



Using Knowledge in Security Sector Reform (SSR) Policy: The Influence of Research on British- led SSR in Sierra Leone

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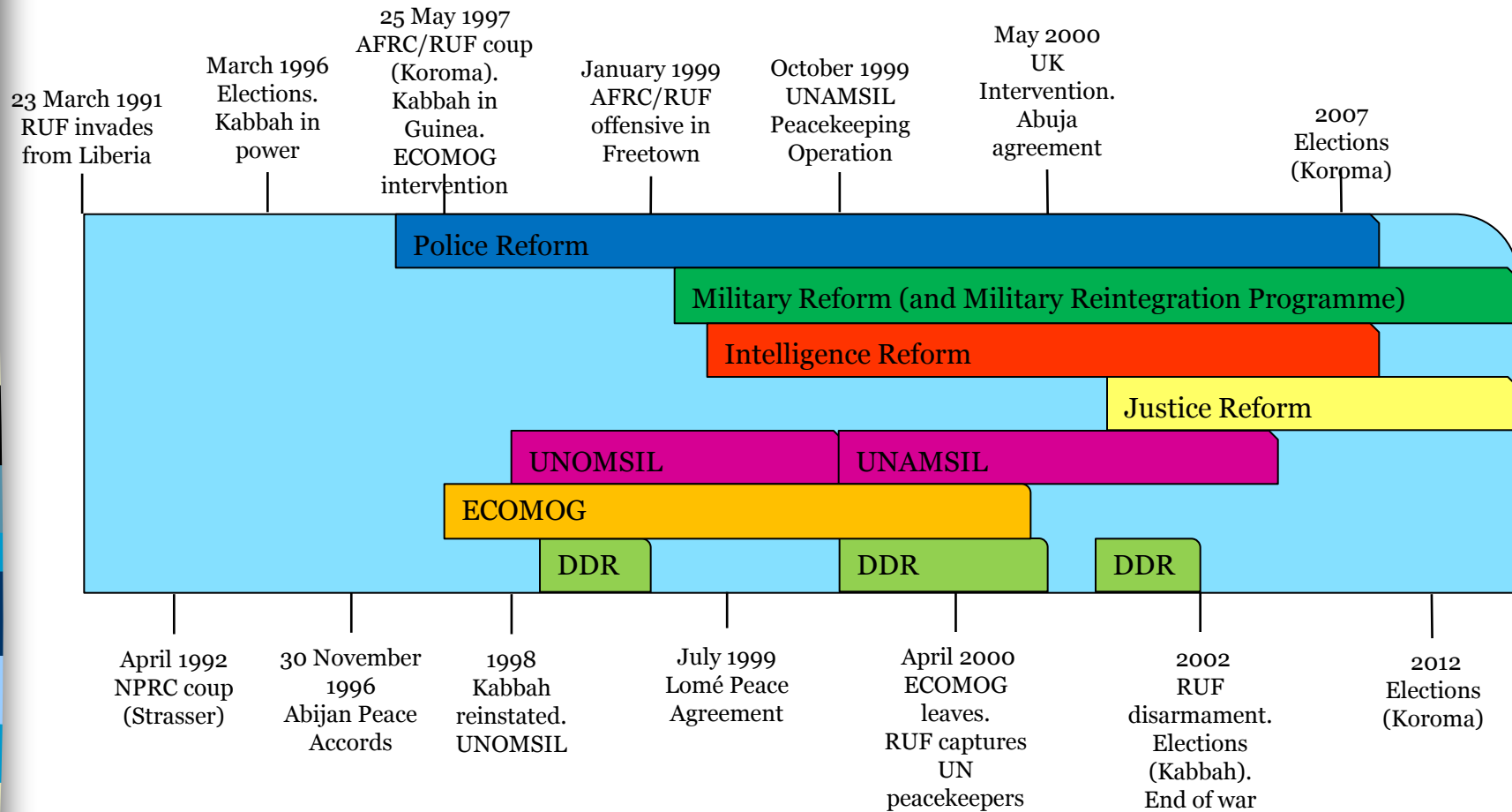
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Presentation Outline

- 1. British-led SSR policy in Sierra Leone
- 2. First Period: ‘fire-fighting’ solutions:
 - Context
 - Institutional pathways
 - Use of research
- 3. Second Period: post-conflict years
 - Context
 - Institutional pathways
 - Use of research
- 4. Lessons from Sierra Leone: what use of research in SSR policy?

1. British-led SSR policy in Sierra Leone





2. First Period: ‘fire-fighting’ solutions

- The context:

“On our arrival we found Freetown in complete disarray and still in a state of virtual war. The functions of state were practically collapsed, with ministries in confusion and officials lacking clear aims and direction ”

“Freetown was a devastated city. You had people living in the streets, it was awful: no water, no electricity, very little food, very difficult place to live ”

“I walked into an empty building and about three people in there, who hadn ’t really an idea of what they were doing. [...]. There must be about 5 people in there. Three of those I had to get out, because they were just political placements ”



2. First Period: 'fire-fighting' solutions

■ Institutional pathways:

- *SSR policy and research agenda starts in late 1990s with the Labour government*
- *Direct relationship with researchers (Dylan Hendrickson, Nicole Ball – not always used for research)*
- *Efforts toward a joined-up approach, with some difficulties (Different ethos and values; different chains of command; different location of IMATT)*
- *High amount of freedom from headquarters*
- *Importance of personal relationships for policy making*
- *Direct UK role in Sierra Leone policy making*



2. First Period: ‘fire-fighting’ solutions

■ Use of research:

- *No role for research in the decision to intervene*
- *Lack of a pre-planned strategy – events shaping policy on the ground more than research (i.e.: decision to maintain the paramilitary; size of the Army)*
- *Importance of personalities on the ground and of their experience, rather than of research*
- *Use of anthropological/historical books, or ad hoc, operational research, rather than academic research from universities (Bibliography Background Brief; IMATT Verification Team; CPDTF A4 sheets and commissioned research)*
- *Ideas and models coming from other experiences*
- *Barriers: no existence, no access, no technology*



3. Second Period: post-conflict years

- The context:

- *Lift of the Presidential State of Emergency in Spring 2002*
- *Increased security in the country (presence of more 17,000 peacekeepers until 2005)*
- *Reformed, reinvigorated, and new-born Sierra Leonean security institutions (MoD, Intelligence)*
- *Three peaceful Presidential elections, with change of ruling party*
- *Reorganisation of some SSR programmes in the country (JSDP staffed by locals and in Moyamba: more security and more capacity)*
- *Security falling among the priorities; very low Human Development Index*



3. Second Period: post-conflict years

- Institutional pathways:

- *Progressive institutionalisation of SSR policy and research (tri-departmental policy briefs and strategy; Stabilisation Unit; research centres and network hubs: GFN SSR, GSDRC; commissioned research; international centres)*
- *'Post-hoc rationalisation' of events on the ground*
- *DFID opening of the office in Freetown: problems in transition, even among programmes (division of police in JSDP and SILSEP, difficult passage from JSDP to AJSP)*
- *Three layers: HQs, country offices, contractors and subcontractors*
- *Advisory, mentoring, supporting role for the UK*
- *Collaboration with other donors in the country (UN, World Bank, European Commission)*



3. Second Period: post-conflict years

- Use of research:

- *Increased uptake and use of research (more time, access, availability)*
- *Examples of use of research: JS DP; ASJP; IMATT perception study; IMATT direct use of SSR book; ONS collaborations*
- *Formal and informal professional relationships with trusted researchers (Paul Jackson, Peter Albrecht, Richard Fanthorpe)*
- *Under-use of local researchers (Fourah Bay College; sometimes used as consultants, but mixed accounts)*



4. Lessons from Sierra Leone

What use of research in SSR policy?

- On the use of research in fragile environments:
 - *Context stability and institutional paths as two main variables determining, shaping, and modelling the influence of research into policy*
 - *Dynamic interactions between researchers and policy-makers*
 - *Increased number of channels for knowledge and research (Experts, research institutes, academic institutions at international and British level; Intermediaries: knowledge brokers, FCO analysts; Informal channels)*
 - *Use of research depending on a person's attitude*
 - *Not necessarily more importance to British-commissioned research*



4. Lessons from Sierra Leone

What use of research in SSR policy?

- On the use of research by different departments:

- *DFID:*

- Emphasis on evidence-based policy*

- Appetite for deeper, long-term research*

- More funding to commission research*

- *FCO:*

- Need for political knowledge of actors, interests, power balances in country*

- Interested in short-term political dynamics, rather than in long-term development trajectories*

- *MOD:*

- Use of short and operational pieces of research*

- Problems of turnover and holding rail*

- SSR discourse through military training and education*



4. Lessons from Sierra Leone

What use of research in SSR policy?

- On the barriers to the use of research:

- *Time:*

- No much time for researchers to carry out research (difficult access, expectations, short policy timeframe)*

- Lack of time for policy-makers under pressure to show quick results*

- Mismatch between research and policy timeframes*

- *Lack of access, availability, resources, funding, capacity, and materials*

- *Excess of choice*

- *Lack of understanding and interest for research “not sufficiently plugged into the realities of what people are facing on the ground”*



4. Lessons from Sierra Leone

What use of research in SSR policy?

- On the peculiarities of SSR research hindering its uptake into policy:
 - *Specific nature of the discipline:
very technical , difficult to have influential concepts*
 - *Lack of theoretical as well as empirical bases:
Rooted on liberal state building assumptions, failing to capture the peculiarities at micro-level*
 - *Conservative mind-sets of security actors; Sensitivity of the issues*
 - *Political and governance dimension of the discipline*
 - *Lack of clear definition (i.e.: justice and police actors)*
 - *No definition of success; no evidence of ‘what works’*



4. Lessons from Sierra Leone

What use of research in SSR policy?

- On policy-makers' use of research:
 - *Rarely direct influence of research on policy, but more often through osmosis and seepage of concepts*
 - *Justificatory, political use of research - defence mechanism?*
 - *Interest for quantitative data*
 - *Awareness of critical literature*
- On the existence of 'two communities':
 - *Perception of antagonism from research community*
 - *Research prescriptions not working in reality*
 - *Research interested in problems rather than solutions*
 - *Mixed views from researchers (some saying policy is not open to criticism, others emphasising collaboration)*



Thank you very much!