

Legitimizing Operation Palliser After the Collapse of the Lomé Accord

**Military intervention in an Era of Scrutinizing
International Involvement**

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This thesis seeks to answer how the British government has legitimized its involvement in the civil war of Sierra Leone. It does so by carrying out a framing-analysis on the period March 1999 to July 2000. This period knows varying levels of involvement, starting with merely pushing for a peace agreement and ending with a full military intervention. International involvement needs to be justified towards the domestic public as well as the international community, in order to gain the needed support. The adopted method consists of analysing the created narrative by British officials, using the three core-types of framing as a methodological lens. The analysis is divided into two parts, the period leading up to the peace agreement and the period after its implementation and subsequent collapse. The analytical results show that the British government has engaged in actively reshaping the narrative in order to legitimize their interference in the Sierra Leonean conflict.

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Introduction

The civil war in Sierra Leone lasted from 1991 until 2000, when it was officially ended with a military intervention led by Britain. Several attempts at peace mongering had failed before, with the Lomé agreement, a year prior to the British intervention, being the most outstanding. The Lomé Peace Accord demanded an immediate ceasefire between the government of Sierra Leone and the insurgency Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and was signed by both parties. International involvement in the conflict had been rare for the first years of the conflict, but the international community was highly supportive of, and even pushed for, the signing of the Lomé agreement. The nature of the agreement, however, was in retrospect a prediction for the atrocious events that took place in Freetown in early May 2000 with the rebels taking over the capital city.

The Lomé agreement not only called for disarmament and demobilisation of the RUF, it also granted a blanket amnesty to those who committed war crimes, promised government positions to former rebels and appointed the RUF leader Foday Sankoh to Vice President and Chairman of the Board of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development (CMRRD).¹ This not only meant that the RUF was transformed into a legitimate political actor, but also that former insurgency leader Sankoh gained full responsibility and control over the country's national resources. With this power-sharing agreement in place, the RUF had to follow the process of disarmament and demobilisation, monitored by a UN observation group.

However, with Sankoh able to maintain his position, as he was in control of much of the wealth, and the UN monitoring group lacking in capacity, the RUF soon broke the agreement.² In May 2000 the RUF began to seize and take hostage of UN personnel and

¹ Andrew M. Dorman, *Blair's successful war: British military intervention in Sierra Leone* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009) 62-63

² Andrew M. Dorman, *Blair's successful war: British military intervention in Sierra Leone* (2009) 62-63

gradually gained territorial control. After an emergency meeting of the Security Council, they called “upon all States in a position to do so to assist the Mission in this regard”.³ This task eventually fell on the British, unilaterally leading Operation Palliser into Sierra Leone to stop the attacks of the RUF and bring an end to the conflict.

Several scholars have shed light on the reasons behind the decision of the British government to intervene militarily in the conflict. A hiatus is visible in the different sets of explanations, which asks for clarification of how these differences came into being. Three possible explanations were posed by Andrew Dorman, Paul Williams and Pat Gibbons & Brigitte Piquard.

Andrew Dorman, Professor of International Security, deemed the intervention “ironic”, because of the shattered Lomé Agreement.⁴ Dorman stated that, “it was unlikely that any government, particularly the UK, would be prepared to fund the use of a military company to supplement the Sierra Leone Army [...] Britain as the former colonial power, was not interested in participating in any conflict”.⁵ The explanation of Dorman as to why the British decided to intervene lies within the pressure of the international community.

At the emergency meeting called by the UN Security Council at May 4, the severity of the threats posed by the RUF was discussed. Dorman explains that Secretary General Kofi Anan, together with the French and US ambassadors, felt that Britain as the former colonial power had final responsibility.⁶ It was made clear that in their eyes Sierra Leone was a British problem, and should thus be solved by them accordingly. Responding via UN, was no longer an option.⁷ This explanation would mean that the decision was not entirely voluntarily on the part of the British.

Associate Professor of International Affairs Paul D. Williams gives another insight as to why the British government was militarily involved in the Sierra Leone conflict. He agrees with Dorman on two points: the main catalyst for the intervention was the ‘panic-stricken’ UN rapport from May 4, and the intervention came as a surprise.⁸ What he disagrees on, however, is the motive behind the decision. Williams gives an understanding behind it in a combination of five imperatives;

³ Andrew M. Dorman (2009) 72

⁴ Andrew M. Dorman, *Blair’s successful war: British military intervention in Sierra Leone* (2009) 33

⁵ Andrew M. Dorman (2009) 64

⁶ *Ibidem* 72-73

⁷ *Ibidem* 72-73

⁸ Paul Williams ‘Fighting for Freetown: British Military Intervention in Sierra Leone’, *Contemporary Security Policy* 22:3 (2001) 153

*a concern to protect British citizens; the humanitarian impulse to 'do something' as Sierra Leone teetered on the brink of a crisis that could be averted by the use or threat of military force; the defence of democracy; the need to live up to the commitment it made about the 'ethical dimension' of foreign policy; and the perception that the future credibility of UN peacekeeping operations was at stake, particularly in Africa.*⁹

The first four indicate that the decision came from within the British government more so than it was being forced upon them. Except from the first and the last imperative, the other three are in line with the humanitarian and ethical aspect of foreign policy, which was supposed to be the guideline for international involvement. The fifth imperative, the credibility of the UN, is not necessarily humanitarian or ethical, but also does not mean that the UN placed responsibility on Britain as Dorman argued.

Pat Gibbons and Brigitte Piquard, both from the field of humanitarian action and conflict resolution, stretch the argument made by Williams even further. They claim that the reasons to intervene are hidden behind the moral grounds. Britain may have had geostrategic interests in Sierra Leone or intervened as a public relations exercise, but justified it with moral and ethical reasons. This way of legitimizing, Gibbons and Piquard state, is necessary because the government needs public support, in the territory of intervention as well as domestic support.¹⁰ They deem the moral justifications “easy propaganda tools”.¹¹

These three sets of explanations give different insights in the reason behind the decision to set Operation Palliser in motion. The differences might lie within the justification of their actions given by the actors involved in the conflict resolution. The given motives by the authors are derived from these justifications, portrayed by different actors with different interests. The process of strategically communicating behaviour to the public is called framing, which is a commonly used method to legitimize actions and can be used strategically to authorize and justify specific behaviour.¹² Carefully analysing these processes of framing, helps to separate authentic motives from propaganda.

⁹ Paul Williams 'Fighting for Freetown: British Military Intervention in Sierra Leone' (2001) 155

¹⁰ Pat Gibbons, P. & Brigitte Piquard. (Eds.) *Working in Conflict – Working on Conflict: Humanitarian Dilemmas and Challenges* (Bilbao, University of Deusto, 2006) 75

¹¹ Pat Gibbons, P. & Brigitte Piquard. (Eds.) *Working in Conflict – Working on Conflict: Humanitarian Dilemmas and Challenges* 75

¹² Autessere, 2012; Snow and Byrd, 2007; Joachim, 2003

The question which then rises, is how the British government itself legitimized its actions, which can possibly elucidate the disparate explanations. Was the intervention in fact portrayed as an ethical, humanitarian or moral issue as Williams, Gibbons and Piquard argue? Or does the influence of the international community play a key role in the way it was being framed? These questions are important as they contribute to a better understanding of how the British government engaged in public relations to gain support for their decision, instead of merely focusing on the issues and events that took place before the intervention.

Public relations (PR), and in this case political public relations (PPR), “performs a public service by bringing issues to the public’s attention [...] the main goal is the use of media outlets to communicate specific political *views, solutions and interpretations* of issues in the hope of garnering public support for political policies.”¹³ Public relations not only functions as a provider of information supply, but also as a means of persuading the public to support specific causes and issues. The different explanations as to why the British government intervened, might indicate that there was an inconsistency in how the military intervention was being justified. It could also mean that an existing frame impeded the ‘new’ narrative. The Lomé Accord was part of the existing frame of the Sierra Leonean conflict resolution in 1999.

The Lomé Accord was drawn with wide international support and a general consensus that turning the RUF into a legitimate political actor was essentially the only option for cessation of the conflict. This presumably means that through PPR, a narrative was constructed which determined how the public took notion of the conflict resolution. Peace could only be created through negotiations, military action was not a viable option in this narrative.¹⁴ In order to legitimize the decision to intervene, a de-legitimization of the existing narrative was imperative. It thus “demanded comprehensive efforts to construct its legitimacy”.¹⁵

The three sets of explanations, the UN forcing responsibility on the British, the humanitarian approach and the geostrategic explanation, do not attest to how the British government did in fact legitimize their actions after the rapid decision to deploy troops to

¹³ Romy Froehlich & Burkhard Rüdinger. ‘Framing Political Public Relations: Measuring Success of Political Communication Strategies in Germany’, *Public Relations Review* 32:1 (2006) 18-19

¹⁴ Andrew M. Dorman (2009) 73-74

¹⁵Christiane Eilders & Albrecht Lüter ‘Research Note: Germany at War. Competing Framing Strategies in German Public Discourse’, *European Journal of Communication* 15:3 (2000) 415

Sierra Leone. The operation did not include an evacuation plan and at the time there was another ongoing conflict in the Balkans where the British had to focus on.¹⁶ With the British troops also deployed in the FRY, it would be challenging to convince the domestic public that the British troops should become involved in another “just war”.¹⁷

In order to establish how the British government engaged in public relations to justify and legitimize the decision to militarily intervene in Sierra Leone, a frame-analysis will be conducted. The framing concept is increasingly used in public relations research and is suitable to apply on political communication strategies.¹⁸ There is, however, not yet a consisting consensus and clear approach of how to conduct a frame analysis as it is being used in varying fields of study and with different aims. In this thesis, the sociological approach will be adopted and used for historic research. In sociology, “frame-analysis is mainly used to study the communication of modern social movements”.¹⁹ In this case-study the frame-analysis will be applied on political actors instead of social movements. In order to construct a practicable method for carrying out this analysis on political actors, the threefold framing theory by sociologists Benford and Snow will be borrowed.

The theory comprises core-types of framing which together form a strategic tool for mobilization. Albeit the theory relates to the mobilization of social movements, this can be transformed in mobilization in the form of social support or approval of political policies. The first type is diagnostic framing, which encompasses includes statements identifying the nature of the problem. The second is prognostic framing; offering solutions for the constructed problem. The final frame is motivational, which identifies the goals pursued with the proposed solution.²⁰ Learning if, and how, the British government made use of these types of framing, will offer more insight in how the legitimization of Operation Palliser took place. It will also better the understanding of why there are different explanations as to why they intervened in the first place. This thesis seeks to answer the question:

¹⁶ Ibidem 64

¹⁷ Paul Williams. ‘Fighting for Freetown’ (2001) 152

¹⁸ Romy Froehlich & Burkhard Rüdinger. ‘Framing Political Public Relations: Measuring Success of Political Communication Strategies in Germany’ (2006) 19

¹⁹ Romy Froehlich & Burkhard Rüdinger (2006) 19

²⁰ Robert Benford & David Snow, ‘Framing Processes and Social Movements: An overview and assessment’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), 614

How did the British government legitimize its involvement in the civil war of Sierra Leone between March 1999 and July 2000 to the domestic public and the international community?

Between 1999 and 2000 the British government was involved in the Sierra Leonean conflict on different levels of engagement. They went from encouraging the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord in 1999, to supporting the UN peacekeeping mission and providing Sierra Leone with logistic support, and ended with a unilateral military intervention within a year. These different levels of engagement are likely to be reflected in the framing-processes of the corresponding actions and policies.

The first chapter will outline the framing process in the period March – July 1999, the months leading up to the Lomé Peace Accord. It will be researched how different frames were constructed to legitimize this policy decision and answer the question: ‘How did the British government legitimize its involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict in the three months before the Lomé Peace Accord?’

In the second chapter the period July 1999 – July 2000 will be analysed. Throughout this year the Lomé agreement was implemented and ultimately collapsed, to which Britain responded with a military intervention. It will become clear how British officials shifted in their diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frame construction opposed to chapter one and answer the question: ‘How did the British government legitimize their involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict after the collapse of the Lomé Peace Accord and the subsequent deployment of military assets?’

The analysis will be conducted on British government press releases, official statements, interviews and transcripts of meetings in the period March 1999 – July 2000. The sources are mainly from the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office Archive and the UN Security Council Archive. These sources will provide discursive processes British officials engaged in to communicate their views on the conflict and strategies of involvement.

Chapter 1: Leading up to Lomé

Diagnostic framing

In March 1999, three months prior to the signing of the Lomé Agreement, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook expressed his views and concerns on the situation in Sierra Leone in a press conference with President Kabbah of Sierra Leone and the Nigerian Head of State Abubakar. He stated, “We should not lose sight of the enormous suffering that has been experienced in Sierra Leone over the past year, [...] where there are still very many people who are suffering as a result of the atrocities of recent weeks. We have delivered 18 tons of emergency medical equipment to help those who have suffered in those atrocities, but many are now dead.”²¹

Diagnostic framing, as the first core-type of a framing process, is used to establish and communicate the problem and the concerning issues and dynamics at hand.²² When trying to gain public support for an action or cause, it is imperative that the diagnostic construction resonates with the specific public one is trying to reach. In this case, the public that the British government is trying to reach, is the British population as well as the international community.

Cook stressed the need not to forget about the atrocities in Sierra Leone, which should be understood in a wider context of international conflict resolution. During the period leading up to the Lomé negotiations, British troops were also involved in the Kosovo conflict, meaning that it would be unlikely for the British public to be convinced that they should become involved in another “just war”.²³ As an act of political public relations, Cook tries to persuade the public not to forget about Sierra Leone, and thereby

²¹ Robin Cook, press conference 9 March 1999, The National Archives (TNA), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), archived 15 July 2001.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010715115433/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?2097>

²² Robert Benford & David Snow, ‘Framing Processes and Social Movements: An overview and assessment’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), 617

²³ Paul Williams. ‘Fighting for Freetown’ (2001) 152

engages in an attributional component of diagnostic framing: adversarial framing. This component delineates the boundaries between ‘good’ and ‘evil’.²⁴ The ‘good’ can be translated to the British support of Sierra Leone, at the time mostly financial and logistic. The “enormous suffering” is clearly the ‘evil’ in the diagnosis, but Cook refrains from placing direct blame of, or responsibility for, inflicting this evil upon the people of Sierra Leone.

Adversarial frames thus construct protagonists and antagonists. The protagonists in the diagnostic frame leading up to the Lomé agreement are very clear. In several statements, British officials, including Prime Minister Tony Blair, emphasize that no other nation outside the West-African region “has done more than Britain” in supporting the government of Sierra Leone.²⁵ The protagonists are both the Sierra Leonean and British government, together with the peacekeeping missions of the UN and ECOWAS (Economic Monitoring Group of West African States). These actors are depicted as the key players in the conflict resolution. A seemingly sensible antagonist would be the RUF, as the insurgency is the most active in using brutal force against the population and committing war crimes, but this is not how they were being framed at the time.

“Directed action is contingent on identification of the source(s) of causality, blame and/or culpable agent”, Benford and Snow state.²⁶ Meaning that this function of the diagnostic frame is essential for the directed action. The directed action in this case, is working towards a peace agreement, so the opposite party needed to be identified accordingly for them to be acknowledged as a legitimate negotiation partner. The RUF was being still portrayed as the culpable agent, but without further attributing blame or reinforcing their specific crimes.

The refraining from placing direct blame is visible when taking a closer look at how Prime Minister Blair on May 22nd, in addressing the upcoming peace talks, speaks of ‘rebels’ versus ‘innocent victims’.²⁷ The word ‘rebels’ intrinsically has negative connotations, but these could have been amplified through a strategy called *vilification*.

²⁴ Robert Benford & David Snow, ‘Framing Processes and Social Movements: An overview and assessment’, (2000), 616

²⁵ Tony Blair, public statement 8 July 1999, TNA, FCO, archived 15 July 2001.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010715121157/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?2623>

²⁶ Robert Benford & David Snow (2000) 616

²⁷ Tony Blair, public statement 22 May 1999, TNA, FCO, archived 15 July 2001.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010715120845/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?2462>

Vilification is “used in an attempt to produce visceral responses that erode the target’s ability to assert credibility”.²⁸ The culpability of the RUF is to be found in the adjective ‘innocent’ when describing the protagonist, rather than emphasizing the atrocious deeds of the to make the distinction. By doing so, the RUF is not underestimated as a culpable agent, but also not deprived of its credibility as a negotiation partner.

Both Cook and Blair steer away from vilification and placing direct blame on the RUF, they address them as “rebels” or merely “the adversary”. Foreign Office Minister Tony Lloyd even used the phrase “rebel faction”, in his public statement about the upcoming peace agreement. ‘Faction’ added the political nature to the RUF, even further facilitating the legitimization process of the peace negotiations.

Instead of engaging in vilification, the strategy that is used here for adversarial framing is *exaltation*, the polar reflection of vilification.²⁹ This strategy “emphasizes positives attributes [...] characterized as pure of heart, selfless, representing the better interests of the community through sacrifice and effort”.³⁰ In describing the protagonist, frequently used words or phrases are “courage; suffering; innocent” for the people of Sierra Leone, “immense effort; sacrifices; suffered” for describing ECOMOG, and “strongly committed” for the British government. In describing the British government, a phrase that is also often heard is a version of all that Britain is doing the most or excels in. “Britain is: doing all we can to help/at the forefront of efforts/very active/playing a leading role” are ways of formulating British actions that show how exaltation is used in creating adversarial frames for the diagnosis.

The constructed diagnosis throughout the months March – July in 1999 consists of adversarial framing to accentuate the role of Britain in supporting conflict resolution in Sierra Leone. British officials, in every statement regarding the conflict, take a moment to praise British efforts and actions by enhancing them to the fullest. The framing of the RUF is not in the expected opposite manner. The RUF needs to be considered a legitimate political actor in order to justify the offered solution to the problem and raise its viability.

²⁸ Quintan Wiktorowicz ‘Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeada’s Struggle for Sacred Authority’, *International Review of Social History* 49:12 (2004) 164

²⁹ Quintan Wiktorowicz ‘Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeada’s Struggle for Sacred Authority’ (2004) 166

³⁰ Quintan Wiktorowicz ‘Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeada’s Struggle for Sacred Authority’ (2004) 166

Prognostic framing

The prognostic frame, the second core-type in framing processes, “involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out a plan.”³¹ There tends to be a correspondence between the diagnostic and the prognostic framing, as the advocated solutions and strategies need to be “reasonable” according to the identified problem. The identified problem was that people in Sierra Leone are suffering due to the civil war, the articulation of the proposed solution to this was that said suffering must be stopped. During the period March – July 1999 the realisation of the prognosis, the strategies for carrying out a plan, was clearly defined.

On March 9th 1999 Robin Cook stated: “We do want to see a dual track approach, we want to see a strong ECOMOG able to achieve stability within Sierra Leone, but also negotiations of a reconciliation with those rebels who are willing to lay down their arms and to be reintegrated into society. We will give our full backing to President Kabbah, and work with President Kabbah in order to achieve those twin goals.”³² The UN mission UNAMSIL and, even more preferable, ECOMOG (the peacekeeping mission of ECOWAS) were in charge of resolving the conflict as far as deployment of troops went. The role of Britain in this prognosis was limited to coordinating the international involvement in the Lomé agreement, through the British-led International Contact Group, and offering logistic and financial support to the active peacekeeping organizations.³³

The strategy was resolving the conflict through a peace agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF. According to Andrew Dorman, there were few alternatives to peace negotiations, unless the international community was prepared to “take on the RUF and defeat them militarily.”³⁴ Prognostic framing often includes a refutation of other proposed solutions, which is called counter-framing.³⁵ Tony Blair directly addressed the possibility of military intervention. On May 22nd 1999 he refuted this option by stating: “There can be no military solution to your problems. Making peace means making hard choices, it means talking to the rebels. It means being ready to accept

³¹ Robert Benford & David Snow (2000) 616

³² Robin Cook, 9 March 1999

³³ Paul Williams ‘Fighting for Freetown’ (2001) 148

³⁴ Andrew Dorman ‘Blair’s Successful War’ (2009) 75

³⁵ Robert Benford & David Snow (2000) 617

back into society those who fought against you. And, where they have genuine grievances, it means addressing these.”³⁶

By making clear that intervening militarily was not an option for the British government, Blair articulated the prognosis in form of a counter-frame. Instead of merely promoting the peace-talks, he deflected the possible demand for intervention by indicating that it is not part of “making peace”.

The prognostic frame was constructed to promote the peace negotiations and reinforced by refuting the alternative solution. Offering a solution to the identified problem needs to be followed up with the last task of framing collective action; motivational framing.

Motivational/Identifying framing

The motivational framing task is used in social movements to provide a “call to arms”, essentially as persuasion of the public to engage in collective action.³⁷ In this case, however, the ‘call to arms’ is not up to the public. The motivational frame, therefore, needs to be understood more as an identifying frame. Instead of individuals participating in collective action, the question to be answered by this framing task should be: ‘why should we become involved?’³⁸ This addresses the notion of national self-image, a convincing construction of collective identity which is necessary for approval of international involvement in conflict areas. Eilders and Lüther argue that “motivation of public opinion basically follows the same logic as protest mobilization”.³⁹ The third core-task, therefore, does not refer to protest or activation mobilization as it does in social movement framing tasks, but rather to mobilization of a consensus in public opinion.⁴⁰

Robert Benford identified four generic of motive which are being used in the last part of the framing process, vocabularies of: severity, urgency, efficacy and propriety.⁴¹ These vocabularies “provide adherents with compelling accounts for engaging in collective action”, according to Benford. The four vocabularies are also visible in the quest

³⁶ Tony Blair, May 22 1999

³⁷ Robert Benford & David Snow (2000) 617-618

³⁸ Christiane Eilders & Albrecht Lüther ‘Research Note: Germany at War. Competing Framing Strategies in German Public Discourse’ (2000) 417

³⁹ Christiane Eilders & Albrecht Lüther (2000) 417-418

⁴⁰ *Ibidem* 417

⁴¹ Robert Benford “‘You Could Be the Hundredth Monkey’: Collective Action Frames and Vocabularies of Motive within Nuclear Disarmament Movement’, *The Sociological Quarterly* 34:2 (1993) 205

of the British government to convince the public of peace negotiations as the most valid solution to support.

Severity of the problem

The severity of the problem is closely linked to its identification, the first core-type of framing tasks. There is, however, an analytical difference between merely identifying the problem and convincing people that it is so serious it requires ameliorative action.⁴² Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Permanent Representative of Britain at the UN Security Council, stressed the severity of the civil war in Sierra Leone in March 1999:

*The crisis matters deeply: although it is a small country, the emergency there is complex, the humanitarian problems horrifying and the message of risk for African development generally is graphic. The gravity of this situation demands a response of appropriate magnitude from the Council, the wider UN system and the international community as a whole.*⁴³

Greenstock identifies the problem at hand to the Security Council, but the difference with the diagnosis is that he emphasizes the gravity and severity to demand a response. Notably, he appeals to the whole international community and the body of the UN, but does not single out Britain as a leading actor. The diagnostic frame contains an adversarial component to delineate boundaries, which the motivational frame does not. This means that there is less need for exalting British involvement. In addition to framing the severity of the problem to gain public support, another vocabulary of motive is addressing why action is needed *now*.

Sense of urgency

⁴² Robert Benford “‘You Could Be the Hundredt Monkey’: Collective Action Frames and Vocabularies of Motive within Nuclear Disarmament Movement’ (1993) 205

⁴³ Jeremy Greenstock UN Security Council meeting 3986 11 March 1999 S/PV.3986

During the same UN Security Council meeting, Greenstock addressed the notion that a peaceful resolution was a matter of urgency. The offered prognosis, political settlement through negotiations, was being posed as highly urgent and framed as being only achievable if the international community acted upon this urgency. President Kabbah needed “a significant and forceful push towards dialogue and settlement”, according to Greenstock. Something Foreign Secretary Cook took care of when he “pressed him to develop dialogue with the rebels”.⁴⁴

Cook himself also stressed the urgency of the matter, “it is in the interest of everybody, and nobody more than the people of Sierra Leone, that we move as quickly as we can in order to achieve an end to the conflict and reconciliation in Sierra Leone”.⁴⁵ In a final remark, Cook distinctly formulated the vocabulary of motive in a sense of urgency: “that suffering in Sierra Leone must be brought to an end as soon as possible and that is why we must proceed on both fronts, by support for ECOMOG and support for negotiations”.⁴⁶ Here, the diagnosis and the prognosis are combined with the exigency for immediate action. Indicating why a situation is severe and the solution urgent is not necessarily enough convince the public to approve or support a policy decision. Only constructing these two vocabularies can even work in a de-mobilizing way, as it can be demotivating for the public to hear these insurmountable problems.⁴⁷ The motivational frame needs positive attributes in order to be effective.

Efficacy of taking action

The efficacy needs to be constructed, as sociological studies have pointed out that an optimistic outcome enlarges the probability of participation and in this case, consensus and support.⁴⁸ The constructed frames by Tony Blair and Robin Cook, are highly efficacious when describing the upcoming peace negotiations and settlement through Lomé. They communicate on several occasions during the three months that the British government has the utmost faith in the peace agreement as a valid solution to the conflict.

After the signing of the agreement was completed, both Blair and Cook issued a statement on this development. Blair “warmly welcomed” the agreement, and stated that,

⁴⁴ Jeremy Greenstock, UN Security Council meeting 3986 11 March 1999 S/PV.3986

⁴⁵ Robin Cook, 9 March 1999

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*

⁴⁷ Robert Benford “‘You Could Be the Hundredt Monkey’: Collective Action Frames and Vocabularies of Motive within Nuclear Disarmament Movement’ (1993) 204

⁴⁸ Robert Benford “‘You Could Be the Hundredt Monkey’ (1993) 205

“this agreement offers the people of Sierra Leone the prospect of an end to the terrible suffering they have endured over the past eight years.”⁴⁹ Cook repeated this trust in the agreement, but added that “the agreement finally offers the people of Sierra Leone the prospect of real peace.”⁵⁰ The message is essentially the same, but Cook amplifies the longevity of the conflict by adding “finally”, and the value of the agreement by mentioning that this is the first possibility for “real” peace.

Jeremy Greenstock, at the UN Security Council meeting, also addressed the efficacy, but more of the involved actors than the agreement itself. He mentioned that peace is achievable in Sierra Leone, but only with the commitment of the international community “to give vigorous support”. The repeated emphasis of the effect the international community can have on the conflict resolution is a logical social construction to make taking action seem more appealing. The last vocabulary of motive is propriety of taking action.

Propriety of taking action

The propriety of action refers to the sense of a moral duty.⁵¹ The specific actor needs to appeal to the beliefs of propriety of the public he or she is trying to convince. Appealing to these beliefs is often being done through a method called *frame amplification*. Frame amplification involves “accenting and highlighting some issues, events or beliefs [...] these may function in service of the articulation process by providing a conceptual handle for linking together various events and issues”.⁵² In other words, some aspects will be accentuated more by the constructors of the frames to reflect or symbolize the larger frame of which it is part.⁵³

Jeremy Greenstock seeks to convey the message that a solution to the conflict is possible, but it needs “hard work and hard cash”.⁵⁴ The larger frame consists of offering a formulated prognosis, communicating that the British government believes in a dual-track approach to support ECOMOG and press for negotiations. Greenstock amplifies this

⁴⁹ Tony Blair, 8 July 1999

⁵⁰ Robin Cook, edited transcript of the press conference 8 June 2000, TNA, FCO, archived 15 July 2001.
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010715115313/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?3783>

⁵¹ Robert Benford (1993) 206

⁵² Robert Benford & David Snow (2000) 623

⁵³ Robert Benford & David Snow (2000) 623

⁵⁴ Jeremy Greenstock, UN Security Council meeting 3986 11 March 1999 S/PV.3986

solution by putting it in short, punctuated terms. This may also function as an alleviation for the first two vocabularies of motive. The severity and urgency, when the solution is captured in a short, comprehensible and most important, seemingly achievable way, seem less motivating.

The motivational, or identifying, frame is necessary to give the public a sense of need to support the collective action. This is constructed through two vocabularies of motive to stress this need. In addition, morality and achievability are important factors to gain public support. These vocabularies all answer the question of ‘why should we become involved?’ and therefore help legitimizing the involvement.

Through the period March – July 1999 the identified problem consisted of suffering in Sierra Leone. The protagonist was also clearly identified, but the antagonist needed to be warmed up to the public as a legitimate political actor. This was done in order to increase the likeliness for the prognosis: ending the suffering by negotiating a political settlement. The peace agreement was signed on 8 July 1999, but did not even last one year. The Lomé Peace Accord contained several elements that are now considered appeasement to the rebels, this is presumably the reason of its early collapse.⁵⁵ After the collapse of the agreement, the framing process needed to shift in order to legitimize new actions and policies for the changed situation. In the next chapter, the diagnosis, prognosis and motivation in the framing processes during July 1999 – July 2000 will be discussed.

⁵⁵ Paul Williams ‘Fighting for Freetown’ (2001) 148

Chapter 2: Deterioration of Lomé leading to Operation Palliser

Diagnostic framing

With the completion and subsequent implementation of the Lomé Accord in July 1999, the diagnostic frame shifted even further towards an undefined antagonist. Whereas before Lomé, the distinction between civilians and rebels was still clearly made, now British officials merely referred to “the people of Sierra Leone”, “all sides of the agreement” or just “all those committed”.⁵⁶ The RUF was being included in the ‘in-group’ of the protagonist.

The adversarial frame construction decreased, as the Lomé Agreement turned the RUF into a legitimate political actor.⁵⁷ It would not have been viable to communicate the insurgency to the public as the enemy or antagonist, because this would have harmed the legitimacy of the peace agreement. Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister of State Peter Hain stated in January 2000 that Britain would also back the RUF and acknowledged them as a political party. “We also want to help strengthen all political parties, including the new RUF Party”, Hain said in his speech.⁵⁸ Publicly acknowledging the RUF as a political actor sought to help garnering support from the public in the new policy towards the conflict, as it gives them a certain amount of credibility.

The Lomé Accord in itself was the subject of many debates, as its nature was highly controversial.⁵⁹ The reason for British officials embarking on a path of legitimizing the adversary, can be found in the power-sharing part of the agreement. The RUF was to be turned into a political party and members were appointed government positions. Moreover, Foday Sankoh became director of the National Resources Commission and was

⁵⁶ Tony Blair, 8 July 1999; Tony Lloyd, public statement 20 May 1999, TNA, FCO, archived 15 July 2001. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010715120244/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?2452>

⁵⁷ Lomé Accord Art. III <http://www.sierra-leone.org/lomeaccord.html>

⁵⁸ Peter Hain, press conference 13 January 2000, TNA, FCO, archived 15 July 2001. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010715113517/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?3201>

⁵⁹ Paul Williams. ‘Fighting for Freetown’ (2001) 148

appointed Vice-President.⁶⁰ The political settlement through power-sharing, showed that the RUF was in a position to make high demands in the negotiation process. They were also granted a blanket amnesty for their crimes. Tony Blair, however, “warmly welcomed” the agreement, stating:

*I believe that this agreement offers the people of Sierra Leone the prospect of an end to the terrible suffering they have endured over the past eight years of conflict. The people of Sierra Leone now have a chance to rebuild their lives and their country in peace and stability and in a spirit of national reconciliation. Britain will help them in their efforts to sustain and develop their democracy.*⁶¹

Scholars have pointed out that there was little mention during this period of the fragility of the agreement. As for attributing responsibility, the diagnostic frame constructed after Lomé holds all parties responsible for adhering to the agreement. The responsibility in this sense does not necessarily mean who was to blame for the problem, but who needs to live up to the offered solution. In other words, who is to blame when it goes wrong.

In May 2000 the RUF broke the Lomé Peace Agreement, by taking hostage of UN monitoring personnel and attacking Freetown. On 4 May 2000, Robin Cook issued a statement in which he directly asserts blame of the situation: “Foday Sankoh bears a personal responsibility for his followers’ actions. The leadership of the RUF is directly accountable for the safety of those UN and other personnel [...] He must ensure their immediate release”.⁶² In two statements after that, on May 7th and 8th, Cook repeated that the responsibility for the new outbreak of violence rested ‘fairly and squarely’ with the RUF forces and their leader. Notably, there is no more question of rebel ‘factions’, the use ‘rebel forces’ indicate the stripping away of the political nature and illegitimate use of force.

The component of attributing blame was absent in the diagnosis leading up to Lomé, but the event of taking UN personnel hostage was a direct attack on the protagonists and therefore a reason to engage in vilification strategies. Robin Cook spoke

⁶⁰ *Ibidem* 149

⁶¹ Tony Blair, 8 July 1999

⁶² Robin Cook, public statement 4 May 2000, TNA, FCO, archived 15 July 2001.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010715114309/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?3620>

of “savagery” and Sankoh was being portrayed as a psychopath. Widespread reports announced the RUF’s “drug-induced and mutilating” activities. This drew sharp distinctions again and the RUF was definitely not a part of the ‘in-group’ anymore. There was no longer the need to convince the public that the RUF was a key figure in the conflict resolution process.

With the changed constructed identity of the RUF, the protagonist also changed. Whereas before, the emphasis was on stopping the suffering of the people of Sierra Leone, now the British UN personnel that was being taken hostage was the main constructed victim in the diagnostic frame. The new prognosis therefore differed drastically from the previous one, by eventually offering military intervention as a solution.

Prognostic framing

Right after the signing of the Lomé Agreement, a UN Observing Mission (UNOMSIL) was sent to Sierra Leone to oversee the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process that was one of the key objectives of the peace accord.⁶³ The British involvement would stretch as far as supporting the UN missions, logistically and financially, but also with personnel.⁶⁴ This limited deployment of soldiers however, was all under UN mandate and not British. The prognosis was to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate the RUF into the society and means were being put in place for this. Foreign Office Minister Peter Hain issued a statement on the implementation of the peace agreement and its monitoring on January 13th, in which he exalts British efforts. “Britain has already learnt from Northern Ireland that you have to learn to forgive, but not forget, in order for a country to heal. An effective and robust UN peacekeeping force, to which Britain has provided personnel and assistance, numbering almost 5,000 has already been deployed.”⁶⁵ Amongst the attacked UN personnel were also British soldiers, which changed the offered solution to the problem.

With the attacks on the UN Observers, the prognosis to the new identified problem also changed. When the RUF made it obvious they were not honouring the provisions of the Lomé Agreement, a new solution to resolve the conflict was needed. On May 8 the Foreign Secretary broke the news of the deployment of British troops in Sierra Leone to

⁶³ Andrew Dorman ‘Blair’s Successful War’ (2009) 78

⁶⁴ Peter Hain, 13 January 2000

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*

take on the RUF: Operation Palliser. Cook stressed that the British military assets are taking measures to safeguard security of British nationals. He also mentioned that Britain will not abandon Sierra Leone, and “continue to take the lead at the UN to restore the peace processes.”⁶⁶ This seemingly indicated that the operation fell under UN mandate, three days later a statement by Prime Minister’s office clarified that it was a unilateral operation which was not a part of UNAMSIL.

Whether the mission was framed a unilateral, British one or as part of an existing UN mission will most likely matter for the motivational task of framing.

Motivational/Identifying framing

As in the previous chapter, the analysis of the motivational frame will be done by means of searching if the British officials constructed the generic vocabularies of motive. The motivational frame-analysis will only be conducted on the period May – July 2000, after the collapse of the Lomé Agreement, because this is when the ‘call to arms’ rhetoric was really applicable. The diagnosis and the prognosis changed after the implementation of Lomé, but the answer to ‘why should we become involved?’ remained the same as in the period leading up to the settlement. Given that the decision to militarily intervene was reached within a week after the RUF seized UN personnel, there was not much time to convince the public to get on board with this decision.

It also appears that even up till right before the troops were being deployed the British government did not communicate this to the public. Even more so, a day before the Operation was set in motion, Robin Cook gave an interview to BBC and Reuters where he stressed the importance of bringing the UN mission up to full strength. When asked by the interviewer if there was any prospect on peacekeepers from the EU being deployed, Cook denied this by stating that it was more likely that if anyone were to take up arms, it would be from African countries.⁶⁷ The mission was only justified after already being put in motion. Nevertheless, the British government still needed to legitimize the Operation, because public support was not a given. As Eilders and Lüther put it, there can be a high

⁶⁶ Robin Cook, public statement 8 May 2000, TNA, FCO, archived 2 July 2001.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010702152121/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?3635>

⁶⁷ Robin Cook, interview 7 May 2000, TNA, FCO, archived 15 July 2001.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010715114740/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?3629>

level parliamentary consensus, but public approval of military action cannot be taken for granted.⁶⁸

Severity of the problem

The severity was being formulated in the need of protecting British nationals in Sierra Leone as “our first duty”. In the first statement issued on Operation Palliser on 8 May by the Foreign Secretary, this was mentioned twice as the main objective of the mission. Cook also terms the severity in how the British government follows the situation in Sierra Leone with “deep anxiety”, have “grave concerns” and “strongly condemn the attacks of the RUF”.⁶⁹ This strong expression of worry will most likely translate the severity to the public. It is notable, however, that the first hint at direct British involvement came at 8 May, when the troops had already arrived in Dakar, Senegal and were on their way to Freetown.⁷⁰ The formulation of the severity in hindsight, will at least enlarge the chances of the public approving the mission. There was no evacuation plan to the Operation, something which will most likely have had caused difficulty in convincing the public to approve of this mission, no matter how severe, it does not account for the notion of national self-image for the British population as to why *we* should become involved.

A sense of urgency

The attacks by the RUF were being framed as an “immediate threat to Freetown” that had to be averted. After the troops arrived in Sierra Leone, however, few words were mentioned on the urgency of the situation. Most likely because the rapid decision and deployment in itself reflect the urgent need to do something. Late July, after nearly three months of British military involvement, Peter Hain elucidated on the decision. “Yes, the situation was fragile, there is no question about that. That is why we had to stiffen it up then it became clear that Freetown might fall and British troops were sent in within forty eight hours to do that very successfully”, Hain answered to a BBC journalist asking if it is going to do anything to improve matters in Sierra Leone.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Christiane Eilders & Albrecht Lüter ‘Research Note: Germany at War’ (2000) 416

⁶⁹ Robin Cook, 7 – 8 May 2000

⁷⁰ Robin Cook, 8 May 2000

⁷¹ Peter Hain, interview 31 July 2000, TNA, FCO, archived 15 July 2001.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20010715115932/http://www.fco.gov.uk:80/news/newstext.asp?4039>

Efficacy of taking action

The constructed vocabulary of efficacy is mainly by means of praising British efforts and highlighting their endeavours by deeming them successful even without knowing the outcome. It seems like a good way to convince your public to approve of action in which the whole nation can take a form of national pride. Also, for the British to frame themselves as the leader in the intervention and resolution process convincingly, helps rendering support of the international community. They not only pose themselves as the unilateral interventionists, at the same time the British government keeps stressing the importance of supporting and strengthening the UN mission. On June 8th 2000, Robin Cook listed both of these aspects in an interview to the BBC:

There are also officers working with the UN mission, communications, and other crucial specialist backup that we are providing to them. But that, of course, is not the sum of our commitment to Sierra Leone. We are by far the largest donor in supporting the peace process. We are taking the lead in the UN [...] as I was saying to President Kabbah, we want to see this job through.⁷²

In this statement, Cook sums up how efficacious Britain is in its involvement, on unilateral level as well as a part of the larger UN body. The last remark also attributes to the vocabulary of propriety, as it has appeals to the nobility of perseverance.

Propriety of taking action

The last motivational framing task consists of creating a sense of moral duty. On 8 May Cook announced that the first duty of the British government was to protect the British citizens in Sierra Leone and others of whom they have consular responsibility.⁷³ This is not so much a construction of a moral duty, but simply something that is being stated as a fact. It does, however, most likely appeal to the domestic public in a sense of propriety, as it takes away the element of what Blair had called “other people’s conflicts”. The prioritisation of saving British nationals gives an immediate valid answer to the ‘why should we become involved’- question that the motivational frame is ought to answer.

⁷² Robin Cook, 8 June 2000

⁷³ *Ibidem*

The propriety of taking action is also visible in how Robin Cook in the same interview amplifies the beliefs of taking action to alleviate the problem.⁷⁴ “We will continue to take the lead at the UN and elsewhere to restore the peace process. We must not allow a few thousand rebels to prevent the end to violence and the peace which to get on with their lives, for which the three million people of Sierra Leone desperately hunger”.⁷⁵ As a final push for a sense of moral obligation, Cook added, “I do not see how we could maintain our self-respect if we turned away from this kind of savagery.”⁷⁶

This chapter has shown that the core-types of framing collective action have drastically changed after the Lomé Accord collapsed. Once it was being implemented, the diagnostic and the prognostic frame were being amplified, more or less an extension of the existing frames in the period leading up to Lomé. The diagnosis showed even less of an antagonist and the prognosis became more detailed and practicable with the implementation of the DDR-programme. There was no need to construct a motivational or identifying frame, as the main policy decision was the peace settlement itself.

The motivational frame became necessary when the situation shifted in such a way there was a need for a new policy and different actions on the part of Britain. The new diagnosis was the brute force of the RUF on Freetown as well as on UN personnel, amongst which were British citizens. The new prognosis consisted of strengthening the UN mission and eventually the deployment of British military assets. Even though the decision was realised essentially overnight, it needed to be legitimized through motivational framing in order to garner public support for the rapid and somewhat unexpected decision.

⁷⁴ Robert Benford “You Could Be the Hundredth Monkey” (1993) 207

⁷⁵ Robin Cook, 8 June 2000

⁷⁶ Paul Williams. ‘Fighting for Freetown’ (2001) 157

	DIAGNOSTIC FRAMING	PROGOSTIC FRAMING	MOTIVATIONAL FRAMING
MARCH – JULY 1999	Suffering must be ended. Protagonist: British Gov., Sierra Leone Gov. UN and ECOWAS missions. Antagonist: unclear, suffering in itself. RUF prepared for political function, also in frame construction.	Solution to end the suffering: peace negotiations and settlement. Counter-frame constructed by Blair: no military intervention possible. Direct action only by UNAMSIL and ECOMOG.	Severity: generally graphic situation. Urgency: solution must be carried out by Int. Comm. Efficacy: only with support from the Int. Comm. peace can be realised. Propriety: amplifying frames to prevent de-motivation.
JULY 1999 – MAY 2000	Antagonist even less clear, RUF included in in-group.	Fully implementing the DDR-programme for achieving peace.	-
MAY 2000 – JULY 2000	Blame/responsibility attribution to RUF for seizing UN personnel and taking over Freetown. British nationals in the area and little to no protection (UNAMSIL weak)	Evacuate British citizens in Sierra Leone. Strengthen UNAMSIL and unilaterally intervene.	Severity: British nationals captured. Urgency: Freetown about to fall in the hands of the rebels. Efficacy: British are leading the UN mission and their own mission. Propriety: savagery needs to be stopped, and British nationals are involved, no longer just “other people’s conflicts”

Figure 1: framing activities summarized

Conclusion

The adopted method for frame-analysis in this thesis, is normally used for framing processes of social movements trying to achieve collective action. By conducting it on frames constructed by political actors, one must bear in mind that they differ from social movement actors in terms of credibility. Political actors already possess a certain degree of credibility, which social movement actors still have to acquire more actively. This is why social movement actors might need to use more amplified frames and make more use of the different strategies.

However, the analysis was still fruitful as it shows how British officials constructed a narrative by means of collective action frames as theorized by Benford and Snow. It becomes apparent how they, in the three months prior to the Lomé Agreement, had to actively legitimize this policy decision, which thereafter they needed to de-legitimize to construct frames for the legitimization of the military intervention. The analysis successfully answers the question: **'How did the British government legitimize its involvement in the civil war of Sierra Leone between March 1999 and July 2000 to the domestic public and the international community?'**

It does so by systematically showing the constructed frames of the narrative at the different moments during the researched year of British involvement. It also contributes to the mentioned different explanations as to why Britain intervened in the first place. The motives that the British government gives as a justification for the varying stages of involvement are more in line with the explanation given by Paul Williams, that there was a five-fold imperative for intervention than the other offered explanations. From the framing analysis does not appear that the Government was pushed into the intervention or that there were geostrategic interests playing a role in the decision. This is not to conclude with certainty, as framing is a very powerful instrument to convince people of a desired truth. What this states, is that the British government actively tried to communicate the message as was most aptly described by Williams.

It has not been taken in consideration, however, how these acts of public relations subsequently resonated with the public, and thus is they were successful. This could have been done by taking in consideration newspapers and other media outlets, to see if the same messages were communicated to the public by journalists and writers. For further research, a frame-analysis on newspapers and other media sources to establish if the constructed frames resonated with the public would be a valuable addition to this research. Furthermore, the research could be extended to a larger timeframe. Now, only a year of the conflict was being analysed, meaning that the pool of sources was rather limited. It would also be interesting to see what framing processes were at hand in the first eight years of the conflict, opposed to just the final year.

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