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Security Sector Reform: the role of epistemic communities in the UK

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Abstract

The UK has for the past decade been a leader in the field of Security Sector Reform. However little effort appears, to have been directed towards explaining UK's presence at the forefront of SSR, and how SSR emerged on the UK's development agenda. The paper hypothesizes that a network of experts has contributed to the advancement of SSR on the UK government's agenda. This argument is tested in an epistemological framework. Evidence is collected from interviews and documents produced by experts working on security sector governance and reform. Conclusions suggested that an epistemic community exists in the UK field of SSR and, whilst its existence has been greatly spurred by UK government policy, it is suggested that the potential of the community is not fully developed.

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[1] The content of this paper is derived from an MSc Development Management dissertation for DESTIN, London School of Economics and Political Science © Jennifer Sugden.

1 Introduction

Unrest generated by former East Timorese soldiers disbanded in early 2006 (BBC News, March 17) and the use of lethal weapons by Ethiopian police forces to disperse students during political demonstrations (Amnesty International, 2002) are recent reminders of how security actors may become a source of violence. The causes of such clashes and abuses by government security agencies are often attributable to unaccountable security institutions weakened by a lack of professionalism, limited capacity, or an underdeveloped institutional design. Within the past decade, policymakers and development agencies alike have been paying increasing attention to the importance of the security sector (Williams, 2002). This growing awareness has called for a novel approach to security sector governance.

Previously considered two distinct disciplines, security and development are increasingly interdependent fields of policy intervention. One of the manifestations of this recognition is the increasing involvement of donor governments and development practitioners in security sector reform (SSR), particularly in the United Kingdom (UK) (Smith, 2001: 15). Acknowledging the plethora of SSR definitions[2], this paper will refer to the reform process of security institutions and organisations with the objective of improving efficiency and democratic control[3].

In wider debate, attention has more recently been drawn to the relevance and implementation of SSR and difficulties surrounding the implementation (for example Chanaa, 2002; Williams, 2002; Peake and Scheye, 2005). Little effort appears, however, to have been directed towards explaining UK's presence at the forefront of SSR, and how SSR emerged on the UK's development agenda. Here, this emergence is examined and narrowed down to the UK level. A review of this examination steers our attention towards the existence of experts emanating from, for example, government bodies, academia, international organisations and NGOs. By exploring their interpretation of SSR, this paper seeks to understand the role of such experts in shaping and contributing to the SSR debate, specifically in the UK.

The paper hypothesizes that a network of experts has contributed to the advancement of SSR on the UK government's agenda. This argument is tested in an epistemological framework. Evidence is collected from interviews and documents produced by experts working on security sector governance and reform. Data are considered in light of the "epistemic community" concept as developed by Haas (1992). Conclusions suggested that an epistemic community exists in the UK field of SSR and, whilst its existence has been greatly spurred by UK government policy, it is suggested that the potential of the community is not fully developed.

[2] See for example Chuter (2006) for a comprehensive review.

[3] Adapted from DFID (2002: 7) and Hendrickson and Karkoszka (2002).

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2 Security Sector Reform: setting the scene

SSR has garnered attention from development practitioners and policymakers since the mid-1990s. A multitude of explanations have been put forward when elucidating this phenomenon. This section begins by tracing the overall evolution of the security-development discourse. Attention is then drawn to the UK and the role of experts in the development of SSR.

2.1 Evolution of approaches to security

The end of the Cold War is widely perceived in the literature as the crux of SSR (for example, Ball, 2001; Hendrickson, 2001; Hamill and von Tangen Page, 2006). As state armies were downsized and military expenditure declined (SIPRI, 2006), the role of the military was reduced and defence expenditures were placed under increasing scrutiny for transparency. As budget constraints turned into a development issue, development practitioners enjoyed new leverage in security issues by gaining more donor support.

Actors traditionally involved in security and the perceptions of security needs were also influenced by factors including globalisation and international trade (Rudolph, 2003: 7). Initially conceived as a "primary function of the state" (Rudolph, 2003: 4), security was mostly dealt with by the military (Avagyan and Hiscock, 2005: 12). With privatisation of security and inclusion of other non-state actors (Chanaa, 2002: 33), the state lost its primacy over the provision and management of security. The image of security has further been transformed by the increasing role of the development community, which changed the way of addressing security. From the late 1990s, SSR was conceptualised as a donor response to face the challenges encountered in post-conflict situations.

The evolution of security involved inter alia a shift of focus from the state to the individual (King and Murray, 2002: 588), which was confirmed by the endorsement of the UNDP's notion of "human security" (UNDP, 1994). Considered a fundamental right, human security has become increasingly intertwined with human development (Call, 2002: 102; Kaldor, 2004: 9-10; Stewart, 2004). The growing recognition of the connections between security, development, justice and democracy has led the international community to promote the adoption of a comprehensive approach (for example, Williams: 2002) sometimes referred to as the "holistic ethos" (Chanaa, 2002: 11). This holistic argument is undoubtedly the most forceful when justifying SSR and is, in essence, what characterises the novelty of SSR.

2.2 Defining Security Sector Reform

Appearing in the wake of post-Cold War security concerns, SSR is a comprehensive programme tackling a wide range of activities from governance issues to technical assistance Department for International Development (DFID), 2002: 18) with the objective of increasing accountability and transparency of security sector institutions. The

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intricacy of SSR is precisely due to the evolving concept of security and the dilemma of identifying which actors should legitimately be considered in the security sector. For DFID, the security sector comprises "all those responsible for protecting the state and communities within" (DFID, 2002: 7). This broad definition is often narrowed, yet implicitly, practitioners are aware that the term encompasses a larger set of institutions and organisations.

Debate on the content and structure of reform has led authors and practitioners to discuss the constituent elements of the term SSR, notably suggesting other terms. The OECD has chosen to use "security system reform" (Hendrickson, 2004), while some commentators refer to security sector "restructuring" (Williams, 2002: 145) or "transformation" (Smith, 2001: 16; Avagyan and Hiscock, 2005: 41). The innuendo behind these variations is that SSR is often considered too negative to be accepted by the target country and is therefore softened to gain support. If SSR is considered a neologism, the notion of restructuring security institutions and the involvement of external actors in the security sector are not new ideas. Chanaa reminds us that external assistance and involvement existed during colonisation, throughout the early twentieth century and during the Cold War (Chanaa, 2002: 14). The novelty of SSR lies in the justification for new actors to be involved in security-related activities.

2.3 Justifying Security Sector Reform

The prospect of reducing conflicts has presumably been the most significant argument for donor agencies engaging in SSR (for example DFID, 2002: 17). With the rise of "failed" or "collapsed" states and the second wave of democratisation in the 1980s, development practitioners have become increasingly interested in the security debate, moving beyond a reconstruction role towards a higher involvement in conflict prevention (Chanaa, 2002: 24). This engagement has materialized through the establishment of transitional administrations and the increasing number of peacekeeping and peace-building operations (Rees, 2002). With the mainstreaming of war and conflict in the development discourse (Duffield, 2001), new theories of conflicts have emerged. These different interpretations, such as Kaldor's novel approach distinguishing "new" from "old" wars (Kaldor, 1999) succeeded in revitalizing debates and bringing SSR to the fore, particularly in post-conflict countries.

Another facet that has been heavily capitalized on is the potential of SSR to reduce poverty. Extolled by donor agencies, particularly DFID, SSR has been heralded for minimising the negative impacts of insecurity on development and investment, thus reducing poverty (DFID, 2002: 8). Although SSR and security issues more generally do not appear in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is understood that development initiatives could be undermined by security threats, hence explaining why the linkages between security and poverty reduction are so frequently highlighted.

Other factors such as the institutional development aspect involved in SSR has inscribed itself in the proclivity of the 1990s of "getting the

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institutions right". Tinted by the Washington Consensus and the neo-liberal agenda, SSR has been known to promote good governance, democracy, transparency and the rule of law (Chanaa, 2002: 47). However, SSR is also considered to have become a reaction to failures of development aid (Smith, 2001), including structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) – the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditional loans. SSR has so far been presented as a benevolent way to deal with failed states, conflict and poverty. However, this review would be incomplete if it did not briefly address the less orthodox motivations behind SSR.

The political weight involved with SSR is colossal (for example Smith, 2001: 13). The prospect of obtaining North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) or European Union (EU) membership, for example, has been drawn on as a 'soft' condition to motivate new and potential members implementing SSR (Avagyan and Hiscock, 2005: 15). As with any other development issue, the extent to which donor activities are devoid of political motives is questionable. Without claiming SSR to be a vehicle of neo-imperialism, we can legitimately question for whom SSR is being designed, in what interest, and what criteria constitute operational success.

The SSR label also presents the inevitable risk of concealing obscure motives and attracting unrelated projects. It has been suggested that in some cases, there are financial and economic incentives behind SSR, determining where the reform efforts will be carried out. A report from SaferWorld observes less interest in funding SSR projects in Armenia than in neighbouring Georgia or Azerbaijan – hosts of strategic pipelines (Avagyan and Hiscock, 2005: 44). In addition, Smith reminds us that the "UK and US at the forefront of SSR are also leaders in the international arms trade" (Smith, 2001: 15). While arms trade is not explicitly discussed in strategic policy documents on SSR, the funding of weapons in developing countries is certainly linked to their capacity to mobilise funding. Although the correlation between SSR and financial motives remains difficult to verify, such linkages should be taken into consideration, especially considering SSR projects often affect the prospects of obtaining additional funds from donor agencies. Despite the existence of such motivations, scholars argue that the intentions of SSR are mostly laudable (for example, Germann, 2002).

2.4 Obstacles to Security Sector Reform

Due to the political implications of reform and the complex nature of the process (Nathan, 2004), numerous constraints hinder progression of the concept and its achievement on the ground. Practical reasons and ideological resistance render the implementation of SSR difficult. Opposition to the concept stems from various actors.

Military personnel and leaders of developing countries may be directly affected through change. Vested interests, corruption, lack of local ownership, loss of national sovereignty and rejection of Western models all contribute to resisting change (Avagyan and Hiscock, 2005: 43; Smith, 2001: 14-15). Regional tensions, internal political challenges, lack of

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political legitimacy and the existence of informal security actors further contribute (Chanaa, 2002). The perceptions of security institutions and their relationships with civilians are linked to the roles of traditions, ethnicities and cultures, which are crucial in determining which actors command authority (Luckham, 2003). In Chile, tradition and military ideology prevailed as the legacies of previous military regimes dominated security institutions, despite reform efforts (Fuentes, 2002). Donor agencies are well aware of these obstacles and have now resorted to systematically review the existing institutional arrangements to encourage ownership and partnership during the reform process (DFID, 2002).

In donor countries, operational challenges including the financial cost of reform (Smith, 2001: 14-15), lack of donor coordination and coherence, difficulties in evaluating SSR, and lack of capacity and expertise (Wulf, 2004) have constrained developments in SSR. The integration of development actors in the security debate has also led to disagreements due to conflicting agendas. For example, the reform of intelligence services remains a sensitive issue, and until recently overlooked by donor agencies (Wilson, 2005: 88). Concerns on the inter-relationship between security and development have been raised within government and academic circles, as well as by civil society organisations. A coalition of Catholic development organisations (CIDSE), expresses concern regarding the diversion of development funding to security issues, suggesting distortion of the security approach (CIDSE, 2006). Rejection of the SSR concept is a recurring challenge, and in most cases reflects a misunderstanding of the objectives of the concept.

2.5 Focus on the UK

The political and historical framework depicted above has provided a basis for explaining the emergence of SSR. These justifications could have been put forward equally by all donor countries: ceteris paribus, the UK's distinct involvement in SSR remains to be explained. An examination of the UK's political context of the late 1990s assists clarification as to whether particular factors predisposed the UK to become advanced in this particular field.

The Labour Party election victory in 1997 marked the start of a set of significant changes that transformed the country's approach to security and development. The then Minister for International Development, Clare Short, initiated an innovative approach to tackle security issues from a developmental perspective. An inspiring speech (Short, 1998), together with the separation of DFID from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) (Brozska, 2003: 7) acted as catalysts in broaching the notion of development and security as interdependent policy issues. This also broadened the discussions on security by departing from the traditional perspective of military budget and spending ratios. Even the Strategic Defence Review mentioned "development levers" as one of a set of tools policymakers should utilise in the joint policy approach to security (Ministry of Defence (MoD), 1998: 18). These novel ideas were confirmed by the emergence of several policies on this issue (DFID, 1999, 2000, 2002).

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Shifting ideology was accompanied by organisational change. New entities emerged reflecting the priority of security and conflict prevention. Cross-departmental initiatives by the MoD, the FCO and DFID initiated the Defence Advisory Team (DAT – now the Security Sector Development Advisory Team (SSDAT), which became an enabling partner of the African Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP) and the Global Conflict Prevention Pool (GCPP) in 2001 (FCO, 2006). Utilising "joined-up" government (Smith, 2001: 15), the UK's ambition is to forge a Whitehall consensus based on the combination and sharing of expertise in the fields of security, diplomacy, and development. This strategy corresponds to the holistic approach advocated for SSR.

2.6 Role of experts in Security Sector Reform

Through offering advice, and shaping the development-security discourse, expert-based groups engaged in SSR have multiplied within the last decade. Growing recognition of their importance has been confirmed through extensive consultation and the formalisation of their role. This has been illustrated in the OECD DAC's draft Implementation Framework on Security System Reform, which mentions the inclusion of a "Multidisciplinary Team of Independent Experts", which will potentially be integrated in the generic policy process in review panels, and at the mapping and analysis level (Chalmers et al., 2005: 29, 36).

Efforts to officialise networks of experts have been illustrated by the creation of the Global Facilitation Network on SSR (GFN-SSR) in the UK. Funded by DFID, the network was previously hosted by Cranfield University and is now being managed by the University of Birmingham. The objective of the network is to "provide knowledge management and network facilitation services to an international network of SSR practitioners" (FCO, 2006).

The establishment of a majority of these organisations and networks coincides with the UK's rising interest in SSR; hence we can postulate a causal mechanism between the influence of these groups and the UK's involvement in SSR. Our objective is to explore the significance of experts in moulding SSR in the UK. This is accomplished by exploring the shared understanding of these experts and whether epistemic influence can be applied to the advent of SSR. In doing so, we seek to contribute to the understanding of the evolution of SSR. The next section exposes the mechanisms of the epistemic community and justifications for choosing this theory.

3 Epistemic Community: a theoretical framework

The application of a conceptual framework provides a different perspective from which to scrutinize the SSR debate. The role of epistemic communities is employed as a theoretical framework within which we explore the emergence and evolution of SSR in the UK. The logic of this

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application is based on the cognitive perspective of the concept, which assumes that consensual knowledge can influence policies. As policy changes in SSR do not appear to have been the result of aggressive lobbying, the theory on epistemic communities was selected for it concurs with a more subtle form of influence existing in this field.

3.1 Defining Epistemic Communities

As an integral part of epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, epistemic communities are a knowledge-based explanation of how decision-makers are influenced by "knowledgeable" experts (Hasenclever, et al. 1997). The international relations literature has heavily drawn on this rationale when explaining the creation and use of knowledge in policy contexts. After Peter Haas reintroduced[4] the concept of epistemic communities in the context of environmental debates (Haas, 1990), the term became normalised as:

"a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area. Although an epistemic community may consist of professionals from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, they have a shared set of normative and principled beliefs (…), shared causal beliefs (…), shared notions of validity (…), and a common policy enterprise (…)." (Haas 1992: 3)

Shared knowledge empowers an epistemic community to facilitate and influence policy decisions via the provision of information and advice. Foucault reminds us of the causal relationship knowledge has on power and vice versa (Foucault, 1980: 52). Application of his analysis to the epistemic community concept emphasises the importance of politics behind knowledge. As policies are crafted according to knowledge flows wielded by the network, the intensity of the pressure depends on the power, resources and objectives of the actors involved.

Another important factor is the degree of uncertainty. In a crisis situation or new policy arena where uncertainty is high, policymakers frequently seek information and advice from other sources (Haas, 1992: 4). They rely on epistemic communities either voluntarily when soliciting experts to supply technical knowledge, or unwillingly when subjected to the epistemic community's persistence. The relationship between an epistemic community and a policymaker is complex as it operates on multiple levels, with shared understanding affecting both the policymaker's thought processes and actions.

[4] "Episteme" and "epistemic community" were previously introduced by authors such as Holzner (1968), Foucault (1970) and Ruggie (1972).

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3.2 Advantages of the Epistemic Community Concept

The strength of the Haas approach lies in the emphasis on knowledge and involvement of a dynamic learning process. Policy direction will oscillate in line with the progression of the community's research, findings, and evolution of ideas. By involving experts from diverse disciplines, the concept of epistemic communities also offers the advantage of going beyond the traditional scope of state actors when explaining problem solving. Epistemic communities provide a comprehensive understanding of how policies emerge and how they are modified over time. This avoids reducing policies to a narrow interpretation limited to policymakers' decisions.

Another advantage of the concept lies in the scope of its application. Although initially conceived to explain global environmental issues (Haas, 1990), the theory can be equally applied at the international and domestic level. Although a useful conceptual tool, universal applicability is imperfect. An understanding of the limitations presented by the concept further improves our use of the tool.

3.3 Limitations and Criticisms of the Epistemic Community Concept

The Haas concept of epistemic communities raises several concerns. While he claims that expertise is a key component uniting experts of a community (Haas 1992: 3), this interpretation overlooks the definition of expertise and the way expertise is acquired. Haas and Levy recognize that "[w]hile epistemic communities provide consensual knowledge, they do not necessarily generate truth" (Haas and Levy, 1993: 23). Further criticisms relate to the composition of the community. Who are the experts? What are the links between the different experts? As community membership remains unclear, it is difficult to identify included (and thus excluded) experts (Haas, 1992: concluding comments).
In addition, unequal dynamics and differences among members can influence the direction of the community. The presence of a dominant member may present a threat. The consensual aspect of the concept also propounds an impression of homogeneity within the community. The magnitude of a community's influence is also challenging to measure. There is a risk of exaggerating the power and authority of the "knowledgeable experts" and of overestimating their capacity to influence policy changes. For example, the ozone regime represents a case in point (Litfin, 1994:184-186). The principle weakness of the concept lies in its difficulty to establish a causal link between cognitive influence and actual policy change.

Despite these limitations, epistemic communities should not hastily be discredited. The concept remains important in understanding policy change.

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4 Research Findings

To investigate the causal effects between the existence of an epistemic community and the way security sector governance has been shaped during the last decade, interviews were conducted with academics and practitioners active in the field of SSR. The objective was to investigate the role of experts in the development of SSR by focusing on their perceptions and understanding of the concept. The findings are presented according to a set of criteria adapted from the Haas definition (Haas, 1992), where the fulfilment of certain criteria allows recognition of the existence of an epistemic community. The criteria are as follows: (a) shared understanding of the principles underlying the SSR concept; (b) common understanding of the benefits, drawbacks and mechanisms of SSR; (c) elements of uncertainty; and (d) networking and knowledge-sharing amongst experts, practitioners and policymakers.

4.1 (a) A shared understanding of the principles underlying the SSR concept

Interviews revealed the existence of a small group of experts existing in academic centres or think-tanks, international organisations, governmental advocacy groups, and to a lesser extent NGOs. Although these actors advance in different spheres of activity, the interviews demonstrated that they were bound by a common belief system and a consensual knowledge of SSR, based on the recognition that security and development are inter-related. Experts agreed on the importance of the reform programme and on the historical-political events that led to the emergence of SSR, reaffirming literary contributions. An acceptance of the principles and justifications of SSR has forged a consensus among the various experts interviewed.

The holistic approach to SSR is perceived as a key principle. Isolated and targeted projects – such as military training – have not been successful. In addition, the introduction of a developmental approach to security issues has been considered by experts from both developmental and non-developmental backgrounds to be more beneficial and to provide sustainable changes. Such considerations are reflected in the “joined-up” system promoted by the tri-departmental efforts of the MoD, DFID and the FCO in the UK. This coordinated programme is strongly advocated, as it corresponds to the holistic principle of SSR. Experts have attributed the consensual aspect of SSR to DFID’s efforts in mainstreaming the concept, such as with the “Mainstreaming and International Influencing” component of the UK Government’s SSR Strategy. The OECD DAC’s Guidelines on SSR (OECD, 2005) have also been crucial in forging a common understanding.

Minor principles of SSR incorporating the importance of contextual considerations and the political nature of the process have benefited from a shared understanding. The importance of considering the context within which the reform inscribes itself is a recurrent theme both in interviews and the literature (Bryden, et al., 2005). It has been alluded to repeatedly with an emphasis on the role of culture and the risks of implementing a

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blueprint approach. It was suggested by one expert that there exists a "Western construct which sees defence only in terms of external security based on their experience in the West", which hinders the progress of SSR. Most of the interviewees were aware of the contextual responsibilities of security institutions and the risks involved in applying ready made donor solutions to beneficiary countries.

Political motivations of donor involvement in SSR were openly exposed during the interviews, for example the case of Sierra Leone was frequently narrated, sometimes explicitly due to its colonial heritage. Other reasons for drawing on this example may include the recent implementation of SSR activities such as the Security Sector Review (OECD, 2005: 5; Wilson, 2005). Despite this recognition, some interviewees reverted to an apolitical developmental perspective: "The drawback of the developmental approach to SSR is that development work gets politicised. The (…) wants to keep it as a developmental issue. It doesn't want SSR to be hijacked as a political issue."

4.2 (b) A common understanding of the benefits, drawbacks and mechanisms of SSR

Interviewees agreed that a fertile debate has emerged from the expertise provided by a wide range of experts. The variety of disciplines covered by SSR also suggests the existence of conflicting interests and approaches, as well as different technical languages amongst actors, which can hinder the process. Elements interviewees identified as being novel to SSR included the multi-disciplinary perspective on security and the involvement of multilateral donors in contrast to traditional bilateral organisations. Some experts cited documents such as the World Bank's "Voices of the Poor" report (Narayan et al., 2000) and Mary Anderson's "Do no harm" (Anderson, 1999), which they believed had a huge impact on the shift of ideology. However the most significant element, considered by some as the "core value of SSR", was the new focus on governance.

This emphasis was, however, not shared by all experts: SSR was alternatively referred to as a governance or a conflict issue. Although most scholars would argue that SSR is not specific to post-conflict or post-authoritarian countries (Call, 2002: 106; Chanaa, 2002: 11), the concept remains very much entrenched in a conflict prevention and peace-building framework. SSR programmes are only recently being considered in established democracies or countries that have not recently been involved in a conflict. The debate on whether SSR is a governance or a post-conflict issue appears to be somewhat superficial. Other debates have evolved around SSR terminology and the actors involved. Some experts claimed the term was "devoid of meaning" and "perverted". In general, however, interviewees viewed these differences as an issue of semantics and less as an obstacle.

Identified obstacles included Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligibility limits, resistance to change, negative perceptions of the military, political risks, difficulties of evaluation and monitoring, limitations of the organisations' mandates and lack of flexible budget lines. It was also

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accepted that the holistic approach presents added complexity, as the scope of the reform programme is wider. While most experts advocated the use of "entry-points" (Chalmers et al., 2005), there was a holistic implication behind this piecemeal approach. Although the debate is still considered as young, different generations of SSR have already been identified (Edmunds, 2002: 7). Two interviews suggest that SSR is entering a third phase, focusing on the operational level of SSR including implementation, evaluation and monitoring activities. The objective here is to translate the holistic approach into practice, whereas the first two phases concentrated on laying foundations and developing concepts.

There is an overwhelming agreement that the UK is a leader in the field of SSR. The UK is praised for its holistic and coordinated strategic approach. DFID in particular is described as the "Godfather of SSR", "a trailblazer in conflict and security issues" and in "a league of its own". DFID has reputedly influenced the OECD DAC and UNDP on the promotion of SSR and strong linkages exist amongst these organisations. It is worth noting that DFID funds the programmes and salaries of UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR). In addition, an overlap of experts exists amongst organisations: for example, the Senior SSR Advisor for DFID is currently the Chair of the OECD-DAC's Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation Network. Other countries involved in SSR, such as Canada and the Netherlands, have benefited from the expertise of the UK. The knowledge-sharing approach to SSR is characteristic of epistemic communities.

The interviewees noted the UK's shift in approach to security from military to developmental. This institutional change has been illustrated by the name alterations of key organisations and departments. For example, the UK's DAT revised its name to the Security Sector Development Advisory Team (SSDAT). This re-branding reflects the change of approach from military-defence to developmental. In addition, the Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department (CHAD) of DFID is now entitled the Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department (CHASE), epitomizing the inclusion of security in development.

4.3 (c) The existence of elements of uncertainty

Elements of uncertainty still appear in the field of SSR. Interviewees frequently referred to uncertainty underlying the concept of SSR. Most policy prescriptions are tentative and rely on cognitive explanations, rather than on empirically tested material. Some referred to a "fear of the unknown", which may explain why SSR is perceived as a complex, difficult and even mysterious issue. Interviewees claimed that SSR was a commonly misunderstood concept, possibly attributable to the use of development language in the security realm and vice-versa. Understanding of SSR is limited both in the development and the security fields. Development practitioners have difficulties delimiting what the legitimate areas for development engagement are. In response to this confusion, some experts claimed that SSR was just like any other sector and that the challenges were similar to other development issues.

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4.4 (d) Networking and knowledge-sharing amongst experts, practitioners and policymakers

A great number of conferences on SSR have been organised over the last ten years[5]. These have brought together specialists from various disciplines. A plethora of journals addressing security and development (including this one) have also emerged over recent years. Collaborations have flourished amongst different group of experts, for example between SaferWorld and the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (Chalmers, 2000). International organisations and agencies such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the EU, and NATO are becoming increasingly involved in SSR as they find ways to approach the subject (for example ISIS, 2006). Within DFID's organisational structure, departments are merging to reflect new visions of SSR. Experts interviewed from international organisations recognised that writings of influential experts had influenced their work, for example "Nicole Ball's report for SaferWorld spurred DFID to engage in SSR."

The experts interviewed are enthusiastic about the direction SSR is taking. The existing debates are considered healthy and the agenda dynamic. The positive momentum of the international community was identified by some experts as having contributed to the progress of SSR, echoing Smith's realization that a commitment to SSR increases the availability of both financial and intellectual resources (Smith, 2001: 16). Some concerns were raised, however, on the small number of experts involved.

Despite their diminutive headcount, experts do not appear isolated from one another. To the contrary, numerous connections exist amongst the experts and the organisations they represent. The GFN-SSR is a prime example of networking and knowledge-sharing, as it is responsible for developing the international community of SSR experts and diffusing information amongst its members. Progressively, it is growing to include groups from across the Southern hemisphere. This came with enormous benefit, including increasing the likelihood to providing local security solutions to local problems and giving the local people a voice.

Understanding that security and development are interlinked presents in itself the innovative worldview uniting the members of this community. Although secondary aspects are somewhat contested, there is a general consensus on the core arguments founding SSR. Data collected from the interviews confirms the existence of an epistemic community according to the criteria listed above.

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[5] For example: "Civil-Military and Security Sector Reform", November 16, 2000, DCAF, Geneva; "New Directions in Security Sector Reform", November 3-4, 2005, IDRC Headquarters, Ottawa; "Developing a Security Sector Reform Concept for the United Nations", July 7, 2006, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bratislava; "Promoting Security Sector Reform in the Horn of Africa", July 13-14, 2006, Centre for Policy Research and Dialogue (CPRD), Addis Ababa; "Security Sector Reform in the Arab World", July 7-8, 2006, Beirut.

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5 Discussion

5.1 Purpose of the theoretical framework

The Haas approach to policy change contributes to the understanding of SSR by exposing the relations between government bodies, international organisations, academia and NGOs. It has confirmed the existence of an epistemic community and its prevalence in the field of security sector governance. The theoretical framework highlights the importance of experts and their role in forging an environment conducive to the acceptance and endorsement of SSR.

5.2 Credibility of the Epistemic Community

The credibility bestowed to an epistemic community lies in the experts' knowledge, considered as the foundation of the community's existence (Haas, 1992). In our case, the value of knowledge can legitimately be questioned, as the community comprises mainly of civilian experts dealing with security issues. The inadequacy of their expertise with the subject addressed and their lack of technical knowledge may appear problematic at first (Edmunds, 2002: 12). However, the cross-sectoral dimension of SSR confirms that this field requires a diverse set of experts complementing each other (Germann, 2002). Data collected from interviews demonstrates that the influence of governance experts, academics, and security specialists is highly beneficial, as the diversity of backgrounds enriches the debate. The composition of the community is therefore a positive factor in the evolution of the SSR concept.

The increasing involvement of actors from developing countries is also buttressing the legitimacy of the community. Networks such as the GFN-facilitated African Security Sector Network are slowly gaining importance within the community (SSN, 2006) and beneficiaries are increasingly participating in the decision process. Moreover, donors are beginning to recognize the benefits in South-South collaboration, and linking up these networks across the Southern Hemisphere in order to promote the sharing of experiences. The development of Kosovo's "Core Consultative Group" is a good example of a local solution, whereby a "group of political parties, representatives of ethnic and religious communities, business groups, media, and women's groups" participate in the Internal Security Sector Review (UNDP, 2006: 1). Such examples of cooperation further confirm the community's credibility, as they are a sign of acknowledgement on behalf of beneficiaries and local actors.

5.3 Influence of the Epistemic Community

The epistemic community has been influential in bringing security and development into the same policy arena and in fostering a common understanding of SSR. By providing knowledge and expertise, experts have encouraged debates at the conceptual level (for example, Ball, 2001;

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Hendrickson, 2001). The developmental background of the epistemic community has also provided added value to policy orientation, offering a holistic approach to security sector governance. It has introduced development principles in the discourse such as local ownership, participation and consultation. As the debate is maturing, experts and organisations are acknowledging the theoretical level of their analyses and are shifting their focus towards practical considerations of SSR. OECD DAC's draft Implementation Framework is the most obvious manifestation of these efforts (Chalmers et al., 2005: 29, 36). The community's influence on the intellectual foundations of SSR has been noticeable, however it would be an overstatement to claim that the consensus among experts and their shared understanding were indispensable in the emergence of SSR policy.

The interconnectedness of the epistemic community with the UK government directs our attention to the role of DFID in driving SSR policies. Several examples demonstrate that DFID was instrumental in creating and funding institutions to address security, development and justice-related issues. The foundation of the Conflict, Security and Development Group of King's College is an illustration of this engagement with academia, confirming the crucial role DFID played in nurturing the community. The UK government's involvement with non-state actors may be attributable to both capacity and strategic reasons. The technical expertise and resources within the relevant government departments are assumed to have been insufficient to drive the agenda alone[6]. For this reason, DFID outsourced research activities to independent experts, academic circles and NGOs. By sustaining a network of experts, DFID gained buy-in from actors who supported their vision of SSR, thus encouraging organisations to take part in the policy thrust and become active partners.

The convoluted relationship between governmental actors and non-governmental experts has rendered it challenging to identify the instigators of SSR policy change. These problems have been accentuated with the existing overlap between policymakers, academics, practitioners, and other analysts[7]. We can determine from our research that an epistemic community emerged under the auspices of DFID's influence. And conversely, that DFID's stand on SSR could not have been attained without the impulse of external organisations and experts. This two-way relationship is comparable to a "push-pull effect", where both parties gain and thrive from each other. The assumption behind this relationship is that if either actor deviates, this may cause the downfall of the other or of both.

5.4 Sustainability of the Epistemic Community

This assumption is precisely what causes the weakness of the epistemic community on SSR. Despite the experts' strong belief in SSR principles,

[6] This assumption is supported by information collected from the interviews.

[7] The interviews highlighted several cases where experts were active in different organisations at the same time.

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internal and external factors to the community point to the uncertainty of the network's sustainability. The knowledge-based nature of the network may threaten the community's existence, due to the small size of the community and the potential turnover of experts.

Another factor to consider is the community's relation to policymakers. A change of priorities or of government could affect the existence of the community and the overall debate. The risk of new political priorities can be demonstrated with the rise of new forms of terrorism over the last fifteen years. Contrary to expectations, the rising concern for insecurity and terrorism did not contribute to the advancement of SSR. On the contrary, data collected from interviews suggests that the negative ramifications may even have caused a relapse in the recently espoused developmental scope. As the debate reverts to more traditional approaches to security, the evolution of SSR may be jeopardized remaining developmental only at the discourse level.

6 Conclusion

The paradigm shift integrating security in the development discourse in the mid-1990s has triggered remarkably disparate reactions from donors. The UK has surfaced as one the most involved donors in terms of policies and project implementation particularly in the promotion of SSR. This paper has sought to understand why the UK has been at the forefront of SSR and how SSR emerged on the development agenda in the UK. The conceptual framework based on the Haas concept of epistemic communities has provided insight on the role of experts, demonstrating their contribution to the promotion of SSR. Despite this positive impact, the research also concluded that the influence of the epistemic community on SSR has been limited. Guided by the UK's government bodies – in particular DFID – the network is now at a stage where it needs to reinforce its capacity to better address the next challenges.

Future research and activities should be directed towards strengthening the community. Currently, several departments and specific projects are under the aegis of DFID and other UK government bodies. These connections have been vital in developing the community and in fostering collaboration amongst the members. At a mature stage of SSR development, the community has reached a capacity where it must consider expanding its reach and reduce financial dependency. As the resources of epistemic communities change over time, more attention should be paid to the institutionalisation of SSR to avoid the risk of being sidelined by other priorities.

This would entail reinforcing institutions that are engaged in security issues, as well as incorporating those which are not yet directly involved. Initiatives could involve: creating more opportunities for dialogue between think-tanks, research centres and NGOs; raising awareness of the general public on the objectives and mechanisms of SSR; creating new academic programmes reflecting the importance of merging security and development; building the capacity of local networks; and securing funding for this wide range of potential activities.

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Monitoring future events will also provide interesting insights on the direction SSR is taking: for example, the OECD DAC's forthcoming "Implementation Framework" on SSR. The future Presidency of Slovakia at the Security Council in 2007 should also cast greater light on SSR. It will be interesting to see how G8 members will react to such events.

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