

What is the Best Way to Deal With Former Combatants in Order to Ensure Peace?

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PHIL BROWN, MAY 23 2012

The best way to deal with former combatants to ensure peace is through comprehensive Reintegration programmes which engage most, if not all, former combatants (UN(1998)-cited by Muggah,R,(2005),pp.243). Throughout this essay I shall draw on examples from two attempts at DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) in Sierra Leone to make a normative argument as to what comprehensive reintegration programmes ought to include. By critically analyzing the reintegration phase of these DDR programmes, I conclude that reintegration programmes ought to address the root causes of war (Peters,K,(2007),pp.39) and provide long/short-term security for former combatants. To achieve this I shall explore the conceptual framework on which this argument is built, identifying that these reforms are a part of the maximalist paradigm of DDR transitions. Following this I shall observe that it is of fundamental importance that reintegration efforts aim to address the 'root causes' of war and explore the important role which context can have on peace processes. Subsequent to this this I argue for the importance that reintegration efforts ought to address the long and short-term security of former combatants. Lastly, I argue that the short-term security of former combatants is of fundamental importance when reinserting former combatants into society to secure peace (Özerdem,(2004), pp.510;Kostner,M,(2001)-cited by Özerdem,(2004),pp.510). In conclusion I shall argue that the best way to 'deal with' former combatants to ensure peace is through comprehensive reintegration programmes which address the 'root causes' of war and provide former combatants with long and short-term security (Peters,K,(2007),pp.39).

Prior to my empirical argument for comprehensive reintegration programmes it is important to establish the conceptual framework on which this is built. The literature surrounding the subject of DDR presents two approaches to DDR processes – minimalist and maximalist (or Demilitarisation and War to Peace programmes[1]). The former are concerned with disarmament for short-term security, whereas the latter aim towards development, reconstruction and peacebuilding (Muggah,R,(2004), pp.27–cited in Willibald,S,(2006),pp.319); Özerdem, A,(2004),pp.500). As such, it is clear that any DDR programmes which aim towards addressing root causes and providing long/short-term security for former combatants conceptually coheres with maximalist DDR processes. Therefore, when arguing for comprehensive reintegration programmes this is to be understood within the paradigm of maximalist DDR transitions. Furthermore this essay is premised on the necessity to include former combatants in the peace process to reduce security risks (Kai-Kai,F,(2000),pp.113). Therefore, I intend for reintegration to be understood as a cross-society phenomenon, involving Combatants, Civil Society, NGOS, and the relevant Governments, thereby making peace more likely through ensuring that all affected parties are united in its processes (Ayissi,A Poulton,R,E,(2000),pp.5,8; Squire,C,(2000),pp.50).

Having established this conceptual framework I shall turn to examples from Sierra Leone's civil war to explore the importance of addressing root causes when 'dealing with' former combatants to ensure peace. The root causes of Sierra Leone's Civil war have been identified as: political and social injustices, mass poverty, insecurity and illiteracy (Alie,J,A, D(2000),pp.34; Peters,K,(2007),pp.37; Humphreys,M,Weinstein,J,M,(2004),pp.33). It is argued that there was an implicit need within reintegration programmes to address the above mentioned causes of war (Colletta,N,Kostner,M,Wiederhofer,I,(1996a),pp.18–cited by Özerdem, (2004),pp.501 ;Foray,M, (2000), pp.100). Therefore DDR processes in Sierra Leone ought to have addressed these root causes, however the various DDR attempts in Sierra Leone had limited and varying levels of success in regards to addressing the aforementioned root

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causes; many former combatants were left in similar economic and social situations as they were pre-war (Humphreys,M,Weinstein,J,M, (2004),pp.33; Foray,M, (2000),pp.103). This is important for the future of peace in Sierra Leone as many former combatants claim that their pre-war socio-economic situations to be justification – or contributing factors – for their involvement of the war (Peters,K,(2007),pp.37). Therefore, for an enduring peace root causes need to be addressed by reintegration efforts as this is likely to prevent former combatants continuing their struggle anew. It is important to note that while this essay focuses on socio-economic root causes, I would maintain that wherever possible all types of root causes should be addressed by reintegration efforts. In short, addressing root causes should be an explicit aim of comprehensive reintegration packages, thereby 'dealing with' former combatants to ensure peace by attempting to remove the conditions which led to war, thereby reducing the likelihood of future warfare.

Therefore, it is clear that addressing the root causes of war is an important aspect of reintegration programmes when 'dealing with' former combatants to ensure peace. However, it is important to understand what factors can make an impact on this reintegration process. Context is an important factor for reintegration programmes as the Sierra Leonean civil war demonstrates. The context surrounding the Abidjan and Lomé Accords directly contributed to the (limited) success of the latter's DDR programmes. It is commonly held, that the futility of continuing warfare after the Lomé Accord (1999) led combatants to give up their arms and reintegrate into society in greater numbers than following the Abidjan Accord(1996) – 47,781 to 3183 respectively (Kargbo,A,(2000), pp.42/48; Squire,C,(2000),pp.59/63;UNDDR,pp.9; Peters,K,(2011),pp.179). As such, while it is important that root causes should be addressed in DDR transitions, it is imperative that this should be attempted when there is a common feeling that the fighting should end – or reintegration efforts might fail (as evidenced by the failure of the Abidjan Accords DDR efforts, leading to further warfare (Foray,M,(2000),pp.105)). If reintegration efforts are attempted at a time of public support this would increase the chances of securing peace (Foray,M,(2000),pp.107). Therefore, it is clear that context is an important factor for reintegration programmes however if the context surrounding the reintegration efforts is conducive to successful reintegration, former combatants can be 'dealt with' in such a way which leads to peace.

Having established the need for context specific reintegration programmes which address the root causes of war, I shall now explore the important factor of former combatants' long-term security. Reintegration has to address former combatants' economic and security concerns, if reintegration is to successfully lead to peace (Foray,M,(2000),pp.107; Peters,K,(2007),pp.39). Ownership of a gun, and belonging to militias offered security and economic gain for combatants in Sierra Leone (Willibald,S,(2006),pp.319; Özerdem,(2004,pp.505). Therefore, it is implicit that reintegration efforts ought to replace this security over the long-term, thereby encouraging former combatants to 'buy' into society, promoting long-term peace. With this in mind it is important to note that the Lomé Accord's DDR programme was more successful than Abidjan's (UNDDR,pp.9) – in part due to the willingness to pursue peace (Kargbo,A,(2000),pp.42/48; Squire, C,(2000),pp.59/63), but also through attempting – and occasionally succeeding (Humphreys,M, Weinstein,J,M, (2004),pp.35) – to offer former combatants long-term security through reintegration processes (Kai-Kai,F(2000),pp.120). Long-term security is a necessary step towards dealing with former combatants allowing former combatants to give up their arms and embrace civil society. This could help build peace in their community through establishing mutual relations of trust. As such reintegration processes ought to address former combatants' long-term security, thereby successfully 'dealing with' former combatants' security needs subsequently increasing the chances of peace.

Having highlighted that reintegration programmes ought to secure former combatants' long term security I shall now argue how failing to do so can potentially affect the peace building process. The reintegration programme following the Lomé Accord had no coordination (Foray,M,(2000), pp. 103) thereby limiting its success. However it did attempt to offer material and physical security to former combatants over a sustained period through job provision, economic safety, and education (Kai-Kai,F,(2000),pp.123;Peters,K,(2007),pp.40/41). However, this reintegration process offered training for an insufficient amount of time, and only offered limited jobs for former combatants (Kai-Kai,F,(2000),pp.123; Humphreys,M, Weinstein,J,M,(2004),pp.4/33-34). Subsequently this limited the success of the reintegration process by limiting how qualified former combatants could be (Peters,K,(2007), pp.44/48/49; Humphreys,M, Weinstein,J,M,(2004), pp.34-36). This limitation has affected the employability of former combatants, and in some cases left former combatants with no choice but to return to the bush (Foray,M,(2000),pp.105).

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Subsequently, some former combatants have been left in pre-war conditions making future conflict more likely (Foray, M., (2000), pp.107). Therefore, to ensure peace it is imperative that reintegration efforts accommodate former combatants' long-term security. It is important to note that addressing root causes, however defined, would aid former combatants' long-term security, thereby making peace more likely. As such, addressing root causes can generate the desired long-term security for former combatants by removing the conditions which led to war.

Having established that reintegration programmes should secure former combatants' long-term security, I shall also argue the same for short-term security. If reintegration is to be initially successful there is a need for reintegration processes to be predicated upon short-term reinsertion packages encouraging combatants to leave their commanders (Özdem, (2004), pp.506). This would provide security for former combatants allowing their initial integration into the community (Kostner (2001), pp.1 – cited by Özdem, (2004), pp.510). In Sierra Leone this short-term reinsertion package took the form of a cash injection of \$300 spread out at different stages of the reintegration process (Kai-Kai, F., (2000), pp.119; Willibald, S., (2006), pp.322; Özdem, (2004), pp.510) subsequently easing the burden upon the community for returning former combatants (Özdem, A., (2004), pp.511). In theory and practice this ensures social and business interactions between former combatants and their local communities (Willibald, S., (2006), pp.322-326). Cash injections to former combatants can have a twofold beneficial effect[2]. Firstly they can help former combatants with immediate security concerns, such as food and shelter (Willibald, S., (2006), pp.323). Secondly, through trade mutually beneficial relationships can be established; in Sierra Leone any ill feelings between former combatants and their new communities did not prevent trade, thereby benefiting both parties. (Tefamichael, Ball, Nenon, (2004), pp.54 – cited by (Willibald, S., (2006), pp.327). Therefore, to counteract the loss of security from disarmament and demobilisation (Willibald, S., (2006), pp.319; Özdem, (2004), pp.505) it is important to offer short-term security packages to help former combatants start their initial reintegration into society. Reintegration is not an easy process, however securing short-term security for former combatants is crucial (Kostner, (2001), pp.1-Cited by Özdem, (2004), pp.510). If this short-term security takes the form of a cash injection, this can induce a relationship between former combatants and their host communities, therefore securing efforts to build peace through improving civil society giving former combatants a chance to 'buy back' into society (Lappia, R., (2000), pp.130).

Through using examples from the Abidjan and Lomé Accords' reintegration programmes in Sierra Leone I have argued that the best way to 'deal with' former combatants to ensure peace is through comprehensive reintegration processes. I have argued that reintegration processes ought to address the root causes of war, and to provide former combatants with long and short-term security. I have achieved this by arguing from the position that addressing the needs of former combatants is directly related to the chances of building an enduring peace. By addressing these root causes it is hoped that a stable social base can be secured, upon which peace can be built. Furthermore it is important to note that addressing the root causes of war can also help the long and short-term security of Former combatants. I have demonstrated the importance of former combatants' short-term security, thereby arguing that the use of reinsertion cash payments is beneficial to the reintegration process for two reasons: firstly by facilitating short-term security for former combatants, and secondly by encouraging economic activity and mutual bonds of reciprocal trust between former combatants and their new communities.

In conclusion therefore, the best way to 'deal with' former combatants to ensure peace is through comprehensive reintegration programmes. I have shown that these reintegration programmes ought to explicitly address the 'root causes' of the war. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that these reintegration processes ought to provide long and short-term security for former combatants, and this is to be benefited by the use of cash reinsertion payments. Reintegration is the most crucial aspect of DDR programmes and it is therefore important that when 'dealing with' former combatants policy makers ought to conceptualise the DDR process as a maximalist process, with its implicit long-term goals of peace building. If the above is adhered to then comprehensive reintegration processes would be the best way to 'deal with' former combatants to ensure a lasting peace.

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[1] The two sets of labels are not equivalent, but similar in scope, therefore for the purposes of this essay shall be grouped together.

[2] this essay cannot discuss the pros and cons of cash transfers in depth. For an overview of the debate consult (Willibald, S. (2006), pp.322).

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