

## **Abstract**

This doctoral thesis explores the ideational framework of British foreign and European policy in the era of New Labour governments (1997-2010). Drawing from social constructivism and the „linguistic turn“ in social sciences, and using discourse analysis as its primary tool, it analyses a set of major foreign and European policy speeches by prime ministers and foreign secretaries, and Labour Party general election manifestos, to reconstruct the ideational structure in which empirical British foreign policy was embedded. It identifies conceptual ideas about the nature and rules governing the international order, distribution of power in the international system, hierarchy of issues in contemporary international agenda, international identity and role of the United Kingdom, its key international relationships, its power resources, and interests and values shaping British foreign policy, as held by the leading government figures of the era. Established changes and transformations of these governing ideas are contextualised in the empirical development in the international arena. While confirming the pro-stability and self-reproduction bias of ideational structures, via their constitution of agency and organization of the actors‘ discursive practices, the thesis identifies six events which sparked systemic level changes in the ideational framework of British foreign policy during the New Labour era. It concludes by proposing a typology of factors enabling change in the foreign policy discourse of a serving government.