Pathways to Post-Liberal Peacebuilding: A Reconceptualization through Comparative Analysis

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Pathways to Post-Liberal Peacebuilding: 
A Reconceptualization through Comparative Analysis

A Thesis Submitted by 
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to the 
Political Science Department at the American University in Cairo 
Graduate Program 
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Brief Bio

Norhan Amin is a Program Associate on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration at the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA), focusing on the UN Approach to DDR, the AU approach on the interlinkage between DDR and countering violent extremism, as well as the implementation of screening, prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (SPRR) of individuals formerly associated with terrorist groups in Africa. Through her work at CCCPA, Amin has supported key training and capacity-building activities on DDR in asymmetrical contexts, and community violence reduction (CVR), in addition to country/region-specific research, analysis, and capacity building (South Sudan, Nigeria, Sahel & Lake Chad Basin regions). Amin also has field experience in different contexts relating to her work on traditional DDR, DDR in contexts of terrorism, and SPRR, including in South Sudan, Colombia, and Nigeria.
Chapter I: Thesis Introduction - Conceptualizing Peacebuilding Approaches Amidst a Changing Conflict Landscape

Background

Following the Cold War, practitioners and theorists have been posed with a changing and rapidly evolving conflict landscape, calling into question traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to establish the extent to which they are effective, and are evolving to remain fit for purpose (Bercovitch and Jackson 2009, 8). The rise of intrastate as opposed to interstate conflicts – mostly common up to the Cold War era – are a prime example of this changing landscape. Characterized by the proliferation of non-state actors and armed groups, the growing nexus between conflict, organized crime, and terrorism, and the confluence of issues of identity, and not just territorial disputes, this changing nature of conflicts will be discussed in more detail, specifically within the literature review; with a specific focus on the New Wars Theory put forth by Mary Kaldor. In addition to this changing nature, incidents of recurring conflicts have also been on the rise. Studies show “about half of all conflict episodes between 1989 and 2018 have recurred.” Furthermore, almost 20% of them have relapsed into conflict three or more times, calling for a need to effectively deal with individuals and communities coming out of conflict and ensure they are not driven back to violence (Jarland et al. 2020).

Simultaneously, the discipline of international relations and consequently the dynamics of the international order had entered a liberal era, whereby democracy, rule of law, and market economics appeared to be the gateway for sustainable peace in post-armed conflict and transitional contexts. International interventions reflected this consensus, giving rise to the “standard treatment method.” For years, the long-standing “standard
“treatment” had been the primary tool employed by the international community to establish peace. More specifically, the standard treatment refers to the set of norms that have been adopted post-1990 to deal with conflicts, most notably: “mediation as an expected and preferred international response to civil war and the use of peacekeepers to implement any agreement reached through mediation” (Gowan and Stedman 2018, 172). Therefore, this method is perceived to consolidate peace by creating a process through which parties can reach a settlement and agreement over differences through conflict resolution tools, such as mediation.

Notwithstanding the shift in conflicts and increased relapse to violence, there has been an evolution in the type of rhetoric for explaining the dynamics of conflicts, actors involved, and peacebuilding processes. What is sometimes called the “fourth generation of peace operations” puts forward the notion of peacebuilding as a complement to the longstanding standard treatment (Kenkel 2013, 132). Moreover, concepts such as conflict transformation and stabilization have become evermore prominent in the discourse on post-conflict reconstruction and development, as well as peacebuilding. Together, this amalgam of literature, concepts, and processes will serve as the basis of which this research will try to unpack.

In response to the many challenges posed by ongoing and prolonged conflicts, the international community, spearheaded most of the time by the United Nations (UN), has developed tools to address issues of armed conflict, transitional phases, power-sharing, and post-armed conflict endeavors through intervention. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants in armed conflict is one of these tools. DDR has become especially important as it addresses the prevalence of armed groups, combatants,
and militias as actors/parties to many current conflicts. As it evolved, it began to address the communities within which most of these ex-combatants would surely return. The DDR process includes activities and interventions to be taken before, during, and after the conflict (or existing mediation processes) to ensure an effective transition to peace.

Equally important to note is that the departure of these processes, including DDR, is anchored - to a great extent – in value-laden conceptions. Most notably, the “democratic peace” or “liberal peace” rhetoric formed a consensus within the international community that for peace to be sustainable, countries in post-armed conflict and transitional contexts should adopt liberal values, specifically through the processes of political institutionalization and economic liberalization (Kenkel 2013, 133). Yet, these mechanisms had been, more often than not, characterized by strong external involvement and more recently contested and critiqued for being conflict and context insensitive, with intrusive international engagement blurring the actual goals and outcomes of these interventions, and at times undermining national ownership (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2007, 492). This has come to be known in the theoretical realm as liberal peacebuilding.

Alternatively, some critics of liberal peacebuilding have developed a different rhetoric or theory, framing it as post-liberal peacebuilding; the nuances of which to be defined in greater detail in the next chapter. One main proposition of post-liberal peacebuilding theory is the imperative of enhancing local agency and ownership in peace processes rather than adopting one-size-fits-all and standard approaches, most notably found within liberal peacebuilding notions. In principle, this new lens considers a localized perspective to peacebuilding, with a bottom-up approach that is also coordinated with the global (Richmond 2011, 3). Clearly, this shift in the rhetoric of peacebuilding, from liberal
to post-liberal signals a shift in the toolbox of peacebuilding as well; whereby tools, such as DDR, witnessed an evolution of one generation to the other to respond to the changing landscape as well as the recognition of putting national and local community priorities and needs at the fore.

Accordingly, this research aims to evaluate the sustainability of peacebuilding through DDR implementation, and the merit of adopting post-liberal peacebuilding approaches to practical interventions. It focuses on the evolution of DDR as a response to changing conflict dynamics and as an integral tool for peace processes and peacebuilding efforts, amidst a changing theoretical narrative on peacebuilding – one leaning away from liberal approaches, and towards more post-liberal and adaptive peacebuilding approaches. As such, it seeks to answer the following questions: Can the theoretical shift to post-liberal peacebuilding invigorate localized peacebuilding processes, and thus reshape the tools applied to become more effective in achieving sustainable peace? Consequently, how can DDR processes lead to more sustainable peacebuilding, from a post-liberal and adaptive peacebuilding lens?

The hypothesis tries to measure the sustainability factors of peacebuilding, specifically after the implementation of DDR in (post-)conflict settings. I base my argument on the premise that the more localized, participatory, and contextualized DDR processes are, specifically concerning the reintegration component, the more sustainable peacebuilding will be. To test this hypothesis, I first trace the shift in peacebuilding paradigms within the relevant literature, from liberal to post-liberal, signifying how post-liberal and adaptive peacebuilding premised on contextualized and participatory approaches can lead to more sustainable peace. After this, I investigate how DDR as a tool...
of these peacebuilding paradigms is implemented by examining two different cases with a history of DDR attempts: Colombia (2016 – present) and Liberia (2003 – 2009). Through this examination, I delve deeper into nuanced, contextualized and innovative DDR processes (those embedded in community needs and priorities from a post-liberal peacebuilding lens) that may lead to more sustainable peacebuilding efforts as opposed to more formal DDR processes grounded in liberal peacebuilding approaches. Although the DDR process is still underway in Colombia, the study will contrast current implementation efforts with earlier DDR endeavors of the 1980s and early 2000s. It will also track the measurements of the success of peacebuilding in Colombia in the present day by analyzing perceptions of ex-combatants compared to previous attempts.

**Literature Review**

“The application of approaches to ending conflict create and recreate a particular international order, it is ever more apparent that how we think about ‘peace,’ ‘conflict, ‘war’ and ‘order’ and how they are created or sustained is a crucial global issue.” – Oliver P. Richmond in Maintaining Order, Making Peace? Rethinking Approaches to Ending Conflict

This review aims to lay the grounds for critical concepts and definitions in which the rest of the research will be anchored. This includes defining what conflicts are and outlining their evolving nature. It will also explore the literature available on the genesis of peacebuilding, its intended outcomes and the tools available to achieve them - underlining the change in the trajectory of its tools, such as DDR. Accordingly, the literature on DDR and its evolution will be reviewed. After this, the contribution of this study and its methodology will be presented.
Defining Conflict & its Evolving Nature

This first section aims to unpack the meaning of conflicts, and how they have evolved and changed in characteristics over the years. Grounding this definition within the research ensures that subsequent sections reflect this evolution.

The most widely known definition of conflicts has been the “incompatible interactions between two or more parties who aspire to different means, goals, interests, and thus interfere in hindering the prospects of the other group” (Miller and King 2005). Conflicts can be either manifest or latent. A manifest conflict is characterized by active actions and behaviors done by the parties to the conflict. A latent conflict is inactive, leading to issues that are embedded within the systems or institutional arrangements (Miller and King 2005). The conflict, in this case, becomes embedded in structural weaknesses and grievances that may be prolonged.

According to Wallensteen and Heldt, as well as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program in Sweden, armed conflict usually concerns the government and territory where parties of a conflict initiate the use of armed force over an incompatibility (Gleditsch et al. 2002, 617; UCDP Definitions). Armed conflict is thus denoted as “state-based conflict” rather than “non-state conflict,” which does not include the government (UCDP Definition). Within this definition, a certain threshold of deaths must be accumulated due to violent events to be defined as a conflict; at times also referred to as ‘war.’ Within this framework, a conflict resulting in at least twenty-five deaths in one year and not more than 1,000 deaths in the entire conflict is described as a small armed conflict (UCDP Definitions). Accordingly, medium-sized armed conflicts would result in more than 1,000 deaths in total but less than 1,000 in a single year (UCDP Definitions).
Alternatively, another widely disseminated definition of armed conflict, or war, was presented by David Singer and Melvin Small through their project “Correlates of War (COW)” which aims at consolidating statistical data available on wars since 1816 (Singer 1972, 243). According to Singer and Small, a violent conflict with at least 1,000 killed combatants per year falls within their definition. This quantitative approach followed by COW, the Uppsala Program, Wallensteen and Heldt, can become controversial, since it may not consider the economic, social and cultural impacts of conflict - the latent nature of the conflict. Yet, assuming that a quantitative differentiation of the level of intensity is made, including the kinds of groups involved, the amount of violence they have inflicted, and the number of deaths within each group, one may be able to map a clear and slightly comprehensive picture about the conflict and the requisite responses.

Delving into a more qualitative approach to defining armed conflicts, some argue that there is no agreed-upon mechanism or authority to define and classify armed conflicts in the international community. However, many States have taken the initiative within the larger international community to assume responsibility. As a result, a qualitative definition emerged. Armed conflicts became classified as either international or non-international (UNODC Module 2018). According to the Geneva Conventions, two factors determine an armed conflict as international. These factors are the legal status of the belligerent parties to the conflict (usually states), and the nature of the military confrontation between them (e.g., declared war, partial or total occupation of the territory of a State party to the Geneva Conventions) (UNODC Module 2018). Yet, for the purpose of this research, the terms interstate or intrastate will be used instead of international or non-international; since intrastate conflicts - although not conducted between two different states - can have
international-like characteristics. I will delve deeper into this distinction regarding the increased regionalization and internationalization of civil wars and intrastate conflicts.

With the evolution of conflict, intrastate armed conflicts have become more prevalent according to Kaldor’s explanation of the New Wars’ Thesis (2013a, 2013b). This type of armed conflict can take place between state armed forces and non-state actors that are usually organized armed group(s), or several organized armed groups versus each other. This blurs the lines between official soldiers and civilians, ex-combatants and veterans, as well as intrastate conflicts and civil wars. The organization of these parties to the conflict falls on different premises, which are: the hierarchical structure within the group, chain of command, operational and recruitment capacity, commander control of group members, as well as control over territory (ICRC Handout 2017).

In particular, since the 1990s, the number of intrastate armed conflicts, many of which are characterized as civil wars, has tripled (Bosetti et al. 2017, 4). Studies also show that “about half of all conflict episodes between 1989 and 2018 have recurred,” and almost 20% have relapsed into conflict three or more times (Jarland et al. 2020, 2). Additionally, with the increase in intrastate conflicts, other characteristics of conflict have also begun to change. Unlike in the early and mid-1990s, conflicts began to become more regionalized and/or internationalized, including an extensive - and new - array of non-state armed groups, as well as the involvement of external actors, making them unwilling to engage in political solutions (Bosetti et al. 2017, 4). Starting as internal conflicts, many develop to take on regional and international implications and characteristics, becoming more protracted and hindering prospects for sustainable solutions.
Armed groups are also becoming increasingly engaged in criminal activity, underscoring a nexus between conflict and organized crime. The interlinkages between conflict and organized crime undermine state legitimacy, create avenues for armed groups to sustain themselves and lower their incentives to enter into political settlements (Bosetti et al. 2017, 4). The transnational nature of organized crime has further exacerbated the impact of this nexus, with groups exploiting the vulnerability caused by conflict to engage in illicit activities such as illegal trafficking of weapons, drugs, and natural resources across borders and throughout regions (Assanvo et al. 2019, 6). This has direct implications on the streams of funding some of these groups tend to acquire, in addition to their recruitment capacity; with many offering material benefits to those who choose to join the group. Additionally, as conflicts continue to destabilize societies and undermine state institutions and governance capacities, some groups take on roles in the provision of services and protection; legitimizing their presence in the territories over which they gained control. Ultimately, this reshapes the dynamic and social contract between the populations, armed groups and national or state governments.

This evolution of conflict is widely discussed within the premise of Kaldor’s *New Wars* theory, in which she differentiates between the wars taking place before the Cold War - the *old wars* - and the new form of warfare that has become different in nature: more politicized and identity-driven.¹ New wars also differ from old wars in the kind of actors, goals, methods and forms of finance that are used (Kaldor 2013a, 2). They have also leveraged and capitalized on transnational networks, engaging in a wide range of violent

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¹ Other scholars argue that new wars are fundamentally different from old wars in that they are distinguished as criminal, rather than political. See Stathis N. Kalyvas, “New and Old Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?”.  

illicit activities, including “looting, pillaging, and hostage-taking; establishing checkpoints to control the flow of necessities and charging “customs duties;” “taxation” of humanitarian aid; and, of course, transnational crime” (Kaldor 2013b, 125).

Some of these changes have also been a result of significant vital developments in the nature of armed groups involved in the conflict, as well as the increasing fragmentation of many of them (DPO 2021, 5-7). The motives guiding the armed groups, and their *modus operandi*, as a result, have become increasingly diverse, with the premises mentioned above fluctuating from one group to another. Additionally, post-armed conflict and transitional settings become increasingly vulnerable to the repercussions of the nexus between conflict and organized crime, and the engagement of armed groups in organized criminal activities; further undermining state institutions and structures (Bosetti et al. 2017, 4). For example, groups engaging in illicit activities may continue to do so in order to sustain their stream of funding. Alternatively, individuals living under the control of some of these groups may be skeptical of political settlements, undermining the actual prospects this may have for achieving peace and security. Efforts aimed at any political settlements, and hence a peacebuilding process, are faced with a challenge in dealing with such groups.

Accordingly, Kaldor argues that new wars can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from organized crime and large-scale violations, becoming increasingly transnational in nature that it is difficult to discern a conflict as either internal or external (Kaldor 1999, 2; Shaw 2000, 172). Terms such as “post-modern wars” and “privatized wars” have also been proposed by scholars, signaling a shift in the way conflicts take place, how they are defined, and ultimately what responses should be applied (Kaldor 2013a, 4). According to Kaldor, and as a grounding framework for the rest of this study, conflicts increasingly became
viewed within a new “globalized war economy” where internationalized western-global interventions have become an integral part of responses. Yet, its consequences are not only internal but take on a transnational nature; extending to the neighboring regions, spreading conflict, displacing populations, and giving room for organized crime to expand.

Furthermore, new wars increasingly tend to revolve around power and identity; claiming power on the basis of affiliation to a particular national, religious, tribal, or ethnic group, and the list goes on. This is primarily also due to the change in the mode of warfare within these contexts. Building on guerilla warfare and counterinsurgency strategies, new wars, Kaldor argues, rely on political control of populations rather than military battles, to control large swaths of land; using violence to control people and territory politically (Kaldor 2013b, 121). Accordingly, this framework will be specifically relevant as this research unpacks the premises of adaptive and post-liberal peacebuilding, as a result of the changing conflict landscape and the emergence of new wars that require a change in the toolbox that addresses them. It is also essential throughout the analysis of the case of Liberia and Colombia, as I trace the different armed groups involved in each conflict, motivation and modus operandi, and therefore the kind of nuanced efforts needed to respond and address these peculiarities in a contextualized manner.

**Avenues for Peace Building**

1. **Conceptualizing Peacebuilding and its Outcomes**

The conceptual understanding of peacebuilding, and its associated processes, was initiated almost 5 decades ago by Johan Galtung in “Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding” well before the emergence of the new wars’ thesis (Galtung 1976, 297-298). Galtung argues that for a peacebuilding endeavor to
take place, there need to be structures that alleviate tension, address and possibly remove
the drivers to conflict and root causes, or offer alternatives to violence. Galtung and John
Paul Lederach both lay the foundation for the understanding of peacebuilding processes

Lederach outlines peacebuilding as a comprehensive and integrated process,
whereby peace is a “dynamic social construct” that evolves and transforms over time
(Lederach 1997, 20). Accordingly, peacebuilding - as a holistic and multi-faceted approach
- should be a set of ongoing processes of change; transforming behavior, relations, systems
and ultimately conflict. In this regard, “cultivating an infrastructure for peacebuilding
means that we are not merely interested in ending something that is not desired. We are
oriented toward the building of relationships that in their totality form new patterns,
processes, and structures (Lederach 1997, 84-85).

Additionally, the concept of peacebuilding had also been developed within the UN
system through Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s *Agenda for Peace* in 1992.
Ghali signified rebuilding state institutions, advancing the mutual benefit of peace between
nations, and addressing the root causes of conflict such as economic, social and political
grievances, at the core of achieving sustainable peacebuilding (Boutros-Ghali 1992, 212).
Ever since, the concept of peacebuilding emerged as a key and defining element of
measuring the successful establishment and institutionalization of peace as reinforced in
the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* published in 1995.

Other definitions proposed by David Chandler define peacebuilding as a
mechanism to achieve peace and prevent the relapse of violence through reassembling the
elements of peace (Chandler 2017, 6). These elements of peace are included in different
activities carried out through institutional capacity-building efforts across the state structures, from the political system to health and welfare (Chandler 2017, 6). Some of these activities translate themselves into steps for the reintegration of combatants, human rights, rule of law, elections, free media, truth and reconciliation, etc. (Chandler 2017, 6). These notions are difficult to operationalize, mainly because their definitions differ from one person to the other, and from one context to the other. As a conceptual idea, and similar to Lederach, Chandler also defines peacebuilding as a process not just for ending war, but creating and building relationships in their totality, with new patterns, processes, and structures (Chandler 2015, 81). Peace is made and sustained as a transformative, social construct that is created through an “inclusive societal process” that manifests peace through structures and resources within particular contexts (Chandler 2015, 81).

Since the 1990s, these definitions have been fluid, largely due to the lack of consensus over the intended outcomes of peacebuilding; preventing relapse to violence, or alternatively, realizing a ‘positive peace’ whereby the root causes of violence are addressed as opposed to a ‘negative peace’ where active and open war is not taking place, but root causes are not addressed. Additionally, the evolving nature of conflicts and the emergence of new wars, has in part led to the restructuring of these definitions and the basis on which to measure the success of interventions. A growing tendency to measure peacebuilding according to its success in strengthening democratic institutions was successively reinforced, namely by the UN Security Council’s definition of peacebuilding, as a critical element of sustainable peace (S/PRST/2001/5). This divergence has called into question placing “liberal peace” conceptions as the ultimate goal of peacebuilding and the premise on which conflict resolution and peace settlements are realized (Teran 2007, 3). However,
for years, peacebuilding remained closely tied with preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking - and as an integral process with a diverse set of tools.

2. **The Peacebuilding Toolkit**

While there is extensive literature on the tools of peace processes and peacebuilding, this study will opt from delving into a deep revision of this available literature, and rather provide a brief overview of the most pertinent ones that have taken shape over the years and are relevant to the argument at hand. It will then provide a special focus on DDR as a technical tool of peacebuilding and its evolution into an integral element of peace processes.

*Conflict Resolution: Negotiation and Mediation Between Parties*

Conflict resolution, as a process, is defined by Wallensteen as a “social situation where the armed conflicting parties in a (voluntary) agreement resolve to live peacefully with – or dissolve – their basic incompatibilities and henceforth cease to use arms against one another” (2015, 52). As a result, the parties to the conflict actively decide to cease violent behavior, without relapsing or questioning new social, economic, and political institutions put in place post-armed conflict. A phase of demilitarization follows conflict resolution and is deemed successful if the parties do not pick up arms once more. Bercovitch, Kremenyuk and Zartman propose that conflict resolution, as a discipline, should ideally engage both theory and practice in order to address actual, on-ground conflicts. Consequently, theory and practice need to come into play to decipher an understanding of violence reduction, conflict settlement and management, and synergizing interests in future political processes (Babbitt and Hampson 2011, 46).
Negotiations have been a key mechanism for bringing parties to a conflict to settle their incompatibilities. However, some would argue that the cost of negotiation is a particularly important aspect for parties to the conflict, when deciding whether they should partake in the process (Zartman and Touval 1985, 29). Negotiating, or carrying out a process of bargaining, must offer the parties to a conflict a better advantage – cost – than remaining in the conflict (Cheng, Goodhand and Meehan 2018, 2). The bargaining process can create strong and viable settlements, as well as pacify violence when actual opportunities are dealt with on the negotiating table for parties or elites. Accordingly, they can perceive a gained interest that is consistent with the new power-sharing deals being discussed in the ongoing peace process (Chang, Goodhand and Meehan 2018, 2). As this is pursued, the bargaining and settlement process may be enhanced with a negotiation process, one that the parties alone may not be able to reach (Bercovitch 1997, 130). This could include mediation efforts done by a third party in order to guarantee enforcement of the peace settlement, and negotiation costs are viable, “while raising the costs of noncompliance” (Babbit and Hampson 2011, 48).

Mediation, as a process of conflict management, is a process that takes place in parallel to the parties’ own negotiation efforts (Bercovitch 1997, 30). In this context, parties to a conflict realize the need to seek, or acquiesce to, external support to change existing conflict dynamics and parties’ behaviors without resorting to the use of force. A mediator’s initial role is to strengthen the links between the two sides of a conflict; links that have been nearly destroyed by the conflict (Greig and Diehl 2012, 127). Through this process, the mediator can manage the expectations of the parties, as well as negotiate their goals, bringing a settlement that is acceptable to all (Greig and Diehl 2012, 127).
**Political Settlements**

The changing nature of conflict and growing number of actors involved in a single conflict, including local, national and international representatives from government, NGOs, as well as the UN, has complicated the avenues available to establish peace (Greig and Diehl 2012, 127). Namely, achieving political settlements has become a tricky task. Nevertheless, it remains an essential element for DDR programs. A political settlement is thus “a combination of power and institutions that is mutually compatible and also sustainable in terms of economic and political viability;” achievable through different modes of negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution (Mushtaq 2010, 4). It is able to withstand time and prospects of violent recurrence and must be able to produce institutions that can benefit from the proposed distribution of power, achieving “minimal levels” of both political and economic viability (Mushtaq 2010, 4). It ensures that different parties to the conflict, if they are in fact powerful groups, do not have a reason to revert back into conflict seeking bigger distribution of benefits in the new power-sharing deals established. Political settlements are an integral element of DDR processes, as DDR is typically outlined in the terms of a comprehensive peace agreement. Following the cessation of conflict and as part of a comprehensive framework to build and sustain peace, the characteristics and technicalities of a DDR program are negotiated and laid out during this process.

**DDR as a Peacebuilding Tool**

1. **What is DDR?**

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is “a process through which members of armed forces and groups are supported to lay down their weapons and return
to civilian life” according to the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO). The ultimate objective of DDR is to build a post-conflict environment that entails security and stability, to be able to embark on a process of stabilization, peacebuilding and reconstruction. The DDR process is supposed to be holistic, including political, military, security, humanitarian and socio-economic aspects (UN IAWG 2010, 24). Together, these dimensions shape a framework that enables the cycle of peace, recovery, development and holistic post-conflict reconstruction to take place; hindering the chances for violent relapse (UN IAWG 2010, 25). Traditional DDR programs consist of three elements, as defined by the UN Integrated DDR Standards (revised in 2019):

1. **Disarmament**: the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons from combatants and civilians. This process reduces the capacity of individuals and groups to engage in armed violence, and the potential to return in the long term.

2. **Demobilization**: Formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. This process is at times accompanied by another process named reinsertion, which refers to the transitional assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization and before reintegration. This is a form of short-term material/financial assistance to support individuals in meeting their immediate needs.

3. **Reintegration**: the process by which ex-combatants become civilians and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is a long-term process with an open time frame through which ex-combatants regain civilian life. This is a process
that involves families and communities, including social, economic and political aspects as well.

DDR became an integral component of operations for peacekeeping, under the auspices of the UN and regional organizations, and tries to ensure that armed groups are well-integrated into post-armed conflict environments. Traditional DDR came with a set of four preconditions. As mentioned earlier, the characteristics of a DDR program should be outlined in a peace agreement reached by the parties to the conflict. Therefore, a negotiated ceasefire or peace agreement that provides the framework for DDR, such as the type of assistance ex-combatants would receive, how to collect weapons, eligibility criteria, etc. needs to be reached. This is premised on a second and third precondition, which are trust in the peace process, and willingness of the parties to engage in DDR; if one party is not willing to engage, another party will not trust the process. Fourth, a minimum guarantee of security can facilitate the planning and implementation phases of the process.

2. **The Evolution of DDR Processes**

With more non-state actors, a proliferation of terrorist groups, and the regionalization and transnational nature of conflict, a change in the DDR toolbox applied was imperative.

1. **First generation DDR**: Building on the above, the first generation is the most traditional form of DDR, one that commences after the conflict has reached an end and meets the preconditions required for DDR to take place. Yet, experience and practical implementation have shown how this generation of DDR programs was exclusively focused on the ex-combatants involved (E.g., DDR programs in the 1990s in Angola, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, among others).
2. **Second Generation DDR**: There then came a realization that these combatants are not operating in a vacuum, but the process needs to take into consideration the families of these combatants and the wider community to which they will be returning. To make sure that the communities are ready to receive these combatants coming back, second generation DDR became more attentive to the needs of the communities in which ex-combatants are reintegrating back into.

3. **Third Generation DDR**: In response to the evolving conflict landscape, and because the contexts in which DDR is being implemented have become rapid and volatile (including characteristics of new wars), this generation of DDR expanded its scope of interventions.

As DDR became employed in contexts of new wars, DDR practitioners were forced to deal with ongoing conflict alongside a wide array of other threats, such as organized crime, terrorism, and increased displacement, among others. Therefore, in many situations where DDR is being called upon or being implemented, the preconditions mentioned are no longer met (OROLSI, 2). However, as DDR evolved, it began focusing on not only ex-combatants and communities, but also at-risk youth and militias. With an expanded scope of interventions, a new toolbox of DDR-related tools has been put forth within the revision of the UN IDDRS in 2019. These are tools that could be used before, during or after a DDR program: to provide immediate and targeted responses, including: Pre-DDR, Community Violence Reduction (CVR), Transitional Weapons and Ammunition Management (TWAM), DDR Mediation Support, DDR Support to Transitional Security Arrangements, and Reintegration Support outside of DDR.\(^2\)

\(^2\) This is in reference to the Integrated DDR Standards, which provide direction and guidance to those engaging in DDR.
This highlights the imperative of situating DDR programs and processes within the framework of the peace process. It should especially be linked to broader peacebuilding and stabilization efforts, take a comprehensive approach towards disarmament, and weapons control and management, and be linked to the broader processes of national capacity-building, reconstruction and development in order to achieve the sustainable reintegration of ex-combatants. This is especially important, since the DDR process addresses the potential challenges that arise if ex-combatants are not offered viable alternative livelihoods throughout the transition to the peace process. DDR processes need to also take into consideration the “qualitative differences in the historical, cultural and political contexts” (Berdal and Ucko 2009, 3). These contextual differences include disparities in the organization and leadership of armed groups, ideology, political, social and economic dynamics, self-sufficiency, external interference, and legitimacy of armed groups in the society (Berdal and Ucko 2009, 3). As liberal peacebuilding efforts tried to apply the ‘one size fits all approach’ so did its tool, DDR in its traditional form, before it went into successive evolution processes.

Growing criticism of DDR has taken place in several works of literature. Some deem DDR to be “too narrowly focused, inflexible and technocratic and detached from the political transition or broader recovery and reconstruction strategies” (Muggah 2008, 1). Nonetheless, it is still widely seen as an ambitious attempt to create a transition in post-armed conflict environments into proper reconstruction. This is specifically due to its ability to decrease the tools of violence (both weapons and individuals who can use them), while providing viable alternatives to violence and avenues for community reconciliation and acceptance. It also holds the potential to advance a sustaining peace approach, whereby
it can leverage on its expanded scope of interventions to include processes and activities outside of a formal DDR program. A combination of a formal program, DDR-related tools, and reintegration support outside of a DDR program can all take place in order to create an environment that is more conducive to peace.

**Argument within the Literature**

As will be formulated in greater detail over the next chapter, the critiques of liberal peacebuilding signaled a shift in the way theorists and practitioners view the end goals of the process, as well as the tools fitted to achieve them. Here, this study aims to bridge between theory and practice - an exercise with limited presence in the discipline of IR - by outlining ways theoretical shifts in peacebuilding can influence the implementation of DDR processes and vice versa, and ultimately how understanding the nature of conflict and approaches of ontology can shape both policy and practice.

DDR as an intervention tool falls within the field of peacebuilding that had been for so long orchestrated by liberal peacebuilding theories and actors who are proponents of the same values. It is important to shed light on cases where DDR has been applied to understand how liberalized approaches to peacebuilding have led to unsuccessful (or short-sighted) DDR attempts. Yet, as a shift took place towards contextualized peacebuilding approaches, the implementation of DDR has also evolved. Accordingly, this study will aim to identify pillars of peacebuilding that could be more context-specific and participatory, through already established intervention tools such as DDR with a focus on contextualized, participatory and localized processes for sustainable peacebuilding in conflict-affected settings; explaining how this can take place. This fills an apparent gap in research
acknowledged by both researchers and practitioners in the field, to strengthen links between peace research vis-à-vis policy and practice on the ground.

**Methodological Approach**

For the purpose of this research, the methods that will be used are process tracing and comparative analysis through case studies. Process tracing is used in the social sciences to reveal causal mechanisms between different variables (Beach and Pederson 2013, 1). A causal mechanism is defined as “a complex system, which produces an outcome by the interaction of a number of parts” (Beach and Pederson 2013, 1; Glennan 1996, 52). Therefore, through the use of process tracing, this research will try to define the causal process through which variables interact to produce an outcome and infer causal mechanisms. In this particular research, process tracing will be used to identify the changes in conflict dynamics that may or may not have induced traditional peace processes to take place and have paved the way for DDR as a tool of peacebuilding to take on different forms. This will be done through analyzing the historical processes underway, which bring together a number of actions and events that have led to either more sustainable peacebuilding or unsustained peace. More specifically, this will also shed light on the shift from liberal to post-liberal peacebuilding theory and how it has affected the effectiveness of DDR interventions - including how more contextualized, localized and participatory reintegration processes can result in more viable peace and sustainable peacebuilding processes.

Therefore, this analysis will attempt a two-fold approach: 1) test a theory on post-liberal and adaptive peacebuilding to see the extent to which they are applicable; 2) explain an outcome of a process, which is mainly how more contextualized, localized and
participatory DDR (a practical tool adopting an adaptive peacebuilding approach) has or has not led to more sustainable peacebuilding. This, however, may have shortcomings, since the causal relation between the variables may sometimes be indirect, with intermediate factors taking part in the outcome being observed. Observing how these different elements (of adaptive peacebuilding) play out in the implementation of DDR processes can eventually pave the way to understanding the complex system between these processes in peacebuilding theory.

This attempt will utilize case studies. A case study, according to Gerring, could be referring to a method that has a small-N and qualitative in nature, “the research is ethnographic, clinical, participant-observation, or otherwise in the field, that the research is characterized by process-tracing, that the research investigates the properties of a single case, or that the research investigates a single phenomenon, instance or example (Gerring 2004, 342). Gerring, however, proposes a different, comprehensive definition: “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units.” For the purpose of this study, two case studies will be presented (Liberia and Colombia) to trace the implementation of DDR, and understand the role contextualized, localized and participatory approaches play in sustaining peace. I chose these two case studies in particular because of the resonance they hold on the implementation of DDR, but also the long historical attempts conducted in both contexts that have shaped the way DDR is implemented today and the literature available to describe this implementation.

Liberia, for years, has been the prime example of the earliest DDR interventions of the 1990s, along with similar contexts such as Sierra Leone and Angola – all of which providing a hallmark example on which to draw on for DDR. However, these very
examples, have been the gateway to realize the shortcomings of earlier DDR interventions – ones that were too focused on the ex-combatants than the communities, and the disarmament and demobilization than the actual and effective reintegration process. More specifically, Liberia has embarked on a path to peacebuilding since the end of the armed conflict that has been interesting to many in the same field. This specifically due to the changes that Liberia has witnessed in the peace process, DDR implementation and peace trajectories at large (such as inclusion of ex-combatants versus acceptance, and youth as peacebuilders movements). This positions Liberia within the conceptual framework of this research, as it illustrates the impact all of these processes have on each other, and eventually on the consolidation of peace.

On the other hand, Colombia has also had long and rich historical experience with building peace and implementing DDR (or similar and related processes). However, after the signing of the peace agreement with the FARC in 2016, the rhetoric on building and maintaining peace has changed, and so have its associated processes such as DDR. DDR, peacebuilding and transitional justice, along with other complementary processes, have taken shape after the signature of peace agreement and signal to a turning point in the history of Colombia; which has grappled with conflict for so many decades, and even centuries. Therefore, taking a closer look at how DDR has specifically evolved over the years, and how it is now being reshaped after this turning point will be key in tracing a change in peace trajectories. This will reflect not only in Colombia, but can feed into the broader discussion on achieving sustainable peacebuilding. Through this analysis, I aim to conduct qualitative interviews with relevant researchers or practitioners within these two contexts, or as pertaining to the larger research question to gather detailed data from their
experiences. As a qualitative study, this study will also analyze both primary and secondary sources and literature to compare the two case studies from a historical perspective, and current developments.
Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

With the rise of intrastate conflicts, more often than not taking shape as civil wars, there has been a growing demand for peacebuilding efforts to advance sustainable peace effectively. In reference to the previous chapter, the era following the end of the Cold War witnessed a ‘liberal epoch,’ whereby a growing consensus emerged that democracy, rule of law and market economics are the gateway for sustainable peace in post-armed conflict settings. However, failure to achieve this vision – specifically through different peace operations in the 1990s – has spurred debate over “the value and validity of the liberal peace approach to international interventions” (Campbell, Chandler and Sabaratnam 2011, 1). Consequently, scholars and practitioners alike have embarked on a process to define the parameters of sustainable peacebuilding; deciphering whether this falls on liberal premises, or more nuanced approaches ranging from constructivist to communitarian and critical theory, according to Campbell, Chandler and Sabaratnam (2011). Additionally, some scholars have specifically based their approaches on what they term as post-modern or post-liberal ideas.

While this theoretical debate poses diverse viewpoints on what peacebuilding entails, what its outcomes should be, and the best ways to ensure its sustainability, it is integral to unpack the divergence of these thoughts. This includes taking stock of why a transcendence from adopting liberal peace as the ultimate approach for sustaining peace in post-armed conflict and transitional settings has taken place. Increasingly, the liberal peace approach has been subject to scrutiny by critics who view this approach as inherently universalist — a one-size-fits-all approach — and thus would impede prospects for
peacebuilding that should ideally be contextualized and consulted with local actors (Wall 2018, 1). Critics of the liberal peacebuilding approach, who emphasize a needed ‘local’ turn in peacebuilding, became widely known as proponents of “post-liberal peacebuilding” approaches, among other paradigms (Richmond 2010; Richmond 2011; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013).

Therefore, this chapter aims to outline liberal peacebuilding as a commonly used approach since the 1990s, and how through its practical implementation it has gained critique over its viability, questioning the impact it has on addressing the root drivers of a conflict and sustainable pathways for peace. It will also trace the emergence of a ‘local turn’ in peacebuilding, including the elements that are conducive to sustainable peace as identified by frameworks and paradigms other than the liberal peace theory. This sequence reflects what William Zartman has described in his chapter Conflict Prevention and Management in the book “Peacebuilding Paradigms”, the “reliance on a broad approach to peacebuilding is analogous to building a house to prove the law of gravity, rather than designing it to meet the specifications of terrain, taste, technology, materials and budget” (2020, 94). This section will then square DDR as a peacebuilding tool within this spectrum of paradigms, shifting from a tool of liberal peacebuilding to a critical tool for sustainable peacebuilding that constructs a conducive environment for peace grounded in contextualized assessments.

Liberal Peacebuilding: The Evolution from First to Fourth Generation

Peacebuilding

“Our aims must be ... to stand ready to assist in peacebuilding in its differing contexts: rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and
building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war” – Agenda for Peace, 1992

While there is limited consensus over the definition of what peacebuilding is as a concept, and many scholars have ventured into defining its elements as laid out in the previous chapter, it is widely understood through its presence in Boutros Ghali’s Agenda for Peace as an “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (1992). Thus, it is part of a process to achieve sustainable peace, including through anchoring peace processes in “a long-term framework that addresses the multiple sources of the conflict, including broader structural change, and must include previously marginalized groups and actors” according to Jacob Bercovitch and Richard Jackson (2009, 14). Yet, debates arose on the specific conditions needed to advance sustainable peacebuilding, beginning with defining what the concept of peace is, identifying and addressing the root drivers of conflict, and whether institution-building, statebuilding and social transformation are larger parts of contemporary peacebuilding processes.

The premise on which this field was built has been, for years, widely associated with the liberal peace theory. Primarily, the liberal peace theory argues that democracies are less likely to go to war (Berg 2020, 79). Consequently, liberal peacebuilding, according to critics of its approaches such as Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond (2013), heralds the “democratic peace” or “liberal peace” rhetoric as the main requisite element for sustainable peace. According to this approach, countries in post-armed conflict and transitional contexts should adopt liberal values most notably through the processes of political institutionalization and economic liberalization; unifying states under a similar
belief in democratic values (Kenkel 2013, 133). Given that peacebuilding as a process had also been supported by government and multilateral institutions which carried the same beliefs, it has largely reinforced the idea that peacebuilding aims to create the environment and mechanisms conducive to effective conflict management by promoting liberalization through state- and institution-building (Boutros-Ghali 1992, 15).

This approach was further expanded through the mandates of UN peacekeeping missions and peace operations, initially tasked to ‘keep the peace’ through activities such as ceasefire monitoring and traditional security mandates, among others (Sabartnam 2011, 2; Berg 2020, 80). Over the years, these missions began taking on the role of reestablishing and rebuilding state institutions, such as through reinforcing rule of law and justice, facilitating national, free, fair and transparent elections, as well as larger peacebuilding efforts (Berg 2020, 79-80). As Meera Sabartnam elaborates in the chapter A Liberal Peace? A Brief Intellectual History of International Conflict Management, 1990-2010, these peace operations “began to foreshadow the more comprehensive, multidimensional and transformative operations that would become the hallmark of post-conflict peacebuilding” (2011, 2). As such, various peace operations in the 1990s aimed to facilitate the creation of liberal governments – for example including, but not limited to, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Haiti – but failed to do so (Campbell, Chandler, and Sabartnam 2011, 1). Through these missions, the component of DDR began to take shape as a critical tool to advance peace and limit the recurrence of violence. This is mainly done through disarming warring factions, ensuring individuals are demobilized from their armed groups and reintegrating them back into their societies as law-abiding and productive civilians.
Secondly, it establishes that peace can be achieved through cooperation and partnerships among the international community: both states and international organizations. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the *standard treatment* taking shape as ‘third-party post-war interventions’ was built on this assumption (Sabartnam 2011, 2). This understanding of cooperation positioned the international community as a guard of peace. Notwithstanding the efforts of the UN and the international community in this regard, and as more conflicts were prolonged and characterized by weak state institutions, overstretched structures, and a proliferation of non-state armed groups, there needed to be a shift in the discourse and approach of peacebuilding efforts as outlined above.

In the *Supplement to the Agenda for Peace* published in 1995, the changing nature of conflict and the failure of peace operations to sustain peace were recognized. Hence, it laid the foundation for a change in approach on the institutional level, mandating operations to take on transformative roles, including in reestablishing government structures and promoting societal change (Berg 2020, 79; Sabartnam 2011, 5). Together and in cooperation, the international community recognized that they could achieve the “apparently universal aspiration of solving conflict … to channel the growing Western attention towards these issues into a blossoming multilateral progressive consensus for peacemaking, development and social justice” (Sabartnam 2011, 3). More comprehensively, states realized that they could extend their cooperation through mediation support and diplomatic channels, as well as through efforts to reestablish institutions in conflict-affected settings – both formal and informal (Berg 2020, 79).

As such, a diverse body of literature has paved this evolution, creating a typology of the different generations of peacebuilding or peace operations over the years (Kenkel
According to both Kenkel and Richmond, first generation approaches more often than not fall within the parameters of conflict management and traditional peacekeeping – broadly referenced within this study as the *standard treatment*. The second generation, although quite similar and at times associated with the first generation, sought to add civilian tasks to its initial role of peacekeeping. In response to the evolving nature of conflict - the new wars – second generation peace operations became more multidimensional as they took place in contexts where conflict was still ongoing. In addition to first-generation mandates, activities of second generation operations included organizing elections, overseeing and implementing DDR, humanitarian aid, and institutional capacity-building, among other activities (Kenkel 2013, 129). Richmond differs in his interpretation of these first two generations, categorizing them as “monodimensional approaches,” whereas the third generation was the one that shifted to a multidimensional mandate (Richmond 2002, 23).

In his book, *Maintaining Order, Making Peace*, and a later published article “Resistance and the Post-liberal Peace,” Richmond creates a framework that describes first generation as conflict management and peacekeeping, where the conflict is “held in limbo” and maintains the state. Subsequently, second generation approaches were introduced addressing causes of the conflict from the grassroots for peacebuilding. Richmond further explains that third-generation approaches attempt to resolve conflict (achieve second generation objectives) but through creating a liberal state. Finally, fourth generation approaches – which according to Richmond have not been achieved yet by liberal peacebuilding – aim to achieve “emancipation and social justice beyond the state” (2010, 666).
Kenkel sets out his own interpretation of this typology. According to Kenkel, third generation peace operations became known as peace enforcement operations, where increased use of force was permitted to carry on the tasks and mandates of the mission. The fourth generation then becomes the generation of peace support operations. This generation is anchored in peacebuilding that is backed by democratic peace theory, or liberal peacebuilding, combined with the permitted use of force to achieve the mission’s mandate (Kenkel 2013, 132). The implementation of this generation of peacebuilding had been, more often than not, characterized by strong external involvement, and more recently contested and critiqued for being conflict and context insensitive, with intrusive international engagement blurring the actual goals and outcomes of these interventions (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2007, 492).

Growing Critique of Liberal Peacebuilding and Alternating Discourses

With new wars becoming more prevalent, there seemed also to be an over-emphasis and overwhelming focus on positioning liberal values and concepts as measurements for the success and failure of peacebuilding. As a result of this focus, critics began to perceive liberal peacebuilding as an out-of-tune approach. More specifically, it was not paying enough attention to the internal dynamics of post-armed conflict and transitional contexts, and more often than not tended to romanticize universal principles of international cooperation, democratic institutions, rule of law and market economics while turning a blind eye to the local realities on the ground, the “every day” (Berg 2020, 78; Richmond 2010, 666). Additionally, the reliance on liberal values in peacebuilding, specifically in new war settings, has actually proved to be – to some extent - problematic. Specifically, its liberal-universal argument has perpetuated the dynamics of conflict, while imposing a
knowledge perceived to be superior and absolute, irrespective of the true root causes of conflict or contextual factors.

To this effect, scholars have weighed the risk of institutionalizing democratic peace theory in civil war contexts. Some have indeed validated those liberal institutions, such as democracy, public participation, transparency, etc. actually decrease the probability of civil wars (Berg 2020, 83). However, others have found that the transition phase to democracy, in fact, can increase the likelihood of civil war in contexts where institutions are usually weak. More often than not, transparent and accountable sources and the dissemination of information are also frail. In light of these findings, the liberal approach to peacebuilding of promoting democracy in the era of new wars, specifically with intrastate wars, may risk exacerbating internal conflict dynamics, fueling a return to violence.

A major addition to this field of work was executed by Roland Paris, specifically in his book *At War’s End*, which outlines the ontology of peacebuilding, from the theoretical origins of the concept to the growing influence of the liberal peace thesis (2004). Paris also assesses 14 different peacekeeping missions from 1989 to 1990 (in Namibia, Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Liberia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, Guatemala, East Timor, Kosovo and Sierra Leone), from which he argues that political and economic liberalization as peacebuilding endeavors can become greatly destabilizing in conflict-affected contexts; therefore, a transition to liberal democracy may not actually be conducive to peace. Additionally, under the liberal peacebuilding framework, brokered peace agreements will usually reflect the neoliberal agenda of political and economic liberalization. As a result, and as Paris reflects on in his chapter on Liberia for example, liberalization guised in free and fair elections proves insufficient in
conflict-affected settings. Moreover, it may exacerbate internal tension as it rushes the process of political and economic liberalization, before addressing primary institutional and structural weaknesses (Paris 2004, 179).

Building on this critique, several flagship approaches have found their way into a list of rampant and diverse critical voices of liberal peacebuilding. According to Tadjbakhsh and Richmond (2011, 232) there are at least five types of critical approaches to liberal peacebuilding: “communitarian critiques – problematizing liberal assumptions of universal values; social constructivist critiques arguing that liberal peace approaches are too technical and depoliticized, ignoring the role of values and identity; critical international theory approaches – highlighting the hegemonic power relations and interests involved in international interventionist missions; post-modern frameworks – which deconstruct the liberal assumptions of universalizing progress towards a single form of modernity, the technocratic frameworks of liberal rationality, and the inscriptions of hegemonic forms of sovereignty; and post-colonial critiques – which challenge the divisions between the global and the local, focus on local context, and highlight the hybrid nature and outcomes of interventionist practices” (Campbell, Chandler and Sabaratnam 2011, 2).

Proposing a nuanced form of peacebuilding, post-liberal peacebuilding theory builds on the presumption that peace is sustainable when it is bottom-up, context-specific and driven by local voices and agency (De Coning 2013, 6). This has recently been promoted by Cedric de Coning as an “adaptive peacebuilding” approach (De Coning 2018, 304). Peace, thus, should be built on, not an effort to apply liberal democracy, market values, and globalization, but rather on the complexities and agencies of local actors. "The
local and the everyday are precisely about the aspiration to get in touch with the constituencies beyond the artificial parameters of the liberal state and induced liberal civil society;” transcend the common beliefs of democratic peace (Richmond 2011, 37). Moreover, it should also account for the evolving nature of conflicts and adapt in a way that responds to this dynamic reality.

Tracing this critique, as well as the alternative discourses and approaches, paves the way for contextual and local peacebuilding and a shift away from liberal peacebuilding’s focus on institutionalism, territorial sovereignty, and liberalization. (Richmond 2010, 668). Yet this approach does not necessarily denote an alternative to liberal peacebuilding altogether. However, it can propose a “hybrid local-liberal” peace to “enable political mobilization to deal with everyday issues, to build representative institutions and locally resonant forms of statehood” (Richmond 2010, 669). This reconnects liberal peace ideas with the everchanging context and conflict dynamics, to ensure that local agency, perspectives, resistance, and national ownership are factored in the larger peace process; hence creating an ‘adaptive’ peacebuilding approach. Specifically, it reflects on the “everyday” to create contextual assessments as to what is, and is not, appropriate for each respective context. This shift lays the foundation for peacebuilding efforts, and consequently DDR as a main tool, to become contextualized, localized and participatory; leading to more sustainable peacebuilding endeavors.

However, it is also imperative to note that this approach is not without any faults. The most important issue being highlighted within this research is to unpack the available discourses and approaches, in order to integrate what will ideally amount to more sustainable peacebuilding. This research argues that through more localized, participatory
and contextualized, sustainability will be achieved. However, a counterargument may be that an overly localized and participatory approach may actually hinder prospects for peace. This may be due to the fact that engaging many local stakeholders may rule out other national priorities and needs. Another shortcoming may be that the balance of power may be tipped, as a result of one local community or group enforcing – or imposing – responses as they deem fit, while undermining priorities of other groups.

Another shortcoming may also arise from taking adaptive, localized and post-liberal peacebuilding endeavors from a literal perspective. The goal of these approaches is to craft alternatives to the long-standing standard treatment of dealing with conflicts, including through overly liberal and state-based peacebuilding approaches. However, this does not negate the fact a more hybrid approach can amount from realizing the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. One key characteristic of liberal peacebuilding – building on the liberal peace thesis – is international cooperation within a multilateral setting. This provides a doorway for the donor community to become involved within peacebuilding processes, for example. Therefore, this should not obstruct the fact that peacebuilding should also be nationally and locally-owned, as well as participatory. However, it should adapt to include threads and elements of all of these processes. Ideally, understanding the strengths and shortcomings of these approaches will resonate in a more efficient and effective manner when devising responses to conflict and building peace.

This shift in thinking is especially important to the implementation of the technical tools of peacebuilding, namely DDR, which has in turn evolved over the years to remain fit for purpose and factor in agency on the local and national levels in planning, designing and implementation of programs and processes. This happens in due time without
romanticizing the role of local agency to achieve more than what its capacities can. Yet, robust contextual analysis and local inclusivity prior to planning is key in at least paving the way for the implementation of DDR, and its potential for creating sustainable peace.

**DDR as a Peacebuilding Tool – An Interwoven Hammock of Theory and Practice**

A growing debate has come into fruition with regards to what constitutes a theoretical framework for DDR. There may not be one, but rather practical guidance, tools, and lessons learned that have shaped and reshaped the way DDR programs and processes are implemented over the years. Both practitioners and scholars have used this as a basis for evaluating the success of DDR and addressing some of its potential shortcomings. This research does not aim to give clear cut answer as to where DDR falls within a theoretical spectrum – on the contrary. What it does aim to do is create an understanding within which DDR can be placed as a component of theoretical underpinnings: where an interwoven “hammock” is created through theory and practice, cradling the tool, literature, theoretical framework, good practices and lessons learned for a consolidated reflection on what is known as DDR, be it a formal program or process. This research aims to use this hammock of knowledge as a basis on which DDR implementation can be evaluated, hinging on theories and literature of peacebuilding and DDR as one of its most critical tools.

DDR has been promoted within the UN’s larger efforts at liberal peace building, through peacekeeping and integrated peace operations missions over the past 30 years. Specifically, with the introduction of new wars, a reinvigorated approach to DDR had been promoted to keep up with the change in the nature of conflict, as well as the nature of armed groups and the contexts in which they operate – evolving from first to second and third generation DDR processes. Thus, it is key to understand that DDR is more than just a static,
technical tool. Rather, the evolution of DDR generations has confirmed that DDR responds to the politics and conflict dynamics on the ground, and is implemented within ideologically and value-driven processes (A/77/610). Additionally, it creates the environment conducive to peace through ensuring that the weapons of violence are removed, and that ex-combatants (and their communities of reintegration) are prepared for a transition from military to civilian, and from conflict to peace.

For years, DDR has been at the center of conflict resolution, post-armed conflict peace consolidation, reconstruction and development. In many contexts, the success of DDR programs, and processes, signal to the success of peace consolidation and peacebuilding. It also establishes a higher probability that no recurrence of violence will occur. This success is attributed to the full implementation of the D-D-R components individually, as well as their derivatives: disengagement, reinsertion, rehabilitation, reconciliation, among other similar processes. As such, DDR becomes a critical component in post-armed conflict contexts, aiming to both consolidate peace and enhance an environment that is conducive to peace, in order to limit a recurrence of violence. According to the definitions of peacebuilding that have been outlined thus far, DDR becomes one of the main tools at achieving peacebuilding’s end goal: consolidating peace and preventing a recurrence of conflict (Paris 2004, 38). It is also a tool that is not exclusive, but rather each component (D-D-R) has a direct impact on the peace process, balance of power and larger stabilization and peacebuilding efforts in a given context.

First Generation DDR

As it first appeared in the 1990s, first generation DDR programs were a direct evolution of the Agenda for Peace, where Boutros-Ghali envisioned the elements of
peacebuilding to include disarming the armed groups, destroying weapons, and other related processes. In the year 2000, the published Brahimi Report created the link between peacekeeping, peacebuilding and socioeconomic development, positioning DDR as one of the key tools and strategies of peace support operations – implementing liberal peacebuilding as outlined above. Its key endeavors were “broad provision of security; collecting, securing, and destroying light and heavy weapons; de-mining; demobilizing ex-combatants; dismantling militia groups; enhancing regional security to stem the spillover of conflicts across borders; identifying and resettling foreign ex-combatants, including children and women; supporting national disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs; promoting sensitization programs within communities; and meeting specific needs of women, children, and disabled ex-combatants” (Knight 2008, 27).

This generation of DDR, quantitatively, had witnessed many successes as evaluated then. Compiled data has shown that almost one million ex-combatants have gone through formal DDR programs since the inception of DDR in the late 1980s (Ayissi 2021, 144). In the late 1990s, for example, Liberia witnessed the disarmament and demobilization of almost 75 percent of listed fighters (24,500 of around 33,000 fighters), yet obstacles remained for the implementation of a successful and sustainable reintegration process (Jaye 2009, 7). This generation of DDR, carried out in Liberia and elsewhere, has shown success in the numbers of individuals going through the process. However, it was also narrowly focused on the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants, that the reintegration component was often overlooked. More so, it was also exclusively focused on the ex-combatants rather than the communities within which they would be reintegrated to prepare them for the reintegration of returning fighters. Moreover, it created the perception among
communities that these ex-combatants are being rewarded for their wrong doings, while victims’ rights were being sidelined. This may, in turn, hinder prospects for peacebuilding, as well as create grievances between community members and ex-combatants (Ayissi 2021, 149-150).

**Second Generation DDR**

Within this backdrop, and as more and more DDR programs became perceived as short-term security interventions, narrowly focused on ex-combatants, scholars and practitioners tried to develop the process based on lessons learned. Moreover, DDR’s narrow focus has led to refueling drivers to conflict, since it singled out ex-combatants from the rest of the community (Ayissi 2021, 149). This included providing them with reinsertion packages, vocational training, and access to income-generating projects. Many saw the shortcomings of a D-D focused program, rather than a process linked to larger stabilization efforts; which essentially is one of the goals of DDR. Therefore, the next generation of DDR, the second generation, tried to shift from a combatant-focused to a community-focused program, specifically with regards to the role of community-based reintegration in the success of a DDR program. This generation of DDR was later adopted in contexts such as Liberia and Angola.

According to the recently published UN Secretary General’s Report on the Revision of DDR (A/77/610), this expanded scope that signaled second generation DDR coincided with the shift in UN peacekeeping mandates to become more multidimensional – a shift already outlined extensively above. This expansion paved the way for interventions such as community violence reduction to emerge, namely in Haiti in 2006. A big development at the time, this contribution kickstarted a reflection on the strategic priorities of DDR
Rather, DDR began to be perceived as a part and parcel of a larger stabilization process, one that is engulfed in political dynamics, and not merely a technical checkbox in peace agreements. Consequently, and as second generation DDR was being implemented, a subsequent shift in conflict dynamics and lessons learned from the field invigorated yet again a shift to a revised plan for DDR, introducing the third generation.

**Third Generation DDR**

With the emergence of new wars, DDR practitioners found themselves in contexts where the preconditions to DDR were not met, and are requested to engage during ongoing conflict. In a recent study conducted by the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and Bonn International Center for Conflict Studies (BICC), titled “The Evolving Nature of DDR: Study on Engaging Armed Groups Across the Peace Continuum,” the authors trace the evolution of DDR since the second generation DDR, by identifying key phenomena and frontier issues that have emerged and reshaped DDR practices since second generation DDR emerged in 2010 to implement the IDDRS (2021). Building on the lessons learned from various DDR programs, a revision process of the IDDRS commenced in 2017, “as it had become increasingly clear that the long-standing principles that underpinned the IDDRS were not longer fit for purpose and thus needed to be adapted” (DPO 2021, 11).
This mirrored the policy shift of the peacebuilding architecture on the UN and international level, to a sustaining peace approach, specifically as a response to the new wars. Building on the General Assembly Resolution 70/262 and Security Council Resolution 2282 – known as the twin UN resolutions on the peacebuilding architecture review – there came a recognition of the need to work across the whole peace continuum: from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping, to peacebuilding and development (DPO 2021, 11). Specifically, the DPO/BICC report lays out the following 2 major phenomena and 4 issues that interplay within the same contexts, complicating the role of DDR policymakers and practitioners on the field alike: 1) fewer meaningful political settlements and solutions to conflict; and 2) the increase in violence by non-state actors and the prevalence of localized conflict; as well as 1) the designation of armed groups as terrorist organizations; 2) the continued fragmentation and multiplication of armed groups; 3) the regionalization of conflict and insecurity; and 4) the impact of epidemics and pandemics in conflict settings (DPO 2021, 6-7).

As a result, DDR shifted from a very specific and technical tool to a process that stretches along the peace continuum – specifically as it was implemented in non-mission settings. Its goal has stretched from being a “strictly minimalist focus on improving security towards a maximalist understanding of DDR as a key intervention for boosting development and reconstruction at the nexus of the security and development agendas” (Munive and Jakobsen 2012, 361). More importantly, DDR programs and processes are no longer confined to their previous role, but need to develop innovative approaches that address the ever-changing nature of conflict and armed groups. Notwithstanding the role that the UN has in this process, DDR implementation was later promoted as first and
 foremost a national endeavor. The new toolbox of DDR that emerged with the third generation, the DDR-related tools, became a key gateway for DDR processes to achieve sustainable peace through: pre-DDR, transitional weapons and ammunitions management (WAM), community violence reduction (CVR), initiatives to prevent individuals from joining armed groups designated as terrorist organizations, DDR support to mediation, and DDR support to transitional security arrangements (IDDRS 2.10 The UN Approach to DDR).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Generation DDR</th>
<th>Second Generation DDR</th>
<th>Third Generation DDR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional DDR</td>
<td>Community-Focused DDR</td>
<td>New Toolbox of DDR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preconditions of DDR are met;</td>
<td>• Preconditions of DDR are met;</td>
<td>• Preconditions of DDR are not met;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conflict has reached an end;</td>
<td>• Armed conflict has reached an end with the signing of a peace agreement;</td>
<td>• Conducted during ongoing armed conflict;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Primary focus is put on combatants;</td>
<td>• Focuses on combatants, their families and communities of return;</td>
<td>• Focuses on combatants and communities (as well as new groups such as at-risk youth and militias);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creates an intervention post armed conflict.</td>
<td>• Creates an intervention post armed conflict.</td>
<td>• Expanded scope of interventions using DDR-related tools.;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                      |                       | • Creates an intervention along the sustaining peace continuum, before, during and after conflict.
Conclusion

DDR, and effective reintegration specifically, are now implemented during ongoing conflict, where individuals may decide to give up arms during anytime throughout the conflict. DDR-related tools such as CVR and WAM can also pave the way for sustainable disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants with specific attention to the realities on the ground and capacities available. This alignment with the sustaining peace approach ensured that the revised integrated DDR processes work along the whole peace continuum, reflecting the multidimensional and multidisciplinary nature of these conflicts and the ways they are addressed. It also gives potential for DDR processes to support local peace agreements, community reconciliation measures and traditional confidence-building mechanisms that can support in the consolidation of peace. Therefore, it is important to understand that DDR processes are political processes, and they are primarily a national endeavor and needs to be anchored in political processes (DPO 2021, 18)

While there may not be a direct link between DDR programs and processes with liberal peacebuilding, per se, it is crucial that this amalgamation of theory and practice is put together. Firstly, DDR emerged within the backdrop of a strong, internationally-supported liberal peacebuilding epoch. Any of its associated processes were, often, implemented and driven by external actors believed to be neutral. Secondly, it became one of the most critical tools put forth by the UN for creating an environment conducive to peace and limiting the recurrence of violence. Yet, this came as a strong element of prioritizing elections, top-down statebuilding, democracy in the form of elections, and international interventions – where DDR was regarded as a mere technical tool to disarm
and demobilize fighters. DDR programs and any associated processes thus provide a pathway for ongoing efforts for peace, to ensure that spoilers to the peace process are disincentivized to obstruct the peace process.

The evolution of DDR, mirroring the evolution and shift in peacebuilding theory, created momentum for a shift from formal DDR programs to DDR processes that address issues of post-armed conflict security and lack of livelihood opportunities needed for peace, recovery and development. These programs and processes, including DDR-related tools of community violence reduction and weapons and ammunitions management interventions, provide an opportunity for ex-combatants to receive support to reintegrate back into societies. Ultimately, the revised IDDRS provides recommendations and guidance for flexible processes that are based on contextual analysis and provide context-specific responses. Also, adopting a bottom-up approach of DDR as a tool of peacebuilding, which emphasizes community engagement and participation from the onset of the planning process and to the stages of implementation, is key in addressing the root causes of conflict and main drivers to violence at the local level. As peacebuilding should not be a one-size-fits-all endeavor, so should not DDR.

Consequently, it is also key to recognize that DDR is not a panacea for peacebuilding. Rather, it can facilitate building trust between ex-combatants and communities that paves the way for other elements of the peace process. That is why, while disarmament and demobilization are key elements of this process, successful reintegration ensures that ex-combatants are provided support networks and livelihood opportunities. Additionally, if implemented in an adaptive manner, it can spur reconciliation efforts between ex-combatants and receiving communities, minimizing the perception that ex-
combatants are rewarded for their wrongdoings by receiving reintegration benefits. However, reintegration is not “one general process, but consists of thousands of micro-stories, with individual and groups efforts, and with setbacks and success” as quoted in Bigombe’s chapter titled Field Reflections on Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Social Imperatives of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. The subsequent chapters will specifically build on this to understand the successes and setbacks of DDR as a tool aimed at peacebuilding. It will also reflect on the change of DDR from a technical tool amidst liberal peace processes to an integrated approach that takes into consideration the local communities, both as victims of violence and active agents of change in their own respective contexts.
Chapter III: Tracing the Success and Failure of DDR in Liberia

Introduction

Spanning from 1980 to 2003, instability and conflict in Liberia has led to consecutive national and international efforts to restore peace to a country grappling with insecurity dating back to when it was founded. Many of these efforts were in the form of conflict resolution, peacebuilding and DDR. Liberia gained formal independence after the signing of the Liberian Declaration of Independence, creating the Republic of Liberia in July 1847 (Dennis 2006, 2). The Republic was founded by a group of freed slaves coming back from America, known as the Americo-Liberians. They subsequently became the country’s leaders, holding both social and political control until 1980 (McMullin 2013, 200). Under the Americo-Liberian control, indigenous groups in Liberia were suppressed and discriminated against on political, economic and social levels.

In the year 1980, a group of officers under the leadership of an army general named Samuel Doe overthrew the then-president of Liberia, William Tolbert. Doe succeeded, becoming Liberia’s first indigenous president. As he assumed his role, he created the People’s Redemption Council (PRC) and later suspended the constitution (McMullin 2013, 200). What seemed at first as a promising change for Libera amounted to more patronizing rule, built on corruption and a monopoly of control by Doe, along with a few trusted members of government from his own Krahn ethnic group (McMullin 2013, 200; Dennis 2006, 3). Nonetheless, it was not long before many of these trusted colleagues eventually left Liberia, as Doe became increasingly oppressive. During his rule, Doe was supported by the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL).
Nine years later, Charles Taylor\(^3\) and his army, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), fought against the AFL and their supporters (the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Military Observer Group (ECOMOG)\(^4\), and anti-Taylor fighters known as the United Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) (McMullin 2013, 201). This initiated a civil war that lasted for eight years, commencing in 1989 and ending in 1997. The civil war resulted in an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 deaths. After which, Taylor became president of Liberia following elections that took place in June 1997, and the civil war ended as he subsumed power. Like previous Liberian presidents, Taylor’s achievements were minimal on economic, political and social fronts. This led to a recurrence of violence later in 1999, as two opposition movements emerged out of the ULIMO forces (ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J); initiating a second civil war in 1999 (McMullin 2013, 201). These two groups, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) led the second civil war from 1999 to 2003, with an estimated 150,000 to 300,000 deaths.

In August 2003, ECOWAS brokered a peace deal between LURD, MODEL and Taylor’s government forces (Government of Liberia Forces - GOL), in Accra. As a result, the parties to the conflict signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which together with UN Security Council Resolution 1509 resulted in the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission. The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was deployed in October 2003 (Dennis 2006, 6). Additionally, as outlined in the CPA as well, a national commission for disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (NCDDRR) was

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\(^3\) Charles Taylor had previously been head of the General Service Agency under Doe and a member of the PRC.

\(^4\) ECOMOG was a peacekeeping force.
established in Liberia, to carry out and oversee a national DDRR process. The DDRR process was regarded as an integral component of the CPA, in addition to being key in securing peace and stabilization efforts in Liberia.

According to the CPA, UNMIL was tasked with the disarmament and cantonment of armed groups in support of national efforts. The then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasized the importance of ensuring that sustainable reintegration opportunities are provided to those returning from armed groups, warning that “failure to adequately plan for and implement the various stages of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, including obtaining timely and adequate funding, would jeopardize the entire peace process and destabilize Liberia and the entire subregion” (S/2003/875). This accentuated the importance of dealing with ex-combatants and promoting a comprehensive DDR program to transition to a post-armed conflict society, where individuals associated with armed groups are provided viable alternatives to violence and are reintegrated as civilians.

The NCDDRR, along with UNMIL and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) made up a Joint Implementation Unit (JIU), to both implement and oversee the DDRR program in Liberia. Correspondingly, two attempts of DDR programs took place in Liberia: the first from 2003 to 2004, and the second from 2005 to 2009. During these periods, DDR was regarded as the ultimate tool for post-conflict reconstruction, and a crucial element in the success of the peace process in Liberia. However, it was quite critical to understand that it should be carried out alongside wider recovery and development efforts and projects, to ensure that sustainable peacebuilding processes are established, but that post-armed conflict contexts are also secure enough for DDR programs and processes to take place. Liberia serves as a prime example to measure this nexus between DDR and
peacebuilding, specifically to the extent it has considered conflict history, political and socioeconomic conditions, and most importantly the institutional capacity. A closer analysis of the nexus between DDR and peacebuilding in Liberia can also provide an interesting view on the dichotomy between the role of international and local actors in defining the parameters of the DDR program, and addressing the priorities and needs as outlined by the national/local stakeholders themselves; for example, what kind of activities are needed and to whom they will be available.

Building on the previous chapters of this research, this chapter aims to take a closer look at the implementation of DDR programs in Liberia, the evolution, success and failures of the different program attempts, and the prospects of peace that were built since the closure of the DDR process in 2009 and UN mission in 2018. The chapter also aims to unpack how DDR was carried out in Liberia, and what elements of the program/process have deemed it successful, while others haven’t. Taking a closer look at some of the “informal” processes of reintegration and local peacebuilding efforts that have taken place ever since the formal end of the DDR program in 2009, this research aims to provide examples from Liberia on how DDR processes can become more contextualized, localized and participatory for more sustainable peacebuilding; even when success as established formal structures define it may not be present.


*Expectations for Initial Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs*

The first DDRR attempt in Liberia commenced in December 2003 and ended a year later in November 2004. During this time, almost 103,000 individuals were disarmed,
while an estimated 100,000 people had gone through demobilization sites, a third of whom were children and women associated with the armed groups (Munive and Jakobsen 2012, 365). This surpasses the initial UN estimates of 27,000 to 38,000 combatants in Liberia according to the Report of the Secretary-General on Liberia in September 2003 (S/2003/875). The actual turnout rate of ex-combatants was almost three times more than the original estimates. These initial estimates had been based on input provided by group leaders on the number of combatants under their factions during the peace negotiations. However, they had “never provided verifiable lists of combatants to check against the tens of thousands presenting themselves for disarmament” according to McMullin (2013, 203). Nonetheless, these estimates had been used to establish the parameters of the DDRR program in Liberia, including areas of cantonment and eligibility of individuals to join the program. Moreover, the percentage of weapons to individuals disarmed in Liberia has been the lowest in the history of DDR – a 0.28 weapon-to-man ratio – due to the high turnout rates of individuals and laxed eligibility criteria to be discussed in more detail further throughout this chapter (Munive and Jakobsen 2012, 365).

The program was initially planned to be carried out in 2 different phases. The first phase was the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants, including the collection of weapons, and formal disengagement of the fighters from the armed groups to which they were associated (Jaye 2009, 12). This phase was initially planned to take place in a span of three weeks to 30 days, under the supervision of UNMIL at designated cantonment sites (divided into D1 and D2 sites) (Paes 2006, 254). Since the JIU had incomplete information and formal registers from the armed groups on the number of combatants within their purview, the eligibility criteria for joining the DDRR program became flexible. This meant
that if an individual showed willingness to hand over a weapon/firearm, then they would be admitted to the program and its benefits (Paes 2006, 254). At D1, ex-combatants were disarmed by UNMIL peacekeepers, after which they would be transferred to the D2 site. At the D2 site, ex-combatants were kept away from civilians in order to be formally registered, “receive medical attention, human rights and peace training, as well as career counselling” (Paes 2006, 254). After the conclusion of this phase – estimated to be three months after they are dispatched - ex-combatants would receive food, travel, and a first installment of a transitional safety net allowance (TSA) of $150 (Caux and Brownell 2003). In the case that foreign fighters were identified, they would be repatriated or remain under refugee status in Liberia.

The second phase would carry out the rehabilitation and reintegration components, specifically to facilitate ex-combatants’ return to civilian life through education and vocational training. This phase was planned to begin after the ex-combatants have gone through the disarmament and demobilization phase, and when they have resettled back into the communities. This phase was based on pillars of providing formal education, vocational training, as well as suitable livelihood opportunities and job creation (Paes 2006, 254). At this stage, the ex-combatants would receive the second installment of their TSA ($150) for sustenance and reintegration support back into the community. However, as the program was being implemented, things did not unfold as planned. It became clear as the first phase of the program commenced that it would face many challenges in its implementation. Consequently, the second phase of the program – as envisioned at the time – was never realized at the time.
Reality Unfolding on the Ground: Soaring Numbers and a Pressure to Keep Up with DD

Alternatively, the program went through three separate phases as it was being implemented: “(1) an aborted round of disarmament in 2003; (2) a second round of disarmament and demobilization in 2004; and (3) rehabilitation and reintegration” (Jaye 2009, 12). Due to the premature start of the first disarmament and demobilization phase on December 7th, 2003, the JIU, and specifically UNMIL, had not been ready to receive the large numbers of ex-combatants, which surpassed their initial estimates (Jaye 2009, 12). On the first day of disarmament alone, more than 2,000 former fighters voluntarily laid down their weapons in Camp Schieffelin, a cantonment site near the capital Monrovia; far exceeding initial expectations according to an article published by UNHCR the next day, signaling “a good start” to the disarmament process (Caux and Brownell 2003).

Notwithstanding this positive progression, the soaring numbers of ex-combatants being admitted to the program was overwhelming. In a matter of ten days, almost 8,000 individuals turned in their weapons (UN News 2003). As a result, this initial phase was unsuccessful as violence broke out in Camp Schieffelin, and the process had to be aborted “because of the lack of preparation and inadequate security” (Jaye 2009, 12). Jaye proposes that, for example, the UN should have initiated the process for all three fighting groups/factions simultaneously. Alternatively, the process only began with the disarmament of the pro-government group fighters, which later encouraged fighters from the other two factions to participate in the disarmament process out of fear that they would be left out. This overwhelmed the capacities of the registration and cantonment sites (2009, 13).
As a result, and according to a UN News article published on December 14th, 2003, the UN was to pause the disarmament process, including the payment of reinsertion allowances, to allow the mission “improve conditions at Camp Schieffelin,” the main operational cantonment site at that time (2003). Other sources claim that the overwhelming numbers combined with logistical and resource issues led to an outbreak of riots in the camp, leaving several people dead and spurring chaos and looting in Monrovia (Paes 2006, 254). Nonetheless, UNMIL was still able to disarm around 13,000 ex-combatants, as well as collect 8,679 weapons, 2,650 unexploded ordnance and more than 2.7 million rounds of ammunition during this phase (Paes 2006, 254; Jaye 2009, 12).

One significant reading of why the program was paused is that the UN failed to accommodate local expertise, perspectives and knowledge. Rather, the UN relied on their own analysis of the situation in perspective with neighboring Sierra Leone, which had just gone through a similar process. As a result, the specificities of the context and perceptions of the local leaders in Liberia needed to be adequately incorporated from the initial planning to implementation phases, to ensure that the priorities of the context are accurately addressed\(^5\). The program that eventually took place wrongly tackles the situation from a “one-size-fits-all” approach, or as some termed it “quick fix” or “cut and paste” responses. Replicating the experience in Sierra Leone, the program was implemented “without any

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\(^5\) Some sources argue that faction leaders were sidelined during the planning and implementation of the process, and thus their needs, priorities and perceptions of how the program should be shaped were not taken into consideration (See Thomas Jaye, Transitional Justice and DDR: The Case of Liberia, 2009). However, on a similar yet separate note, other sources show that local middle and lower-level commanders were used during the process to verify and confirm individuals’ membership and affiliation with the groups. They were “gatekeepers” at cantonment sites, who were responsible to cross-check applicants’ names on lists that were drawn up by the local commanders – putting them in a position of power to determine whether a person was included – or not – in the program (See Jairo Munive & Stine Finne Jakobsen, Revisiting DDR in Liberia: Exploring the Power, Agency and Interests of Local and International Actors in the ‘Making’ and ‘Unmaking’ of Combatants, 2012).
critical consideration taken to situational differences between the two countries” (Jaye 2009, 13).

Because the program began without adequate preparation and sensitization with the local community beforehand, it was interrupted for four months. During this pause, the JIU, and specifically UNMIL, had a chance to re-orient the program to address the reality on the ground. One of the changes was expanded eligibility criteria, including the admission of individuals who could not in fact lay down a weapon, but can hand over 150 rounds of ammunition in its place, or merely present proof of membership in one of the armed groups (Paes 2006, 254; Jaye 2009, 13). Later as the program commenced, exceptions were made for “group weapon teams,” whereby groups of up to five ex-combatants or associates present together one weapon to prove their membership in an armed group.

After four months, the program restarted in April 2004, with four new cantonment sites, geographically spread out to target members from the different armed groups. However, mirroring what had happened during the first phase, the caseload of ex-combatants was far more than originally planned for, and therefore UNMIL and the JIU found themselves re-designing the program yet again. As a result of this, ex-combatants would no longer stay in DD sites for three weeks to 30 days, but rather only three days (Munive and Jakobsen 2012, 365). Moreso, in an effort to refit the program to the increasing number of individuals, the budget for reintegration per beneficiary was reduced by half.

After its restart, the DDRR program continued in two more phases. During these two phases, information was gathered about ex-combatants’ preferred reintegration plan or
program, which was comprised of either formal education vocational training, agriculture or employment. They also received orientation before their formal discharge to prepare them for the rehabilitation and reintegration phases that would ensue. By the end of this phase, more than 100,000 individuals went through the program, a third of whom were women and children (see figure 3.1 and 3.2 below). The DD phase of the program officially ended in October 2004 (Munive and Jakobsen 2012, 365). Most of this caseload was then sent to the rehabilitation and reintegration phase of the program, which started earlier in June 2004, yet with repercussions associated with the unexpectedly high numbers of beneficiaries.

### TABLE 1:
**NUMBER OF EX-COMBATANTS BY FACTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faction</th>
<th>Phase I</th>
<th>Phase II</th>
<th>Phase III</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFL</td>
<td>4,164</td>
<td>6,830</td>
<td>1,252</td>
<td>12,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LURD</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19,717</td>
<td>13,720</td>
<td>33,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODEL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2,855</td>
<td>10,283</td>
<td>13,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5,107</td>
<td>10,471</td>
<td>15,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>8,889</td>
<td>16,957</td>
<td>1,878</td>
<td>27,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13,123</td>
<td>51,466</td>
<td>37,604</td>
<td>102,193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE 2:
**BREAKDOWN OF PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES BY GENDER**

- **11%**, 11,330 indv. (Men)
- **22%**, 22,660 indv. (Women)
- **67%**, 69,010 indv. (Children)

*Source: Aggregated from Data Available in Munive and Jakobsen, 2012.*
The combined rehabilitation and reintegration phase of the DDRR program had been treated from the onset in 2003 as a separate phase of the process. The RR phase had been mostly taken under the purview of UNDP as the main implementor, along with the support of other members of the international community through a UNDP-managed Trust Fund (Jaye 2009, 16). This Trust Fund, which brought together supporting entities and donors such as the EU, USAID and UNICEF, together with UNDP sponsored most RR activities that were subsequently carried out, including those targeting women and children associated with armed groups. This phase would later be reshaped – taking form as a second generation program in 2005 - and later carry on till its official end in 2009. Of the 103,000 individuals admitted through the DD phase, almost 90,000 received reintegration support through the program.

During the D2 process, beneficiaries were asked to choose their preferred area of return, 45% of which chose to return to Monrovia rather than their own areas of origin. This decision was most likely affected by the perception that economic and livelihood opportunities were more probable in the capital city than in other areas. However, this was unlikely, since the city was already home to hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and IDP camps that threatened to overwhelm the city without enough job opportunities (Paes 2006, 258). The assistance provided was also a major factor in what kind of reintegration the ex-combatants would go through; whether it be employment, vocational training, labor activities, agriculture or formal education.

According to a report by KAIPTC and ZIF, assessing the DDRR program in Liberia, 67% of individuals going through RR were sponsored by the UNDP Trust Fund
and managed by UNDP, while the other 33% carried out by the EU, USAID and other bilateral partners (2007, 31). However, other sources show that, in fact, of the $13.5 million put into the Trust Fund, almost $10.2 million were already spent on the DD phase of the program (Paes 2006, 259). This ultimately left the RR phase to fall short of funding, with limited access to donor money that can move the program forward. This shortfall reflects one of the many preparatory shortcomings of the program. First, the RR activities still needed to be accounted for in the budgeting of the program as the DD phase was by UNMIL. However, the RR phase were “supposed to be financed through a tendering process in which the UNDP invites project proposal from interested parties” (Paes 2006, 259). This made the process dependent on whether third parties were interested or not in creating and implementing these activities – which to the dismay of many rendered RR and the sustainability of reintegration as a sidelined process, independent of the main components of the DDR process in Liberia.

Moreover, the Trust Fund was weak in the face of garnering support for the RR process, with donors, or “parallel partners” such as the UK, Japan, EU, and USAID among others opting to conduct programs bilaterally with other supporters (Paes 2006, 260; McMullin 2013, 206). These parallel partners signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the JIU to implement different projects. Accordingly, the RR activities were divided between the UNDP Trust Fund sponsoring 63,000 ex-combatants, while the parallel partners’ projects benefitted 36,000 ex-combatants. Through this arrangement, for example, UNICEF was able to implement a reintegration program for children, since “ex-CAFF – children associated with fighting forces - are not seen as a problematic group and are rarely identified as security threats in their communities” (KAIPTC and GIZ 2007, 33).
Nonetheless, challenges remained when operating RR programs for adults, given that responsibility of the RR program was dispersed, without real ownership on the part of the government or UN mission of the process. As a result, the programs under the Trust Fund were ultimately different than those implemented by the different partners, specifically in the type of assistance provided and the duration of it as well (McMullin 2013, 206). For example, one implementing partner reduced a reintegration activity to three months, although all reintegration programs had to abide by an eight-month-long program that included both classroom training as well as practical components (McMullin 2013, 206).

Another discrepancy was the lax requirements made for enrollment in the reintegration programs. For example, the JIU permitted “register proxies,” which meant that ex-combatants could enlist other individuals to receive reintegration benefits. As such, many decided to choose formal education as the mode of reintegration, enrolling their children in the programs rather than themselves (McMullin 2013, 206). This created space for the program to be exploited by different individuals, looking for monetary benefits from the TSAs or providing opportunities for their children to join training and education programs. As a result, the partners assisted more than 30,000 beneficiaries, many of which were not verified ex-combatants. This created a large caseload of ex-combatants who never got the opportunity to go through the reintegration process that initiated in 2004 (referenced in different evaluations as a residual caseload) (McMullin 2013, 207).

Moreover, the very few programs that did in fact exist were narrowly focused on formal and vocational training of the ex-combatants, shifting to address purely economic factors rather than understand the full spectrum of drivers to mobilization and violence in
the Liberian context. They were also left for NGOs to implement, who “generally lacked capacity or were unwilling to prioritize reintegration over existing activities, especially given the short lead time and lack of up-front funding from the UN Development Program trust fund” (Jennings 2007, 208). According to McMullin, they were mostly not accredited as well (2013, 207). This meant that they usually did not offer quality training or education to allow for placement into the job market. Concurrently, other plans for job placement mechanisms as well as public service projects were neglected throughout the process. This was problematic for many, as reintegration had long perceived as a transition into sustainable livelihood, including through its labor-intensive programming to ease the threat that can be caused by unemployed ex-combatants, who might return to violence or re-enlist for financial reasons.


Contextualized Assessments for Effective Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Recovery (RRR) Programming: The Hotspot Assessments

As more and more challenges obstructed the rehabilitation and reintegration phase for ex-combatants, the realization that reintegration is a long-term process grew. It also became clear that for reintegration to be successful, it had to be linked to larger developmental and social recovery plans in the country. Strategically, programming for reintegration approaches changed to address this realization: including through “(1) systematic monitoring of security threats linked to reintegration, (2) the design of projects that precisely address the identified challenges, and (3) the premise that reintegration efforts should focus on creating alternative livelihoods and on targeting communities as a whole,” rather than the ex-combatants alone (Tamagnini and Krafft 2010, 16). This
approach became the segway to ensure a safe and secure election process in 2005, since it provided a way to monitor any potential threats to the election process in 2005.

As a result, RR programs in Liberia started shifting to resemble second generation DDR programming. This would address issues that pertain to the wider communities of reintegration and ensure that the program is not primarily fixated on the ex-combatants (McMullin 2013, 209). These second generation programs were built on three different premises, or categories, according to a report on Second Generation DDR in Peace Operations by Department of Peace Operations (DPO) in the UN (2010 4-5). The aim of the report was to analyze and document innovative programs and approaches to DDR at the time (in 2010) to guide practitioners in the field. According to the report, the three premises of second generation DDR were: post-conflict stabilization measures, targeting specific groups, and alternative approaches to disarmament and unregulated weapons (UN DPO 2010, 4-5). In order to achieve these premises, the Report highlights one innovative approach carried out in Liberia, which was an investigation conducted to design RR programs that are attuned to not just military structures, but the larger violence- and war-affected communities (UN DPO 2010, 3).

This investigation later became known as the hotspot assessment, which “sought to identify and analyze potential areas of trouble “hotspots” and devise a “hotspots action plan” to address these before they flared up” (Tamagnini and Krafft 2010, 16). Consequently, the assessments presented that the major security challenge in the areas under revision was lack of livelihood opportunities, not only for ex-combatants but for the community by and large. Furthermore, they also reflected the different roles ex-combatants were acquiring in their communities upon their return; given that the assessment was
conducted periodically by UNMIL’s Joint Mission Analysis Cell (JMAC) through the Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Recovery (RRR) Unit (UN DPO 2010, 4; McMullin 2013, 209). In total, the RRR produced seven different assessments in four years, from the end of 2005 to mid-2009 (McMullin 2013, 209). The Hotspot Assessments were able to present a pragmatic method to monitor and address issues on the ground, realizing that for ex-combatant reintegration to be significant, then communities should be part of the process as well - as both the main recipients of ex-combatants, as well as war-affected and vulnerable populations.

To address the issues outlined in the Hotspot Assessments, a majority of the projects made to promote reintegration were labor-intensive and employment creation projects – in order to spur concrete peace dividends within communities through the provision of alternative livelihoods (Tamagnini and Krafft 2010, 18). This shift in modus operandi introduced how to utilize community-based reintegration projects and programs to address issues of security. This specific development would later be used for peacebuilding efforts in Liberia, and more broadly in different contexts over time, and as a key lesson learned for DDR programs. They were also a guide to follow-up projects that targeted ex-combatants and “non-combatant community members, implemented in areas determined by UNMIL to be vulnerable” (McMullin 2013, 210).

The second generation programs in Liberia were a major development in the way DDR programs were implemented, specifically in its relation to broader stabilization and peacebuilding efforts. It became clear that, although DDR is a tool to be implemented in order to handle the caseload of ex-combatants post-armed conflict or war, it should also ensure the communities of return and environment is conducive to peace; albeit recovering
from the remnants of the conflict. Eventually, these ex-combatants will not re-enlist or be propelled to take up arms once again. Some of these programs included labor-intensive road projects, skills training on rubber plantations for both ex-combatants and community members, as well as professional training for motorcycle taxi members. More specifically, the realization that reintegration is linked with economic and social recovery was key in identifying the type of reintegration needed in the Liberian context, specifically in the phase of peace consolidation and for longer-term peacebuilding. This is not to prelude the success – or failure – of the reintegration process in Liberia. However, it was a crucial step in executing a different process to address the situation as it was unravelling on the ground.

**Translating Policy, Assessments and Recommendations to Practice on the Ground**

After running the Hotspot Assessments, the RRR (along with other UN agencies) started implementing different labor-intensive and employment projects from the period from 2006 to 2009. Most of these projects focused on road repairs and rehabilitation in an effort to respond to two fundamental issues: large unemployed communities and damaged infrastructure (McMullin 2013, 210). This approach, according to Tmagnini and Krafft, would be three-pronged. It would improve the accessibility of road, provide opportunities for short-term employment, as well as pave the way for stability in the community (Tmagnini and Krafft 2010, 18). Under a “Special Engineering Project” led by RRR unit, UNDP and the Ministry of Public Works, a labor-intensive infrastructure program was allocated around $1 million per year to repair and maintain roads. The program targeted the employment of ex-combatants, vulnerable community members, and war-affected populations – with strong encouragement for women to join (McMullin 2013, 210).
Activities under this project included roadside brushing, stone crushing, repairing wooden bridges, and constructing open box channels, through which beneficiaries received a $3 daily wage, and $5 for supervisors (Tmagnini and Krafft 2010, 18). Two other funding arrangements were also constructed, with the support of WFP and UNDP, along with UNMIL. These provided food for work programs, as well as agricultural projects, in addition to the labor-intensive road rehabilitation projects. The labor-intensive road rehabilitation projects brought into employment over 70,000 individuals, 20% of which were women, and made up a total of around 2.5 million working days (McMullin 2013, 211; Tamgnini and Krafft 2010, 19). As a result, there were noticeably less crime rates in the areas where the projects were being implemented, as well as a decline in re-recruitment into armed groups. Reduced conflict and enhanced conflict resolution capacity were also main outcomes of the projects provided, as it provided opportunities to extend reintegration program benefits to areas that could not benefit from the program in its preliminary stages (McMullin 2013, 211). It was also an effective way in providing support when national governments’ capacity cannot conduct these projects on its own or needs considerably large investments.

Other projects that have been implemented as part of the reintegration program in part to address a longstanding issue of illegal occupation and taxation of rubber plantations by ex-combatants. After the conflict, many ex-combatants moved into rubber plantations, in search of quick economic opportunities found within this business. Rubber tapping on plantations across Liberia were exploited, at times by ex-combatants, and at time by local authorities who made ex-combatants pay to stay on the plantation (McMullin 2013, 211). Accordingly, the Liberian President took the initiative, along with UNMIL’s Special
Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to establish a Rubber Plantations Task Force (RPTF) that was tasked with producing an analysis and recommendations report on improving conditions in plantations. It also established an Interim Management Teams (IMTs) to manage plantations where no local authorities were present and re-establish state authority in places occupied by ex-combatants, namely Cocopa, Guthrie and Sinoe (McMullin 2013, 213). As a result, there was significant improvement in the living and working conditions within the different plantations – for both ex-combatants and the plantation communities.

Towards the end of the reintegration program in 2009, another Hotspot Assessment analyzed the increase in motorcycle taxi unions (MTUs). Within these MTUs, many ex-combatants sought refuge, to become part of a larger community, but also looking for alternative employment and economic opportunity (McMullin 2013, 210). Motorcycle taxi driving became a flourishing livelihood opportunity for many in Liberia after the war, including both ex-combatants and war-affected populations such as at-risk youth. While it eased the reintegration of ex-combatants after the war, it also provided fast and cheap modes of transportation for the rest of the community; thus, enhancing reintegration and reconciliation after the conflict within communities, and between the ex-combatants and the communities to which they returned.

However, violent acts quickly reverberated because some of these motorcycle drivers, with many being feared and perceived as “reckless drivers with limited knowledge of traffic rules and little or no respect for public order” (Tamagnini and Krafft 2010, 17). As a result, one of the most innovative approaches to reintegration ensued, with a project for motorcycle taxi drivers, funded by the Peacebuilding Fund through UNDP, and
conducted by Liberian YMCA, Ministry of Transport and the Liberia National Police (LNP) (McMullin 2013, 210; Tamagnini and Krafft 2010, 16). The project aimed to improve motorcycle taxi drivers’ skills, as well as obtain the requisite licensing to practice this profession. It provided training on traffic laws, conflict resolution, business professionalism, as well as psychosocial counseling for drivers (McMullin 2013, 210).

**Perceptions of DDR in Liberia: Analyzing the Challenges & Opportunities of Reintegration for Sustainable Peacebuilding**

It was clear from the several attempts of DDR in Liberia that first generation programs were lagging. With a strong focus on numbers, real and on-ground impact of reintegrating individuals back into the community, peace dividends between ex-combatants and communities of return, as well as a sense of stability was sidelined as a result. More so, what culminated out of these processes was large numbers of individuals receiving training for jobs that did not necessarily exist in the Liberian context. The laxed entry criteria meant that reintegration support would be allocated to more individuals than was initially planned for, without any increase in budget or capacity to absorb the increasing numbers. As the process progressed, it was clear that along with opportunities for effective reintegration programming to achieve sustainable peacebuilding, there came many challenges that still needed to be overcome in Liberia.

More evidently, reintegration programs’ funding was not accounted for from the beginning of the planning process, highlighting a great shortcoming in perceiving reintegration as a separate process. While reintegration is a more long-term endeavor than its more technical associates (disarmament and demobilization), adequate planning needs to ensue to ensure that the beneficiaries going through the program are absorbed, receive
the requisite rehabilitation activities needed, and are prepared for their reintegration. While the utilization of Hotspot Assessments was key in understanding the situation on the ground, a growing narrative of success embraced the Liberian context: that it was able to accommodate a larger than expected number of individuals, regardless of whether the support they received was appropriate or adequate.

Subsequently, after the conclusion of the reintegration program in 2009, various assessments indicated that more than 70% of program beneficiaries witnessed improved livelihoods and living conditions. Beneficiaries were able to utilize the wages they received from labor-intensive projects to invest in other income-generating endeavors. “More than 90 percent of respondents were of the opinion that the short-term jobs have helped to promote community peace and reconciliation in a number of ways: people are now working together more constructively, and more people are able to take care of their families and themselves” (Tamagnini and Krafft 2010, 19). This assessment of the situation after the end of the program shows how quick impact projects can bridge short-term security issues and broader development goals. Likewise, reintegration programs in Liberia, at best, were trying to simultaneously address issues of security and development, based on the findings of the Hotspot Assessments. The program was also built mainly on the premises that ex-combatants need to be reintegrated into jobs.

The utilization of emergency employment programs – such as the infrastructure development for employment projects in Liberia – provided an economic incentive and alternative to violence for many ex-combatants. Ideally, these programs should have been designed and implemented in a way that feeds into long-term employment creation, market demand and development goals (UN DPO 2010, 23). In fact, the Hotspot Assessments did
disclose that many of the ex-combatants who have gone through the RR program met the “economic standards” of the communities to which they will be reintegrated. The assessments also reflected the acceptance of these individuals by the communities (McMullin 2013, 213). According to a public opinion survey conducted by UNMIL throughout the process, 93% of ex-combatants viewed that they were accepted by their neighbors, and 73% believed that they were being accepted by their communities (Jaye 2009, 18).

For UNMIL, successful rehabilitation and reintegration meant that ex-combatants were given material incentives to stay out of conflict and not resort to violence. Thus, unemployed ex-combatants were perceived as the most critical security threat, who need to turn into productive citizens (Munive and Jakobsen 2012, 374). This assumption is primarily derived from the narrative that the main drivers of conflict and armed mobilization are economic. Therefore, within this conceptual framework, sustainable employment becomes the key answer to resolving the issue of reintegrating ex-combatants, notwithstanding the many drivers to conflict, root causes, and inherent reasons that may lead individuals to join armed groups. This creates a limited understanding of the wide spectrum of motives behind combatants’ decision to join armed groups, reproducing the idea that combatants and armed factions are “rational utility maximizers,” and neglecting other individuals’ motives such as status, authority, and structural conditions (Munive and Jakobsen 2012, 375).

Therefore, while the employment projects were innovative, they could have been more sustainable in the long run. Many challenges arose on different fronts, including programmatic, political, security, structural and ideational challenges according to
McMullin (2013, 213-214). Most significantly, a contradiction between security and development goals of reintegration calls into question how to measure reintegration as successful. Also, how should the success of reintegration be measured as separate from the entire DDR process? Many of these questions fall back into the purpose of this research: how can DDR contribute to more sustainable peacebuilding? Through this analysis, it is evident that one substantial factor is the success of the reintegration component, yet how can it be deemed successful?

As the case of Liberia has represented, actors need to weigh between the security and development goals of both reintegration and the entire DDR process. It was essential that the exact outcomes, impact and benefits of DDR had to be outlined from the onset of the planning process. The case of Liberia shows the pitfall of assuming that DDR benefits are open access to anyone willing to turn in voluntarily. This assumption, and unintentionally, overpromises its benefits and due course. It also risks that the program becomes too broad to have any concrete developmental results for the wider community (Jennings 2007, 212). Additionally, since reintegration is less technical than disarmament and demobilization, and many times its actual goals are unclear, it is difficult to have a thorough assessment of its success on the ground. Consequently, this assessment can be made if one makes either one the following assumptions for the reintegration process: (1) it is meant to improve the security situation; (2) it is meant to improve the socio-economic situation of ex-combatants; (3) it is meant to improve the socio-economic situation of the ex-combatants and war-affected communities.

Convoluting these assumptions together risks the effectiveness of the reintegration program to successfully lay the ground for sustainable peacebuilding (even if this is a long-
term goal in itself). As such, reintegration becomes not an end in it and of itself – as part of a DDR process – but a means to reach this end. Many of the issues that arise throughout the program can be attributed to the concrete conceptualization of the program and what it intends to accomplish (Jennings 2008, 330). “In Liberia, there was an apparent disconnect between the program’s activities and objectives” obscuring effective implementation (Jennings 2008, 330). Specifically, with the rising number of individuals admitted to the DD phases of the program, the outlook for reintegration did not change. This amounted to a substantial number of ex-combatants being reintegrated into unemployment, whereby the Liberian economy was not ready to absorb such numbers of ex-combatants with an already limited window of opportunity.

Additionally, international actors dominated the process, with little national ownership over the process. This has been reiterated in reports done to assess the DDRR process in Liberia, specifically highlighting the importance of national ownership and responsibility for rehabilitation and reintegration activities (KAIPTC and ZIF 2007, 37). As a result, the process did not include social or political reintegration support, unintentionally creating barriers between individuals deemed as ex-combatants and the rest of the community (McMullin 2020, 33).

**Innovative & Bottom-Up Reintegration for Peacebuilding**

Moreover, studies have shown that “in a context like Liberia recruitment is endogenous to local conflict dynamics” (Munive and Jakobsen 2012, 376). Therefore, addressing issues and drivers to conflict based on motives other than those that are purely economic is key to understanding why reintegration can be successful or not. As a result, community-based approaches to reintegration, adopting second generation DDR, can be
attuned to support bottom-up peacebuilding efforts as opposed to dominant top-down peacebuilding – which the DDRR program in Liberia, in a way, created. This is specifically because the community members are in the best place to induce change, and establish peace dividends, as they are the primary recipients of the returning fighters, families of fighters or associates, and war-affected populations. Therefore, processes such as reintegration for sustainable peacebuilding should be based on the priorities as conveyed by the people themselves. They should be contextualized enough to address the issues on the ground, while being innovative to ensure that individuals are given a viable alternative to taking up arms.

One example of such innovative way was through the MTUs, and through ex-combatants taking up motorcycle driving as a profession. For years, motorcycle driving was regarded as a dangerous activity, specifically since it joined together ex-combatants; becoming a hotspot for brewing tension and potential violence. Moreover, the discourse perpetuating that ex-combatants are troublemakers and criminals has hinged the international community, and at times the national government, away from supporting them. As discussed earlier in this section, support programs provided counseling and training on traffic rules to the MTU members. Yet, international actors involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration phases did not make use of the opportunities this may provide as a peacebuilding tool for the ex-combatants (McMullin 2021, 68). The motorcycle drivers have actually supported peacebuilding in the communities through connecting isolated communities, moving goods and people, and “providing critical social support to each other during a vulnerable transition period” (McMullin 2020, 12).
Years after the DDRR program ended, many ex-combatants opted to become motorcyclists as a means of sustenance, but as a peacebuilding tool for their communities as well. Many perceptions of cyclists show that motorcycle driving keeps them out of trouble, ensuring that they are both economically and socially reintegrated (McMullin 2021, 80). On one hand, through motorcycle driving, many ex-combatants can secure a better future for themselves and their families. On the other hand, the realization that this activity is perpetuating peaceful existence has allowed many to create social networks that can support them through their reintegration as civilians; facilitating “free movement, friendship, opportunities, and postwar reconciliation and redemption” (McMullin 2021, 81).

Consequently, many attribute their successful embarking on long-term reintegration to the integrative and peace-promoting nature of motorcycling rather than the formal DDR process. On the contrary to the formal DDR process, motorcycling did not perpetuate conflict identities; distinguishing between ex-combatants and the rest of the community. In fact, it provided an opportunity to many members of the community to shape peacebuilding through reintegration that reflect their own priorities and narratives. Thus, it “encapsulates the possibilities and contradictions of peacebuilding and ex-combatant reintegration, through emphasizing voice and anchoring insights to everyday experiences of the simultaneous opportunities and challenges of the motorbike hustle” (McMullin 2021, 81-82). It has also mobilized youth in search of a space to promote themselves as active agents of change, bringing the everyday perceptions of the community into the broader rhetoric of peacebuilding. This is based on the needs of these individuals, perception of the conflict, and their role in the peace process and peace consolidation. This provides a
different level from which we can evaluate the success of peacebuilding, other than the traditional, macrolevel understanding of security and stability as the main characteristics. This level is premised from the grassroots-up.

**Conclusion**

An analysis of DDR attempts in Liberia signifies a few points with regards to the hypothesis of this research: localized, contextualized and participatory programs, specifically with regards to the reintegration component, will lead to more sustainable peacebuilding. As reflected in the previous sections, the DDR program initiated with assumptions that were far from being contextualized. Assuming that the Liberian context was similar to Sierra Leone, the UNMIL based much of its assessments on how to conduct DDR, for who, the type of combatants and activities from the previous attempt conducted in Sierra Leone; losing in true essence the contextualization of the program.

Secondly, the overly securitized approach to reintegration in Liberia has led to programmatic interventions that were short-lived, alleviating direct tension, issues without building the foundation for longer-term development, socioeconomic improvement and peacebuilding activities. This tends to characterize reintegration programming as a maximalist, and a macrolevel intervention, losing the nuances that are essential to address the experiences of the local context (McMullin 2013, 231). It becomes a “buying time” intervention, improving conditions short-term but not initiating long-term peacebuilding through the effective and essential reintegration and reconciliation between ex-combatants and communities. This undermines the long-standing treatment taking form in neoliberal and macroeconomic interventions, as I argue in this research and as mentioned by McMullin (2013, 231). This justifies maximizing utility of the large number of ex-
combatants into employment endeavors, while sidelining wider national efforts at development and recovery for the rest of the community, war-affected populations and at-risk youth. Unfortunately, this normalizest "reintegration into poverty" in Liberia (McMullin 2013, 232).

In Liberia, as elsewhere DDR was implemented, the international community, and specifically the UN Mission in mission-settings manage the process. This calls into question the ultimate ownership of the process, as well as peacebuilding efforts after the program is finished. Who gets to take on the work peacebuilding after international actors and how do is local knowledge utilized? In the initial Liberian attempts of DDR, the programs greatly resembled the experiences of Sierra Leone, spearheaded by UNMIL’s planning of the program. Yet, reintegration programs needed to specifically respond to the particular experiences of the Liberian context, including most notably drivers for recruitment, legitimacy perceptions in the eyes of the local population, modus operandi of the different armed groups, and what kind of peacebuilding methods may be suitable for this specific context.

I argue, similarly to Kathleen Jennings and Jaramey McMullin, that the Liberian context provides many opportunities for innovative, nuanced and unorthodox approaches to DDR. This unorthodox approach can tap into reintegration processes presumed from the everyday, leading to better prospects of sustainable peacebuilding. The motorcycling culture in Liberia mimics the idea of peace in the everyday, of sustainable social, economic and political reintegration outside the formal, technical sphere of DDR programs and processes. It is also entirely locally-driven, taking into account the communities’
experiences and suggestions. A clear account and documentation of this grassroots effort can be essential in informing DDR design, for both national and international actors alike.

In the next chapter of this research, I will take a closer look at DDR in Colombia and how community-driven and localized efforts are key in designing and informing national DDR efforts. Furthermore, the concluding chapter will put the experiences of both contexts into perspective, analyzing how bottom-up approaches to DDR, and specifically reintegration, can further lead to sustainable peacebuilding. This will heavily draw upon an in-depth analysis of the motorcycle culture for peacebuilding in Liberia and evaluate it in comparison with efforts ongoing in Colombia. This will better inform this research, helping unpack the hypothesis of this thesis to understand modes of DDR and reintegration for sustainable peacebuilding.
Chapter IV: Collective Reincorporation: Prospects for Peace in Colombia

Introduction

Almost sixty years of conflict in Colombia have come to an end after the signature of a peace agreement with left-wing guerilla group the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army or Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejercito Popular (Spanish abbreviation – FARC-EP) in 2016 following four years of peace negotiations. For years, Colombia has been hard hit by ongoing conflict, violence and a plethora of armed groups, including paramilitaries and guerilla fighters, all with a distinct cause and diverse political drivers and backing. With the end of the conflict, almost 500,000 lives had been taken, and approximately eight million forcibly displaced according to data made available by the Truth Commission in Colombia’s final report on the internal armed conflict (published June 28, 2022)\(^6\).

For years, these non-state armed groups have established themselves in remote areas of Colombia as alternative governing structures, specifically through the provision of services and extension of law enforcement (Capone 2018, 1). By filling a vacuum left by weak state structures, these non-state armed groups, and most notably the FARC, became the de facto ruling authority in many territories. The FARC is one of the oldest left-wing rebel groups in Colombia, emerging out of the 10-year civil war that took place in the late 1940s between the Colombian Conservative Party and the Colombian Liberal Party – a period known as La Violencia (Franco 2019, 24). This period created the origin for both the guerilla-like groups in Colombia, whose main drivers to violence were resistance and self-defense against the government, as well as the other paramilitary groups (Franco 2019, 36).

\(^{6}\) The executive summary of the report can be found using the following link: https://www.abcolombia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ENV1.pdf.
Since the 1980s, the government of Colombia has embarked on several rounds of peace negotiations with the different armed groups involved in the conflict, including namely to identify ways for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of most of these groups to consolidate peace in the country (Capone 2018, 3). The main groups involved in the conflict, and consequently the peace negotiations at different intervals in time, are the government armed forces, paramilitary groups, and guerilla – or rebel – forces (Capone 2018, 8). Many of the guerilla forces’ violence, who are mostly associated with the left-wing, was induced by poverty and lack of access to basic needs.

The FARC - the largest group of Colombia’s left-wing rebels - was founded in 1964, as a result of government suppression of the Communist party and exclusion of the left (Lee 2012, 30). The group’s initial leaders and founders consisted of farmers and land workers, with radical demands on “issues such as land tenure, property ownership and foreign trade,” in addition to resentment of the rising levels of inequality across Colombia (Lee 2012, 29; Suarez 2000, 580). The FARC had been driven by their intent to overthrow the government, and establish their own Marxist government (Lee 2012, 32). Since its inception in the 1960s and moving forward, the FARC became dominant in several regions, but specifically gained prominence and presence as it became involved in drug production and trafficking in the 1980s (Lee 2012, 30). After which, the group’s capacity reached an estimated 15,000 members towards the end of the 1990s. Alongside the growth of the FARC was the growth of another left-wing guerilla group named the National Liberation Army or Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN) (Suarez 2000, 578). Similar to the FARC, the ELN sought to ignite a revolution against the government, like the instigation of the Cuban revolution led by Che Guevara’s model of guerilla warfare (Suarez 2000, 580).
On the other hand were the mostly right-wing paramilitary groups, widely encompassed under the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia or *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC). The AUC has for years also been regarded as one of the main groups responsible for the violence in Colombia. It is comprised of a coalition of different paramilitary groups that emerged by the 1990s, following the failed peace agreements of the 1980s. The paramilitary groups aligned themselves with the aims and objects of elite landowners, politicians, as well as military structures against the left-wing guerilla groups (Franco 2019, 48). As a result, their operations were backed by political networks, which permitted – and legalized – “profits from violence” (Grajales 2011, 771). This allowed landowning elites to defend their privileges besides the state (Grajales 2011, 771). Individual ex-guerillas have also joined the AUC, as they were open to receive defecting individuals from groups such as the FARC and ELN in search of greater economic benefits (Franco 2019, 48).

Notwithstanding the perpetuating and widespread violence across Colombia, peace negotiations and attempts at reaching political settlements between the government, paramilitary and guerilla groups have been integral in the Colombian context since the 1980s (with an extensive precedent)⁷. Starting initially in the 1980s following President Belisario Betancur assuming power, a round of peace negotiations led to the signing of an agreement for the cessation of hostilities and military activities, including kidnapping and “terrorist acts,” named the La Uribe Agreement (Franco 2019, 43). This agreement also included the demobilization of guerilla and paramilitary members. Additionally, President

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⁷ For the purpose of this study, and due to the constraint of the time frame to be covered, I will only be reflecting on peace processes, negotiations and DDR attempts taking place after the 1980s. For a detailed historical account, you can refer to the book by Carranza-Franco, Francy, *Demobilization and Reintegration in Colombia: Building State and Citizenship*. 
Betancur was keen on factoring the guerilla groups’ grievances over widespread poverty, inequality and suppressive political sphere in his policies and reforms. Notwithstanding this achievement, the agreement and reforms that ensued led to the unintended consequence of a polarized political landscape, whereby fragmentation of the state increased between military and civil authorities, and armed groups expanded vis-à-vis drug traffickers (Franco 2019, 47).

After Betancur’s attempt at peace and demobilization, another two main attempts at DDR took place in Colombia: under President Alvaro Uribe from 2003 to 2010 and under President Juan Manuel Santos from 2010 to 2018 (Franco 2019, 4). The DDR process undertaken during Uribe’s presidency had primarily targeted paramilitary groups and individual guerilla members, with most individuals demobilizing at the time from the AUC. Between 2003 and 2006, almost 32,000 AUC members had demobilized (Kaplan and Nussio 2018, 137). However, the process was criticized for lacking transparency, inflating the number of demobilized individuals and failing to cease violence (Kaplan and Nussio 2018, 137). During the same time, individual guerilla fighters were promised reintegration packages and benefits, as incentives for demobilization. As a result, approximately 21,000 fighters demobilized individually between 2002 and 2010 (Kaplan and Nussio 2018, 138). The Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR) had been the main body in charge of undertaking the DDR process during that time.

From 2010, and under the leadership of President Santos, another DDR process commenced, as President Santos kickstarted peace negotiations with the FARC after assuming power. In 2016, the government of Colombia and the FARC finally signed an agreement for the cessation of hostilities, in preparation for a plebiscite to take place over
the six points of a final peace agreement between the parties – including of which was the terms of DDR for former FARC members (Franco 2019, 75). As a result of the signed peace agreement, a tripartite monitoring and verification body was established comprising of the Colombian government, the FARC, as well as the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (Baysal and Dilek 2023, 8). The Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN) was established in 2017, replacing the ACR, as an administrating body for the DDR process, generating opportunities for ex-combatants, as well as building a long-term reintegration and reincorporation process to ensure sustainability of interventions (ARN Overview 2022).

Taking forward the case of Colombia, this chapter aims to unpack the different DDR programs that have taken place within this context, including the different approaches that have been applied, their successes and failures, as well as existing opportunities for collective and community reintegration and reincorporation to effectively lead to sustainable peace. Colombia has been plagued with the proliferation of armed groups and perpetuating violence, ebbing the lives and livelihoods of people while tearing away the social fabric for years. However, after more than 50 years of violence, the bloodshed and conflict seem to be coming to an end. Therefore, understanding the recent approach to DDR in Colombia, specifically the more nuanced approaches for reincorporation at the community level and with ex-combatants, can inform the target of this research. This study aims to provide examples from Colombia on how DDR processes can be more contextualized, localized, participatory and implemented at the national and sub-national levels, warranting them more conducive to sustainable peacebuilding processes. It will take stock of the different community reintegration and reconciliation processes, along with
social reintegration initiatives, to evaluate the influence of these approaches on peacebuilding processes.

**Rounds of Peace Processes since the 1980s: Colombia’s Attempts at a DDR Process**

*Establishing Peace in the 1980s and 1990s: The Lead-Up to Comprehensive DDR in Colombia*

In the beginning of the 1980s, peace negotiations and demobilization efforts for different guerilla group members, including the FARC and other groups such as M-19 and EPL, led by President Betancur were characterized by “blanket amnesties” under the “Law of Unconditional Amnesty in Favor of Peace” – Law 35, in a bid to establish ‘peace and stability’ (Capone 2018, 3; Franco 2019, 43; Theidon 2007, 71). The agreement— and peace processes known as the *La Uribe Agreement*— entailed that guerilla groups would not engage in military action, while the government would put in place a rehabilitation and reintegration plan for ex-combatants, and the victims of the conflict as well (Franco 2019, 43). As a result of this process, the FARC initially agreed to a ceasefire, followed by creating their own political party, the *Union Patriotica* (UP). Yet, the peace process was never fully realized, as the FARC did not partake in the DDR program in place (Capone 2018, 3). Rather, they continued their military expansion and use of violence, alongside partaking in the political sphere.

Consequently, right-wing paramilitary groups began to backlash at UP members, killing both members and sympathizers of the left-wing in the Colombian government (Capone 2018, 3; Franco 2019, 43). During the same time, other guerilla groups were expanding, including through violent attacks and operations. Soon after, Betancur’s peace process began to falter, specifically as he had intended to refrain from a hard military
approach towards the groups and adopted a liberal approach in addressing grievances of social inequality and political participation of the diverse groups (Franco 2019, 43-45). The negotiations and peace processes eventually failed, as violence broke out on several occasions between the military and different armed groups, including most notably the operation to siege the Colombian Supreme Court in 1985 (Capone 2018, 3).

Peace processes and endeavors at demobilization of armed groups remained high on the agenda of all subsequent presidential transitions, starting from 1986 and onwards till 2002 with the election of Alvaro Uribe. Presidents Virgilo Barco Vargas, Cezar Gaviria, and Andres Pastrana all initiated negotiations with separate groups, including the M-19, FARC, ELN and EPL on different intervals (Baysal and Dilek 2023, 7). For example, under President Vargas, a peace settlement was signed with the M-19, leading to the demobilization of many of these members (Franco 2019, 45). The upcoming presidents went through similar processes with different groups, leading to increased demobilizations over the years. Accordingly, the National Council for Normalization (NCN) was created to create a formal structure for DDR in Colombia, facilitating the process of reintegration for the demobilized individuals (Franco 2019, 46).

Parallel to this process, different armed groups created NGOs to assist demobilized individuals in their reincorporation and reintegration processes. For example, they created initiatives to pool money into projects for both economic and social reintegration of their members, creating both livelihoods and opportunities for participation in community organizations (Franco 2019, 46). Nonetheless, the FARC remained intact, while the UP continued to receive violent backlash until it was rescinded in 2002. Capone also argues that “the government proved to be incapable of guaranteeing the security of the ex-
combatants and this previous experience of demobilization and violent repression has been haunting any subsequent efforts to negotiate again with the rebel groups,” and specifically any attempts that targeted the FARC (2018, 3). Therefore, violence continued on the political level, with many reforms altering the balance of power of vital elites, giving rise to the paramilitary groups (Franco 2019, 47).

During the 1990s, after the incomplete demobilization process, in addition to state fragmentation, political polarization, and a steady proliferation of drug trafficking, paramilitary groups and guerilla groups began acquiring finance out of their strong link with criminal networks (Franco 2019, 47). They specifically began engaging in drug trafficking with an increase in the cocaine industries during this time - benefiting from the rising drug cartels in Colombia. Moreover, this unpleasant experience when it comes to DDR, in addition to violent political suppression, has hindered any prospects for future attempts, and lulled guerilla group members away from taking part in peace negotiations (Capone 2018, 3). Yet this was to change as President Uribe assumed power and kickstarted peace negotiations directed specifically to paramilitary groups (mainly the AUC). However, he refrained from engaging or negotiating with the FARC, leaving them and other guerilla groups to remain active throughout this process (Capone 2018, 3; Kaplan and Nussio 2018, 137).

**Uribe’s DDR Process: The Collective Demobilization of Paramilitaries**

At the time of implementation, the DDR process under President Uribe was considered to be one of the most comprehensive DDR processes in Colombia since the 1980s. The process took place during Uribe’s term, from 2002 to 2010 (Kaplan and Nussio 2018, 137). It mainly targeted right-wing paramilitary groups, as well as individual...
members defecting from left-wing guerilla groups (Capone 2018, 3; Kaplan and Nussio 2018, 137). This culminated in a DDR program that hosted the AUC, considered as the “umbrella organization for paramilitary groups in Colombia” as mentioned before (Baysal and Dilek 2023, 7). According to Kaplan and Nussio, 52,419 individuals demobilized as part of this process, starting from August 2002 up until January 2010 (2018, 137). Additionally, almost 21,000 ex-combatants decided to go through individual demobilization processes during this time (Kaplan and Nussio, 2018, 138).

After Uribe assumed power, he put in place the Policy of Defence and Democratic Security, which aimed to recover the power of the state in the face of criminal and armed groups, in addition to establishing opportunities for development (Franco 2019, 60). This approach linked establishing basis for security, by dealing with the proliferation of armed groups, with securing opportunities for economic development, resources and the benefit of communities. Yet, in implementation, this approach prioritized a strong military and security goal, over economic, social and political development (Franco 2019, 60). As mentioned briefly in the previous section, prioritizing security approaches and responses may not necessarily lead to development, specifically when dealing with caseloads of ex-combatants and individuals formerly associated with armed groups looking for opportunities to reintegrate into a conflict-ridden society. A balance between security and development priorities is key to maintain holistic interventions (Jennings 2008).

To outline the implementation of a DDR process for the ex-combatants of paramilitaries, the first round of formal negotiations resulted in the signing of the Santa Fe de Ralito I Agreement in July 2003 (Capone 2018, 3). This agreement specified that the demobilization process should take place and formally end in late 2005. However, in turn
the AUC needed to “suspend all its unlawful activities and respect the unilateral ceasefire, as well as to provide support to the Government in its anti-drug-trafficking efforts” (Capone 2018, 4). A second agreement was signed later in May 2004, with the aim of setting specific concentration zones for paramilitary groups. It also created the space to halt arrest warrants for AUC members. Additionally, as a result of the agreement, the Mission in Support of the Peace Process of the Organization of American States (OAS) was created to monitor the DDR process. The main aim of these agreements was to “re-establish the monopoly of force in the hands of the state” (Nussio 2011, 88).

Legal frameworks in Colombia were also integral in shaping the demobilization process for ex-combatants, and specifically in characterizing the kind of process that members of different groups received. The demobilization process under Uribe was premised on two legal frameworks (Franco 2019, 63). First, law 782 of transitional justice was used to treat the “rank-and-file paramilitaries and guerilla deserters,” who have committed political crimes during the conflict (Franco 2019, 63). A second law was directed at paramilitary leaders and made available to them amnesty and impunity in the face of gross violations and crimes. Framed under the “alternative punishment bill” these paramilitary members would pay fines instead of serving prison time (Capone 2018, 4). This created grievances over the DDR process and scattered the demobilization processes taking place for different paramilitary groups during this time; undermining any prospects for a one or unified process for all. Moreover, strong ties of some of the groups with organized criminal networks involved in drug-trafficking further jeopardized the process as a whole (Franco 2019, 65).
The Establishment of the Alta Consejeria para la Reintegracion Social y Economica de la Presidencia de la Republica (ACRSE)

Subsequently, the main over-arching legislative framework outlining the DDR approach was the Justice and Peace Law (JPL), which was signed in July 2005 (Capone 2018, 4). Through the JPL, Uribe’s government sought to achieve three goals, “i) to achieve demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of illegal armed groups, ii) to recognize and enforce the rights of the victims to truth, justice and reparations and iii) to conduct criminal proceedings against the leaders responsible for the commission of serious crimes” (Capone 2018, 4). Overall, the program provided individuals going through it with reintegration packages and benefits, in addition to reduced sentences. The programs also focused on creating “large-scale rural and urban cooperatives” (Thorsel 2013, 189). According to Thorsel, this was part of a larger economic reintegration strategy. As part of the program, and the reintegration benefits received by the ex-combatants (ex-AUC members), each participant was assigned to a project that would fill the need for employment after reintegration. Along with that, they would receive a seed capital of two million Colombian Pesos (Thorsel 2013, 189). However, out of the estimated 6,500 participants planned to receive this fund, by 2006, only 2,200 had did and many did not spend it on creating entrepreneurial projects (Thorsel 2013, 189).

In September 2006, the Presidential High Council for Reintegration (ACRSE) was established to administer the reintegration policies and programs in Colombia, including through creating long-term economic reintegration for ex-combatants – both individually and collectively demobilized individuals (Thorsel 2013, 190). What followed was an era of progressive reintegration, adopting a more integrated approach to the demobilization
and reintegration and establishing community reintegration initiatives that take lead in implementation. The ACRSE oversaw providing ex-combatants with, not only reinsertion packages and benefits, but also education and vocational training, psychosocial support, healthcare, grants for individual business projects (of eight million Colombian Pesos), as well as monthly stipends (Kaplan and Nussio 2018, 138; Thorsel 2013, 190).

The reintegration process was conducted by the government, through the ACRSE, with many reconciliation activities accompanying the reintegration processes. For example, community dialogue initiatives, collective community projects, cultural events, and similar initiatives took part as part of the Conpes 3554, which outline the national policy for social and economic reintegration of armed groups in Colombia (Kaplan and Nussio, 2018, 138). Nonetheless, many community members still feared the demobilized ex-combatants and the process inherently focused on providing economic opportunities rather than accomplishing social reintegration – focusing on “business plans, employability, and social service (Thorsel 2013, 192). Conversely, some communities created community reintegration mechanisms, whereby organizations were created to organize ex-combatants away from armed groups (Kaplan and Nussio 2018, 139).

“While officially a large number of paramilitaries passed through the program, the Government never verified whether all of them actually demobilized, and it was unable to effectively dismantle the groups’ criminal networks and support system” (Kaplan and Nussio 2018, 139). Since there was no mechanism to verify that the individuals going through the program were truly part of the paramilitary group, collective demobilization meant that all individuals submitting to become part of the process received the promised benefits (Jaramillo, Giha and Torres 2009, 13). Similarly, the attempt to demobilize
individuals from left-wing armed groups, while an attempt to dismantle the groups’ capacities from within as part of a counter-insurgency process from the government, did not achieve this goal despite large numbers of deserters. The entire process was also suspicious for many, given Uribe’s – and his government’s - close ties with the paramilitary leaders (Franco 2014, 252). An additional factor was the fact that much of the process was designed and implemented on the national level, with little to no consultation with local and municipal authorities – which will be discussed in more detail further along in this chapter (Franco 2014, 252).

| Table 4.1 Non-State Armed Groups taking part in peace processes from 1991 to 2016 |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------|------------------|-----------------|
| Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) | Year | Number of disarmed people | Current status |
| Popular Liberation Army—EPL | 1991 | 2286 | Active disidence |
| April 19 Movement—M-19 Revolutionary workers party | 1990 | 900 | Political participation |
| Quintín Lame Armed Movement—MAQL Ernesto Rojas Command the urban arm of the EPL Socialist renewal group Militias | 1991 | 157 | Civil organizations (research and actions in human rights) |
| | 1994 | 650 | Active disidence in other NSAG groups Political participation |
| | 1994 | 150 | Civil organizations (research in armed conflict) |
| | 1998 | 171 | Demobilized |
| | 2008 | 45 | Demobilized |
| | 2006 | 31,671 | Reintegration |
| | 2016 | 13,000 | Reincorporation |

*Source: López Hernández (2016).*

Embarking on a Road to Lasting Peace: DDR for FARC under the Final Peace Agreement (2016)

The national strategies and processes to consolidate peace continued to evolve, specifically as President Uribe’s process did not seem to fulfill the goal of creating lasting peace. On the contrary, it is still viewed considering the many weaknesses it had, from being “unable to target all the States’ opponents” to failing to address issues of accountability and reintegration (Capone 2018, 5). Yet, with the election of President Juan
Manuel Santos in 2010, several legal strategies were reformed, including those of which impacting the reintegration programs already in place in Colombia (Thorsel 2013, 192). Simultaneously, a reinvigorated effort to establish peace negotiations with the FARC were underway, as new adaptive mediation tactics created the pathway for “exploratory meetings,” and finally promises for an agreement aimed at ending violence in Colombia once and for all (Penagos 2022, 71). In a similar effort, the ACRSE was replaced by the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR) in November 2011 to oversee a sustainable reintegration process that brings together ex-combatants, but also addresses the needs of the host communities (ARN Agency Overview).

After four years of negotiations, a peace agreement was reached, entitled, “The Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace” in September 2016. However, this was followed by a nationwide plebiscite in October, whereby the agreement was shockingly rejected (Capone 2017, 19). The plebiscite result showed the split population sentiments towards the agreement, whereby 50.2% rejected it, 49.8% were in favor of it, and 60% of the eligible voter population did not participate (Petcu 2020, 6; Gluecker et al. 2022, 360). However, in just over a month, the parties of the agreement (namely the Colombian Government and the FARC) revised the terms, submitting and signing an updated version on 20 November 2016 (Capone 2017, 19).

The agreement covered six points: rural reform, political participation and “democratic opening to establish peace,” securing a ceasefire and DDR of former FARC members, drug-trafficking, rights of victims and transitional justice, and finally,
monitoring, verification and implementation mechanisms of the agreement\(^8\) (Penagos 2022, 72; Capone 2018, 5). The Final Agreement incorporated more than fifty amendments that were suggested by the different factions, ensuring that all concerns were addressed early on and that a meaningful peace process was underway. For this research, I will be looking into the agreement’s pillar focused on DDR, specifically in establishing a ceasefire and securing pathways for ex-FARC members to transition back into the communities.

In particular, chapter three of the agreement lays out the imperative of tailoring economic, social and political reincorporation of the FARC, specifically “in accordance with their interests” (Final Agreement 2016, 8). As per the agreement, the effective reincorporation of ex-combatants lays the basis for sustainable, stable and long-lasting peace (2016, 8). As part of the provisions of the peace agreement, a tri-partite monitoring and verification mechanism was established, bringing together representatives of the government, the FARC and the United Nations (Baysal and Dilek 2023, 7). Additionally, the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC) was established in July 2017, to monitor and verify the implementation of sections 3.2 and 3.4 of the peace agreement\(^9\) (Baysal and Dilek 2023, 8).

According to the agreement, the DDR would proceed, with almost 7,000 FARC members agreeing to disarm and demobilize into twenty-six established Zonas Veredales Transitorias de Normalizacion (ZVTN) or transitional village zones for normalizations and

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\(^{8}\) For an English translation of the signed peace agreement, you can refer to the following link: [https://www.peaceagreements.org/wview/1845/Final%20Agreement%20to%20End%20the%20Armed%20Conflict%20and%20Build%20a%20Stable%20and%20Lasting%20Peace](https://www.peaceagreements.org/wview/1845/Final%20Agreement%20to%20End%20the%20Armed%20Conflict%20and%20Build%20a%20Stable%20and%20Lasting%20Peace).

\(^{9}\) These two sections pertain to the following respectively: reincorporation of the FARC-EP into civilian life – in economic, social and political matters – in accordance with its interests; and the agreement on guarantees of security and fight against criminal organizations and criminal acts against any organization or person taking part in the implementation of the accords and peacebuilding.
seven camp sites or *Puntos Transitorios de Normalizacion* (PTN) in different rural areas (Gluecker et al. 2022, 360; Capone 2018, 5). These were used as living spaces for FARC members while they received demobilization support and laid down their weapons to the UN (Atuesta 2019). The process of demobilization would last for six months, officially starting on December 5th, 2016 (Capone 2017, 30). By the formal end of the process, almost 10,000 ex-combatants had demobilized (Petcu 2020, 6). Simultaneously, the UN mission had gathered almost 9,000 arms, 1.8 million ammunition rounds, and 38,000 kg of explosive and materials. Accordingly, the official disarmament process was finalized by June 2017 (Baysal and Dilek 2023, 8).

The ZVTN locations were chosen based on a few considerations, including most importantly that they needed to be secluded and distant from major urban centers, as well as far away from regions where illicit markets were present (Segura and Stein 2019, 6). These considerations were important to ensure the protection and safety of both the FARC members as well as the civilian populations. It also facilitated the mechanism for monitoring and verification of the members, ensuring that they are not drawn to rejoin armed groups or potential illicit networks. Fulfilling these main considerations, along with a few others proposed by the government, took a lot of work. Therefore, most of the ZVTNs ended up being established in areas where there was prior presence of the FARC to ensure the safety of the returning individuals (Segura and Stein 2019, 6). Additionally, the FARC believed that by returning to areas where they had established presence, they would be able to consolidate power as an emerging political voice and actor (Segura and Stein 2019, 5).

The process was overseen and co-managed by the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN) – replacing the ACR in May 2017 – and representatives of the
FARC. The disarmament phase consisted of a technical process, by which the FARC’s weaponry and arsenal were handed down to the UN, including through a process of registration of weapons, identification, monitoring and verification of arms’ possession, recollection, storage, removal of the arsenal and final disposal of the arms (Capone 2018, 5). After the DD phases were complete, the reintegration process, and effectively what became known as ‘reincorporation,’ was implemented in the form of collective reincorporation processes. “This allowed continuous physical and social cohesion of former combatants as part of the strategy of the FARC to maintain its internal cohesion” (Gluecker et al. 2022, 360). As a result, the FARC remained intact, not as an armed group, but as a political party in the following two congressional periods in 2018 and 2022 (Gluecker et al. 2022, 360).

**Foundations for Collective Reincorporation**

The reintegration phase that ensued, termed for distinction as the reincorporation phase in the Final Peace Agreement, was defined by the *Consejo Nacional de Reincorporacion* (CNR) or National Council for Reincorporation. The CNR included two representatives from the Government and another two from the FARC to ensure coordination and compatibility of views in organizing the following needed processes (Baysal and Dilek 2023, 9). The distinction in terms – from reintegration to reincorporation - was made to distinguish between the reintegration process of the demobilized individuals from the AUC in 2003, during Uribe’s process, and the newly demobilized individuals from the FARC after the signing of the 2016 peace agreement (Baysal and Dilek 2023, 9). This change in terminology is key in the Colombian context, as it differentiates between the different processes that are to be put in place for different ex-combatants as per their
affiliation. During the peace negotiations, FARC leadership were keen on creating a collective approach to their reintegration, in order to maintain the group’s cooperative capacity, as well as reinforce its position in the political sphere – thus calling for collective reincorporation (Segura and Stein 2019, 3).

More importantly, the FARC wanted to establish a different process premised on the fact that they have not surrendered to the state, and that ensured that their reincorporation strategy would reflect this. In reality, the FARC view themselves as “having negotiated with the state as two equal sides,” and therefore were keen on acquiring the terminology that recognizes and creates this distinction (Baysal and Dilek 2023, 13). Another example was their preference of using the term dejacion or laying down, instead of desarme or disarmament – yet again signaling to the voluntary nature of the process (laying down their arms) from the side of the FARC and its intention to remain a strong political actor (IFIT 2021, 2). Therefore, it was clear that they wanted to steer away from terminology that was reminiscent of the previous DDR attempts in Colombia, specifically as some of which were used as means to dismantle the capacity of the FARC – referring mainly to the counterinsurgency attempt of individual demobilizations under Uribe’s DDR process mentioned earlier.

According to the ARN, the reincorporation process established after the signing of the Final Peace Agreement is divided into two phases. First, the process commences with an initial stage of early reincorporation, whereby individuals spend 24 months. The second phase consists of a subsequent longer term and more comprehensive reincorporation stage (ARN Social and Economic Reincorporation Handbook). During the early reincorporation stage, individuals receive “state agency-based services” as per their needs and priorities,
including 90% minimum monthly wage if they do not have alternative employment and a one-time “normalization allowance” of two million Colombian Pesos (Segura and Stein 2019, 7). The long-term reincorporation stage then offers and expanded and more comprehensive spectrum of services, cutting across seven different components: education, economic sustainability, community, healthcare, habitability and housing, family and comprehensive psychosocial well-being (ARN Social and Economic Reincorporation Handbook).

Additionally, territorial spaces for training (capacitation) and reincorporation (Espacios Territoriales de Capacitacion y Reincorporacion - ETCRs) were created to carry-out activities for the early reincorporation phase for the planned 24 months (Segura and Stein 2019, 7). These had transformed out of the original demobilization sites – the ZVTNs – and provided semi-permanent housing to accommodate the many ex-combatants who had no home to return to (International Crisis Group 2021, 6). After which, these ETCRs are to be transformed to become permanent reincorporation spaces that have are integral for establishing collective reincorporation efforts; managed by the ARN and continue to receive support in the form of food, public services, security measures, in addition to assistance for productive projects (ARN Handbook; Atuesta 2019).

While intended to be integral spaces for disarmament, demobilization – and by leu of sequence, reincorporation as well – the ETCRs did not hold much potential for long-term livelihoods. Since most of the areas chosen for these sites were isolated, they did not offer the needed space to capitalize on farming experiences of ex-combatants for example. It was also too isolated to move agricultural products to the market and back (International Crisis Group 2021, 7). Many individuals began to leave the ETCRs, and relocate in
different areas, in pursuit of economic opportunities and livelihoods, as well as in search of areas where they could manage to work and live next to one another, in search of political, social and economic reincorporation as a collective unit (International Crisis Group 2021, 7). Still, they in fact did represent an innovative approach to spur reincorporation, with support from the different actors on the ground, local, national and international (Penagos 2023, 108).

Most importantly, the FARC were looking for opportunities to create business cooperatives that can spur sustainable livelihood opportunities for the many individuals reintegrating back into the society; alongside the national efforts which were strategized as individual routes. One main initiative created to enhance the collective reincorporation process, as well as fulfill the peace agreements call to support productive projects, was the Economias Sociales del Comun (Ecomun), or the national cooperative People’s Social Economies. The Ecomun is the “institutional figure designed by the FARC as the anchor of the collective reintegration” (Segura and Stein 2019, 8). All the resources required for the projects conducted under the Ecomun was managed by the FARC. However, the projects were implemented by different local cooperatives, featuring different productive routes such as coffee planting and production, wood factories, tourism, and services as well (Atuesta 2019). Some of these projects were later approved and adopted by the ARN. Yet, some argue that they have not been as conducive to effective reincorporation, while others state that this approach has laid the foundation for innovative ways to sustain peace in a society that has been conflict-ridden for more than half a century.
Perceptions of DDR in Colombia: Analyzing the Challenges & Opportunities of Reincorporation for Sustainable Peacebuilding

Even with the potential for sustainable peacebuilding the Colombian context, challenges still need to be addressed for the implementation of DDR and the peace process as a whole. These challenges, although put to test the many achievements of the milestone peace process, do not negate the many accomplishments of the process thus far. Yet, they are integral to identify, in order to understand how better to respond and reshape the implementation, thus applying a truly adaptive peacebuilding process. One main challenge outlined by Segura and Stein is the initial insistence of FARC to adopt a collective approach for their reincorporation and reinsertion (2019). Accordingly, the FARC’s determination to reincorporate as a collective body, while was an innovative approach in the Colombian context, has proved several shortcomings. First, since it is a novel approach, it required structural changes and national level adaptation from the government to enable the roll-out of the process. To the contrary of what Segura and Stein argue, there has been, to a great extent, adaptation on the national level in order to accommodate this type of reincorporation (as we have seen with the establishment of governance bodies such as the ARN, and local and regional committees that oversee different reincorporation processes.

Relatedly, one key issue was the spaces where collective reincorporation was made available and the limited access to opportunities in them. While for the FARC, these zones were in spaces where they had historically been present and thus integral to maintaining their power and consolidating local power, they perpetuated many obstacles. The fact that many of these zones were secluded meant that they were too remote to connect with existing markets, making it less feasible to generate income out of economic enterprises.
(Segura and Stein 2019, 9). Moreover, many of the FARC’s members lacked the technical knowledge to design and implement sustainable projects, starting from generating an idea to navigating around red tape (Segura and Stein 2019, 9). Here, we find ourselves at a crossroads between the perception of some of the individuals being reincorporated and the national efforts undertaken to make sustainable economic livelihoods possible, such as the creation of the ARN, the ETCRs and Ecomun. Other issues also include access to land for ex-combatants, infrastructure, weak present of the state, public services and markets. Yet, for the purpose of this study, we will not be delving into these types of structural challenges, while keeping in mind that they do influence reintegration.

While this approach has instigated prospects for political and social reincorporation for the FARC, it still needs to achieve economic reincorporation. As a result, the process has been slow in implementation, and a number of FARC leaders have “abandoned this idea of collective return and are instead focusing on the more traditional political strategy of establishing a presence in major cities” (Segura and Stein 2019, 12). According to Gluecker et al.’s interviews with participants of the process on their perception of the reintegration process, some participants are well aware of the challenges and disappointing developments with regards to reincorporation (2021, 368). Many have opted to processes that are outside of the collective reincorporation zones, for the lack of economic opportunities and security, ultimately feeling abandoned by FARC leaders themselves (Gluecker et al., 2021, 368).

Another major point was the emergence of FARC dissidents, who opposed the process from the beginning. As a result of frayed political transformation on the part of the FARC, as well as challenges to reintegration and reincorporation, many individuals decided
to split under a different command. This was spurred by narrative promoting that FARC commanders “negotiated their personal status and left ex-combatants at the mercy of whatever might happen to them” (International Crisis Group 2021, 24). These individuals decided to continue the armed struggle against the state, posing as strong spoilers to the peace process, as well as reincorporation. This threat is exacerbated as more reincorporated individuals have become weary of the process, signaling the potential of recidivism if they are not provided with viable alternatives to joining the armed group.

Building on the challenges laid out above, the DDR process in Colombia outlined after the signing of the 2016 peace agreement remains a milestone in the history of the conflict and signifies opportunities for sustainable peacebuilding. Coupling DDR with transitional justice, as laid out in the provisions of the agreement, was key in ensuring DDR is squared against strong national stabilization, peacebuilding and legal efforts to maintain peace. Striking a balance between peace and justice throughout the history of the Colombian conflict has been present. With the signing of the 2016 peace agreement, the state was keen on addressing the past abuses committed by the FARC against the many civilian communities. It also ensured that a reconciliation process between the communities and the reincorporated individuals was underway. This prioritizes the rights of victims, while maintaining an understanding that ex-combatants are not being rewarded for their wrongdoings (in the form of education, psychosocial support, and other reintegration benefits). Pairing DDR, reconciliation and peacebuilding together created the foundation on which to premise sustainable and participatory peacebuilding.

Since chapter five of the peace agreement centralizes the rights of victims in the peace process, it outlines the imperative of holding those who have committed crimes
during the conflict accountable, ensuring for the communities a guarantee of protection and non-recurrence of violence. This created the “Integral System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition” to ensure reconciliation between the returning fighters and the communities (Triana-E et al. 2022, 85). One unique example is the process of written pledges of participation in transitional justice programs from FARC members if they are to go through the demobilization process (IFIT 2021). This entailed participation in truth-telling commissions, reparations, as well as commitment to non-recidivism.

Additionally, the establishment of the Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz (JEP) or the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as part of the national implementation policy actors was key in ensuring transitional justice was part and parcel of the peace process and subsequent DDR implementation. The JEP is one of the Integral System’s mechanisms, and the main one for transitional justice (Triana-E et al. 2022, 85). The JEP was mandated to “investigate, elucidate, judge, and punish serious human rights violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed in the context of the armed conflict up to December 1, 2016”\(^\text{10}\) (Penagos 2023, 113).

**Innovative & Bottom-Up Reintegration for Peacebuilding: Adaptive DDR for Sustainable Peacebuilding**

What amounted out of these processes, and building on Colombia’s history with peace processes and DDR attempts, was a new and improved approach to the reintegration process of ex-combatants. It built on the experiences of DDR to create a new model that is premised on the needs and concerns of the local and national actors, along with both the individuals being reintegrated and some of the host communities. Additionally, the

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\(^\text{10}\) This quote is extracted from the Truth Commission, JEP and UBPD 2019, as cited in Penagos 2023.
reincorporation process outlined in the peace process premised the three elements of reincorporation as interdependent – economic, political and social – creating what has been recently termed an adaptive peacebuilding approach (Penagos 2023, 104). This has largely been taken forward by the ARN and the FARC, to advance a larger peacebuilding and stabilization approach with the main aim to end the armed conflict in Colombia; something that was far-off from previous attempts of peace and DDR.

Previous attempts had indeed focused on the broader political and economic spheres in Colombia. However, the process that came out of the negotiations and signing of the peace agreement in 2016 was innovative and nuanced, not only in the implementation of DDR, but in the shaping of the negotiation phase of the peace process. Reflecting what has been argued since the beginning of this study, the need for interventions – and specifically DDR – to be community-based and participatory, so was the peace process with the FARC. Building on the many lessons learned over the years, the peace process with the FARC was thus ‘adaptive;’ it was community-based, participatory and context-specific.

As such, it was able to develop “innovative frameworks and approaches, for example developing procedural distinctions between peace negotiations and the peace process; positioning the rights of the victims at the center of the talks; addressing issues related to rural development; and preparing for peacebuilding before the agreement was signed” (Penagos 2022, 58). One example of how the process has been adaptive in this regard, is through the different considerations made to ensure that all the parties’ concerns were addressed early on in the process and throughout the implementation, such as: adjusting labels and terminology for the DDR process to boost legitimacy, bringing in
representatives of all parties to the negotiating table rather than civilian representatives, and building on lessons learned from previous DDR attempts, among other considerations (IFIT 2021, 2).

Furthermore, the negotiations were marked by strong local and national ownership alongside external support. This has shaped the provisions of the agreement, and specifically the ensuing implementation of the DDR process, since the process was driven by the parties to the conflict through direct negotiation between both, including through platforms for dialogue (Herbolzheimer 2016, 8). External actors, such as Cuba, Norway, Venezuela and Chile were requested to become formal negotiators in the process, the US, Germany, the UN and EU also nominated special envoys to the peace process, and international experts came in as advisors to the process (Herbolzheimer 2016, 8). Coupled with the tendency to learn from past experiences, Colombia embarked on a generation of DDR characterized by strong institutionalization, as well as the participation of local and national actors that support all three routes of reincorporation: the economic, political and social (Penagos 2023, 104).

Similarly, throughout the implementation of the process, strong institutional actors came into being, such as the ARN. This ensured that the implementation of DDR strikes the right balance between national ownership and external support, as well as adequate context-specificity and local community participation. For example, the ARN’s local units in different departments across Colombia coordinated with local communities to identify the needed interventions and strategies to be implemented (Penagos 2023, 108). This coordination included creating local and regional committees that were comprised of government representatives, former FARC representatives, the private sector and different
UN agencies, which all participated at various stages (Penagos 2023, 108). The ETCRs mentioned earlier are one prime example of this coordination, specifically as it brings together local, national and international actors to support both individual and collective productive projects that can “generate incomes, promote social cohesion, and avoid new ways of violence” (Penagos 2023, 108). Additionally, the communities involved in the ETCRs are consulted by the ARN, to inform the design of projects, educational opportunities, as well as raise awareness on issues such as co-responsibility and gender.

Conclusion

The DDR process in Colombia has been a long and extensive journey. Beginning with the peace process in the 1980s and moving with different DDR processes under the different presidencies, each attempt has been characterized by different activities, procedures and legal frameworks under which implementation was conducted. One main thread, and the main element that has led to the breakthrough process in 2016 is localized and participatory approaches that aim at long-lasting peace. Coupled with a strong national endeavor to consolidate peace, such as in institutionalizing the requisite institutions and oversight mechanisms, the DDR process, and specifically reintegration and reincorporation in the Colombian context, has been shaped to address the realities on the ground. More so, it was designed as a bottom-up approach – alongside external support from different partners and UN agencies - to ensure that the needs and priorities of both the ex-combatants as well as the communities are considered. With a few downfalls and challenges, it is apparent that the process is far from over. However, through measuring the sustainability factors of peacebuilding in the Colombian experience, it is apparent that there are a few
characteristics in the design and implementation of DDR that make sustainable peace more probable.

An analysis of the DDR process in Colombia sheds light on the way peacebuilding through DDR can be achievable. More importantly, it signifies how this process can become adaptive, in order to perpetuate community-based, contextualized and localized programs – from the onset of the peace negotiations all the way to implementation. One characteristic of the Colombian peace process displays the concept of adaptive peacebuilding approaches, ones that are contextualized as per the needs of the local communities and societies. According to Penagos’ chapter “Adaptive Mediation in Colombia: Toward Institutional Capacity Building Amid Complexity and Uncertainty,” research has found that a main characteristic of the 2016 peace process with the FARC was an adaptive approach to peacebuilding (2022, 58). Accordingly, this peace process was more able to consolidate long-lasting and sustainable peace in Colombia, compared to prior attempts, as it utilized bottom-up approaches that were attuned to the concerns and needs of the local community. Additionally, both local and international actors worked together to coordinate efforts in this regard.
Chapter V: Conclusion: An Analysis of DDR within Peace Trajectories

Introduction

Looking back on the different case studies I have analyzed throughout this research, there is ample space to infer what peacebuilding and peace geographies might look like in different locations and contexts, specifically as similar interventions are used. One significant finding of this analysis was how conflict-affected settings are quite different, thus calling for entirely different interventions, responses and solutions even when the universalized toolbox remains the same. Therefore, measures of successful sustainable peacebuilding, and eventually DDR, while they may offer lessons learned from one context, cannot be replicated in another without adequate consideration of the contextual differences and typology of actors involved. This was noticeably clear as I analyzed the two case studies, Liberia and Colombia, since these two different contexts called for the same type of intervention, DDR. However, the way the tool was implemented and carried out was very different in both locations, and with very different consequences and implications on the peace scene in both contexts. Similarly, they both included different stakeholders, including the kind of ex-combatants or armed group in question, the community approach towards the conflict and armed groups, and the stakeholder responsible for implementation (national, international, or both sharing responsibility).

What was particularly interesting to look at was how DDR can involve different metrics of community inclusion and community acceptance, depending on the institutionalized conceptions in place. For example, in Colombia, reintegration and reincorporation meant different things depending on the context. This conception also shaped the kind of benefits and opportunities individuals would receive, since it implicated
which armed group they were part of. Additionally, many narratives of peace in Liberia have moved beyond strictly the implementation of DDR. The fact that reintegration occurs as a long-term endeavor highlights the imperative to deal with DDR and peacebuilding in tandem and as intertwined processes. This plays out not just in dealing with ex-combatants, but also in creating an environment conducive to peace for everyone post-war; regardless of any binary distinction between individuals as ex-combatants and community members. This will be discussed in more detail in the coming sections.

From the onset of the research process, my main focus was to examine how contextualized, localized and participatory DDR implementation can lead to more sustainable peace, and how peace can also lead to community acceptance of ex-combatants into social, political and economic scenes. Moreover, the aim was to look at how ex-combatants would be accepted into communities, and specifically, how DDR can facilitate this kind of process. As I analyzed both case studies, I found that the discourse circulating about ex-combatants is closely tied to how the actors involved in the implementation of DDR enforce the definitions and conceptions about them (including demographics, potential, interests, values, threats, etc.), but also how this informs – and unfortunately at times misguides - the programming and the design of the interventions.

I was able to conduct two interviews with Dr. Jaremey McMullin\(^\text{11}\) and Ms. Marta Orrantia\(^\text{12}\), on peacebuilding trajectories in the Liberian and Colombian contexts,

\(^{11}\) Dr. Jaremey McMullin is a Senior Lecturer at the School of International Relations, University of St. Andrews. He is currently exploring youth peacebuilding processes through a multi-year project that analyzes the peacebuilding impacts and challenges of the commercial motorcycling sector in Liberia. His primary research interest areas are the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants and the politics of veterans' return from war. This research interprets the impacts of reintegration and veterans' assistance programmes on post-conflict identities, conflict resolution, and security, and identifies the consequences of incomplete reintegration.

\(^{12}\) Ms. Marta Orrantia is a Colombian Novelist, Professor of Creative Writing, and former magazine editor. She founded and edited Gatopardo magazine, and also founded and managed Rolling Stone for the
respectively. I will be reflecting on their inputs throughout this coming chapter, to analyze the implementation of DDR in both contexts and its influence on prospects for sustainable peacebuilding accordingly. This specifically builds on Dr. McMullin’s extensive field experience in the Liberian experience with DDR, reintegration and peace trajectories, in addition to Ms. Orrantia’s recent efforts to document and provide a space for story-telling projects dedicated to female ex-combatants of the FARC as a form of self-expression about peace, community inclusion and the grey area between binary terms of ex-combatant and citizen.

Aiming to explain the study’s findings in relation to the hypothesis set out, I aim to unpack what post-liberal and adaptive peacebuilding might mean in a DDR context. First, through comparing the cases of Liberia and Colombia, this chapter will shift the focus to the importance of reintegration as the critical transition link between formal DDR processes and sustainable peace endeavors in post-armed conflict contexts, what has in many literature been referred to as the “Achilles Heel of DDR” for being DDR’s weakest element (Ayissi 2021, 152). This includes a discussion on how long-term reintegration trajectories from historical case studies (such as Liberia and other prominent cases including Mozambique, Angola, and Haiti, among others) can influence the design, implementation and adaptability of formal DDR processes. It will also look at how conceptions of community, inclusion and participation depend on different contextual

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factors and perceptions of the “ex-combatant” and their role in society after their reintegration.

Second, the chapter will examine the advantages of nationally-owned DDR processes as part of a national stabilization and peace agenda, as we have seen in Colombia, while reiterating the imperative of coupling this with true local inclusion and participation to inform program design on the national level. This positions itself within the theoretical framework of this thesis by highlighting the importance of post-liberal peacebuilding approaches premised on the ‘local’ and untied to universalized notions of peace, but also promoting hybrid peacebuilding approaches, whereby nuanced and innovative interventions that draw on contextualized assessments, bottom-up approaches, as well as local and national agencies are employed. This will lay the grounds for the final section of this chapter, where I delve into how adaptive and post-liberal peacebuilding theory can take shape in practical interventions, in DDR in Liberia and Colombia, for more sustainable peace. Finally, I will end the chapter by outlining some limitations faced during the study and a possible way forward for further research on this topic.

**Healing the “Achilles Heel of DDR”: Focus on Reintegration**

Since the inception of DDR processes almost three decades ago, the reintegration process has widely been regarded as the most difficult phase, but also the weakest in terms of design and implementation. Nonetheless, time and time again, national and international stakeholders have been reminded of the imperative of advancing successful reintegration to ensure effective peacebuilding and prevent the recurrence of violence. “Living in a country with such a conflict is like living with fear all of the time,” says one ex-combatant interview that was part of the *Disarming the Mind: Reintegrating Ex-combatants in*
Colombia on the issue of reintegrating thousands of ex-combatants in a context that has been conflict-ridden for almost half a century, and where many generations have known nothing but conflict (Nature Video 2018, 0:14 – 0:22). As both chapters on Liberia and Colombia respective have highlighted the importance of accounting for perceptions of DDR, specifically in analyzing the challenges and opportunities of reintegration for sustainable peacebuilding, it was clear that reintegration success was key to create conditions conducive to peace. The more contextualized, localized and participatory reintegration processes were the higher the chances were for peace to be sustained.

As Ms. Orrantia mentioned during our interview, many of the individuals returning back have been fighting for more than 20 years. Therefore, they need to immerse themselves in a new society and family and learn to interact with others through reintegration. However, the process is two-fold, whereby communities themselves need to understand how to become part of this process alongside the ex-guerilla members in Colombia. Orrantia also stressed, in the case of the reincorporation of the FARC, many of the programs’ efforts were directed within the ETCRs. Since these ETCRs were very isolated, the programs became too targeted, decentralized and region-specific, lacking the inclusion of the wider communities in rural and urban areas of Colombia. Depending on the region of the ETCRs, different programs were initiated. This proved helpful since it utilized the available resources around the ETCRs. However, this did not last long as many went out to look for better opportunities elsewhere. Furthermore, this did not create a space for proper reintegration efforts that are directly related to both ex-combatant and community needs. Through Orrantia’s story-telling project for female ex-combatants, she came to learn the everyday lives of these individuals. Notwithstanding that many were
fighters, they were also mothers, daughters, wives, children, lovers, etc. Deconstructing the lives that many of these ex-combatants have lived can provide an entry point to the communities at large to understand how reintegration can work both ways – where communities understand how to include individuals being reintegrated and these individuals who have been part of a “dysfunctional family” for so long learn how to become part of society through effective reintegration.

Dr. McMullin also shed light on the reintegration processes underway in Liberia through motorcycling, shifting the focus to long-term reintegration for peace trajectories. Dr. McMullin highlighted the shortcomings of DDR and reintegration as pushed forward by liberal peacebuilders. Whereas many of these times, DDR and reintegration under this agenda hinder participatory and localized approaches and promote “time-spaces that are scripted or desired for them” (McMullin 2022, 517 – 541). As such, motorcycling matters to the ex-combatants in Liberia a lot more than the formal DDR process, since it has provided them avenues for long-term inclusion in social, political and economic spheres. Additionally, and unlike the formal DDR program, which was overstretched by the unexpectedly large caseload, motorcycling is a reintegration avenue that can accommodate large numbers. It was also an activity that translated direct agency by the individuals themselves, to create opportunities that can eventually provide them with viable alternatives to criminal activity or violence. The nuanced and innovative nature of this activity, but also adaptiveness, gave an opportunity for ex-combatants and communities to interact as part of a reintegration process that is different than the formal DDR processes, which were short-lived but also did not pave the way for projects or efforts aimed at peace to continue after the program’s end. This, however, is not without its challenges. But,
according to McMullin, many are now couching their challenges and needs in terms of threats to peace, which should indefinitely be the aim for DDR and reintegration. It is not about whether DDR has failed or succeeded anymore. Once the program has ended, the priority has shifted to create and/or maintain the elements of environment that are conducive to peace.

Reintegration needs to be recognized, first and foremost, as a long-term process, the foundations of which are built within a DDR process. As such, learning from the challenges faced in the implementation of long-term reintegration outside of a DDR program – one premised on achieving effective social and community inclusion – should inform the design of DDR processes. This does not necessarily mean that reintegration projects need to span for the rest of time, on the contrary. Reintegration projects need to pave the way for effective local and national level efforts that aim to take forward a narrative that is not defined by terms such as “conflict” and “post-war.” It needs to perpetuate a narrative of peace endeavors, inclusion, and an understanding of how communities and societies work. Such efforts can transcend into education, health, psychosocial support, political expression and participation, and measures to ensure visibility and security of all individuals. Accordingly, formal DDR processes can use these lessons learned to become more adaptive in a way that promotes these kind of reintegration activities aimed at long-lasting and sustainable peace even after the formal DDR program ends. Here, an analogy of planting a seed can be used: where formal DDR processes plant the seed for larger efforts that can create and sustain peaceful and resilient societies. This is built on detailed, contextual assessments of the situation, in addition to participation of both the individuals being reintegrated and the communities receiving them. Without the
necessary foundation that recognizes the different role of each group as a vital component for the success of the process, then reintegration might as well remain the Achilles Heel of DDR.

**Bottom-Up and Nationally-Owned DDR Processes**

Another significant aspect is the role of national institutions in taking responsibility for the implementation of DDR within their respective contexts. As outlined in the chapter on DDR in Colombia, the many DDR attempts were grounded in national frameworks and processes that aimed at nation-wide peacebuilding and stabilization efforts. At the outset of the peace process of 2016, the negotiations were marked by strong local and national ownership alongside external support. This has shaped the provisions of the agreement, and specifically the ensuing implementation of the DDR process, since the process was driven by the parties to the conflict through direct negotiation between the government and FARC, including through different platforms for dialogue. Similarly, the implementation of the reincorporation and reintegration processes were coordinated by the government through local units and communities to identify the needed interventions and strategies. Although many have been narrowly targeted, as pointed out earlier by Orrantia due to the isolation of ETCRs where these programs took place, it reflects an approach that is adaptive, and has potential for sustainable peace.

By being bottom-up and nationally-owned, these programs strike a balance between reflecting realities on the ground but also promoting reality in the form of peace trajectories for ex-combatants and the communities. However, they need to position communication as key to ensure that state policies promote to the communities the kind of narrative that will facilitate comprehension and understanding of how to be prepared within
a DDR context. The Final Report of the Truth Commission in Colombia specifically lays out narration of victims and ex-guerilla members, in order to understand the nuances of their experiences, and thus shape responses and programs accordingly. This effort should be coordinated from the bottom-up, but with strong national support and grounded in national endeavors that promote recovery. Orrantia made an interesting observation, which is echoed in many fora, literature and policy papers. This observation is that the success of DDR is tied to strong political will, and this political will needs to be reflected from the very top of the state system to the very bottom. She pointed out that with the newly elected president, Gustavo Petro, narratives of peace and reinvigorated effort to realize and reap results of the peace process have been instigated.

The discourse circulated about ex-combatants is important on what kind of programs are provided to them. Assuming that all individuals returning to the communities are the same homogeneous group is invalid. Additionally, the inclusion of international actors that enforce this same proposition through their programming may perpetuate efforts to re-stigmatize ex-combatants, rather than the other way around. McMullin further echoed this idea, specifically referring to his recent work on hustling and cycling in Liberia as part of peacebuilding and reintegration through livelihood in Liberia (McMullin 2022, 67 – 90). Exclusively top-down approaches that are advanced most of the time by international peacebuilding may risk overlooking, and neglecting altogether, localized and contextualized insights from the individuals who are indeed affected by the conflict. As such, ex-combatants, at-risk youth and larger community members need to be regarded as peacebuilders, participating in the design of processes and all the way to implementation. Their needs and priorities also need to be factored in a bottom-up approach that links
together local agency, perspectives, resistance and national-ownership all within a larger peace process. A clear account and documentation of different grassroots efforts (such as motorcycling in Liberia for example) can be essential in informing DDR design, for both national and international actors alike. It also provides room for more effective coordination between local, national and international actors, to ensure that peace trajectories reflecting the situation and individuals most affected by conflict are accounted for.

Together, bottom-up and nationally-owned processes, that are well-coordinated with international actors when need be, should create a system in which the state recognizes the need of ex-combatants, at-risk youth and conflict-affected communities in order to create and maintain peace. Out of this system, opportunities are made by the state to address many grievances that arise out of conflict and enhance long-term support and social inclusion. Learning from formal DDR programs, the state should take this forward in dialogue with the stakeholders most affected, in order to pick up where the formal program or process has ended. DDR is not the panacea to achieve this, but it should be the intervention creating the space for the state and community to do so. Building on a concept McMullin put forward in the interview, DDR programs should not ‘foreclose’ the state from taking forward reintegration activities, projects and efforts aimed at promoting peace. There needs to be a collective understanding that this will be a long-term endeavor, building on but also transcending DDR in order to ensure that all individuals understand the role throughout this endeavor on all levels.
Hybrid, Post-Liberal, & Adaptive Peacebuilding

Circulating back to the hypothesis of this study, the analysis of the two case studies put in conversation with insights from the interviews conducted – while do not 100% trace a full process – provide proof that the more that DDR follows a post-liberal peacebuilding approach, but also the more adaptive it is, the more sustainable peace will be. The case of Liberia illustrates the way in which interventions need to adapt to realities on the ground, specifically through contextualizing and localizing programs to reflect the needs on the ground. When formal DDR approaches did not achieve this, trajectories of long-term reintegration for peacebuilding through motorcycling activities for ex-combatants and at-risk youth created an opportunity for these individuals to design and participate in their own guise of peacebuilding. Post-liberal and adaptive peacebuilding approaches signified that peace considerations are built on presumptions of power, with some approaches holding prominence for some actors over others: liberal peacebuilding to international/liberal actors who promote its same values; post-liberal to the local agencies of power, as well as conflict-affected individuals (both active participants of conflict, and communities bearing the affects of conflict).

Accordingly, positioning interventions of peacebuilding squarely within frameworks that look at the international, national and local, can facilitate an understanding of sustainability factors of peacebuilding. As briefly attempted to explain within this research, understanding that a one-size-fits all approach does not ensure effectiveness or sustainability of peace, it is hard to prescribe the formula provided within this research as a panacea for DDR to succeed and lead to sustainable peacebuilding. However, as triangulated through analyzing the case studies, tracing the evolution of peacebuilding as
both a concept and process in the international peace and security architecture, as well as defining the implementation of DDR as a peacebuilding tool, post-liberal and adaptive peacebuilding approaches provide the framework upon which more effective processes can take place. This was significantly highlighted in the cases of Liberia and Colombia, where inclusive DDR and reintegration processes that effectively included and recognized the social, political and economic aspirations of ex-combatants and communities augmented the perception among individuals that peace processes are “working.” As such, they were more confident that there was a space created for them to take part as peacebuilders of the state as well, without following externally imposed ideas and conceptions of peace and the state.

Adaptive peacebuilding thus builds a trajectory that develops an innovative approach “to peace operations and peacebuilding, where international peacebuilders, together with the communities and people affected by the conflict, actively engage in structured processes to prevent conflict and sustain peace” (De Coning 2018, 304 – 305). Following on De Coning’s proposition, adaptive peacebuilding, in response to the evolving nature of conflict, can shift the tools required in a way to addresses this change on the ground. Ultimately, learning from the challenges that our posed through DDR processes can help re-envision and re-adapt the interventions to become contextualized, localized and participatory, while promoting a balanced coordination between local, national and international actors as peacebuilders. De Coning explains that this can take place through two processes: variation and selection (2018, 306). Such as in Liberia and Colombia, an ordered mechanism of engagement between ex-combatants, communities, local authorities and national authorities can push forward innovative and nuanced approaches that cater to
priorities while pushing forward self-sustainability and continuity. The recognition of this complex system of interactions between actors, interventions, narratives and peace trajectories is thus key for sustainable peacebuilding.

**Limitations of the Study and Further Research**

As part of my concluding chapter, I believe it is crucial to identify a number of limitations to my research, as they may have affected the final outcome. The first limitation was the language barrier I experienced when looking for and using sources with regards to the Colombia context. Since a lot of useful primary and secondary sources (such as many of the legal documents cited) were in Spanish, I had to rely on translation software to understand these sources. While this kind of software was useful, it was not able to generate translations for longer pieces and articles, as well as scanned copies of documents. Without this specific limitation, the research would have benefitted from wider access to primary and secondary sources, archives, and potential interviewees.

This language barrier, unfortunately, led to another limitation, which is the lack of available and/or reliable data. Through my research, I was able to find and use diverse sources of information and data on the Colombian history, context and ongoing implementation of the peace agreement. However, more recent news articles, short analysis pieces and video interviews and panels on the current state of affairs were available mostly in the Spanish language. Had there been more time to conduct my research, I could have looked for a dedicated Spanish translator in order to assist me in this endeavor. Nonetheless, I believe that I was able to access relevant and reliable information to the best of my ability during my research. Looking forward, however, this would be an element to take into consideration before embarking on the research endeavor.
This research adopts a lens that exclusively looks at peacebuilding approaches. While this is not a limitation per se, it is important to acknowledge that this research can be embedded within a larger conversation on post-conflict reconstruction and development. This includes unpacking the main four elements within this approach, most notably: political, economic, security, and justice or transitional justice elements. Within this study, I focus mostly on how DDR fits within peacebuilding, and ultimately this may achieve effective post-conflict reconstruction and development. Another angle could have been how SSR processes are also part of the security question, in relation to the other elements and DDR. Yet, I believed that this was beyond the scope of this research and thesis. However, it may serve as a critical starting point for similar research endeavors.

Lastly, as I was not able to gather interviews with ‘ex-combatants’ or community members from either Liberia or Colombia, I relied on other researchers’ fieldwork findings and extensive interviews (such as Dr. McMullin’s interviews with youth, cyclists, ex-combatants in Liberia, and Ms. Orrantia’s ex-combatant story-telling project in Colombia). However, if this research is to be taken forward, I believe it could benefit from adopting a participatory action research (PAR) approach. PAR is “a qualitative research approach that takes account of researchers and participants collaborating to investigate social issues and take actions to bring about social change” (Oliveira 2022, 1). This is done with the aim of collecting and analyzing data that can be used to induce practical knowledge used for social change.

Accordingly, the participation of the individuals under study in the research, including their local knowledge on specific issues of power, culture, and empowerment, can manifest broader understandings of peace and ex-combatant typologies (e.g. what the
characteristics of an ex-combatant are, what ex-combatant participation in communities means, what a peaceful community is, what are the mechanisms through which it can be achieved, etc.). This can better capture an accurate representation of these individuals’ perceptions of life post-armed conflict, but also use research to define the parameters they need to achieve it. Similar to the theoretical framework adopted within this study, this research approach takes a local turn and deep dive into the everyday that can effectively utilize academic research and methods alongside practical knowledge and experience.
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