The National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) Programme
Towards post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation in Syria - *by Syrians, for Syrians*

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Disarmament in Syria

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Preamble

ESCWA commissioned this paper as part of a series, looking at options to build lasting peace in Syria, in the scenario of a political settlement bringing the conflict to an end. This paper focuses on the challenge of Disarming, Demobilising and Reintegrating (DDR) armed groups as a way to restore the state's monopoly over the use of legitimate violence. Doing so in Syria (as in most if not all post-conflict environments) will obviously require broader Security Sector Reform (SSR) so as to reform the state itself and make it less of a threat, and more accountable, to all its citizens.

This paper will only focus on DDR for the sake of clarity, and ease of reference. Doing so may bear the usual risk that DDR and SSR are approached as two distinct sets of considerations and activities and follow a linear approach whereby SSR only starts after DDR has been completed. ESCWA would like to specifically alert readers to such a risk. In Syria, the state is responsible for most instances of civilian death.[1] Irrespective of one's political views and affiliations, this reality means that a sole focus on Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) cannot be sufficient a step to make all Syrians safe throughout the country.

This paper was briefly presented at a workshop held with Syrian participants in Tunis on 24-25 May 2018, and has been updated to build on some of their feedback.

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[1] From 51% according to selected Russian analysts, up to 92% according to the Syria Campaign's www.whoiskillingciviliansinsyria.org.

Introduction

At the time of writing, over 350,000 combatants belong to one of Syria's conflict parties. This includes non-state armed groups (NSAGs),[2] statutory forces, and armed groups which operate alongside the Syrian military but may only partly fall under its command and control. Most actors to the Syrian war are both security providers and threats. They may provide public security in areas they control, coerce and live off the population, and present a threat to populations in areas protected by others.

This paper will specifically focus on the challenge of Disarmament in the context of Syria, as a key condition to restoring basic safety and security for all Syrians, in the aftermath of a political settlement. While transitional justice is beyond the scope of this paper, Syrian policymakers ought to know that justice is the one key programmatic area that can help turn short-term safety gains into effective reconciliation and peace in the long-term.[3]

The most commonly used approach to deal with disarmament is referred to as "DDR." DDR used to refer to an internationally accepted framework of Disarming and Demobilizing combatants affiliated with (usually non-state) armed groups, to then Reintegrate them into civilian life. Over the years, DDR has however become the go to acronym designating most programmes seeking to reduce armed violence in a fragile environment.[4]

This paper will take a lightly different and needs-based lens. Restoring safety and order for all Syrians, regardless of gender, religious belief, sectarian and political affiliation, will require the need for disarmament as a way to restore security in the short-term. Programmatic priorities will have to be assessed on the basis of a thorough understanding of the main threats to Syrians' safety. Doing so may involve "typical" DDR programming, as well as other initiatives which would initiate elements of structural reform, and hence typically fall under SSR.

To begin with, section 1 will outline the rationale for disarming Syria. Section 2 will present a definition of DDR and its purpose. Section 3 will unpack some of the conceptual bias that characterize DDR approaches. Section 4 will then outline key requirements to successful DDR and Section 5 reflect on common pitfalls. Section 6 will briefly touch upon the question of who should spearhead DDR/disarmament efforts in Syria. Section 7 will specifically discuss linkages between DDR and each of the NAFS four nexus. At last, section 8 will capture the essence of this paper into twelve guiding principles for successful disarmament in Syria.

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2 In conflict literature, NSAGs are typically viewed as armed groups which challenge the authority of the state through armed violence. They are typically "opposition" groups and are hence distinct from paramilitary groups which operate alongside a given country's security forces.

3 The importance of Transitional Justice to anchor the quick wins of disarmament in the long haul, has been widely documented. While this is a "lesson identified", it may not be a "lesson learned" just yet. For more analysis, see Seth G. Jones and others, Establishing law and order after conflict, RAND Corporation, 2005.

4 DDR knowledge has over the years been compiled into "International DDR Standards" (IDDRS). A "shorter" Operational Guide (317 pages) is also available to help one navigate the IDDRS. Available from http://www.iddrtg.org/about-us/.

1. The case for disarmament in Syria

At the time of writing, two thirds of Syria's combatants are affiliated with armed groups which either oppose the state, or are only loosely affiliated to it. Insecurity is spreading throughout the country, weapons are widely available, and disarmament programming is needed to solve part of the problem.

1.1.   350,000 + active combatants

As of early 2018, a conservative estimate of the number of Syrians affiliated to one of the country's warring parties amounts to no less than 350,000 combatants.[5]

The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) accounts for five corps. Three pre-existing ones, which account for about 80,000 personnel (from a pre-war strength of 225,000 mostly conscripts), in addition to the Russian-sponsored Fourth and Fifth Legion/Corps, created respectively in late 2015 and late 2016.[6] In addition, selected intelligence units (e.g. military intelligence, air force intelligence) fall under the authority of Syria's Ministry of Defence.[7] These will need to undergo profound transformation to reach global standards.

In parallel, a broad range of state-aligned armed groups co-exists with the SAA. These include the National Defence Forces (NDF), foreign armed groups (mostly Iraqi, Lebanese and Afghan combatants), tribal and local militias, as well as militias directly funded by members of the country's political and business elites, and answerable directly to them. Disbanding these units as part of a DDR process is a necessity. It will be in line with Russia's policy to restore the primacy of the SAA, but may well constitute a direct threat to the power of some of Syria's ruling elite.

To the exclusion of foreign fighters, these account for no less than 250,000 Syrian combatants on the side of the state (consisting of about half Syrian military personnel

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5 The analysis below builds on an interview with a confidential source, as well as publicly available western and Russian material, including Kirill Semenov, The Syrian Armed Forces Seven Years into the Conflict: From a Regular Army to Volunteer Corps, Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), 17 May 2017. Available from http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/the-syrian-armed-forces-seven-years-into-the-conflict-from-a-regular-army-to-volunteer-corps-/; Kirill Semenov, Assad's Army and Intelligence Services: Feudalization or Structurization? Modern Diplomacy, 19 March, 2018. Available from https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/03/19/assads-army-and-intelligence-services-feudalization-or-structurization/; Tim Ripley, Syrian army prepares for post-conflict challenges, Jane's HIS Markit. 26 October 2017. Available from http://www.janes.com/images/assets/474/75474/Syrian_army_prepares_for_post-conflict_challenges.pdf; Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, The Fifth Legion: A New Auxiliary Force, Syria Comment, 24 December 2016. Available from http://www.aymennjawad.org/19504/the-fifth-legion-a-new-auxiliary-force; Fabrice Balance, Status of the Syrian Rebellion: Numbers, Ideologies, and Prospects, PolicyWatch 2727, 22 November, 2016, available from http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/status-of-the-syrian-rebellion-numbers-ideologies-and-prospects.
6 Russia viewed the need for a standing army instead of a plethora of state-aligned armed groups. Both the Fourth and the Fifth Corps were hence set up to combine the most effective state-aligned militia into more cohesive units, under MoD structure, on the basis of new systems of command and control. The Fifth Corps includes experienced units such as the Liwa Suqur al-Sahara, the Liwa al-Quds as well as NDF units, elite army units such as the Tigers Forces, and small numbers of foreign fighters.
7 Others have their own chain of command, for instance the "political security" ("Amn al-Syasi").

(all five corps) and half Syrian militia members).[8] More precise estimates may not be possible, as i) allegiances shift, ii) only parts of the militias have integrated the newly created Fifth Legion, iii) numbers for tribal militia alone can cause significant variations (for instance the Suqur al-Furat, strongly linked to the Al-Shaitat tribe, and whose numbers could be in the thousands), iv) selected statutory units also started hiring foreign personnel,[9] and v) groups of opposition fighters became local security forces after they surrendered as part of Russian sponsored "reconciliation" efforts.

The Syrian armed opposition has never been a unified insurgency, and rapidly fragmented into over a thousand armed groups, deemed to account for 100,000 to 150,000 combatants at its peak.[10] For most of the war, most combatants (100,000) belonged to large-scale units, in addition to medium-scale (most Salafi-Jihadi) groups of a few hundred combatants each, and a third category of hundreds of small (mostly local) groups whose aim was to defend local interests rather than to pursue offensive gains.

In early 2017, agreements made between Russia, Iran and Turkey over "de-escalation zones" eventually led to a re-composition of the NSAG scene. Most groups were forcibly re-grouped in Idlib's province and, by early 2018, have turned into auxiliary forces for the Turkish army. There, NSAGs have merged into new coalitions, usually dropping Islamist references along the way. The Syrian Liberation Front / Jabhat Tahrir Suriya may account for up to 20,000 individuals, and the Turkish-backed renewed Free Syrian Army for 25,000. Adding to southern combatants gathered in the Jabha Janoubia (20,000 or so), these amount to an estimated 70,000 combatants.

Combatants currently being evacuated from eastern Ghouta may amount to about 10,000 down the line, Kurdish led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to about 30,000, and dozens of thousands of combatants remain unaccounted for throughout the country. These include individuals formerly affiliated with a designated terrorist organisation who went into hiding, and smaller numbers of opposition NSAGs which turned into local defence forces as part of the Russian sponsored "reconciliation programme". Together with battle losses, this reality explains why numbers of opposition affiliated combatants have reduced over the past twelve months. Further, there are no reliable strength estimates for groups such as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

The fate of Syria's NSAGs and paramilitary forces will need to be examined as part of a DDR programme. Integration within a reformed military/police is possible for only some of them, including on the basis of gendarmerie or territorial commands to reflect the local dimension of most of these groups. Doing so will require thorough management, re-training, vetting to ensure clear command, control and accountability of these forces in the future.

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8 Remaining militia consist of NDF contingents not assimilated into the latest Fourth and Fifth legions, as well as unspecified numbers of tribal based militias. Some analysts use higher numbers, as they estimate that the state-aligned militias account for more than twice the number of SAA personnel, see Kiril Semenov, Ibid.

9 See the example of one of the 5th Legion's kataeb, which has hired Lebanese combatants in the past. http://www.aymennjawad.org/19819/katibat-dir-al-watan-new-sub-unit-of-the-fifth

10 For recent details and analysis, including when it comes to the NSAG's ideological differences, see Fabrice Balanche, op. cit., and Kirill Semenov, Anti-government extremist organizations in Syria, Russian International Affairs Council, 16 June 2017, available from http://russiancouncil.ru/en/syria-extremism.

1.2. The pre-eminence of local interests

Seven years into the war, armed groups have shaped local governance in areas they controlled. In opposition areas, local administrative councils (LACs) most often replaced pre-war administrative structures (except in areas controlled by Kurdish-dominated political and military groups), working either in parallel and coordination with prominent local armed groups, or under their control. New elites have emerged at the local level, including in governmental held areas, and engaged into new practices in relation to setting and implementing policy. Future disarmament programming may need to acknowledge this reality and involve local actors, so as to build on their legitimacy, and gain a critical mass of acceptance.

Typically, the key DDR question which arises from this consideration is to define the provision of security at the local level, as the result of a DDR programme. Is there room for combatants affiliated to non-statutory forces to become part of the country's security service at the local level? If so, establishing the role, mandate, composition, management arrangements, strength levels and formation process of these local forces will be a key variable of a DDR process.

The importance of local identities in shaping the armed groups scene (including for state-aligned militias) is key and will present peacemakers with a set of challenges when facilitating a process of political and security settlement acceptable to most conflict parties.

These actors themselves are in the midst of a game of influence between selected regional and international backers,[11] whose priorities add to the complexity of Syrian conflict parties' own interests. Simply put, alliances may be fluid, affiliations shift, and what may be a terrorist group to one external backer, is a palatable interlocutor to another.

1.3. Previous attempts at transitional security in Syria

In 2018, interim security arrangements such as "ceasefires" and "disarmament" will come across as loaded terms in Syria. The government's approach to quashing the rebellion has been consistent in besieging and starving a given population into submission, and then negotiating one of two forms of surrender: i) partial disarmament and co-optation as a local militia now "reconciled" with the state", or ii) evacuation of combatants and their dependants to another part of the country (mostly Idlib), allowing the state to bring in other intermediaries. The Syrian government has then displayed equal consistency in using such arrangements to free up its capacity, and then send reinforcements to places such as Deir ez Zor, Idlib and, earlier this year, eastern Ghouta.

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11 This includes four permanent members of the UN Security Council, who currently have troops in Syria.

This pattern shows a consistent approach of ceasefires and disarmament as tools for the surrender of armed opposition groups, organised under the auspices of Russia's "Coordination centre for reconciliation of opposing sides" (CCROS). Since February 2016, the CCROS has brokered ceasefires in besieged areas, overseen the transfer of opposition fighters and civilians[12] or organised their "reconciliation" with the state as local enforcement groups. The CCROS is entirely manned by Russian military personnel and serves key intelligence gathering purposes.[13]

> *"Reconciliation, what reconciliation? There cannot be reconciliation without accountability!" (Tunis workshop participant)*

1.4.   Three critical assumptions underlying this paper

This paper has been prepared to inform policy debate on questions of disarmament and DDR, and feed into ongoing consultations with Syrian policymakers. As such, this paper is predicated upon three critical assumptions captured in the table below:

1	A future disarmament programme will build on an inclusive political settlement and be designed with a view to enhance the safety and security of all Syrians, not to push the political agenda of a given group at the expense of others.
2	Transitional security programmes will focus on the provision of short-term security for all Syrians. They ought to involve and apply to all (opposition and state-aligned) armed groups, in addition to part - or all - of Syria's existing security sector.
3	Syria will not rebuild its security sector to its pre-war state (220,000 mostly conscript forces). Rather, disarmament will be part of a process of transforming Syria's security sector into a more effective force which i) is "accountable to civil authorities, independent oversight agencies and civil society"; ii) adequately manages (internal and external) threats, and iii) has the necessary budget provision to fulfil its mandate.

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12 It is worth noting that members of local councils were most often relocated themselves as part of these Russian sponsored efforts. As a result, local governance experience and capacity has, again, diminished in most places.
13 The CCROS first commander, Lieutenant-General Kuralenko, came to the job strong from his previous experience heading a joint Russia/Iran/Iraq intelligence sharing facility in Baghdad.

2. DDR, purpose and possibilities

2.1. Purpose

Disarmament is best understood as a mechanism to address the most prominent symptom of a conflict, the armed violence. Successful disarmament programmes serve to significantly reduce this threat through a process of separating combatants from their weapons in a dignified way. Combatants may belong to any force which needs to be decommissioned after a conflict, irrespective of whose side they fought on, and whom they fought against.

2.2. What the DDR acronym stands for

DDR stands for "Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration." It is a framework developed and widely adopted by the United Nations when it comes to disarming combatants and supporting their reintegration into civilian life. The practice itself became codified in 2006 when the UN system produced the first International DDR Standards,[14] in an effort to provide DDR practitioners the world over with guidance material on most aspects of DDR, checklists, Terms of Reference and other useful tools. This formed a seminal body of knowledge related to what some experts call "first generation DDR/traditional DDR/Basic DDR."

- Disarmament

Disarmament usually consists in the "collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes."[15] Disarmament will usually take place in a dedicated DDR site, which may be mobile in the case of armed groups operating in rough terrain.

In a country awash with weapons such as Syria, policies will need to establish what weapons are eligible or not, and how best to destroy weapons and ammunition in a safe manner.

a) Typically, dedicated safe demolition sites will be needed to process large stockpiles of explosives and ammunition which may not have been stored properly.

b) Destroying surplus weapons should be the norm rather than the exception.

c) Should part of the weapons not be destroyed but handed over to newly formed security services, then (re-)building safe weapons storage facilities and putting in place weapons management systems will be needed from the get go.

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14 The updated version was compiled in 2014 and contains two additional chapters.
15 Source, Operational Guide to the Integrated DDR Standards, 2014, page 25

- Demobilisation

Demobilisation is the "formal and controlled discharge of active combatants." With this step, fighters become "ex-combatants", i.e. civilians. In a range of DDR processes, demobilisation has involved gathering combatants in designated cantonment sites, something which Syrian policymakers may seek to avoid.[16]

- Reinsertion & Reintegration

DDR's "R" actually consists of two distinct steps. One is "Reinsertion" and involves the provision of temporary individual assistance (possibly up to a year) to help ex-combatants cover immediate basic needs, time for longer term reintegration support to come into effect. This transitional assistance may profit combatants as well as their dependants, and include petty cash,[17] clothing, shelter and building material, food assistance, medical services, and toolkits.

Reintegration is a longer-term process through which ex-combatants socially and economically reintegrate into society. This process will take time and require individual adjustment for each of the ex-combatants, as well as acceptance on the side of his/her community, neighbours and society as a whole.

DDR programmes usually focus on primarily economic support and skills development schemes as a vehicle for individual reintegration. This may include but not be limited to job placement, apprenticeship, vocational training, small business, microfinance services, as well as the provision of business and agricultural inputs. In Syria, the provision of education and literacy services might be needed, to allow younger combatants (and others) to complete their studies to a given level. Typically, reintegration is costly and requires long-term external financial support, which donors will always balance against their own interests, priorities, and what they can afford in a post-conflict setting.

2.3.   DDR as part of a continuum

- The transitional security continuum

Any attempt at DDR in Syria ought to be re-situated in the broader process of the country's transition from war to peace. This process is anything but linear and always entails i) series of changes to address the root causes of the conflict. Such changes build on political compromises which may or may not be captured in the provisions of a peace agreement (assuming there is one). They include (but are not limited to)

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16 Cantonment tends to be included in demobilisation, without due consideration of the risks associated to it in most environments (the latest IDDRS released in 2014 still include cantonment in the definition of demobilisation). For more analysis of international experiences related to cantonment, and lessons drawn from this experience, see Mark Knight, Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace, Journal of Peace Research 41(4) · July 2004.

17 DDR practitioners have traditionally been warried of cash assistance which may be mistaken for a cash reward in exchange for a weapon, and fuel illegal arms flows. However cash assistance is increasingly recognized as beneficial to humanitarian and development programming, and re-injecting cash at the community level would be useful, in a post-conflict scenario in Syria. Monthly stipends might be considered for an interim period.

accountability for crimes and human rights violations, language and minority rights, the representation of all relevant constituencies at the national and subnational level. They may entail electoral, constitutional and legal reforms. In addition, the war to peace transition requires ii) practical arrangements to address the symptoms of conflict, armed violence, and reduce it in the short-term.

The latter transitional security process will include immediate security arrangements (usually through the form of a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities agreement), as well as interim security arrangements which initiate a comprehensive approach to disarmament, weapons control and management. This interim phase will include aspects usually associated to both DDR and SSR. The easiest way to understand the distinction between immediate and interim security arrangements, is that immediate arrangements will seek to freeze the conflict, whereas interim arrangements will actually alter power dynamics on the battlefield, by removing the groups' combat capabilities.

Last but not least, the transition process will require long-term transformation of a given country's security sector to turn the immediate wins of peace into sustainable governance progress towards accountability. Simply put, DDR is a tool to implement parts of a peace agreement, which often focuses on ex-combatants and their dependants. Other tools are needed to complement, and maximize, its effects, including but not limited to Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) legislation changes, as well as reforming the management and oversight of border security, law enforcement, and intelligence services.[18]

Typically DDR will be understood as a process which applies to NSAGs, and SSR as its equivalent to the state. It is important that Syrian policymakers have this dichotomy in mind and purposefully design a disarmament process which goes beyond traditional DDR thinking, is reciprocal and encapsulates element of structural reform (see sections 3.2, 3.3, 8.4, 8.6 and 8.8 below).[19]

- DDR is a political undertaking

The considerations above serve as a useful reminder of the profoundly political nature of any disarmament undertaking. Whether NSAGs agree to disarm or not, will depend on i) the extent to which their political demands are met as part of the new political

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18 The latter activities will form the bulk of a Security Sector Reform programme and may best be approached as part of a concerted effort to outline Syria's future National Security Strategy.

[19] The need for a strategic approach to disarmament was discussed at length by participants to the workshop held in Tunis on 24-25 May 2018. Some sessions specifically reviewed comparative experience in the region, and highlighted the risks and costs of disjointed and un-strategic approaches to security transition. Participants had opportunities to learn about Iraq where no DDR took place, and an executive disbandment of the country's military led to a strategic security vacuum, followed by widespread insecurity and the creation and competition of mission-based security bodies, in the absence of an inclusive and unified strategy. They also heard about Libya, where DDR funds were disbursed to no avail, in the absence of any verification mechanism of the number, status and eligibility of about 160,000 individuals. Both Libya and Iraq serve as a powerful reminder i) that effective security transitions takes time. It requires a generational effort; ii) of the human, societal and infrastructure costs associated with failed security transformation, 7 to 15 years into a given conflict.

ordeal; and ii) the pressure their constituencies and external backers are exerting on them to comply with a given political settlement.

Disarming groups effectively deprives them from their most effective bargaining chip, their ability to exert violence. They will traditionally hold onto their weapons for as long as their core political concerns are unmet. In a number of recent conflicts, armed groups have held onto their weapons for as long as their core political concerns were unmet. For instance, the IRA made its disarmament contingent upon political achievements first, and "putting weapons beyond use"[20] only happened much later in the process. The mediation team in the Aceh peace agreement (the "Memorandum of Understanding") understood this dynamic and early on suggested that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed", effectively postponing the question of sequencing the DDR efforts until an agreement had been reached on the most salient political issues. In both cases, knowing the political gains they had successfully negotiated made it easier for NSAGs to agree to disarmament.

The situation may be slightly different in Syria, where external backers may be in a position to lean on conflict actors to accept compromises (this includes but it not limited to NSAGs who have been losing a lot of ground to government forces over the past 18 months).

- DDR generation X

A cursory look at the DDR literature highlights that very different approaches, concepts and programmes are captured under the DDR acronym. In 2010, less than four years after the IDDRS came out, the United Nations system spelled out the need for a "2nd generation DDR"[21], arguing that i) pre-conditions to "traditional DDR" were seldomly met in the field,[22] ii) while new approaches were needed to target recalcitrant groups, gangs and reduce armed violence at the community level. More recently, others are calling for 3rd generation DDR approaches, so that DDR methods can be adapted to, and used in, environments characterized by offensive military operations, counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).[23]

Wondering whether Syria needs 1st, 2nd or 3rd generation DDR may not be a useful starting point. DDR policymakers themselves note that "in actual programming on the ground, differences (between traditional and 2nd generation DDR) are often blurred. In addition, while the approaches differ in their focus, they are not usually implemented in pure form in any one context."[24] That differences are unclear, and not implemented in "pure form", is a useful reminder that DDR is nothing but a tool, and that what it can

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20 In Northern Ireland, no mention was made of "disarmament" which the IRA saw as tantamount to surrender. Rather, "putting weapons beyond use" became the official terminology.
21 See United Nations, Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) practices in Peace Operations, A contribution to the New Horizon Discussion on Challenges and Opportunities for UN Peacekeeping, 2010.
22 IDDRS identify pre-conditions which should be in place before DDR programme begins. These include i) a signed peace agreement which provides a legal basis for DDR, ii) willingness from the conflict parties to take part in DDR voluntarily and iii) commitment to ensuring the security of the DDR implementers.
23 James Cockayne, and Siobhan O'Neil, eds, UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose? 2015, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research.
24 See United Nations, op. cit, p.10.

achieve in a country such as Syria, depends on a clear understanding of the country's conflict dynamics, the extent to which DDR can address some of the problems, and similarly the extent to which other disarmament approaches may be needed.

With this in mind, Syrian policymakers may be well advised to go back to the drawing board and outline what may be required to make Syrians safe in the short-term. Then only does it make sense to look at available tools and methodologies to deliver on parts of this strategic objective. What are the main threats Syrians face in their country, and what disarmament priorities emerge from that assessment? Are problems leading to the proliferation of armed groups (for instance weak/predatory/exclusive governance, limited legitimacy and questionable human rights records) within or outside the scope of existing DDR practice and mandates? If radicalisation cannot be addressed as part of a DDR programme, what other measures may be needed to reduce it and curb sectarian tensions?[25] How many combatants are there in Syria and how many should undergo a DDR programme? What is the vision for the country's security sector, and what parts of the country's statutory forces need to undergo DDR from the get go? How mainstreamed is the safe storage and management of weapons and ammunition in Syria?

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25 Current thinking, shared both by academics and practitioners, is that de-radicalisation programmes should be kept separate from DDR initiatives. It is worth noting that there is no agreed upon framework, in conflict environments, to deal with states whose actions contribute to radicalisation through practices such as the use of terror and support to sectarian militias.

3. Disarmament in Syria, what for?

Defining the focus and extent of a disarmament programme in Syria requires careful thinking, for Syrian policymakers to build a common understanding of what groups pause the greatest threats to Syrians of all gender, age, religion, sectarian and political affiliation (this understanding is key to determine levels of priority in dealing with these groups as part of a nationwide disarmament programme).

3.1. Initial contextual analysis is everything

What the debate around generations of DDR programme really is about, is the need to build disarmament solutions on the basis of a joint understanding of a country's security challenges. Only on the basis of this assessment can they then agree on potential solutions to Syria's short-term security problems in a post-agreement scenario. This analysis will need to be constantly updated and fed into programmatic adjustments. This is perhaps the single most important message to take from the abundant literature on DDR approaches and generations.

A joint analysis of the country's short-term security challenges may highlight the following considerations among others: the main threats to Syrian civilians include NSAGs, state aligned forces, foreign fighters, Syrian statutory forces, and weapons and ammunition left within range of the overall population in the aftermath of conflict. Each of these hypothesis is examined below.[26]

- The proliferation of weapons in the hands of NSAGs is a threat to Syrians' safety and security

At the time of writing, no less than 100,000 Syrians may be affiliated with a NSAG. This estimate will need to be carefully verified and broken down into specific groups and areas.

Mapping these groups will be key, to then decide on priorities and sequencing at the subnational level. These priorities will need to be validated at the subnational level, in addition to an endorsement at the country level. A specific DDR initiative targeting these groups is needed to i) canton medium and heavy weapons, ii) register, collect and destroy small arms and light weapons (SALW),[27] iii) collect and destroy ammunition and explosives.

- The proliferation of weapons in the hands of state-affiliated armed groups is a threat to Syrians' safety and security

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[26] One of the Tunis workshop participants suggested an alternative approach, based on discussing Syrian security needs at the individual, institution and state level. Both approaches can be useful ways to structure the context analysis and are up participants' preferences.

27 Decision to destroy part or all depends on the state of weapons storage/management systems, as well as future needs for the country's security sector. The planning assumption should be to destroy all weapons, in line with best practice in an environment where so many are in circulation.

DDR programmes that seek to demilitarize armed groups will need to include combatants currently enrolled in the National Defence Forces and other paramilitary units which operate out of the control of the country's Fourth and Fifth Legions. Some of these units operate with only loose supervision from, or coordination with, the Syrian state. Current estimates place their cumulated strength at no less than 125,000 individuals. The need for verification, prioritization, and disarmament applies to this group as well.[28]

- The presence of foreign armed groups is a threat to Syrians' safety and security

A broad coalition of foreign militia has been mobilized to support the state's security forces in Syria. Afghans, Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) and Lebanese Hezbollah fighters may account for more than 50,000 combatants who, in a post-settlement scenario, would undermine the legitimacy of a Syrian peace process, and threaten its accomplishments. Their leaving the country will need to be organised by the state and its regional backers (Russia and Iran), in conjunction with DDR efforts in support of Syrian participants.

- The availability of weapons to Syria's formal security sector is a threat to part of the population

Syria's public security sector may need to undergo significant reform. The remaining elements may need to undergo i) a DDR like scheme to disband specific units when applicable, in addition to ii) the screening of current military, police and intelligence personnel to separate individuals who have ordered and/or committed human rights violations; iii) the re-training of parts of the country's security sector as part of a new mandate, so as to increase their battle readiness but also enhance their accountability; iv) the recruitment of new security personnel, ideally from parts of the population currently under-represented in the country's security institutions; v) a rethinking of the country's security sector.[29]

- The widespread and unregulated availability of weapons in the country as a whole, is a threat to Syrian civilians

This is even more so the case as most of Syria's neighbours are in conflict (Iraq, Turkey), and experience very high rates of unregulated weapons ownership (Jordan, Lebanon). A baseline will be needed to map and process existing weapons depots. An assessment of the country's gun laws will be needed, complemented by weapons registration programmes for civilian ownership. The need for/ opportunity of weapons buybacks programmes in support of legal reforms will, too, need to be assessed. Should weapons buybacks initiatives be considered, they ought to build on existing best practice to avoid unintended consequences.

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28 Including the cantonment of crew served weapons, the collection and destruction of SALW, ammunition and explosives.

29 This re-thinking is needed in the aftermath of conflict, and can best be framed as an effort to conceptualize a National Security Strategy. Such Strategy will require an inclusive and iterative process for former conflict parties to agree on the form and function of the country's security sector, funding requirements, and principles and mechanisms to guarantee human rights accountability (including for past violations).

Only then would a Syrian "DDR programme" contribute to significantly reduce the possession and use of weapons, disband armed groups, help ex-combatants start a new life, and contribute to a more effective and accountable public security sector.

- The proliferation of explosive remnants of war and mines is a threat to Syrian civilians

When the war stops, parts of the Syrian territory will be contaminated by remnants of war and mines.[30] Clearing contaminated areas will require i) a mapping of minefields, weapons and ammunition depots at the subnational level, ii) sufficient EOD expertise and manpower to ensure safe transportation, stockpile management and demolition of ERWs and mines.

3.2. DDR, a conceptual bias in favour of the state?

The author's experience is that NSAGs will most often oppose the idea of DDR. NSAGs now have access to international advisers and peer groups, learning material is available online, and what they gather from comparative experience usually echoes their own personal experience. "DDR is for losers,"[31] it only applies to NSAGs and, once completed, insufficient pressure is being put on the state to reform its security sector. As a result, most DDR programmes lead to taking weapons away from NSAGs and strengthening the position of states as conflict parties, irrespective of their human rights record and the (un)professionalism of their statutory and non-statutory forces. With this in mind, armed groups will often view DDR as tantamount to counter-insurgency by non-violent means. Challenging this reality and granting disarmament some success will require recalibrating the whole approach when it comes to Syria, in addition to thorough engagement with a broad range of stakeholders.

- NSAGs are not the only perpetrators or armed violence

The debate over the evolution of DDR programmatic options and tools to adapt to the ever-changing nature of conflicts, is perhaps less important than the question of what DDR should focus on to begin with. Analysts insufficiently question the primary analytical underpinning of DDR programmes, which views "proliferating non-state armed groups across multiple settings" as the main threat to civilians in conflict.[32] This perception is very much state-centric and remains common to most practitioners and analysts in the field of transitional security. Indeed, most plans to restore some elements of safety and stability in the aftermath of conflict, are predicated upon the Weberian conception that states ought to have a monopoly over the use of force.

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30 Explosive remnants of war (ERW) consist of both unexploded ordnance (UXO) and abandoned ordnance (AXO). The latter typically includes ammunition and explosives which may be left in weapons and ammunition depots across the country. ERW as a category does not include mines.
31 Direct quote from a Moro Islamic Liberation Front negotiator, Cotabato, Philippines, October 2012.
32 Robert Muggah and Chris O'Donnell, "Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. Stability", International Journal of Security and Development, 4(1), 2015, page 4. Available from http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.fs

This is all well and good for as long as the state upholds the rule of law. Irrespective of one's political opinions and affiliations, the track record of Syria's security forces over the past seven years shows evidence that this is not the case. Not only are human rights not protected but instances of severe human rights violations are common, victims have no effective legal recourse, nor are there effective mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution.[33]

With this in mind, any attempt at successful DDR in Syria will need to avoid the usual pitfall of a sequential approach to security transition: first the international community supports a DDR programme to take away the use of force from non-state actors, and then only would the state undergo reforms, through appropriate SSR programming. Unless both armed groups and the state are the object of concerted efforts, DDR cannot deliver on the promise of a significant reduction of armed violence in the country, and hence enhanced security for civilians.

- DDR is not a simple pre-condition to SSR

Conditioning the beginning of SSR to the completion of a DDR programme, negates the very reality that state security forces are an active party to a given conflict. In Syria, as in many other conflict environments, the state may not be viewed as a legitimate security provider by large segments of the population.

> *"The failure of previous DDR initiatives to lead onto or incorporate elements of SSR has been widely seen as a problem, often leading to renewed tensions or conflict, with an unreformed military or police repeating the mistakes of the past"* (Lamb 2008, p23).

This lesson has been identified for years (see the textbox above) but has yet to lead to a global re-think of the DDR/SSR nexus in the field. DDR and SSR remain routinely treated in isolation, supported by different donors and implemented by different teams. Although the IDDRS acknowledge the need to approach DDR and SSR as mutually benefiting efforts to prevent the resumption of conflict, in practice, the challenge remains and leads to disjointed implementation.

3.3.   The challenges of rebel-military integration

Past DDR efforts always entailed the demobilisation of NSAGs. In instances where the legacy of the security forces was being questioned, past DDR endeavours may have involved the demobilisation of a standing army. Whether it may be necessary to disband the whole military apparatus, or "simply" demobilize selected units and leaders, depends on an assessment of their conduct of the war, pointedly i) the extent to which they might be guilty of human rights violations and ii) their effectiveness in the battlefield. When DDR programmes entail the merger of past enemies, rebel and

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[33] Selected participants to the Tunis workshop had reservations about the idea of restoring the Syrian state's monopoly over the use of violence, highlighting the extent to which the monopoly of violence is tantamount to a monopoly of access to the political sphere. This discussion was a useful reminder of the need for a security transformation process to precisely de-link those in the future, so that the state may exert a monopoly of violence while undergoing reforms to no longer monopolize the political debate.

military forces, into a new security system, they fall under the category of rebel-military integration (RMI) schemes.

Such an approach may seem appealing at first, as a practical tool to promote both reconciliation and state-building in a post-conflict scenario. However RMI can only be successful if defined on the basis of a national security strategy, which clearly spells out the role and structure of the military, within a sustainable state revenue projection.[34] Whether a full-fledged RMI is indicated in the case of Syria, with an estimated 350,000 + arms carriers as a relevant target group and in light of the country's fiscal constraints, is unsure. Irrespective of the scale of the reform, Syrian DDR policymakers will nonetheless need to ensure that the country's future military apparatus is free from political interference, has operational independence and public accountability. Changes may be needed to create a more inclusive organisational culture, and replace symbols possibly associated with abusive practice. As part of this effort, questions of rank harmonisation, vetting and training will require particularly careful examination.

- Rank harmonisation

As part of a Syrian DDR programme, individuals formerly affiliated with NSAGs and paramilitary groups might join the country's security apparatus instead of becoming civilians. The longer the war drags on, and the more these individuals will expect that they join at the same level than the one they were at in given armed groups. Their expectation that ranks in a reformed army are based on levels of seniority in given armed groups will need to be managed carefully. A system of rank harmonisation will be needed to anticipate such issues, and ensure that ranks and positions in a reformed security sector are first and foremost based on technical needs, requirements and qualifications.

- Vetting

Vetting is in itself a very sensitive undertaking which requires dedicated guidance.[35] In a post-conflict environment, vetting processes are now considered a key measure of governance reform, to ensure that future government bodies, including the military, enjoy higher levels of probity and professionalism than may have been the case during war. Typically, vetting is a process that seeks to identify individuals who have perpetrated (or been associated to) human rights violations, with a view to discontinue their service.

Strictly speaking, vetting is not a usual component of DDR programmes. Transitional security initiatives usually focus on delivering security as a primary objective, not justice. With this in mind, DDR should not seek to replace a fully dedicated transitional

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34 For a critical review of RMI efforts to date, including case studies, see Mark Knight, "Military integration and war termination", in Monopoly of Force: the Nexus of DDR and SSR, Melanie A. Civic and Michael Miklaucic, eds., (National Defense University Press, 2011).

35 Alexander Mayer-Rieckh's work offers precious guidance on the topic of guidance, including but not limited to Pablo de Greiff and Alexander Mayer-Rieckh, eds., Justice as Prevention: Vetting Public Employees in Transitional Societies, (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2007). Available from https://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/57EFEC93-284A-DE11-AFAC-001CC477EC70/

justice programme. Rather it should be viewed as paving the way to future justice endeavours. It is in this light that vetting may become relevant to early DDR planning. Should a Syrian DDR programme seek to place former combatants in other parts of the security sector, then planners have an imperative to ensure that these individuals i) have no past record of brutality and/or human rights violations, and ii) possess skills which match the needs of a reformed security sector.

Vetting processes will be contentious, but necessary, to ensure that the Syrian security apparatus can regain public trust from all segments of the population. Similar efforts may be needed for other parts of the Syrian public administration. Careful planning will be needed to ascertain the scope and criteria of a vetting process, whether it applies to some or all positions in the military and the security sector, in addition to external candidates whose skills and backgrounds may be needed as part of a reform process, how long would a vetting process be in place for, what changes it might lead to in general recruitment guidelines for the institutions at hand. If well done, a vetting process can participate to a significant change in the relationship between the population one the one hand, and the security sector and its members on the other. It can contribute to enhanced legitimacy for the state, especially in areas currently held by NSAGs.

- Training

Investment in training will be required. The Syrian army will need to reform and shift its collective mind-set to become more mindful of human rights and protecting the population. Training and coaching may be necessary to build on initial vetting and ensure that change becomes a reality. Further, it may be necessary to send former NSAG and militia combatants to undergo NCO or officer training, before they can formally integrate a reformed Syrian security sector. Past experience of turning "rebels" into military or police personnel has often been inconclusive, and will require a significant effort on the side of these individuals and the organisation around them, to ensure that a new culture of accountability and discipline prevails, which will foster public trust in the country's security apparatus.

Key requirements for successful DDR

4.1. Clear eligibility criteria

Deciding who is eligible for DDR in Syria will determine whether such an initiative enjoys broad-based support or not. Clear guidance will be needed to decide whether support functions are eligible to DDR (e.g. cooks, messengers, drivers…), and what specific process may apply to underage combatants, those who can no longer support their family as a result of disability or trauma, and the family of deceased combatants. Specific attention will need to be paid to the definition of dependants and sympathizers, to avoid that these categories alone accounts for the bulk of the DDR caseload (should sympathizers be included in the first place).

More strategically, a clear mapping of all units lined up for DDR will need to be formalised and endorsed by all concerned, to avoid that groups affiliated to the state end up being under-represented in the DDR mapping and, hence, do not undergo DDR.

4.2. Verification mechanisms

Rigorous verification mechanisms are an absolute must to ensure that eligible candidates are vetted for participation into a DDR programme, and fraud minimized. Typically, once a DDR programme is announced, non-eligible individuals may seek to gain access in order to secure individual assistance, and opportunities will exist for them to buy forged documents proving their eligibility. Similarly, selected commanders and powerbrokers will try and gain access for their supporters, in exchange for financial rewards. Others will hold on to their best fighters and most modern weapons to retain an advantage in case the DDR process does not deliver on its stated objectives.

Vetting each and every DDR candidate will require extensive local knowledge but is key to ensure the integrity of the process, and assure all conflict parties that former enemies are held to the same standards than they are. Working with local civil society and activists will be key to manage and crosscheck information gathered from others (including but not limited to police and security forces, intelligence networks, government and opposition stakeholders). Their involvement needs to be formalized – and their work protected - as part of the process.

4.3. Wide participation by the most significant armed groups

As part of the peace agreement, conflict parties will have an opportunity to define what caseload is eligible to DDR. Should it be ill-defined or incomplete, the whole process will under-achieve. Should significant armed groups be left out of this process (as was the case in Afghanistan), then other participants will be vulnerable to the ones who remain armed, and seek to avoid participation.

At best, the Syrian war will end with a peace agreement between a small number of conflict parties, under the patronage of regional powerbrokers. A worst, the war will follow its current trajectory until the centre can claim victory, and force its opponents into compliance. In any case, and in light of the emergence of powerful new elites at the subnational level, combatants are unlikely to simply lay down arms and join a centrally run security sector.

4.4. The need for cohesive leadership

Measures to ensure that Syria returns to a state of security will be complex, and priorities many. International and regional powers, foreign armed groups, militia heads and new elites will all seek to meddle in and strengthen their influence. Unless disarmament – and transitional security as a whole - is led and supported by powerful enough an actor to keep it a priority, it may soon become a second tier priority in the face of the country's other needs. Looking at Afghanistan and Iraq will give planners ample examples of what happens when that is the case. In brief, effective DDR is the

one key condition to restoring safety and security. Without it, people will keep living in fear for another generation at least.[36]

One way to support cohesive leadership is for disarmament planners and implementers to benefit from regular and constructive consultation of a contact group, gathering donors and powers who carry influence over some of Syria's main powerbrokers, with the view to ensure compliance to agreed-upon disarmament objectives.[37]

36 Readers may be interested in the following peace of research. The subsequent limitations of what the DDR programme could achieve in Afghanistan find roots in a range of issues, including but not limited to initial flaws in the peace deal itself (absence of a key conflict party (the Taleban) at the table; push back by key Afghan powerbrokers to include strong language related to disarmament in the text of the peace agreement, etc…), or a system of "lead nation" which effectively stood in the way of strategic coherence and leadership, among others. In Chapter 4 (pp. 61-101), this paper specifically looks at how the lack of strategic coherence translated into lack of funding for overall justice and security sector reform, hampering any chance to sustain the early wins of DDR over the midterm. This study makes a case in point for strategic thinking, and funding, in the aftermath of conflict. See Seth G. Jones and others, Establishing law and order after conflict (RAND Corporation, 2005), available from https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG374.html

37 Disarmament programmes are part of a broader political process and are meant to serve a political purpose. Key issues may sometimes need to be escalated to the political level, to ensure timely progress on key objectives of a peace process implementation strategy. Thorough discussions of the benefits and limitations of Groups of Friends in a range of different peace processes can be found in Teresa Whitfield's work. While Whitfield's work focuses on marshalling leverage and resources at the negotiation stage, it provides rich food for thought for similar endeavours at the implementation stage. See Teresa Whitfield, Working with groups of friends, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, 2010. Also Teresa Whitfield, External actors in mediation, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2010, and Teresa Whitfield, A Crowded Field: Groups of Friends, the United Nations and the Resolution of Conflict, An occasional paper of the Center on International Cooperation: Studies in Security Institutions (Vol. 1), 2005.

Reflecting on common DDR pitfalls

5.1. Multiplication of fighters and payroll

The upsurge in numbers as a prelude to an individual-based DDR programme is a well-documented trend. Armed groups commanders see it in their interest to increase the numbers of their own "militia" prior to the start of a DDR programme. They can further benefit from all sorts of extortion schemes to ensure that each and every participant shares a portion of his/her benefits with those in charge. In a post-conflict context where economic opportunities are rare, individuals also perceive access to a DDR programme and associated benefits as a valued opportunity to gain material and financial assistance. The lure of future benefits can lead some to purchase forged documents establishing combatants' credentials and stating their eligibility to a DDR programmes. This risk, illustrated in the text box below, is to be expected in Syria.

Controversy over numbers in Afghanistan

The "traditional DDR" programme implemented in Afghanistan in 2004-05, the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme, is the largest-scale single-country DDR programme implemented to date.

The objective was to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate 100,000 individual members of the Afghan Military Forces (AMF), but eventually 60,000 only were deemed eligible. At the planning stage, the controversy around numbers was significant. In Afghanistan's western region alone,[38] "discussions show(ed) a plethora of information, often conflicting, sometimes opaque (…). During initial discussions with the regional Corps commanding officers, Afghan counterparts at the subnational level would press for up to 35,000 personnel, officers included. Such numbers were based on payrolls managed at the provincial level."[39] Systems in place offered commanders the possibility of drawing cash for non-existent "ghost" troops. Lengthy and detailed discussions eventually led to a ceiling of 6,000 eligible combatants for the western region alone.

5.2. Officers are likely to oppose DDR

DDR programmes may appropriately address combatants' expectations when it comes to the rank and file. However, they often meet strong opposition from the officers who feel that they have more to lose than to gain from a DDR process. Conflicts will often give officers opportunities to get rich through promotions to the best units (and perks), and opportunities to build on the war economy. In Syria, scores of officers derive significant income from checkpoint management and delivering exemption papers to conscripts, for them not to serve in the country's army (a system most Syrians know as "Tafiesh" /تفييش). This allows corrupt officers to cash in the monthly salary of a non-existent soldier, in addition to the bribe the said soldier pays

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38 For the sake of planning and implementation, the ANBP programme had been divided into five, completed by a number of Mobile Disarmament Units (MDUs). The author was the ANBP's manager for the western region for a year in 2004-05, until the formal completion of the traditional DDR component, which was then to be followed by other phases targeting irregular armed groups.

39Correspondence between military planners and the ANBP management team, author's private record, June 2004.

in the first place. Officers involved in the Tafiesh system derive three to four digit income (in US dollars) every month, and such amounts ought to be put in perspective with current salary levels and pension entitlements (less than USD 20 a month for most).

State sanctioned looting (Ta'afish / تعفيش), constitutes another source of significant income for the country's military apparatus.

Rebuilding modern, accountable and combat-effective forces in a post-war scenario will require clear messaging and leadership, and a mixture of pressure and incentives to vet SAA officers and invest in more attractive pension schemes, so as to facilitate their demobilisation or early retirement when needed.

5.3.   The 1 to 1 disarmament ratio

When it comes to weapons, traditional DDR programmes are predicated upon a simple equation of "one combatant, one weapon." To be eligible to participate to a DDR programme (based on prior political agreement), individuals not only have to be affiliated to units which are to be disbanded, but also ought to hand over one weapon. This "one combatant, one weapon" criteria in effect leaves a lot of weapons in circulation as, for constituted units and armed groups:

- Combatants may have more than a single weapon. Additional weapons, ammunition and explosives are not "captured" by a traditional DDR programme.

- Several combatants can be counted against crew served weapons. Typically three individuals can be "DDRed" against a single recoilless cannon or mortar tube. Individual weapons they may carry in addition, are not systematically collected as part of a traditional DDR programme.

- All military units have weapons and ammunition depots, in addition to the individual weapons mentioned above.

5.4.   Disarmament, tactical success v. strategic failure

The author worked as a regional manager for the largest scale single country DDR programme ever implemented so far, the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP). The programme's first phase focused on a traditional approach to DDR and sought to disarm, disband and reintegrate up to 60,000 individuals by the summer of 2005. The target was met,[40] the disarmament target exceeded,[41] heavy weapons cantonment successfully completed, and convoys of weapons were leaving to a central weapons depot in Kabul, for future transfer to the growing Afghan National Army. However, Afghanistan accounted for an estimated ten million weapons in circulation at the time.

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40 More than 58,000 individual combatants had been processed by July 2005.
41 In addition to weapons formally handed over as part of the DDR "1 weapon for each combatant" approach, DDR teams systematically emptied weapons storage facilities which they gained access to in the field.

Against this backdrop, there were obvious limitations as to the DDR programme's impact. This scenario is a likely risk for Syria and highlights the importance of early and participative strategic planning, to i) avoid that prominent conflict actors slip through the cracks, and ii) ensure that disarmament is one of many parts of a broader strategic plan.

5.5. DDR will not address root grievances

DDR programmes have a mixed success record. When the fighting stops, the sense of urgency decreases, and important commitments may not be implemented in a timely manner. A DDR programme can deliver much needed safety, but peace is more than the mere absence of violence. Unless disarmament is designed as part of a security transformation strategy, and in support of stated political objectives which address broader political grievances, it is only a matter of time before armed dissatisfaction re-emerges (from the same or other armed groups).[42]

5.6. DDR is mistaken as a linear approach, R tends to be under-funded and perceived as failing

In most DDR programmes, reintegration is perceived and planned as the last step of a linear process, which ought to start with the disarmament and the disbandment of armed groups. While this approach is dogmatically convenient, it often presents field practitioners with significant challenges in the field, which ought to be better addressed in the eventuality of a Syria disarmament programme.

- A scary leap of faith for individual fighters

Conditioning the reintegration phase (and benefits) to prior disarmament and demobilisation, puts individual combatants in an extremely uncomfortable position. In doing so, implementers effectively give individual fighters and their units no choice but to place blind trust into them, and surrender the means of their individual and collective security *in the absence of any practical benefit to themselves or their communities*, at the time the decision is made. While selected fighters may be tired and welcome such an opportunity to give away their guns, it will represent a difficult psychological adjustment to most.

- Reintegration is expensive, funding is often late and insufficient

The IDDRS initially set out a goal of DDR programmes leading to sustainable reintegration for ex-combatants, to be achieved through individual support to each and every fighter so as to i) upgrade existing skills or develop new ones (ideally for specialties that the market is in need of); ii) purchase tools and equipment to start a

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42 Conflict has been going on in the Philippines for about two generations now, despite various government attempts at disarming groups. Their poor record in implementing existing agreements and seeking to address root causes, is the main explanation for the armed groups' perpetual renewal in the southern half of the country, in addition to high rates of armed violence throughout the entire country.

new business/income generating activity; iii) develop on-the-job training with existing businesses; and then iv) make a living and cater to a family's needs.

In the field, this approach has quickly proven unrealistic as i) the funding requirements were often significantly beyond what the donor community was comfortable with,[43] ii) funding specific to reintegration would often come in late and be conditioned to prior tangible results on the DD front, iii) reintegration takes time to plan for and requires a prior understanding of what the market needs, what skills ex-combatants may (not) have, and who is best placed to (re-)train them. These factors would commonly translate into significant delays between the completion of the DD phase and the beginning of reintegration, and mounting frustration on the side of ex-combatants who may easily feel short-changed. One should also simply acknowledge that sustainable reintegration for significant segments of the population is beyond the reach of a given programme, and requires proper investments in the broader economy.

This reality bears a number of risks which include a resurgence in crime, as ex-combatants may attack DDR personnel and sites, resort to intimidation and turn to predation, and/or sell their skills to other groups.

DDR in Syria, by whom?

The United Nations have long been the leading actor in managing DDR programmes worldwide, the International DDR Standards were developed under their effigy, and most peace processes have entailed active UN participation. Some DDR programmes have involved regional organisations as well, but very few had no UN involvement whatsoever.[44]

Should a DDR programme happen in Syria, it is unclear that conflict parties and regional backers will be open to UN involvement in managing, let alone leading it. Events unfolding in Ghouta in early 2018 attest to the paralysis of the UN Security Council in Syria, and it is expected that selected international and regional actors, usually absent from the "DDR scene", may need to be called upon to lend a disarmament programme much needed gravitas and leverage.

Typically, Russia will need to be part of such a set up. Their involvement may be unsettling for a range of local and international actors, and their understanding of – and views on - best practice in relation to disarmament and peaceful transitions may be unorthodox. Ultimately, one needs to consider the question of their involvement based on a pragmatic assessment of the task at hand, the appetite for risk involved in such an undertaking, and these actors' ability to project deterrence in Syria, if and when needed. Linkages to an overall political process will be key, including but not

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43 In the case of Syria, a conservative planning assumption to reintegrate 200,000 fighters (i.e. most NSAGs and state-aligned militias) would require a minimum of USD 150 million for reintegration assistance only.

44 One noticeable exception is the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) which monitored the implementation of the Aceh "Memorandum of Understanding" after the conflict ended in 2005. This entailed supervising the disarmament of the then NSAG, GAM, as well as monitoring reintegration programmes implemented by others.

limited to the ability to exchange with relevant powerbrokers and supporters through a friends' group.[45]

Of outmost importance will be Syrian capacities to lead on the design and implementation of a nationwide disarmament and security transformation process. It is premature to suggest what administration may be best placed to do so, in light of the "breakup of administrative boundaries and state administrative structures over the course of the war"[46], and the pre-eminence of a wide array of local actors whose involvement in DDR will be a key condition of success.

This will require the active involvement of i) policymakers knowledgeable about transitional security, ii) political and military figures who have command and control over the country's NSAGs and security services, as well as iii) local verification capacities. The latter may easily be misconstrued as intelligence capacities, but in fact consists of men and women whom, at a local level, command respect in their communities, and may be able and willing to i) share knowledge about local armed groups and security officials at the planning phase; ii) ensure public information and transparency; and iii) act as a crucial verification group/feedback mechanism throughout the entire process.

4. DDR considerations for the NAFS four nexus

In this section, it is important to touch upon possible linkages between disarmament and the NAFS four nexus, for the attention of Syrian planners. In preamble, it may be useful to emphasize two key considerations:

- Disarmament programmes directly participate to peacebuilding and conflict transformation. They provide enablers to structural change (e.g. the resumption of normal life and access to administrative services) and separate combatants from their command structures. They give them the space and opportunities to re-build relations (i.e. reconcile) with non-combatants, as well as participate to broader economic recovery (most significantly through cash injection in the local economy).

- However, one must bear in mind that disarmament/DDR alone cannot produce full-fledged post-conflict economic and social transformation. While a useful set of activities to deliver on short-term safety, it cannot substitute for longer-term programmes which are needed to address a given conflict's root causes, and hence prevent its recurrence.

7.1. Nexus 1- displacement and local response

Simply put, disarmament is needed to enable the return of civilian populations and allow for the resumption of local governance, free from the overbearing friendship of given armed groups and security officials.

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45 See footnote 12 above.

46 Kheder Khaddour, Local wars and the chance for decentralized peace in Syria, Carnegie Middle East Center, 28 March 2017, page 15. Available from http://carnegie-mec.org/2017/03/28/local-wars-and-chance-for-decentralized-peace-in-syria-pub-68369

Often combatants are expected to reintegrate in their community of origin. This raises a range of practical difficulties for combatants who may have been convoyed out to Idlib and other places as part of a local security arrangement between the state and the group they belong to. As a result, some combatants will have spent significant time in places other than their place of origin, some may wish to settle down in another part of the country, others may not be welcome back.

Also, conditions in places of origin may not be conducive to return in the short term. Significant investment in rubble clearing and infrastructure rehabilitation may be required to make whole neighbourhoods liveable again. In the case of a city like Raqqa, the concentration of explosive remnants of war and mines is so high that humanitarian planners actually advise against return. Meanwhile, "clearing" the place requires EOD capabilities which are not available in the region, and which international actors are unwilling to supply at this point in time.

Numbers of combatants and their families may not have the required documentation to support their land and property claims in their place of origin (documents can be lost or destroyed, and administrative services unavailable to significant parts of the population, opposition combatants included). Also, there will be instances whereby property and land may have been seized or handed over to new occupants.

In a post-conflict scenario, ex-combatants will be one of many categories who will be in need or urgent administrative support (together with returning refugees, internally displaced people and numerous conflict victims) and will overflow the capacity of the state's services both at local and central level.

On a more positive note, DDR will present the country with ample opportunities for recruitment and social change. Numerous individuals will have gained leadership and organisational skills which will be key in re-organising effective local response. Values of comradery, purpose and team work developed in armed groups, can easily be put to good use in responding effectively to the multiple requirements of post-conflict reconstruction, may they be the organisation of effective processes (e.g. access to documentation, distributions and information campaigns), immediate rubble clearing and the resumption of public services.

7.2. Nexus 2- legal framework and institutional rehabilitation

The legal framework applicable to Syria in a post-conflict scenario, will provide the context within which a DDR/disarmament programme can happen. At minima, this legal framework will consist of Syria's national laws, and relevant international agreements. Should the conflict by ended by a formal peace agreement, then this document will add to national and international laws and may or may not outline the extent to which DDR will be linked to transitional justice and institutional reforms, the scope of a Syrian DDR programme, and how it is situated in a broader process of reconciliation and cohesion.

If DDR/disarmament initiatives will present Syria with an opportunity to address key conflict drivers, institutional reform simply goes beyond the scope of usual DDR programming. The war itself is a demonstration of the need to reform the country's institutions. Significant portions of the country rebelled against the authority of the

Syrian state, up to 150,000 people took up arms against it at the peak of the war, and for a while other forms of governance applied to large swaths of the country.

In 2018, national Syrian institutions may suffer from a lack of fair and equitable representation of the countries' main constituencies, and will have lost effectiveness, capabilities and, for some, legitimacy, as a result of the conflict. Equally if not more important, the need to repair the link between the state and its constituencies, adding to the trajectory of the war, is likely to require that local governance bodies and actors are given more power and resources to respond to the needs and aspirations of the populations they are meant to serve.

Another four considerations come to mind:

- A large-scale disarmament programme in Syria, is a clear and powerful illustration of the need to reform national institutions, starting with the security sector. Disarmament can remove the imminent threat of weapons for planners to focus on how best to build more resilient institutions, which are more inclusive and effective than they were before the war.

- From a justice and reconciliation perspective, what legal changes may be required to hold perpetrators (including ex-combatants) to account in a way that promotes reconciliation with the rest of the country?

- As DDR addresses the symptoms (the weapons), what needs to be done to address some of the conflict's root causes, and what legal and constitutional changes may be required to do so?

- DDR programmes and institutional vetting processes routinely happen concomitantly in post-conflict environments, but they are rarely coordinated, and can allow for the reintegration of human rights abusers into reformed (security) institutions. Systematic linkages are needed, to vet all DDR candidates willing to reintegrate into the country's public service.

7.3. Nexus 3- reconciliation and social cohesion

As previously stated, disarmament/DDR is a powerful tool towards reconciliation and social cohesion, but does not suffice on its own. War will obviously disrupt social cohesion, and halter if not severe links between given individuals, communities, and institutions. Disarmament/DDR typically presents a society with an opportunity to repair these links. Some of this reconciliation can be facilitated as part of a DDR programme (e.g. one that traditionally focuses on ex-combatants) but complementary initiatives will be needed to reduce tensions linked to sectarianism, economic inequalities, social exclusion, individual and collective trauma (including but not limited to survivors of torture and gender-based violence) among others.

Again, a thorough assessment will be needed, for planners to decide whether a Syria DDR programme should focus on individual assistance to ex-combatants, or have a broader reconciliation mandate and entail other streams of work, including at the community level.

Social cohesion will usually entail two strands of activities, one that focuses on giving excluded groups opportunities for effective non-violent engagement, and hence reduces the rationale for violence. The other dimension is to restore social dialogue in all its forms, including but not limited to activities, planning and dialogue initiatives that foster respect and build trust, encourage active participation by all members of society irrespective of traditional barriers (gender, age, combatant background, sectarian affiliations), and any initiative that supports more responsive relations between citizens and the state (at both national and subnational level).

Ex-combatants will be a primary group of concern for reconciliation efforts. Selected individuals and groups may view ex-combatants as nothing but perpetrators of violence. In cases where DDR participants have committed violence against civilians and reintegrate into neighbourhoods where former victims live, is reconciliation possible without justice? As a matter of principle, DDR efforts will also need to carefully manage the perception that they only reward violent behaviour, whereas non-violent victims have little to no assistance themselves.

Preliminary thoughts to manage these difficulties include:

- A special focus on ex-combatants as part of the country's transitional justice efforts, with due attention paid to criteria for prosecution, truth-telling, reparations, to help communities accept ex-combatants back in their midst. These will complement other measures (e.g. vetting and individual counselling) put in place to support the reintegration of ex-combatants into reformed public institutions.

- In addition to a disarmament programme targeting individual ex-combatants, projects at the community/neighbourhood level will need to address issues of economic and social disparities, public participation, gender inequalities, lack of community security and accountable governance. Such projects may end up focusing on livelihoods, (mental) health service provision, small business support, small infrastructure rehabilitation among others.

- Selected combatants and commanders can become champions of change in society as a whole. Charismatic ex-combatants and success stories can inspire others and should be capitalized upon.

7.4. Nexus 4- rehabilitation of physical and social infrastructure

In light of the level of destruction across the country, rebuilding basic infrastructures will require manpower and the Syrian economy will have significant absorption capacity for construction workers.

DDR planners should establish guidelines so that a minimum percentage of ex-combatants is to be hired in this sector, alongside other vulnerable segments of the population. Prioritizing skills enhancement, vocational training, and the purchase of toolkits and equipment for the construction sector, will allow ex-combatants and others to have direct livelihood opportunities for the short to mid-term, and ease up their reintegration into the civilian labour market.

7.5.   Gender and human rights-related gaps in the theme/sector

DDR very much is a male-dominated undertaking, and Syria is no exception to the rule. To the exception of Women's Combatant Units (YPJ), the overwhelming majority of combatants in the opposition or state-aligned militia are men themselves, as are the state's security officials. It would hence be easy to perpetuate the gender gap that tends to characterize security affairs in the aftermath of conflict, and Syrian planners will need to dedicate time and expertise to avoiding such a situation. Three key considerations are highlighted below, to address the current gender gap.[47]

First, the role of Syrian women has significantly changed over the course of the war. Large numbers of women have had to step in and take on roles previously played by men. With an estimated 500,000 deaths so far, in addition to countless cases of injuries, the Syrian conflict has severely reduced the number of able-bodied working-age men. As a result, the number of female-headed households has grown, and they have entered most segments of the workforce. Syrian women have had to take on new responsibilities as primary breadwinners, including outside the country, where Syrian female professionals routinely support the rest of their family in Beirut, Gaziantep and Istanbul to begin with. When peace returns, large numbers of Syrian male ex-combatants might struggle with the necessary adjustment to civilian life, and see the new social and economic roles taken on by Syrian women as a threat.

Significant reforms will be needed to ensure that the women are not forced to go back to more traditional domestic functions, and that the equality they have conquered as a result of the conflict, effectively translates into equality by law. Careful attention will be needed to ensure that the DDR objective of reintegrating large numbers of (primarily) male combatants into the work force, does not happen at the detriment of Syrian women's current roles and future perspectives.

Second, a Syrian DDR programme will need to develop policies which will bear gender implications for significant numbers of households. What is the policy for combatants who can no longer act as primary breadwinners for their family, as a result of injury and/or trauma? Should their next of kin be a working-age wife, sister or mother, what support is extended to her? What policy applies to supporting the family of deceased combatants? And is it consistent with policies applying to families and widows of non-combatants?

Third, as part of the broader transformation of the country's security sector into more inclusive and accountable entities, what will be the female combatants' role? Will they be given the same right to demobilise or remain in the country's security sector? Are there measures in place to ensure that women (like other excluded groups) not only

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47 For a more detailed discussion of gender gaps in DDR programmes, and guidance on how best to ensure gender-responsive DDR, see the IDDRS Chapter 5.10, available from http://unddr.org/uploads/documents/IDDRS%205.10%20Women,%20Gender%20and%20DDR.pdf. A more recent publication offers a more thorough perspective on the topic, including practical programmatic tools. See United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR (2012), How-to guide to gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, available from http://www.iddrtg.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/How-to-Guide-Gender-Responsive-DDR.pdf.

enter but can gain access to decision-making level positions in the country's armed forces, law enforcement, border security and intelligence services?

From a human rights standpoint, DDR can have a formidable impact in Syria. First and foremost, a well-executed DDR programme re-establishes control over the use of violence, and is key in allowing Syrians of all affiliations to live free from fear. Also, a DDR programme opens the door and paves the way to future transitional justice programming. This is very much the case in three inter-connected aspects:

> *"Security cannot be separated from Justice and the Rule of Law"* (Tunis workshop participant).
>
> *"We don't want peace to be about a partnership of perpetrators"* (Tunis workshop participant).

- Former combatants, on all sides, can no longer hide behind their weapons to avoid responding for crimes they might have committed during the war.
- As a DDR programme happens, vetting policies will be needed for new/existing members of the country's security sector, to ensure that individuals responsible for human rights abuses see their public service discontinued.
- As part of a broader effort to make the country's security sector more accountable, a DDR programme is a powerful symbolic step for the country to signal a change from the past, and i) equip itself with checks and balances, as well as ii) ensure that its security services (and the whole public administration beyond it) become more inclusive and representative. This in itself can contribute to reducing sectarianism and the marginalisation of given groups, and hence be a key factor towards mid to long-term human rights improvements.

5. Twelve guiding principles for Syria

Transitional security presents Syrian policymakers with a range of complex challenges. The following guiding principles build on best practice and may be helpful in framing their work. They also summarize key considerations discussed by participants to the Tunis workshop.

In regard to process design

8.1. Forge a common understanding of transitional security early on

It is important that all parties develop ownership of transitional security concerns, requirements and outcomes. Access to knowledge is a key condition to enabling participants to make informed decisions and, hence, own the issues. Giving them access to knowledge and a safe space to learn and discuss issues early on, will allow them to i) forge a common understanding of sensitive topics, ii) outline common areas of concern and, possibly, priorities, iii) build consensus on guiding principles. This effort will increase their readiness ahead of a political settlement.

A future disarmament programme will draw on good practice and require external DDR/SSR expertise *in support of* Syrian decision makers. This external expertise is

needed to ensure that Disarmament in Syria reflects best practice, is not designed in isolation, and features counter-proliferation efforts to curb the widespread availability of weapons in the country.

8.2. Begin with the end in mind

Transitional security progress will be easier if it builds on a clear strategy to begin with. This strategy can be short and will serve to outline i) an appropriate level of security forces in a post-agreement scenario; ii) relevant functions assigned to the security sector in relation to public security, defence, border security, intelligence, the dispensation of justice; iii) budgetary resources required for such an effort; iv) principles guiding a Syrian DDR process, inclusive of a planning figure; v) the type of NSAG members who might be integrated into a future security sector based on considerations of skills, leadership and requirement for inclusive representation; vi) a commitment to the vetting of security forces in a post-agreement scenario[48]; vii) a commitment to human security, i.e. putting the citizens' need for justice and safety at the heart of a future security strategy. Doing so will prove invaluable in defining the scope and extent of a "DDR" programme for Syria.

8.3. The objective is individual safety and security, first and foremost

Lessons learned the hard way by DDR practitioners all point to individual safety as a key factor of change. If a DDR programme is designed with the intent to reduce the threat posed by **all** fighting forces to **all** Syrians, then large swaths of

> *"I was part of (armed group). I left when I realized that security should not be about fighting. It's about protecting the people"* *(Tunis workshop participant, day 1).*

the population will support the endeavour, and may influence combatants, commanders and decision-makers towards compliance.

This practically means that elements traditionally associated with SSR ought to be included right from the start of any truthful disarmament initiative, whether it is the disbandment of specific units, a vetting process,[49] or external recruitment into the country's police and security forces. These steps, the intent they signal and the results they deliver, will have a positive impact on NSAGs' commitment, and participation, to DDR. Vice-versa, the lack of progress on reforming elements of the state security sector may well block progress on the DDR front.

8.4. Build an incremental and reciprocal process

In a post-agreement scenario, parties who commit to the spirit of a disarmament process need to see regular political gains and confidence-building measures which i) deliver on important components of a peace settlement and ii) provide other groups

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48 As mentioned earlier, vetting is a complex endeavour which will require dedicated technical guidance to understand the options, outline a common approach and produce elements of language.
49 Vetting can be done for human rights reasons, but also on the ground of competence, as part of a process of restructuring the country's security sector.

with incentives for further progress. With this in mind, DDR programmes will gain from an incremental approach, where disarmament happens in synch with the achievement of given political milestones. At each stage, disarmament ought to entail reciprocal steps by the state, for each step taken by NSAGs.[50] This approach i) will ensure continuous confidence-building through the delivery of concomitant results which feed into one another; and ii) be key to sustain trust in and support to a country-wide endeavour to enhance the safety and security of all Syrians.

8.5. Build the system around the users

Restoring the authority and legitimacy of the Syrian state over the whole territory does not mean re-establishing the power of the centre over the periphery. Rather, planners should accept the possibility of different set-ups for different geographies, depending on the terms and conditions of a political settlement in a post-conflict scenario, as well as the extent to which armed groups represent the aspirations of sizeable parts of the population. When that is the case, local security arrangements ought to feature individuals and forces deemed legitimate to the local population.

Teams involved in implementing DDR need to be present at the subnational level and allow users to have i) a single point of entry for follow-up,[51] and ii) a visible and friendly face to engage with, as part of a broader effort to repair broken social links between various segments of the Syrian population. Whether local DDR teams will be affiliated with a line ministry, a local council or municipality, has yet to be determined.

DDR guidance material and literature all mention "encampment" as a possible, if not necessary, element of the demobilisation process, because cantonment sites are convenient from an organisational standpoint. However, experience suggests they seldomly are user-friendly. Combatants may stay in camps, separated from families and loved ones, for extended periods of time. Risks associated with cantonment sites include security, financial and management liabilities,[52] and should be avoided altogether.

In regard to disarmament

8.6. Disarm and disband all non-statutory forces

Policymakers may consider a wide range of DDR programmatic options which all contribute to restoring safety and security in the country. Choices, sequencing and priorities will be determined on the basis of i) an initial joint assessment by DDR

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50 This was a feature of the peace agreement in Aceh and, while happening to a significantly smaller scale than would be the case in Syria, was important in translating the state's commitment into reality at every step of the process.
51 Based on experience, individuals may wish to discuss questions as diverse as corruption schemes (forging DDR documents, commanders collecting tax from ex-combatants), information requests, lack of follow-up on previous commitments, individual medical conditions, family reunification, information about weapons caches and other security developments, referral to other services.
52 Security risks relate to the presence of vast numbers of combatants who may feel disenchanted if progress does not materialize fast enough. Targeted attacks are also easier in a camp like situation. Besides, cantonment sites are expensive endeavours to host, feed and cater to large numbers of individuals.

planners of all sides, and ii) what is acceptable to Syria's main powerbrokers in a post-conflict scenario. In any case, such efforts will need to include members of state-aligned paramilitary groups.

8.7. Systematically destroy surplus weapons and ammunition

There is no reliable estimate of the number of weapons currently in circulation in Syria. Between the weapons and ammunition the parties bought themselves, what the government lost to opposition groups, and what regional and international backers shipped to their protégés over the years, it is however reasonable to expect that availability by far exceeds the future needs of the country once peace has returned. This scenario spells a clear case for the systematic demolition of ammunition and weapons collected as part of a DDR programme, to reduce the danger posed by the dissemination of uncontrolled weapons and ammunition. Further, scrap metal can be transformed into tools and equipment which the country's construction sector will require significant quantities of.[53]

8.8. Link disarmament to broader counter-proliferation efforts

In the aftermath of conflict, numbers of Syrians will have one or several weapon(s) at home. Taking these weapons out of circulation is necessary to reduce risks of illicit weapons smuggling and rise in criminality. Syria will be presented with a historic opportunity to reduce and regulate their availability, and the following measures may typically be needed:

- The demolition of weapons, explosive remnants of war and mines in safe sites. This should entail the recruitment and certification of a Syrian cadre of EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) experts, whose knowledge will be needed over the long-term;
- Initiatives to ensure safe storage and enhanced stockpile management, and avoid that weapons and ammunition "get lost".[54] This may apply to police and security forces, and possibly to community weapons depots if deemed relevant;
- A review and update of the country's gun laws to limit access to weapons.[55]

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53 Popular support can be easily mustered and sustained if disarmament turns into positive change for communities. Not only can they start living without fear, but weapons can be smelted into tools and distributed at no cost to the population (as a matter of example, each AK 47 contains enough metal to turn into a shovel head).
54 "According to a report of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), roughly 17% of small arms, mortars, and grenade launchers supplied to the Afghan security services since 2002 are unaccounted for", see Melanie A. Civic and Michael Miklaucic, eds., Monopoly of Force: the Nexus of DDR and SSR, (National Defense University Press, 2011), p.255.
55 This can be done in conjunction with weapons buyback initiatives to maximize effect. However, weapons buyback schemes come with significant risks and should not be considered unless they follow established best practice.

In regard to reintegration

8.9.   Drop individual reintegration schemes

This is by no means a suggestion that reintegration does not matter. Rather, it is i) a recognition that successful reintegration is a time-consuming undertaking which usually gets de-prioritized in DDR programmes, and whose success requires resources and expertise for the country as a whole, beyond the boundaries of a DDR programme and caseload; ii) a pragmatic acknowledgement that reintegration is often dropped in favour of reinsertion, which is easier to quantify and fund, and aims at facilitating a return to a given community (as opposed to enabling a sustainable reintegration into society).

In Syria, one option might be to instead re-conceptualize and resource a new Anti-Unemployment Commission to provide job placement services for qualified and unqualified workers, ex-combatants included, with a view to i) organize the referral of construction (and other) workers who will be needed in large numbers, ii) provide short practical refresher training as relevant, iii) refer individuals to microfinance providers to facilitate access to cash in resuming economic activities, iv) ensure the availability of toolkits and basic equipment as needed. Such an undertaking, while directly relevant to large numbers of ex-combatants, would be best managed as a distinct initiative.[56]

8.10. Focus on reinsertion, including psychosocial support

Focusing on reinsertion can ensure that ex-fighters have time and resources to i) re-build their home and household (this can include the provision of cash stipends, toolkit, building material, basic equipment and furniture), ii) send their children back to school, iii) receive medical attention for themselves and their dependants, iv) undertake administrative formalities.[57]

Planning and funding for psychosocial reintegration is key and should ideally not focus on ex-combatants only. Attending to ex-combatants' medical and psychological needs should not take place outside of the nationwide medical care and referral system. Numerous non-combatants will have medical and psychological needs too, and strategic efforts should be geared towards rebuilding a system for the country as a whole, including but not limited to a short-term and speedy identification, referral and treatment of relevant ex-combatants. Besides, fora which foster exchanges between ex-combatants and other segments of the population, may ultimately contribute to helping Syrians live together again, beyond sectarian, religious and political divides.

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56 This may well be a departure from DDR practice so far, but is based on a realistic acknowledgement that DDR programmes often do not have the bandwidth, expertise and financial resources to undertake employment programmes on such a scale, in support of a given country's reconstruction. It might also contribute to clearly delineating "political" DDR activities from more development interventions, allowing partners such as international NGOs to contribute their full resources and potential to the latter, without what some of them may view as a risk to their impartiality.

57 Most ex-combatants may need to renew their ID papers, property titles and so on.

8.11. Early cash injection is key

Early injections of liquidities in the local economy will be key, to bridge the gap between individual reinsertion support and longer-term reintegration initiatives for the country as a whole. This may take the form of cash-based interventions which i) focus on clearing rubbles and rebuilding basic infrastructures, ii) place an emphasis on hiring local labour (and hence income), and iii) support the resumption of small businesses which civilians will have a widespread demand for (on the demand side).

A focus on micro-finance for all areas most impacted by the conflict (indicators to be determined) will contribute to the resumption of small businesses, from the supply side, for a range of services that civilians will have a widespread demand for (e.g. bakeries, grocery shops, hardware stores, pharmacies).

8.12. Consider "changing the sequence"

DDR is best understood as a set of activities which seek to i) remove the threat of weapons and ii) give weapons carriers other opportunities in life. This should not be viewed as a sequential model. There will be cases where significant numbers of combatants are reluctant to handover weapons as a pre-condition to further assistance. Should this situation become a stumbling block, then consider introducing community based funding first, while helping commanders plan for internal weapons registration (but no disarmament just yet). When and how often will this be needed will depend on the initial conflict analysis the DDR planners will have conducted at the outset.

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