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Managing Armed Groups in Myanmar's Peace Process:

Security Sector Governance as a Way Forward

DB Subedi

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DB Subedi is an Adjunct Lecturer in School of Humanities at the University of New England, Australia and a Senior Fellow in the Centre for Security Governance in Canada. He has a PhD in Peace Studies from the University of New England Australia where his PhD research project studied disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of Maoists ex-combatants in Nepal.

He also posses more than 12 years of experience in project management, training and research in the field of peacebuilding, conflict and violence prevention, security promotion and development and has worked in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Australia. His research interest includes peacebuilding and conflict transformation, DDR and SSR, post-conflict reconciliation, social cohesion and security promotion, gender and peacebuilding, de-radicalisation and countering violent extremism. His research works have been published extensively as journal article, policy briefing papers, book chapters and opinion articles. He is a co-editor of *Cultivating Peace* (Cambridge Scholar Publishing 2014) and *Reconciliation in Conflict –Affected Communities: Practice and Insights from the Asia-Pacific* (Springer Publication 2018, forthcoming).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Myanmar has experienced one of the world's longest armed conflicts. More than two dozen ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), militias and insurgents have been engaged in the conflict. In 2015, eight of the EAOs signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). This paper explores the dilemmas around the management of armed groups in the peace process in Myanmar, with a focus on the future of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR). It explores security, economic and political factors that affect, either positively or negatively, the future of a DDR or SSR program. The paper also argues that a clear conceptual understanding and consensus between EAOs and the Union government on how to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate armed groups must be embedded in the framework of political dialogue and peace negotiation. Recognizing the sensitivities associated with dealing with EAOs, this paper suggests that avoiding the sensitive language of DDR and SSR during political negotiations while broadly focusing on aspects of the management of armed groups and their weapons in accordance with the principles and practice of security sector governance may help reach a consensus between EAOs and the government. The paper also discusses critical considerations for security sector governance as a way forward .

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

BGFs	Border Guard Forces
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DKBA	Democratic Karen Benevolent Army
EAOs	ethnic armed organizations
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
KNU	Karen National Union
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NLD	National League for Democracy
PMs	People's Militias
RCSS	Restoration Council of Shan State
SSPP	Shan State Progress Party
SSR	security sector reform
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
UNDDR	United Nations International DDR standards
UWSA	United Wa State Army

INTRODUCTION

Since 1949, Myanmar (also known as Burma) has suffered from one of the world's longest armed conflicts. The peace process that was initiated by the quasi-civilian government formed after the 2010 election arrived at a critical juncture when the then government signed the NCA with eight EAOs in October 2015. More than a dozen EAOs are, however, not yet part of the NCA. The current government, led by the National League for Democracy (NLD), has prioritized national reconciliation and peace as a part of the road map for peace. Yet, there are many thorny issues, which need to be sorted out before the country moves from the NCA phase to a peace agreement phase. One such issue is the DDR of armed groups.

The question about how EAOs — some of which have controlled territories and run parallel governance structures — will eventually give up their arms and enter into social, political and economic life is central to Myanmar's peace process. The political road map for peace as stipulated in the NCA includes a seven-step process[1], which clearly recognizes the need to manage the troops of EAOs. While the road map appears to be a state-centric framing of the peace process by the government and the military, EAOs both inside and outside of the NCA process, have challenged it for being a highly top-down approach controlled by political elites.

With regard to the management of the armed groups in the peace process, the NCA has used the term "security integration" in section six; however, what the term will entail and, more importantly, whether it will follow a DDR model or an SSR model is ambiguous. Indeed, the terms DDR and SSR are considered highly sensitive in Myanmar's peace process and are therefore downplayed, partly due to the potential negative political implications they might have in the negotiation process.

This paper explores the security, economic and political factors that affect, either positively or negatively, the future of DDR or SSR in Myanmar. It argues that a clear conceptual understanding and consensus between EAOs and the Union government on how to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate armed groups must be embedded in the framework of political dialogue and negotiation. Recognizing the sensitivities associated with the terms DDR and SSR, this paper suggests that during political negotiations, a consensus between EAOs and the government may be reached by avoiding the sensitive language of DDR and instead broadly focusing on aspects of the management of armed groups and their weapons in accordance with the principles and practice of security sector governance. A focus on security sector governance will integrate elements of DDR and SSR while linking management of armed groups and their weapons with a political process such as national reconciliation, federalism and economic transformation.

MODELS OF MANAGING ARMED GROUPS AND WEAPONS IN A PEACE PROCESS

DDR

As an important element of post-conflict peace building, DDR is a model applied to transform armed groups into civilians at the end of a war.[2] In peace building that emerges from a political settlement, DDR is a part of a peace negotiation; therefore, by default, it is a political process and also a mechanism for power-sharing (Ball and van de Goor, 2006; Verkoren et al., 2010). Leaving DDR out of a peace negotiation may temporarily make it easier for conflict actors to reach a consensus. However, the absence of a DDR agenda in a peace negotiation also means the parties to a peace negotiation lack a shared agenda that would determine the future of armed groups.

Traditional DDR programs, also known as "first generation DDR", mainly focused on individual ex-combatants, perceiving them as a "security threat multiplier." Early DDR programs were mainly guided by a neo-realist view of peace building and state building, which sought to address post-conflict security challenges by dealing with disarmed and demobilized ex-combatants. A major criticism of this approach was its actual and perceived failure to link DDR with wider post-conflict political and development processes and the lack of national and local ownership (Muggah, 2010; Ozerdem, 2009). Institutional and policy innovations were, however, made in DDR programs in the 1980s and 1990s. The United Nations Integrated DDR standards (UNIDDR), for instance, is an example of policy innovation, which provides a broader framework for practitioners to plan and execute DDR programs in conjunction with post-conflict stabilization, development and governance programs.

The recent wave of DDR programs, also known as the "second generation DDR" (Muggah, 2010), is an outcome of the policy innovation. One important innovation in second generation DDR is the expansion of the focus from individual ex-combatants to include combatants, their families and communities, who also suffered from the armed conflict in one way or another. This shift in focus ties DDR to post-conflict recovery and development. Yet, DDR programs are still criticized for lacking national ownership and for being implemented through a centralized peace architecture that reinforces the state-centric nature of post-war reconstruction and liberal peace-building projects (Ozerdem, 2009; Porto, Alden and Parsons, 2007). Despite the fact that DDR is a highly political process (the success or failure of which is contingent upon the political will of key political actors, including armed groups), the second generation DDR programs do not sufficiently engage with armed groups' political agendas in situations where armed groups pursue such political agendas as political inclusion, constitution writing and federalism, as was the case in Nepal.

SSR

SSR, which came into vogue after the Cold War, is another model applied to restructure the security sector in nascent post-conflict democracies. The concept of SSR refers to a set of policies, programs and activities that are intended to improve the security and justice delivery system, in accordance with the principles of transparency, human rights and democracy (Sedra, 2010b). In many cases, SSR and DDR become closely interlinked and/or DDR becomes an element of a broad SSR framework, which needs to address security and stabilization issues but also to restructure one or many aspects of justice and security-providing mechanisms (Bryden, 2007; Lamb and Dye, 2009; McFate, 2010). While there is no single model of SSR, examples from various countries suggest that SSR includes a legal and constitutional framework providing for the use of force in accordance with international standards, an institutionalized system of security governance and management, the mechanisms for the oversight of state security actors by civilian authorities and the capacities to provide effective security with transparent mechanisms (Fitz-Gerald, 2012).

Because an SSR program focuses on creating an enabling policy environment and enhancing institutional capacity to deliver security, it is criticized for embracing a top-down model of liberal state building that undermines context sensitivities, local cultural nuances of formal and informal security and justice systems, local ownership of security delivery and, more importantly, linking SSR with local governance arrangements (Hanggi, 2005; Sedra, 2010a).

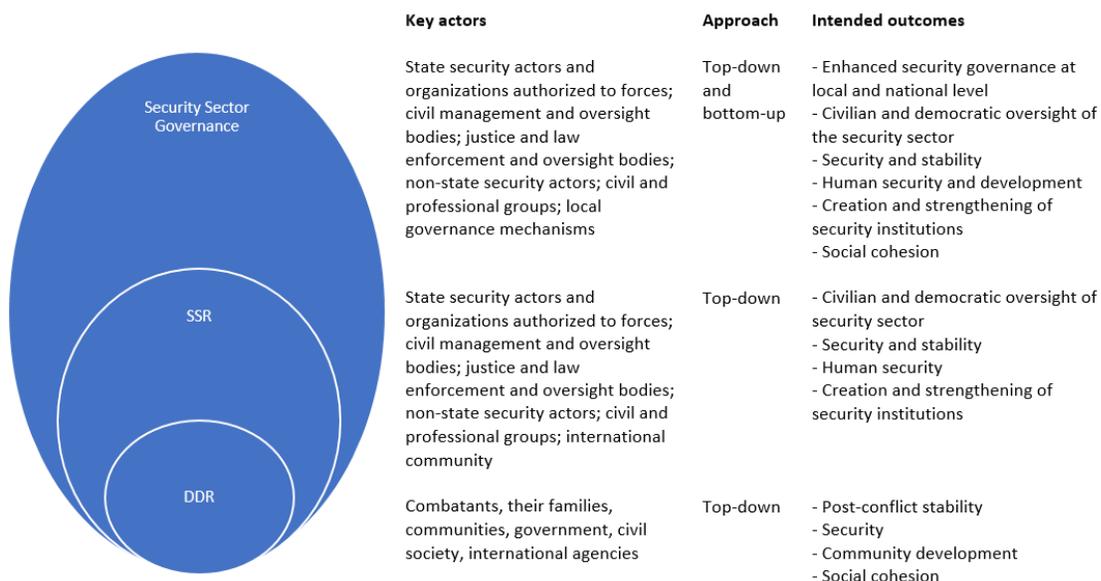### Towards a Maximalist Concept of Security Sector Governance

Recent experience from other Asian countries such as Nepal, the Philippines and Timor Leste shows that in a politically negotiated peace process, DDR does not necessarily follow a traditional model; rather, DDR and SSR are integrated in such a way that a hybrid model of DDR emerges out of a political negotiation between the governments and armed groups in questions (Hall, 2009; Subedi, 2014a). Also notable is the fact that in a politically negotiated peace process, the debate over SSR often tends to focus on the integration of rebels into the military, as was the case in Nepal and the Philippines, rather than addressing the broader question of democratizing the security sector and improving security governance under the principles of democratization.

In a post-conflict country, SSR has inherent links with the governance system because "professionalism and effectiveness of the security sector is not just measured by the capacity of the security forces, but how well they are managed, monitored and held

accountable" (Sedra, 2010a: 16). The intersection of SSR and security governance becomes more apparent in emerging democracies, where democratization, devaluation of power and local development are contingent on inclusive security provisions at the national to local levels. Inclusive security provisions in this case may include both formal and informal security mechanisms; formal includes state security mechanisms, whereas the latter might include informal and indigenous justice system and local community-led security mechanisms.

SSR embraces a top-down model, focusing on (re)building or strengthening security-providing institutions and overseeing bodies and mechanisms. But institutional reform does not guarantee changes in institutional culture. Indeed, change in institutional culture and the behaviour of security actors in line with the principles and practice of good governance, transparency, accountability and human rights are more vital than creating or reforming security sector for the improvement of inclusive security delivery mechanisms. By enhancing the institutional culture and the governance aspect of SSR, it can be expected that security sector governance will potentially link a top-down approach with a bottom-up approach to security delivery. Both DDR and SSR can be a part of the concept of security sector governance, which must also take into account prevailing systems and the culture of formal and informal security and justice provisions.

Figure 1: Maximalist Concept of Security Sector Governance

	Key actors	Approach	Intended outcomes
Security Sector Governance	State security actors and organizations authorized to forces; civil management and oversight bodies; justice and law enforcement and oversight bodies; non-state security actors; civil and professional groups; local governance mechanisms	Top-down and bottom-up	- Enhanced security governance at local and national level - Civilian and democratic oversight of the security sector - Security and stability - Human security and development - Creation and strengthening of security institutions - Social cohesion
SSR	State security actors and organizations authorized to forces; civil management and oversight bodies; justice and law enforcement and oversight bodies; non-state security actors; civil and professional groups; international community	Top-down	- Civilian and democratic oversight of security sector - Security and stability - Human security - Creation and strengthening of security institutions
DDR	Combatants, their families, communities, government, civil society, international agencies	Top-down	- Post-conflict stability - Security - Community development - Social cohesion

NON-STATE ARMED ACTORS AND THE PEACE PROCESS IN MYANMAR

EAOs

EAOs in Myanmar have been waging armed conflict with the government since Burma become independent from the British colony in 1948. The centralized nature of the nation-state building process was fraught with structural problems that undermined ethnic inclusion in the state-building process in post-colonial Burma (Sadan, 2013).[3] The exclusionary political process of state building was a source of grievance amongst ethnic groups like Mon, Kayah, Pao, Kachin, Chin and Shan. They initially supported the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) — the first political party that declared an insurgency after the independence. However, following the breaking up of the CPB after the 1989 mutiny, most of the ethnic groups that previously extended support to the CPB eventually ended up initiating armed insurgency on their own (Linter, 1990; Sadan, 2013).

In 1962, there was a military coup, which provided a passage for *Tatmadaw*[4] to ferment a nationalistic identity and a narrative of national integrity on which stringent counter-insurgency strategies were conceived. This resulted in the military operation that pushed EAOs to remote villages and borderlands in the south, north and east, where some of them effectively controlled the politics, administration and economy of the hinterlands.[5]

The attempts made by the military-led government for a ceasefire agreement failed in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Although a ceasefire agreement with 17 EAOs, including powerful groups like Kachin Independent Organisation (KIO), Karenni National Progressive Party, New Mon State Party, Pao National Organization, Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) and Chin National Front, was reached in the 1990s, continued hostile environments coupled with the lack of a political road map for peace could not hold the ceasefire. In 1989, a number of ethnic minority groups in the north and east of the country mutinied against the CPB, citing their dissatisfaction with the predominantly Burman leadership of the CPB (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2011). This led to an unprecedented proliferation of the armed outfits, especially in ethnic rural areas in the north and east along the borders of China and Thailand, respectively. Some influential and powerful-armed groups in terms of their armed forces such as the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (Kokang) emerged over time, which made a significant shift in the history and dynamics of armed conflict.

The exact number of armed groups and their military strength in Myanmar are hard to estimate, in part because some EAOs and militia groups are still disbanded while others are considered illegal and so their activities are mostly underground. Estimates from various sources, however, suggest that the total number of EAO troops including their reservist forces could be more than 100,000 combatants.[6] The government has recognized

only 16 EAOs as a "ceasefire group," while some other groups are out of the ceasefire process. The following table summarizes major EAOs and their military strength.

Figure 2: Selected EAOs with Significant Number of Troops

EAOs	Potential military strength	Ceasefire agreement
United Wa State Army	30,000 combatants and 10,000 reservists	Bilateral ceasefire agreement in September 2011
Kachin Independence Army (KIA)	10,000 combatants and 10,000 reservists	Last ceasefire agreement in 1994
Restoration Council of Shan State	8,000+ combatants	Signed NCA in October 2015
Shan State Progress Party	8,000+ combatants	Bilateral ceasefire agreement in January 2012
Karen National Union (KNU)	6,000+ combatants	Signed NCA in October 2015
Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA)	3,000+ combatants	No ceasefire
National Democratic Alliance Army	4,500+ combatants	Bilateral ceasefire agreement in September 2011
Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army	3,000+ combatants	No ceasefire
Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)	1,500+ combatants	Signed NCA in October 2015
New Mon State Party	800+ combatants and 2,000 reservists	Bilateral ceasefire agreement in February 2012
Karenni National Progressive Party	600+ combatants	Bilateral ceasefire agreement in March 2012
National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang	Less than 500 combatants	Bilateral ceasefire agreement in April 2012
Pa-O National Liberation Organisation	400+ combatants	Signed NCA in October 2015
Chin National Front	200+ combatants	Signed NCA in October 2015
Kuki National Organisation – Burma	200+ combatants	No ceasefire
Karen National Liberation Army – Peace Council	Less than 500 combatants	Signed NCA in October 2015
Arakan Liberation Party	Less than 100	Signed NCA in October 2015

Source: Compiled by the author from different sources including Burma News International (BNI) (2015) and Myanmar Peace Monitor (2016).

Militias

Militias are broadly defined as armed groups that are created to support the military (both national and foreign) and/or armed groups for different strategic purposes; some are used to aid the military capacity of state or non-state armed groups while others work as proxy security actors defending local areas and territories (see Hoffman, 2007; Wehrey and Ahram, 2015). In Myanmar, both sides, *Tatmadaw* and the EAOs, have created militias.

After the 2008 constitutional referendum, *Tatmadaw* introduced a policy to transform armed groups into Border Guard Forces (BGFs) or People's Militias (PMs) (M. Z. Oo, 2014).[7] By 2009, out of 40 active EAOs, five were transformed to BGFs and another 15 were converted to PMs, while the rest were still outside of the peace process (ibid.). Many EAOs have also created militias to consolidate their fighting strength and expand local outreach for protecting and controlling rural hinterlands under their control (Buchanan, 2016).[8] However, militias are made up of mostly members of ethnic groups (former members of EAOs) and work closely with the *Tatmadaw*. In most cases, local communities do not support them.

Although estimations vary regarding the number, size and strength of the militias, a study reports that the total strength could be over 80,000, out of which about 30,000 of them are armed (Buchanan, 2016: 29). Another study estimates that the number of militias could be up to 180,000 serving in 5,023 militia groups (M. Z. Oo, 2014). Militias can hardly be ignored, as they have heavily dotted the landscape of conflict, violence and the war economy in Myanmar.

Even though militias are significant and important actors in the conflict dynamics, the civilian government has, after 2010, delinked the militia transformation from the peace process. This is partly because such a transformation process would have a negative impact on ceasefire negotiation. The EAOs were, from the beginning, against the idea of the militia transformation because of the perception that such a transformation would only weaken their armed struggles, and that it could at times criminalize the armed insurgency and EAOs could lose local support.

The drive to transform armed groups into militias in the aftermath of the 2008 constitutional reform by the *Tatmadaw*-led government was partly aimed at diffusing EAO forces as much as possible and creating a powerful support base for the *Tatmadaw* for the upcoming election in 2010. However, it was evident that pro-government militias ultimately began to engage in non-security activities to finance themselves, which resulted in the formation of a militia-led war economy over time (see the section "War Economy" for further information) (Buchanan, 2016). On the other hand, pro-EAO militias have also ended in both security and non-security activities such as engaging in self-defence at the village level as well as relying on local taxes from public to fund them. Thus, the militias

in Myanmar (both pro-government and pro-EAOs) have emerged as key security actors that have impacts on security, violence and war economy dynamics. Without disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating militias, lasting peace in Myanmar will be elusive.

FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT THE FUTURE OF DDR AND SSR IN MYANMAR

Security Dilemma and Trust Building

Fear, suspicion and the lack of trust between EAOs and the government, particularly the military, have resulted in what is known as a "security dilemma" environment In this environment, armed groups generally held a perception that if they surrender their weapons, which guarantee their security and bargaining power, then the disarmed and demobilized combatants run the risk of being reneged by the government (Glassmyer and Sambanis, 2008). A credible security guarantee is therefore necessary for armed groups to overcome the security dilemma so as to take part in a DDR or SSR program. On the part of the government, the fear that armed groups will undermine the state's capacity to control violence engender a security dilemma situation, which prompts the government to consolidate power and expand military capabilities. This, in turn, instigates armed groups to consolidate power and maintain strategic defensive and, if needed, offensive, positions in ways that perpetuate a cycle of conflict and violence.

In Myanmar, the security dilemma situation has a direct impact on the peace process as EAOs, and the military have proposed different options for managing armed groups in the war-to-peace transition. The EAOs prefer SSR with an aim to form a so-called inclusive Union Army by integrating EAOs troops into *Tatmadaw*, while the *Tatmadaw* has pushed for DDR. EAOs (currently negotiation with the government) see what happened to militias will happen to them if they accept DDR, losing the support of local communities.

Having narrowly focused on combatant-army integration rather than discussing broader SSR agendas like democratization of military and inclusive security governance, the SSR agenda is, however, still not well connected to other political agendas like federalism. For EAOs, DDR carries a negative connotation, which is presumed to be an equivalent to "surrender and defeat." In the absence of a strong security guarantee by the government, preferably in the presence of a credible international monitoring group, DDR will not only be perceived as threatening to EAOs' existence, but it would also be less likely to induce what EAOs want as a "win-win" outcome of the armed insurgency.

A total of 25 percent of the seats in the Parliament are reserved for *Tatmadaw* representatives, whereas, according to the 2008 Constitution, only serving military officers can lead the three most powerful ministries — Defense, Home Affairs and Border Affairs.

This gives *Tatmadaw* a significant leveraging capacity in the peace process and also control over the security affairs in the country. Despite the fact that the NLD-led government is ramping up the peace process in Na Pi Taw, fights between EAOs and *Tatmadaw* have not stopped.[9] This is matched by an unprecedentedly large and controversial military budget of US$1.15 billion in 2016, intended for the modernization of the military by investing in military hardware and logistics, including aircraft, ships, vehicles and weapons. Furthermore, EAOs are reluctant to disarm because of the precedent that the schemes for armed groups to exchange "weapons with democracy" failed in the 1950s (A. N. Oo, 2014). Although these different political and security dynamics make EAOs less willing to accept DDR at present, they must realize that DDR is inevitable in the future.

On the other hand, the government, especially *Tatmadaw*, has maintained that DDR would be its preferred option to deal with armed groups (Gronberg, 2016). This reflects *Tatmadaw's* stance for disarmament before political settlement as a necessary condition to maintain the state's legitimate control over violence for peace, national unity and integrity. Thus perceived security dilemma and the lack of trust and confidence between EAOs and the *Tatamadw* have impeded the peace process.

The War Economy

The ethnic grievance in Myanmar has been expressed in many violent forms, including a flourishing war economy that sustains the insurgency and favours the status quo. It is reported that EAOs and, in some cases, the military have resorted to informal taxation, illicit trade and natural resource extraction while some armed groups are involved in the production and trafficking of drugs, which leads to the creation of a typical war economy that sustains their political and business networks and renders power to both sides to maintain the status quo (Benson, 2015; Callhan, 2007; ICG, 2011). As noted earlier, pro-government militias and pro-EAOs militias are also reportedly involved in illicit trade. For instance, the link between the Shan state militias and narcotics trafficking is a widely known example of the war economy in Myanmar.[10]

An exhaustive analysis of the war economy is beyond the scope of this paper. However, a key point here is that there is also a grievance factor that has given rise to a typical war economy. As also noted earlier, the structural fault lines of post-colonial nation state building that has perpetuated the armed conflict in Myanmar means that major EAOs have organized and mobilized popular support from below around the issues of identity, inclusion and the demand for federalism. This form of popular mobilization has provided some EAOs (KIO, for instance) with the space to operate self-declared "liberated areas" in which they control extraction of natural resources, local taxes and even international trade. KIO's involvement in jade mining in the Kachin state could be seen as a typical form

of war economy that emerged from the long-standing grievances.

What is also notable is the fact that the war economy and political violence operate in a shared territory and, at times, may have shared objectives in Myanmar. Therefore, making a clear distinction between political and criminal orientations of armed groups is one of the most notorious tasks in analyzing the war economy and its effects on the peace process. Greed-based militias, which are engaged in exploiting natural resources, make the war economy of Myanmar more complicated. These militia groups are more likely to accept DDR because it ultimately offers them a political and social identity. By contrast, EAOs, which mobilize grievances and engage in the war economy to sustain armed conflict, may look for a different option to deal with their arms and armies. An option such as security sector governance could simultaneously help them to fulfill their political demands. Therefore, a careful analysis of the war economy and its impacts on peace and conflict dynamics is necessary to understand the future of DDR and SSR in Myanmar.

The Demand for Federalism

Much of the EAOs' contention around historical and structural issues is expressed through the demand for federalism as one of the outcomes of a political settlement. The NCA document reaffirms the state's commitment to the principles of federalism and democracy while also emphasizing maintaining territorial integrity, which means the right to self-determination, and separatism at present or in future will be unacceptable. Federalism and the model for management of armed groups must not be dealt with separately because it is the model of federalism that will determine how the security sector that includes the so-called Union Military will be governed. Disarmament of armed groups can be a potential deal for agreeing on such a federal model (ICG, 2016). However, it must also be noted that in the current configuration of power-sharing between *Tatmadaw* and the NLD-led government and the growing formal and informal alliances between EAOs and ethnic political parties, federalism is not an easy deal to reach, especially given the skeptical position of *Tatmadaw* on this issue.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR A WAY FORWARD

Sensitivity in Using the Language in the Peace Negotiation

Although both sides, the EAOs and the government, have explicitly and implicitly acknowledged the need for reintegration of armed groups, a part of the problem at present boils down to sensitivity around the use of language. The term DDR is unacceptable to the EAOs while *Tatmadaw* is uncomfortable with the idea of SSR, leading to an impasse in

DDR-SSR dialogue. Using less-sensitive language in the political negotiation may avert this impasse. It is suggested that both sides could use a broader term such as "management of armed groups and weapons", rather then using SSR and DDR. It will help create an enabling environment for both sides to forge a common understanding for managing armed groups while its technical and administrative details can be worked out when the peace process reaches the next stage.

A DDR/SSR Program Anchored on a Security Sector Governance Framework Would Be a Suitable Option

As present, it appears a conventional DDR program as implemented by the UN in other countries may be less feasible in Myanmar. Considering the security dilemma situation on the part of EAOs, disarmament before political settlement will be unlikely because once disarmed, armed groups will lose their bargain capacity in the peace process, as was the case in Myanmar in 1950s and between 2008 and 2010. This dilemma may be overcome if a DDR program is integrated into a broader framework of federalism and security sector governance, which encapsulates some elements of DDR while also increasing civilian and democratic oversight of the state security forces including the police. This will balance the approach to both DDR and SSR, and motivates EAOs to cooperate.

As noted above, much of the discussion on SSR by EAOs has focused on integrating rebels into the military to create a so-called Union Military. However, the impact of security integration on the national economy is yet to be determined because rebel-military integration often increases the size of the military and the economic burden to a war-torn country.[11] Nonetheless, EAOs currently negotiating with the government have also proposed reforming judiciary system including law enforcement and civilian oversight of security sector as a part of SSR, which means EAOs have already intended to take a security governance approach in peace negotiation. In Myanmar, federalism will entail new arrangements for security sector governance. This will in turn ensure local ownership of security, justice and democratization of security forces, which are vital to social cohesion and enhanced community security for durable peace.

Although military integration would be almost inevitable to garner EAOs' support for the peace process, only a few combatants may end up integrating into the armed forces and many others will have to go through a community-based reintegration process. Different options for community reintegration can be explored, including the possibility of integrating combatants into local security forces such as the police (Kyed and Gravers, 2015). This must, however, be accompanied by a democratic security governance mechanism that takes into account the existing security dynamics and their impact on the everyday life of people at the local level.

In the current scenario, the *Tatmadaw* may reject the idea of security sector governance, which will bring the Burma army under the civilian oversight. However, in the long-run, linking security sector governance with the peace process and federalism can benefit the *Tatmadaw* in many ways. First, as the country is now opening up both politically and economically, *Tatmadaw* is also willing to professionalize through collaborations and cooperation with foreign militaries including those of the United States, Russia, China, Thailand, India and Bangladesh. This is where security sector governance can add value to create a democratic identity of the *Tatmadaw,* which will open up bigger space for the Myanmar military to engage with militaries from democratic countries. Second, accepting the principles and practice of security sector governance will provide *Tatmadaw* with credibility and legitimacy to participate in the UN peacekeeping missions, an aspiration that the Myanmar military is interested in.

Targeting All Armed Actors Is Necessary to Build Lasting Peace

The fact that only eight EAOs have signed the NCA while many others are still outside of the peace process raises a critical question as to the scope of DDR and SSR in managing the armed groups. There are a significant number of armed militias, which must eventually go through a disarmament and demobilization process. Therefore, including some groups in the DDR / SSR process and leaving other armed actors out will have a little impact on the peace process.

A phased approach may be taken to deal with different categories of armed groups over time. This might begin with a comprehensive profiling of armed groups including militias, created by both sides, as this information would be necessary to verify combatants and determine the extent of caseload in a DDR program. The ceasefire partners can be the targets of DDR and SSR as part of a security sector governance scheme in the first phase, while DDR of other groups may be carried out in the long term.

Demobilization without Camps

Considering the high number of armed groups, Myanmar will likely have a massive caseload for demobilization. Where a large number of combatants are to be demobilized, a cantonment-based phased demobilization process is useful for information collection (Knight and Ozerdem, 2004). However, examples from other countries reveal that cantonments can also reinforce remobilization of combatants by their commanders (Subedi, 2014b). Alternatively, Knight and Ozerdem (2004) suggest demobilization without camps, in which demobilization centres replace traditional cantonments. This model is cost-effective, and many EAOs would accept this model, as they may not wish

to concentrate their dispersed fighters in demobilization camps. If the DDR program is overseen by the local security governance mechanisms, demobilization without camps could be a viable option in Myanmar. Furthermore, given EAOs' resistance to disarm before political settlement, demobilization before disarmament can be a potential solution.[12]

A Focus on Demand-driven Reintegration Options May Help Build a Consensus

It is likely that a high number of combatants will eventually reintegrate into the community. Much of the contentions around DDR can, therefore, be addressed through negotiations on a reintegration package. Recognizing that the role of combatants' families, social network and communities are crucial in assisting reintegration, a comprehensive survey of the needs and expectations of ex-combatants as well as their families and community members will be helpful to enhance local ownership of a reintegration program and to make the support demand-driven.

Reintegration programs have three dimensions: economic, social and political. Economic reintegration will be essential to create jobs and peaceful livelihood options for combatants as well as their families. Much of the success of economic reintegration will depend on the capacity of the local market and economic system to absorb combatants. A demand-driven reintegration program must be embedded in long-term post-war recovery and development programs. Because reintegration and local development have synergetic effects, the success of reintegration programs will depend on how the local governance system plans and oversees long-term development.

Myanmar's conflict-ridden economy, largely marred by cronyism, a rent-seeking culture and a war economy, does not at present provide an optimistic picture. There is a massive rural-to-urban migration and international labour migration (especially to Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea), which means the local economy will have limitations in creating new jobs, entrepreneurship development and self-employment opportunities. Modernizing and transforming the agrarian sector and building a partnership with emerging local business actors will be especially helpful for making economic reintegration viable. Engaging combatants in social mobilization and local community development works could also be a viable option (Kyed and Gravers, 2015). However, after 2010, social mobilization and local community development sector has attracted educated but unemployed rural and urban youth, making the sector highly competitive in Myanmar. A reintegration mechanism led by local government to empower combatants will be necessary to engage them in social mobilization and local community development.

Social reintegration is defined as the process of how combatants are accepted by families and communities in ways that enable them to forge new social connections and networks

(Özerdem, 2012). Perhaps, with some exceptions, social reintegration of combatants will be less of a problem in Myanmar because most ex-combatants function locally where they have frequent contact and interaction with their families, social and cultural network, and communities. In most cases, combatants are also seen as "liberator and ethnic heroes"; therefore, they will likely enjoy better social acceptance. But obviously combatants and militias who have a criminal record and/or are involved in the war economy will face problems with social acceptance. Gender-specific support and psychosocial support could be an important element of social reintegration.

Finally, EAOs that have represented ethnic identities and have political objectives and orientations may turn to become a political leader. This will create a space for political reintegration for combatants. However, this may only be possible for high-ranking rebel leaders and not a viable option for mid and lower rank rebels and militias.

Demand driven reintegration will occur only when there is sufficient political will and trust between EAOs and Tatmadaw has been achieved. However, for now political will on both sides is very low. Unless a great deal of trust has been achieved it will be very difficult to begin talking about those options at the negotiation table.

CONCLUSION

Peace building in Myanmar will remain incomplete without effective management of armed groups and their weapons. This must include EAOs, but also militias. Although the NCA has vaguely recognized the need for "security integration," what this entails is elusive.

Given the political sensitivity associated with DDR and SSR, Na Pi Taw is inclined to defer DDR and SSR from ongoing political dialogue and negotiations. Such a deferral will, however, be counterproductive because DDR and SSR are politically sensitive processes, which must be negotiated in a peace deal. A key question at this stage of the peace process is how to manage this sensitivity and find a way forward in managing armed groups and their weapons.

This paper has pointed out that DDR and SSR have shared elements in Myanmar's peace process. Focusing completely on DDR and negating SSR or vice versa will perpetually impede the peace process. The paper argues that the key actors of the dialogue and political negotiation process could use less inflammatory language by using the term "management of armed groups and weapons," so that it focuses on the broader issues of managing armed groups including EAOs and militias. A context- and culture-sensitive model for managing armed groups that combines the SSR and DDR models that is

embedded in the framework, policies and program of security sector governance could be a feasible option to manage the armed groups and their weapons in Myanmar's peace process. However, adopting a security sector governance approach for managing armed groups requires strong political will in all key actors - Tatmadaw, the government and EAOs - which is lacking at present.

NOTES

1. The seven steps of the political road map for peace include: a) signing of the NCA and its ratification by the legislature; b) drafting a framework for political dialogue by all stakeholders collectively within 60 days of the signing of the NCA; c) convening political dialogue with all parties concerned within 90 days of the signing of the NCA; d) convening a Union Peace Conference; e) signing of a Union Accord based on the Union Conference, which would be the basis for the amended of constitutions and laws; f) submitting the Union Accord for a ratification by the legislation; g) implementation of the Union Accord and "security reintegration." See Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement document, 2015, pp. 22-23.

2. Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants including the development of responsible arms management programs. Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups, while reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income (see UN, 2006: 8).

3. Additionally, the ethnic groups were also dissatisfied with the provision of rights to self-determination in the new Constitution and the limited space given to them in the consultations for the formation of a post-independent state. However, the breakout of the armed rebellion was also partly driven by external factors such as the post-communist revolution in China and the changing configuration of the Cold War geopolitics (Taylor, 1973)

4. The Myanmar Armed Forces is officially known as the *Tatmadaw*. In this paper, the terms *Tatmadaw* and military are used interchangeably to refer to the military organization of Myanmar.

5. In some places, EAOs controlled local areas and ran them like a "mini state" with their own health, education and local administration systems. For instance, the Brigade 6 area of the Thailand–Myanmar border Karen National Union (KNU) has historically provided education and health care whereas other groups like the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and UWSA also have their international networks through foreign relations and trade departments.

6. For more on the profile of armed groups in Myanmar, see http://mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/armed-ethnic-groups.

7. BGFs and PMs operated under the limited command of *Tatmadaw* and received a regular salary from the military.

8. In many EAOs, part of the militias would be a reservist force, which would be called upon to support EAOs' military offensive when needed. As such, the reservist force was irregular and dispersed in villages, and was often out of the direct control of the EAOs.

9. KIA and TNLA have seen increased fighting and intense fighting between *Tatmadaw* and the RCSS and SSPP in Shan state and DKBA in Mon and Karen states has occurred in 2015 and 2016 (BNI, 2015).

10. See Buchanan (2016).

11. The actual size of the military in Myanmar is unknown due to *Tatmadaw's* closed internal system that is inaccessible for outsiders. It is, however, claimed that there are up to 500,000 men and women in the *Tatmadaw*, while most observers believe that the number could be between 300,000 and 350,000 (Selth, 2015).

12. For more on demobilization before disarmament, see Knight and Ozerdem (2004).

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