

# DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION: A CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

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“The UN Secretary-General has recently enumerated three key objectives, the fulfillment of which have often engendered successfully, comprehensive peace-building: (a) consolidating internal and external security; (b) strengthening political institutions and good governance; and (c) promoting economic and social rehabilitation and transformation. A comprehensive programme for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants is critical to all three of these objectives.”<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) are not just terms that have of late engulfed the world of security studies; their relevance to the developing world – and particularly to the African continent – makes DDR and its various dimensions one of the most referred to and applied solutions to conflict-prone areas, of which Africa is a part. For the past 30 years, the African continent has not experienced a period of absolute peace. No sooner had the new states emerged from their liberation wars then they were immersed in divisive political differences, which led to some severe loss of life and immense destruction of property in the battle for absolute political control and destiny – a phenomenon that brought about some challenges to the emerging states. In a way this has continued to offer challenges to some post-colonial states, long after the departure of the colonial masters.

This lack of security has been particularly problematic to a number of states. Zimbabwe, for one, has been experiencing internal instability, in part due to the country’s current electoral disputes and ‘resource rearrangement’ through the land reform programme.<sup>2</sup>

In other cases, combinations of intra-state and inter-state conflict have left some states such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone embroidered in instability (while declaring war over)<sup>3</sup> and enjoying what may

well turn out to be a temporary respite after a savage conflict which left a significantly sized population without limbs.

Another dimension of the challenges facing states particularly on the African continent includes relatively weak political institutions, a poor governance culture and poor economic performance, with states requiring social upliftment and transformation. Nevertheless, this paper is concerned with the problem arising out of intra- and inter-state violence. This is the elaborate programme of the DDR of ex-combatants in a post-conflict intra-state or inter-state environment. Without the challenges posed by the DDR process, the achievement of strong political institutions and well-performing economies, as well as the development of good governance, are unlikely.

A major concern of this paper is in identifying and highlighting the challenges of DDR as well as other concepts which contribute to the better understanding of DDR, and consequently assist in bringing about a more peaceful and stable environment. The paper takes cognisance of the fact that DDR programmes which have occurred in some states have been lauded as having been successful by the mere fact that the states are experiencing a reasonable level of stability and economic growth. For instance, given the relative success South Africa has had in the socio-political and economic spheres, it may be considered inconceivable that such a country could be said to have a DDR problem, as this paper shall argue. Nevertheless, even if South Africa were to have had a faultless DDR, its experience would still serve as a valuable lesson for other states. In examining some of these processes, the paper will put under the microscope some of the generally accepted assumptions that have followed the analysis of DDR across time and space.

In this regard, the paper uses a perspective of DDR which can be used in analysing the programme in a variety of states, sub-regions and regions. While not disputing that there are a variety of peculiarities between states, sub-regions and regions, it is contended that it does not necessarily follow that the stated entities are themselves homogeneous.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore plausible to develop a general framework with which to analyse DDR in the categories generally used, and that way achieve uniformity owing to similarities in the methodological approach. The paper therefore begins by placing DDR in perspective and later enters into a discussion of the concepts of peace dividend, conversion, peace-building, development and security – all of which play a significant part in successful DDR.

### **Placing DDR in perspective**

“Technically speaking, the first two components of the process (demobilisation and disarmament) are finite, while reintegration is ongoing, complex and its success dependent on a number of

interconnected issues that go beyond the formal end of the war.”<sup>5</sup>

“The demobilisation process should not be seen as an end in itself but should include an extended process of making the military more streamlined and able to respond efficiently to the changing national security needs.”<sup>6</sup>

DDR is a theme that has attracted the attention of contemporary studies in security and peace studies. The World Bank is among the leading institutions that have delved into an analysis of DDR.<sup>7</sup> Although not detailed in the characteristic of disarmament, the ‘D’ is merely associated with the collection and storage of arms and recognising transparency as an important component thereof. Although logic entails that disarmament ought to precede demobilisation and reintegration, it is the last two that the World Bank has analysed extensively from its coverage of conflict and post-conflict zones.

### *Demobilisation without mobilisation?*

Demobilisation is defined as the “(r)elease of soldiers from military duty and return to productive civilian life (in which is entail(ed) formal discharge from service, return to normal place of residence, closing of barracks and other military quarters and organisational structures”.<sup>8</sup> If post-conflict experiences in the sub-African region had conformed to the classical situation such as that which obtained in the European wars, this definition would not have attracted any attention at all. Instead, the legitimate question is: Is it possible to demobilise if you never mobilised in the first place?<sup>9</sup>

An interesting dimension is that during the past major wars – particularly that of the First and Second world wars – the emergence of threats to the Western states by pre-war Germany and Japan triggered the mobilisation of the peoples of these states and militarisation designed to meet the challenges posed. Consequently, the end of the hostilities demanded that the states disarm, demobilise and reintegrate into civilian lives those who had been a part of the military efforts of the time.

The question that Virginia Gamba raises is how the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa – who were never in fact mobilised in the face of the mostly intra-state conflicts faced by states in the region<sup>10</sup> – could then have been demobilised at a later stage! Instead, history shows that only some sections of the region, not the entire population, was mobilised. For instance, in both apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia (as indeed during the period of Zimbabwe–Rhodesia) only a minority became members of the liberation movements from both the rural and urban areas, leaving a large segment as mere by-standers and an even a greater segment utterly untouched by the political movements in the countries.

The effects of demobilisation without mobilisation, as is the case in most of the sub-Saharan Africa region, can therefore not be expected to follow the trends of, for example, post-war Europe, North America or Japan, where the totality of the nation was mobilised to meet the threats to their survival. One major difference concerns the uniformity of the population towards the goals of demobilisation; with greater uniformity being expected from among peoples who were mobilised. Little sympathy, if any, would be expected from the segment of society that felt far removed from the issues which influenced mobilisation in the first place. With the greater passage of time, the need for demobilisation becomes even more distant and eventually ceases to be a priority or even a budget factor in government planning.

It is therefore evident that demobilisation, as Denise Spenser has correctly argued, is not an ongoing process. This means that there comes a time when every ex-combatant will have been demobilised, and consequently the need for budgetary allocations towards the process are no longer required. However, the existence of problems because of the process' rather intricate nature, caused by a divergence from the traditional norm of demobilisation, makes prediction of the cessation of the latter rather tenuous. Kees Kingma raises these issues when he considers the extent to which demobilisation contributes to human development and whether this also brings about improved security.<sup>11</sup> This in turn makes disarmament a rather problematic undertaking, and consequently demilitarisation even more so, as will be observed later.

Although the very premise of DDR is evidently problematic, it is nevertheless important to note that numerous literature derived from several experiences have been recorded. They should therefore be identified to avoid the more obvious 'reinvention of the wheel', while at the same time taking cognisance of Africa's uniqueness in respect to DDR.

The World Bank manuals regard demobilisation in two forms, namely: peacetime and during the transition from war to peace. The former is the phase in which it is possible to experiment until one gets the correct 'formula'. Being the manageable phase, pilot operations may be undertaken to learn from experiences elsewhere. The latter form does not enjoy the luxury of a crisis-free environment and demobilisation takes a more urgent approach, symptomatic with emergency relief operations. The World Bank correctly identifies that a freshly contested area demands some political sensitivity requiring the integration of warring parties before "intiat(ing) a phased demobilisation". An important consideration of a successful demobilisation is regarded as one in which during the design stage, such factors as "environmental sensitive timing" are taken into account and that it "be linked to normal crop and school cycles".<sup>12</sup> Another critical consideration during demobilisation is to avoid donor fatigue.<sup>13</sup> In the paper's view, this World Bank work addresses the classical cases which form only a part of the situation in sub-Saharan Africa – that which is experienced a 'normal'. A similar dilemma faces the matter of reintegration.

## *Reintegration*

Reintegration is identified as the “(r)eturn to normal functioning society (which) may apply to returnees both military and non-military who must rebuild family and social life within the community”.<sup>14</sup> Regarded too as prone to donor fatigue, reintegration is also premised on the Western approach to the concept. This is particularly the case in that, by definition and practice, reintegration is a lengthy and rather complex process that does not appear to have any clear conclusion, and is therefore a phenomenon that may soon result in some loss of vibrancy and enthusiasm.<sup>15</sup> The process, which in the earlier stage involves ‘stepping stone’ activities and acts (as the World Bank handbook calls it) as “a safety net to provide support for ex-combatants between demobilisation and full reintegration”,<sup>16</sup> is referred to a *reinsertion*. The initial action of bringing an ex-combatant and his/her family back into society is, in the view of this paper, hardly a process of its own but rather a stage of reintegration. Providing material or monetary assistance to the families of the ex-combatants is considered critical in this process; a move that also makes it easier for the communities to accept the ‘long lost’ members of society ‘back’ into the fold.<sup>17</sup> Through ‘entitlement packages’, an ex-combatant and his/her family is provided the means to “bridge the difficult period between demobilisation and reintegration”.<sup>18</sup> In operationalising this process, local banking systems enable ex-combatants to have access to the required resources regardless of physical location. For a reinsertion process to be successful it is, however, necessary to ensure that the local community to which the ex-combatant and his/her family are being re-introduced is sensitised and involved in decision making regarding local issues. Dimensions of reintegration that require closer examination include economic, social and gender components.

The economic dimension of reintegration is in many ways the ‘engine’ of reintegration in that it provides the aspects that determine the structure and direction of the process. A critical component of this dimension is ex-combatants’ general lack of information about the real economic situation that will confront them upon their return to civilian life. This ‘drought’ of information demands the need for “an information, counselling and referral services”, which evidently would be of crucial assistance to ex-combatants.<sup>19</sup> The economic dimension also posits two types of strategies, namely rural and urban strategies, which require different approaches. The former strategies are easier and have a shorter gestation period, taking into account appropriate areas for resettlement and security. These would then be protected through individual title deeds or as a component of a resettlement programme. This contrasts considerably with urban strategies, which are more complex and take longer to achieve. The provision of vocational training that provides ex-combatants with marketable skills serves as part of the solution to reintegration problems. This provides a viable solution to ex-combatants who are keen to

settle down quickly and in a more sustainable manner. Job creation programmes and on-the-job training – in which the private sector plays a major role, particularly at the design stage – foster sustainable employment opportunities for ex-combatants.<sup>20</sup> It has been recognised, however, that there is a more urgent need for immediate employment of ex-combatants, provided more readily by labour-intensive work. The World Bank study has also shown that full participation by those intended to benefit directly from reintegration, and taking into consideration the sensitivity of local communities and involving them in decision making regarding local issues, leads to successful resettlement programmes.

### Concepts and issues for thought

As the above shows, DDR is a complex undertaking that affects and is affected by a variety of factors. Some of these include peace dividend, conversion, peace-building, development and, indeed, security itself. Interrogating these concepts provides an elaboration of the various issues that give a better understanding of the challenges of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration.

#### *Peace dividend*

Following a conflict situation, it is expected that when some form of stability finally dawns, there is a general expectation that, at last, benefits accruing from a more peaceful environment will surely characterise this new phase. There is therefore a belief that peace dividend, defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a cumulative reduction in expenditure, characterises this development.<sup>21</sup> This is not to suggest that a peace dividend implies a complete, or what could be described as a *positive* peace. Indeed, defining peace is difficult. A more accurate description is the existence of “infinite shades of peace”.<sup>22</sup> Whatever the degree of peace in existence, the notion of peace dividend would appear to suggest the evolvment of benefits following the ‘calm’, as would be said to be the case in a post-conflict situation. Symptomatic of this would be the contemporary era following the demise of apartheid in South Africa, a post-Savimbi period in Angola and expectations of the post-conflict environment in the Great Lakes region for the DRC, Burundi and other countries there.

Kees Kingma provides an improved understanding of peace dividend in the context of calculating its dimension by viewing the concept as “overarching” and deconstructing it to include concepts of *resource*, *welfare* and *product dividend*. Resource dividend refers to the “total reduction in defence budget minus additional spending required by the military downsizing”.<sup>23</sup> The argument is that the reduction in military expenditure symptomatic of peace

dividend ought to take cognisance of other costs of disarmament, such as the cleaning up of military bases and the re-training of former combatants and civilians. Related to this form of peace dividend is product dividend, which is defined as the “total effects that arise due to increased civilian government spending, tax cuts, budget deficit reduction or other alternative uses of the resource dividend”.<sup>24</sup> Kingma stipulates that the ultimate development following product dividend is that of welfare dividend, which is defined as the “positive welfare effect resulting from the resources released from the military”.<sup>25</sup>

The reduction in military expenditure expected in a post-conflict environment is clearly seen as having a direct and indirect impact, in which the former relates to such issues as more health and education facilities, and the latter to a reduction in inflation and interest rates, which would then lead to an increase in investment and employment levels.

The value of the concept of peace dividend – as would be expected from theoretical constructs when applied to empirical dimensions – raises other questions such as those posed by Peter Vale who states: “Exactly how long and how influential a peace dividend might be is a matter of some speculation.”<sup>26</sup> He also observes that there is in fact a view by orthodox strategic studies that peace dividend ought to be brief. How, indeed, this applies to such areas as the Southern African Development Community, which has experienced long periods of conflict, is open to speculation.

### *Conversion*

Related to the concept of peace dividend is that of conversion, defined as “civilian (re)use of sources that were formerly used for military activities”.<sup>27</sup> Conversion evolves from both a more peaceful environment and the decision to adopt a less militaristic posture by reducing the military budget and refocusing the direction of military research and development, as well as re-examining the nature and character of the arms industry in line with the prevailing peace and stability.<sup>28</sup>

In the articulation of conceptual issues which affect demobilisation, Kingma makes a critical revelation when he points to a relationship between *reductions in the military in poor countries and reductions in security expenditure*. While this hypothesis is subject to empirical evidence, Kingma introduces a notable concept of *security expenditure* as distinct from that of military expenditure. The concept of security expenditure is correctly linked to that of the *security sector*, as that component which encompasses more than just the armies, air forces and navies.

Although this figure of the security sector is higher than that of the military sector, the articulation of military expenditure is nevertheless a fairly accurate statistic to employ.

### *Peace-building*

Playing a fairly central role in the entire programme of DDR is the concept of peace-building, defined as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict”.<sup>29</sup> Peace-building is designed to provide some confidence among people and to investigate the prime causes of conflicts. During the contemporary period, peace-building has undertaken the lead role in providing a comprehensive process, which takes cognisance of political, economic, social and psychological aspects, as well as one that takes into account the totality of human beings through the acknowledgement of the significance of women’s critical role. In this way, peace-building’s traditional role of solidifying peace has an improved chance of succeeding in ensuring that conflict does not arise. The value of peace-building is seen in its involvement in election monitoring, in the carrying out developmental activities such as human rights advocacy, and in providing assistance to law enforcement officials, such as the police force, to carry out a technically improved service that shows compassion towards people.

A particularly notable dimension of the peace-building concept is the linkage it provides between development and security – both issues that will form part of the discussion in this paper. One aspect is the linkage between security, stability and development. The hypothesis that increased security and stability leads to development is an aspect that may not necessarily be an empirical reality, despite its seemingly obvious manner. Related to this is that “peace is required for development, but development is required for peace”.<sup>30</sup> This symbiosis is, however, also subject to speculation. Yet another dimension that signifies the complexity of the peace-building concept is the dilemma it poses in respect of dependency as a solution to the attainment of self-sustenance. Another debate that seems to be ongoing is that between emergency and development intervention. All these debates and hypotheses serve to widen the understanding of the peace-building concept as well as the issue of DDR. The concept of development, which has transcended time, is one of them.

### *Development*

Development is, of course, a concept that has as many definitions as there are ideological and theoretical viewpoints. A working definition that this paper considers comprehensive is by Pearce and Turner, who argue that the concept “involves maximising the net benefits of economic development, subject to maintaining the services and quality of natural resources over time”.<sup>31</sup> During the more contemporary era, the concept has been more informed by neo-liberal views that have a multilayer perspective on security. With the UNDP’s entry into the fray with its focus on human development, the concept has tended to

take the central positioning of people; it defines human development as the “creation and utilisation of people’s choices and capabilities”.<sup>32</sup>

The challenge that the concept of development poses in the DDR debate is the extent to which its focus is truly towards people’s needs. In this paper’s view, this is dependent on both the seriousness with which ex-combatants and their families as well as the other segments of society are fully integrated, and the extent to which DDR informs demilitarisation. It is therefore towards the focus of the security concept that we must now turn.

### *Security*

The concept of security is as old as time itself. It is not the intention of this paper to enter into a historical debate, but rather to exculpate from aspects of it in order to inform the DDR debate. It is, however, pertinent to stipulate that the more nuanced perception of the concept of security evolved from shifts over the past decade. During this period the ‘battle’ was essentially between two ‘plateaus’ which are so interwoven that in the end it seems to have been rather meaningless. The debate has been over *security of states* and *security of people*.

Shifts in the interpretation of security have generally been attributed to the East–West conflict associated with the formation of two power blocs – one by the Soviet Union and its allies, and the other by the United States (US) and its allies – fighting over ideology *plus* fighting for the ‘soul’ of the rest of the world. The other reasons were changes in economic and military power balances, which saw the emergence of the US as the sole surviving superpower, as well as increased environmental awareness. Developments in the past three years suggest further shifts in the security debate. For one, there is increased unilateralism by the US: the bullying of states which do not ascribe to the interpretation of security as defined by the US. Another related factor is the linkage of terrorism to the Islamic religion; a development that has put into turmoil the balance of power in the Arab states and further strengthened the Israeli position in the Middle East. Although these developments may appear to be of peripheral linkage to DDR challenges, the refocusing of global attention on them must surely cast a less than beneficial reflection on the difficulties experienced in post-conflict and conflict areas.

Other conceptual issues that affect the resolution of DDR challenges include such security dimensions as national security, common security, collective security, cooperative security, environmental security and the security community. The debate as to what extent national security is a reflection of the protection of states and people and not regime security – which hitherto would entail a bias towards military security – is still ongoing. The other concepts of security (that is, common security, collective security, cooperative security, environmental security and security community), show some commonality: namely, a realisation that the challenges at hand are too enormous to be

handled by individual states alone. The drive is therefore towards collaborative arrangements.

## Conclusion

This paper has provided a comprehensive, albeit brief, discussion of demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration. The paper has also identified some of the most critical concepts and has posed some significant questions that lead to a better understanding of DDR. By interrogating these issues through a conceptual discourse, the paper has contributed to the search for a peaceful and stable society.

## Notes

- 1 Ambassador Peggy Mason Buenos Aires Seminar, August 2001 in Elanders Gotab, 2002. *Challenges of peace operations: Into the 21st century: Concluding report 1997-2002*, Stockholm. Emphasis is my own.
- 2 Prior to Zimbabwe's 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections, the country had embarked upon a controversial land programme. This saw a number of 'white' settler farmers losing their farms to either the government or the 'war veterans'. The disputes over the election results and the manner in which they were conducted, together with the land issue, have contributed to the current instability in the country.
- 3 At a meeting with US President George Bush on 5 November at the White House, DRC President Joseph Kabila declared that the war in his country was over, although fighting has continued – reminiscent of the former's own declaration aboard a US aircraft carrier in respect to the conflict in Iraq.
- 4 Colletta et al argue that despite the usefulness of a general approach, it is nevertheless crucial to have an in-depth study of a specific environment. For details see N Colletta, M Kostner and I Wiederhofer, *The transition from war to peace in sub-Saharan Africa*, 1996, p xi.
- 5 T Thusi and S Meek, Disarmament and demobilisation, in M Malan, S Meek, T Thusi, J Ginifer and P Coker, *Sierra Leone: Building the road to recovery, ISS Monograph Series 80*, March 2003, p 23.
- 6 D Spenser, *Demobilisation and reintegration in Central Africa*, Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC) Paper 8, February 1997, p 64.
- 7 Being involved in post-conflict work, the World Bank has produced a learning module for its Staff Development Programme on *Demobilisation and Reintegration Programming*, published in August 2001. The handbook provides 'lessons learnt' from a variety of countries involved in DDR.
- 8 Ibid, p 5.
- 9 V Gamba and M Chuma of Safer Africa in an interview posed the question and the argument.
- 10 Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia – part of the Front Line States (FLS); a group of states

in the Southern African sub-region belonging to what has been referred to as the 'black' bloc created to defend themselves against aggression from South Africa, the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the Portuguese (who controlled Mozambique and Angola).

- 11 K Kingma, *Assessing demobilisation: Conceptual issues*, in K Kingma (ed), *Demobilisation in sub-Saharan Africa*, Macmillan Press, London, 2000, p 3.
- 12 Colletta et al, op cit, p 12.
- 13 Ibid, p 15.
- 14 World Bank, 2001, op cit, p 5.
- 15 Colletta, et al, op cit, p 22.
- 16 World Bank, 2001, op cit, p 5.
- 17 See World Bank document, 1999, 5.13.
- 18 Ibid, p 43.
- 19 Ibid, p 54. See also Colletta et al, op cit, pp 19-20.
- 20 See Colletta et al, op cit, p 21.
- 21 K Kingma, op cit..
- 22 R Scruton, *A dictionary of political thought*, Macmillan Press, London, 1982, p 410.
- 23 K Kingma, op cit, p 24.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 P Vale, 2003. *Security and politics in South Africa: The regional dimension*, Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., Boulder, Colorado and London, 2003, p 192, n 36.
- 27 K Kingma, op cit, p 24.
- 28 This information is from the 1996 BICC Conversion Survey which presents six aspects of conversion – those already stated and the closure of military bases and recasting them so that they can undertake other developmental issues; getting rid of dangerous defence material safely as well as “management of surplus weapons”; and demobilisation and reintegration.
- 29 B Boutros-Ghali, *An agenda for peace: Preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peace-keeping*, report of the Secretary-General, United Nations, New York, 2002, p11.
- 30 K Kingma, op cit, p 25.
- 31 D W Pearce & R K Turner, *Economics of Natural Resources and the Environment*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1990, p 24.
- 32 K Kingma, op cit, p 30. See also UNDP, *Human Development Report 1990*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990.