BRITISH INTERVENTIONS SINCE THE 1990S AS DISTINCTIVELY ''LIBERAL.''

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**Introduction**

This paper critically discusses the respects under which the British interventions since the 1990s (postmodern era) are distinctively liberal. In liberal interventions, powerful states such as the United Kingdom (UK) use international and local efforts to achieve permanent global peace over promoting their national interests (Williams, 2013). In most instances, when great powers intervene against another state, it raises great suspicion for self-interests. The end of the cold war established a new era of armed conflict against states that were a threat to global peace and security (Hoffmann, 1998). Conversely, as theorised by neorealists, these interventions may seek to promote the political agenda of the attacking country (Zengin, 2019). British military interventions since 1990, such as Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone, differ from previous interventions since they did not respond to a direct threat to the country (Farrell, Rynning, and Terriff, 2013).

Britain was among the three in five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)alongside the US and French, who have undertaken the expeditionary operations since the 1990s (Chalmers et al., 2014). However, the interventions raise debate on national, international, and human security, which are fundamental components of global peace and security (Freedman, 2005). In the war against Iraq in 1991, the UK interventions were guided by international rule of non-aggression since the Iraq invasion of Kuwait was against international regulations. My argument on UK interventions since the 1990s as liberal is made in three steps following an explanation of liberalism and identifies UK actions as a liberal state. Section two discuss how UK military interventions such as Iraq 1991 sought to safeguard the credibility of international institutions such as the UN. Section three covers interventions such as Kosovo and Sierra Leone to protect human security in the attacked countries through local and international efforts. Section four covers interventions such as Iraq 2003 to protect the liberal rights of residents in the UK, including citizens and immigrants, amidst the global terrorism threat.

**Liberalism in war and UK as a Liberal State**

Liberalism in war is an approach in international relationships theorising states attacks other states to create stable peace over promoting national interests hence using strategies that prevent the reoccurrence of wars with the states they fought (Williams, 2013). The liberal states use different strategies to defeat illiberal states and to transform them, fulfilling the agenda by international institutions (Farrell et al., 2013). Liberal states have adopted the liberal idea that interventions should be designed around moral ends, which has become the basis of international politics (Turner, 1999). Interventions are morally justified in ending conflicts, reconciling adversaries, restricting warfare against noncombatants, among other situations (Cahill, 2019). Liberalism is common in post cold war since the collapse of the Soviet Union established a new era to promote global values enhanced by the United States as a hegemonic power and by international organisations such as the UN (Ramonet, 2004). The overall objective is to foster fair trade, and protect minorities, to enhance sustained growth. In its attack against Iraq in 1991, Britain defended the international rule for non-aggression since the Iraq invasion and occupation of Kuwait was a violation of international direction (Chalmers et al., 2014). Britain is a liberal state, and the term ethical foreign policy was coined in Britain in the late 1990s for consistency with global values to enhance stable peace.

**Protecting Credibility of Liberal International Institutions**

The British interventions in post cold war era protect the liberal institutionalist perspective from safeguarding the credibility of international organisations and promoting global values for cooperation and peace (Daalder, and Lindsay, 2018). While UNSC permanent powers may use their veto powers to promote national interests by influencing international interventions, some armed conflicts protect the liberal agenda (Farrell et al., 2013). UK interventions against cross-national conflicts, such as the attempted annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, were guided by international rule of non-aggression since Iraq violated UN directives (Hoffmann, 1998). The United States, the hegemonic power at the time, emphasised collective security, forming an alliance with Britain to promote those values (Cortell and Davis, 1996). Britain had developed a sense of responsibility and was actively involved in international affairs beyond national interests (Chalmers et al., 2014). While international organisations such as the UN have been a better alternative as enforcers of international security, they have been able to act effectively under the support of powerful states, including the UK (Hoffmann, 1998). Britain has been committed to standing strong internationally through military interventions in the post cold war era despite diminished political and economic status. British interventions in the post cold war era show great effort to enhance peace enforcement in states whose actions contradict international institutions. In the case of Bosnia, high UN impotence changed the British Army attitude toward peacekeeping (Markus, 2004). The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) recognised revising the wider peacekeeping concepts to promote international security. British Army, in its Peace Support Operations, emphasised the need to establish a 'middle ground' for peace enforcement to ensure the use of force was impartial and even-handed (Markus, 2004). Unlike in the previous wars where such interventions would involve Britain war against a state with control, the subjects of war were collapsed states (McInnes, 2003). The change in Britain interventions toward an international goal is evidenced by the widening efforts in joint military efforts. The joint doctrine changed Britain military culture leading to a common understanding of warfare with other states (Markus, 2004).

Following the Gulf War, British military interventions sought to promote international peace as a partner to the sole remaining superpower. A grand strategic alignment with America influenced British policymakers to support interventions beyond domestic political will (Gause, 2019). Liberation of Kuwait was a combined and joint operation of new quality showing a need for change toward peace enforcement in the international community (Markus, 2004). By the end of the Gulf War, the British Army had recognised that joint military campaigns were crucial for the exploitation of western technological superiority (Farrell, and Terriff, 2020). In contrast, the joint military intervention was not a strong strategy in the cold era where Britain emphasised national interests over international security. Britain interventions are based on the understanding that the country no longer possesses the economic and military means to leverage national interests by imposing its will on other nations (Daddow and Schnapper, 2013). While it may appear as a means for Britain to secure its national interest, establishing multilateral alliances is an approach to play a great power role despite diminished political and economic status. Collaboration with the world superpower in its intervention is evidence of promoting international security and human security over national interests. The relationship with the US is important in enhancing stability in the world. According to Lee and Beech (2011), coalitions in modern British politics during wartime are often led by liberal or conservative politicians.

The UK and the US have often enacted bilateral military cooperation with other key partners such as France on the ground of shared interests to promote world stability and cut defence costs (Jung, 2005). Even when there has been opposition to military interventions by the EU, such was the case in Kosovo, Iraq, and Libya interventions, and it was not due to Britain obstruction but opposition by other states like Germany (Daddow and Schnapper, 2013). Although Britain was historically depicted as an awkward partner of the European Union, its political objective was to take global responsibility, hence prioritising the values held by the US regarding events in other nations (Fontana and Parsons, 2015). Global alliances in military interventions cannot succeed on the grounds of national interests but depend on shared global values. NATO members have not ignored the events in other nations due to the potential global ramifications. Britain alliances with the US confirms similar values on the need to aid states which have been under dangerous ideologies such as dictatorship, extreme Marxism, and Communism, among other ideologies as designated by Washington (Williams, 2013). A liberal coalition between US and UK stressed the need to create democracy, peace and prosperity in other states such as Iraq. The attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 was perceived as not an attack on America but the ‘stable peace’ which the international community sought to create (Williams, 2013).

**Enhancing Peace and Security in ‘Illiberal’ States**

The British interventions in post cold war era also promoted Liberal rights in developing countries by fighting against tyrannies and not undermining the country. Most British interventions, such as in Kosovo and in Sierra Leone, primarily aimed to protect citizens against tyrants over the national political agenda (Farrell et al., 2013). Furthermore, the interventions in Iraq and Bosnia in the 1990s and Afghanistan in the 2000s sought to turn the tyrannies into democracies by ensuring the wars would be succeeded by reconstructions. Foreign involvement is a significant approach to address the deeper causes of conflict in these countries. In the state of chaos, liberalism incorporates the use of force for self-defence and collective defence over aggression (MacMillan, 2005). With the contemporary tyrannies, massive violation of human rights, including ethnic cleansing and genocide, the British interventions seek to enhance other states' peace and security (Hoffmann, 1998). Although Britain was frustrated by UN authorised mission in Bosnia, the country maintained efforts to undertake peace operations. British principle was that it was difficult to protect the people when opponents were intent on war (Farrell et al., 2013). Under the ‘New Labour’ government elected in 1997, Britain leveraged the use of force for humanitarian purposes. Since 1997 Britain expenditure on overseas development assistance increased significantly, overtaking Germany and France (Chalmers et al., 2014). Despite the relative economic decline, Briain has retained the fourth-largest defence budget surpassing France and Germany. Although interventions in Afghanistan were not matched with civilian efforts in 2002 and 2003, which affected civilian and diplomatic engagement, later British emphasised civilian efforts to be primary in its action (Chalmers et al., 2014). Hence a humanitarian mission is characteristic of its wars in peace.

In the 1990s, the UK developed a humanitarian mission to guide its military actions that aim to aid states headed by illiberal regimes to protect the civil rights of those residents (Lewis, 2021). Conversely, until the mid-1990s, the UK made limited, short and sharp demonstrations of force and intense campaigns against the weakest states in conflict to make individual nations safer and to guarantee freedom, equality. The humanitarian mission required liberal states to adopt new thinking to achieve strategic effects, including collaboration with civilian partners (Jung, 2005). The United States launched a military transformation strategy to incorporate new military ideas and technologies later adopted by the British Army and adapted to the British circumstances (Farrell, Rynning, and Terriff, 2013). With the special relationships with the United States, Britain could advance its military strategy to facilitate a humanitarian approach to conflicts centred on combat (Farrell et al., 2013).

In the Kosovo crisis, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, explained that the attack was not targeting Serbina people or undermining the country, but on president Milosevic for conducting awful cruelty in the country (Markus, 2004). While the interventions are followed by diplomatic alliances, there is a greater emphasis on the transformation of the states to democratic institutions that safeguard citizens liberal rights. Britain parliament justified military action in Kosovo on the need to protect innocent men, women and children from death, barbarism and ethnic cleansing by brutal dictatorship (Daddow and Schnapper, 2013). In the former Yugoslavia, Britain deployed an army to protect humanitarian relief. However, the phobia of intervention in the Rwanda genocide was a great threat to the people of Rwanda, and this undermines determination by great powers to protect human security (Chalmers et al., 2014). Furthermore, despite failure in counter-insurgency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, showing inability to adapt military tactics to a liberal strategic direction, efforts helped safeguard the security of their citizens. The interventions are distinctively liberal since there was no direct military threat to the UK and achieved strategic success to promote human security.

Some countries in the developing world are exploring liberal idealism in a new democratic regime with the assumption that they would live in peace (Chalmers et al., 2014). The risks of conflicts are high since countries are turbulent and tempted by war in the process of democratisation. Although liberal internationalism theory explains interventions should be limited to humanitarian operations to protect the victims of disasters, others emphasise the need to use force to address the deeper causes of the disasters (Clarke, 2001). An intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 was against an intra-state conflict, and the UK reinforced UN efforts to strengthen a legitimate government through different liberal strategies. First was through force to support the legitimate government, followed by a former combatants disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme, and addressing the regional source of support to the rebels (Chalmers et al., 2014). Furthermore, the civil conflicts in Sierra Leone were prompted by the presence of readily captured resources, yet Britain efforts supported the development of a legitimate government to restore peace in the region (Silberfein, 2004).

**Liberal Response to Terrorism: Protecting Citizens and Immigrants**

Britain interventions are also distinctively liberal as they seek to protect the civil rights of citizens and immigrants by recognising terrorism as a global threat. Britain foreign policy is grounded on the premise that dictatorship and conflicts in other countries can spread beyond its borders (Hampshire, 2008). Most significant is the 2003 Iraq war, where Iraq was believed to make a deadly weapon that, on the hand of Al-Qaida, was a threat to the UK and other nations (Freedman, 2005). Interventions responded to evidence of new dangers and heightened awareness of existing dangers in the new world, including transnational organised crimes, religious extremists, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, among others (Daddow and Schnapper, 2013). These dangers threatened the safety of the global population, and Britain interventions in the new world were rationalised with liberal thinking to enhance international security. UK foreign policy changed to adopt new thinking to match the new challenges (Markus, 2004). This involved changing the concept of national interest from the realist state centrism to collective solutions for the global community under the liberalism model (Daddow and Schnapper, 2013). The transition from peacekeeping to peace enforcement in Britain account for strong actions by British Amy since the 1990s. According to Markus (2004), the British Army changed its perception of war in other countries, increasing the concern to get and remain involved until peace is achieved. Hence while the British government sought to neutralise potential attacks on the UK, it protected civil rights in the recipient illiberal states. Furthermore, Britain interventions over the last few years, although they are based on stabilisation and counterterrorism, interventions such as Iraq 2003 focused on safeguarding civil rights.

Recent anti-terror policies by the UK include the traditional rationality principle to emphasise homeland security over civil rights in the recipient countries, reducing military interventions (Hampshire, 2008). Military interventions immediately post 9/11 long-term objective was to eliminate threats of potentially being a safe haven for terrorist organisations, which would violate the civil rights of immigrants in the country as well as its citizens in the illiberal states (Mellon, 2002). The rise of globalised terrorism showcased by the 9/11 attack in the US influenced Britain to use force to pursue national security, protecting the civil rights of its citizens and immigrants. The 9/11 attack demonstrated the need for liberal democracies to protect themselves from the illiberal forces. The 9/11 attack heightened awareness of the security threat imposed by liberal thinking, including globalisation and interdependence (Mellon,2002).

Interventions were distinctively liberal, with the British government supporting the US invasion in Afghanistan to hunt down the Al-Qaida terrorists (Farrell et al., 2013). Illiberal forces in post cold war posed a threat to Britain and other developed western countries and their affiliates, and enhancing homeland security guaranteed civil rights. They were pursuing foreign threats in the East to minimise jeopardising freedom, democracy and justice principles if residents would be perceived as suspects (Lodge, 2004). Recent interventions are based on counterterrorism and stability, or there is a phobia of interventions against terrorist organisations due to minimised threats on domestic security. However, most of the interventions immediately post 9/11 prevented disillusioned people from joining terrorist organisations (Chalmers et al., 2014). In the Afghanistan invasion, the British supported interventions to remove the Taliban host from power since they posed a threat to religious extremists in its country. The immediate interventions by Britain post 9/11 are against the terrorist groups and state sponsoring terrorism (Farrell et al., 2013). Thus the Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns impacted the British public and politicians view of military interventions.

**Conclusion**

This essay explains three accounts where the British interventions in the post-cold war were distinctively liberal. The liberal interventions seek to promote global peace and stability but not to undermine the sovereignty of the countries fought hence using different strategies to defeat the combatants and support their transformation. First, the interventions are liberal since they include a military intervention to protect the credibility of international organisations such as the UN for stable international security. Interventions such as the Gulf war are propelled against the state for non-compliance with UN directives. Britain takes a responsibility to be involved in such international affairs to protect civil rights over national interests. On this account, collaboration with the world superpower demonstrates the adoption of shared global values over national interests. Second Britain interventions post-cold war includes a humanitarian mission to protect residents in a state affected by civil wars and not to undermine their countries. While phobia of interventions in Rwanda raises questions of humanitarian missions and unfolds a realist view for diplomatic relationships, Britain increased its overseas developmental assistance expenditure since 1997 despite the economic decline. Civilian efforts in different interventions in Sierra Leone, Kosovo and Libya demonstrate a humanitarian mission. Finally, Britain military interventions in post cold war protected the liberal rights of citizens and other residents responding to the global terrorism threat. UK host immigrants from different parts of the world, and transnational organised crimes, religious extremists, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, among other existing dangers, are neutralised through foreign interventions. Collaboration with the US demonstrates the transition from realist state centrism to collective solutions.

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