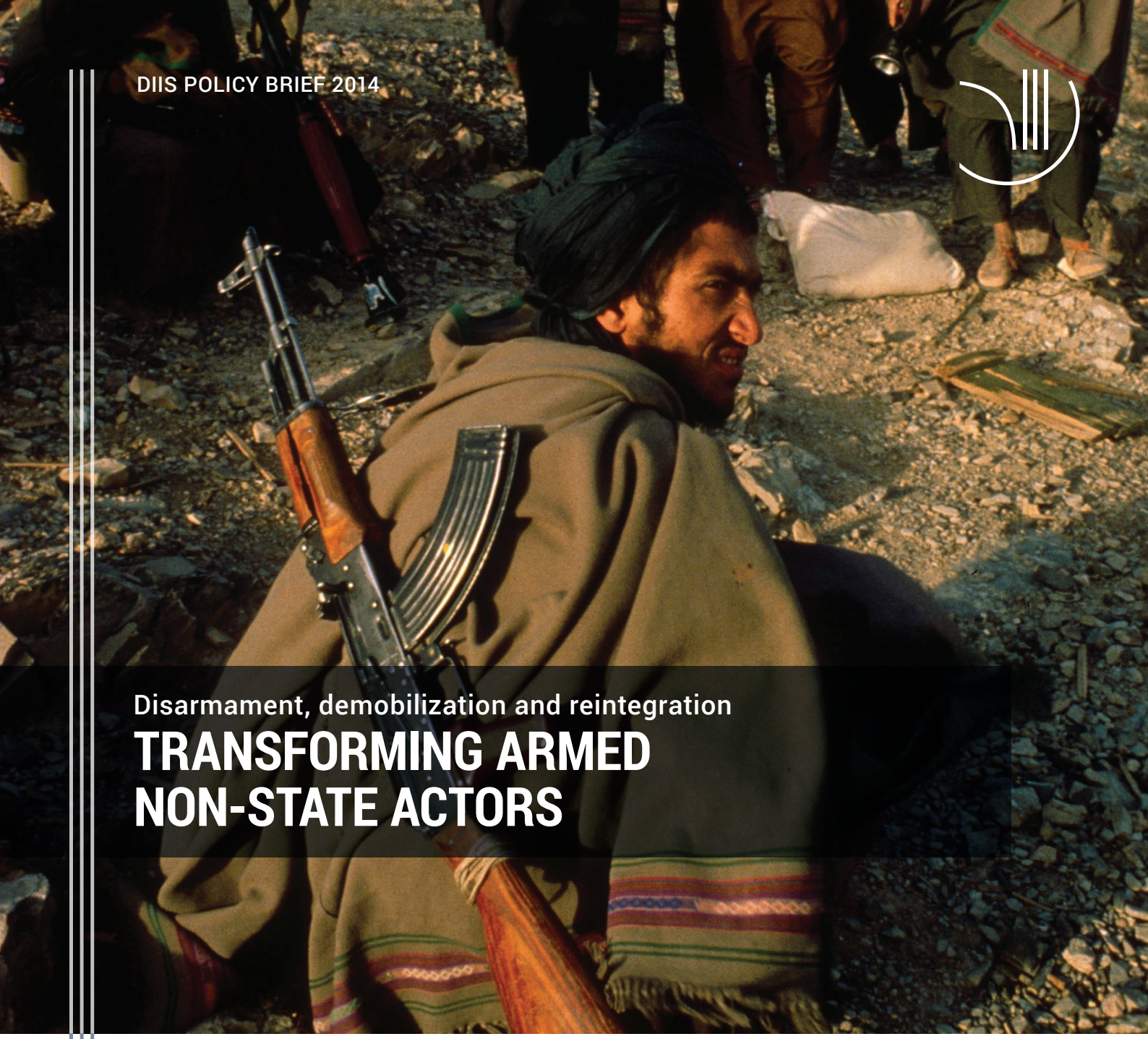

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

TRANSFORMING ARMED NON-STATE ACTORS

It is necessary to rethink the assumptions and theory of change of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs in current situations of armed violence

Countries as different as Afghanistan, Colombia, South Sudan and Burma face major challenges to the state's monopoly of violence and the imperative to bring under control armed non-state actors (ANSAs). In Afghanistan for instance, an estimated 1,870 armed groups exist, including tribal and other militias, community defense forces, and criminal gangs. In the international community 'Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration' is the default program to deal with this challenge. However, experience shows that

RECOMMENDATIONS

- DDR programs should mirror current forms of armed violence and build on political economic analyses of armed non-state actors.
- Disarmament and demobilization does not necessarily secure peace and stability. Policy makers should consider a gradual process in which the management of violence rather than the monopoly of violence is the short-term aim of programs.
- Policy-makers must revise the assumptions behind current approaches to reintegration.

DDR programs aim at transforming combatants into civilians, but are not designed for current situations of armed violence

> **"The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and those associated with armed groups is a prerequisite for post-conflict stability and recovery"**
> United Nations Integrated DDR Standards, 2006

the concept of DDR, developed to deal with statutory and largely well-organized insurgent armies in the 20th century, fail to meet its aims in many areas affected by armed violence today.

Armed non-state actors are defined as any organized group with a basic structure of command operating outside state control, using force, or the threat of force, to achieve its objectives. These actors, ranging from insurgent armies and paramilitaries to vigilantes and urban gangs, exercise some degree of control over territory and populations and may reach levels of organization similar to that of states. They can be in active conflict with states, operate in situations of 'no peace, no war', or even be linked to state institutions in wider security governance networks.

DDR programs comprise a range of elements with the objective of facilitating the transformation of combatants into civilians. They are highly standardized following the introduction in 2006 of the United Nations' Integrated DDR Standards. Never before have DDR programs been so comprehensive in their scope and areas of competency, comprising an ever-expanding field of interventions such as access to land, cash transfers, employment and livelihoods.

A need for political economic analysis of violence and armed non-state actors

In spite of the development of international standards and the general theory and practice of DDR, such templates are, inevitably, not local and context specific. The contexts of today's armed violence are generally much more diffuse and difficult to manage. They comprise

- the existence of a range of non-war contexts that experience extremely high levels of violence and very influential ANSAs, and
- contexts of armed conflict that are characterized by overlapping or 'hybrid' forms of violence and a range of ANSAs that are very different from the insurgent armies of the 20th century.

Violence in many countries is not regulated within particular state institutions like the armed forces and the police. This raises the question of whether DDR as we know it is an appropriate template for violence reduction in today's situations of armed violence. To re-imagine DDR programs will therefore require programmers to invest in context (conflict) analysis and recognize the varied nature of armed groups and their relation to the political economy of violence. DDR in other words should in principle ask: Which actors provide citizens with security and are thus seen as legitimate in local contexts? Understanding the triangular relationship between ANSAs, states, and the populations is essential in developing strategies to deal with ANSAs. Issues of legitimacy, resource mobilization and recruitment are of utmost importance for the future design of DDR.

Disarmament and demobilization for stability?

Armed non-state actors have usually been seen as diametrically opposed to stability. However, ANSAs may also produce degrees of stability, providing protection and sometimes other services to populations, and therefore enjoying local legitimacy. Efforts

Disarmament is the comprehensive collection, documentation, and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of ex-combatants and the civilian population.

Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed groups. The first stage involves the processing of combatants in temporary centers. The second stage encompasses a 'reinsertion' package.

Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants return to civilian life and gain sustainable employment and income during the post-conflict recovery period. Reintegration addresses social and economic issues.

to simply disarm and delink armed individuals from loose military structures as quickly as possible, is not necessarily a recipe for stability. Firstly, in many hotspots of the world the state is not strong enough to coerce or compel ANSAs to disarm, and to ensure protection of people. Libya is a case in point.

Secondly, disarmament is a particularly sensitive topic for ANSAs, as giving up their arms amounts to defeat. These groups are often unsure that promises made in return for disarmament will be fulfilled. So disarmament and demobilization should be approached with care and sometimes reframed with regard to the specific context.

Therefore, disarmament and demobilization could come in stages, even following 'reintegration'. Ensuring stability in places such as Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Iraq will have to bypass the DDR standard response (to disarm and demobilize first) and focus instead on power-sharing agreements as the best solution in the short term. To achieve stability, in other words, the United Nations, sovereign states and international agencies have to consider following more diverse strategies to deal with ANSAs instead of focusing only on the 'elimination' through DDR programs. Instead of insisting on the state's monopoly of violence, states may eventually bolster stability by considering different forms of violence management.

Reintegration
The reintegration component of DDR programs is based on a number of assumptions:

Firstly, combatants are removed from their communities when mobilized and they therefore need special reintegration arrangements unlike the broader war-affected population. However, in many cases the ANSAs' members are operating in the localities where they were mobilized, being part-time combatants or already 'integrated' in the community. ANSA members typically defy clear-cut distinctions between civilians and combatants.

Secondly, since demobilization is assumed to break the links of command and control, reintegration is seen as an individual process. However, commanders and members tend to see reintegration benefits as the prize of demobilization provided by commanders who 'look after their people'. Hence, prior links and hierarchies are often inherently part of the reintegration process.

Thirdly, reintegration aims to reduce the causes and likelihood of remobilization. Employment and improved economic livelihoods are cast as antidotes to the perceived risk that ex-combatants pose to stability. Assuming that poverty, marginalization and unemployment play into the mobilization of combatants, DDR programs focus on providing alternative, civil economic opportunities for ex-combatants. However, the alleged root causes and the general lack of opportunities require more structural and long-term investments. Support for reintegration by its nature can only bring about a few quick wins. It is generally believed that education or vocational skills training is a first step in economic reintegration, but sustainable jobs are few in restrained economies and training is sometimes poorly suited for the labour market needs. Thus, a recent independent evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) work with reintegration concluded that 'relevance can be limited and efforts conducted often limited both financially and technically'.

In sum, policy makers should revise the assumptions behind reintegration support and favor activities that take the existing links between ex-combatants as well as their role in local political economies as a point of departure.

This brief is based on the workshop 'Armed non-state actors' and templates for violence reduction, DIIS, September 25-26, 2014.

Jairo Munive, Post Doc researcher, DIIS (jari@diis.dk)
Finn Stepputat, Senior researcher, DIIS (fst@diis.dk)

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