

Role of Political Leadership and Governance in the Reintegration of War Veterans: Challenges and Their Implications for Zimbabwe

Shadreck P.M. Makombe

Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Abstract: The research sought to assess the reintegration of war veterans into the society, the challenges and their implications. In trying to find solutions to the research problem, the researcher examined the role of political leadership and governance in the handling of the integration of war veterans in Zimbabwe and identified reintegration models that can be undertaken to ensure that the war veteran's grievances are holistically met and accommodated by the ordinary community members in Zimbabwe. The research method used was qualitative approach and the data was generated through the use of face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and the researcher as a tool with a sample of eight participants which consisted war veterans. The findings were presented in narrative form; thematic analysis was used through interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Lack of participation had negative consequences for the specific programme objectives, and also for the wider peacebuilding project to which DDR is meant to contribute. Inaccurate information, lack of consultation, failures in programme delivery, and misappropriation of funds all of which were closely linked to the lower rungs of the ladder of participation had negative consequences for the rebuilding of social capital and identification with the new system of governance and accountability which is part of the countries' transition from armed conflict to peace. The research concluded that failure to recognize the political dimension adequately at the policy level has also meant that the issue has been poorly dealt with at the local level by implementers of reintegration programs. reintegration was not properly conducted in Zimbabwe and war veterans would remain isolated from society if no proper measures are taken. The research suggests it was the government's responsibility to implement a framework for reintegration of war veterans and war victims through reconstruction, rehabilitation, resettlement, empowerment and social security programmes.

Keywords: Reintegration, Reconciliation, Disarmament, Demobilisation

I. INTRODUCTION

Research that today deals with the political aspect of reintegration has only done so in a rather limited and under-theorized fashion, as it is usually unclear why certain aspects have been chosen over others to represent political reintegration. I would argue that this limited conceptual understanding of what political (re)integration means has in turn impaired investigations of the political impact of these programs. During the struggle for independence the masses were mobilised by the nationalist bourgeoisie leadership and

called upon to make supreme sacrifices to liberate the country. The purpose of this thesis was, therefore, to comprehensively and critically explore the demobilisation process and its impact on the ordinary war veteran who, at the end of the war, found himself with neither sufficient resources nor the necessary social backup to re-integrate fully into the civil society he had struggled to liberate. The research addressed the war veterans' concerns, fears and crisis of expectations as well as the measures they took to salvage their situation.

Background of the problem

A large component of peacebuilding efforts today is the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs that target ex-combatant populations, in an attempt to smooth the transition to civilian life and alleviate security risks in the transition phase. These are large endeavors that have become increasingly integral to UN practices in post-war societies. While the DDR concept is relatively new in the 80s and emerged in a specific global-political context, the challenge and methods involved in DDR are not new; dealing with returning soldiers has been a societal challenge before, and especially in terms of the political consequences (Muggah 2009). For instance the Southern African states of Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe each suffered armed conflict at various times from the 1960s to the early 1990s. Post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants was crafted and implemented as part of the broader transition from war to peace in all the five countries.

The pursuit of peace and stability through the management of weapons and sustainable reintegration of war veterans was one of the primary goals of these programmes. However, in all cases, DDR fell short of meeting this objective, with different security and stability implications within a decade or so of the implementation of DDR. This research sought to closely look at the reintegration of the war veterans in Zimbabwe and why it was not successful. It tried to provide remedial action to the issues that are still crippling the reintegration of the war veterans into the society to this very day. Post-war recovery is a long-term task where success depends on the holistic and integrated implementation of various post-war recovery programmes from landmine clearance, physical rebuilding, and economic revitalization to

institutional strengthening, reconciliation, and development. Each of these post-war activities has its own significance in the establishment of peace that can only be sustained by addressing the root causes of the conflict. It is in conjunction with this context that the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former war veterans in Zimbabwe should also play an imperative role for the sustainability of the peace-building process.

The problem is that definitions matter, not just in the academic world, but because they have repercussions on the ground. Poor conceptualization of reintegration has been noted to influence design, implementation, expectations, coordination practices, financing, monitoring and ultimately, also, our understanding of what drives and explains success of DDR programs (Kingma and Muggah 2009). Thus, part of the confusion and the mixed results concerning the impact of DDR overall, also relates to what is actually meant by reintegration. Failing to recognize the complexity of the concept of reintegration, and not differentiating enough between, for instance, social, economic and political reintegration risks masking our understanding of how DDR works and does not work.

Research that today deals with the political aspect of reintegration has only done so in a rather limited and under-theorized fashion, as it is usually unclear why certain aspects have been chosen over others to represent political reintegration. I would argue that this limited conceptual understanding of what political (re)integration means in turn impaired investigations of the political impact of these programs. This paper will therefore give an overview and critique of how this has been dealt with in the past. Starting with the policy community, this paper makes clear how the political dimension of reintegration has largely been overlooked, yet political and democratic norms are implicit in the policy discourse about DDR. Secondly, this paper explores the reintegration models can be adopted to ensure that the war veterans' grievances are holistically met and accommodated by the ordinary community members in Zimbabwe. Finally, this paper concludes with a conceptual discussion, proposing how political reintegration should be defined and thereby studied. Importantly political reintegration needs to be considered in two respects: firstly, as the degree of any political involvement, and secondly and separately as the embrace of democratic norms among individual ex-combatants.

Statement of the research problem

There is also recognition within the policy community that DDR programs feed into larger political processes during these transitions. The political aspects seem mainly to come in at the execution level of DDR, where it is a question of political will among the elite actors of the parties involved in the conflict. War veterans find it difficult to adapt as they return to the society, as indicated by the recurrence of violent behaviours normally encountered during war (Dzinesa, 2000).

Violent behaviours are a precursor to reintegration challenges and present a failure to adapt to the societal environment or situation. This paper explored the role of political leadership and governance in the handling of the integration of war veterans in Zimbabwe.

Research Questions

The research was informed by the following research questions:

- What is the role of political leadership and governance in the handling of the integration of war veterans in Zimbabwe?
- Which reintegration models can be adopted to ensure that the war veterans' grievances are holistically met and accommodated by the ordinary community members in Zimbabwe?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspectives and concepts outlined above may help to provide a framework for the study of reintegration of war veterans in Zimbabwe. In addition, there are also some specific methodological concerns that apply to reintegration studies, and which may usefully be highlighted and this work was guided by the conflict theory. Conflict theory states that tensions and conflicts arise when resources, status, and power are unevenly distributed between groups in society and that these conflicts become the engine for social change (Clausen 1968). In this context, power can be understood as control of material resources and accumulated wealth, control of politics and the institutions that make up society, and one's social status relative to others (determined not just by class but by race, gender, sexuality, culture, and religion, among other things).

Marx's Conflict Theory

Many social theorists have built on Marx's conflict theory of 1847 to bolster it, grow it, and refine it over the years. Explaining why Marx's theory of revolution did not manifest in his lifetime, Italian scholar and activist Antonio Gramsci argued that the power of ideology was stronger than Marx had realized and that more work needed to be done to overcome cultural hegemony, or rule through common sense. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), conflict theory originated in the work of Karl Marx, who focused on the causes and consequences of class conflict between the bourgeoisie (the owners of the means of production and the capitalists) and the proletariat (the working class and the poor). Focusing on the economic, social, and political implications of the rise of capitalism in Europe, Marx theorized that this system, premised on the existence of a powerful minority class (the bourgeoisie) and an oppressed majority class (the proletariat), created class conflict because the interests of the two were at odds, and resources were unjustly distributed among them. Within this system an unequal social order was maintained through ideological coercion which created consensus--and acceptance of the

values, expectations, and conditions as determined by the bourgeoisie. Marx theorized that the work of producing consensus was done in the "superstructure" of society, which is composed of social institutions, political structures, and culture, and what it produced consensus for was the "base," the economic relations of production.

Socialization

Socialization is a term used by sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and educationists to refer to the process of acquiring norms, customs, behaviour and ideologies by an individual in a particular social setting. Clausen (1968), a sociologist, asserts that socialization provides individuals with the attitudes, skills, and habits that they need to become active members of their particular communities. It is, therefore, the means by which group norms are achieved and cultural continuity sustained across generations.

During the reintegration process, war veterans return to their communities after long absences during which they are exposed to harsh and sometimes unstructured military life. Upon return to civilian life, the war veterans have to learn, adopt and sustain community norms, values, rules and roles. In his discussion of the *Social Context Theory*, Earle (2000) claims that the socialization process helps the individual fit into the community and access existing social activities and support networks. In order to understand important aspects of the reintegration process for the individual war veterans, the two theories are the Ecological Systems Theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1977) and the Constructed Reality, which was advanced by Berger and Luckmann (1966) better elaborate the concept under study.

Reintegration within Social Context

The family is the first contact an ex-combatant has at the beginning of the reintegration process. The family environment, therefore, plays the important role of supporting the ex-combatants in their initial efforts to achieve social cohesion upon return to civilian life. Halberstadt, Cassidy, Stifter, Parke and Fox (1995) emphasize that the family environment influences the individual's values, social skills and peer relations that to a large extent determine the outcome of the reintegration process for the individual. Family acceptance is especially critical in the reintegration of former war veterans. For example, in Northern Uganda, Annan, Blattman and Horton (2006) found that family acceptance was remarkably high with over 94% of former war veterans reporting that they were accepted by their families without insult, blame or physical aggression. Only one percent of the child soldiers reported that their family was unhappy or unwelcoming upon their return. In addition, family connectedness and social support were more likely to have lower levels of emotional distress and better social functioning. The research concluded that the re-establishment of relationships with positive adult role models in the family facilitated faster reintegration of former child soldiers into community life.

Political reintegration at the different levels of analysis is also motivated by different concerns. Hence, the argument in favor of including the military elite (warlords and military commanders etc) in formal and representational politics is rather different from the argument in favor of allowing former combatants to participate in politics. Ensuring that previous military strongmen have a reason to support the peace and avoiding spoilers, have often been an important incentive behind their entry into formal and representational politics. At the same time, their war history, which sometimes includes human rights abuses as well as crimes against humanity, makes their inclusion in democratic politics as elected representatives rather uncomfortable (see among others Stedman 1997; Darby 2006). Thus at this level, there are serious trade-offs to be considered in terms of forwarding the peace and democratization processes, dilemmas that are not as pronounced at the other levels.

In contrast the justification for transforming armed groups into political parties is that they then can become functional vehicles for addressing the root causes of the conflict, offering a formalized channel for politics to continue through that is commensurate with democratic politics. However, the challenge here is that these parties may then perpetuate the conflict that was at the center of the war, in a way that freezes the conflict lines rather than eventually moving beyond them. Instead of moving beyond the conflict, the post-war society may have to deal with politics that is structured around the same divisions for a long time to come. At the same time, this potential tradeoff also speaks to the main justification for such transformation: it allows the various actors to channel the grievances that fuelled the conflict and address the conflict causes in a legitimate manner.

During conflicts, political groups such as militias and guerrilla groups are formed to further the aims and objectives of the war. Such groups use violence and intimidation to achieve their objectives (Nilsson, 2005). Although the violence is aimed at grabbing power and changing existing political structures, communities inevitably bear the brunt of the war. Political reintegration of war veterans starts with the involvement of the returnees in community affairs and decision making. It is crucial that the war veterans are allowed to influence decisions that affect them in the society (Nilsson, 2005). When former freedom fighters participate in community affairs, they make their voices heard and feel good about it. They become stakeholders in community affairs. As they participate in community activities, the war veterans learn how to respect the rule of law, social norms and community values.

Reintegration Strategies

1. Change Theory

The previously discussed sets of literature PTSD, the adjustment approach, and cultural crossings are unified by a concern for people in transition. Scholars working in a diverse set of traditions, including organizational behaviour,

management, leadership, psychology, social psychology, education, and sociology, have developed theories about people going through transitions, changes, transformations, and adaptations. There appears to be consensus that whether the change is planned, unexpected, or evolutionary, the process of moving from an old position to a new position is difficult (Bridges and Mitchell, 2000; Heifetz, 1994; Levy, 1986; Lewin, 1951; Samuels, 2006; Turner, 1974; Vaill, 1996). I believe a deeper understanding of transitions is crucial to the understanding war veterans but transition literature in its current state does not address war veterans

2. *Liminality and PTSD*

Samuels (2006) believes incomplete transition is a significant contributor to PTSD and she argues that since there is “no formal aggregation rite for homecoming veterans...there is no conclusion to their passage from the field back into civilian life”. Her reasoning is inspired by Turner (1974) and his focus on the liminality (from *limen*, Latin for ‘threshold’) accompanying separations and returns. According to this theory, a returnee is temporarily neither here nor there, considered betwixt and between (Turner, 1974:232). Since this state of ambiguity does not fit normal social structures, rituals are created to help people (the returnee and the community to which they return) integrate. Returning veterans are difficult for civilian communities to understand; unable to integrate back in the community, feelings of isolation may leave a veteran in a liminal state, leading Samuels (2006) to conclude that “experiencing traumatic events may be inevitable for soldiers; however, in my opinion, permanent banishment into the margins causes the ‘disorder’.

3. *Ebaugh's role exit*

While Bridges (2000) describes transitions for a broad set of circumstances, Ebaugh (1988) is focused on the transitions that occur when a person leaves a role in which the self-identity and the role itself are entangled. Between 1971 and 1985, Ebaugh interviewed 57 ex-nuns and 106 people exiting from a variety of different roles, including physicians and dentists, police officers, teachers, mental health workers, air traffic controllers, divorced people, mothers without custody of their children, retirees, recovering alcoholics, ex-convicts, former members of religious orders and post-operative transsexuals.

For some roles, the intensity of role attachment and role commitment leave a residual long after exit, thus creating a “hangover identity” (Ebaugh, 1988:5). Former roles “somehow linger on and define how people see and present themselves in their present identities” (Ebaugh, 1988:3). Role exit follows four stages. The first stage is first doubts, during which time “individuals begin to question the role commitment they had previously taken for granted” (Ebaugh, 1988). The exiter then begins to seek alternatives to the current arrangement, and based on the desirability of alternatives, a turning point occurs with the intent to separate (or actual separation) becomes concrete. The final stage,

creating the ex-role, occurs when the former role is integrated within the new identity. The turning point is the most unsettled for exiters, and as Ebaugh reports,

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first selection criterion was voluntary participation. Of the 45 eligible candidates, the researcher eliminated members of my immediate executive with whom the researcher interacted with daily and with whom personal relationships had developed. This reduced the pool of eligible candidates to 35. Invitations to participate in this study were sent out in January 2017, and eight candidates committed to three interviews each over an 18-month period.

The researcher used purposive sampling to recruit participants. The researcher chose to work with war veterans rather than traditional leaders since the researcher was in the war of liberation for 5 years. The researcher believed working with the war veterans' community to answer the research question offers several advantages. The second criterion for selection was membership in the association led by the researcher during my tenure as Secretary General. The shared experiences provide a common backdrop and, to some extent, normalize each individual's reintegration process. Each person experienced the same major events, yet interpreted them differently, making their own meanings in different ways over time.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with war veterans in Gweru. These were face-to-face interviews. Shingleton and Straight (2014), suggest that an interview is a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee with the specific purpose of obtaining relevant information. The researcher aimed to concentrate on topical issues and not specific questions, hence the utilisation of semi-structured interviews. The researcher used a tape recorder with the consent of the participants so as to capture the exact words from the participants' mouth and also used probes when interviewing to find out secret or hidden information on the issue of reintegration of war veterans and the challenges thereof.

This study also adopted focus group discussions to gather valuable information on the reintegration of war veteran. Chisaka et al. (2013), define a focus group discussion as a group discussion in which six to twelve participants talk about a relevant topic under the guidance of the researcher who will play the role of a moderator. Six members was the right size for most research purposes associated with traditional focus groups, large enough to provide a variety of perspectives but small enough not to become disorderly. The researcher had to intervene at times to give floor to the others to share their views and experiences on the subject topic. Focus group discussion in this study became the best means of generating data pertaining controversial issue of war veteran's reintegration in Zimbabwe.

III. FINDINGS

The evidence is not confined to the ex-combatants' accounts. One former commander is quoted as admitting that he allowed 12 non-combatants to enter DDR, in order to assist them, and in return for a percentage of their benefits (2005, p 54). The report also quotes a UNDP description of improved controls in Zimbabwe, following the experiences of the programme. Internal documents, including one memorandum from UNMIL, are also quoted directly, highlighting the problem of commanders appropriating benefits or corruption by local officials in Zimbabwe.

They were different types of corruption noted, some distinctions must be drawn between the types of corruption or mismanagement, when dealing with the perception that these were problems within the reintegration programme. Firstly, patent mismanagement of a programme, its under-resourcing, or failure to receive expected benefits, may have effects which are consistent with corruption or misappropriation, but they are not necessarily the same as corruption. The danger is that they will be seen as such by war veterans, given their suspicions, experiences, and the political culture both before and during the war. What we can access directly through this research is their perception, both of specific events, and of "how things work" in general. We also have a clear indication that they feel strongly about it, and that, in some cases, it is uppermost in their minds. The reality is that these perceptions – whatever they may be based on – are an important factor in themselves, in how they feel about the peace process, the "deal" of DDR, and any notion of ownership or participation.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

There is a growing body of work that address politics and political reintegration in the aftermath of war, and if we look beyond DDR, we can see that this research can be divided into three areas: 1) research that focus on the transformation of the military elite to a political elite; 2) research that focus on the transformation of armed groups into political parties; and 3) research that discuss political reintegration at the individual level of rank and file combatants. In most instances, war veterans had high level positions and influential positions during the liberation struggle. They cannot just return into the community and became ordinary people without a contribution or say in the manner in which decisions that affect their community are made. Therefore, failure to recognise their position during the war and the role the war veterans were to play within the normal civilised community was a grave mistake for the reintegration process as these meant demotions to those who were in the position of power during the armed struggle.

They is need to take the political consequences of DDR seriously, good or bad, intended or unintended. In order to do that, however, we need a measured and explicit definition of what political reintegration is all about, and appropriate indicators that truly reflect the degree of political reintegration at the individual level. The division between levels of analysis

as suggested by this paper can be useful in order to structure research in areas beyond DDR-programs, namely in relation to post-war democratization processes in general. Conceptual clarity is important, in part because it allows us to structure empirical research better, but also because it allows us to see other patterns of similarity and dissimilarity across levels as well as linkages between concepts better. Contrasting this overview of the concept of political reintegration with the research that has been carried out in this field can help us see gaps in the current literature. Differentiating political reintegration with respect to different referent objects in post-war politics thus offers ways to both see new research questions, as well as ways of structuring them.

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