

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

Paul Jackson¹

¹ University of Birmingham

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This paper takes a structured view of DDR, dividing the practice into three main stages and arguing that Colombia shows some signs of third generation DDR. It does make a few general assumptions, including that third generation is any more effective than first and second, but overall it is structured in a way that provides a good introduction to the subject.

Overall, I have four main comments, or areas of comment, that I hope could make this paper better - and I believe that the author is correct in that this case is an interesting one for researchers because Colombia has such a heterogeneous history of violent groups and their demobilisation. I urge further work on this paper because it deserves it.

Firstly, I feel that the balance of this paper is slightly wrong. There is too much fairly standard discussion of different facets of DDR at the beginning, and this crowds out some of the analysis at the end. There is no real need for a lot of detail that provides a good introduction to different types of DDR but does not really add to the research within the paper. As a result, the analysis elements do not really start until over halfway into the piece with section 4.1.

Secondly, because there is not much room, I feel that the actual analysis is squeezed out. I think that some of the additional space created through reducing the detail should be used to discuss why the Colombian case is so interesting and what the main characteristics of the groups being demobilised actually were. Each Colombian group was markedly different in terms of the context of DDR and also their motivations, so this could have thrown up a lot of interesting issues around DDR approaches... and yet the paper doesn't really do that. As a result, I feel that it does not really address the critical issue of nice, neat 'bandings' and 'stages' and 'generations' not representing a real world that is not neat and may contain elements of lots of conceptual approaches.

Thirdly, I am not so sure that the Colombian context is any more unique than many others. Sadly, there are lots of examples of DDR processes internationally, and yet the author continues to use the term 'unique' to describe Colombia. Whilst each context may well be unique, this rather undermines the aim of learning from international experience.

Fourthly, and again, I suspect, related to the small amount of analytical space in the paper, the author skims over several serious issues with the DDR literature and practice. It mentions, for example, that social reintegration is difficult, but that's it - it just mentions it. Some of the features of the different approaches to DDR have been designed to address this, but the author doesn't really engage with this, so they end up under-using the excellent material from the former combatants

themselves.

In summary, I think this paper could be interesting and engaging, and I largely agree with the author, but at the minute, I feel that the balance of the paper is wrong, and so it tends towards descriptive narrative and away from the analysis that is tentatively introduced towards the end but that forms the most interesting element of the paper itself. I would encourage the author to work on this and to 'show off' their research.