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The limits of state-led norm entrepreneurship: The United Kingdom and the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI)

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Abstract

This article examines the limits of state-led norm entrepreneurship in the case of the UK and the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative. The UK-led Preventing Sexual Violence in conflict Initiative emerged in 2012 and accelerated to the tipping point and beginning of the norm cascade by 2014. However, the Preventing Sexual Violence in conflict Initiative has since struggled to sustain similar levels of UK-led entrepreneurship where resources and institutional support have stagnated and declined. This article argues that the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative is evidence of how a norm that originally benefits from powerful state-led entrepreneurship to the point of cascading has to be maintained by consistent state support to prevent its progress from slowing, and potentially stagnating, at a significant moment in its evolution. The article contributes to research on norm entrepreneurship, the norm lifecycle, and analysis of the reasons why the UK's entrepreneurship on the Preventing Sexual Violence in conflict Initiative has gradually stagnated when compared to its initial considerable investment in leadership and support.

Keywords

cascade, norm entrepreneurship, norm lifecycle, norms, PSVI, UK foreign policy

Introduction

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) was jointly launched in 2012 by the UK Foreign Secretary, William Hague (2012), and the Special Envoy to the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees, Angelina Jolie, to tackle sexual violence in conflict and address 'the culture of impunity and establish a new culture of deterrence in its place'. With support from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and access to international venues such as the United Nations and G8, Hague assumed primary responsibility for initially leading the PSVI where it accelerated in a short period

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of time from an emerging norm in 2012 to reaching a tipping point and beginning to cascade by 2014.

Following this considerable progress in its first 2 years, a 2020 report from the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI, 2020: ii) found that post-2015, 'high-level ministerial interest waned, and funding and staffing levels for the PSVI team were reduced'. Alongside this, the PSVI's budget of £15 million in 2014–2015 'has precipitously fallen' to under £2 million by 2018–2019 (ICAI, 2020: 9). The government's response to the ICAI report was to maintain that 'the PSVI remains a top priority for the UK Government' as shown by the ministerial appointment of the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the PSVI, continued funding, and support for the UK Team of Experts (HM Government, 2020: 1). However, this position is in contrast to Hague's (2021) suggestion that 'the UK government has continued PSVI but with lower priority'.

This article argues that this shift in the government's prioritisation, and the stagnation in its level of support, reveals the limitations of state-led norm entrepreneurship on the PSVI. Specifically, it argues that the PSVI is evidence of how a norm that originally benefits from powerful state-led entrepreneurship to the point of reaching the norm cascade stage of its development has to be maintained by consistent state leadership and support to prevent its progress from slowing, stagnating, and potentially following a non-linear norm lifecycle at a significant moment in its evolution. The PSVI gained significant traction from UK-led entrepreneurship between 2012 and 2014 through a combination of the organisational platform of the FCO, the international leadership of Hague as Foreign Secretary, and the venues available for UK entrepreneurship on the international stage. Following this period, responsibility for the PSVI shifted to the junior ministerial role of the Prime Minister's Special Representative, while resources from the FCO have declined substantially relative to the 2014–2015 budget.

The article thus shows the challenges of state-led norm entrepreneurship when the evolution of a norm becomes closely associated with a particular state, where over the course of a norm's lifetime experiences changing governments, ministers, and foreign policy priorities, which may in turn lead to changes in a government's institutional support and allocation of resources. In doing so, it draws attention to the importance of the domestic institutional environment required to sustain a norm even as it cascades in a situation where it still remains primarily dependent on its original entrepreneur.

To analyse the progress and limitations of the UK's entrepreneurship on the PSVI, the article draws on a combination of 38 speeches, statements, commentary, press releases, and reports from the UK government, ministers, the FCO, House of Lords Committee Inquiries, written evidence, and official government responses, independent commissions, news commentary, and UN resolutions between 2012 and 2021. This timeframe covers the PSVI's founding through to the publication of the ICAI report, while accounting for any notable developments in 2021.

This argument is structured in three sections. The first addresses the theoretical context on norm entrepreneurship, the linear and non-linear lifecycle of norms, and the PSVI. Section '2012–2014: The swift emergence and evolution of the PSVI' then examines UK-led entrepreneurship on the PSVI between 2012 and 2014, which covers its emergence to reaching the tipping point and cascading. Section '2015–2020: The limits of UK norm entrepreneurship on the PSVI' analyses the gradual stagnation of the UK's entrepreneurship on the PSVI between 2015 and 2020 to support the argument that a norm which initially benefits from powerful state-led entrepreneurship requires sustained support to continue its normative progress and prevent it stagnating and potentially following a non-linear lifecycle.

The article makes two main contributions. The first is to the theoretical and empirical literature on the role of state-led norm entrepreneurship (Davies and True, 2017; Ingebritsen, 2002; Stefan, 2017, 2021; Wunderlich, 2013), and the linear (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998) and non-linear norm lifecycles. There has been a growth of research which challenges the linear norm lifecycle (Krook and True, 2010), and examines the stagnation, decline, and disappearance of even previously internalised norms (Beyer and Hofmann, 2011; Brown, 2020; Iommi, 2020; Lantis, 2016; McKeown, 2009; Panke and Petersohn, 2011, Panke and Petersohn, 2016). However, this article's contribution is its focus on an earlier stage of the norm lifecycle where a norm navigates the tipping point and begins the cascade, but its progress remains primarily dependent on its original entrepreneur, which has seen a stagnation in its own contribution of resources and support. This in turn draws attention to the importance of the domestic institutional context required to sustain a norm even as it cascades to ensure its progress does not slow at a critical point in its evolution as an international norm.

Its second contribution is to empirical research on the initial success of the UK's entrepreneurship which supported the PSVI's international momentum through its domestic institutional support, its challenges in sustaining this commitment to entrepreneurship, and assessing why government prioritisation has reduced relative to pre-2015 and its implications for the PSVI. This is important for UK government attempts to lead on the PSVI but also other normative foreign policy initiatives by showing the importance of maintaining state-led norm entrepreneurship at a critical stage when a norm transitions from emerging to cascading.

Norm entrepreneurship and the linear and non-linear norm lifecycles

The constructivist turn in International Relations scholarship (Checkel, 1998) generated increasing attention on how norms help create and shape what is considered appropriate action for different actors. In their seminal article, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 891) defined 'a norm as a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity'. They argued that 'norms do not appear out of thin air; they are actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior in their community' (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 896). These agents are norm entrepreneurs, which refers to 'an individual or organization that sets out to change the behavior of others' (Florini, 1996: 375). Norm entrepreneurs thus primarily seek to change existing norms and practices and establish new ones (Sunstein, 1996: 909) and operate mainly at the beginning of a three-stage lifecycle of norm emergence, cascade, and internalisation (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 895). A norm emerges when an entrepreneur has an idea or when an issue is brought to their attention and they decide to lead on changing it (Rosert, 2019: 1108). It is during this first stage that 'norm entrepreneurs attempt to convince a critical mass of states (norm leaders) to embrace new norms' in order to reach a 'tipping point' of support for the norm to then progress to the second stage of a 'norm cascade' (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 895).

Leadership is therefore essential in norm entrepreneurship to navigate a norm to the tipping point and cascade (Davies and True, 2017; Wunderlich, 2013: 32, 2019). Intertwined with leadership is the positionality of a norm entrepreneur and their access to platforms and venues to promote a norm and convince other states and actors to adopt and internalise it (Colman, 2011: 163; Davies and True, 2017: 716–717; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 899–900; Madokoro, 2015: 35; Rushton, 2008: 99). Rushton (2008: 99) for example suggests that the UN Secretary-General's norm entrepreneurship is facilitated by the strong

organisational platform that the UN provides given its vast membership of states. Venues are distinct from organisational platforms in being 'the institutional setting in which a variety of international actors interact' (Colman, 2011: 164). While an organisational platform is important for the resources and support for norm entrepreneurship, particularly as a norm emerges, Colman (2011: 164) suggests that venues involve negotiations with other actors and that entrepreneurs may subsequently change venues if their norm starts to receive pushback.

This shows how access to an organisational platform alone is no guarantee that a norm will successfully navigate all three stages of the norm lifecycle if entrepreneurs encounter norm resistance in a venue. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) outlined some initial hypotheses on why some norms succeed while others may not. These propositions stem from the success of a norm being dependent on its quality – or the quality of the entrepreneur – to the idea that the content and 'clarity and specificity' of the norm matters (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1996: 906–909). While this approach accounts for the quality of the entrepreneur, it is short of examining the importance of consistent support from a norm entrepreneur during the emergence, tipping point, and norm cascade. This includes how the priorities of a norm entrepreneur may change during the process of the norm lifecycle and the subsequent implications of this change for its leadership, support, and momentum for the norm it originally championed.

There has been a growth of research which reconsiders this linear norm lifecycle (Krook and True, 2010) and shows how even internalised norms can stagnate, decline, regress, and disappear (Beyer and Hofmann, 2011; Brown, 2020; Iommi, 2020; Lantis, 2016; McKeown, 2009; Müller and Wunderlich, 2018; Panke and Petersohn, 2011, Panke and Petersohn, 2016). McKeown (2009: 11) uses the concept of 'reverse cascading' to describe a process whereby a norm that previously cascaded regresses and 'loses salience'. In the case of the aid effectiveness norm for instance, Brown (2020: 1232) suggests that it was unsuccessful in changing the practices of actors because of weak internalisation and 'underwent a reverse cascade'.

Norm regression has thus been conceptualised as a fourth step of the norm lifecycle following internalisation, with norm contestation and non-compliance being central to this process (Iommi, 2020: 76). Research focusing on the disappearance of international norms suggests that norm violation, norm challenges and contestation, and a failure of actors to comply with a norm are some important factors which explain the regression and disappearance of norms and their replacement with other norms and practices (Panke and Petersohn, 2011, Panke and Petersohn, 2016). The challenge with norms is that they are not static once they emerge, successfully navigate all the stages of the norm lifecycle, and become internalised, but remain open to contestation by different actors (Deitelhoff, 2020; Iommi, 2020; Müller and Wunderlich, 2018; Wunderlich, 2019). This contestation may in turn then lead to the decline, regression, and disappearance of a previously internalised norm.

This literature provides important insights into the linear and non-linear lifecycle of norms. The point of departure in this article is its focus at an earlier stage as a norm navigates the tipping point and begins to cascade. It shows the importance of the domestic institutional environment required to sustain the PSVI as an international norm as it cascades in the absence of other equally positioned global leaders. This is because the PSVI's emergence and route to the tipping point and cascade has primarily relied on the UK as its original entrepreneur. The UK has made significant contributions to the PSVI's normative evolution on the international stage since 2012 to the point where it has become closely connected to UK leadership and the vast institutional resources and

support at its disposal. However, in the post-2015 period the UK's entreprenuership on the PSVI has stagnated in terms of domestic institutional support and resources relative to height of UK leadership between 2012 and 2014. While it could be argued that prominent UK leadership is no longer required now that the PSVI has navigated the tipping point and received broad state support, the PSVI lacks other clear state normative champions to continue building momentum in a similar manner to the UK's own leadership efforts to prevent its progress slowing and potentially stagnating (see Hague, 2020, 2021).

Some research has examined how initial norm entreprenuership can decline and disappear, such as the Brazilian government's leadership on R2P (Stefan, 2017). Brazil proposed its own Responsibility while Protecting (RwP) initiative which gained traction under the guidance of its Foreign Minister, Antonio de Aguiar Patriota. While still at the emergence stage, the Foreign Minister departed and Brazil's 'domestic interest in RwP vanished' (Stefan, 2017: 107). This article is focusing on the PSVI as a norm which has started the cascade, rather than declined. The UK government also maintains that the PSVI remains one of its foreign policy priorities (HM Government, 2020), but the next two sections show that UK norm entreprenuership has stagnated at a significant point in the PSVI's normative evolution. The speed at which the PSVI emerged and navigated the tipping point is remarkable, but this article argues that it requires the UK to maintain its entrepreneurship and domestic institutional support to continue its momentum as an international norm in the absence of other state champions.

2012–2014: The swift emergence and evolution of the PSVI

The PSVI has deep historical roots in efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflict. The Bosnian conflict in the 1990s and a visit to refugee camps in Darfur in 2006 have been mentioned by Hague as some of the main reasons for his own commitment to the PSVI (Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), 2012a; Hague, 2006, 2014a; House of Lords, 2015). Hague (2014a), for example, later remarked that 'Bosnia was at the origins of our global campaign'. Two years prior to co-founding the PSVI, Hague speaking on the subject of women and peace and security suggested that the coalition government 'will not pursue a foreign policy without a conscience and we will speak out against abuses whenever and wherever they occur' (FCO, 2010).

It was in 2012 that Hague as UK Foreign Secretary formed a partnership with the Special Envoy to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Angelina Jolie, to launch a new initiative for the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. It is important to recognise the forming of this partnership for the international visibility, normative evolution, and UK-led entrepreneurial leadership on the PSVI as it emerged and navigated towards the tipping point and cascade. Angelina Jolie is not only an international celebrity (Wright and Rosamond, 2021: 444), but also a prominent 'celebrity diplomat' (Cooper, 2007: 126). On refugees and gendered violence, for example, Wright and Rosamond (2021: 444) acknowledge Jolie's 'extensive experience working with multiple institutions, across humanitarian projects and with politicians', with the latter evident in her work alongside Hague on the PSVI. It is plausible to argue that Hague's partnership with Jolie was a critical starting point of the UK's strategy for global leadership on the emerging PSVI in having the Foreign Secretary with access to international venues such as the UN and G8 teaming up with the Special Envoy to the UN High Commissioner on Refugees and a celebrity already with a global profile and experience in international diplomacy on issues related to the PSVI.

Hague subsequently suggested that the prevention of sexual violence was a 'moral cause' and 'about common humanity' (FCO, 2013e). This is in addition to suggesting that 'it is also central to foreign policy, because sexual violence perpetuates division and conflict, undermining international peace and security' (Hague, 2013). Hague also later commented that the prevention of sexual violence 'is a crucial part of foreign policy; it is not an add-on, it is not something to be dealt with when we are not too busy doing something else' (Hague in House of Lords, 2015). This is important for showing that the UK-led initiative was an important priority, but also a global concern that necessitated support from states and other actors, which was again emphasised by the partnership with Angelina Jolie. Hague's position on the PSVI was thus reflective of 'conscience leadership' (James, 2018: 556) in pursuing the moral and normative cause of tackling sexual violence in conflict, while equally raising awareness of the imperative to prevent sexual violence in conflict. Based on this initial state-led norm entrepreneurship, and Hague's leadership as Foreign Secretary, the PSVI successfully navigated the first steps of norm emergence in raising attention to the issue and attempting to initiate change through the development of a new norm.

The organisation platforms, resources, and venues for PSVI entrepreneurship. Following the PSVI's emergence, attention turned to persuading a critical mass of support from states for it to reach the tipping point and begin the norm cascade. Some notable aspects of the PSVI's emergence is the UK's prominent membership of international institutions, support from the FCO, and the leadership of the Foreign Secretary in one of the Great Office of UK State (see also Davies and True, 2017). Hague's leadership experience as a core state-based agent on the PSVI is important for the PSVI because a fundamental part of the creation and promotion of a new norm is persuading other states and actors to support it in order to reach the tipping point and cascade (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). Hague had been leader of the Conservative Party from 1997 to 2001 prior to his experience of foreign affairs as Shadow Foreign Secretary from 2005 until his official appointment as Foreign Secretary in 2010, a role which was ranked fourth for ministerial influence in 2012 when the PSVI was co-founded (Allen and Siklodi, 2020: 227).

However, leadership alone is insufficient without the necessary organisational platform and venues available for entrepreneurship at a domestic and international level (Colman, 2011; Rushton, 2008). This is because organisational platforms provide the institutional support and resources that are essential for an emerging norm to gain traction and attention from other actors. Between 2012 and 2014, the emergence and acceleration of the PSVI were helped significantly by its strong organisational platform in the shape of the UK FCO, which has a sizable budget and resources at its disposal. One example of this is Hague's strong support from close advisors in the FCO alongside other prominent domestic and international actors such as Angelina Jolie, Hilary Clinton, Madeleine Rees, Brigid Inder, and Baroness Helic (Davies and True, 2017: 712).

The resources afforded to the PSVI through its organisational platform were considerable during its early evolution between 2012 and 2014. Some examples include the UK building on its contribution to the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict through £1 million of core funding and allocating another £1 million over 2 years to the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims (FCO, 2013c: 91). This was followed by the announcement in 2013 of £5 million of FCO funding being allocated over a period of 3 years to support initiatives and projects on addressing sexual violence in conflict. This includes providing approximately £2.7 million for

projects on preventing sexual violence in a range of countries, with the FCO (2014a: 17) listing Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burma, Colombia, DRC, Guatemala, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Syria. Funding also helped establish a UK Team of Experts including 'doctors, lawyers, police, psychologists, forensic specialists and experts in the care and protection of survivors and witnesses' (FCO, 2014a: 16). The Team of Experts increased rapidly to 73 members by 2013 (Hague, 2013) and has since been deployed on 90 occasions (Hague, 2020), including Mali to assist the EU training mission, in Syria to document human rights abuses and support justice and accountability efforts, and post-conflict settings in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina among other countries (FCO, 2012b, 2014a: 14–15).

In 2014–2015, the PSVI's annual budget was £15 million (ICAI, 2020: 9). This included the UK hosting the first global summit to end sexual violence in 2014, which was both a reflection of the PSVI's progress and an evaluation of its next steps (FCO, 2014a: 8). It was attended by 125 countries and 900 experts, representatives from the UN, African Union, European Union, faith leaders, and civil society organisations (Hague, 2014b). One expert described the summit as 'a symbolic embodiment of a slow attitudinal shift on the issue of conflict related sexual assault' (Myrttinen and Swaine, 2015: 499).

The organisational platform of the FCO and the considerable resources allocated to the PSVI worked in tandem with the leadership of William Hague as Foreign Secretary and the venues available for sustained UK norm entrepreneurship. Venues provide an essential location for norm entrepreneurs to negotiate with other states and actors and persuade them to endorse a norm for it to reach the tipping point and cascade (Colman, 2011). As UK Foreign Secretary, William Hague utilised two main venues to both raise awareness and gather support for the PSVI. The first was the G8 where Hague acknowledged the importance of this venue for the PSVI in representing 'some of the world's largest economies and most powerful nations' and therefore 'we [the G8] have the ability to show leadership on vast global issues of our time' (Hague quoted in FCO, 2013d).

Hague (2013) subsequently followed this commitment by making the PSVI his 'personal priority' during the UK's presidency of the G8 in 2013. This venue demonstrates the importance of state-led entrepreneurship where the UK had access and a leadership role in an exclusive and prominent international group of states. It was at the 2013 gathering that members agreed the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in conflict, which Hague described as an 'historic agreement' (Hague quoted in FCO, 2013d). The Declaration addressed a number of areas on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, including the importance of accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, the development of an International Protocol on the Investigation and Documentation of rape and sexual violence in conflict,[1] and 'the need to exclude crimes of sexual violence in armed conflict from amnesty provisions' (FCO, 2013a, 2013d).

The second venue of UK-led entrepreneurship was the UN Security Council. On 24 June 2013, Hague chaired a UN Security Council open debate where he, alongside PSVI co-founder, Angelina Jolie, delivered speeches on the importance of adopting a resolution on preventing sexual violence in conflict (FCO, 2013b). Crawford (2017: 141) suggests that the objectives outlined in the UK's concept note for the open debate reflected the UK's sway and aims of generating the support of UN members and the Security Council for its work on the PSVI. This shows the UK's attempt to propel its own PSVI entrepreneurship onto the international stage as part of a process of norm diffusion.

Member states unanimously adopted Resolution 2106 (2013) on 24 June 2013, which reaffirmed their commitment to end sexual violence in conflict (UN Security Council, 2013: 2). While Resolution 2106 was a collective international endeavour with co-sponsorship from 46 states, it is suggested that the resolution 'still bears the hallmarks' of UK entrepreneurship on the PSVI, such as the focus on victims and survivors (Crawford, 2017: 140). Even though Hague chaired the open debate that concluded with the adoption of resolution 2106, it is important to note the challenging diplomatic negotiations in the weeks prior to its endorsement that led to the draft resolution, which includes 'several rounds of exhaustive negotiations at expert level, followed by bilateral discussions' (Security Council Report, 2013). This demonstrates the complex diplomatic process of generating support among states in the lead up to the speeches by Hague and Jolie, with the open debate representing the conclusion to this stage of the international diplomatic negotiations on the PSVI.

These achievements in only 2 years demonstrate the importance of sustained UK-led entrepreneurship in order to lead on the successful emergence of the PSVI and towards navigating the tipping point. Hague, in particular, was able to utilise the powerful backing of the organisational platform of the FCO with its vast resources and diplomatic networks, along with the UK's prominent membership of powerful international venues such as UN Security Council and G8, to generate domestic and international momentum on the PSVI. The ICAI (2020: 11) in turn suggests that 'the PSVI has contributed to making the UK a leading voice in the international effort to address conflict-related sexual violence, especially through its influencing work'. This statement reflects Hague's (2014b) own commitment to 'maintain strong visible UK leadership' on the PSVI. To achieve this, the PSVI has been founded on strong state-level institutional support and resources, including the FCO and membership of international institutions. Hague (2020), for instance, later acknowledged that the UK 'showed that considerable momentum could be generated through persistent and senior advocacy by a prominent nation present in most global fora'.

Returning to the norm lifecycle, by 2014, the PSVI had arguably reached the tipping point and navigated to the norm cascade stage having received a critical mass of support from states as it emerged between 2012 and 2014 (see Davies and True, 2017: 714–715). As the next section argues, the UK's post-2015 engagement with the PSVI shows some of the limits of state-led entrepreneurship when a norm that initially benefitted from powerful state-led entrepreneurship and prioritisation to reach the norm cascade is not consistently sustained as resources and support from the original entrepreneur stagnate and decline. Without this support, a norm's progress may begin to slow and become at risk of stagnating at a significant point in its development, particularly in the absence of other equally positioned actors and international normative champions to take the lead moving forward. This is because as the section 'Norm entrepreneurship and the linear and non-linear norm lifecycles' shows, a successful transition to the norm cascade is no guarantee that it will become internalised without sustained levels of international support and momentum, especially from entrepreneurs.

2015–2020: The limits of UK norm entrepreneurship on the PSVI

The PSVI emerged, reached the tipping point, and navigated to the cascade stage at a remarkable speed between 2012 and 2014. The immediate focus after the 2014 global summit was on sustaining similar levels of UK entrepreneurship to continue the early

domestic and international progress on the PSVI. One organisation for example stated that 'in order to ensure the credibility of the PSVI, the UK must continue to show strong global leadership' and 'if the UK Government allows priority on this to slip, it could send a damaging message that the momentum on this issue is waning' (Amnesty International, 2015). Similarly, a House of Lords (2016: 3) report on the PSVI argued that the UK should continue to build on its early progress because otherwise 'momentum will be lost'. These statements are part of a broader concern about the future of the PSVI as a UK foreign policy priority without sustaining similar levels of entrepreneurship relative to the period between 2012 and 2014 (Kirby, 2015: 471; Myrttinen and Swaine, 2015: 500).

In their 2015 election manifesto, The Conservative Party (2015: 76) suggested it 'will drive forward the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative' should it win the election. Once in office, the government reiterated this commitment through stating its intention 'to maximise every opportunity to keep PSVI at the top of the international policy agenda' (HM Government, 2016: 9). However, the reminder of this section argues that the UK has not sustained similar levels of domestic institutional support as part of a broader stagnation in its entrepreneurship on the PSVI relative to the period between 2012 and 2014. This is captured by a reduction in a number of areas that were identified in the last section '2012–2014: The swift emergence and evolution of the PSVI' as being critical to the PSVI's initial acceleration, including resources from the organisational platform of the FCO, its prioritisation in UK foreign policy, and senior ministerial leadership from the position of Foreign Secretary. Due to its close association with UK entreprenuership, this places the PSVI's progress at risk of slowing on the international stage, particularly when there is an absence so far of another equally positioned international normative champion willing to take centre stage on leading the PSVI. This is not to overlook the post-2015 achievements of the UK and other actors on the PSVI, but rather to identify the importance of sustaining state-led entrepreneurship to maintain and build on its considerable progress.

Changing entrepreneurship, declining resources, and the organisational platform. Following his departure as Foreign Secretary, William Hague initially retained his leadership role as the new Prime Minister's Special Representative on the PSVI and remained in this position until 2015 when he was succeeded by Baroness Anelay for 2 years followed by the appointment of Lord Ahmad in 2017. While the Special Representative remains a ministerial role it now operates at a junior level. According to the ICAI (2020: 12), this change had a notable impact on the PSVI with 'ministerial attention and funding being redirected elsewhere'. For example, compared to its peak financial support of £15 million in 2014–2015, the UK's annual funding for the PSVI had fallen to under £2 million by 2019 (Hodal and Ford, 2020; ICAI, 2020: 9). Further evidence of this significant budget reduction is the PSVI team in the FCO, where 'understaffing, high turnover and, in many cases, staff lacking expertise in the area, limit the impact of the Initiative' (ICAI, 2020: 21). A team which consisted of 34 staff in the build up to the 2014 global summit, had dropped to 3 by 2020 (ICAI, 2020: 12). Similarly, the Team of Experts had reduced in size by 2020 (Hodal and Ford, 2020), in addition to a nearly 50% reduction in deployments between 2016 and 2020 (House of Commons, 2021). This is a noteworthy decline considering the important role that the Team of Experts has in implementing the PSVI in practice. The extent of this decline in resources allocated to the PSVI is captured by the comments by Hague (2021) that despite the considerable efforts of Lord Ahmad to continue driving the Initiative:

> the sense of energy at a senior level, however, has dissipated. Funding for the initiative is the lowest since we started it. The team of experts is rarely deployed. The raising of the issue across all diplomatic gatherings has dried up.

Alongside this shift from senior ministerial leadership, the ICAI (2020: 25) found that the PSVI 'lacks an institutional home with the necessary governance and oversight role' and that 'as ministerial interest and budget fell, the number of programmes declined and the focus of the PSVI portfolio dissipated'. This is a critical assessment of the PSVI's condition which had initially benefitted from considerable resources and institutional support from the organisational platform of the FCO within a state that had been influential in its early normative development.

The decision to merge the FCO and the Department for International Development (DFID) to form the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in 2020 only adds to the uncertainty around the PSVI's organisational platform and extent of the UK's present and future entrepreneurship. While the merging of two departments would at first appear an ideal opportunity to demonstrate UK leadership by intertwining the PSVI with its foreign and development policy, the source of responsibility for the PSVI within the new department remains unclear. The UK government also signalled that the merging of the two departments is part of a broader shift in its strategic objectives and priorities based on a broader commitment 'to safeguard British interests and values overseas' (House of Commons, 2020). However, it is unclear what role specific initiatives such as the PSVI have as part of this reconfiguration of the UK's foreign policy objectives. The government's 2021 Integrated Review of UK foreign policy does outline some level of commitment to the PSVI in aiming to 'build momentum on efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflict' (HM Government, 2021: 79). However, beyond this brief statement, there is no specific reference to how the government intends to fulfil this commitment in the coming years.

In the backdrop of the reduction in domestic institutional support, resources, and the lack of clarity on the PSVI's organisational platform, Special Representatives continued to demonstrate the potential for UK entrepreneurship on the PSVI. A significant achievement from the leadership of Lord Ahmad was the launch of the Principles for Global Action report, which focused on preventing and addressing the stigma associated with conflict-related sexual violence (FCO, 2017c). In particular, the report intends to act as 'a practical guide designed to raise awareness among policy makers of the challenges, issue and sensitivities of stigma from a survivor's perspective' (FCO, 2017a). Lord Ahmad built on this through the launch of PSVI 'survivor champions', which aimed to 'support and champion all survivors of sexual violence in conflict' (FCO, 2019a). Alongside these contributions, the UK 'played a key role' in securing the passing of resolution 2467 on sexual violence in 2019, which builds on the UK's earlier work on resolution 2106 adopted in 2013 (FCO, 2020a: 10). Resolution 2467 recognises 'a survivor-centred approach' to preventing and addressing sexual violence in conflict (UN Security Council, 2019: 3), which continues Lord Ahmad's approach to the PSVI.

It was also announced that the UK would host another international conference on the PSVI in November 2019, although this was subsequently postponed due to the 2019 general election (FCO, 2019b). Despite this, Lord Ahmad reiterated the UK's commitment to the PSVI, particularly through its survivor-centred approach (FCO, 2020b). This survivor-centred commitment was further shown by the launch of the draft Murad Code which was founded with Nadia Murad and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations

(IICI) and according to Lord Ahmad 'puts survivors rightly at the heart of our collective response' (Lord Ahmad quoted FCO, 2020c). The Special Representative has therefore made significant contributions to the development of the PSVI even while the UK's broader entrepreneurship on the PSVI has gradually stagnated.

The adoption of resolution 2467 in particular shows how the PSVI has continued to maintain support from states at the international level following its move to the norm cascade. In this sense, the PSVI is still progressing as an international norm because resolution 2467 suggests that states remain committed to the norm. Beyond this, several aspects of the PSVI continue to be primarily led by the UK's entrepreneurship, such as launching the Principles for Global Action and building on establishing a survivor-centred approach. Even so, the former Foreign Secretary and co-founder of the PSVI, William Hague (2020), has since suggested that 'despite the valiant efforts of Lord Ahmad, there are clear signs of the usual global inertia returning'. This captures the important progress that has been made under the leadership of Lord Ahmad as Special Representative, but also draws attention to the challenge of maintaining international momentum on the PSVI even after the adoption of resolution 2467.

One of the issues again is that the UK's entrepreneurship has also gradually stagnated as shown by the decline in domestic institutional and material support for the PSVI. This is in turn problematic for the PSVI's momentum at the international level because it continues to be principally UK-led and sponsored, and at the time of writing, there is no other state that has yet demonstrated a willingness to take the lead from the UK on the PSVI (see Hague, 2021). This stagnation in the UK's entrepreneurship on the PSVI, and the lack of another equally positioned state indicating its intention to take the lead, thus captures both the strengths and limits of state-led norm entreprenuership. On one hand, the PSVI shows the importance of the domestic institutional environment and its critical support for the norm's emergence and acceleration on the international stage. However, on the other hand, the PSVI's close association with the entrepreneurship of the UK, which has endured even at the cascade stage, reveals the issues when the UK's institutional support for the PSVI has stagnated. Yet, the PSVI had gained considerable international momentum by 2014 to the point where it was an opportune moment to successfully navigate the tipping point to maximise state support on the international stage. It is therefore difficult to envisage whether the UK could have done anything differently at the time since there was no indication that UK domestic institutional support would stagnate, while there was broad state support on the international stage, which enabled the PSVI to navigate the tipping point and cascade.

The importance of sustaining PSVI norm entrepreneurship. The government's response to the 2020 ICAI report on the PSVI is that the UK 'remains a global leader on the issue' (HM Government, 2020). Yet, this statement is contrary to the perspective of the ICAI (2020: 25) that 'at present we find the Initiative lacks leadership and direction'. As the previous sub-section shows, successive Special Representatives have attempted to lead on the PSVI since its cascade, but assumed this position amid a considerable decline in institutional support and resources since 2015 alongside a move to a junior ministerial role which is unable to command similar resources that were previously available to the Foreign Secretary. The UK's post-2015 engagement with the PSVI thus exposes some fundamental limitations of state-led entrepreneurship when a norm that initially benefitted from powerful entrepreneurship to the point of cascading has since struggled to maintain its level of support following a stagnation and decline in domestic institutional support and resources from its original entrepreneur.

The PSVI has continued largely as a UK-led initiative on the international stage where the Special Representative has been prominent in the discourse and material actions on the PSVI, such as through the Principles for Global Action, Resolution 2467, and the survivor-centred approach as shown by the Draft Murad Code and the PSVI survivor champions. Given this close relationship between the PSVI and UK leadership, this article has argued that without the UK sustaining its entrepreneurship through a commitment to international leadership, the allocation of resources, and a clear organisational platform, the PSVI's progress may begin to slow and become at risk of stagnating at a significant point in its development, particularly in the absence of other states adopting a leadership role and championing the PSVI moving forward.

There have in fact been calls for a return to high ministerial leadership to revitalise UK-led entrepreneurship on the PSVI. While commending Lord Ahmad for leading the UK's work on the PSVI, Anthony Mangnall MP proposed that 'responsibility for the PSVI must be restored to the Foreign Secretary' because 'top-level leadership is needed on this issue' (House of Commons, 2021). While Hague (2020) suggests that the UK is still able to adopt a leadership role on the PSVI but that it requires leadership 'at a very senior level within government' because it affects different areas and departments of government, and thus requires high-level ministerial leadership (Hague, 2020). Writing further, Hague (2021) suggested that the UK has the chance to demonstrate its leadership on the PSVI with support from the United States for example, but if the UK decides not to follow this path, then it may be a case of requesting the United States to take the lead because the prevention of sexual violence in conflict requires sustained international momentum. In November 2021, there were some initial signs of the UK's attempts to revitalise its leadership on the PSVI following the Foreign Secretary's launch of 'a major global campaign' on preventing sexual violence in conflict, which includes the UK hosting a global summit in 2022 ((FCDO, 2021)). This shows how the UK still remains positioned for international entreprenuership on the PSVI should it decide to enhance its institutional resources, support, and capacity for leadership in the coming years.

Having emerged, reached the tipping point, and navigated to the norm cascade, the UK demonstrated the significant role of state-led entrepreneurship in the rapid acceleration of a norm. However, since 2015 UK entrepreneurship has stagnated following a decline in domestic institutional support relative to the period between 2012 and 2014. The findings from the PSVI case show the challenges that state-led processes of norm entrepreneurship may encounter since domestic governments, ministerial positions, and institutional resources are liable to shift while the emergence, cascade, and internalisation of international norms are not necessarily fixed to a specific timeframe, but continue to cascade and progress as part of a linear lifecycle, or reverse cascade, decline, and disappear as part of a non-linear lifecycle (Beyer and Hofmann, 2011; Brown, 2020; Iommi, 2020; McKeown, 2009; Panke and Petersohn, 2011, 2016). While the PSVI is not at the point of a reverse cascade, regression, decline, or disappearance, this article shows the challenges still facing state-led norm entrepreneurship when this occurs over a sustained period of time involving changes in governments, ministers, and departmental structures.

This examination of the PSVI between 2012 and 2020 is therefore an important case study in showing how despite a norm reaching the tipping point and cascading – which suggests strong international endorsement for the PSVI – it has still largely relied on UK-led entrepreneurship, which since 2015 has stagnated and declined. The literature on the norm lifecycle suggests that while it is difficult to precisely identify a number, a tipping point and transition to the cascade stage generally requires 'one-third of the total

states in the system to adopt the norm' (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 901), but beyond this there is less certainty on the point at which a norm requires additional sponsors and strong advocates to prevent a norm's progress slowing and to guide it towards internalisation. The PSVI therefore shows the importance of sustaining state-led entrepreneurship even at the cascade stage when this platform is not yet shared by other equally positioned normative champions allocating similar levels of attention and resources to the PSVI.

Conclusion

This article argues that the PSVI reveals the limits of state-led norm entrepreneurship when a norm which originally benefitted from powerful entrepreneurship to the point of cascading has to be maintained by other equally positioned entrepreneurs and retain its institutional support to prevent its progress from slowing and potentially stagnating at a significant point in its normative evolution. The article shows how the PSVI emerged, reached the tipping point, and started the norm cascade at a considerable rate between 2012 and 2014 under the entrepreneurship of the UK. Yet, since 2015, there has been a stagnation and decline in institutional support and the allocation of resources, its organisational platform is less clear, and the role of Special Representative has shifted from the Foreign Secretary to a junior ministerial appointment. It has been argued that this places the PSVI's progress at risk of slowing and potentially stagnating as a result of these changes in the UK, which has remained the PSVI's primary state entrepreneur between 2012 and 2020. This article provides a novel contribution to research on norm entreprenuership and the linear and non-linear lifecycle of norms (Beyer and Hofmann, 2011; Brown, 2020; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Iommi, 2020; Lantis, 2016; McKeown, 2009; Panke and Petersohn, 2011, Panke and Petersohn, 2016) by drawing attention to the importance of the domestic institutional context required to sustain a norm even when it has navigated the tipping point and reached the cascade stage. This is due to the close association between the PSVI and its original entrepreneur of the UK, which has witnessed a gradual stagnation and decline in its contribution of resources and support for the PSVI in the post-2015 period. While the PSVI has not itself stagnated, regressed, declined, or disappeared on the international stage, the article has drawn attention to the importance of maintaining international leadership to prevent it stagnating or following a non-linear norm lifecycle.

This argument also makes an important empirical contribution to research on the remarkable development of the PSVI as a UK-led initiative, and the challenges it faces in the post-2015 period (Davies and True, 2017; ICAI, 2020; Kirby, 2015). It finds that the PSVI is a lesson for how state-led entrepreneurship can facilitate the rapid acceleration of a norm through access to a strong organisational platform, international venues, and senior ministerial leadership, but that this may also depend on an ever changing domestic institutional environment where the position of ministers, government priorities, and the allocation of resources may shift, which then has implications for sustaining state-led norm entrepreneurship.

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Note

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