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Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of Ex-Combatants: An Appraisal

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Abstract

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of Ex-Combatants is the first and most important step in the transition from war to peace. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) can be employed in both war and peacetime, as well as to reduce the size of armed forces and redistribute public spending. However, DDR is much more complicated in a post-conflict environment, when different fighting groups are divided by animosities. They are also faced with a real security dilemma as they give up their weapons when civil society structures have crumbled, and when the economy is stagnant. This is why the establishment of real democratic practice became a must in such transitional societies. This study examined Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of Ex-Combatants. The objectives of the study are to explain the relationship between democracy and DDR, to discuss the importance of democracy in transitional or post-conflict societies and to analyse some of the challenges and how best to resolve them. The method adopted in this study is content analysis, using both primary and secondary data. The secondary data employed include existing literature on the topic, such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, conference papers, UN and ECOWAS publications, periodicals and other related documents. In the study, the internet was also consulted. The study adopted the Failed State Theory. The findings indicate that the ready availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons has made the democratic transition from war to peace difficult. The study recommends that there is need for the Federal, State and Local Governments to collaborate in the process of DDR of Ex-Combatants, there is need for the Federal, State and Local Government in Nigeria to collaborate in the process of DDR of Ex-Combatants and Democratic Transition for War to Peace in Nigeria, there is the need for proper coordination among NGOs and other humanitarian bodies to ensure appropriate DDR process, the Federal Government of Nigeria should erect a fully equipped designated area for DDR of Ex-Combatants.

Keywords: Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, Ex-Combatants

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Introduction

Democracy, unlike other forms of governance, has inherent checks and balances. This usually promotes dialogue/diplomacy and discourages people from resorting to violence to resolve their political differences. The combination of democracy and DDR makes it easier to support the transition from war to peace by ensuring a safe environment. This will definitely and adequately pave the way for the transfer of ex-combatants back to civilian life, and empower them to earn a livelihood through peaceful means instead of war. Some basic features of democracy in post-conflict or transitional societies are discussed below. A study or discussion on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration would be incomplete without a proper understanding of the features that characterize armed conflicts. One of these is the use of arms. Ordinarily, the thought that arms would play any damaging or instrumental role in intra-national conflicts years back would have been ignored with a sleight of hand. However, recent events reveal an urgent need to address the challenges posed by surplus arms, which constitute a danger in many post-conflict communities. This is against the background of intense inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts that have become characterized by deadly weapons. The essence of this is to broaden your view of the issues that make the processes of DDR imperative, with the hope that this would enhance your understanding and handling of the processes when you come across them (NOUN PCR 373:19)

Challenges to Democratisation in Post-Conflict States in Africa

The greatest threat to democratisation and state-building in most post-conflict States in Africa, as in elsewhere (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique and Congo DR, etc), has been their battered economies. Mismanagement of public resources is widespread, while the majority of the people live in slums. Except for Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, the rest of these post-war countries are well-endowed with natural resources, including oil, diamond, iron ore, platinum and cobalt. Prices of these commodities were at phenomenal levels until they started slipping in the middle of 2008.

The UNDP Human Development Index (2007/2008) ranks Sierra Leone 176 out of 177 countries. At 40.5 years, life expectancy in Sierra Leone is even below the African average, seven years after the war ended there. Angola, Africa's fastest growing economy, ranks 162, yet the country's economy has been expanding at a phenomenal pace – an annual average of about 19 per cent since 2000. As Africa's leading oil exporter, Angola reaped billions of dollars during the spike in oil prices; however, the dos Santos Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government is corrupt, incompetent, and wasteful. Transparency International, the anti-corruption watchdog, rates Angola as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. There is next to no investment in the larger rural population and basic infrastructure beyond Luanda, the national capital. No wonder Angolans feel terribly disillusioned. Other development indicators for Sierra Leone are equally stark. Sierra Leone's agricultural sector provides about three-fourths of jobs; however, the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme trained ex-combatants as plumbers, carpenters and mechanics.

African states generally lack the necessary capacity or the will to effectively perform core functions of statehood. For post-war recovery African states, the crisis is dire and urgent: many are unwilling or simply unable to provide basic public services such as governing legitimately, ensuring physical security, fostering sustainable and equitable economic growth, as well as other essential public goods such as clean water, affordable health care, schools, roads and decent jobs. The high level of youth unemployment is a major challenge to the security and development of these fragile countries (NOUN PCR 373: 81-87).

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Conceptual Clarifications

Ex-Combantant

An Ex-Combatant is a person who participated in a war and has decided not to take part in any further armed confrontation (Mónica, 2021 et al.). When dealing with disarming, demobilising, and reintegrating ex-combatants, the United Nations officially considers that fighters become ex-combatants when they are registered as disarmed (UN, 1999:52). However, this is of little use since it says nothing about who should be recognised as a fighter or combatant. It is therefore necessary to first establish what constitutes a combatant. While a consensus exists on what a combatant is in interstate wars, there is no clear definition concerning intrastate wars. In international conflicts, combatants are considered to be members of national armed forces, where there exists an identifiable organisation, a clear command structure, and an internal disciplinary system. Such a definition is not always applicable in intrastate wars. Many guerrilla groups and paramilitary forces lack both a clear command structure and organisation. The international community, therefore, emphasises whether the individual has taken a direct part in the hostilities. To have directly taken part usually means that they have committed acts that were intended to cause harm to enemy personnel and material (Lindsey, 2001:26).

Disarmament

Disarmament is the exact opposite of armament. It involves the reduction, control, or abolition of weapons. For Zanders (2013), disarmament is the "reduction of levels of specified weapon categories to zero" (p. 8). It is the act of laying down arms or the condition of being disarmed. In the words of Mifflin (2009), disarmament is "the act of laying down arms, especially the reduction or abolition of a nation's military forces and armaments" (p. 1). Disarmament could be total or partial. Total disarmament connotes a condition in which all arms or specific types of arms and weapons are completely removed or abolished, whereas partial disarmament refers to a situation in which particular categories of arms and weapons are removed or abolished. Disarmament therefore, is either the total or partial withdrawal of arms as a way of waning a conflict/war situation, deterring aggression or violence or a strategy of peace building.

Olaniyi and Aligwekwe (2013) define disarmament as "the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population" (p. 23). Olaniyi and Aligwekwe's definition is apparently more encompassing than that of the other scholars cited above. It highlights the processes, types of arms, and, most importantly, includes civilians in the disarmament agenda. Edeko (2011)'s definition of disarmament is also quintessential. He states that "disarmament includes disarming of combatants and irregular forces, weapons buyback programmes and arms embargoes and control" (p. 72).

Methodology

The method adopted in this study is content analysis, using both primary and secondary data. The secondary data employed include existing literature on the topic, such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, conference papers, UN and ECOWAS publications, periodicals and other related documents. In the study, the internet was also consulted.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Failed State Theory. The term "failed state" is often used to describe a state perceived as having failed in some of its essential responsibilities as a sovereign government. A failed state has shattered social and political structures (Anyanwu, 2005). It is characterized by social, political and economic failure. Common characteristics of a failing state include a central government so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control

over much of its territory, the non-provision of public utilities or services, widespread corruption and criminality, refugees and the involuntary movement of populations, and sharp economic decline. Anyanwu (2005) notes that failing states are invariably the product of the collapse of power structures that provide political support for law and order, a process generally triggered and accompanied by anarchic forms of internal violence. It is the collapse of state institutions, especially the police and judiciary, resulting in paralysis of governance, a breakdown of law and order, and widespread banditry and chaos. Not only are the functions of government suspended, but its assets are destroyed or looted, and experienced officials are killed or flee the country.

Literature Review

Anderlini and Conaway present demobilization as the formal disbanding of military formations and, at the individual level, as the process of releasing combatants from a mobilized state. The discharge of ex-combatants spans over a period of time, during which they are usually conveyed to their homes or new districts and granted small initial reinsertion packages to enhance their resettlement process. They inform further that ex-combatants or guerrillas are, in some cases, eager to return to their homes. In some cases, they may deliberately stall the process out of fear of rejection when they return to their communities. In Uganda, in the early 1990s, in order to forestall any hitch or resistance from the ex-combatants, they and their families were briefed prior to the distribution of a settling-down kit that included shelter, food, transport, clothing, and medical care for a transition period of six months.

Disarmament

Disarmament is the first phase of DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration), and logically precedes demobilization and reintegration. However, it is often a long-term process. A major problem is the collection of small weapons and light arms, which are easy to conceal and difficult to account for. The existence of large paramilitary groups and irregular forces also complicates disarmament, which, under these conditions, becomes a long-term process to be carried out over a wide region by peacekeepers, regular military forces, and civilian police. The creation of effective police forces has become a high priority, both for their ability to control the territory more effectively than peacekeepers and for the indirect effects of improved security. A safe environment greatly enhances the effectiveness of voluntary disarmament programs by decreasing the need for civilians to retain their weapons. The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language (2007) sees it as “the act of laying down arms, especially the reduction or abolition of a nation's military forces and armaments” or “the condition of being disarmed”. Collins English Dictionary (2009), on the other hand, sees it as “the reduction of offensive or defensive fighting capability, as by a nation” or “the act of disarming or state of being disarmed”. But simply put, Disarmament is the act of reducing, limiting, or abolishing weapons.

The United Nations defines disarmament as “the collection of small arms and light and heavy weapons in a conflict zone” (Anderlini and Cornaway, N.D.: 2). Often, physical disarmament takes place in assembly areas where ex-combatants are assembled in camp-like settings, weapons are confiscated, safely stored, and eventually destroyed. Disarmament generally refers to a country's military or specific type of weaponry. Operationally, the most common form of disarmament is the abolition of weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear arms. General and Complete Disarmament refers to the removal of all weaponry, including conventional arms. Disarmament can be contrasted with arms control, which essentially refers to the act of controlling arms rather than eliminating them.

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A distinction can also be made between disarmament as a process (the process of eliminating weapons) and disarmament as an end state (the absence of weapons). Disarmament has also come to be associated with three things. These include:

i. The aforementioned arms control, which is not associated with a schedule of gradually reducing and then eliminating major weapons systems;
ii. Nuclear disarmament does not address civilian weapons and military systems whose firepower and extent of damage can be considerable. For example, the war in Iraq has led to the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians; during the Korean War, hundreds of thousands died; and in so-called "New Wars" in Africa, millions have died. In none of these cases were nuclear weapons used. Yet, the extent of civilian and military deaths has been considerable, surpassing the damage caused by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II.
iii. Unilateral disarmament, which seeks to reduce weapons systems in either an ad hoc fashion or based on initiatives within one nation. This approach fails to leverage reductions in one country for reductions in another, or a series of countries.

Furthermore, unilateral disarmament, as advocated in the United Kingdom, fails to assuage the concerns of "realists" about the dangers posed by other countries' weapons systems and power projection. Philosophically, disarmament should be viewed as a form of demilitarization, part of an economic, political, technical, and military process to reduce and eliminate weapons systems. Thus, disarmament is part of a set of other strategies, such as economic conversion, which aim to reduce the power of war-making institutions and their associated constituencies. Disarmament need not be an "utopian" project in the sense of being misguided or naive. Rather, various strategies can be used to promote the political, economic, and media power necessary for demilitarization.

Approaches to Disarmament

Arms collection centres require security guarantees, both for centre personnel and for ex-combatants. Collection and destruction of weapons should be completed quickly to avoid having arms stolen from storage centres and used to restart fighting. Disarmament criteria may focus on specific weapons, individuals, or groups, but the specific approaches are as follows:

i. An exclusive focus on weapons may attract individuals who seek the benefits connected to the disarmament program, but who are not ex-combatants willing to demobilize;
ii. A focus on individual disarmament, which is considered an aggressive attitude by military leaders, who may decide not to cooperate if they believe that they have lost control over the process;
iii. A combined approach requires both the surrender of weapons and individual verification of combatant status. This approach reduces abuse and shifts the program entry criterion toward eligibility as a combatant.

Identifying a specific group for disarmament has proven to be the most effective strategy in ensuring the cooperation of commanders. However, it has some undesirable consequences: strengthening the commanders' control over the combatants and enabling abuses by commanders who "sell" access to the DDR program.

Disarmament is important not only for the material improvement of security conditions, but also for its psychological impact. There are added psychological benefits when ex-combatants physically disable their own weapons, and are led in doing so by their commanders, immediately upon entering the disarmament site. The process symbolically

underscores the transition from military to civilian life. Additionally, public destruction of weapons is an important tool in sensitizing the population and promoting the DDR program.

Barriers to disarmament

The political and economic barriers to disarmament are considerable. They are primarily based on the concentrated power of those who support militaristic approaches to foreign policy. Another key barrier is ideological. Many foundations and universities have failed to support research in disarmament, instead favouring more ad hoc and limited approaches like arms control, conflict resolution, and limits on weapons systems in specific countries. Part of this may be pragmatism, but often it is the result of a limited understanding of the history of disarmament. Attempts to restrict nuclear proliferation are, of course, a necessity. Bolstering these efforts would be assisted by checking the link between military intervention and nuclear proliferation. Many countries fearful of being invaded, particularly by the U.S., have tried to secure or develop nuclear weapons. As a result, policies to limit military interventions may be part of a larger demilitarization program.

The use of weapons in domestic conflicts and conventional wars can be attributed to the rise in domestic disputes, which has led to the proliferation of black markets for weapons. These weapons have become instruments for handling and settling conflicts in many instances. It has also encouraged the proliferation of both stationary and roaming guerrilla movements on the continent.

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Demobilization

Demobilization includes the dismantling of military units and the transition of ex-combatants from military to civilian life. In times of peace, demobilization programs can be gradual and tuned to the needs of the groups being demobilized. At the end of a conflict, demobilization presents the same logistical challenges as emergency relief and resettlement programs for displaced people. Thus, demobilization includes assembly of ex-combatants, orientation programs, and transportation to the communities of destination. These movements of large groups of people should be timed to coincide with phases of civilian life that facilitate reintegration, such as crop and school cycles.

Assembly of ex-combatants helps ensure their participation in the DDR program, through their disarmament, registration, and access to DDR benefits in the form of goods and services. When ex-combatants are assembled, they are first registered and then receive civilian identification cards, which allow the holders to participate in the DDR program and receive benefits. Encampments are not intended to host ex-combatants for a long time, but adequate facilities, food supplies, and medical assistance are important to maintain discipline and security. In addition, encampments' infrastructure should be built to meet not only the needs of ex-combatants, but also of the many dependents who may follow them.

Orientation is essential in establishing and reinforcing ex-combatants' beliefs that the DDR program offers viable alternatives to conflict as a livelihood:

Pre-discharge orientation has important practical and psychological functions. Practically, it provides ex-combatants and their dependents with basic information about the DDR program. Psychologically, it empowers DDR beneficiaries as free citizens, by addressing their needs and doubts and asking for their interactive participation. The pre-discharge orientation typically focuses on the DDR program, the implementing agencies, the rights and obligations of participants, and how they can access the program's benefits. General information is also offered about reintegration into civilian life, such as health issues, education and employment opportunities, and access to land and credit.

Post-discharge orientation caters to more specific needs in the context of the community of resettlement. Post-discharge orientation is the first step in the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants. It provides information about the place of relocation, economic opportunities, and relevant local institutions and social networks, including religious groups, NGOs, veterans' associations, farmers' associations, women's groups, and others.

Transportation is a primary logistical challenge. Ex-combatants, their families, and their belongings are transported to the district of destination. If organized convoys cannot reach the communities of origin or destinations of choice, ex-combatants are provided with travel allowances, which ensure that they can finance their way home independently (Fusato, 2003).

Reintegration

After ex-combatants have been demobilized, their effective and sustainable reintegration into civilian life is necessary to prevent a new escalation of the conflict. In the short term, ex-combatants who do not find peaceful ways of making a living are likely to return to conflict. In the longer term, disaffected veterans can play an important role in destabilizing the social order and polarizing the political debate, becoming easy targets of populist, reactionary, and extremist movements.

Reintegration includes: Reinsertion, which addresses the most immediate needs of ex-combatants. Reinsertion assistance consists of short-term relief interventions, which provide a safety net for demobilized ex-combatants. Assistance may include housing, medical care, food, and elementary education for children. The distribution of cash allowances has proven to be the most effective and efficient way to provide reinsertion assistance. Cash payments are preferred over in-kind assistance because of reduced transaction costs, easier and more transparent accounting, and because cash payments can adapt more closely to the specific needs of beneficiaries. Additionally, cash allowances have the positive psychological effect of empowering ex-combatants to take charge of their lives.
Economic integration is the final requirement for a DDR program to be successful and sustainable in the long term. The goal of economic reintegration efforts is to provide ex-combatants with financial independence through employment. Different initiatives should cater to the special needs of disabled veterans who cannot reintegrate into the labor force, for rural settlers, and for urban settlers. Common economic integration programs include education and professional training, public employment, encouragement of private initiative through skills development and microcredit support, and access to land (Fusato, 2003).

Reintegration Processes

Reintegration includes the following: Reinsertion, which addresses the most immediate needs of ex-combatants. Reinsertion assistance consists of short-term relief interventions, which provide a safety net for demobilized ex-combatants. Assistance may include housing,

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However, cash payments present two dilemmas: they can give the negative impression of being "cash for weapons," and they can be easily lost or misused for consumption and pleasure. A common solution to this problem is to distribute allowances neither in advance nor at the time of disarmament, but instead after arrival at the community of destination, in separate instalments, and accompanied by post-discharge counselling. Initiatives aimed at full and self-sustained social and economic reintegration, which must follow temporary reinsertion assistance programs. Ex-combatants are a special group who present additional challenges, since:

i. They constitute a potential security threat;
ii. They may be viewed with fear, suspicion, and resentment by the rest of the population;
iii. They are often uprooted from their communities of origin and their social networks;
iv. They may not know or may no longer accept basic social rules.

For these reasons, the first step in the reintegration of ex-combatants is their inclusion in society. DDR programs provide cooperation with formal and informal local social networks, psychological support and counselling, and initiatives for the reunification of families.

Economic Reintegration

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The Challenges of Reintegrating into Civil Society

Despite the logistical challenges of disarmament and demobilization, reintegration, which is the acquisition of civilian status and sustainable employment and income, is considered the most difficult phase of any DDR process. An Institute for Security Studies (ISS) paper calls it “the Achilles heel of DDR” (NOUN PCR 373, p. 77)

Challenges of Reintegration programmes in Africa include the following:

i. The inflation of the number of combatants in the DDR. For instance, in Côte d’Ivoire, the number increased from about 30,000 to more than 45,000 within a few months. More than 100,000 combatants have been recently disarmed and demobilized in Liberia, which is almost triple the number assessed at the beginning of the process. More than 70,000 ex-combatants went through the DDR process in Sierra Leone. Participants stressed that economic incentives offered to ex-combatants are certainly one of the reasons for this inflation in the number of ex-combatants (NOUN PCR 373. p, 78).

ii. Increasing numbers of child combatants to DDR: almost 3,000 today in Côte d’Ivoire, about 7,000 went through the DDR process in Sierra Leone and more than 10,000 in Liberia.

iii. Gap between the aspiration of ex-combatants to join post-conflict (re)formed national armed and security forces on the one hand and, on the other hand, the absorption capacity of these forces (NOUN PCR 373. p. 78).

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The following conditions are required before beginning a DDR program, and help to guarantee its success:

i. Security
ii. Inclusion of all Warring Parties
iii. Political Agreement
iv. Assembly
v. Orientation
vi. Transportation

For any reintegration programme to be successful, adequate long-term planning is needed, especially in finance. Planning of the long-term financing of the reintegration of ex-combatants. Long-term planning should be effective well before the commencement of the implementation of DDR programmes. Preferably, long-term financing of reintegration should take place in parallel with negotiations on peace agreements. For swift and credible implementation, the planning and financing of DDR must be included in the agenda of the peace negotiations. Optimization of the financing architecture of reintegration. It is also important to avoid the fragmentation of the financing of reintegration programmes. To this effect, one could envisage the establishment of a global fund for the long-term financing of post-conflict reintegration of ex-combatants. Such a fund would coherently merge the reintegration programmes into the planning and implementation of policies related to post-conflict economic reconstruction, poverty alleviation, youth employment and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, a network of donors and development partners could be established, using the scheme devised in Guinea-Bissau. For effective reintegration of ex-combatants, it is important that funds pledged by international partners are made available within appropriate time frames.

Finding Peacetime Substitutes for the Benefits of War

To prevent ex-combatants from becoming marginalised in post-conflict societies, it is necessary to find substitutes for the loss of empowerment that demobilisation entails. It is important to underline that these substitutes should never be seen as rewards, since this can be perceived as offensive by civilians who may have suffered at the hands of ex-combatants. They should instead be seen as mechanisms that ease the transformation of combatants into civilians and are therefore necessary to attain peace and development. However, since giving these substitutes may be controversial, it should be done in conjunction with efforts at reconciliation. There are four main forms of substitutes. First, when handing in their weapons, ex-combatants lose the ability to fend for their own security, whereby it is imperative to find ways to ensure their physical security. Second, the economic survival of ex-combatants and their families must be ensured. Third, there needs to be mechanisms that allow ex-combatants to channel their political demands peacefully. Finally, it is important to find ways to safeguard the societal prestige of ex-combatants (Nilsson, 2005: 39).

The Physical Security of Ex-Combatants

In civil wars, the majority of victims are civilians. As a civilian, it may be safer to join an armed group. Recruitment can therefore be a good way of protecting oneself and one's family from murder, pillage, forced transfer and other forms of harassment (Keen, 2000b: 23, 25, 31; Utas, 2003: 16). Once demobilised, however, former guerrillas and soldiers lose the ability to fend for their own and their families' security. It is therefore argued that it is essential to ensure the physical security of ex-combatants when they return to civilian life. If this is not done, it will not only be difficult to persuade combatants to disarm, but there is also a high probability that already disarmed and demobilised combatants will rearm

themselves (Berdal, 1996:17-18; Call & Stanley, 2003:212-13, 216, 218; Stedman, 2003:110) (Nilsson, 2005: 39-40).

The Economic Security of Ex-Combatants

One of the main benefits of participating in war is the opportunity for economic gain. Some authors argue that the central aim of rebellion is economic profit, especially through the illegal taxation of natural resources for export (Collier 2000:839, 852). Even though other factors may explain the outbreak of violence, economic considerations may become more important with time. In some civil wars, an economic interest in continuing the war at a profitable level may replace defeating the enemy as the main objective (Berdal and Malone, 2000:2, 6). Taking part in war can also be profitable for the individual. Being a combatant ensures a certain income, either in the form of a salary or from looting. The use of violence may also be a way to gain access to land, water and mineral resources by forcing original owners away (Berdal, 1996:16-17; Keen, 2000b:23-25, 29-31). Thus, ensuring the economic security of ex-combatants is the most decisive factor in the post-demobilisation phase. If former soldiers and guerrilla fighters lack means of securing their economic survival as civilians, there is a high probability that they will take up arms again (Özerdem, 2002:962). The best way of doing this is to provide ex-combatants with meaningful occupations whereby they can support themselves and their families (Berdal, 1996:18; Call & Stanley, 2003:215-16; Gamba, 2003:126, 133; Mehlum, Moene & Torvik, 2002:456-57; Spear, 2002:150; Özerdem, 2002:969-71, (Nilsson, 2005: 43).

The Political Influence of Ex-Combatants

During war, alternative political institutions are created, such as militias and guerrilla groups. By using violence and intimidation, these groups can change established power structures and take control over large tracts of territory. Being a member of such a group also offers individuals the opportunity for political empowerment. Through the use of arms, combatants can reverse old relationships of dominance and humiliation that they may have suffered under in their local societies. It can also give them the power to exact revenge on individuals who wronged them in the past (Keen, 2000b:23, 25; Lyons, 2004:269, 271; Utas, 2003:15-16). According to some scholars, it is necessary to ensure that ex-combatants do not become politically marginalised after demobilisation. It is, in other words, crucial that they are allowed to influence decisions affecting them. Failure to do so could, at worst, lead to renewed warfare (Spencer, 1997:65; Disarmament…, 2004:26). A similar line of thinking can be found among those who argue that for peace to prevail, it is crucial that former rebels are encouraged to engage in normal politics (Zartman, 1995:337). It is then not far-fetched to argue that if the political system includes political parties, which ex-combatants believe represent their interests, ex-combatants may be less inclined to resort to violence (Nilsson, 2005:48-49).

Safeguarding the Societal Prestige of Ex-Combatants

A final form of empowerment is the societal prestige that combatants gain from carrying arms. Being part of an armed group can give a certain status in society. As protectors of local communities, combatants and warlords often receive the respect and appreciation of the local population (Lundin, 1998:105; Lyons, 2004:269; Spear, 2002:145). Combatants can also be filled with a sense of pride and accomplishment that they are taking part in an important struggle (Schafer, 2001:229, 231). In some conflict areas, participation in violence symbolises boys' ascent to manhood (Peteet, 2002:260, 263; Utas, 2003:9). Becoming a combatant can therefore have a great symbolic value. With the arrival of peace, combatants risk losing the status associated with being a fighter. This loss can be threatening for both soldiers and guerrillas. Ex-combatants, therefore, need to be given new roles in society that grant them an equivalent amount of prestige or, if possible, at least

acknowledge the positive role they had during the conflict. Failure to do so may result in ex-combatants creating new roles for themselves in society, such as that of vigilantes, which guarantees continued societal respect through the usage of violence (Spear, 2002:145). Safeguarding the societal prestige of ex-combatants must, however, be done with great care, as ex-combatants may have committed serious atrocities. In some post-conflict societies, it may not even be possible, since it would make reconciliation extremely difficult. (Nilsson, 2005:51).

Discussion and Conclusion

From the foregoing, this study empirically presented the Role of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of Ex-Combatants and Democratic Transition from War to Peace in Nigeria. The failing economy, insecurity, high unemployment, poverty, the government's failure to provide basic necessities of life, and corruption stand as a cog in the wheel of appreciable efforts and policies to arrest the menace in the country. Most of the Nigerian borders are porous, therefore, giving room for easy influx, movement and exit of arms, human trafficking and drugs. However, a high level of corruption in Nigeria constitutes the various security risks bedeviling the state.

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations can be made to support the reintegration of ex-offenders. First, there is a need for more comprehensive and accessible employment programs that address the specific needs of ex-offenders. These programs should include job placement services, vocational training, and mentorship to help ex-offenders build the skills and confidence needed to secure stable employment. Second, community organizations and support groups should be strengthened and expanded to provide social and emotional support to ex-offenders. These groups can help reduce social isolation and stigmatization, offering a sense of belonging and practical assistance. Third, improving access to mental health services is crucial for addressing the psychological challenges faced by ex-offenders. Policymakers and practitioners should work to reduce barriers to mental health care, such as cost and availability, and promote the importance of mental health support. Fourth, legal and bureaucratic barriers need to be addressed to facilitate smoother reintegration. Simplifying social services application processes and providing clear guidance on navigating legal obligations can help ex-offenders comply with requirements and access the support they need. Lastly, advocacy for policy reforms that reduce discrimination against ex-offenders and promote their reintegration is essential. Public awareness campaigns and legal reforms can help shift public attitudes and create a more supportive environment for ex-offenders.

The successful reintegration of ex-offenders is a multifaceted process that requires addressing a wide range of challenges. By understanding and addressing barriers to employment, social integration, psychological well-being, and navigating legal systems, we can develop more effective support systems and interventions. This study provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of ex-offenders, highlighting the need for comprehensive and coordinated efforts to promote their successful reintegration into society. Through continued research, policy advocacy, and practical interventions, we can help ex-offenders rebuild their lives, reduce recidivism, and contribute positively to their communities.

Recommendations

1. There is a need for the Federal, State and Local Governments in Nigeria to collaborate in the process of DDR of Ex-Combatants and Democratic Transition from War to Peace in Nigeria.

2. Government agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, Security operatives, and other critical stakeholders should overhaul the relief material distribution process through the strict monitoring of the distribution team to avoid misuse of authority, diversion of relief materials, segregation, harassment, gender bias, and other irregularities before, during and after distribution.
3. There is a need for proper coordination among NGOs and other humanitarian bodies to ensure proper DDR process.
4. The Federal Government of Nigeria should erect a fully equipped designated area for DDR of Ex-Combatants.

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