

Combatants to State-builders – Lessons learnt and Recommendations

CSDN Policy Workshop
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Problem Statement

≡ Who/Why to engage:

- ‘Non state armed groups’ are key stakeholders in contemporary conflicts.
- Political conflicts can only be resolved through political means – but since 9/11/2011, hard security approaches have taken precedence over ‘soft power’ engagement

≡ When/How long to engage:

- Peace processes should be defined extensively, from ‘talks about talks’ to the implementation of peace accords: need for sustained engagement and support.

≡ How to engage:

- Importance of supporting ‘security transitions’: no peace without restoration of the state’s legitimate monopoly over the use of force.
- But conventional approaches to post-war security transition are biased, externally-imposed, state-centred and short-sighted: ‘counter-insurgency by other means’.
- Lack of ‘inside-out’ perspectives on effective forms of engagement to support the transition from state challengers to state- and peace-building agents.

Research framework

Main research question:

»Under which conditions do armed groups generate and maintain the political will to restore the state's monopoly over the use of force and participate in post-war governance?«



Methodology: Participatory Action Research

- ≡ Self-reflection and analysis by local teams made up of 'empathetic' researchers and (former) combatants as 'insider experts' involved in all phases of the research process



Outcome: Conflict transformation support, through:

- ≡ Capacity-Building
- ≡ Peer-Advice
- ≡ Policy Advice

Case Studies: 9 Trajectories from War to Politics

Country/ region	Armed Group	Conflict type	Start of armed conflict	Peace accord	Current status
Colombia	M19	gvt	1973	1990	In politics
S. Africa	ANC/MK	gvt	1961	1991	heads gvt
El Salvador	FMLN	gvt	1970s	1992	heads gvt
N. Ireland	Sinn Fein/IRA	territory	1969	1998	in (local) gvt
Kosovo	KLA	territory	1994	1999	heads gvt
Burundi	CNDD/FDD	gvt	1994	2003	heads gvt
Aceh	GAM/ AGAM	territory	1976	2005	heads (local) gvt
Sudan	SPLM/A	Territory /gvt	1983	2005	heads gvt
Nepal	CPN-M/PLA	gvt	1996	2006	Heads gvt

Research findings: Summary

Key components of effective peace process support:

- ≡ **Inclusivity**
- ≡ **Participation**
- ≡ **Comprehensiveness**

Lessons learnt and recommendations - Five thematic clusters:

- ≡ **Transition management**
- ≡ **Arms management**
- ≡ **Combatants as change agents**
- ≡ **Transitional justice**
- ≡ **State reform / State-Building**

1: Transition Management - Lessons Learnt

Peace processes are highly volatile and prone to intra-party tensions, security vacuums and the appearance of new 'spoilers'



Importance of maintaining/supporting organisational cohesion during negotiations and early post-war transitions, through:

- ≡ Inclusive negotiations with representative leaders and all affected factions
- ≡ Temporary cantonment of troops to preserve unity and discipline and to instruct members about their post-war options
- ≡ Keeping militant command structures intact until security sector integration and democratisation measures are devised and/or implemented
- ≡ Setting up self-run interim security organs providing elements of continuity in the struggle in the eyes of (former) combatants and supporters

1. Transition Management - Recommendations

Third-party mediators should:

- ≡ Promote unity and cohesiveness within conflict parties during peace processes by encouraging inclusive negotiation formats and engaging with a broad spectrum of representatives (including ‘radical’ and marginalised factions as well as pragmatic leaders);
- ≡ Advise state negotiators not to insist on dismantling rebel organisations and command structures prematurely, as they can play important security and symbolic roles in volatile post-war contexts;
- ≡ Recommend the regrouping of dispersed combatants from all conflicting parties into self-managed assembly camps;
- ≡ Devise, in conjunction with the conflict parties, context-relevant interim mechanisms to maintain cohesion and discipline in the early phase of peace implementation.

2. Arms Management - Lessons Learnt

One-sided demands for armed groups to disarm unilaterally create acute security and political dilemmas for their combatants.



Both sides need tangible security guarantees to build trust in the transition process and abide by their commitments to implement necessary reforms, through:

- ≡ Cessations of hostilities as early confidence-building measures
- ≡ Parallel (& reciprocal) demilitarisation of non-statutory and statutory forces
- ≡ Comprehensive peace accords embedding arms management in broader structural reform programmes
- ≡ Coordinated (e.g. ‘tit-for-tat’) implementation of the parties’ reciprocal commitments
- ≡ Self-managed decommissioning
- ≡ International protection and verification schemes

2. Arms Management - Recommendations

Third-party mediators should:

- ≡ Advise state actors to refrain from making unilateral disarmament a necessary precondition for substantive agreements on the roots causes of the conflict;
- ≡ Be aware of context-specific sensitivities (and symbolic connotations) that surround the terminology of arms management, and encourage parties to adopt a holistic approach, comprising demilitarisation measures by state and non-state armies alike;
- ≡ Encourage parallel and reciprocal implementation timeframes for decommissioning and state reform, as mutual confidence-building measures;
- ≡ Devise relevant protection schemes to ensure the safety of demobilising combatants.

International peacekeeping missions and peacebuilding agencies should:

- ≡ Support combatants' ownership of arms management schemes;
- ≡ Coordinate the work of the various agencies in charge of supporting DDR and SSR processes, in order to ensure their coherent planning and parallel implementation;
- ≡ If required by the parties, monitor decommissioning/demilitarisation processes.

3. Former Combatants as Change Drivers - Lessons Learnt

Many armed group leaders and members object to the term ‘reintegration’ which treats them as ‘outcasts’ needing to be ‘re-socialised’, and which ignores the embedded nature of most insurgencies:

» the relation between fighters and the people [is] so close that the border between the two [is] practically non-existent«



By contrast, they see themselves as community leaders and peacebuilding agents with differentiated ‘re-skilling’ needs and interests, and emphasise the importance of:

- ≡ Self-managed combatant identification/selection processes and support schemes
- ≡ Integrated approaches to post-war conversions and trajectories: security sector integration, community-based socio-economic facilitation, political capacity-building

3. Former Combatants as Change Drivers - Recommendations

National and international planners of reintegration programmes should:

- ≡ Carry out extensive analysis of the nature and specificities of the organisations undergoing demobilisation, and broaden combatant identification criteria to take into account the diversity of roles and functions within and between armed groups;
- ≡ Adopt a comprehensive approach to socio-economic, political and security sector integration schemes, and assessing the absorption capacity of each sector;
- ≡ Include combatant organisations in programme planning and implementation, offer capacity-building and support for self-managed schemes, and revise the generic 'reintegration' terminology in the light of locally meaningful and acceptable concepts;
- ≡ Pressure for and support community-based approaches linking individual socio-economic facilitation with broader regional or national rehabilitation schemes that target needy constituencies, such as low-income housing, health and education programmes.

4. Transitional Justice - Lessons Learnt

Combatants often carry multiple identities within their communities, from heroes to victims and/or perpetrators. In many cases, justice and accountability are central to their reform agenda, as long as they are applied equally to all conflict sides.



Justice and security should not be seen as incompatible imperatives but as complementary and mutually-reinforcing processes, through:

- ≡ Conditional amnesties and truth commissions stressing mutual responsibilities in upholding accountable transitions;
- ≡ Balancing compensation and support schemes for war veterans and war victims;
- ≡ Inclusive vetting processes to redress past human rights violations and increase public confidence in the state's justice and security sector;
- ≡ Former combatants' initiatives in dealing with the past from below.

4. Transitional Justice - Recommendations

Mediators should:

- ≡ Ensure that local understandings of 'justice' are taken into account before importing TJ experiences from elsewhere;
- ≡ Make amnesties conditional upon collaboration with justice mechanisms, e.g. disclosure of truth and apologies;
- ≡ Suggest the introduction of relevant provisions and mechanisms acknowledging all conflict stakeholders' mutual responsibility for past abuses.

Peacebuilding agencies should:

- ≡ Provide technical advice for the introduction of appropriate human rights vetting and lustration mechanisms (discharge, transfers or early retirement), and offer international supervision of such proceedings upon request;
- ≡ Support former combatants engaged in dealing with the past, reconciliation or other TJ projects through capacity building and financial support.

5. State Reform / State-Building - Lessons Learnt

According to combatants, the emergence of armed struggle is rooted in abuses of authority and exclusionary or authoritarian practices by illegitimate state institutions.



The political will of armed groups to undergo DDR and TJ schemes is heavily conditioned by their active participation in the transformation of state institutions to address the root causes of violence, through:

- ≡ Democratisation of the political system through transitional power-sharing arrangements, procedural and constitutional reform;
- ≡ Power redistribution through self-rule or state formation in separatist conflicts;
- ≡ Consolidation of civilian entities pursuing the struggle by nonviolent democratic means;
- ≡ Democratisation and professionalisation of the security system through security sector integration, inclusive recruitment schemes, (re)training and civilian oversight;
- ≡ Comprehensive national and international implementation oversight.

5. State Reform / State-Building - Recommendations

Mediators should:

- ≡ Facilitate balanced agreements addressing RLMs' claims to security sector transformation, democratisation or socio-economic reform, by ensuring that relevant structural reform provisions are included in peace accords.

Peacebuilding agencies and NGOs should:

- ≡ Support the transformation of underground structures into effective political parties, through training in conventional politics and good governance.

SSR support agencies (e.g. EU CSDP missions) should:

- ≡ Guarantee international legal and technical standards for military/police integration, vetting and re-ranking, and offer training for the new defence and security forces in conventional warfare and international codes of conduct.

International peace accords' verification and oversight bodies should:

- ≡ Interpret their mission mandates extensively (i.e. beyond immediate security stabilisation measures); involve local actors in monitoring activities, and plan for a timely transfer of oversight competencies to inclusive national bodies.



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Many thanks for your attention!

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