplomatic communications, *The Guardian* reported that the US and UK governments knew of Islamist extremist activity in Libya in 2008 (Black, 2011).

Two hundred Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) members, including leader Abdel-Hakim Belhaj, were released from prison and torture in Libya on condition that the group announced its separation from Al Qaeda (Black, 2011), casting some doubt on the reliability of the announcement. Cameron dismissed such concerns by stating that: "The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group was allied with al-Qaeda. It is not any more and has separated itself from that organisation."[3]

This was not the assessment of the British government's list of banned terrorist organisations, which had included LIFG since 2005. In the 2017 edition, the entry still stated that, "The LIFG seeks to replace the current Libyan regime with a hard-line Islamic state. The group is also part of the wider global Islamist extremist movement, as inspired by Al Qa'ida" (UK Home Office, 2017: 15). Cameron's apparent hypothesis of a jihadist group, driven by powerful religious faith to kill and risk death, suddenly and sincerely switching to the same level of commitment to Western liberal democracy, precisely at a moment when it was convenient to British government objectives for it to appear to do so, may be considered deficient in credibility.

It was not until December 2013, long after the killing of Gaddafi, that evidence of Islamist atrocities in Libya was reported to Parliament, by DUP MP Jim Shannon: "Christians have been murdered for failing to agree to convert to Islam."[4] Islamist involvement in the Libyan rebellion was not a significant topic in debates before or during the regime change campaign. In the Syria debates, by contrast, it was a major topic, acknowledged even by the British government in its division of rebels into

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[1]   Appendix III: para 4959-4961.
[2]   Appendix III: para 4976.
[3]   Appendix III: para 7783.
[4]   Appendix III: para 20727.

moderate and extremist. It appears to have been a factor in the measured approach of the British government to regime change in Syria.

It may be that the value of Libyan hydrocarbon reserves, and the British desire for vengeance and restoration of influence in Libya, outweighed a limited perceived risk of anti-British jihadist violence after regime change. Syria had not offended directly against the UK, and Syria's hydrocarbon reserves were far smaller than those in Libya (US Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). However, when the British government began to bomb Syria in 2015 on the pretext of fighting the Islamic State group, its first reported choice of target, "… oil fields in eastern Syria" (BBC News, 2015c: n.p.), did little to authenticate its humanitarian stance.

Variations over Time: Top 5 Themes in Libya Debates Comparison

Charts 5 to 9 below depict the variations in frequency over time of the five most frequent themes overall in the Libya debates, and the frequencies of each of these themes in the Syria debates, for approximate comparison and illustration of consistency and change in Parliamentary priorities in discussion of each country. Charts 10 to 14 in the subsequent section provide equivalent visualisations and comparisons with the Libya debates for the top five themes in the Syria debates. The overall picture tends towards inconsistency, contradiction, and opportunism, supporting arguments of questionable ethics in British humanitarian intervention (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015), against humanitarian intervention (Gilpin, 2005; Wertheim, 2010; Cunliffe, 2020) and against the suitability of the UK as a humanitarian enforcer (Dunford and Neu, 2019a).

Chart 5: Regime Change: Theme Comparison over Time.[1]
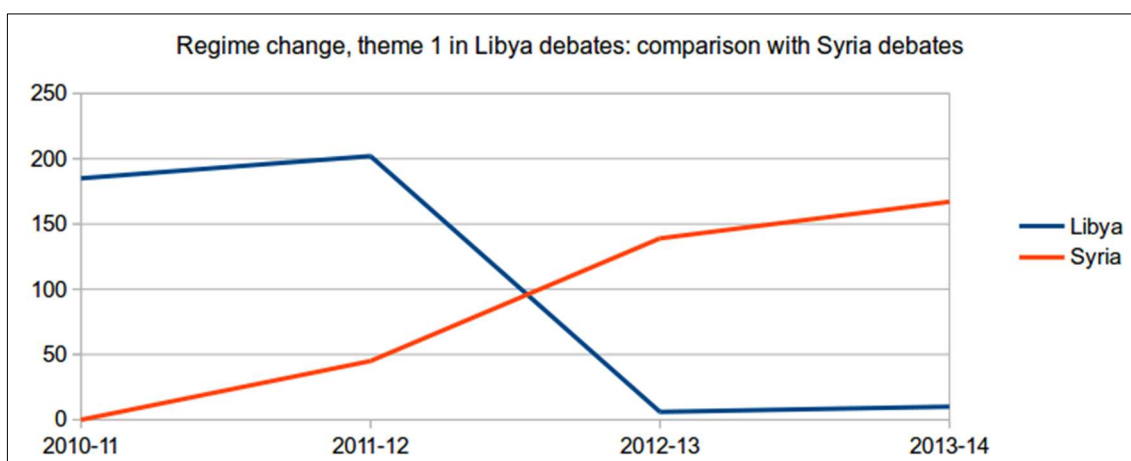
The trends shown in Chart 5 suggest that regime change was a major theme from the start of the Libya campaign, but only became a major theme in Syria debates once regime change had been completed in Libya. The steep fall in discussion of this theme, and all themes, in Libya debates reflects the decline in discussion of Libya after regime change, and the failure of regime change to produce the benefits anticipated by MPs.

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[1]   Appendix II.

Chart 6: Lives, Protection of, Theme: Comparison over Time.[1]
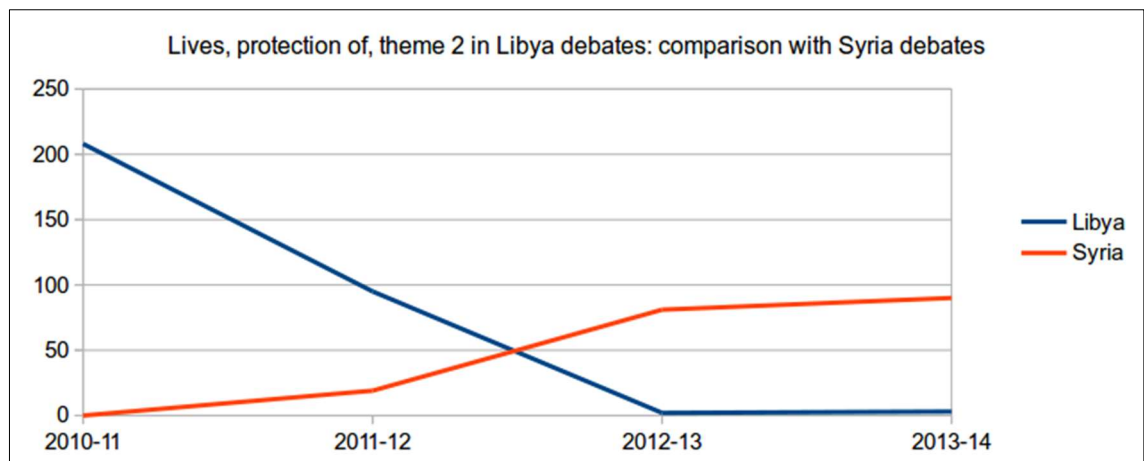
The trends shown in Chart 6 suggest that the protection of lives theme became a concern more slowly and at a lesser level of intensity in Syria debates.

*Chart 7: Leadership = Regime Theme: Comparison over Time.*[2]
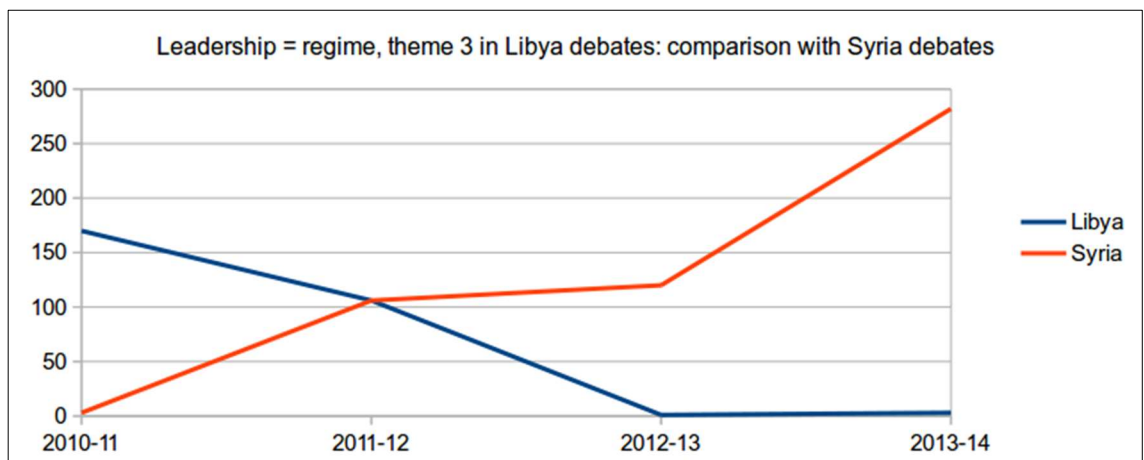
The trends shown in Chart 7 suggest that identification of the target state's leadership as a regime, a label of illegitimacy, was applied strongly from the start in the Libya campaign, but more slowly to Syria, following implementation of regime change in Libya. This scheduling suggests that a right to intervention based on an outlaw state designation, as suggested by Rawls (1999) is open to abuse in the form of arbitrary portrayal of target states as illegitimate to justify intervention.

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[1]   Appendix II.
[2]   Appendix II.

Chart 8: UNSC Mandate Present Theme: Comparison over Time.[1]
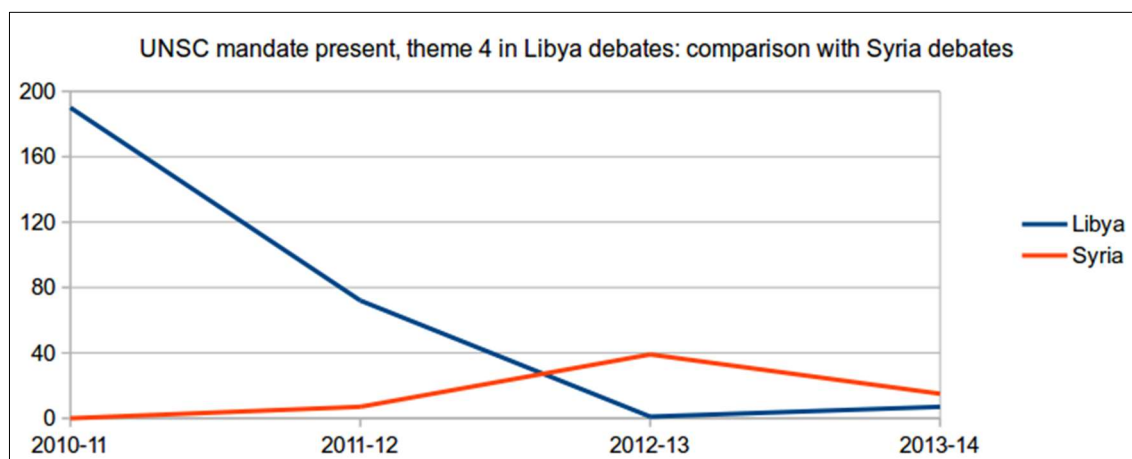
The trends shown in Chart 8 reflect the central role of a Security Council mandate (of which Resolution 1973 was the decisive element) in the Libya campaign, and the absence of a Security Council mandate for military intervention in Syria.

Chart 9: No-Fly Zone Theme: Comparison over Time.[2]
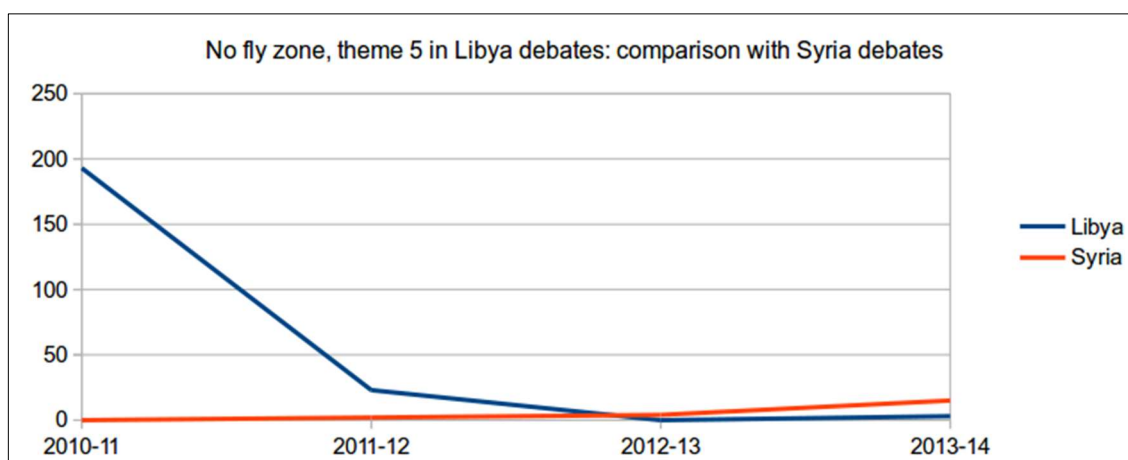
The trends shown in Chart 9 reflect the central role of the no-fly zone in the Libya campaign, its redundancy after regime change, and the absence of a no-fly zone permitting military intervention in Syria. The trend for Syria also indicates a small increase in discussions of no-fly zones as a means of intervention towards the end of the study period, but no concerted, substantial campaign.

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[1]   Appendix II.
[2]   Appendix II.

**Variations over Time: Top 5 Themes in Syria Debates Comparison**

Charts 10 to 14 below depict the variations in frequency over time of the five most frequent themes overall in the Syria debates, and the frequency of these themes in the Libya debates.

Chart 10: Leadership = Regime Theme: Comparison over Time.[1]

Leadership = regime, theme 1 in Syria debates: comparison with Libya debates
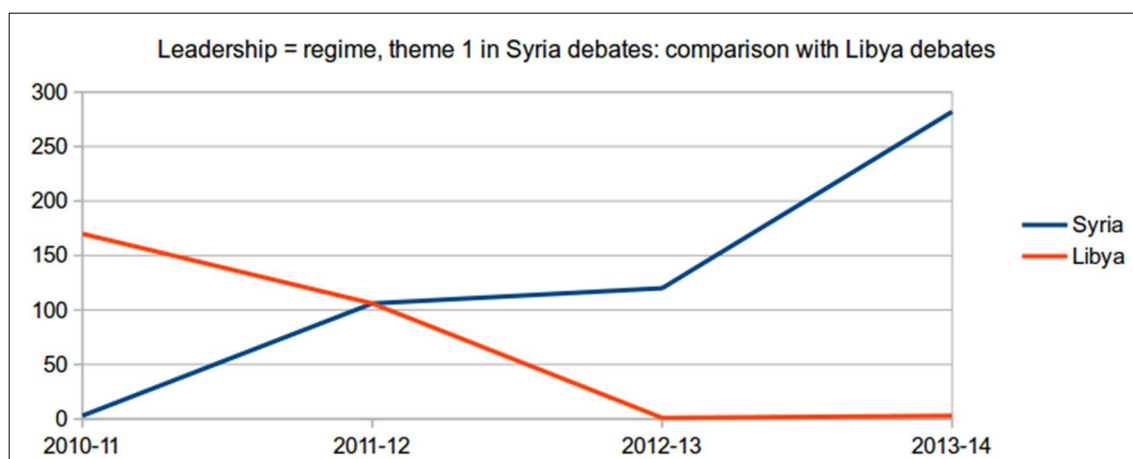
The trends shown in Chart 10 suggest that identification of the target state's leadership as a regime, a label of illegitimacy, was applied from the start in the Libya campaign, but more slowly to Syria, following implementation of regime change in Libya.

Chart 11: Humanitarian Aid Theme: Comparison over Time.[2]

Humanitarian aid, theme 2 in Syria debates: comparison with Libya debates

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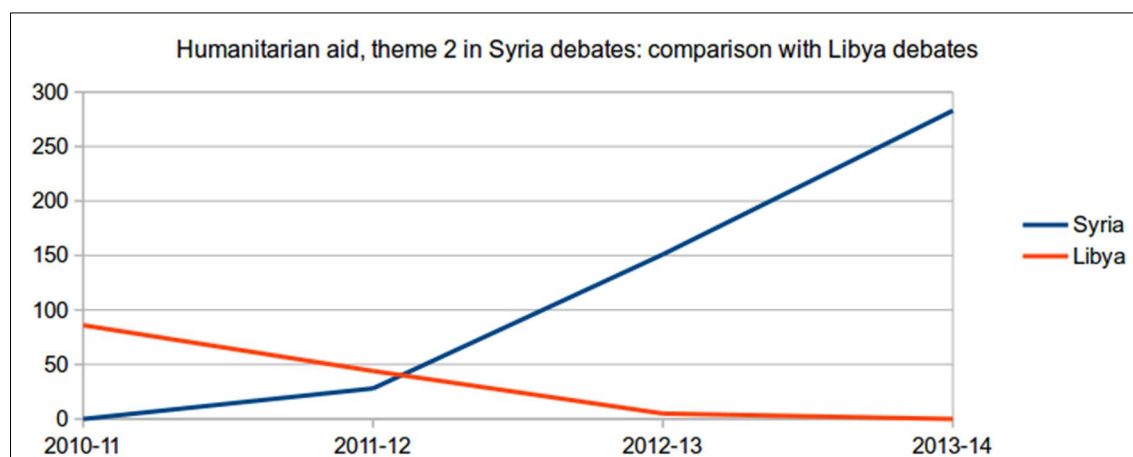
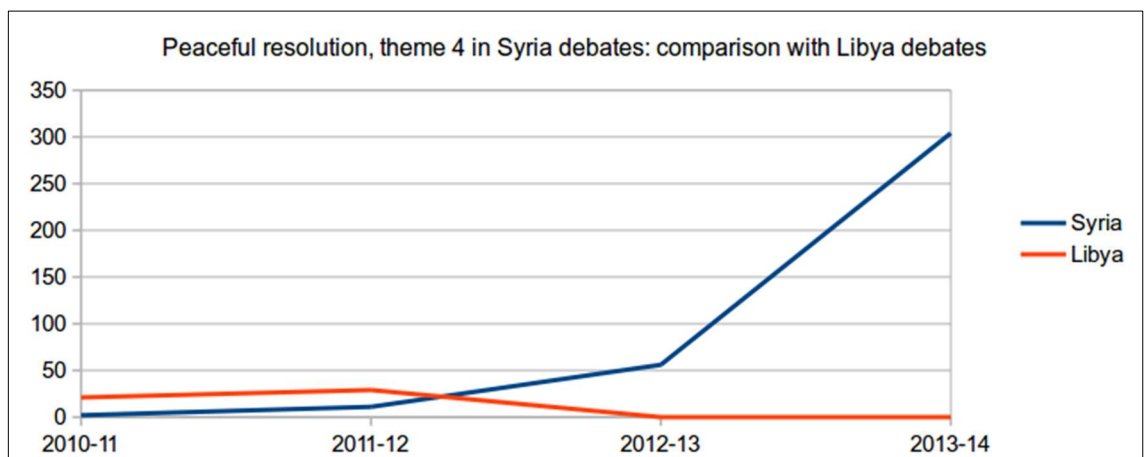1   Appendix II.
2   Appendix II.

The trends shown in Chart 11 suggest that humanitarian aid was a relatively minor theme in Libya debates, but after limited initial interest became a dominant theme in Syria debates.

Chart 12: WMD (Negative) Theme: Comparison over Time.[1]
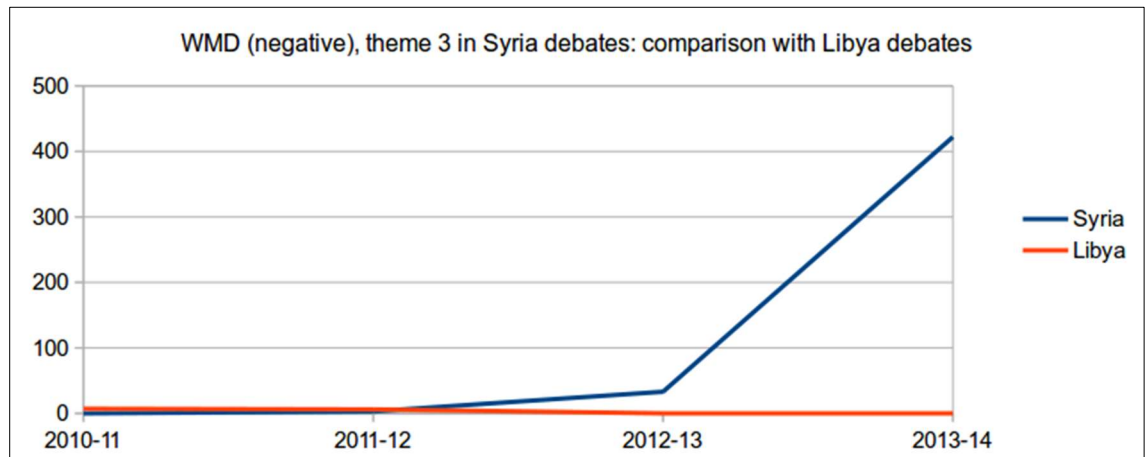
The trends shown in Chart 12 suggest that the WMD (negative) theme was never significant in Libya debates, but rapidly became a major theme late in Syria debates, in the fourth year of the analysis.

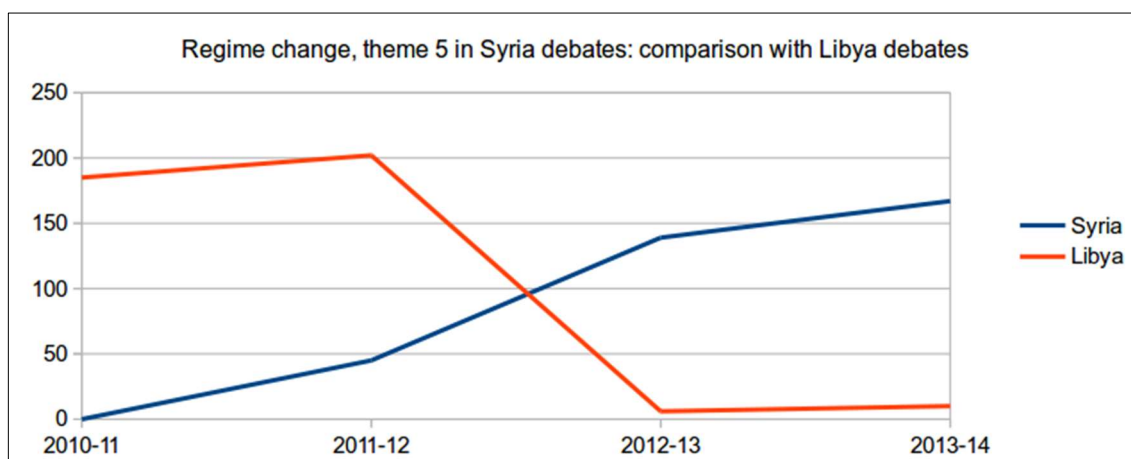*Chart 13: Peaceful Resolution Theme: Comparison over Time.[2]*

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1   Appendix II.
2   Appendix II.

The trends shown in Chart 13 suggest that peaceful resolution was never a significant theme in Libya debates, but grew steadily in the Syria debates, becoming a major theme in the fourth year of the analysis.

Chart 14: Regime Change Theme: Comparison over Time.[1]

The trends shown in Chart 14 suggest that regime change, 5th most frequent theme in Syria debates and 1st in Libya debates, was a major theme from the start of the Libya campaign, but only became a major theme in Syria debates once regime change had been completed in Libya.

This chapter compared theme occurrences and trends in the Libya debates to those in the Syria debates. Commonalities were revealed, such as commitment to regime change, supporting Cunliffe's (2020) argument that Western humanitarian military intervention inevitably entails pursuit of regime change; derogatory description of the target government as a regime (Shupak, 2018); and reliance on humanitarian arguments to justify the policy of regime change and support for armed rebellion. The British government and opposition front benches omitted to seek amendments of this policy to reduce human suffering in Syria as the nature of the conflict, conforming with Kaldor's (2012) description of intractable, self-sustaining new wars where atrocity crimes are a primary tactic, became clear over several years. Such inflexibility in the face of concerns expressed by MPs on the themes of doubt intervention will help and Islamist takeover suggests a low probability that better understanding of new wars (Kaldor, 2012) would direct British intervention

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[1]   Appendix II.

policy to more humanitarian outcomes.

Differences between the British government's Libya and Syria campaigns included regime change timing and tactics, and the adaptation of the humanitarian presentation to circumstances. For example, unlike Libya, there was no Security Council resolution authorising military intervention in Syria. This, and Syria's alliance with Russia, deterred Western bombing and, therefore, excluded its presentation as lifesaving action. In the absence of a lifesaving violence theme for Syria, the British government, and supportive MPs, heavily emphasised British payments of financial humanitarian aid.

The following chapter reviews the credibility of humanitarian warfare in the context of the thematic analysis results, including ulterior motives for intervention, British efforts to shape replacement regimes in Libya and Syria, inhumane outcomes of humanitarian policy, and perverse incentives to authoritarian regimes created by the threat of humanitarian military intervention.

Chapter 8: The Credibility of Humanitarian Warfare

This chapter provides a critical review of findings in this thesis relevant to the credibility of humanitarian military intervention. It discusses evidence of ulterior motives, supporting Cunliffe's (2020) assessment of bad faith, and contradictions in arguments by British government and opposition MPs which raise significant questions about their presentation of warfare as a humanitarian act. Ulterior motives included commercial opportunities for British business, the acquisition of a reputation for strong leadership by the British state and government, punishment of a British enemy, and the objective of shaping replacement regimes in Libya and Syria. The latter indicated a neo-colonial approach of exerting control, undermining the claim of liberation (Young, 2003; MacMillan, 2007; Cunliffe, 2020). The praise for Cameron's leadership in obtaining UN authority for war supports Fukuyama's (1992) argument that liberal leaders will continue to pursue in the developing world opportunities for military triumph no longer available within the liberal world.

Contradictions included double standards, interpreted as unethical by critics of the British government (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015); the preference for war over peace as a humanitarian objective; and the contrast between humanitarian aims and inhumane outcomes. A strong contrast was found between two frequent themes in the Syria debates, humanitarian aid by the British government, often directed to refugees, and the opposition of the British government to relocating even the most vulnerable refugees, war orphans and victims of sexual violence, from harsh conditions in refugee camps in the Middle East to asylum and care in the UK. This contrast, and the omission of the government and the opposition front bench to amend their policy stances to reduce humanitarian harm, cast serious doubt on professed humanitarian motives.

The frequency of proclamations in the debates analysed of Britain's humanitarian world leadership supported the constructivist argument that state actions are influenced by national self-perception (Phillips, 2007), a motivation that might tend to prioritise action over outcome as a performance indicator. The British government's hostility to relocating Syrian refugees to the UK appears to have been a collision between state self-image and political expediency, where the latter dominated the final compromise of minimal admission of refugees and minimal cooperation with UNHCR, indicating that the government's commitment to humanitarian policy was weak and superficial. The ulterior motives and

contradictions supported the argument that Britain and its NATO allies are unsuitable enforcers of an international responsibility to protect (Dunford and Neu, 2019a).

The concept of humanitarian warfare appears contradictory (Vukasovich and Dejanovic-Vukasovich, 2016). There may be a humanitarian intention, but it may not be the primary motive (Cunliffe, 2020), and when the chosen instruments of intervention are designed to kill and destroy with great force, the proposition that the humanitarian character of an intervention can be deduced from intentions expressed by interveners (Bellamy, 2004) appears doubtful. Mary Kaldor (2012) has argued that justifying warfare in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan by labelling it humanitarian intervention has tended to discredit the concept.

In the Libya war, aerial bombardment was the main instrument of an assault justified on humanitarian grounds. In the House of Commons, David Cameron presented bombing on behalf of a rebel force as more legitimate than invasion.[1] The British government described this tactic in terms which implied that the absence of invasion rendered the bombing humane, for example, Cameron in March 2011: "… we are not talking about an invasion; we are not talking about an occupying force; we are talking about taking action to protect civilian life".[2]

In fact, as discussed in Chapter 5, he was talking about bombing until the rebels won. His government deployed a rhetorical redefinition of regime change as nothing less than a complete package of invasion, occupation, and construction of a new regime, to argue that bombing to change the regime in Libya was not regime change, while insisting on regime change as the only acceptable outcome. The British government, opposition leadership, and most MPs made a persistent effort to present a violent coup d'état as an act of kindness, veiling the reality of military aggression for political and tactical ends - revenge, retribution, strategic advantage, and commercial gain.

Ulterior Motives and Misrepresentation

Tory MP Rory Stewart pointed towards a practical benefit of outsourcing the ground troop function to rebels in regime change wars: "… we can set strategic direction without having to rush in with our troops".[3] Thus, the UK and allies could pursue

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 2311, 2398, 2481.
[2]   Appendix III: para 2590.
[3]   Appendix III: para 1964.

their strategic goals at a greatly reduced financial, human, and political risk and cost. Furthermore, the intervening states could attribute negative outcomes to choices allegedly made by the supposed beneficiaries of intervention. Demonstrating the use of medical terminology to promote Western violence as humanitarian, *Washington Post* editorial writer Charles Krauthammer (2007: n.p.) wrote on the Iraq invasion of 2003: "We midwifed their freedom. They chose civil war". Avoidance of responsibility and accountability by the intervening states was fortified in Libya and Syria by outsourcing ground troops and by building a coalition to share, and thus dilute, culpability.

On Iraq, Krauthammer (2007: n.p.) complained: "You can always count on some to find the blame in America", as if it was unreasonable to blame America for an unprovoked American invasion and occupation. Gathering a coalition to fight the war provided a means of dispersing risks, including responsibility for the harm war inevitably causes. Refraining from invasion and occupation effectively passed nominal responsibility for stabilisation and reconstruction to the people of the target state.

In Syria, the absence of direct Western military assault against government forces for most of the conflict was also exploited to attribute blame for the failure of Western strategy to the West not intervening, despite its extensive intervention (Pattison, 2015). Thus, the failure of indirect intervention was used to promote direct intervention. This propaganda method avoided discussion of practical realities by focusing on moral imperatives to act, supported by a false assumption that the West had hitherto done nothing.

Anatol Lieven (2010) has argued that in the age of European empires, colonial powers studied countries to control them. Faulty intelligence could lead to loss of control and colonist deaths, so traditional imperialist research was bound to a more factual approach than could be risked by neo-colonialists eschewing direct administration of target states. Therefore, neo-colonialism removes risk from the creation of emotive scenarios to justify military intervention: saving civilian lives, enabling prosperity, ending tyranny, or helping the target state's people to achieve their liberal aspirations. Anything that suits the propaganda narrative can be projected onto the people of a state targeted for regime change. If it turns out to be substantially untrue, such as the prospects for democracy in Libya, or the moderation of rebels in Syria, most of the human and economic cost is likely to be borne by target state citizens, not Western troops, residents, and administrators, or

British voters.

In the Libya and Syria debates, MPs employed euphemisms in place of literal terms for military assault, such as "humanitarian intervention",[1] "muscular liberalism",[2] "muscular enlightenment",[3] "take action",[4] or simply "do something".[5] None of these evokes the reality of modern war (Kaldor, 2012), the slaughter, mutilation, and destruction, squalid refugee camps, unrestrained criminality in the absence of legal authority, sectarian genocide, famine, epidemics of disease, and reversed national economic and human development.

Tory MP Rory Stewart's comments in March 2011 featured several rhetorical devices to promote humanitarian military intervention. He said:

> The situation in Libya and the no-fly zone are driven ... by our humanitarian obligation to the Libyan people. It is driven by our concerns for national security and, probably most of all ... by the kind of message that we are trying to pass to people in Egypt or Tunisia. If we had stood back at this moment and done nothing - if we had allowed Gaddafi simply to hammer Benghazi - people in Egypt, Tunisia and Syria would have concluded that we were on the side of oil-rich regimes against their people. We would have no progressive narrative with which we could engage with that region over the next three decades.[6]

He introduced the humanitarian angle first, establishing the action as morally righteous, and presented intervention as a duty to the people of Libya. He tendentiously represented counter-insurgency operations by the Libyan armed forces as Gaddafi's plan "simply to hammer Benghazi". He invoked national security to strengthen the case for war, but without explaining how security would be improved. His language was more evocative than logical. He went on to advocate war in terms of peace: NATO bombing would "… increase the likelihood of a peaceful political settlement."[7]

For Stewart, perhaps the most important function of bombing Libya to change the regime was to send a message to neighbouring countries. The proposition that

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[1]   Appendix IV: paras 1774, 9796, 11581.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 216, 218, 513.
[3]   Appendix III: paras 2178, 3515.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 2576, 2657, 2806.
[5]   Appendix IV: paras 13443, 13853.
[6]   Appendix III: para 3057.
[7]   Appendix III: para 3072.

blowing people up in one country to reassure people in others that the British narrative is progressive appears difficult to reconcile with humanitarian aims.

Stewart presented not bombing as doing nothing, and thereby appeasing a violent tyrant. He personalised the Libyan armed forces as "Gaddafi". He presented a Western-led military operation against Libyan counter-revolutionary military action in crude, emotive terms, and characterised Western violence to prevent suppression of rebellion as progressive. However, the UK went on to bomb Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq to suppress rebellions, causing extensive damage and loss of life.

Estimates of civilian casualties in the Mosul assault have been as high as 40,000 dead (Cockburn, 2017). The BBC reported that "UN war crimes investigators say US-led coalition air strikes on Islamic State militants in the Syrian city of Raqqa are causing 'staggering loss of life'" (BBC News, 2017c: n.p.). A report in *The Independent* cited Amnesty International: "US, Britain and France inflicted worst destruction 'in decades' killing civilians in Isis-held city of Raqqa, report says" (Cockburn, 2018a: n.p.).

Stewart's recommendation to bomb Libya to show Arabs that the UK did not back oil-rich Arab tyrants was inconsistent with the UK's active support for oil-rich Arab tyrants in, for example, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015). However, Stewart did not call for that support to end, nor did the British government. On the contrary, *The Independent* reported large increases in British arms sales to Saudi Arabia following its invasion of Yemen to reinstate a president deposed by Yemeni rebels. While the Yemen war caused a "humanitarian catastrophe" (Stone, 2016: n.p.), UK licenses for arms sales to Saudi Arabia rose from £9 million in the second quarter of 2015 to £1 billion in the third quarter.

Amnesty International reported "… that the UK continued to despatch huge amounts of weaponry to Saudi Arabia despite overwhelming evidence that the Saudi war machine was laying waste to Yemeni homes, schools and hospitals" (Stone, 2016: n.p.). By the next year, the value of British arms sales licensed for sale to Saudi Arabia had been increased to over £3 billion, 1000% greater than combined British and American humanitarian aid to Yemen in two years of war (Mohamed, 2017). One euphemism for arms sales used by Tory MP Daniel Kawczynski, who had been an outspoken proponent of British military intervention to secure regime change in Libya, was "British security exports".[1] British arms supplied to Saudi

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[1]   Appendix III: para 20426.

Arabia do not appear to have significantly increased Saudi security, but substantially harmed the security of millions of Yemenis.

A humanitarian motive was not evident in Stewart's advice in the March 2011 debate that "… the most important thing for us now is to be careful with our language and rhetoric".[1] This posited presentation of the war as more important than its impact on human lives, again a difficult stance to reconcile with sincere humanitarian objectives.

Sincerity cannot be reliably evaluated, but the many contradictions and inconsistencies in arguments for humanitarian war raise significant doubts. If it could be clearly shown that warfare can be humanitarian, there would be no need to call it something else, e.g. intervention, action, or protection. The concept of humanitarian warfare arguably seems likely to infringe the most basic of human rights - the right to life (Machel, 1996).

Former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mohamed Mahathir (cited in Bricmont, 2006), commented that killing many people in response to a belief that a much smaller number have suffered breaches of human rights appeared contradictory. Western governments have suppressed this contradiction by under-reporting casualties caused by Western military action (Cockburn, 2017), and by maximising attribution of civilian casualties to the enemy state leadership. Several references in the debates under the killing of civilians theme attributed responsibility to the leaders of Libya or Syria.[2] Near-silence on military casualties reinforced the impression that the enemy governments were targeting civilians, and the interveners and rebels acting purely defensively to protect civilians.

Security Council Resolution 1970, the first of the two resolutions used by the UK as authorities for regime change in Libya and, according to Cameron, drafted by the British government,[3] appears to have subtly co-opted human rights as an instrument for intervention. In paragraph 14, the resolution: "Encourages Member States to take steps to strongly discourage their nationals from travelling to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to participate in activities on behalf of the Libyan authorities that could reasonably contribute to the violation of human rights" (United Nations Security Council, 2011e: 4).

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[1]   Appendix III: para 3062.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 866, 1114-1116, 1274, 1382, 1813; Appendix IV: paras 1275, 2095-2096, 3194, 5376.
[3]   Appendix III: paras 390, 480.

Arguably, if the overriding aim had been to prevent the violation of human rights, it would have been irrelevant on whose behalf they might have been violated. The insertion of the phrase "on behalf of the Libyan authorities" appeared to allow member states to permit travel by people who might violate human rights while opposing the Libyan authorities. The British government permitted travel to Libya for the purpose of opposition activities. *The Times* (Swerling et al., 2017) and *Middle East Eye* (Thomas-Johnson and Hooper, 2017) reported that the government had returned confiscated passports and lifted control orders applied to restrict the movement of terrorism suspects of Libyan heritage based in the UK, allowing them to travel to Libya to fight in the war. If the government had been confident that these activities would be lawful and humane, the "on behalf of" clause would have been redundant.

Although definitions of terrorism vary widely, it seems highly implausible that these people would ever have been subjected to such orders had they not been suspected of potential involvement in activities likely to violate human rights. One of the terrorism suspects allowed to travel to Libya during the revolution was an Islamist called Salman Abedi (Swerling et al., 2017). As the post-coup anarchy intensified, he was rescued by the Royal Navy and brought back to the UK in 2014 on the instructions of the UK Border Force, controlled by Home Secretary, and later Prime Minister, Theresa May. Three years later, he blew himself up in a crowd of people, many of them children, at a concert in the Manchester Arena, killing 22 and injuring over 200 (Sky News, 2018).

The eastern post-regime change government in Libya, separate from the UN/Western-backed government in Tripoli, did not judge British involvement in Libya to be humanitarian. It condemned the Manchester massacre, linked it to Britain's support for terrorism, and identified Libya's oil wealth as Britain's primary motive for intervention. Terrorists operating with British assistance, it said, included:

> … the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group which has been recruiting Libyan and Muslim youth in the UK and Europe and sending them to Libya and other countries to deliver terrorism and death with the prior knowledge of the British government which provided a safe haven.
>
> These groups have been destroying our cities and towns in an attempt to shape Libya into an exporter of terror to the whole planet (cited in Davies, 2017: n.p.).

Thus, the new rulers of eastern Libya and its capital Benghazi, helped into power by British bombing justified on the grounds that it would prevent Libya from becoming a haven for terrorism, accused Britain of doing precisely what it had claimed it sought to prevent: "British officials ... insist deliberately to support these groups and encourage them to operate and attempt to control the Libyan people and their resources" (cited in Davies, 2017: n.p.).

The former leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), listed as a terrorist organisation by the UK and USA (Agerholm, 2017), Abdel Hakim Belhaj, and his pregnant wife were abducted in 2004 by the CIA with British assistance and delivered to Libya. There they were imprisoned and tortured, she for four months, he and other members until 2010, when they were released after the LIFG "… severed its ties with al-Qaida" (Black, 2011: n.p.). In 2011, he became a rebel leader in Tripoli (Sensini, 2016).

Belhaj's lawsuit against the British government, commenced in 2013 (Reprieve, 2018) and concluded in 2018 with a £500,000 payout and apologies to him and his wife (Cobain et al., 2018), accounted for the rise of the UK atrocities theme to 1st position in the Libya debates ranking for 2012-13.[1] Human rights NGO Reprieve reported in February 2017, over a year before the apology and payment to Belhaj were announced, that the government had already spent £744,000 trying to block Belhaj's lawsuit (Reprieve, 2017).

Belhaj had sought a token payment of £1 from each defendant, an admission of culpability, and an apology (Cobain, 2013). Thus, a government committed to reducing public spending, which had cut child benefit, housing support for the poor and unemployed, living support for the disabled, and unemployment benefit (BBC News, 2010), paid over £1 million in an effort to shield British state actors from legal accountability for human rights abuses, while proclaiming humanitarian aims and legal accountability as motives for bombing Libya and supporting violent revolution in Syria.

Straw's defence had no humanitarian basis. He and former MI6 counter-terrorism chief Sir Mark Allen (Cobain, 2013) sought to have proceedings barred by the Official Secrets Act (Neuberger et al., 2017). Their co-appellants made the extraordinary claim, especially when contrasted with the prominent accountability theme in Libya (9th) and Syria (19th) debates, that it would be "… damaging to the

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[1]   Appendix II.

public interest" (Neuberger et al., 2017: 3) for them to face an attempt to hold them accountable for what amounted to a British state conspiracy to commit severe breaches of human rights.

Allegations of crimes and atrocities formed a large part of the UK government's cases for regime change in Libya and Syria. Crimes of the Syrian government ranked 14th, and atrocities 57th, in the Syria debates.[1] Added together, and corrected for three paragraphs tagged with both themes, they would rank 8th.

The UK's moral authority to denounce and correct the wrongs of others, and its claim to be seeking accountability for human rights abusers in Libya and Syria, were undermined by the revelation that a recent British government had committed and abetted serious breaches of human rights, including kidnapping and torture, and its successors had engaged in a lengthy and expensive struggle to avoid accountability.

This effort by two consecutive British governments and three prime ministers lasted three years and cost £750,000 in legal fees (Agerholm, 2017) in addition to the ultimate £500,000 payout. The expenditure obtained what the governments sought - termination of the lawsuit without an admission of legal liability (Shirbon, 2018) - so that the defendants and the institutions they represented, the British government, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and MI6, could continue to maintain that they had not been found culpable of criminal acts in a court of law. But neither had Muammar Gaddafi or Bashar Assad.

The leadership of Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair was cited in the debates as a ground for scepticism about British government war campaigns.[2] Tory MP David Amess said, "… it was Tony Blair who got me to vote for the war in Iraq and I will never forgive him for having told us a pack of lies at the Dispatch Box."[3] Blair was also credited with founding the modern principle of humanitarian intervention in a speech in Chicago in 1999.[4] Labour MP Jack Straw stated that "Tony Blair, in his groundbreaking speech in Chicago in 1999, laid the foundation for what six years later became the agreement on the responsibility to protect."[5]

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[1]   Appendix I.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 542, 1769-71, 3109, 4023.
[3]   Appendix III: para 4023.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 1769, 2812, 2940, 2981.
[5]   Appendix III: para 2981.

MPs made several references to a "duty to protect".[1] Liberal Democrat MP Menzies Campbell traced the genesis of this duty to Blair's Chicago speech.[2] Blair had expressed a preference for duties over rights in a speech early in his premiership: "A decent society is not actually based on rights; it is based on duty. Our duty to each other, to all should be given opportunity, from all responsibility demanded" (Open University, 1999: 30).

This approach could be useful in arguments for humanitarian military intervention because, if it is accepted that duties supersede rights, the duty to intervene in a foreign country could be treated as overriding the right to life of the country's people, even when the duty is invoked to protect those people. While a right may be infringed by the result of an action, it can be argued that a duty is fulfilled by the action, not by the results of the action. Thus, actions presented as humanitarian which have anti-humanitarian outcomes, as war usually does, can be presented not just as legitimate, but obligatory.

Consistent with this logic, the rhetoric of arguments in favour of humanitarian military intervention tends to bisect the enemy state's inhabitants into a group to be saved, the people, and a group to be killed, the regime. When members of the people are killed in an intervention, their deaths are attributed to the cruelty and intransigence of the regime, not to the foreign military aggressor or rebel violence. The impact of the intervention on the people's lives is hardly considered in evaluating the action. The test applied is whether the intervener fulfilled the duty to act, not whether the intervention produced benevolent outcomes.

None of the MPs who identified good planning as the key to successful regime change wars cited any case of humanitarian regime change enabled by external violence which had produced benevolent results due to good planning. A requirement to devise and impose a new regime after violently removing an existing one could risk creating a rationale for imperialism (Cunliffe, 2020), due to the likely need for the power and privileges of an empire to impose the necessary control.

A traditional benefit of imperialism, the extraction of profits from colonies, remains a motivation of neo-colonialism, with the additional benefit of savings on the provision of security and administration (Loomba, 1998). The theme of commercial opportunities for UK business in Libya rose up the yearly ranking after the overthrow

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[1]   Appendix III: para 2005, 2812, 2940.
[2]   Appendix III: para 2812, 2940.

of Gaddafi. In 2010-11, it was 42nd of 63; in 2011-12, 21st of 55; in 2012-13, 9th of 13; and in 2013-14, 9th of 17.[1] Thus, the rise was partly accounted for by MPs showing less interest in Libya, reducing the number of themes and debates over time. References to commercial opportunities for UK business overseas, not specifying a country, were 2nd in the Libya debates in 2012-13 and 2013-14.

It seems unlikely that the promotion of regime change on commercial grounds would have succeeded politically. This may partly account for the initial lack of prominence accorded to the issue. Another complication was that some British businesses had substantial investments in Gaddafi's Libya, and stood to lose from a regime change war, at least temporarily.[2] After early post-regime change penetration by UK business, initiated by the British government shortly before the killing of Gaddafi,[3] the collapse of order in the country postponed further efforts.

The new Libyan government was impoverished, and British commercial exploitation thwarted, by rebel units stealing oil and selling it in informal markets where British firms could not lawfully operate (Cockburn, 2013). After regime change Libyan GDP fell by 54% from 2010 to 2011. It recovered in 2012 but fell thereafter until by 2014 it had dropped by 66% from a peak in 2008 (Trading Economics, 2018). Security conditions in Libya continued to deteriorate after the period of this study. By 2017, GDP was recovering but was still 41% less than the 2008 figure (Trading Economics, 2018).

The relative lack of commercial opportunities in Syria correlates with the British government's hesitant approach to the enforcement of regime change there. The risks were greater, and the rewards smaller. 123 references to requests by the British government to other states to help with the cost of humanitarian aid in Syria during regime change, compared to 2 such references in the Libyan debates, may, in addition to factors already discussed, have indicated British pessimism about potential future financial returns from overthrowing Assad.

The analysis found 197 references to Britain's lead in humanitarian aid in Syria debates and 7 in Libya debates, but only 1 reference to Britain's lead in military spending in the Syria debates,[4] and 0 in debates on the Libya campaign. The 1 reference was by Labour backbencher Paul Flynn, questioning the need for the UK's

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[1] Appendix II.
[2] Appendix III: paras 7915, 7964, 9209.
[3] Appendix III: para 9043.
[4] Appendix IV: para 14606.

high level of military spending.[1] Responding for the coalition government, Liberal Democrat Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg did not address Flynn's question.[2] It appeared that the British government was more concerned to emphasise its spending on the humanitarian aspect of humanitarian warfare than on the warfare aspect.

Imperialist motives might also be ascribed to the British government's efforts to shape and influence governments to replace Gaddafi in Libya and Assad in Syria (Young, 2003; MacMillan, 2007; Cunliffe, 2020). The British government attempted to evade the charge of unlawful regime change in Libya by denying that it intended to install a new regime.[3] This argument implicitly defined regime change as installation of a new regime, not removal of the existing one. It appears spurious as it relies on an assumption that destruction is not change. Thematic analysis tracked references in the debates to responsibility for the establishment of the post-coup government with the post-war settlement themes.

The 1st ranked of these, with 99 references, was British responsibility for the post-war settlement. The 2nd, the responsibility of the Libyan people for their future government, had 42 references. This suggests that while seeking to give the appearance of a neutral facilitator, the British government planned to play an influential part in shaping the new government. Similarly, in Syria certain rebel factions were chosen for British support, and the theme of UK influencing opposition was significant, with 83 references.

Further evidence that the UK was not a neutral facilitator was provided when a steering group for regime change in Libya, Friends of Libya, was formed at Hague's urging at the start of the war in March 2011. This involved Arab states in war planning and thus helped to meet the need agreed by Cameron to put an "Arab face"[4] on intervention, reducing its Western appearance. Two themes directly covered the undesirability of intervention appearing Western-led. One was pro-intervention, the other anti-intervention.

Neither had a high ranking, but the most frequent in Libya debates was pro-intervention, at 72nd. In Syria debates, the perception of Western leadership as an anti-intervention argument was higher than as a pro-intervention one, but still ranked

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 14606.
[2]   Appendix IV: paras 14652-14720.
[3]   Appendix III: paras 4710, 7343.
[4]   Appendix III: para 1240.

low at 103rd. Avoiding the appearance of Western leadership was a concern, but it was more often approached indirectly in the debates under such themes as regional support, Arab league, international community, and coalition for intervention. Qatar was the leading British partner in establishing and running Friends groups for Libya and Syria, so the Arab face was not a democratic one. Neither was it that of the people, or rebels, inside Libya or Syria.

The Friends group for Syria was not set up until March 2012, following discussions between Hague and the Prime Minister of Qatar in February 2012.[1] The group was an integral part of the regime change process. The delay of one year strongly suggests that regime change in Syria was a less urgent priority for the UK than in Libya, and indicates a sequential approach to regime changes. It also adds to doubts raised by analysis of references under the urgency of action theme, as discussed in Chapter 5, that lifesaving was a primary driver of intervention.

The first MP to allude to a specific rebel atrocity in the Libyan conflict, a massacre, was a leading proponent of Western military intervention, Tory Daniel Kawczynski.[2] He referred to the massacre while promoting reinstallation of a pro-British monarch in Libya. His candidate was also his friend, Mohammed El-Senussi, heir to the last Libyan monarch installed by the British who had been deposed by Gaddafi in 1969 (BBC News, 1969).

Kawczynski promoted El-Senussi as "untainted by Gaddafi",[3] and innocent of atrocities, and thus appeared to be using the rebel atrocity as an argument in favour of restoring the monarchy. He expressed no regret that his promotion of regime change had enabled rebel atrocities, even when he told parliament two years after Gaddafi's overthrow, "From my friends in Tripoli, I get daily reports of kidnappings, violence and acts of terrorism; the Government still do not have control over large parts of the country."[4]

Kawczynski also had a strong interest in commercial opportunities in Libya,[5] which he exploited with his own business enterprise in 2013.[6] He received no criticism in the Commons for commercial exploitation of regime change, but when he alleged in parliament that: "Mr Blair personally benefited financially from various

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 5383.
[2]   Appendix III: para 9529.
[3]   Appendix III: para 9530.
[4]   Appendix III: para 20425.
[5]   Appendix III: paras 19, 9553, 9557, 9585
[6]   Appendix III: para 18025.

transactions with the Gaddafi regime",[1] he was rebuked by the chairman for discourtesy.[2]

He did not seek the direct imposition of a restored monarchy, but a plebiscite in Libya on the question of restoration. A policy of giving the lead to the Libyan people would, however, have excluded such action as illegitimate. The Libyan people were perfectly capable of deciding for themselves whether they wished to hold a plebiscite on restoring the monarch. The negligible resistance to the previous incumbent's removal by Gaddafi (BBC News, 1969) may be an indication of national enthusiasm for the monarchy, although that would not have remained constant for 42 years.

El-Senussi's website in 2018 condemned "foreign meddling" and remarked that: "Recent years have borne witness to the unjust suffering of our countrymen, the squandering of our wealth, and the plundering of our lands" (El-Senussi, 2018: n.p.). This could be seen either as decrying Kawczynski's efforts, or as condemning foreign meddling not conducive to his cause, i.e. by parties not interested in restoring the Senussi clan to power and wealth in Libya.

Kawczynski's monarchist proposal was not adopted, but the UK's choice of the government in Tripoli as the legitimate Libyan authority, when it had no mandate to choose Tripoli over Benghazi, or to favour selected rebels, defectors, or exiles over others, indicates that its stance fell between deciding and influencing the future government of Libya. It did not stand back to allow Libyans to choose their own path until it became clear that its proclaimed vision, the rapid spontaneous formation of a Western-style liberal democracy and stable business investment environment, had failed to materialise.

One reason for the reluctance of the British government and opposition to debate Libya in Parliament, as the new Libyan government began to fail and the humanitarian crisis escalated, may have been aversion to dislodging the aura of strong leadership that British MPs had attached to their war against Gaddafi in 2011. Almost unanimous support for the war by the opposition (UK Parliament, 2011) neutralised the post-war crisis as a partisan issue, and partisan attacks on the failure of the intervention could also have been perceived as undermining Britain's status as a world leader and the principle of humanitarian intervention.

The parliamentary reaction to the success of Cameron and Hague in obtaining

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[1]   Appendix III: para 9608.
[2]   Appendix III: para 9610.

UN authority for war in Libya suggests a powerful motive for military intervention. Thematic analysis found 66 references to personal leadership in the Libya debates, 5 in the Syria debates. Analysis of these references suggested a positive correlation between military aggression and a political perception of strong leadership.

Some examples from the personal leadership theme, starting from the adoption of Resolution 1970, illustrate the political profit of starting a war. Tory MP Mark Pritchard on 14 March 2011: "May I offer the Prime Minister my full support and congratulate him on his leadership?"[1] Tory MP Andrew Bridgen made his praise partisan: "… the Prime Minister was both forward thinking and right … [.] Does not his stance on this issue contrast enormously with the Leader of the Opposition, who appears to have flip-flopped in a way reminiscent of his predecessor?"[2]

The initial flurry of leadership praise in Libya debates, 23 references before the bombing began, outnumbered all 5 references to personal leadership in the Syria debates. 17 were in one debate on 18 March 2011, welcoming the adoption of Resolution 1973 that authorised the use of violence. If their motives had been humanitarian, it seems probable that the MPs would have waited for evaluation of the effects of the war before delivering their praise, and urged caution and restraint in the use of such a powerful and destructive instrument for humanitarian ends.

A sample of Tory MPs' praise shows a marked lack of caution or restraint:

"May I congratulate the Prime Minister on the superb leadership that he and the Foreign Secretary have given".[3]

"I congratulate the Prime Minister on his success and leadership".[4]

"Yet again, my right hon. Friend has shown a breathtaking degree of courage and leadership".[5]

"May I also commend my right hon. Friend on his decisive leadership?"[6]

"May I, too, congratulate the Prime Minister on his spectacularly successful leadership".[7]

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[1] Appendix III: para 1256.
[2] Appendix III: para 1290.
[3] Appendix III: para 2346.
[4] Appendix III: para 2360.
[5] Appendix III: para 2372.
[6] Appendix III: para 2400.
[7] Appendix III: para 2440.

"I too commend the Prime Minister's statement, and his courage and leadership".[1]

"May I thank the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary for showing world leadership in an hour of need?"[2]

"May I, too, congratulate the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on leading international opinion on the matter?"[3]

Government MPs dominated but did not monopolise the applause. Labour MP Joan Ruddock joined the chorus on 18 March 2011: "May I also congratulate the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on the action they have taken?"[4] Further praise for Cameron and Hague's leadership came from opposition MPs after the bombing had begun, including Labour's Jack Straw,[5] Thomas Docherty,[6] Geoffrey Robinson,[7] Denis MacShane,[8] Chris Bryant,[9] and Keith Vaz.[10]

The last positive reference to leadership in Libya debates was by Tory MP Daniel Kawczynski on 28 November 2011, judging the intervention "a great success",[11] and attributing it to Cameron. When he described Libya's collapse into violent anarchy nearly two years later,[12] he did not rescind his leadership praise, and neither did anyone else. The mantle of strong leadership gained by starting and winning the war was not eroded by humanitarian failure, although the war had been promoted as a humanitarian endeavour.

War, especially with the full might of NATO against a small, weak enemy like Gaddafi's Libya, would, therefore, appear to have been a valuable political goal for Cameron. He was a Conservative leader who had failed to win an overall majority in the 2010 general election, and had consequently been obliged to govern in coalition with his power constrained by a minority partner, the Liberal Democrats. The Libya intervention offered him the prospect of going into the next general election, in which he did obtain an overall majority, as a successful war leader.

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1   Appendix III: para 2491.
2   Appendix III: para 2522.
3   Appendix III: para 2538.
4   Appendix III: para 2404.
5   Appendix III: paras 2991, 6708, 7747.
6   Appendix III: para 3470.
7   Appendix III: para 5378.
8   Appendix III: para 5937.
9   Appendix III: para 7756.
10   Appendix III: para 7801.
11   Appendix III: para 11053.
12   Appendix III: para 20425.

Contradictions

A substantial number of fundamental contradictions found by thematic analysis in the British government's arguments for regime change intervention pointed towards bad faith in humanitarian claims (Cunliffe, 2020), and opportunist inconsistency manifested in double standards (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015). While arguments for humanitarian war permeated the debates, the more obviously rational case for humanitarian peace was rarely raised. SDLP MP Dr Alasdair McDonnell said in the August 2013 debate on a government motion to attack Syria on WMD grounds:

> On a practical level, we believe that any military activity will be counter-productive and will not save lives but in fact cost them. As was said earlier, it is no more pleasant for a person to be killed by a cruise missile than by gas - they are still dead. Our objective should be to be humanitarian and protect lives.[1]

It would seem probable that this case would have been made more often, and by government and opposition leaders, not merely a few backbench MPs, if the professed humanitarianism of the political leaders had been sincere.

British policy in Syria demonstrated a strong contradiction between humanitarian claims and humanitarian outcomes. In May 2013, Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt acknowledged that after more than two years of war, waged with support and guidance from the UK, the British-backed rebels in Syria still needed "… to be appropriately trained to respect the principle of international humanitarian law."[2] Despite this knowledge, the British government had "pushed" the EU into partial lifting of its arms embargo to allow the supply of defensive military equipment and training by EU states.[3] Burt celebrated this measure as: "The breakthrough achieved by the UK in February".[4] The measure appeared to fail. Three months after the "breakthrough", Burt reported that "… the situation in Syria has continued to deteriorate. Syria is an unmitigated humanitarian disaster."[5]

But there was no change of policy or even acknowledgement of its failure. Instead, Burt continued to portray the war as a massacre of innocents by Assad,

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 13982.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 11454.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 11453.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 11454.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 11455.

and introduced a WMD accusation.[1] Personalising the conflict as the evil work of Assad helped the UK to avoid responsibility. Everything was Assad's fault, including the consequences of British and allied policy. Even if Burt was sincere when he insisted that the military escalation facilitated by the UK in weakening the arms embargo had been aimed solely at saving lives, the omission on the part of the British government to even acknowledge that the policy had failed is hard to reconcile with humanitarian intent.

When Hague said, in March 2013, "… we have to do everything we reasonably can to shorten the conflict",[2] the British policy had remained essentially the same for two years - regime change by agreement, enforced by escalating pressure on the Syrian government. There had been only one significant amendment to the escalation policy, the 3-way fight plan, pressing the rebels to fight each other as well as the Syrian government and its powerful allies. This appears, predictably, to have shifted the policy's probability of success from implausible to impossible.

Throughout the Syria debates, the British government, minimally challenged by the opposition, maintained a rigid commitment to regime change as the only permissible solution. When the Labour front bench did oppose, it was on tactics and on refugee policy, not on objectives. As the death toll mounted in Syria and the rebellion was taken over by jihadists, the British government's unwavering insistence on regime change by agreement, enforced by escalation, did not appear consistent with the most obvious fundamental humanitarian objective of ending the violence. A similar critique may be applied to its earlier insistence on regime change in Libya.

The exaggerated risk of massacres (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016), that had been used to obtain authorisation to bomb Libya,[3] was emphasised by MPs immediately after the start of NATO bombing,[4] during the war,[5] and after regime change[6] to create an impression of humanitarian success. On 21 March 2011 Cameron said, "We have saved the lives of many Libyans and we have helped to prevent the destruction of a great and historic city."[7]

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 11455.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 10668.
[3]   Appendix III: paras 2374, 2379, 2388, 2397.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 2548, 2744, 2768, 2953.
[5]   Appendix III: paras 5289, 6132, 6687.
[6]   Appendix III: paras 7720, 7824, 9023, 11053.
[7]   Appendix III: para 2768.

By 2018, as a consequence of regime change, much of Benghazi was reportedly ruined and factional violence continued, with LNA forces advancing on the city of Derna (Cockburn, 2018b). Egypt, which had backed the 2011 no-fly zone on humanitarian grounds, bombed Derna. Civilians were being killed all over the country. African migrants were imprisoned by people traffickers, who murdered several of their captives when they tried to escape (Cockburn, 2018b). The British government had moved on to the pursuit of regime change in Syria.

In 2018, it was reported that, after the pacification of Benghazi and expulsion of Islamists by the LNA, fifty Libyan sappers had been killed and sixty wounded. The Reuters report indicated that they were not receiving effective assistance from the powers that had intervened militarily on humanitarian grounds in 2011: "Military engineers striving to clear the explosives lack mine detectors and are working with basic tools and their bare hands" (Al-Warfalli, 2018: n.p.). As Libyan government forces under Gaddafi had been prevented from entering Benghazi by NATO, it seems likely that the primary source of these explosives had been rebels empowered by NATO. Reuters dated their placement to 2014-2017, years after Gaddafi's death (Al-Warfalli, 2018).

Thematic analysis found few references to the Libyan education system in the Libya debates, other than remarks about Libyans studying in the UK during the Gaddafi administration and a claim by Hague in October 2011 that "… the children are at school".[1] This apparent lack of interest calls into question the expressed humanitarian aim of increasing economic opportunity for Libyans by regime change.[2]

When Liberal Democrat MP Stephen Gilbert advocated "development support"[3] for "the new Libya",[4] the practical intervention he proposed was "… an insurance scheme to protect British businesses as they venture into Libya to set up operations."[5] Labour MP Michael McCann presented foreign aid as similar to an exploitation tax on "… the wealth Britain has extracted from across the globe",[6] with a national security function, and argued that: "International development aid will also save lives and put more children into school, while creating new markets for the

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1   Appendix III: para 9199.
2   Appendix III: para 9131.
3   Appendix III: para 9583.
4   Appendix III: para 9583.
5   Appendix III: para 9583.
6   Appendix III: para 13784.

future."[1]

One of the new market factors school expansion would tend to create would be educated African labour. However, lack of domestic opportunity and strict restrictions on entry by non-European migrants to the aid donor states of Europe led to thousands drowning in the attempt to enter unlawfully from Africa (UN News, 2017). Hundreds died in one week in 2016 (BBC News, 2016b). Slave markets selling captured migrants opened in Libya after regime change (Brennan, 2018), making a grim irony of Tory MP Robert Halfon's argument in support of war to impose regime change: "Those who oppose freedom in the middle east, however, are exactly like those who opposed the end of slavery".[2]

Halfon had a personal grievance - "… my grandfather lost his home and business to Gaddafi"[3] - but did not recuse himself from Libya war debates for conflict of interest, instead arguing forcefully for violent regime change. He was one of the very few MPs who urged the government to arm Libyan rebels,[4] and, even after the disaster of Libya, to arm Syrian rebels.[5]

The urgency of the British government's 2011 campaign for war in Libya, in which it promised to save lives and bestow freedom, contrasts with its apparent disinterest in action to end slavery in Libya after regime change. Post-war slave dealing was first reported in 2017 and continued into 2018 with no Western intervention (Brennan, 2018). Although uninvited intervention would technically have been a breach of sovereignty, this may not have been a decisive objection, as it was reported that Libya was "without a capable government" (Brennan, 2018: n.p.).

Reluctance to commit ground troops was also not a credible reason for inaction, as it had already been done. In a rare identification of British government duplicity by a committee of MPs, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee found that:

> British Special Forces have reportedly been deployed to Libya, where they apparently engaged in frontline combat in May 2016. It is difficult to square reports of British Special Forces participating in combat with the comment by the Secretary of State for Defence in May 2016 that 'we do not intend to deploy ground forces in any combat

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[1]   Appendix III: para 13784.
[2]   Appendix III: para 2179.
[3]   Appendix III: para 2169.
[4]   Appendix III: para 3513.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 5554.

role. Before engaging in any military operation in Libya, we would of course have to seek an invitation from the Libyan Government, and would also have to involve this Parliament.' The GNA has not invited the UK to deploy combat troops in Libya and the UK Parliament has not considered the matter (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016: 36).

A UN finding in 2018 that in Libya "… armed groups kill and torture with impunity" (Brennan, 2018: n.p.) contrasts with the British government's avowed intention in 2011 "… to ensure that anyone responsible for abuses in Libya will be held to account."[1] There was scant evidence of Britain pursuing accountability after regime change. In 2018, ICC arrest warrants were active for three suspects - Gaddafi's son Saif, Gaddafi's internal security chief, and a rebel militia leader - and none of them were in ICC custody (International Criminal Court, 2018).

In February 2011, Cameron said, "Britain is taking a lead"[2] in pursuing accountability for war criminals in Libya. The disappearance of that lead after regime change suggests that the British government's vocal support for judicial accountability may have been at least partly motivated by the propaganda aim of legitimising military intervention.

While standing aside from the problem of education in post-war Libya, the British government made repeated references to its humanitarian aid for the primary education of Syrian refugee children.[3] It was planning for long term growth in refugee numbers,[4] so the aid appears to have been related to the regime change strategy of prolonging the conflict until the desired balance of power was achieved - Assad too weak to win, but not weak enough to fall, and thus obliged to negotiate his own replacement. This strategy acted against the humanitarian need to end the war promptly and thereby permit the return of refugees.

Tory MP Andrew Bridgen talked to a Syrian man in Damascus who "… made the point that although he was no fan of Assad, if the rebels win, his wife will probably have to take the veil and his daughters will not [sic] longer be able to go to school. He felt that his country would go back 100 years."[5] This concern does not appear to have influenced government policy, except perhaps in supporting the hesitant

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[1]   Appendix III: para 389.
[2]   Appendix III: para 389.
[3]   Appendix IV: paras 10438, 13337, 18302, 18318, 19118, 19121.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 10438.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 13099.

approach to regime change, thereby lengthening the war.

Human Rights Watch (2018: n.p.) assessed conditions in Libya in 2018, seven years after the regime change war had been promoted as humanitarian assistance:

> Libya's political and security crisis continues as two authorities, the Tripoli based UN-backed Government of National Accord and the Interim Government based in eastern Libya, compete for legitimacy and territorial control. Protracted armed clashes have displaced hundreds of thousands of people and interrupted access to basic services such as healthcare and electricity. Militias and armed groups, often with links to the competing governments, carry out arbitrary detention, torture, unlawful killings, indiscriminate attacks, disappearances, seizure of property and forced displacement. Hundreds of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers, including children, who flock to Libya mostly en route to Europe, experience torture, sexual assault and forced labor by prison guards, coast guard forces, and smugglers.

Many of the millions of refugees from the Syrian war in neighbouring states were also living in harsh conditions and reliant on dwindling foreign aid (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018). The contradiction between British government claims of world-leading generosity towards Syrian refugees, and its refusal to join a scheme to relocate vulnerable refugees to safe locations broke the consensus on regime change policy between government and opposition. In 2014, at the beginning of the fourth year of the Syrian conflict, there were three debates in the Commons on the theme of refugee admittance to the UK. The context was the British government's refusal to join a UNHCR scheme to relocate vulnerable Syrian refugees from Middle Eastern countries to Western states.

The passage of years before the British parliament even considered relocating Syrian refugees to the UK, and the government's resistance to their admittance, contrasted with the humanitarian presentation of UK policy. Some MPs, including Sir Menzies Campbell of the governing coalition's minority party, the Liberal Democrats, alleged that the British government's motive for keeping Syrian refugees out of the UK was electoral competition from the anti-immigration party UKIP,[1] led by Nigel Farage.

Labour MP Mike Gapes asked why the coalition had "… a policy that is to the

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 17616.

right of UKIP?"[1] SNP MP Pete Wishart pointed out that "… even Nigel Farage recognises that there is a difference between a refugee and an immigrant."[2] A member of the Prime Minister's party, James Gray, eschewed partisan comment but made a telling intervention, invoking the memory of the Nazi holocaust:

> There must be occasions in international affairs when compassion trumps all other political and policy considerations. Surely there are echoes of the Kindertransport here. Surely we can find a place in our hearts for just a small number of these terribly tortured and disaffected Syrian children. Surely we can find room for them in the United Kingdom - just a few of them, just anything. Please say yes.[3]

The government, represented by International Development minister Justine Greening, did not say yes. She explained the refusal by repeating that the UK had given a lot of money for refugee aid, and claimed that the UK's donation of more money than any other government to UNICEF "… shows that we work directly with children."[4] Immigration minister Mark Harper had previously rejected relocating vulnerable refugees to the UK as it would "… have only a token impact on the huge numbers of refugees."[5]

The need for Labour MP Yvette Cooper to spell out the obvious fact that, "… it is not token for a child who is given a home",[6] again brings the government's humanitarian motives into question. Labour MP Barry Gardiner demonstrated that the minister had contradicted himself by arguing "… that it is insignificant, that it is a token. If it is so small, why do the Government not do it? Is it because it will contribute to the Minister's net migration figures?"[7]

The government had chosen to include refugees in its net migration figure. It had promised a steep reduction in this figure, but the figure had increased.[8] Migration within the EU was protected by free movement rules, therefore, a policy of reduction implied targeting non-European migrants and refugees for exclusion, and this could not be credibly presented as humanitarian. The government ignored[9] MPs'

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 17620.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 17660.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 18338.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 18340.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 17599.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 17606.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 17676.
[8]   Appendix IV: para 18828.
[9]   Appendix IV: paras 18592-18595, 18838-18841.

requests[1] to remove refugees from the target on humanitarian grounds.

British financial aid for Syrians was cited repeatedly by MPs in the UK's favour,[2] although at £500 million in three years from 2011 to 2013[3] it was still less than one third of the £1.8 billion the UK had reportedly spent on war in Libya in 2011.[4] Ministers argued that it was better to provide aid to refugees in the Middle East than to relocate them to the UK, so that they could return home after the conflict.[5]

MPs did not challenge the implication that travel would never be possible from the UK to Syria, but the argument that money was superior to refuge was dismissed by Yvette Cooper as "… not an either/or question".[6] Labour MP Geoffrey Robinson made the same point.[7] Such rebuttals account for most instances of the false dichotomy criticism theme, but ministers ignored the objection and adhered to the argument.[8]

The inhumanity of this stance provoked a public and cross-party backlash[9] which pushed the government into agreeing to admit some vulnerable refugees. It still refused to join the UNHCR relocation scheme, citing flexibility as its reason.[10] The need for additional flexibility was challenged,[11] and the claim that the government scheme was distinctive was dismissed as "… a distinction without a difference".[12] The government response - that a unilateral scheme enabled it to prioritise specific types of vulnerable person[13] - contrasted with the previous stance that relocation was tokenism and would trap refugees in the UK. It was also debunked by Yvette Cooper, who pointed out that the UNHCR scheme included such flexibility.[14]

MPs' claims of humanitarian concern for the suffering of refugees were also undermined by 95 references in Syria debates to refugees as a burden. Syrian refugees were not discussed as a resource for Middle Eastern countries. References to refugees as a potential resource for the UK were scarce and did not

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1	Appendix IV: paras 18589, 18812, 18828.
2	Appendix IV: paras 17596, 17597, 17600, 17605.
3	Appendix IV: para 17596.
4	Appendix III: para 11210.
5	Appendix IV: paras 17598, 18664.
6	Appendix IV: para 17606.
7	Appendix IV: para 17652.
8	Appendix IV: paras 17698, 17732, 18322.
9	Appendix IV: paras 18798-18800, 18822, 18868, 19019.
10	Appendix IV: paras 18595, 18601, 18640, 18644.
11	Appendix IV: para 18658.
12	Appendix IV: para 19067.
13	Appendix IV: para 18660.
14	Appendix IV: para 18820.

feature until 2014, the fourth year of war, when the topic was raised in the debate on the government's refusal to relocate vulnerable refugees to the UK.[1] Only one of these references[2] preceded the government's reversal of the refusal, so the theme is unlikely to have had much impact on that decision.

The British government has attributed its reluctance to admit Syrian refugees to a fear of being overwhelmed (Osborne, 2015). However, in the light of Syrian refugee numbers in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Germany and Egypt compared to the number in the UK, shown in Table 3 below, and the greater material wealth of the UK than most of those countries, this claim is questionable.

Table 3: Syrian refugees in MENA countries and the UK in 2018

Host country	Syrian refugees in country	Host country population	Syrian refugees per 10,000 population
Lebanon	992,127	6,100,075	1,626.4
Jordan	653,031	10,458,413	624.4
Turkey	3,424,237	81,257,239	421.4
Germany	496,674	80,457,737	61.7
Iraq	247,057	40,194,216	61.5
Egypt	126,688	99,413,317	12.7
United Kingdom	9,100	65,105,246	1.4

Table 3 data sources: Syrian refugees - (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019b); Population - (US Central Intelligence Agency, 2019).

A further contradiction emerged in the British government's aspirations to train the world towards liberal governance. When the "important lesson"[3] taught to the world by Britain's rapprochement with Gaddafi was reversed by the decision to overthrow him, Cameron sought to replace it with another: "In the act of stopping him, let us hope that that sends a message to dictators the world over."[4] However, the message was confused by British hesitation in seeking to stop Assad, due partly to Russian and Chinese resistance, and partly to concerns about the risks of regime

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[1]   Appendix IV: paras 17754, 18603, 18605, 18829, 18834.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 17754.
[3]   Appendix III: para 39.
[4]   Appendix III: para 2759.

change in Syria.

The overall lesson would be hard for the intended students to discern. At first, domestic repression was permitted in Libya in exchange for international cooperation. Then domestic repression became unacceptable in Libya, coincident with the imminent defeat of a rebellion, while it continued to be acceptable in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia after they had repressed protests. Domestic repression became unacceptable in Syria only after a lengthy delay, and a rebel victory remained undesirable throughout, while domestic repression after regime change in Libya became irrelevant, and was hardly discussed in the British House of Commons. While insisting that Assad must fall, the Western powers sought to set rebels against each other at the point when they appeared to be having most success. Western military intervention in the Middle East, hitherto branded as a war on terror against jihadists, helped jihadists advance across Syria.

The overall lesson from Libya and Syria seems to be that where an authoritarian state is of strategic and economic significance to Western powers and has a socialistic model of governance, an uprising is likely be supported by Western intervention in exchange for post-regime change benefits. The favoured intervention model is reinforcement of local rebel forces. If, like Libya, the target state has no powerful strategic allies, the intervention is likely to be more overt, and if it is allied with a permanent member of the UN Security Council, more covert. Western regime change decisions appear irreversible, and announcement of humanitarian motives inevitable, but ensuing humanitarian disaster appears unlikely to prompt changes of strategy or goal.

The only outcomes providing evidence of genuine humanitarian motivation for British government regime change decisions may be the death tolls in revolutions. The Saudi and Bahraini protests were suppressed without massive loss of life. It could be argued that this explains the omission of the UK to seek intervention on behalf of the protestors.

However, this hypothesis is challenged by the contrast between the almost instant declaration of illegitimacy against Gaddafi, and the substantially delayed declaration of Assad's illegitimacy until the death toll in Syria's conflict had greatly exceeded that in Libya. It is further undermined by the British government's refusal to amend the policy of regime change by escalation in Syria despite the accelerating death toll and displacement of people. The British government's apparent

indifference to civilian suffering in Libya after regime change, and its participation in the mass killing of civilians in Raqqa and Mosul during assaults to expel rebel occupiers, also cast doubt on its commitment to civilian protection.

In Yemen, the British government continued to assist Saudi-led violent repression of insurrection (Spencer, 2016), even after the war had cost thousands of civilian lives (Pavlik, 2018). Britain did not intervene against the widespread use of mercenaries in Yemen (Carlsen, 2015), although it had condemned this in Libya,[1] as had the Labour opposition.[2]

The *de facto* lesson on how to remain in power sent to dictators by British government action would appear to be:

- Cooperate with the West or enter a military alliance with another global power.

- Exploit, to the fullest extent possible, the willingness of the international community to sell arms valuable for internal repression.

- Avoid any reforms that might facilitate protest.

- Impose pervasive surveillance and repression to prevent any uprising reaching a level of momentum that can only be quelled by a significant military response.

- Use disproportionate force to crush any public protest as quickly as possible.

- Acquire nuclear weapons to impose a cost on foreign intervention that most of the world would consider excessive.

Irrespective of the avowed intentions of Western intervention, this is not a list of humanitarian behaviours.

The lesson drawn by Russia from the West's Libya deception was that the R2P and humanitarian intervention may be used as cover for Western aggression. This is likely to have increased the difficulty of obtaining a Security Council resolution on humanitarian grounds in the future. It may have terminally discredited the concept of the R2P as grounds for military action. When Russia vetoed draft Resolution 2011/612 on Syria in October 2011, its Security Council delegate Vitaly Churkin, referring to the expansion of the Libya campaign beyond the authority of Resolution

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 460, 464, 1115, 1144, 1204.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 890, 1722, 2325.

1973, said: "These types of models should be excluded from global practices once and for all" (United Nations Security Council, 2011a: 4).

The humanitarian impact of discrediting the R2P as a *casus belli* is uncertain. Given that material national interests, even if accompanied by sincere humanitarian aims, tend to govern the military actions of states (Cockburn, 2014; Cunliffe, 2020), it appears unlikely that the R2P can become an instrument of humanitarian outcomes as long as it features a route to military enforcement (Morris, 2013).

The manifestation of double standards undermined British claims to be acting ethically (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015). The subject of arms supply by the UK occurred frequently under the double standards theme in the debates. MPs commented on the British government's history of authorising arms sales to governments it later decides are so oppressive that they must be overthrown by force.[1] MPs also criticised the practise of continuing to arm some of the world's most repressive governments while attacking others on the grounds of their repressive rule.[2]

Tory MP David Davis reported in the 29 August 2013 debate on a military response to alleged WMD use by Syria that: "The CIA has recently declassified and published its information on Iraq's use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war, in which the West provided intelligence data in order for the Iraqis to be able to target their activities more effectively, killing 50,000 Iranians."[3] Davis cited this example to challenge the attempt by Foreign Secretary Hague, to depict a Syrian CW incident as uniquely horrific.

Tory MP Robert Halfon cited the precedent of Halabja, where in 1988 Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had gassed to death 5,000 Kurds, in support of the government plan to bomb Syria.[4] Although the UK had taken no punitive action in response to that major war crime, Halfon cited it immediately after invoking "Britain's historical tradition of always standing against mass murder by dictators".[5]

Tory Prime Minister David Cameron[6] and MP Nadhim Zahawi[7] cited negative outcomes supposed to have arisen from the British non-response to Halabja as a

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 1843, 1873, 2664, 3389, 3455.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 997, 1025, 1843, 1847, 1849, 2664.
[3]   Appendix IV: para 13929.
[4]   Appendix IV: para 13488.
[5]   Appendix IV: para 13488.
[6]   Appendix IV: para 13490.
[7]   Appendix IV: para 14572.

precedent for a violent response in Syria. Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn indicated that the British government reaction to Halabja had gone beyond permissive inaction, and approached positive support: "I raised the issue here in Parliament and was told that the situation was serious, bad and quite appalling. I then asked why we were involved in the Baghdad arms fair only eight months later. The Minister at the time told me that it was good business."[1]

In March 2011, Labour MP Geraint Davies described the Libyan armed forces, which Britain had been arming and training until weeks earlier,[2] as "Gaddafi's machinery for the mass slaughter of hundreds of thousands of near-defenceless civilians".[3] Unless an army can switch from being a professional and ethical defence force to a machinery for mass civilian slaughter in a few weeks, this meant Britain, under Labour and Tory-led governments, had knowingly equipped and strengthened a machinery for mass civilian slaughter. This would undermine claims to be driven by a desire to save civilians. Corbyn told the House that whenever he raised humanitarian concerns about arms sales, "I am always told, 'If you raise all these issues, it will cost a lot of jobs in the arms industry.'"[4]

In a later debate, SDLP MP Mark Durkan welcomed Gaddafi's referral to the ICC and asked, "… should those who provided him with the infrastructure of repression and the weaponry for civilian slaughter not also be deemed complicit in the scale of his crimes?"[5] Hague replied that there were "lessons to learn",[6] but eschewed comment on the complicity of the leaders of his government and their NATO allies. He expressed a preference for the ICC to continue concentrating its efforts on "… the people most directly culpable for crimes against humanity".[7]

Cameron called Libyan armed forces "Gaddafi's war machine"[8]. The first of these references was in May 2011, when NATO was already attacking defensive structures and military storage facilities, not merely repelling attacks on civilians. These, and attacks on communications centres, were justified as destroying facilities capable of use to attack civilians. Britain's policy on arms exports banned

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 15368.
[2]   Appendix III: paras 466, 474, 1194.
[3]   Appendix III: para 3413.
[4]   Appendix III: para 20471.
[5]   Appendix III: para 7574.
[6]   Appendix III: para 7576.
[7]   Appendix III: para 7576.
[8]   Appendix III: paras 5561, 7702.

the sale of items that might be used to attack civilians.[1]

Labour MP David Winnick pointed out in February 2011 that, under the Cameron/Clegg government, "Britain took part in an arms fair in Libya last November at which all kinds of crowd control equipment and sniper rifles were sold to the regime".[2] Plaid Cymru's Elfyn Llwyd added, "Since the first half of last year, £31 million worth of armaments have been sold to Libya, including water cannon, stun guns, smoke grenades and tear gas - in other words, a panoply of equipment that can be used against civilians".[3] Cameron's response was to blame the previous government,[4] but these arms had been supplied during his term of office.

The double standards and arms supply to enemy state themes included references to British government inconsistency, but these were rare in the environment of cross-party agreement on regime change. Authorisation of arms sales to Libya by the previous Labour government may also have helped to subdue potential Labour criticism of the Tory-led coalition government's sudden switch from arms suppliers of a murderous tyrant's war machine to compassionate lifesavers. In a later debate, Tory MP Robert Halfon reminded Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander that: "When he was responsible for the Export Credits Guarantee Department, he allowed defence equipment to go to Libya."[5] Alexander complained in response that Halfon was asking too many questions, and attributed some responsibility for British arms sales policy to the EU.[6]

Tory MP Sir John Stanley pointed out that the UK had been committed for a long time to a policy of not licensing sales of items "… which might be used to facilitate internal repression."[7] Labour's David Winnick asked about:

> … the bombs, the torpedoes, the rockets and the missiles that have been sold to the Libyan regime by France, Italy and Germany - that is apart from what we have been selling up until the past few weeks? What on earth did the Governments believe those arms would be used against?[8]

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[1]   Appendix III: para 6240.
[2]   Appendix III: para 466.
[3]   Appendix III: para 474.
[4]   Appendix III: para 476.
[5]   Appendix III: para 1659.
[6]   Appendix III: para 1661.
[7]   Appendix III: para 6240.
[8]   Appendix III: para 1194.

Corbyn commented that: "Only three weeks ago, we were training Libyan forces and selling arms to Libya."[1] This was 4.5 weeks after President Obama had ordered Gaddafi to step down, so if the timing is correct, the UK was still helping to construct Gaddafi's war machine after its mass slaughter of civilians had reached a level of criminality considered sufficiently extreme by NATO's leading member to warrant regime change.

The sale to Libya of items unlikely to be used for anything other than civilian repression suggests routine breach of the anti-repression policy. Corbyn stated that weapons sales to Libya and other dictatorships "… include anti-personnel equipment for crowd control, to deal with civil disorder and control populations."[2] According to Tory MP Sir John Stanley, a government report on a proposed sale of armoured vehicles to the Gaddafi administration in 2008 found:

> There remain wider human rights risks in Libya, but it was judged very unlikely that these vehicles would be used to carry out abuses. As a result it was concluded, with reference to the Consolidated Criteria, that there was not a clear risk that these vehicles would be used for internal repression and the licence was approved.[3]

However, the Labour leadership in opposition and the Tory-led coalition government judged it certain in 2011 that Gaddafi would massacre his people if not prevented by force.[4] Labour shadow Foreign Secretary, Douglas Alexander, who stated in 2011 that NATO bombing "has already prevented the foreseeable and certain killing of many Libyan citizens",[5] had been Secretary of State for International Development in 2008 (UK Parliament, 2019).

Stanley asked why, after two months of war against Gaddafi, there had been no revocation of arms sales to Syria, nor to Saudi Arabia where armoured vehicles supplied by Britain had been used to crush popular dissent.[6] He stated his view that the reason for the latter was, "Saudi Arabia is big money, is big oil, and is useful intelligence",[7] implying a low priority for humanitarian concerns.

Former CIA case officer (Docherty, 2002), Robert Baer (2003: 67), rejected Saudi

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[1]   Appendix III: para 3249.
[2]   Appendix III: para 6324.
[3]   Appendix III: para 6243.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 2768, 3570, 3575.
[5]   Appendix III: para 3575.
[6]   Appendix III: para 6250.
[7]   Appendix III: para 6250.

Arabia's value as an ally against terrorism, citing an investigation which had found that: "The Saudis are active at every level of the terror chain, from planners to financiers, from cadre to foot-soldier, from ideologist to cheerleader". In terms of intelligence, Saudi Arabia did not appear to have provided anything of value to the US government (Baer, 2003).

A further contradiction found by thematic analysis was between Britain's claims of altruistic generosity and its attempts to recoup the costs of humanitarian aid and military intervention from other states. British MPs made numerous references to British world leadership in humanitarian aid in Syria. Thematic analysis found 197 references to the British lead on aid in Syria debates, starting in March 2012 with a large payment to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Lebanon.[1] This was one of the biggest differences with the Libya debates, where only 7 such references were found. The difference also indicated opportunism in the selection of humanitarian justifications for supporting violent revolution.

Britain's primary humanitarian message in the Libya campaign focused on NATO bombing saving lives. Britain's primary humanitarian message in the Syria campaign, where the Security Council had not authorised military intervention, was generous donation of financial aid by the UK. Thus, the British government, mostly supported by the official opposition, appeared in its parliamentary arguments to adapt the humanitarian framing of its policy to fit the type of intervention it was able to implement towards regime change in each target state.

From September 2012, parliamentary statements on British generosity in Syria were often accompanied by appeals to other nations to cover the aid costs,[2] much of which went to the maintenance of refugees.[3] Demands made by MPs for other nations to reimburse Britain for the cost of bombing Libya were limited to a few backbench proposals. One MP recommended seeking recompense from the new Libyan government for the cost of removing the previous one,[4] which appeared to cast NATO in a mercenary role. Another proposed that the cost be recouped by appropriating Libyan state assets held in the UK.[5] The latter suggestion was rejected

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[1]   Appendix IV: para 6508.
[2]   Appendix IV: paras 8861, 8919, 8921, 9010, 9665, 9718, 10104, 10106.
[3]   Appendix IV: paras 7894, 8839, 8861, 8865.
[4]   Appendix III: para 14914.
[5]   Appendix III: para 1298.

as improper by Cameron in March 2011.[1] However, when it was suggested after regime change, in September 2011, that the UK could request payment from the new government for the cost of bombing, instead of appropriating state assets, Cameron's response was more ambivalent: "That is not a consideration that we have gone into so far … My right hon. Friend makes an important point that we can bear in mind."[2]

This response was adapted, over a month later, by defence secretary Liam Fox, to: "… the UK did not play a leading role in this action for financial return",[3] followed by: "How costs are apportioned and whether other countries can help with those wider costs can be discussed, but only after the conflict has been concluded, which it has not yet been".[4] Finally, over a year later, newly appointed Defence minister Andrew Murrison gave a firm negative: "We will not seek to recover costs from Libya".[5]

It would appear from the length of time needed to reach an unambiguous position that there had at least been some friction between humanitarian and acquisitive inclinations. An earlier suggestion by Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Alexander that Britain could use "Libyan oil money"[6] to pay for repairs to NATO bomb damage in Libya was not initially rejected. Hague said, "We are still discussing the idea".[7] The government and backbench MPs appeared to expect Libya to pay for the damage caused by NATO bombs,[8] voluntarily rather than by sequestration of national funds, as well as compensation for IRA and Lockerbie bombs.[9]

Kawczynski, who had argued for humanitarian intervention, indicated where his government wanted Libyan money to go: "When the new Secretary of State for Defence went to Libya, he said to British companies, 'Pack your bags and come here to reconstruct Libya.' I totally agree with him".[10] He regretted insufficient effort by British companies: "We are the ones who go in and liberate the country, and then everyone else goes in and gets all the business."[11] Corbyn relayed a Libyan

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1   Appendix III: para 1300.
2   Appendix III: para 7791.
3   Appendix III: para 9015.
4   Appendix III: para 9023.
5   Appendix III: para 14916.
6   Appendix III: para 4514.
7   Appendix III: para 4526.
8   Appendix III: paras 6182, 7710, 13358.
9   Appendix III: paras 3053, 7785, 9544-9545, 9666, 14926.
10   Appendix III: para 9548.
11   Appendix III: para 9549.

perspective: "They destroyed our country and now they want us to pay them to rebuild it".[1]

In contrast to the frequent enumeration of British humanitarian aid in Syria debates,[2] ministers downplayed the cost of bombing Libya. When Tory MP David Ruffley requested "… the cost of UK military intervention in Libya",[3] Defence minister Andrew Murrison responded with "… the net additional cost of Operation Ellamy at £199 million",[4] instead of the full cost, stated as "nearly £1 billion"[5] by Kawczynski, and given as "£1.8 billion"[6] in a parliamentary answer to Corbyn.

It appears that the UK did not wish to draw attention to the cost of war in Libya, which was less credible as an innately humanitarian action (as opposed to a belligerent action with a claimed humanitarian objective) than feeding refugees. The cost of bombing Libya, in which Britain was one of several participants, was also an indicator of the massive extent of the assault. If this had been frequently publicised, it might have suggested to observers that the action had not been limited to protection.

This chapter considered evidence from the thematic analysis of Libya and Syria debates to assess the credibility of humanitarian military intervention. Evidence emerging from the analysis in the previous chapters pertaining to the credibility of humanitarian military intervention was critically examined. Ulterior motives and contradictions in British government and parliamentary opposition arguments were identified and reviewed, raising significant doubts about the presentation of warfare as a humanitarian act by government with opposition support.

Indications were found of bad faith in presenting coercive intervention as humanitarian (Cunliffe, 2020), of neo-colonial efforts to influence the development of new regimes in Libya and Syria (Young, 2003; MacMillan, 2007), and of illiberal pursuit of a reputation for national and personal leadership by instigating military conflict (Fukuyama, 1992). The role of double standards in undermining the credibility of Britain's ethical stance on humanitarian intervention (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015) was discussed, and a notable contradiction investigated between

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[1]   Appendix III: para 11219.
[2]   Appendix IV: paras 6508, 8839, 9718, 9950, 10334, 10384, 10399, 10564, 10596, 10730, 10762, 12816, 12960, 13282, 14788, 15038, 15127, 15583, 16105, 16125, 17282, 17596, 17600, 17622, 17670.
[3]   Appendix III: para 14910.
[4]   Appendix III: para 14912.
[5]   Appendix III: para 18025.
[6]   Appendix III: para 11210.

the British government's focus on humanitarian messaging and its refusal in 2014 to join a UNHCR scheme to relocate especially vulnerable refugees, such as victims of sexual violence and orphaned children, from the Middle East to Western states.

The following chapter combines and expands the main conclusions drawn from the literature review and thematic analysis, and offers suggestions for future research indicated by the findings of this thesis.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

This chapter presents conclusions from the thematic analysis and the contextualised discussion of the data it revealed. Findings included, alongside apparently genuine humanitarian sentiment, the deployment of humanitarian rhetoric for ulterior objectives by the British government, and connivance at this by leading opposition politicians. Humanitarian crises in Libya and Syria worsened after international intervention, and potential solutions appeared more remote. Despite initial claims by MPs to be driven by a duty to intervene on behalf of the peoples of Libya and Syria, there were no calls for intervention to redress the humanitarian damage inflicted by the collapse of the new regime in Libya, and no significant pressure to change policy on Syria after years of failure. The chapter ends by proposing some directions for further investigation suggested by the findings of this research project.

The thematic analysis of debates on Libya and Syria undertaken for this thesis contributes to knowledge by providing evidence for and against notable arguments in the debate about humanitarian intervention and the R2P. The evidence supports Cunliffe's (2020) assessment that the Western liberal powers, notably the P3, have undermined their own professed values at home and abroad by using humanitarian propaganda to obtain an appearance of legitimacy for violent intervention, against the will of their electorates, to enforce the expansion of liberalism, and left a trail of destruction for which they have shown little concern. The insistence of British government and opposition MPs on the overthrow of Gaddafi[1] and Assad[2] supports the hypothesis that liberal faith in democracy as the guarantor of human rights makes pressure for regime change war a corollary of liberal humanitarian intervention (Mearsheimer, 2018; Cunliffe, 2020).

The Tory and Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2011, with Labour opposition support, imposed the logic that civilian protection required regime change onto Resolution 1973 to justify regime change war in Libya.[3] The expressed aim of Britain's Syria policy was also regime change, and remained so irrespective of obstacles and harm. The phrase *regime change*, discredited by the 2001 Iraq war, was rejected by the British government,[4] and replaced by euphemisms, "political

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[1]   Appendix III: para 5139.
[2]   Appendix IV: para 9243.
[3]   Appendix III: para 5139.
[4]   Appendix III: para 7343; Appendix IV: para 10077.

transition",[1] "democratic transition",[2] and "peaceful transition",[3] indicating a prioritisation of marketing support for revolution to a reluctant public over representing public opinion in policy. This casts doubt on the viability of non-violent approaches to the R2P (Morris, 2013), as intervention designed with the objective of regime change is likely to require violence to overcome the resistance of the incumbent regime to loss of power.

The arbitrary extension by the P3 in 2011 of a humanitarian intervention instrument, UNSC Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011b), to a regime change authorisation suggests a significant risk of similar manipulation of future Security Council resolutions. Efforts by the British government to present regime change as not being regime change, and the covert insertion of ground forces into the Libyan war (Amoore, 2011) contrary to the Prime Minister's assurance,[4] both indicate a disposition of the British government and its NATO allies to obtain political support for military goals by deception. This could include interpreting an authority for peaceful intervention as an authority for violence, perhaps by defining all action short of invasion as non-violent, or simply maintaining secrecy about the use of force.

These case studies also partly support Bricmont's (2006) humanitarian imperialism hypothesis, whereby imperialist aggression is carried out in the guise of humanitarian intervention which does not necessarily constitute deliberate deception. Supporters of humanitarian violence may subconsciously adopt beliefs that permit them to act with sincerity. However, the lack of discussion by the British government and most MPs of the plight of Libya after the killing of Gaddafi,[5] or of the human rights abuses facilitated by their intervention (Human Rights Watch, 2018), and their inflexibility in pursuing violent regime change in Syria regardless of the humanitarian impact,[6] cast significant doubt on their commitment to humanitarian outcomes.

Unlike the British annexation of South African goldfields justified by humanitarian rhetoric (Bricmont, 2006), the Libya and Syria regime change campaigns brought no obvious commercial benefits to the intervening states. Failure is not evidence of

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[1]   Appendix III: para 5030; Appendix IV: para 3977.
[2]   Appendix III: para 7845; Appendix IV: para 7889.
[3]   Appendix III: para 1216; Appendix IV: para 6488.
[4]   Appendix III: para 1136.
[5]   See Chart 2 in Chapter 7.
[6]   See Chapter 6.

abstention, so it cannot be concluded that there was no commercial motivation. Some expressions of such motivation for intervention in Libya were found by the thematic analysis.[1] Although these were not numerous, their infrequency could be credibly accounted for by the decision to present a case for war based on humanitarian and security concerns rather than profit, and by the obstacles to commercial activity in the target states, including the rapid collapse of the Libyan state after regime change (Sensini, 2016). The lack of references in the Syria debates[2] to potential commercial opportunities in Syria may help to account both for the lower level of intervention, and for British abstention from seeking a change in strategy after years of failure disastrous for the Syrian people.

Strategic gains such as projecting power and cementing Britain's military alliance with the USA and NATO were more obvious benefits from the interventions, consistent with Gilpin's (1983) hypothesis that leaders go to war to win prestige, whether by their own military prowess or in alliance with dominant global powers. Prime Minister Cameron received lavish praise in the House of Commons for his war leadership. This thesis found, therefore, that acquisition of prestige was a significant outcome of British leadership of the intervention in Libya, and probably a significant motive. Pursuit of prestige as leading international humanitarians also appears to have motivated British policy in Libya and Syria. The humanitarian aspect of the British government's frequent announcements in parliament of its status as a major donor of aid to refugees from the Syrian war was undermined by its inflexible commitment to regime change instead of seeking an early end to the war, and its refusal to admit all but a very few Syrian refugees to the UK. The refugee issue aroused considerable parliamentary criticism,[3] but regime change inflexibility did not.

From the perspective of liberal hegemony, both conflicts could be perceived as partial successes. The Libyan dictator had been removed and a form of liberal democracy attempted.[4] Gaddafi's socialist regime had been erased. The Syrian dictator had lost large areas of his country. After 2016, some Western liberal media reported that President Assad had gained a victory (Fisk, 2017; Hassan, 2018). Others claimed that "Assad has not won anything" (Lister, 2019: n.p.), or that he had

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 1949, 5856, 9043, 9548.
[2]   Appendix IV.
[3]   See Chapter 8.
[4]   Appendix III: paras 13362, 13532.

regained territory but not legitimacy (McLaughlin, 2020). From the latter viewpoint, destroying illiberal regimes and failing to replace them with anything better, or even as functional, could be seen as clearing the path for progress towards the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992: iii), rather than power projection and a bungled effort to secure natural resources. However, such a perception would be difficult to reconcile with humanitarian aims.

The belief that a liberal world is inevitable because the style of liberalism developed in the West is the ideal system of governance and, therefore, everyone able to choose it will do so (Fukuyama, 1992), might seem a powerful justification for action to accelerate the process. It could explain why liberal powers continue with humanitarian interventions despite increasingly inhumane outcomes. A short-term sacrifice may be considered acceptable in the greater battle for freedom and progress. The acceptability of the sacrifice to the intervening powers may be enhanced when those being sacrificed are not their people.

The double standards and level of human and economic destruction manifested in the Libya and Syria conflicts by the direct and indirect interventions of the P3 powers and their allies are likely to have accentuated the concerns of developing countries that humanitarian intervention is usually a cover for neo-colonial aggression (Dietrich, 2013). Consequently, the contention that the R2P was widely accepted by UN member states as a restraint on humanitarian intervention, not as an advance in cosmopolitan progress, appears credible (Hehir, 2019). The argument that the adoption of Resolution 1970 and a phone call from the UN Secretary-General to Gaddafi asking him to stop the violence constituted preventive action under the R2P that could justify moving on to war within 22 days (Bernstein, 2012) is weak. It is undermined by prior Western contributions to Gaddafi's armaments,[1] and exaggerations of danger to civilians (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016).

The argument that there was no time for prevention in Libya because of Gaddafi's haste in targeting civilians (Bernstein, 2012) was not upheld by this thesis. The evidence from thematic analysis indicated that British haste for military intervention was propelled mainly by fear of an imminent rebel defeat, not of civilian massacres. The evidence does not reveal any humanitarian justification for the absence of reconstruction efforts, nor for proposals in the British parliament to make Libya pay

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[1]   Appendix III: paras 466, 474, 1194.

for the cost of the bombing[1] as well as reconstruction.[2]

Kaldor's (2019) suggestion that the disintegration of states such as Yugoslavia, Libya and Syria in new wars is a phase in the development of international civil society, whereby state power is diminishing in favour of a cosmopolitan world led by enlightened activists in NGOs, transnational institutions and similar organisations, is not upheld by this thesis. By providing a moral rationale for powerful liberal states to attack weak states where democracy is deficient or absent, this belief could present a considerable hazard to international peace and stability and to the people of the target states. It does not appear to take adequate account of the state power manifested in humanitarian interventions such as Libya, and embedded in the United Nations system, particularly the Security Council with the veto power of the P5. It appears to exaggerate the role of civil society in war decisions (Hehir, 2019).

Additionally, there appear to be no compelling grounds for confidence that a cosmopolitan world order would necessarily adhere to liberal social values (Cunliffe, 2020). If democratic structures underpinned by the state were marginalised by the obsolescence of states, the new order would not be democratic in the common liberal sense (Hobsbawm, 2004). An argument that a better form of democracy could emerge would need to be supported by a credible explanation of how it could work. The cases of Libya and Syria, as illustrations of the consequences of weakening state authority, argue against the proposition that cosmopolitan democracy will emerge to fill the void.

The findings of this thesis support the contention that the P3 states which led the direct intervention in Libya in 2011 - the USA, UK, and France - and their military alliance which did most of the bombing, NATO, are not suitable authorities to be entrusted with leadership and control of the military enforcement of humanitarian standards (Dunford and Neu, 2019a). Indirect and covert intervention by the P3 in Syria casts further doubt on the suitability of these states to lead humanitarian military interventions. The P3 respected UN Security Council decisions rejecting military intervention in Syria to the minimal extent, by refraining from a campaign of bombardment against Syrian government forces. However, they continued to pursue regime change by other economic and military means, and did not reconsider this policy even after years of failure and escalating humanitarian crisis.

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[1]   Appendix III: para 14914.
[2]   Appendix III: para 4514.

If they are the only states with the political will and the military resources to lead decisive humanitarian military interventions, the corollary may be that military action under the R2P currently presents too great a risk to be responsibly authorised.

It seems reasonable to expect that the level of force required for protection will often be significantly less than the level required for revolution. If the NATO intervention had been limited to stopping a military advance on Benghazi and seeking a negotiated settlement to internal strife, it is likely that far less force would have been needed. As the threat to civilians had been exaggerated (UK Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016), direct force may not have been needed at all (Mearsheimer, 2018). African Union diplomatic pressure and perhaps a deployment of peacekeeping forces agreed with the Libyan government might have sufficed to minimise harm to civilians.

The case of Libya illustrated the danger of going to war on the basis of the R2P while crucial basic questions about its legitimacy and operation remained unanswered (Dietrich, 2013). The case of Syria, where Russian and Chinese Security Council vetoes were at least partly provoked by P3 abuse of Resolution 1973 (United Nations Security Council, 2011a), supports the judgment that the R2P is "on life support" (Dietrich, 2013: 348) and that although humanitarian intervention is likely to recur, it will be at a significantly reduced frequency and may be through other means than the R2P.

Michael Ignatieff (2014: 2), a co-author of the ICISS report defining the R2P (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001), described Russian President Putin's use of the rhetoric of civilian protection to justify his annexation of Crimea as a "mocking parody" of the R2P. He did not offer evidence of any post-annexation human rights abuses in Crimea, speculating instead on potential future consequences. He asserted that Putin had taken the civilian protection argument used to justify the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya as a precedent for his Crimea action.

However, a clearer case of parodying humanitarian intervention occurred long before the twenty-first century formulation of the R2P. Hitler's notes to Chamberlain on the Sudetenland, sent in 1938, proved to be perhaps the most extreme abuse of humanitarian intervention rhetoric on the historical record. The notes display many features of the language used in the House of Commons in 2011 to justify military intervention in Libya: protection of defenceless civilians; cruel repression by, and

madness of, the target state leadership; a refugee crisis; liberation of political prisoners; self-determination of the people; the security of Europe; and even democracy, as Hitler proposed a plebiscite (Butler, 1938). Bellinger (2020) has listed earlier examples of similar duplicity, including US interventions in the Caribbean, Latin America and the Philippines, and French and British humanitarian imperialism in Africa and Asia.

Humanitarian military intervention appears to have existed as, to use Ignatieff's (2014: 2) term, "parody", for much of its history. It might, therefore, be prudent to exclude from enforcement roles, as unqualified for the task, states responsible for the parodic forms (Dunford and Neu, 2019a). It might also be prudent to exclude them from related decision making, but the governing body of international humanitarian intervention would then be even less entitled to call itself the international community than is the Security Council as currently composed, and would probably lack sufficient military means for effective enforcement. Furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that states with no history of disguising ulterior motives with humanitarian rhetoric would necessarily refrain from doing so if given the opportunity.

The malign appropriation of a principle does not render that principle invalid or malign. However, it would seem prudent, given the historical susceptibility of the principles underlying humanitarian intervention and the R2P to such appropriation, and the discredit flowing therefrom, to build a strong control system into the rules of R2P application. If, as Cunliffe (2020) avers, that is impossible because the R2P can only be operationalised by the Security Council's permanent members and they cannot be held accountable, then the R2P as military intervention will continue to carry excessive risk. A humanitarian imperative would, therefore, require the R2P to be treated with extreme caution, and not turned into a routine instrument of global governance (Wertheim, 2010).

The reductive dichotomy of war or nothing, frequently deployed in arguments for humanitarian military intervention (Lynch, 2011), was tracked by the appeasement theme in the thematic analysis conducted for this thesis. Alternatives to violence were often presented by politicians in the Libya and Syria debates both as doing nothing and as appeasing a tyrant or sharing common purpose with a criminal. The war or nothing dichotomy tends to present what is probably the least inherently humane response to a humanitarian crisis - warfare - as the only humane response.

The presumption in favour of war implicit in negative descriptions of Security Council decisions against military intervention such as "paralysis" (Pison Hindawi, 2016: 31), "blocking" (Pison Hindawi, 2016: 33), "inertia" (Smith, 2018: 20), "inaction" (Hehir, 2010: 220), or "failures to act" (Hobson, 2016: 433) appears to be counter-humanitarian in effect, as it promotes the activity most conducive to mass atrocity crimes - armed conflict (Kaldor, 2012). In practise, as seen in Libya and Syria, this is likely to be civil war, where the factors of intractability delineated by Kaldor (2012) will be strongest. The evidence found for this thesis suggests that an underlying reason for the counter-productive application of the R2P in Libya may be that the development of the R2P doctrine began with this pro-war presumption and built a rhetorical system for promoting its actuation. The system included promises of prevention and reconstruction, which may have helped to sell the R2P concept to developing countries (Dietrich, 2013) but, in the cases of Libya and Syria, appeared to be illusory.

For humanitarian purposes, an approach which prioritised the avoidance of war would seem to have better prospects (Müllerson, 2013). Such an approach would ideally begin with analysis of the root causes of the crises which led to the demand for the R2P, and include Kaldor's (2012) insights on the nature of contemporary warfare, but omit any utopian assumptions about the future of humanity. It would then focus on the prevention of those causes within an internationally acceptable and sustainable framework, one which did not empower the richest states to govern the poorest in an informal reconstruction of the exploitative empires of the past.

An atrocity crime prevention strategy focused on a policing response, as proposed by Kaldor (2012), tackles the problem at the end of a sequence of events culminating in the risk or occurrence of mass atrocity crimes, not the beginning, and is therefore likely to be inefficient and unreliable - especially in the absence of a police force or even the constitutional framework within which such a force could legitimately operate. The R2P was arguably undermined as an instrument for humanitarian intervention when its developers identified the crucial problem as insufficient coercive action by the international community (Hobson, 2016). The logical solution to a shortage of coercive action is more coercive action, so that the approach was skewed in favour of military intervention, even though it also paid substantial attention to prevention and reconstruction.

It is understandable that deployment of the *war or nothing* dichotomy to accuse

critics of humanitarian military intervention of choosing to do nothing and hence of cynicism and inhumanity (Fiott, 2013) angers those whose criticisms have been inspired by the humanitarian crises caused or exacerbated by such interventions:

> But the dream of harmony among peoples is too precious to be subverted by the masked bigotry of empty moralism. True idealists harbour no particular fear of standing idly by. They ask not whether to do something but what is best to do, and they act, or forbear, accordingly (Wertheim, 2010: 167).

However, this thesis found evidence of sincere humanitarian aims as well as the cynical use of moralising rhetoric in pursuit of military intervention in Libya and Syria. It seems reasonable, for example, to conclude from Sir Gerald Kaufman's anger at the government's misuse of a protective Security Council resolution to justify a regime change war in Libya[1] that his support for the protective action had been sincere. Nonetheless, this thesis finds that Wertheim's point is a crucial one. The pursuit of a reduction of mass atrocity crimes is likely to be more productive if the debate is broadened beyond the action/inaction question and grounded in current reality with reasonable expectations, rather than unrealistic and paradoxical hopes such as the R2P founding "… the emergence of a new international norm, one that mandates the prevention of human destruction" (Bernstein, 2012: 342), by means including human destruction.

In a work on genocide prevention, Thomas Weiss (2018) cited Kofi Annan rhetorically asking the UN General Assembly whether, if there had been a country or alliance willing to intervene to stop the 1994 Rwanda genocide, it should have refrained from intervening without legal authority from the Security Council. However, this did not happen. There was no such volunteer. Addressing what did happen, and its causes, would seem a more constructive route to a solution than the fabrication of emotive rhetorical scenarios.

This would be an onerous task, fraught with controversy, as it would need to look at issues such as European and US racism, imperialism, double standards, and paternalism (Young, 2003; Cunliffe, 2020); the failures of liberalism (Stiglitz, 2002); the misconceptions and failures of development aid (Moyo, 2010; Rist, 2010); the hazards of civil society governance (Polman, 2011); the unresolved legacies of

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[1] Appendix III: para 19529.

colonialism in Africa (Young, 2003); and African governance (Maathai, 2010). However, as Wertheim (2010: 167) wrote, "... if humanitarian interventionism is a worthy cause, it has everything to gain from squarely confronting its costs." This thesis supports the arguments of authors such as Cunliffe (2020), Wertheim (2010), and Mearsheimer (2018) that the reduction of mass atrocity crimes needs more pragmatic realism and less utopian liberalism.

The difficulty of envisaging a system of international enforcement of human rights immune from national ambitions and great power competition tends to support Cunliffe's (2020) contention that the Western conception of human rights lies at the root of the failure of humanitarian intervention in the post-Cold War era. Every proposal for an amended system encounters the same obstacle - the military and economic power needed to enforce governance standards in other countries puts the enforcers beyond the reach of international accountability. This might be so even without the UN structure, but the UN Charter and Security Council vetoes institutionalise unaccountability (Cunliffe, 2020).

Proposals for better humanitarian intervention tend to assume that the problem is one of technical adjustment and consequently fail due to avoiding the fundamentals. Bellamy's (2004) intentions test focusses on perhaps the least testable aspect of humanitarian intervention - good intentions - and assumes that a higher authority, or the governments of states supplying intervention troops, can precisely adjust active military interventions to ensure their alignment with good intentions. Bellinger's (2020) intervention test tasks potential interveners with determining public opinion in states riven with conflict, and makes interveners effectively accountable to themselves. Charny's (2018: 151) genocide eradication toolkit is frankly and aptly classified by its inventor as a "midsummer night's dream". Such solutions, and the liberal faith in the inevitability of civil society growth spreading liberalism, and thereby propagating harmony and reason - exemplified in Mary Kaldor's (2012: 126) prediction that once liberal values have suffused a site of conflict, "territorial solutions will easily follow" - evade crucial practicalities.

The same could, perhaps, be asserted against Cunliffe's (2020) proposal that Western human rights require fundamental reconsideration. However, a wealth of methods exists for the consideration of ethical and political questions. Cunliffe (2020) did not propose a solution, but identified what he considered the fundamental problem at the root of humanitarian intervention, and recommended that it be

seriously examined. It is not probable that this offers hope for the eradication of mass atrocity crimes. However, it may offer the best route towards the redesign of humanitarian intervention in favour of humanitarian outcomes, a route that escapes the tendentious "familiar 'bomb-or-do-nothing' dyad" (Lynch, 2011: 65), and reconsiders the question of human welfare at the level of international relations from basic principles instead of Western liberal assumptions.

Suggestions for Further Study

Investigation of the root causes of mass atrocity crimes in the contemporary world, untrammelled by either the reductionism of the action/inaction dichotomy (Lynch, 2011) or by the utopianism of assumed future worlds (Rawls, 1999; Kaldor, 2003; Hehir, 2019), however realistic they may appear, is an important area of research highlighted by the findings of this thesis. A line of enquiry, the urgency of which will depend on the extent to which the R2P continues to be invoked in the cause of war, concerns the issue of responsible protection (Stuenkel, 2016). How can humanitarian interveners be held accountable for the outcomes of their intervention? How can interventions be controlled to ensure they are protective? Are control and accountability possible within the current materially unequal world order? Can complete R2P intervention - prevent, protect, rebuild - be applied without the R2P becoming an instrument of neo-colonialism, imposing the interests of the interveners over those of the people subject to the intervention (Cunliffe, 2020)? Could any technical solution, such as restructuring the Security Council (Hehir, 2010), lead to an improvement in international action against mass atrocity crimes, while the international order outside the UN remained unchanged in terms of power distribution? If none of the above questions can be answered with concrete, viable blueprints for reform, does the problem lie in the Western liberal conception of human rights, rather than its misapplication, as suggested by Cunliffe (2020)?

An investigation focussing on which, and whose, rights have been improved by Western state interventions in the name of liberal values could help to provide a better understanding of the reality of human rights in the context of liberal hegemony. This might appear to contradict Cunliffe's argument that critiques of humanitarian intervention which aim for a more humane application of human rights are futile because the root problem is the conception, not the application, of human rights. However, the investigation could lead to an empirically founded conception of rights constructed from assessment of benefits accruing from interventions - to

identify the rights bestowed and protected by liberal intervention in practise.

William Robinson (1996) investigated the *de facto* beneficiaries of US overseas interventions presented as promotion of democracy. He found that in the 1980s the USA had switched from supporting dictators in the developing world to promoting a form of heavily regulated democracy, because in a globalising world the latter offered a more reliable apparatus for the maintenance of governance favourable to US interests, as well as a propaganda and policy package more consistent with liberal values. However, the principal beneficiaries remained the same - not the people of the democratised states, but international capitalists and their collaborators among domestic elites.

This analysis may risk overlooking the wider social benefits of liberalisation and the potential for US-designed and controlled democracies to overcome foreign manipulation and set their own national priorities using the mechanisms of democracy. A more comprehensive examination of who benefits, and how, from humanitarian military intervention could provide a working definition of human rights as manifested in liberal practise, rather than as described in liberal rhetoric, and this could be a more productive basis for discussion than the inevitable gap between rhetoric and reality.

Media headlines report dramatic examples, such as the enrichment of US contractors in the US invasion of Iraq (Fifield, 2013); the growth of opium, heroin, and methamphetamine production in US-occupied Afghanistan (Farmer, 2019); and the expropriation of most of Sierra Leone's mineral wealth by foreigners (Maconachie, 2018), but there is a need to look beyond the headlines to provide a full picture of whose rights are served by the assertive pursuit of liberal hegemony.

This line of enquiry could assess the extent to which harm done by liberal intervention is attributable to incompetence, and therefore avoidable by better intervention, or to the successful enforcement of the rights of actors favoured by the interveners over the rights of others, such as Israeli rights over Palestinian rights (Perugini and Gordon, 2015), and therefore perhaps best avoided by less intervention. It could also help to determine whether impartial intervention is a practical possibility, or as the findings of this thesis suggest, effectively an oxymoron (Cunliffe, 2020).

List of Appendices Supplied in Electronic Form

Appendix I - Theme and difference rankings for all years. Excel spreadsheet listing themes in order of their frequency of occurrence in the Libya and Syria debates over the entire period studied, and the same data ranked alphabetically to aid specific theme lookup. Frequency difference ranking included, with differences between the number of occurrences of each theme in each set of debates and ratios of the differences as an approximate significance indicator.

Appendix II - Theme rankings per parliamentary year. Excel spreadsheet listing themes in order of their frequency of occurrence in the Libya and Syria debates, presented separately for each parliamentary year, and the same data ranked alphabetically to aid specific theme lookup.

Appendix III - Libya debates coded with theme labels. Excel spreadsheet containing full text of the Libya debates analysed in the thesis, with paragraph numbers and theme labels.

Appendix IV - Syria debates coded with theme labels. Excel spreadsheet containing full text of the Syria debates analysed in the thesis, with paragraph numbers and theme labels.

Appendix V - Theme codes. Excel spreadsheet listing all theme codes used in the analysis with their labels and definitions, plus an alphabetical index with see and see also references.

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