Defining Britain's international role in the post-Cold War period: domestic role contestation in British party-political manifestos, 1992-2019

Definiendo el rol internacional del Reino Unido en el periodo post Guerra Fría: la disputa doméstica de roles en manifiestos políticos británicos, 1992-2019

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Santiago, diciembre 2020

Abstract: The Brexit referendum campaign and result are commonly presented as provoking a fundamental rupture in the consensus on the UK's international role amongst the principal parliamentary parties. This study looks to problematise this perspective by proposing that the identified breakdown of consensus predates the vote and forms part of a longer process of role crisis amongst the UK's political elite. To do so, it applies role theory focused on domestic role contestation and carries out a deductive content analysis of the party-political manifestos of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties presented at general elections from 1992 to 2019. Contrary to the hypothesised crisis, this thesis finds high levels of consensus amongst the three parties for the UK's National Role Conception, especially between Labour and the Liberal Democrats, increasing in the decade prior to the referendum and decreasing after the vote.

Key words: Foreign Policy, National Role Conceptions, Domestic Contestation

Resumen: La campaña y el resultado del referéndum de Brexit se presentan comúnmente como causante de una ruptura fundamental en el consenso sobre el rol internacional del Reino Unido entre los principales partidos parlamentarios. Este estudio busca cuestionar esta perspectiva proponiendo que la ruptura identificada del consenso, es anterior a la votación y forma parte de un proceso más largo de crisis de rol dentro de la élite política del Reino Unido. Para ello, esta tesis aplica la teoría de roles centrada en la disputa nacional de los roles y realiza un análisis de contenido deductivo de los manifiestos políticos de los partidos Conservador, Laborista y Demócratas Liberales presentados en las elecciones generales de 1992 a 2019. Contrariamente a la crisis que se plantea en la hipótesis, esta tesis encuentra altos niveles de consenso entre los tres partidos para la Concepción del Rol Nacional del Reino Unido, especialmente entre los Laboristas y los Demócratas Liberales, la cual aumentó en la década anterior al referéndum y disminuyó después de la votación.

Palabras claves: Política exterior, concepciones nacionales de rol, disputas domésticas

Dedicatoria: A Dorotea le agradezco su paciencia inagotable, a Andrés sus consejos incisivos, y a Carlos Alfonso su apoyo infatigable.

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Introduction

The divisive Brexit campaign and political debates since the referendum of 23 June, 2016 are widely seen to have created a "role crisis" by raising fundamental queries about British national identity, the sort of country it is and the resulting role it should play on the world stage (Oppermann et al., 2020, p. 25; Strong, n.d.). The result has fundamentally shocked British foreign policy (FP), "represents a major rupture in Britain's international position" (Oppermann et al., 2020, p. 2) and has made the United Kingdom's (UK) FP a publicly debated topic. Strong (n.d.) identifies contestation of the country's role on three different levels of analysis following the vote: the international-level role conflict between the UK and other countries' expectations of its role; at the horizontal domestic-level amongst elites, referring to professional politicians; and finally, at the vertical domestic-level between elites and the general public. As a result, scholars identify increasing politicisation and polarisation around the UK's role in the world which brings to an end the fairly stable post-Cold War consensus about Britain's foreign policy and role shared by the principal political parties (Martill & Rogstad, 2019).

However, this thesis argues that Brexit has only shone light on a "role crisis" that predates it. Though "the question of "what is Britain's role in the world?" has undeniably come into sharper focus than at any point in decades" (Wright, 2017, p. 43), this question has hung over the UK since the end of the Second World War. It was brought into sharp focus in 1962 when the United States (US) Secretary of State Dean Acheson famously stated that Britain had "lost an empire and not yet found a role" (McCourt, 2014a, p. ix). The furore caused by his words, in part, comes from the fact that "he had put his finger squarely on Britain's international predicament" (McCourt, 2014a, p. ix). Figuring out how the UK could maintain its position as a top-tier country, despite relative economic and power decline has remained a timeless issue continually faced by political leaders over the years until today (Sanders & Houghton, 2016).

Despite this, political leaders have consistently failed to accept the UK's diminished relative power and status, and to establish consensus around a role based on a realistic and frank appreciation of its standing vis-à-vis the rest of the world (Garnett et al., 2017). Notwithstanding Margaret Thatcher's 'Middle Power', Tony Blair's 'bridge' and 'pivotal power', Gordon Brown's 'global hub', David Cameron's centre of a 'networked world' and Theresa May's 'Global Britain', leaders have "struggled to pin down a usable meaning" for Britain's role in the world (McCourt, 2011b,

p. 32) and "the feeling persists that Britain's place in contemporary world and politics is, in fact, unclear, and that this represents a problem for UK foreign-policy makers" (McCourt, 2011b, p. 33). As a result, the inability of British political leaders to articulate a plausible role accepted domestically and internationally has dominated the country's political history since 1945 (See Harrison, 2009, 2010), and this has remained the case following the end of the Cold War and the resulting paradigmatic changes to international affairs.

Alongside the inability to put Acheson's ghost to bed, political leaders have tended not to reflect on questions of national identity nor problematise Britain's 'role in the world' (Gaskarth, 2014; McCourt, 2011b). In political discussions, this expression has been conflated with British diplomatic and military responsibilities, with the UK's capacities, like nuclear weapons and permanent seat at the Security Council, and with affirmations of a national purpose, like being 'a force for good' (Gilmore, 2015; McCourt, 2011b). The result is that politicians have tended to fall back on clichés and descriptive tropes that fail to provide a useful analytical concept for studying the UK's role, contributing to a perceived strategic drift in British FP in recent years (Gaskarth, 2014; McCourt, 2011a, 2011b, 2014b). Within the context of the Brexit referendum, this tendency manifested itself in the inability of either side to seriously engage with Britain's international role during the campaign (Garnett et al., 2017), leading scholars to argue that "Brexit was not, in short, a referendum on Britain's role or roles in world politics" (McCourt, 2020, p. 9), but about domestic politics. Despite claims of bipartisanship over FP in the UK prior to the Brexit campaign and referendum, recent work identifies serious divisions amongst politicians in the years before the vote, especially due to the Iraq War (Gaskarth, 2016; Harrois, 2015; Strong, 2015), and the influence of ideology on the FP positions evoked by parties (Atkins, 2013; Beech, 2011; Daddow & Schnapper, 2013; Gaskarth, 2013; I. Hall & Rengger, 2005). As a result, the "role" crisis' and the breakdown of the post-Cold War foreign policy consensus amongst political parties, frequently associated with Brexit, are likely to predate the referendum campaign and vote in 2016.

Faced with the commonly stated assertion that Brexit means that "Britain has lost its role" (Harrois, 2018, p. 10), this thesis problematises this viewpoint and hypothesises that the post-Cold War period has been characterised by a growing lack of consensus between parties over the UK's international role that predates Brexit. As a result, the objective of this thesis is to study domestic role contestation between the principal political parties over the last three decades to identify how they have understood Britain's role in the post-Cold War period and to identify the level of

consensus held between them. Crucially, it does not aim to study the causes of the Brexit referendum or the decision, nor does it look at the effect of the decision and its implementation.

The end of the Cold War is chosen as it represents a paradigmatic change to the international environment, within which the UK continues to operate and project an international role until today. It altered the context and assumptions within which British FP was conducted and rested on since the end of the Second World War, forcing the country to re-evaluate its national interest (Wallace, 1992). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the resulting end of the bipolar international system and relevance of ideological confrontation, "the calculations of where Britain would sit within this newly forming global order reverted to the questions that the nation should have addressed at the end of the Second World War" (Garnett et al., 2017, p. 224). Namely, if the UK was a European nation with its future in the European Union (EU), a faithful ally to the US, or an independent actor friendly to both. Alongside these, new ideas began to develop about the UK's role, like that of a moral obligation to other countries and peoples, and the idea that the disappearance of the Soviet threat and its replacement by international terrorism meant that the country should prepare for a future of wars of choice and new international responsibilities. These ideas have been present in UK political discourse ever since and form part of the roles debated by political actors.

Drawing on role theory and focusing on domestic-level intra-elite horizontal role contestation (Strong, n.d.), this thesis will apply content analysis to the party-political manifestos presented at the general election campaigns since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 (1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2017, and 2019) to identify the role conceptions in contention among the three principal national parliamentary parties: the Conservatives Labour, and the Liberal Democrats. For the purpose of this study, 'elite' will be understood as referring to each one of the three parties as a whole as expressed in their party-political manifestos. Despite an understanding of the centrality of domestic factors and political parties' ability to articulate and pursue policy in office and opposition, parties remain a "neglected element" in foreign policy analysis (FPA) and a fruitful avenue for research (Alden & Aran, 2016, p. 80).

Elections are fertile ground for studying domestic role contestations as they push parties to position themselves on questions of foreign policy. Though they have been little studied, evidence points to their importance as sites of contestation of national roles (Cantir & Kaarbo, 2012, 2016). Within the context of elections, these are expressed in party-political manifestos, which, as written

texts, facilitate a content-analysis based study (Pogorelis et al., 2005). These texts are chosen as "the understanding which policy-makers hold about Britain's role in the world becomes manifest in speeches and official documents" like the manifestos presented for each election (McCourt, 2011b, p. 35). The party political manifesto is a staple of British elections and is the "main linguistic representation of a party's offering at election time," embodying the ideas being presented to the electorate and epitomises "the most basic and direct expression of the strategic positions of a party" (Ormrod & Henneberg, 2009, p. 191). Its publication receives significant media attention, can set the tone and themes of the election, and is considered the most powerful and influential document created by political parties in the context of elections (Pearce, 2014).

Manifestos are an appropriate medium for the calculation of intra-elite domestic contestation of national roles for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are major statements of parties intended to present the full picture of their stances to the electorate in advance of each general election, allowing for easy longitudinal and cross-sectional comparison (Volkens, 2001). Secondly, they are created by the party as a whole, and not factions, meaning manifestos are likely to reflect internal party debates, and the greater political context, including interparty competition. Finally, because manifesto commitments are often implemented, major parties with the chance to form governments are unlikely to make unrealistic and unfulfillable pledges (Bara, 2005). For these reasons, the literature supports a focus on the manifestos as a source of understanding of party positions (See Budge et al., 2001; Volkens et al., 2013), and this position is applied to national roles.

To carry out the analysis, this thesis will apply deductive, or directed, content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It will first categorise and define the most commonly mentioned roles in the academic literature on British foreign policy: *Faithful Ally to the US, Global Trading State, Great Power, Isolationist, Leader of the Commonwealth, Liberal Interventionist, Regional Partner of Europe, Status Quo Power,* and *Thought Leader,* in alphabetical order (Gaskarth, 2014; Oppermann et al., 2020; Strong, n.d., 2015). Then, it will code the party-political manifestos to see the presence and salience of different roles. It will draw conclusions from the coded data with reference to the literature and theory, tracing changes over this period and identifying the level of consensus held amongst the three parties studied.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis looks to study domestic contestation of National Role Conceptions (NRCs) between political parties in party-political manifestos, and as such, it will apply role theory with a focus on role conflict, role change and domestic role contestation. Although originally drawn from sociology and psychology with a focus on the study of individuals, role theory has been applied to FPA since the 1970s based on two premises: that political leaders determine national NRCs and implement FP accordingly, and that the international system functions like a stratified social system. However, role theory is not a single theory, per se, "but rather a family of theories, an approach, or perspective that begins with the concept of roles as central to social life" (C. Thies, 2010, p. 4).

Role theory has seen a renewed interest in recent years (Brummer & Thies, 2015) partly due to its descriptive, analytical and organisation value (C. Thies, 2010; Walker, 1987). Descriptively, it provides a rich conceptual vocabulary for categorising values, beliefs and identities, whilst organisationally, it can be applied to different levels of analysis, bridging them by linking agents and structure. Finally, its explanatory value comes from the ability to harness its concepts and incorporate them to other theoretical approaches, and as such, it is a flexible theoretical instrument that allows for the use of a wide range of tools (Sekhri, 2009).

Role theory understands the role as a social position, "constituted by ego and alter expectations regarding the purpose of an actor in an organised group" which can be constitutive to the group, be functionally specific (Harnisch, 2011, p. 8; C. Thies, 2010), be situated in space (Dodds, 1993) or a scale of power (Kalevi J Holsti, 1970). In essence, a role is made up of three elements: role expectation, or the role prescribed by others (the alter) and expected from the actor; NRCs, or the normative expectations of FP that actors (ego) express for themselves; and role enactment, or the actual FP behaviour undertaken by a state (Aggestam, 1999). Though there is a tendency to conflate role with identity (Nabers, 2011; C. G. Thies & Breuning, 2012), they are conceptually distinct. Identity is focused on 'who we are' and role on 'what role we play' within a social group, indicating that identity can be defined without reference to other states, whilst roles are always dependent on counter-identities and cannot be performed autonomously outside of a position in a social structure (Hopf, 2002; Wendt, 1999).

National Role Conceptions

This thesis focuses on NRCs, defined as "the policymakers own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules, and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. It is their "image" of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state towards, or in, the external environment" (Kalevi J Holsti, 1970, pp. 245–246). This definition suggests a number of important elements: firstly, that the focus of research is the policy maker and their perceptions of appropriate commitments or behaviour[1]; secondly, these tend towards stability; thirdly, that these conceptions are played on different stages and thus may be numerous and vary; and fourthly, that NRCs are interactive and bridge the internal and external dimensions of a state (Breuning, 2019).

NRCs are produced by the interaction of alter and ego expectations, and draw on internal and external sources. They are influenced by "location and major topographical features of the state; natural, economic and technical resources; available capabilities; traditional policies; socio-economic demands and needs as expressed through political parties, mass movements, or interest groups; national values, doctrines or ideologies; public opinion "mood", and the personality or political needs of key policy makers" (Kalevi J Holsti, 1970, p. 246). At the same time, they are related to and buttressed by "role prescriptions coming from the external environment" (Kalevi J Holsti, 1970, p. 246). The result is that NRCs must resonate and be meaningful to a domestic audience, whilst at the same time be credible in the state's relationships with the external environment, thus creating opportunities for conflict (Breuning, 2011).

They are normally observed in declarations and speeches made by policymakers when they talk of commitment, duties, functions and responsibilities indicating expectations of a certain types of FP and should be examined in relation to the meaning and understanding that the policy-makers attach them (Aggestam, 1999). They are broad categories that allows for broad levels of

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[1] Role theory is the most successful approach to relate elite perceptions with FPA (Aras & Gorener, 2010) and the focus on elites is normally justified on a number of grounds. Firstly, the state, often personalised through a leader, is the focus of studies, and it is assumed that roles are generally shared by the community and consistent with that expressed by the leader (Brummer & Thies, 2015). Secondly, in democracies, the capacity to not re-elect politicians who have NRCs that the population disagrees with and the existence of various institutional mechanisms that deal with role contestation indicate that leaders tend to represent NRCs rooted amongst the public and elites (Harnisch, 2011).

interpretation, and actors generally have room to innovate on scripts and improvise based on the situation they face, their identity and the expectations of others (Wehner, 2018).

Role theory sees FP behaviour as both purposeful and shaped by institutional context (Aggestam, 1999), meaning that "roles are neither determinist nor indefinitely elastic" (Adigbuo, 2007, p. 89). NRCs can be understood as intervening variables that affect FP, but are rarely the sole explanatory factor (Grossman, 2005). They are 'road maps' which facilitate a FP decision-maker's navigations through a complex political reality (Aggestam, 1999) and function as "a cognitive device that stands at the intersection of the ideational and material aspects of international relations" (Breuning, 2011, p. 26). They are based on decision-makers' understanding of the state's identity and cultural heritage, their perception of their state's place and possibilities within the international system that simplify, and provide guidance and predispose actors towards one intentional behaviour rather than others. Because they represent "a set of shared expectations relating to how a state behaves as a function of its position on the international stage", they prescribe specific and predictable behaviours to actors (Morin & Paquin, 2018, p. 271). As a result, different categorisation schemes (Chafetz et al., 1996; Kalevi J Holsti, 1970; Hymans, 2006; Wish, 1980) have been proposed to "provide the researcher with a useful tool for explaining variations in foreign policy behaviour" based on NRCs (Aras & Gorener, 2010, p. 77).

States very often play several roles simultaneously on different international stages (Aggestam, 1999) and Holsti (1970, p. 277) concluded that "policymakers of most states conceive of their state in terms of multiple sets of relationships and multiple roles and/or functions". They can vary in importance (or centrality) and are used depending on the situation (salience) (Chafetz, 1996). Not all roles are equally relevant, and a state will have a master role, salient in every situation, and auxiliary roles that apply to certain issue areas or relationships (Breuning, 1995; C. G. Thies, 2013b). Neither do all NRCs provide the same clarity of behaviour. As a result, Barnett (1993) differentiates between position and preference roles, with the former representing well-defined and detailed action guides, while that latter allows for greater flexibility of interpretation of the role. Another differentiation is between ascribed and achieved roles (C. G. Thies, 2013a), where the first are roles provided by other actors, and the latter ones chosen by the actor itself.

Role conflict

Due to the variation in the scope, specificity, communality and obligation of role expectations, there is a constant potential for conflict between role sets (Harnisch, 2011). These can be caused by role ambiguity, or when role expectations are unclear; role malintegration, when a role fails to fit with other roles; role discontinuity, when an actor has to fulfil a sequence of malintegrated roles; and role overload, when too many role expectations exist (Biddle, 1986). Role conflict can be differentiated between inter-role and intra-role ones (Brummer & Thies, 2015): between incompatible expectations of multiple roles held by an actor, and different expectations of a single role (See Barnett, 1993; Tewes, 1998 for examples of studies of inter-role conflict).

Brummer and Thies (2015) argue that states have an interest in resolving role conflict, be they present or potential, in order to act convincingly internationally. Creativity is central to role theory (Wehner, 2018) and policy-makers have discretion in interpreting roles to accommodate potential conflicting roles that can be produced by different institutional contexts (Aggestam, 1999). Policy makers frequently look to avoid acknowledging conflicts, like the case of German post-Cold War policy-makers (Ash, 1994). When faced, actors have a number of methods to cope with role conflicts (D. T. Hall, 1972): communicating with other actors to alter their expectations, temporarily adjusting behaviour to accord with expectations or changing role conceptions completely.

Role change

The real potential of conflict makes role change possible, although "history is not destiny,… neither do role conceptions change easily" (Breuning, 2011, p. 30). As such, it is argued that NRCs "provide long-standing guidelines or standards for behaviour" (Wish, 1980, p. 547) and tend towards stability when they become intersubjective cognitive constructs that policy-makers are socialised into and internalise (Aggestam, 1999). Sudden changes are rare, as the process of feedback (both from other actors on the international stage and domestically) and the resulting adjustment normally provoke a gradual convergence between expectations of different actors (Morin & Paquin, 2018).

As a result, change is normally gradual, as "states do not usually abandon role conceptions outright. Instead, they slowly downgrade their centrality. Rapid shifts in role may, however, occur in states undergoing internal upheaval" or other significant changes like new state formation (Chafetz et al., 1996, p. 736). Gustavsson (1999) draws on the notion of "policy windows" from public policy research to state that fundamental change, in this case related to NRCs, is possible when three factors are present: changes in fundamental structural conditions, strategic political leadership and some form of crisis. Hudson (1999) clarifies that these revisions must be acceptable to international actors and resonate with domestic values. This position supports Holsti's claim (1982) that realignments in FP can be best explaining by shift in leader perceptions and leadership qualities.

Additionally, one can differentiate between two types of change: adaption and learning (Harnisch, 2011). Adaptation refers to changes in the performance of a fixed role, through changes to strategies and instruments used. Learning, on the other hand, implies changes in values and goals, and as such is frequently associated with changes in NRCs. Another related concept is that of role distance, or the process by which an actor conceives of a new role while distancing itself from a previously held role, or adapts new ways to creatively perform an existing role caused by dissatisfaction and estrangement with the role conception (Goffman, 1961). Magid (1979) states that changes occur in a holistic and unidirectional manners when there is a clash between an old and a new NRC, otherwise it takes a more synthetic manner. This supports Breuning's (2019) view that less intense change of NRCs is likely to be the most frequent.

Domestic role contestation

Related to the above is the notion of domestic role contestation, which is a new and increasingly relevant area of interest in role theory (Brummer & Thies, 2015; Cantir & Kaarbo, 2012, 2016), and has been applied to British FP (Betti, 2020; Gaskarth, 2016; Strong, n.d., 2015). Along with the insights provided by role conflict and role change, it makes up the theoretical focus of this thesis. Role theory, in contrast to FPA, has traditionally black-boxed the state by assumed domestic consensus over NRCs, rationalised by the belief that roles are inter-subjectively held by society and that elite views matter the most, and due to the methodological tendency to aggregate

data from different domestic actors. However, roles are not as stable as previously thought, and changes to domestic political conditions affect FP and roles.

With the aim of developing research in this area, Cantir and Kaarbo (2012, 2016) developed the notion of role contestation at the horizontal (among elites) and vertical (between elites and masses) levels as a way to enrichen role theory with FPA insights of domestic level factors. Though it is closely related to inter and intra-role conflict, this approach differs from it by rejecting the tendency to "anthropomorphise" the state (Harnisch, 2012, p. 52) because "it disaggregates the state and examines the process by which domestic actors with various role conceptions interact in the foreign policy-making process" (Cantir & Kaarbo, 2016, p. 6). The relationship between the two levels of contestation varies based on individual case factors (Breuning, 2016; Özdamar, 2016). This thesis focuses on horizontal level contestation, an area which FPA research demonstrates experiences considerable disagreement (Cantir & Kaarbo, 2012).

Elections and parties have a key role in channelling the contestation of roles. It is within political systems that NRCs are debated and contested, and electoral accountability can reward or punish parties based on the NRCs that they advocate for and look to gain support for (Brummer & Thies, 2015). In this context, roles can be used strategically to gain support for specific policies and can be invoked to justify decisions and positions (Cantir & Kaarbo, 2012). Additionally, roles themselves can be products of party ideology, and as such are likely to be enshrined in party platforms expressed through manifestos.

Numerous studies have identified the relevance of inter-elite role contestation, including Brummer and Thies (2015) who look at government-opposition dynamics in post-war Germany; Frank (2011) who finds inter-party and elite contestation in Germany and Poland; and Wehner and Thies (2014) who identify contestation between executive and legislative elites in Mexico and Chile. In terms of the relevance of partisanship and political parties, Rathbun (2004) argues for their relevance in the area of humanitarian interventions; whilst Ozkececi-Taner (2005) finds that different Turkish NRCs are institutionalised in parties. This thesis draws on these insights in analysing domestic horizontal role contestation amongst the three principal British political parties in party-political manifestos since the end of the Cold War.

Objectives and Hypothesis

General objective

- Analyse domestic role contestation between the three principal British political parties in party-political manifestos in the post-Cold War period to identify the level of consensus held amongst them.

Specific objectives

- Analytically develop categories of roles based on role theory literature applied to British FP and conceptualise them through their component characteristics in the form of a coding scheme.
- Apply the identified NRCs to the manifestos, identifying their presence and salience in each one of the documents.
- Compare results longitudinally and between parties to reach conclusions about similarities and differences between parties and within parties in the period under study.
- Identify the level of consensus between parties on appropriate NRCs for the UK.

Hypothesis

We expect to find significant variance over appropriate NRCs for the UK held between the three principal parliamentary parties, indicating a lack of consensus between them. The above should be empirically apparent in party political manifestos since these are the instruments parties use to communicate their stances on NRCs to voters during general elections. We expect this variance to be present before the commitment to a Brexit referendum vote made by the Conservative party in their 2015 manifesto, and the referendum held in 2016.

Methodology

The development of methodology has not been a central focus of role theory (Wehner, 2018), making it conceptually rich but methodologically poor (Walker, 1987). As a result, role theory research tends to employ a wide range of qualitative methods, including content analysis (Breuning, 2019). For Thies (2010), role theory is at its most methodologically rigorous when using content analysis to code NRCs using standard procedures, based on a methodologically sound choice of material samples and inter-coder reliability. This thesis will follow the standard steps of qualitative content analysis as set out by Lune & Berg (2017) and applied to deductive or directed content analysis by Elo & Kyngäs (2008) and Hsieh & Shannon (2005).

Content analysis is understood as "a careful, detailed, systemic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, assumptions, and meanings" (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 182). Elo & Kyngäs (2008) consider it a flexible method through which one can infer meaning from data, providing fresh insights about, describing or establishing theories regarding a phenomena, whilst taking into consideration intentions, consequences and its context. The content analysis process codes the information content into data that is then analysed through "a set of procedures to make inferences from text" (Weber, 1990, p. 19). As an example of an interpretative approach to qualitative research (Huberman & Miles, 1994), it treats communication as a collection of symbols with layers of meaning, and it is a methodology that can illuminate how people "use or manipulate symbols and invest communication with meaning" (Moyser and Wagstaffe, 1987, in Hermann, 2008, p. 151). This approach is particularly apt for the research question of this thesis as political leaders and parties do not directly reference the UK's role, but rather allude to their conceptions of it in written and oral communication.

Content analysis can be used in an inductive or deductive way, depending on the theoretical and substantive focus of the researcher and research question (Weber, 1990). This thesis applies the deductive approach, also known as directed content analysis. It is used where "existing theory or prior research exists about a phenomenon that is incomplete or would benefit from further research" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281) and "is often used in cases where the researcher wishes to retest existing data in a new context" (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 111). Rather than inductively developing categories from the text being studied, this approach is used when the

structure of analysis is operationalised on earlier theories and models, developing categories from theory which are then coded to the text, thus moving from the general to the specific (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this case, the theory being applied and tested is that of role theory focusing on the UK, with the categories being drawn from literature on NRCs expressed by political leaders. This approach is applied with consideration of the challenges identified by Hsieh & Shannon (2005), namely the risk of bias in the interpretation of data, and the fact that an overemphasis on theory distracts from the contextual factors of the phenomenon.

Due to an appreciation that "the most important task of the researcher is to establish a meaningful procedure for a systemic (non arbitrary) analysis" (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 184), this work applies the standard six-step approach to content analysis to safeguard objectivity, adapted to suit the deductive, or directed, content-analysis approach applied in this study (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The following steps are outlined in greater details below:

1. Collect and organise data by applying an explicit criterion of selection.
2. Analytically develop categories of roles based on role theory literature applied to British FP.
3. Transform categories into codes.
4. Carry out coding in which the codes were applied to the text, and adapt categories if necessary.
5. Examine the materials to isolate meaningful patterns.
6. Consider the identified patterns in light of previous research and theories to draw conclusions.

Criterion of selection

This study considers that NRCs are shaped and expressed through political articulations (Campbell, 1992; Nabers, 2011; Zehfuss & Maja, 2002), like declarations and speeches made by policymakers when they talk of commitments, duties, functions and responsibilities indicating expectations of a certain types of FP behaviour. As such, it takes the foreign policy sections of party election manifestos as the level and unit of analysis. This follows Graneheim and Lundman's (2004) recommendations that the unit of analysis should be a text large enough to be considered as a whole separate entity, but small enough to correspond to the meaning unit, in this case

understood to be words, sentences and chunks of sentences that are coded and associated with categories. Specifically, the units of analysis are the manifestos presented by the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties for the eight general elections that have occurred since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, these being those of 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2017, and 2019. These three are chosen as they are the principal national parliamentary parties, collectively having received between 75.2 and 94.1% of the vote in each of the elections under study and are the only parties to have been in government in this period, making their evocations of NRCs more likely to reflect or be influenced by popular opinion and electoral politics.

During the period of study, there were eight general elections with each party presenting a party manifesto for each one, resulting in 24 units of analysis which were found on the database of the Comparative Manifesto Project and downloaded[2]. Due to the traditional salience of domestic issues over FP in British elections, only a small section of each manifesto focuses on FP and was thus included in the study. These were transformed into a Word document attached in Appendix 1. The documents are presented in a format as close as possible to that published in the manifestos, with paragraphs, bullet points, titles and subheadings indicated as such. Where necessary, inserts or boxes of information were placed at the end of the document, in order not to disturb the flow of the text, but pull quotes, if taken verbatim from the main text, were not included.

Due to the Brexit referendum, the manifestos of 2017 and 2019 included the UK's relationship with the EU as a crosscutting theme throughout, as well as a separate chapter alongside the traditional one exclusively on foreign affairs, which in 2017 and 2019 tended to avoid all mention of Europe, or to mix foreign with domestic affairs. As a result, and for the sake of parsimony, only chapters that focused exclusively on European relations and foreign affairs in general were included, despite the fact that references to European relations could be found throughout. For that reason, the following sections were included or excluded from the material carried out:

- Conservative 2015: exclude 'Stronger together: a Union for the 21st century' from the 'Keeping Our Country Secure' chapter.

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[2] https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu

- Conservative 2017: exclude 'Our Precious Union' and 'The Home of Democracy and Rule of Law' from the 'A Strong and United Nation in a Changing World' chapter.

- Labour 2017: include 'Negotiating Brexit' and 'International Trade' from the 'Negotiating Brexit' chapter.

- Conservative 2019: include 'Get Brexit Done' chapter.

- Labour 2019: include 'The Final Say on Brexit' from the 'The Final Say on Brexit' chapter and exclude 'Supporting our veterans and investing in men and women of today's Armed Forces' and 'Animal Welfare' from the 'We Will Strengthen Britain in the World' chapter.

The sections chosen for content analysis are described in the table below.

Table 1. Manifesto sources for content analysis

Election	Party	Manifesto name	Chapter	Pages
1992	Conservative	The Best Future for Britain	Taking Responsibility for Britain	1-4
	Labour	It's Time to Get Britain Working Again	(7) Britain in a new world	26-28
	Liberal Democrat	Changing Britain for Good	(5) Britain's partners: European partnerships for the new century	42-46
1997	Conservative	You Can Only Be Sure with the Conservatives	(9) Europe and the world	NA[3]
	Labour	New Labour: Because Britain Deserves Better	Give Britain leadership in Europe	36-39
	Liberal Democrat	Make the Difference	Britain in the World	54-61
2001	Conservative	Time for Common Sense	A world leader	28-31

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[3] A PDF version of the original manifesto was unable to be found. An online version was found at:
https://web.archive.org/web/20110920112230/http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/con97.htm#eu

	Labour	Ambitions for Britain	(5) Britain strong in the world: How we make foreign policy work for Britain and the wider world	36-41
	Liberal Democrat	Freedom, Justice, Honestly	Britain's role in the European Union	18
			Defence and International Institutions	19
2005	Conservative	Are you thinking what we're thinking?	Defending our freedoms	24-27
	Labour	Britain Forward, Not Back	(7) International policy: A stronger country in a secure, sustainable and just world	82-91
	Liberal Democrat	The Real Alternative	Britain's Place in Europe and the World	14-15
2010	Conservative	Invitation to Join the Government of Britain	Promote our National Interest	101-118
	Labour	A Future Fair for All	(10) A global future: Meeting the challenges of the new global age	10:1-10:7
	Liberal Democrat	Change That Works for You	Your world	56-69
2015	Conservative	Strong Leadership, A Clear Economic Plan, A Brighter, More Secure Future	(7) Keeping Our Country Secure	72-80
	Labour	Britain Can Be Better	Standing up for Britain's interests in Europe and the world	73-82

	Liberal Democrat	Stronger Economy. Fairer Society. Opportunity for Everyone.	(11) Britain in the World	138-153
2017	Conservative	Forward, Together: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future	(2) Strong and United Nation in a Changing World	29-45
	Labour	For the Many, Not the Few	(2) Negotiating Brexit: Negotiating Brexit; International Trade	23-27/ 30-32
			(12) Global Britain	115-123
	Liberal Democrat	Change Britain's Future	(1) Protect Britain's Place in Europe	8-12
			(8) Make a Better World	80-86
2019	Conservative	Get Brexit Done: Unleash Britain's Potential	Get Brexit Done	5
			We Will Strengthen Britain in the World	51-57
	Labour	It's Time for Real Change	The Final Say on Brexit	87-92
			A New Internationalism	93-105
	Liberal Democrat	Stop Brexit, Build a Brighter Future	Stop Brexit	6-8
			Our Plan for a Better World	60-65

Categories

This study is an example of deductive or directed content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), in which categories are derived analytically from the literature, rather than through the process of open coding. A coding frame is developed which identifies key concepts or variables as initial coding categories, which are then given operational definitions derived from the literature. These categories "reflect the meanings and expectations inherent in the

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theoretical framework that the researcher has adopted in order to view the study" (Lune & Berg, 2017, pp. 183–184) which in this example is role theory and its application to British FP.

The categories are deductively drawn from secondary literature that applies role theory to British FP, which in itself is drawn on prototypes established by Holsti (1970) or inductively based on the close reading of texts. In recent years, a number of different categorizations have been developed to facilitate cross-case comparison, based on the belief that "a well-classified national role conceptions scheme can provide the researcher with a useful tool for explaining variations in foreign policy behaviour" (Aras & Gorener, 2010, p. 77). In his seminal work, Holsti (1970) analysed the statements of FP leaders of 71 nations between 1965 and 1967, and identified 17 roles, which are arranged in an active-passive axis of activity in international affairs, ranging from revolutionary leader-imperialist, as the most active, and protectee, as the least. This typology is not exhaustive and only focuses on activity, ignoring hard power capabilities, ideological outlook and status. Chafetz et al (1996) for instance, developed Holsti's original typology to include additional roles. Others, like Shih (1988) have pointed out the insufficiencies in the categorisation scheme, arguing that it fails to describe the diversity of states and nations internationally, was not deductively categorised and was heavily influenced by Cold War dynamics. Wish (1980) proposed an alternative typology that included 13 NRCs and analysed states on two dimensions: cooperative versus competitive, and high status versus low status; and grouped around three categories: status, motivational orientation and issue or problem area. Hymans (2006) contributed a more parsimonious typology based on a two-dimensional model of solidarity and status.

Based on the theory and an analysis of role theory applied to British foreign policy, this thesis identifies nine key roles that are transformed into categories: *Faithful Ally to the US, Global Trading State, Great Power, Isolationist, Leader of the Commonwealth, Liberal Interventionist, Regional Partner of Europe, Status Quo Power,* and *Thought Leader,* in alphabetical order (Gaskarth, 2014; Oppermann et al., 2020; Strong, n.d., 2015). These are understood as ideal types evoked in British FP discourse. This thesis does not assume these to cover all dimensions and manifestations of the NRCs expressed by political parties, but based on the literature, it considers them to be the most significant and relevant ones for this study, following the examples of Gaskarth (2014), who selected six, and Oppermann et al (2020), who selected five. As such, this study acknowledges that certain other NRCs may be identified in the process. Following Gaskarth

(2014), each role was separated into its component parts and transformed into subcategories which are outlined below.

Faithful Ally to the US

Holsti differentiates between regular alliance commitments made through mutual assistance with faithful ally relationships, stating that the latter depends on governments making "a specific commitment to support the policies of another government" (1970, p. 267). In the British case, this refers to support for the US. This role "pitches Britain as the closest international partner of the US and is expected to secure US support for British interests and enhance British influence on the international stage" (Oppermann et al., 2020, p. 22). As such, there is an expectation for the UK to support US diplomatic initiatives and participate in conflicts led by it, even if detrimental to national interest.

This relationship is expressed through the notion of a 'special relationship' which has become an essential trope of British diplomatic language. It draws on the shared historical, cultural and ideological relationship between the two countries and is often referred to as Atlanticism. Specifically, this "emphasises the broadly similar Northern Atlantic and Anglo-Saxon political culture, democratic ethics and national interest that are shared between the UK and the US" (Beech, 2011, p. 350). In terms of history, it draws heavily on the alliance between the UK and the US during the Second World War against Nazi Germany, during which time the UK remained a great power though clearly starting its relative decline, and a generous interpretation of a partnership between the two countries as bulwarks of political and economic freedom against the USSR. Since the end of the Second World War, a key element of this relationship has been military cooperation and coordination, especially in the US-dominated NATO alliance in which the UK has the second largest military.

As a result, the following ideas are associated with the *Faithful Ally to the US* NRC for the purpose of this study:

- Support for continuing US global leadership in the political, economic and military spheres.

- Support for US military interests and campaigns.

- Support for NATO and military cooperation with the US.

- Evocation of the 'special relationship'.

Global Trading State

This NRC draws on the notion of a 'trading state' as proposed by Rosecrance (1986), which refers to countries that eschew territorial and power ambitions to focus on internal economic development sustained by global trade and investment, alongside cooperation and dialogue in the context of economic interdependence. Applied to the UK, this NRC, "envisages Britain as an outward-looking, liberal and internationalist leader on global free trade" (Oppermann et al., 2020, p. 10). It is associated with championing and advocating for business, free markets and trade around the world, whilst providing leadership in the pursuit of economic liberalisation and globalisation, through the form of Free Trade Agreements with other countries, protecting and innovating the rules-based global economic order, and engaging with other countries actively through trade and investments. It specifically understands the UK as being uniquely well placed to benefit from free trade, the prevailing economic order and globalisation (Daddow, 2019).

This NRC draws on a historical narrative of mercantilism (Clarke, 2020) and the country's role as the creator of the global free trade system in the nineteenth century. It also has a strong association with other liberal values, specifically a British moral commitment to and understanding of free trade as buttressing different freedoms, including democracy, and is associated with promoting peace through economic interdependence and prosperity (Trentmann, 2008). Historically, "the defence of cheap food and open markets was linked to a popular narrative of a vibrant civil society" and was seen as part of the country's "civilising mission of peace and progress" (Trentmann, 2008, p. 2).

As a result, the following ideas are associated with the *Global Trading State* NRC for the purpose of this study:

- Support for free trade, economic liberalisation and globalisation.
- Support for new or deeper Free Trade Agreements.

- Support for the multilateral rules-based trading order and its institutions (WTO, IMF, WB, etc).
- Association of trade with liberal values like democracy and human rights.

Great Power

The *Great Power* NRC is both a social construct, and an appreciation of a country's material capabilities and will to use them to pursue objectives. The English School of International Relations proposes that "a state must certainly possess substantial military capability in order to qualify as a great power, so as to make a meaningful contribution to regional order and thus international "society". Yet while the possession of force is necessary to qualify as a great power, it is not sufficient, since fulfilling the "Great Power" roles requires the discharge of certain societal responsibility to uphold international order" (Blagden, 2019, pp. 9–10). As a result, *Great Powers* have special rights and responsibility when it comes to the management of the international system, and therefore "promote stability via the creation and control of regional spheres of influence, and by managing their relations – including crisis avoidance – with other great powers" (McCourt, 2014b, p. 167). However, *Great Powers* also apply their resources to achieve their interests. As Gaskarth states, "traditional Great Power behaviour involved alliances and rivalries with other states in pursuit of relative gains" (2014, p. 579).

Additionally, being a *Great Power* is understood of as not only a status. It also "indicates a leadership" and global interests in international affairs (Chafetz et al., 1996, p. 741). As a result, a *Great Power* is expected to have a vested interest in events throughout the world and, in the case of the UK, it is "expected to play a part in crisis management, particularly in Europe and its near aboard" (McCourt, 2014b, p. 160) and be capable of responding and intervening diplomatically, economically and militarily. This implies "the maintenance of a preponderance of power in key military and industrial sectors to afford a state competitive advantage in the event of war" (Gaskarth, 2014, p. 579), as well as institutional resources and the capacity to act independently through these resources. As such, the possession of 'full-spectrum capability' allowing the country to send expeditionary military forces outside its borders at short notice is essential, as well as the maintenance of a credible minimum deterrent in the form of nuclear weapons.

As a result, the following ideas are associated with the *Great Power* NRC for the purpose of this study:

- Support for UK armed forces and increasing their capabilities.

- Support for an independent nuclear deterrent.

- Affirmation of the UK as a power broker in international conflicts.

- Support for military, economic and diplomatic interventions to support interests.

- Evocation of independent foreign policy and capabilities.

Isolationist

For Holsti, "the national role of the isolate demands… a minimum of external contacts of whatever variety. Statements … reveal fears of external involvements of any kind and emphasize self-reliance" (1970, p. 270). It is an inward-looking NRC that implies spending as little energy and resources as possible abroad in order to focus on domestic concerns. Political leaders might express this role if they "recognize severe domestic problems and discern that it is better for his nation (and/or himself) to expend very little of its resources in the international arena" (Wish, 1980, p. 538). Gaskarth associates this NRC for the UK with "voices calling for the country to adopt a more circumspect, non-intervention stance on particular regional or global issues" (2014, p. 566), and highlights the association of non-intervention in international affairs with military interventions abroad and international commitments like foreign aid spending. The author goes on to associate this NRC with neutrality, minimal defence spending, withdrawal from treaty commitments and enhanced border security based on the notion of being an island nation that defends itself from contact with the outside world.

As a result, the following ideas are associated with the *Isolationist* NRC for the purpose of this study:

- Opposition to increased or support for decreased spending on foreign policy, including military and foreign aid.

- Opposition to foreign intervention, including military intervention.

- Opposition to cooperation and multilateralism in relation to global issues, including climate change, development, etc.

- Support for withdrawal from international commitments and participation in international organisations.

- Support for neutrality in relation to conflicts.

- Support for greater frontier security and opposition to the movement of people across borders.

Leader of the Commonwealth

This NRC draws on Holsti's notion of a 'regional leader' which refers "to duties or special responsibilities that a government perceives for itself in its relation to states in a particular region with which it identifies, or to cross-cutting subsystems" (1970, p. 261). In this case, the region or subsystem is the 54-state Commonwealth of Nations which "was conceived as an instrument to replace the Empire with a British sphere of influence" (Srinivasan, 2006, p. 257). Since Winston Churchill's Three Circles speech in 1948, connexion to the countries of the former Empire has been an ever-present part of the country's FP imaginations and discourse (Daddow, 2018). This NRC sees the block as an important element in the imagination of a transnational and global British orientation, and its identity (Eaton, 2019) and leadership stems from "Britain's identitive focus in the organisation… A characteristic of the association is the tendency of all members to regard the United Kingdom as the central point of orientation" (Srinivasan, 2006, p. 265). As such, this NRC focuses on the Commonwealth as a forum for the projection of British power and influence globally.

In practical policy terms, "this role centres on upgrading Britain's historical links to Commonwealth countries and turning the Commonwealth into a hub for Britain's wider diplomatic and economic relations" (Oppermann et al., 2020, p. 19). Additionally, it emphasises the "bonds of shared values and the common heritage of Commonwealth members as well as opportunities for deeper relations" (Oppermann et al., 2020, p. 20). Additionally, this NRC sees the Commonwealth from a trade and investment perspective as "a vibrant economic space" (Adler-

Nissen et al., 2017, p. 584), but one neglected following Britain's joining of the European Economic Community in 1973, preventing the UK from developing any initiative to turn the Commonwealth into a free trade area (Price, 2016).

As a result, the following ideas are associated with the *Leader of the Commonwealth* NRC for the purpose of this study:

- Support for the Commonwealth, its work and its functions.
- Support for greater economic and political relations with Commonwealth countries.
- Evocation of the Commonwealth as a platform for British influence and power.
- Evocation of imperial nostalgia.

Liberal Interventionist

For Gaskarth, a *Liberal Interventionist*, or what he calls an opportunist-interventionist, is a state that "seeks to exploit current disruptions in the international system to advance liberal ideas about human rights, democracy and good governance, even at the expense of the existing framework of international law" (2014, p. 577). It draws on Holsti's defender of the faith, which refers to states that "view their foreign policy objectives and commitments in terms of defending value systems (rather than specified territories) from attack" and which frequently "undertake special responsibilities to guarantee ideological purity for a group of other states" (1970, p. 264). In this case, the value system to be defended is a liberal one, likening the country to a global policeman of liberal rules and values.

This NRC can be closely associated with the solidarity approach of the English School's vision of international society, and specifically its affirmation of "the universal applicability of substantive liberal values, such as human rights protection and democracy promotion" (Ralph, 2014, p. 2), even if they break international norms like sovereignty and state intervention, or procedural norms within institutions like the UN Security Council. As a result, it is associated with a muscular defence of a set of liberal values and ethics, including democracy and human rights, often through the application of military force, as well as economic and diplomatic efforts. These efforts might incur a high financial and reputational cost, and thus be disadvantageous to traditional

interpretations of national interest.

As a result, the following ideas are associated with the *Liberal Interventionist* NRC for the purpose of this study:

- Support and advocacy for liberal values, like democracy and human rights in other countries.
- Intervention in other countries to support values, including through military, diplomatic and economic means.
- Prioritising liberal values over international norms of state sovereignty and non-intervention.
- Evocation of ethical responsibility to foreigners.

Regional Partner of Europe

The NRC defined as the regional partner of Europe identifies the scope of the country's foreign policy as less global and more regional. This role draws on what Holsti (1970) and Hermann (1987) referred to as 'Regional-subsystem collaborator' and a 'regional collaborator', and indicates "far-reaching commitments to cooperative efforts with other states to build wider communities, or to cross-cutting subsystems" (Kalevi J Holsti, 1970, p. 265) in this case with the European Union, or other organisations that have a regional dimension, like the Council of Europe and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is associated with the UK embracing its historical European identity and playing a fuller leadership role in the region.

The UK has had a very ambiguous relationship with the European Union project, and this has been represented by the variety of positions taken by political actors. Despite this, this NRC is premised on a belief that the UK's FP orientation is towards Europe, regardless of the level of Euroscepticism expressed by politicians or its position as an 'awkward partner' with a tendency to oppose movement towards political integration whilst supporting the UK's continuation in the EU (Gaskarth, 2014). In relation to the Brexit referendum and the election manifestos of 2015, 2017 and 2019 this NRC is associated with the maintenance of strong European links and deep cooperation in areas of security, justice, home affairs and economic matters, especially in terms of

trade and the single market (Oppermann et al., 2020), even if an end of EU membership is concurrently expressed.

As a result, the following ideas are associated with the *Regional Partner of Europe* NRC for the purpose of this study:

- Support for the EU as an institution, and to European institutions (European Court of Justice, European Court of Human Rights, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, etc).
- Support for defence cooperation and join action with the EU or other European bodies.
- Support for values associated with the EU (free movement of people, finance, trade and good) and with the European region (human rights, democracy, etc) with direct reference to the EU or other European bodies.
- Manifestation of European identity.
- Support for extending the EU or other European bodies.

Status Quo Power

Gaskarth (2014) provides a detailed definition of a status quo, or rule of law, power. It acts as an "upholder of international law" (2014, p. 571) and looks to preserve the status quo amongst the nations, with a particular focus on norms of sovereignty and non-intervention. The author goes on to associate it with a country that is "happy with its position in world affairs and would not seek radical reform of the prevailing international order" (2014, p. 571). This focus on norms and opposition to radical reform associates the NRC with the pluralist approach of the English School which stresses the need to act in accordance with international consensus and procedural norms of deliberation at the international level (Ralph, 2014).

This NRC is associated with a commitment to international institutions by working through them and supporting them, including financially, as well as treaty observance. In terms of specific FP activities, Gaskarth identifies "drafting papers and legal treaties, hosting conferences, conducting observer missions, verifying commitments and offering advice", as well as "providing

diplomatic expertise and financially support for the institutions of global governance," especially the UN, as key elements (2014, p. 572).

As a result, the following ideas are associated with the *Status Quo Power* NRC for the purpose of this study:

- Obeying and defending international law and its institutions.
- Defending procedural norms of international organisations, like at the UN.
- Supporting the pre-eminence of state sovereignty and non-intervention.
- Diplomatic and financial support for institutions of global governance.
- Affirming the centrality of the UN in global peace and security.

Thought Leader

Though the NRC of *Though Leader* has many similarities with the *Status Quo Power* mentioned above, it is more progressive in its approach to the international order. It draws on elements of Holsti's 'mediator-integrator' understood as states that perceive "themselves as capable of, or responsible for, fulfilling or undertaking special tasks to reconcile conflicts between other states or groups of states" and "help adversaries reconcile their differences" (1970, p. 265), but goes beyond a limited focus on interstate conflicts. Gaskarth provides a detailed description of this NRC. For the author, "acting as a thought leader is about identifying risks and solutions that affect the international community as a whole…working to further global public goods" (2014, p. 575), rather than just national interests.

A *Thought Leader* draws attention to problems and creates a shared awareness of the risks inherent in them that may be ignored by others. This role is associated with providing creative thinking and promoting policy innovations by "acting as a convenor for debate, discussion and dialogue" (Evans & Steven, 2010, p. 14). It coordinates responses to issues, by providing "shared platforms and operating systems to campaign for change and manage the risks identified" (Gaskarth, 2014, p. 575), often innovating in international norms, as well as guiding and making discussion of global or regional topics possible. As a result, a *Though Leader* can be associated

with a type of activist diplomacy and often with radical reforms of the institutions of the international system.

As a result, the following ideas are associated with the *Thought Leader* NRC for the purpose of this study:

- Defence of global goods (for instance, the sea, environment, natural species, space, Arctic/Antarctic, peace and disarmament, prosperity, development, etc).
- Advocacy for global or regional issues at international organisations.
- Creating coalitions of countries to face global issues, and cooperating with others.
- Hosting conferences and sponsoring commissions into global issues.
- Putting global interest above a traditional interpretation of national interest.
- Creating and supporting new international norms.
- Supporting reforms of international institutions.
- Supporting development and international aid.

Following the creation of categories and subcategories, each one was given a code to facilitate the process of coding. If role contestation is understood to be a dynamic process in which NRCs are battled over discursively, then one can expect roles to be both affirmed and rejected by different actors in the manifestos. As a result, when coding is being carried out, affirmations, as well as rejections of categories will be identified. Positive evocations, which are expected to be the most numerous, are identified with the code. In the case of a rejection of NRCs in favour of a disengagement from international affairs, opposition to cooperation and distancing from multilateral organisations, the text will be coded as the *Isolationist* NRC. Otherwise, it will code it as *Other*.

Following a first reading of the manifestos, it became clear that additional coding rules would have to be established to provide a clear coding scheme in order to respond to the breadth of ideas evoked in the manifestos and give analytical clarity to them. For instance, in their relationship with the European Union, manifestos could evoke support for the institution whilst supporting greater integration, or support for the institution, whilst opposing greater integration towards a federal structure and maintaining sovereignty in certain areas. As both agree on the UK

being a *Regional Partner of Europe*, neither could be classified as *Isolationist* in nature. To identify a difference between the positions, any evocation of support for Europe but opposition to greater integration and any transfer of sovereignty from the UK to the EU will be identified as a sceptic strand of the *Regional Partner of Europe* NRC, and will be coded as RPEU (scep). When counted, it will form part of the *Regional Partner of Europe* NRC as it is in essence a position of support for European relations, but a nuanced one. Outright opposition to the EU will simply be classified as *Isolationist*. Additionally, as a supranational organisation, Europe represents an intermestic topic that is treated as both a foreign and domestic issue by parties, as well as a technocratic one focused on the functioning of the EU's political institutions. Only statements that can be understood as unambiguously related to British FP will be coded.

Also, due to the breadth of topics that enter under the *Thought Leader* NRC, four sub-categories were established: TL (dev) for aid and development topics, TL (enviro) for environmental and climate change topics, TL (arms) for anti-nuclear weapons and arms reduction and control, and TL (eco) for economic reform focused on fair trade, labour standards and corruption fighting. These will also form part of the calculations of the *Thought Leader* NRC but allow greater clarity when coding.

Additionally, considering that politicians, like in the debate in the House of Commons on 29 August 2013 over the use of force in Syria, only indirectly refer to NRCs (Strong, 2015), it is likely that not every sentence and phrase in the manifestos will be easily attributable to the categories outlined above. As such, text considered to be neutral will be left uncoded. Also, due to the fact that only nine categories are being coded for, chosen for their prominence in literature that focuses on roles in British FP, it is also likely that other NRCs may be evoked in the text. As such, a further category code was included for this content, and will be coded as *Other*.

The codes, in alphabetical order, are as follow:

FAUS= *Faithful Ally to the US*
GLTS= *Global Trading State*
GP= *Great Power*
ISOL = *Isolationist*
LC= *Leader of the Commonwealth*
LI= *Liberal Interventionist*

Other = content not associated with nine NRCs but indicating an alternative NRC

RPEU= *Regional Partner of Europe*

SQP= *Status Quo Power*

TL= *Thought Leader*

The coding process and concerns for validity and reliability

Coding is understood as the process by which data is organised into categories and interpreted, but there is no single best way to code (Kalevi J Holsti, 1970). Hsieh & Shannon (2004) propose two strategies for the coding of deductive, or directed, content analysis: first reading the content to identify all examples of the phenomenon under study, in this case NRCs, before coding the identified passages to the predetermined codes; or alternatively, to begin immediately coding with the predetermined codes, with any data left uncoded being analysed later to see if it represents a new category of a subcategory of an existing one. The authors state that the first approach is better at capturing all occurrences of a phenomenon, thus increasing trustworthiness, and the second being recommended is the researcher feels confident that there will be bias in their identification of categories in the text. This study applies the second approach.

As a social science methodology, content analysis requires researchers to make a strong case for reliability and validity of their results, which are inextricably linked (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Manifestos are understood to represent an example of pattern content, where "there is an objective pattern that all coders should uncover sorting through symbols and recognising connections among them" (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 261). The role of the researcher is to identify these patterns, rather than interpret them.

Reliability has three elements (Krippendorff, 2018) : stability, or the tendency for the same data to be coded the same way over time; reproducibility, or the tendency to classify data into the same categories; and accuracy, or the tendency for norms and protocols established for the correct categorisation of data to be implemented. With a focus on stability and accuracy, the manifestos were coded three times and results compared to make sure that the same information was being coded in the same manner.

In terms of format, there is a distinction between intercoder reliability, in the event of a group of coders working on the same data, and intracoder reliability, when there is only one, like in this study (Lacy et al., 2015). Though the use of multiple coders is normally used as a mechanism to safeguard reliability, and thus validity, this study understand that "the primary aim of inter- or intracoder reliability checks is to test the reliability of the coding protocol [also known as a coding scheme], and the protocol's ability to result in consistent categorization of content" (Lacy et al., 2015, p. 6). As a result, faced with a sole coder, the means by which reliability can be safeguarded if through establishing a systematic process for the coding process based on an explicitly articulated coding scheme that establishes discreet categories. This scheme draws on the categories and sub-categories explained above and its application is outlined below.

This process of establishing a coding scheme was made following Potter & Leving-Donnerstein's (1999) recommendation to adapt the approach to reflect the content to be coded, in this case, latent pattern content. This process is connected to the notion of validity, which requires a coding scheme, faithful to the theory that is orientating the study, that guides coders in the analysis of content. Specifically, the authors state that the designer of the coding scheme "must deduce from the theory the important manifest characteristic in the content", and then explicitly "tell coders how to make inference of patterns from the appearance of specific sets of manifest elements" (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, pp. 266–267). This provides a calculus to be used uniformly by the coders that forms the basis of their judgements, and eliminates the role of interpretation on the part of coders. As such, it "is an effort to make the coding process uniform across all coders so that the coding can be regarded as systematic and thus scientific" (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 268). Additionally, validity requires the existence of a standard with which coding is compared. This will also be the coding scheme, outlined below, which operationalises the categories and sub-categories outlined above alongside a set of rules to be applied:

Table 2. Coding scheme

Code	NRC	Characteristics
FAUS	*Faithful Ally to the US*	Support for continuing US global leadership in the political, economic and military spheres Support for US military interests and campaigns Support for NATO and military cooperation with the US Evocation of the 'special relationship'
GLTS	*Global Trading State*	Support for free trade, economic liberalisation and globalisation Support for new or deeper Free Trade Agreements Support for the multilateral rules-based trading order and its institutions (WTO, IMF, WB, etc) Association of trade with liberal values like democracy and human rights
GP	*Great Power*	Support for UK armed forces and increasing their capabilities Support for an independent nuclear deterrent Affirmation of the UK as a power broker in international conflicts Support for military, economic and diplomatic interventions to support interests Evocation of independent foreign policy and capabilities
Isol	*Isolationist*	Opposition to increased or support for decreased spending on FP, including military and foreign aid Opposition to foreign intervention, including military intervention Opposition to cooperation and multilateralism in relation to global issues, including climate change, development etc Support for withdrawal from international commitments and participation in international organisations Support for neutrality in relation to conflicts Support for greater frontier security and opposition to the movement of people across borders

LC	*Leader of the Commonwealth*	Support for the Commonwealth, its work and its functions
		Support for greater economic and political relations with Commonwealth countries
		Evocation of the Commonwealth as a platform for British influence and power
		Evocation of imperial nostalgia
LI	*Liberal Interventionist*	Support and advocacy for liberal values, like democracy and human rights in other countries
		Intervention in other countries to support values, including through military, diplomatic and economic means
		Prioritising liberal values over international norms of state sovereignty and non-intervention
		Evocation of ethical responsibility to foreigners
RPEU	*Regional Partner of Europe*	Support for the EU as an institution, and European institutions (European Court of Justice, European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, etc)
		Support for defence cooperation and join action with the EU or other European bodies
		Support for values associated with the EU (free movement of people, finance, trade and good) and with the European region (human rights, democracy, etc) with direct reference to the EU or other European bodies
		Manifestation of European identity
		Support for greater integration and extension of the EU or other European bodies
SQP	*Status Quo Power*	Obeying and defending international law and its institutions
		Defending procedural norms of international organisations, like at the UN

		Supporting the pre-eminence of state sovereignty and non-intervention
		Diplomatic and financial support for institutions of global governance
		Affirming the centrality of the UN in global peace and security
TL	*Thought Leader*	Defence of global goods (for instance, the sea, environment, natural species, space, Arctic/Antarctic, peace and disarmament, prosperity, development, etc)
		Advocacy for global or regional issues at international organisations
		Creating coalitions of countries to face global issues, and cooperating with others
		Hosting conferences and sponsoring commissions into global issues
		Putting global interest above a traditional interpretation of national interest
		Creating and supporting new international norms
		Supporting reforms of international institutions
		Supporting development and international aid
Other	alternative NRC	Other NRC manifestations that do not match the above

Additionally, the declarative nature of manifestos limits space for coder interpretation, and thus possible subjectivity and bias, increasing reliability and thus validity. The typical British party-political manifesto opens with an introduction in the form of a personal address from the party leader, followed by a body divided into thematic sections (like health, the economy and foreign affairs). These sections describe the current situation of each of these domains, express the party's position, principles and proposed policies in the form of pledges, and criticisms of other parties and the governing party's record in the case of challengers (Pearce, 2014). In the case of incumbents, FP actions and achievements are often highlighted. Manifesto pledges, for their part, tend to be either general, referring to statements of objectives, with no clear indication of strategy, or detailed ones, which explain how objectives will be achieved (Childs et al., 2010). Considering that NRCs are expressions of commitments, duties, functions and responsibilities indicating expectations of a certain types of FP behaviour (Aggestam, 1999), phrased as what "we want and what we do as a result of who we think we are, want to be, and should be" (Krotz, 2002, p. 4), they form part of the language typically found in British party political manifestos.

When coding, this thesis applied the method introduced by the Comparative Manifesto Project of dividing the text into statements, known as 'quasi-sentences', each representing an argument expressed as a sentence or phrase, which are then given a code (See Pogorelis et al., 2005). The intention was to try to capture the holistic meaning expressed in these 'quasi-sentences', instead of breaking them down into separate words that may lose the context in which they were expressed and its intended meaning.

In order to further systematise the coding process, safeguard reliability and increase the validity of the data, a number of rules were established for the coding scheme to identify what would be considered an expression of an NRC and thus coded. These included:

- statements of intentions and specific FP pledges associated with parties (i.e., Labour will/ won't..., the Conservatives promise/ pledge to...)
- statements of party positions on FP issues (i.e., Labour supports/ opposes…)
- normative judgements related to UK FP behaviour (i.e., the UK must/ should, has to... it is important/ essential that the UK…)
- affirmations of the UK's place or function in world affairs (i.e., the UK is...)

- affirmations of past actions, decisions or pledges directly associated with the UK's role in the world in incumbent manifestos (i.e., Britain has..., under the Conservatives, the UK has…)

To make sure that the coding scheme was appropriate and assured clear rules for coding that arrived at discreet categories, the above rules were reviewed following an initial reading of the manifestos to adapt them and avoid doubts or uncertainties. With this in mind, the scheme established that descriptions of the context in which the UK implements its FP, or criticisms of other parties, unless these take the form of pledges, declarations of principles or evoke a position on a specific issue or topic will not be coded as NRCs. The study will only code statements that are explicitly related to FP and Britain's international role, and will not code statements that refer to the actions or FP of other entities, like the EU. For instance, in the area of climate change, statements associated with domestic policy objectives, like increasing the use of renewable energy sources in the UK, will not be coded, whilst affirmations of the UK's international role in promoting renewable energy use abroad will be.

Likewise, in relation to the EU, only statements related to British participation in European initiatives and affirmations of the UK's relationship to the bloc were coded as manifestations of NRCs. Statements that refer to preferences for the way the EU functions, be it in relation to the European Parliament, transparency, or otherwise, are treated as domestic issues and so will not be coded as manifestations of NRCs. Though the result may be that statements that could be interpreted as referencing NRCs do not get included in the study, the aim is that this helps to systematise the coding process and maintain consistency throughout all the manifestos analysed, increasing reliability and thus validity.

Considering the nature of the question and the resources available, it was decided that coding would be carried out using Microsoft office tools rather than on a specialist and paid qualitative analysis tool like Atlas.ti. The manifestos were transformed into a Word document and the coding done using comments in which the identified text was highlighted and the category name indicated in the comment (see appendix 1). Once this was done for all manifestos, the coding and categories assigned were reviewed three times to make sure that they followed the same systematic approach. In order to transform this qualitative data into quantitative data, Word macros were used to extract the comments from the manifesto and transformed into a table indicating the quoted text, the NRC it was associated with, the party and election year (see appendix 2). This data

was then transformed into an Excel table and a formula applied to automatically count the words of the quoted texts. Finally, these were grouped together to give a single word count for each NRC for each party in each election manifesto which was later used as the core data to be analysed (see the presentation of data in appendix 3).

Data analysis

Following the coding of the texts, the data was analysed in order to calculate the level of consensus held amongst the three principal UK parliamentary parties on the NRCs they presented for the UK in their election manifestos. This calculation was based on two factors: the presence or absence of NRCs in a party manifesto (whether they are mentioned or not) and the salience of specific NRCs within the manifesto. Role theory supports these two approaches. On the one hand, it indicates that the manifesto are likely to express more than one NRC, because states tend to have role sets (2005), whilst on the other hand, it acknowledges that not all roles are equally relevant, and state will have a master role, salient in every situation, and auxiliary roles that apply to certain issue areas or relationships (Harnisch, 2011). The more salient the role, the more important it is assumed to be and the more consequential is its evocation by a political party.

NRC Presence

The presence of NRCs (referred henceforth as *NRC presence*) was calculated by indicating whether an NRC was evoked in a manifesto or not. This approach follows the example of Grossman (2005), and responds to the risk of giving excessive importance to roles expressed more than once in a single statement by coding NRCs that appear in statements, regardless of their frequency, only once, treating each text as a whole. The author analysed the frequency of statements about Russian NRCs, understood as the percentage of texts in which an NRC was expressed. In this thesis, following Grossman (2005) the collected information was mapped longitudinally from 1992 to 2019. In order to compare the parties in this way, a table was created for each party indicating whether an NRC was mentioned or not in each of the election manifestos studied, with a dark grey cell indicating presence, and a blank one indicating absence (tables 3, 4 and 5). Next, for each NRC, a percentage was calculated, representing the percentage of manifestos in which a particular role was mentioned. Finally, the parties were compared based on the percentage of manifestos in which NRCs were mentioned (table 6). The results and their analysis are presented below.

Table 3. NRC Presence *in Conservative party manifestos (1992-2019)*

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019	Total
FAUS	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
GLTS	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
GP	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
ISOL	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
LC	■	■	■		■	■	■		75%
LI	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
Other	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
RPEU	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
SQP	■	■					■	■	50%
TL	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%

Table 4. NRC Presence *in Labour party manifestos (1992-2019)*

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019	Total
FAUS	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	87.5%
GLTS		■	■	■			■		50%
GP	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
ISOL						■		■	25%
LC	■	■	■		■	■			62.5%
LI	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
Other	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
RPEU	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
SQP	■	■	■	■			■	■	75%
TL	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%

Table 5. NRC Presence *in Liberal Democrat party manifestos (1992-2019)*

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019	Total
FAUS	■	■		■		■	■	■	75%
GLTS	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		87.5%
GP	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
ISOL		■							12.5%
LC			■						12.5%
LI	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
Other		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	87.5%
RPEU	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%
SQP	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	87.5%
TL	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	100%

Table 6. Comparison of NRC Presence*: Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat party manifestos*

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat
FAUS	100%	87.5%	75%
GLTS	100%	50%	87.5%
GP	100%	100%	100%
ISOL	100%	25%	12.5%
LC	75%	62.5%	12.5%
LI	100%	100%	100%
Other	100%	100%	87.5%
RPEU	100%	100%	100%
SQP	50%	75%	87.5%
TL	100%	100%	100%

A comparison of the NRCs evoked by the three parties in their manifestos in all the elections indicates a level of consensus on the relevance of certain role for the UK. Of the ten roles that were being coded, four appeared in 100% of the manifestos of all parties. These are *Great Power*, *Liberal Interventionist*, *Regional Partner of Europe*, and *Thought Leader*. This indicates that, regardless of the salience afforded to each role by the parties, all three agreed that these four were relevant to the UK's national role in some sense. In the second order of consensus, the *Other* role, referring to evocations of preferences for the UK's role that did not match the nine identified in the literature, was mentioned in all manifestos of the Conservative and Labour parties, and 87.5% of the Liberal Democrats'. Additionally, a high level of agreement could be argued existed over the UK's role as a *Faithful Ally of the United States*. It was mentioned in all the Conservative party's, 87.5% of Labour's and 75% of the Liberal Democrat's manifestos. The NRC which saw the least consensus was that of the *Isolationist*, with this role being mentioned in all Conservative party manifestos, but only 25% of Labour's and 12.5% of the Liberal Democrats'.

When the results are looked at for each party, it is clear that certain NRCs are more relevant in some parties over others. For the Conservatives, the core set is numerous, and each NRC appears in 100% of manifestos except the *Leader of the Commonwealth* and the *Status Quo Power*. The latter were mentioned in 75% and 50% of the manifestos, respectively. For both Labour and the Liberal Democrats, the *Great Power*, *Liberal Interventionist, Regional Partner of Europe* and *Thought Leader* NRCs were mentioned in all manifestos. For Labour, the *Other* NRC also appeared in every single one. Also, for Labour, in order of appearances, the *Faithful Ally of the United States* appeared in 87.5%, *Status Quo Power* in 75%, *Leader of the Commonwealth* in 62.5%, *Global Trading State* in 50% and the *Isolationist* in only 25%. For the Liberal Democrats, the *Status Quo Power*, *Global Trading State* and the *Other* NRC appeared in 87.5% of manifestos, the *Faithful Ally of the United States* in 75% and finally, the *Isolationist* and *Leader of the Commonwealth* in only 12.5%.

In summary, this way of looking at the data indicates that there is a clear set of roles that all three parties agree that the UK plays, these being the *Great Power, Liberal Interventionist, Regional Partner of Europe* and *Thought Leader*. It also indicates that the Conservative party understands the UK's international role through a broader number of roles than the other two parties. For the six NRCs that did not appear in 100% of the manifestos of all parties, the level of consensus varies, with the greatest disagreement being over the *Isolationist* NRC.

Calculating the salience of NRCs

Measuring the salience of NRCs within political texts, like manifestos or speeches, is complex, but it can be carried out by measuring the frequency with which an NRC is mentioned. This, however, has been carried out in the role theory literature in two manners. One approach follows the example of Catalinac (2007) and her study of Japanese NRCs in relation to the 1991 and 2003 conflicts in Iraq. In her study, the author studied plenary sessions of the Japanese parliament and took each articulation of a preferred NRC for the country as a separate role statement, regardless of the number of words or sentences that this statement took the form of. Being a plenary session, politicians could talk in various occasions, and each expression of a NRC was counted, resulting in a total value for the times an NRC was mentioned in a session. By comparing these figures, a measure of salience was reached.

An alternative approach, and one that this thesis implements, is that of measuring salience based on how much space is dedicated to an NRC's evocation in the text, in terms of the number of different contexts and paragraphs, or sentences or words in which it is stated (Sula, 2019), based on the idea that the more space afforded an NRC, the more salient it is considered to be for the speaker. A version of this approach is to calculate the percentage of quasi-sentences devoted to specific topics as a percentage of the total of quasi-sentences being studied (Pogorelis et al., 2005; Volkens, 2001). Considering the limited number of texts under study (24 manifestos in total), it was decided that salience would be measured by counting the number of words dedicated to an evocation of a specific NRC as a percentage of all words used to evoke NRCs. Specifically, two measures were created: *NRC Salience*, which establishes a quantitative measure for the salience of a specific NRC in a manifesto, and *NRC Salience Consensus*, which looks to create an indicator to measure the level of consensus amongst parties about the salience of specific NRCs at a specific election, explained in detail below.

NRC Salience

NRC Salience looks to measure how important a specific NRC is for a party as expressed through a manifesto. As a means of a proxy to measure salience, this thesis calculated the number of words dedicated to specific NRCs as a percentage of the words dedicated to NRCs in total

counted in each manifesto. For instance, if out of 1000 words identified as evoking NRCs of all types in a manifesto, 100 refer to the *Isolationist* NRC, this will receive a score of 10% as words coded as referring to this NRC represented 10% of all words used to express NRCs. The relative salience of different NRCs for a party will be calculated by comparing the *NRC Salience* value for each role, based on the logic that the more words are dedicated to a specific NRC, the more important it is to the party in question. Therefore, the NRC that has the highest *NRC Salience* will be considered to be the most important for the party in question, with second largest being considered the second most important, and so forth.

This approach focused on counting words is used because, as edited written texts, the manifestos are organised around themes and ideas, making it extremely likely that evocations of the same NRC are grouped together in sentences and paragraphs, making it difficult and possibly arbitrary to separate them into individual evocations to be counted separately as was carried out by Catalinac (2007). Though this is imperfect, it is chosen as the method most likely to provide an accurate proxy for NRC salience which could be carried out in a systematic manner, safeguarding reliability and validity.

A comparison of the average *NRC Salience* per party per NRC (graph 1, tables 7 and 8), and analysis of the *NRC Salience* for each party across the period (graphs 2, 3 and 4) were carried out and the results are presented below.

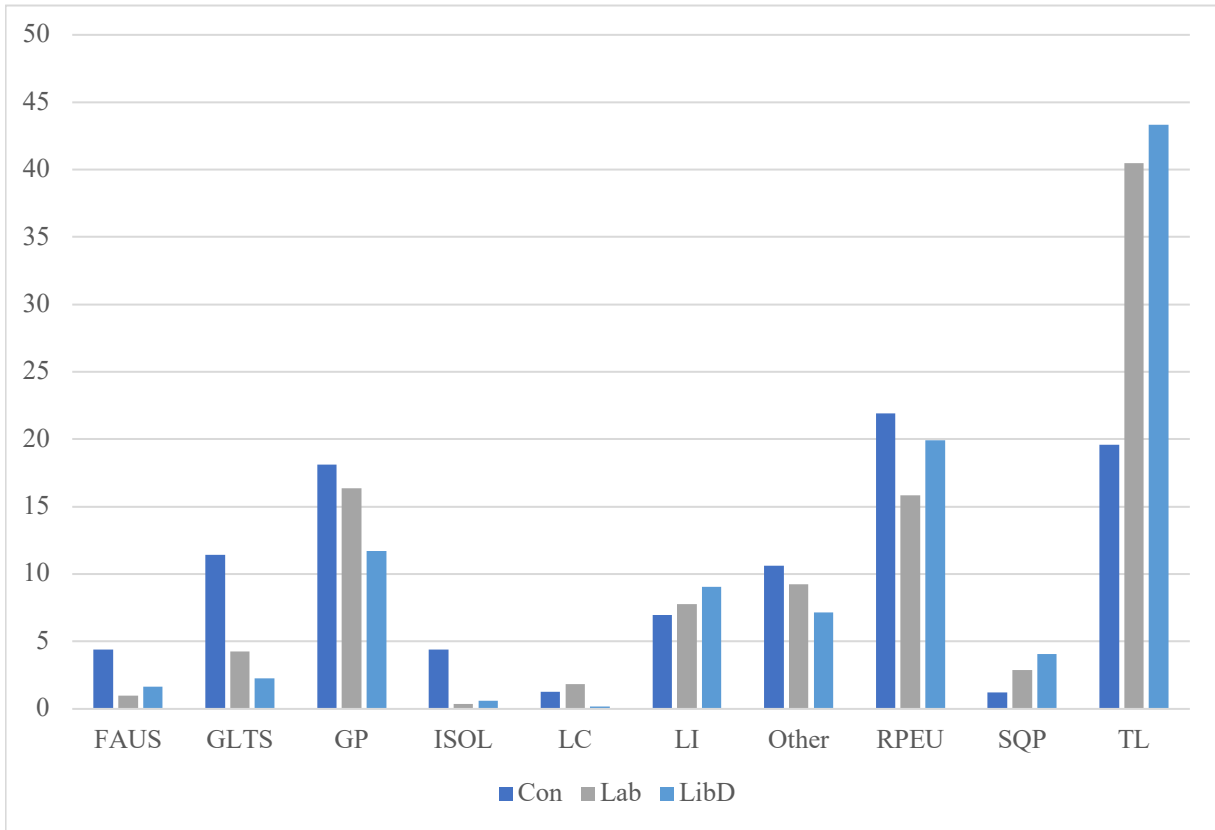*Graph 1. Comparison of average* NRC Salience *(per party per NRC)*

Table 7. Comparison of average NRC Salience *(per party per NRC)*

Average	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat
FAUS	4.40	0.97	1.66
GLTS	11.42	4.26	2.27
GP	18.13	16.35	11.73
ISOL	4.42	0.39	0.62
LC	1.29	1.83	0.19
LI	6.96	7.78	9.05
Other	10.63	9.26	7.15
RPEU	21.94	15.82	19.91
SQP	1.21	2.87	4.06
TL	19.60	40.46	43.34

Table 8. Average NRC Salience *(largest to smallest)*

Conservative		Labour		Liberal Democrat	
RPEU	21.94	TL	40.46	TL	43.34
TL	19.60	GP	16.35	RPEU	19.91
GP	18.13	RPEU	15.82	GP	11.73
GLTS	11.42	Other	9.26	LI	9.05
Other	10.63	LI	7.78	Other	7.15
LI	6.96	GLTS	4.26	SQP	4.06
ISOL	4.42	SQP	2.87	GLTS	2.27
FAUS	4.40	LC	1.83	FAUS	1.66
LC	1.29	FAUS	0.97	ISOL	0.62
SQP	1.21	ISOL	0.39	LC	0.19

A comparison of the average *NRC Salience* for each party for each election indicates both consensus and disagreement between the three. For all three parties, the *Global Power, Regional Partner of Europe* and *Thought Leader* are the three NRCs with the highest values. Whilst *Thought Leader* comes first for both Labour and the Liberal Democrat party, it is second for the Conservatives, who have *Regional Partner of Europe* in first place. In second place for Labour and the Liberal Democrats came *Great Power* and *Regional Partner of Europe*, respectively, whilst in third place came *Great Power* for both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, and *Regional Partner of Europe* came third for Labour.

Looking at the *NRC Salience* value that the top three roles scored, these indicate a difference between the Conservatives, on the one hand, and both Labour and the Liberal Democrats on the other. The top valued NRC for Labour and the Liberal Democrats, *Thought Leader*, scored 40.46 and 43.34 respectively, with a difference of 24.11 and 23.43 percentage points between the first and second highest valued NRCs. This indicates the centrality of the *Thought Leader* NRC to the conception both parties have of the UK's role, when compared to all other roles. For the Conservatives, on the other hand, the highest scoring NRC, *Regional Partner of Europe*, only

scored 21.94, and there was only a difference of 2.34 percentage points between it and the second highest. The points to the Conservatives conceptualising the UK's international role through a number of NRCs, whilst both Labour and the Liberal Democrats prioritise one, something that was indicated in our calculation of *NRC Presence*. This is further illustrated by the fact that the three top valued NRCs represented 59.67 of all evocations of UK NRCs made by the Conservatives, whilst for Labour and the Liberal Democrats, this was far higher, at 72.63 and 74.98 respectively.

Comparing the *NRC Salience* score for each party for each election indicates how the relative salience of each role has changed throughout this period. The principal three roles, identified by the average *NRC Salience* indicator as *Great Power*, *Regional Partner of Europe* and *Thought Leader* were examined in more details. In the case of the Conservatives, the *Regional Partner of Europe* increased from an *NRC Salience* score of 19.9 in 1992, to a peak of 43.2 in 1997, before steadily decreasing in value to 2.7 in 2019. From 1992 to 2010, it was the most mentioned NRC in order of *NRC Salience*, before falling to third in 2015, fourth in 2017 and then seventh in 2019, clearly indicating a drop in its salience to the party relative to other NRCs. The *Though Leader* role decreased from 18.8 in 1992 to a low of 10.5 in 1997, year in which it came fourth in order of *NRC Salience*, before increasing to 11.7 and 13.8 in 2001 and 2005, then to 22.2 and 21.2 in 2010 and 2015. From 1992 to 2005, it fluctuated between the third and fourth highest scoring role in order of *NRC Salience* indicator, before coming second in 2010 and 2015, and ranking first for the elections of 2017 and 2019, with an *NRC Salience* value of 34 and 24.6 respectively, indicating its increased importance following the result of the Brexit referendum. Finally, the *Great Power* role has remained relatively stable during the period, ranging between a high of 25.9 in 2015 and a low of 12.9 in both 2001 and 2019, and fluctuating between coming first and third in order of *NRC Salience*.

In the case of Labour, the *Regional Partner of Europe* role has oscillated in a fairly narrow band between a high of 26.6 in 1997 and low of 11 in 2010. From 1992 to 2001, it was the second highest scoring role in terms of *NRC Salience*, before dropping to third in 2005, and then fourth until 2019, indicating its decreasing salience for the party. The *Though Leader* role has greatly varied in the period under study, yet remained the highest scoring NRC on the *NRC Salience* indicator. Starting at 45.2 in 1992, it dropped to 31.1 in 1997 before reaching a maximum of 58.2 in 2001. Between then and 2017, it dropped progressively to a low of 25.7, before increasing to 47.6 in 2019. The *Great Power* role fell from 15.2 in 1992, before dropping to a low of 5.8 in 1997

and steadily increasing to a high of 27 in 2015. Following this, this NRC fell again to 16.9 in 2017, and then again to 13.7 in 2019. From a low of sixth place in 1997, in order of *NRC Salience*, the role consistently came second place in the period from 2005 to 2019, excluding 2017 when it came third.

For the Liberal Democrats, whilst the *NRC Salience* scores seem to vary, the position of the roles on the *NRC Salience* scale stay relatively stable. For instance, though the *Thought Leader* came first in order of *NRC Salience* for every single election, it began at 49.8 in 1992, dropped to 28.3 in 1997 before consistently increasing to a peak of 58.4 in 2010. However, after this, it decreased over two election to a low of 27.6 in 2017, before increasingly slightly again to 32.6 in 2019. The *Regional Partner of Europe* NRC also remained fairly stable, coming second in 1992 and 1997, and third afterwards, with the exception of 2010 when it came second. In this same period, the *NRC Salience* score consistently decreased from a peak of 33.9 in 1992 to a low of 10.1 in 2005, before increasing steadily to 22 in 2017, and peaking off at 16.3 in 2019. Less regularity was observed in the results for the *Great Power* NRC, which varied between second and fourth place, and a low of 4.5 in 1992 and a high of 22.1 in 2017.

Looking at the *Isolationist* NRC, relevant to this study due to its association with Brexit, it appears to have had relevance only to the Conservative party which scored an average *NRC Salience* of 4.4, coming seventh in order of size. Whilst it steadily increased from 2.3 in 1992 to 7.1 in 2005, it dropped to 1.9 in 2010 before once again increasing steadily to a peak of 8.4 in 2019 when it came fifth. For Labour, this role scored an average of 0.4 and was only identified in two elections: 2015 when it scored 2.8, and 2019, when it scored 0.9. For the Liberal Democrats, it scored an average of 0.6 and was only identified in the 1997 election when it scored 5.

Arguably, there was also a shared consensus on the least salient roles, with similar NRCs found amongst the last three in order of *NRC Salience*. For all parties, *Faithful Ally to the United States* and *Leader of the Commonwealth* appeared in the list, with the former scoring third-last for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, and second-last for Labour, and the latter coming in last for the Liberal Democrats, second last for the Conservatives and third-last for Labour.
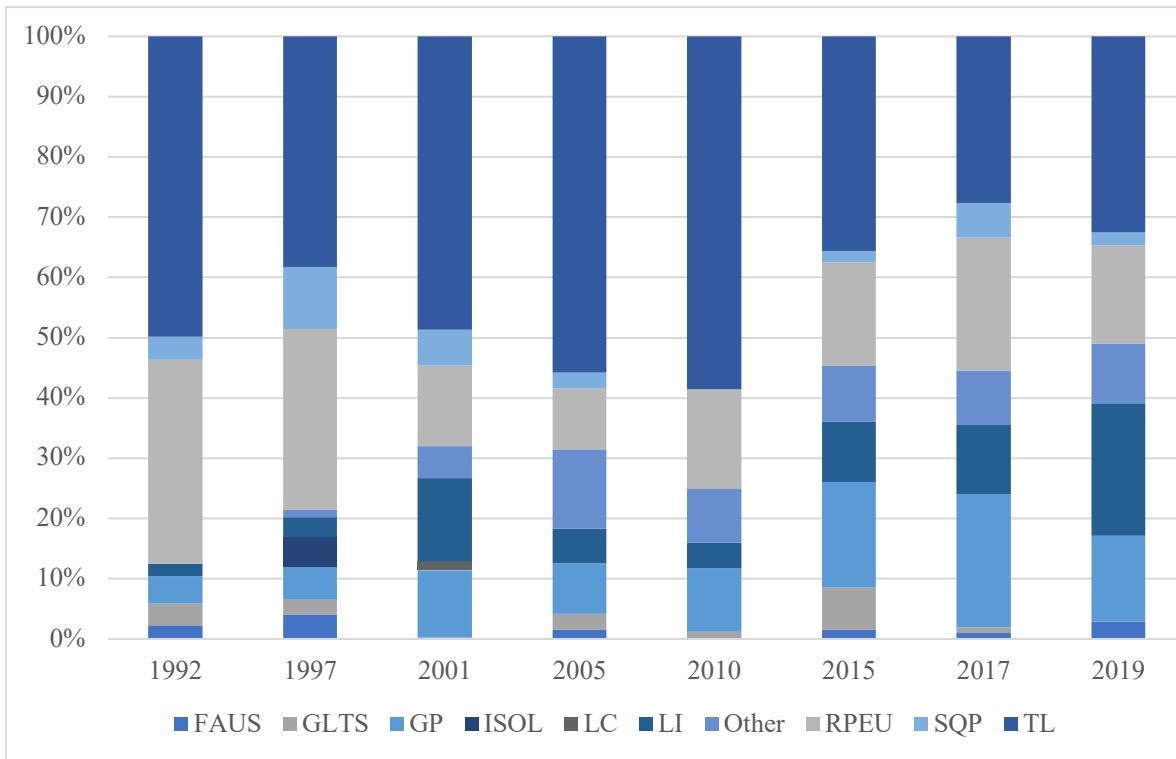
Graph 2. Comparison of NRC Salience *in Conservative manifestos*
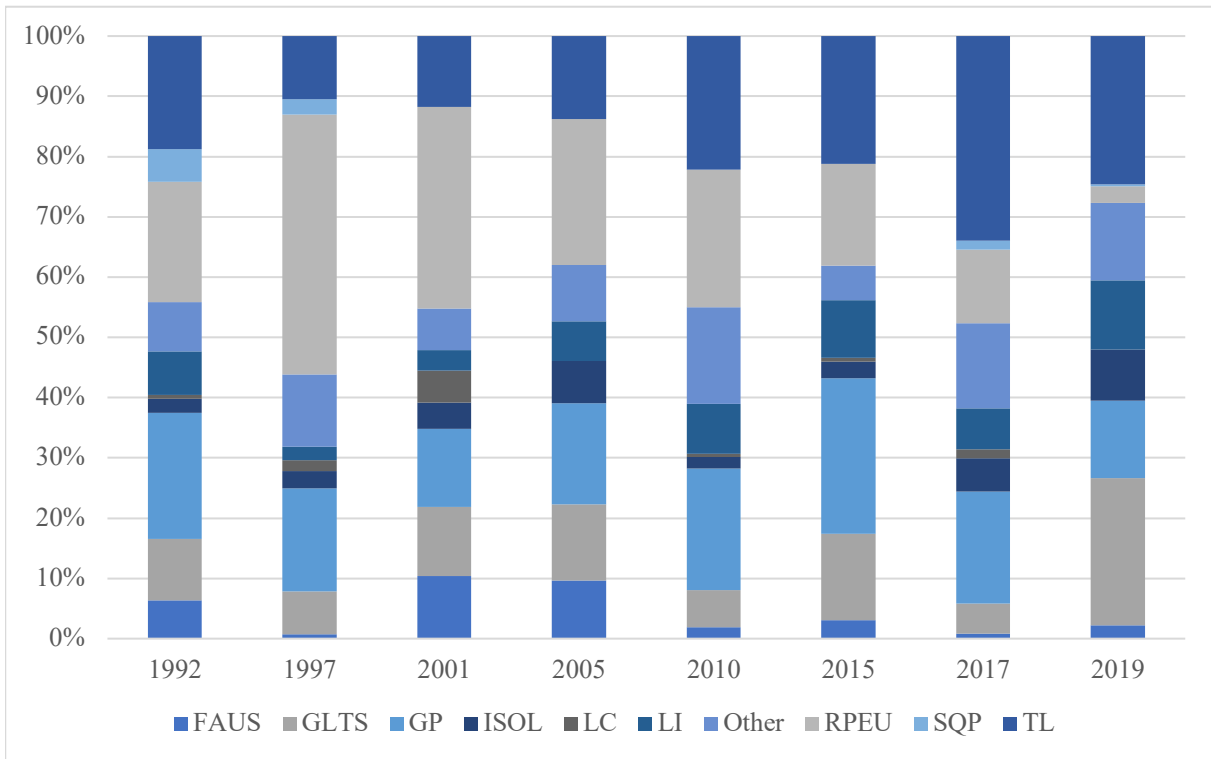
Graph 3. Comparison of NRC Salience *in Labour manifestos*
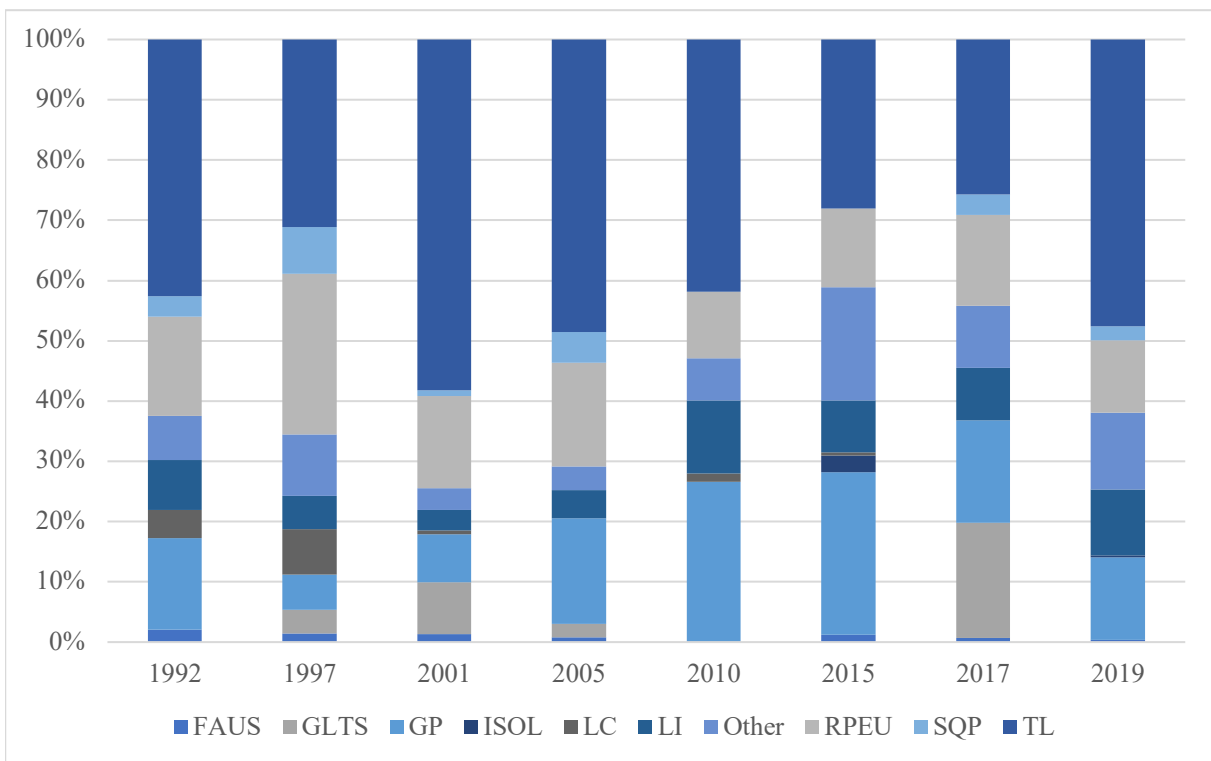
*Graph 4. Comparison of* NRC Salience *in Liberal Democrat manifestos*

In order to compare the salience of specific NRCs for different parties in different elections and establish the level of consensus held amongst the parties throughout the period under study, an indicator was established and called *NRC Salience Consensus*. If all parties were in agreement on the relative salience of an NRC, this study presupposes that a similar *NRC Salience* value would be identified, whilst big differences between different parties' *NRC Salience* would indicate differences in positions. For instance, if all three parties scored an *NRC Salience* value of 15% for the *Regional Partner of Europe* role, this thesis argues that there is a consensus on the relative salience of this particular role. On the other hand, if the three parties scored 50%, 20% and 0% respectively to the *Great Power* role, this thesis argues that there is a greater level of disagreement over the salience of roles, compared to the first situation. Based on this, an indicator of party difference, called *NRC Salience Consensus,* was created to measure the differences in salience parties allocated specific NRCs in relation to other parties, and then as a sum of these differences in order to get a final calculation for the election as a whole, which could be compared longitudinally.

The process for reaching these figures was the following. First, the difference in *NRC Salience* between each set of parties (Conservative with Labour, Conservative with Liberal Democrats, and Labour with Liberal Democrats) was calculated for each individual NRC. As means of an example, in 1992, the Conservatives scored an *NRC Salience* value of 20.9% for the *Great Power* role, whilst Labour scored 15.2% and the Liberal Democrats 4.5%. As a result, the interparty difference between the Conservatives and Labour was 5.7 (20.9-15.2), 16.4 (20.9-4.5) between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats and, 10.7 (15.2-4.5) between Labour and the Liberal Democrats. All of these differences are calculated as absolute numbers, and the differences between parties for all NRCs are added together to arrive at a total for each party pairing, giving us an *NRC Salience Consensus* for a party pair. Finally, these three values were added together to provide an indicator for party position differences for each election as a whole, giving us an *NRC Salience Consensus* value for each election.

It is important to highlight that this indicator is a rough calculation of differences between parties and only considers the differences in *NRC Salience* between them. It does not take into consideration the significance of certain NRCs not being mentioned by some parties, and being

mentioned, regardless of with what salience, by other parties. It could be argued that there is a greater difference between a hypothetical party with an *NRC Salience* of 2% for the *Isolationist* NRC and one that does not mention it, then between the party with the *NRC Salience* of 2% and another with 10%. Neither does the value given by the indicator provide a meaning in and of itself. For instance, although the lower the number, the greater the level of consensus between parties, a value of 50 on the *NRC Salience Consensus* indicator does not provide an objective and absolute measure of consensus or disagreement. Rather, these values only have meaning when compared with one another and this study only uses them for that purpose to roughly measure differences between election to indicate changes in the level of consensus. Therefore, between two elections, a value of 100 at election 1 and 200 at election 2 indicates that there was more consensus between the parties during the first election, and less during the second. As a result, the *NRC Salience Consensus* indicator, both for differences between party pairs and for each election as a whole, will be used to trace changes over the period under study. The results and their analysis are presented below.

Graph 5. Comparison of NRC Salience Consensus *from 1992 to 2019*
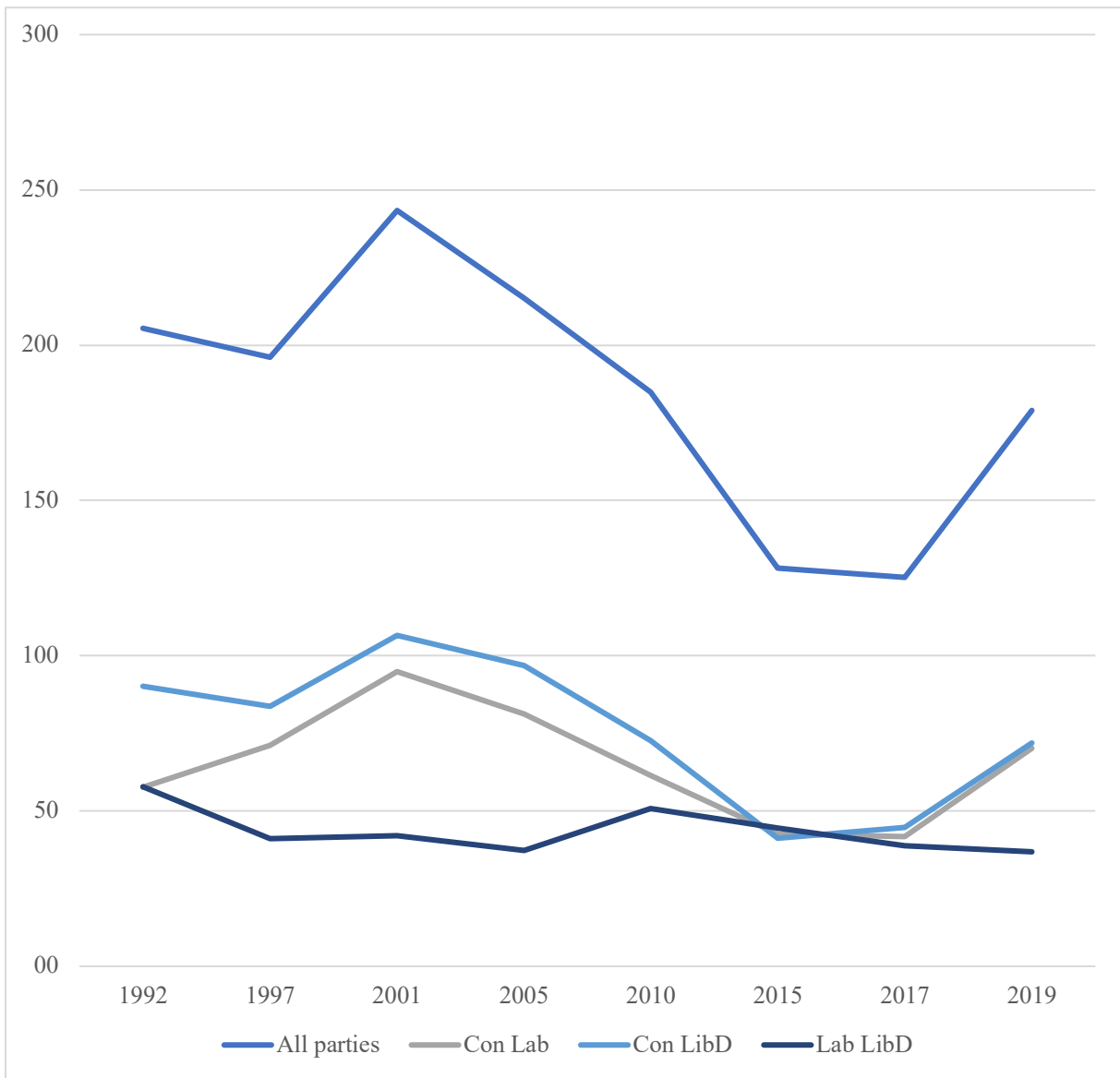
Table 9. Comparison of NRC Salience Consensus *from 1992 to 2019*

	1992	1997	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019
All parties	205.5	196.0	243.4	215.1	184.8	128.3	125.2	179.0
Con Lab	57.6	71.1	94.9	81.2	61.5	42.6	41.7	70.2
Con LibD	90.1	83.8	106.5	96.8	72.6	41.2	44.7	71.9
Lab LibD	57.8	41.2	42.0	37.2	50.7	44.5	38.8	36.9

This data indicates a number of things relevant for this study and its hypotheses. Firstly, the party pair values indicate that the changes in consensus are principally related to the Conservative party. The *NRC Salience Consensus* indicator was relatively stable between Labour and the Liberal Democrats in the period being studied, with the indicator value holding more or less steady within a 20.9-point band, with 36.9 as the lowest in 2019, a high of 57.8 in 1992 and an average value of 43.6. This varies greatly with the *NRC Salience Consensus* indicator value for both parties with the Conservative party. For the Conservative-Labour relationship (Con Lab), the value has varied from a low of 42.6 in 2015, high of 94.9 in 2001, and an average value of 65.1. For the Conservative-Liberal Democrat relationship (Con LibD), on the other hand, the values saw a low of 41.2 in 2015, a high of 106.5 in 2001 and an average of 79.95.

Unlike the case of Labour and the Liberal Democrats, the *NRC Salience Consensus* indicator for both parties with the Conservative party takes the form of an 'N', characterised by two marked increases, indicating a movement away from consensus between the two parties on the salience of different roles, and a low point between the two, indicating a movement towards consensus. Labour and the Liberal Democrats scored a value of 57.6 and 90.1 respectively in 1992 on their level of consensus with the Conservative party. This then increased for both parties to a maximum of 94.9 and 106.5 in 2001, indicating a decrease in consensus. This peak was then followed by a steady movement towards greater consensus. During the 2015 and 2017 elections, the *NRC Salience Consensus* reached a low of 42.6 and 41.7 respectively for the Conservative-Labour party pairing, and 41.2 and 44.7 respectively for the Conservative-Liberal Democrat one. The 2019 election cycle saw the indicator increase in value to 70.2 for the Conservative-Labour relationship, and 71.9 for the Conservative-Liberal Democrat relationship. This change indicates a movement away from consensus between the two elections.

Secondly, the data does not support the hypothesis of significant variance over appropriate NRCs for the UK held between the three principal parliamentary parties, present before the commitment to a Brexit referendum vote made by the Conservative party in their 2015 manifesto, and the referendum held in 2016. As the *NRC Salience Consensus* indicator for the eight elections between 1992 and 2019 is a composite of the three party-pair *NRC Salience Consensus* values, it also shows the same trend as described above. Whilst the value drops from 205.5 in 1992 to 196 in 1997, it increases to a maximum of 243.4 in 2001. Over the next three elections, this dropped to 128.3 in 2015, and then slightly further to a minimum value of 125.2 in 2017. Finally, for the

year 2019, the value increased to 179. Whilst there is a decrease in the level of consensus between the parties between 2015 and 2017, the principal period of low consensus is that from 1992 to 2001, followed by a period of increasing consensus from 2001 to and 2017. The data points to a growing consensus between the parties, invalidating the hypothesis of significant variance.

In terms of the consequences of Brexit for FP consensus, a question related to the implication of the hypothesis, but not a hypothesis per se, if we consider that a manifesto commitment to holding a referendum was first presented by the Conservative party in the 2015 election, the movement towards greater consensus amongst the parties between 2015 and 2017, as indicated by the *NRC Salience Consensus* indicator does not necessarily point to the topic causing a breakdown in consensus. Whilst the indicator does point to a drop in consensus between 2017 and 2019, which may be linked to Brexit, it does not reach the proportions calculated between 1992 and 2010. If the topic of Brexit had caused a profound breakdown in consensus, the period from 2015 to 2019 would be expected to indicate a significant increase in the value of the *NRC Salience Consensus*. The data presents an unclear picture on this point.

Conclusions

This thesis looked to identify the level of consensus held between the three principal parliamentary parties over the UK's international role, hypothesising that the post-Cold War period has been characterised by a lack of consensus which predates the Brexit referendum campaign and result of 2016. Instead of agreement, it expected to find manifestos presenting significant variance over appropriate NRCs for the UK amongst the three parties being studied. And specifically, for this divergence to be found in manifestos before the evocation of a manifesto commitment to a referendum in the 2015 Conservative manifesto and the 2016 Brexit referendum, questioning the validity of the notion that Brexit caused a "role crisis" by raising fundamental queries about British national identity, the sort of country it is and the resulting role it should play on the world stage (Oppermann et al., 2020, p. 25; Strong, n.d.).

The data points to three conclusions, which broadly negate the hypothesis, and will be delved into in further detail below. Firstly, there are indications of consensus amongst the parties over the most and least relevant NRCs for the UK. Secondly, consensus was especially strong between the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, but it was weaker with the Conservative party. Thirdly, while movements away from consensus were identified in the early 1990s and between 2017 and 2019, the rest of the period indicates stable or increasing consensus amongst the parties.

The results point to a strong consensus amongst the parties over a small number of NRCs that are associated with the UK. In terms of *NRC Presence* in the manifestos, four appeared in 100% of the manifestos of all parties. These are *Great Power*, *Liberal Interventionist*, *Regional Partner of Europe*, and *Thought Leader*. This indicates that, regardless of the salience afforded to each role by the parties, all three agreed that these four were relevant to the UK's national role in some sense. This same data also indicates a high level of agreement over the UK's role as a *Faithful Ally of the United States*. It was mentioned in all the Conservative party's, 87.5% of Labour's and 75% of the Liberal Democrat's manifestos.

A similar picture was indicated by a comparison of the average *NRC Salience* for each party for each. For all three parties, the *Global Power, Regional Partner of Europe* and *Thought Leader* were the three NRCs with the highest value. At the same time, *Faithful Ally to the United States* and *Leader of the Commonwealth* were found amongst the three NRCs with the lowest

salience score, indicating consensus over the least important roles too. In this sense, in contrast to the expected disagreement amongst the parties, the data pointed to consensus.

In terms of the second conclusion, the measured consensus was stronger between Labour and the Liberal Democrats, than for each with the Conservative party. In the case of the *Isolationist* role, it was mentioned in all Conservative party manifestos, but only 25% of Labour's and 12.5% of the Liberal Democrats'. Additionally, the *NRC Salience Consensus* indicator indicated a stable value for the Labour and the Liberal Democrat pairing, but a similar pattern of difference for both in relation to the Conservatives. For Labour and the Liberal Democrats, the indicator value remained within a 20.9-point band, with 36.9 as the lowest in 2019, a high of 57.8 in 1992 and an average value of 43.6. For the Conservative-Labour relationship, on the other hand, the value varied from a low of 42.6 in 2015, high of 94.9 in 2001, and an average value of 65.1, whilst for the Conservative-Liberal Democrat relationship, it saw a low of 41.2 in 2015, a high of 106.5 in 2001 and an average of 79.95.

A further difference is apparent in the analysis of the average *NRC Salience*. Whilst all three parties had the same NRCs amongst the top three mentioned, the difference in percentage points between the first and second was significantly bigger for Labour and the Liberal Democrats, compared to the Conservatives. The top valued NRC for Labour and the Liberal Democrats, *Thought Leader*, scored 40.46 and 43.34 respectively, with a difference of 24.11 and 23.43 percentage points between the first and second highest valued NRCs. For the Conservatives, on the other hand, the highest scoring NRC, *Regional Partner of Europe*, only scored 21.94, and there was only a difference of 2.34 percentage points between it and the second highest. The data points to the Conservatives conceptualising the UK's international role through a number of NRCs, whilst both Labour and the Liberal Democrats prioritise one. This is also supported by the *NRC Presence* measure, which shows that the Conservative party views the UK's international role through a group of eight NRCs, whilst Labour and the Liberal Democrats do so through five and four respectively. These results indicate that the Conservatives were the outlier in the period studied.

Thirdly, and finally, our measure of *NRC Salience Consensus* indicated that, contrary to what was hypothesised, party consensus on NRC Salience actually increased in the period from 2001 and 2017, indicating a movement towards greater inter-party agreement on the relative salience of different NRCs. The drop in consensus between 2017 and 2019 may be explained by the dynamics of the Brexit referendum and result, indicating that it did lead to an erosion in

consensus amongst the parties, though this is not a central concern of this thesis. The fact that the period from 2015 to 2017, spanning the period from the Conservative party manifesto pledge to holding a vote and after the referendum result, saw an increase in consensus complicates the picture and an easy reading of the situation. As a result, a discourse analysis of the manifestos, focused on a close reading of the texts and qualitative analysis of its message may be necessary to illuminate the picture and understand the effect of Brexit on the consensus as expressed through manifestos of the elections between 2015 and 2019.

Whilst the extent of consensus amongst the UK public over the UK's role is unclear, with polls suggesting disagreement (Harrois, 2015) but some studies suggesting a popularly shared notion of British exceptionalism (Vucetic, 2020), this study indicates that a consensus exists amongst the political elite in contrast to the hypothesis proposed. Though there are nuances, especially the difference between Labour and the Liberal Democrats, on the one hand, and the Conservatives, on the other, the period from 1992 to 2019 has seen relative consensus amongst the three on the UK's international role as expressed in their manifestos, and a marked increase in the years leading to the Brexit referendum.

The decrease in consensus, identified by this study, between the last two elections could be an indication that the Brexit referendum and results, as predicted by commentators and political scientists broadly (See Martill & Rogstad, 2019 for instance), have in effect resulted in an erosion in bipartisan consensus that will continue to grow in the future. This, however, remains to be seen, and will have to be analysed in future studies.

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