

Complying with Idealistic and Realistic Approaches: The Challenge for UK Aid to the Global South in the Post-Brexit Era

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Abstract

The withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) gave rise to its associated batch of uncertainty about the direction of this country foreign policy. With this in mind, state and non-state actors attempt to predict the role and trend of UK aid deemed the main instrument of state diplomacy. In this vein, the body of work found in the literature addresses outstandingly the nature, mission, target, significance and size of UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era. This paper goes beyond this prediction and establishes that the challenge for the allocation of UK aid to the global south is to balance two approaches that defray the chronicle: one is to respond to poverty-related issues, this is to say idealism approach, and the other one relates to the UK economic and strategic interests, namely, the realism approach. The combination of these two approaches is continual, UK policymakers abiding by this trend. It is then a challenge for UK aid to the global south to concur with this reality.

Keywords: Idealistic and realistic approaches, UK aid, global south, post-Brexit era.

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Introduction

The success of the 'leave' vote, following the referendum on the UK membership of the European Union, stunned not only other EU countries and a section of the British public but also flabbergasted other development partners of the UK disseminated across the globe. Among these partners are undoubtedly developing countries, which wonder about the fate that awaits UK aid they receive either by bilateral cooperation channels or through the EU mechanism. Velde and Mendez-Parra (2019)¹ argued that Brexit creates uncertainty that had an undetermined impact on aid for the poorest countries as they did not know how best to proceed in their political and economic relationships with a 'Global Britain'. This event, seeming like a political earthquake, was unpredicted by many state and non-state actors. As such, its aftermaths kept sparking concerns for aid recipient countries in the global south while attracting scholars' attention. This is compounded by the UK status of the G7 member, which requires devoting at least 0.7% of its National Gross Income to aid to the developing countries as a whole (UK Parliament, 2015)². Similarly, Aspinall (2022)³ explained that the 0.7% of National Gross Income commitment to aid and developing spending has to be on the cards. This research fits into the context painted above, including the unchanging background of developing countries in need of UK aid because these countries are still facing myriad issues characterising the socio-economic circumstances of their population. As also indicated by Oxfam (2020, p.6)⁴, with the whole-UK government aid approach after Brexit, there are significant cultural roadblocks to achieve to ensure the machinery of government is pointing in the same direction to meet the same goals. This can be even more challenging for a values-led foreign policy, when the priorities, such as trade, development and security seem paramount in the ever-churning political cycle (Ibid). In consideration of this combined framework, this study identified the patterned challenge for UK aid to the global south.

This study asserts that in the post-Brexit era, the challenge for UK aid is to comply with both idealism and realism approaches. UK Parliament-House of Commons (2022, p. 5)⁵ stated that in line with the Government's 2021 integrated review of foreign, defence, security and development policy, UK aid would focus on Africa and the Indo-Pacific and target poverty alleviation, economic development, girls' education, and climate change. This is idealism and realistic approach. Idealism refers to the universal morality as opposed to the realism described as a foreign policy for maintaining and extending the power of the state, the unconscious reflection of national interest (Dunne and Cox, 1998)⁶. The idealistic view of foreign aid as a norm is backed by Lumsdaine

(1993, p. 3)⁷ as he explained that it converges lines of evidence establishing that foreign aid cannot be explained solely on the basis of donors' economic and political interests, since their humanitarian concern is the main basis of support for assistance. The idealistic approach to UK aid for the global south in the post-Brexit era suggests that this aid should help achieve social and development prescriptions of developing countries. As revealed by the UK Government (2019)⁸ in 2019, Britain development aid in the post-Brexit had to be used to tackle the global social challenges of our time including poverty and disease. The above is in line with Brysk (2009, p.5)⁹ view as he argued recently that states construct their international identity as good citizens by complying with humanitarian internationalism standards with value-oriented foreign policies involving well-considered foreign assistance. The governing idea of this approach is that through a foreign aid, the UK has to build its high profile as an international actor by abiding by humanitarian norms, which also drive foreign policy.

As far as the realistic approach is concerned, Waltz (1979)¹⁰ argued that it is the general pattern of state behaviour that can be understood as a result of states pursuing incentives above other moral goals. Hence, the UK foreign policy in general in the post-Brexit era is also perceivable through its national interests. About this approach to aid, Hook (1995, p. 14)¹¹ who described aid as money transferred on concessional terms by the governments of rich countries to the governments of poor countries, contended that at its core, this practice is motivated by donors' national interest. The above ascertains a self-interested mood that guides developing countries' choices with regard to allocating foreign assistance to developing countries in need. Therefore, this approach has to apply to the UK aid to the global south as well. On this note, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (2021)¹² explained that aid to developing countries is to be an extraordinarily effective means of securing the national interests in promoting transparency on natural resources, making the best possible use of Britain new technologies across the globe, fighting terror-related conflicts and open markets and trade for UK businesses. Kissinger (1994)¹³ corroborated the realistic approach to foreign aid as an approach to international relations based upon the nation-state and driven by national interest as its ultimate purpose. Therefore, the rhetoric of the realist approach to UK aid to the global south is that by means of this aid, this country has to strive to execute its global and domestic interests, which do not change whatever the circumstances of time and space.

Methodology

This research was guided by the theoretical approach that uses concepts to increase understanding, as opposed to empirical study that prioritises gaining knowledge by conducting analysis relying upon real-world data. The theoretical approach emerged to highlight principles upon which states have to rely (Swanson and Corbin, 2009)¹⁴. This approach underlines the best form of actions the state can undertake or the existing knowledge that should drive the ideal public policy. This approach suits better this study, which strives to explain the range of challenges for UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era. Therefore, the governing idea of the theoretical approach is to describe ideal principles that should guide international politics and relations. As this study establishes what might be the challenges for UK aid to the global south, the theoretical approach will help ascertain what must or should be, rather than what is. Leopold and Stears (2010)¹⁵ argued in favour of the theoretical approach in international development because it helps determine what kind of public policy should be pursued by states in defined circumstances. The above ascertains that the theoretical approach sets out principles and values that favour its use in this study.

This research also prioritised the qualitative approach because its related analysis was solely centred on non-numerical data. This suggests that its data analysis refers to the description and meanings of ideas, actions and postures. According to Mohajan (2018, p. 24)¹⁶, qualitative research is a methodological approach that underlines the way people make sense of their experiences. Therefore, this approach helps understand reality to the extent that its purpose is to interpret and describe phenomena (Ibid). Thus, it is not, in its origin a quantitative study described as an approach that quantifies officials' behaviours or political opinions as a way of generating data of the same nature. This is because analysing UK aid to the global south does not require necessarily quantitative techniques that generate statistics to quantify public policy issues, and this is not the mission of this paper. In line with the above, McNabb (2015, p. 225)¹⁷ argued that qualitative research describes a set of non-statistical inquiry processes and techniques employed to gather data regarding a phenomenon and the use of these data for commendable interpretation and best understanding. Under the circumstances of this study, this approach will help unveil the trends of UK aid for the global south in the context of post-Brexit by engaging systematically with data collected from various sources for an in-depth analysis of the topic under investigation.

For the data collection procedure, this research relied upon document review that involves the examination of existing records. Scott (2006)¹⁸ explained that document review implies scrutinising governmental and non-governmental publications as source materials. Considering the preceding, document review unveiled official versions of UK government public policy on aid for the global south not otherwise provided. McCulloch (2004, p. 22)¹⁹ contended that primary texts are essential as 'background material' for the 'real' analysis in the sense that they translate officials' views on public affairs. The preeminent sources of information for this study

comprise official documents from the UK government and parliament. For an exhaustive review of UK government documents, this study focused on the traditional influence of makers and implementers. Thus, to identify UK government documents, sustained attention was paid to public institutions where take place political debates; this is to say the UK House of Commons and House of Lords. The same approach applied to where political decisions are made, namely, UK government cabinets. The same attention was paid on public bodies where decisions are implemented; this is to say UK government cabinets, as well as various regulatory offices and executive agencies. A comprehensive review of these documents will help circumscribe the challenges for UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era thanks to documents completeness.

As far as the data analysis technique is concerned, this study relied upon content analysis and triangulation. Content analysis is described as the analysis of public policy actors' standpoints expressed under official circumstances. Yang *et al.* (2011)²⁰ explained that content analysis is based on the recurring appearance of themes in the text to understand public policy. Consequently, this technique implies scrutinising the transcripts to grab key phrases and words from data collected to infer based on the patterns from this scrutiny. The above argument aligns with Flick's (2002)²¹ insight that the main feature of content analysis is data scrutiny, followed by the interpretation of the array of patterns deriving from these texts. The use of content analysis was of higher relevance for this research, as this technique facilitates the identification of UK government rhetoric of its aid policy for the global south; thereby its trends in all sources involved in the triangulation of data, which also framed this research. Triangulation allowed for the cross-checking of data sourced from UK official records against the view of non-state actors, i.e. NGOs and newspapers. As also upheld by Haydn (2019)²², triangulation ensures the juxtaposition of several data sources in order to highlight the research findings. Comparing data collected from different sources also allowed comparing the perspectives of people from different backgrounds. In this way, triangulation helps assess the reliability of data-gathering methods. Therefore, engaging with multiple sources mixed reduced the weight given to a single data source and asserted the complementary of different data sources.

Idealistic Approach: UK Aid Responding to the Needs in Resource-poor Countries

Generally speaking, "idealism" refers to an approach to international relations and politics that advocated certain moral goals, such as, promoting humanitarian values and making the world a more just and peaceful place. Nicholson (1976, p. 76)²³ indicated that idealistic framework leads the state to decide what is right, and thinks that there are moral criteria superior to those which particular states assert since some things are known to be right for all men such as good life and freedom. The governing idea of idealism as sustained above is reflected in the discussion over the UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era. Brexit does not mean that the UK stops contributing to aid activities, and so this will not result in it spending less money on aid that includes humanitarian aid efforts and international development programmes (UK Parliament, House of Commons, 2019)²⁴. This is because the UK Government is legally obliged to continue to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income as aid each year (Ibid). Lightfoot *et al.* (2017)²⁵ nurtured this debate as they mentioned that endeavoured to meet the 0.7% aid/GNI target, the UK aid to developing countries will prioritise aid to poorer countries. Similar to that of many other advanced aid donor countries, this aid will focus mostly on fragile states (Ibid). The views above appear to be expressive because these highlight a motive behind UK aid to developing countries. The above fits into Slim's (2005)²⁶ view who, linking aid to idealism, argued that modern humanitarianism has always tried to improve foreign aid technically in areas like health, sanitation and food as well as legally with the development of a comprehensive framework for women and children in particular. These views dwell on a set of principles under which the UK aid policy could not depart after gained the status of a country acting unilaterally. On this note, BBC (2021)²⁷ contended that despite the temporary reduction, the UK remains one of the largest aid donors in the developing world to address socio-economic issues, with some money given to international bodies like the UN and others to spend as they see fit. It is also the sense of the British Foreign Policy Group (2021)²⁸ that motivated by a moral approach and a historical argument, British aid and development spending support social issues in the developing world in accordance with its status as a generous nation, which is incredibly important to Britons' sense of national identity and pride. Therefore, the challenge for UK aid under these circumstances is unknown, which also highlights the features of the recipients of this aid in this newly emerged context. Kohnert (2018)²⁹ analysis exhibits and disseminates the same understanding as he merely indicated that the UK aid in the post-Brexit would contribute to most missions in its traditional area of intervention, namely Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and all other developing countries in need. Despite setting British spending on foreign aid at 0.5% of National Gross Income, foreign aid for developing countries is always in order in the UK (Reuters, 2022)³⁰. This favours an impactful UK foreign aid policy oriented towards more development prescriptions of the global south in the post-Brexit era.

It is also argued that as Brexit released the UK from the shackles of the EU, this situation had to unleash the potential of this country aid, which increases its ability to act as a global actor. Olivie and Perez (2020, p. 203)³¹ concurred with this standpoint because for them, considering that Brexit could entail that the UK is free from the

European Union burden, it would probably reinforce Britain's commitments in global affairs, including its development agenda. This idea was reinforced by the fact that the UK's aid effort is a legally binding commitment that can be modified only by a major political agreement, which is not the case so far (Ibid). Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson upheld the above idea when announcing the creation of the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, as he explained that the UK government is committed to keeping overseas development aid targeting social issues in developing countries as established in law, to have greater impact and influence on the world stage (UK Government, 2021)³². The above narrative clarifies further the significance of UK aid to the global south after the UK voted to leave the EU. This approach is unambiguous in that Brexit should not adversely affect the advancement of UK goals in international development and humanitarian policy enshrined in Agenda 2030 and other international agreements (Bond, 2017, p. 4)³³. This also portrays the same challenge for this UK aid. Indeed, this narrative digs out the myriad of foreign policy prescriptions to urge through UK aid after Brexit. Referring to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, Abrams (2013)³⁴ contended that international aid has always been driven by idealism embedded in donors' good intentions, which is a systematic approach to solving challenges in developing countries, namely, poverty, diseases, and illiteracy. These studies establish the connection between the significance of UK aid and these prescriptions, which are the challenge accounting for this significance. The relevance of this approach appears in Manji's (2019)³⁵ analysis because he explained that following Brexit, the legal framework for this country spending on aid is robust enough to withstand the demands that a new post-Brexit political and economic context is making. This aid is significant as now government departments exercise their power on official development assistance formerly spent through the European Union (Ibid). Companying for international development, Lisa Nandy, Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, advocated a holistic approach to foreign aid in Britain's new role in the world after Brexit, which should emphasise human rights, democracy and the rule of law wherever they are threatened in the world (Labour Party, 2020)³⁶. Based on the above, the configuration of one of the challenges for UK aid to the global south is ascertained and this enlightens the debate on this topic.

The idealistic approach to UK aid for the global south has long been supported by early studies. Indeed, as exemplified by Bose and Burnell (1991, p. 20-21)³⁷, in the eyes of other aid donors, it is right that the UK public spending on aid gives great weight in the allocation of fund to basic development objectives in the Third World. Kohnert (2018, p. 123)³⁸ sounded the alarm about the diminution of this aid because of a possible devaluation of the pound sterling, with a corresponding negative impact on the value of British aid in Africa and elsewhere. This could be aggravated by a likely fall in British GNI as a direct or indirect result of Brexit (Ibid). He also argued that the relatively poor growth forecasts of the UK raise questions about its ability to meet its aid commitments (Ibid). The preceding suggests that the idealistic approach to UK aid for the global south is still pressing, including in the post-Brexit era. This view above keeps dominating the debate in the UK political realm and government cabinets. Under its former system, the UK Department for International Development (2020)³⁹ supported that UK aid to developing countries will continue after Brexit because the UK is committed to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals, which is a historic global agreement to eradicate extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice and leave no one behind. This trend has been emphasised although there are strong signals that UK aid will be cut as successive Secretaries of State appear unable to persuade a substantial section of the media and public that UK aid and development policy serves good causes in a variety of ways (Lightfoot *et al.*, 2017, p. 517)⁴⁰. Hence, adopting the idealistic approach to UK aid to the global south is one of the challenges. Identifying this challenge increases the understanding of the three-dimensional structures of this country aid, namely its size, role and destination. The Guardian (2017)⁴¹ emphasised that considering that the UK has always been a leading voice in support of development aid and free trade as a tool for economic development, it has to seek to achieve continuity in its relationships with developing countries. Therefore, the UK should at a minimum, avoid removing the existing aid-related benefits and current market access received by the poorest countries (Ibid). The UK Conservatives Party (2017, p. 37-38)⁴² revealed in its manifesto ahead of the 2017 election that as Britain is a significant influence for good around the world, the country shall lead a global campaign for education, as well as the hard work to end extreme poverty and coordinate efforts against tropical diseases through its foreign aid. The preceding circumscribes the direction of the UK policy aid deemed an essential component of its foreign policy. Similarly, Spisak (2022, p. 33)⁴³ argued that the UK, like the EU, seeks opportunities to pool resources to maximise their impact when it comes to the development and humanitarian aid. This unveils the constraints that could not limit the scope of idealistic approach of UK aid in the post-Brexit era.

There is a lot to say about possible defies lying ahead of UK aid to the global south. It emerges from Beasley's (2021)⁴⁴ study that since Brexit gave the UK greater independence to play a substantive role; its aid is an essential tool of its foreign policy. In a written statement to Parliament, former UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has explained that the UK aid portfolio will focus on the government's core priorities (UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2021)⁴⁵. These include reducing poverty, getting more girls

into school, providing urgent humanitarian support to those who need it most, and tackling global threats like climate change and international health (Ibid). The nature of UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era is suitably laid down while specifying the features of one of the challenges that could justify it. The idealistic approach to UK aid to the global south in the above perspective can also be drawn from the International Rescue Committee (2021)⁴⁶ statement in that this aid is described as lifesaving. Indeed, this aid allows the UK to live up to its responsibilities in the world's toughest places, at a time when humanitarian needs are particularly high and millions of people are facing starvation (Ibid). The above corroborates Olivie and Perez' (2020, p. 203)⁴⁷ analysis considering that for them, the impact of Brexit could result in the need to re-route aid towards particular and pressing humanitarian needs. This specifically British aid allocation pattern seems more consistent with gaining control over policy decisions (Ibid). The undisputed challenge, the size and trend of UK aid amid this country's withdrawal from the EU is established. This fits into the idealist approach to aid for development sustained by Hatti (2001, p. 633)⁴⁸ who favoured the conceptualisation of foreign aid in terms of development policy objectives as a gesture of generosity. As also indicated by the UK Parliament, House of Lords (2021)⁴⁹, the UK Overseas Development Assistance should set its budget in line with seven core priorities "in the overarching pursuit of poverty reduction", namely, global health security; girls' education; defending open societies and resolving conflict; and humanitarian assistance. Like previous evidence, the narrative above exemplifies the relevant question associated with the challenge for UK aid to the global south. This narrative has to do with the idealist approach. As also indicated by Overseas Development Institute (2017)⁵⁰, the UK's trade and international development policies should be aligned by applying the principle of 'do no harm' and avoid damaging developing countries as Britain leaves the EU. This is because many developing countries rely upon development aid and trade with the UK to boost economic growth, create jobs and reduce poverty (Ibid). The above accounts shed light on the dogmas that guide UK multifaceted aid after Brexit through the lens of the idealist approach.

Realistic Approach: Securing UK National Interests through Aid to the Global South

Roughly speaking, realism is an approach to the practice and study of international relations and politics that highlights the role of the nation-state and emphasises the general assumption that national interests guide nations across the globe. Morgenthau (1985)⁵¹ explained that the main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest, which provides the link between reason trying to understand international politics and the facts to be understood. Pauselli (2013)⁵² corroborated recently the realistic approach to foreign aid as he explained that self-interests are part of the process in which developed countries make transfers of resources to poor countries. Complying with the realistic approach as described above turns out to be another challenge for UK aid to the global south in the Post-Brexit era and therefore the principle of this approach applies equally to the circumstances alluded to above. On this note, former British Prime Minister Boris John ensured the House of Commons that every diplomat in the UK service is actuated by the mission and vision of the country and that UK aid is better in tune with our national values and our desire to be a force for good in the world (UK Government, 2021)⁵³. Price (2016, p. 499)⁵⁴ also established this approach as he explained that to keep its tradition on development aid, the UK will still wield power in relation to economically smaller and more dependent states, particularly if its aid regime continues to be tied to development and trade provisions. He argued that the UK will collectivise its obligations to ACP states, and this will be a framework for its development cooperation relations across the global south (Ibid). Emphasising national values and economic ties establishes further that the key aspect of the realistic approach streams consistently from UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era. When taking office as Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Development (2018)⁵⁵ in January 2018, Matthew Rycroft explained that as the UK leaves the EU, there is a need to consider its strategic direction through development aid, think of the country as central to the British Government's work, build partnerships to protect the country from threats, and thus promote the UK multiple interests around the world. The realist approach to UK aid also loomed from the European Parliament (2017, p. 6)⁵⁶ view, which indicated that with an allocation similar to that in the previous scenario, the UK aid budget for developing countries would be maintained so that Brexit leads to a crucial role in the world for the UK as a better way of pursuing its multiple interests. On this note, Bell (2022)⁵⁷ indicated that Brexit has necessitated the introduction of legislation to regulate the UK foreign aid, investment and internal market based on its national interests. The above aligns perfectly with the realist view on foreign aid policy through the lens of economic and security power, which weighs predominantly most state action and policy in a cost-benefit analysis.

The realism approach can also be traced in seminal narratives made about the nature of UK aid to developing countries in the post-Brexit era. According to the UK Institute for Fiscal Studies (2018)⁵⁸, an updated strategic aim of UK aid after the Brexit aligns more closely with the benefits of aid spending in developing countries with the UK's national interest. It sets out three key objectives for UK aid: promoting trade, responding to crises and strengthening security (Ibid). This approach is significantly highlighted by Lightfoot *et*

al. (2017, p. 517)⁵⁹ as they claimed that UK aid and development policy touches on a wide range of interests covering security, trade, climate change, migration, gender rights and others. They explained that Brexit could accelerate existing trends within UK development policy, notably towards the growing priority of private sector-led economic growth strategies and blended finance tools (Ibid). The above asserts that after Brexit, the UK foreign aid is also expected to divert to respond to new and existing urgent demands in compliance with UK national interests. Indeed, activities such as defence engagement, training and capacity building for defence personnel in developing countries are characterised as being in the interests of UK security (Chatham House, 2021)⁶⁰. The reason is that the UK has to assist poor countries to develop their economies and long-term resilience, prepare for climate change effects and disease outbreaks, prevent or reduce conflicts, and intercept terrorist activities (Ibid). This corroborates the view of Nigatu (2015, p. 1)⁶¹ on the realist paradigm of foreign aid seen as an instrument of enhancing national power and security of the donor country, for example, through reducing the temptations and threats of terrorism. The preceding ascertains the commonly displayed determinants of the behaviour of the UK over its foreign aid to the global south after Brexit. This behaviour argues itself in a clear and forceful way in favour of a self-interested approach to aid in addressing issues on the UK top agenda, which means to advance a more profitable policy in relation to this component of the globe. As also indicated by James Cleverly, as Minister for The Middle East and North Africa, under its priority, the UK is a leader in anticipatory action and is committed to “doing humanitarian aid differently”, which involves identifying hazards, pre-agreeing action plans and funding, and triggering a response when a ‘risk threshold’ is crossed (UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2021)⁶². In the same vein, Hoekman *et al.* (2016)⁶³ contended that the UK aid to developing countries is designed as a robust procedure by which the Britain government supports trade needs and these countries private sectors, which are to be liberalised. Thus, this aid intends to contribute to the UK economy by maximising Britain companies’ production abroad (Ibid). A close look at the above analyses suggests that the nature of UK aid to developing countries in the post-Brexit establishes suitably the reliance on the realism approach. Indeed, the priorities on top of the UK agenda for aid in this new context are outlined. This enlightens the challenge of this country aid policy related to the change of its circumstances due to Brexit. Thus, this aspect of UK aid policy is better clarified.

Realism accepts the fact that foreign aid is also a function of national interests. Lancaster (2006, p. 2)⁶⁴ corroborated this view, as she relayed the correlation between aid provided to a country and its description to indicate purpose. She supported then to the realist prediction that aid is driven by donors’ interests (Ibid). This was also the sense of Sir Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labour party when claiming that UK development aid to countries in need reduces conflict, disease and people fleeing from their homes and these actions form the UK interests (UK Parliament, House of Commons, 2021)⁶⁵. Therefore, cutting aid will have a significant impact on UK economic and security interests (Ibid). Like these two previous studies, Kohnert (2018, p. 122-123)⁶⁶ also noted that after Brexit, the British government’s perspectives on its future relationships with developing countries are closely entangled with aid for trade and financial policy. This policy applies particularly to London’s focus on “aid for trade,” “trade, not aid,” and private sector development as outlined above (Ibid). The above point towards the same direction regarding the UK aid to developing countries, considering that they emphasise foreign aid granted for trade, private sector and social engagement in the broader south. On this note, it is explained that the UK’s potential contribution to global development is about much more than the aid target, considering that fiscal choices are made in the national interest (Official Development Institute, 2022)⁶⁷. Securing these priorities listed above equals the challenge for this aid in this changing context. Similarly, the UK Institute for Government (2018)⁶⁸ admitted that as it takes back control of the £1.5 billion in overseas aid channelled through the EU, the UK is offering to stay involved in the progress of developing countries after Brexit while being free to enhance its bilateral relationships through trade and development as it sees fit the UK interests. Recent studies by other scholars and non-state actors highlight the need for the UK to embarrass a realistic approach through the role of its aid to developing countries in the post-Brexit. Olivie and Perez (2020, p. 204)⁶⁹ aligned on this trend as they contended that diverted from countries with weak economic ties to the UK, or least developed countries (LDCs) with low rates of poverty, the UK aid will be redistributed to Commonwealth, African and Asian middle-income countries (MICs) to reinforce historical and economic ties. As also argued by the United Nations (2019)⁷⁰, despite uncertainty on UK aid and trade policy following the vote to leave the EU, the realistic scenario would be less disruptive, and in principle, there need be no impact on development aid and trade preferences. The UK will continue to offer duty-free access along the lines of Everything But Arms (EBA) and under the same conditions as under current Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the European Union and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) (Ibid). The role of UK foreign aid in the context specified above is assessed, as it should while demonstrating sufficiently the governing idea of a realistic approach. This is because these narratives depict suitably the array of UK national interests, which should be part of the overarching challenges for UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era.

The UK aid perceived through the lens of realism approach can also be filtered from Martill and Staiger’s (2018)⁷¹ view, which highlighted that as Brexit has likely altered the balance of power between Europe and the

UK, the latter would use its aid to developing countries to secure a more independent role of its policy intervention in these countries. Debating on the importance of the UK foreign aid programme on 1 July 2021, the UK Parliament, House of Lords (2021)⁷² admitted that UK aid to developing countries should back strategic advantage through technology and science, shape the open international order of the future, build resilience in the UK and overseas, and strengthen security and defence at home and overseas. The scrutiny of the above standpoints brings to the same finding. It exhibits the nature of the challenge through the lens of this country interest conveyed by its aid to developing countries. As outlined above, this trend remains consistent with the UK foreign policy after Brexit. As also indicated by the Sun (2020)⁷³, after Brexit, UK overseas aid should continue to be treated with reference to UK interests or to the values the UK wishes to express or the diplomatic, political or commercial priorities of the Government of the UK. Considering the preceding, which is a promising supplementary line of research that focuses on the motive of UK aid, the characteristics of one of the challenges for this aid to developing countries is outlined. This approach turns out to be an ideal prism to assess UK aid to developing countries after Brexit. The above fits into Zimmerman's view (2005, p.5)⁷⁴ indicating that in an international political realist perspective, states can be primarily driven by the desire for security and economic interests. This theoretical position leaves little room for control over foreign policy by domestic powers (Ibid). In the same vein, Glencross and McCourt (2018)⁷⁵ explained that Brexit met the UK desire to regain control of important aid policy levers to serve British interests better. This exclusionary power is consistent with the global Britain message about openness and engagement with a plethora of international partners (Ibid). Hence, the realism approach turns out to be one of the determining factors of UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era, thereby one of its principal challenges. On this note, the British Council (2021) called recently for closer alignment of the UK's aid spending with its foreign policy interest goals. It identified three key campaigns for global Britain – free trade, freedom from oppression, and freedom of thought, termed 'three freedoms', which should comprise the cornerstone of a 'national global strategy' to express the UK's interests and values at the global stage (Ibid)⁷⁶. Centred merely on national interests streamlined by the UK foreign aid policy towards developing countries in the post-Brexit era, the above insinuates consistently one of the challenges for this aid in this newly emerged political and diplomatic setting.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore and categorise the challenge for UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era. It rested on the theoretical and qualitative approaches as well as relied on document review as the data collection method. It capitalised on the strengths of triangulation of data and content analysis as analytical techniques. It was based on the observation that previous research does not provide a sketch of the knowledge about the challenge faced by UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era. Essentially, this work, discussing this topic, exhibits a limitation, considering that it is not elaborative as far as the challenges for the UK aid under the above-mentioned circumstances are concerned. This research provided the relevant detail and nuance on these challenges that the existing literature seemingly misses stereotyping. The shortcoming of previous works amply justified the need to undertake this research.

When exploring extensively the reasons behind UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era as it emerged from data collected, the study established the ramifications between all aspects of this aid and international relations paradigms. The analysis of these data provided the set of significant clusters of idealistic and realistic approaches to the UK aid to the global south in the period under scrutiny. Indeed, one interesting finding is the affirmation that UK aid is meant to be handled through the lens of humanitarian prescriptions, namely poverty reduction and economic growth. The above narrative asserts compliance with the idealistic approach. Indeed, there is sufficient evidence that UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era is shaped by the rhetoric promoting a general sense of benevolence that tackles socio-economic issues in this part of the world. Another finding emerging under the circumstances alluded to above is the assertion of self-interested mood resting on security, technology and trade, which drives the UK aid following its exit from the EU. The above account argues for compliance with the realism approach. That is because there is striking evidence that UK aid is also thought to rely upon the belief holding that it is an effective driver of this country's multifaceted interests embedded into a set of its foreign policy goals to achieve through its relationship with the global south. Thus, this UK aid is also a diplomacy tool for strengthening strategic and economic interests.

It is to note that in the light of data analysed, both approaches are compelling. Their binding nature grants them the challenging character, to the point that these two approaches determine the UK aid policy towards the global south in the post-Brexit era concomitantly. This suggests that these approaches are not mutually exclusive, ascertaining thereby a complementary. Hence, the study is consistently expressive on the challenge that drives the nature, role, target, significance and size of this aid. However, this is not where the accounts of UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit should end. All this is to say that further research could examine to what extent colonial ties and global issues could determine the quintessence of UK aid under the same circumstances. This study is topical considering that its genesis occurred during the domestic debate in the UK regarding its ability to

fulfil its political pledge on foreign aid to the global south. It offers an in-depth theoretical analysis on the two approaches to UK aid to this part of the world in this newly emerged political context based upon the evidence. Overall, this study strove to be the further step towards a more comprehensive understanding of UK aid to the global south in the post-Brexit era.

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