DDR in Nepal:
Stakeholder Politics and the Implications for Reintegration as a Process of Disengagement

Report by Tone Bleie and Ramesh Shrestha
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Acknowledgements

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The fieldwork in Nepal could not have been conducted with support from key stakeholders, including: Desmond Molloy, Senior Advisor to the Inter-Agency Rehabilitation Programme and several of UNIRP’s local staff; the Supreme Commander of the People’s Liberation Army Nanda Kishor Pun (alias “Pasang”); PLA Commanders in the visited cantonments; members of the Special Committee for Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation of Maoist Army Combatants; District-level NGO representatives; community leaders and community people around the visited cantonments. Special thanks goes to the many representatives from youth wings of political parties and youth-based NGOs and INGO’s who participated in the CPS organized draft validation workshop “Can we shape a common-ground agenda for Nepal’s future?”, held in Kathmandu on November 14th, 2011. We are extremely thankful for the reception, time and sincere responses from the female and male PLA combatants and ex-combatants whom we have interviewed.

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Abbreviations

CPS Centre for Peace Studies
DDR Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
IDDRs Integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration standards
UN United Nations
UNMIN United Nations Mission in Nepal
VMLR Verified Minors and Late Recruits
UNIRP United Nations Inter-Agency Rehabilitation Programme
PLA People’s Liberation Army
CPA Comprehensive Peace Agreement
SSR Security sector reform
INGO International non-governmental organization
NGO Non-governmental organization
CBO Community based organization
CA Constituent Assembly
NA Nepal Army
CPN-UML Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)
U-CPN (M) United communist party of Nepal (Maoists)
NC Nepali Congress
EU European Union
UN DPKO United Nations Department for Peace Keeping Operations
AMMAMAA Agreement on Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies
YCL Young Communist League
GTZ Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Co-operation)
GoN Government of Nepal
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
ILO International Labor Organization
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNPFN</td>
<td>UN Peace Fund for Nepal</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAAFAG</td>
<td>Children affected by Armed Forces and Armed Groups</td>
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<td>IDPs</td>
<td>Internally Displaced people</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>Special Committee for Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation of Maoist Army combatants</td>
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Part 1: Introduction

Key messages

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) occur in conflict-ridden, weakened states in which one or more armed non-state actors that may be party to a DDR process have challenged the monopoly of power. Other actors may remain outside the formal DDR efforts and continue to undermine community security and to challenge the fledgling state and other armed competitors. The inception, escalation, longevity, and ending of armed conflicts often involves tangled regional dimensions that challenge the simplistic characterization of civil wars as being only internal. Over the last two decades, the UN was well as regional organizations, have taken a neutral third-party role in the increasingly challenging peace-building operations around the world, from political missions to full-fledged peacekeeping operations.\(^1\) In retrospect, the multilateral actors and applied researchers have tended to view the success of these efforts as mixed. In particular, reintegration has received insufficient attention and resources and may have an inadequate evidence base.\(^2\) Given that the global recession currently threatens the funding of multilateral peace building interventions, a pressing concern is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of international operations. The research community is being challenged to produce solid applied reintegration research that is relevant to both policy and planning.\(^3\)

Arguably, this means paying greater attention to national ownership, to how regional and historical conditions frame the role of the UN and DDR, and to the voices and agency of ex-combatants and the diverse communities to which they belong. Based on these priority concerns, this report has combined state and people-centered approaches through a historical lens and political analysis to describe and understand one of the world’s most inexplicably drawn-out DDR operations in recent decades. As this report nears completion, Nepal’s major political parties have signed a “breakthrough” deal that ends nearly five years of cantonment for some 19,000 verified Maoist Army Combatants.\(^4\) The deal accords the UN a limited role in the upcoming integration and rehabilitation, which is in stark contrast to its prominent role as Asia’s only political mission after the peace accord was signed in late 2006. What kinds of shifts have occurred in the relations between the UN and other international and national stakeholders?

This report argues that the UN-led DDR intervention overlooked critical historical, geopolitical, and domestic dynamics of mobilization. These oversights, while trying to hold on to a value-neutral and apolitical program, could only inadequately tackle the politics

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1. In 2010 alone, these agencies, funds, and programs supported reintegration programs in 18 countries and territories, providing support to around 257,000 ex-combatants. Approximately 9000 of these ex-combatants were female and nearly 14,000 were children. See the Report of the Secretary-General to the 65th session, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, (A/65/741) 21 March 2011.

2. The summary in the Report, op. cit., states “...(11) While in the past, United Nation’s assistance to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has often been fragmented, significant progress has been made, although many challenges remain”. For a synthesizing scholarly statement on the state of evidence of the effectiveness of DDR, see, for example, R. Muggah, M. Bredal and S. Torjesen, Conclusion: Enter an evidence-based security promotion agenda (pp. 268–282), in R. Muggah (ed.) 2009. Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Dealing with Fighters in the Aftermath of War, Routledge Global Security Studies.

3. The Centre for Peace Studies (CPS) at the University of Tromsø established the International Research Group on Reintegration (IRGR) as its contribution to this challenge. This report is one of the outputs of this project.

4. This deal was signed by the three major political parties and an alliance of Madhesh-based political parties on November 1st, 2011.
which engulfed the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and the continuing DDR intervention after the Mission was closed down in early 2010. This narrative seeks to unravel the often contradictory rationales and agendas of different stakeholders. It makes the point that, for a variety of political and tactical reasons, the rival national and regional actors placed the peace track (as well as the integration and rehabilitation of combatants) on the backburner early on. This left the UN in the increasingly difficult position of being the only unambiguous protagonist for the peace process and of DDR, and hence a thorn in the side of a number of the national actors.

The decreasing leverage of the UN is visible in the recent national agreement (in November 2011) on the integration and rehabilitation of the verified combatants. The political deal leaves the UN sidetracked, but seriously concerned with the “golden handshakes” (high cash payments) which form the centerpiece of it. The UN is nevertheless obliged to support the deal politically and with at least some discreet technical support. Most likely will a few bilateral donors commit themselves to co-fund the expensive deal, which has three “routes”: integration, rehabilitation, and retirement (I/R/R). The implementation poses serious challenges, not least for Nepalese authorities and the political establishment, which must convince the international community that the costly I/R/R will have any real peace dividends. The political parties involved must resist the temptation of turning the deal into another of their shortsighted power-sharing and spoiler arrangements.

Key organizing concepts

Reintegration studies are increasingly focusing on the fact that DDR often becomes politically contested and embedded in the wider political economy. Arguably, DDR’s effectiveness is due less to program-internal factors than to a host of contextual macro- and micro-factors.

General political economy insights; the aim of this report is to generate political economy insights into the factors that give shape and direction to DDR in Nepal, from design through to implementation and outcomes. The report is not an evaluation of DDR programs in Nepal, but an applied piece of research that seeks to fill a lacunae in the literature on DDR in Nepal; the specific political conditions that largely explain the shape and directions of DDR in post-war Nepal. So far, the applied research which exists provides mostly specific program-relevant knowledge.

An explanatory framework of DDR; the report provides an explanatory framework of DDR as a multifaceted process that can grasp the calculus and actions of international and regional actors, national governments, and the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) at the helm of a mass-based militant political movement. Women form a sizeable share of

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5 See for example the Special Issue of Journal of Conflict, Security and Development, 2009: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): grasping complexity, rescaling ambition and rethinking intervention, Vol. 9, Issue 4, which applies a political economy perspective on a range of specific DDR topics. This issue is an output of a three-year CPS-NUPI research funded by the Norwegian Research Council (NRC), and T. Stankovic, S. Torjesen and T. Bleie, 2010. Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. A Survey for Practitioners in Nepal. Kathmandu: the Centre for Peace Studies (p.9).

6 Saferworld’s comprehensive report from 2010 an example of a program-relevant study. Common ground? Gendered assessment of the needs and concerns of Maoist Army combatants for rehabilitation and integration. Saferworld: Kathmandu. J.S. Sharma and D. R. Friedman’s report from 2010 is an example of a growing body of works with broader scope. Towards a “Great Transformation”? The Maoist insurgency and local perceptions of social transformation in Nepal. Feinstein Int. Center, Turfs University.
the movements’ young Maoist guerrillas (officially called Maoist Army Combatants). A historical and political analysis of how macro conditions at regional and national levels frame and impact DDR polices and programming provides a necessary, but insufficient explanation of the ground realities of a heterogeneous mass of combatants. Arguably, their differing motivations for remaining mobilized and demobilized at key junctures in the DDR process must attract more serious attention from reintegration researchers and from practitioners.

The following analytical concepts may help policymakers and practitioners adopt a more nuanced and sophisticated approach. The chosen concepts developed by the International Research Group on Reintegration (IRGR) including the work of the IRGR affiliate Tore Bjørgo, among others. Bjørgo’s work on disengagement from radical groups informs some of these concepts, which are intended to guide policy thinking and research on reintegration. These concepts can all be operationalized for empirical discovery procedures for research, policy analysis, or programming purposes.

**Trajectories;** refer to movements that combatants undertake as they depart from an armed group. The time span from early departure (early exit) until a full return to civil life can vary tremendously and may involve complex patterns of movements, which researchers and practitioners alike need to understand better. All combatants have a trajectory, regardless of whether the person has chosen to enter a formal reintegration process. In a research setting, it is just as relevant to study the “self-integrated” combatants as it is to study those who enroll in government- or internationally-run programs. The concept can be operationalized in order to study different strands and sub-strands of combatants, based on a hypothesis about which strands are critical for a particular study, in order to document and analyze the systematic similarities and differences between strands. Depending on the purpose of the study in question, it may be relevant to distinguish between “verified” and “non-verified” combatants. For certain research purposes, the question of whether a combatant has been assigned a formal title by a program is irrelevant. Rather, the key issue is whether the person has been an active member, for longer or shorter periods, of an armed group and what characterizes the trajectories. If the purpose is to contribute to planning, monitoring, or evaluation, it may be useful to compare systematically different sub-strands of verified and non-verified combatants in order to gain critical insights into the program context and how contextual factors may influence the result chain of the program. Trajectories can be mapped for particular selected individuals, groups, or segments (strands and sub-strands). The movements can range from the very basic (such as departure to home village) to the more complex. Combatants may for example oscillate between departure and re-engagement a number of times. Moreover, the destination of combatants as they depart from a group may be very different from a simple return to a home village. It can include entering into other rural host communities, settlement in urban dwellings or short- or long-term migration out of the country. Activities may range from employment in the formal economy and local political participation to continued illegal economic activities.

**A multi-centric notion of community;** a community can be a lived (“socio-geographic”) space with varying degrees of belonging or an imagined community with frequently shifting spatial boundaries. In other words, a community can be citizen-based, such as a national community, a community of believers in a political cause or in a faith, or a community as a particular kind of lived place with a certain level of social cohesion. To date, the standard IDDRS guidelines and programming manuals have only recognized the latter reference, and
even then usually as a byword for “home village”, or community of return or resettlement. It is problematic to presume that combatants will seek to enter “a community” (such as a home village) after they have completed a DDR program or returned to civilian life on their own. In fact, return to a home community for an intermittent period or for longer-term, may only be one of many possible trajectories. Moreover, the bias towards thinking of community only as “lived space” disregards the fact that combatants are often deeply entangled throughout the DDR process in real or imagined political, social, or religious communities. Many of these groups motivate them to join armed groups and may present serious obstacles to them making changes in their combatant lifestyle and departing from the armed group.

Disengagement and engagement; are a useful operational pair-concepts for documenting and analyzing the specific junctures of entry into and exit out of an armed movement or group, as well as the relevant push and pull factors. These operational terms and can empirically unravel the psychological, social, economic, and political dimensions of a multi-scaled reintegration process. As we will attempt to highlight in this report, the pair-concepts are particularly useful in analyzing continued engagement after formal demobilization and discharge and the specific conditions for disengagement from disengagement. In this report, “disengagement” refers to changes in behavior and participation in social groups and activities during exiting processes. Its twin concept is engagement, the process of entry into armed groups and movements. Related concepts are push factors, which are negative forces and circumstances that make certain social affiliations unattractive and unpleasant, and pull factors, which offer attractive and rewarding alternatives to life as a combatant. A number of studies and research traditions have addressed various aspects of how individuals join and leave different types of reclusive, militant, extremist, or criminal groups or scenes. A common theme in all these research traditions is the importance of social ties for disengagement. Individuals typically join a group or movement because their friends or family members are involved (although they sometimes join despite family opposition). After disengagement, family or other close-knit networks may play an important role in the individual’s social reintegration. Engagement and disengagement are junctures in a combatant’s “career,” which typically has a beginning, a peak, and an end. The various research traditions share the view that individual decisions to join or leave are the product of a combination of factors and motivations that work together. Various forms of disillusionment are usually the main triggering factors. There is increasing evidence that the processes involved in joining and leaving criminal or militant groups have similarities across country cases and types of groups.

Reintegration: social, economic and political; reintegration is broadly similar to disengagement, but the concept is wider in that it also includes activities and notions of belonging after leaving an armed group. Reintegration denotes a process in which fighters (1) change their status from “combatant” to “civilian,” and (2) alter their behavior by ending the use of violent means while increasing activities that are sanctioned positively by the mainstream community.

The change in behavior is visible in three arenas: social, political, and economic. In social terms, combatants reduce their contact and reliance on the militia networks and enhance their interaction with mainstream communities and family. The political dimension involves ending efforts to achieve political goals through violent means and instead entering into
mainstream politics at the local, regional, or national level. In economic terms, reintegration entails a move away on the part of the combatant from the livelihood support mechanism associated with the militia networks. Instead, as part of economic reintegration, combatants are able to obtain long-term gainful employment or initiate other legitimate income-generating activities, including agriculture, which allows them to support him/her and any dependents. It is important to stress, as noted under the “Trajectories” heading, that reintegration is often partial, incomplete, and reversible.

This understanding of reintegration differs from some conventional definitions. Conceptualizations of reintegration often conflate reintegration with the actual incentives and support programs that are offered as part of Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programs. The US Army’s Field Manual 3-07 Stability Operations notes that participants receive amnesty, re-enter civil society, gain sustainable employment, and become contributing members of the population. The field manual notes that reintegration includes skills training, relocation, resettlement support, basic and vocational education, and assistance in finding employment. The tendency to see “reintegration” as synonymous with “program support” may be useful in project and evaluation contexts. For research purposes, however, it is unhelpful since it narrows the focus to the issuance of material, financial, or psychological support and related activities. It also takes attention away from the fuller picture of trajectories of the fighters. Instead, the level of success in issuing the actual support packages takes center stage in the analysis. The primary agents and objects of study become the international or national organizations. This report seeks to avoid this undue bias towards assistance only and rather provides an account of how commanders and combatants experience the processes whereby they change status and alter their behavior. This is a broad and multifaceted process in which the program support that fighters receive only plays a certain – and sometimes rather insignificant – part.

Equipped with these operational concepts, this report is structured as follows.

Outline of this report

Part 1 introduces the main contexts of this study; the new urgency of enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of peace keeping operations and the role to applied reintegration research in this pressing endeavor. This study is built on a number of key organizing concepts which is meant to improve and direct policy and planning in the world of DDR. The final section outlines the main methodologies used during intensive primary data collection in 2011.

Part 2 addresses the antecedents of DDR in Nepal by investigating the nature of armed conflict and the peace settlement and the conditions that have shaped UN’s shifting leverage in Nepal since the final days of armed conflict.

Part 3 addresses the politics of engagement and disengagement of the Maoist Army combatants. This part starts by debating whether entry into the Maoist army and militia was predominantly the result of individual or collective decisions, as the basis for analyzing the conditions for remaining engaged or exiting. This is followed by an analysis of what characterizes engagement in the Maoist movement, in political, social, economic and military terms, in order to understand what kinds of communities the combatants maintain real or imagined bonds of belonging to or membership in. Within this context, particular
attention is given to the voices of the verified minors and late recruits (VMLRs) in explicating their own motives and experiences with the discharge process and homecoming. The report seeks to answer the question of whether the decision to initiate a change in status from combatant to ex-combatant and from violence to non-violence is mostly a collective or individual one. This part ends with an examination of the reasons why the six-month disarmament and demobilization process stipulated in the comprehensive peace agreement turned into a nearly five-year long cantonment of continuing military engagement.

Part 4 examines the outcomes of DDR in Nepal to date. This part elaborates on the arguments from part 3 regarding the changing character of cantonment from temporary spaces to community-like, providing critical insights into why the discharged of the minors and late recruits become so controversial, and how a sense of belonging to different communities impacted early and later stages of disengagement. The last two sections debate the selected planning issues of the UN’s Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP) and the issue of “golden handshakes” (large cash payments) in the ongoing integration, rehabilitation and retirement of verified combatants. This part also devotes due attention to program coherency in promoting disengagement (and thereby reintegration) and existence of positive reinforcing linkages to the wider recovery and development efforts.

Background and methodology

The report leverages interdisciplinary insights into how what one tend to understand as “contexts” of DDR policies and programs, including geopolitics and national polices as well as the slow patchy recovery efforts, directly intervenes into the DDR interventions.

The overall research strategy for this Nepal study is two-fold. The first part of the strategy is to use own previous research and existing literature as the basis for undertaking a historically informed policy analysis of the specific circumstances at the regional and national levels that shape the actions of the main stakeholders to the DDR process. The second part is to use in-depth interviews as the basis for lending voice and agency to combatants and ex-combatants; this includes analyzing if their decisions are individual or collective and the circumstances that shape their decisions regarding engaging and disengaging and exiting from the Maoist Army or People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The empirical material on combatants and ex-combatants consists of 20 in-depth interviews conducted between early April and mid-May 2011. In same period, key informant interviews were conducted with UN program staff, officials of the Government of Nepal (GoN), ex-combatants, and human rights activists. Focus-group-interviews were conducted with local politicians and the business community from one of the host districts for cantonments. A final set of interviews were conducted in November 2011, right after the breakthrough deal was signed. The sub-strands of combatants interviewed consist of seven non-verified self-integrated combatants, two verified combatants in the cantonments, nine enrolled verified minors and late recruits (VMLRs), one drop-out VMLR, and one graduated VMLR.

The policy analysis are based on a combination of secondary sources (research literature, UN reports and media reports) and the two authors’ own research and outreach work in Nepal in the 2006-2011 period. Bleie has done research on post-war restructuring of the state and contributed regularly with expert commentaries in public media in Nepal since the armed conflict ended. Shrestha has been extensively involved in applied research on DDR, especially on integration/rehabilitation of Maoist Army Combatants and conducted field research in most of the cantonments.
The limited sample is due to limited time and the sample frame was influenced by political constraints. We have confined the total sample to 20 in-depth interviews and the relative numbers of each sub-strand of combatants reflects a range of specific factors. The numbers of current combatants is due to the restricted access to the cantonments in the spring of 2011. When we applied for permission to visit a number of cantonments throughout Nepal, hectic renewed negotiations had started regarding the modalities and terms for integration and rehabilitation, which resulted in quarantine on research in the cantonments. The relatively high number of VMLRs in the sample is a result of being granted access to the regional training centers of the UN’s rehabilitation project. The relative under-representation of women deserves an explanation. The self-integrated combatants that we were able to trace and interview were men. Tracing self-integrated female ex-combatants could require more longitudinal research, since many former female PLAs have attempted to conceal their military pasts. There are no female officers at the senior level of commanders whom we interviewed. Therefore, all of the women in the sample are VMLRs. Most of the interviewed in our sample are foot soldiers and junior officers, since we have assumed that relatively more combatants at this level than among the senior commanders will opt for rehabilitation.

This draft has undergone a panel review. Comments have been invited from experts with comprehensive Nepal-specific knowledge. The draft has been presented and reviewed through a series of stakeholder consultations in Nepal in November 2011. The draft has also received helpful comments and feedbacks from the institutional members of the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on DDR through a series of system-wide consultation mechanisms.

Part 2: Antecedents to DDR in Nepal

The nature of the armed conflict and the peace settlement in Nepal

Conflicting and shifting understanding of the nature of settlement
The end in 2006 of more than a decade of civil war in Nepal between the state and the Maoist party (currently called the United Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist) left high hopes among war-weary Nepalese and the international community. The hopes were that the cessation of hostilities, the promisingly broad political alliance, the abolition of the ruling Hindu monarchy, and a politically awakened citizenry, would combine to remove the structural causes that were the prime drivers for the mass-support the Maoists had mustered in the armed conflict’s decisive phases from 2001 onward.

Five years later after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), these hopes have been replaced by cynicism among ordinary Nepalese citizens and open frustration from the international community. Confrontational politics, a stalled constitution-making process, frequent strikes, and a proliferation of new armed groups in the Terai (the plain area bordering India) have eroded trust in politics and the state-bearing institutions and so to say halted reestablishment of essential local government functions, labor-intensive growth and

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8 Therefore, we are grateful for support from the Special Committee for Supervision of Army Combatants and to the PLA Chief’s Nanda Kishor Pun (alas “Pasang”) for granting us special permission to visit two cantonments before the quarantine was fully implemented.

9 See the acknowledgements.
efforts to establish a genuinely democratic party system. However, one should caution against claims that the security situation is getting progressively worse throughout the country, especially in the Terai. A recently released security study reports that the security situation in the perception of Terai dwellers in 2010 was improving. However, the report cautions that the situation could worsen quickly, citing an influx of rehabilitated Maoist combatants as one of the risk factors.\footnote{See Small Arms Survey/Saferworld/IDA/NEMAF, 2011. \textit{Armed Violence in the Terai}. Kathmandu. We like to emphasize stronger than this report does, that one main reason why security has been improved in Terai is that ordinary people who earlier supported the cause of the political armed groups, providing information and shelter, have turned against them, realizing these groups engage in criminal activity and fuel community insecurity. In our assessment a major risk factor is the politicization of crime, an effect of impunity. In other words, the Maoist combatants may not in general be overrepresented in these more than 100 armed groups, in spite of the fact that some of the early outfits were formed and lead by former Maoist guerillas.}

Technically, the armed conflict ended as a stalemate in the battlefield in 2005. Over the following months, a mass movement combined with Indian backing led to a peace agreement. Among the key elements of this agreement were democratization of the state’s army, weapon control and a six-month deadline for discharge, integration and rehabilitation of combatants. These elements of security sector reform (SSR) and of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), have since become bones of immense contention. Five years after the weapons were handed over and stored in containers and with keys retained by the respective Divisional Commanders and the containers observed electronically and physically by UN arms monitors, the a verified number of 19,601 people still languish in these camps, overstepping the discharge deadline by more than four years. This is already one of the longest cantonment periods in modern times.

As a first step, towards addressing the reintegration topic and contributing to an understanding of contextual macro-factors and conflict sensitivity, this report will analyze the political circumstances that have made the DDR process and its outcomes different from the technical apolitical prescriptions in the UN’s standard IDDRS guidelines.\footnote{See Module 4.11 on reintegration at \url{http://www.unddr.org/iddrs/}}

As the fault lines of Nepalese politics deepened and shifted with the abolition of the monarchy, there was a change in the understanding that the security forces and the Maoist party developed regarding the nature of the 2005 ceasefire, and the immediate political victories of the peaceful mass movement in the spring months of 2006. The highest ranking members of the Nepalese army look back without fondness on the circumstances that led their well-trained army of nearly 100,000 agree to a ceasefire with the Maoist guerilla and local militias, which were much smaller in conventional terms (that is, in terms of weaponry and combatants). The power vacuum created by the absence of a king as commander-in-chief was left unfilled by the politically weak prime ministers in the 2007–2010 periods, with the exception of the CPN (M) prime minister in 2008, whose unsuccessful bid to ensure civilian control over the military lead to his party’s exit from government.\footnote{Analysts have attempted to fully gauge the reasons for the prime minister’s abrupt exit. One could question whether Puspha Kamal Dahal “Prachanda” had any real conviction that he could succeed against “the comprador bourgeoisie and feudalists” in his own coalition, including the President of NC, and the ministers of Home and Defense and the army leaders. Perhaps this SSR stint was more of political rite to prove the U-CPN (M)’s commitment to parliamentary democracy to other constituencies, notably the reform-friendly sections of the urban middle class and the international community.} The prime ministers in this period have been embroiled in factionalist internal party politics and reactive politics towards the opposition. Stronger backing from the Nepali Congress (NC) and
United Marxist Leninist Party (CPI-UML) has enhanced the influence of the Nepalese Army. The Maoists view of the endgame in 2005–2006 was their political victory, is understandable. Their effective control over much of the countryside (partially run by their own parallel local “peoples’” government set-up), as well as the sweeping historical constitutional amendments that resulted from acceptance of their demands for a secular state and constituent assembly, gives the Maoists reasons to feel triumphant and proud. Apart from being significant in Nepal’s recent political history and in the Maoist movement’s own party history, these achievements are internalized in the collective memory of rank-and-file cadres (refer later interviews in this report). Such self-perceptions have important implications that have complicated the return to civilian life of these individuals. The UCPN (M)’s interpretation of the peoples’ mandate from April 2006 Jana Andolan (People’s movement) and the 2008 Constituent Assembly election have also posed challenges. In our assessment, this interpretation overly downplays the citizenry’s support for a peace with real short-term dividends and how fear and limited voting alternatives from other parties have impacted the election outcome.13

The international community interpreted the CPA14 as a real roadmap for peace and responded astutely by establishing Asia’s only political peace building (and hence troop-less) mission. In retrospect, this move was too optimistic. What matters now is that lessons are drawn from UNMIN’s three years and UN Country Team’s Integrated Rehabilitation Programmed (due to end in June 2012) for the VMLRs, however bitter-sweet they may be, and that the leverage for context-informed recommendations is considered for the ongoing rehabilitation and integration efforts. Space limitations mean that this policy report will outline in brief the main circumstances that have derailed the peace process and influenced deeply the DDR process.15

Nepal’s regional predicament
The Western media only gave its full attention to Nepal’s communist guerilla movement (that is, a politically-led militant movement) in the end-phase. What caught the outside world’s short-lived interest was the guerillas’ exit from their jungle strongholds and entry into a diverse popular mass movement. This movement filled the streets of the urban centers, and resulted in the abolition of the world’s last ruling divine Hindu kingship and the entry of the guerillas into parliamentary politics. Nepal was the new red tower of Asia. Its pre-insurgency history was presented as if the early 1990s had seen the first ever spell of democracy, after a centuries-long authoritarian era of Nepal’s traditional warrior rulers. In fact, this is a misrepresentation of Nepal’s recent modern history. The current armed conflict (the “People’s War,” in Maoist parlance) is far from the first armed insurgency in Nepal. The first was by Congress militants (inspired by the Indian independence movement) who crossed over from India, predating the end of the Rana rule in 1951. During the decade that

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13 In the 2008 election, women received 33.22 per cent and men 66.78 per cent of the 601 CA seats. Not only in terms of gender, but also ethnicity, region and caste, this is the most representative national assembly in Nepal’s history.


15 The authors have built this observation on extensive travels in rural and urban Nepal over the last four years. We have found that the notion of peace (shanti in Sanskrit) is becoming contested at the grassroots level due to the failure of politicians and the international community to provide real peace dividends to ordinary citizens. Increasing awareness of state discrimination led ethnic activists to argue that there was no real peace during the former regime; this local notion is not far from the concept of “negative peace” in peace studies. Apart from this, we note certain nostalgia in some quarters about the stability during the party-less monarch-led period from the 1960s to the late 1980s. Others have rightly pointed to the positive impact of land reform and provision of educational during the party-less regime.
followed, a mostly successful homegrown DDR effort took place.\(^\text{16}\) Communist ideologies have more than half a century of history, predating other Western ideologies, including liberal and social-democratic ideas. There was a first short-lived democratic stint as early as BP Koirala in the late 1950s. The visibility of liberal and social democratic grew as Nepal become increasingly aid-dependent, with a highly visible presence of many diplomatic missions, bilateral and multilateral agencies and International Non-governmental organization (INGOs) from the mid and late 1980s onward. The early 1990s saw an explosive growth of intermediary and service Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organization (CBOs), think-tanks and advocacy groups.\(^\text{17}\) As the armed conflict ended, a number of humanitarian and conflict-reducing INGOs, such as the Carter Centre, International Alert, Saferworld, and the International Commission of Jurists, have established a presence, engaging in research, advocacy, training, and conflict-mediation and program development.

Every rebellious and revolutionary move in Nepal since WW2 has involved some regional axis, whether it is that between the Indo-Ganges plains and the Himalayan hills of Nepal, between Nepal and mainland China, or both. Every political crisis and deal in the last half-century or so has been facilitated or dictated by Delhi, including the 12-points agreement between the Maoists and the other mainstream parties. As a number of analysts have pinpointed\(^\text{18}\), the origin and rise of this most recent and most important militant communist movement is part and parcel of a complex and often overlooked regional political and cultural regional landscape. This is not to underrate certain important national preconditions for the Maoist movement’s gradual success in the 1996–2006 period.\(^\text{20}\)

Since independence, and based on its own predominantly non-violent anti-colonial struggle, India has pursued a policy of non-alignment, multilateralism, and south-south solidarity. This global foreign and security policy is in contrast to India’s hegemonic security policy on its own subcontinent.\(^\text{21}\) In South Asia, “hard” policies in the form of treaty bilateralism characterized by asymmetrical benefit sharing, border and enclave disputes, nuclear buildup, a record of inter-state wars and border clashes, interventions, annexation of princely states

\(^{20}\) These preconditions were: the ingrained high-caste and patronage-oriented culture of state institutions that derailed reformist attempts to make them non-discriminatory and redistributive; the alienation of the political elite and their ruthless use of security forces and courts to prosecute political rivals in 1995; the long-standing exposure in the Rapti Zone (the core area for the uprising); continuous exposure to forced army recruitment over centuries (into Nepal’s own army, foreign Gurkha regiments, and finally into the PLA); the Maoist leadership’s ability to create a political hit-list agenda and broadcast it effectively; their adaptable military Maoist doctrine and the bravery of their politically motivated fighters; the receptiveness to radical militant action in an entire generation of rural poor young made aware by the INGO and NGO development discourse of their rights that did not pay off in the form of new improved livelihoods; and, finally, the miscalculated retreat by the civilian government and the security forces in the early phases of the conflict.  
and trade blockages are, in several ways, combined with “soft” policies. The soft policies underpinning Indo-Nepal relations include longstanding and extraordinarily close inter-party relations across the political spectrum. As a result of cooperation in higher education, many members of the political and military elite hold degrees from Indian institutions. India remains a major partner in development, trade in cheap industrial goods, and infrastructure projects in Nepal. Indian private interests are major shareholders in Nepal’s tourist sector and industries. Nepal’s society is still molded by a centuries-long joint religious and cultural legacy (notably a joint sacred landscape crisscrossed with shrines, pilgrimage, and trade routes) and massive two-ways flows of forced and voluntary migrations. For India’s fundamentalists, Nepal’s Hindu kingdom has been a locus of identity affirmation. Despite the abolition of the caste system, Nepal’s family-centered social fabric was still characterized by the persistence of caste-endogamy until this was challenged during the Maoists’ insurgency. Marriage within the same caste has also entailed cross-border alliances among the old hill and plain elite and among common Hindus and Muslims of the Terai plains. This interwoven social fabric, along with crude power politics (having certain similarities with the British Raj’s policies towards Nepal during the rule of the Ranas), underlies the closeness of Nepal-Indo relations and provides the background for why the 1580 km long border is one of the world’s least policed and most open.

As a small buffer state between India and its other giant neighbor, the People’s Republic of China, Nepal has had to maintain a difficult geopolitical balance. China’s foreign policy on Nepal has been preoccupied with stability, which has led it to keep stable diplomatic relations with Nepal’s modern rulers, regardless of their regime type. For China, the large diaspora of Tibetan refugees is a paramount security concern. Stability is China’s overriding preoccupation, along with sensitivity towards Nepalese authorities’ handling of anti-Chinese Free-Tibet expressions in the diaspora community. With the notable exception of King Mahindra’s (ruled 1956–1972) more balanced Nepal-Indo and Nepal-China policy and his predecessor Birendra’s (1972–2001) failed effort to get international recognition for Nepal as a “Zone of Peace,” Nepal’s shifting rulers have accepted being part of India’s backyard with the concessions in state sovereignty that such a position entails.

During the armed conflict, India kept close relations with the shifting governments, while also allowing the Maoists to operate from Indian soil, albeit with some restrictions. China’s emphasis on stability (the insurgent’s Maoist ideology notwithstanding) meant it was one of the last foreign powers to have close ties with King Gyanendra’s increasingly unpopular regime. India’s array of overt and covert diplomatic actions, trade policies, media investments, covert maneuvers in the form of funding of insurgents and the rise of the Madheshi parties, and intelligence operations inside Nepal has had consequences for Nepal’s political actors, which still includes an active dethroned king. These consequences remain worryingly superficially analyzed and openly debated by representatives of the diplomatic community. With few notable exceptions, human rights monitors do not in their reports provide accurate, in-depth analysis on the constellation of regional and national conditions which explains Nepal’s continuing worrisome human rights record.  The International Crises Group, under the leadership of Rhoedrick Chalmers in 2009–2010, took in a number of reports issue with India’s massive influence and the repercussions for the peace process in terms of increased insecurity in Terai, the fall of the UCPN (M) led government and the ascendency of NA as a strong political force, increasing political polarization and violence by the political youth wings. Another exception is the Asian Centre for Human Right’s Briefing Paper: Nepal and the Pax Indianus, no 2. 14th. July, 2009.
The predominance of current spoiler politics

On August 28, 2011, Nepal elected Baburam Bhattarai, the vice-chair from U-CPN (M) as its fourth prime minister since the CA election in 2008. Bhattarai succeeds two CPN-UML prime ministers whose short terms were characterized by factional power-sharing, a lack of progress in drafting the constitution, and failure to agree on the strategies and modalities of the integration and reintegration of the cantoned combatants. It is too early to say whether this will lead to a revitalized peace effort, especially since the parliamentarian parties again failed form a national consensus government. The election occurred after a last-minute four-point deal with a grouping of five Madhesh-based parties known collectively as the United Democratic Madheshi Front (UDMF).

When the heavily criticized CA embarked on a new three-month extension, many observers assumed that Prime Minister Bhattarai has too little time to solve contentious constitutional issues such as the form of governance, state restructuring through federalism, new electoral system, and reform of the NA and agreement on the final modalities for integrating and rehabilitating the Maoist combatants. Their predictions have proved only partly correct, since the Bhattarai government forged in November 2011 the Seven-Point Agreement on integration and rehabilitation. Bhattarai has not only faced hostile opposition from the other main parties outside his coalition, but also from the hard-liner faction within his own party, which has characterized his decision to hand over the keys to the arms containers as suicidal. The current government has been formed with India’s consent. Bhattarai has an extensive network in the Indian establishment beyond the U-CPN (M)’s above-ground sister parties. The fact that the Madhesi parties have been promised the Defense and the Home portfolios, along with the promised block inclusion of Madhesi in the NA, suggests strongly that this deal was with Indian consent, if not Indian-brokered. Days after the new prime minister’s vetting visit to Delhi, the four main parties signed the Seven-Point Agreement. Importantly for the upcoming reintegration, integration, and restructuring of the armed forces, the Agreement is no longer just about the integration of the cantoned combatants, among whom the representation from the plains is very low. It is also about other newly

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23 Based on own interviews with prominent Nepalese editors, journalists and academicians in 2011.
24 Johan Galtung, a founding figure of peace research, introduced this influential analytical term (which conceptualizes a condition without hidden structural violence) in one of the first issues of the Journal of Peace Research (JPR) in 1964.
25 Such factionalism is not a new feature of Nepalese politics, but the current fault lines form an important backdrop to the current stalemate. The recent coalition government between CPN-UML and the U-CPN (M) under Prime Minister Khanal was strongly opposed by a faction led by the recently resigned Nepalese prime minister Nepal and CPN-UML leader Oli, who had been widely seen as keeping open lines to the Indian regime. The Maoists’ interest in reshuffling and expanding the cabinet initially aimed to overcome the bitter internal differences between three factions. These factions are largely a result of the successful expansion of the Maoist trade unions, offering expanded constituencies for the three rival party leaders for new alliances and patronage with the private sector and other trade unions. Revenue for party coffers has also increased. Only one member of the coalition of Madhesi parties was part of the former short-lived government.
26 According to the UN data, nearly 90 percent of the combatants are of hill origin; among those of Terai origin, the Tharus dominate.
emerged Madheshi stakeholders, who are claiming proportional access to the army as well as to other key state institutions, a demand which is bound to be very hard to realize.

Nepal’s politics has become increasingly polarized since the U-CPN (M) (which held the prime ministership) withdrew from the government in May 2009 in protest at the lack of support for exercising greater civilian control over the army chief’s decisions. The rebuffed efforts, which were intended to initiate wider SSR reform, led the Maoist party into an unexpectedly difficult period as an opposition party. The emboldened and active NA, which was in a closer alliance with the India-leaning NC and the UML, tried to isolate the Maoists’ proposed plans for army integration and rehabilitation. A partisan civilian and military bureaucracy also tried to resist the winds of change. It was India’s view that the NA was a bulwark against radical restructuring of the state apparatus. A recent sign of this is the substantial military assistance, recently demonstrated by the Indian army chief’s recent commitment to provide military vehicles to Nepal’s army. The NA had a similar high-profile visit from the Chinese army chief of PLA who had promised substantial grants and clearly resented the interference from the EU, the US, and India in Nepal’s affairs, which he said, “instigating Tibetans.”27 The close ties between the top brass in the Nepalese and Indian armies, together with the some of the political parties’ tolerance of the Indian position and their tendency to support by default those institutions that the leftist forces had tried to restructure, increased the confidence of the NA. This happened in spite of pressure from many diplomatic missions and the human right organizations to address impunity from war crimes and to start genuine reform of the army’s opaque recruitment, promotion, and benefit systems.

India’s security establishment’s rhetoric that the influence of radicalized Maoist politics in Nepal is a root cause of India’s own expanding Maoist insurgency may be more tactical than anything else. Informed analysts do not agree as to whether this is the actual reason for India’s resistance to a new bid for a Maoist-led government. A more important factor could be the U-CPN (M) chairman’s stubborn insistence until recently that he was the party’s only candidate for prime minister, with a bid to restore Nepal’s sovereignty. India remains opposed to any leader who might inspire other rim-states to pursue nationalistic politics. This argument is supported by the fact that India has approved of Bhattarai’s candidacy for some time, which was blocked by his rival Dahal. Hence, India continues to court Nepalese leaders across the political spectrum, back the United Democratic Madhesi Front, fund armed non-state groups with sanctuaries on Indian soil, and support the proposal of making the entire Southern lowlands into one federation. Such a federation would effectively create a buffer zone along the 1580km open Nepal-India border. The recent Maoist-Madhesi pact,28 which ended the deadlock, must be seen in this light. The above analysis has shown that there are always at least two regional “third parties” in Nepal, in addition to the UN and other actors.29 As the following section highlights, the scope for the international community

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27 This pact is backed by a four-point agreement that covers integration and rehabilitation of the combatants, relief to the victims of various movements, amnesty to persons from oppressed and backwards groups who face criminal charges (a - door for continued impunity?), commitment to human rights, constitutional supremacy, independent judiciary, inclusive democratic republic, autonomous regions, federal system with right to self-determination, elections, social justice, and protection of national unity and integrity. The pact commits that a bill is to be passed and Madheshis are to be recruited into the NA (possibly as separate units).

29 An emerging third regional actor is Pakistan, whose intelligent services reportedly are currently active in the Western Terai belt.
is limited and subject to the vagaries of conditional approval by these main geo-political actors. This scope arguably set the terms for the UN-supported peacebuilding efforts, and even more so when the UN, as in this case, takes the lead in a DDR intervention that - as we will show - has not become properly owned by the national and regional actors.

The UN in Nepal in the final days of the armed conflict and after the CPA

From high promises and leverage to declining popularity

The broad country representation of UN funds and agencies in Nepal and their continued presence during the decade-long armed conflict enabled the UN to follow the changing dynamics of the warring parties very closely, redirect some of its assistance, take a proactive role and call for dialogues to end the conflict. Through its Department for Political Affairs and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN came to play an important, albeit non-decisive third-party role during the late phase of the armed conflict in 2005 when the agreement with the Seven-Party Alliance was made.

At this stage, the UN had a significant degree of leverage on the U-CPN (M), which was looking for a possible honorable exit after having recently faced some painful losses in battles; and also on the Royal Nepal Army (RNA). The RNA took heed of High Commissioner Arbou’s warnings that their alleged involvement in disappearances, torture, and extra-judicial killings would threaten their important peacekeeping role.30 The Nepal office of OHCHR was established in May 2005. OHCHR’s purpose was to address allegedly serious human rights violations by both sides of international humanitarian law and the emergency rule of the subsequently dethroned King Gyanendra. The very presence of OHCHR during the mass movement in April 2006 (Jana Andolan) mitigated more excessive use of force by the RNA. Again, one of the army’s prime concerns was the risk of Nepal’s tarnished international reputation as a nation that contributed to international peace-keeping. When the king yielded power and the parliament was reinstated, the UN was quick to open discussions about its possible future role in supporting the so-called 12-point Agreement and the upcoming elections to the Constituent Assembly.

The first request to the UN from the Seven-Party Alliance raised Maoist protests due to the use of the phrase “decommissioning” of arms. This concept was replaced with a new disarmament solution in the peace agreement (CPA) reached in November 2006.31 This was followed by the Agreement on Monitoring and Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA), which detailed the modalities of monitoring armed personnel and armies on both sides. It was agreed that the Maoist combatants would be cantoned in main camps and satellite camps with their weapons under an UN-supervised “single-lock system”, i.e. the Maoist Commanders held the keys themselves. The army, no longer called the Royal Nepal Army, would keep a similar number of arms locked away and would restrict its military activities to an absolute minimum. A Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee was established to oversee this agreement (see below). The first stage of implementing the AMMAA was what may be called a partial disarmament only, since the weapons were handed in and stored, and the keys were controlled by the Maoist Division Commanders. The process provoked

30 Nepal is the 6th largest contributor to UN DPKO missions. Access to such service constitutes an important incentive structure in the army. It is the army’s Achilles heel as it comes to impunity and non-action against officers who allegedly committed serious war crimes.

headed debate for another reasons; the number of weapons handed in was much smaller than the number of claimed combatants.\textsuperscript{32}

Shortly after the CPA was signed, the Security Council sanctioned\textsuperscript{33} the cautiously crafted mandate (to address not the least Indian concerns) to the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), which launched the UN’s only full-fledged mission in South Asia. This set the stage for a political mission that was fraught with challenges, not least tackling Nepal’s convoluted and theatrical politics of pretense, hidden agendas, and shifting alliances, deeply entangled in geopolitics. Its tenure from January 2007 to January 2010 was marked by some successes, with the regional powers constantly on watch. In its late phase, UNMIN was receiving decreasing levels of goodwill from the erstwhile UML-led government, and from U-CPN (M), which had benefited considerably from the mission. Eventually, a range of civil society actors close to NC and CPN-UML also became weary of the mission. The consequences are far-reaching. Currently (in late 2011) they can be observed in national political actors’ tactical deal to take change over the upcoming integration and rehabilitation and retirement, and partial sidelining of the UN as of now.

Reasons for mounting disenchantment with the UN’s support to the peace process

UNMIN’s mandate of only monitoring arms and reports on compliance within a limited timeframe might seem reassuring to apprehensive regional neighbors, but it was still watched very closely. As noted above, the main actors became increasingly antagonistic in early 2009, after the UCPN (M) withdrew from the interim government. The elections for the Constituent Assembly were postponed a second time and the security situation deteriorated rapidly in much of the Terai’s border region. The UNMIN response was to offer more support in the implementation of the CPA, in the stalled integration efforts of the PLA and in SSR in general, and security advice for the upcoming elections. This offer was met with mixed feelings and even suspicion. In fact, the erstwhile UML-led government actually declined these offers. The renewal reaffirmed the same good offices role as in the first period. In this phase, UNMIN continued its rather limited monitoring in the recently built cantonments. However, UNMIN’s interpretation of its mandate, pressing ahead for fuller implementation of CPA, treating both parties as equals, was received somewhat negatively by the NC and a large section of UML, which saw sinister underlying motives behind the Maoists’ withdrawal from the government and felt that UNMIN peace-building offers provided the Maoists with too much legitimacy.

Before the elections in 2007, the UN conducted first and second rounds of registration and verification. The considerable discrepancy of approximately 8000 combatants (31,000 in the first round and 23,610 in the last, including 19,602 verified and 4008 disqualified\textsuperscript{34}) was seen by some as proof of the UN’s naiveté and bias. It may be that the full story behind the

\textsuperscript{32} 3,375 weapons were presented from approximately 31,000 combatants, raising speculation about hidden caches. This small number reflects the Maoists weaponry, in addition to a high number (50,000) of explosive items.
\textsuperscript{33} UN Security Council Resolution 1740, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/217/92/PDF/N0721792.pdf?OpenElement gave the following mandate: (1) to support the peace process, assisting the transformation of the ceasefire into a permanent, sustainable peace; to monitor the management of arms, including in the cantonment of Maoist combatants and their arms and ammunitions, including explosive devices; to assist with the registration of combatants and their weapons and to monitor the Nepal Army; to assist the parties through a joint monitoring committee; to assist in the monitoring of the ceasefire arrangements through OHCHR; to provide support to conduct the election of Constituent Assembly; to provide monitors to the electoral process.
\textsuperscript{34} Especially after the release of a controversial video of a 2008 address by Puspha K.Dahal, the Maoist party’s chairman and de-facto commander-in-chief.
verifications is yet to be made public. Without question, the UN has considerable experience of such verifications worldwide, knowing full well that that reshuffling cadres and redeploying troops is common, as is manipulating registration and verification of bio-data of claimed fighters. But these are very sensitive matters, which are not talked about very openly.\(^\text{35}\)

From 2007 to 2009, the media broadcasted UNMIN’s high-profile presence, not only in the capital, but also in the countryside. UNMIN’s regular reports to the Security Council, in diplomatic but crisp language, were embarrassingly revealing with regard to the political power struggles within the political and military establishments, who claimed the reports contained breaches of diplomatic discretion.\(^\text{36}\) In particular, UNMIN and HCHR officials found themselves increasingly targeted in wrangling over a range of monitoring-related issues, which their highest officials on the ground sought to clarify, supported by the regularly visiting Assistant Secretary-General Pascoe from UN headquarters in New York. In this period, the UN found itself engulfed in the blame games that are so common in Nepal’s political culture. There was a sense of frustration about a seeming mismatch between the UN’s mission mandate and its leverage; that is, the actual scope and willingness of the parties to allow the UN to fulfill its role.

While the UN seemed to be on better diplomatic terms with the Maoist leadership than the India-friendly fractions of UML and NC, this conceals the Maoist leadership’s contradictory interests. On one hand, the UN was a buffer between the NA and the PLA, providing the Maoist leadership with a certain sense of protection against assignation plots. On the other hand, the Maoists were uneasy about the UN’s eagerness to go ahead with the integration and rehabilitation of their combatants. Importantly for the cadres in the party, these pressures came from a foreign actor whose value-laden rhetoric was bourgeois in nature. Below, the report analyzes why this uneasy double-bind relationship did not disappear with the departure of the UNMIN in January 2010. It has actually remained, and has completely embroiled the UN in a mix of spoiler and patronage politics in discussions over modalities of integration versus the packages for the rehabilitated.

\(^{35}\) The first head of the Nepal office of UNHCR, Ian Martin, after he had left his office wrote tellingly with quotation marks about this two-stage registration and verification. He acknowledged that the high numbers during the first round were the combined result of the Maoists’ huge expansion of their army from three to seven divisions between late 2005 and late May 2006, when the Ceasefire Code of Conduct was signed, which prohibited any new recruitment by either army and set the negotiated cut-off point for eligibility as a “verified” combatant of the PLA or local militias and new recruitments under lofty promises. See Ian Martin. Opportunities Lost on the Path to Army Integration, (p. 118). In European Bulletin of Himalayan Research, 37, 2010. The verification interviews conducted during the last round were entered into the UN’s Dream Database, based on one-hour individual interviews in the cantonments. No birth certificates were required, which many interviewees would not have had. There was no other useful document for verification purposes. Among the relatively few who were married (about 35 percent), even fewer had marriage certificates, since the Maoist leadership had discouraged formal marriage registration, both during the conflict and after.

\(^{36}\) http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gIKWLeMTlsG/b.2802333/
Part 3: The politics of engagement and disengagement

Postponing the future – the politics of DDR when peace is no longer a common agenda

Formally disarmed – but not demobilized
Based on the above analysis, the focus of the report now shifts towards painting a more complete picture of the politics that escalated soon after the constituent assembly election and the previously discussed brief Maoist-led government. This will bring us to consideration of the intricate linkages between recent geopolitical developments, including the main and often misunderstood incentives that drive the most influential third-party players (India and China) and the Nepali protagonists, mainly the UCPN (M) with some shifting allies and the NC as a powerful faction of UML and pro-royalist forces. For the Maoist leadership, the shift from jungles to the halls of parliament in 2006 represented a new phase in a multi-faceted war, an alliance based on liberal multiparty democracy.37

The withdrawal of the Maoists from the government in 2009, due to circumstances outlined above, caused a diversion from the fragile peace track. Within the Maoist party, this not-unexpected failure was by many seen as a proof of the limitation of implementing a bourgeois revolution. It also allowed closer attention to be paid to the extra-parliamentarian mass movement through workers unions and the Young Communist League (YCL), whose country-wide mass base was built up under a leadership that included some of the most experienced commanders from the PLA, who had been commanded to not go for registration and verification. The response from a self-integrated former senior YCL commander is illuminating: “It was totally the party’s decision. We had to manage our community and build its capacity. Even I did not like to go to the cantonment because I wanted to do many things, staying outside the cantonment. If our party will not follow the mandate of people’s war [eradication of all forms of exploitations and prolongation of people’s constitution] then we will revolt against the state in future.” (NonVSelf4.)

The unintended repercussions of upgrading the cantonments
In the souring political climate, the cantoned PLA was still considered a key element of preparedness for the continued mass struggle and a leverage tool in the constitutional negotiations. The upgraded infrastructure and improved services in the cantonments and the one-key lock UN-led monitoring system enabled political tactics whereby the partly intact PLA could, in a worst-case scenario, be remobilized and serve as a precaution in the climate of deteriorating trust.38 The dragged-out cantonment also served other bargaining purposes; the negotiations on the terms of the packages of the VMLR were a test case for the anticipated tough negotiations over the size of the packages of the verified combatants

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37 The sincerity of the U-CPN (M) regarding multiparty democracy is keenly disputed by several center-right parties and is a matter of debate among Nepal analysts. We would like to underline that even Bhattarai, the chief-ideologist of the party and the incumbent prime minister, has argued that there is a fundamental difference between liberal bourgeois democracy and people’s democracy. It is unfortunate that Bhattarai glosses over the fact that post-liberal and social-democratic models of democracy could be viable alternatives that would address many of the Maoists’ central transformative agendas.

38 In an interview with visiting activists from Ireland and Britain in October 2009, Vice-Chairman Baburam Bhattarai said, “The PLA is still with us within the single-lock system, monitored by the UN team, but basically the key is with us and the army is with us and we never surrendered” (see World People’s Resistance Movement, Reports and interviews by activists of WPRM, http://www.wprmbritain.org/?p=926#more-926).
(VC). In the cantonments throughout the country, regular military exercise went hand in hand with political work. As the acting division commander of the 7th division expressed so aptly in an interview, a cantonment functioned as a “political university.” While it is hard to fully gauge how persuasive such political rhetoric can be among rank-and-file combatants, we have found reasons to assume that such messaging effectively convinced many combatants that the many months in the cantonments represented a new phase in a drawn-out revolutionary struggle. Peace was a thing of the future.

In other words, the combatants have been, in technical DDR terms, disarmed yet still mobilized and engaged. A sizable portion has actually seen themselves as a mobilized in a both political and military community that is engaged in a new phase of struggle. Therefore, the recently started reintegration and integration has not been the sole preoccupation of the cantoned women and men. Before the recent breakthrough deal, the cantoned followed a strictly hierarchical command and communication structure. All decision making and negotiating power was entrusted to be solved by the leading political and army leaders in Kathmandu, whose line of communication went as far down as to include the division commanders in the cantonments. The sources of information for mid-ranking commanders and rank-and-file soldiers were partly the media and their own internal informal channels. However, preventing the combatants from defecting in large numbers remains a massive challenge in mass psychology, information control and patronage. As seen below, it has required a politics of inflated promises of huge cash payments, or golden handshakes.

Many of the 28 cantonments were constructed by the PLA in late 2006 in militarily strategic locations by cutting down lush forest at what was, in military terms, safe distances from major roads, city centers and the cantonment of NA. In this early phase, the conditions were obviously primitive, causing health problems and considerable dissatisfaction. The launch in August 2007 of a GTZ project to improve the infrastructure, offering health services and vocational training at a time when the deadline fixed for discharge had passed, helped normalize life in the cantonments. The trainings were an early response to the CPA’s commitment to the professionalization of the PLA to prepare them for integration into the security forces. Numerous arranged marriages and love marriages (the party encouraged inter-caste love marriages between cadres) created a vast number of family establishments from 2007 onward. As many female combatants became pregnant and gave birth, the camps evolved into community-like arenas, where at least the commanders were able to live with their families. The rank-and-file soldiers were granted regular leave to visit their parents, spouses, and children, many of whom had settled near the cantonments. A notable feature of this rim-zone habitation was the female combatants who received three years of maternity leave, while continuing to draw monthly allowance from their cantonments. During this time they lived in the proximity of the cantonments. We have found that quite many of these women were de-facto ex-combatants, since their contact with the nearby cantonments was usually limited to visits from spouses from the cantonments and their own monthly collection of allowances.

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The greatly improved facilities that resulted from the above-mentioned GTZ project,\(^{41}\) including comfortable houses for commanders, improved barracks, safe sanitation and drinking water, good training and exercise grounds (even some swimming pools), health posts, and training halls, all exceeded the standards of what could be described as temporary camps. Since the Maoist commanders were still in charge of the camps, leave approvals for emergency purposes were handled with flexibility. The UN’s monitoring was largely confined to weapons monitoring. The retained command structure and upgraded facilities all helped prevent mass desertion and eased the frustration and anger caused by perceived ill-treatment from the party and the international community. The readiness of the international community to support new and improved infrastructural was in contrast to the slow response from the government.\(^{42}\) As noted earlier, we found that the semi-permanency of the cantonments gave them character as centers for political training and as military training centers. The cumulative result of these factors is that the Maoists have a better military and ideologically trained combatant force in 2011, which even if they had undertaken major redeployments and reshuffling from military to civilian functions in the period from the cease-fire in 2005 and until the cantonments were raised.\(^{43}\) By comparison, the NA became a notable political force during this period. However, budget cuts and the prospects of downsizing while having to integrate a considerable force of new Maoist army combatants caused frustration and a stream of voluntary resignations from officers who foresaw a bleak future.

As an essential backdrop for investigating what kind of “community” the cantonments have become, we will retrospectively investigate the motivations of entry into the Maoist movement. In analyzing entry and political and military engagement, we will use the concept of trajectory in order to get a basic understanding of the routes into the movement and during the armed conflict.

Entry into the Maoist armed movement

Motivation of entry – a key issue

A central theme in this report is understanding reintegration by seeing it as a process of disengagement. The reasons for joining often affect the motivation for remaining or leaving an armed movement or group. In the case of Nepal, this section deals with entry as a basis for analyzing what engagement in a radicalized Maoist militant movement over a very long period entails. As we argued above, for many, engagement in the movement in no way ended with the ceasefire and the peace agreement. In reality, engagement has continued in several different forms, including into the YCL, into other wings of the Maoist Movement or entry multiparty politics locally and centrally. Why, in the first place, did tens of thousands of under-aged teenagers and young adults from different castes and ethnic groups from a vast hill region join the Maoist armed movement? Our underlying interest is to understand whether joining the Maoist armed movement (either the PLA or the local militias) was predominantly an individual action. Alternatively, joining could have been based primarily on collective decisions made by senior family members and local party leaders. Even if the

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\(^{41}\) GTZ has recently been renamed GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit).


\(^{43}\) The number of combatants who entered the Young Communist League, may have been 6000–7000. See International Crisis Group, Nepal: From Two Armies into One, Asia Report, p. 5, No. 211, 2011.
interviews here are too limited to cover the whole range of preconditions and modes of decision, they do provide some important evidence. The question of whose decisions these were is easier to answer in some instances than others. Research and media has revealed some unambiguous evidence of forced recruitment by kidnapping schoolchildren and use of the age-old “one member per house” conscription order. This resulted in some instances of parents deciding to send daughters to the front as fighters in order to spare their sons, who were effectively their life insurance.  

The entry and exit factors for engagement
Based on previous research into engagement and disengagement into armed groups (see Horgan and Bjørgo, op.cit.), we created a provisional list of likely entry/exit factors, which was revised and expanded based on analysis of the 20 in-depth interviews. The most senior combatants interviewed are verified combatants.  

“Actually, two years before the Peoples War I was already a party cadre and worked on the early preparatory plans for launching the war. During that year [1996] only students like me, teachers, and farmers joined as combatants” (“Gautam”- verified combatant). Testimonies such as this illustrate a common entry route among the most senior veterans, people now in their thirties who were initially young activists who launched the armed struggle, survived the decade-long conflict as guerrilla fighters and had risen to senior rank by the time of the peace settlement. As will be seen later, people who had dedicated much of their youth and their adult life to this armed movement, often at great personal cost, were interested in continuing their military career.

Akin to the political backgrounds of current combatants, mentioned above, most of the self-integrated combatants said that they first joined the movement as political cadres in the students’ wing and the women’s organization. Some had previously been members of CPN-ML who radicalized and shifted their party loyalty to UCPN (M). Others had no earlier party record, but had close relatives and friends who were already active in politics.  

“Our district [Jhapa] was highly influenced by communist ideology. We young people were so impressed by the way our village elders had been involved in the communist movement in the past ...” (“Laxman” - a non-verified self-integrated combatant). This ex-combatant hints at the short-lived violent communist (Naxalite) uprising in his home district in the early 1970s. Importantly, he was influenced by this political milieu, but the final decision to become involved, as he expressed it, “was his own.” Roughly four out of five of the accounts of the transition from political non-violent activism to organized violence emphasized either one decisive event or a series of consequential circumstances that became decisive for joining the armed movement. Experiences of political prosecution carried out by the police (and later by the armed police force created in 2001) typically help explain why the interviewees then went “underground” and joined as a protective action. Some recalled how they were driven by anger and a strong wish to take revenge. Their narratives provide details of harrowing losses: loved ones being killed mercilessly in front of them, revered elder relatives killed during battles with security forces or after torture in detention. Some of the narratives


\[\text{Two of the four interviewed combatants had joined from the inception of the armed uprising. When we conducted our interviews, in April–May of 2011, the responsibility was formally handed over to the Special Committee, but it was still de-facto with the UCPN (M).}\]

\[\text{Of the five self-integrated interviewees, three joined as political cadres.}\]

\[\text{These events include experience of own political prosecution, detention or torture, observing others being subjected to inhuman treatment during detention, torture or extra-judicial killings of family members or close friends.}\]
have undertones of searching to find a substitute for their lost father figure (“war family”). Others expressed a wish to pay tribute to a killed loved one or revered guardian by joining the same political cause for which the dead had sacrificed their lives.

These accounts recall actual decisive events, which provide traces of evidence about series of decisions that were mostly socially and psycho-socially motivated. A well-articulated ideological rationale comes later, after joining the movement to undergo ideological training. Some interviewees portrayed a route from being an active political cadre to joining as a combatant. Others spoke of making a transition from a passive political sympathizer to active service as a party cadre or directly to a combat role. The self-integrated interviewees typically joined in their early or late teens from 1999 onwards, when the armed conflict had engulfed much of the countryside. None of the people we interviewed had been abducted or conscripted by other coercive means, which is not to say that this was an unimportant recruitment tactic. A number of collective factors are at play at the level of the party, the family, and the peer groups. A highly radicalized community environment was the result of the authorities’ “Operation Romeo,” with excessive use of violence by police (as a response to the Maoists’ SIJA Campaign), a deep sense of economic deprivation, and a readiness for collective action that could change these bleak collective prospects.

The narratives of the verified minors and late recruits
Our interviews with verified minors bring to life fragments of recalled experiences of former child soldiers who joined in the very late phase of the armed conflict or even after the ceasefire. They are part of Nepal’s generation of children whose entire childhood was marked by the civil war. Their accounts show a combination of political, ideological, economic, and social motivations for entry that is not dissimilar to those of the young adults. Quite a number of these interviewees were subjected to forced ideological training in secondary and higher secondary schools, a decisive influence even if they were not expressly forced to join as child soldiers. The issue of agency is critical here. These were children, used to obeying orders and to shouldering family responsibilities, often receiving punishment and abuse instead of parental counseling and care. They were highly vulnerable to recruitment by elder peers, teachers, and co-villagers who had already enrolled in non-combatant or combatant roles. In our view, few in this young age group made independent decisions. We have interpreted their own terms for characterizing decisions of guardians as “made by others” and decisions made with peers as “made by themselves.” Indeed, decisions made in a peer group are also largely group decisions; senior peers exercise considerable authority over younger members, replicating ranked family structures in peer groups. In reading these interviews, we also found documented glimpses of the politically volatile situation in the months before the ceasefire and the CPA, and between the CPA and the first round of verification. They tell of a massive deliberate reshuffling of political and military cadres, including new recruitment among sympathizers and cadres as noted earlier. There are cases of both individual and family-based decisions made by mothers and elder siblings to join as late recruits in 2005 and 2006. One narrated: “Right after the war we were looking for opportunity for a job. In the Maoists campaigns, we were told we could be included in the

49 Eleven verified minors and late recruits were interviewed, seven of whom were minors.
50 “Ramesh” a verified minor narrated: “I was heavily beaten by my father in front of our villagers. I was so dependent on my father and joined the PLA to gain my own income and have an outlet for my feelings of revenge towards my father”.

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PLA and later integrated into the national army. Since we were unemployed, we joined ...”
(“Suman” - late recruit)

Beyond motivations - deeper societal causes for engagement
We have sought to answer the question of whether it is meaningful to think of being a member of a fighting group as an individual or collective decision. Our evidence base is 20 interviews and contextualized knowledge by way use of other literature and our own background knowledge about Nepal’s societal conditions that the statements of the informants may not necessarily have directly commented or reflected upon. The entry factors we have found are traceable in the combatants’ and ex-combatants own narratives as they reflect on the people and circumstances that motivated them. Importantly, the circumstances they themselves referred to as decisions by guardians, relatives, peers, and party leaders reveal decisions made under constrained economic and political circumstances.

These circumstances are closely framed by Nepal’s volatile political, social and economic situation with a detracting state, weak macro-economic growth, severe lack of decent youth employment and access to justice (through police and courts), and a deteriorating security situation. What are referred to in the interviews as “own” motivations, such as becoming member of PLA in order to receive protection, were rational responses to deep societal problems and state failures. One interviewee responded to political prosecution by opponents or torture in police detention and extra-judicial killings (in the later phases by what was then the RNA) in a situation of weakening law enforcement that evolved into a breakdown of rule of law as the conflict escalated. Many claimed to have been motivated by a combination of political, ideological, social, and economic reasons. Their tales lends evidence to a real sense of injustice and hopelessness at a very young age. Lacking a political language to give voice to their moorings of protesting injustice and indignity, the Maoists offered them a much needed political platform. With other parties and most of the INGOs and NGOs having been driven away by the Maoists in the early phase of the conflict, there were no social-democratic or liberal political agendas that offered youths alternatives for collective peaceful action. These young boys and girls found in the Maoist ideology a common ground for rectifying injustice by engaging as combatants. By entering, some have been influenced (although it is hard to say how decisively) by senior guardians, teachers (who were local cadres), and peers. Strikingly, virtually all the interviewed combatants are from poor, smallholder households and have to juggle time for basic education with arduous work on family farms. They found few prospects of securing a livelihood in their villages and saw labor migration as the only alternative (especially the boys and younger men) until they became politically engaged in the Maoist movement.

For some, being harassed, beaten up and arrested was a motivating force for joining. Others were subjected to such violations after becoming political cadres, local militia, or elite combatants, which reinforced their joint sense of revolutionary vanguard against what the Maoists called “an oppressive feudal regime”.

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Engagement as combatants in a Maoist movement

*Conventional warfare versus protracted peoples’ war*

During the first five years of the conflict, the police was the visible face and combating force of the state. In this early phase, small groups of guerrillas engaged in selective near-combat and also attached barracks and stores to build their stock of weapons. The Royal Nepal Army (RNA), the ancient state-bearing institution with professionally trained soldiers, was finally ordered out of the barracks in 2001, alongside the newly established armed police. That development led to a massive new wave of recruitment; the swelling army of approximately 96,000 individuals became the security forces’ first line during the last phase of the war. In a sense, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and the RNA fought two different wars. The RNA fought a semi-conventional war of attrition aimed at controlling key territory for the state, such as district headquarters and towns, and seeking military encounters that would weaken the Maoists. The PLA, was led by the strategic concept of a protracted people’s war with an emphasis on simulation, deceiving the enemy into vulnerable positions and attacking when their opposition expected it least. The pioneer guerillas in the early phase were political cadres from the Mid-Western region (see citations from interviews in this report), the home of many ethnic communities and of former high castes and untouchables. Given their military strategy of living among the people who would supply recruits, information, and supply (either freely or by force); the liberated areas should be run by the revolutionaries. By early 2001, the phase of strategic defense had ended and was succeeded by a phase of strategic balance that involved an attack on the RNA base in the district of Dang in November of that year.

The major factors that could help explain the very entry of children and young adults into the Maoist movement has been discussed above. These entry routes were based on decision-making processes that can be characterized as either being wholly collective or having both collective and individual attributes, showing a fussy continuum between group-based and individualized decision making. In uncovering these attributes, we have not simply taken the ideological meta-narratives in the combatants’ narratives at face value. Instead, we have looked at other more specific and subtle statements, which are more likely to convey authentic remembered events and motives. Many underprivileged youths found in the Maoists political ideology “a roadmap” to change their society through the barrel of a gun. Girls and young women joined for a whole variety of reasons, spanning from a quest for women’s freedom and dignity, to succumbing to patriarchal family norms and hence joining to save their brothers. This map provided explanations for the caste, gender, and ethnic discrimination and exploitation they faced and a collective armed solution, an alternative to escaping to an uncertain future as farm laborers or labor migrants in India, Malaysia, or the Gulf States. Beyond their revolutionary rhetoric, Maoists were eager to engage children and women in their revolution for two tactical military reasons in particular. Firstly, children and women could be used as spies, since they are not usually suspected. Secondly, the Maoists were aware that women and children were in fact more trustworthy and loyal to the cause and would not defect as easily as men. This recognition builds on and uses personality traits formed by deep-rooted gender and caste hierarchies.

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51 Prime Minister G.P. Koirala wanted to mobilize the RNA back in 1999, but was unable to convince the Commander-In-Chief, the late King Birendra.
Building a vast political community of believers
As the mass uprising moved from its initial phase, which had been confined to a few districts in Mid-Western Nepal, a massive program and infrastructure for ideological training, morale boosting, and guerilla warfare was gradually built up. Cultural programs, involving evocative folk tunes and songs, along with new martial texts composed by the cadres, were integral to the consolidation of base areas and expanding in the far-flung hill regions and in the Terai.52

Ideological training on a massive scale ensured long-term commitment to the movement, as the need for a massive expansion of the PLA grew. Mass recruitment by coercive means became a necessity. Based on cultural programs from using classrooms to outdoor grounds for mass gatherings, a layered political representative structure, and the above-mentioned military tactics, a vast community of believers as revolutionaries was built up, with strong comradeship, the need for ultimate sacrifice (and becoming martyrs) for the cause, and a caricatured notion of the enemy.

The ceasefire in 2005 and the tactical shift to topple the royal-led regime by joining the inter-party-led mass movement in April did not preclude the military track; hence, the fighting force was expanded from three battalions to seven. During the tumultuous months that followed the ouster of King Gyanendra in 2006 and the sweeping constitutional changes by the reinstated parliament, a massive yet secretive redeployment was strategized and executed. There were also many early-leavers: combatants who registered in the first in the first round of verification, disobeyed orders, and quietly left and reintegrated. As many as 8640 personnel out of 32,250 did not appear for the second round. Many of them are likely to have been civilians mobilized after the ceasefire, who exited early due to a host of personal reasons. Of the 19,602 that were finally verified, 15,756 were men and 3846 were women according to UNMIN.

This section has used the notion of trajectories in order to map the actual main “routes” of combatant and the switches from combatant to non-combatants and from non-combatants to combatants, as a basis for informed analyses of crucial frame conditions for the formalized DDR programs. We have also explicated some of the frame conditions for the caseload, which are the combatants who were registered and verified in late 2006 and early 2007. The following section examines the cantonments by using analytical concepts of community, engagement and disengagement.

Part 4: Outcomes of DDR in Nepal
Engagement instead of formal disengagement

**DDR's role in the shift from combatant to ex-combatant**

DDR is understood as a process that strips the symbols and means of the role of combatant or solider, and provides the fighters with basic skills, education, cash, and counseling that enables them to fully shift to a civilian life with a new compatible set of roles.53 This process is still often undertaken in temporary demobilization camps to prepare both DDR

53 IDDRS, http://www.unddr.org/iddrs/, see module 2.10
responsible and the cantoned for the next steps in the process. The cantonment ends with a discharge ceremony and is followed by certain routes: typically merger of armies or integration into armed forces and a reintegration route that enables a return to civilian profession and life. Other routes are sometimes offered, such as direct exit and retirement. The cantonment period can function as an early phase of disengagement or of continued engagement, depending on the nature of weapons control, reinsertion packages, availability of reintegration and life-skill-oriented counseling, and the overall social climate in the camps. It matters whether this is a climate of a warrior community or a transitory, peace-conducive climate that allows for a degree of individual decisions. This climate is heavily influenced by cantonment leadership, third-party monitors and observers (if they exist) and the nature of services offered. Also the degree of freedom of information, relations between commanders and food soldiers, relations between foot soldiers and surrounding communities, existence of continuing organized violence, and the formal or informal influence that other civilian and armed actors have on camp conditions are influential factors.

Those who on individual basis may want to return to civilian life, and those who are directed in their decisions, will be able to choose between reintegrating outside of any formal program or enrolling in such a program. Both are routes for disengagement. In the transition phase, reinsertion and reintegration overlap to some degree and the idea of “community” has gained new importance. While formal IDDRS guidelines have detailed a comprehensive community-based approach, in practice it is still proving difficult in practice to accomplish this much-wanted turn in policy and programming, mainly due to financial and time constraints. The UN and others who support DDR programs are increasingly concerned with how to move beyond insertion to full-fledged reintegration or rehabilitation efforts in order to achieve at least a gradual shift from the status of solder to ex-soldier. With a long record of international experience, the UN recognizes that this is far from a smooth transition. There are substantial risks involved: the number of drop-outs may be high, trainings, cash incentives, and counseling may not provide for decent and sustainable livelihoods, combatants’ gender-specific needs may be neglected, etc. All of these risk factors aggravate the possibilities for re-engagement as combatant, whether it is back into the same group or movement or into another armed group.

**Engagement and disengagement as a lens to grasp ground realities**

Even if the UN’s global documents as we have noted express concern over why reintegration efforts have partly been failing, they stop short of examining whether certain taken-for-granted assumptions about the DDR process may contribute to these results. One such underlying assumption is thinking of DDR as a linear process and the individual(iced) combatant as a client to be re/integrated and settled in a community. As we have attempted to highlight, reintegration research may have much to offer in terms of establishing a comprehensive evidence-based framework for understanding how and why combatants act as members of groups, including communities, and how this might explain why they leave or do not leave behind their militant activities.

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54 IDDRS, http://www.un DDR.org/iddrs/
55 In UN terms, reinsertion is a 12-months period after demobilization, when the cash-flow for reintegration may yet be limited and the potential of frustration turning into spoiler action and new armed violence is high.
Studying engagement and disengagement through interpretation and analysis of data offers researchable approaches through which to understand what happens on the ground in the apparently chaotic months and years following a formal settlement. Under the surface of flux and chaos, however, the key actors of a peace settlement may behave surprisingly rationally, positioning themselves carefully in the new battle for deciding the rules of the game in DDR programs, gaining access, trying to prevent enrollment, etc. Studying disengagement requires a sound understanding of engagement; the reasons for entry are often connected with the reasons for remaining in an armed group or movement. If these analytical terms are used to analyze the ongoing DDR efforts in Nepal, along with the notion of following the trajectories of different strands of combatants and their sense of community, a better informed understanding of the group-realities can be built up. As discussed above, the cluster cantonments in Nepal, with their militarily strategic locations, are due to a series of political reasons and are no longer transitory spaces for rapid disarmament and reinsertion. They have become semi-permanent structures, with quite a developed infrastructure, which enabled the Maoists to maintain their own army. The combatants, once demobilized, have received regular military and ideological training as a wing of the country’s most organized and widespread party.

From temporary spaces to community cohesion
The camps have attained community-like features, such as the formation of households and quarters for families, community arenas, sports grounds, and outdoor pavilions for meetings, health posts with MBBS doctor and nurse (provided by the Nepalese government), official visitors rooms, even swimming pools and a clear boundary towards the outer world. However, they also have numerous linkages to the surrounding community as customers, renters of dwellings (female combatants married to verified PLA on maternity leave, etc.). Also, friendships have been established and maintained and business relations have been forged with the host communities. A significant number of combatants plan to become residents in their host communities instead of moving back to their pre-war communities. The surrounding communities have seen several positive benefits from the debated GTZ project, in addition to increased demand for goods, income from house leases, and declines in certain forms of crime. To varying degrees, combatants have, through monthly leave and other household strategies, reintegrated socially into their native communities through marriage, household establishment, and economic support. A substantial number of combatants are active party cadres and have taken part in regular party meetings, even at the national convention. The attendance of verified combatants at the Palungtar Convention in December 2010 caused massive protests from the other political parties who wanted to see these combatants barred from entry into the Nepalese army.

Given the analytical definition of community in this report (see the introduction), three distinct community-dimensions can be discerned: the cantonments attaining community-like features; a certain level of social integration between cantonments and surrounding host communities; and the integration of the combatants in the cantonments into the UCPN (M), a national political community or movement. The role of combatants has been consolidated during the long cantonment period. Also, a considerable number of late recruits have been given military and ideological training and consider themselves soldiers. New role combinations have been not only permitted, but even encouraged through marriages between cadres and comrades. Marital status leads to new roles as spouses, daughters/sons in-law, and eventually parents. Pregnancy, birth, and early infant care have posed a series of
new dilemmas for the female and male combatants in question, and also for the PLA leadership and down the command chain. The Maoist party has established a maternity leave policy for female combatants. Female combatants married to mid- and senior-level commanders were permitted to live within the camps. Female combatants married to foot soldiers were as already noted instructed to find living quarters in the rim zone of the cantonments or in their home communities. The Maoist leadership has not confirmed that these female combatants living nearby the cantonment in rented accommodation are to be automatically reintegrated back in the society, and not offered a choice for a military career. Our observations and interviews suggest that a not unsubstantial number of these female soldiers are in the process of gradual reintegration, based on the informal decisions of senior commanders and central leaders. But the picture is varied. Some female army combatants strongly wish to pursue a military career. Returning to these female combatants who live in rim-zones and surrounding communities, it is notable that some are found to be currently cut off from all regular communication flows inside the cantonments, including information regarding their future rehabilitation or integration options. As one female platoon vice-commander told us “We are not aware about what goes on in the cantonment. In a way we are placed outside and becoming normal civilians” (“Laxmi” - verified female combatant on leave). Her statements are validated by observations in several rim-zones of female combatants on leave being fully emerged in parenting and other household chores. Although they formally have status as combatants on leave, the de politicization, demilitarization, and domestication of these female combatants stands in stark contrast to the Maoists’ policies of women’s emancipation, as well as international resolutions (e.g., 1325) and guidelines on rights and needs of female combatants.

**Political belonging and the role as combatant**

Through regular ideological training and cultural programs, the cantonments have cultivated a continued sense of loyalty to the cause and instilled in the cantoned a fairly strong sense of being part of a political community. This is a more all-encompassing political status, based on a combatant role. In the post-war period, the Maoist leadership has managed to remain supremely in charge of the command chain. This has been a very challenging and risk-prone political project, which, through a range of efforts that have not been widely publicized or well understood, have succeeded in curbing the discontent of being stranded in cantonments. One of these regulative policies (strict publicity management in the cantonments) has created very high expectations among the cadres for cash payments as the main component of rehabilitation and retirement packages.

The picture emerges of cantonments not as transitory spaces for technical DDR operations, but as increasingly complex social spaces with community-like dynamics at three levels of scale (with increasing social cohesion) and with a minimal UN presence on the ground. The combatants became pawns in the stalled peace process of fractional power struggles, where their rights as children and young adults became completely secondary to tactical political gains.

In this case, engagement in terms of participation in the armed conflict and in the early post-war years is a complicated process of emerging conflict between collective commitments to the Maoist party and movement and collective commitment to one’s own family. In contrast to international standards for demobilization and treatment of minors, the discharge became fraught with unprecedented difficulties.
The troubled discharge of verified minors and late recruits

The notion of disqualified
In DDR programming, transparent and standardized procedures are to be followed during verification in order to identify combatants who do and do not meet the criteria of length of service and legal age limits. By Western notions, quantifiable aspects of qualifications are the basis for certain entitlements, and those criteria are to be routinely used in all cases. They establish who is eligible for inclusion, as the basis for establishing the scale of any program and parameters required for infrastructure, staffing, benefits, services, and estimated budget. These procedures have been put to use in resource-poor countries as part of the verification processes of armed groups that have high numbers of child soldiers. According to international standards, the discharge of minors is a matter of high expediency. The UN is quite familiar with the fact that such procedures may cause frustration and resentment from military commanders, and even from children and young adults who have to leave early. Nonetheless, few verification processes and public discharges have caused so much anger, frustration, and trauma from those involved as in the UN’s rehabilitation project in Nepal.56 Why is this the case?

The controversy surrounding the discharge of minors will be used as an entry point to start answering the question of what it means to leave the cantonment under the condition that it is experienced as an involuntary exit for many, if not for all. We will attempt to analyze the nexus of underlying causes, building on the above analysis of engagement, community-like features of cantonment life, the notion of trajectories and routes and the different understandings and interests of the UN, the GoN, and the U-CPN (M) in the verification process, and also in the demobilization of the VMLR that took place in seven cantonments, with case-load being transported from satellite cantonments over 38 days in February–March 2010. This was a huge logistical and well-organized inter-agency operation under the leadership of the resident coordinator.57

One reason for the controversy was the use of the term “disqualified” and its literal translation into Nepali. The translated term in Nepali ayogya has negative connotations; of being incomplete, handicapped, and even useless. Later damage-mitigating measures, such as changing the English terminology from “disqualified” to “verified minors and late recruits” and the Nepali translation (pachi bharti bhayeka nobalak pramanit), had only modest damage control effects. There are certain specific reasons for this. The cantonment period, which according to the CPA should take six months and adhere to international standards less, took two years after the UN-led verification process. Effectively, these people have been cantoned for nearly three years. This unusually long cantonment had profoundly socialized the youngest combatants into a militant community at two levels. Each cantonment, with its satellite cantonment, had become a close-knit “war community.” Cultural and ideological training also ensured a sense of belonging to the two-track movement at a national level.58 Importantly, more than 80 per cent of those who were

56 This information is based on an interview with a senior DDR expert with comparable experience from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Haiti and South-Sudan.
57 This analysis is based on own interviews with 11 VMLR, senior staff of UNDP and review of internal UN documents on the discharge process.
58 “Two tracks” refers here to the peoples’ mass-movement (with a hard-line faction wanting a return to war if necessary) and engagement in multi-party democracy.
verified as minors had since become young adults.\textsuperscript{59} In the cantonment, they had matured and professionalized as combatants.

The negative reactions to being classified as disqualified, has to be understood as a composite result of both this real shift in expectations (due to transition from childhood to adulthood), a strong identification with the Maoist war family, and a sense of humiliation triggered by being labeled “disqualified”. These strong reactions could be observed before, during, and after the discharge process. “Man Bhadur” a VMLR said, “... I think they should have told us about our status soon after the completion of the second verification because it would have helped us to find our own way three years back. I have wasted three years for nothing in the cantonment ...”. Others complained that they learned about their disqualified status informally from seniors who had access to protocols. The following statement from the VMLR “Suman” should be seen in light of the negative connotations to the Nepali term: “I do not think the UN has the authority to call us ‘disqualified’ because the UN did not fight the war. They have ruined our lives by defining us as disqualified ...”. The damage to the discharge process could have been reduced had there been a more culturally informed and sensitive translation of the term disqualified and willingness on the part of PLA to relax their information control. This could have allowed UNMIN access to provide the cantoned with timely information about the verification criteria and the discharge process criteria, and to offer life-skill and career counseling.

All available documentation\textsuperscript{60} points to two major issues. The first is that the UCPN (M) violated children’s rights by keeping command lines over their youngest combatants for such a long time before releasing them.\textsuperscript{61} When this was eventually agreed, UCPN (M) declared this a “unilateral” process, which restricted engagement and ownership from the GoN and the other mainstream parties. Secondly, when the damage was done, the involved UN agencies underestimated the depth of social cohesion in the cantonments as a community rather than temporary spaces. Had this been better understood, the discharge process and the ceremonies could arguably have been organized in a manner more compatible with Nepalese traditions of generosity in public farewell ceremonies, which would have nurtured a stronger sense of public recognition and self-respect.

\textit{The discharge as a public ritual and the bitter homecoming}

The discharge ceremony, which is a from a social science perspective a public transition ritual, was conducted without a great deal of fanfare, although government representatives did attend the ceremonies. The departing “handshake,” in the form of a modest amount of cash,\textsuperscript{62} reinforced a sense of humiliation and involuntary separation and clashed with the Nepalese cultural notion of gifting money as a fragile symbolic act to engender good luck and prosperity. The modest amount was a result of verified minors and late recruits being categorized together in the discharge process, a condition upon which the U-CPN (M) had insisted. Some felt the disqualified label and disappointingly low and inauspicious “handshake” was an attack on their identity as fit and capable fighters and a bad omen in a cultural sense.

\textsuperscript{59} Numbers at the courtesy of UNIRP.
\textsuperscript{60} The VMLR’s own statements, international standards of children in war, project documents and media coverage of statements by all involved actors.
\textsuperscript{61} The Paris Commitments and Principles and the Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces. 95 member states have endorsed these principles.
\textsuperscript{62} 10,000 NRS from UN and 12,000 NRS from the Maoist party constituted three months’ salary, or approximately 285 USD.
There is insufficient evidence in our material to conclude whether the sense of belonging was deeply gender-differentiated, in other words whether the sense of humiliation was felt more strongly among male VMLRs than females. Some of the VLMRs argued strongly during the interviews that fitness and combat capability, not age and late service, should have the main criteria for being qualified or not. Instead, the exit was involuntary for many. “I fought for years and was ready to sacrifice my life. When I had to come out of the cantonment I was really sad. Leaving was a really painful moment in my life ...” (“Ram” – a verified minor enrolled in UNIRP).

Due to the strict information control regime in the cantonments and unilateral definition of the discharge process, leaving was not seen as a consequence of the nationally negotiated peace agreement involving the U-CPN (M) and the state party. It was seen as a singular decision by the party as ultimate in-charge of the PLA and the cantonments. “We followed the party decision and left the cantonments. But all VLMR were not happy with the party’s decision, since we had joined with the prospects of being integrated in the NA. Our dreams were shattered by this decision. Obviously one feels bad seeing one’s dreams vanish ...” (“Dipak” - drop-out verified minor).

Others saw compliance with their party’s decision as a deal in order to put the entire process of integrating and rehabilitating the remaining verified combatants on track. In retrospect, some felt their sacrifices were in vain. “The Maoist leaders said that if we left the cantonments, the integration and rehabilitation process would soon be completed. But 15 months has passed since our discharge and our leaders have not found the modalities. Why?” (“Ram” - verified minor).

The home-coming of some of the discharged was also negatively affected not only by the modest amount of cash they received, but by the medias’ broadcasting of the term “disqualified.” Community and family members started using the term in direct conversation as the discharged returned home, which had a negative influence on the reception. Whether by intent or mistake, the mass media’s handling played into the hands of the U-CPN (M), who had a strategic interest in retaining the loyalty of many of the discharged. Massive enrollment into the UNIRP was conceived as a threat. Not only was the chain of command challenged, the party’s leverage over the VMLR was also at stake. Some recruitment into the youth wing did occur, resulting in criticism from other parties and child’s rights groups.

Although the number of early leavers was unknown, this was not a one-way exit with no return. There was movement of combatants both in and out of the cantonments. A substantial number left and then returned as a pragmatic response to the perceived benefits of being verified or due to disillusionment about being disqualified. One graduated VMLR said: “… I had been in the PLA in a supportive role, but left and went abroad for employment. When I came to my home village, old friends asked to again rejoin the PLA after the Jana Andolan was over and they were constructing cantonments. So I went with my wife to the cantonment. After the verification process, I was termed as disqualified. Due to this, I did not want to stay and returned to my home town. When the discharge process was to be held, they asked me to be present at the ceremony and I went to the cantonment just for this purpose.” (“Dev” – verified minor and late recruit).

This section has briefly analyzed the specific circumstances that resulted in the discharge that many experienced as involuntary. It has also looked at the Maoist’s command structure,
demotivating buy-in from GoN and other parties, and restricting access by the UN to undertake vital information work and individual social and economic profiling, strong cohesion in the cantonments, the verified minors’ unrealistic expectations, and an unfortunate translation of the term “disqualified.” This charged politicized situation made the early phase of the UNIRP Rehabilitation Programme challenging, to say the least.

The UN Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP): Uneven Exit and Disengagement

Early planning and design phase
The above sections analyzed the main conditions that motivated children and young adults into armed struggle, their situation in the cantonments, and the circumstances that, for many, led to a troubled discharge. These insights form the context for the present section’s brief analysis of the interagency program. In order to avoid duplication with the Saferworld study, this section addresses the following programming-related issues: (1) the critical design phase and the degree to which it has built on an adequate understanding of reintegration; (2) the degree to which UNIRP promoted an exit process towards consolidated rehabilitation; and (3) key lessons and implications for the upcoming rehabilitation of the current combatants.

Implemented through UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and ILO, the UNIRP program was launched in February 2010, following the above-mentioned discharge process in February and March 2010. The so-called “packages” included options of vocational skill training, micro-enterprises, health training and formal and informal education. The main source of funding was the UN Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN), a multi-donor trust fund supported by Canada, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. From the outset, UNIRP faced difficulty building political buy-in from the Government of Nepal and has experienced direct obstruction from elements within UCPN (M). There were also negative perceptions among both enrolled and non-enrolled VMLR whose expectations were unrealistically high. Nevertheless, the response rate has increased considerably, as a sizeable number of VMLR did not find viable options and gradually received accurate information about the program. Despite the absence of sound baseline data (see discussion below), program delivery has improved, based on several consolidated learning mechanisms.

The early planning and design of this rehabilitation project took place in the same hectic period as the preparations and discharge process. All the key partners met in the project’s Steering Committee meetings. The UN representatives felt that the GoN and UCPN (M) representatives constrained the design process, rather than contributing to optimal solutions. In our assessment, the planning and design works were to some degree compromised. This is a planning paradox, in view of the considerable waiting period between verification and discharge. Collaboration could have fully capitalized on UNICEF’s, ILOs’ and UNFPA’s considerable in-country knowledge and coherently addressed social, political, economic, security and psycho-social rehabilitation.

Instead, the program design process was rushed, mainly due to very late and limited access to the minors and late recruits. In fact, UCPN (M) did not allow detailed socio-economic profiling during the second verification in late 2007 or early 2010, before the discharge, and did not allow full processing and use of the existing data in the Dream database. Due to the individualistic planning rationale in DDR programming, the UN Country Team and UNIRP
placed considerable emphasis on the consequences it has had for the crucial design and planning work. Except for a brief desk review, no (baseline) labor-market or livelihood-opportunity analysis was undertaken at this stage. UNIRP has emphasized economic rehabilitation through its four training and education packages. Indeed, the project recognizes that the labor market is limited for youths with little education, short vocational training and a military past. Action research on collaboration with the private sector and employability of VLMR was first conducted when the first graduates entered the labor market as job seekers. After one year of implementation, the UN’s Special Review acknowledged the need for systematic labor market analysis and more diversified packages of attractive and safe training options.

Furthermore, no comprehensive social-reintegration analysis was undertaken addressing age, gender, ethnicity, and caste, and no studies were commissioned on communities’ own capacity to reintegrate ex-combatants, IDPs and permanently injured civilians. The limited inter-agency collaboration in the design phase cannot be satisfactorily explained as paralyses, due to limited access to the combatants. Funding has been found to be a constraining factor in the first months of the project and may, to some degree, explain the low priority given to early assessments and research.

Limited funding and stringent accountability (set by funders) defined the basic financial, program and durability parameters. This led to a centralized organizational structure with five regional offices (in the regional headquarters), which monitored the training centers and provided counseling to the VLMR. The four UN agencies headed their separate sub-projects, including the UNICEF-led NGO-network Children Affected by Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) for child-oriented community outreach components. This structure had a short two-year timeframe. A less centralized project structure was considered, but was found to be less cost-effective. Instead, one gradually scaled-up outreach from the regional centers included financial support for mobility of the enrolled ex-combatants.

The UNIRP program’s design mainly focused on economic reintegration. Young combatants were assisted in shifting to a non-combatant status through training, education and counseling. They were taught to use newly acquired skills, knowledge and motivation to establish themselves as (married) productive earning civilians. This one-sided focus on economic integration was a directive by the GoN. In its risk analysis, the project considered the limited buy-in from the government. It also took account of the fact that, for that enrollment, motivation and outputs could be affected by pressure from the UCPN(M), senior commanders and peers. The result chain recognizes the risk of receiving minimal support, or even disruption, from GoN and UCPN (M). However, counter-measures such as public information campaigns, engagement with the Maoist leadership, and individualized support made it evident that the entrenched nature of the VLMRs’ involvement with the Maoist movement, was somewhat underestimated. The centralized program structure was considered to be another risk factor. It was felt that a more decentralized structure would jeopardize training standards. Our data indicates that, to some degree, peer pressure influenced the selection of some rehabilitation packages (especially vocational training). Even well-trained counselors had difficulty countering such group pressure. The education package, which is qualification-based and therefore more likely to be based on individual choice, offered certain decentralized options. It is possibly more effective in facilitating reintegration, but this is very difficult to prove, based on available monitoring data.
The design’s community approach was rather limited, considering IDDR standards. The plan chose to use information campaigns, training and education, and infrastructure support, as the key community-focused inputs. The project listed strict budget limitations and limited ownership by the government and the Maoist party as the main reasons for the limited community focus. Social reintegration, for which a community-based approach could be a central operationalization, was considered a secondary project concern. We recognize that this is a complicated issue to address, since many VMLR were from remote hill villages, which had considerable damage and a rural economy in tatters. In fact, it is an immense challenge for UNIRP, underscoring the need to link the project with wider peace building and development efforts that should address persistent social and economic inequalities. Another challenge, which UNIRP only realized when early batches of VLMR faced social stigma, was the frequently staunch opposition to inter-caste marriages and moral stigmatization of female combatants. These are both issues that could have been addressed from the outset, in order to optimize the result of socio-economic rehabilitation.

The considerable implications for project outcomes of not choosing a comprehensive community-based approach are bound to become more visible in the months ahead when the huge cohort of VMLR will graduate and face painful choices between full exit, partial exit or return to the military and also might feel aggrieved by the huge case transfers to the exiting verified combatants. The vast majority of VMLR are skeptical or outright opposed to returning to their native communities. The process of returning to civilian lives in semi-urban centers in the Terai or in major cities might be less challenging. However, this process should be supported by a community-based approach designed to address the challenges that these dynamic communities face, particularly competition for scarce resources, political divisions, and community insecurity.

Incorporating the notion of multiple communities in the design phase would have brought stronger attention to combatants’ involvement in a political community are a key to understanding their decisions about how and where start building a life, and the possibility of breaking the chain of command. Greater attention to the dilemma of belonging to the Maoist movement as a moral community that rejects caste endogamy, and to local communities as moral custodians that still uphold caste endogamy, could have strengthened the project’s design and result chain. Such an approach would have sent the strong message that there was no return to a pre-war community life with entrenched ideas of caste, gender, and relations between old and young that have marked the hierarchical Nepalese society for centuries.

Routes, community, agency and enrollment in UNIRP
Relatively few of the VMLR enrolled in the first few months after the discharge. Our preliminary investigations provide information about the VLMR’s routes and movements.

Thirty percent of the 4,008 discharged individuals were young girls. A total of 2,394 individuals went through discharge ceremonies and 1,614 were no-shows. A large portion of recently married or pregnant female ex-combatants were among these no-shows. Many VMLR remained near their former cantonments, living temporarily with family or friends, and making short visits to their original communities. An unknown number of the minors were directly recruited as cadres in the YCL. In some districts, the Maoist leaders organized welcoming ceremonies for the VMLR whom they had recruited. We considered this to be only a partial exit. The UN, the government and other organizations have criticized this YCL
recruitment. The UN believes that individual decisions to join should be voluntary. The regional training centers offered extensive contact between those enrolled and comrades. This provided fertile ground for frustration, criticism and demands from the VMLRs.

The UCPN (M)’s criticism of UNIRP was not only a bargaining tactic for later negotiations on rehabilitation of the remaining 19,000 verified combatants. It also showed their continued guardianship (a key notion in the Nepalese culture) for these restless teenagers whom they had convinced to come out from cantonments. These youngsters felt compelled to engage with Maoist party due to their profound sense of insecurity. To many, engaging in YCL and the Maoist party was “trading security against political allegiance” in a post-war context of increasing violence and declining rule of law.

The UCPN (M) tried to balance two contradictory agendas; one as a lead partner in the UNIRP program, the other as a political militant movement. The latter gave the militant youth wing a way to recruit these well-trained verified minors. The roamers and active political cadres kept closely in-touch and continued to project negative opinions of the rehabilitation project. This helped to maintain party loyalty and discipline. Our interviews indicate that an unknown number of integrated cadres became discontent and disillusioned with the party. Many finally left without being severely sanctioned for joining the UN Rehabilitation Programme. Other VMLR moved home. They viewed themselves as belonging to a successful revolutionary movement, but at a great cost to themselves. Even the late recruits shared similar challenges after returning home. Many interviewees told us they resumed the arduous farm work from which they had wanted to escape by joining the Maoist movement. Many migrated to India and the Gulf countries. One VMLR noted: “Right after being discharged, I went to my home town for a month. Sometimes, underground groups tried to approach me….I felt the suspicion from community members’ reception as enormous and humiliating, and I could not bear it, so I returned to my district headquarters and worked for YCL. Later I decided to leave for this rehabilitation opportunity.” (“Sita” an enrolled female ex-combatant).

Many opted for rehabilitation in the early phase. They did so either because they found the benefits for party loyalty too meager or they saw no better option for temporary support. For others, the decision to enroll was youthful optimism that the packages could help them build a future, while also managing family responsibilities. With networks among the discharged highly intact, facilitated by mobile-based telecommunication, decisions for training were often collective, taken with comrades/peers and spouses. This runs counter to the UN’s emphasis (in the IDDRS Guidelines) that decisions should be based on individual counseling. Most of the rehabilitation packages were offered in the five regional centers. Resettling for those VMLR who lived far from the centers was postponed for several months. Many used this transitional settlement period at the training centers as a springboard for finding opportunities for settling in urban areas.

UNIRP monitoring and our own interview data suggest that there have been certain significant reorientations and strengthening of the project’s delivery system. Emphasis on low impact in early-phase rehabilitation of female combatants and feedback from the CAAFAG Network has led to improvement. External commissioned studies and the UN’s Special External Review have actively been used, showing good results. Attention to gender specific capacity development requirements and psycho-social needs have therefore
improved and training opportunities expanded. The latter based on belated market research and improved coordination with the private sector.

More time is required to see if inroads into the labor market are temporary or permanent. While these are more than mere cosmetic improvements, they are unlikely to rectify the gaps we identified in the early planning and design phase. Looking ahead, a major challenge for further rehabilitation of ex-combatants is to draw lessons learned from the gaps, shortcomings and hard-earned achievements of UNIRP.

Some of these key lessons include: improving national ownership; giving full attention to the dignity and grievances (land disputes, damaged property, displacement, torture, permanent injuries etc.) of the combatants; a comprehensive, decentralized, community-based approach to rehabilitation; and better coordination and delivery through both local government, civil society organizations and the private sector.

Engagement and disengagement of verified combatants

Earlier in this report, we analyzed the intricate political circumstances that explain the deadlock of Integration and Rehabilitation (I/R) of the Maoist Army Combatants and the intricate repercussions of the excessively long cantonments. These included: camps becoming communities that stopped discontent from boiling over, and an irresponsibly long demobilization period for the verified minors. Intact command lines have strengthened the Maoist Army, allowing it to function as a security guarantee for the U-CPN (M) and a threat for its political opponents.

As noted earlier, a deal (the Seven-Point Agreement) was signed as this report was being completed, which includes detailing integration, rehabilitation and voluntary retirement (I/R/R). This agreement sets certain new critical conditions for engagement and disengagement routes. The deal has led to a flurry of political and technical activity. The Special Committee (SC) for the Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation of Maoist Army Combatants belatedly (in February 2012) has been finalizing the specific entitlements for the three options that were not much detailed in the Seven-Point Agreement.

So what is at stake now that there is finally a formal political deal? The most agenda-setting element is the very attractive terms for “golden handshakes” (cash transfers) for voluntary retirement. The high cash value currently makes this option highly attractive for senior commanders, since the terms for the integration route contain clear disincentives in terms of education, service period, and age. Moreover, this option is also attractive for foot soldiers and mid-ranking officers, since the content of the rehabilitation the packages was discouragingly specified. Key elements of the deal are based on the Nepal Army’s own proposal, another indication of its current political scope of maneuver. However, the deal can only in a limited tactical perspective be seen as a “win-win” solution. It ensures that the U-CPN (M) can politically reintegrate many of its current senior commanders who would otherwise have gone for integration. The party also expects to fill up party coffers with substantial amounts of the golden handshakes. The political attractiveness must also be seen as a concession to India’s skepticism about full integration of Maoist army combatants in the regular forces and the compulsions of the new political government short-lived coalition based on the more or less unrealistic promise of block-integration of Madhesi into the Nepal Army.
“Golden handshakes” - politicized as a mediation broker and incentive system

The agreement on very substantial cash packages to verified combatants who have opted for exit begs several questions. When the re-verification was conducted in late 2011 the rehabilitation option was not detailed, the terms and conditions for cash installments for the retirement route and rank conversion (for army integration route) had yet to be fully settled. This created a skewed incentive system, which played into politically changed nature fulfilling previously agreed upon quotas for army integration. The retirement option was part of a large-scale power sharing arrangement and an intra-party mediation broker, aimed at motivating ex-combatants from the so-called hardline fraction to opt for the retirement route instead of the integration route. The final figures of the re-verification are telling: 8671 male combatants and 1034 female combatants registered for army integration, a number well above the quota of 6,500 previously agreed. 4 840 male combatants opted for retirement and 2525 female combatants for the same. Only 6 men opted for rehabilitation. The re-verification became a formidable battle between individual and collective wills (party leaders, bargaining political fractions and political brokers and senior commanders and mid-ranking officers).  

The media reported conflicts (involving commanders-lower ranking ex-fighters and the party) around shares in golden handshakes and the issue of these ex-combatants’ competing collective responsibilities, expose the need for transparent control routines, safety, and mediation as both preventive and curative measures. SPD scholar and practitioner Desmond Molloy (2011) has in an unpublished paper correctly argued that pure cash transfers are problematic in the current context of rent-seeking, extortion, weakened rule of law, and lack of institutional support for counseling, banking services, and investments. This reflects the overall slow recovery process and development five years after the formal peace agreement, which makes bridging this option to pathways of the reintegration process virtually non-existent. Molloy’s evidence-based argument is widely shared in the international community. A number of agencies are ready to finance the rehabilitation option, but few bilateral agencies have committed themselves to financing the controversial golden handshakes. Regardless, a substantial part of the funding will come from Nepal’s development budget, which means that funding of the estimated total amount of budget of 6 billion NRS comes indirectly from international assistance.

Since so few have opted for the rehabilitation course, the main question is currently if the retirement route is organized around a set of modalities and incentives which make this route a pathway towards recovery and reconciliation and entry into civilian life. Importantly, the financial support should contribute to decent livelihoods and an active civil and political life as a bridging arrangement to the wider peace-building effort. This may have also been the viewpoint of a sizable portion of the verified combatants themselves, in stark contrast to their top commanders. But the current individual-focused cash payments in a society organized around a set of conflicting competing collective entitlements is bound to create havoc.

63 These are the authentic final figures (as of February 25, 2012) provided at the courtesy of the Secretariat of the Special Committee for Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation of Maoist Army Combatants
Importantly, the Nepal Army is not as monolithic as it may seem. Typically on conditions of anonymity, quite a number of high-ranking officers told us that integrating 5,000 to 7,000 combatants into NA is both acceptable and possible. It is our assessment that this has long been a widely shared opinion within the middle-ranking officer corps. Among the top brass, the predominant view is that a new directorate will better secure the institution. Putting this in context, the number of combatants accounts for only 5–7 percent of the current force of NA. It will rise to no more than 10 percent if the NA is downsized to its pre-war size.

We now return to our key questions: What does it mean to leave the cantonments for rehabilitation or retirement? Is leaving voluntary or not? And what is disengagement for the verified combatants? In the recent flurry of political activity and hectic preparations for regrouping in the cantonments, the central Maoist leaders made it very clear that, while individual needs and interests are not being entirely discounted, they may have to be sacrificed in favor of the collective needs and interest of the party. Since currently released final numbers are disaggregated by gender and not by rank, we may assume that more mid-ranking combatants have been commanded to opt for a military career through army integration. The final numbers opting for this route are well above the quota of 6,500, which signals that integration issue is far more than a symbol cause. The large numbers of ex-combatants who have registered for the retirement route, as already argued, shows is a crucial element of the ongoing political drama. The large cash payouts functions as a strong incentive for senior officers to take this route. Their integration into the party organs with access to high offices in the government is an issue of great importance, as has been the case in many power-sharing deals elsewhere.

Relatively fewer female ex-combatants have opted for a military career compared to retirement. Female combatants who do not have comprehensive care responsibilities will face fewer dilemmas than combatants with under-aged children. Women are underrepresented among mid- and top-ranking Maoist combatants. A large number married during the cantonment period and have taken main responsibility for raising children. Even a stronger commitment to a gender-sensitive integration policy than the one which is currently in place, may not solve the dilemma for those female combatants who either cannot or will not rely on other care providers. Many of the new posts will be operative and camp-based. The obstacles for married female combatants to reconcile family responsibilities with service in the army are emerging as sensitive and difficult ones, in the media, in the cantonments, and in families.

The combatants currently being discharged from the cantonments, are leaving behind a radical, political, tight-knit war-community. They see themselves as revolutionary vanguards that deserve compensation for their wartime sacrifices and achievements, and their immense patience in the cantonments. One current combatant expressed his feelings; “The major political parties must become clear on one matter – has PLA contributed to change by demolishing the monarchy and setting up the republic? We claim we have played a tremendously important role. Thus, PLA should be honored for this. Many houses of Maoist cadres were burnt and family members lost. Because of this contribution, and to compensate us for the loss of our property, the state should provide a good package so we can live the rest of our lives in a dignified manner.” (“Laxman” - verified combatant)
Based on our interviews, we have found that expectations for an uncomplicated return to native villages or new communities vary from optimistic to pessimistic. The critical rehabilitation factors are:

- communities’ war-time experiences
- combatants’ own history of grievances and war crimes
- combatants’ and community’s wish for reconciliation or vengeance
- rehabilitation and retirements package sizes should not create new grievances
- non-political rehabilitation committees
- degree of political awareness translated into social practices
- conflict level between political parties
- situation of already-integrated ex-combatants
- situation of IDPs and their grievances
- role of armed groups in the area
- access to health care services
- prospect for upward economic mobility

Saferworld’s comprehensive survey-based assessment of needs and concerns for Maoist army combatants found that only 20 percent expected to return home without challenges. Many verified combatants (men more so than women) feared coming home “empty handed,” being humiliated, or even rejected. About 40 percent of combatants feared rejection due to inter-caste marriage. In addition, a majority of female combatants feared moral scrutiny and condemnation for having lived with male combatants.

Interestingly, those combatants who had suffered the greatest personal losses felt the strongest about the importance of reconciliation. “Krishna” an interviewed senior commander said: “My wife and brother were tortured and killed by the police, but what to do? We should not return to our old grievances, but rather start anew with the previous enemy, building on the new relationship embodied first in the 12-point agreement borne of a joint quest for peace and stability.”

The difficulties faced by female VMLR and those who married inter-caste do not seem to have alerted the authorities to start planning for a dual-track approach to social reintegration of the verified. This would include life-skills counseling for the exiting disengaged combatants and sensitization of community leaders and social workers to lay the groundwork for an accepting welcome to the ex-combatants turned civilians. Since many low-ranking female combatants have established themselves in the rim zones around the cantonments, and are de facto disengaging, many will wish to settle in surrounding communities.

Because we have found that UNIRP (except for the CAAFAAG-implemented component) had an overly minimalist approach to the social dimension of integration, we argue for a paying closer attention to how social and economic reintegration is interconnected.

While the scale of current conflict is unknown, there are reports of conflicts between commanders and verified exiting combatants. One may expect cash transfers will also generate conflict with self-integrated combatants who return home empty-handed, and with
the VLMRs who received a comparatively miniscule amount during the discharge. Similarly other war-afflicted IDPs and permanently injured civilians may find themselves at an objectionable loss. Ex-combatants who return home will undergo tremendous pressure to spend on kith and kin, and loan out to needy co-villagers. This may help community integration, at the cost of the individual combatant and his/her family’s livelihood. Those who remain stingy may face sanctions and consider leaving again. Combatants who settle in semi-urban and urban areas will attract the attention of pure criminal elements and friends with risky business proposals. In other words, cash transfer has risks of spurring family tension, conflict between former comrades and cadres, and supporting the illicit economy.

In order to enhance the livelihoods of ex-combatants and communities, economic incentives viable small-scale enterprises, property purchase, and suitable education are needed. These must be backed by counseling services for behavior management, trauma healing and economic management. In doing this, the returning combatants may become local change agents and well-recognized leaders who can mend the deep rifts and bring new life to their communities.

**Conclusion and main findings**

This report started with recognizing the critical need for evidence-based reintegration research and arguing for a political economy analysis of Nepal's decade-long armed conflict and the peace settlement. This served as an entry point for an assessment of the conditions that have shaped the UN’s shrinking leverage in Nepal since the final days of the armed conflict in 2005. The report found that while the official stalemate on the battlefield between the national security forces and the Maoist guerilla and local militias, the latter saw the endgame as a political victory while the former viewed the settlement as a defeat dictated by their civilian political masters. In establishing the United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) in late 2006, the Security Council’s limited “good offices” mandate was an apt expression of the complex geopolitical political realities the mission was tasked with from the outset.

The mission had a high-profile presence but a limited mandate of supervision and technical assistance. This played into a complex political game that was embedded in a political culture whose virtues and vices proved challenging for the UN to comprehend and tackle. We have found that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement’s SSR and DDR elements became subject to intense political strife soon after the peace process’s promising interlude. From the very beginning, the former Maoist guerilla movement disowned the DDR and the international IDDRS standards. The UN became increasingly isolated and criticized as the only unambiguous protagonist for the fragile peace process. The six-month deadline for discharging the Maoist Army Combatants was soon breached. Between 2007 and 2010, the UN Inter-Agency Team, OHCHR, and the High Commissioner for Children in Conflict, together with some national NGOs, were virtually alone in championing an end to impunity and discharge of the verified minors and late recruits, whose lengthy cantonment was in violation of international standards.

The report has analyzed the escalation of a political struggle that shifted from being predominantly a struggle over radical transformation of key state institutions (including asserting civilian rule over the security sector) to a drawn-out tug-of-war in which political allies (in the mass movement that succeeded in ending the armed conflict) become
adversaries. The Nepalese Army’s political influence grew (due to political support by default and Indian backing) and the contending political parties started to use the pending constitutional issues and integration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants as tactical bargaining cards. In order to keep their mass base and avoid a split in the party (which has an influential hard-liner faction), UCPN-M implemented a two-pronged strategy of engagement in parliamentary politics and in mass action in the streets.

Overall, the UN’s mission’s mixed success and final closure in early 2010 highlighted three reinforcing sets of difficulties. The first is that it was a neutral third-party supporter to the implementation of a Peace Agreement over which there was no national consensus and weak support by a major regional third party (neighboring India). The second was that it lacked sufficient insight into the geopolitical frame conditions and Nepal’s national history and political culture; this caused it to overestimate its own strategically leverage. Thirdly, partly as a result of the first two difficulties, the value of the neutral and apolitical DDR policy and program was inadequate for contending with local understandings of front and backstage politics and a radical and counter-radical regime preserving political struggle, wherein individual human rights of child soldiers, young combatants and the civilian war-affected population are secondary at best.

Building on a political economy analysis of the intricate linkages between geopolitics and the actions of the most influential third-party players and the main national political actors, the second part of this report analyzed the politics of engagement and disengagement during what has become the world’s longest cantonment period in modern times. We have found that the withdrawal of the Maoists from the government in 2009, following their assertion of civilian political rule over the Chief of the Nepal Army, heralded a turning point. The already fragile peace process was placed on the backburner, until very recently. In the souring political climate, the cantoned combatants were found to function as a key element in a continued mass struggle and a leverage tool in the stalled constitutional process. The prolonged cantonment period effectively became a tactical and military strategic ploy in which the international community contributed by supporting a substantial upgrading of the infrastructure and services in the cantonments. The retained command structure and upgraded facilities arguably helped prevent mass desertion and eased the frustration and anger caused by perceived ill-treatment by the party and the international community.

Whilst the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) gave the UN the monitoring role of arms, it is significant that the CPA gave control over the keys (with which the arms were locked) to the Maoist Commanders. Effectively, the cantoned Maoist Army Combatants were neither effectively disarmed nor demobilized and lines of commands were strictly maintained. These military conditions, together with the semi-permanency of the cantonment, are found to have given them a character as centers of military and ideological training. The cumulative result is that the Maoists have a better trained force in late 2011 than they did when the armed conflict ended in 2005–2006. This is despite the fact that many of the senior commanders avoided verification and opted for political reintegration.

Based on the argument that reintegration can be understood as a process of disengagement, the report investigated the nature of the decisions (collective or individual) and the reasons for entering (and remaining part of) the radicalized Maoist militant movement at the outset in 1996 and during the more than 10 years of armed conflict. With the caveat that there is a continuum between collective and individual decisions, the report found that most decisions
of engagement were framed by Nepal’s volatile and deteriorating situation. This comprised a
detracting and discriminatory state, a lack of access to justice, weak economic growth
including high youth employment, and overall weak inter-generational justice. It is
concerning that none of these critical macro-economic and governance parameters have
improved over the last five years. The fact that the deeper societal causes for radical militant
engagement remain unaddressed is a critical and consequential observation, to which we
returned in our analysis of the recent agreement on integration, rehabilitation, and
retirement of verified combatants.

The report’s fourth and final part, documents and analyzes selected DDR outcomes,
showcasing the usefulness of a political economy approach to make sense of how Nepal’s
divisive politics is not simply a context to the UN’s DDR intervention, but directly impacts the
motivation and decisions of the clients in consequential ways. The entire efforts to
discharge, demobilize, and rehabilitate the minors and late recruits became UN-led, rather
than UN-supported. The ownership of these processes by either the government or the
UCPC(M) was virtually non-existent and, in the case of the Maoists, rejected outright. For
the Maoists, retaining chains of command over the verified minors who considered enrolling
and were enrolled in the UN’s Rehabilitation Program (UNIRP) was part of a large political
project of mass mobilization. One of the regulative polices for maintaining loyalty was to
demotivate entry and motivate drop-outs by creating dissatisfaction by instilling
unrealistically high expectations about UNIRP’s provisions. In keeping with its mass line, the
well-funded party apparatus of UCPN (M) had a very large number of cadres as full-time
employees and could compete with the UNIRP’s benefit packages. Moreover, UNIRP’s
“stewardship” was ostensibly short-term and job guarantees after graduation could not be
given unconditionally.

The report found that the UCPN (M) violated children’s rights by keeping command lines
over their youngest combatants for a too long time before releasing them. When this
happened, the process was conducted unilaterally, restricting engagement and ownership
from the government and other parties. Once this damage had been done, the involved UN
agencies were guided by the assertion of a cantonment as a transitory space before ex-
combatants are reintegrated in communities, overlooking the fact that the cantonments
were no longer just settlements and had increasingly complex community-like features. Our
approach to community as a multi-centric concept unraveled an unexpected gender
dimension. Female combatants on maternity leave settled in large numbers around the
cantonments and quite many of them were found to be in the process of de facto
demobilization and rehabilitation.

Finally, the report analyzed three programming-related issues for UNIRP: the adequacy of
the notion of reintegration in the design phase, the degree to which UNIRP has promoted a
consolidated exit process, and key lessons for the upcoming rehabilitation of current
combatants. The design was found to be unduly focused on economic rehabilitation at the
expense of social rehabilitation, mainly due to directives from the GoN. The design’s
community focus, with the notable exception of the UNICEF-led project, was found to be
limited; this is likely to affect effective rehabilitation and reconciliation in the coming
months, as both graduated VMLR and verified ex-combatants who have chosen retirement
or rehabilitation resettle. The combatants faced a dilemma of being involved in a political
community that wants to break caste taboos, while also belonging to local communities who
still largely consider themselves moral custodians of upholding intra-caste marriages. Greater attention to this dilemma would have necessitated greater emphasis on social issues and coordination with the line agencies and other development partners that advocate social reform. Despite lacking political buy-in and the above-mentioned shortcomings in the planning phase, the UNIRP is found to have managed to improve programme delivery. These results are based on a solid set of generative learning mechanisms, which have led to improved response rates overall and from female clients in particular. Current monitoring data on employment rates among graduated VMLRs is found to be encouraging, although caution should be taken when consider the relatively short period of collection of the employment data.

Significantly, this report has found that of the identified key lessons from UNIRP, which comprise: improved national ownership, fuller attention to dignity and grievances, a comprehensive decentralized community-based approach, and better coordination and delivery through the government, the civil society and private partners and selective attention to dignity and grievances, only two have to some degree been accounted for in the ongoing integration and retirement processes. These are national ownership (with several caveats, as will be explicated below) and dignity and grievances (also only partially).

The Seven-Point Agreement is a politically forged tactical deal among the four major parties as the front-stage actors. The UN has not been asked to be party to its implementation. So far, the UN has not even had a technical supporting role in the recounting of combatants, a process that has been hectic and not so far particularly transparent. In the light of this report’s analysis of Nepalese party politics as being characterized by unstable consensus over short-term power-sharing arrangements, the current deal may be “national” by default. The UN and the rest of Nepal’s international partners are mostly sidelined and divided, with different commitments to fund the expensive deal directly and indirectly. The deal is “a win-win arrangement”, in a short-sighted perspective, granted the vastly different underlying motives of the main front and back-stage actors. The UCPN (M) chances of getting acceptance for block entry of Madeshis into the army, have diminished. The party is about to undertake an impressive and massive process of political reintegration, by absorbing a couple of thousand commanders, who exit with lucrative golden handshakes and prospects for higher party offices and future offices in government. A mixed alliance of the leadership in the Nepal Army, its currently allied political parties, and India have averted the feared block entry of radical elements into the regular armed forces. It could be expected that those that integrate, most of which would do so by command, are not coming from the radical nationalist fraction of the Maoist party. Given the symbolic value of integrating women into combat roles the armed forces, a not insignificant number of female combatants will be integrated. Efforts will be made to start institutionalizing a gender-sensitive employment policy in line with Nepal’s Action Plan on 1325. These predicted outcomes apart, serious uncertainties surround the Seven-Point Agreement’s effects on the fractured, grievance-ridden national polity and on deeply war-affected communities. Rather than settling grievances, the golden handshake-driven retirement efforts may actually fuel new dissent between those who get plenty and those who receive little or nothing.
Policy recommendations

- **First critical lesson from Nepal**: UNMIN’s mixed successes and diminished leverage as neutral third-party actor, the Rehabilitation Programme being UN-lead instead of supported and the UN being currently sidelined, highlight the difficulties of DDR interventions in a country context where several of the preconditions for DDR interventions are at best only partly in place.

- **Building on this lesson from Nepal**: this lesson from Nepal and related cases, can serve as basis for a generic early -assessment tool, which outlines the preconditions that shall be in place (in order to fully conform) and should (preferred) be in place, before the international community decide to undertake a DDR or Reintegration Intervention.

- **Finding the critical balance**: the UN as well as other international actors that are committed to assist bringing the peace process back on track, must fully recognize the political nature of SSR and DDR in Nepal and strive for a balanced approach between unprincipled pragmatism and human rights standards, inclusive democracy, rule of law, and the International DDR Standards for reintegration of ex-combatants.

- **A commendable reorientation**: there is a need for a strategic approach that builds on a thorough understanding of opportunities and constraints when operating in a buffer state, wherein geopolitics plays a decisive role. A long-term approach is needed for the UN to rebuild trust as a neutral third-party actor. The difficult choices the UN will have to make as a development partner should be guided by the long-term systemic approach to peace-building, development and national reconstruction.

- **A multi-pronged, conflict-sensitive approach is recommended**: this would enable the UN and like-minded partners to achieve three things: (1) to engage with the national political processes and create incentives and support systems for cohesive goal-based strategic action, as opposed to short-term power sharing and spoiler arrangements; (2) to engage with the rights-based social movements of Madhesi, women, Janajati, Dalit, Adivasi, and workers to create conducive conditions for a citizen-based trust as Nepalis. Such a trust could build popular sovereignty and greater accountability of the currently power and spoiler-oriented national political actors; (3) aims to strengthen community-based approaches that are less instrumental (not simply what communities can do for UN interventions) and more supportive of communities’ absorptive capacity of returnees (ex-combatants and civilians), reconciliatory practices, their local informal and semi-formal mechanisms of negotiating social conflicts and political rifts, their management of natural resources, their demands for greater government presence and better service delivery, and the presence of private sector actors in joint livelihood and peace building activities between victims and perpetrator of violence in the past.

- **Backing conflict transformation from below**: there is a wealth of incipient changes in traditional discriminatory local conflict resolution and reconciliation mechanisms, brought about by the Maoist peoples’ courts, local social leaders new political awareness of justice and pioneers in community policing and civic education. All need policy recognition and support from all government agencies and credible civil society actors. Uneven existence of such mechanisms continued unjust treatments and inability to address serious war-related and post-war grievances need to be assessed and alternative mutually acceptable solutions identified.

- **Backing conflict transformation from meso-level**: strengthen federal and local government service delivery, improvement of rule of law, community security, private –
public partnership for infrastructure and market development - should enhance and complement local efforts and boost mutual accountability.

- **Nepal’s politics at crossroads;** the serious distrust of political parties and the state of having delivered meager peace dividends, must be transformed into restored faith in building a common peaceful future, through legitimate compromise of interest, ideology and identity and coalition building. Specific inequalities along caste, ethnic and gender and age remain important to address. They are articulated in the composition of the dissolving Maoist Army, the ex-combatants’ unaddressed grievances and their communities’ dismal state of wellbeing and underdevelopment.

- **Agreements on the constitution and federalism;** have to pave the way for a political consensus on policies and public deliverables which address these grievances and inequalities and rebuild the basis for cooperative action. The key elements of the Seven-Point Agreement are not consistently contributing to political consensus by non-violent means and addressing grievances of both ex-combatants and civilians.

- **A critical need for a political consensus around the minimum standards for a national security policy;** there is an urgent need for interparty consensus around a minimum standard security policy, which includes security sector reform (also addressing improved civilian control over the Nepal Army), border control, community-led reintegration and reconciliation, and community policing - incorporating human security concerns that heal the wound of communal divides between hills and plains and improve livelihoods and safety.
The International Research Group on Reintegration

Efforts to ensure social, political and economic reintegration of former combatants are persistently neglected in peacebuilding interventions. This is so, even as reintegration of former fighters is a central prerequisite for durable peace to take hold and for post-war economic reconstruction to be kick-started.

The Centre for Peace Studies’ (CPS) International Research Group on Reintegration (IRGR) is currently in cooperation with other applied academic institutions and international agencies, including the United Nations Interagency Working Group on DDR (IAWG-DDR), undertaking interdisciplinary and comparative studies of reintegration. Current initiatives build on a four years in-depth project with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) on the contexts of DDR. Ongoing applied research will enable the group to assess strengths and weaknesses in current DDR policy formulation and programming and contribute to a bolstering of reintegration efforts in key conflict zones.

The research initiative will solidify the standing of the Centre for Peace Studies at the University of Tromsø and associated partners as an international hub for expertise on reintegration. Complementary to the ongoing IAWG-CPS collaboration, which also has a focus on customization of DDR knowledge products, CPS is in collaboration with UNIDIR (Geneva) and Livework (a leading innovator of service design), developing prototypes which may enable CPS gradually to take on global service functions on reintegration.

Disarmament and demobilization, the shorter and technical sides of DDR, usually receive considerable focus and resources. Reintegration, however, is understudied and critically underfinanced. The work of the IRGR may help rectify this by maintaining a deliberate focus on reintegration and substantiate why long-term funding will enhance cost-effectiveness of peacebuilding. An underlying premise of current initiatives is that if reintegration, in all its facets, is systematically studied, we can generate new important evidence-based knowledge that will help future reintegration programming. Too little is known about the mechanisms that facilitate and play into reintegration processes. These need to be recorded, distilled and analyzed in order for researchers and practitioners to see common patterns and processes, which in turn can shed new light on why and how reintegration processes unfold in the way they do. Reintegration is an issue gaining importance in inter-agency efforts - helping to develop UN-wide tools and approaches will therefore provide important support to the Integrated Missions concept.

The IRGR comprises both faculty staff and affiliated leading scholars on DDR and global security. Furthermore, CPS currently supports young researchers to develop expert knowledge on DDR and Reintegration in particular. CPS’s own PhD and MA students in Peace and Conflict Transformation are affiliated with the expert group and receive guidance from a group who combine academic excellence with dedicated work as practitioners. Several of the groups’ members are current or former UN staff, including from agencies such as DPKO, UNDP, UNIFEM and UNESCAP. The DDR team will offer advice on design, implementation and evaluation of DDR, as well as on institutional capacity building and on mainstreaming gender-aware reintegration concerns into large-scale reconstruction and recovery efforts.