Ideas, tradition and norm entrepreneurs: retracing guiding principles of foreign policy in Blair and Chirac's speeches on Iraq

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Abstract. The significance of ideas to foreign policy analysis remains contested, despite a plethora of empirical studies applying ideational frameworks. Drawing on social constructivism, this article proposes a causal understanding where ideas derived from tradition define the political space for contemporary debates and effect foreign policy behaviour. This ideational approach is substantiated by a historical study of guiding principles in British and French foreign policy, which establish a set of baseline expectations for the analysis of Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac's speeches on Iraq. The empirical study shows that whereas Chirac largely stayed within a French ideational framework, Blair applied a more complex combination of ideas from both traditions. Conceptualising Blair as an aspiring (but ultimately unsuccessful) norm entrepreneur is a fruitful interpretation of this role.

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Introduction

The study of ideas in foreign policy has seen a rise in popularity during the last few years, drawing on social constructivism as well as reflectivist and discourse-oriented avenues. Foreign policy analysis (FPA), traditionally rather nebulous on epistemological issues, has seen a sharpened focus on ideas coupled with debates on whether (either) social constructivism or reflectivism may be of service to FPA.[1]

[1] Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (eds), *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Vendulka Kubálková, (ed.), *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998); Karin Fierke and Knud Erik Jørgensen (eds), *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2001); Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Knud Erik Jørgensen and Tonny B. Knudsen, *International Relations in Europe: Traditions, Perspectives, Destinations* (London: Routledge, 2006); David P. Houghton, 'Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision Making: Toward a Constructivist Approach', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 3 (2007), pp. 24–45.

The present article extends contributions from a constructivist perspective by elaborating the concept of *guiding principles*, defined here as core ideas derived from tradition and essential to forge a national foreign policy consensus. Guiding principles can be sought out through historical analysis and may, as will be shown in this article, be analytically useful to gauge the cognitive basis of foreign policy making. In order to measure the significance of such ideas, speeches and debates offer key empirical data. By allowing for individual agency within collective cognitive frames, this approach also avoids the loss of agency to which ideational analysis is sometimes disposed.[2]

In the foreign policy domain, collective ideas are allowed immediate leverage on the formulation and justification of policy. Defining a nation against the external world has a particular symbolic significance: in Europe, it has been argued, despite enhanced integration, the legitimacy of foreign policy remains embedded in national identity and self-ascribed roles.[3] Identity is strongly geared towards established tradition, making innovation in foreign policy a daunting and rarely accomplished task.[4] Studying foreign policy debates is hence a venture that may shed light not only on idea structures among policy-makers but on the political culture itself and the principles and ideas underpinning it. Guiding principles, according to this perspective, set the terms for foreign policy debates by defining a political space which actors leave only in exceptional circumstances, and typically at considerable cost. Strategic and material interests affect these debates, but they are often overridden by the element of historical continuity. Thus, studies of foreign policy debates and of policymaking should acknowledge the importance of collective ideas, rooted in identity politics and the traditional role to which a nation sees itself suited.[5]

To exemplify this ideational approach to FPA, the present article provides a comparative study of speeches by the British prime minister, Tony Blair and the French President, Jacques Chirac, preceding the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. The theoretical basis, discussed in the first section of the article, draws on social constructivism to account for how ideas impact on political identity and decision making by defining the legitimate freedom of manoeuvre. As background to the empirical analysis, section two gives a brief historical overview of post-war French and British foreign policy, from which a set of contrasting guiding principles are extracted. The resulting dichotomies are applied in section three in the empirical analysis, which examines the extent to which traditional guiding principles were prevalent in Blair and Chirac's speeches on Iraq. In the final section I return to the theoretical implications of the analysis, with particular focus on the balance between collective ideas and individual agency.

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[2] Valerie Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 1 (2005), pp. 1–30.

[3] Lisbeth Aggestam, 'Role Theory and European Foreign Policy: A Framework of Analysis', in O. Elgström and M. Smith (eds), *The European Union's Roles in International Politics. Concepts and Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 11–29.

[4] Jamie Gaskarth, 'Discourses and Ethics: The Social Construction of British Foreign Policy', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2 (2006), pp. 325–41.

[5] Philippe G. Le Prestre (ed.), *Role Quests in the Post-Cold War Era. Foreign Policies in Transition* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); Marijke Breuning, 'Configuring Issue Areas: Belgian and Dutch Representations of the Role of Foreign Assistance in Foreign Policy', in D.A. Sylvan and J.F. Voss (eds), *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 303–32.

Theorising the causal impact of ideas

The significance of ideas to FPA remains contested, despite a number of empirical studies applying ideational frameworks.[6] The present article argues that conventional social constructivism offers a promising avenue to the study of foreign policy debates. Essential to such research is a refined understanding of both agency and ideas in the causal chain of policymaking. The theoretical argument presented here is that collective ideas defined by tradition shape the political space for contemporary debates and effect the foreign policy decisions of policy makers. Guiding principles of foreign policy are conceived as a stable body of ideas which set the terms for conceptualising, discussing and deciding foreign policy. Elitism and socialisation in parliament help maintain this stability around traditional concerns.[7] My empirical focus in this article is on the causal link between traditional guiding principles and ideas present in foreign policy debates. Before elaborating the theoretical framework, I will give a brief review of competing analytical approaches to ideas.

Concepts such as narratives, idea sets or policy paradigms are relevant to the full range of political analysis and have, for example, become prevalent in studies of the British domestic agenda.[8] The result has been new understandings of how structural, ideational and strategic variables impact on policy output. Empirical studies of ideas in *foreign* policy have been less systematic, inspired by diverse epistemological positions and united by genre (historical or case-based) rather than theoretical position. Applying social constructivism to the field has yet to resolve this confusion: in particular, the constructivist belief in causality differs from reflectivist epistemologies.[9]

Broadening the scope from FPA to international relations, some of the same unresolved tensions arise. The study of ideas has suffered from poor conceptualisation and little agreement over what analytical role they should be assigned –

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[6] Roxanne L. Doty, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of US Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly*, 37 (1993), pp. 297–320; Henrik Larsen (1997) *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis. France, Britain and Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997); David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Paul A. Chilton, Mikhail V. Ilyin and Jacob L. Mey (eds), *Political Discourse in Transition in Europe 1989–1991* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1998); Donald V. Sylvan and James F. Voss (eds), *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver (eds), *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States* (London: Routledge, 2001); Henry R. Nau, *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[7] Gaskarth, 'Discourses and ethics'.

[8] Mark Bevir and Rod Rhodes, *Interpreting British Governance* (London: Routledge, 2003); *Governance Narratives* (London: Routledge, 2006); 'Interpretive Approaches to British Government and Politics', *British Politics*, 1 (2006), pp. 84–112; Michael Kenny, 'Ideas, Ideologies and the British Political Tradition', in Ian Holliday, Andrew Gamble and Geraint Parry (eds), *Fundamentals in British Politics* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 275–300; David Marsh and Matthew Hall, 'The British Political Tradition: Explaining the Fate of New Labour's Constitutional Reform Agenda', *British Politics*, 2 (2007), pp. 215–38.

[9] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Steve Smith, 'Foreign Policy is What States Make of It: Social Construction and International Relations Theory', in Kubálková (ed.), *Foreign Policy*, pp. 38–55; Houghton, 'Reinvigorating the Study of Foreign Policy Decision Making'.

resulting in unrefined methodology and little scope for generalisation.[10] There has also been a lack of consensus on concepts; 'ideas' or 'ideology' have confusingly referred to variables at the personal as well as the social and national levels. The absence of a consensus has been the more flagrant in attempts to theorise ideas in causal relationships. With questions of causality, the structure/agency conflict is immediate: ideas could be conceived as, on the one hand, fundamental structural movers or, on the other hand, flexible devices applied by political actors to win support. In the realist paradigm ideas are typically seen in the latter perspective of manipulation and interests in disguise; others perceive ideology as endogenous, but relevant only to certain types of regimes. What appears a more fruitful framework for ideational analysis is the literature where ideas are considered as *guides and constraints to all forms of political agency*. Carlsnaes represents this tradition when referring to foreign policy as the 'extension of [national] values into the international arena'; Hunt, equally, refers to ideology as 'sets of beliefs and values [. . .] that make international relations intelligible and decision making possible'.[11] The challenge, according to both these contributions, is to seek out the specific ideas underpinning decisions.

In order to accomplish the task of defining ideas behind policy, we should look towards the conventional constructivism initially propagated by Alexander Wendt.[12] Constructivism does not refute the material facts of international relations; however, it modifies the rationalist conception of objective interests.[13] Of particular significance is the inclusion of collective ideas and identity which are considered analytically prior to interests. This widening of analytical scope is based on the view that interests follow broadly from collective beliefs. Constructivism thus represents a synthesis of materialist and idealist assumptions of foreign policy. In a broader sense, foreign policy becomes 'the way in which a country expresses its individual heritage and character to the outside world'.[14] The ideational heritage is subject to continuous reinterpretation and is sufficiently flexible to accommodate a broad range of interests around its core beliefs.[15] When a performance crisis occurs, it may cause a reorientation of the guiding principles, which will then be redefined.[16] To what extent ideational revision results in profound change is

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[10] Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change. Soviet/Russian Behavior And the End of the Cold War* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. ix.

[11] Walter Carlsnaes, *Ideology and Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 4; Michael H. Hunt, 'Ideology', *The Journal of American History*, 77 (1990), pp. 108–15.

[12] Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, 46 (1992), pp. 391–425; *Social Theory of International Politics*.

[13] Jutta Weldes, 'Constructing National Interests', *European Journal of International Relations*, 2 (1996), pp. 275–318; Emanuel Adler, 'Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics', *European Journal of International Relations*, 3 (1997), pp. 319–63; Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', *World Politics*, 50 (1998), pp. 324–48.

[14] Christopher Hill, 'A Theoretical Introduction', in William Wallace and William E. Paterson (eds), *Foreign Policy Making in Western Europe. A Comparative Approach* (Westmead: Saxon House, 1978), pp. 7–30, p. 22; Alex McLeod, 'L'Approche Constructiviste de la Politique Étrangère', in Frédéric Charillon (ed.), *Politique Étrangère: Nouveaux Regards* (Paris: Presses de Science Po, 2002), pp. 61–90.

[15] According to Hill and Wallace, '[e]ffective foreign policy rests upon a shared sense of national identity, of a nation-state's "place in the world", its friends and enemies, its interests and aspirations'. These are 'assumptions [that] are embedded in national history and myth, changing slowly over time'. See Christopher Hill and William Wallace, 'Introduction: Actors and Actions', in C. Hill (ed.), *The Actors in Europe's Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 1–16, p. 8.

[16] McLeod, 'L'approche constructiviste', p. 78;

dependent on political entrepreneurship and the alternatives available at the time of crisis.

Ideational path dependence is a useful analytical concept to describe this process, echoing the conception of *institutional* path dependence that is seen to limit the scope for functionally driven change.[17] More generally, our understanding of the role of ideas in FPA can be further enriched by the literature on new institutionalism.[18] Here, to conceptualise institutional change the role of both ideas and political agency are brought into the analysis.[19] Agents who take on the role as reformers of collectively held beliefs could be theorised as norm entrepreneurs. Where ideational change occurs, and debates enter new territory (thus opening a space for policy change), agency can be traced back to such entrepreneurs. Significantly, however, they must benefit from windows of opportunity where a change in collectively held beliefs is conceivable. The emphasis on agency maintains that guiding principles 'do not appear out of thin air; they are actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior'.[20] Combining the impact of collective ideas with windows of opportunity and norm entrepreneurs could thus help resolve some of the tensions in FPA between structure and agency oriented analyses. I now turn to the foreign policy traditions of Britain and France to define a set of collective ideas constituting the backdrop for debates on Iraq, where the rhetoric of Blair and Chirac will be analysed from a constructivist perspective.

Guiding principles in the British foreign policy tradition[21]

This brief review of British foreign policy attempts to define a set of guiding principles that have been consistent throughout the period since 1945. Among the principles seen to pervade policymaking are a privilege for Anglo-American relations, with NATO as corollary; insular reserve towards the European continent; a maintained global presence with special preference for the Commonwealth; a policy based on pragmatism rather than principle; and, finally, a liberal belief in international trade.

British post-war foreign policy could perhaps be summarised by the term continuity alongside decline. In this view, there is an essential conservatism in

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[17] Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time. History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[18] James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 'The New Institutionalism. Organizational Factors in Political Life', *The American Political Science Review*, 78 (1984), pp. 734–49; *Rediscovering Institutions. The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1989); Kathleen Thelen, 'How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis', in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 208–40.

[19] Mark M. Blyth '"Any More Bright Ideas?" The Ideational Turn of Comparative Political Economy', review article, *Comparative Politics*, 29 (1997), pp. 229–50; Colin Hay and Daniel Wincott, 'Structure, Agency and Historical Institutionalism', *Political Studies*, 46 (1998), pp. 951–57.

[20] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization*, 52 (1998), pp. 887–917.

[21] The following reviews of post-war British and French foreign policy draw upon extensive use of secondary sources. For the purpose of this article, the reviews have been abridged; a more elaborate account is given in Bratberg, *Grand Nations*.

British foreign policy. Combined with a predominantly pragmatic outlook, this has made decision-makers evoke a mixture of historical precedence and common sense rather than great principles through policy developments since 1945.[22] A preference for unstated pragmatism has also been accompanied by the absence of explicitly stated aims and principles in foreign policy. Only in recent years has this changed: the formulation of a set of international priorities, first presented in a White Paper in 2003 and succeeded by a similar document three years later marks a clear departure from the British tradition of implicitness.[23] This tradition may also explain why, as late as by the end of the Cold War one could claim that no reformulation of national priorities had been stated since Churchill's vision of 'the three circles' (Europe, US and Commonwealth) with which post-war Britain was to engage.[24]

In the first decade of that post-war era, British policy-makers were determined to keep American interests committed to Europe, from an economic and strategic point of view just as much as from a perception of kinship.[25] Anglo-American partnership rapidly acquired a fixed status on the British side. With support from its Atlantic ally, Britain reduced the danger of overstretching while opting for the maintenance of influence based on a strong historical role. The three circles doctrine served as a corollary to this commitment to American power. A 'masterly ideological mystification', it served to legitimise British hesitation over priorities and direction during the following decades.[26] While relying on the special relationship for strategic support, Britain's balancing of the three circles became increasingly precarious in the post-war decades – often ritualised rather than given actual content.[27] Let down by the US over the Suez crisis in 1956 and opting for withdrawal in the late 1960s from its remaining Asian strongholds: Britain had indeed, in Dean Acheson's phrase 'lost an empire and not yet found a role'.[28]

In its relations with Europe, the insular view of Britain as offshore and self-reliant has served as a rationale for disentanglement. Historically, the predominant British view was of the salient military threat being 'the achievement by a single state of domination on the European continent'.[29] Meanwhile, the

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[22] In the words of Lord William Rees-Mogg (interview with author, London 10 November 2004), Britain's foreign policy follows 'a *pragmatic* and *liberal* tradition [. . .] in the sense that it defends the liberal causes of the world, but with a clear conscience of the limitations of its power – of anyone's power – to make the world a better place'.

[23] FCO, *UK International Priorities: A Strategy for the FCO*. White Paper, Command 6052, published 12 February 2003; *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The UK's International Priorities*. White Paper, Command 6762, published 28 March 2006.

[24] Christopher Tugendhat and William Wallace, *Options for British Foreign Policy in the 1990s* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1988).

[25] Thus, Britain became a main benefactor of American aid through the Marshall Plan from 1947. In the military domain, there were British aspirations that the US would help sustain British commitments overseas, a concern that was brought to the fore by emerging expansionism on the part of the Soviet Union. This reached a crucial point in 1947, as British requests for American help in Greece and Turkey worked as rationale for the Truman doctrine, which would offer American help to peoples subdued under the Communist threat.

[26] Andrew Gamble, *The Conservative Nation* (London: Routledge, 1974), p. 85.

[27] Paul Sharp, *Thatcher's Diplomacy. The Revival of British Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), p. 6.

[28] Acheson quoted from his speech at the Military Academy, West Point, 5 December 1962. Accessed through Oxford Dictionaries on 19 June 2008 at: {http://www.askoxford.com/results/?view=quot&freesearch=dean+acheson&branch=14123648&textsearchtype=exact}.

[29] Tugendhat and Wallace, *Options for British Foreign Policy*, p. 62.

political and cultural divide constituted by the Channel has meant that Britain has been a consistent laggard in the process of European integration. With the exception of Edward Heath's premiership (1970–74), every British government since the first strides towards membership has held strong qualms over Europe. European debates in Britain have been easily caught by historical representations of the continent as violent, unstable and opposed to fundamental British traditions of parliamentary sovereignty, common law and ancient liberties.[30] Differing political cultures and, above all, differing conceptions of what integration is meant to obtain (closer unity and social protection vs. functional cooperation, common market) have remained.[31]

Reflecting this cultural divide, in the global empire that Britain administered until the mid-twentieth century, 'profitable trade and cheap diplomacy' were predominant ideas, well-founded on self-interest, yet 'happily in conformity with moral dictates'.[32] Entrepreneurship and liberalism at home were echoed abroad in the notion of free trade imperialism, according to which the Empire was fundamentally a framework for commerce.[33] Liberalism was coupled with individualism, a belief in the virtue of personal liberty from governmental interference, in the material as well as the spiritual domain.[34] By protecting that liberty, Parliament would play a pivotal role, the remains of which we witness today in the symbolic importance of parliamentary sovereignty against the supra-nationalism of the EU. The question of *ideational* impact on British politics may be a fallacy, as precedence and common sense seem more often evoked than ideas. History influences politics rather through the 'notion of enduring, timeless interests', summed up in keywords as Britain's global extension, its basis in commerce and consequent reliance on open seas.[35] This entanglement of material interest and ideas goes to illustrate how core ideas in Britain have acquired their position through proved utility and profit.[36]

To what extent has this ideational material changed over time? Conservative rule under Margaret Thatcher was perceived as revolutionary in many areas of domestic policy. In the foreign policy domain, however, Thatcherism implied no radical departure, aiming explicitly for the re-establishment of British influence abroad, in part through affirmative military strength. With regards to European

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[30] Oliver J. Daddow, 'Euroscepticism and the Culture of the Discipline of History', *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2006), pp. 309–28; Piers Ludlow, 'Us or Them? The Meaning of Europe in British Political Discourse', in Mikael af Malmborg and Bo Stråth (eds), *The Meaning of Europe. Variety and Contention Within and Between Nations* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 101–24; William Wallace, 'Foreign Policy and National Identity in the United Kingdom', *International Affairs*, 67:1 (1991), pp. 65–80.

[31] Andrew Gamble, *Between Europe and America: The Future of British Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[32] Tugendhat and Wallace, *Options for British Foreign Policy*, p. 2.

[33] Bernard Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World 1850–1986: Delusions of Grandeur* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), p. 118.

[34] David Marquand, *The Unprincipled Society. New Demands and Old Politics* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1988), p. 221.

[35] Christopher Hill, 'The Historical Background: Past and Present in British Foreign Policy', in Michael Smith, Steve Smith and Brian White (eds), *British Foreign Policy. Tradition, Change and Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 25–49, pp. 28–9.

[36] Notably, the liberal belief in free trade, a cherished goal of British foreign policy, was also the *material interest* of a burgeoning industrial class, as Victorian Britain profited strongly from export-driven trade. At the same time, self-sufficiency was never considered an option in this country raised in the virtue – and necessity – of exchange.

integration, the prime minister championed a further development of the common market, yet remained staunchly nationalist in questions outside the economic domain. Ideally, the Europe supported by Britain would broaden its area of free trade rather than deepen integration into social or foreign/military policy. All in all, Thatcher's international approach was conservative, its emphasis put on liberating the forces of international capitalism while maintaining a military balance in Europe.[37]

Whereas John Major's seven years as prime minister only moderated the most controversial Thatcherite stances on Europe, the return of a Labour government in 1997 was expected to bring more fundamental change. Labour did indeed bring a new language to the domain of British foreign policy; what followed in substance, however, is more debated.[38] In the early years of the Labour government, much was made of the supposedly ethical dimension to foreign policy, supported by debt relief and peace-building efforts, a suggested clamp-down on weapons exports to rogue states and, in Kosovo (1999) and Sierra Leone (2000) by humanitarian intervention. In a much-quoted speech to the Economic Club in Chicago on 22 April 1999, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, gave the ideological rationale for such intervention.[39] As manifested by events thereafter, the concept of humanitarian intervention implies a difficult terrain both in terms of ethics and international law. Both the Kosovo campaign (1999) and the Iraq invasion (2003) lacked endorsement by the United Nations (UN) Security Council due to disagreement among the veto powers – yet, the two cases received sharply contrasting judgements from the international community.[40] It may be analytically useful to draw a line between the early years of Blair's premiership, characterised by caution and humanitarian reasoning, and his later embrace of bold intervention on security grounds, accentuated by the events of 11 September 2001. Whether a departure from traditional guiding principles is detectable in Blair's speeches on Iraq is an underlying question in this article.

Guiding principles in the French foreign policy tradition

Arguably, a summary of post-war French foreign policy could emanate in a set of broadly shared ideas despite great political transformation underway. The essential guiding principles extracted in the review below are: belief in a strong Europe under French guidance; a preference for multilateralism, with the EU and UN as dominant vehicles, partly operating as counterweight to American power; parallel significance of French *independent* influence on the international scene, supported

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[37] Wyn Rees, 'The Anglo-American Security Relationship', in Stuart Croft (ed.), *British Security Policy. The Thatcher Years and the End of the Cold War* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 143–60, p. 145.

[38] William Wallace, 'The Collapse of British Foreign Policy', *International Affairs*, 82 (2005), pp. 53–68; Paul D. Williams, *British Foreign Policy Under New Labour, 1997–2005* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[39] Tony Blair, 'Doctrine of the International Community', speech to the Economic Club of Chicago, 22 April 1999. Accessed on 7 August 2007 at: {http://www.ndol.org/ndol_ci.cfm?contentid=829&kaid=128&subid=187}.

[40] Nicholas J. Wheeler and Tim Dunne, 'Moral Britannia? Evaluating the Ethical Dimension of Labour's Foreign Policy' (London: the Foreign Policy Centre, 2004), pp. 27–31.

by strong presidential power; an esteemed civilising mission based on French republican legacy; a foreign policy based on principle more than on pragmatism; and, finally, a perceived importance of global reach with former colonial relations as bedrock.

In contrast with Britain, French foreign policy in the post-war period gives a primary impression of rupture just as much as continuity. In a longer perspective, French political history shows numerous cases of regime change.[41] However, while institutional – and even constitutional – design has been subject to tumultuous changes, continuity is what characterises many of the *ideological* elements of French politics. Arguably, the natural starting point for a post-war evaluation of French foreign policy is 1958 rather than 1945. Signified by the rise to presidency of Charles de Gaulle and the Constitution establishing the Fifth Republic, there is ample reason to suggest a new era began in 1958. According to de Gaulle, the new Constitution washed away the symptoms of weakness and division to return to the ancient, grander vision of France. Undoubtedly, the Fifth Republic marked a resolute break with executive impotence. Foreign policy set an example for the strong presidential role by becoming part of his *domaine séparé*. The immediate implication was firm, thought contested leadership in a tumultuous period of colonial war in Algeria. In a longer perspective, however, de Gaulle applied foreign policy as part of his project to forge a new political consensus.

Prior to 1958, French political history had wavered between parliamentary dominance on one hand and charismatic-plebiscitary rule on the other. In the Fourth Republic (1946–58), much like the Third (1871–1940), the balance had tilted towards the National Assembly, where a broad range of political parties battled for power and prestige. The 1958 constitution made a resolute break with this tradition by introducing a semi-parliamentary polity with presidential pre-dominance. Nevertheless, de Gaulle was less of a break with French political tradition than what has often been claimed.[42] The emphasised view of the Gaullists was that France was in need of strong leadership to *re-establish* republican ideals, in a nation 'historically divided, politically weak, and yet culturally strong, [. . .] and potentially "great"'.[43] International prestige was perceived as indispensable in this process – suggesting that a more affirmative role would be assigned to French foreign policy.

Thus, a set of explicit guiding principles were to permeate French foreign policy, strongly reflected in the rhetoric of successive presidents. One central tenet was the emphasis on French exceptionalism, largely drawing on France's revolutionary legacy and its perceived historical role as spearhead of human rights. According to this perspective, applauded by de Gaulle, France was committed to a vigorous presence abroad. In the foreign policy domain this further implied an emphasis on autonomy and a French civilising mission. De Gaulle's was a vision of nation-states as the building blocs, organised in a clear-cut hierarchy with

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[41] More fundamentally, France has been a laboratory of constitutions. The quest for constitutional perfectionism marks a deep contrast to the British political system, which almost 800 years after the Magna Carta has yet to be laid down in a written constitution.

[42] Philip G. Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France. French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 4–5.

[43] Philip C. Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur. Ideological Aspects of de Gaulle's Foreign Policy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 2.

France in a prominent role, as reflected in the composition of the UN Security Council.[44] Independence, however, was also conducive to the support of a multipolar world, opposing the logic of two dominant blocs imposed by the Cold War. French withdrawal from the integrated military structure of NATO (1966) and development of an independent nuclear deterrent exemplifies this idea. In few domains has French post-war autonomy been more clearly evoked than in military affairs, where it has always been invested with large symbolic significance.[45]

De Gaulle gave his contribution to what 'may have been the most unified French nation since before the Great Revolution'.[46] Among the few distinct adjustments pursued by his successors, Pompidou (1969–74) and Giscard d'Estaing (1974–81), was a more cooperative approach to Europe, based on the understanding that France alone could only play a limited role on the world scene. In foreign policy continuity and Europe are keywords even of the presidencies of François Mitterrand (1981–95) and Jacques Chirac (1995–2007).[47] Closer European integration represents a compromise of the nationalist twist to French foreign policy, yet is more in line with de Gaulle's vision of the world than often conceived. This is particularly clear in the French pursuit of global influence through Europe. Aspirations for continental leadership have long roots in French political thought. One could here observe a tension in the French political mind between de Gaulle's *national-republican* and Monnet's *federationalist* approach to Europe.[48] The latter had been given ascendancy with the emerging European integration. De Gaulle on his side promoted the national interest yet gave his whole-hearted support to integrationist measures that could promote French interests abroad, reflected, *inter alia*, in the French-German tandem sealed by the Elysée Treaty (1963).

To Aldrich and Connell, 'France is the only country that wants to express its foreign policy in universal, logic terms [while aspiring] to a global role'.[49] There is no perceived contradiction between promoting French interests and universal ideas, harking back to revolutionary history and the French guise as 'homeland of human rights'.[50] Promotion of human rights and democracy remains central to French foreign policy, accompanied by support for multilateral institutions, a distinct presence overseas and command of *la francophonie*, the global French-speaking community. In addition to the EU's remit, the UN may be regarded as the primary vehicle of French multilateralism on a global scale. According to Tardy, the UN

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[44] This particular French perspective is reflected in de Gaulle's suggestion of a NATO triumvirate as well as his prospects for the European Community (notably the so-called Fouchet Plan suggesting French-German dominance). Furthermore, de Gaulle allowed himself a relentless pursuit of French interests even within the EC, as shown by France's boycott of Council meetings of the mid-1960s.

[45] Jolyon Howorth, 'Consensus and Mythology: Security Alternatives in Post-Gaullist France', in Robert Aldrich and John Connell (eds), *France in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 16–34, p. 16.

[46] Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France*, p. 68.

[47] Alistair Cole, *François Mitterrand. A Study in Political Leadership* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[48] Mark Wise, 'France and European unity', in Robert Aldrich and John Connell (eds), *France in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 35–73, pp. 39–40. Notably, the Revolution and following warfare marks the beginning of morally justified French expansionism. Later supra-national initiatives were typically in the vein of St. Simon; democratic federations for the promotion of peace, nevertheless on the basis of universal rights embedded in the Revolution.

[49] Robert Aldrich and John Connell, 'Beyond the Hexagon: France in World Politics', in R. Aldrich and J. Connell (eds), *France in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 1–15, p. 14.

[50] Charles Thumerelle and Philippe G. Le Prestre, 'France: The Straitjacket of New Freedom', in Le Prestre (ed.), *Role Quests*, pp. 131–60, p. 135.

provides the double virtue of being a forum to promote the French universal message and an institution in which French prestige is maintained.[51] France may here pursue a position of power while simultaneously promoting progressive (and seemingly disinterested) causes.

In light of post-Cold War changes, and the relative decline of French economic and military power, certain of these principles have been accentuated whereas others have been left in decline. Multilateralism today has a clear anti-American bias, seeking to balance American dominance, primarily through the EU and secondarily through international law maintained by the UN.[52] French attitudes to Europe have proven increasingly sceptical since the marginal acceptance of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, culminating with the refusal of the draft constitution in 2005. Meanwhile, globalisation has emerged as a pivotal issue marked by strong internal opposition towards the exposure to international market forces. In this context, national protectionism and aspirations for a strong EU go hand in hand. The difficult preference is for an EU in concord with French ideas, something which is far more difficult to achieve in a union of 27 member states than in de Gaulle's era of a core Europe of six.

Method and data

The brief ideational reviews of post-war British and French foreign policy may be summarised in an analytically useful matrix form. Table 1 draws together some essential guiding principles, based on dichotomies where the two countries represent opposite poles. Guiding principles of British and French foreign policy can thus be seen as a series of dichotomous variables. For heuristic purposes, the variables are organised in four dimensions covering essential characteristics of foreign policy ideas.[53]

Case studies investigating the role of ideas typically utilise texts such as policy documents or speeches as data. Contributions to this field have already addressed how Tony Blair's ideas or personality are reflected in his case for invasion in Iraq.[54] The present article contributes to this frontier by relating Blair and Chirac's speeches to a historical set of guiding principles, thus opening a broader scope for comparison.

Within the school of qualitative content analysis, the design may be referred to as *ideational*, where the aim is to trace the appearance of ideas in textual material through manual coding. Here, the significance of a text rests on it being part of a

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[51] Thierry Tardy, 'La France et l'ONU, entre Singularité et Ambivalence', *Politique Étrangère*, 67 (2002), pp. 931–47, p. 932.
[52] Michael J. Glennon, 'The New Interventionism: The Search for a Just International Law', *Foreign Affairs*, 78:3 (1999), pp. 2–7; Norman Bowen, 'Multilateralism, Multipolarity, and Regionalism: the French Foreign Policy Discourse', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 16 (2005), pp. 94–116.
[53] These dimensions are inductively derived from the set of ideas represented in the table. They are thus not based upon any form of statistical inference.
[54] Craig McLean and Alan Patterson, 'A Precautionary Approach to Foreign Policy? A Preliminary Analysis of Tony Blair's Speeches on Iraq', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 8 (2006), pp. 351–67; Stephen B. Dyson, 'Personality and Foreign Policy: Tony Blair's Iraq Decisions', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2 (2006), pp. 289–306.

Dimension	Variable	Britain	France
Nation and sovereignty	1. National identity	Insular, British/Atlantic	Continental, French-European
	2. Sovereignty approach	Traditional, nation-state exclusiveness	Confederalist – European unity under French leadership
	3. Focus of political sovereignty	Parliament, formal independence	Nation, ideational legacy
Values and ideas	4. Character of tradition	Nostalgic – institutional	Timeless – spiritual
	5. Prominent ideals	Entrepreneurship, materialism	Philosophical integrity, Idealism
	6. Dominant ideology	Pragmatic, conservative	Doctrinaire, progressive
	7. Operating procedure	Bilateral, direct	Multilateral, rhetorical
	8. Salience of international law	Moderate: Practical, Case-dependent	High: Theoretical, focus on legality
Foreign policy approach	9. Stated values and ambition	Free trade, coexistence: Moderate	Moral progress, inter-national reform: Missionary
	10. Strategy towards the US	Influence through friendship	Counterbalance, confrontation
	11. Relevance of parliament	Strong symbolic value as centre of legitimacy	Since 1958: Limited role, especially in foreign policy
Political culture	12. Party culture	Bipartisan – adversary, but pragmatic ('loyal opposition')	Fractionist, conflictual – ideological
	13. Legitimacy of head of government	Indirect – parliamentary	Direct – elective or plebiscitary

Table 1. *British- French contrasts in guiding principles affecting the conduct of foreign policy*

genre where similar ideas predominate.[55] Ideational analysis relates logically to the question of '[w]hat motives, values, beliefs, and attitudes are revealed in a person's writing or speech'.[56] Whichever method applied for coding ideas will require an element of interpretation. The analysis applied for this article follows a middle road between quantitative content analysis on the one hand and discourse-oriented analysis on the other. While content analysis is often constrained to counting words and concepts, discourse analysis yields a deeper scope for interpretation but

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[55] Göran Bergström and Kristina Boréus, *Textens Mening och Makt. Metodbok i Samhällsvitenskapelig Textanalys* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2000), p. 154.
[56] Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (London: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 68.

is often difficult to validate.[57] Ideational analysis attempts to balance the virtues of counting and interpreting while avoiding the pitfalls of both.

Researchers who analyse texts by combining counting and interpretation have been criticised for 'being unsystematic in their uses of texts and impressionistic in their interpretations'.[58] Reliability remains an obvious challenge: to make the analysis as transparent as possible, qualitative content analysis should be used with a defined body of texts and with a coding scheme providing for a relatively straightforward coding of data. For the purpose of registering ideas in Blair's and Chirac's speeches, a coding scheme was made on the basis of the guiding principles presented in table 1. To operationalise the British and French guiding principles, I constructed a range of standardised statements – such as '*Europe must find a common voice..*' as they were expected to appear in political debates. These statements were given as contrasting pairs; hence, a reference to a traditional British principle would normally imply opposition to its traditional French adversary. Operationalising the guiding principles required some preliminary knowledge of the data, which was obtained through a short explorative study of speeches on Iraq. The dichotomies of French vs. British principles turned out to be analytically fruitful, with the majority of ideas falling along either the French or the British foreign policy tradition.[59] To exemplify how coding was conducted, an excerpt is given here from a declaration by the French President at the dawn of the invasion:

France, faithful to her principles [. . .], will continue to act for the just and peaceful resolution of crises; by collective action, through the UN, the only legitimate forum for peace in Iraq. . .[60]

Three ideas were registered for this segment, based on the coding scheme:

2.02 We have a vision of the world, a set of ideas, to help resolve the Iraq issue. [***Values and ideas***: France]
3.01 Legitimacy of military action requires endorsement by the UN Security Council. [***Foreign policy approach***: France]
3.02 Any intervention in Iraq must be in accordance with international law. [***Foreign policy approach***: France]

In other parts of the texts specific ideas or principles could be rare, or references could be irrelevant to the principles I had conceived. However, speeches as well as debates were generally of a high comparative quality, which meant that the two leaders could be analysed along the intended dimensions with high validity.[61] The

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[57] Cynthia Hardy, Bill Harley and Nelson Philips, 'Discourse analysis and content analysis: two solitudes?', *Qualitative Methods*, 2:1 (2004), pp. 19–22.
[58] Klaus Krippendorf, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, second edition (London: Sage, 2004), p. 87.
[59] With both Blair and Chirac, roughly two thirds of all ideas extracted from the speeches adhered to either the French or the British foreign policy tradition as these had been defined. The coding scheme is available from the author on request.
[60] Declaration at the outbreak of war (Paris, 20 March 2003). Author's translation.
[61] A manifestation of this was found in the speeches by Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac to their respective diplomatic corps in January 2003. Both underlining a great-power heritage, the two leaders nevertheless diverged consistently on the ideas or values to be promoted through the maintenance of a global role. An interesting contrast to the high comparability of Blair and Chirac is found in speeches by the French and British foreign ministers, which were originally intended to

only ideational dimension that was added through acquaintance with data was the historical significance of Iraq, which occurred repeatedly in speeches by Blair but not by Chirac (see table 2). With regard to the choice of data, the analysed texts are of a rather heterogeneous genre. In particular, the different contexts of speeches, interviews and press conferences were expected to cause some analytical problems, along with the time dimension which covers the period from September 2002 to late March 2003. Different contexts meant that the statements were not uniquely centred on the issue of Iraq. The majority of them, however, gave essential information on the line of argument presented to the public on the issue of a possible Iraq invasion. Moreover, while differing in form and audience, the material nevertheless showed a surprising degree of internal consistency for both Blair and Chirac. In addition to the contrast between the two leaders, the time dimension opened the opportunity for observing changes over time, which in the case of Blair gave the basis for an interesting observation. I will return to this point below.

Empirical analysis: analysing speeches on Iraq

The issue of how to respond to the potential threat from Iraq took centre stage of public debate in many European countries in 2002–03. This was to a particular extent the case in Britain and France, due to their pivotal role in establishing a coalition whereby consensus in the UN Security Council could be reached. Both countries also share a historical legacy in the Middle East which made positioning on the Iraq issue indispensable.[62]

In the following analysis of debates preceding the invasion of March 2003, focus is directed towards the heads of government rather than the broader popular currents. What would be the expected finding was a reflection of traditional guiding principles in the rhetoric of both Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac. With regard to government policy, the two nations diverged consistently, with France as a leader of a European anti-war bloc and Tony Blair's government lining up closely with the US. Parliamentary opinion, however, was more diverse in both nations. British debates were characterised by relatively strong opposition in Parliament all the way to the centre of government.[63] French parliamentarians were more united behind government policy, but disputes arose over the strategic merits of open opposition

be analysed as part of the broader government discourse on Iraq. This had to be abandoned due to poor comparability. Relevant speeches by the British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, were given almost exclusively to a parliamentary audience while statements by his French counterpart, Dominique de Villepin, were from a range of non-parliamentary settings.

[62] This is the most evident with regards to Britain, which was behind the design of all the Arab Gulf states except for Persia and held a colonial mandate over the Iraqi territory till independence in 1932. France has been present by intimate commercial and strategic ties, historically via the bridgehead represented by Syria. The perceived importance of French participation in conflict resolution was reflected in President François Mitterrand's statement at the eve of the 1991 Gulf war: 'La France ne peut pas être la Suisse'.

[63] Thus, Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development and Robin Cook, Leader of the House of Commons, were among the political casualties of the Iraq issue. Both resigned during 2003 in protest against their government's policy in Iraq. In one of the fundamental parliamentary votes over Iraq, 139 Labour MPs voted against its government on the case for invasion.

	1. Nation and sovereignty	2. Values and ideas	3. Foreign policy approach	4. Political culture	5. Historical significance of Iraq...	Total
(a) TONY BLAIR						
Arguments derived from British foreign policy tradition	38% (14)	39% (43)	83% (25)	100% (7)	100% (15)	55% (104)
Arguments derived from French foreign policy tradition	62% (23)	61% (57)	17% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	45% (85)
Sum	20% (37)	53% (100)	15% (30)	4% (7)	8% (15)	100% (189)
Arguments not linked to any of the two traditions	Great power role: 5% of grand total (15) Others: 34% of grand total (106)					Grand total: 310
(b) JACQUES CHIRAC						
Arguments derived from British foreign policy tradition	30% (11)	15% (12)	9% (9)	50% (2)	0% (0)	15% (34)
Arguments derived from French foreign policy tradition	70% (26)	85% (66)	91% (92)	50% (2)	100% (2)	85% (188)
Sum	17% (37)	35% (78)	45% (101)	2% (4)	1% (2)	100% (222)
Arguments not linked to any of the two traditions	Great power role: 2% of grand total (8) Others: 34% of grand total (156)					Grand total: 386

Table 2. *Occurrence of arguments from separate political traditions in speeches on Iraq; numbers given in per cent (frequency counts within brackets)*

Ideas, tradition and norm entrepreneurs

to the US.[64] In my analytical framework, these policy divergences may affect which ideas will be the most conducive for decision makers to evoke. Still, conformity with traditional guiding principles will be the obvious working hypothesis for both heads of government, not the least because invasion in itself could be supported by each of the two diverging traditions.[65]

Blair: 'This is not the time to falter...'[66]

Iraq presented Tony Blair with an international mission, as a manifestation of his post-9/11 global engagements. According to the Prime Minister, the Iraqi regime tied together the predominant threats of the twenty-first century: a rogue state with possible terrorist links and potentially equipped with weapons of mass destruction.[67] Iraq, furthermore, had been a consistent theme in British and American politics throughout the 1990s, as Saddam Hussein's regime had been the cause of rising concern. The challenge would be to unite an international coalition responding to Blair's pretension of leadership. Did his attempt to foster such a coalition over Iraq also imply an attempted role as norm entrepreneur at home? If so, we would expect to see Blair breaking new pathways in his rhetoric rather than leaning on ideas from the British foreign policy tradition. Was this the case in his speeches on Iraq?

The analysis certainly revealed a strongly activist character in Blair's speeches. A disproportionate number of the ideas evoked by the prime minister were on the dimension of *Values and ideas*, and here he drew heavily on what I defined as the French foreign policy tradition, seeking the moral high ground rather than pragmatic self-interest:

This is not a time for British caution or even British reserve, still less for a retreat into isolation [. . .] This is a time for us to be out in front; engaged; open; creative; willing to take bold decisions [. . .] Now is the moment to make our future as exciting in impact, if different in character, as our history.[68]

Blair frequently argued for affirmative and pre-emptive action on moral grounds, clearly at odds with the prudence associated with British foreign policy. Significantly, this uncompromising approach was coupled with a strongly instrumentalist and efficiency-oriented view of the UN which was far more in line with what the British tradition. The combination of moralism and required efficiency gave a special urgency to Blair's arguments. Speaking in September 2002 the prime minister proclaimed:

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[64] Pernille Rieker, 'Power, Principles and Procedures. French Foreign Policy Towards the USA (2001–2003)', *Journal of International Politics*, 42 (2005), pp. 264–80; Jonathan Spyer, 'Europe and Iraq: Test Case for the Common Foreign and Security Policy', *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 11 (2007), pp. 94–106.

[65] The belief that both ideational traditions could be shown to either support or oppose invasion was supported by a separate analysis of parliamentary debates in the two countries. See Bratberg, *Grand Nations*.

[66] Twenty-three speeches by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, were analysed. All speeches were accessed on 10–12 February 2005 from the website service of 10 Downing Street: {http://www.number-10. gov.uk/output/Page3109.asp}.

[67] Weapons of mass destruction, a concept frequently applied in the debates over Iraq, refers to atomic, biological and chemical weapons, all inhibited by international law.

[68] Speech at Foreign Office conference for British diplomats (London, 7 January 2003).

If the challenge to us is to work with the UN, we will respond to it. But if we do so, then the challenge to all in the UN is this: the UN must be the way to resolve the threat from Saddam not avoid it.[69]

Blair's speeches were thus characterised by a bold and moral approach to Iraq derived from the French tradition rather than a 'British' penchant towards prudent self-interest. A similar observation can be made on the dimension of **Nation and sovereignty**, where Blair's rhetoric was permeated with references to promotion of *international solidarity*, especially in the early phase of the debates.[70] Principles of the British foreign policy tradition, such as the importance of *the Atlantic alliance* and *national interest* were present, but less numerous than the international solidarity argument.

On the third analytical dimension, **Foreign policy approach**, Blair however chose a more traditional British approach. Only rare occurrences were made to *UN legitimacy* and *international law*. Furthermore, Blair did not once raise the French-derived ideal of a *multipolar world*. On the contrary he maintained the importance of *working with the US* rather than *balancing it* and the need for enforcement rather than lengthy deliberation. Similar leanings towards British tradition were seen on the two last dimensions, **Political culture** and **Historical significance of the Iraq question**, which were prevalent in his parliamentary speeches. The latter dealt with the view of Iraq as a case of (successful) *containment* vs. (potentially disastrous) *appeasement*. Blair's use of historical reference exemplifies the social construction of pivotal events in the past from which present decision-makers are to learn: Versailles and Munich are the two quintessential European examples, both of relevance to Britain.[71] Blair's speeches revealed a strong presence of the British-derived appeasement argument:

[I]f the international community having made the call for his disarmament, now, [. . .] at the point of decision, shrugs its shoulders and walks away, [Saddam] will draw the conclusion dictators faced with a weakening will, always draw. That the international community will talk but not act; will use diplomacy but not force; and we know, again from our history, that diplomacy, not backed by the threat of force, has never worked with dictators and never will [. . .][72]

The analysis of ideas in Blair's speeches strongly supports the perception of an aspiring norm entrepreneur. In his speeches, Blair would present a hybrid version of the British and French foreign policy traditions. The most striking example is found in his combination of the *idealist* and *moralist* verve of the French tradition with *enforcement* and *efficiency* in a British traditional vein. The result of this contradictory course is a hybrid version of what I defined initially as French and British foreign-policy traditions. A final observation should be added with regard to developments over time. From the September 2002 to January 2003 period to February/March 2003 Blair appears to have made a considerable shift of emphasis from the French-side *international solidarity* argument towards the importance of

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[69] Speech at TUC conference (Blackpool, 10 September 2002).
[70] This idea accounts for the 'French' predominance in Blair's arguments on this dimension, as references to *Europe* occurred only rarely in his speeches.
[71] Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, 'The History of a Lesson: Versailles, Munich and the Social Construction of the Past', *Review of International Studies*, 29 (2003), pp. 499–519. The issue of political culture was reflected well in Blair's affirmation of parliamentary legitimacy, made explicit in the House of Commons debates on 24 September 2002 and 18 March 2003.
[72] Speech to the House of Commons (Westminster 24 September 2002).

the *Atlantic alliance* and *national interest* in the weeks leading up to the invasion. On *Values and ideas*, however, Blair's movement is from 'British' to 'French' ideas, increasingly embracing the principle of *acting boldly* rather than *prudently* and perceiving Iraq as a case for *moral principle* rather than pragmatic consideration. Lastly, the idea of *Britain having a national vision* was evermore present in Blair's speeches. Table 2 gives a summary account of speeches and statements on Iraq.

Chirac: 'Au nom de la primauté du droit'[73]

Contrary to the British prime minister, Jacques Chirac did not take international idealism to mean a proactive stance against Iraq. French resilience towards military action caused much bitterness among British and American officials and was central to the lack of Security Council endorsement. The fact that the French position pushed the UN towards the sidelines on Iraq is paradoxical, as championing the UN as source of legitimacy through international law was a recurring theme in Chirac's speeches. The presidential statements between September 2002 and March 2003 reveal a consistent emphasis on UN legitimacy and legality, ideas strongly emphasised by the French foreign policy tradition. This was coupled with an emphasis on Europe, as implementer of UN law as well as an actor in its own right.

The dimension of *Values and ideas* was relatively less emphasised by Chirac than by Blair. Meanwhile, where Chirac argued along this dimension, he almost exclusively drew upon ideas from the French foreign policy tradition. Thus, the principles of *a vision of the world* and *war is the worst of all solutions* were strongly supported by Chirac; so was the view that French identity is embedded in *timeless ideas rather than institutions*. However, on the two (equally French-derived) principles quintessential to Blair – *Iraq as a case for moral progress* and – in particular – that *policy should be bold and intervene against evil*, Chirac's references were rare. On the British side of traditional ideas, Chirac surprisingly matched Blair in his reference to *efficiency*. Rather than supporting military action, however, this idea was evoked in relation to the weapons inspections regime. Tellingly, Chirac was far behind Blair in accepting the *necessity of military enforcement where diplomacy fails*.

On the first dimension of the analytical scheme, *Nation and sovereignty*, Chirac – as Blair – arrived with a majority of ideas derived from the French tradition. Among the nuances between the two, where Blair referred singularly to *international solidarity*, Chirac in his speeches split evenly between solidarity and the desirability of *Europe* finding a common voice. In fact, the latter accounts for the larger share in Chirac's arguments along this dimension.[74] The European flavour

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[73] Twenty-five speeches by the President, Jacques Chirac, were analysed. All speeches were accessed on 16–18 February 2005 from the presidential website service: {http://www.elysee.fr/index.php}. All quotes presented are the author's translations.

[74] Surprisingly, the President also equalled Blair in referring to the importance of Atlantic alliance. This lends credence to a certain flexibility, as his tending of Atlantic partnership was particularly prevalent before Anglo-American audiences – in interviews with *New York Times* (9 September 2002), *Time Magazine* (16 February 2003) and French television (10 March 2003).

of Chirac's rhetoric, meanwhile, often consisted in seeing the EU follow the leading voice of France:

Europe will not exist in the multipolar world unless she acquires a common security and defence policy [. . .] This does not pose a threat to France; French interests are deeply integrated with those of Europe. Whether we discuss Iraq [. . .], development or globalisation, I am confident that the French position is supported by a majority in Europe.[75]

The dimension of **Foreign policy approach** was where Chirac put the overwhelming thrust of his argument. Two principles derived from the French tradition appeared to be of unrivalled importance, namely the *key role of the UN Security Council in justifying military action* and the belief that *action must follow international law:*

We have the ambition of a more just and peaceful world, regulated by law under the UN, which incarnates international democracy; of a world where peace and war cannot be decided but in this nodal point of the international community.[76]

Here, Chirac drew heavily on what I defined as the French foreign policy tradition, with the UN and the EU as twin sources of legitimacy. An interesting contrast with Blair is found in Chirac's promotion of *a multipolar world*; while Blair repeatedly warned against this idea – 'th[e] concept of rival poles of power' as 'a profoundly dangerous concept'[77] – the French President consistently referred to the need for an independent Europe, in 'a multipolar world where it is evident that Europe will have a place'.[78] Chirac also maintained that 'dialogue between cultures, between civilisations based on mutual respect is a better way of resolving our problems', hence *legitimacy requires lengthy deliberation.*[79] The two last dimensions of the analytical scheme, **Political culture** and **Historical significance of the Iraq question** were hardly seen in speeches and statements by Chirac; thus, there were no references to appeasement, for example, a concept which in France has nothing near the historical resonance that it has on the British side. Finally, no change over time comparable to that of Blair's rhetoric was found in the speeches of Chirac.

Blair vs. Chirac: agency under the weight of tradition

The analysis of Chirac's speeches reveals a leader drawing selectively on what I defined as guiding principles of French foreign policy. His single significant move towards the British tradition was found in a few strategic references to the Atlantic alliance. Significantly, Chirac's arguments to support non-intervention drew almost exclusively on guiding principles from the French tradition, which – irrespective of his stance towards Iraq – facilitated his communication with a domestic audience. In this perspective, Blair's great difficulties with gaining home support for invasion should not be seen as only the result of an unpopular policy. His limited correspondence with the British foreign policy tradition may have contributed to his difficulties in persuading the national public.

[75] Interview with *Le Figaro* (Paris, 20 January 2003).
[76] Speech for the Algerian national assembly (Alger, 3 March 2003).
[77] Press conference on Iraq (London, 25 March 2003).
[78] Interview with *Time Magazine* (Paris, 16 February 2003).
[79] Interview with *New York Times* (Paris, 9 September 2002).

Based on the above, there are clear theoretical lessons to be drawn from the comparative study of Blair and Chirac. Agency is reflected in an ability to change the political weather by redefining the core principles from which decisions are drawn. Where Blair aspired to the role of entrepreneur, he did not succeed in expanding the political space to import French ideas to the British foreign policy tradition.[80] While this explanation obviously simplifies a lengthy political debate, it appears a fruitful approach for enhanced understanding of ideational structures and entrepreneurship. Significantly, it was not a shortage of arguments that caused Blair's limited success in convincing the British public. His mix of idealism and *realpolitik* would justify invasion in light of: Saddam's regime as a threat to the Western world; the moral-humanitarian cause of Iraq's submerged population; the need to take action against cruelty; the dangerous precedence of appeasement; the desire to maintain privileged relations with the US. Nevertheless the Prime Minister failed to persuade the British public or forge a parliamentary consensus around his own argument, leaving him as an aspiring, yet ultimately unsuccessful norm entrepreneur.[81] Chirac meanwhile positioned himself close to the ideational tradition of French foreign policy, which was conducive to a general consensus in Parliament as well as in the French public. Less entrepreneurship and more conformism is the summary judgement of Chirac.

In a comparison between the two leaders, then, it is Blair who stands out as the greatest analytical challenge. According to the theoretical perspective applied here, traditional guiding principles are embedded in the individual decision maker. There is however a remaining scope for deviation from collective ideas. Blair may have embodied a belief in the ability to transform the world which breaks with core principles of the British tradition.[82] An alternative reading, given less emphasis here, is that Blair in his evaluation of guiding principles came down with such an emphasis on the American alliance that other priorities became secondary or instrumental. What is certain is that Blair challenged some of the core assumptions of British foreign policy. Further empirical studies are needed in order to develop hypotheses on when entrepreneurship is attempted, and when it may succeed. The institutionalist concept of critical juncture, presupposing an external crisis for fundamental change to occur, would be a useful starting point for this debate. Thus, one may hypothesise that revision of guiding principles occurs at critical moments where the nation's external identity is put to the test. From these scope conditions, the aspiring entrepreneur will offer a re-interpretation of parts of the nation's history and, most importantly, of its preferred international role. The preconditions for successful entrepreneurship have been less theorised in this article, but must include the speaker's credibility and the amenability within the audience to consider fundamental reform.[83]

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[80] Interestingly, cursory reading of speeches by the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw hints towards a stronger preponderance of Atlantic partnership and national interest, hence a more traditional outlook, than in speeches by the Prime Minister.

[81] In light of the former prime minister's appearance before the Chilcot inquiry on 29 January 2010, this summary of his advocacy for invasion remains valid. Moreover, while Blair's position is consistent, the same can also be said about public opinion in Britain: criticism is directed not only towards the flawed argument of weapons of mass destruction but also towards the supposedly pernicious combination of moralist interventionism and expansionist *realpolitik* which inspired Blair's position towards Iraq.

[82] Dyson, 'Personality and foreign policy'.

[83] I am grateful to the second reviewer for raising these points.

Finally, analysing Blair and Chirac with the British and French traditions as reference points is not exhaustive. Let us briefly mention a different source of the ideas promoted by Blair. Reference could be drawn to the interwar Labour of James Ramsay MacDonald and Keir Hardie, whose internationalism was permeated with a vision of moral progress. The context was different, the challenges they had to face of a whole different nature than Iraq. However, the insistence on activism and international justice was equally persistent. A departure from dominant elements in the British foreign policy tradition, Blair may have felt more at home with his early Labour predecessor MacDonald, who on the threshold of Labour's first government stated:

[T]here is not a capital city in Europe today but contains somewhere embers which, with a fresh blowing wind, will scatter themselves over the inflammable material of Europe [...] My colleagues and myself want to go to office with a broad foot and a big heel and to stamp [...] upon every one of those embers [...][84]

Conclusion

Ideas, while significant to decision making, have for too long been under-conceptualised in political analysis. This is a particularly valid in the FPA literature, where ideas are often admitted *some* impact, yet the precise nature of their influence remains undefined. When this is the case, it is also because ideas are intrinsically difficult to grasp, 'mediated through the preferences and capacities of each government'.[85] However, foreign policy cannot be fully understood without its historical basis, guided as it is by collective ideas, tradition and precedence. This article has presented a framework where a set of historically derived ideas define the political space in which foreign policy debates occur. The subsequent empirical study of speeches by Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac on the issue of Iraq lends itself to substantial as well as theoretical observations.

While a number of traditional British-French distinctions would hold sway in speeches by Blair and Chirac on the Iraq issue, Blair departed from this perspective by combining selective ideas from the French tradition (such as bold and moral action to defend ideas abroad) with traditional British principles of swift action and efficiency. More specifically, while Chirac's speeches drew largely on French principles of UN legitimacy, legality and a common EU voice, Blair's speeches combined French-inspired moralism with claims for efficiency derived from the British tradition.[86] This attempted entrepreneurship was ultimately unsuccessful as

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[84] Speech by James Ramsay MacDonald at a mass meeting in the Albert Hall (London, 8 January 1924), on the eve of Labours' first accession to government. Reproduced in Hildegerd Gauger and Hermann Metzger, *British Political Speeches and Debates from Cromwell to Churchill* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954), pp. 34–7.

[85] Hill, 'The Historical Background', p. 30.

[86] Moreover, where international references were made, in France these pointed equally to Europe and the international community, while Blair's speeches turned exclusively towards the latter. Finally, where Chirac's speeches on Iraq turned largely towards arguments on principle, in Britain historical experience and perceived effects of policy were more frequently evoked. This was particularly evident in parliamentary debates, where Blair was speaking to an assembly well-dressed in historical precedence and, notably, the concept of appeasement.

Blair did not find resonance, neither in public or Parliament, for his attempts to expand and transform the guiding principles of British foreign policy.

One may discuss whether the analysis of Blair and Chirac's speeches on Iraq says more about the rationale for going to war than it does about foreign policy. An assumption in the present study is that debates on war and invasion bring forward the guiding principles of foreign policy with particular clarity. Speeches related to the Iraq invasion are therefore considered useful data for a case study, in which both the collective tradition and individual entrepreneurship are displayed. In order to establish to what extent Iraq is particular, comparative analyses of other cases of invasion, such as Kosovo, would be useful, as well as period studies such as pre- vs. post-9/11.[87]

Perhaps the most significant argument of this article is that while tradition weighs heavily on foreign policy, entrepreneurship allows for revising dominant collective ideas. A successful entrepreneur can thus effect paradigmatic change, with '[t]he construction of cognitive frames' an essential strategy to do so.[88] However, such entrepreneurship is critically dependent on benevolent circumstances, typically conceptualised as windows of opportunity. Success is also dependent on the quality of the entrepreneurship itself. Blair may have failed on both these variables. The analytical framework presented in this article is particularly powerful in foreign policy where continuity and tradition normally prevail. Individual agency should not be forgotten when discussing ideas in FPA. Yet it is traditional ideas that define the normative frames within which agency operates. If we accept these basic propositions, the analytical relevance of ideas to FPA should take prominence in future research.

[87] I am grateful to the first reviewer for raising this point.
[88] Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics', p. 897.