

Reintegrating Ex-Combatants in Liberia: What role can DDR play for democracy?

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Current research on democratization and peacebuilding tend to emphasize macro-level issues such as institutional arrangements or elite group formation and compliance. However, this paper suggests that we need to look at how these two parallel processes interlink at the micro-level. As a way to take on the challenge of how such policies feed into democratization, we should take a closer look at Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) programs and their rarely studied political impact among ex-combatants. By doing so, we also address three major challenges within current DDR research, namely: 1) the normative challenge of how these programs structure and condition the ex-combatants' continued political voice has not been studied enough; 2) research in this field has approached this from the perspective of *political reintegration*, which suffers from several conceptual challenges; and 3) at present this research has lacked a theoretical framework in which to grapple and make sense of the political consequences of DDR, i.e. *how* do the programs shape the political outlooks of the ex-combatants. In this paper various types of reintegration programs are studied in terms of their political ramifications among ex-combatants in Liberia, as we need to take a closer look at the design of the programs in order to understand the varying impacts of these programs. This paper suggests that the work methods employed within the programs, as well as composition of beneficiaries matter for the ex-combatants' relation with politics.

