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# Fraternal foreign policy transfer? Evaluating the case of Australian Labor and British Labour

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**ABSTRACT**
The literature on policy transfer and policy diffusion is vast, but analysis of how this operates in the domain of foreign policy is limited. Is there evidence that policy-related knowledge and ideas in the foreign policy realm are transferred between jurisdictions? This article addresses this question in the context of the relationship between two fraternal social democratic parties – the British Labour Party and the Australian Labor Party. It focuses on the period between 2006 and 2010, which covers Kevin Rudd's assumption of the Labor leadership and his first term as Prime Minister and the transition from Tony Blair to Gordon Brown in June 2007. Kevin Rudd's Prime Ministership was terminated in a party room coup in June 2010 while Gordon Brown led the British Labour Party to electoral defeat one month earlier. The article investigates three prominent areas of foreign policy – regional engagement, climate change, and aid and international development – to evaluate the extent of policy transfer and diffusion between the Rudd and Brown Governments. Using the 'degrees of transfer' framework outlined by Dolowitz and Marsh, it finds that emulation, policy combinations, and inspiration all featured but that there was scant evidence of complete transfer.

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## Introduction

This article evaluates the degree of overlap between British Labour and Australian Labor in the area of foreign policy between 2006 and 2010. The analysis is concerned with pinpointing instances of policy transfer, defined here as

> a process or set of processes in which knowledge about institutions, policies or delivery systems at one sector or level of governance is used in the development of institutions, policies or delivery systems at another sector or level of governance. (Evans 2009, 243–244)

There is a fine definitional line between policy transfer and policy *convergence*; but the latter can be described as a situation where, in the realm of public policy, jurisdictions 'are facing similar problems and are tending to solve them in similar ways' (Bennett 1991, 218). Such a situation 'involves a process in which policies in two or more countries become more alike over time' (Marsh and Sharman 2009, 271). By definition, policy transfer may or not take place in these situations. This article adopts a relatively permissive

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approach to the presence of policy transfer across the case studies it evaluates. This aligns with the spirit of the framework enumerated by Dolowitz and Marsh (2000, 13):

> Policy transfer is not an all-or-nothing process. While any particular case can involve a combination of processes and agents, there are basically four different gradations, or degrees, of transfer: copying, which involves direct and complete transfer; emulation, which involves transfer of the ideas behind the policy or program; combinations, which involve mixtures of several different policies; and inspiration, where policies in other jurisdictions may inspire a policy change, but where the final outcome does not actually draw on the original.

In surveying the discrete case studies of regional engagement, climate change, and international aid and development – selected on the grounds they were central to both governments' respective foreign policies during their respectively brief tenures between 2006 and 2010 – the article does not find any suggestion of complete transfer. The challenges associated with establishing evidence and causality with respect to policy transfer is well acknowledged in the literature (see Stone 2001). However, the following analysis shows that policy transfer between Australian Labor and British Labour did take place and was characterised by emulation, combinations, and inspiration. This was particularly salient in the area of international aid and development, but it was also apparent (though to a lesser degree) regarding climate change policy.

## Foreign policy agendas

Intuitively at least, one would expect that political parties with similar philosophical dispositions will share common traits across policy areas in government. There appear to be good grounds for this expectation, with governments at the national and local levels embracing policy initiatives adopted in other jurisdictions. Fraternal links between political parties, policy networks facilitated by think tanks associated with these parties, and the influence of policy entrepreneurs and epistemic communities in promoting specific initiatives all contribute to this process (on policy entrepreneurs, see Roberts and King 1991). The international influence of neoliberal domestic policies adopted in the UK and the US during the 1980s had an impact on centre-left, as well as centre-right, governments. Although centre-right governments were especially enthusiastic about embracing the economic deregulation initiatives championed by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, centre-left parties were also influenced by neoliberal reform agendas. Policy transfer that occurred between the Clinton administration and Blair Government, for instance, witnessed the latter adopting many elements of the former's 'tough love' approach to social welfare (Legrand 2012).

The literature on policy transfer in the domestic realm is well established, but a search for scholarship on *foreign* policy transfer yields fewer results. Studies on the transfer of ideas and practices in relation to foreign policy in the European Union context – what some refer to as the 'Europeanisation' of foreign policy – are well established (see, in particular, Smith 2004; De Flers and Muller 2012; Lightfoot and Szent-Ivanyi 2014).[1] However, beyond the case of Europe, the literature on foreign policy transfer is largely non-existent. One only has to think of the dynamics that drive security alliances to appreciate that countries routinely coordinate foreign and defence policies. And members of regional multilateral organisations such as the European Union and the

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Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) seek to align their foreign policies in relation to issues such as climate change. But it is less clear that countries consciously transfer foreign policy ideas. On the face of it, this seems strange given the philosophical overlap between the worldviews of centre-left and centre-right parties. Centre-left parties tend to pursue ambitious liberal-internationalist agendas in foreign policy, while for those on the centre right the national interest and a sharper edged realism looms larger in policy calculations (on individual cases, see Lee and Waters 1997; McCraw 2005; Vickers 2011, 9–26; Paris 2014). Concretely, this translates into differences over the role of international institutions (centre-left parties tend to be optimistic while centre-right parties are more sceptical), the utility of alliances (centre-left parties tend to be critical while centre-right parties are more positive), and the use of armed force (the centre-left inclines to caution while the centre-right approach is more permissive). The philosophical spirit of a centre-left approach to foreign policy is captured well in a 2007 speech by then British Foreign Secretary David Miliband (quoted in Lunn, Miller, and Smith 2008, 46):

> Yes, the world can be a scary place. Yes, it's tempting to lower our sights. But in progressive politics we must always be restless for change. And that means we have to be restless about the future, not the past. Progress is possible. Britain has a vital role to play. And the prize is immense. Not the end of history but more people better educated, better fed, better off, better able to make their own history.

However, beyond overlapping worldviews, it is difficult to verify policy transfer between any two countries in relation to foreign policy. While much of the literature on policy transfer focuses on the diffusion of ideas internationally, substantiating influence in the realm of foreign policy is largely missing in action. This provides something of a contrast with the domestic sphere, where evidence of policy transfer between jurisdictions is readily apparent, as demonstrated by the foci of other articles in this special issue. Why is this so?

A major reason might be because foreign policy is in most cases a more tightly controlled, elite-driven enterprise than domestic policy. In liberal democracies, foreign policy decisions are typically concentrated in the executive, with limited input from legislatures. In the British and Australian cases, governments rarely encourage public debate on foreign policy issues in a context where issues surrounding health, education, and economic policy typically dominate. The sources of foreign policy decisions are elusive and more opaque in terms of process and inputs. As Gyngell and Wesley (2007, 16) have observed:

> Foreign policy and diplomacy have always seemed resistant to rational investigation and broad public understanding. Partly this is a function of the inherently secretive and executive nature of the activity; even the most public diplomacy tends to originate in the private calculations of foreign ministries. Partly it is a function of generally held perceptions about the nature of statecraft, which is considered to be a realm of complex gambits and intricate strategy.

Another reason why evidence of policy transfer in the area of foreign policy is in apparent short supply may simply be because it is problematic to substantiate. As Stone (2001, 32) has written, even in the domestic sphere, policy transfer is difficult to prove: 'The diffusion or transfer of ideas and ideologies can have significant agenda-setting impact. However, it is a more difficult enterprise first to see such ideas structure thinking and secondly, to see such ideas and values institutionalised'.

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In the British and Australian contexts, Labo(u)r parties in government have pursued foreign policies that tend to privilege the role of the United Nations in international relations, underscore the importance of regional engagement, and privilege (at least rhetorically) the role of ethics in driving a normative agenda. Yet, the argument that there are distinctive traits distinguishing the foreign policies of social democratic governments from their conservative counterparts is hard to sustain. There can be no question that the Blair Government was deeply engaged in international and regional institutions, but its leading role in seeking to justify the US-led invasion of Iraq in the absence of a UN Security Council Resolution raised serious questions about the government's liberal-internationalist credentials at home and elsewhere, particularly in Europe. In the Australian context, since the early 1980s, the Labor Party has demonstrated a strong underlying commitment to the alliance with the United States equal to the Liberal-National Parties, with few if any issues of substance separating political parties when it comes to dealing with Washington.

The advent of the Blair Government in 1997 brought into stark relief the project of social democratic renewal often referred to as 'the third way'. Briefly popular in the late 1990s, the third way essentially envisaged centre-left parties embracing many liberal principles typically eschewed by the 'old left', including in the foreign policy domain (Leigh 2003). 'New Labour' was a political slogan, to be sure, but it did impart a break with the past. As the first elected Labour government since 1974, the Blair Government – and Tony Blair in particular – made a point of dispensing with Labour traditions in many policy areas. In broad terms, New Labour was about political renewal, but it was also about making Labour's *policy* agenda accessible to a broader audience. As Blair notes in his memoirs,

> New Labour wasn't at all about changing the basic values or purpose of progressive politics; on the contrary it was about retrieving them from the deadweight of political and cultural dogma that didn't merely obscure those values and that purpose, but also defeated them. (Blair 2010, 91)

In the domestic sphere, the Blair Government was influenced by the Hawke and Keating period (O'Reilly 2007). On foreign policy, the new Blair Government embraced several themes that had been evident under Australian Labor Governments between 1983 and 1996, most notably the concept of 'good international citizenship' (Wheeler and Dunne 1998, 848). The latter was closely associated with a more muscular expression of Australia's status as an activist middle power, a message enthusiastically promoted by Foreign Minister Gareth Evans (1988–1996). It also chimed with the 'third way' domestic policy agenda and set a course for a self-consciously 'ethical' foreign policy based on liberal-internationalist norms and an explicit articulation of international society, as distinct from a zero-sum Hobbesian worldview associated with Realism (see Wheeler and Dunne 1998, 853–857). Indeed, in the domain of foreign policy, there were many similarities between the Blair and earlier Hawke–Keating periods in terms of strengthening a Labo(u)r commitment to the centrality of the US alliance, providing a compelling intellectual as well as political, rationale for deepening regional engagement in Asia/Europe, and integrating to a far greater extent diplomacy and foreign economic policy. The extent to which these were simply overlapping approaches rather than evidence of policy transfer and diffusion is an open question. There was scant reference to the influence of the Hawke–Keating Governments in any of the public statements emanating from senior figures in

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the Blair Government, including Blair himself. Yet, normative and symbolic values espoused by the Blair Government aligned closely with those embraced by the Hawke and Keating Governments, suggesting that Antipodean inspiration shaped British Labour's foreign policy, at least in its early years.

The ascent of Kevin Rudd to the Labor leadership in late 2006 occurred as British Labour was experiencing the twilight months of Tony Blair's premiership. In foreign policy terms, Blair's legacy was perceived to have been tarnished by the Iraq War and the associated view that his government had been unwilling to challenge the misguided elements of the Bush administration's war on terrorism. Like the Howard Government in Australia, the Blair Government had been at the forefront of supporting the US-led invasion in spite of significant domestic opposition, including the majority of public opinion (O'Neil 2009). Australian Labor's opposition to the US invasion of Iraq on the grounds that it was not justified without a legal UN mandate put it at odds with British Labour's position. The unpopularity of the invasion, and the subsequent botched occupation, promoted a sense of vindication in the Australian Labor Party, which was reinforced as three leaders (Simon Crean, Mark Latham, and Kim Beazley) preceded Rudd between 2003 and 2006. The Iraq experience almost certainly dampened any appetite for Australian Labor to look to the Blair Government for foreign policy inspiration in the lead-up to the 2007 Australian election.

However, there were compelling parallels between Kevin Rudd and Tony Blair politically, including their respective approaches to foreign policy (see, in particular, Campbell 2007; Weller 2014). Both were self-declared Labo(u)r 'modernisers' who had no factional base in their own party and ideologically would have been just at home in a centre-right party as in a social democratic party. Indeed, both were frequently viewed with suspicion in their own party, particularly by the left. As Paul Kelly observes, 'Like Tony Blair, Rudd fell outside the emotional heartland of his own party' (Kelly 2014, 120). Both had presidential styles of leadership, which was especially evident on foreign policy. Blair and Rudd were intimately involved in foreign policy and frequently inserted themselves into specific issues to such an extent that they were seen as being their own foreign ministers. Blair and Rudd sought to exploit their deep well of international contacts to achieve foreign policy outcomes, and both were highly networked into the US political system. Great faith in their own personal capacity to achieve substantive outcomes were hallmarks of the Blair and Rudd approaches to foreign policy. Oliver Daddow and Jamie Gaskarth have noted that: 'Blair believed he could achieve his European objectives by force of charisma and his persuasive skills as much as anything else' (Daddow and Gaskarth 2011, 8). This was a trait evident in Kevin Rudd's approach to the 2009 Copenhagen climate change conference (more on this below) and the ill-fated attempt in 2008 to construct a more robust regional security framework in the Asia-Pacific. Yet strangely, despite all of these parallels, there is no evidence of any connection personally between Blair and Rudd.[2] The latter had a close working relationship with Gordon Brown who, unlike Rudd and Blair, tended to delegate authority on foreign policy.

The next three sections investigate whether, and to what extent, foreign policy transfer and diffusion took place between Australian Labor and British Labour under the Rudd and Brown Governments. I evaluate three distinctive areas of foreign policy that were especially prominent in both countries between 2007 and 2010 and which are foreign

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policy touchstones for centre-left governments worldwide: regional engagement, climate change, and aid and international development.

## Regional engagement

Tony Blair entered office in 1997 with a pledge to 'put Britain at the heart of Europe' (Lunn, Miller, and Smith 2008, 29). Blair's commitment dovetailed neatly with New Labour's internationalist agenda and provided a deliberate counterpoint to the Tory Party, which remained essentially split on Britain's engagement with Europe. In contrast to the Thatcher and Major Governments, both of which had been ambivalent about Britain's place in Europe, a hallmark of the Blair–Brown periods was 'the conflation of British and European identities'. While the Rudd Government entered office in 2007 with a strong commitment to the Asia-Pacific, unlike fraternal Labour colleagues in the UK, Australian Labor could not credibly point to any substantive shortcomings under the previous conservative government in terms of Australia's regional engagement. Indeed, the Howard Government (1996–2007) had overseen a substantial strengthening of Australia's economic, political, and strategic engagement in Asia, something that was both unexpected and counterintuitive given the occasional frictions in dealing with other regional countries on political issues in particular (Wesley 2007).

A strong point of difference between debates over regional engagement in the Australian and British contexts was that, in the UK context, contention between the Labour and Conservative Parties revolved around the intrinsic *merits* of European integration, while in the Australian debate difference between Labor and its conservative opponents revolved around the *means* of regional engagement in Asia. The Brown Government argued that it was possible to maintain a distinctively British identity and preserve national autonomy by avoiding 'being governed by Brussels' while at the same time being committed Europeans. This was at odds with the position of an increasing number of influential Conservatives who believed that pro-European and pro-British views were fundamentally contradictory.[3] Debates over Australian regional engagement were less stark, but partisan differences were still evident. Labor remained more optimistic than their Coalition counterparts about the efficacy of multilateral institutions in addressing security, political, and economic challenges in the Asia-Pacific (see Hall and O'Neil 2014).

Because of his former role as Chancellor, Gordon Brown was more inclined than his immediate predecessor to view the European project in economic rather than institutional terms per se (O'Donnell and Whitman 2007). This was reinforced by Brown's leading role in the region during the 2008–2009 global financial crisis, which had a brutal impact on many European economies. While being a committed multilateralist, Brown nonetheless was more nationalistic than Blair in framing Britain's participation in the EU. As Pauline Schnapper argues, the Brown Government sought to balance the two traditions in Labour Party thinking on Europe that had existed since the 1960s: 'One is wariness of European integration for fear that Britain could lose its Commonwealth links and its global outlook. The other is seeing strong engagement in the European Community as crucial to Britain's political and economic future' (Schnapper 2015, 157). The Rudd Government confronted no such contradictory impulses in framing its approach to the Asia-Pacific. This, combined with Kevin Rudd's ambitious diplomatic agenda on entering office, almost certainly

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fostered an over-estimation of Australia's ability to shape its regional environment. The Rudd Government's very public failure to attract support for its ambitious 'Asia-Pacific Security Community' proposal in 2008 reflected a serious misjudgement of the region's continuing aversion to European-style security mechanisms and an under-estimation of the desire on the part of ASEAN nations to continue driving Asian regionalism (O'Neil 2011, 275–277).

On regional engagement, there was little evidence of meaningful policy transfer and diffusion between the Rudd and Brown Governments. At one level, this is hardly surprising. The European and Asian regional contexts are very distinctive in their makeup and dynamics, with one highly institutionalised and the other placing a premium on informal networks between states. In this sense, regional engagement constitutes a 'hard test' for discerning foreign policy transfer and diffusion. Moreover, as noted above, Labo(u)r governments in both jurisdictions had different historical legacies to deal with. However, there was some overlap in the thematic approaches of the Rudd and Brown Governments to Asian and European engagement respectively. The first point of overlap was that both governments claimed to be representative of their region's interests in global forums. This was especially apparent in the economic domain, with Rudd and Brown both emphasising the leading role of Asia and Europe in the evolution of the G20 (see, for instance, Sheridan 2009; Watt 2009). The inaugural G20 Leaders' Summit in 2008 coincided with their second prime ministerial year in office. The second point of overlap was that both governments' attempts to play a regional leadership role produced few substantive results. As already noted, despite its best efforts, the Rudd Government was unable to play a leading role in building Asian institutions, and the short-lived idea that the Mandarin speaking Kevin Rudd would play a 'bridging role' between Washington and Beijing ended abruptly with Rudd's combative critique in 2008 of China's human rights performance.[4] Like Kevin Rudd, Gordon Brown pursued a strong regional leadership focus in his foreign policy, and like Rudd he encountered little success. Notwithstanding Brown's pronounced commitment to the European 'project', he remained (as he was when Chancellor) sceptical about monetary and political integration, which made it difficult to build coalitions with other major European leaders on key policy issues (Lee 2014).

## Climate change

Gordon Brown and Kevin Rudd became the respective leaders of their parties at a time when recognition of the global threat from climate change was gaining rapid traction. Tony Blair had acknowledged the scale of the challenge (BBC News Online 2004), but by contrast John Howard refused to recognise the magnitude of climate change, which was a contributing factor to his electoral defeat in 2007. In Opposition, Rudd had characterised climate change as 'the great moral challenge of our generation' (Koutsoukis 2007), while Gordon Brown compared the threat to nuclear war (Brown 2009). The fourth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was released in early 2007 and concluded that 'warming of the climate system is unequivocal and that human contributions to global warming would continue to grow', notwithstanding 'current climate change mitigation policies and related sustainable development practices' (IPCC 2007, 5 and 7). In the UK and Australia, developing climate change policy had become a textbook two-level game along the lines laid down by Putnam (1988): international and domestic level

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forces were intersecting on far-reaching economic, environmental, and security challenges.

At the domestic level, Australian Labor and British Labour commissioned high profile climate change reviews, the Stern Review, that issued its report in 2006, and the Garnaut Review, that released its report in 2008. Both were led by economists (Lord Nicholas Stern and Professor Ross Garnaut) who investigated in detail the impacts of climate change and recommended a range of targets to reduce carbon emissions between 3% and 5% in the coming decades (see Garnaut 2008; Stern 2007). Instituted by Gordon Brown when he was still Chancellor in 2005, the influence of the Stern Review on the Garnaut Review (commissioned in early 2007 by Rudd when he was Opposition leader) was apparent, and the Garnaut Review drew on much of the logic of Stern's approach.[5] Wayne Swan, who would become Treasurer under Rudd, has since noted that, in a series of conversations in 2006 with Gordon Brown and Nicholas Stern, 'their hard-headed analysis set out a case that convinced me climate change was not just an environmental issue but also a critical economic one' (Swan 2014, 338).

The primary impact of the Stern Review was the nexus it created between climate change and economic policy, a theme embraced enthusiastically by both sides of politics and peak lobby groups in the UK. As Neil Carter and Michael Jacobs have written, this was a period when radical emissions reduction targets became the norm in the UK: 'The post-Stern shift in the policy image of climate change was striking. The Government and Opposition parties began emphasizing the goal of building a "low carbon economy", highlighting the job creation and growth opportunities flowing from stronger climate policy' (Carter and Jacobs 2014, 135). At no point did Australia experience the same degree of bipartisan support for decisive climate change policy under the Rudd Government; indeed, the Opposition Liberal Party remained split on the issue. In short, in marked contrast to the UK experience, there was never a genuine political consensus in Australia about the need for climate change policy initiatives, including an emissions trading scheme.[6]

In terms of foreign policy, climate change featured prominently under the Rudd and Brown Governments between 2007 and 2010. One of the first acts of the newly installed Rudd Government was ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, something the previous Howard Government had consistently ruled out. At the bilateral level, the Rudd Government placed renewed emphasis on assisting Australia's Pacific Island neighbours, states particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change (most significantly, rising sea levels) while multilaterally Labor pointed to its determination to play a more active role in strengthening developed states' commitments at the UN level to emissions reduction targets (Elliott 2011, 214–215). The Blair and early Brown Governments had already established a high profile for the UK on climate change in international institutions and Brown's oversight of the passage of the UK Climate Change Act in 2008 reinforced the policy credibility gained from his earlier decision as Chancellor to commission the Stern Review (UK Climate Change Act 2008).

Internationally, the climate change crucible for the Brown and Rudd Governments was the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen Summit was significant in marking the deadline for agreement among states to a post-2012 climate change mitigation framework as per the 'road map' agreement reached at the 2007 Bali Climate Change Summit. In the lead-up to the Copenhagen Summit, Brown and Rudd

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cooperated closely in developing their respective negotiating positions and both leaders were part of the eight member 'Copenhagen Commitment Circle', a group of small and middle powers created in an attempt to bridge some of the most intractable differences between the developed and developing world in the lead up to the summit (Weller 2014, 256). The Australian and British approaches to the summit were strikingly similar. While the UK's emission reduction targets (as part of the broader EU's position) were more ambitious than Australia's, Gordon Brown had earlier agreed to an Australian proposal that endorsed less onerous emissions targets for developing states than those for developed states in an endeavour to achieve consensus for a global agreement at Copenhagen (Totaro 2009).

Once the summit began, Brown and Rudd were two of the highest profile leaders in attendance. Despite spirited criticism from their respective domestic constituencies that they were more focused on profile than substance, both leaders were central to the grinding negotiations on compromise draft texts that took place behind closed doors (Stratton 2009). Notably, the Australian and UK delegations at Copenhagen sought to coordinate their policy positions as negotiations unfolded. This included Kevin Rudd supporting 'Gordon Brown's proposal for a $10 billion "fast start" fund to assist poor countries to deal with the consequences of climate change' (Weller 2014, 258). Although the Copenhagen Summit failed to reach a consensus outcome, it did underscore the continuing role in multilateral forums of cooperation and policy coordination between like-minded states, including Australia and the UK.

## International aid and development

In liberal democracies, parties of the centre left typically place more rhetorical emphasis on the role of overseas development aid (ODA) than their conservative counterparts. This is influenced largely by an internationalist worldview that developed countries have a moral obligation to assist developing states. It is also driven by a philosophical perspective that looks favourably on the redistribution of wealth as a path to justice in human affairs. This contrasts with the realist view favoured by conservatives that the national interest takes priority and that ODA should be an extension of this. For realists, ODA is about using aid as an instrument to promote defined foreign policy outcomes rather than the pursuit of international development per se. Centre-right parties focus on talking about targeted aid in relation to *countries* deemed to be of strategic significance, while those on the centre left are more at home talking about the promotion of international development through *human* empowerment. Historically, this philosophical gap has been reflected in distinctive approaches to aid and development on the part of conservative and social democratic governments in the UK and Australia.

When the Blair government entered office in 1997, it instituted a major shakeup to the way in which Britain approached aid and international development. One of the first steps it took was to shift the Overseas Development Administration from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and create it as a separate Ministry in the form of the Department for International Development (DfID). This mirrored the view in many influential sections of the Labour Party that aid and development should not be an instrument of foreign policy. As Blair recalls in his memoirs (2010, 24), the initiative generated some consternation within the British government, most notably the FCO:

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> It was not popular with the Foreign Office, who lost control over of the largest slice of their budget, and some of their objections gained my sympathy over time. Clare Short was the Secretary of State for the new department. Under her leadership, it led the way globally in terms of development policy and people just queued up to work in it. It resembled an NGO within government and this caused significant problems from time to time, but all things considered, I thought it worth it and it gave Britain huge reach into the developing world.

As outlined in the landmark 1997 UK White Paper on International Development, the Labour Government aimed to 'refocus efforts to eliminate poverty … including the aim of halving the proportion of the world's population living in extreme poverty by 2015' (UK Secretary of State for International Development 1997, 6). The separation of the goal of international development and the provision of ODA from wider foreign policy aims was striking under Labour between 1997 and 2007. In a marked departure from the general practice of Western governments, the 2002 UK International Development Act actually disallowed aid being tied to the provision of British goods and services (Gaskarth 2011, 97).

Before it was abolished in 2013 by the Abbott Coalition Government and its remnants integrated into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) had been on a path of major expansion. This expansion had begun under the Howard Government in 2005 when it was announced that Australia's ODA would double by the year 2010. This followed a series of funding cuts over the previous decade, despite the Howard Government committing Australia in 2000 to the Millennium Declaration and the ancillary Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). AusAID had been created by the Keating Labor Government in 1995 after passing through several incarnations as a line agency within a Ministry and as a separate executive agency following the creation in 1967 of a discrete ODA branch in what was then the Department of External Affairs.[7] By the time the Rudd Government came to power in 2007, AusAID's influence was already rising within the Australian bureaucracy that mirrored its growing resource base and size. This growth accelerated rapidly under the Rudd and subsequent Gillard Governments. In the four years from 2007 to 2011, AusAID's total staff compliment grew from 655 to 1534, and its Senior Executive Service (SES) grew from 29 to 66 (AusAID 2008, 264; AusAID 2012, 347). To put this in perspective, in 1998 AusAID's total staff was 580 and its SES compliment was 16 (AusAID 1999, 101).

Aid and international development was the clearest example of foreign policy transfer and diffusion between UK Labour and Australian Labor. The transfer was largely one-way, with AusAID emulating core characteristics of DFID's professionalisation of ODA delivery and a strengthened nexus between aid provision and broader international development objectives (Negin 2013). Between 2007 and 2010, and up until the end of Labor rule in September 2013, AusAID fostered a culture where the expertise of the international development practitioner was prized above the national civil servant. The global development community includes government agencies, but one of its primary mantras is that individuals in the developing world should be seen as part of distinctive communities rather than citizens of a state per se; development is conceived of as a global objective (for a critical analysis, see Mosse 2011). As Jack Corbett and Sinclair Dinnen have noted, AusAID

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> appointed a number of these senior development practitioners from organisations like DfID – which, by way of comparison, has its own minister, and one enunciated objective: to end extreme poverty – and the World Bank. These development agents in turn sought to infuse AusAID with a language and understanding of development that reflects broader currents in development discourse and practice. (Corbett and Dinnen 2013)

More concretely, the period also witnessed enhanced cooperation between the UK and Australia in the delivery of ODA, with the conclusion in 2008 of a partnership agreement between DfID and AusAID 'that highlighted working together across such areas as the MDGs, climate change, delegated partnerships and aid effectiveness' (Negin 2013).

Under the Rudd Government, there was clear evidence of policy transfer across two distinctive areas. The first was that AusAID accorded increasing prominence to addressing the root causes of poverty, rather than simply arguing that economic growth would promote development and lead to poverty reduction. The latter had been the mantra of Australian aid policy since the landmark Jackson Review under the Hawke Government in 1984, which recommended that strategic and commercial interests play a key role in shaping aid decisions, as well as humanitarian concerns (Corbett and Dinnen 2016, 94). This shift in emphasis mirrored the approach of DfID under the Blair and Brown Governments, a key theme of which was that societal change remained a fundamental pre-requisite for reducing poverty and meeting the MDGs. In particular, protecting vulnerable groups, most notably women and children as well as ethnic minority communities, was seen as crucial (Armon 2007). Kilby summarises this perspective well:

> social exclusion is a major cause of poverty and therefore should be directly attacked by promoting regulatory and policy frameworks, putting in place affirmative action programmes to ensure equal access to public expenditure, improving economic opportunities, and promoting political participation. (Kilby 2007, 121)

The second area where emulation of the UK approach was apparent was AusAID's increasing autonomy within the Australian bureaucracy from DFAT, and indeed other agencies and departments. Growing autonomy for AusAID was evident during the Rudd Government, with the agency's resource expansion from 2005 being accompanied by new infrastructure investments in AusAID itself and significantly larger programmes to administer. This inevitably led to enhanced bureaucratic influence and a distinctive institutional culture that resembled 'a sophisticated and rich NGO' where 'the higher values were multilateral, humanist and liberal' (Dobell 2015). Yet, it would be inaccurate to conclude that AusAID replicated the autonomy that DfID enjoyed within the UK bureaucracy: there were limits, and at no stage was AusAID ever a separate ministry like DfID. Arguably the central Australian international development initiative after 2007 – targeting new aid programmes in Africa between 2008 and 2012 that coincided with Australia's campaign for a seat on the UN Security Council – was transparently a product of instrumental foreign policy imperatives and DFAT was the bureaucratic actor driving this initiative (Negin 2015). Moreover, DfID's autonomy was balanced by Britain's ODA budget being spread across a range of government agencies. Australian aid, by contrast, has historically been highly centralised. This began to change in the mid 2000s, but the perception that AusAID was overly protective of its budget persists, and was exacerbated by the continuing scaling up of Australia's ODA budget.[8]

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## Conclusion

Outside European Union studies, foreign policy remains something of a blind spot in the scholarly literature on policy transfer. In one sense, this is puzzling. Around the world, centre-left and centre-right parties typically invoke analogous philosophical justifications for pursuing certain directions in foreign policy, just as they do with domestic policy. Thus there is no obvious reason why foreign policy should not be a location of deeper analysis with respect to the existence (or otherwise) of policy transfer and policy diffusion. Indeed, there is untapped potential for further detailed studies that compare fraternal parties in this area. This pertains just as much to comparing liberal democratic states across the world, not just states in Europe that have thus far dominated much of the literature. Ascertaining the extent of transfer and diffusion in the realm of foreign policy can provide valuable lessons for policy makers themselves, as well as advancing comparative politics and public policy scholarship.

For the purposes of this special issue, the analysis has shown that, in addition to demonstrable policy convergence, there was discernible policy transfer and diffusion between Australian Labor and British Labour under the Brown and Rudd Governments. Using the 'degrees of transfer' framework articulated by Dolowitz and Marsh, there is no indication that 'direct and complete transfer' took place in relation to any foreign policy area. Instead, there is evidence of emulation (climate change and aid and development), combinations involving mixtures of different polices (aid and development), and inspiration (climate change and aid and development). Overall, however, transfer and diffusion remained uneven. In selecting three discrete areas of particular importance to centre-left governments worldwide, the article located evidence (to paraphrase Mark Evans) that knowledge about policies and institutions in one jurisdiction was utilised by another to develop their policies and institutions. This was especially salient in the area of aid and international development where British Labour's pioneering approach had a clear influence on Australia's thinking under the Rudd Labor Government.

The analysis also confirmed the existence of more generic overlap in foreign policy approaches between Australian Labor and British Labour. Some of this was coincidental and undoubtedly the result of philosophical traits shared by centre-left parties worldwide (e.g. a preference for multilateral institutions to address global issues like climate change). Yet, it undoubtedly also owed much to the more mundane reality that, irrespective of their philosophical disposition, governments the world over often react to similar circumstances in similar ways. Policy transfer and diffusion is often difficult to prove in domestic as well as foreign policy contexts. However, it remains the case that most governments pragmatically, and quite appropriately, seek to replicate what are perceived to be the good ideas of others in pursuit of better policy outcomes.

## Notes

1. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this point to my attention.
2. Probably the clearest instance of cooperation was the appointment of Alan Milburn as a campaign adviser in the lead-up to the 2007 election. Millburn had been a Minister in the Blair Government from 1999 to 2005. See Button and Murphy (2007).
3. On the pervasiveness of sovereignty in UK debates over Europe, see Gifford (2010).
4. For an example of early thinking on Kevin Rudd as a bridge, see 'US to Press Rudd on China', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February 2008.

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5. The 634 page Garnaut Review made only four separate references to the Stern Report (Garnaut 2008). However, Ross Garnaut has noted in email correspondence with the author (dated 29 February 2016) that: 'I am a good friend of Nick and learned from his work, and he has acknowledged publicly that he has learned from mine. His central problem was very different from mine: his was working out the costs and benefits of climate change mitigation for the world as a whole; mine was working out the costs and benefits in one country in a many country world. The difference in the central problem required a different methodology'.
6. A significant and vocal minority of the Australian public remained opposed to policy initiatives (including an emissions trading scheme) to address climate change. See Pietsch and McAllister (2010).
7. For a summary of the evolution of thinking underlying Australia's approach to aid development and delivery, see Corbett and Dinnen (2016).
8. I would like to thank Jack Corbett for this point.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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