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Research Article

Evolution and Challenges of DDR: A Policy Review Through the Prism of Colombia's Three-Generational Experience

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This paper delves into the evolution of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in Colombia, tracing its transformation across three generations. It contends that Colombia's extensive DDR experience, shaped by its enduring conflict and successive peace processes, provides valuable lessons for post-conflict peacebuilding and ex-combatant reintegration. Through a comprehensive policy review, the study examines the development of DDR strategies, highlighting their responsiveness to evolving conflict dynamics. Utilizing a diverse range of sources, the research provides a nuanced understanding of Colombia's unique DDR context. The paper emphasizes the shift from narrow disarmament and demobilization approaches to more comprehensive strategies that encompass political, social, and economic aspects of reintegration. It underscores the importance of context-specific, coordinated, and culturally sensitive DDR initiatives for sustainable peace and stability. By showcasing Colombia's dynamic DDR experience, the research offers strategic lessons relevant for global DDR practices, enriching the discourse on conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

1. Introduction

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) protocols are crucial components in peace processes, significantly impacting conflict resolution and post-conflict stability (Kilroy, 2015). Although seemingly new, these protocols have historical roots and have faced various challenges and approaches throughout history (Rufer, 2005). This analysis of DDR history shows that the difficulties of reintegrating ex-combatants into society are not a recent phenomenon. Throughout history, from ancient Rome to the aftermath of World War II, veterans have faced challenges in their reintegration. The United States recognized these challenges and made significant improvements to its demobilization practices after World War II. This included adopting a more gradual approach and providing educational support to veterans (Banholzer, 2014). The reintegration of former combatants is a complex societal issue with significant political implications (Söderström, 2013).

In the 1980s, international DDR programs emerged due to the limitations of earlier efforts, signifying a shift beyond the mere disarmament and demobilization phases. These international initiatives prioritized the intricate process of effectively reintegrating ex-combatants into civil society, thereby forming a new dimension of DDR practice (Muggah, 2005).

In this context, a policy review of DDR initiatives is essential. The review aims to analyze the policies that underpin DDR efforts, their evolution, and provide critical insights into the future of DDR. This policy review consists of three key sections. The first section comprehensively analyzes DDR procedures and their development since they were first implemented. The subsequent section explores the concept of DDR "generations." In this context, the term "generation" refers to the dynamic adaptations and diverse scopes that have emerged as DDR practices have responded to the changing nature of conflicts and contexts.

Colombia's experience with DDR offers valuable lessons for policymakers in conflict and peacebuilding scenarios. Colombia's long-standing armed conflict and subsequent peace agreements provide a comprehensive case study for understanding DDR challenges and successes. The ongoing "Paz Total" initiative further highlights the potential of DDR in achieving sustainable peace. By analyzing Colombia's past, present, and future of DDR, insights can be gained that contribute to effective DDR policies worldwide. The third section introduces Colombia as a compelling case study. Colombia has been extensively studied in DDR literature and is arguably the only example where all three generations of DDR have been concurrently present throughout the course of its armed conflict.

2. Conceptual Approach and evolution of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) protocols of Ex-Combatants

The first operations involving DDR components were conducted in Namibia in 1989, as an initiative of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (CIDDR, 2009; Rufer, 2005) and in Central America by the United Nations Observer Group (Langholtz & Steenken, 2017). Subsequently, disarmament and demobilization were included in various latitudes, in Haiti, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, Mozambique, Angola, Sierra Leone, and the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranya and Western Sirmia (Méndez et al., 2013; Wolter, 2007). Since the aforementioned inception in the late 1980s, more than 60 different DDR initiatives have taken place around the world (Muggah & O'Donnell, 2015).

The segmentation of knowledge generated from different experiences and applications of DDR protocols, in addition to the low development of the reintegration of ex-combatants as an object of research (Nilsson, 2005), mobilized several international cooperation agents, governments and United Nations programs to compensate for the lack of clear policies and gaps that limited the establishment of a collective approach in the implementation of DDR programs (UNDDR, 2014). Among these international actors, we can highlight the

German Technical Cooperation, the Norwegian International Defence Centre, the Canadian Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, and the Swedish National Defence College, which, in recognition of the importance of DDR for sustainable peace, jointly published in 2004 the handbook Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration A Practical Field and Classroom Guide, which provided practical guidelines for effective DDR measures as an integral part of international peacekeeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction plans (Wolter, 2007).

In line with the establishment of implementation guidelines, although more focused on the distribution of funds and the reintegration phase, the Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (SIDDR), in its final report, emphasizes the importance of multi-donor funds targeted not only at ex-combatants but also at host communities and those affected by the conflict, recognizes the role of women and children as members of armed groups, even if they were not combatants, and their right to benefit from the reintegration process, examines the lack of state capacity to meet the demands of DDR processes, and how this can be addressed through the intervention of the private sector and civil society. The report places particular emphasis on the relationship between DDR processes and transitional justice initiatives, as well as on maximizing public resources to achieve maximum inclusiveness (Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2006).

With the aim of establishing general DDR guidelines, the United Nations developed the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) between 2003 and 2006.The IDDRS distilled lessons learned from the experiences of the 1990s to the mid-2000s and has since become the reference manual for DDR operations (Langholtz & Steenken, 2017).

The descriptive terms for the components of DDR used in most of the literature and evaluation studies are based on the common United Nations definitions from the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council in February 2000 (Rufer, 2005).

Disarmament:

> Disarmament is the collection of small arms and light and heavy weapons within a conflict zone. It frequently entails the assembly and cantonment of combatants; it should also comprise the development of arms management programmes, including their safe storage and their final disposition, which may entail their destruction. Demining may also be part of this process. [1]

Weapons surrender can be coercive or voluntary, and although it aims to reduce the number of combatants or dismantle armed units (Gleichmann et al., 2004), it is not limited to the latter, as civilians can also be part of the process (Rufer, 2005). In any case, it requires monitoring by the international community (Fisas, 2011). In turn, it serves as a mechanism to seal the trust between the negotiating groups and is one of the last steps in the peace process. Its complexity may be exacerbated in countries with an armament culture (the cases of Afghanistan and Chad), but the weapons destruction phase, in addition to its practical purpose, has a symbolic connotation as a demonstration of the transformation to a new, safer, and more peaceful society (Langholtz & Steenken, 2017).

Demobilization:

> Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centers to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion. [2]

The process of demobilization serves as a counter to recruitment (Wolter, 2007) and involves the elimination of military structures as the beginning of the transition to civilian life, discharging them and granting them the status of ex-combatant (Langholtz & Steenken, 2017; Pietz, 2004). Within the demobilization process, which involves support for combatants and their families, there is a phase of reinsertion. This transitional assistance provides basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, medical services, education, training tools, and employment opportunities to ex-combatants and their families. The duration of this assistance is typically up to one year before the longer-term process of reintegration begins (Rufer, 2005; UN. Secretary-General, 2005). Reinsertion programs have been implemented in various contexts such as Uganda in the early 1990s where about 40,000 war veterans were successfully resettled with the help of these packages. Similar programs have also been used in Central American conflicts as a means of supporting individuals transitioning back into civilian life (Langholtz & Steenken, 2017).

The Escola de Cultura de Pau (2008) identifies seven types of disarmament and demobilization (see table 1), six of which consist of the handing over of weapons and the demobilization of combatants, while only one includes the reintegration component:

Type	Includes Disarming	Includes Demobilization	Benefits and incentives	
1	Yes	Yes	Return to Civil Society	No compensation
2	Yes	Yes	Return to Civil Society	Temporary benefits for the group's top management
3	Yes	Yes	Return to Civil Society	Return kit (cash payment, food, and transportation) for all ex-combatants
4	Yes	Yes	Return to Civil Society	Monthly payment for a period for all ex-combatants
5	Yes	Yes	Integration into the State Security Forces	
6	Yes	Yes	Reintegration to society program (DDR)	
7	Mixed Model between type 5 and any of the others			

Table 1. Types of disarmament and demobilization

Source: Prepared by the author with information from the Escola de Cultura de Pau (2008)

Reintegration

> Reintegration refers to the process which allows ex-combatants and their families to adapt, economically and socially, to productive civilian life. It generally entails the provision of a package of cash or in-kind compensation, training, and job- and income-generating projects. These measures frequently depend for their effectiveness upon other, broader undertakings, such as assistance to returning refugees and internally displaced persons; economic development at the community and national level; infrastructure rehabilitation; truth and reconciliation efforts; and institutional reform. Enhancement of local capacity is often crucial for the long-term success of reintegration[3].

The challenges to reintegration vary in their social, political, and economic nature. Stigmatization, and the possibility of rejection by host communities are challenges to the social reintegration of ex-combatants. At the political level, collective or group reintegration is transformative, as it seeks to assist in the transformation of illegally armed organizations into entities that operate as political actors within the legal parameters of the

government; in the same way, at the individual level, political reintegration is restorative, as it implies the restoration of their decision-making power and their status as citizens within the community (UNDDR, 2014a).

The reintegration phase is the weakest and at the same time the most important phase of DDR (Nilsson, 2005); it is open-ended and extends over several years (Wolter, 2007). It takes place in communities at the local level and is a national responsibility with long-term external support (UNDDR, 2020). As a vulnerable group accustomed to living with weapons, ex-combatants do not have sufficient tools to achieve economic and social integration, the purpose of this phase is to provide them with sustainable livelihoods within a range of options that may include education, vocational training, job placement in agriculture, livestock, fish farming, industrial areas, as well as entrepreneurial development through the creation of small and medium enterprises (Fisas, 2011; Rufer, 2005; UN. Secretary-General, 2005).

Since its inception, DDR has evolved not only in the definitions of each of its processes, but especially in the approach taken, according to Vries & Wiegink (2011) DDR is continuous and involves two perspectives, ranging from an initial "minimalist" type limited to the establishment of security, to a "maximalist" perspective that represents an opportunity for development, in contrast, Banholzer (2014) considers that it contributes to the benefit of individuals but is not intended or enabled to improve economic or political contexts, while authors such as (Colletta & Muggah (2009) along with (Nussio (2013) go beyond this dichotomy, classifying the available literature in different generations or waves, each of which suggests an evolution in the scope and specific objectives of DDR.

2.1. DDR Generations

2.1.1. First generation of DDR

The first generation of DDR (see Table 2), often called "traditional DDR," follows a sequential process and focuses primarily on military and security aspects (Jachnik, 2020; Muggah, 2010). Initially targeting ex-combatants, this approach used standardized templates and best practices but often failed to consider local particularities (Muggah & O'Donnell, 2015; UNDPO, 2010). Implemented mainly in economically disadvantaged nations, these programs often depend on external donors and operate within post-conflict settings under peace agreements (Altier, 2021; Mats R. Berdal., 1996; Muggah, 2010).

Traditional DDR typically involves global organizations like the United Nations and consists of structured phases such as cantonment, disbandment, and transitional assistance, including education and vocational training (IOM, 2019). The model is top-down, targeting signatory parties to facilitate the peace process and establish a secure environment but struggles to engage non-signatory armed groups (Altier, 2021; UNDPO, 2010). Preconditions for implementation include a peace agreement and willingness from conflict parties (UNDPO, 2010).

Despite this, several challenges have emerged. Firstly, the first generation often lacked appropriate contextual awareness, making it difficult to adapt to the specific needs of different conflict zones. Secondly, the identification of target groups was often poorly executed, affecting the program's efficacy. Thirdly, security dilemmas arose from asymmetrical disarmament, causing issues in achieving lasting peace. Fourthly, the pitfalls of partial demobilization and the insufficiency of reintegration assistance have been criticized. Finally, the issue of consistent funding has also been a persistent challenge, affecting long-term sustainability (Muggah, 2010).

While the focus has been on disarmament and demobilization, the psychosocial aspects of reintegration have often been overlooked, leading to calls for addressing the broader impact of war (UNDPO, 2010). Criticisms highlight the need for a more holistic approach that encompasses the well-being of entire conflict-affected communities to enhance peacebuilding (Ayissi, 2020).

DDR Generation	Features	Institutions involved	Approach	Responsibles	Challenges	DDR processes
First generation (1989 – 2006)	• Development of common standards based on lessons learned and condensed in manuals. • Interventions had a minimalist approach, prioritizing security and military and police concerns. • Implementation occurred in post-conflict contexts where peace agreements or ceasefire had been negotiated or signed. • There was a lack of any visible element focused on the reintegration process for former combatants. Instead, these individuals received	• The German Technical Cooperation. • The Norwegian International Defence Centre • The Canadian Pearson Peacekeeping Centre • The Swedish National Defence College • Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden • UNDDR UNHCR	• The primary emphasis is on former combatants involved in military structures	• Practitioners • Military • Peacekeeping forces • Policy makers • Scholars	• No contextual awareness • The identification of target groups. • Security dilemmas. • Partial demobilization, • Insufficiency reintegration assistance. • Funding.	• Mozambique: (1992 – 1997) • Uganda: (1992 – 1995) • Cambodia: (1991 – 1993) • Djibouti: (1993 – 2002) • Eritrea: (1993 – 1997) • Somaliland: (1993 – 2008) • El Salvador: (1992 – 1996) • Haiti: (1994 –1996) • Angola: (1995 – 1997) • Bosnia and Herzegovina: (1995 – 2003) • Mali: (1995 – 2003) • Liberia: (1996 – 1997) • Sierra Leone: (1996 –

DDR Generation	Features	Institutions involved	Approach	Responsibles	Challenges	DDR processes
	humanitarian assistance through various organizations.					2004) • Guatemala: (1997 –) • Rwanda: (1997 2001) • Tajikistan: (1997 –) • Kosovo: (1999 –) • Guinea-Bissau: (2000 –) • Uganda: (2000 –) • Cambodia: (1999 – 2005) • Somalia: (2000 –) • Eritrea: (2001 – 2006) • Ethiopia: (2000 – 2005) • Congo, Republic: (2000 –) • Angola: (2002 – 2006) • Solomon Islands: (2002 – 2003) • Rwanda: (2002 –

DDR Generation	Features	Institutions involved	Approach	Responsibles	Challenges	DDR processes
						2005)
						• Afghanistan: (2002 – 2006)
						• Burundi: (2004 – 2008)
						• Liberia: (2002 – 2009)
						• Papua New Guinea: (2003 -)
						• Haiti: (2004 –)
						• Central African Republic: (2004 – 2006)
						• Congo, Democratic Republic: (1999 –)
						• Sudan: (2004 -)

Table 2. Matrix First Generation of DDR Interventions

Source: Prepared by the author with information from the Escola de Cultura de Pau (2008), Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden (2006), Peace Agreements Database (2023) and Piedmont (2015).

2.1.2. Second generation of DDR

A crucial shift in DDR methodologies emerged in the mid-2000s, as stakeholders recognized that traditional DDR strategies were inadequate for the comprehensive needs of reintegration and the broader goals of peacebuilding. This shift was in response to the evolving dynamics of conflicts and political landscapes, necessitating new methods focused on sustainable reintegration and peacebuilding (IOM), 2019). However, this evolution faces significant challenges, including the absence of political determination to see through the long-term commitments required for successful DDR, and the problematic uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, which can fuel conflict and complicate the disarmament process.

The advent of "Second Generation DDR" (see Table 3), denotes an adaptive response to these challenges, introducing concepts like "Interim stabilization" and a widened scope of security-focused initiatives. Yet, this generation of DDR is not immune to external pressures, such as the destabilizing impact of illicit drugs and organized crime, which can undermine the reintegration of combatants into lawful societies. Economic instability further threatens the sustainability of DDR efforts, as it hampers the provision of viable livelihoods for ex-combatants.

Significantly, Second Generation DDR operates synergistically with, in parallel to, or as an alternative to traditional DDR (UNDPO, 2010). While it represents a forward-thinking approach, there is a pressing need for efficient integration and coordination mechanisms to align the diverse array of peacebuilding activities. Ayaka Suzuki, Chief of the DDR Section in the United Nations Department of Peace Operations, underscores that the term "Second Generation DDR" is not intended to replace traditional DDR but rather to address its limitations or complement its efforts, especially in scenarios marked by ongoing conflicts or delicate peace processes. This approach facilitates trust-building and fosters secure environments, laying a potential pathway for eventual traditional DDR (UNDPO, 2010).

Discourse on DDR now extends beyond its initial parameters, considering the complex relationship between DDR and sectors such as transitional justice, security sector reform, and state building (Muggah, 2010). However, the field also grapples with critical evaluations that cast doubt on the effectiveness of DDR processes, calling for rigorous evidence to validate their impact. This iteration of DDR shifts the focus from individual combatants to the larger community, emphasizing sustainable peace through community security and justice measures. Such a shift is critical in contexts where traditional DDR prerequisites, such as a peace accord, are lacking, allowing armed groups to maintain their influence (Molloy, 2017; Muggah & O'Donnell, 2015).

At the heart of Second-Generation DDR lies the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) strategy, which aims to foster community engagement and facilitate local reforms to diminish societal violence. Originating in Haiti in 2006, the CVR has since expanded to various conflict-affected regions, emphasizing the need for development-oriented peacekeeping efforts to combat organized violence (UNDDR, 2018). In context like Yemen, CVR components were implemented as a diplomatic tool in conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Jachnik, 2020). The

integration of CVR approaches into DDR protocols addresses the challenges posed by persistent community violence in post-conflict environments.

Lastly, Second Generation DDR espouses a customized approach, tailoring processes to the unique needs of countries amidst peace negotiations. It employs a locally sensitive, evidence-based methodology, which is adaptable and subject to ongoing assessment to ensure responsiveness to changing conditions. Nevertheless, the adaptability of this approach must contend with the various outlined challenges to truly meet the nuanced demands of peacebuilding in complex conflict scenarios Baysal & Dilek, 2023; UNDPO, 2010).

DDR Generations[ii]	Features	Institutions involved	Approach	Research representatives	Challenges	DDR processes
Second Generation (2006 – 2015)	• Prioritize extensive development-oriented activities • Explores the intricate correlation among transitional justice, security reform and development • Acknowledge DDR as an integral part of a broader political process. • Address and decrease various types of violence • Establish connections with local communities • Incorporate evaluation techniques to oversee the detection of incipient security risks	• Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) • The United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) • Civil society organizations • Private sector organizations	• The contextual influence on outcomes (Nussio, 2013). • There is a change in perspective from helping individuals to benefiting the entire community (Piedmont, 2015)	• Practitioners • Scholars • Inter-governmental organizations	• No political determination • The uncontrolled utilization of natural resources illicit drugs • Organized criminal activities • Economic instability • Doubts about the effectiveness of DDR processes	• Haiti: (2004 –Presente) • South Sudan: (2011 – 2023) • Liberia: (2003 – 2008) • Democratic Republic of the Congo: (2010 – 2023) • Ethiopia: (2013 - 2015) • Afghanistan (2006 – 2011) • Côte d'Ivoire (2004 – 2017)

DDR Generations[ii]	Features	Institutions involved	Approach	Research representatives	Challenges	DDR processes
	and recognize deficiencies within DDR					

Table 3. Matrix second generation of DDR interventions

Source: Prepared by the author with information from the Escola de Cultura de Pau (2022), International Organization for Migration (2019), Peace Agreements Database (2023), United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2010), Muggah (2010), Nussio (2013) and Muggah & O'Donnell, (2015).

2.1.3. Third generation of DDR

The evolution of DDR into its third generation (see Table 4) is a direct response to the complex challenges of modern conflict zones. As practitioners navigate the difficult terrains of counterinsurgency and stability operations, they increasingly face armed and criminal groups not aligned with the peace process. This novel DDR paradigm, evident in regions like Somalia, Libya, Mali, Iraq, and Afghanistan, departs from the second generation by incorporating the varied entities subjected to military actions (Altier, 2021).

Contemporary conflict environments have rendered traditional DDR approaches insufficient, prompting a transition towards what is now termed 'third-generation political reintegration.' This paradigm shift has led the UN Security Council to adapt its mandates, acknowledging the realities of terrorism and the intricate web of violent extremism. Such an environment demands the integration of countering violent extremism measures with DDR strategies, marking a significant shift on a global scale (Piedmont, 2015).

Recognizing the multifaceted needs for reintegration, the third generation of DDR suggests that enduring success rests on the pillars of economic, social, and political reintegration. Notably, ex-combatants demonstrate a propensity for political involvement post-demobilization, necessitating programs that move beyond economic incentives to address broader socio-political goals (Altier, 2021; Gilligan et al., 2013). As DDR processes interlace with military and counter-terrorism efforts, they become more sensitive and politically charged, reflecting a move away from purely socioeconomic models to ones that embrace a more comprehensive approach to reintegration (Cockayne & O'neil, 2015).

In today's landscape, DDR extends beyond the post-conflict phase and stretches across the entire peace continuum from prevention to resolution, and from peacekeeping to sustainable development. Programs now operate prior to the formal end of conflict and the signing of peace accords, fit together with initiatives in

transitional justice, security sector reform, and national development strategies. This expanded scope signifies a departure from a one-size-fits-all programmatic approach to a more adaptable, context-sensitive DDR process (Baysal & Dilek, 2023; UN General Assembly, 2022).

This modern iteration of DDR acknowledges that traditional prerequisites may not always be present, prompting the United Nations to prioritize adaptability and tailor interventions to the unique and ever-changing on-the-ground realities. It distinguishes between the DDR 'program' a set of activities over a given period and the DDR 'process' a personalized journey influenced by individual experiences, skills, and needs (Langholtz & Steenken, 2017; Muggah & O'Donnell, 2015). The third generation hence views ex-combatants as active agents in post-conflict scenarios, who, with their distinctive insights and capabilities, can contribute significantly to the broader peacebuilding narrative (Nussio, 2013).

Such a comprehensive DDR strategy is critical given the nature of modern conflict groups, which often lack clear political objectives, possess volatile command structures, and are prone to fragmentation. Moreover, their interactions with organized crime and terrorism necessitate a DDR framework capable of operating within the grey zones of conflict, where peace agreements may be nonexistent, and the lines between criminality and insurgency are blurred (Muggah & O'Donnell, 2015). As such, UN peace operations are increasingly required to address conflicts where traditional peacemaking strategies may be inadequate, highlighting the intricate work of third-generation DDR in complex conflict ecosystems (Cockayne & O'neil, 2015).

DDR Generations	Features	Institutions involved	Approach	Research representatives	Challenges	DDR processes
Third Generation (2015 – present)	• It distinguishes between a DDR program, which refers to specific activities over a period of time, and the DDR process, which is inherently personal and varies according to an individual's abilities, needs, and limitations. • Use a combination of punishment and, eventually, incentives to target groups that may not be direct parties to a future peace agreement. • DDR activities are being	• Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) • The United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) • Civil society organizations • Private sector organizations • The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)	• Aims to provide ex-combatants with a more sustainable economic, social, and political alternative to conflict (IOM, 2019). As it is believed that individuals are the ultimate solution to peacebuilding challenges (Nussio, 2013, p.10).	• Practitioners • Scholars • Inter-governmental organizations • Involves experts from a variety of fields, such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, and political science.	• Reintegration in volatile situations • Ongoing conflicts • Non-state armed groups • DDR in the absence of a formal peace agreement • Unclear legal and political frameworks	• Somalia (2013-present) • Libya (2015 – present) • Mali (2019 – present) • Central African Republica (2016 – present) • Yemen (2017-present) • Colombia (2017-present)

DDR Generations	Features	Institutions involved	Approach	Research representatives	Challenges	DDR processes
	reevaluated as dynamic political processes rather than isolated or infrequent endeavors. • Represents a shift from isolated interventions to activities integrated into national development plans. • The conflicting groups are often linked to organized crime and terrorist networks. • There is increasing recognition that each DDR intervention must be tailored, negotiated, and executed based on the unique and					

DDR Generations	Features	Institutions involved	Approach	Research representatives	Challenges	DDR processes
	evolving circumstances on the ground.					

Table 4. Matrix third generation of DDR interventions

Source: Prepared by the author with information from the Escola de Cultura de Pau (2022), International Organization for Migration (2019), Peace Agreements Database (2023), United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2010) and Muggah & O'Donnell, (2015).

3. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in the Colombian Armed Conflict

Colombia stands out as the most extensively researched country due to its prolonged conflict and significant demobilization efforts (Altier, 2021). The Colombian government has engaged in multiple peace negotiation processes with various armed groups since the 1980s. These negotiations took place under different administrations, including Belisario Betancur (1982-1986) during the "La Uribe" process with the FARC-EP, Virgilio Barco Vargas (1986-1990) resulting in M-19's demobilization, César Gaviria (1990-1994) through the Tlaxcala and Caracas dialogues involving the FARC-EP, ELN, EPL, and Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) during his tenure in El Caguán. The demobilization of the paramilitary group AUC also holds significance as it occurred from 2002 to 2006 under Álvaro Uribe's government and contributed to experiences regarding demobilization and amnesties (Baysal & Dilek, 2023).

The last peace process carried out by the Colombian government was during the presidency of Juan Manuel Santos (2010 - 2018) and the FARC - EP, this process is still in the implementation phase, being its main characteristic feature the inclusion of ex-combatants in the design of the reintegration policy.

3.1. Viability of past DDR programs in Colombia

According to the United Nations, DDR programs are only viable when certain preconditions are met: 1) The signing of a negotiated ceasefire or a peace agreement that that outlines the framework for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; 2) Confidence in the peace process; 3) Willingness of the parties to the armed

conflict to participate in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; 4) A guarantee of minimum security (UN General Assembly, 2022).

Upon examining the DDR programs in Colombia from the 1980s to the early 2000s, it is observed that these prerequisites for viability were not completely fulfilled in any of the DDR programs during this timeframe.

		DDR Program			
		Bilateral truces of the 1980s	Peace pacts in the 1990s	Pardon and reintegration for guerrilla deserters Mid-1990s	Demobilization and reintegration agreement with the AUC (2002 – 2006)
Viability conditions for DDR	The signing of a negotiated peace agreement	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Trust in the peace process	No (No support by civil society, economic associations, or military forces)	Yes	No	No (Less than two percent of the signatories ratified the process)
	Willingness of the parties	No (No political backing)	Yes	No	Yes
	A minimum guarantee of security	No (The amnestied denounced the lack of guarantees for their personal protection)	No (Thousand ex-combatants assassinated)	Yes	Yes

Table 5. Viability of DDR programs in Colombia (1980s to early 2000s)

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Understanding the DDR processes that Colombia has experienced in terms of generations allows us to identify the viability of the peace strategies implemented by different governments prior to the recent peace agreement of 2016, which is still being implemented.

3.2. First generation of DDR in Colombia's armed conflict

Political challenges and lack of institutional support hampered the first efforts in the 1980s, without an agenda for the political and social reintegration of ex-combatants, who were the sole beneficiaries of these interventions, without considering the host community.

The peace accords signed during the presidencies of Barco (1986-1990) and Gaviria (1990-1994) were notable for the importance of political reintegration, especially of former M-19 guerrilla fighters, but with regard to social and economic reintegration, a technical approach was maintained that replicated models implemented in the 1980s, based on assistentialism and independent of the context in which the reintegration process was carried out, especially due to the lack of security conditions for the signatories, which led to what has been called in the literature on the Colombian armed conflict the genocide of the political party Unión Patriótica (Villarraga, 2013).

The individual amnesty process of the mid-1990s, on the other hand, lacked a collective identity on the part of the demobilized population, which had no decision-making power in the reintegration strategy implemented. The DDR processes of the 1980s and 1990s represented important attempts to end the Colombian armed conflict. However, in line with the first generation of DDR, these efforts were characterized by a limited focus on security and disarmament, minimal attention to the causes of the conflict, and temporal and spatial limitations in the implementation of DDR processes.

3.3. Second generation DDR in Colombia's armed conflict

The demobilization and reintegration agreement with the AUC between 2002 and 2006 marked an important turning point. This process can be considered a transition to second-generation DDR, as it focused on more comprehensive reintegration, including cross-cutting issues such as transitional justice and youth, and establishing links with local communities and victims (IOM, 2019).

The process with the AUC required a different approach than the previous processes, taking into account the nature of the population to be reintegrated, which was not part of the guerrilla and whose origins and motivations for taking up arms were different from the political project of the groups that were part of the previous processes; however, the strategy to be used was again based on an individualistic and unilateral reintegration model, despite the fact that it was a collective demobilization (González & Clémence, 2019).

The characteristics of the DDR process with the AUC place it within the spectrum of second-generation DDR as it was carried out in the context of an active armed conflict and the population to be demobilized was linked to different types of violence, however, the approach did not include second-generation tools such as the Community Violence Reduction, nor was a reintegration model adapted to the context applied; instead, a first-generation model was replicated, focused on economic issues and with limited outcomes, resulting in few signatories and high recidivism in criminal activities, in turn, the extension of the benefits of the process to the victim community was truncated by the extradition of the high commanders of these organizations, affecting access to truth and reparations (Indepaz, 2011).

3.4. The road to third generation DDR in the Colombian armed conflict

3.4.1. DDR process of former members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP)

On November 24, 2016, the Santos government, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP) ended a conflict lasting over half a century through a comprehensive Peace Agreement. The agreement, which was the result of four years of public dialogue in Havana, Cuba, included provisions for the disarmament and demobilization of the FARC-EP, as well as the long-term reintegration of demobilizing combatants (UN Security Council, 2017).

The peace agreement created a three-party monitoring and verification system comprising of the Colombian government, the FARC-EP, and the United Nations. The UN Verification Mission in Colombia was established in July 2017 to authenticate the implementation of sections 3.2 and 3.4 of the peace agreement by the Government and the FARC-EP (UNDPO, 2021).

The FARC-EP has requested the avoidance of terms such as Reintegration and Demobilization in the new agreement. Instead, they propose the use of Reincorporation and Disarmament, which better reflect their desire to distinguish their processes from previous demobilizations where their enemies participated (Baysal & Dilek, 2023). In the case of "Reincorporation," this technical term emphasizes the communal aspect of the process and the involvement of former combatants in creating their own strategies for reintegration with society. Regarding the implementation of the term "Disarmament" instead of "Demobilization," the FARC EP believes that the process would not dissolve them as a group, but rather transition them from an armed military movement to a democratic and political one (McFee & Rettberg, 2019).

The 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the extinct FARC - EP subscribes to the advances of the third generations of DDR, highlighting its comprehensiveness and recognition of the heterogeneity of the population to be reintegrated, including cross-cutting issues such as women, gender, children and youth, present in the latest version of the IDDRS, however the viability of its implementation is

conditioned by various factors inherent to the context in which it is developed, the most determining factor being the continuity of the armed conflict in which threats to the signatories of the agreement persist.

The conformation of territorial spaces for training and reintegration (AETCR) included in this last peace agreement breaks with some paradigms already expressed in the literature on DDR, among which: reintegration does not imply the return to the places of origin of the former combatants, the skills and social capital generated during the war can play an advantage in situations of community reintegration (Torjesen, 2013). The importance of the context becomes more relevant in the implementation through the AETCR, where each of these spaces represents a scenario with its own dynamics that may or may not favor reintegration, depending on the security conditions, access to infrastructure, productive resources, communication organization, among others.

3.4.2. Paz Total policy

The "Paz Total" policy represents a comprehensive and ambitious approach by the current Colombian government to address the long-standing issues of armed conflict and violence in the country. This policy aims to extend beyond traditional disarmament and demobilization strategies by incorporating a broader perspective on peacebuilding and conflict resolution (Daley, 2023; González Posso, 2023; Janetsky, 2023; Valencia Agudelo, 2022). "Paz Total" is not just a strategy for negotiating with and demobilizing armed groups but also a framework for addressing the root causes of conflict. The policy aims to create a stable and enduring peace by integrating various armed groups, including the ELN and FARC-EP dissidents, into the social and political fabric of the nation (Daley, 2023; González Posso, 2023). One of the key aspects of "Paz Total," as highlighted by Janetsky (2023) and Valencia Agudelo (2022) is its emphasis on a legal and policy framework that enables negotiations with these groups. This approach underscores the Colombian government's recognition of the need for a legal and structured process to effectively manage the complexities of demobilization and reintegration.

Trejos & Badillo (2023) along with Indepaz (2023) provide insights into how "Paz Total" is designed to address the socio-economic disparities and historical injustices that have fueled the conflict. This includes tackling issues like land distribution, rural development, and the drug trade, which are integral to the perpetuation of violence in Colombia. The "Paz Total" initiative in Colombia, represents a significant advancement in the policy and practice of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of ex-combatants. This comprehensive approach underscores the intricate relationship between peace negotiations, socio-economic reforms, and DDR processes.

Negotiations with armed groups, including politically motivated entities like the ELN and FARC-EP dissidents, as well as criminally oriented organizations, are a key element of the policy. This highlights the necessity of distinguishing between various motivations of armed groups in DDR processes and tailoring approaches accordingly (Daley, 2023; González Posso, 2023). Such nuanced negotiations, crucial for effective disarmament and demobilization, also underscore the complexity and diversity of contemporary conflict environments,

posing unique challenges to DDR efforts. The legal and policy frameworks supporting "Paz Total" reflect the importance of a robust legislative environment in facilitating DDR processes. Laws and policies that enable negotiations, safeguard rights, and promote the reintegration of ex-combatants are fundamental to the sustainability and effectiveness of DDR (Janetsky, 2023; Valencia Agudelo, 2022).

The socio-economic integration of ex-combatants is another critical aspect (Indepaz, 2023), addressing issues such as land distribution, economic inequities, and the illicit drug trade is essential for long-term peace and stability, demonstrating that socio-economic development is an integral part of DDR strategies. Furthermore, political, and social inclusion of ex-combatants is vital for DDR success. The policy's emphasis on providing opportunities for political participation and social acceptance is crucial for the successful reintegration of ex-combatants and reducing the risk of recidivism into armed conflict.

The policy's acknowledgment of the distinct challenges and needs of rural and urban areas affected by conflict reflects an understanding of the varied environments in which DDR must operate. This geographical differentiation is vital for addressing the root causes of conflict and ensuring successful reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life, especially in rural regions where land reform and rural development are essential (Daley, 2023; González Posso, 2023; Janetsky, 2023; Trejos & Badillo, 2023) Badillo & Trejos (2023) and Bosack (2023) provide insight into the questions and criticisms surrounding the policy, including the challenge of differentiating between politically motivated and criminally oriented armed groups, as well as the feasibility of implementing such a comprehensive policy. The challenges in implementing 'Paz Total,' including skepticism about its viability and the government's capacity, underscore the importance of realistic planning, resource allocation, and continuous monitoring in DDR initiatives (Badillo & Trejos, 2023a; Bosack, 2023).

In contrast to past DDR processes, where armed groups came to the negotiating table weakened by military offensives, the current situation presents different conditions. For instance, organizations like the ELN have grown stronger in recent years, and their presence even extends into Venezuelan territory (InSight Crime, 2020). Meanwhile, groups such as the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) have the largest number of members and a significant reach in important urban areas (Badillo & Trejos, 2023b). They also generate significant income from criminal activities. The participation of FARC-EP dissidents in the negotiations depends on the impact it will have on the implementation of the 2016 Accords. The 'Total Peace' policy carries significant political weight and exerts considerable influence on the negotiations. It is one of the pillars of Petro's government and generates pressure on the government to accelerate the negotiations. This pressure could impact planning and minimum conditions, such as disarmament before demobilization.

The "Paz Total" policy in Colombia, as explored in this work, offers significant insights into the evolution of DDR strategies. It illustrates the need for comprehensive, context-specific approaches integrating socio-economic, legal, and political factors into third generation DDR frameworks. The policy's outcomes will provide critical lessons for future DDR initiatives in similar conflict-affected settings.

4. Discussion

4.1. What needs to be done to make the DDR process with FARC-EP and Paz Total policy viable and fit into a third generation DDR model?

When it comes to the process of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), its effectiveness largely depends on how well it can be adjusted to the ever-changing and multifaceted situations encountered in real-world scenarios (Altier, 2021). Clearly, the approaches and methods used in DDR programs can show considerable differences, even among communities within a single country (Mats R. Berdal., 1996). The varied nature of situations highlights the necessity of adaptable strategies in DDR initiatives. This is reflected in the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), which are more akin to a 'collection of fundamental concepts and guidelines' rather than a strict set of rules. (Molloy, 2017).

Colombia, often recognized as an effective DDR example, provides a unique scenario. Remarkably, Colombia stands out as one of the more economically prosperous countries to carry out DDR efforts (Nussio, 2018). Nonetheless, the achievements in DDR in Colombia have encountered obstacles, notably in terms of public opinion. A study in the nation indicated that a considerable number of residents 'feared' (41 percent) and 'distrusted' (82 percent) former combatants (Nussio, 2018). Moreover, the reluctance to associate with ex-combatants doesn't necessarily stem from a direct dislike towards them. Instead, many people are apprehensive about the potential risks of being near ex-combatants. This apprehension is based on the view that ex-combatants are not dangerous in themselves, but rather, they are likely to be the targets of aggression (Prieto, 2012).

The economic reintegration component is a crucial part of the DDR procedures. Regrettably, numerous former combatants face challenges in obtaining formal jobs or accessing loan services. Their chances are further restricted due to experiences of marginalization and segregation (Peña & Dorussen, 2021). Additionally, ineffective economic reintegration not only hindered the social acceptance of ex-combatants but also fueled their widespread stigmatization. Discussions and surveys revealed that a minority's involvement in domestic violence and criminal acts led to the general perception of ex-combatants as security risks, with entire groups being mistrusted and collectively blamed for crimes (Willems & van Leeuwen, 2015). Reintegration theories commonly advocate that the reengagement and community acceptance of former combatants reinforce security perceptions and lower re-offending rates, with these processes being intrinsically tied to the revelation of the ex-combatants' identities. This presents a stark contradiction in practice, as hiding an ex-combatant's identity contradicts the reintegration strategies, which in Colombia, are inclined towards identity exposure rather than maintaining anonymity (González & Clémence, 2019).

In the Colombian context, individuals who have experienced or observed the impacts of war firsthand often adopt more balanced views. Numerous victims, when discussing ex-combatants, expressed the sentiment that 'judgment should be avoided.' They frequently referenced severe conditions like extreme poverty, threats to life, and motivations for revenge as compelling reasons that can drive individuals to involuntarily become part of armed groups(Prieto, 2012). Moreover, understanding the motivations and backgrounds of ex-combatants is essential for effective reintegration and reconciliation, a process that requires viewing them as individuals with diverse and complex histories (Gutiérrez & Murphy, 2023).

Initiating reintegration efforts early can significantly motivate a more authentic and lasting process of disarmament and demobilization, potentially scheduled for later. In situations where there is limited political support for disarmament, beginning with reintegration activities could prove beneficial.(UNDPO, 2010). Emerging research underscores that the success of ex-combatants' reintegration into society is increasingly influenced by the quality of relationships they establish in their host communities, rather than merely financial assistance. This perspective highlights the key role of social integration, community acceptance, and relational networks in facilitating a successful transition from combatant to civilian life (Binenwa, 2016; Ike et al., 2022; Kaplan & Nussio, 2018b; Parry & Aymerich, 2023; Schmitt et al., 2021). In Colombia, the vital role of social reintegration is underscored by the fact that a substantial 97% of former combatants surveyed emphasized the need to be actively engaged in community life as a crucial step towards their full reintegration (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018b).

Furthermore, incorporating the voices and perspectives of ex-combatants in the formulation of DDR programs has been shown to enhance community engagement and foster more effective reintegration outcomes. Studies from regions like Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Colombia highlight that a participatory approach in DDR processes not only improves relations within communities but also contributes to the overall success and sustainability of these programs, particularly in addressing the unique needs of diverse groups, including female ex-combatants (Baysal & Dilek, 2023; Kilroy, 2014; Steenbergen, 2021). In the context of Colombia, the integration of ex-combatants into social service projects is increasingly recognized as a dual mechanism of ensuring reparations and fostering a collective commitment to a shared future. As highlighted in various development and reintegration initiatives, this approach not only addresses the stigma associated with ex-combatants but also actively involves them in community rebuilding efforts, symbolizing a reparative step towards societal healing and a unified future (Firchow, 2013; Kaplan & Nussio, 2018b; Rhyn, 2019). In the field of DDR, entrepreneurship is emerging as a fundamental bridge to facilitate the reintegration of ex-combatants into society. This approach not only helps them overcome the many challenges they face, but also magnifies the positive impact of their entrepreneurial endeavors. Moreover, it offers ex-combatants a unique opportunity to repurpose and adapt the skills they acquired during their time in armed groups for new, socially beneficial applications in the entrepreneurial sphere (Fajardo et al., 2019).

In DDR contexts, ex-combatants' wartime experiences often give them significant social capital, which can be either beneficial or detrimental in their post-conflict lives (Wiegink & Sprenkels, 2022). Notably, in Colombia, having connections with fellow ex-combatants does not necessarily result in increased recidivism. Communities with active civil society organizations tend to support the reintegration of these individuals by diminishing their need for separate organizational structures. This fosters smoother reentry into civilian life (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018b).

The evolving landscape of DDR in Colombia, characterized by the dynamic interplay of economic, social, and psychological factors, underscores the necessity of a comprehensive and inclusive approach. To effectively navigate the complexities of reintegration, it is crucial to integrate ex-combatants into the fabric of society through participatory DDR programs, community engagement, and entrepreneurial endeavors. Such a multifaceted strategy not only mitigates the challenges posed by societal stigma and limited formal employment but also leverages the unique skills and experiences of ex-combatants. Ultimately, fostering a sense of community belonging and acknowledging the diverse backgrounds of these individuals are key to achieving sustainable peace and reconciliation. Embracing this holistic model aligns with the third generation of DDR, promising a more successful integration of ex-combatants into civilian life and contributing to Colombia's long-term stability and development.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This policy review article focuses on DDR processes, providing critical insights, particularly in the Colombian context, enriched by global comparisons. The article discusses Colombia's DDR journey, which has evolved through the challenges of FARC-EP reintegration and the 'Paz Total' policy, reflecting a nuanced adaptation to complex, and transforming conflicts. The Colombian case is unique in its politico-economic dimensions and the heterogeneity of combatant groups. This offers a rich tapestry of lessons and strategies for comprehensive peacebuilding. The paper outlines the historical evolution of DDR, highlighting its initial focus on disarmament and demobilization, and the eventual incorporation of reintegration as a crucial component. The role of various international actors in refining and standardizing DDR protocols is emphasized, and their contributions to the field are acknowledged. Our study found that DDR has moved from a minimalist approach that prioritized the establishment of security to a maximalist perspective that views DDR as a vehicle for broader development and societal transformation. This shift underscores the growing recognition of the complex socio-political dimensions inherent in DDR processes.

Section two examined the evolution of DDR, which signifies a growing recognition of the complex realities of conflict and post-conflict scenarios. The shift toward more comprehensive approaches emphasizes the need for DDR programs that are adaptable, context-sensitive and integrated into broader peacebuilding efforts. The

emergence of DDR's third generation highlights the significance of addressing ex-combatants' diverse needs, including their socio-political reintegration and potential role in peacebuilding processes.

After a thorough review and analysis of the first two sections, it is evident that the Colombian DDR process, specifically with the FARC-EP and the broader 'Paz Total' policy, is a significant advancement in the third generation of DDR models. The 2016 peace agreement focused on community-centered 'reincorporation' and transformation from an armed movement to a political entity. The comprehensive approach of 'Paz Total' exemplifies a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in sustainable peacebuilding and reintegration. The Colombian case highlights the importance of context-specific approaches that go beyond traditional disarmament and demobilization. The emphasis on socio-economic and political factors, the involvement of ex-combatants in the design of their reintegration strategies, and the incorporation of broader socio-economic reforms demonstrate a sophisticated approach to addressing the root causes of conflict and ensuring long-term peace and stability. The evolution of DDR in Colombia's armed conflict presents a framework that integrates DDR with political transformation and socio-economic reforms. This model acknowledges the diverse nature of ex-combatants and emphasizes the importance of customized reintegration strategies. It departs from a universal approach and promotes the active involvement of ex-combatants in their reintegration, with a focus on community engagement and development.

The Colombian DDR process should be highly adaptable to the unique challenges posed by different armed groups and the diverse motivations of combatants. Considering these findings, several policy recommendations emerge. First, DDR strategies should be adaptable and tailored to the unique political and social landscape, addressing the specific needs of diverse groups such as women, children, and indigenous communities. Second, DDR should be integrated into a broader peacebuilding framework and closely coordinated with development programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening governance and the rule of law.

In addition, the involvement of local communities in the DDR process is essential to ensure sustainable reintegration and reconciliation. Long-term support and monitoring of DDR initiatives are crucial for their success, requiring continuous evaluation and adaptation of strategies to respond to evolving conditions. Building the capacity of local institutions to manage DDR processes through training, resource allocation and fostering partnerships between government, civil society and international organizations is also essential. There is also value in learning from DDR experiences in other countries. Further comparative analysis could provide critical insights and help avoid past mistakes, leading to more effective DDR processes.

Footnotes

[1] Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process, 11 February 2000 (S/2000/101).

[2] Note by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly in Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, 24 May 2005 (A/C.5/59/31).

[3] Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process, 11 February 2000 (2000 S/2000/101).

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Declarations