

**POST NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND
REINTEGRATION OF EX COMBATANTS, 1970- 1975**

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ABSTRACT

The rising cases of ex service personnel assisting insurgents or facing challenges of reintegration into their communities after service have necessitated a research on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex service men. As shown in the research, it is a very fundamental process with military, security, socio- economic and humanitarian dimensions for any nation transiting from conflict to peace. It is a very important process of properly reintegrating ex combatants that volunteered and risked their lives for the sake of their countries. The justification of this study lies in the fact that given ex combatants' familiarity and access to weapons, without a viable alternative to generating income after a civil war, ex combatants face a propensity to turn to crime in the absence of a comprehensive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process. Using primary and secondary sources, the research aims at finding ways of repositioning ex combatants for a more peaceful environment.

KEYWORDS: Nigeria, War, Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration.

INTRODUCTION

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration is a very fundamental process with military, security, socio- economic and humanitarian dimensions for any nation transiting from conflict to peace. This critical but important process becomes necessary in order to properly reintegrate ex combatants that volunteered and risked their lives for the sake of their countries. It is a process that enables a nation to transit from conflict to peace and gives ex combatants the opportunity to become stakeholders in peace, security and progress of their nation. Also, it seeks to check criminal violence after a civil war. This study is important and relevant because, given ex combatants' familiarity and access to weapons, ex- combatants without a viable alternative to generating income after a civil war may turn to crime in the absence of a comprehensive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process.

Findings in this study therefore, will be useful in repositioning ex combatants for a more peaceful environment.

In general terms, it is a strategy that supports peace processes and enhances security so that post-conflict reconstruction and recovery can begin with the hope to ensure that short-term security imperatives are integrated into long-term development programming. Indeed, it is a post conflict management process. DDR programmes are also expected to reduce the risk of a war recurring in a variety of ways, by: reducing the availability of weapons; geographically dispersing ex-combatants and disrupting their social networks; providing ex-combatants with economic opportunities unrelated to conflict; building confidence between former warring parties, including restructuring the military; and helping governments realize peace dividends.¹

The experience of ex-combatants since the creation of Nigeria in 1914 does not reflect a good implementation of DDR programme; a situation that oftentimes leads to low morale of war veterans and discourages even potential enlisters. In some cases, in an event like this, war veterans become ready tools in escalating local conflicts and indulging in activities that are inimical to development. For instance, the West Africa Campaign of World War I comprised mostly of Nigerian soldiers and consisted of two relatively small military operations to capture the German colonies in West Africa: Togoland, and Kamerun. Togoland (Togo) was captured in a few weeks in 1914, but Kamerun (Cameroun) resisted until February 1916.² Disarming and demobilizing them after the military expeditions, no adequate provision was made to reintegrate them into the society. Also, during the Second World War Nigerians made up more than half of the total force of 90,000 West African soldiers deployed to South East Asia after 1943 as part of the British Army's 81st and 82nd (West Africa) Divisions. Although the soldiers were demobilized, many remain bitter that their contribution was never adequately recognised.³ Their restlessness account for the renewed and reinvigorated nationalist struggle for the political Independence of Nigeria in 1960.⁴

Again, after the Nigerian Civil War, the Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon warned against spiraling expectations of the post- war period, saying "we must not expect miracles over night. Patience and hard work are necessary"⁵ and went on to promise post war Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Rehabilitation exercise (the 3Rs). He also assured that "demobilized armed forces personnel to be trained and placed in gainful employment in civilian life".⁶ In spite of this seemingly commitment to DDR, not much was achieved for the ex- combatants.⁷

Against this background, this chapter focuses on the post Civil War attempts that were made by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria led by General Gowon from 1970 to 1975 and examine the extent to which ex- combatants were disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into the society. To achieve this, the chapter is delineated into sections: Introduction, Conceptual Explanations, Background to the Nigerian Civil War, DDR and the Policy of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation (the 3Rs) from 1970 to 1975, DDR Process Implementation in Some Selected African Countries and conclusion.

Conceptual Explanations

Research and practice on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration have been motivated predominantly by operational concerns rather than more esoteric scholarly interests such as war recurrence. Academic investigation has focused on practical aspects of the project cycle – from designing robust DDR interventions to monitoring and evaluating outputs and outcomes. In what amounts to the first generation of DDR research from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, researchers from predominantly US, UK and Western European institutions (both university and research institute-based) focused on more qualitative and case-specific phenomenon in Africa. This first wave began with general assessments of DDR and its relationship with wider peace-building and state-building processes. Researchers were mobilized to examine specific aspects of combatant and ex-combatant motivations and skill-sets, access to and availability of weapons and munitions, the relative trade-offs between cash and non-cash incentives for participation, absorptive potential in areas of return and repatriation, long-term dividends of reintegration assistance, the trade-offs between individual and collective remuneration and recidivism of DDR participants.⁸ A major focus of first wave scholars was with the specific institutional features of DDR itself – namely disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

This study, in clarifying concepts, takes into cognizance the fact that, DDR just like many of such concepts, do not have a singular or universally accepted definition. However, we shall attempt some definitions to help our understanding of the subject matter. According to Massimo Fusa to, DDR which aims at demilitarization can also be used in times of peace, to reduce the size of armed forces and redirect public spending towards other meaningful ventures.⁹ However, it should be made clear that DDR is much more complicated in a post-conflict environment, when different fighting groups are divided by much hatred and face a

real security dilemma as they give up their weapons and go back to the civil society where structures have crumbled, and the economy has become stagnant.

The strength of DDR lies in the fact that it usually supports the transition from war to peace by ensuring a safe environment, transferring ex-combatants back to civilian life, and enabling people to earn livelihoods through peaceful means instead of war. Demilitarization is in phases; the first is disarmament, followed by demobilization and then reintegration.

Disarmament: this is the first phase of DDR, and logically precedes demobilization and reintegration. Basically, it is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, light and heavy weapons carried by both combatants and often also some civilians. Disarmament may also include the development of responsible arms management programmes.¹⁰

The US Department of Defense Dictionary eclectically views disarmament as “The process of transitioning a conflict or wartime military establishment and defense-based civilian economy to a peacetime configuration, while maintaining national security and economic vitality”.¹¹ Disarmament generally refers to a country’s military or specific type of weaponry. Operationally, the most common form of disarmament is abolishment of weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical, biological or nuclear arms. General and complete disarmament refers to the removal of all weaponry, including conventional arms. Disarmament can be contrasted with arms control, which essentially refers to the act of controlling arms rather than eliminating them. A distinction can also be made between disarmament as a process of eliminating weapons, and disarmament as an end to the absence of weapons.

Philosophically, disarmament should be viewed as a form of demilitarization part of economic, political, technical, and military processes to reduce and eliminate weapons systems. Thus, disarmament is part of a set of other strategies, like economic conversion, which aim to reduce the power of war making institutions and associated constituencies. Disarmament need not be a “utopian” project in the sense of being misguided or naive. Rather, various strategies can be used to promote the political, economic, and media power necessary for demilitarization.

Demobilization: this is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. It is human centric. There are two stages of demobilization. The first stage of demobilization includes the processing of individual combatants and placing them in temporary centres plus the massing of troops in camps designated for this

purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks) while the second stage encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is oftentimes called reinsertion.¹²

Reinsertion is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training and employment. While reintegration is a long term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is a short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year.¹³

Reintegration: is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance.¹⁴

After ex-combatants have been demobilized and disarmed, their effective and sustainable reintegration into civilian life is necessary to prevent a new escalation of the conflict. In the short term, ex-combatants who do not find peaceful ways of making a living are likely to return to conflict. In the longer term, disaffected veterans can play an important role in destabilizing the social order and polarizing the political debate, becoming easy targets of populist, reactionary, and extremist movements. In order for all this not to happen, an effective reintegration exercise must be undertaken. Going by the above explanation, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of ex-combatants is a first step in the transition from war to peace. But DDR can be used in time of peace as well to reduce the size of armed forces and redistribute public spending.

For the purpose of this study, our working definition sees Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programme as a process that seeks to disarm ex combatants after a war or conflict in an effort to demobilize them and reintegrate them into well - functioning and well -governed societies that recognize equality and justice as part of the peace process. To achieve the security objectives of a DDR programme, support should be given to achieve full initial socio-economic reintegration of ex-combatants. However, in the context of longer-term reintegration, a balance must be struck between supporting ex-combatants' specific needs and the needs of the wider community in order to prevent

resentment. Emphasis should be placed on moving quickly from ex-combatant-specific programmes to community-based and national development programmes. If this is not done then there is a likelihood as this study has found, for the ex-combatants to continue to identify themselves as belonging to a special group outside society and therefore retarding their effective reintegration into local communities.

Background to the Nigerian Civil War

It should be made clear that it is not within the purview of this chapter to replicate the remote and immediate factors that led to the Nigerian Civil War. Neither does this segment of the chapter intend to trade blames as to which side- Biafra or the Federal Government- plunged the country in to a civil war. This has already been treated in notable conferences and academic discourse. However, it is important to give a brief highlight on the origins of the war.

Most scholars are agreed that the Independence granted Nigeria by her former colonial masters, the British, set the country on a path of chaos and destruction in which regionalism, ethnicism, nepotism, thuggery political brinkmanship were the order of the day.¹⁵ The series of crises that befell Nigeria shortly after independence dramatically led to the first military coup of 15 January 1966, a coup that subsequently installed General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo, as the head of Nigeria's first military government. The January coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, an Igbo, saw the demise of two senior Northern political leaders and four senior Northern soldiers. Given the ethnic distribution of the casualties of the January coup and the fact that the leader of the coup and Ironsi were both Igbo, allegations were leveled against the regime of General Ironsi as being an attempt at domination of the country by the Igbos.

However, in any attempt to analyze the origins of the Nigerian Civil War, it is expedient to locate them (causes) in a variety of sources as well as levels. This is important because, for instance, the factors could be explained in terms of political competition; inter-regional economic rivalry; elitist in- fighting and arguably, class or religious struggle; military anomie and ambition; personal, ethnic and regional conflict; or in terms of social malaise and disenchantment with the Golden Age that never materialized in the aftermath of colonialism; or colonialism itself and the outcome of fifty years of divide and rule.¹⁶

Also, theories have been variously advanced by the participant leadership, and expectedly, from opposing stand points. For example, the Federal Military Government asserted that:

The failure of the Nigerian Constitution at Independence in 1960 to recognize the strong desires of the minorities and other communities for self determination affected the balance of power at the centre.¹⁷

And that it was this deep seated imbalance that adversely affected the First Republic through its life span. Ojukwu, shortly before the civil war had attacked the same regime as well in his speech: *Army with the Old Guards* where he insisted that the regime's insensitivity "led inevitably to the complete loss of moral and political authority".¹⁸ For Ironsi, it was not so much the content as the structure that was to blame but "that rigid adherence to the regionalism which was the bane of the last regime and one of the main factors which constituted to its downfall".¹⁹

Expectedly, all of these stand points or interpretations on the causes of the war have found promoters who seek to trade blames. For instance, the Finance Minister during the Gowon regime, Obafemi Awolowo notes that:

The Nigerian Civil War was inevitable. But whilst its inevitability was clear to Ojukwu as far back as September 1966, it did not appear to have dawned on the Federal Military Government until towards the end of April 1967. There were forebodings.... which prompted the Federal Government to make contingent military preparations for an armed show down which it continued to pray never to happen... and was already secretly but hard for war which he knew was the historical concomitant of any act of succession²⁰

This appears to be Awolowo's explanations of the Gowon administration's reluctance to go to war. Isawa Elaigwu, also writing from the perspective of the Federal Military Government and from the prism of Gowon's interpretation of the causes of the war cited sources in defence of his position, saying:

It had become evident by March 1967 that Ojukwu was going to lead the Eastern Region to secede, statements such as, 'there is no power in this country or in Black Africa that can subdue us by force' and 'we possess the biggest army in Black Africa had signalled to Nigerians that succession was at close quarters. It had become clear that secession could not be avoided except force was used.'²¹

He quoted Gowon as justifying his actions by saying: “We are quelling a rebellion, not fighting an external enemy... The responsibility for healing the nation’s wounds in the future lies with us not with any foreigner”.²²

Frederick Forsyth, strongly and publicly supported the cause of Biafra in the Nigerian Civil War, and covered the period as a war correspondent in Biafra. He had a fifteen-year association with the Igbo leader, Chukwuemeka Ojukwu and published a biography in 1982 with the full cooperation of the subject. It covers his youth, army training, the civil war, and his twelve-year exile and out rightly blames Gowon for the woes that befell Nigeria from 1967 to 1970.²³

According to Chinua Achebe, in his own interpretation, the war began with the January 15, 1966 *coup d’etat*, through the counter coup staged mainly by Northern Nigerian officers and the massacre of thirty thousand Igbos and Easterners in pogroms that started in May 1966 and occurred over four months, as the events of those months left millions of other future Biafrans feeling terrified signaling the beginning of a civil war. He asserts thus:

As we fled ‘home’ to Eastern Nigeria to escape all manner of atrocities that were being inflicted upon us and our families in different parts of Nigeria, we saw ourselves as victims. When we noticed that the federal government of Nigeria did not respond to our call to end the pogroms, we concluded that a government that failed to safeguard the lives of its citizens has no claim to their allegiance and must be ready to accept that the victims deserve the right to seek their safety in other ways including secession.²⁴

The Federal Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon also states its own side of the story concerning the outbreak of the war.²⁵ In all of these factors on the origin of the civil war, there is an element of bias. However, that is not the focus of this study. The next segment is on the implementation of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation (the 3Rs) in relation to Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process.

DDR and the Policy of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation (the 3Rs) from 1970 to 1975

With the end of the civil war, one of the most immediate demands on Gowon’s government was one of providing relief for the suffering masses of the newly affected areas. The need for shelter, food and medicines for the war affected population became more glaring than ever. To further complicate issues was the simultaneous necessity for rehabilitation and reconstruction; to restore electricity, water, transport and communications. So also, was there

the urgent need to resettle farms, reopen factories, and facilitate the resumption of normal economic life.²⁶

It was against this backdrop that the Federal Military Government immediately adopted the policy of Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (3Rs) which was rather encompassing than strictly focusing on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of only ex-combatants. There was no deliberate policy to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants. However, the then Finance Minister Chief Obafemi Awolowo recognized, correctly, that because of the protraction and conditions escalating the war, Nigeria was left with a large army about twenty times its pre-war size which posed a serious dilemma for the economy. If the country continued to keep such a large army, as he said, then the bulk of resources would have been diverted for their maintenance, to the prejudice of the economy and of the masses of other segments of the society. On the other hand, if Nigeria demobilized a large number of them immediately, without their simultaneous absorption into alternative employments, then highways and alleyways would, of a certainty, have been infested by hungry, discounted, and disillusioned youths who might be tempted to commit violent crimes, again to the prejudice of the economy and of the masses of the people.²⁷ This and other factors prompted the 3Rs which appeared to the government then a more holistic approach in dealing with the post-war situation.

This 3R policy²⁸ and ideal presupposes that a country has gone through the ordeal of crisis or war, coupled with a long period of mistrust, and highlight the need to, first and foremost, reconcile with one another. The government had to find ways of reaching out, forgiving and embracing one another. The action resulted in mass movements, dislocation and the destruction of lives and property. These all had to be rehabilitated. The '3Rs', as they came to be known, were intended to provide immediate relief to all who suffered, one way or the other, as a result of the conflict, and to enable them restart and rebuild new and better lives. The government provided the funds and material to enable some of the destroyed or damaged infrastructure to be rebuilt. Nigeria was greatly assisted in this matter by other nations and international organizations, such as the UNDP, WHO, UNICEF and UNESCO, ADB, IBRD, and the Red Cross. It is worthy of note that even during the war there were occasions when the Federal Government created safe corridors, which enabled food and medicine to get through to the civilian population within secessionist enclaves. The primary intention of the reconciliation exercise was to earn the Igbo trust, and urge them to realize that they also had an equal stake in the Nation they had helped to build. However, it was also

an attempt to appeal to the hearts and minds of the citizens, in order to reintegrate the seceding region and people back into Nigeria, and restore trust between all Nigerians. Public servants were re-integrated into the federal service and there was an open policy to readmit most of their military officers and men back into the Federal Army /Armed Forces. Igbos who had fled to other parts of the country, returned to their homes and property, and the welcome they received greatly helped in the reconciliation efforts.²⁹

As the reconciliation efforts gained pace, it was joined by a rehabilitation action, which entailed the restoration of damaged infrastructure, through the reconstruction of shelter, local markets, clinics, schools and other vital infrastructure and services, in order that the people might be able to recommence their lives as swiftly as possible. The government also undertook a massive reconstruction programme of the various major infrastructures damaged or neglected during the war so that life could fully return to the affected areas. Work on roads, hospitals, schools and colleges, universities, airports, ports etc were undertaken and assisted by the United Nations agencies. It was this reconstruction programme that later dove-tailed into the National Development Plan 1970 -74/75.

General Gowon in a post war speech, in an effort to assure of his commitment and dedication to the peace process, also emphasized that the war ended with 'No Victor, No Vanquished' and went further to state thus:

We are at the dawn of national reconciliation. Once again we have the opportunity to build a new nation. On our side, we fought the war with great caution, not in anger or hatred, but always in the hope that common sense would prevail. Many times we sought a negotiated settlement, not out of wickedness, but in order to minimize the problems of reintegration, reconciliation and reconstruction. We knew that however the war ended, in the battlefield or in the conference room, our brothers fighting under other colors must rejoin us and that we must together rebuild the nation anew. All Nigerians share the victory today; the victory for national unity, victory for hopes of Africans and black people everywhere.³⁰

This pronouncement suggested that the administration was genuinely dedicated to the promotion of post war peace, stability and development of all peoples on equal bases. Unfortunately, events unfolding proved to the contrary as there was a gap between the pronouncement and implementation. For instance, following the secession of Biafra in 1967, Nigerian government ordered all its officers and men who were at training facilities all over the world to return home for the war. The instruction was to the effect that these officers and men return 'to their bases in their respective regions'. Majority of the officers and men who

returned to bases which fell under the Biafran areas were compelled to join the Biafran side. The amnesty granted ex Biafran soldiers, was limited in its application to officers and men of Northern and Western extractions, as officers and men from Eastern Nigeria, who, out of no fault of theirs, fought on the Biafran side, found their names either removed from the list of officers and men of the Nigerian Army, Air Force and Navy or were not entitled to either pension or gratuities.

For example, there was the case of the 143 Nigerian Air Force men who, prior to the war, were sent on training in Germany and, in line with the German tradition, were emblazoned as 'Cadets' and not as 'officers'. These were men and women who have undergone, passed and graduated from training here in Nigeria before being seconded to Germany for further training. General Abdusalam Abubakar, who later ruled Nigeria, was among these officers. Other notable officers of the Nigerian Army included Air Vice Marshall Anthony Okpere, Lary Koinyan, Ike Ernest, etc. These men, like others, fought on the side of the Nigerian troop, not by choice but owing to the fact that they were of the Northern extraction. Others, who were from the Western extraction and returned to their Western Regional bases, also joined the Federal troops while those from the Eastern Region fought on the side of Biafra. At the end of the war, these officers and men, like the Biafran soldiers, were incorporated into the Nigerian Army except those officers and men who were trained in Germany and of Eastern extraction. The excuse for their non-inclusion was that they were emblazoned as 'Cadets' and by the military pension laws; they were regarded as students. Attempts, since the end of the war, to get the Nigerian government to incorporate them into the army so as to be entitled to pensions and gratuities, having been trained abroad and in Nigeria before, proved a challenge for so long.³¹

The latest in the series of the efforts was in 2006 under President Olusegun Obasanjo. After intensive lobbies; the Federal Government in the Federal Government of Nigeria Official Gazette No. 40, Volume 93, announced another general amnesty or presidential pardon for soldiers, mostly air force men, who fought during the Civil War. Under this new amnesty regime, only 103 of the 143 qualified. The breakdown of the 103 personnel granted pardon shows 26 Commissioned Officers, 43 Officer Cadets, and 34 Lance Corporal and Air Men. Others who completed training in Germany like these men and were equally emblazoned as 'Cadet' were left in the cold.³² It could be argued that ethnicity, favoritism, and corruption rather than nationalism dictated the direction of government amnesty under General Gowon and even under President Olusegun Obasanjo.

In the area of reintegrating ex- Biafran soldiers in to the Nigerian Military, the Federal Government set up the Board of Officers to probe the war activities and roles of officers on the secessionist side. Isawa Elaigwu notes that:

...the case of the Biafran soldiers was to be reviewed by a Board of Officers which was to probe the war activities and roles of officers on the secessionist side. At the end of the exercise, quite a number of officers were re-absorbed; some were dismissed from the Nigerian military service, while those Nigerian officers who had helped secessionist forces to invade the former Mid- West (now Delta and Edo States) were detained for further period.³³

There were two Boards of Officers- one for senior officers while the other reviewed the cases of junior officers. These officers were formerly in the Nigerian Army. Those who were recruited straight in to the Biafran Army, stood dismissed at the end of the war which meant the demise of the Biafran Army.³⁴ The Board of Officers also recommended that all combatant officers above the rank of Captain should be dismissed, discharged or retired without benefits. Only junior officers were absorbed in to the Nigerian Military. However, even the officers that were absorbed faced challenges in terms of promotion. And it took 40 years after the war for an Igbo man, Lt. Gen. Onyeabor Azubuike Ihejirika to be appointed the Chief of Army Staff.³⁵ This was contrary to the letters of Gowon post war speech.

Also, over 5,000 police officers who fought on the secessionist side were only granted general amnesty in 2003 by President Olusegun Obasanjo, but went ahead to approve funds for the payment of their entitlement in 2007- 37 years after the war had ended.³⁶ However, Eghosa Osaghae commenting on the alleged marginalization of Igbos in the military explained that:

...one of the things the Igbo have structurally been disadvantaged is good representation in the military, in which understandably because it is not too long since the civil war ended. The war led to the wiping out of a whole generation of the Igbo officers... the Igbo will have to wait until say the officers who came in the 1970s and 80s for them to have adequate representation.³⁷

The reintegration programme of the Federal Government also undermined the incorporation of children, especially, under- age soldiers. This invisibility of child soldiers from such discussions is due to the following assumptions. First, adults constitute the most important segment in any war situation because of their economic importance and children depend on them for survival, hence, efforts should be to quickly rehabilitate adults leaving out children. Second, women and children are the most vulnerable groups in the society; therefore, any

policy that takes care of women also naturally takes care of children. Third, another erroneous assumption is that child soldiers are only dangerous during war situations. But if post-war society can ensure that they are placed in the right environment (within the family set up), their war mentality would disappear. Due to these flawed assumptions, child soldiers' post-war reintegration, like elsewhere not just in Nigeria, are either not considered at all or considered as a short term programme. This posed serious security threats.³⁸ It must be understood, however, that, any reintegration that does not enthusiastically consider child combatants in rehabilitation, demilitarization and proper reintegration will only face a future explosion of tyrants, rebels and war-mongers.

Also, immediately after the war, the Federal Government made attempts at resettling some displaced children that were sent abroad for treatment during the course of the war. Owing to the devastation, death and displacement caused by the war; the 'Biafran' Government, in collaboration with some international organizations and agencies, arranged for the evacuation of a large number of children from the ravages of war and war-related diseases, most notably kwashiorkor, for treatment and safe-keeping in the Republic of Gabon and Ivory Coast. A few of these children were taken to Europe.³⁹ Immediately hostilities ceased in 1970, the Federal Government arranged for the reparation of these children back to Nigeria. To facilitate this, the United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was invited to participate in the negotiation for the children's return. The Federal Government also nominated the International Union for Child Welfare (IUCW) to arrange for the children's repatriation to their parents after arriving Nigeria. Parts of the mandate given IUCW were to 'rehabilitate', 'manage through fostering', 'placement and family assistance' programmes for these children as well as, for those who could not locate their parents and family members, ensure institutional support for their well-being. To achieve its mandate, IUCW set up five transit centers: Port-Harcourt, Ikot-Ekpene, Azumini, Mgbidi, and Ngor Okpala; where these children were received, rehabilitated and handed over to their parents or relatives.⁴⁰ A sizeable number of these children were reunited with either their parents or relatives. About 30% could not locate either parent or family members. For these 30%, the IUCW negotiated 'in-state homes' and welfare centers with the governments of the three Eastern states, as well as legal adoption processes with the public. By 1973 when the IUCW was closed down, more than 80 children were unclaimed in East Central State, 167 in Rivers, and 157 in South Eastern State. These children were left to the Social Welfare Departments of the states.⁴¹

Philip Emeagwali has also argued that even after the war was over, no prisoners of war were exchanged but that all of them were killed.⁴² This is contrary to the norm of International Humanitarian Law which states that Prisoners of War (POWs) cannot be prosecuted for taking a direct part in hostilities. Their detention is not a form of punishment, but only aims to prevent further participation in the conflict. They must be released and repatriated without delay after the end of hostilities. The detaining power may prosecute them for possible war crimes, but not for acts of violence that are lawful under IHL.⁴³

Most civil war combatants both on the Federal Government side as well as the secessionist side were not disarmed after demobilization at the end of the war just as no commensurate welfare package was given to them. The ex-Biafran soldiers have continued to ask for their reintegration and assimilation into the nation's armed forces in order to facilitate the payment of their pensions. In a desperate move to get the attention of the government the veterans planned a nationwide strike in September, 2013 to express their grievances.⁴⁴ Narrating his ordeal, a veteran states thus:

We need to be rehabilitated. If not that we are war victims, being members of the Nigerian family, I think we deserve life. Our children deserve to be educated, our wives deserve to be clothed and have something doing, since they are our helpers; our eyes and our legs. We are pleading that you take our message to the Federal Government; we are begging that they should come and alleviate our sufferings.⁴⁵

DDR Process Implementation in Some Selected African Countries

In this section attempt is being made to examine the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process in other African countries with the view to comparing the process with the Nigerian experience after the civil war. This will give us a better perception and understanding of DDR process and the 3Rs under the administration of General Yakubu Gowon within the period under focus. The idea here is to bring to fore the extent to which a successfully implemented DDR can bring about positive change and peace in a post war community. The DDR process in the African countries cited here is an adaptation of the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone Conference Report on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR) and Stability in Africa.⁴⁶

Burundi: Burundi has experienced a long-standing political and ethnic conflict with regional ramifications that started before independence in 1962. The conflict intensified in 1972 with a

Hutu invasion from Tanzania that saw a systematic killing of Tutsis. In 1993 the conflict peaked after the assassination of the first elected Hutu President. Again, Tutsis were systematically targeted. The repression of the National Army against Hutus was equally brutal. More than 300,000 persons died in the conflict since 1993 and up to 24 per cent of the population was displaced at the worst period of the war.⁴⁷

Many internal negotiations took place between 1993 and 1996 with the formation of successive governments but failed to end the conflict. External negotiations between 1997 and 1999 that were facilitated by the Organisation of African Union (OAU) resulted in the signing of the Arusha Agreement of August 2000, the formation of a transitional Government the same year and a general ceasefire in November 2003. The last rebel group joined the Agreement in May 2005 but was still in conflict with the transitional Government. Disarmament could not proceed as planned in assembly areas due to mutual mistrust between the parties, but all ex-combatants entering demobilization centers were disarmed. 10,000 ex-combatants, including 2,700 children, had been demobilized by 1 June 2005. Reinsertion allowances equivalent to 18 months of wages were paid to ex-combatants, half on leaving the demobilization centers and the rest in three equal installments paid at three month intervals in the community of reintegration. Ex-combatants are also entitled to reintegration benefits of 500,000 to 600,000 francs (Fbu). Child ex-combatants are provided special care under a UNICEF sponsored programme. Women and the handicapped also have special programmes.⁴⁸

Liberia: The 14 year conflict that wrecked Liberia left the population in a state of apprehension. Against the background of a DDR programme that was hastily implemented from 1994 -97, following a lull in the conflict, and the ensuing donor fatigue, Liberians anxiously await the end of the brutal self destruction and regional instability that have resulted from the conflict. Although mechanisms were put in place in 1994 to jumpstart DDR, the resumption of hostilities in April 1996 and the resultant looting and destruction of assets including databases seriously hindered the process. The Abuja Peace Accord of 1997 brokered by ECOWAS ended hostilities but the issue of social reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life remained unresolved. Consequently the international community and the national stakeholders opted for a “quick and dirty” approach that did not provide for adequate encampment of ex-combatants for detraumatization. The ex-combatants were thus not fully demobilized in preparation for genuine reintegration.⁴⁹

In addition, the DDR process focused mainly on gun -carrying combatants, thus vulnerable groups, including women and children and followers of warring factions, were not considered. Other major shortcomings of the 1997 DDR programme included the failure of the elected government to restructure the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) in keeping with the Abuja Peace Accord since the government was preoccupied with its own security and survival. The government also failed to include leaders of other warring factions in key decision-making positions. This led to dissatisfaction and a mass exodus of ex -combatants and their regrouping in a neighbouring country to re -launch full scale war on Liberia in 1999. The current DDR programme that was launched in 2003 is being implemented in line with standard DDR principles and procedures but there are existing policy and operational challenges which, if unresolved, may derail the process. Among the key challenges are the lack of national ownership and the marginalization of the National DDR Commission whose statutory functions are coordination and supervision of the process. Nevertheless, the DDR programme has addressed some conventional issues including the disarmament of 103,019 ex -combatants, well over the initial projections of 38,000. Some 28,000 weapons were collected by the official end of the DD phase on 31 December 2004. The current DDR has also addressed issues related to vulnerable groups including child soldiers, women, war wounded and followers of warring factions.⁵⁰

Rwanda: Rwanda experienced one of the most brutal genocides in recent history resulting in the deaths of approximately one million people in 1994. The slaughter ended when rebels under the leadership of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) overthrew the Government. More than two million Rwandans fled to neighbouring countries as refugees, including thousands of former soldiers of the Government's Forces Armées Rwandaise (FAR) and militias (Interahamwe) who participated in the genocide. A new Government of National Unity, including the RPF and all political parties that were not involved in the genocide, was formed in July 1994.⁵¹

The Government accorded priority to the re-establishment of state authority throughout the country, rebuilding institutions and reorganizing public administration. In 1997, the Government decided to tackle the problem of resettling the returnees and screening ex-combatants for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). Disarmament was the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence while Demobilization and Reintegration were entrusted to the newly established Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) that was placed under the supervisory authority of the Ministry of Finance and

Economic Planning. A Steering Committee composed of high –level officials from participating line Ministries was charged with policy development and coordination. The overall mission of RDRC was to support the successful social and economic reintegration of ex -combatants in their respective communities and to realize national security, reconciliation and development. The reintegration component was envisioned to be an integral part of the overall national reconciliation and reconstruction strategy and it supports directly the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Government.⁵²

With support from the international community, RDRC developed the Rwanda Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (RDRP) that was expected to work through existing government structures. The main objectives of RDRP are to:

- i. Demobilize an estimated 20,000 Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA-former rebels), ex -combatants from the Rwanda Defence Forces (current army), and 25,000 members of ex -armed groups (AG), and support their transition to civilian life;
- ii. Support the re-insertion of 15,000 ex -FAR combatants;
- iii. Support the social and economic reintegration of all ex –combatants demobilized in Stage II (2002 -2005) and all Stage I (1997 -2002) ex -combatants who remained economically and socially vulnerable; and
- iv. Facilitate the reallocation of Government expenditure from military to social and economic sectors.⁵³

Rwanda’s DDR experience has been mostly positive. By June 2005, 35,367 ex-combatants, including 2,500 child soldiers, had been demobilized out of the estimated 60,000. Some 15,000 ex -combatants from the ex -FAR and ex -AG have been integrated into the National Army. Most of those not yet demobilized are members of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Demobilized ex- combatants received a reinsertion Basic Needs Kit that is equivalent to 50,000 Frw (110 USD) for food, seeds, tools and basic household items and were also transported to the communities of their choice. In addition, professional soldiers (ex -RDF and ex -FAR combatants) received Recognition of Services Allowances (RSA) that ranged from 150,000 Frw (330 USD) to 500,000 Frw (1,100 USD) depending on years of service and seniority. More targeted support through a Vulnerability Support Window has been provided on grant basis to 11,770 economically vulnerable ex -combatants. Special counselling and support programmes are available for women, children and the war-disabled.⁵⁴

Sierra Leone: The ten -year conflict in Sierra Leone ended with a negotiated settlement wherein all parties eventually became committed to stability and therefore decided to comply with the provisions of the various peace documents they signed. The Lomé Peace Agreement signed on 7 July 1999 ultimately became the operational document for the peace process in Sierra Leone. One of the key provisions of this agreement was the development of a viable Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (DDRP) for combatants of the various factions to transition the country from war to peace and consequently bring about stability.⁵⁵

The overall goal of DDRP was to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate ex - combatants in order to consolidate short-term security as a basis for lasting peace in Sierra Leone. The three key objectives were:

- a) Collect, register, disable and destroy all conventional weapons and munitions retrieved from combatants during the disarmament period;
- b) demobilize approximately 45,000 ex-combatants of the Armed Forces of Sierra Leone, Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Civil Defence Forces (CDF) and paramilitary forces; and
- c) Prepare and support ex -combatants for reinsertion and socio –economic reintegration upon discharge from demobilization centers.⁵⁶

In developing the DDR programme, several policies, strategies and assumptions were made and a robust institutional framework and institutional arrangement put in place. The emphasis was on national ownership and partnership with key international and national partners for effective planning, coordination and implementation. The DDR programme went through three distinct phases with associated setbacks such as a coup d'état, initial non -compliance with peace agreements, programme restructuring, etc. Despite the setbacks the programme was successfully implemented and recorded some of the following key successes: establishment and management of several disarmament and demobilization centres in collaboration with key implementing partners across the country; disarmament and demobilization of over 71,000 ex-combatants; and payment of Transitional Safety Allowances to over 54,000 eligible beneficiaries that voluntarily registered for such schemes. They also benefited from economic reintegration programmes ranging from vocational/apprenticeship skills training and agriculture to formal education. Also, social reintegration measures that promoted forgiveness and reconciliation were largely achieved. Vigorous information and sensitization campaigns and monitoring and evaluation systems

were key activities of the programme that contributed to the overall success of the DDRP in Sierra Leone.⁵⁷

Conclusion

This chapter is an attempt at revisiting the issue of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration as a very fundamental process for Nigeria's transition from the 1967 to 1970 civil war to peace. Going by our explanation of DDR process in a post war situation, most Nigerian civil war combatants, both on the Federal Government and secessionist side, were not disarmed after demobilization at the end of the war just as no commensurate welfare package was given to them at the time of demobilization. The reintegration of ex-Biafran soldiers was not followed to the letter as the process was flawed in many ways. The reintegration programme of the Federal Government also undermined the incorporation of children, especially, child soldiers. Examples are drawn from other African countries that experienced a civil war and how their applicability of DDR.

As shown above, this critical but important process is extremely important in order to consciously reintegrate ex combatants/veterans into their societies. The chapter concludes that this all important DDR process was not duly followed but rather, a holistic approach of 3Rs was attempted. Most of the ex combatants who volunteered and risked their lives for Nigeria were left demoralized even as some have continued to suffer post- traumatic pains. In any post war environment, while it is important to retrieve all weapons in the hands of ex combatants, the focus should not only be on the immediate requirements to remove weapons from the hands of non -state (rebel) actors and to bring them back into mainstream society, but also the inclusion of long-term stabilization and development programmes in peace agreements.

DDR programmes primarily emphasize the disarmament and demobilization of ex - combatants. However, for durable peace and sustainable development ex-combatants must be reintegrated into well - functioning and well -governed societies that recognize equality and justice. No section of the society should be punished, intimidated or made to suffer. DDR programmes are a vital component of any peace process but they cannot be implemented in a vacuum nor can they make a peace process successful on their own. Such programmes must stress partnership, especially with civil society and must be more gender -sensitive. A good DDR process takes into consideration the principles of International Humanitarian Law as well.

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