

Dean Piedmont
dean.piedmont@gmail.com

The Role of Disarmament, Demobilization & Reintegration in Countering Violent Extremism

Currently there is no policy guidance to address the DDR-CVE nexus. As this brief shows, there is a need for a new, innovative policy framework for DDR that better equips the concept to address the DDR-CVE challenge. A paradigm shift in policy is needed to reframe DDR as a conflict-prevention measure, rather than merely a post-conflict peacebuilding tool.

Abstract:

The use of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) as a post-conflict and peacebuilding tool by the United Nations (UN) and major international actors has proliferated since the 1980s. Evolving from a practice addressing state-centric security to one focused on development goals, DDR is entering a new phase – third generation political reintegration. In this phase, the UN Security Council is issuing mandates in environments where mercenaries, foreign fighters and terrorists increasingly dot the conflict landscape. In this setting, countering violent extremism (CVE) and DDR have started to intersect globally. Currently, there is no policy guidance governing DDR and CVE. DDR continues to be guided by the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) while CVE focuses on foreign fighters from Europe and North America who return home. Disaggregating the three generations of DDR since the 1980s, this brief offers policy makers concrete and actionable measures addressing the DDR-CVE interface for foreign fighters who do not return and undergo DDR. It offers recommendations for DDR in CVE as a conflict prevention tool and, in doing so, shifts towards social reintegration as a primer for socio-economic reintegration accompanying the notion of political agency and transformation of non-state armed groups. Taken together, these offer an innovative policy framework addressing DDR and CVE.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dean Piedmont attained an MA from Denver University in 2002. His area of expertise is child protection, youth development and reintegration specializing in DDR. Dean served governments, bilaterals, NGOs and the UN from 2002-2014 in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Iraq and South Sudan. In 2009, Dean joined UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery managing a global DDR and stabilization portfolio where he spearheaded efforts in political reintegration and armed group transformation. Today he's the Director for the Peacebuilding, Reintegration and Stabilization Group, consults for USAID, the World Bank and designs and teaches courses as an adjunct professor in US based universities.

Introduction

DDR of former fighters in the aftermath of conflict is as old as war itself. Tens of thousands of soldiers voluntarily underwent DDR during the Roman-Etruscan wars in the third century BC, and DDR initiatives have taken place after virtually every conflict since. In fact, there have been no fewer than 60 DDR initiatives globally since the UN and major bilateral engagement in the late 1980s.¹ While most were launched in the wake of international or civil wars as part of an internationally mandated peace support operation, shifting conflict dynamics and emergent caseloads over the last decade continue to alter the landscape in which DDR operations are implemented. Whether occurring as an outcome of a peace accord or during active conflict, DDR represents a voluntary civilian-led non-violent policy option for national and human security.

The global caseload in 2011-2012 was estimated at approximately 300,000 DDR candidates spread across more than 20 planned or ongoing DDR operations.² This estimate was based on DDR efforts targeting persons in combatant and non-combatant roles from statutory armies and non-state armed groups (NSAGs), and as such does not account for special conditions, which include the return and reintegration of foreign fighters or radicalized elements of fighting groups. While DDR has taken place in active conflict, and has been applied as a peacebuilding and security tool in armed conflict for groups with asymmetric and predatory tactics and agendas, the phenomenon of DDR mandates being handed down from the Security Council where “terrorists” and “radicalized” elements permeate the landscape is relatively new, and is increasing.

This indicates that preconditions for DDR as a post-conflict peacebuilding tool are no longer in place. These include DDR occurring as a voluntary process with a minimum-security guarantee for all parties undergoing DDR. A legal framework, usually enshrined in a comprehensive peace agreement, governs these conditions.³ This paper forwards the premise that, in the absence of these preconditions, DDR must be reframed as a conflict-prevention tool, rather than a post-conflict tool. Such a reconfiguration of DDR will facilitate programming and metrics around CVE issues; a primary consideration for successful reintegration for emergent groups undergoing DDR is social reintegration. Doing so displaces economic reintegration as the prime mover for successful ex-combatant reintegration. Irrespective of predatory behaviour or tactics, groups and persons adhering to violent extremism have a legitimate grievance, or access to geographic and political spaces where a legitimate grievance exists.

At Issue - Where DDR and CVE intersect

Mandates to undertake DDR continue to be promulgated without due consideration for changing conflict dynamics and emergent caseloads associated with the foreign fighter and radicalization phenomenon. In 2015, DDR initiatives are envisaged, planned or implemented under various global nomenclatures that overlap with geopolitical areas where CVE efforts and reintegration will be undertaken. DDR concepts have been considered for Ukraine, while the Brussels Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia and the Framework Agreement between the Philippines government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front refer to DDR as the “normalization of relations” and “decommissioning” respectively.⁴ In Colombia and Somalia, DDR is being considered in active conflict as a tool for stabilization and peacebuilding with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Al-Shabab⁵, both of which have been labelled as terrorist organizations at various junctures. In the case of Colombia, a classic reintegration approach is being considered for FARC, coupled with institutional integration, while in Somalia reintegration will occur for “defectors.”

The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) is seeking political reintegration of anti-government elements (AGEs) and the Taliban, while the Libyan Warriors Affairs Commission is looking towards DDR as a means to reward so-called revolutionary fighters without considering CVE and reintegration for pro-Gadhafi elements.⁶ Across the Sahel and northern Africa in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, the Middle East and even Nigeria, DDR is being considered irrespective of preconditions for success. Simultaneously, efforts at counterterrorism, anti-radicalization and CVE are under discussion. These efforts are being developed in silos, and largely devoid of conflict- and context-specific analysis or risk assessments, although it can be expected that there will be a significant intersect in the beneficiary caseload.

Three Generations of DDR

To gain an understanding of DDR’s role in CVE, we must examine DDR since the late 1980s to the present. This can best be accomplished by subdividing DDR into three distinct generations. The first generation occurred in the wake of the Cold War. Typified by verifiable caseloads under unified command and control, these occurred regionally in Latin America and southern Africa, and can be categorized as the statebuilding generation for DDR. There was no discernable reintegration component; former fighters received humanitarian benefits from organizations such as the United

Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).⁷ “Operations” were driven with overriding military support with an emphasis on security sector reform/integration. An intended end state was the stabilization of regions through the creation of new, strong central states. This is similar in many ways to contemporary stabilization measures.

By the mid-2000s, a second-generation policy approach emerged in response to the perception by the international community that DDR, and reintegration specifically, was not achieving the intended sustainable peacebuilding aims. This led to a broad range of initiatives targeting communities as a means to facilitate enabling conditions for DDR.⁸ While the first-generation caseload dealt mostly with rebels (terrorists) turned liberation fighters (heroes), the second generation addressed more predatory

groups. While practice lagged behind policy in the field, there was a shift in thinking from a focus on supporting the individual, to supporting the community as a beneficiary. This phase can be characterized as the development generation of DDR. An end state was the strengthening of a weak state through securing peacebuilding dividends as measured in development gains.

Presently, DDR is undergoing a third shift. The monetization of DDR is creating a cottage industry for former fighters travelling across international

The monetization of DDR is creating a cottage industry for former fighters travelling across international borders rejoining armed groups as mercenaries. Peace operations are receiving DDR mandates in areas with weak state structures and limited statehood where conflict is ongoing, state governance and rule of law are absent.

borders rejoining armed groups as mercenaries. Peace operations are receiving DDR mandates in areas with weak state structures and limited statehood where conflict is ongoing, state governance and rule of law are absent and insurgent groups slated for DDR are associated with “terrorist” organizations, complicating the legal and political environment. DDR efforts are mandated for states, although they have regional dimensions, with conflict dynamics and emergent caseloads of foreign fighters being shaped by radical agendas, oftentimes associated with Islam. The operating environment includes counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, with addressing reintegration and CVE an increasing concern. This current generation of DDR can be characterized as the political reintegration generation for DDR. There is a dearth of research for DDR and CVE with no policy to guide practice on the ground.

Problem Statement

Research in DDR and CVE linkages lags far behind policy and practice. The international community is experiencing the effects of ineffective DDR, and in worse-case scenarios the decision to design and implement DDR

may be exacerbating conflict rather than serving as a credible policy and peacebuilding option. The result is the application of expedient DDR that is not well adapted to contexts where counterterrorism and CVE require attention in the same geographic space. These new conflict dynamics and caseloads for which there is a need to cross-fertilize CVE and DDR include the reintegration of foreign fighters, terrorists and political mercenaries that will not be returning to the West, but rather can move from conflict to conflict across porous borders. Examples exist in the Sahel and CAR, where persons are slated for DDR multiple times unintentionally.

Similarly, there is the danger that expediency associated with the foreign fighter phenomenon will lead directly to the dilemma of perceiving DDR and CVE through a narrow socio-economic lens. This ignores the dynamics of well-educated and middle-income youth becoming radicalized and joining highly asymmetric and terrorist groups as foreign fighters with violent extremist agendas, which occurs in Europe and the United States, as well as research undertaken in Colombia showing that socio-economic reintegration is not the prime factor preventing recidivism into FARC.⁹ Simultaneously, the monetization of DDR resulting in a cottage industry of professional mercenaries that may join radical groups to earn livelihoods through criminal and predatory behaviour, including the adoption of radical identities, ideology and terrorism, points to poverty and socio-economic reintegration as causal and curative factors. These ostensibly contradictory dynamics suggest the need for robust and context-specific analysis.

On the political front, there is a need to know when to negotiate, disband or transform an NSAG.¹⁰ Some NSAGs use political ideology as a means to advance criminal agendas; others seek legitimate redress to grievance. This requires drawing upon the typologies of NSAGs to effect armed group transformation and political reintegration, as well as an increased understanding of nuanced approaches, contexts and nomenclature around DDR and CVE. In Kosovo, Sudan and the Philippines, the normalization of relations, SSR and decommissioning are used under the auspices of DDR. FARC in Colombia may integrate traditional DDR with social reintegration and issues of recidivism. DDR shaped two state solutions in Sudan and Kosovo, with, respectively, arguably the largest failure and success in recent DDR history. In Afghanistan, “political reintegration” in DDR addresses reconciliation with AGEs and the Taliban while simultaneously offering individual packages for former fighters in a manner seemingly disconnected from the stated political goals and aims of DDR.

The above issues clearly demonstrate a critical need for a more robust

analytic approach to DDR. The “three generations of DDR” are not well-articulated or transcribed into policy guidance and practice areas. In part, this results in DDR being handed down through UN Security Council mandates as a panacea for peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and as an expedient peace dividend. In doing so, several issues are not considered in environments where DDR and CVE reintegration will overlap geospatially, including whether the preconditions exist as promulgated in the IDDRS to undertake a credible DDR. Even where preconditions do exist, there is further need to undertake a risk assessment, mitigation and conflict analysis utilizing specific expertise in DDR – including “three generation” and CVE issues. A metric for DDR and CVE should ask the question of whether program and policy options are being appropriately

explored that include a mix of options to create an enabling environment for DDR where there is a risk of radicalization.

A metric for DDR and CVE should ask the question of whether program and policy options are being appropriately explored that include a mix of options to create an enabling environment for DDR where there is a risk of radicalization.

An illustrative case of ineffective DDR is the APRP, where first-generation DDR models are being implemented in an environment where political reintegration and CVE are more suitable approaches. Alternatively, in Somalia, the integrated social and community-based reintegration (CBR) program

approaches in the Youth for Change Initiative to handling “defectors” through DDR processes where violent extremism characterizes the caseload are seemingly better situated to address de-radicalization and preventative approaches in CVE. In both cases, terrorist elements and asymmetric tactics accompany a radical Islamic agenda. In Somalia, however, elements of CVE have been considered for DDR, while in Afghanistan more traditional approaches to DDR are being implemented. While the results in Afghanistan are known, success factors for DDR and CVE in Somalia are yet to be determined.

Towards a Policy Framework for DDR and CVE

The first generation for DDR occurred at the end of the Cold War, with DDR written explicitly into peace agreements. Ex-combatant target groups were under a unified command and control, wore insignia and were largely associated with liberation movements fighting statutory armed groups associated with the state as exemplified in Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique in Southern Africa, and to a lesser extent countries in Central America. These were largely inter-state or proxy wars. DDR explicitly recognized armed group legitimacy through a political transition process. The second generation was marked by intra-state

conflict and civil war of a highly predatory nature. These were typified in places like Liberia and Sierra Leone where the state in effect failed. Similar to the first generation, DDR was initiated following peace agreements, not during active conflict. This is not the case for the third generation, where the contestation is about challenging Westphalian notions of state legitimacy writ large as expressed through religious ideology and violent extremism. The primary difference here is that policy for the third generation does not exist, making the DDR default largely governed by practices from previous DDR efforts.

A new policy approach for DDR requires a paradigm shift better situated to address the DDR-CVE intersection. Shifting the locus for success along three trajectories requires repositioning DDR for CVE. A primary shift in policy development is to see DDR as a conflict-prevention measure, rather than a post-conflict peacebuilding tool. Such an approach addresses the phenomenon of recidivism into armed groups. A second shift is from socio-economic reintegration as the prime factor for successful DDR towards social reintegration as a precondition to sustainably reintegrate persons in fragile economies where radicalized groups operate.

This can be done by placing communities and reintegration of foreign fighters from DDR at the centre of the reintegration process through a process civic engagement, as is the case in Somalia. The emphasis on social and CBR becomes the vehicle promoting transformative governance to strengthen national and regional security where the outreach of the state is limited. Doing so facilitates vertical linkages between the state and community for security governance, and horizontal linkages between individuals and communities comprised of extensive kinship systems by taking primary responsibility for individuals released back into communities.¹¹

The third shift acknowledges radicalization as relational vis-à-vis the state and NSAGs. In this relationship, ideology becomes perceived as radical when a method to achieving its political aim is a non-state actor resorting to using “illegitimate violence” with the state applying “legitimate use of violence” in return. These dynamics shape group identities, harden positions and limit space to renegotiate social contracts. It is precisely this limiting space for peace settlements that increases expedited peace through ill-informed DDR mandates.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Any policy that integrates DDR and CVE must take into account that foreign fighter reintegration will occur within regions where radicalized groups are operating and need to be adapted to countries of return outside the West.

- In many cases, a stated goal of DDR is to break command-and-control structures through dissolution or disbandment of armed groups. In cases where legitimate grievances exist and political agency is necessary, conflict analysis and DDR risk assessments should explicitly examine when armed group transformation into political entities is a preferred DDR and CVE reintegration outcome. The transformation of the PALIPEHUTU (FNL) in Burundi into a political wing deserves further examination, as well as cases like Tajikistan, where security sector integration and the retained command-and-control relationships enhanced peacebuilding.
- DDR efforts may harness individual reinsertion support to sever ties between former commanders and combatants. Preconditions need to incorporate conditions whereby individuals, and society, may benefit from CVE approaches fostering continued contact between commanders and former fighters exercising their civic duty in non-violent means. Policy makers and researchers may consider looking at cases like Namibia, where veterans' associations provide political space to air and address former fighters' grievances.
- Current CVE policy and approaches focus attention on reintegration of foreign fighters once they return to the West. Any policy that integrates DDR and CVE must take into account that foreign fighter reintegration will occur within regions where radicalized groups are operating and, therefore, need to be adapted to countries of return outside the West.
- DDR pays scant attention to mobilization and remobilization as measurements of success in DDR. In reframing DDR and CVE as a preventative tool, an examination of metrics of success should be linked to issues of recidivism, mobilization and preventing remobilization as indicators of success.

Conclusion

Research and policy development for CVE and DDR linkages for reintegrating foreign fighters lags far behind policy, and even further behind practice. Major UN and bilateral entities are focused on “classic” approaches that may integrate security and development outcomes, but are not adapted to contemporary conflict dynamics and emerging

caseloads associated with terrorism and violent extremism. While well intentioned, these entities are not well resourced to research and develop policy around third-generation dynamics that explicitly recognize the need to integrate CVE, deradicalization and DDR approaches for foreign fighters that will reintegrate overseas and in regions where radicalization continues to proliferate. The result is the application and expedience of classic DDR as exemplified in first- and second-generation approaches in environments where counterterrorism and CVE require attention.

In effect, there is a monetization of DDR in areas of the world where radical extremism and agendas continue to take root. This is occurring globally, and is not contained to a specific region or continent. Cases across the Sahel, in Kosovo and Ukraine, the Philippines, Afghanistan and Colombia, as well as northern, central and western Africa exemplify this fact. This points to a need to approach DDR and CVE through a preventative lens, rather than a narrow post-conflict and peacebuilding one. This raises the question not of whether DDR has a place in the future of peacebuilding and CVE, but rather where?

In moving forward with reintegration for foreign fighters, the CVE approach for DDR candidates includes a shift from socio-economic reintegration as having primacy to social cohesion as a precondition for CVE. This is informed by the phenomenon of well-educated youth from middle-income families in the West voluntarily joining groups such as the Islamic State. The Rome Memorandum identifies 25 good practices for CVE and foreign fighter reintegration, although it addresses foreign fighters from the West, returning to the West.¹² DDR and CVE policy needs to be explicit by acknowledging that the majority of foreign fighters undertaking DDR will not be doing so in the West, but rather in areas where re-recruitment, remobilization and recidivism can negatively impact DDR.

An incumbent shift includes the notion of political agency in DDR and CVE. Operating under the assumption that radical ideologies are relational and can be reversed over time, third-generation political reintegration addresses legitimate grievance through transformative processes of NSAGs. In this framework, the linkages in DDR and CVE will necessarily address the structural causes of conflict, rather than offer remedial short-term solutions handed down through a legally binding Security Council mandate. Taken together, these elements can inform a new generation in emergent DDR and CVE policy.

About the SSR 2.0 Briefs

The *SSR 2.0 Briefs* are intended to advance second-generation approaches to SSR that seek to overcome the challenges and deficiencies encountered by orthodox SSR approaches. The series offers a venue to present new ideas, approaches, and strategies. Authors are encouraged to adopt innovative positions and break new ground in their briefs.

Series Editor – Mark Sedra

Series Coordinator – Antoine

Vandemoortele



Centre for Security Governance

85 Edwin St., Unit 1

Kitchener, Ontario

N2H 4N7

Canada

Phone: 226-241-8744

Email: info@secgovcentre.org

The Centre for Security Governance (CSG) is a non-profit, non-partisan think tank dedicated to the study of security transitions in fragile, failed and conflict-affected states, a process also known as security sector reform (SSR). A registered charity based in Kitchener, Canada, the CSG maintains a global network of research fellows from a variety of backgrounds, including practitioners, research analysts and academics, as well as partner organizations from the public and private sector engaged in SSR issues.

Notes

1. Robert Muggah, "Next-Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration." *World Politics Review*, June 17 2014, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13862/next-generation-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration>
2. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Multi Year Results Framework*, 2013, http://issuu.com/undp/docs/undp_cpr_myrf_2013
3. United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Centre, *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards*, 2005, <http://www.unddr.org/iddrs.aspx>.
4. Bangsomoro Framework Agreement, 2012, <http://www.secgovcentre.org/files/www/framework-agreement-for-the-bangsomoro-2012.pdf>
5. Jonathan Masters, "CFR Backgrounders: Al-Shabab." Council on Foreign Relations, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabab/p18650>
6. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan National Security Council, "The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP)." Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, 2010.
7. The reference to "humanitarian benefits" depicts a first-generation response in southern Africa where the DDR caseload was intermingled with caseloads of returnees. As such, benefits were governed by packages of assistance provided to those mandated to be supported by the UNHCR. While some skills training efforts did occur, there was scant attention to reintegration. In modern DDR programs, these "packages" are framed as Transitional Support Allowance; usually allotted along with training during "reinsertion." This occurs during the demobilization phase of DDR.
8. UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in Peace Operations*, January 2010, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/2GDDR_ENG_WITH_COVER.pdf.
9. Oliver Kaplan and Enzo Nussio, "Explaining Recidivism of Ex-Combatants in Colombia", October 2014, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2350318
10. Véronique Dudouet, *Mediating Peace with Proscribed Armed Groups*. USIP, 2010, www.usip.org/publications/mediating-peace-proscribed-armed-groups.
11. Interview with Daniel Ladoucer, Project Manager, Joint UN Youth for Change Somalia, United Nations Development Programme, New York, March 2015.
12. The Washington Institute, *Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returning and Foreign Terrorist Fighters*, PolicyWatch 2376, February 2015.