

“hd

Centre for  
Humanitarian  
Dialogue

**viewpoints**

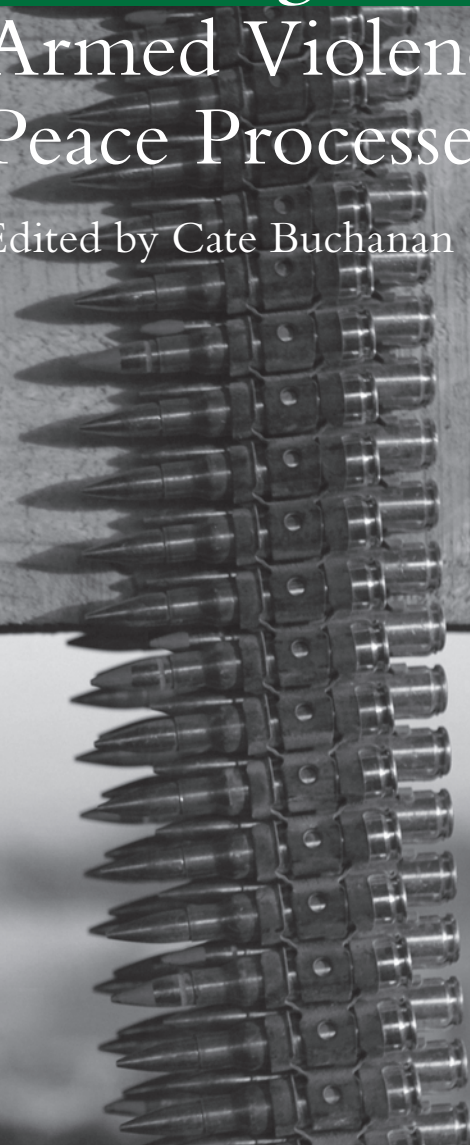
VOLUME I • MARCH 2008

# NEGOTIATING DISARMAMENT

Reflections on  
Guns, Fighters and  
Armed Violence in  
Peace Processes

Edited by Cate Buchanan

WARNING!  
2 WAY  
SHOOTING RANGE



## ABOUT THE HD CENTRE

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) is an independent, Geneva-based foundation whose purpose is to prevent human suffering in war. Our humanitarian approach starts from the premise that preventing and resolving armed conflict is the surest means of doing so, and to this end we promote and facilitate dialogue between belligerents.

Through our work, we seek to contribute to efforts to improve the global response to armed conflict. Our operational engagements are complemented by policy and analytical work focused on civilian protection, mediation techniques, transitional issues and arms and security matters.

HD Centre's work on weapons control and armed violence reduction began in 2001 and has included a range of research, policy and advocacy projects. A central focus is to draw attention to the human costs of weapons misuse and identify options for action for policy-makers and practitioners, and directions for further research and advocacy.

### Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

114 rue de Lausanne  
Geneva, 1202  
Switzerland

*Phone* +41 22 908 1130

*Fax* +41 22 908 1140

*E-mail* [info@hdcentre.org](mailto:info@hdcentre.org)

*Website* [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org)

**Photo:** © Canadian Department of National Defence

**Design:** Richard Jones ([rick@studioexile.com](mailto:rick@studioexile.com))

**Printing:** Paul Green Printing, London

# Reflections on Guns, Fighters and Armed Violence in Peace Processes

Edited by Cate Buchanan

# NEGOTIATING DISARMAMENT: STRATEGIES FOR TACKLING WEAPONS AND VIOLENCE IN PEACE PROCESSES

Negotiating Disarmament explores issues surrounding the planning, timing and techniques of violence reduction, weapons control and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration activities in the processes of peace-making: negotiations, agreements, implementation strategies. Through expert meetings, specific peace process reviews, perception studies, interviews and analysing experiences over the last two decades, as well as drawing upon the HD Centre's own operational engagements, it aims to:

- Provide practical and accessible guidance on weapons control, DDR and violence reduction and prevention to those actively engaged in peace-making,

including mediators, government officials, armed groups, donors, civil society and UN officials;

- Demystify DDR, weapons control and violence reduction strategies through identifying patterns and trends, and lessons over time;
- Identify and describe common obstacles faced in addressing arms issues in peace processes, and suggest ways these may be tackled; and
- Contribute to the generation of analysis and the building of linkages within the violence reduction and prevention, peace-making, peace-building, conflict resolution, and arms control communities.

For more information, go to [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org).

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION CATE BUCHANAN .....	4
1. TRENDS IN WEAPONS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT IN PEACE PROCESSES CAMILLA WASZINK .....	5
2. PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOBILISATION, REINTEGRATION AND WEAPONS CONTROL IN THE EL SALVADOR PEACE PROCESS JOAQUÍN M CHÁVEZ .....	13
3. NEGOTIATING DECOMMISSIONING AND REINTEGRATION IN ACEH, INDONESIA KALLE LIESINEN AND SAMI LAHDENSUO .....	20
4. A MEDIATOR'S PERSPECTIVE JULIAN THOMAS HOTTINGER .....	30

# INTRODUCTION

**P**EACE PROCESSES ARE RENOWNED FOR their many twists and turns, moods and opaque terrain. Within them, matters related to weapons and violence have a paradoxical status: at once the subject of intense anxiety and attention, yet frequently duly ignored. *Reflections on Guns, Fighters and Armed Violence in Peace Processes* represents a rich collection of voices and experiences, and seeks to contribute to a growing debate about holistic response to these matters in peace processes. It is the first of a two-part series bringing together first-hand accounts and careful observations from individuals with diverse connections to peace processes, offering space for their views on how weapons control, violence reduction, and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration fare in the push and pull of peace negotiations.

As part of its commitment to exploring and prompting debate on the practice(s) of peace-making, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue takes seriously these concerns. This is evidenced by the ‘Negotiating Disarmament’ project of which this volume is a part of and its efforts to generate reflections and observations from past experience, and ideas and suggestions for future action. The *Viewpoints* volumes join a set of reports over 2008 addressing thematic and country-based foci ranging from trends in weapons control and violence reduction related provisions in peace agreements to the challenges of reintegration; understanding how to better address the presence of bombs and unexploded ordnance; to how this range of issues actually fared in the peace talks in El Salvador, Burundi and Sudan.

The present publication is an unusual and special contribution to this work and the reader will be stimulated by the instructive overview from Camilla

Waszink of the perils of delaying or neglecting DDR and weapons control in peace negotiations; and, the recollections from Joaquín Chávez, a former member of the FMLN in El Salvador and member of the negotiating team, of how these matters were hinged explicitly to security sector transformation while reintegration, longer-term weapons reduction efforts and other key measures were neglected, with grave implications for human security.

The dilemmas from the perspective of ‘third party facilitators’ are the neatly conveyed by seasoned mediation specialists. Dr. Julian Hottinger provides insights from his detailed experience on the thorny question of when DDR and weapons control measures can be raised in negotiations, and some of the pitfalls and opportunities. The Crisis Management Initiatives’ Kalle Liesnen and Sami Lahdensuo review the DDR content of the Aceh peace process, reflecting a common tension for mediators: balancing providing input and direction, with working with the parameters of the will of the parties’ around the table.

Appreciation is expressed to all the contributors, and their willingness to share their thoughts. Thank you also to Emile LeBrun and Chris Stevenson for their steady editorial assistance.

Finally the Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the Government of Canada, providing funding to bring this report to life. Appreciation is also extended to the Governments of Switzerland and Norway for their input and support for other elements of the ‘Negotiating Disarmament’ project.

**Cate Buchanan**

Editor

March 2008

# 1 TRENDS IN WEAPONS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT IN PEACE PROCESSES CAMILLA WASZINK

OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES, awareness has grown regarding the importance of weapons control and disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) in peace processes—both during the negotiation of peace agreements and in their implementation. Experience gained during this period has demonstrated that the way these issues are handled can significantly influence the outcome of peace-building efforts and contribute to their success or failure.

The end of the Cold War gave rise to renewed cooperation among the major powers. This led the international community to engage in a series of ambitious peace operations—the majority under the aegis of the UN, though in some cases led by regional organisations like North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the African Union. From the outset, the mandates of these missions generally included the DDR of ex-combatants. Over time, they have also incorporated a broader range of weapons reduction measures, such as voluntary weapons collection schemes among the civilian population, capacity-building of security forces in weapons management and the establishment of a regulatory framework for weapons possession.

The issue of unregulated small arms proliferation received increased international attention after a call for action by then-UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1995. He coined the term ‘micro-disarmament’ to describe the assembly, control and disposal of small arms and light weapons undertaken by the UN in conjunction with peace settlements, and highlighted its relevance to peace-building.

In 2001, states adopted the UN Programme of Action on small arms, committing to a range of measures to strengthen controls on these weapons, including through disarmament and other weapons management activities in post-war situations.<sup>1</sup> Its implementation is followed up through regular meetings, which provide the main global framework for discussion and action on small arms and light weapons control.

A review of weapons control and DDR efforts during peace processes reveals certain trends in implementation over time, as well as a number of common weaknesses and obstacles to success. Carefully learning from these developments is a critical first step to strengthening practice and the evolution of norms in this area.<sup>2</sup>

## Too little, too late, too often: Weapons and DDR during peace negotiations

If peace settlements contain weak or insufficient provisions for dealing with weapons and DDR, these questions will often come back to haunt processes at a later stage. Even though post-war disarmament has received greater attention and support in recent years, these subjects have frequently been neglected or given inadequate attention during the negotiation process itself. There are a number of different reasons for this.

The lack of consideration given to this issue can be inadvertent, as may be the case when negotiators fail to appreciate its importance or have limited experience in this area. The senior political figures that are

---

**CAMILLA WASZINK** was a policy adviser in the Arms Unit of the Legal Division of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) from 2002 to 2008, where she was responsible for the ICRC’s work on arms transfers and small arms availability and a focal point for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies on issues related to weapons and international humanitarian law. Previously she worked as a researcher for the Small Arms Survey, the Bonn International Center for Conversion in Germany and the Program on Security and Development at the Monterey Institute of International Studies and has written extensively on arms transfers and international humanitarian law, small arms control, post-war disarmament and the role of weapons in peace processes. She holds an MA in international policy from the Monterey Institute of International Studies and a BA in political science and law from the University of Oslo.

often involved in such negotiations, including as mediators, may not give priority to what they might consider more technical matters—such as weapons. Moreover, they may not have the necessary expertise to address such issues in detail, and this can result in vague, unrealistic and incomplete provisions. Yet, such ‘details’ may prove critical in practice.

In the case of Liberia, for example, neither the 1993 Cotonou Accord nor the follow-on agreements concluded between 1994 and 1996 included any provisions for the disposal of weapons collected. As a result, it ended up taking more than two years to persuade President Taylor to destroy the weapons collected after disarmament and demobilisation was conducted in 1996–1997. The 1995 Dayton Peace Accords, which ended the armed conflict in Bosnia, provides another example. The agreement stipulated a series of arms control measures pertaining to heavy conventional weaponry, but it largely ignored the category of small arms and light weapons. Limiting provisions in this way ignores the reality of most contemporary armed conflicts, which are predominantly fought with small arms and light weapons.

In other processes, a deliberate choice has been made by negotiators or mediators to delay discussions of the particularly sensitive issue of weapons out of fear that it will derail the process. Weapons often carry a symbolic, ideological and psychological significance that far exceed their objective military utility, making questions of disarmament particularly resistant to deal-making and compromise. While this may be a carefully considered tactical choice that can facilitate the successful conclusion of a peace agreement, it is a strategy that can quickly backfire when the absence of clear provisions for weapons control and DDR compounds the difficulty of dealing with these aspects at a later stage. At the same time, controlling weapons and disarming groups and individuals is often a long-term process, and various aspects may still need to be further negotiated or renegotiated at a later stage as new issues arise.

## Step-by-step approaches

One approach that has proven effective in promoting DDR and weapons control during peace talks is to allow for gradual confidence-building between the parties by linking disarmament to other measures that can reassure or benefit the groups and individuals surrendering weapons. This can be done through a

phased process, in which the achievement of targets related to the number of weapons surrendered leads to the realisation of other desired objectives such as increased political inclusion, demilitarisation of state forces or security sector reform. During the peace process in Northern Ireland, for example, Sinn Fein’s success at the polls, as well as a ‘package deal’ that linked disarmament to the downsizing of state forces and police reform, facilitated progress in putting the Irish Republican Army’s weapon stockpiles ‘beyond use’.<sup>3</sup> Another variation of this phased approach allows for gradual surrender of arms by different factions as a way of promoting incremental confidence building. In Sierra Leone, this was referred to as ‘paired rolling disarmament’, in which two districts with opposing factions would simultaneously disarm.<sup>4</sup>

When implemented carefully and transparently, the collection and destruction of weapons may in fact provide a powerful means of building confidence between former warring parties and war-torn communities. With this in mind, the organisation of public weapon destruction ceremonies has become an increasingly common feature of disarmament programmes, often referred to as ‘Flames of Peace’—dubbed after the bonfire of guns that marked the symbolic end of the 1996 Tuareg rebellion in Mali.

## The primacy of politics

It is clear that politics is the primary determinant of success to agreeing and implementing DDR and weapons control in an effective and realistic manner. Efforts to remove weapons are of limited value—however well implemented they may be—as long as the political conditions for a resolution of the conflict are not in place. Given the widespread availability of weapons in most conflict zones, parties can easily rearm if the political agreements break down.

In practice, there are several unfortunate examples of disarmament processes that have gone ahead without regard to the political realities on the ground. Even when parties have demonstrated an obvious lack of good faith—for example by turning in old and unusable weapons or by taking advantage of a ceasefire during the demobilisation phase to rearm and regroup—programmes have been allowed to continue. This is probably due to a combination of factors, such as the difficulty of suspending an on-going programme once it has generated a certain momentum; a bureaucratic



wish to implement programme activities according to established plans and timetables; or quite simply, wishful thinking that the situation will improve.

However, the consequences of turning a blind eye to an evident lack of political will can be grave, and have included not only the loss of resources and political capital, but even lives. This problem was bluntly described in the 2000 ‘Brahimi report’ on UN peace operations, which stated that “the Secretariat must not apply best-case planning assumptions to situations where the local actors have historically exhibited worst-case behaviour.”<sup>5</sup>

While the political process must be sufficiently advanced to generate a realistic possibility of success, it is important to take advantage of the window of opportunity for disarmament that may open just after the end of hostilities. The sudden prospect of peace may create a unique willingness to surrender weapons among both combatants and civilians, which may be lost if the process is delayed and uncertainty about the benefits of peace emerge. DDR has, on numerous occasions, been jeopardised because it was not implemented in a timely way, for example when delays occur in the deployment of peace-keepers or in the disbursement of funds to finance the process.

## **Weapons as bargaining chips**

Weapons are among the most powerful bargaining chips that parties possess around the negotiating table. Consequently, circumvention and deception should be expected. Parties may seek to withhold information or provide inaccurate estimates of the number of combatants and weapons that they hold. During negotiations, it may be in the interest of a party to exaggerate the number of weapons it claims to have as a way of strengthening its own bargaining position. Yet, when approaching the disarmament stage, the same party may seek to deflate these figures to retain more weapons.

It is vital to determine reliable baseline estimates for the parties’ weapons holdings to be able to set realistic disarmament targets and to have a figure against which the numbers of weapons surrendered can be assessed. Useful sources of information can include intelligence information, previous and current claims by the parties themselves and press reports. The establishment of a baseline must be followed up with careful monitoring of the parties’ arms holdings throughout the process and of the number of weapons surrendered and destroyed.

In this regard, it is worth noting the importance of evaluating not only the quantity, but also the type and quality of weapons held as compared to those surrendered. A well-known and recurrent problem in many DDR programmes has been the turning in of a disproportionate number of old and unusable weapons.

The likely inaccuracy of information supplied by the parties themselves underscores the importance of having access to independent means of verifying such claims. Assessing the size of weapons holdings can of course be extremely difficult, particularly in settings characterised by long-lasting or recurring armed conflicts, a large number of armed groups, spill-over from armed conflicts in neighbouring countries, porous borders, and leakages from state stockpiles. There is now a growing body of relevant research on the dynamics of weapons stockpiles and inventories, including assessments of the size of weapons holdings in the hands of governments, non-state armed groups and civilians.<sup>6</sup>

Although the difficulties and risks involved should not be underestimated, if weapons-related issues can be successfully addressed during negotiations and clear provisions included in the peace settlement, it is likely to enhance transparency, oversight and understanding of the process. The inclusion of advisers with expertise in weapons control and DDR could help ensure that these aspects are addressed in a realistic and effective manner. This would also likely reduce opportunities for deception, mistrust and manipulation by the parties.

Discussions around the thorny issue of weapons—and progress made in addressing it—may also provide a valuable indicator of the parties’ actual intentions and willingness to end the conflict through a negotiated settlement. However, resolving this issue on paper does by no means guarantee success, as the implementation process is likely to be fraught with new challenges.

## **Words into deeds: the implementation of weapons control and DDR provisions**

A wealth of experience and analysis has been accumulated over the past two decades regarding the practical implementation of disarmament during peace processes. Given the various lessons learned and ‘best practice’ exercises undertaken in this period, it is discouraging to note that many of the same problems continue to arise wherever such programmes are carried out. What is the reason for this?

Part of the explanation probably lies in the fact that disarmament is only one element of a broader political transition from violent conflict to peace, with all of the pitfalls inherent in any such process. The disarmament programme and its likelihood of success will be influenced by a host of external factors that are likely to be far outside of the programme implementers' control. In many cases, it may therefore be unfair to blame past failures on the programmes themselves. Even a well-designed programme flawlessly executed can fail simply because the political process runs into trouble or collapses.

Despite the difficult political environment surrounding such efforts, there is still much that can and should be done to enhance the implementation of disarmament programmes. While significant progress has been made in the last few years, a more consistent application of lessons learnt from previous experiences is still required. Recent developments, such as the adoption of the UN Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) in December 2006, provide hope that this will occur more systematically in the future. These standards constitute the definitive policies, guidelines and procedures for all UN DDR operations, developed with the participation of the fifteen UN departments, agencies, funds and programmes that are involved in various aspects of DDR.<sup>7</sup>

One of the positive features of these standards is that they recognise the need for a more comprehensive approach to DDR beyond the mere demobilisation and collection of weapons from ex-combatants. Although the disarmament of ex-combatants remains the core goal, the introduction to the IDDRS affirms a broader vision of the ultimate objective of DDR: “*DDR lays the groundwork for safeguarding and sustaining the communities in which these individuals can live as law-abiding citizens, while building national capacity for long-term peace, security and development.*”<sup>8</sup>

It is likewise encouraging that the IDDRS contains modules on a range of cross-cutting issues that have been inadequately considered in the past: such as how to address the needs of women, children and youth, the relationship between DDR and food aid/food security interventions and how to tackle health issues such as HIV/AIDS during a DDR process. The next key step is to ensure that those actually designing the DDR processes are provided with the necessary tools and resources to apply the IDDRS on the ground. In processes that aim to develop universal guidelines

**“The IDDRS affirms a broader vision of the ultimate objective of DDR: *DDR lays the groundwork for safeguarding and sustaining the communities in which these individuals can live as law-abiding citizens, while building national capacity for long-term peace, security and development.*”**

and establish good practices, there is still often a gap between the ‘what’ and the ‘how’. A potential danger with such exercises is also that they can promote a one-size-fits-all approach to activities, which in fact require a highly sophisticated understanding of and interaction with the local context.

### **Building comprehensive controls**

Although it is an ambition that is still challenging to put into practice, it has now become a statement of the obvious to say that disarmament must be an integrated part of a comprehensive peace-building strategy. In the broadest sense, this implies that it must be undertaken in conjunction with a range of other measures aimed at establishing stability and security after conflict, including in the areas of transitional justice, security sector reform, governance and social and economic development.

In a more narrow sense, however, and more directly linked to the disarmament process itself, it entails adopting a more holistic strategy for weapons control and armed violence reduction. In addition to the collection of weapons, a number of complementary measures should be considered. These may include the establishment of adequate procedures for stockpile management and security; the destruction of surplus, confiscated and collected weapons; the development of a regulatory framework for the possession and use of guns by civilians; the prevention of illicit arms trafficking; and the promotion of activities aimed at preventing and reducing armed violence at the community-level.

Additional measures like these can help ensure that the gains from disarmament are not reversed or lost in the long-term. A comprehensive approach to weapons reduction has for instance been successfully implemented in Cambodia. The Cambodian government, with the support of the European Union, has undertaken a range of activities to improve weapons control and management, combining efforts to

strengthen national arms legislation and the security and management of military and police stockpiles with weapons collection and destruction and public awareness campaigns in local communities.<sup>9</sup>

## Widening the lens

The need for a more comprehensive approach is also becoming apparent with regard to another key aspect of such efforts, namely the definition of target groups. Many current armed conflicts are characterised by a variety of armed actors and a proliferation of armed groups. These may include the government's regular armed forces, armed opposition groups, paramilitaries and criminal networks. In addition, it is common for splinter groups to emerge during a transitional process, as factions divide over contentious issues or group members feel that their interests are not being adequately represented by the leaders participating in negotiations. Exclusion of one or more armed groups from the DDR process, which denies them access to benefits such as reintegration support, can easily result in continued violence. In a number of settings, even small armed factions have been able to disrupt and endanger a peace process by engaging in continued violence or refusing to lay down their arms. These risks must be taken into account in decisions to include or exclude certain groups around the negotiating table, as well as in the DDR process itself. To the extent possible, an inclusive approach that seeks to engage all armed actors should be sought.

Furthermore, when determining the eligibility criteria for entry into a DDR programme, it may be necessary to look beyond those who have been active combatants and also include other individuals that have been part of an armed group, regardless of their role. The concept of DDR still implies that disarmament is linked to the demobilisation of armed combatants. This has often limited its target group in ways that do not correspond to the realities of many of today's armed conflicts and failed to consider the wide range of people who may have been involved in the conflict.

Instead of using the possession of a gun as a strict entry requirement, participation in an armed group may be a more appropriate criterion. This can help ensure that, for example, women and children who have performed other functions are not excluded. The needs of ex-combatants' dependents should also be considered. The eligibility criteria for DDR should be addressed during negotiations to ensure that target

groups are defined in accordance with local realities and that all groups that have participated in the conflict are considered. This will help prevent tensions and problems from arising when particular groups find themselves left out of the formal process.

## Civilians and guns

Consideration should also be given to reducing and regulating guns in civilian hands. For a number of reasons, there are often significant numbers of small arms in the hands of civilians at the end of an armed conflict. In some cases, warring factions have distributed weapons to civilians as part of a deliberate strategy. In other cases, the general insecurity generated by the conflicts has led civilians to arm themselves for their own protection. The widespread availability of military weapons in many war-affected areas facilitates this trend. In addition, secret arsenals of weapons may be retained by armed groups or by individual combatants who hold on to them for future security.

It may therefore be necessary to complement the formal demobilisation and disarmament of ex-combatants with efforts to remove these excess weapons from circulation and reduce the number of guns in civilian hands.<sup>10</sup> This should be taken into account already during the negotiation phase and not simply as an afterthought to the DDR process. An increasingly common approach is the organisation of voluntary weapons collection programmes for civilians, which generally offer some type of incentive for civilians to disarm. Sometimes these strategies, particularly when offering cash in return for guns, have had undesirable consequences. Although the provision of individual incentives is still common, there has been a gradual move towards collective incentives, such as development projects, which instead benefit a group or the whole community.

For example in Sierra Leone, after the end of the formal disarmament process in 2002, the Sierra Leone Police, together with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), launched a series of weapons collection efforts targeting communities. Development incentives were provided to chiefdoms that could be certified as 'arms free'. This was done in parallel with the development of new gun laws which significantly strengthened standards and criteria for the use and possession of weapons by civilians.<sup>11</sup> A similar Community Arms Collection for Development programme has since been undertaken by UNDP in neighbouring Liberia.

## Reintegration: Achilles' heel?

A comprehensive strategy must see the reintegration of ex-combatants as integral to the process of weapons control and armed violence reduction. Effective social reintegration of those associated with armed groups and government forces can greatly influence the prospects for sustainable disarmament. It is therefore unrealistic to view disarmament and reintegration as two separate and independent processes. Collecting weapons is after all just a means to an end. The real goal is—simply put—to get those who hold weapons to want to stop using them. First and foremost, this entails achieving a political settlement between the parties to the conflict. However, it would be unwise not to also consider the needs of ex-combatants as individuals.

From a purely humanitarian perspective, ex-combatants often need initial support in order to sustain themselves. Former combatants may also suffer from significant health problems related to their participation in the conflict, such as psychological trauma, disability or HIV/AIDS. At the same time, there are other more pragmatic reasons for assisting ex-combatants and helping them to acquire viable alternative livelihoods. Without such support, they are less likely to want to give up their weapons and more likely to re-engage in violence or crime. Efforts must therefore be made to make peace seem like the more attractive option.

However, reintegration is often the least emphasised component of DDR programmes and it is typically easier to secure funding for disarmament than for reintegration activities, which requires longer-term involvement and produces less tangible results. Short-comings and delays in reintegration support have jeopardised a number of past DDR efforts, including the demobilisation processes in Mozambique, Angola and Liberia in the 1990s.<sup>12</sup> Yet, solutions have been devised that attempt to address this problem. For example, during the most recent DDR process in Sierra Leone, so-called 'stopgap projects'—which consisted of short-term employment for ex-combatants waiting to enter the formal reintegration process—were critical in preventing discontented combatants from resorting to violence. Because combatants were employed in communities to help restore damaged infrastructure, these projects also assisted in building trust and improving social relations.<sup>13</sup>

It cannot be denied that the challenges to effective reintegration are very real in countries emerging

from war, particularly in situations where social and economic structures have all but collapsed, there is massive unemployment among the whole population and a significant proportion of the population is poor. In this regard, it is interesting to note that a survey of ex-combatants in Liberia in 2006 showed only a marginal difference in the socio-economic situation reported by ex-combatants who had received a reintegration training package compared to those who had not participated in any reintegration scheme. This is likely a reflection of the high rate of unemployment in the country rather than of the reintegration programme as such.<sup>14</sup>

In such contexts, it can also be highly problematic to prioritise one group over others, in particular a group that may be seen as responsible for the conflict and in many cases has committed abuses against civilians. The reintegration process may also disrupt new structures and means of social organisation that have emerged in communities as a result of the war. For example, women may have assumed a leading role both within the household and in community governance while men have been in combat. It will require a great deal of caution to ensure that reintegration programmes do not end up aggravating an already volatile situation by leading to increased hostility towards ex-combatants or friction between different groups of beneficiaries. Again, initiatives that benefit community development rather than specific groups can reduce the risk of tension and promote reconciliation, though some level of targeted support for ex-combatants is nonetheless likely to be needed.

## Conclusion

During the negotiation of peace agreements, weapons and disarmament seem to be questions that—either by design or by accident—rarely receive sufficient attention around the negotiating table. However, when it comes to the implementation of such agreements in the context of peace operations, the fate of the weapons is often among the most visible and sensitive aspects of the process. Experience shows that the degree to which weapons-related issues are successfully handled on the ground can influence the outcome of the entire peace process. This paradox leads to the rather obvious conclusion that such questions must be given greater prominence from the outset—during peace talks—as well as in the crucial period before

negotiations start when preparations are made and information is collected.

It is a cause for optimism that the growing awareness surrounding these questions is starting to show results and a more comprehensive and professional approach to DDR and weapons control in the context of peace-making and peace-building is emerging.

## Some suggestions to consider

### 1. Expert advice on weapons control and DDR

Issues of disarmament and weapons control should be addressed in as much detail as possible during peace negotiations. Negotiators or advisers with the requisite expertise should be involved to ensure that peace agreements include appropriate and realistic provisions.

### 2. Political will is key

Disarmament cannot create political will where there is none. While progress made in the disarmament process can help build confidence and positively influence the political process, it cannot bear the responsibility for processes that were destined to fail.

### 3. Step-by-step

A series of confidence-building measures rather than the immediate, complete surrender of weapons can be an effective path to disarmament. This step-by-step approach can link the surrender of weapons to the gradual achievement of other political objectives or the disarmament by one faction to that of another.

### 4. Start early to obtain accurate information

Weapons are valuable bargaining chips during negotiations, both in terms of their symbolic and practical importance. Access to reliable information about the parties' weapons holdings will reduce opportunities for deception and encourage greater transparency. This will require thorough preparations and collection of information before negotiations start.

### 5. Balance lessons learned and specific context

Lessons from past experiences must not only be recorded, but also applied. Greater efforts must be made to ensure

the transfer of knowledge between those involved in DDR and weapons control efforts, whether at the level of programme implementation, research or policy development. However, the limitations of lessons learnt must also be acknowledged. What has worked in one context may be entirely inappropriate in another. Rigorous contextual analysis and adaptation is therefore essential.

### 6. Bundle measures

Removing excess weapons from circulation and adequately controlling their availability after conflicts will require a 'package' of weapons control measures. In addition to the collection and destruction of weapons, this may include measures to enhance the management and security of stockpiles, to develop adequate national legislation on arms transfers, to regulate the use and possession of weapons and to ensure that ammunition is subject to the same strict controls. To achieve a long-term reduction in armed violence, weapons control measures should be complemented by evidence-based preventive strategies that seek to affect the factors that lead to violence.

### 7. Address all relevant actors

Disarmament and weapons collection efforts must be targeted in accordance with local realities and should cast a wide net so as to capture all relevant groups. This may include individuals who have been involved in or associated with armed groups, even if they have not participated actively in hostilities, including civilians.

### 8. Economic reintegration supports disarmament

The existence of viable alternative livelihoods is important for ex-combatants to remain committed to disarmament. Efforts to support the reintegration of ex-combatants must take into account the broader socio-economic context to ensure that the support provided is appropriate and likely to have an impact. The needs of other groups affected by the conflict and the situation of the population in general must also be considered. The provision of support that will collectively benefit the community can reduce the risks involved in targeting specific groups.

## Suggested resources for further information

- Berdal, Mats (1996), *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars*, Adelphi Paper No. 303, Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Buchanan, Cate and Mireille Widmer (2006), *Civilians, guns and peace-building: Approaches, norms and possibilities*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Negotiating Disarmament briefing paper No. 1
- Faltas, Sami, and Joseph DiChiaro eds. (2001), *Managing the Remnants of War: Micro disarmament as an Element of Peace Building*, Nomos, Baden-Baden
- Faltas, Sami, Glenn McDonald and Camilla Waszink (2001), *Removing Small Arms from Society: A Review of Weapons Collection and Destruction Programmes*, Occasional Paper No. 2, Small Arms Survey, Geneva
- Jensen, Steffen and Finn Stepputat (2001), *Demobilizing Armed Civilians*, CDR Policy Paper, Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen, December
- Kingma, Kees ed. (2000), *Demobilization in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Development and Security Impacts*, MacMillan, New York
- Meek, Sarah and Mark Malan, eds. (2004), *Identifying Lessons from DDR Experiences in Africa*, Workshop Report, ISS Monograph No 106, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria
- Swarbrick, Peter (2007), *Avoiding Disarmament Failure: The Critical Link in DDR—An Operational Manual for Donors, Managers, and Practitioners*, Working Paper 5, Small Arms Survey, Geneva
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (2004), *Getting it Right, Doing it Right: Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration*, New York
- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (1996), *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: The Issues*, New York and Geneva
- United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR (2007), *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)*, UN Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR, New York

## Websites

- Bonn International Center for Conversion** [www.bicc.de](http://www.bicc.de)
- Institute for Security Studies** [www.iss.co.za](http://www.iss.co.za) (go to DDR page)
- International Action Network on Small Arms – UN process on small arms control portal** [www.iansa.org/un/index.htm](http://www.iansa.org/un/index.htm)
- Small Arms Survey** [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org)
- UN Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Resource Centre** [www.unddr.org/](http://www.unddr.org/)

## Endnotes

- 1 See United Nations, *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*, A/CONF.192/15. Available at: <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/poa.html>.
- 2 Several of these arguments were first presented in previous publications by the author, 'Talking about Disarmament: The Role of Small Arms in Peace Processes', *Small Arms Survey 2003: Development Denied*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 277–321 and 'Taking Weapons out of Circulation', *Missing Pieces: Directions for Reducing Gun Violence*

- through the UN Process on Small Arms Control*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva, 2005, pp. 79–92. Available at: [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org).
- 3 For an analysis of the process in Northern Ireland, see Hauswedell, Corinna and Kris Brown (2002), *Burying the Hatchet: The Decommisioning of Paramilitary Arms in Northern Ireland*, Brief 22, Bonn International Center for Conversion, Bonn.
  - 4 This strategy is highlighted in UNAMSIL DDR Co-ordination Section (2003), *The DDR Process in Sierra Leone: Lessons Learned*, UNAMSIL, Freetown, August, p. 17; and Thusi, Thokozani (2004), 'Learning from Sierra Leone' in Alusala, Nelson and Thokozani Thusi, *A Step Towards Peace: Disarmament in Africa*, Monograph No. 98, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, p. 52.
  - 5 United Nations General Assembly/United Nations Security Council (2000), *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/55/305-S/2000/809, Para. 51.
  - 6 See for example the Small Arms Survey yearbooks 2001–2007, as well as its occasional papers and special reports. Available at: [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org).
  - 7 The IDDRS are available at the electronic UN DDR Resource Centre which contains information about past and on-going DDR programmes, training modules and other reference documents. See [www.unddr.org/iddrs/](http://www.unddr.org/iddrs/).
  - 8 1.10. Introduction to Integrated DDR Standards, para. 7. Available at: [www.unddr.org/iddrs/01/](http://www.unddr.org/iddrs/01/).
  - 9 For further information about this programme, see [www.eu-asac.org](http://www.eu-asac.org).
  - 10 For an analysis of some of the concerns surrounding the disarmament of civilians, see Jensen, Steffen and Finn Stepputat (2001), *Demobilizing Armed Civilians*, CRD Policy Paper, Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen; and Buchanan, Cate and Mireille Widmer (2006), *Civilians, guns and peace processes: Approaches and possibilities*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. Available in French, Spanish and English at: [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org).
  - 11 Further information about this programme can be found at [www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=60](http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=60). See also Miller, Derek, Daniel Ladouceur and Zoe Dugal (2006), *From Research to Roadmap: Learning from the arms for development Initiative in Sierra Leone*, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva.
  - 12 These problems are described for example in: Berman, Eric (1996), *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*, UNIDIR, New York and Geneva; Porto, Joao Gomes and Imogen Parsons (2003), *Sustaining the Peace in Angola: An Overview of Current Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration*, Monograph No. 83, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria; Kapungu, Leonard (1998), 'Case Studies Problems, Achievements and Lessons Learned Liberia' in Kuhne, Winrich et al. (2007), *Consolidating Peace Through Practical Disarmament Measures and Control of Small Arms: From Civil War to Civil Society*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, pp. 85–87; and Dzinesa, Gwinyayi A. (2007), 'Postconflict Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Southern Africa', *International Studies Perspectives*, 8, pp. 73–89.
  - 13 UNAMSIL DDR Co-ordination Section (2003), *The DDR Process in Sierra Leone: Lessons Learned*, UNAMSIL, Freetown, August, p.8.
  - 14 For further information about this survey and the DDR programme in Liberia, see: [www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=52](http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=52).

# 2 PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOBILISATION, REINTEGRATION AND WEAPONS CONTROL IN THE EL SALVADOR PEACE PROCESS

## JOAQUÍN M CHÁVEZ

SIXTEEN YEARS AGO, THE GOVERNMENT of Alfredo Cristiani and leaders of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) signed a peace accord that settled the Salvadoran civil war, one of the most intense conflicts in twentieth-century Latin America and the site of the longest US military involvement up to that time. The war (1980–1992) is often remembered as one of the last chapters of the Cold War in Latin America, though its origins can be more accurately attributed to a long history of authoritarian rule and repression.<sup>1</sup> The peace accords can be considered largely successful as they facilitated a significant democratic transition, with the United Nations (UN) in the role of mediator and guarantor of the process.<sup>2</sup>

I participated in the negotiations and implementation process as a member of the FMLN, joining the team in May 1991 and was committed to dialogue and negotiation to end the civil war.<sup>3</sup> My specific contribution was in the formulation of socio-economic issues, of critical importance to so many who had taken up arms. During the second half of 1991, I was also involved in the discussions on the demilitarisation of society, the creation of the National Civilian Police, and the terms and conditions for the cessation of the war, including during the final round of negotiations held in New York City in December.

Between 1992 and 1993, I was a member of a tripartite body in charge of overseeing national reconstruction, composed of representatives from the government (principally from the Secretariat of National Reconstruction), the UN Mission (ONUSAL), and the

FMLN. I was also engaged with the restoration of territories under FMLN control during the war (e.g. return of local government and public services), the monitoring of the peace process, the transformation of the FMLN into a political party and in the coordination of the FMLN-CD (Democratic Convergence) presidential campaign of 1994, and the entry of the FMLN into electoral processes.<sup>4</sup>

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) in El Salvador was a key part in bringing about a definitive end to the violent conflict and to preventing post-accord military confrontations. In the process the FMLN forces fully demobilised and the military dramatically reduced in numbers and submitted to processes of doctrinal reform. The DDR process generated political space for the transformation of the FMLN into a legal political party and for the implementation of major political reforms in the country.

Reintegration, on the other hand, failed to provide the majority of former combatants sufficient socio-economic support to build dignified lives. Moreover, negotiators did not address the issue of guns in civilian hands, and in fact the number of weapons in civilian possession and their use in violent crime dramatically increased after the war. Issues of institutional impunity also affected the credibility of the peace process and the prospects for national reconciliation and reparations for the victims of state and war-related violence.<sup>5</sup> The overall weaknesses of reintegration efforts and the lack of provisions for reducing civilian held arms may have contributed to the substantial increase in social violence and crime in the post-war period.

---

**JOAQUÍN CHÁVEZ** was a member of the FMLN until 1996. Since 1997, he has conducted research on the peace process in El Salvador. Between 1997 and 2000, Chávez worked as a researcher and policy consultant for the United Nations Development Programme in El Salvador on issues of social violence. He is the cofounder of the Central American Studies Programme at California State University Northridge where he taught courses on culture and violence in Central America and Latin American history. Chávez is currently a fellow at the Department of History of New York University, where he conducts research on the role of intellectuals in the origins of the Salvadoran civil war.

## During the peace talks

Demilitarisation and democratisation of society were the dominant themes of the peace negotiations. This is understandable given the long and painful history of militarism in El Salvador.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, substantive agreements on demilitarisation made discussions on DDR possible, and this approach ultimately generated political commitment on both sides to DDR (though we did not use this term at that time).

But discussions of demilitarisation were initially deadlocked for several months. In August 1990, the FMLN introduced a proposal for the demilitarisation of society that was flatly rejected by the government. It was the UN proposals on the future of the armed forces in October 1990, and the direct intervention of the UN Secretary-General in the negotiations in January 1991, that led to the first substantial agreement on demilitarisation, in Mexico City in April 1991. The 'Mexico Agreements' included constitutional reforms regarding the role of the armed forces, placing the military under civilian authority. The FMLN's initial proposal demanded the demobilisation or the integration of the two armies, which is why it included a 'unilateral declaration' in the Mexico Agreements that stated: "the wording of article 211 [of the Constitution], where the armed forces are described as a 'permanent' institution, is incompatible with its position on this matter."<sup>7</sup> It was only in 2004 that the FMLN lifted its reservation on this point, when the leadership concluded the military had fully complied with the peace accords and undergone doctrinal reform appropriate for a permanent role in a democratic society.

In September 1991, during meetings held in New York City, the parties adopted the so-called 'compressed negotiations' to address the final topics; at this time they also agreed that up to 20 per cent of FMLN combatants and a further 20 per cent of state forces would be eligible to join the new National Civilian Police.<sup>8</sup> This significantly contributed to FMLN willingness to discuss DDR. As a result, issues related to the establishment of "guarantees and conditions needed to reintegrate members of the FMLN into civilian, institutional, and political life of the country in absolute legality" and the conditions for the cessation of the armed conflict were also included in the compressed negotiations, three months before the end of the peace talks.<sup>9</sup> The parties, particularly the FMLN, wanted to agree on a final accord before

the departure of Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar on December 31, given his crucial contribution and that of his team to a successful outcome.

Despite the growing time pressure, the demobilisation and disarmament aspects contained in the chapter VII of the accords, 'The Cessation of the Armed Conflict', were carefully planned by a sub-committee composed of commanders of the armed forces and the FMLN and assisted by UN experts.<sup>10</sup> The main elements included:

- the conditions for the establishment of a permanent cease fire;
- the separation of forces;
- the movement of the two armies into specified and semi-permanent facilities;
- the creation of an inventory of military personnel and the weapons of both armies;
- the destruction of the FMLN arsenal;
- the progressive and simultaneous demobilisation of both armies; and,
- the verification role of the UN mission (ONUSAL).

In January 1992, the parties agreed on a timetable aimed at, completing the demobilisation of the FMLN army; the purging of human rights violators in the army; the reduction of the army; the demobilisation of the army's elite counterinsurgency battalions known as 'Battalions of Immediate Reaction'; and, the dismantling of security forces (namely the National Guard, Treasury Police, National Police, and paramilitary bodies) by October 1992.

The process was rich in ambiguities and posed various threats to the consolidation of peace. In principle the FMLN committed to gradually demobilise its troops by 20 per cent in five stages. They were quartered in 15 sites and this was to be matched by a reciprocal effort on the government side. At various times, the FMLN postponed demobilisation in protest at the government's attempts to circumvent implementation of the peace accords, particularly concerning the demobilisation of paramilitary forces and the notorious National Guard (which had become a fully fledged death squad by the early 1990s) and the implementation of the programme to transfer land. In November 1992, the UN publicly acknowledged that the FMLN was not obliged to adhere to the initial timetable of demobilisation if the government failed to implement the complimentary agreements.



A series of political assassinations of FMLN leaders and activists perpetrated between 1992 and 1993 by clandestine groups were also a serious challenge to the process. This was a last-ditch attempt by the extreme right against the FMLN to derail the peace process. These assassinations ended in July 1993 after the publication of a report on the activities of illegal armed groups still operating at the time.<sup>11</sup> An explosion of an FMLN arsenal in Managua, Nicaragua in March 1993 prompted a major crisis. This was particularly problematic for the UN Secretary-General, who had publicly accepted the FMLN assurances of its full disarmament: a precondition for the FMLN inscription as a legal political party. The FMLN accepted full responsibility and handed over the rest of the weapons in its possession.

## The challenges of reintegration and the land transfer programme

DDR was one part of a larger effort to demilitarise the state and those who took up arms in the revolution. However, the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life was hastily conceived during the negotiations and then poorly implemented. This flaw contributed, to a certain extent, to the high levels of social and criminal violence that wracked Salvadoran society in the aftermath of the civil war—which has continued to this day. Considerations of age, gender, physical and mental health, as well as the cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of the various combatants (FMLN and government forces) were not carefully contemplated in the reintegration initiatives. Nor were those of the roughly 15,000 civilians who occupied private or state land in the territories under FMLN control during the war, who were included in the process under the term *tenedores* (or ‘holders’ of land, farmers who settled on abandoned land during the war).<sup>12</sup>

The government’s approach to reintegration was guided by unrealistic assumptions about ‘good economic performance’ from former combatants in the immediate aftermath of a civil war. This unreasonable expectation pressured combatants who had endured tremendous losses during the war in terms of physical and mental health, family networks, personal property, and the opportunity to acquire the skills and education to live productive lives. Yet the government deemed that FMLN fighters, and curiously, also government soldiers should be given minimal support for reinser-

**“The FMLN negotiators had perhaps a more nuanced approach to reintegration, but in practice they, too, prioritised discussions on ‘substantive agreements’ . . . and were less prepared to engage with this crucial theme.”**

tion and reintegration to civilian life. The aim was to get the process over with as quickly and cheaply as possible.<sup>13</sup>

The FMLN negotiators had perhaps a more nuanced approach to reintegration, but in practice they, too, prioritised discussions on ‘substantive agreements’ (i.e. demilitarisation and the creation of new democratic institutions), and were less prepared to engage with this crucial theme. A contentious Land Transfer Programme (known as the PTT) was eventually successful despite its original flawed design and a painfully laborious implementation process. By 1999 it had redistributed 3,305 properties totalling an area of 103,200 hectares to 36,100 former combatants and civilians. Adverse factors such as a crisis in the agricultural sector and the lack of access to credit and technical assistance simply made rural reintegration precarious for the majority of people who received land. These were aspects not seriously considered in the peace accords. The land programme offers a lesson for others in situations where the distribution of land is a key cause of violence and discontent. Negotiating such elements without thoroughly considering critical issues such as the status and levels of social and productive organisation, housing quality, the viability of subsistence crops, soil quality and capacity, and infrastructure, risks undermining success.

However, it is important to note the positive aspects of the PTT process, particularly the remarkable capacity of the Salvadoran government and the FMLN to renegotiate and implement all the adjustments to the initial design despite their mutual distrust and differences. The government and the FMLN collaborated to create special legislation to fully implement the PTT, resulting in most beneficiaries obtaining definitive legal possession of a parcel of land. Technical aspects such as the measurement of public (state) and private land included in the PTT also required close cooperation. Support (technical and financial) from the UN and international donors, particularly the USAID



and European Community, played a major role in achieving full compliance with the PTT agreement. Notwithstanding, rural property prices skyrocketed with the demand created by the PTT, rendering the massive financial resources provided by the international community insufficient.<sup>14</sup>

## Renegotiating reintegration

In the last months of 1992 the problematic of reintegration became protracted and the parties had to go back to the negotiating table. Yet several basic issues could not be resolved: the short-term perspective, the limited vision of the target populations and a lack of resources. While the peace accords noted that the National Reconstruction Plan (NRP) should reflect the nation's collective wishes, they were not explicit on the need to formulate this consensually.<sup>15</sup> As it transpired, the government implemented its own version of an NRP with minimal input from the FMLN.

In theory, the target populations of the NRP included not only demobilised guerrillas and soldiers, but also displaced, repatriated residents in the zones of conflict—some 986,000 people in some 115 municipalities. In practice, however, the discussions between the government's National Secretariat for Reconstruction and the FMLN's National Reconstruction Commission held after September 1992 focused almost exclusively on reintegration programmes. Urban and rural reintegration encompassed both short and medium-term programmes. Short-term programmes included aspects such as the provision of personal documentation lost during the war years (e.g. birth certificates), household items and farming tools, business and vocational training, and credit for technical assistance with agri-

cultural activities. Medium-term schemes encompassed the creation of small businesses, scholarships, housing, and assistance with agricultural activities and rural settlements.<sup>16</sup> Notably, the reintegration programmes did not include support for improving or assisting with the mental and physical health of participants.

## Violence and frustration after the war

An indeterminable number of former soldiers, paramilitaries and FMLN combatants drifted into banditry and crime after the war. Exclusion is both a subjective and objective process and recourse to violence is a common path for recovering social and political power. The persistence of acute inequalities between an affluent minority, former soldiers and combatants, and members of the socially excluded majority, in conjunction with unfulfilled expectations of the democratic transition, were *and* are sources of frustration, resentment and violence.<sup>17</sup> It may seem counterintuitive for negotiators of warring factions to conceive of an integral and long-term vision for the reintegration of former enemies into civilian life, yet it is in fact a 'social contract' to consolidate peace and stability and to attain economic recovery.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the destruction of war weaponry, the post-war period brought a dramatic increase in the number of firearms in civilian hands and the widespread use of small arms in violent crime, particularly homicides.<sup>19</sup> The various negotiators of the peace accords could hardly have foreseen this nightmarish upsurge of social violence. El Salvador, at last count in 2006, had a homicide rate of 55 per 100,000 people with guns deaths accounting for 80 out of every 100 of those deaths.<sup>20</sup>

The availability and misuse of firearms in the post-war period is a critical aspect of the phenomena of violence in El Salvador. There are now approximately half a million guns in circulation, of which only 211,577 (roughly 42 per cent), are registered.<sup>21</sup> Adult and young men are the primary victims of gun violence, reflecting the high levels of gang activity in the country and across Central America.<sup>22</sup>

The approval of an amnesty law for crimes committed during the civil war by the National Assembly on March 22, 1993 provoked widespread frustration among former FMLN combatants and supporters. This occurred just days after the Truth Commission report was published, which identified that some 85 per cent of the human rights violations committed during the

war were perpetrated by state agents, 10 per cent by individuals in ‘civilian clothes’ (i.e. paramilitaries and/or ‘death squads’) and roughly 5 per cent by the FMLN.<sup>23</sup> The institutionalisation of impunity was particularly damaging not only for the prospect of national reconciliation but also for the credibility of the DDR process that was unfolding, leaving those involved with a sense of injustice.

## Some suggestions to consider

### 1. Timing and confidence building

The Salvadoran experience suggests that the contentious issues of ‘laying down arms’ is rarely something that will be negotiated at the early stages of peace talks. In the Salvadoran case, the approach on this issue was essentially to first agree on the future of the Salvadoran armed forces (as a precondition for democratisation) and then negotiate DDR. However, it must be restated that the El Salvador process fell short on robust reintegration measures.

### 2. Weapons and DDR are technical and political processes

All components, but crucially reintegration, are loaded with political, cultural, and socio-economic pressures and expectations. The Salvadoran experience suggests a lack of a comprehensive and long term-vision of reintegration inspired by human security as opposed to economic concerns and informed by clear analysis and data.

### 3. Trauma and psycho-social impacts

Parties to peace processes ought to practically consider the psycho-social impacts of war on former combatants and civilians. In El Salvador, simplistic approaches proved to be inadequate to deal with the multiple manifestations of war-related trauma. The provision of timely and robust services and assistance could mitigate the psycho-social effects of war among veterans and civilians.

### 4. Ignoring armed civilians and other armed groups creates risks

The El Salvador peace process is one of many over the last twenty years that has struggled to address additional armed groups or the challenge of reducing and regulating guns in the hands of civilians. Ignoring these holders of weapons imperils peace processes. In the Salvadoran case, the role of the Joint Group for

the Investigation of Armed Illegal Groups provides a useful example of how to start to tackle the question of additional armed groups.

### 5. Strengthening gun laws is crucial in peace agreements

Peace agreements provide direction for future processes over a variety of time frames: short, medium and long term. Strengthening national gun laws is a measure that could more systematically be included in peace agreements, given the likely changes in attitudes and the sheer volume of weapons in circulation after years of war. The Salvadoran case suggests that it is important to establish legal frameworks that effectively regulate and reduce guns in the hands of civilians once hostilities have ended.

### 6. Imagine implementation

Weapons control and DDR can be processes rich in ambiguity, ambivalence and tension. It is important to give ample consideration to scenarios that could unfold once the actual process begins and identify potential problems. It is also relevant to consider effective ways to channel the participation of civil and political society in the peace process. The Commission for the Consolidation of Peace constituted by the government, the FMLN and the political parties represented at the National Assembly played an important role in the implementation of the peace accords. However, the participation of civil society both during the negotiation and the implementation was much less effective, and can in other situations be far more actively engaged and utilised.

### 7. Linkages to impunity and reconciliation

In the case of El Salvador, impunity for war crimes cast a significant pall over reconciliation, and negatively impacted the reintegration process. Considering the linkages between moral, material and legal reparations for the victims and survivors of war-related violence is the responsibility of those around the negotiating table. The peace accords included important institutional measures to eradicate impunity and to reconcile Salvadoran society, most notably the creation of the Truth Commission and the General Prosecutor on Human Rights, as well as pertinent aspects of the judicial reform and public security sector transformation. Ensuring synchronicity between post-war justice and security systems is a tremendous challenge but one that must be met.

## Suggested resources for further information

- Álvarez, Antonio and Joaquín M. Chávez (2001), *Tierra, Conflicto Y Paz*, CEPAZ, San Salvador
- Buchanan, Cate and Mireille Widmer (2007), *Surviving gun violence in El Salvador: a tax on firearms for health*, Background paper No. 2 on Survivors of Armed Violence, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva
- Call, Charles T. (2003), 'Democratisation, War and State-Building: Constructing the Rule of Law in El Salvador', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 35, Cambridge University Press
- Casasfranco-Roldán, María Virginia (1997), *Demobilization, Reintegration and Pacification in El Salvador*, Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, San Jose, Costa Rica
- Chávez, Joaquín M. (2004), 'An Anatomy of Violence in El Salvador', *North American Congress on Latin America: Report on the Americas*, May–June
- Doyle, Micheal W., with Ian Johnstone and Robert C. Orr eds. (1997), *Keeping the Peace: Multidimensional UN operations in Cambodia and El Salvador*, Cambridge University Press
- Juarez, Jorge (2005), *De la Dictadura hacia la Democracia: La Guerra Civil en El Salvador y la Solucion Negociada*, CEPAZ, San Salvador
- Montgomery, Tommie Sue (1995), *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace*, Westview Press, Boulder
- Nissen, Astrid and Klaus Schlicht (2006), *From Guerilla War to Party Politics: Transformation of Non-State Armed Groups in El Salvador and Nicaragua*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva
- Samayoa, Salvador (2002), *El Salvador: La Reforma Pactada*, UCA Editores, San Salvador
- United Nations Security Council (1993), *From Madness to Hope: the 12-year war in El Salvador: Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, S/25500 (Annex), New York

## Websites

- Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública** [www.uca.edu.sv/publica/iudop/principal.htm](http://www.uca.edu.sv/publica/iudop/principal.htm)
- International Action Network on Small Arms – Central America portal** [www.iansa.org/regions/camerica/camerica.htm](http://www.iansa.org/regions/camerica/camerica.htm)
- Small Arms Survey – Central America portal** [www.smallarmsurvey.org/files/portal/spotlight/country/americas.html](http://www.smallarmsurvey.org/files/portal/spotlight/country/americas.html)
- UNDP El Salvador website** [www.pnud.org.sv](http://www.pnud.org.sv)
- Washington Office on Latin America** [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org)

## Endnotes

- 1 See Alvaro de Soto's prologue in Montobbio, Manuel (1999), *La Metamorfosis del Pulgarito*, Icaria Antrazyt-FLACSO, Barcelona; and Torres-Rivas, Edelberto (1997), 'Insurrection and Civil War in El Salvador', *Keeping the Peace: Multidimensional UN operations in Cambodia and El Salvador*, eds. Micheal W. Doyle, Ian Johnstone and Robert C. Orr, Cambridge University Press; see also the forthcoming Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue publication on DDR, weapons control and survivors of armed violence in the El Salvador peace talks.

- 2 The FMLN was an insurgent coalition made up of five organisations: the Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), the People's Revolutionary Army, the National Resistance, the Central American Revolutionary Workers Party and the Salvadoran Communist Party. For more on the history of this coalition see Montgomery, Tommie Sue (1995), *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado.
- 3 The views contained in this paper are personal and do not reflect the perspective of any institution. It is my sincere wish that these reflections on the Salvadoran peace process are useful to those who work for peace and reconciliation in different nations and my country. I dedicate this article to the memory of Antonio Álvarez Flores, a man of peace.
- 4 See Nissen, Astrid and Klaus Schlichte (2006), *From Guerilla War to Party Politics: Transformation of Non-State Armed Groups in El Salvador and Nicaragua*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva.
- 5 The National Assembly, dominated by the official party, ARENA, approved an amnesty law for war crimes in March of 1993, a few days after the publication of the detailed and devastating Truth Commission Report.
- 6 Juárez suggests that demilitarisation negotiations took up 22 months of the entire 24-month process. See Juarez, Jorge (2005), *De la Dictadura hacia la Democracia: La Guerra Civil en El Salvador y la Solucion Negociada*, CEPAZ, San Salvador. Salvador Samayoa, one of the main negotiators for the FMLN, also wrote a chapter on this issue in his memoirs. See Samayoa, Salvador (2002), *El Salvador: La Reforma Pactada*, UCA Editores, San Salvador.
- 7 United Nations, ed. (1992), *El Salvador Agreements: The Path to Peace*, UN Department of Public Information in cooperation with ONUSAL, New York.
- 8 See the text of the compressed negotiations agreed by the parties on September 25, 1991. Available at: [www.usip.org/library/pa/el\\_salvador/pa\\_es\\_09251991\\_compressed.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/el_salvador/pa_es_09251991_compressed.html).
- 9 See United Nations, ed. (1992).
- 10 *ibid.*
- 11 This was undertaken by the Joint Group for the Investigation of Armed Illegal Groups created by an agreement between the government and the FMLN in 1993. Members included the General Prosecutor for Human Rights, Dr. Carlos Mauricio Molina Fonseca, a representative of the UN Secretary-General, Dr. Diego García Sayán and two representatives of the Salvadoran government, Dr. José Leandro Echeverría and Dr. Juan Jerónimo Castillo. The mandate was twofold: to coordinate a team of police and judicial investigators and to present a report to President Armando Calderón Sol and the UN Secretary-General. For more information, see Juarez, Jorge (2005).
- 12 The FMLN included a total of 28,421 beneficiaries under the term 'Rural Reintegration', a figure that encompassed some 15,000 *tenedores*. Not counted were some 1,500 FMLN combatants and *tenedores* assisted by the European Union in the department of Usulután. See Casasfranco-Roldán, María Virginia (1997), *Demobilization, Reintegration and Pacification in El Salvador*, Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, San Jose, Costa Rica.
- 13 See Álvarez, Antonio and Joaquín M. Chávez (2001), *Tierra, Conflicto y Paz*, CEPAZ, San Salvador; Casasfranco-Roldán (1997); and Del Castillo, Graciana (1997), 'The arms-for-land deal in El Salvador', *Keeping the Peace: Multidimensional UN operations in Cambodia*

- and *El Salvador*, eds. Micheal W. Doyle, Ian Johnstone and Robert C. Orr, Cambridge University Press.
- 14 The accords created the National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ), made up of representatives of the Government, the FMLN and the political parties in the National Assembly, to monitor overall implementation. In turn, COPAZ created the Special Agrarian Commission (CEA/COPAZ) in charge of verifying the inventory of land and property included in the PTT, dealing with potential conflicts between *tenedores* and landowners, and promoting full and prompt compliance of the accords related to agrarian issues. The government's Office of Coordination of the Agrarian Theme and the FMLN's Land Commission renegotiated political, technical and legal aspects related to the PTT.
- 15 Chapter 5, section 9 of the peace accords states that "Within 30 days from the signing of the agreement on the cessation of the armed conflict, the Government of El Salvador shall submit to FMLN the National Reconstruction Plan which it has drawn up, so that the recommendations and suggestions of FMLN, like those of the various sectors of national life, may be taken into account, ensuring that the Plan reflects the country's collective wishes". See United Nations, ed. (1992).
- 16 See Casasfranco-Roldán (1997).
- 17 See Ramos, Carlos Guillermo (2000), 'Marginación, exclusión social y violencia', *Violencia en una sociedad en transición ensayos*, UNDP, San Salvador.
- 18 See Ozerdem, Alpaslan and Mark Knight (2004), 'Guns, camps and cash: Disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion of former combatants in transitions from war to peace', *Journal of Peace Research*, 41, pp. 505-507.
- 19 In 1993 the UN Security Council reported that the FMLN destroyed an arsenal of 10,230 weapons. See Chávez, Joaquín (1999), 'El Control de armas y la violencia', *VIII Coloquio: Violencia y salud*, University of El Salvador, San Salvador, p. 67; and Cruz, José Miguel (1998), 'Los Factores Posibilitadores de la Violencia en El Salvador', *Violencia en una Sociedad en Transición*, UNDP, San Salvador. For more information on the psychosocial dimension of violence, see Aron, Adrienne and Shawn Corne eds. (1994), *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- 20 See UNDP El Salvador (2006), *Living without Arms? Evaluation of the Arms-Free Municipalities Project: An Experience in Risk-Taking in a Risky Context*, UNDP, San Salvador.
- 21 Interview by Chris Stevenson of Small Arms Survey with Inspector Carlos Cornejos, Weapons Division, National Civilian Police, San Salvador, 16 August 2007.
- 22 See USAID (2006), *Central America and Mexico Gang Assessment*, Annex 1 El Salvador profile at [www.usaid.gov/locations/latin\\_america\\_caribbean/democracy/els\\_profile.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/latin_america_caribbean/democracy/els_profile.pdf); see also Cruz, José Miguel (2007), *Street Gangs in Central America*, UCA Editores, San Salvador.
- 23 The Truth Commission was part of the 16 January 1992 agreement. Established in July of that year, it was composed of former Colombian President Belisario Betancur, former Venezuelan Foreign Minister Reinaldo Figueredo Planchart, and Thomas Buergethal, George Washington University law professor. Its report was released on March 15, 1993 and focused on violence and human rights transgressions since 1980. *From Madness to Hope: the 12-Year War in El Salvador: Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador*, is available at the United States Institute for Peace Truth Commissions Digital Collection at [www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/el\\_salvador](http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/el_salvador). The findings determined that El Salvador lacked the judicial, legislative or executive capacities to control the growing military domination of society. As a result, death squads organised by civilians and military personnel operated with impunity.

# 3 NEGOTIATING DECOMMISSIONING AND REINTEGRATION IN ACEH, INDONESIA KALLE LIESINEN AND SAMI LAHDENSUO

**T**HE CRISIS MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE'S (CMI) involvement in the Aceh conflict started in 2004, with the first round of talks in January 2005. The talks, facilitated by CMI and the Chairperson of its Board, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, ended with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka or GAM), signed 15 August 2005.<sup>1</sup>

The Ahtisaari-led talks were not the first negotiations between the parties. The GoI and the GAM had engaged in substantive negotiations—for the first time in the history of the lengthy armed conflict—between 1999 and 2003. This process, under the aegis of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, should not be underestimated.

The CMI provided mediation in order to agree a peaceful settlement within a framework of autonomy. Among the issues debated over the seven-month period in five rounds of Helsinki-based talks (starting in January and ending in July), six key topics comprised the agenda for negotiation:

- Self-government, its parameters and contours;
- Provisions for political participation, including provincial and local elections;
- Economic arrangements, including an auditing system for provincial revenues to taxation issues and the allocation of revenue and finances from Jakarta to the province;
- Amnesty for both political prisoners and GAM members;

- Security arrangements, including reducing the presence of national military and police forces, and defining their roles in Aceh and the decommissioning of GAM armaments; and
- Modalities for an external monitoring process.

A key element of the process was the principle that 'nothing is agreed before everything is agreed'. This meant that neither party could claim victories during the process or communicate with their constituencies' via the media. All the agreements were included in the MoU, which was published in August, creating space for the negotiators and mediation team to work.

## Weapons control and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration in the negotiations

The issues of disarmament and weapons control were not considered central to the process, with demobilisation and reintegration a more important focus for both parties. However, the parties were aware of the need to agree on certain weapons-related measures, including identifying a meaningful quantity of arms to be removed from circulation. On these matters, there was a conscious choice from the CMI and President Ahtisaari not to go into details regarding the design of the actual disarmament process. From a tactical point of view, it was seen as more promising to link disarmament to the wider question of reintegration (or 'facilitation of integration', as it was called during the talks). Therefore simultaneous to agreeing on the

---

**KALLE LIESINEN** led the decommissioning process in Aceh from August 2005 and concluded the job exactly 107 days later. He then became one of the Deputy Heads of the Aceh Mission, and now works on follow up of the accord in the position of Executive Director of the Crisis Management Initiative, chaired by President Martti Ahtisaari, the mediator of the Aceh peace agreement.

**SAMI LAHDENSUO** closely followed the Aceh peace process from the inception of the Crisis Management Initiative-led talks. He now works on follow up of the process as the leader of the Martti Ahtisaari Rapid Reaction Facility. In 2006 he wrote a paper on the role of local civil society and its liaison with the Aceh Monitoring Mission.

numbers of arms to be handed over, reintegration was also negotiated.

From the beginning of the talks representatives of the GoI were willing to discuss the various activities they were prepared to support for GAM fighters return to civilian life. On many aspects of the peace talks, the parties were asked to put forward concrete proposals, and this was also the case with the matters of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration.

## Terminology

Terms and concepts are context dependent, influenced by the actors and the history of the particular situation. Peace processes are peculiar for the constant ‘tweaking’ of terms across situations. Words matter in such situations and once all parties have agreed on a definition or a concept, regardless of its accuracy in other contexts, it is unlikely to be changed.

In recent years the combination of demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) has become commonly accepted in war-affected settings. With this in mind the use of term ‘decommissioning’ in the Aceh peace treaty is unusual but not without precedent. It is a general term for a formal process to remove something from operational status: industrial decommissioning, nuclear decommissioning and the decommissioning of soldiers, also known as demobilisation. The Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) brought the term and concept to greater prominence in the complex process to deal with the weapons of armed groups in the Northern Ireland conflict.<sup>2</sup> (President Ahtisaari was one of the three commissioners of the IICD.) The term was used intentionally in that process, as it was in Aceh, to avoid the term ‘disarmament’, which was associated with humiliation and loss. It also serves as a useful combining phrase, folding disarmament and demobilisation into one term. This is how it was understood and used in the Aceh accord and implementation process.

## The Memorandum of Understanding

Disarmament provisions in the MoU ordered GAM to undertake the decommissioning of all arms, ammunition and explosives with the assistance of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) (MoU Clauses 4.2 and 4.3). The GAM committed to hand over 840 weapons starting 15 September in four phases and concluding

31 December 2005 (Clause 4.4). For its part the GoI was obligated to withdraw all elements of non-indigenous military and police forces from Aceh in four stages in parallel with the GAM decommissioning. Withdrawal was to occur immediately after each stage was verified by the AMM, and to conclude by 31 December 2005 (Clauses 4.5 and 4.6).

This design tied decommissioning directly to security sector reform, which determined the potential shape and size of future military, police and other security structures in Aceh.<sup>3</sup> Reintegration was also a crucial part of assisting persons who had participated in GAM activities to return to civil society, and included economic support to former combatants, pardoning political prisoners and affected civilians.<sup>4</sup>

With such precise provisions there was little ambiguity about what needed to be implemented and monitored: fixed weapon numbers, unit strengths and a tight timeframe. The weakness was in the lack of indicators with which to measure progress against stated quantitative objectives. To try and achieve this, local NGOs, international agencies and donors had various roles, but remained largely uncoordinated with one another.

## Practice and theory: words and deeds

At the same time that the first set of talks occurred in January 2005, an expert group of academics and practitioners met at the International Peace Academy in New York. The discussion, part of the Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration (SIDDR), reviewed how DDR is seldom implemented in a comprehensive way, and how it often fails to complement a stable peace process. The purpose of the SIDDR process was to link DDR at the earliest possible stage to a peace support operation’s mandate. The work was to be done in close consultation with ongoing international policy processes, namely the development of the UN Integrated DDR Standards and the World Bank Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme.

The CMI was well aware that the SIDDR approached DDR from a broad perspective but felt that the situation in Aceh did not warrant this as the parties were clear on their boundaries and timeframe. Additionally, the SIDDR process was not completed until March 2006, when the final report was presented to the UN Secretary-General. Publication of background studies

were circulated in mid-2006, and provided information for the ensuing policy debate within the European Union (EU) on DDR. By this time, the Aceh negotiations and the main challenges of DDR had been overcome. However, the one resource the CMI drew upon was, *Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment: Principles and guidelines*, developed by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Lessons Learned Unit.<sup>5</sup> Despite the ongoing evolution of DDR theory and its disconnection from the Aceh process, all the elements of DDR were included in the Aceh peace accord in a way that was acceptable to the parties.

After the agreement was signed the first stumbling block was the EU as the supervising body. The original idea in Brussels was to use a private company to do the disarmament work. The idea collapsed – as no companies were available as fast as needed and the EU had to form its own team to handle disarmament and demobilisation. (The GoI was the lead actor on reintegration with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) contracted by the EU to manage some aspects.) Ultimately some fragments of the original idea survived in the final mandate of the AMM, tasked only to “monitor the demobilisation of GAM and decommissioning of its armaments”—a mandate that turned out to be disarming in real terms.<sup>6</sup>

The AMM was the first effort of its kind for the EU in Asia, with everything developed from scratch and strict timeframes further pressuring the process. Integrating DDR into peacekeeping exercises has evolved into the UN’s multidimensional approach to peace-building and reconstruction, but at that stage it was not an established approach for the EU, and there was an additional lack of experience and familiarity with the mechanics of DDR.

However, the initial desire to outsource the disarmament component, and the inability to do so, actually led the EU to develop its DDR policy. The EU went through a comparatively rapid process of policy development, and accepted the UN terminology and conceptual approach, thus recognising the long history

**“Despite the ongoing evolution of DDR theory and its disconnection from the Aceh process, all the elements of DDR were included in the Aceh peace accord in a way that was acceptable to the parties.”**

of DDR and its specialised actors. The *EU Concept for support to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration* was approved a year after the Aceh decommissioning.<sup>7</sup>

## The devil in the detail

The DDR process was ultimately a minor component of the Aceh peace negotiations as militarisation was not regarded as a key issue by the parties. Therefore only the timing and the most important quantitative information were strictly determined to set the pace for the whole process. This is not to say that the issues are not important, but it reflects an approach that emphasised the parties’ genuine ownership of the process. This meant that CMI as the mediator did not push or raise issues not agreed by the parties to be of crucial importance.

The CMI organised verification exercises in Sumatra related to troop numbers and GAM weapons stocks. The first assessment was done just before the signing of the MoU and the second only two weeks before signing. During the first round, Finnish Major-General Jaakko Oksanen (who would become the first AMM Deputy Head of Operations) collected information from Indonesian Army units to compare it with the number of weapons to be decommissioned. The TNI believed that the GAM would have 1,400 weapons at the most. The second assessment sought to verify the effectiveness of GAM’s chain of command.

This process convinced the CMI and President Ahtisaari that a peace deal was possible and that the components were achievable. The late attention to the decommissioning details left little time to negotiate the actual modalities of DDR, however. Therefore a lot was left to be discussed locally between the parties and the implementing body. In the thirty days after signature, the head of the decommissioning unit carried out intense negotiations, and pressed hard to meet the deadlines and goals set. Partly for this reason, Aceh is not an exemplary case in negotiating DDR.

While weapons were handed over by the GAM on time, ex-combatants did not emerge from hiding. GAM fighters did not register themselves when handing in weapons; instead a smaller group of individuals who were not the original ‘holders’ or users of the gun handed them over. GAM representatives made it clear that demobilisation would be done later and that the finer details would be negotiated separately. This effectively reduced the scope of the process to disarmament only.





The outcome was a great disappointment to the decommissioning unit and the IOM who expected the AMM to provide a list of former combatants in order to provide clothing, undertake a health check, distribute funds for the first two months and prepare for follow up. The same procedure had worked well with the first round of released prisoners. The process would have followed practice from other situations and countries, where demobilisation and disarmament were directly linked to the provision of reinsertion and reintegration benefits. With the absence of a list of demobilised fighters, however, the IOM programme stalled, and funds had to be returned to Brussels.

The core of decommissioning had survived, yet questions awaited clarification and settlement, and spoilers and sceptics tried to exploit the situation. The peace agreement committed the guerrillas to give up 840 weapons and demobilise 3,000 combatants. However, these small and suspiciously precise numbers did not convince the media and many other observers and commentators. As a result, the AMM repeatedly had to explain that not all GAM fighters had been armed and many weapons were lost during the war and the 2004 tsunami. The parties were unanimous on the figures but the spirit of trust among people in Aceh went through a period of jeopardy.

Not only was the real number of weapons under discussion, so were the number of fighters. This was originally started by GAM, based on their concern of

separating fighters from supporters for entry into programmes. Many GAM members had contributed through different roles during the decades. Rather than consisting of small bands of guerrillas hiding in the hills, combatants over the years moved in and out of active combat, protecting and supporting the GAM from towns and villages. Even the bush was not restricted to fighters; other individuals and families in support roles were also based there. More than 20,000 people could claim being retired fighters and civilian members. GAM leaders understood that they risked serious internal discord—and even a potential security risk—if they agreed only armed members could qualify and not the thousands of others whose efforts were regarded as of equal value.

Nevertheless, the number of fighters was strictly limited in the peace agreement. Discussion over how to deal with the larger pool of people became increasingly sensitive. The GoI was concerned that recognition of a larger number would leave those supporting the peace process vulnerable to hard-line nationalists who would say that GAM had lied during the negotiations, and that if they had larger numbers of personnel, they must also have more guns.

Discussions were politically loaded with the government demanding a list of names from GAM as a precondition for any reintegration assistance. The AMM accepted the demand, in part because it appeared to fit with international norms on how DDR is normally

done, and in part because it would advance the building of trust. The IOM also agreed as it met their expectations of accountability. This demand was however unacceptable to GAM as the fighters were still afraid of punishment or revenge if they stepped forward. And yet not tackling the transition of larger numbers of GAM presented a potential security risk if they could not see benefits from the peace process.

The GAM would not provide a list because they suspected the names would inevitably find its way to the intelligence services. The GAM leadership also wished to keep control over reintegration funds in order to help their own structures when transitioning from a rebel movement to a political and social body. The list increasingly became a hot negotiating point and a bargaining tool for other concessions.

Given that precisely 840 arms had to be handed over by GAM, it was important to define what weapons were acceptable to the AMM. Handmade weapons such as swords, crossbows and knives were excluded, and only so-called conventional weapons in working condition were deemed acceptable for turn-in. A weapon was disqualified if it was in poor condition, or had broken or missing parts, or if it was ineffective due to poor construction, materials or other technical deficiencies.

The issue of accepting custom-made 40mm grenade launchers that met the functionality, effectiveness and lethality criteria of the AMM turned out to be a problem for the GoI. Internal tension grew between the hawks and doves over the parameters of the MoU. A view was voiced that as the number of GAM fighters increased, so should the number of weapons to be decommissioned. The custom-made weapons became a central point of GoI's position on decommissioning, with the AMM accepting the weapons but the GoI disputing them in order to force GAM to give up more weapons.

At the end of the third decommissioning round the GAM indicated that even the number of 840 acceptable weapons might not be reached. With high-level discussions, and considerable effort by Irwandi Yussuf (now Governor of Aceh) and the decommissioning unit, the final goal was reached on 19 December 2005. The GoI called upon the GAM to verify in a written statement that they had handed in all their weapons. After an exchange of letters, the GoI stated that in spite of the dispute on numbers and quality of the weapons, they accepted the outcome. As the authorised

international body, the AMM accepted the disputed weapons and declared that the GAM had fulfilled its commitment to disarm by the end of year. Since that time only about one hundred weapons have been confiscated in Aceh—mainly from criminals and anti-GAM organisations ('civil defence forces' or paramilitaries previously supported by the GoI, of Javanese origin). With a population of 4 million, this represents a very small number of illegal weapons.

## Local ownership takes the lead

Parallel to the discussions in Brussels about the agreement implementation process, the GAM emphasised that international involvement was critical as they did not want to surrender to the Indonesian army. They needed dignity, respect and safe methods to collect and destroy their weapons. In the first *Concept of Operations* drafted by the decommissioning unit the implementation of disarmament was based on the wishes of GAM, drawing upon good practice elsewhere such as registration, disbandment and integration. The importance of showing respect to former fighters was widely understood and factored into operational procedures: any humiliation could have meant new violence in the future or resentment of the process.

Arms were to be handed over to an international body only. Decommissioning teams were to move from one location to another collecting the weapons and registering fighters for reintegration without great publicity. The GAM was also supposed to organise disarmament events of their own in the presence of the international monitors. For its part, the GoI demanded full transparency and the presence of the police and army in all weapons collection sites and full army control. This led to the GAM handing in weapons but refusing to register fighters for formal demobilisation due to the army presence.

## From planning to action

The decommissioning process can be divided into three periods, covering the phase prior to the Initial Monitoring Presence was in place through to the AMM phase:

- **Pre-IMP** 3–14 August 2005
- **During the IMP** 15 August–14 September 2005
- **During the AMM** 15 September–31 December 2005

The pre-IMP period entailed familiarisation with the situation and players, forecasting a range of scenarios and detailed planning. It also included preparations to demonstrate a presence in Aceh when the MoU was signed on 15 August 2005.

During the IMP period, practical preparations took place, including:

- Developing the ‘Concept of Operations’;
- Working through a range of technical methods and procedures;
- Preparing procedures and appropriate documentation;
- Devising the structure and organisation of the mobile decommissioning teams;
- Recruiting EU and Association of South East Asian Nations monitors as well as administrative positions;
- Procuring and preparing the necessary equipment, tools and vehicles; and,
- Preparing to receive and train personnel.

The bulk of the personnel arrived in Indonesia on the 9 September 2005 for training. Teams became operational on 13 September 2005, with the first decommissioning event on 15 September—the same day the Aceh Monitoring Mission was officially launched. Four mobile decommissioning teams (MDTs) with ten people covered the whole of Aceh, each with their own area of responsibility. If needed, they could be moved to other areas to reinforce or support operations. Working methods were established very quickly, allowing the decommissioning team to liaise with the GAM via the Local Committee of Security Arrangements, as well as through other meetings to arrange for the time and locations of decommissioning.

The HQ decommissioning unit in Banda Aceh was responsible for planning, documentation and medical evacuation. MDTs had three functional parts:

- A leadership group, responsible for preparations, implementation and administration;
- A liaison group, coordinating communications with the GAM, TNI, police, local authorities as well as other agencies to establish the weapons collection sites; and,
- A technical/explosive ordnance disposal (tech/EOD) group, responsible for the actual destruction of weapons and ammunition.

The tech/EOD group destroyed weapons with a 1.7KW rotary cutting machine powered by generators. Telescopic sights, weapons cases and other accessories

**“For transparency, detailed documentation of guns and ammunition before and after destruction occurred, and a full inventory developed of those weapons given or returned to the TNI.”**

were smashed with sledge hammers and dismantled with bolt-cutters. Ammunition was destroyed with explosives provided by the Indonesian army. These relatively simple and portable methods could be used as the number of arms was limited and did not include heavy or large weaponry. For transparency, detailed documentation of guns and ammunition before and after destruction occurred, and a full inventory developed of those weapons given or returned to the TNI.

The GAM brought their weapons and ammunition to agreed weapons collection sites (WCS). There were 18 WCS throughout Aceh, each coordinated with the police to secure the location and establish crowd control measures. Each WCS had an area to check weapons in, a registration area, a storage room for guns and ammunition, and a destruction area, as well as viewing areas and space for the media.

Having solid expertise was pivotal for making an impact in the short time period. Two-thirds of the DDR experts had a military background, including working on Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) small arms projects in the former Soviet Union and Caucasus, decommissioning in Northern Ireland and EOD work in Lebanon, Iraq and Sri Lanka. The decommissioning work was undertaken by a 44-person team from 12 countries. For the first time, human rights monitors took part in a European Security and Defence Policy mission as members of the decommissioning component. The handbook, *Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: A practical field and classroom guide*, was used as a guide and whilst giving a helpful broad outline, the circumstances of different missions vary so much that a universal manual cannot capture the specificities required.<sup>8</sup>

Activities occurred from September to December in four phases concentrating on weapons collection and destruction during the middle of every month during which 210 weapons were ‘put beyond use’. This then led, as agreed and scheduled, to the relocation of TNI and police in the last ten days of each month.

The tight timetable was useful for maintaining the momentum and helped with preventing the parties from blocking the process.

## Managing perceptions, neutrality and safety

In the beginning, a critical challenge was managing government dignitaries and their entourages so that their arrival at the sites did not affect the neutral nature of the disarmament events. It was crucial that the process be seen by the GAM as dignified and impartial. On occasions, it appeared that the TNI had ‘ownership’ of the sites, with a loss of control by the AMM. After the first two rounds of decommissioning this ceased and did not impact the number of weapons handed over—as could easily have happened.

The GAM remained secretive and only provided the location of the first weapons collection sites on the morning of the decommissioning itself. The first event saw the surprising choice of a sports field in the middle of Banda Aceh in front of the main garrison. The GAM chose places that were strongholds for them, surrounded by supportive crowds of villagers: Thousands of civilians gathered, with excitement and cheering with the GAM’s appearance. Instead of individual GAM fighters handing over their weapons, the weapons were put into rice and flour sacks and delivered in bulk by a few GAM representatives. As the process developed, the GAM became more willing to reveal the weapons collection sites a few days in advance and worked with the AMM to agree some of the sites.

An ongoing problem for the decommissioning unit was the lack of common safety regulations among the GAM fighters when delivering weapons. Some of the old explosive devices were literally terrifying. The AMM and the parties had differing perspectives on safety concerns, with government VIPs and some GAM members wandering around the destruction area, having discussions in front of the public. At times the AMM district office monitors added to the disorder by also entering this space. The general public was invariably well-behaved and compliant with the safety rules. With a combination of good luck and professionalism there were no accidents. But the situation highlighted the importance of having trained personnel and strict discipline on safety matters.

## Shortfalls and highlights

The DDR exercise in Aceh generated extensive media coverage, with the GAM providing well-orchestrated events, and the GoI presenting no obstacles. The media’s focus on the process was also accompanied by substantial attention from the local population. These two factors simultaneously helped support and pressure the parties. Transparency proved to be one of the key factors to success. This required a proactive approach from international actors to quell unintended or planted rumours that might arise when the AMM was not on top of the media connections.

Early efforts to fund and support ex-combatants’ reintegration into society were unsuccessful because of the lack of registration and transparency. Assistance was only given to recipients stipulated in the MoU and this led to envy and bitterness. Interestingly, the process was firmly government-led, reducing the scope for international agencies to provide advice and direction. Despite concerns, there were few violent incidents, mostly reprisal attacks related to personal disputes. Former fighters gradually gained confidence to return to villages. Incidents verified by the AMM, most of which were minor, declined from a monthly high of 107 in October 2005 to 20 in February 2006. This reflected the high-level commitment of the parties, and the control that senior leaders retained over local level commanders.

The most problematic component was the demobilisation, with disappointment from within the AMM that the military chain of command was not severed in a formal process. This left ongoing suspicion that GAM fighters had not fully returned to civilian life. The former fighters may be a source of problems for many reasons and Aceh proves that, in certain cases, it can be important to require that people formally renounce in writing their association with a group or cause. We believe that the remaining command structure of guerrillas, combatants, freedom fighters – as you wish – is a key element in the remnants of disorder today. The development of veteran’s organisations with open membership can be one way to acknowledge the effort of soldiering *and* promoting return to civilian life.

To compensate for the lack of a formal demobilisation ceremony a ‘Last Weapon Ceremony’ was conceived and held on the 21 December 2005 to signify the end of the decommissioning of GAM weapons. Represent-

atives from the GoI and the GAM were invited to witness the symbolic destruction of the last six GAM weapons. A plaque was made from the remains of the last weapon and jointly presented by the head of the AMM and senior GAM representative Irwandi Yussuf to the GoI as a mark of the end of conflict and the beginning of lasting peace.

The documentation of such projects is often neglected due to timing and quick staff turnover. In this instance, the four mobile decommissioning teams and the leadership compiled individual reports to document their work. These reports were then combined into one final report and given to AMM HQ for further distribution. Forms documenting the receipt, details and destruction of weapons were also compiled and a set given to the President of Indonesia and Teungu Zaharia Saman of the GAM on 27 Dec 2005 and AMM HQ for relevant EU authorities on 29 Dec 2005.

The Indonesian army has now started recruiting Acehese men, receiving some 5,000 applications for 175 positions. However, no former GAM combatants have so far joined the TNI. The Aceh military district commander has expressed satisfaction about the security situation, while stating that future threats to stability may come from internal tensions within GAM, the poorly managed reintegration programme and unemployment leading to criminality. Economic recovery remains a challenging issue.

The number of confiscated weapons has remained low even though Indonesian gun laws extend to Aceh. Criminality has increased, though it does not generally entail weapons use. The Governor is satisfied with the decision reached under AMM auspices to increase the strength of the Aceh police with a further 2,000 personnel above the MoU cap of 9,100 personnel. Since the AMM left there have been sporadic incidents involving the excessive use of force by the police. Human rights training for the police force is a work in progress.

## Conclusion

The components of a DDR processes do not necessarily follow one after another in a fixed order, nor do these components necessarily occur at the same time. However, all elements should still be assessed and planned as part of an overall process with consideration of the local circumstances and needs. In peace negotiations a general understanding of established

practice could be helpful in this regard, but inserting standards or models from other situations may not be advisable.

The AMM concentrated on the details of the agreement and avoided the wider complex array of issues at play, which were generally Indonesian in nature rather than specifically linked to the Aceh conflict. Human rights and reintegration were unquestionably gaps. The AMM stuck to its core strengths, but this pragmatic, operational approach did not accord with all the expectations of a human security approach. In Aceh one must however remember the limitations of the mandate and understand that this process was occurring within a sovereign democratic state, which had a commitment to peace and was capable of putting it into practice.

## Some suggestions to consider

### 1. Building memory

The documentation of short and rapid operational projects is often neglected due to timing pressures and quick staff turnover. However, for both internal learning, as well as doctrine and policy development, clear evaluation, documentation and analysis is crucial. This should be included in the tasks of any major DDR-effort from the planning phase through to its finalisation.

### 2. Weapons management

Peace agreements *and* DDR processes should always include arms control strategies as the first wave of disarmament often leaves many weapons behind, and does not often address the issue of weapons in civilian possession. For this purpose the decommissioning component stored a set of equipment and devices for later use in the AMM. Some of the decommissioning personnel joined the AMM as monitors when the unit was dismissed at the end of 2005. The mechanism was not needed in the case of Aceh, as the local administration was capable of dealing with those arms that were found after decommissioning. Given that the 2004 tsunami may have killed people with knowledge of buried caches, there may still be arms yet to be uncovered.

### 3. Linkages to security sector reform

The Aceh peace process included the elements of DDR and security sector reform and they were linked in important ways. After the withdrawal of the interna-

tional monitoring mission, both the GoI and the GAM were willing to increase the number of police—even though this had been contentious during the peace talks. This was in recognition of the need to control criminality and general disorder, and to promote human rights training within the police force.

#### **4. Local context**

International experience calls for the adoption of common frameworks for post-war programming that more effectively link disarmament or decommissioning and demobilisation to reintegration measures—and then to development strategies. Planning for a successful DDR programme requires an understanding of the local context, as well as the goals, political will, and resources that international donors are willing to contribute. Effective DDR planning also relies on analyses of possible beneficiaries, power dynamics, and the nature of the armed conflict and peace process.

#### **5. Spoiler strategies**

Mediators are constantly aware of the power and potential of spoilers in a peace process. The threats posed by spoilers continue well into the implementation phase and must not be underestimated. Planners should also identify potential spoilers and the impact they might have on the DDR process. When possible, spoilers should be engaged in a peace dialogue, and any outstanding security concerns moved into a separate process (e.g. sub-committee or working group) to avoid undermining the implementation efforts.

#### **6. Sustainable reintegration**

Reintegration is the key to sustainable peace. While disarmament and demobilisation are time-bound, reintegration is an ongoing process. Reintegration should address the economic and social needs of ex-combatants (and other war-affected victims), focusing on providing economic skills and opportunities that promote reconciliation within the communities where ex-combatants settle. Close attention however, must be paid to community perceptions of former combatants. Difficulties can arise if former combatants, at times guilty of intimidation and human rights abuses, are ‘rewarded’ with benefits while impoverished communities receive little to nothing. Careful consideration and balancing of individual and collective benefits can potentially avoid resentment.

#### **7. Importance of formal disbandment**

Formal demobilisation is politically and psychologically important and it is important to organise a process to break the chain of command and erase oaths of obligation. Developing mechanisms for symbolic transformation from military to civilian life, such as recognition of military service and ceremonies to end the service, should be encouraged. Chains of command, if left intact, can develop into criminal or terrorist networks.

#### **8. The utility of veteran’s organisations**

Ex-combatants of all persuasions have gone on in many other contexts—Mozambique, Nicaragua, and South Africa—to form effective organisations that have contributed to peace-building in diverse ways. Ex-combatants have helped identify training and education needs, keep track of ex-fighters, and provide support. Those engaged in peace processes could consider the development of veterans’ organisations during the DDR effort.

#### **9. Women’s roles and contributions**

Too often DDR programmes displace women who have worked in so-called non-traditional jobs or roles during war. Those who devise activities should ensure that women’s contributions to society are not undermined. In Aceh the international community acted very carefully cognizant of cultural sensitivities. This may not have been the best approach. Women should be included in peace-building—including DDR—from the beginning. Additionally, women experience unique victimisation during war, often suffering sexual violence, rape and other forms of gender-based violence, and specific substantive assistance needs to be developed to respond effectively.

#### **10. Indicators for impact**

The outcome of DDR efforts are easily measured by the numbers of weapons, ammunition and explosives processed; the level of grants for reintegration; and the number of disbanded units and ex-combatants. However, developing quality impact indicators is also required and demands sensitivity and a more comprehensive approach. For example, human security ‘success’ could be gauged in Aceh by the increase in marriages and the resulting population increase. These types of indicators are extremely valuable for setting goals and need to be better understood and applied.

## Suggested resources for further information

- Beeck, Christine (2007), *Re-paving the road to peace: Analysis of the implementation of DD&R in Aceh Province, Indonesia*, Brief 35, Bonn International Center for Conversion, Bonn
- Brines, Ingeborg, Robert Connell and Ingrid Eide (2000), *Male roles, masculinities and violence: A culture of peace perspective*, UNESCO Publishing, Cultures of Peace Series
- Capie, David (2002), *Small Arms Production and Transfers in Southeast Asia*, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University
- Gleichmann, Colin, et al (2004), *Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: A practical field and classroom guide*, Swedish National Defence College, Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, Forsvarets skolesenter, GTZ
- Lahdensuo, Sami (2006), *Building peace in Aceh: some observations on the work of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) and its liaison with local civil society*, Discussion paper, Crisis Management Initiative, Helsinki.
- Lessons Learned Unit, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (1999), *Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment – Principles and Guidelines*
- Mazurana, Dyan (2004), *Women in Armed Opposition Groups Speak on War, Protection and Obligations under International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law*, Report of a workshop organised by Geneva Call and the Programme for the Study of International Organisation(s)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (2004), *Getting It Right, Doing It Right: Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration*, New York
- United Nations Security Council (2000), *Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security*, S/RES/1325, 31 October

## Websites

- Crisis Management Initiative** [www.cmi.fi](http://www.cmi.fi)
- International Action Network on Small Arms – Asia Pacific portal** [www.iansa.org/regions/asiapacific/asiapacific.htm](http://www.iansa.org/regions/asiapacific/asiapacific.htm)
- Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration** [www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/4890](http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/4890)
- United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations** [www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/index.asp](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/index.asp)
- World Bank Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Program** [www.mdrp.org](http://www.mdrp.org)

## Endnotes

- 1 *Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement*. Available at: [www.cmi.fi/files/Aceh\\_MoU.pdf](http://www.cmi.fi/files/Aceh_MoU.pdf).
- 2 For an analysis of the process in Northern Ireland, see Hauswedell, Corinna and Kris Brown (2002), *Burying the Hatchet: The Decommissioning of Paramilitary Arms in Northern Ireland*, Brief 22, Bonn International Center for Conversion, Bonn.
- 3 MoU Clause 4.7 set the number of military forces to remain in Aceh after the relocation at 14,700. The number of police forces to remain in Aceh after the relocation was set at 9,100.
- 4 MoU Clause 3.2.5 mandated the GoI to “allocate suitable farming land as well as funds to the authorities of Aceh for the purpose of facilitating the reintegration to society of the former combatants and the compensation for political prisoners and affected civilians. The authorities of Aceh will use the land and funds as follows: a) All former combatants will receive an allocation of suitable farming land, employment or, in the case of incapacity to work, adequate social security from the authorities of Aceh; b) All pardoned political prisoners will receive an allocation of suitable farming land, employment or, in the case of incapacity to work, adequate social security from the authorities of Aceh; c) All civilians who have suffered a demonstrable loss due to the conflict will receive an allocation of suitable farming land, employment or, in the case of incapacity to work, adequate social security from the authorities of Aceh.”
- 5 Lessons Learned Unit, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (1999), *Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment: Principles and guidelines*, December
- 6 MoU Clause 5.2
- 7 By the Council of the European Union on 11 December 2006 and then by the European Commission on 14 December. Available at: [www.eplo.org/documents/EU\\_Joint\\_concept\\_DDR.pdf](http://www.eplo.org/documents/EU_Joint_concept_DDR.pdf).
- 8 Gleichmann, Colin et al (2004), *Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: A practical field and classroom guide*, Swedish National Defence College, Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, Forsvarets skolesenter, GTZ.

# 4 A MEDIATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

## JULIAN THOMAS HOTTINGER

I AM WRITING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE of a conflict mediator, and will try to identify within the different phases of a peace negotiation where the issues of weapons control and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) occur and could be most effectively raised.<sup>1</sup> Over the last fifteen years I have worked with a wide range of warring parties in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Indonesia, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Liberia, Uganda, Somalia and Sudan. In all these situations questions around weapons were contentious. Over that time the doctrine of DDR has developed significantly, and today the range of weapons control strategies at a local level are staggering in scope and achievements.

Yet in peace processes, specifically the peace-making component, these issues are frequently considered taboo. Be it by the rebel fighter who has come to see the power and respect that his or her gun brings them (and their dependents), or a commander who fears losing control, or the government soldier who signed up for a job for life and is now a number on a piece of paper that needs to be purged or moved on by politicians and powerbrokers.

### The universe of armed groups

In the last decade there have been various debates on how to engage armed groups, what to expect from them, and which negotiating approaches and techniques to apply. This has been dramatically affected

by the 'war on terror' and the intense discussions and policy reframing by various governments on whom or what constitutes a terrorist group. Without delving into the details of this debate, there is a need to recognise the importance and diversity of armed groups and the consequences for those confronting and engaging them. An emerging school of thought amongst mediators suggests one should not negotiate with *or* for the 'baddest of the bad boys'. This intersects with the lively debate about how conflict facilitators and mediators at a multi-track level can address these groups, and help neutralise their negative effects.

Another feature of engaging rebel groups is the length of time many combatants have been wedded to their identity as a fighter. Armed groups have effectively doubled their life expectancy within the last twenty years. In the 1960s and 70s, an average rebel force in Africa could either obtain its objectives, or decide to negotiate, within a life span of roughly six years. Today, most groups have existed or fought for more than 12 years. They have spread geographically, combatants have become more diverse, and common denominators have reduced with groups also more heterogeneous.

The fact that these struggles last longer also means that relationship building tends to require continuous work by mediators as key individuals get killed or become reclusive. This may require having to completely renew contacts, working up the ladder again to obtain consensus on issues, and renegotiating principles that will hope-

---

**DR. JULIAN THOMAS HOTTINGER** is a member of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Experts Pool and has worked extensively as a mediator and resource person in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia, Indonesia, Northern Ireland, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Liberia, Uganda and Sudan. In January 2002, he took part in negotiating the 'Nuba Mountains Cease-fire Agreement' signed by the Government of Sudan and the SPLA [Nuba]. In 2003 he was a member of the resource team working on the Machakos Peace Protocol/Naivasha Peace Negotiations between the Government and the SPLM/A and in 2005 worked with the Gerakan Aceh Medeka, helping to prepare their positions on self-government for their peace negotiations. In 2005-06 he was attached to the African Union Facilitation Team in Abuja, working on the Inter-Sudanese Negotiations on the Darfur crisis. More recently he has been involved in the negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, and is currently working on the Somali peace process of which he has been involved since 2000.



fully make ordinary people's daily life slightly safer. This can be both a blessing and a curse, and weapons issues and DDR would be matters to sound people out on.

## The moveable art of mediation

During my mediation training about fifteen years ago, we were told to be careful in the way(s) we tackled any debate on disarmament: it was a hot topic and had to be handled carefully. The truth is that there was not much alternative but to address it once a cessation of hostilities or cease-fire was obtained, though little was known on how to 'do' DDR. Most of us were just instinctively addressing the issues without enough in-depth knowledge. The message, however, was clear: trying too quickly to solve disarmament issues or arms control could literally ruin the process. The issues were deal-breakers.

I recall participating in negotiations where disarmament was tabled at the wrong time and in a manner that prompted some parties to walk out. For armed groups the only means of survival is fighting and they will not give up their arms until there is a total guarantee that what was discussed is implementable and that a credible body will oversee that process. We are probably too often fixed on counting the confiscated guns—seen quite often as a measure of success—instead of thinking of the fighters and their future.

One major risk mediators experience when introducing a certain topic is that the parties run with it and use it as a bargaining chip: "We are willing to implement some form of disarmament if you get this or that for us". Once caught in such a dynamic, more harm than good is likely. Especially if the armed group perceives a push on a particular issue (say disarmament or human rights), then you are up for bargaining at every step. Peace negotiations are of course a process in themselves. Quite often the primary aim of the parties is 'to test the water', see what the universe of negotiations is made of, perhaps to test their enemies, and in some cases use a lull in fighting or a cease-fire to build up their forces and prepare for further battle.

The world of mediation has become so complex and specialised with mediators called in to fulfill certain tasks, and then have to drop out as they will not be seen as neutral by the adversary of the armed group. A mediator frequently feels strong pressure to tackle the most urgent needs with the hope of obtaining a

**"Like other areas where pride, standing and history are at stake questions related to DDR and weapons control have to be introduced gradually, with a watchful eye to timing."**

drop in violence, leaving substantive and core issues for later. Weapons issues often fall into this basket, and from time to time, 'later' just never seems to happen.

All that said, and despite the tricky aspects of 'negotiating disarmament', it should not be left to the last moment or be dealt with in scant provisions. Some of my colleagues would say that such topics should only be introduced once the negotiations have reached a point of *non-retour*, when the deal is firming up and the parties will not easily walk away. Like other areas where pride, standing and history are at stake questions related to DDR and weapons control have to be introduced gradually, with a watchful eye to timing.

## Differing interpretations

The connection between DDR and peace negotiations is dynamic, complex, and is constantly shaping and reshaping the course of peace and war. Despite its importance, understanding of this relationship has for too long been fragmentary, chiefly because three schools of thought—security, DDR and conflict resolution—offer different and often contradictory perspectives. But this does not necessarily mean that no form of collaboration or understanding can be obtained. What has probably happened is that, over the years, ways of working and looking at issues has drastically changed (and will hopefully still evolve), while experts have become stuck in their respective fields, not communicating effectively. There is, in some cases, a view that mediators might also be obstacles to DDR while in pursuit of a peace deal. On the other hand, mediators believe they have a more pragmatic approach to DDR.

Additionally, within peace talks, there is typically an artificial distinction made between disarmament and arms control discussions. Disarmament refers to a systematic schedule and planning process for reducing weapons systems and preparation for war, while arms control is an effort related to the control and movement of weapons, but does not always entail taking them out of circulation. If one recognises that

disarmament does not necessarily always include destruction. It is easy to see where definitions get tricky.

From my experience, members of armed groups' focus on the first D of DDR, and see this principally as a reductive and punitive process. I am always fascinated by people who go into the fine details about what a DDR process should look like, what provisions should contain, what they should omit, and how they should be implemented. From what I have seen, there is no 'one size fits all'. Nevertheless, there is probably a minimal threshold for a DDR process to be viable and three issues appear important to bear in mind.

Firstly, DDR and weapons control efforts are strongly conditioned by the nature of the conflict. Conflicts are heterogeneous and often have more explanations to them than the warring parties admit. The way a mediator defines a conflict is also a form of engagement (though of course mediators are not supposed to involve themselves in debates of religious, ethnic or political nature). A mediator addressing a violent conflict without first-hand knowledge of the situation at hand must proceed with extreme caution, and is reliant upon briefings to understand the issues. No matter how briefed one is (and often mediators today are over-briefed), it is extremely important to step into a situation with modesty, empathy and the ability to listen to, and understand the parties' positions. Attentiveness to what is not being stated and the nuances of the situation are equally critical. There is no quick fix and respect for the distinctiveness of the conflict and related processes (e.g. past DDR efforts) is necessary.

Secondly, DDR and weapons control entails a series of mixed elements. At the start of my career, a mediator was called upon to negotiate a cease-fire and there was hope that, if the violence could be stopped, a disarmament process would follow. Today, such a strategy is not realistic or achievable. As the field of conflict mediation has deepened and evolved so have the expectations of conflicting parties of their involvement in peace processes. Armed groups in particular want a total vision of what their future looks like before they are willing to lay down their arms. Trust in such contexts is at a low ebb and rises in slow and small increments. Given this trend, DDR and weapons issues are increasingly placed in the mid to latter sections of negotiations.

Finally, the clauses related to weapons, demobilisation and reintegration, are rarely perfect. No agreement has all the solutions. Peace agreements are a snapshot of political compromise at its tightest and finest points. In this sense an agreement is probably best appreciated as an initial understanding between conflicting parties for realising co-existence of some sort. In this process elements are agreed to that are perplexing to outside observers and civil society. Frequently it seems that matters related to weapons fall into a grey area, causing concern particularly in the international community, where consistency with global standards is sought.

## Phases of peace negotiations

The conventional three-phase approach of peace talks includes pre-negotiations (talks about talks); substantive negotiations; and a phase that focuses on how implementation will unfold. In reality, these phases are not linear, and often overlap in confusing ways. I would also add pre-pre negotiations, which take in all the 'leg work' of going between parties possibly for many years in advance of any movement to the negotiation table. Where can DDR and weapons control issues most beneficially be raised in these phases? Are some more 'ripe' than others?

In the pre-pre-negotiation period third parties or mediators are in contact with the belligerents in low-key, deniable ways. This off-the-record contact can be a period in which a range of issues, sensitivities and thresholds are explored. This phase frequently involves linkages with circles that gravitate around armed groups: members of the diaspora, intellectuals, family members and other supporters. The aim is to gradually gain confidence and be introduced into the combatant circles. This can take years and is not always successful. But it is necessary, as no group will negotiate properly until the ripe moment has been reached, where belligerents conclude that the cost of conflict is unbearable and a solution has to be found.

This process can slowly start to shift attitudes and outlooks. Instead of a confrontational logic, a constructive-argumentative approach is encouraged. Armed groups are always convinced (at least at this initial stage) that they are strongly disadvantaged when having to step into negotiations. There is a need to facilitate ease with the process by getting the parties used to arguing issues out instead of fighting them out.

At this point, disarmament-related concepts need to be taken out of the global policy-research framework and discussed according to the specificities of the conflict and linked to the types of violations perpetrated. Discussions will be strongly influenced by the confidence the mediator(s) has acquired with the rebels and their belief that there is something to gain by starting to think about dropping their weapons. Talk invariably goes back and forth on violations and provides a clear entry point to reinforce international humanitarian law and human rights standards. These principles take a long time to discuss and are rarely accepted by all. The excuse is that the adversary does not behave much better, or a change in attitude will be seen as a weakness or that the concepts are uniquely Western. This last argument has been tabled in the past by the *Janjaweed* in Darfur, for example. Finding some common ground (albeit shifting) on humanitarian issues such as ending sexual violence, protection of civilians, and respect for prisoners is critical. Ultimately these issues are strongly linked to combatants and their future disarming.

## The pre-negotiation phase

In the pre-negotiations phase the facilitator or mediator aims to limit the discussions to practical aspects: Where to meet? What are the parameters of discussion? What is the intent of the negotiations? Who will sit at the negotiation table? Inclusiveness becomes a process at this point, not only referring to levels of participation but to the content.<sup>2</sup>

At this point, pre-conditions start to surface. Within a mediator's world, pre-requisites or pre-conditions are a perennial source of debate. Some colleagues refuse to entertain any discussion of them. Others, like myself, are less strident, as long as they are not discussed in this initial phase. To do so the parties need to be convinced to include them in the future agenda of talks and that the best way to move these beyond pre-conditions is to thrash them out at the negotiating table as full agenda items.

This is also one of the few times that disarmament is voluntarily raised by the parties, usually as an implacable pre-requisite. In some cases, parties will want guarantees that they will obtain a blanket amnesty for coming to the table. Other parties will want the freeing of prisoners; that the 'past' is not investigated; or, that one party disarms as a show of intent. Such

**“There is a great temptation to employ creative ambiguity, running the risk of embedding an ‘understanding’ that becomes impossible to remove at later stages of the talks.”**

vicarious victories pose numerous challenges and can shift bargaining positions several times within the course of a day. It matters little how these conditions are qualified; they always demand a lot of attention.

There is a great temptation to employ creative ambiguity, running the risk of embedding an 'understanding' that becomes impossible to remove at later stages of the talks. The danger with creative ambiguity is that the parties can easily live with it, yet the more you use it the more you can be trapped by it. Parties often see it as a form of leverage, twisting an understanding, especially if they had to make some compromises at the table that they hope to gain back. The questions one is faced with are: Is it the right moment to deal with these issues? If so, what aspects are best raised? At this stage, however, the process is too raw, too fragile to expect anything coherent on an issue as fraught as weapons. There are two cases that come to mind in which disarmament was too heavily insisted upon at this initial phase, for no clear reasons, when there was not the slightest degree of confidence between parties, probably even less in the mediators. The rebels walked out. There is a need for care not to jeopardise the process for an initial—ultimately hollow—victory.

## Within the substantive phase

At this stage ideas on the shape of DDR start to come forward, without necessarily labelling it as such. Often referred to as reconciliation mechanisms, coalition techniques or standard peace procedures, there is more space and legitimacy at this point to talk weapons issues. Encouraging frequent exchange on DDR and weapons control is desirable. The more sensitised the parties are to discussing elements and concepts, perhaps the greater the prospect of coherent provisions.

Maybe the issue, though, is not so much how the components of DDR or weapons management are included within peace agreements, but more about how they are introduced and, ultimately approved by the negotiating parties. Mixing DDR, particularly

disarmament measures, within the overall content of the process appears a less threatening approach than having a stand alone capital “D” agenda item. The parties are best encouraged to see these issues as part of their larger stated commitment to ending violence. A mediators’ job is to continuously—though subtly—demonstrate the connections between security issues and other concerns.

## Within discussions about implementation

A key challenge is to get parties to a peace process to imagine implementation and to problem-solve the inevitable hurdles together. The onus shifts dramatically to the government side and it is crucial that rebel groups and civil society also take responsibility for turning words into action. Implementation is often referred to as the ‘Achilles heel’ of peace agreements. It is important to constantly discuss implementation while negotiating, encouraging equal doses of creativity, compromise and pragmatism. Furthermore, it is important to create alternative methods for moving the implementation process forward, in order to continue the discussions, if a stumbling block emerges.

When negotiating implementation issues, including helpful actors and methods, the creation of a permanent mechanism may be helpful, such as a committee or a set of teams to address the problems incurred and to share responsibilities among the parties. It can instil a sense of responsibility beyond the negotiation table, and be useful as an accountability exercise. Finally, all agreements and post-accord implementation strategies and measures must be in writing; a golden rule that is often forgotten.

## Conclusion

We have to be clear: peace cannot be acquired without attention to the tools of armed violence, and consideration of those whose livelihoods and identities are linked to them. There is no space for debate

**“We have to be clear: peace cannot be acquired without attention to the tools of armed violence, and consideration of those whose livelihoods and identities are linked to them.”**

on this issue. Peace agreements are generally weak, incomplete, contradictory documents, representing broad areas of agreement possible at a given time. The international community has very little leverage, and knows that the harder they push for an issue, the less likely it will be implemented. Nevertheless, there is a tacit agreement that certain principles can no longer be violated or ignored. If a peace agreement was signed today and contained clauses which rejected any form of disarmament, most countries would refuse to recognise the agreement and it would have to be renegotiated at a later stage. Such a proposal would simply not stick, civil society would be outraged and victims and their families would be looking for answers—and perhaps revenge.

## Some suggestions to consider

### 1. An incremental approach

It is impossible to build a universal check-list for each negotiation phase to ensure that weapons are satisfactorily addressed by the end of the process. But there are important general guidelines that will increase the chance of successful disarmament—some of which have little to do with weapons explicitly. In the pre-pre-negotiation phase, for example, the most important prerequisite is building bonds of trust with the parties. At the same time, in early discussions, finding common ground on humanitarian issues can provide an early ‘bridge’ to discussions of weapons later on. DDR and weapons issues are increasingly placed in the mid-to-latter substantive phases of the negotiations, while it is essential that their modalities be adequately addressed during the implementation discussions, which generally come in the final phase.

### 2. Walk, don’t run

Pushing too hard or too early on weapons issues runs the risk of derailing the entire negotiations. It is imperative that negotiators, advisers and others are cognizant of the connections that fighters have with their weapons, especially before the point of ‘*non retour*’ is reached.

### 3. Different scenarios: different sizes

Mediators and others often come to the table with knowledge of global policy ‘good practice’ and the latest case studies of DDR in other contexts. However each situation is distinct, and what works in one will not necessarily work in another. It is important to

keep one's attention primarily focused on the details, needs, expectations, attitudes, and trust levels between the warring parties as they relate to DDR and weapons control, rather than arbitrarily imposing an external framework: 'one size does not fit all.'

#### **4. It's all connected**

A crucial aspect of mediation is highlighting to parties the explicit and implicit connections between the various provisions under discussion as they relate to post-war security. In this context, it may be more advantageous to discuss DDR as part of the continuum alongside security sector transformation, justice security reform, humanitarian concerns—and this also may be less threatening for the parties themselves. Similarly, longer-term weapons control measures may appear more logical when discussed as an extension

of DDR. But as noted above, this is not guaranteed to be so, and every case is different.

#### **5. Transparency is the best policy**

Though the temptation to use creative ambiguity may be strong, and the incentives for avoiding difficult topics high, it is generally better to be up front and explicit in discussing key terms, concepts, and approaches to DDR and weapons control. If it appears that doing so will be too threatening, it is probably too early in the process to discuss these issues. Rather than embedding future discussions with a false or misleading sense of agreement, it is better to wait for the next opportunity to raise the issues transparently. The flip side, of course, is not to wait too long. In general, these issues should be introduced substantively in the middle phase, not later.

## Suggested resources for further information

- Capie, David (2004), *Armed Groups, Weapons Availability and Misuse: An Overview of the Issues and Options for Action*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva
- Conciliation Resources (2005), 'Choosing to engage: Armed groups and peace processes', *Accord, an international review of peace initiatives*, Issue 16
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth (2007), *Negotiating with groups that use terrorism: Lessons for policy-makers*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva
- Florquin, Nicolas and Eric G. Berman (2005), *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns, and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region*, Small Arms Survey, Geneva
- Gorman, David and Andre Le Sage (2005), *Dealing with armed groups – the practical challenges: support in negotiation practice*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva
- International Council on Human Rights Policy (2000), *Ends and Means: Human Rights Approaches to Armed Groups*, Versoix
- Lombard, Louisa (2006), 'Armed Groups' in *Small Arms Survey 2006: Unfinished Business*, Oxford University Press, Geneva
- Petrasek, David (2005), *Vive la Difference? Humanitarian and Political Approaches to Engaging Armed Groups*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva
- (2005), *Armed groups and peace processes: pondering and planning engagement*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva

- Pfaffenholz, Thania and Darren Kew, Anthony Wanis-St. John (2006), *Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Why, whether and how they could be involved*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva
- Slim, Hugo (2007), *A guide to mediation: Enabling peace processes in violent conflicts*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva

## Websites

- Geneva Call** [www.genevacall.org](http://www.genevacall.org)
- Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development** [www.genevadeclaration.org](http://www.genevadeclaration.org)
- Non-State Actors in Conflict Project, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute** [www.sipri.org/contents/conflict/nonstateactors.html](http://www.sipri.org/contents/conflict/nonstateactors.html)
- OsloForum** [www.osloforum.org](http://www.osloforum.org)
- Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups Project, Harvard Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research** [www.tagsproject.org](http://www.tagsproject.org)

## Endnotes

- 1 The views contained in this paper are personal and do not reflect the official perspective of any institution.
- 2 See for example, Murithi, Tim and Paula Murphy (2007), *Under the Acacia: Mediation and the dilemma of inclusion*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva.