RESOLVE

NETWORK

Violent Extremist Disengagement & Reintegration:
Lessons from Over 30 Years of DDR

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Recent questions surrounding the repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of those who traveled to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the reintegration of violent extremists in conflict zones including Somalia, Nigeria, Libya and Mali, and the impending release of scores of homegrown violent extremists from prisons in the United States and Europe have heightened policymaker and practitioner interest in violent extremist disengagement and reintegration (VEDR). Although a number of programs to reintegrate violent extremists have emerged both within and outside of conflict zones, significant questions remain regarding their design, implementation, and effectiveness.

Need for research

While research on VEDR has progressed over the past fifteen years, recent literature tends to focus on the motivations and characteristics of the individual violent extremist and center around discussions of risk assessment. As such, studies often overlook the larger communal and political environment that contributes to and sustains violent extremism. To advance our understanding of VEDR, this report draws insights from a review of the literature on ex-combatant disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). The literature on DDR typically adopts a "whole of society" approach, which helps us to understand how systemic factors may influence VEDR at the individual level and outcomes at the societal level. Despite the important differences that will be reviewed, the international community's thirty-year experience with DDR—which includes working with violent extremists—offers important insights for our understanding of VEDR.

Key lessons from the DDR literature

1. REINTEGRATING WHOM AND INTO WHAT

- The literature on DDR suggests that VEDR programming and processes must be designed to account for **individuals' motivations for involvement** as well as their skills and desires.

- Programming must also be **context-specific** and responsive to the historical and political factors relevant in a society and the wider community into which individuals will reintegrate.

- Successful disengagement and reintegration require a minimum threshold of **security** in society as well as **mutual trust** and **political will**. Individuals will not disengage if it puts them at risk. Draconian state policies, exclusionary politics, and the absence of confidence-building measures impede disengagement and fuel the grievances that may have led to involvement in violent extremism in the first place.

- **Forced disengagement** without reintegration fails to address key problems in society and only subdues violence in the short term. Adopting a "band-aid" approach to VEDR and losing sight of long-term objectives and the necessary institutional and societal reforms will render violent extremism a serious problem for the foreseeable future even in developed democracies.

- Individuals' economic reintegration or ability to obtain sustainable livelihoods through civilian employment requires a certain **level of economic development**.

2. Successful reintegration is social reintegration

- Successful reintegration is contingent upon one's **social reintegration**—that is, their acceptance by family, peers, and neighbors.

- **Stigmatization** impedes employment opportunities and the development of pro-social ties and a pro-social identity. Policy and practitioner discourse may contribute to and reify stigmatizing identities. **Familial and civil society networks, entrepreneurship,** and **community sensitization** measures may help foster acceptance.

- Well-designed **community-based projects** may help to eradicate stigma and discrimination. They benefit a larger segment of society, embody a commitment to a shared future, highlight the incredible social capital those reintegrating wield, serve as a form of reparations, and offer those reintegrating a new, pro-social identity and ties. Through the creation of social capital and resiliency, community-based projects may have a preventative effect and deter recruitment.

- Although sometimes difficult to balance with long-term political and human rights objectives, **local and national ownership** of programming is preferable as it fosters investments by those reintegrating in their community and polity.

- While important at the national level, there is little evidence that **transitional justice** measures increase community acceptance at the local level, where the behavior of those reintegrating and their contributions to the community may play a more pivotal role.

3. Avoid creating new grievances

- Disengagement and reintegration programming and processes must **manage expectations and deliver on their promises**. Failure to do so undermines trust in the state and the process.

- Holding individuals for lengthy periods and/or in inhumane conditions leads to a discourse of resistance against the state or external actors that impedes reintegration. Time spent in voluntary or involuntary **confinement** should contribute to, not undermine, reintegration.

- **Vocational training or education** is more likely to lead to one's economic and social reintegration than short-term cash assistance.

- **Women and children** face additional barriers to reintegration that must be addressed. Their involvement is often de-politicized and de-securitized and children especially lack agency in their reintegration. For men, reintegration programming and the language around ex-combatants often reify, rather than undermine, "militarized masculinities."

- **Psychosocial support** is essential to process the trauma that some suffered while involved and the vacuum-like experience of disengaging from a social role and related relationships.

- **Political reintegration** is key for long-term stability. By having a voice in government, those reintegrating are able to channel their current and any future grievances non-violently.

4. PREPARE FOR THE LONG HAUL

- **Lack of long-term planning, coordination, and funding** can exacerbate societal tensions, fuel distrust, increase costs, and reduce effectiveness. Focusing on short-term gains can undermine long-term objectives. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation can help mitigate shortcomings in initial program design.

- **External actors** can enable groups to credibly commit to reform, distribute the financial burden, and incentivize human rights protections. However, a large number of external actors or the failure to coordinate may undermine long-term policy coherence and implementation.

- Individual **risk assessments** should be ongoing and inform program design. Focusing on community-based reintegration in risk assessment circumvents an overreliance on recidivism rates and increases program applicability to those not directly involved in violence.

- **Program evaluation** is difficult given differences across contexts and participants as well as the absence of randomly assigned control groups. Quasi-experiments and wave and panel surveys that account for social desirability bias and measure long-term change need to be triangulated with rigorous ethnographic and interview-based research. **Research** needs to not only consider whether certain interventions result in disengagement and reintegration at the individual level, but whether they result in a long-term reduction in violence at the societal level.

INTRODUCTION

The release and potential recidivism of detainees held at Guantanamo Bay heightened policymaker and practitioner interest in violent extremist disengagement and reintegration (VEDR). Since that time additional challenges related to VEDR have come to the fore: the repatriation of individuals who traveled to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or were born to parents there, the reintegration of local members or supporters of ISIS, efforts to disengage and reintegrate violent extremists in ongoing conflicts in Somalia, Nigeria, Libya, Mali, and elsewhere, and the impending release of a significant number of homegrown violent extremists from prisons in the United States and Europe.

A great deal of academic literature on the drivers and processes of disengagement and de-radicalization has been written over the past fifteen years that can inform our assessment of and response to the problem. The literature relies primarily upon first-hand interview accounts with former extremists[1] and, more recently, quantitative, larger sample studies of the factors associated with disengagement and re-engagement/recidivism.[2] Scholars have also drawn theoretical insights from disciplines that can enlighten our understanding of VEDR, including criminology, social psychology, sociology, and psychology.[3] Studies of criminal and gang desistance and recidivism, disaffiliation from new religious movements, voluntary role exit, commitment and turnover in relationships and traditional work organizations all offer important contributions.[4]

No study, however, systematically reviews and draws insights from the literature on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and ex-combatant reintegration, more broadly.[5] Yet, this literature

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1 Rogelio Alonso, "Why Do Terrorists Stop? Analyzing Why ETA Members Abandon or Continue with Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 9 (2011); Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan, eds., *Leaving Terrorism Behind:Individual and Collective Disengagement* (London: Routledge, 2009); Julie Chernov-Hwang, *Why Terrorists Quit: The Disengagement of Indonesian Jihadists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); John Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009); Fernando Reinares, "Exit from Terrorism: A Qualitative Empirical Study on Disengagement and Deradicalization among Members of ETA," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 23, no. 5 (2011), https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.613307; Michael Kenney and Julie Chernov Hwang, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Understanding How British and Indonesian Extremists Disengage and Why They Don't," *Political Psychology* (December 10, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12713.

2 Mary Beth Altier et al., "Why They Leave: An Analysis of Terrorist Disengagement Events from Eighty-Seven Autobiographical Accounts," *Security Studies* 26, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2017.1280307; Mary Beth Altier, Emma Leonard Boyle, and John G. Horgan, "Returning to the Fight: An Empirical Analysis of Terrorist Reengagement and Recidivism," *Terrorism & Political Violence* (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2019.1679781; Badi Hasisi, Tomer Carmel, and David Weisburd, "Crime and Terror: Examining Criminal Risk Factors for Terrorist Recidivism," *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 36 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10940-019-09415-y.

3 Mary Beth Altier, Christian Thoroughgood, and John G. Horgan, "Turning Away from Terrorism: Lessons from Psychology, Sociology, and Criminology," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 5 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343314535946.

4 Altier, Thoroughgood, and Horgan, "Turning Away from Terrorism: Lessons from Psychology, Sociology, and Criminology."

5 A few studies examine the impact of violent extremism and the changing nature of conflict on DDR and how to detect violent extremists within DDR programs, but no systematic studies exist of lessons from DDR for the disengagement and reintegration of violent extremists. See: Robert Muggah and Chris O'Donnell, "Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015), http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.fs; James Cockayne and Shiobhan O'Neil, eds., "UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?" (United Nations University, 2015), https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/un_ddr_in_an_era_of_violent_extremism.pdf; Joanne Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR

offers important lessons for VEDR.[6] Unlike most studies of VEDR, which tend to focus at the individual level, the recent literature on DDR tends to adopt a "whole of society" approach that considers the larger community and political environment. As such, it covers topics like building social cohesion and inter-communal trust and addressing the grievances that fuel conflict. The DDR literature further considers the importance of community inclusion and acceptance, peace-building, and transitional justice in disengagement and reintegration processes. It also addresses, to some extent, the reintegration of those who may not have been directly involved in combat, as well as gender- and age-sensitive initiatives. Further, the international community's thirty-year experience in formal DDR programming (the first United Nations (UN) effort began in 1989 in Central America) can offer valuable insights on good practice in VEDR regarding the specific content and structuring of programming and interventions at the individual, communal, and societal level. Finally, while the literature on VEDR overrepresents Western cases,[7] DDR has occurred primarily in fragile, developing countries with donor-dependent economies.[8]

For these reasons, the DDR literature is well-poised to help advance our understanding of the larger systemic factors associated with the successful disengagement and reintegration of violent extremists. The literature not only highlights the pressing need of academics, policymakers, and practitioners to consider the social and political environment into which violent extremists are reintegrating, but it offers tangible lessons regarding the remediation of grievances and the fostering of pro-social ties and community cohesion. Social cohesion and the resolution of grievances are critical to the successful reintegration and rehabilitation of violent extremists; they help address the social ecology of violent extremism.

This report reviews the literature on DDR to further inform our understanding of VEDR and help contribute to sound programming and practice. It begins with a brief overview of what VEDR is, why it is important, and why studies of VEDR need to move beyond the individual to account for social dynamics and the larger political environment. In the second section, I provide an overview of DDR and consider important differences between DDR and VEDR. The third section outlines my methodological approach. In the fourth section, I present lessons from the literature on DDR organized under four key themes. The final section concludes by summarizing the main findings and offering directions for future research.

Programmes," *International Peacekeeping* 25, no. 3 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2018.1440177; Desmond Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice* (Boulder, Colorado: Kumarian Press, 2017); Dean Piedmont, "The Role of Disarmament, Demobilization, & Reintegration in Countering Violent Extremism," *Center for Security Governance*, no. 3 (2015).

6   Cockayne and O'Neil, eds., "UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?."

7   Lina Grip and Jenniina Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review," *Conflict, Security & Development* 19, no. 4 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2019.1626577.

8   Mats R. Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts* (International Institute for Strategic Studies, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

VEDR: AN INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM?

What is VEDR?

Violent extremist *disengagement* refers to the process by which individuals cease their involvement in activity that is violent or that intentionally facilitates violence on behalf of an extremist group or cause. Thus, disengagement entails a shift in one's *behavior* away from violence. Disengagement is distinct from the attitudinal process of *de-radicalization*, in which individuals abandon their *belief* in a violent, extremist ideology. Importantly, disengagement and de-radicalization often do not occur simultaneously. Individuals often disengage from violent extremism without relinquishing their belief in the violent, extremist ideology.[9] Moreover, not all individuals who participate in violent extremism are driven by a deep commitment to the ideology or cause. Some are not "radicalized" but forced to join or motivated, for example, by the opportunistic gains of involvement (e.g. salary, looting), a desire to engage in violence of any kind, or the social bonds participation provides.[10] Likewise, there are many individuals who believe in violent extremist ideologies, who are not engaged in violent extremist or illegal behavior. For these reasons, the emphasis of this report is on fostering disengagement from violent extremism.

Violent extremist *reintegration* refers to the process by which individuals disengaging from violent extremism adopt a conventional "pro-social"[11] role and identity within society. Successful reintegration involves shedding one's violent extremist identity; though individuals may still retain aspects of that identity and integrate them into their new, pro-social identity (the involvement of former violent extremists in countering violent extremism work is one example).[12] Individuals who are reintegrating must navigate the development of new social networks and relationships and find ways to de-identify with their violent extremist role, even while others in society may continue to impose stereotypes based on their previous involvement in violent extremism.[13] The DDR literature outlines three types of reintegration, each applicable and useful in the context of violent extremism. *Economic reintegration* refers to individuals' ability to ensure a sustainable livelihood through conventional employment.[14] *Social reintegration* includes acceptance by one's family, peers, neighbors, and ultimately the development of pro-social relation-

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9   Altier et al., "Why They Leave: An Analysis of Terrorist Disengagement Events from Eighty-Seven Autobiographical Accounts."

10   Altier, Thoroughgood, and Horgan, "Turning Away from Terrorism: Lessons from Psychology, Sociology, and Criminology."

11   What constitutes pro-social behavior is subjective and will vary across communities, but here and throughout I refer to non-violent, legal behavior that benefits others and society.

12   Shadd Maruna, *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives.* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001); Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

13   Ebaugh, *Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit*.

14   Alpaslan Özerdem, "A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach," *Conflict, Security & Development* 12, no. 1 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2012.667661; Larissa Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia," *Conflict, Security and Development* 19, no. 2 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2019.1586157.

ships.[15] Finally, *political reintegration* occurs when individuals feel they are a part of the decision-making process within their community and polity; that is, they feel they have a voice in their society.[16]

A pressing policy issue

The disengagement and reintegration of violent extremists is a critical and urgent policy issue. Currently, there are thousands of former ISIS fighters in Kurdish detention facilities in northeastern Syria and tens of thousands of Iraqi, Syrian, and foreign-born women and children associated with ISIS housed in camps.[17] In Syria, the al-Hol camp alone is estimated to contain 65,000 individuals, 94 percent of whom are women and children, while about 13,500 are foreign born (not Syrian or Iraqi).[18] Over 24,000 Syrian nationals are scheduled for release, and another 4,000 have already been released.[19] The security and humanitarian situation in these camps, especially al-Hol, are precarious, and a number of individuals have escaped.[20] Prolonged and ongoing conflicts in other countries including Nigeria, Somalia, Mali, Colombia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Libya, Yemen, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories also involve a significant number of violent extremists whose disengagement and reintegration is vital for ending violence and ensuring long-term stability.

Stable autocracies and developed democracies too confront the challenge of reintegrating foreign fighters and their families returning from conflict zones and homegrown violent extremists who espouse a wide range of ideologies (e.g. far-right, far-left, Islamist, ethno-nationalist). Saudi Arabia, for example, has had a terrorist rehabilitation program since 2003 to address domestic terrorists and citizens returning from U.S. detention at Guantanamo.[21] Singapore similarly developed a program in 2003 to rehabilitate Jemaah Islamiyah detainees, and other countries have followed suit.[22] More recently, disengagement and de-radicalization programs have emerged across Europe and are being discussed in the US as

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15   Odile Cuénoud González and Alain Clémence, "Concealing Former Identity to Be Accepted after the Demobilization Process in Colombia: A Real Reintegration in a Post Conflict Scenario?," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 7, no. 2 (2019), https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v7i2.864.

16   Kees Kingma, "Assessing Demobilization: Conceptual Issues," in *Demobilization in Subsaharan Africa: The Development and Security Impacts*, ed. Kees Kingma (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 2000).

17   Mona Yacoubian, Chris Bosley, and Leanne Erdberg Steadman, *Can Syrians Who Left Isis Be Reintegrated into Their Communities?*, United States Institute of Peace (2020), https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/10/can-syrians-who-left-isis-be-reintegrated-their-communities.

18   Yacoubian, Bosley, and Steadman, *Can Syrians Who Left Isis Be Reintegrated into Their Communities*; Thomas Renard and Rik Coolsaet, *From Bad to Worse: The Fate of European Foreign Fighters and Families Detained in Syria, One Year after the Turkish Offensive* (Egmont Institute, 2020).

19   Renard and Coolsaet, *From Bad to Worse: The Fate of European Foreign Fighters and Families Detained in Syria, One Year after the Turkish Offensive*; Associated Foreign Press, "Kurds to Allow Is-Linked Syria Families to Quit Al-Hol Camp," (May 10, 2020). https://www.france24.com/en/20201005-kurds-to-allow-is-linked-syria-families-to-quit-al-hol-camp.

20   Renard and Coolsaet, *From Bad to Worse: The Fate of European Foreign Fighters and Families Detained in Syria, One Year after the Turkish Offensive*.

21   Christopher Boucek, *Saudi Arabia's "Soft" Counterterrorism Strategy: Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 2008), https://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp97_boucek_saudi_final.pdf.

22   Kumar Ramakrishna, "A Holistic Critique of Singapore's Counter-Ideological Program," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 1 (2009).

nations grapple with a growing prison population of violent extremists in addition to returning foreign fighters and their families.[23]

Although a number of programs to reintegrate violent extremists have emerged both within and outside of conflict zones,[24] significant questions remain regarding the design, implementation, and effectiveness of these initiatives.[25] Programs vary significantly, and given a comparatively small number of participants, the absence of a randomly assigned control group of individuals who do not participate in programming and the time horizon needed to capture re-engagement, it is methodologically challenging to determine the success of programming in reducing risk.[26] These questions, coupled with fears about the risk individuals pose and several high profile attacks by participants in disengagement and de-radicalization programming, have caused governments to adopt a securitized approach to the rehabilitation and reintegration of these individuals, to focus programming only on "low risk" offenders, or to relinquish their responsibility for them altogether (for example, the failure to repatriate).[27] Certainly, those who have committed crimes should be prosecuted and some security measures should be in place. However, for some individuals we lack adequate evidence for prosecution, while others—especially children—are victims, and most of those prosecuted and convicted will one day be released. As such, we need to better understand how to promote the disengagement of these individuals and their reintegration into society.

23   Rajan Basra and Peter R. Neumann, *Prisons and Terrorism: Extremist Offender Management in 10 European Countries* (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, 2020), https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ICSR-Report-Prisons-and-Terrorism-Extremist-Offender-Management-in-10-European-Countries_V2.pdf; Jesse Morton and Mitchell D. Silber, *When Terrorists Come Home: The Need for Rehabilitating and Reintegrating America's Convicted Jihadists* (Counter Extremism Project, 2018).

24   Basra and Neumann, *Prisons and Terrorism: Extremist Offender Management in 10 European Countries*; Cockayne and O'Neil, eds., *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?*; Gordon Clubb and Marina Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria," *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 11 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2018.1458303; Vanda Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments," in *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?*, eds. James Cockayne and Siobhan O'Neil (United Nations University, 2015), 36-62; James Khalil et al., *Deradicalisation and Disengagement in Somalia Evidence from a Rehabilitation Programme for Former Members of Al-Shabaab* (Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), 2019).

25   Basra and Neumann, *Prisons and Terrorism: Extremist Offender Management in 10 European Countries*; Gordon Clubb et al., "Revising the De-Radicalisation or Disengagement Debate: Public Attitudes to the Re-Integration of Terrorists," *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 21 (2019); Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria"; Khalil et al., *Deradicalisation and Disengagement in Somalia Evidence from a Rehabilitation Programme for Former Members of Al-Shabaab*.

26   This does not mean that we shouldn't try to evaluate these initiatives as best we can, only that truly showing their causal impact is methodologically difficult, if not impossible. Altier, Boyle, and Horgan, "Returning to the Fight: An Empirical Analysis of Terrorist Reengagement and Recidivism"; Basra and Neumann, *Prisons and Terrorism: Extremist Offender Management in 10 European Countries*.

27   In the wake of high-profile attacks in Fishmongers Hall, Reading, and Streatham, the United Kingdom is considering a Counterterrorism and Sentencing Bill, which would increase the minimum sentence for certain terrorist offenses to 14 years and increase monitoring for up to 25 years. See: On repatriation see: Adam Hoffman and Marta Furlan, *Challenges Posed by Returning Foreign Fighters* (George Washington University Program on Extremism, 2020), https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Challenges%20Posed%20by%20Returning%20Foreign%20Fighters.pdf. On the focus on low risk offenders, see: Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria"; Khalil et al., *Deradicalisation and Disengagement in Somalia Evidence from a Rehabilitation Programme for Former Members of Al-Shabaab*.

The literature on VEDR

Due to the emphasis on identifying and thwarting potentially dangerous individuals, much of the recent literature on the drivers of radicalization and recruitment into violent extremism focuses at the individual level.[28] Discussions about the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists similarly often center on individual risk assessment and the reasons why individuals disengage and/or deradicalize.[29] Less attention, however, is paid to the social, communal, or political processes that facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration.[30]

Rigorous empirical research from social psychology, however, suggests one's likelihood of leaving any given social role, here the violent extremist role, is contingent not only upon the satisfaction one derives from their involvement and investments in that role, but also the alternatives available.[31] Similarly, one of the most robust findings from criminology is that desistance—or a decline and cessation in offending—is associated with the development of outside pro-social ties with non-deviant others through, for example, family, education, or employment.[32] These pro-social ties provide individuals with incentives not to re-offend and reinforce their adherence to accepted social norms.[33]

In the context of violent extremism, research demonstrates that a deep ideological commitment to the cause may dampen the effects of pro-social ties in precipitating disengagement in the short-term.[34] Alternatives and incentives outside of an armed group are less compelling to those profoundly committed

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28   See:Allison Smith, *Risk Factors and Indicators Associated with Radicalization to Terrorism in the United States: What Research Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice Tells Us* (National Institute for Justice, 2018), https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/251789.pdf; Arie Kruglanski et al., "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism," *Advances in Political Psychology* 35, no.1 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12163; Jennifer Kavanagh, "Selection, Availability, and Opportunity: The Conditional Effect of Poverty on Terrorist Group Participation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55, no. 1 (2011), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002710374713. There are exceptions. See: Noémie Bouhana, *The Moral Ecology of Extremism: A Systemic Perspective* (Commission For Countering Extremism, 2019), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-moral-ecology-of-extremism-a-systemic-perspective.

29   See: Altier et al., "Why They Leave: An Analysis of Terrorist Disengagement Events from Eighty-Seven Autobiographical Accounts"; Monica Lloyd and Christopher Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 2, no. 1 (2015), https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/tam0000035; Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements*; Reinares, "Exit from Terrorism: A Qualitative Empirical Study on Disengagement and Deradicalization among Members of ETA."

30   Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria."

31   Caryl E. Rusbult, "A Longitudinal Test of the Investment Model: The Development (and Deterioration) of Satisfaction and Commitment in Heterosexual Involvements," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45, no. 1 (1983), https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.45.1.101; Benjamin Le and Christopher Agnew, "Commitment and Its Theorized Determinants: A Meta-Analysis of the Investment Model," *Personal Relationships* 10, no. 1 (2003), https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6811.00035; Caryl E. Rusbult, Christopher Agnew, and Ximena Arriaga, "The Investment Model of Commitment Processes," in *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, ed. Paul Van Lange, Arie Kruglanski, and E. Tory Higgins (London: Sage, 2012).

32   Robert J. Sampson and John Laub, *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points through Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); John Laub and Robert J. Sampson, "Understanding Desistance," *Crime and Justice* 28 (2001); Paul Gendreau, Tracy Little, and Claire Goggin, "A Meta-Analysis of the Predictors of Adult Offender Recidivism: What Works!," *Criminology* 34, no. 3 (1996).

33   D.A. Andrews and James Bonta, *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct* (Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing, 1994).

34   Altier et al., "Why They Leave: An Analysis of Terrorist Disengagement Events from Eighty-Seven Autobiographical Accounts."

to the pursuit of a political goal through the use of force. Nevertheless, the development of pro-social ties may still prove fundamental in facilitating and then sustaining disengagement in a number of ways. First, for those whose involvement in violent extremism is not motivated by ideological commitment but by financial or material incentives, social bonds, or self-esteem, pro-social ties provide an alternative means to fulfill those needs. Second, research shows that a large number of violent extremists disengage without "de-radicalizing."[35] Despite a deep ideological commitment, many violent extremists become disillusioned with their involvement for a variety of reasons (e.g. disagreements with leaders or other members, one's role, the strategy or tactics of the group, burnout, difficulty living a clandestine lifestyle). This dissatisfaction may prompt their exit, but only if they have sufficient alternatives outside of involvement (e.g. employment, friends, family, schooling).[36] Otherwise, they remain trapped in their violent extremist role. Finally and perhaps most important, research suggests that two of the most statistically significant predictors of violent extremists' re-engagement and recidivism are a strong belief in the ideology and connections to individuals still involved.[37] Research from criminology indicates that the development of pro-social bonds are key to altering these anti-social attitudes and associations over time.[38] The development of pro-social ties and alternatives outside of involvement, however, is impossible if a violent extremist is not welcomed back into his or her community or if support for violent extremism is pervasive within a society. Thus, greater attention must be paid to the social and political environment where VEDR occurs.

WHAT IS DDR & HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM VEDR

What is DDR?

DDR seeks to reduce the likelihood of conflict reoccurrence by removing weapons from society (disarmament), breaking command and control links or the readiness for violence (demobilization), and ensuring ex-combatants' successful transition into civilian life or the state's security forces (reintegration).[39] DDR emerged from a series of confidence-building measures in Central America during the mid-1980s and early 1990s.[40] It typically occurs in conflict environments in the wake of: 1) a comprehensive political settlement between warring factions under international, often UN, supervision (e.g. Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mozambique), 2) a clear government victory (e.g. Ethiopia, Eritrea), or 3) state fragmentation where external actors compel it (e.g. Somalia, Mali).[41]

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35   Altier et al., "Why They Leave: An Analysis of Terrorist Disengagement Events from Eighty-Seven Autobiographical Accounts."

36   Altier et al., "Why They Leave: An Analysis of Terrorist Disengagement Events from Eighty-Seven Autobiographical Accounts"; Kenney and Chernov Hwang, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Understanding How British and Indonesian Extremists Disengage and Why They Don't."

37   Altier, Boyle, and Horgan, "Returning to the Fight: An Empirical Analysis of Terrorist Reengagement and Recidivism."

38   Andrews and Bonta, *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*; Laub and Sampson, "Understanding Desistance."

39   Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

40   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

41   Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

First generation or classical DDR generally followed a cessation of violence as a tenet of peacekeeping. In a sequential fashion disarmament is typically followed by demobilization and then reintegration. Classical DDR assumes not only a pause in violence as part of a comprehensive peace settlement but national ownership and voluntary participation, as entire groups commit to disarm and demobilize.[42] The focus is primarily on security and eliminating potential spoilers.

Second generation DDR entailed a shift where the focus was no longer solely on combatants but on engendering sustainable peace through community security approaches, justice, and development.[43] Moreover, practitioners were now operating in contexts that did not fulfill the preconditions of classical DDR. In Haiti, for example, there was no peace accord and armed political and criminal gangs roamed communities. The emphasis therefore was on community violence reduction through increased community engagement and local political reform.[44]

Discussions of third or next generation DDR emerged when practitioners found themselves operating in the context of ongoing war amid offensive counter-insurgency or stability operations. As such, third generation DDR seeks to engage armed and criminal groups that may be the targets of military operations and not ever parties to an eventual peace agreement (e.g. in Somalia, Libya, Mali, Iraq, Afghanistan).[45] In such contexts, DDR is not always voluntary, especially when combatants are faced with the prospects of a death sentence or life imprisonment.[46] Although DDR has always grappled with violent extremists (e.g. Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)), third generation DDR faces the challenge of reintegrating certain violent extremists (e.g. al Qaeda, ISIS), who reject the legitimacy of the nation-state order and UN as they are perceived as promoting Western interests.[47] Moreover, the UN has requested that countries criminalize fighting with al Qaeda, its affiliates, or splinter groups.[48] As such, ex-combatants associated with these groups are not afforded the legitimacy that is

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42   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

43   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*; Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments"; Robert Muggah, "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts," *The Round Table* 94, no. 379 (2005), https://doi.org/10.1080/00358530500082684; Robert Muggah, "Negotiating Disarmament and Demobilisation: A Descriptive Review of the Evidence," *Colombia Internacional* 77 (2013), https://doi.org/10.7440/colombiaint77.2013.02.

44   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*; Muggah, "Negotiating Disarmament and Demobilisation: A Descriptive Review of the Evidence"; Muggah and O'Donnell, "Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration."

45   See, for example: *The Changing Landscape of Armed Groups: Doing DDR in New Contexts*, World Bank Group, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping, Social Science Research Council, conference notes from May 1, 2018, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/changing-landscape-of-armed-groups-doing-ddr-new-contexts; Cockayne and O'Neil, eds., *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?*; Muggah and O'Donnell, "Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration."

46   Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments"; Muggah and O'Donnell, "Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration."

47   Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments"; Naureen Chowdhury Fink, "The Blue Flag in Grey Zones: Exploring the Relationships between Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in UN Field Operations," in *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?*, eds. James Cockayne and Siobhan O'Neil (United Nations University, 2015), 62-80.

48   Demobilisation Interagency Working Group on Disarmament, and Reintegration, "Module 2.1.1: The Legal Framework for UN DDR," *Integrated DDR Standards*, https://www.unddr.org/modules/IDDRS-2.10-The-UN%20Approach-to-DDR.pdf.

typical in and underlies DDR processes.[49] The UN has issued special guidelines regarding the screening for such individuals in DDR processes and prohibits their participation in formal DDR, advising prosecution or alternative rehabilitation and reintegration programming.[50] The UN Interagency Group on DDR began a comprehensive review of the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) in 2017 to address practice outside of UN missions or a comprehensive peace settlement. This culminated in the 2019 revised IDDRS, which include support to programs, consistent with legal guidelines, for those leaving groups designated as terrorist organizations as well as initiatives to prevent individuals from joining armed groups designated as terrorist organizations.[51]

Distinctions between VEDR and DDR

While who constitutes a violent extremist is often politicized, a large number of participants in DDR initiatives could be categorized as violent extremists as they engage in ideologically motivated violence often against civilians. Still, recent efforts at VEDR differ from DDR in a number of important ways.

CONFLICT VERSUS NON-CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS

DDR is typically carried out in former or ongoing conflict zones and, with a few exceptions, in fragile, developing, quasi-democratic, or non-democratic states. This means that despite possible national ownership of programming, international organizations and external actors are involved in DDR in most instances, and recipient countries are donor-dependent.[52] The international community often becomes involved as part of a UN peacekeeping or special political mission making DDR just one facet of a larger, integrated peacebuilding effort, and the aims of DDR may be reinforced in other areas of programming (e.g. security sector reform).

Efforts to reintegrate violent extremists certainly occur in similar contexts and within DDR initiatives, but VEDR also takes place outside of conflict zones and in developed democracies with relatively high levels of state capacity. In these instances, there may be little international involvement especially when it comes to the disengagement and reintegration of homegrown violent extremists. Programming may be run by non-governmental or civil society organizations, and efforts are often isolated from or occur absent any larger, integrated peacebuilding and government reform process. Related, the recent influx of foreign fighters into conflict zones and their repatriation means that certain violent extremists are reintegrating into communities not directly impacted by the conflict. As such, the community-based approaches discussed in the DDR literature would not, in these cases, include communities that were direct parties to or victims of the conflict.

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49   Georgia Holmer and Adrian Shtuni, *Returning Foreign Fighters and the Reintegration Imperative* (United States Institute of Peace, March 2017), https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2017-03/sr402-returning-foreign-fighters-and-the-reintegration-imperative.pdf.

50   Interagency Working Group on Disarmament, "Module 2.1.1: The Legal Framework for UN DDR."

51   Demobilisation Interagency Working Group on Disarmament, and Reintegration, "Module 2.10: The UN Approach to DDR," *Integrated DDR Standards*, https://www.unddr.org/modules/IDDRS-2.10-The-UN%20Approach-to-DDR.pdf.

52   Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

Organizational structure and weapons

DDR is typically applied to hierarchical, comparatively large insurgent organizations with command and control links. Although a number of violent extremists operate within insurgencies, some belong to smaller, more decentralized networks engaged in a clandestine strategy of terrorism. Further, violent extremists may operate as lone actors, who may be inspired by a broader movement, but not formally part of an armed group. When these command and control links are not present, demobilization is a much more confined task focused only on an individual's readiness for violence. Violent extremists operating as part of smaller, clandestine groups or as lone actors may also lack access to conventional weapons, or the number of weapons they possess may be relatively small.

Targets of violence

Given that violent extremists tend to employ a strategy of terrorism attacking civilian, in addition to military, targets, a group's "defeat" or loss of territory does not mean their demise; nor does their forcible disarmament and demobilization. Violent extremist groups, such as ISIS or al Qaeda, and their members can easily shift from a strategy of insurgency to terrorism, which requires few resources, command and control links, or conventional weapons (vehicles, for example, could be used) to launch attacks. Thus, while some have argued that DDR is more straightforward in the case of an outright government victory,[53] this seems to be less true when violent extremists are waging a campaign of terrorism. The short-term potential for political violence remains despite forcible disarmament and demobilization of insurgent units.

Role of ideology

Finally, VEDR may include an ideological component (e.g. de-radicalization programming) that is sometimes absent in traditional DDR, where the emphasis historically is on ensuring sustainable economic livelihoods. Yet, a number of DDR initiatives do include attempts to change the mindset of ex-combatants. In Sri Lanka, for example, where there is a clear overlap between DDR and VEDR, "the state sought to de-politicize cadres and make sure that they were no longer at risk of rescinding or sympathetic to the LTTE."[54] Similarly, in Rwanda, ex-combatants attended re-education camps that offered lectures on Rwandan history and politics.[55]

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53 Muggah, "Negotiating Disarmament and Demobilisation: A Descriptive Review of the Evidence."

54 Rebekka Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka," *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqy019.

55 David Duriesmith and Georgina Holmes, "The Masculine Logic of DDR and SSR in the Rwanda Defence Force," *Security Dialogue* 50 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0967010619850346.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This report reviews the existing literature on DDR to draw lessons for VEDR. To identify relevant literature, I began, with the help of a graduate research assistant, with keyword searches of the New York University Library Catalog (including social science databases) and Google Scholar using systematic combinations of the terms "disarmament," "demobilization," "reintegration," "DDR," and "ex-combatant." To ensure adequate coverage of the literature on gender, children, and supporters/civilians, we also conducted searches using the aforementioned terms in conjunction with the keywords "gender," "women," "men," "children," "supporters," and "civilians." To help identify recent working papers and policy documents or other grey literature, similar searches were conducted on the internet. The reference list of each source was also reviewed to identify any additional sources that may not have emerged in our initial search (e.g. policy reports). Overall, we identified 372 potential sources. Each source was skimmed first for relevance, then, if relevant, key findings were extracted from the study through notetaking. In addition to reporting a study's key findings, we assessed the validity and generalizability of a study's findings in light of the methodological approach and the empirical evidence presented.

The validity and generalizability of the conclusions reached in the DDR literature are highly contingent upon the methods employed and the cases consulted. There is significant variation in the quality of the theoretical frameworks, methodology, and scope of the research reviewed. A large percentage of publications cover a single conflict or country using survey, interview, comparative, or ethnographic methods. Cases of formal internationally assisted DDR are the most represented. Colombia is the most frequently studied country, which is not surprising given the duration of the conflict and large scale demobilization there. The use of in-depth single country case studies or even comparative subnational case studies within a country means that the findings, while perhaps valid in the context investigated, may not be generalizable. Moreover, given the nature of DDR programming and that it often occurs in conflict zones, few studies, even within a single country, are able to identify the causal effect of DDR writ large or specific interventions.[56] Those isolated cases that are able to tend to be quasi-experimental and use a very short follow-up period, making it impossible to gauge DDR's impact on long-term processes like social and political reintegration.[57] Though scholars are increasingly employing experimental methods when possible, a large number of studies still select on the dependent variable, looking, for example, at only those who participated in a particular program or intervention. These methodological considerations should be kept in mind throughout the report, and future research should continue to probe and verify the claims that the reviewed works put forth. While this study identified and reviewed a number of published studies by practitioners, a deeper, more comprehensive dive into practitioners' reports or notes from the field or interviews with relevant practitioners may yield additional insights.

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56 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*, 1; Marcatan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 4 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002707302790; Kathleen M. Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia," *International Peacekeeping* 14, no. 2 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310601150800.

57 See: Michael J. Gilligan, Eric N. Mvukiyehe, and Cyrus Samii, "Reintegrating Rebels into Civilian Life: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Burundi," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57, no. 4 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002712448908.

Finally, due to the overlap between DDR and VEDR in some cases of insurgency that culminate in a peace process (e.g. Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), LTTE, FARC) and recent third generation efforts at DDR amid ongoing conflict (e.g. Boko Haram, al-Shabaab), it is not always possible to clearly situate a study wholly within the DDR or VEDR literature. Some studies straddle both literatures and approaches and a few explicitly tie the two together, especially when discussing ex-combatant reintegration. In the interest of comprehensiveness, I include these studies in my review of the DDR literature. They illustrate the overlap and offer important insight on DDR processes for violent extremists disengaging as part of a comprehensive peace settlement as well as those participating in a DDR processes during active conflict.

WHAT CAN OUR EXPERIENCE WITH DDR TEACH US ABOUT VEDR?

The following section outlines lessons gleaned from the DDR literature for our understanding and practice of VEDR and presents supporting evidence from my review. These lessons are organized into four key themes.

1 : Consider who is reintegrating and into what

INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The DDR literature reiterates the importance of those researching or practicing VEDR to seriously consider variation in individuals' motivations for involvement. Research on DDR demonstrates that the failure to identify and consider the specific motivations and characteristics of individual combatants can be destabilizing.[58] War and conflict create an "alternative economic and social order" that certain individuals, especially leaders of armed groups, profit from and may benefit from perpetuating.[59] Some therefore cite a need in programming to account for the differential threat posed by middle and high-ranking leaders who can more easily mobilize ex-combatants or new civilians for criminal or political violence.[60] The programming and processes for reintegration also depend on whether an individual's involvement was

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58   Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Özerdem, «A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach.»

59   Kieran Mitton, "Engaging with Disengagement: The Political Reintegration of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front," in *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict: Politics, Violence and Transition*, eds. Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 11; Lillian Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed?* (German Development Institute, November 31, 2013), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2367307; Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

60   Enzo Nussio, "Ex-Combatants and Violence in Colombia: Are Yesterday's Villains Today's Principal Threat?," *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 3, no. 1 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2018.1396911; Anders Themnér, "Wealth in Ex-Combatants: Examining the Resilience of Ex-Command Structures in Post-War Liberia," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (2019): 526-544, https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogy029; Ramesh Srivastava, *Reintegrating Demobilised Combatants: A Report Exploring Options and Strategies for Training Related Interventions*, (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 1995).

voluntary or involuntary due to coercion or extreme poverty.[61] Likewise, the amount of time and roles held in the armed group are likely to influence one's reintegration needs.[62]

In addition to motivations for involvement, the DDR literature suggests that efforts at VEDR should also identify the skills, needs, and desires of those reintegrating. Berdal claims that "the success of the transition from demobilisation to reintegration is closely linked to the number of comprehensive and meaningful surveys of the population previously undertaken."[63] Ex-combatants may lack a formal education and have few skills outside of combat even in developed democracies.[64] Programming must be inclusive of and sensitive to gender, age, and other important characteristics of participants. Research shows that those with disabilities may have a harder time finding employment and reintegrating and are more likely to be rejected by their families.[65] Often, however, these distinctions are not considered in DDR practice for financial or logistical reasons, which is likely true in the context of VEDR too.[66] Aside from potential logistical and financial issues, offering a more tailored, individual approach must be balanced with tenets of fairness and equality, which in the case of DDR are encapsulated in the IDDRS.[67]

Finally, certain members of armed groups need to be neither disarmed nor demobilized and the DDR framework oversimplifies the variety of individuals in armed groups and their motivations for involvement.[68] The same is true of those involved in violent extremism. The need to "demobilize" abducted minors, forced laborers, and involuntary "cannon fodder" and spouses, "trivializes a complicated reali-

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61 Jeannie Annan, Moriah Brier, and Filder Aryemo, "From "Rebel" to "Returnee": Daily Life and Reintegration for Young Soldiers in Northern Uganda," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 24, no. 6 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0743558409350499; Grip and Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review."

62 Grip and Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review"; Nussio, "Ex-Combatants and Violence in Colombia: Are Yesterday's Villains Today's Principal Threat?."

63 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*, 45.

64 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Nat J. Colletta, Markus Kostner, and Ingo Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda* (World Bank, 1996); Özerdem, "A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach"; Bill Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective," *Social & Legal Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663907076534; Peter Shirlow et al., *Politically Motivated Former Prisoner Groups: Community Activism and Conflict Transformation* (University College Cork, Research Report submitted to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, 2005).

65 Janet E. Lord and Michael Ashley Stein, "Peacebuilding and Reintegrating Ex-Combatants with Disabilities," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 19, no. 3 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2015.1031515; Sukanya Podder, "From Recruitment to Reintegration: Communities and Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Liberia," *International Peacekeeping* 19, no. 2 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2012.665696; Annan, Brier, and Aryemo, "From "Rebel" to "Returnee": Daily Life and Reintegration for Young Soldiers in Northern Uganda."

66 Antonio Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan," *Conflict, Security & Development* 8, no. 2 (2008), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800802095369.

67 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."

68 Sabiiti Mutengesa, "Facile Acronyms and Tangled Processes: A Re-Examination of the 1990s 'DDR' in Uganda," *International Peacekeeping* 20, no. 3 (November 2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2013.828526.

ty."[69] Many are victims rather than perpetrators.[70] Some are willing supporters, but not combatants. All of them, however, may need individually tailored reintegration support.

CONTEXT MATTERS

In addition to considering individual motivations and characteristics, our thirty-year experience with DDR suggests that VEDR efforts in conflict and non-conflict environments would benefit from context-specific approaches that consider salient political and societal factors. Although lessons can be learned and transferred in certain instances, a strong consensus in the literature is that there is no uniform approach to DDR.[71] Scholars argue that too much attention is often paid to the mechanics of DDR rather than the need for societal transformation informed by historical context and processes.[72] Policymakers and practitioners need to focus on the political context and the "forces and dynamics in the real world" that shape actions.[73] Effective and sustainable solutions depend "much less on adherence to a fixed formula drawing on 'best practices' than on innovative, often pragmatic, solutions rooted in an understanding of conflict dynamics and wider political circumstances."[74] Sequencing, programming, and the institutional arrangements to support DDR need to "reflect realities on the ground."[75] Programming and practice might vary even across communities within the same country. According to one DDR practitioner, there was no "cookie cutter" approach to community violence reduction in Haiti because gang members' motivations and relationships with the community differed across neighborhoods.[76] Even the Integrated Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) are not considered doctrine but a "toolbox of basic principles and ideas" to be addressed in case-specific context.[77]

SECURITY, MUTUAL TRUST, AND POLITICAL WILL

One critical contextual factor is the political environment. Research on DDR suggests that the incentives offered to disengaging violent extremists will have a limited impact on overall societal outcomes, which depend much more on levels of security, political will, and mutual trust. *Voluntary* disarmament and demobilization are unlikely to occur or be sustained without a basic level of security in society and, thus, a cessation of violence.[78] Armed groups or individuals within them will not want to relinquish their weapons if they think it puts them in in danger.

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69   Mutengesa, "Facile Acronyms and Tangled Processes: A Re-Examination of the 1990s 'DDR' in Uganda," 351.

70   Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective."

71   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*; Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

72   Mats R. Berdal and David H. Ucko, "Introduction to the DDR Forum: Rethinking the Reintegration of Former Combatants," *International Peacekeeping* 20, no. 3 (November 2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2013.843971.

73   Mutengesa, "Facile Acronyms and Tangled Processes: A Re-Examination of the 1990s 'DDR' in Uganda," 354.

74   Berdal and Ucko, "Introduction to the DDR Forum: Rethinking the Reintegration of Former Combatants," 316.

75   Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*, 22.

76   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*, 70.

77   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*, 13.

78   Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed*; Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Mark Sedra, "New Beginning or Return to Arms? The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process in Afghanistan," originally presented at *State reconstruction and international engagement in Afghanistan*, May 30-June 1, 2003, London School of Economics and Political Science and University of Bonn, http://eprints.lse.

In Somalia, for instance, individuals who disarmed quickly fell victim to gangs.[79] In Haiti, a gang killed five children merely for speaking with DDR practitioners without its permission.[80] In Northern Ireland, ex-combatants feared being killed outside their own area, and in Colombia, they worried about being targeted by organized crime groups.[81] Defectors may also face reprisals from their armed group for leaving or participating in DDR.[82] That was the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) where punishment attacks by armed groups against their own escalated following the launch of the DDR program as did the stealing of benefits from program participants.[83] In Sierra Leone, Revolutionary United Front (RUF) commanders restricted combatants' knowledge of DDR provisions and forcibly re-mobilized some participating in DDR until the government responded by militarily eliminating spoilers.[84] Violent extremists defecting or participating in programming, even in developed democracies, may also face reprisals. Victims too may want justice and threaten those reintegrating.[85]

Weak states, in particular, cannot guarantee the security of violent extremists who defect or disengage, and therefore the incentives to remain armed or a member of an armed group are vast. The DDR literature demonstrates that a strong, central authority and relatively high state capacity are necessary to deter reprisals and ensure a certain level of security and, where relevant, the enforcement and credibility of the peace process.[86] Participation in DDR programs in Afghanistan was much higher in districts where the state was capable of exerting a minimum level of territorial control, and non-existent outside those

ac.uk/28377. ; Kees Kingma and Vanessa Sayers, "Demobilization in the Horn of Africa" (paper presented at the IRG Workshop, Addis Ababa, December 4-7, 1994); Zoë Marriage, "Flip-Flop Rebel, Dollar Soldier: Demobilisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo," in *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict: Politics, Violence and Transition*, eds. Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Mark Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace," *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 4 (2004), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343304044479; Muggah, "Negotiating Disarmament and Demobilisation: A Descriptive Review of the Evidence"; Enzo Nussio, "How Ex-Combatants Talk About Personal Security. Narratives of Former Paramilitaries in Colombia," *Conflict, Security & Development* 11, no. 5 (2011), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2011.641725; Willemijn Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 15, no. 2 (2010).

79   Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Clement Adibe, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Somalia* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 1995).

80   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

81   Enzo Nussio and Kimberly Howe, "When Protection Collapses: Post-Demobilization Trajectories of Violence," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, no. 5 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2014.955916; Kieran McEvoy, Peter Shirlow, and Karen McElrath, "Resistance, Transition and Exclusion: Politically Motivated Ex-Prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 16, no. 3 (2004), https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550490509991.

82   Annan, Brier, and Aryemo, "From "Rebel" to "Returnee": Daily Life and Reintegration for Young Soldiers in Northern Uganda"; John Riley et al., "Escaping the LRA: Examining the Decision to Disengage from Militarized Dissident Groups," *African Security* 10, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2017.1305859; Anneli Botha and Mahdi Abdile, "Reality Versus Perception: Toward Understanding Boko Haram in Nigeria," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, no. 5 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1403152.

83   Joanne Richards, *Demobilization in the DRC: Armed Groups and the Role of Organizational Control* (Small Arms Survey, 2013).

84   Mitton, "Engaging with Disengagement: The Political Reintegration of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front."

85   Libardo J. Ariza and Manuel Iturralde, "'You Don't Respect Me, but I'm Worthy of Respect'. Paramilitaries' Prison Experience and Conflict Transformation in Colombia," *Punishment & Society* 21, no. 5 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1462474518809012; Juan Diego Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 6, no. 3 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijs022.

86   Kees Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," in *Demilitarisation and Peace-Building in Southern Africa: Concepts and Processes*, eds. Peter Batchelor and Kees Kingma (Taylor and Francis, 2018), Chapter 6.

districts.[87] A comparative analysis of states participating in the Multi-Agency Development and Reintegration Program (MDRP) in the Great Lakes region of Africa similarly concluded that strong, stable governments were better able to participate in DDR than weak ones.[88] Where state capacity is lacking, some suggest it can be substituted by an external actor.[89] The UN, for instance, played such a role in Namibia and Mozambique.[90]

In addition to a certain basic level of security, mutual trust and political will are considered critical for DDR and are likely to play a pivotal role in VEDR. Where distrust reigns and states or other actors are not held accountable for human rights violations, VEDR, like DDR, is unlikely to be successful or sustainable even in non-conflict settings. Mutual trust between all parties, including the state, is fundamental for fostering the political will necessary for *voluntary* disarmament and demobilization.[91] The exclusion of any warring party (e.g. UNITA in Angola, the Taliban in Afghanistan) can quickly derail a peace process and create incentives for other groups to remain armed.[92] Mutual trust is also unlikely to exist in cases of ongoing conflict,[93] when the state is engaged in repression and human rights violations,[94] or when conflicting parties are not held responsible for human rights violations.[95] Excessive force by Nigerian security forces, for example, is thought to deter the defection of Boko Haram militants or, if they do defect, to encourage their reintegration into areas where the state lacks control, and they may more easily fall back into violence.[96] In order for mutual trust to emerge and remain, the mechanisms for addressing potential points of contention, especially the judiciary and the police, need to be perceived as credible and legitimate.[97] Security forces must be "accountable to elected bodies," de-militarized, and "viewed as legitimate across the political spectrum and in the communities where they are deployed."[98] The success of DDR therefore depends on how issues are addressed in society and follows rather than precedes the political process.[99]

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87   Major William Selber, "A Question of 'Government' Control: Afghanistan DDR Programs since 2001," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29, no. 2 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2018.1433514.

88   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

89   Kieran Mitton, "Where Is the War? Explaining Peace in Sierra Leone," *International Peacekeeping* 20, no. 3 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2013.838391.

90   Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1; Kingma and Sayers, "Demobilization in the Horn of Africa."

91   Guy Lamb and Theo Stainer, "The Conundrum of DDR Coordination: The Case of South Sudan," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 7, no. 1 (2018), http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.628; Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective"; Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives."

92   Mats R. Berdal and David H. Ucko, *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict Politics, Violence and Transition* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, and New York: Routledge, 2009).

93   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

94   Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

95   Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1.

96   Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria."

97   Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*; Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1.

98   Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*, 51-2.

99   Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed*; Muggah, "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts."

DDR will fail if the political process fails to foster the necessary political will.[100] Such was the case for some time in Mozambique where confidence-building measures including power-sharing and police and government oversight were absent.[101] Although there are no comparative studies of the effect of regime type on DDR outcomes,[102] these findings insinuate that democracy is necessary for DDR. However, some evidence, specifically in Tajikistan, supports the notion that DDR can work in authoritarian settings too.[103]

Of course, *forcible* disarmament and demobilization or the forced disengagement of violent extremists through, for example, imprisonment, do not require security, mutual trust, or political will. A great deal of research demonstrates that civil wars that end in decisive military victory are more likely to result in sustainable peace.[104] One reason is that they pose less of a reintegration challenge due to defeat. Nevertheless, Hill argues that conflict reoccurrence is less likely only in the short-term and that in a number of cases (e.g. Rwanda, Syria, Sri Lanka, Ireland) conflict re-emerged generations later.[105] Berdal similarly maintains that coercive disarmament and demobilization may signify that the political problems and insecurity plaguing society are not being addressed and will only produce short-term results.[106] DDR under duress—that is alongside ongoing military action or absent a political settlement—lacks political buy-in.[107] Such military victories are "transient" and peace over generations will only be sustained through the reintegration of "rebellious communities," not military victory.[108]

Security, mutual trust, and political will and the policies that foster them (e.g. reform of the police and judiciary, respect for human rights, commitment to the political process) are just as relevant for successful VEDR and the reduction of violent extremism at the societal level.[109] Likewise, forcible disengagement of violent extremists through military defeat or imprisonment without a focus on these issues is likely to only produce short-term societal results. Of course, VEDR and DDR programming cannot in and of itself transform entire societies or governments. VEDR programming too may face additional hurdles in that it is often detached from the more comprehensive reforms that usually occur alongside DDR and that may contribute to mutual trust and political will (e.g. security sector reform, peace processes). VEDR programming should, however, be cognizant of the relevant societal and political factors that underlie violent extremism and the constraints they impose on disengagement and reintegration. VEDR, like DDR,

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100 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

101 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

102 Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed?*.

103 Anna Matveeva, "Tajikistan: DDR in the Context of Authoritarian Peace," in *Post-Conflict Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration: Bringing State-Building Back In*, ed. Antonio Giustozzi (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing 2012).

104 Roy Licklider, "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945-1993," *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 3 (1995), https://doi.org/10.2307/2082982; Monica Duffy Toft, "Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory?," *International Security* 34, no. 4 (2010)no. 3 (1995, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2010.34.4.7.

105 Tom H. J. Hill, "The Deception of Victory: The JVP in Sri Lanka and the Long-Term Dynamics of Rebel Reintegration," *International Peacekeeping* 20, no. 3 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2013.830024.

106 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

107 Cockayne and O'Neil, *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?*.

108 Hill, "The Deception of Victory: The JVP in Sri Lanka and the Long-Term Dynamics of Rebel Reintegration," 370.

109 Of course, given the possible use of sporadic terrorist or lone actor attacks, it is possible that some isolated instances of violent extremism will still occur.

should be approached "from a political lens rather than a purely technical one" so that it contributes to rather than undermines the larger structural changes that will facilitate successful reintegration and deter recruitment into violent extremism in the long term.[110] Adopting a "band-aid" approach to VEDR and losing sight of long-term political objectives (e.g. security sector reform, respect for human rights, political inclusion) even in developed democracies will render violent extremism a serious problem for the foreseeable future.

The economic environment

In addition to the political environment, economic conditions are also important. We know that conventional employment provides violent extremists with alternatives that may help explain their disengagement, especially for those who are already disillusioned or motivated by material gains or social bonds.[111] The development of pro-social ties (and ideally attitudes) through conventional employment also serve as important protective factors.[112] However, the DDR literature suggests that VEDR is simply not possible or sustainable absent a certain level of economic development and social justice.[113]

There is great consensus in the DDR literature that sufficient economic opportunities increase the opportunity costs associated with participation in armed conflict or crime and eliminate some of their root causes.[114] However, research shows that at low levels of economic development DDR programs rarely provide ex-combatants with "sustainable, non-violent livelihoods."[115] Ex-combatants are reintegrated

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110 Alpaslan Özerdem and Sukanya Podder, *Child Soldiers: From Recruitment to Reintegration* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Piedmont, "The Role of Disarmament, Demobilization, & Reintegration in Countering Violent Extremism"; Rens Willems and Mathijs van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi," *Disasters* 39, no. 2 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12102.

111 Altier et al., "Why They Leave: An Analysis of Terrorist Disengagement Events from Eighty-Seven Autobiographical Accounts"; Altier, Thoroughgood, and Horgan, "Turning Away from Terrorism: Lessons from Psychology, Sociology, and Criminology."

112 Andrews and Bonta, *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*.

113 Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed*; Rosalind Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment," in *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence*, eds. Rosalind Shaw, L. Waldorf, and Pierre Hazan (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

114 Paul Collier, "Demobilization and Insecurity: A Study in the Economics of the Transition from War to Peace," *Journal of International Development* 6, no. 3 (1994), https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3380060308; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004), https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpf064; W. Andy Knight, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview," *African Security* 1, no. 1 (2008), https://doi.org/10.1080/19362200802285757; Mark Irving Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Obasesam Okoi, "Peacebuilding and Transformational Change in Nigeria's Oil Region," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21270; Anup Phayal, Prabin B. Khadka, and Clayton L. Thyne, "What Makes an Ex-Combatant Happy? A Micro-Analysis of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration in South Sudan," *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12186.

115 Annan, Brier, and Aryemo, "From "Rebel" to "Returnee": Daily Life and Reintegration for Young Soldiers in Northern Uganda"; Humphreys and Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration"; Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia"; Lamb and Stainer, "The Conundrum of DDR Coordination: The Case of South Sudan"; Ian Levely, "Measuring Intermediate Outcomes of Liberia's Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Program," *Defence & Peace Economics* 25, no. 2 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2012.727065; Jaremey McMullin, "Integration or Separation? The Stigmatisation of Ex-Combatants after War," *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 2 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210512000228; Nikkie Wiegink and Ralph Sprenkels, "Beyond Reintegration: War Veteranship in Mozambique and El Salvador," *Development and Change* (February 3, 2020),

into poverty.[116] Many lack access to basic healthcare or education.[117] In Burundi, one World Bank report concluded that economic reintegration was "uneven" and only 2 percent of ex-combatants could meet six basic needs.[118]

These economic constraints have had very real implications for the effectiveness of DDR. A survey of over 7,000 Somali ex-combatants found that individuals are more willing to disarm if they have the opportunity to return to an economically stable region as opposed to an unstable one.[119] Other research indicates ex-combatants with few economic opportunities are more likely to return to urban areas to seek work, where they are more likely to fall into criminal or rebel activity.[120] Unemployed foot soldiers often turn to opportunistic crime,[121] while officers may engage in more organized criminal activity.[122] One comparative study across countries observes that certain DDR programs in Africa underperformed because of the level of economic development.[123] Colombia, which is considered a reasonably successful case, is one of the wealthiest countries to engage in DDR.[124] In already poor countries, ongoing conflict further constrains economic opportunities so much so that there has been a shift in focus from reintegration to simply reinsertion where demobilized fighters are provided a one-time support package upon their release with no follow-up.[125] If there are few opportunities for employment, some maintain that vocational training programs may not be the best use of resources.[126] These findings indicate that VEDR

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https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12576; Steven A. Zyck, "Former Combatant Reintegration and Fragmentation in Contemporary Afghanistan," *Conflict, Security & Development* 9, no. 1 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800802704945.

116 Knight and Özerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace," 516.

117 Rens Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, and New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).

118 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

119 Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed?*.

120 Kees Kingma, "Demobilization of Combatants after Civil Wars in Africa and Their Reintegration into Civilian Life," *Policy Sciences* 30, no. 3 (1997), https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004215705156; Daniel Ayalew and Stefan Dercon, "From the Gun to the Plough": The Macro and Micro-Level Impact of Demobilization in Ethiopia," in *Demobilization in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Development and Security Impacts*, ed. Kees Kingma (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 2000).

121 Theresa Stichick Betancourt et al., "Sierra Leone's Former Child Soldiers: A Follow-up Study of Psychosocial Adjustment and Community Reintegration," *Child Development* 81, no. 4 (2010), https://dx.doi.org/10.1111%2Fj.1467-8624.2010.01455.x; Sasha Gear, *Wishing us away: Challenges facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa* (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), 2002); Andrea Gonzalez Pena and Han Dorussen, "The Reintegration of Ex-Combatants and Post-Conflict Violence. An Analysis of Municipal Crime Levels in Colombia," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, (January 2020), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0738894219894701.

122 Chris Alden, "Making Old Soldiers Fade Away: Lessons from the Reintegration of Demobilized Soldiers in Mozambique," *Security Dialogue* 33, no. 2 (2002); Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, Tobias Pietz, and Shay Duffy, *Turning Soldiers into a Work Force: Demobilization and Reintegration in Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Bonn International Centre for Conversion, 2003).

123 Guy Lamb, *Assessing the Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in the Context of Instability and Informal Economies* (World Bank, Other Papers, 2011).

124 Nussio, "Ex-Combatants and Violence in Colombia: Are Yesterday's Villains Today's Principal Threat?."

125 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments"; Cockayne and O'Neil, *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?*

126 Nicole Ball, "Demobilizing and Reintegrating Soldiers: Lessons from Africa," in *Rebuilding Societies after Civil War: Critical Roles for International Assistance*, ed. Krishna Kumar (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1997); Heinemann-Grüder, Pietz, and Duffy, *Turning Soldiers*

efforts may severely hampered in countries with very low levels of economic development or in cases where active conflict disrupts the local economy. VEDR policy and practice must be cognizant of and try to address such limitations.

Even where there are economic opportunities, research on DDR further demonstrates that VEDR programs must consider the local economic market into which individuals are reintegrating. The initial reintegration program in Afghanistan, for instance, was described as "a desk exercise in Kabul" and detached from reality on the ground.[127] Advice to ex-combatants on careers was "arbitrary," not couched in any market analysis, and often created competition and conflict between ex-combatants (e.g. training 15 tailors for one village).[128] As a result, small businesses that were set up folded quickly and farmers lacked the requisite infrastructure, including irrigation systems, culminating in crop failure.[129] Similar outcomes were observed in other cases where programming was designed in isolation from the needs of the community leading to an oversupply of labor and unsustainable livelihoods.[130]

Summary of implications for VEDR

VEDR must identify and take into account the different characteristics and motivations for involvement of those reintegrating. While some may be ideologically driven, others' participation in violent extremism may stem from other factors including coercion, financial gain, a sense of belonging and social bonds. Supporters and others associated with violent extremism, not just combatants, may need reintegration support. The socio-political context is also key. Efforts at VEDR should contribute to a larger process to promote security, mutual trust, and political will within a society. Disengagement and reintegration will be difficult and unsustainable over the long-term where the state lacks territorial control, citizens constantly fear for their safety, human rights abuses are pervasive, and accountability for such crimes is lacking. A certain level of economic development and social justice also seems critical for successful, long-term VEDR. Where a sustainable livelihood is not possible outside of violent extremism, there is a strong incentive to remain or become re-involved.

2: Successful reintegration is social reintegration

Social reintegration and stigmatization

Recent literature on DDR highlights the importance of *social* reintegration for successful outcomes, and the same is likely true in the context of VEDR. Reintegration, as a component of DDR, was originally conceived in narrow, economic terms at the individual level—that is, does the ex-combatant have civil-

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into a Work Force: Demobilization and Reintegration in Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina.

127 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan," 173.

128 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan," 174.

129 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan."

130 Krijn Peters, "From Weapons to Wheels: Young Sierra Leonean Ex-Combatants Become Motorbike Taxi-Riders," *Journal of Peace Conflict & Development* 10 (2007); Mats Utas, "Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2005); Alpaslan Özerdem and Mohammed Hassan Babiker, "A Future Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Process in Sudan: Lessons Learned from Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda," *Conflict, Security & Development* 3, no. 2 (2003), https://doi.org/10.1080/1467880032000126921.

ian employment capable of generating a sustainable livelihood.[131] However, over time, it became clear that one's economic reintegration is closely tied to their social reintegration where social reintegration is defined as acceptance by one's family, peers, and neighbors.[132] Even with appropriate education and market-based training, the stigma associated with being an ex-combatant can preclude a sustainable, pro-social livelihood.

This is true even in developed democracies. In Northern Ireland, for instance, conflict-related prisoners who eschew violence, remain stigmatized and marginalized and are often discriminated against legally, in employment.[133] Similarly, in developing countries, communities hold negative perceptions of ex-combatants due to war-time abuse and destruction and fear they may return to violence.[134] According to one survey in Colombia, 41 percent of respondents "fear" and 82 percent of respondents "distrust" ex-combatants.[135] In Liberia, 25 percent of ex-combatants said they were regarded with fear and 11 percent with anger, and 40 percent said the community was "watchful or distrustful" of them.[136] In Colombia, one ex-combatant commented that when he visited a store in the next town, the owner told him that he had "the face of a demobilized combatant" and should leave.[137] Some in the community believe that working with ex-combatants will put them at risk not because they view the ex-combatants as dangerous but because ex-combatants are more likely to be targeted.[138]

For these reasons, many ex-combatants are unable to secure formal employment or loans.[139] They report living in impoverished neighborhoods with low institutional capacity, high crime, and fewer economic

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131 Özerdem, «A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach"; Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

132 Humphreys and Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration"; Knight and Özerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace"; Enzo Nussio and Juan E. Ugarriza, "The Effect of Perspective-Giving on Postconflict Reconciliation. An Experimental Approach," *Political Psychology* 38, no. 1 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12324; Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

133 Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective"; Peter Shirlow, "Mythic Rights and Conflict-Related Prisoner 'Re-Integration,'" *Capital & Class* 43, no. 1 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816818818086.

134 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia"; Mitton, "Engaging with Disengagement: The Political Reintegration of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front."

135 Pena and Dorussen, "The Reintegration of Ex-Combatants and Post-Conflict Violence. An Analysis of Municipal Crime Levels in Colombia"; Oliver Kaplan and Enzo Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 35, no. 2 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0738894215614506; Nussio, "Ex-Combatants and Violence in Colombia: Are Yesterday's Villains Today's Principal Threat?."

136 Walt Kilroy and Helen Basini, "Social Capital Made Explicit: The Role of Norms, Networks, and Trust in Reintegrating Ex-Combatants and Peacebuilding in Liberia," *International Peacekeeping* 25, no. 3 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2018.1461564.

137 Kimberly Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1, no. 1 (2007): 80, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijm011.

138 Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities."

139 Andres Barrios Fajardo, Clifford Shultz, and Juan Carlos Montes Joya, "Entrepreneurship as Boundary Object: Toward Reintegration of Colombia's Ex-Militants into Civil Society," *Journal of Macromarketing* 39, no. 4 (2019): 368-384, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0276146719884606.

opportunities due to their marginalization and segregation.[140] Failure to economically reintegrate further contributes to their stigmatization as they are perceived as not working and more likely to fall into crime.[141] The involvement of one or a few ex-combatants in crime, domestic violence, or rape often leads to stigmatization of the entire group.[142] Ex-combatants further assert that the government and NGOs frame them as security threats, despite low recidivism rates. Additional research corroborates fear and discrimination by reintegration program providers.[143] Perhaps most concerning, experimental research in Northern Uganda indicates that even when communities claim to accept ex-combatants in surveys (perhaps due, in part, to social desirability bias) and ex-combatants are well-connected to noncombatants, they receive 15 percent fewer resources even when accounting for ethnic, religious, and other cleavages.[144]

Reducing such stigma and fostering community-based social reintegration has benefits beyond economic reintegration that would apply in the context of VEDR. Stigmatization impedes one's reintegration "not only because it obstructs acceptance in civilian society, but also because it continuously reinforces a deviant status, and thereby deviant behavior."[145] Further, the refusal of ex-combatants to reveal their identity[146] due to possible discrimination hinders reconciliation.[147] Some even "self-demobilize" and forego participating in a DDR program, despite its potential benefits, in order to avoid the ex-combatant label.[148] Even if ex-combatants are able to find employment, some return to armed groups because they fear retribution for their past actions by victims or the wider community.[149]

In many cases, "reintegration is a misnomer because many are unable to return home."[150] One survey in Liberia found 72 percent of ex-combatants were not in the same community they had been before

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140 Pena and Dorussen, "The Reintegration of Ex-Combatants and Post-Conflict Violence. An Analysis of Municipal Crime Levels in Colombia"; Nussio, "Ex-Combatants and Violence in Colombia: Are Yesterday's Villains Today's Principal Threat?."

141 Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

142 Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

143 Nussio, "Ex-Combatants and Violence in Colombia: Are Yesterday's Villains Today's Principal Threat?"; Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

144 Matthew Osborne, Ben D'Exelle, and Arjan Verschoor, "Truly Reconciled? A Dyadic Analysis of Post-Conflict Social Reintegration in Northern Uganda," *Journal of Peace Research* 55, no. 1 (2018): 107-121, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343317729011.

145 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*, 114.

146 González and Clémence, "Concealing Former Identity to Be Accepted after the Demobilization Process in Colombia: A Real Reintegration in a Post Conflict Scenario?"; Nussio, "Ex-Combatants and Violence in Colombia: Are Yesterday's Villains Today's Principal Threat?."

147 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

148 Özerdem, «A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach.»

149 Prieto (2012) finds little evidence that such reprisals actually occur at least in the ex-combatants he surveyed. Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities." See also: Ariza and Iturralde, "'You Don't Respect Me, but I'm Worthy of Respect'. Paramilitaries' Prison Experience and Conflict Transformation in Colombia"; Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives."

150 Selber, "A Question of 'Government' Control: Afghanistan DDR Programs since 2001," 135.

joining their group.[151] Some sever ties with their family to protect them from potential reprisals.[152] Yet, research shows that having a family to return to aids in successful reintegration.[153] Ongoing discrimination, similar to the kind experienced by many ex-combatants, reduces the likelihood individuals will ever identify with a new referent group.[154] The less marginalized ex-combatants are in their community, the less dependent they are on their bonds with former militants and the less likely they are to return to their armed group or engage in crime.[155] Successful social reintegration avoids "ex-combatant silos."[156]

While reintegrating violent extremists are likely to confront stigmatization and discrimination akin to ex-combatants, research on DDR indicates that the experience is not universal and may depend on underlying attitudes in the community or other contextual factors.[157] In some instances, ex-combatants may return to their communities as "war heroes."[158] Cross-national research in Africa observes that reintegration is more difficult in societies with ethnic or regional tensions or a decline in social capital.[159] Within countries, reintegration is most challenging where political affiliations of the ex-combatants and the community differ.[160] A study of the reintegration of Boko Haram militants highlights that whether a family or community accepts ex-combatants is dependent upon the "ideational context."[161] In radical milieus, communities might not accept ex-combatants precisely because they have de-radicalized, whereas in antagonistic or referent milieus, reintegration and de-radicalization programming can help ex-combatants form and frame new identities acceptable to their host communities.[162] In Liberia, ex-combatants who fought with groups that protected and defended the community were welcomed home, while those who fought

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151 Kilroy and Basini, "Social Capital Made Explicit: The Role of Norms, Networks, and Trust in Reintegrating Ex-Combatants and Peacebuilding in Liberia."

152 Ariza and Iturralde, "'You Don't Respect Me, but I'm Worthy of Respect'. Paramilitaries' Prison Experience and Conflict Transformation in Colombia."

153 Podder, "From Recruitment to Reintegration: Communities and Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Liberia"; Kaplan and Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia."

154 Nyla R. Branscombe, Michael Thomas Schmitt, and Richard Harvey, "Perceiving Pervasive Discrimination among African Americans: Implications for Group Identification and Well-Being," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77, no. 1 (1999), https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.1.135.

155 Pena and Dorussen, "The Reintegration of Ex-Combatants and Post-Conflict Violence. An Analysis of Municipal Crime Levels in Colombia."

156 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

157 Anna Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army," in *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict: Politics, Violence and Transition*, eds. Mats R. Berdal and David H. Ucko (London: Routledge, 2009).

158 Özerdem, «A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach"; Wiegink and Sprenkels, "Beyond Reintegration: War Veteranship in Mozambique and El Salvador"; Nathalie Duclos, "Introduction: Rethinking the Former Combatants' Return to Civil Life," in *War Veterans in Postwar Situations: Chechnya, Serbia, Turkey, Peru, and Cˆote d'Ivoire,* ed. Nathalie Duclos (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1-23; Lalli Metsola, "The Struggle Continues? The Spectre of Liberation, Memory Politics and "War Veterans" in Namibia," *Development and Change* 41, no. 4 (2010), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2010.01651.x; Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

159 Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda*.

160 Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda*.

161 Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria."

162 Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria."

with predatory groups or committed abuses had a harder time reintegrating.[163] In Uganda, parents of children who had not returned home were critical of those children who had.[164] Some evidence also suggests that, in certain cases, victims may be more empathetic. In Colombia, some who "lived through or witnessed the war experiences of others" viewed ex-combatants as victims explaining that they joined armed groups against their will, for revenge, or due to poverty.[165] Research in Northern Ireland similarly concludes that victims are more accepting of ex-combatants' attempts to change.[166] Evidence from Liberia, however, demonstrates somewhat differently that victimized communities may be less accepting.[167]

Importantly, a number of studies find that policy and practitioner language around DDR further reifies ex-combatant identities, contributes to stigmatization, and suggests they have no social capital to contribute to society.[168] A discourse analysis of DDR policy documents and semi-structured interviews with practitioners in Liberia concludes that DDR guidance, practitioners, and donors often paint "former combatants as 'unworthy' aid recipients" by promoting and institutionalizing unsubstantiated narratives of *threat* (i.e. ex-combatants are "inherently and naturally threatening" to peace) and *resentment* (i.e. communities will resent assistance to ex-combatants, are fundamentally different from ex-combatants, and are more deserving of aid).[169] By construing ex-combatants as the primary threat, scholars note that the literature tends to overlook other important risks for and drivers of violence (e.g. political elites, security services).[170] The resentment and threat narratives also become totalizing and result in the ultimate form of othering into perpetrators and victims when reality is more ambiguous.[171] Narratives of threat also securitize DDR and reintegration programming: participants are worthy of aid "only if they are threatening."[172] The same may be true in the context of violent extremism where securitizing discourse and narratives reify the deviant or anti-social identities of violent extremists, which further inhibits their reintegration. Violent extremists belonging to certain al Qaeda-linked groups may face additional stigma due to their formal criminalization in the UN system.[173]

Finally, some DDR scholars maintain there is a need to delink reintegration from disarmament and demobilization.[174] States or international organizations should run disarmament and demobilization programs

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163 Humphreys and Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration"; Podder, "From Recruitment to Reintegration: Communities and Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Liberia."

164 Anders Nilsson, *Reintegrating Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Societies* (Stockholm: Sida, 2005).

165 Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities," 545.

166 John Brewer and Bernadette Hayes, "Victimisation and Attitudes Towards Former Political Prisoners in Northern Ireland," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 27, no. 4 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.856780.

167 Podder, "From Recruitment to Reintegration: Communities and Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Liberia."

168 McMullin, "Integration or Separation? The Stigmatisation of Ex-Combatants after War."

169 McMullin, "Integration or Separation? The Stigmatisation of Ex-Combatants after War," 386.

170 McMullin, "Integration or Separation? The Stigmatisation of Ex-Combatants after War."

171 McMullin, "Integration or Separation? The Stigmatisation of Ex-Combatants after War"; Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

172 McMullin, "Integration or Separation? The Stigmatisation of Ex-Combatants after War," 413.

173 Holmer and Shtuni, *Returning Foreign Fighters and the Reintegration Imperative*.

174 Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives"; Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

and reintegration should be led by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the community level.[175] Such approaches would help resolve the challenge that reintegration is a much more long-term process that cannot be resolved in two, three, or even five years.[176] In cases of ongoing conflict, an RDD, rather than a DDR, model might be more effective as community-based confidence-building measures generate the mutual trust and security necessary for disarmament and demobilization.[177] Focusing on social reintegration before disarmament and demobilization can help actors buy time. UN guidance now notes that DDR should be flexible, responsive to context, and need not be sequenced.[178]

In the context of VEDR, focusing on reintegration and delinking it from engagement in violence may be especially helpful when the lines between civilians, supporters, and truly violent extremists are blurred. It also addresses the challenge that it is impossible to completely disarm certain violent extremists who may use non-conventional weapons, e.g. vehicles. By prioritizing reintegration, policies are not only setting the stage for the disengagement of violent individuals, they are addressing the needs and risk factors of all individuals associated with the violent extremist group, regardless of age, gender, or role.[179]

THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES

Our thirty-year experience with DDR suggests that well-designed community-based approaches can help combat stigma and discrimination and foster the positive social and political capital necessary for VEDR both within and outside of conflict zones.[180] Although they require a great deal of time and resources and a "high level of expertise,"[181] community-based approaches are thought to hold great promise for reintegration, which is described as the "Achilles heel" of DDR[182] and the most often overlooked and

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175 Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives"; Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed*; Kathleen M. Jennings, "The Political Economy of DDR in Liberia: A Gendered Critique," *Conflict, Security & Development* 9, no. 4 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800903345770; Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1; Nicole Ball, *Spreading Good Practices in Security Sector Reform: Policy Options for the British Government*, Safeworld (London, December 1998).

176 Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives."

177 Selber, "A Question of 'Government' Control: Afghanistan DDR Programs since 2001."

178 Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1; United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Practices in Peace Operations: A Contribution to the New Horizon Discussion on Challenges and Opportunities for UN Peacekeeping* (United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2010); Andrea Kathryn Talentino and Frederic S. Pearson, "Weapons of War, Weapons of Peace: DDR Processes in Peacemaking," *International Peacekeeping* 27, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2019.1623676.

179 Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

180 Outside of conflict zones, it is likely to just be a single, or perhaps a few, returned foreign fighters or homegrown violent extremists who are reintegrating. Research maintains that reintegration is easier the lower the ratio of returnees. See: Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

181 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*, 3.

182 Sarah Meek and Mark Malan, *Identifying Lessons from DDR Experiences in Africa: Workshop Report* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2004), 12.

underfunded component.[183] A great deal of research now suggests that reintegration depends less on the funds and packages provided to ex-combatants, but on their relationships with their host community.[184]

One benefit of community-based approaches, in addition to reducing stigma, is that they tend to make non-combatants beneficiaries too and thus help neutralize the perception that ex-combatants are profiting from their bad behavior.[185] This is important because approaches that focus solely on combatants fuel resentment.[186] In Liberia, one social worker recounted, "if you go there and say [to the community] we are only registering soldiers, they will stone you out of the place."[187] Such resentment not only inhibits reintegration but motivates non-combatants to try and register for DDR benefits.[188] A number of scholars further maintain that rewarding perpetrators undermines transitional justice and the peace process.[189] One civilian in Sierra Leone explained, "Our wounds cannot be healed when we see the perpetrators being compensated and we get nothing!"[190] According to some, DDR therefore should not only help ex-combatants, but should be embedded in a "wider support structure" that includes communities and the most vulnerable in society.[191] In post-conflict environments, reintegration should be connected to general reconstruction and "the economic revitalization of the society overall."[192]

183 Sami Faltas, *DDR without Camps*: *The Need for Decentralised Approaches* (Topical Chapter for the Conversion Survey (BICC), 2005); Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment"; Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia."

184 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Faltas, *DDR without Camps*: *The Need for Decentralised Approaches*; Humphreys and Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration"; Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia"; Peters, "From Weapons to Wheels: Young Sierra Leonean Ex-Combatants Become Motorbike Taxi-Riders"; Utas, "Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone,"; Chris Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

185 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia"; Kaplan and Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia."

186 Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives"; Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda*; Podder, "From Recruitment to Reintegration: Communities and Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Liberia"; Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities"; Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

187 Podder, "From Recruitment to Reintegration: Communities and Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Liberia."

188 Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

189 Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army"; Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia"; Podder, "From Recruitment to Reintegration: Communities and Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Liberia"; Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia"; Wiegink and Sprenkels, "Beyond Reintegration: War Veteranship in Mozambique and El Salvador."

190 Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment," 112.

191 Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia"; Alpaslan Özerdem, *Post-War Recovery: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009); Sigrid Willibald, "Does Money Work? Cash Transfers to Ex-Combatants in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Processes," *Disasters* 30, no. 3 (2006), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0361-3666.2005.00323.x.

192 Ball, "Demobilizing and Reintegrating Soldiers: Lessons from Africa."

Reintegration is therefore understood as fundamentally a social process underlying economic and political reintegration.[193] In Colombia 97 percent of ex-combatants surveyed reported they "had to feel like an active part of their communities to be completely reintegrated."[194] Achieving social reintegration, as noted earlier, can be difficult, especially in communities where ex-combatants are not likely to be welcomed as heroes.[195] Many scholars therefore advocate for participatory approaches that include both ex-combatants and the community in the design and implementation of a project that serves the greater good and is emblematic of a shared future.[196] While projects and programming may be centrally administered, project design, decision-making, and implementation should be devolved.[197] This allows for greater applicability and monitoring as well as flexibility and adjustments over time.[198] What are described as community-based projects, are often instead community-located but designed and implemented by external actors.[199] Research, however, suggests that if ex-combatants are provided a say in the development of reintegration programming, they are likely to develop better relations with the community resulting in more positive DDR outcomes.[200] Similarly, such initiatives will fail if the community feels like the project or programming is being "forced upon them."[201] Community input fosters a greater sense of ownership and helps facilitate reconciliation.[202] Projects based on common interests and goals (e.g. a much-need community center, school library, new parks, a soccer club, or vocational training programs

193 Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia"; Özerdem, "A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach"; Stina Torjesen, "Towards a Theory of Ex-Combatant Reintegration," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2, no. 3 (2013), https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.cx; Wiegink and Sprenkels, "Beyond Reintegration: War Veteranship in Mozambique and El Salvador."

194 Kaplan and Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia," 134.

195 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia"; Kaplan and Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia"; Jonah Leff, "The Nexus between Social Capital and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: A Case for Sierra Leone," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 6, no. 1 (2008): 9-38, https://doi.org/10.4314/ajcr.v8i1.39419; Özerdem, "A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach."

196 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia"; Annan, Brier, and Aryemo, "From "Rebel" to "Returnee": Daily Life and Reintegration for Young Soldiers in Northern Uganda"; Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Brewer and Hayes, "Victimisation and Attitudes Towards Former Political Prisoners in Northern Ireland"; Kees Kingma and Torge Kübler, *Demobilisation and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Post-War Transition Countries: Trends and Challenges of External Support* (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), 2001); Özerdem, "A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach"; Rens Willems et al., *Security Promotion in Fragile States: Can Local Meet National: Exploring Connections between Community Security and DDR* (Working Group Community Security and Community-based DDR in Fragile States, 2009), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/B1650890633397C6C125762700334285-Full_Report.pdf.

197 Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda.*; Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

198 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

199 Özerdem, «A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach.»

200 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Walt Kilroy, "Does a More Participatory Approach to Reintegrating Ex-Combatants Lead to Better Outcomes? Evidence from Sierra Leone and Liberia," *Conflict, Security & Development* 14, no. 3 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2014.923151; Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective."

201 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia," 202; Richard Bowd and Alpaslan Özerdem, "How to Assess Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 7, no. 4 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2012.727537.

202 Stefan Thorsell, "Towards People-Centered Economic Reintegration? An Analysis of the Economic Reintegration Strategy of Demobilised Combatants in Colombia " *Colombia Internacional*, no. 77 (2013), https://doi.org/10.7440/colombiaint77.2013.07.

run by ex-combatants) attract more participants than those based on geography alone.[203] Interest-based projects may be easier in urban areas with a larger population.[204]

An additional benefit of community-based projects is that they allow ex-combatants to demonstrate that they are making good on their past and are a positive force for change.[205] Positive, pro-social interactions between ex-combatants and community members in shared projects are thought to promote trust and reconciliation through discussions about a shared future[206] and the mobilization of communities for their "physical, socio-political and economic needs."[207] In doing so, they alter communal narratives about ex-combatants.[208] Additionally, ex-combatants are less marginalized when they are generating social capital.[209] The networks, norms, and trust associated with social capital are critical not only for collective action but reintegration.[210] In Colombia, mandatory participation by ex-combatants in 80 hours of social service work demonstrated their commitment to a shared future and served as a form of reparations, so much so that some ex-combatants were upset when their participation was not made public.[211] Good deeds and behavior in the community serve as a form of atonement and help facilitate reintegration.[212]

Some maintain that community projects should not reveal ex-combatants' identities or that there are even ex-combatants participating prior to the start.[213] The hope is that over time individuals will reveal their ex-combatant identity.[214] While concealment helps ex-combatants avoid discrimination and offers

203 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

204 Leontine Specker, *Definition and Scope of the R-Phase* (Clingendael Institute, 2008), www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05381.5.

205 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia"; Maruna, *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives.*

206 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*; Bert Jenkins, D.B. Subedi, and Kathy Jenkins, eds., *Reconciliation in Conflict-Affected Communities* (Singapore: Springer, 2018); Nussio and Ugarriza, "The Effect of Perspective-Giving on Post-conflict Reconciliation. An Experimental Approach"; Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities."

207 Özerdem, «A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach»; Victor Asiedu, "Planning and Implementation of a Community-Based Approach to Reintegration Programmes of Ex-Combatants," *Development in Practice* 22, no. 1 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2012.630985; Jeremy Ginifer, "Reintegration of Ex-Combatants," in *Sierra Leone: Building the Road to Recovery*, eds. Mark Malan et al. (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2003).

208 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

209 Kilroy and Basini, "Social Capital Made Explicit: The Role of Norms, Networks, and Trust in Reintegrating Ex-Combatants and Peacebuilding in Liberia"; Leff, "The Nexus between Social Capital and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: A Case for Sierra Leone"; Podder, "From Recruitment to Reintegration: Communities and Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Liberia"; Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities"; Maivel Rodríguez López, Eleni Andreouli, and Caroline Howarth, "From Ex-Combatants to Citizens: Connecting Everyday Citizenship and Social Reintegration in Colombia," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 3, no. 3 (2015), https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v3i2.388.

210 Kilroy and Basini, "Social Capital Made Explicit: The Role of Norms, Networks, and Trust in Reintegrating Ex-Combatants and Peacebuilding in Liberia"; Okoi, "Peacebuilding and Transformational Change in Nigeria's Oil Region"; Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

211 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

212 Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda*; Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment"; Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia."

213 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

214 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

an added layer of security especially in cases of ongoing conflict,[215] long-term concealment can induce stress and decrease feelings of belonging for ex-combatants.[216] Moreover, the revelation of one's identity is thought to be key for reconciliation and social reintegration as both depend on acceptance.[217]

Research in Colombia further finds that where marginalization and discrimination constrict opportunities for formal employment, entrepreneurship can help foster ex-combatants' social and economic reintegration.[218] Former militants often acquire transferable skills (e.g. leadership, organization, planning, perseverance, cultural awareness, self-confidence, self-reliance) that can be channeled for good.[219] By identifying and pursuing untapped business opportunities that benefit the community, ex-combatants are able to apply their skills, and the community is more likely to view them as helpful and productive members of society.[220] Such entrepreneurship also aids in the creation of a new, pro-social identity for the ex-combatant.[221] Once a certain level of security is established, social dialogues within the community and among political leaders can also help reduce ex-combatant stigma and build mutual trust that fosters reintegration and reconciliation.[222]

Familial networks and civil society organizations within the community are also cited as playing an important role in helping ex-combatants reintegrate and may play a similar, critical role in VEDR. Social networks

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215 Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey, "Perceiving Pervasive Discrimination among African Americans: Implications for Group Identification and Well-Being."

216 Anna-Kaisa Newheiser and Manuela Barreto, "Hidden Costs of Hiding Stigma: Ironic Interpersonal Consequences of Concealing a Stigmatized Identity in Social Interactions," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 52 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2014.01.002; Erin K. McFee, "The Double Bind of "Playing Double": Passing and Identity among Ex-Combatants in Colombia," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 22, no. 1 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000146; Laura Smart and Daniel M. Wegner, "Covering up What Can't Be Seen: Concealable Stigma and Mental Control," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77, no. 3 (1999), https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.77.3.474, all cited in González and Clémence, "Concealing Former Identity to Be Accepted after the Demobilization Process in Colombia: A Real Reintegration in a Post Conflict Scenario?."

217 González and Clémence, "Concealing Former Identity to Be Accepted after the Demobilization Process in Colombia: A Real Reintegration in a Post Conflict Scenario?."

218 Barrios Fajardo, Shultz, and Montes Joya, "Entrepreneurship as Boundary Object: Toward Reintegration of Colombia's Ex-Militants into Civil Society."

219 Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers : Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011).

220 Barrios Fajardo, Shultz, and Montes Joya, "Entrepreneurship as Boundary Object: Toward Reintegration of Colombia's Ex-Militants into Civil Society."

221 Barrios Fajardo, Shultz, and Montes Joya, "Entrepreneurship as Boundary Object: Toward Reintegration of Colombia's Ex-Militants into Civil Society."

222 Sara Julia Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs," *International Journal on Rule of Law, Transitional Justice and Human Rights*, no. 3 (2012), Bhandari Chiranjibi, "Social Dialogue: A Tool of Social Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Nepal," *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 7, no. 1 (2019), https://doi.org/10.18588/201905.00a062; Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1; Nussio and Ugarriza, "The Effect of Perspective-Giving on Postconflict Reconciliation. An Experimental Approach"; Willems et al., *Security Promotion in Fragile States: Can Local Meet National: Exploring Connections between Community Security and DDR*; Dustin Sharp, "Bridging the Gap: The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and the Challenges of Integrating DDR and Transitional Justice," in *Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding on the Ground*, eds. Chandra Sriram, Garcia-Godos Jemima, Johanna Herman, and Olga Martin-Ortega (Taylor and Francis, 2012); Anjili Parrin, "Creating a Legal Framework for Terrorism Defectors and Detainees in Somalia," *Columbia Journal of International Law* 55, no. 1 (2006).

or gatekeepers can help reduce stigma and foster community trust.[223] A 2008 World Bank survey in Angola found that 93 percent of respondents considered themselves reintegrated into their community and that Church and political affiliations played a role in facilitating their initial, short-term integration.[224] Another survey in Colombia discovered that those who were accepted by their families were 47 percent less likely to reoffend; individuals with children were also less likely.[225] Family ties may be even more important in facilitating disengagement and reintegration in cases of ongoing conflict "where state and institutional support are comparatively weak."[226] In Lebanon, where there was no external DDR programming to rely on, familial and militant networks, which were largely maintained during the conflict, were pivotal in ex-combatants' social and economic reintegration.[227] Research on Ethiopia finds the same, and evidence from Uganda corroborates the importance of militant connections in fostering rehabilitation.[228] The role of militant ties, however, may be contingent on whether the group is still active or re-escalation is likely. In Sri Lanka, ex-combatants' retention of ties to the LTTE negatively impacted their reintegration.[229] In Colombia, however, there is no evidence that ongoing ties to other ex-combatants increased the likelihood of recidivism.[230]

In addition to the role of familial and social networks, research in Colombia demonstrates that ex-combatants may have an easier time reintegrating in socially vibrant communities with more civil society organizations where they see less of a need to organize among themselves.[231] Socially vibrant communities may also play a role in protecting ex-combatants from armed group reprisals.[232] Research further suggests that reintegration is more difficult in communities that have experienced high levels of violence due to trauma and the impact of the conflict on local job opportunities.[233] Reintegration also appears more likely the smaller the number of ex-combatants reintegrating into a community relative to the population.[234] Rural areas may be more favorable for reintegration as social networks are stronger, the cost of

223 Helen Basini, "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDRR in Liberia," *International Interactions* 39, no. 4 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2013.805129; Kari Karamé, "Reintegration and the Relevance of Social Relations: The Case of Lebanon," *Conflict, Security & Development* 9, no. 4 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800903345796; Kilroy and Basini, "Social Capital Made Explicit: The Role of Norms, Networks, and Trust in Reintegrating Ex-Combatants and Peacebuilding in Liberia"; Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*; Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

224 Alex Vines and Bereni Oruitemeka, "Beyond Bullets and Ballots: The Reintegration of UNITA in Angola," in *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict: Politics, Violence and Transition*, eds. Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

225 Oliver Kaplan and Enzo Nussio, "Explaining Recidivism of Ex-Combatants in Colombia," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62, no. 1 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002716644326.

226 Grip and Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review."

227 Karamé, "Reintegration and the Relevance of Social Relations: The Case of Lebanon."

228 Annan, Brier, and Aryemo, "From "Rebel" to "Returnee": Daily Life and Reintegration for Young Soldiers in Northern Uganda"; Robert Muggah, "Comparing DDR and Durable Solutions: Some Lessons from Ethiopia," *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine*, 2008, https://odi-hpn.org/magazine/comparing-ddr-and-durable-solutions-some-lessons-from-ethiopia/.

229 David Webber et al., "Deradicalizing Detained Terrorists," *Political Psychology* 39, no. 3 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12428.

230 Kaplan and Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia."

231 Kaplan and Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia."

232 Kaplan and Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia."

233 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

234 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

living is lower, and the armed group is typically less proximate;[235] it also avoids putting pressure on urban labor markets and the housing system.[236] Nevertheless, some contend that urban environments allow ex-combatants to better blend in, offer more opportunities for employment and civic association, and increase the likelihood that individuals will integrate into a more global progressive culture that maligns violence.[237]

Community sensitization measures may help thwart stigma and discrimination, increase buy-in for shared projects, and aid in the reintegration of violent extremists within and outside of conflict zones. Efforts to prepare and sensitize communities through school and local media have played an important role in fostering understanding and acceptance of the reintegration process and related DDR programming.[238] In Northern Uganda, for example, deliberate messages of innocence were spread about those who were forcibly recruited by the Lord's Resistance Army to try and sensitize the community.[239] In Burundi, the government aired radio messages to encourage communities to support the reintegration process. In certain locales, NGOs held meetings or initiated discussions about what reintegration would entail, the role they had to play, and why it was in their interest to facilitate the process.[240] Such measures may also be necessary to encourage the participation of ex-combatants who fear social stigma.[241]

The revised IDDRS outline the role of public information and strategic communications in support of DDR.[242] While public information cannot compensate for faulty DDR programming or wholly convince individuals to participate, it is essential for increasing buy-in from communities and ex-combatants alike.[243] Public information campaigns, however, should be pre-tested on a local audience, carefully monitored and evaluated, and sensitive to the local context, literacy rates, and modes of media consumption.[244] Rhyn further

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235 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*; Ayalew and Dercon, "From the Gun to the Plough": The Macro and Micro-Level Impact of Demobilization in Ethiopia."

236 Daniel Ayalew, Stefan Dercon, and Pramila Krishnan, *Demobilisation, Land and Household Livelihoods: Lessons from Ethiopia* (Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford, 1999).

237 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*; Okoi, "Peacebuilding and Transformational Change in Nigeria's Oil Region"; Specker, *Definition and Scope of the R-Phase*.

238 Sandra Baez, Hernando Santamaría-García, and Agustín Ibáñez, "Disarming Ex-Combatants' Minds: Toward Situated Reintegration Process in Post-Conflict Colombia," *Frontiers in Psychology* 29 (2019), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00073; Bowd and Özerdem, "How to Assess Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants"; Jonathan Morgenstein, *Consolidating Disarmament: Lessons from Colombia's Reintegration Program for Demobilized Paramilitaries* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2008), https://www.usip.org/publications/2008/11/consolidating-disarmament-lessons-colombias-reintegration-program-demobilized.

239 Jeannie Annan et al., "Civil War, Reintegration, and Gender in Northern Uganda," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55, no. 6 (2011), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002711408013.

240 Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi"; Rens Willems, Personal Correspondence, October 28, 2020.

241 Kilroy, "Does a More Participatory Approach to Reintegrating Ex-Combatants Lead to Better Outcomes? Evidence from Sierra Leone and Liberia."

242 Demobilisation Interagency Working Group on Disarmament, and Reintegration, "Module 4.6: Public Information and Strategic Communications in Support of DDR," *Integrated DDR Standards*, https://www.unddr.org/modules/IDDRS-4.60-Public-Information-and-Strategic-Communication.pdf.

243 Interagency Working Group on Disarmament, "Module 4.6: Public Information and Strategic Communications in Support of DDR."

244 Interagency Working Group on Disarmament, "Module 4.6: Public Information and Strategic Communications in Support of DDR."

asserts that such measures need to target the entire population, not just where ex-combatants resettle; often, affluent areas are overlooked.[245]

Communities and VEDR programming must also realize the incredible social capital that violent extremists may wield. According to the DDR literature, ex-combatants should be viewed as individuals who can shape peacebuilding and post-conflict trajectories.[246] Ex-combatants often exercise extraordinary social capital stemming from their wartime experiences, "which may be moulded into an asset or liability."[247] Former armed groups and their members are already usually embedded in a society politically and socially and possess dense social networks and relationships that they may leverage to construct a positive identity and develop a sense of belonging post conflict.[248] Rather than returning to society, ex-combatants should be viewed as emanating from within a society.[249] Evidence from Northern Ireland demonstrates that ex-combatants *can* play an important role in fostering reconciliation through restorative justice.[250] Findings from Eritrea similarly indicate that "far from being a burden or a threat to peace building, ex-combatants 'can represent a major force for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-torn societies.'"[251] The same is likely true of reintegrating violent extremists in both conflict and non-conflict environments—their experiences and relationships can become either an asset or a liability.

Despite their promise, community-based approaches for VEDR have limitations. First, they may not be appropriate for the most high-risk or ideologically committed violent extremists.[252] Second, they should only be attempted once a baseline level of security is established.[253] Third, they may be inappropriate in communities largely sympathetic to or supportive of violent extremism.[254] These caveats withstanding, and although additional research is warranted, community-based approaches hold great promise in the

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245   Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

246   Kilroy and Basini, "Social Capital Made Explicit: The Role of Norms, Networks, and Trust in Reintegrating Ex-Combatants and Peacebuilding in Liberia"; Kieran McEvoy and Peter Shirlow, "Re-Imagining DDR: Ex-Combatants, Leadership and Moral Agency in Conflict Transformation," *Theoretical Criminology* 13, no. 1 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1362480608100172; McMullin, "Integration or Separation? The Stigmatisation of Ex-Combatants after War."

247   Wiegink and Sprenkels, "Beyond Reintegration: War Veteranship in Mozambique and El Salvador," 7.

248   Wiegink and Sprenkels, "Beyond Reintegration: War Veteranship in Mozambique and El Salvador."

249   Wiegink and Sprenkels, "Beyond Reintegration: War Veteranship in Mozambique and El Salvador."

250   Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective"; McEvoy and Shirlow, "Re-Imagining DDR: Ex-Combatants, Leadership and Moral Agency in Conflict Transformation"; Gordon Clubb, "From Terrorists to Peacekeepers": The Ira's Disengagement and the Role of Community Networks," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 10 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2014.941434; Neil Ferguson, "Disengaging from Terrorism: A Northern Irish Experience," *Journal of Deradicalization* no. 6 (2016); Carmel Joyce and Orla Lynch, "Doing Peace": The Role of Ex-Political Prisoners in Violence Prevention Initiatives in Northern Ireland," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 12 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1253990.

251   Stephen Klingebiel et al., *Promoting the Reintegration of Former Female and Male Combatants in Eritrea: Possible Contributions of Development Co-Operation to the Reintegration Programme* (Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, 1995), 6.

252   Lilla Schumicky-Logan, "Addressing Violent Extremism with a Different Approach: The Empirical Case of at-Risk and Vulnerable Youth in Somalia," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 12, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2017.1336467.

253   Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

254   Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria."

development of the pro-social ties and identity necessary to foster and sustain VEDR at the local level, even when there may be potential institutional roadblocks to political reintegration at the national level.[255]

NATIONAL AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Although not formally tested in the context of VEDR and additional research is necessary, the international community's experience with DDR suggests that programming be nationally and/or locally owned even though it may require international commitment and funding.[256] National and local-level ownership prevents the investment of armed groups only in the actions of external actors, whose presence may be short-lived.[257] It is also critical to the community-based approaches described in the previous section. Ownership, however, is often difficult to define. One actor may design programming, while another implements it, and yet another provides funding.[258] Donais therefore argues somewhat differently that DDR should consist of dynamic cooperation between the local, national, and international, rather than owned by any one.[259]

Despite the agreed upon benefits to national and local ownership, it is not without its challenges. Often, there are tensions between what nation-states choose to do with ex-combatants, especially in a prison setting, and the tenets of international law.[260] Lack of transparency in decisions by military and intelligence officials on when to release ex-combatants, especially those being detained are especially problematic.[261] National and local ownership also raises questions for the international community, especially in cases of ongoing conflict, about which actors are acceptable to work with and what to do when those actors engage in behavior that violates international norms or undermines larger strategic objectives.[262] In Nepal, national ownership and the sidelining of international actors led to elite capture of the peace process to pursue their wartime interests through exclusionary policies.[263] On the other hand, the DDR process in Nepal was entirely led by external actors. Though contrary to the IDDRS, this allowed the UN to adequately ensure compliance with international law.[264] In Afghanistan, which is typically cited as a case with no or low national ownership, Giustozzi maintains that national ownership did play a critical role

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255 Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities."

256 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments"; Charlotte Fiedler et al., "Gradual, Cooperative, Coordinated: Effective Support for Peace and Democracy in Conflict-Affected States," *International Studies Perspectives* 21, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekz023; Kingma and Sayers, "Demobilization in the Horn of Africa."

257 Mitton, "Where Is the War? Explaining Peace in Sierra Leone."

258 Talentino and Pearson, "Weapons of War, Weapons of Peace: DDR Processes in Peacemaking."

259 Timothy Donais, "Operationalizing Local Ownership," in *Local Ownership in International Peacebuilding: Key Theoretical and Practical Issues*, eds. Sung Yong Lee and Alpaslan Özerdem (London: Routledge, 2013); Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia."

260 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."

261 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."

262 Muggah and O'Donnell, "Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration."

263 Jasmine-Kim Westendorf, "Challenges of Local Ownership: Understanding the Outcomes of the International Community's 'Light Footprint' Approach to the Nepal Peace Process," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 12, no. 2 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2018.1472963.

264 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."

in derailing DDR as the government determined which groups would disarm and which ex-combatants would reintegrate.[265] National and local ownership also fueled corruption, as fake combatants were provided assistance, ghost soldiers were reintegrated into the Afghan National Police, and local commanders pocketed the assistance provided to ex-combatants.[266] Given the challenges national and local ownership poses, it is critical that some contingencies are in place so that it contributes to rather than threatens DDR processes and stability.[267]

National and local ownership, while valuable in theory, is often difficult in practice given the timeline and "international blueprints" for DDR.[268] This is also likely to be true of international efforts at VEDR in conflict environments. Even though local ownership is the stated goal, the international community usually engages in top-down approaches to achieve immediate results and improve security.[269] At the community level, true local ownership and participatory approaches (such as those discussed in the previous section) are also described as difficult given the short time-frame for reintegration that requires "rapid planning and implementation, thereby limiting the possibilities for participation and ownership."[270] Finally, some comparative case study evidence demonstrates that local ownership is "important but not essential to successful DDR outcomes" and that there may be multiple pathways to positive outcomes.[271] DDR was considered relatively successful in Côte d'Ivoire where ownership of the process was wholly national as well as in Liberia where DDR was internationally led.[272]

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Scholars of DDR have argued that without reconciliation[273] and transitional justice, the reintegration of ex-combatants is unsustainable.[274] The same may be true in the context of VEDR. Transitional justice and DDR are described as inextricably intertwined conceptually and theoretically and, according to some, should therefore be merged more closely.[275] DDR can contribute to stability necessary for transitional

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265 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan."

266 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan."

267 Westendorf, "Challenges of Local Ownership: Understanding the Outcomes of the International Community's 'Light Footprint' Approach to the Nepal Peace Process."

268 Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives"; Muggah, "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts."

269 Westendorf, "Challenges of Local Ownership: Understanding the Outcomes of the International Community's 'Light Footprint' Approach to the Nepal Peace Process."

270 Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives."

271 Talentino and Pearson, "Weapons of War, Weapons of Peace: DDR Processes in Peacemaking."

272 Talentino and Pearson, "Weapons of War, Weapons of Peace: DDR Processes in Peacemaking."

273 Prieto defines reconciliation as the "(re)construction of social trust and nonviolent relationships at the local level." See: Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities," 526.

274 Rhyn, "Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia"; Anna Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army," *Conflict, Security & Development* 7, no. 3 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800701556537; Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

275 Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia"; Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment"; Nilsson, *Reintegrating Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Societies*.

justice, while transitional justice "can have positive consequences on the legitimacy and integrity of DDR initiatives and facilitate reintegration."[276] Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, for example, can help individualize guilt and reduce the stigmatization of entire groups.[277] Prosecutions of the most heinous crimes mean those returning to the community are less threatening and should be perceived so.[278] Prosecutions and reparations are also thought to help temper community resentment of returning ex-combatants as some justice has been served.[279] Moreover, transitional justice tends to focus on the reform of repressive structures, emphasizes the rule of law, and is concerned with building "fair and efficient" public institutions, all of which are important for DDR (and VEDR).[280] Such institutions promote the political reintegration of ex-combatants, channel grievances, and reduce the potential for political violence.[281]

Despite these potential benefits, balancing DDR, which tends to prioritize security concerns, with transitional justice measures, which give precedence to righteousness and the rule of law, often creates tensions and requires tradeoffs.[282] Amnesty, for example, may be critical in securing a peace accord and ensuring disarmament, but it can also generate resentment and perpetuate a culture of impunity.[283] While some maintain that Truth and Reconciliation Commissions may reduce the stigmatization of entire groups,[284] others note they could reinforce perpetrator/victim stereotypes.[285] Shaw argues that recent efforts to integrate DDR and transitional justice, which she concedes are interlaced, "draw upon narrow definitions of justice that fail to engage with what "justice" and "reintegration" mean to all war-affected groups."[286] Justice often consists of reparations for victims and legal accountability for the perpetrators of egregious crimes. Yet, these transitional justice measures fail to acknowledge or prosecute the structural injustices and human rights violations that may have precipitated the conflict in the first place, in

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276 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs," 112.

277 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs."

278 Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

279 Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

280 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs."

281 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs."

282 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs."

283 Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities"; Özerdem, "A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach"; Pablo de Greiff and Roger Duthie, *Transitional Justice and Development: Making Connections*, International Center for Transitional Justice (2009).

284 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs."

285 Roger Duthie, *Local Justice and Reintegration Processes as Complements to Transitional Justice and DDR* (International Center for Transitional Justice, February 2010), https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-DDR-LocalJustice-ResearchBrief-2010-English.pdf; Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

286 Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment," 112.

addition to those that occurred during the course of conflict.[287] According to Shaw, the categories of perpetrator and victim in many cases are not so clear-cut.[288]

For these reasons, Shaw argues that transitional justice measures should be approached with great caution during DDR.[289] Successful reintegration in Liberia, where she conducted her research, depended upon the "social norms, humility, hard work, and sobriety" of ex-combatants more than any rendering of their pasts.[290] Research in Colombia similarly concludes that although most victims and ex-combatants agreed that individuals should be brought to justice, most thought these policies at the national level would have little effect on community relations at the local level.[291] According to individuals interviewed across three cities, "shared situations of poverty and insecurity and personal experiences with violence – generate everyday contact and build empathy," and these are not linked to transitional justice processes at the national level.[292] One individual explains, "Even if I give a victim 50 million pesos [approximately $28,000], that won't accomplish anything… Real reparations are only made through social actions, with projects that contribute a lot to the community."[293] Most victims and ex-combatants wanted to look towards the future, rather than the past.[294] In Northern Ireland, Shirlow likewise maintains that it is not important whether ex-combatants apologize for their past actions.[295] What matters is whether they are "supporting peace building, challenging sectarianism, walking across the sectarian divide, developing relationships with the PSNI [Police Service of Northern Ireland] and providing victims with recognition through working with them"—that is transitional justice.[296] These findings reiterate the importance of the local, community-based approaches discussed in the previous section for individuals' social reintegration.

Research has reviewed potential ways of mitigating the tensions between transitional justice and DDR that may be helpful for VEDR, especially in conflict environments or with regard to returning foreign fighters. First, legal frameworks that outline the relationship between DDR and transitional justice and the provisions relevant for each are useful and recommended as they create clear expectations about who, for example, will be prosecuted and offered amnesty.[297] They also create the trust and protections necessary for combatants to voluntarily disarm.[298] DDR programs are also subject to international law

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287 Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

288 Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

289 Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

290 Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

291 Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities."

292 Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities," 528.

293 Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities," 542.

294 Prieto, "Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities."

295 Shirlow, "Mythic Rights and Conflict-Related Prisoner 'Re-Integration'."

296 Shirlow, "Mythic Rights and Conflict-Related Prisoner 'Re-Integration'," 46-7.

297 Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army"; Duthie, *Local Justice and Reintegration Processes as Complements to Transitional Justice and DDR*; Robert Muggah, *Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Dealing with Fighters in the Aftermath of War* (London: Routledge, 2009); Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs."

298 Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army."

that places some constraints on what they can and cannot do.[299] However, "local justice practices can be difficult to square with international principles because of low standards of evidence, insufficient protection of the rights of the accused, sentences that violate international human rights norms, or provisions that discriminate, particularly against women."[300]

A second recommendation is to make the two conditional upon one another so that the dispensation of justice requires participation in DDR programming, or participation in DDR is contingent upon compliance with transitional justice measures.[301] A final proposition is to connect DDR and transitional justice measures through information sharing and institutionalized coordination and collaboration so that staff work together and/or overlap to ensure the policies of one are not undermining the other.[302] Some evidence, however, indicates that this last suggestion may create more problems than it solves. In Sierra Leone, for example, lower-ranked ex-combatants avoided DDR programming altogether because of fears information would be passed to the Special Court.[303] Information sharing too may pose a number of ethical and logistical challenges, though increased coordination and collaboration between DDR and transitional justice measures in other areas could be beneficial.[304]

Summary of implications for VEDR

Successful VEDR requires the support of the communities that individuals return to. Social reintegration is often necessary to facilitate one's economic and political reintegration. Those reintegrating will have a difficult time finding employment and developing pro-social ties and a pro-social identity where stigmatization and discrimination prevail and reinforce their deviant status and behavior. Public sensitization measures or information campaigns that highlight, for example, the importance of reintegration, the community's role, and the different motivations for involvement, including that some individuals—especially children—are victims may help foster acceptance. Well-designed community-based projects may also play an important role in reintegration and transitional justice. Such projects benefit the entire community (not just the perpetrators), may serve as a form of reparations, and aid in the development of pro-social ties and a pro-social identity. Even in the most adverse political and economic environments, these projects may generate additional social capital and community resilience, which serve as important protective factors against radicalization and recruitment. Familial and civil society networks as well as entrepreneurship may play a pivotal role in helping violent extremists transcend stigma. While additional research is necessary, local or national ownership of programming seems to be preferable provided that it can be balanced with human rights considerations and compliance with international law.

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299 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs."

300 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs," 116-17.

301 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs"; Duthie, *Local Justice and Reintegration Processes as Complements to Transitional Justice and DDR*.

302 Duthie, *Local Justice and Reintegration Processes as Complements to Transitional Justice and DDR*.

303 Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combatants and the Sierra Leone Experiment."

304 Duthie, *Local Justice and Reintegration Processes as Complements to Transitional Justice and DDR*.

3: Absolutely avoid creating grievances

ABILITY TO DELIVER AND MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

VEDR, like DDR, programming must carefully manage the expectations of participants and deliver fully on its promises. This requires clear, transparent, and consistent guidelines and legal frameworks in addition to ensuring upfront, long-term funding and coordination where there are multiple agencies involved, which is typically the case even within national governments. Offering resources (e.g. cash, training, education, housing), for example, only to have funding not approved or withdrawn breeds mistrust and creates additional grievances.

Research on DDR demonstrates time and again that while reintegration programs can contribute to social capital, they can also undermine it if they become a source of distrust, especially when programs fail to fulfill their promises at all or in a timely manner.[305] Failures and delays also undermine trust in the state; so too does the corruption of programming when benefits, for example, are distributed to non-combatants or when those distributing payments skim.[306] Clear and transparent guidelines and legal frameworks as to who is eligible to participate in DDR, what the process entails, and what benefits will be distributed are important in managing expectations.[307] Changes to those guidelines midstream, while sometimes necessary, may create resentment and disillusionment that undermines trust in the process.[308]

Often, the failure to deliver at all or in a timely manner stems from the absence of adequate planning or funding. In Sierra Leone, 28,000 ex-combatants were anticipated to partake in DDR, but 47,000 showed up.[309] In Liberia, only one of three cantonment camps were ready in time.[310] Delays in reintegration payments in the DRC were due to the failure to plan around the absence of a banking system.[311] In addition to breeding resentment, delayed payments often force ex-combatants to take out loans with interest rates that compound their dire economic situation.[312] In Liberia, many of those who disarmed and demobilized were unable to access reintegration programming for months, years, or at all.[313] Delays between demobilization (where ex-combatants uphold their end of the bargain) and reintegration assistance (where the government or international community upholds its end of the bargain) undermine trust and threaten the entire process.[314] So too can the stalling of entire DDR programs. The Afghanistan New Beginning Programme (ANBP) began two years after the conflict and six months late due to disagreements and

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305 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

306 Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

307 Muggah, "Negotiating Disarmament and Demobilisation: A Descriptive Review of the Evidence."

308 Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

309 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

310 Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

311 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict : The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

312 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict : The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

313 Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

314 Kilroy and Basini, "Social Capital Made Explicit: The Role of Norms, Networks, and Trust in Reintegrating Ex-Combatants and Peacebuilding in Liberia"; Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

planning and staffing issues.[315] Disarmament and demobilization, which was supposed to take twelve months, took twenty-one.[316] These delays led to a deterioration in security as members of armed groups became involved in crime to support themselves.[317]

Cantonment & detention

Cantonment is the process by which armed groups are *voluntarily* assembled together for a period of time in one location for collective disarmament and demobilization. It might seem odd to discuss cantonment in reference to VEDR, but the DDR community's experience with cantonment offers critical insights into the advantages and disadvantages of detaining violent extremists and the conditions of detainment. Importantly, time in voluntary or involuntary detention can fuel existing or create additional grievances that impede one's disengagement and reintegration.

Two advantages of cantonment are that it "allows the practitioners to see for themselves and thus better understand command-and-control structures they aim to dismantle" and that "it takes groups that are not yet disarmed away from front lines, areas of operation and areas inhabited by civilians."[318] Cantonment also allows practitioners to deliver relevant programming (orientation, counseling) in one place rather than traveling to where each combatant resides and aids in the documentation of individuals.[319] In cases of ongoing conflict, transition or reception centers offer similar benefits and protect defectors from the armed group.[320]

Cantonment, however, offers a number of security and social challenges and, according to some, should be "approached with great caution."[321] There is increasing concern that time spent in such facilities, especially where they are unable to be internationally monitored or in instances of ongoing conflict, are not truly voluntary.[322] Some argue that they contribute to the further stigmatization of ex-combatants and their isolation from the community into which they will be reintegrating.[323] There is a consensus in theory, though often not true in practice, that cantonment or time in a transition center should be a very short phase that occurs only after disarmament.[324] Cantonment sites or transition centers can be

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315 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan."

316 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan."

317 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan."

318 United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Legal Aspects of Cantonment.

319 United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Legal Aspects of Cantonment; Kingma and Sayers, "Demobilization in the Horn of Africa."

320 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments"; Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army."

321 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*, 26; Kingma and Sayers, "Demobilization in the Horn of Africa ."

322 Cockayne and O'Neil, *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?*

323 Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia."

324 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda*; Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

very expensive to run if ex-combatants are housed for a long time.[325] Delays in the delivery of assistance while in cantonment can fuel not only frustration, distrust, and resentment, but create feelings of imprisonment.[326] This may cause individuals to try to escape cantonment or lead to disturbances within the camp.[327] The cantonment site or transitional center may also become a target if the armed group believes it "produces intelligence streams, flips insurgents, or delivers anti-militant propaganda."[328] There are also concerns that the cantonment site or transition center could be infiltrated by the armed group."[329]

Cantonment sites and transition centers must also ensure basic human rights. Insufficient water, food, shelter, and sanitation as well as massive displacement results in unrest within the camps.[330] Research shows that failure to fulfill basic needs and uphold human rights while in cantonment or transition centers "breeds low self-esteem and feelings of insecurity, mistrust, resentment and hopelessness" and causes ex-combatants to view themselves as victims of the state.[331] Such sentiments drive ex-combatants to adopt a "discourse of resistance" which impedes reintegration and is associated with re-offending and returning to an armed group upon one's release.[332] Inhumane conditions in prison (or involuntary detention) have a similar effect.[333] Not only should basic human rights be guaranteed, but the time spent in cantonment, transition centers, or even prison should contribute to transitional justice and eventual reintegration.[334] The benefits of disengagement and reintegration "need to be made visible as swiftly as possible."[335]

A similar logic would seem to hold in the case of VEDR. Long delays and/or inhumane conditions whether for a violent extremist defector in a transition center or individuals detained in camps (e.g. the ISIS members and supporters detained in Syria) may stimulate feelings of involuntary detention, generate additional grievances, lead to disillusionment with the state, and may be associated with re-involvement (regardless of the original reasons for joining). Individuals' time in a prison, camp, or transition center should, from the start, play an important role in their reintegration and the development of sustainable livelihoods. We need to not only ensure humane and secure conditions as well as a quicker timeline to

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325 Wenche Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22, no. 2 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2019.1673669.

326 Kingma and Sayers, "Demobilization in the Horn of Africa."

327 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Kingma and Sayers, "Demobilization in the Horn of Africa."

328 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments," 50.

329 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."

330 Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1.; Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army."

331 Ariza and Iturralde, "'You Don't Respect Me, but I'm Worthy of Respect'. Paramilitaries' Prison Experience and Conflict Transformation in Colombia," 610.

332 Ariza and Iturralde, "'You Don't Respect Me, but I'm Worthy of Respect'. Paramilitaries' Prison Experience and Conflict Transformation in Colombia."

333 Ariza and Iturralde, "'You Don't Respect Me, but I'm Worthy of Respect'. Paramilitaries' Prison Experience and Conflict Transformation in Colombia."

334 Ariza and Iturralde, "'You Don't Respect Me, but I'm Worthy of Respect'. Paramilitaries' Prison Experience and Conflict Transformation in Colombia."

335 Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1, 156.

prosecution or release and reintegration, but we need to better understand how to leverage this time so that it contributes to positive VEDR outcomes. Individuals need to be able to conceive of a life for themselves outside of violent extremism.

Cash payments versus sustainable livelihoods

Research on DDR indicates that VEDR programming should emphasize the acquisition of skills that will help those reintegrating achieve sustainable livelihoods rather than short-term cash assistance. Studies repeatedly demonstrate that cash-for-weapons programs in conflict environments do little to contribute to ex-combatants' reintegration and can generate additional security issues.[336] They can also fuel grievances. "One weapon, one combatant" type initiatives may exclude individuals, especially women, from the DDR process.[337] Some combatants, for example, share weapons.[338] Cash-for-weapons programs also may reinforce war-time structures and lead to the "commercialization of DDR" where commanders act as gatekeepers selling or distributing weapons thereby granting access.[339] If the price offered for weapons is much higher than the local rate, it can result in an influx of weapons into the country and incentivize civilians to purchase and turn in arms, expanding participation in DDR and fueling a "reintegration industry."[340] There are real conceptual and practical difficulties in determining who is an ex-combatant.[341] In Liberia, it is estimated that 60 percent of those who handed in weapons for cash were not ex-combatants.

Perhaps most important, transactional approaches "buy-off" insurgents, but do not address the root causes of conflict, making conflict reoccurrence likely.[342] Further, there is scant evidence that cash-for-weapons programs are associated with employment at the individual level or reintegration and long-term development at the national level.[343] They can also incentivize violence as ex-combatants may try

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336 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

337 Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed?*.

338 Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed?*.

339 Christopher Hills and Megan MacKenzie, "Women in Non-State Armed Groups after War: The (Non)Evolution of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration," in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military*, eds. Rachel Woodward and Claire Duncanson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 455-471; Jairo Munive and 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," *Conflict, Security & Development* 12, no. 4 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2012.724792; Nussio and Howe, "When Protection Collapses: Post-Demobilization Trajectories of Violence"; Themnér, "Wealth in Ex-Combatants: Examining the Resilience of Ex-Command Structures in Post-War Liberia."

340 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*; Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective."

341 Muggah, "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts."

342 Muggah, "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts"; Okoi, "Peacebuilding and Transformational Change in Nigeria's Oil Region."

343 Knight and Özerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace"; Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*; Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective," 264.; Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

and manipulate the system by engaging in more violence to elicit additional or larger payments.[344] Similar dynamics would seem to apply to VEDR especially in conflict environments.

Although some cash assistance is described as "essential" especially during the initial stages of reinsertion,[345] successful economic reintegration, assuming a viable level of economic development, requires some educational assistance and/or vocational training[346] and should be "demilitarized" and delivered by civil society organizations.[347] Skills training, however, needs to be based on a market analysis and tailored accordingly.[348] In one case, mechanical and electrical training was offered in a village with only three cars.[349] Moreover, great care should be taken that specific skills training does not further stigmatize ex-combatants. In Uganda, for example, tailoring became known as a "rebel trade."[350] Similarly, when ex-combatants reintegrated into the Ugandan military, they were kept in a separate unit, which further contributed to their stigmatization and marginalization.[351] When offered different options, individual ex-combatants may choose cash payments even if it may not be in their long-term interest. In Nepal, out of the 19,600 participants in DDR, 15,602 chose cash payments, 1,444 chose integration into the armed forces, and only 6 selected training that would, in theory, offer a sustainable livelihood.[352]

Despite the supposition that approaches that focus on building sustainable livelihoods, rather than short-term payments, are more effective, the existing evidence base that any DDR programming in and of itself improves an individual's economic reintegration is scant.[353] Humphreys and Weinstein's research in Sierra Leone famously found that DDR had no impact on the livelihood of ex-combatants; those who did not participate reintegrated just as well as those who did.[354] Some studies, however, find to the contrary that those who participate in DDR programming enjoy better livelihoods.[355] In Colombia, where 90 percent

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344 Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1.

345 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

346 Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

347 Ball, *Spreading Good Practices in Security Sector Reform: Policy Options for the British Government*; Kingma, "Demobilisation, Reintegration and Peace-Building in Southern Africa," 1.

348 Basini, "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDRR in Liberia"; Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed*; Hills and MacKenzie, "Women in Non-State Armed Groups after War: The (Non)Evolution of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration"; Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

349 Mats Utas, "Sweet Battlefields: Youth and the Liberian Civil War" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Uppsala University, 2003).

350 Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army," 158.

351 Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army."

352 D.B. Subedi, "War to Peace Transition in Nepal: Success and Challenges Ahead," *Small wars Journal* 9, no. 11 (2013).

353 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States;* Josef Teboho Ansorge and Nana Akua Antwi-Ansorge, "Monopoly, Legitimacy, Force: DDR-SSR Liberia," in *Monopoly of Force: The Nexus of DDR and SSR*, eds. Melanne A. Civic and Michael Miklaucic (Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2011), https://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/books/monopoly-of-force/monopoly-of-force.pdf?ver=2015-03-06-123930-240.

354 Humphreys and Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration."

355 Neil Boothby, J. Crawford, and J. Halperin, "Mozambique Child Soldier Life Outcome Study: Lessons Learned in Rehabilitation and Reintegration Efforts," *Global Public Health* 1, no. 1 (2006), https://doi.org/10.1080/17441690500324347; Humphreys and Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration"; Robert Muggah and Jon Bennet, "Context Matters in Ethiopia: Reflections on a Demobilization and Reintegration Program," in *Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Dealing with Fighters in the Aftermath of War*, ed. Robert Muggah (New York: Routledge, 2009); James Pugel, *What the Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-Combatants in Liberia* (UNDP, 2007).

of surveyed ex-combatants had not graduated high school, education was cited as the most appreciated aspect of programming. Those who obtained their diploma after disarming were 44 percent less likely to re-offend.[356]

All of these studies, however, are unable to isolate the causal effect of DDR or particular interventions as they lack random assignment. Thus, it could be that there is something unique about individuals who chose to enter DDR, participate in a particular training, or obtain a degree that truly explains reintegration outcomes rather than the programming. A quasi-experiment in Burundi improves upon these methods, by leveraging bureaucratic delays in program implementation in certain areas to demonstrate that DDR programming is associated with a 20 to 35 percentage point reduction in poverty.[357] However, other scholars have critiqued, and the authors note, a weakness of their design the short-follow up period of 9 months.[358] It is not surprising that those who just received salary and training from a DDR program have a higher income and are employed in a more lucrative occupation than those who did not.[359] To show that programming is truly effective in generating sustained economic reintegration, one would need to look much further out.[360] Nevertheless, the existing research base suggests that where aid is offered to reintegrating violent extremists, vocational and educational training is more likely to result in a sustainable livelihood and reintegration than cash assistance. Participation in such trainings may also help develop ties with individuals outside of violent extremism.

Gender- and age-sensitive approaches

Avoiding new grievances means that programming and practice must take into account the differing stigma and logistical challenges that men, women, and children confront during VEDR, while being cognizant that gender and age-specific groups are not monolithic. The failure to do so not only results in ineffective programming but may fuel perceptions of injustice that contribute to involvement in violent extremism. Research on DDR demonstrates that gender considerations are essential for success[361] and should be enshrined in peace settlements and relevant legal frameworks.[362] Historically, DDR has priori-

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356 Kaplan and Nussio, "Explaining Recidivism of Ex-Combatants in Colombia."

357 Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii, "Reintegrating Rebels into Civilian Life: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Burundi."

358 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

359 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

360 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

361 Nadine Ansorg and Julia Strasheim, "Veto Players in Post-Conflict DDR Programs: Evidence from Nepal and the DRC," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 13, no. 1 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2018.1501981; Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda*; Jennings, "The Political Economy of DDR in Liberia: A Gendered Critique."

362 Muggah, *Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Dealing with Fighters in the Aftermath of War*; Muggah, "Negotiating Disarmament and Demobilisation: A Descriptive Review of the Evidence."

tized male ex-combatants over women and children,[363] and initial programs failed to consider the needs of women and girls altogether.[364] The same is true of VEDR.

Despite frameworks such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and protocols that require gender considerations, DDR programs "have continued to fail women and girls."[365] Although women constitute a small proportion of members in certain armed groups, in others they comprise a large contingent.[366] In Eritrea, one-third of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front was female. In Nepal, women comprised 30-40 percent of Maoist combatants.[367] The lack of attention to women in practice stems, in part, from their constant portrayal as victims or in auxiliary roles.[368] In Sri Lanka, female ex-combatants were portrayed as "exploited" and "brainwashed" and thus "depoliticized."[369] In Sierra Leone, few women were thought to have played a role in the conflict and those that did were rarely referred to as "soldiers" or "combatants."[370] Instead, they were described as "camp followers, abductees, sex slaves and domestic slaves," or "girls and women associated with the fighting forces" and "vulnerable groups associated with armed movements."[371] This is despite the fact that some women described themselves as soldiers who had engaged in substantial military training and combat.[372] Research in Northern Uganda further shows that female ex-combatants were just as likely as men to participate in and witness violence.[373] Female

363 Dyan Mazurana, Roxanne Krystalli, and Anton Baaré, *Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Reviewing and Advancing the Field* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana, *Where Are the Girls?: Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and after War* (Montreal: Rights and Democracy, 2004); Dyan Mazurana and Linda Cole, "Women, Girls, and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)," in *Women and Wars*, ed. Carol Cohn (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012).

364 Shadia Marhaban, "The Reintegration of Ex- Combatants in Post-War Aceh: Remaining Challenges to a Gender- Blind Planning and Implementation Process," in *Post-War Security Transitions: Participatory Peacebuilding after Asymmetric Conflicts*, eds. Veronique Duddouet, Hans J. Giessmann, and Katrin Planta (London: Routledge, 2012); McKay and Mazurana, *Where Are the Girls?: Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and after War*; Mazurana and Cole, "Women, Girls, and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)."

365 Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective"; Hills and MacKenzie, "Women in Non-State Armed Groups after War: The (Non)Evolution of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration."

366 Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective."

367 Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective"; Luna K.C., "Everyday Realities of Reintegration: Experiences of Maoist 'Verified' Women Ex-Combatants in the Aftermath of War in Nepal," *Conflict, Security and Development* 19, no. 5 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2019.1658969.

368 K.C., "Everyday Realities of Reintegration: Experiences of Maoist 'Verified' Women Ex-Combatants in the Aftermath of War in Nepal"; Megan MacKenzie, "Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone," *Security Studies* 18, no. 2 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410902900061; Annan et al., "Civil War, Reintegration, and Gender in Northern Uganda"; Mazurana, Krystalli, and Baaré, *Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Reviewing and Advancing the Field*.

369 Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka," 636.

370 MacKenzie, "Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone."

371 MacKenzie, "Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone," 255-56.

372 MacKenzie, "Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone."

373 Annan et al., "Civil War, Reintegration, and Gender in Northern Uganda."

ex-combatants are also more likely to experience distress than men as a result of perpetrating or being a victim of violence, including rape, during armed conflict.[374]

Women, like men, join armed groups for a variety of personal, social, and political reasons and hold a multitude of roles. [375] While many women assume combatant roles and voluntarily participate, they are more likely than men to be forcibly conscripted or serve in support roles and thus generally and wrongly overlooked by DDR.[376] In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the discourse on DDR essentially "de-securitized" women; unemployed men were portrayed as security threats, whereas idle women were not.[377]

Gender considerations are also vital because women often face an additional layer of stigma for their participation in an armed group.[378] Some women are forcibly married within armed groups and, in certain communities, divorce or prior marriages are not "legally or socially sanctioned."[379] In the DRC, it was assumed all female ex-combatants were sexually abused and had sexually transmitted disease.[380] In Sri Lanka, women who returned home were automatically assumed to have engaged in violence and were suspected of being sexually abused.[381] In Eritrea, female ex-combatants were viewed as "too emancipated" and not suitable for marriage, even for their former comrades.[382] In Sri Lanka, surveillance of female ex-combatants hindered their marriage prospects.[383] Due to the additional stigma and constraints that female ex-combatants confront, many choose to self-demobilize and forego reintegration assistance.[384] In Sierra Leone, women and girls who possessed weapons they could turn in still avoided DDR programming because an "ex-combatant identity" could preclude reintegration back into their communities.[385] Many turned to prostitution "becoming long-term girlfriends in exchange for material support" or abusive marriages.[386]

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374 Jeannie Annan, E. Green, and Moriah Brier, "Promoting Recovery after War in Northern Uganda: Reducing Daily Stressors by Alleviating Poverty," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 22 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2013.823636; Theresa Stichick Betancourt et al., "Context Matters: Community Characteristics and Mental Health among War-Affected Youth in Sierra Leone," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 55, no. 3 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12131.

375 Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka."

376 Basini, "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDRR in Liberia."

377 Jennings, "The Political Economy of DDR in Liberia: A Gendered Critique"; MacKenzie, "Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone."

378 Fazeeha Azmi, "I Want My Wings Back to Fly in a New Sky: Stories of Female Ex-LTTE Combatants in Post-War Sri Lanka," in *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace*, ed. Seema Shekhawat (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

379 Mazurana, Krystalli, and Baaré, *Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Reviewing and Advancing the Field*.

380 Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic."

381 Azmi, "I Want My Wings Back to Fly in a New Sky: Stories of Female Ex-LTTE Combatants in Post-War Sri Lanka."

382 Kingma, "Assessing Demobilization: Conceptual Issues."

383 Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka."

384 McKay and Mazurana, *Where Are the Girls?: Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and after War*; Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives"; Luisa Maria Dietrich and Gunhild Schwitalla, "Demobilisation of Female Ex-Combatants in Colombia," *Forced Migration Review* 1, no. 27 (2007).

385 Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*.

386 Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*; McKay and Mazurana, *Where Are the Girls?: Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and after War*; Peters, "From Weapons to Wheels: Young Sierra Leonean Ex-Combatants Become Motorbike Taxi-Riders"; Shaw, "Linking Justice with Reintegration? Ex-Combat-

Additional logistical challenges such as transportation and funds needed to reach a DDR site as well as childcare may further hinder the participation of women and girls.[387] Sometimes women and girls lack knowledge of the DDR process and their eligibility.[388] Although segregation by sex is the norm now, mixed cantonment sites or transition centers could put them at risk of sexual assault.[389] Despite the stigma and serious challenges women report reintegrating and the absence of truly gender-sensitive DDR programming, quasi-experimental research from Northern Uganda, where most women were abducted into the LRA, finds that women only faced minor setbacks reintegrating. Those few who faced major difficulties had the least social support and had been exposed to extensive violence during the conflict.[390] Rather than the formal DDR process, cooperatives or networks of female ex-combatants and education often play an important role in helping women reintegrate.[391] Yet many remain economically marginalized.[392] Community-based projects and social action have also helped women, especially young, forced mothers, obtain coping skills and communal and familial acceptance.[393]

If women do choose to enter formal DDR programs, assistance is often ill-suited to their needs especially during the reintegration phase.[394] Unlike men, who are typically offered training in technical vocational skills (e.g. information technology, masonry, mechanics), women are offered training in side-income generating activities such as sewing, tie-dying, or traditionally feminine professions (e.g. beauticians, seam-

ants and the Sierra Leone Experiment"; Utas, "Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone,"

387 Mazurana, Krystalli, and Baaré, *Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Reviewing and Advancing the Field*; Lindsay Stark et al., "Developing Culturally Relevant Indicators of Reintegration for Girls, Formerly Associated with Armed Groups, in Sierra Leone Using a Participative Ranking Methodology," *Intervention* 7, no. 1 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1097/wtf.0b013e32832ad38f.

388 Hills and MacKenzie, "Women in Non-State Armed Groups after War: The (Non)Evolution of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration."

389 Hills and MacKenzie, "Women in Non-State Armed Groups after War: The (Non)Evolution of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration"; Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army."

390 Annan et al., "Civil War, Reintegration, and Gender in Northern Uganda."

391 Wenche Hauge, "Group Identity—a Neglected Asset: Determinants of Social and Political Participation among Female Ex-Fighters in Guatemala," *Conflict, Security & Development* 8, no. 3 (2008), https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800802323316; Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic"; Ángela Santamaría Chavarro and Fallon Hernández, "Fostering Solidarity for Gender/Ethnic Reincorporation: The Experience of Female Indigenous Ex-Combatants in Tierra Grata, Cesar," *Journal of Gender Studies* 29, no. 2 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2018.1537875.

392 Angela Veale, Miranda Worthen, and Susan McKay, "Transformative Spaces in the Social Reintegration of Former Child Soldier Young Mothers in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Northern Uganda," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 23, no. 1 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000212; Veale, Worthen, and McKay, "Transformative Spaces in the Social Reintegration of Former Child Soldier Young Mothers in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Northern Uganda"; Michael Wessells, *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

393 Susan McKay et al., "Building Meaningful Participation in Reintegration among War-Affected Young Mothers in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Northern Uganda," *Intervention* 9, no. 2 (2011), https://doi.org/10.1097/WTF.0b013e328348dfe7; Angela Veale et al., "Participation as Principle and Tool in Social Reintegration: Young Mothers Formerly Associated with Armed Groups in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Northern Uganda" *Journal of Aggression Maltreatment & Trauma* 22, no. 8 (2013): 829-848, https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2013.823635; Veale, Worthen, and McKay, "Transformative Spaces in the Social Reintegration of Former Child Soldier Young Mothers in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Northern Uganda."

394 Basini, "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDRR in Liberia"; Hauge, "Group Identity—a Neglected Asset: Determinants of Social and Political Participation among Female Ex-Fighters in Guatemala"; Mazurana, Krystalli, and Baaré, *Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Reviewing and Advancing the Field*.

stress).[395] While some note that such skills provide a sense of empowerment,[396] for some, they are not the skills or education they desire.[397] Moreover, the lack of a viable income increases their dependency on men,[398] including commanders, thereby reinforcing rather than breaking command and control links.[399]

Sometimes women are offered vocational training, but no childcare, which means that they are unable to participate and select cash assistance instead.[400] Similarly, girls who are forced mothers usually do not return to school (fewer than 10 percent in Northern Uganda) likely due to childcare considerations.[401] Certain industries, often the most viable or lucrative, discriminate against women in employment. In some countries women may lack property or inheritance rights, therefore, if cash payments are used to purchase land, it must be registered in a male's name.[402] In Nepal, women were initially offered the opportunity to join the military, but then prohibited based on additional educational, age, and skills-based restrictions.[403] Beyond economic considerations, women and girls with children born during the conflict often confront poor healthcare and inadequate psychosocial support, especially in healing from the trauma of sexual and gender-based violence.[404]

An additional challenge for women is that reintegration may entail a shift from the more egalitarian gender roles they experienced in their armed group into a more traditional, patriarchal society.[405] Female ex-combatants "are effectively shuffled out of the public political sphere and into the domestic realm

395 Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic"; Megan MacKenzie, *Female Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, Security, and Post-Conflict Development* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

396 Basini, "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDRR in Liberia."

397 Hills and MacKenzie, "Women in Non-State Armed Groups after War: The (Non)Evolution of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration."

398 Hills and MacKenzie, "Women in Non-State Armed Groups after War: The (Non)Evolution of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration."

399 Hills and MacKenzie, "Women in Non-State Armed Groups after War: The (Non)Evolution of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration"; Irma Specht and Larry Attree, "The Reintegration of Teen-Aged Girls and Young Women," *Intervention* 4, no. 3 (2006), https://doi.org/10.1097/wtf.0b013e3280118167.

400 K.C., "Everyday Realities of Reintegration: Experiences of Maoist 'Verified' Women Ex-Combatants in the Aftermath of War in Nepal.

401 Annan et al., "Civil War, Reintegration, and Gender in Northern Uganda."

402 Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka"; Azmi, "I Want My Wings Back to Fly in a New Sky: Stories of Female Ex-LTTE Combatants in Post-War Sri Lanka." Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic."

403 K.C., "Everyday Realities of Reintegration: Experiences of Maoist 'Verified' Women Ex-Combatants in the Aftermath of War in Nepal."

404 Basini, "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDRR in Liberia"; McKay and Mazurana, *Where Are the Girls?: Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and after War*.

405 Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka"; Mazurana, Krystalli, and Baaré, *Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Reviewing and Advancing the Field*; Alpaslan Özerdem and Sukanya Podder, "Disarming Youth Combatants : Mitigating Youth Radicalization and Violent Extremism," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011), https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.3; Rolston, "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The Irish Case in International Perspective"; Santamaría and Hernández, "Fostering Solidarity for Gender/Ethnic Reincorporation: The Experience of Female Indigenous Ex-Combatants in Tierra Grata, Cesar"; Azmi, "I Want My Wings Back to Fly in a New Sky: Stories of Female Ex-LTTE Combatants in Post-War Sri Lanka"; Vanessa Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective to Successful Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Processes," *Disarmament Forum* 4 (2003): 25-37. https://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/women-men-peace-and-security-en-565.pdf.

through post-conflict development policies."[406] In Sri Lanka, reintegration programs encouraged women to marry and have children quickly, as family would render them "less vulnerable to future radicalization."[407] The progress women made on gender issues within their armed groups and its transformative potential is thus often overlooked by the DDR process.[408] Instead, women face "remarginalization" when reintegrating through oppressive "conjugal ordering" around the family and sexual relations.[409] Many women in Nepal felt their "wartime contributions were devalued and made invisible, offering limited options in the post-conflict era."[410] Some women in Sri Lanka described the DDR process as "infantilizing."[411] One woman noted how she was a paramedic in the LTTE, but could never be one in mainstream society.[412] Even if DDR policies promote gender equality and sensitivity, local governments may not be receptive. In the Philippines, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front did not like the use of the word "gender" as the group viewed it as associated with Western development approaches and incompatible with Islam.[413]

Just as female ex-combatants tend to be portrayed as victims, men are typically conveyed as perpetrators regardless of what their involvement entailed.[414] For some men, participation in an armed group may afford a sense of traditional masculinity that may be difficult to obtain in mainstream society where economic opportunities are limited.[415] DDR processes, according to some, allow for the emergence and promotion of alternative masculinities that emphasize men's roles, for example, as caregivers.[416] Nevertheless, DDR programs—even those that seem gender-equitable and rights-based on the surface—tend to follow a masculine logic couched in the patriarchal order that reinforces, rather than undermines, "militarized masculinities."[417]

406 MacKenzie, "Securitization and Desecuritization: Female Soldiers and the Reconstruction of Women in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone," 243.

407 Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka," 637.

408 Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic"; Mazurana and Cole, "Women, Girls, and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)."

409 Duriesmith and Holmes, "The Masculine Logic of DDR and SSR in the Rwanda Defence Force"; Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army"; K.C., "Everyday Realities of Reintegration: Experiences of Maoist 'Verified' Women Ex-Combatants in the Aftermath of War in Nepal"; MacKenzie, *Female Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, Security, and Post-Conflict Development*.

410 K.C., "Everyday Realities of Reintegration: Experiences of Maoist 'Verified' Women Ex-Combatants in the Aftermath of War in Nepal."

411 Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka," 638.

412 Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka," 638.

413 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

414 Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic."

415 Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic"; Isabella Flisi, "The Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia: Addressing Violent Masculinities in a Fragile Context," *Gender & Development* 24, no. 3 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2016.1233667; Kimberly Theidon, "Reconstructing Masculinities: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia," *Human Rights Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.0.0053.

416 Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic"; Theidon, "Reconstructing Masculinities: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia"; Laura Woodbury, "Reconstructing Gender Identity for Child Combatants in Post-Conflict African Societies," *Journal of International Service* 20, no. 1 (2011).

417 Duriesmith and Holmes, "The Masculine Logic of DDR and SSR in the Rwanda Defence Force."

Similar to women, children born or abducted into an armed group or those who join of their own volition may face additional layers of stigma and reintegration challenges.[418] Although research and guidance advises that children should be returned to their families post-conflict, they are less likely to be welcomed back into their communities.[419] Even families may refuse to take children back.[420] This is especially true of children born out of forced marriages[421] and problematic because research shows that familial acceptance of the child results in less psychological distress.[422]

Given the challenges and trauma some children confront, and the often low capacity of war-torn communities that may be absorbing a fair number of children, some suggest that institutional solutions may be more effective for those who are orphaned or rejected by their family.[423] Where orphaned ex-combatants are confronting high levels of psychological distress, and "social networks" are "stretched to their limits" in the community, institutions that house and school these children offer them the opportunity to build positive relationships with peers and adults that are often not easy to facilitate in poverty-stricken, war-torn communities.[424] Such relationships are important protective factors for children affected by armed conflict.[425] Conversely, exposure to domestic and community violence negatively impacts the resilience of these children.[426]

Studies further show that children who were involved in an armed group for longer or who engaged in violence have the most difficulty reintegrating.[427] Children who have grown up in armed groups may have "never experienced anything else than the culture of violence and aggression" and, as such, have

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418 Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army"; Mazurana, Krystalli, and Baaré, *Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Reviewing and Advancing the Field*; Susan McKay et al., "'I Stand Like a Woman': Empowerment and Human Rights in the Context of Community-Based Reintegration of Girl Mothers Formerly Associated with Fighting Forces and Armed Groups," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 2, no. 1 (2010), https://doi.org/10.1093/jhuman/hup028.

419 Borzello, "The Challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army"; Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic"; Humphreys and Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration"; Özerdem, "A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach."

420 Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed?*.

421 Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*; Alcinda Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); McKay and Mazurana, *Where Are the Girls?: Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and after War*; Susan Shepler, *Childhood Deployed: Remaking Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014); Wessells, *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*.

422 Betancourt et al., "Sierra Leone's Former Child Soldiers: A Follow-up Study of Psychosocial Adjustment and Community Reintegration."

423 Brigitte Muller, Barry Munslow, and Tim O'Dempsey, "When Community Reintegration Is Not the Best Option: Interethnic Violence and the Trauma of Parental Loss in South Sudan," *International Journal of Health Planning and Management* 32, no. 1 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.2311.

424 Muller, Munslow, and O'Dempsey, "When Community Reintegration Is Not the Best Option: Interethnic Violence and the Trauma of Parental Loss in South Sudan," 105.

425 Theresa Stichick Betancourt et al., "Research Review: Psychosocial Adjustment and Mental Health in Former Child Soldiers—a Systematic Review of the Literature and Recommendations for Future Research," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 54, no. 1 (2013). https://dx.doi.org/10.1111%2Fj.1469-7610.2012.02620.x.

426 Fionna Klasen et al., "Multiple Trauma and Mental Health in Former Ugandan Child Soldiers," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 23, no. 5 (2010), https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.20557.

427 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*; Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition: The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda*; Özerdem, "A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach."

not had "a chance to internalize non-violent conflict solving mechanisms and behavior."[428] Given the challenges children face, DDR programming must address their unique needs.[429] Girls, in particular, are often overlooked.[430] Children, however, can reintegrate successfully if offered the requisite support.[431] In Northern Uganda, children formerly in the LRA were just as likely to be employed as those not involved in the conflict.[432] They were, however, more likely to work in low-skilled jobs due to their lack of education.[433]

Catering to the unique needs of children should not undermine their agency or assistance. Research in Angola shows that portraying children as more vulnerable than adults and focusing on child protection "did not lead to specialized assistance: it led to no assistance."[434] Children, even as old as sixteen or seventeen, like women, were "de-politicized" as a security threat and "rendered invisible."[435] In other cases, DDR support for children was underfunded and unsuitable.[436] Though support has improved in recent years, children under eighteen are still usually ineligible for financial packages or vocational training as a part of DDR and are instead offered a formal education.[437] However, many, especially in their teens, want and need to secure an income; some even have a family to support.[438]

DDR programs should view children, both boys and girls, as sources of positive social capital.[439] War is "not simply destructive for children, but also transformational, just as it is for adults."[440] Surveys assessing children's skills and desires once reintegrated could help determine who might benefit from education versus financial assistance and vocational training. Programming for children should be individually tailored.[441] Research in Sierra Leone shows that returning to school is associated with the development of pro-social attitudes and confidence.[442] Conventional employment might have a similar effect. Other

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428 Anna Maedl et al., "Psychological Rehabilitation of Ex-Combatants in Non-Western, Post-Conflict Settings," in *Trauma Rehabilitation after War and Conflict: Community and Individual Perspectives*, ed. Erin Martz (New York: Springer, 2010).

429 Knight, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview."

430 Dyan Mazurana et al., "Girls in Fighting Forces and Groups: Their Recruitment, Participation, Demobilization, and Reintegration," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 8, no. 2 (2002), https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327949PAC0802_01.

431 Annan et al., "Civil War, Reintegration, and Gender in Northern Uganda"; Christopher Blattman and Jeannie Annan, "The Consequences of Child Soldiering," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 92, no. 4 (2010).

432 Blattman and Annan, "The Consequences of Child Soldiering."

433 Blattman and Annan, "The Consequences of Child Soldiering."

434 Jaremey McMullin, "Reintegrating Young Combatants: Do Child-Centered Approaches Leave Children—and Adults—Behind?," *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2011), https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2011.567006.

435 McMullin, "Reintegrating Young Combatants: Do Child-Centered Approaches Leave Children—and Adults—Behind?," 760.

436 Peter W. Singer, *Children at War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press).

437 Roos Haer, "The Study of Child Soldiering: Issues and Consequences for DDR Implementation," *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1166946; McMullin, "Reintegrating Young Combatants: Do Child-Centered Approaches Leave Children—and Adults—Behind?."

438 Boothby, Crawford, and Halperin, "Mozambique Child Soldier Life Outcome Study: Lessons Learned in Rehabilitation and Reintegration Efforts"; McMullin, "Reintegrating Young Combatants: Do Child-Centered Approaches Leave Children—and Adults—Behind?."

439 McMullin, "Reintegrating Young Combatants: Do Child-Centered Approaches Leave Children—and Adults—Behind?."

440 McMullin, "Reintegrating Young Combatants: Do Child-Centered Approaches Leave Children—and Adults—Behind?," 752.

441 McMullin, "Reintegrating Young Combatants: Do Child-Centered Approaches Leave Children—and Adults—Behind?"; Haer, "The Study of Child Soldiering: Issues and Consequences for DDR Implementation."

442 Betancourt et al., "Sierra Leone's Former Child Soldiers: A Follow-up Study of Psychosocial Adjustment and Community Reintegration."

studies indicate that support for children should be grounded in the family and community.[443] Research with Somali youth demonstrates that local, community-based projects that foster social and political reintegration can help reduce feelings of aggression and contribute to community acceptance.[444] Community sensitization and reconciliation processes are further cited as important in promoting children's reintegration.[445]

PSYCHOSOCIAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

For certain individuals, psychosocial support is essential to overcome the trauma they experienced while involved in violent extremism or the "vacuum-like" experience of disengaging and reintegrating. Psychosocial support, however, is one of the most often overlooked and underfunded aspects of DDR programming.[446] Ex-combatants, across a range of conflicts, especially those who partake in or witness violence or experience trauma, are likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), fear, insecurity, substance abuse, depression, and social exclusion.[447] Other studies note that ex-combatants tend to have "abnormal and exacerbated expressions of aggression and violent behavior even after demobilization."[448] Those forcibly recruited may need more psychological support than volunteers.[449] The process of reintegrating too can induce psychological distress, as many are not used to being responsible for their basic needs (food, shelter, healthcare) due to their time in the armed group or in cantonment (or prison) where such things are provided.[450] Unaddressed mental health issues impede individuals' economic and

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443 Haer, "The Study of Child Soldiering: Issues and Consequences for DDR Implementation"; Özerdem and Podder, "Disarming Youth Combatants: Mitigating Youth Radicalization and Violent Extremism."

444 Schumicky-Logan, "Addressing Violent Extremism with a Different Approach: The Empirical Case of at-Risk and Vulnerable Youth in Somalia."

445 Myriam Denov and Ines Marchand, "'One Cannot Take Away the Stain': Rejection and Stigma among Former Child Soldiers in Colombia," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 20, no. 3 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000039.

446 Basini, "Gender Mainstreaming Unraveled: The Case of DDRR in Liberia."

447 Baez, Santamaría-García, and Ibáñez, "Disarming Ex-Combatants' Minds: Toward Situated Reintegration Process in Post-Conflict Colombia"; Annan, Brier, and Aryemo, "From "Rebel" to "Returnee": Daily Life and Reintegration for Young Soldiers in Northern Uganda"; Kaplan and Nussio, "Explaining Recidivism of Ex-Combatants in Colombia"; McEvoy, Shirlow, and McElrath, "Resistance, Transition and Exclusion: Politically Motivated Ex-Prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland"; Grip and Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review."

448 Baez, Santamaría-García, and Ibáñez, "Disarming Ex-Combatants' Minds: Toward Situated Reintegration Process in Post-Conflict Colombia," 2. See also: Betancourt et al., "Sierra Leone's Former Child Soldiers: A Follow-up Study of Psychosocial Adjustment and Community Reintegration"; Katharin Hermenau et al., "Addressing Post-Traumatic Stress and Aggression by Means of Narrative Exposure: A Randomized Controlled Trial with Ex-Combatants in the Eastern DRC," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 22, no. 8 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2013.824057; Anke Kobach et al., "Violent Offending Promotes Appetitive Aggression Rather Than Posttraumatic Stress-a Replication Study with Burundian Ex-Combatants," *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (2015), https://dx.doi.org/10.3389%2Ffpsyg.2015.01755.

449 Grip and Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review."

450 Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

social reintegration. In Somaliland, ex-combatants would not seek work due to psychological problems.[451] Those experiencing trauma or depression are also likely to withdraw from their communities and to distrust them.[452]

Although costly, all ex-combatants should be screened for potential mental health issues and offered appropriate long-term support usually in the form of counseling.[453] Research in Nepal, where ex-combatants were offered rather extensive psychosocial support, shows that although only 30 percent opted into the service, it had a positive impact on their reintegration.[454] Likewise, a study in Burundi found that little attention to psychosocial support (as well as reconciliation) impeded economic and social reintegration.[455] Further, research suggests that certain ex-combatants might benefit from learning additional cognitive skills that help them positively interact with others in society post conflict.[456] Training in mediation techniques may increase pro-social behavior and positive affection towards others.[457]

Political reintegration

The successful and sustainable reintegration of ex-combatants is now thought to depend on not only their economic and social reintegration, but also their political reintegration. The same is likely true in the context of VEDR. Political reintegration is considered closely tied to one's social reintegration[458] and is defined as "the process through which the ex-combatant and their family become a full part of decision-making processes" within a polity.[459] Whereas social reintegration focuses on the formation of horizontal linkages between the ex-combatant and their family or social structure, political reintegration is about individuals' involvement in decision-making processes at the community or national level.[460] According to some, political reintegration requires not only political participation but specific forms of

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451 Michael Odenwald et al., "Khat Use as Risk Factor for Psychotic Disorders: A Cross-Sectional and Case-Control Study in Somalia," *BMC Medicine* 3, no. 5 (2005), https://doi.org/10.1186/1741-7015-3-5.

452 Julia Dickson-Gomez, "Growing up in Guerrilla Camps: The Long-Term Impact of Being a Child Soldier in El Salvador's Civil War," *Ethos* 30, no. 4 (2002), https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1525/eth.2002.30.4.327.

453 Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed*; Grip and Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review."

454 Irma Specht, *Independent Evaluation of the UNIRP* (Kathmandu, Nepal: Transition International, February 2013).

455 Willems and van Leeuwen, "Reconciling Reintegration: The Complexity of Economic and Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Burundi."

456 Baez, Santamaría-García, and Ibáñez, "Disarming Ex-Combatants' Minds: Toward Situated Reintegration Process in Post-Conflict Colombia."

457 Baez, Santamaría-García, and Ibáñez, "Disarming Ex-Combatants' Minds: Toward Situated Reintegration Process in Post-Conflict Colombia."

458 Özerdem, «A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach.»

459 Kingma, "Assessing Demobilization: Conceptual Issues."

460 Christopher Maclay and Alpaslan Özerdem, "'Use' Them or 'Lose' Them: Engaging Liberia's Disconnected Youth through Socio-Political Integration," *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 3 (2010), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2010.500144; Johanna Söderström, *The Concept of Political Reintegration in Current Peace Research* (Department of Government, Uppsala University, 2013), http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A639734&dswid=-7278.

political participation that mitigate the use of violence. [461] Others note that political integration entails political involvement on the same terms as others in society, even if those terms are poor.[462]

Political reintegration is perhaps "the ultimate goal" because it is vital for preventing conflict reoccurrence or an individual's return to violence. [463] By having a say in decision-making processes, ex-combatants are able to channel their grievances non-violently into the political process. Political inclusion may also quell the grievances that led to conflict in the first place. Failure to prioritize political integration as a component of the DDR process, according to Ucko, led to "Iraq's subsequent unravelling."[464] The "deliberate alienation" of entire segments of society through DDR programming that excluded them and the failure to disarm Shia militias, whose leaders on the Governing Council systematically discriminated against and persecuted Sunnis, created a situation in which Sunnis knew they could never win through democratic processes.[465] In Sierra Leone, research similarly suggests that although disarmament and demobilization were successful, the political reintegration of former RUF members may be incomplete, as many subsequently engaged in electoral violence and intimidation.[466]

A number of studies indicate that, once demobilized, ex-combatants are often more politically active than others in society. Former child soldiers of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda were more likely to vote or hold leadership roles in their community.[467] Likewise, a large survey shows that those who were abducted into the LRA in Northern Uganda were 22 percent more likely to vote, 73 percent more likely to be a member of a peace promoting organization, and twice as likely to be a community leader or hold a political role.[468] Former combatant networks, when properly channeled, may "transform and endure, and undertake collective efforts, for example in party politics and electoral campaigning or governance and public office."[469]

While the case of Iraq illustrates what factors may impede political reintegration, it is still unclear which factors or interventions ensure it. Some contend, though no one has demonstrated, that successful economic and social integration will have downstream effects that foster political integration.[470] A quasi-experiment in Burundi finds that although participation in a DDR program was contributing, at least in the short-term, to the economic welfare of ex-combatants, there was no evidence of "downstream effects" from economic to political reintegration.[471] Participants were not any more likely to report satisfaction

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461 Mitton, "Engaging with Disengagement: The Political Reintegration of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front."

462 Maclay and Özerdem, "'Use' Them or 'Lose' Them: Engaging Liberia's Disconnected Youth through Socio-Political Integration"; Söderström, *The Concept of Political Reintegration in Current Peace Research*.

463 Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii, "Reintegrating Rebels into Civilian Life: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Burundi."

464 Berdal and Ucko, *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict Politics, Violence and Transition*, 89.

465 Berdal and Ucko, *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict Politics, Violence and Transition*.

466 Mitton, "Engaging with Disengagement: The Political Reintegration of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front."

467 Annan, Brier, and Aryemo, "From "Rebel" to "Returnee": Daily Life and Reintegration for Young Soldiers in Northern Uganda."

468 Christopher Blattman, "From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda," *American Political Science Review* 103, no. 2 (2009), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409090212.

469 Wiegink and Sprenkels, "Beyond Reintegration: War Veteranship in Mozambique and El Salvador," 7.

470 Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii, "Reintegrating Rebels into Civilian Life: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Burundi."

471 Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii, "Reintegrating Rebels into Civilian Life: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Burundi."

with the peace process or hold positive views of the government.[472] The survey, however, used a very short follow-up period (9 months), while political reintegration is likely a much more long-term process. Moreover, it would seem to require the sort of institutional changes and transitional justice measures that ensure citizens' security, protect civil rights, and allow people to safely and fairly express their preferences through the political process.

The above findings suggest that if the grievances that underlie involvement in violent extremism persist and are unable to be effectively channeled through the political process, then individuals are less likely to disengage and more likely to return to violence. Where individuals feel marginalized by the national and/or international political system, or even threatened by it, radical, violent ideologies are more likely to resonate. If this is true of large segments of the population or of certain communities, then people may be reintegrating into environments that are not pro-social in the conventional sense but supportive of radical, and perhaps even violent, ideologies.

Summary of implications for VEDR

VEDR programming and processes need to carefully manage participants' expectations and deliver on their promises. Failure to do so undermines the mutual trust and political will necessary for voluntary disengagement and reintegration and may exacerbate existing grievances or generate new ones. Indefinite and/or inhumane detention makes it more difficult for individuals to imagine a life for themselves outside of violent extremism, can contribute to a discourse of resistance against the state or captors, and may increase the risks of reinvolvement in violent extremism. Any time spent in confinement, whether in prison or elsewhere, should contribute to rather than undermine one's ability to envision an alternative life for themselves outside of violent extremism. Rather than short-term cash assistance, efforts to promote long-term economic reintegration should focus on ensuring one's ability to achieve a sustainable livelihood through education or vocational training based on an understanding of local economic opportunities. Programming and policies must be sensitive to the unique needs of men, women, and children and careful not to "de-politicize" women's involvement and reinforce "militarized masculinities." Psycho-social and mental health support is essential for addressing the trauma that individuals experienced as well as the vacuum-like experience of disengaging from a violent extremist role and reintegrating. Finally, ensuring political reintegration or the belief that one has a voice in local and national decision-making processes may play an important role in deterring re-engagement.

4: Prepare for the long-haul

Timelines, coordination, and funding

Although timelines vary, VEDR, like DDR, is typically a long-term process. As such, policymakers and practitioners would be wise to prepare for the long-haul. Research shows that effective DDR requires long-term planning, coordination, and funding. However, most DDR programs are only a few years long and focus disproportionately on the disarmament and demobilization phases, since reintegration is difficult

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472 Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii, "Reintegrating Rebels into Civilian Life: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Burundi."

to address in such a short time frame and less straightforward.[473] The same is often true in the context of violent extremism where the emphasis seems to be on disengagement rather than reintegration.

Focusing too much on short-term gains can undermine long-term objectives,[474] especially if larger objectives are not clearly outlined from the start. For example, sometimes vocational training is viewed as a measure to keep ex-combatants occupied and ensure short-term stability rather than to develop "long-term livelihoods."[475] The decision in Afghanistan to work with warlords and militias so long as they paid "lip service" to the central government facilitated short-term stabilization but undermined long-term objectives.[476] DDR did not break down but reinforced prior systems of patronage (e.g. through training courses in houses of local commanders, small businesses that relied on illegal goods provided by a commander).[477] A similar phenomenon occurred with Shia and Kurdish militias in Iraq.[478]

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation and effective coordination can help mitigate the effects of poor program design at the outset. This was the case in Nepal, where cooperation between agencies and regular consultation with program participants allowed for adjustments along the way and led to successful outcomes.[479] Lack of planning, coordination, and funding, however, can foment tensions, increase the overall costs of DDR, and reduce its effectiveness.[480] In Angola, the government underestimated the number of ex-combatants demobilizing by at least half.[481] Fighters continued to arrive as demobilization was declared complete. In El Salvador, the lack of a general strategy for reintegrating ex-combatants and coordination between the UN and World Bank impeded the peace process.[482]

Funding crises often mean that preliminary surveys of ex-combatants, which would enhance the effectiveness of reintegration packages and programming, are foregone.[483] In Iraq, the Transition and Reintegration Implementation Committee (TRIC) recommended a 5 year reintegration program, which was shortened to only 7 months.[484] TRIC was grossly underfunded and staffed by only one person in 2004.

473 Francesca Capone, "An Overview of the DDR Process Established in the Aftermath of the Revised Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC: Finally on the Right Track?," *Global Jurist* 18, no. 1 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1515/gj-2017-0007; Muggah, "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts"; Verkoren et al., "From DDR to Security Promotion: Connecting National Programs to Community Initiatives."

474 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

475 Özerdem, *Post-War Recovery: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration*; Özerdem, "A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: 'Social Reintegration' Approach."

476 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan," 170.

477 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan."

478 Berdal and Ucko, *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict Politics, Violence and Transition*.

479 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*.

480 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

481 Vines and Oruitemeka, "Beyond Bullets and Ballots: The Reintegration of UNITA in Angola."

482 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Alvaro de Soto and Graciana del Castillo, "Implementation of Comprehensive Peace Agreements: Staying the Course in El Salvador," *Global Governance* 1, no. 2 (1995).

483 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

484 Berdal and Ucko, *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict Politics, Violence and Transition*.

Reports claim that money earmarked for reintegration was used for "unplanned security threats."[485] Donors or NGOs may choose to fund only parts of programs for financial or political reasons.[486] They may be reluctant to work with armed groups or to invest without financial transparency.[487] In Afghanistan, Japan insisted on offering no direct economic incentives to ex-combatants as they "did not want to be seen as supporting illegal/criminal groups."[488] Only 10 percent of estimated weapons were recovered through the program in two years.[489] When financial backing and adequate planning are lacking, the result is ad-hoc and ill-coordinated DDR, which can have a destabilizing effect on security, mutual trust, and political will.[490]

These findings highlight that in conflict environments, governments need to prepare for not only the battlefield but what follows military victories. They need to better anticipate the potential detainment of violent extremists so that coordinated policies and funding are in place to ensure humane conditions and avoid delays between confinement and prosecution or release and reintegration. Funding for individuals' reintegration must not only be adequate but sustained and well-coordinated between relevant parties. The failure to do so is likely to feed or generate additional grievances. True societal transition, according to DDR practitioners, will take a full generation.[491]

In non-conflict environments, where VEDR is often handled by a single state, adequate and sustained funding and long-term planning are just as critical. Governments need to acknowledge that VEDR is a long-term process, ensure adequate coordination between relevant government agencies and NGOs (often with conflicting aims), and outline long-term objectives so that they do not succumb to short-term wins. Failure to do so may exacerbate or generate the grievances underlying involvement in violent extremism.

THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL ACTORS

Research on DDR suggests that effective planning, coordination, and cooperation may be more difficult the greater the number of external actors involved. External actors can help or hinder DDR, and the same seems true for VEDR, especially in conflict environments. DDR is not a politically neutral activity, as it alters capabilities for violence (and relative power) within a society.[492] Progress therefore may stall if the involvement of or actions by external actors are thought to undermine a group's relative position.[493] This is especially relevant today where we see a number of civil conflicts play out as proxy wars (e.g. in Yemen, Syria, Iraq).

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485 Berdal and Ucko, *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict Politics, Violence and Transition*.
486 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*, 95.
487 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.
488 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan," 175-76.
489 Giustozzi, "Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan," 176.
490 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.
491 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.
492 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."
493 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

On the other hand, under the right conditions, external actors can help actors credibly commit to a peace process or political reform and distribute the financial burden.[494] Some have argued that international involvement by the UN or development agencies is critical to the success of DDR and that international actors can aid with the long-term monitoring of police and security forces to ensure their demilitarization.[495] Others have noted that regional support, which was present in Central America and Central Africa but absent in Yugoslavia and Somalia, is also essential in combatting the trafficking of small arms and light weapons.[496] Today's conflicts are increasingly internationalized and necessitate a regional approach.[497]

The involvement of a large number of external actors, however, may stymie implementation. Using a formal model and case studies, Ansorg and Strasheim argue the sheer number of external actors (veto players) involved in a DDR process rather than their policy distance or cohesion explains poor implementation.[498] While potentially more cost effective, having a large number of autonomous external actors may also undermine long-term policy coherence.[499] Ill-coordinated efforts by international agencies and/or governments can result in fragmented or substandard DDR (and arguably VEDR).[500] Such was the case in South Sudan where no clear country or organization was in charge of reintegration efforts, which reached only half of targeted participants.[501] In the DRC, conflicting objectives between the World Bank, which prioritized development, and the UN and the International Organization for Migration, which emphasized security, similarly resulted in delays and suboptimal outcomes.[502] Nevertheless, excellent international coordination and cooperation is possible and contributes to positive DDR outcomes.[503] Interventions with child soldiers in Sierra Leone were considered effective because of the coordination and collaboration between the various agencies and governments involved.[504]

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494 Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs Succeed*; Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Talentino and Pearson, "Weapons of War, Weapons of Peace: DDR Processes in Peacemaking."

495 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars:Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*; Ball, "Demobilizing and Reintegrating Soldiers: Lessons from Africa."

496 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*; John Williamson, "The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Child Soldiers: Social and Psychological Transformation in Sierra Leone," *Intervention* 4, no. 3 (2006), https://doi.org/10.1097/wtf.0b013e328011a7fb.

497 Cockayne and O'Neil, *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?*.

498 Ansorg and Strasheim, "Veto Players in Post-Conflict DDR Programs: Evidence from Nepal and the DRC."

499 Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars : Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*.

500 Lamb and Stainer, "The Conundrum of DDR Coordination: The Case of South Sudan," 1.

501 Lamb and Stainer, "The Conundrum of DDR Coordination: The Case of South Sudan"; Ghebremedhin Haile and Tiberious Bara, "Final Evaluation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programme Individual Reintegration Project Component (2009–2012)," South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SSDDRC) and United Nations Development Programme, Juba, South Sudan, September 23, 2013.

502 Renner Onana and Hannah Taylor, "MONUC and SSR in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *International Peacekeeping* 15, no. 4 (2008), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310802239733; Robert Muggah, "The Anatomy of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in the Republic of Congo," *Conflict, Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2004), https://doi.org/10.1080/1467880042000206840.

503 Fiedler et al., "Gradual, Cooperative, Coordinated: Effective Support for Peace and Democracy in Conflict-Affected States."

504 Williamson, "The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Child Soldiers: Social and Psychological Transformation in Sierra Leone."

Risk assessment

Preparing for the long-haul when it comes to VEDR means that risk assessments, when possible, need to be ongoing and comprehensive in order to properly inform programming. There is a growing consensus that the most effective method for risk assessment of violent extremists in the context of DDR programs is through structured professional judgment, which lies between unstructured and statistical assessments.[505] Structured professional judgment allows the evaluator to consider how the risk factors for re-involvement in an armed group vary from one individual to another.[506] Such approaches are, however, time consuming and require experienced assessors. In addition, not all assessors may rate individuals in the same way.[507] Although less effective, when one lacks properly trained psychologists who can engage in structured professional judgment and sufficient funding, quantitative assessments are cited as the most prudent alternative. However, they should be gender sensitive.[508] Other researchers further suggest that qualitative interviews with ex-combatants and their family and future community members could help inform risk assessment and shape reintegration programming.[509] With regards to mental health "psycho-pathologic, psychiatric, and social-cognitive profiles of ex-combatants" are noted as imperative for both risk assessment and program design.[510] Regardless of the type of risk assessment employed, they should be conducted regularly to determine whether new or different interventions are needed as individuals and circumstances shift.[511]

Risk assessments also need to be fair. One issue with risk assessment in the context of DDR is that governments or their military and intelligence agencies may prohibit oversight.[512] This makes it difficult to know whether risk assessment is being applied fairly or at all, while the stakes are high.[513] In Somalia, being categorized as a low-risk ex-combatant means receiving amnesty and reintegration support; being categorized as high-risk means facing the court.[514] Decisions are often arbitrary. Despite a much publicized amnesty program in Somalia, the country lacks any legal framework to protect defectors.[515] Further, the potential categorization of high-risk individuals as low-risk means that they can infiltrate and spread their ideology or promote violence with the DDR program.[516]

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505 Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes."

506 Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes."

507 Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes."

508 Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes."

509 Grilc, "The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Postconflict Societies – a Discussion About a Possible Harmonisation of Transitional Justice and Integrated DDR Programs."

510 Baez, Santamaría-García, and Ibáñez, "Disarming Ex-Combatants' Minds: Toward Situated Reintegration Process in Post-Conflict Colombia," 11.

511 Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes."

512 Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes"; Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."

513 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."

514 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."

515 Vanda Felbab-Brown, *The Limits of Punishment: Transitional Justice and Violent Extremism Somalia Case Study* (United Nations University, 2018), https://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/attachment/2770/4-LoP-Somalia-Case-Study.pdf.

516 Felbab-Brown, "DDR in the Context of Offensive Military Operations, Counterterrorism, CVE and Non-Permissive Environments."

In the context of violent extremism, recidivism or re-engagement rates may count individuals who are seemingly disengaged and reintegrated but are spreading violent, radical ideas as a "success."[517] In developed democracies, surveillance and other security measures may explain sustained disengagement and low recidivism/re-engagement rates without true social and political reintegration. In cases of ongoing conflict or weak, developing countries, it may be difficult and expensive to track and monitor former violent extremists especially over a sustained period.[518] Focusing on community-based reintegration and the development of pro-social attitudes and relationships (key theme #2) in risk assessment and larger practice circumvents an overreliance on potentially faulty recidivism rates.[519] It also addresses the reintegration of individuals who have not committed crimes but may be supportive of violent extremism.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Evaluating the success of VEDR, similar to DDR, initiatives requires an agreed upon definition of success and the use of sound social science methods. Although DDR outcomes have often been judged by the number of collected weapons and ammunition and disarmed and demobilized participants,[520] others maintain that DDR is only successful if it contributes to "the delivery of a peace process or to the reduction of armed violence" in society.[521] Similarly in the context of VEDR, success should not be determined by the number of violent extremists who disengage voluntarily or involuntarily but by their reintegration and a reduction in violent extremism within society.

Perhaps a more serious challenge is that truly experimental methods to gauge the effectiveness of any program or intervention require the use of a control group that for some random reason did not partake. Real world or ethical considerations, however, usually preclude the use of random assignment of individuals to DDR (and VEDR) programming. Researchers in the DDR literature have found innovative ways to try and circumvent these limitations by utilizing quasi-experiments. Osborne et al. and Annan et al., for example, exploit the randomness of abduction to investigate the effects of armed group participation.[522] Gilligan et al. utilize a survey and exploit exogenous bureaucratic delays in DDR programming in Burundi to judge the program's effects.[523]

Even if researchers find ways to simulate random assignment, challenges regarding measurement and the follow-up period remain. Reintegration is typically a long-term process that is difficult to measure. Yet, a

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517 Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria."

518 Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria."

519 Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria."

520 Ansorg and Strasheim, "Veto Players in Post-Conflict DDR Programs: Evidence from Nepal and the DRC"; Madhav Joshi and Erik Melander, "Explaining Demobilization in the Wake of Civil Conflict," *Peacebuilding* 5, no. 3 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2016.1268345; Knight and Özerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace."

521 Molloy, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Theory and Practice*; Muggah, "No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts."

522 Osborne, D'Exelle, and Verschoor, "Truly Reconciled? A Dyadic Analysis of Post-Conflict Social Reintegration in Northern Uganda"; Annan et al., "Civil War, Reintegration, and Gender in Northern Uganda."

523 Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii, "Reintegrating Rebels into Civilian Life: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Burundi."

number of quasi-experiments in the DDR literature utilize short, one-time follow-up periods.[524] Wave or panel studies that offer insights not only within, but also across countries are cited as crucial for examining reintegration over a lengthy period.[525] Reliance on self-report data in surveys can, however, be problematic.[526] Unless techniques such as list or endorsement experiments or randomized response methods are used, attitudinal or perceptual measures of social and political reintegration collected in surveys may suffer from social desirability bias.[527] In such instances, behavioral measures (e.g. participation in community groups, elections, willingness of the community to share resources with ex-combatants) or objective indicators (e.g. small business success) may be much more revealing.[528]

Despite these methodological challenges, the critical importance of VEDR, like DDR, warrants its continued study, even though advances are likely to be incremental rather than monumental. Awareness of the methodological limitations of different research designs and discounting studies that are not carefully researched and evidence-based are essential to progress.[529] Given all of the moving parts that influence VEDR, any comparative research design is likely to be overdetermined—that is, there are more independent variables than cases to consider. Exploiting subnational variation, however, in economies, communities, or political conditions within countries with similar programming for individuals with similar motivations can help advance our understanding of the role systemic factors play in VEDR. The use of theoretical frameworks from related literature (sociology, political science, social psychology, neuroscience, criminology), critical junctures, process-tracing, and counterfactuals can also aid sub-national or cross-national comparative research.[530] Quasi-experiments and true experiments, when possible, can help address random assignment. Wave and panel surveys that account for social desirability bias allow

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524 Willems, *Security and Hybridity after Armed Conflict: The Dynamics of Security Provision in Post-Civil War States*.

525 Grip and Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review"; Kaplan and Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia." UN University's Managing Exits from Armed Conflict project is in the process of employing longitudinal studies in a number of countries.

526 Baez, Santamaría-García, and Ibáñez, "Disarming Ex-Combatants' Minds: Toward Situated Reintegration Process in Post-Conflict Colombia."

527 Bryn Rosenfeld, Kosuke Imai, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "An Empirical Validation Study of Popular Survey Methodologies for Sensitive Questions," *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 3 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12205; Will Bullock, Kosuke Imai, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Statistical Analysis of Endorsement Experiments: Measuring Support for Militant Groups in Pakistan," *Political Analysis* 19, no. 4 (2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpr031; Graeme Blair, Kosuke Imai, and Yang-Yang Zhou, "Design and Analysis of the Randomized Response Technique," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 110, no. 511 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1080/01621459.2015.1050028; Graeme Blair, Kosuke Imai, and Jason Lyall, "Comparing and Combining List and Endorsement Experiments: Evidence from Afghanistan," *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 4 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12086. On the potential effects of social desirability bias see: Graeme Blair, Alexander Coppock, and Margaret Moor, "When to Worry About Sensitivity Bias: A Social Reference Theory and Evidence from 30 Years of List Experiments," *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 4 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000374.

528 Barrios Fajardo, Shultz, and Montes Joya, "Entrepreneurship as Boundary Object: Toward Reintegration of Colombia's Ex-Militants into Civil Society"; Grip and Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review"; Kaplan and Nussio, "Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia"; Osborne, D'Exelle, and Verschoor, "Truly Reconciled? A Dyadic Analysis of Post-Conflict Social Reintegration in Northern Uganda"; Selber, "A Question of 'Government' Control: Afghanistan DDR Programs since 2001."

529 Grip and Kotajoki, "Deradicalisation, Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review."

530 Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl and Nicholas Sambanis, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programs: An Assessment,* Folke Bernadotte Academy Research Report, 2010, https://fba.se/contentassets/7da0c74e1d22462db487955f2e373567/ddr_programs_-an-as-

for greater generalizability within the countries in which they are applied, but only if there is a large enough sample of violent extremists to be polled.

Such methods, however, do not allow for a deep understanding of how individuals navigate their social, economic, and political environment and why so. They may also be ill-suited for sensitive topics such as trauma that are likely to permeate involvement in violent extremism and reintegration. Rigorous qualitative ethnographic and interview-based research that pays careful attention to sampling, truthfulness, and systematic analysis therefore needs to be triangulated with quantitative approaches. Research on DDR also suggests that social network analysis may offer important insights on the relevance of armed group structure for explaining VEDR outcomes.[531]

Summary of implications for VEDR

VEDR is a dynamic, long-term process that is unlikely to be accomplished in a few months or even a few years. Successful social and political reintegration in particular take time. Policymakers should commit to long-term planning, funding, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation of these efforts. Long-term objectives, especially at the societal level, should be outlined from the start so that they do not succumb to short-term gains. The involvement of external actors can help distribute the financial costs of VEDR efforts and may help certain groups in conflict environments commit to a peace process. However, the involvement of a large number of external actors or conflicting organizational interests can impede progress if their actions are not well-coordinated. Risk assessment should be regular and ongoing and rely on structured professional judgment when possible. Focusing on individuals' social, economic, and political reintegration in risk assessment and evaluating program effectiveness may circumvent some of the challenges posed by an overreliance on recidivism/re-engagement rates. Despite a number of methodological obstacles, the critical importance of VEDR warrants its careful, continued study. The design and funding of sound experimental, qualitative, and quantitative research is essential to further not only scholarly understanding but good practice.

CONCLUSION

This review of the DDR literature offers a number of lessons for VEDR policy and practice, the most important of which I summarize here. First, VEDR policies must identify and consider the different motivations and characteristics of those reintegrating as well as the larger social, political, and economic context. VEDR may be extremely difficult or unsustainable over the long-term at certain levels of economic development or in political environments where security, mutual trust, and political will are lacking. Any programming should be aware of these limitations and, when possible, advance these larger, societal aims.

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sessment.pdf; Fiedler et al., "Gradual, Cooperative, Coordinated: Effective Support for Peace and Democracy in Conflict-Affected States."

531 Ernesto Cardenas, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Luis Carlos Guevara, "Network Structure of Insurgent Groups and the Success of DDR Processes in Colombia," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29, no. 4 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2018.1488416.

Second, successful reintegration requires the support of the communities that former violent extremists return to. Stigmatization and marginalization preclude the ability of those reintegrating to secure conventional employment or otherwise develop pro-social relationships, resulting in a lack of opportunities outside of violent extremism. Well-designed community-based projects and community sensitization measures (e.g. public information campaigns) may help combat stigmatization and aid in the development of these pro-social ties and a pro-social identity. Community-based projects may also help generate additional social capital and resilience, which can serve as protective factors against radicalization and recruitment even in adverse political and economic environments. Familial and civil society networks and entrepreneurship may further help those reintegrating navigate and transcend stigma. Policymakers and practitioners should be careful that the language used to describe VEDR programming and participants does not further reify a deviant status, contribute to stigmatization, and impede reintegration.

Third, VEDR programming and processes must avoid exacerbating existing grievances or generating new ones by managing participants' expectations, delivering on their promises, and being mindful of human rights considerations and the unique needs of men, women and children. Failure to do so undermines participants' trust in the process and may increase the resonance of violent extremist ideologies or the incentives to return to a violent extremist group. Indefinite and/or inhumane detention often fuels a discourse of resentment against the state or one's captors. Any time spent in prison or detention should contribute to, rather than undermine, one's ability to envision an alternative life for themselves outside of violent extremism. Psycho-social and mental health support are essential for dealing with trauma and the difficult process of disengaging from one's violent extremist role and reintegrating.

Finally, VEDR is a long-term, difficult-to-measure phenomenon that may require changes not only to individuals but often to social relationships and political institutions and processes. As such, promoting VEDR requires a firm commitment to long-term planning, coordination, funding, and ongoing, rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Policymakers and practitioners must not lose sight of the societal and contextual factors that underpin involvement in violent extremism or impede reintegration. To do so will render violent extremism a problem in society for the foreseeable future despite any short-term wins.

Future research on VEDR should continue to build upon the findings of this report. We need to more systematically consider variation in the economic, communal, and political context individuals are reintegrating into, how that interacts with individual motivations for involvement, and which tailored interventions may be more or less effective in different situations.[532] We need to know which, if any, interventions work in the most adverse economic and political settings where individuals' economic and political integration faces seemingly insurmountable obstacles. We must better understand the relationships between economic, social, and political reintegration in the context of VEDR and how each may foster or impede the others. Studies are also required on whether and which community-based interventions, including sensitization measures, work best in the context of VEDR across different economic and political contexts. We need to better understand how social reintegration can safely be fostered for individuals qualified as high-risk or deeply ideologically committed. We need to determine not only whether dif-

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532 Clubb and Tapley, "Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria."

ferent interventions promote disengagement and reintegration at the individual level but whether they contribute to long-term progress in the fight against violent extremism at the societal level. Finally, we must identify the impact of language and discourse around violent extremists on their reintegration. How does the use of certain terms or the framing of issues, especially by governments and NGOs, contribute to or hinder disengagement and reintegration processes?

This report has highlighted the need for those working on DDR and VEDR to continue the dialogue sharing both theoretical insights and good practice. Both are not only individual-level but systemic, societal challenges that warrant complex thinking and multifaceted, multidisciplinary approaches. The form that violent extremism takes depends, in part, on the capacity of the states where it occurs and represents a continuum. In developed democracies, where the security apparatus of the state is strong, and opportunities for inclusion and peaceful political dissent are typically vast, violent extremism often occurs as sporadic networked or lone actor terrorist attacks. However, in weak, fragile states, violent extremists are able to not only launch terrorist attacks but form insurgencies consisting of more organized military-like structures that allow them to attack state targets and control territory. Dismantling the silos between studies of terrorism, civil conflict, civil war, and other relevant academic disciplines, while acknowledging pertinent differences, will allow for more complex and productive thinking about VEDR.

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