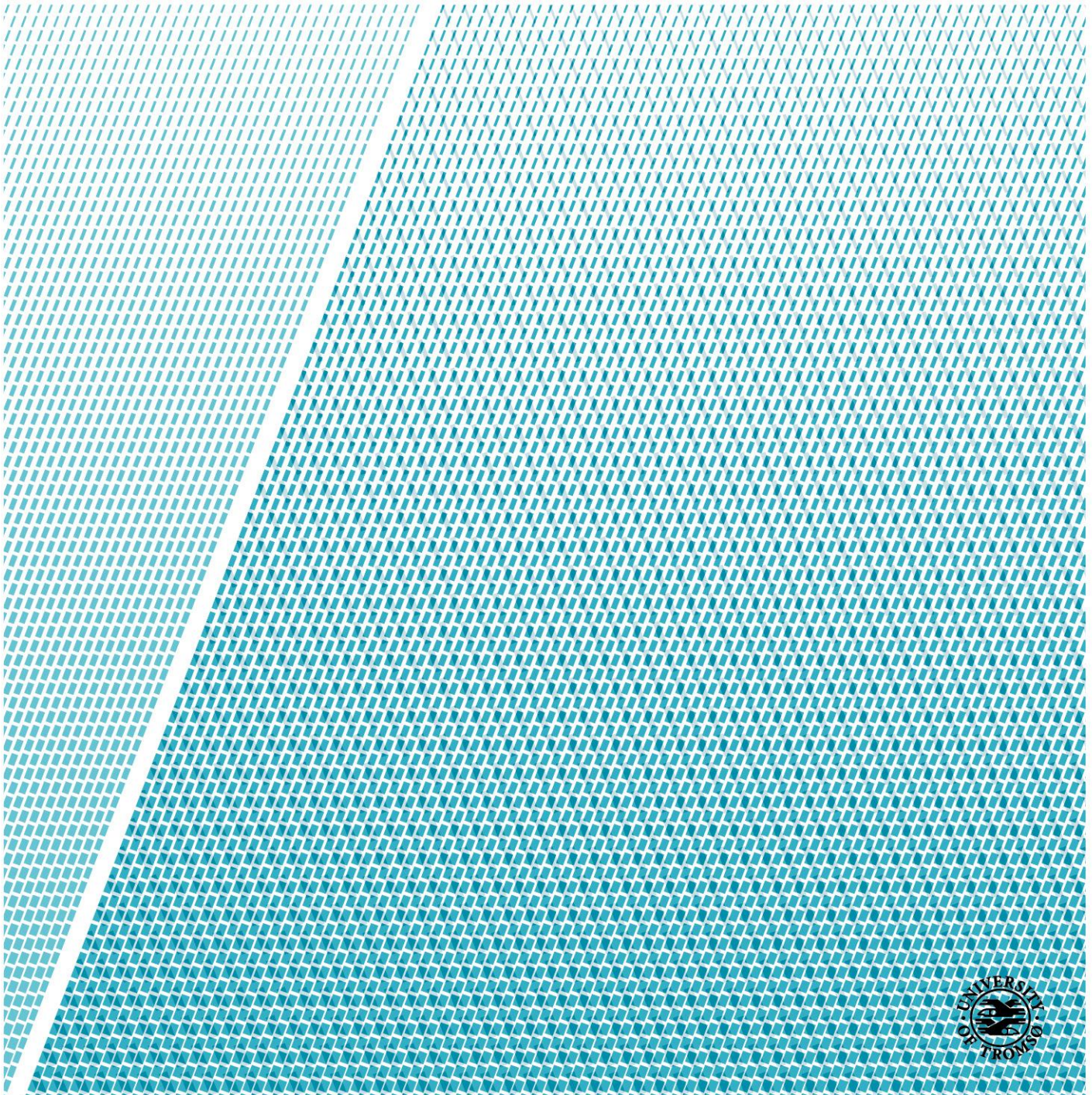


Reintegration of Maoists Ex-combatants in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Reintegration of ex-combatants is one of the major processes after the end of armed conflict. This study revolved around the question of social, political and economic challenges and opportunities that ex-combatants in Nepal come across while they remained in cantonment and after their voluntary retirement. The idea of integration has been analyzed along three dimensions; social, political and economic reintegration, notably adapted in Nepalese cultural, social and political context. After the demobilization, most of the ex-combatants did not return to their original home community, instead they opted to settling new lives, especially in new communities. Therefore, these combatants must overcome several challenges to rebuild their lives as a civilian in the new community. The Study explored that those ex-combatants who chose for voluntary retirement and obtained the golden handshake are migrated abroad especially, in gulf countries in search of opportunities where others are struggling with day to day lives in the home country.

The research is based on the analysis of primary data from the field, through the semi-structured interview methods of the data collection. Socio-economic reintegration of ex-combatants is significant and relevant for economic development as successful reintegration increases security and stability. In case of Nepal reintegration should have been designed by consulting the ex-combatants to address their grievances rather than deciding it in political level. It is also noted that a number of ex-combatants are having difficulties in accessing employment. The cash based option has been understood as the problem solving schemes for the management of ex-combatants as an approach to implement the peace agreement rather than a process to transform ex-combatants into civilians. The Study suggests that the cash which ex-combatants received during voluntary retirement helped them to move out of the cantonment but it failed to contribute or bring any noticeable changes in their lives as civilians due to the lack of guidance and plan. Thus, it is essential to focus on community centered approach to reintegration which can recuperate from effects of armed conflict and promote social cohesion.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

AMMAA	Agreement on the Monitoring and Management of Arms and Armies
CFUG	Community Forest User Group
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDC	District Development Committees
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DFID	British Department for International Development
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRGR	International Research Group on Reintegration
MPCT	Master's Degree Program in Peace and Conflict Transformation
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
PLA	People's Liberation Army
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SLF	Sustainable Livelihood Framework
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UCPN	Unified Communist Party of Nepal
UCPN-M	Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
UN	United Nations
UNMIN	United Nations Mission in Nepal
VDC	Village Development Committee
VLMR	Verified Minors and Late Recruits

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Nepal's Armed Conflict and Peace Process	1
1.3 Introducing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) as a Global Component in Peacebuilding	2
1.4 Reintegration in Global Practice	4
1.5 Reintegration: Nepalese Context	4
1.6 Statement of the Problem.....	6
1.7 Hypothesis.....	7
1.8 Project Objectives	10
1.9 Research Questions	11
1.10 Motivation for the Research Project	12
1.11 Structure of the Thesis	13
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	15
2.1 Introduction.....	15
2.2 The Multi-dimensional Notion of Integration.....	18
2.3 Political Reintegration	19
2.4 Social Reintegration.....	20
2.5 The Notion of Community.....	20
2.6 Economic Reintegration.....	22

2.7	Sustainable Livelihood Framework	22
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		25
3.1	Introduction.....	25
3.2	Reintegration of Ex-combatants in Nepal.....	25
3.3	Selection of Study Area	26
3.4	Data Collection Strategy and Techniques.....	28
3.5	Qualitative Method of Data Collection.....	30
3.6	Informants Selection	31
3.7	Access to Informants and Organizations	32
3.8	Focus-Group Discussion.....	33
3.9	Observations	34
3.10	Data Analysis.....	34
3.11	Insider Vs. Outsider	35
3.12	Challenges During Field Visits.....	37
3.13	Research Limitations	38
3.14	Ethical Considerations	38
3.15	Reflection From the Field	39
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE		41
4.1	Introduction.....	41
4.2	Informants Profile In Brief.....	42
4.3	An Endless Cantonment Life and Exit Options.....	45
4.4	Settlement in New Host Communities.....	51
4.5	The Nepalese Post-War Context and Ex-Combatants' Reintegration Strategies	54
4.6	Social Reintegration and Social Network Building.....	54
4.7	Involvement in Community Building Projects and Organizations	61

4.8	Political Reintegration of the Ex-Combatants	62
4.9	A War-Family Network and Relations	62
4.10	Perspectives of Ex-Combatants on the People's War and the Political Party as a Community	63
4.11	Economic Reintegration of the Ex-Combatants	63
4.12	Cash-Based Approach to the Reintegration of the Ex-Combatants.....	65
4.13	Financial Assets	66
4.13.1	Rights to Ancestral Property.....	67
4.13.2	Earnings Accumulated During Cantonment Period.....	67
4.13.3	Loans from Saving and Credit Groups or Bank and Finance	68
4.13.4	Golden Handshake	68
4.14	Land in Low Price.....	69
4.15	Vocational Skills and Training	70
4.16	Push and Pull Factors of Migration	71
4.17	Ex-combatants as Peace-builders.....	72
4.18	Feelings of Humiliation	72
4.19	Chances of Resorting to Violence.....	73
4.20	A Sense of Insecurity.....	75
4.21	Comfortable Daily Lives.....	75
4.22	Acceptance and Mutual Harmony	75
4.23	Injuries and Disabilities	76
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION		79
5.1	Summary of Research Findings	79
5.2	Reintegration, Livelihood and Development.....	80
5.3	Analytical Contribution of the Findings	82
5.4	Community-centered Approach to Reintegration.....	85

7 REFERENCES 87

Figures

Figure1: Map of Nepal where Shaktikhor, Chitwan was the central region cantonment

Figure 2: Map of Nepal with Maoist cantonment location

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Reintegration of ex-combatants is one of the major processes, following the ending of armed conflict. Many former combatants self-integrate and find ways to return to civilian life by a combination of own efforts and that of the surrounding war-weary society. Reintegration is also a steered planned process, undertaken by the aid of international organizations or through national efforts. When armed conflict is about to end or have recently ended, combatants directly engaged in armed struggle generally will to varying degrees have social, political, economic livelihood and psychosocial needs, which all should be taken into consideration.¹

If the authorities and their international partners fail to partly or fully address the strategic and practical needs of ex-combatants, they may bring long term negative consequences to the society and the state. The emphasis on the needs of the average ex-combatant aside, ex-combatants are often able people who have learned hard lessons of taking care of themselves under the most unimaginable circumstances of armed conflict. If enrolled in a program, they may have gone through a process of disarmament and demobilization, “the two Ds” as specialists often call them. Recently, the United Nations and specialists have started to debate and experiment with undertaking some level of reintegration while armed conflict rages. Therefore, I shall below discuss disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in greater depth. Since this research is in the context of Nepal, let me first provide some basic information about Nepal’s protracted armed conflict.

1.2 Nepal's Armed Conflict and Peace Process

In contemporary Nepal, a decade-long insurgency was waged by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the Nepalese state from 1996 to 2006. The 240-years old monarchy in Nepal was abolished and People's Republic was established. The conflict claimed the lives of 17,000 people

¹ Subedi, D. B. (2014). Conflict, Combatants, and Cash: Economic Reintegration and Livelihoods of Ex-combatants in Nepal. *World Development*, 59,

and displaced around 100,000 more people.² The insurgency came to the end after a month's long Peoples Movement leading to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). However, this was neither the end of violence nor the political struggle between the major mainstream political parties of Nepal, the Maoists and the Nepalese state.

The CPA of 2006 was creating a peaceful Nepal led by parliamentarian political parties elected by the peoples of Nepal. Even though progress has been made, challenges remain and the country continues to experience political instability to the date. The international society welcomed the political settlement and the United Nations set up United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) in order to offer technical assistance and to overview the implementation of the peace agreement. This brought a new wave of peacebuilding experts to Nepal, including global professionals in DDR programming. The international standardized version of reintegration came to clash with the Maoists transformative politics with its Security Sector Reform (SSR) focus and with a strategic and tactical power struggle that involved both several national actors and India as the dominant regional power. The bickering around the DDR agenda should last for years.

1.3 Introducing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) as a Global Component in Peacebuilding

In a policy statement of an agenda for peace, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali presented the concepts "Peacekeeping"³ "Peace Enforcement"⁴ and "Peace-Building".⁵ According to the erstwhile UN Secretary General, peace-building might include functions such as "disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring

² <https://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/nepal/conflict-profile> retrieved on August, 2017.

³ Performing observation functions, UN Peacekeepers provide security, the political and peace-building support to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace. Over the years, peacekeeping has evolved from a primarily military model of observing cease-fires and the separation of forces after inter-state wars, to incorporate a complex model of many elements – military, police and civilian – working together to help lay the foundations for sustainable peace

⁴ Involved more heavily armed contingents authorized to use force to achieve purposes other than self-protection; with the authorization of the Security Council, of a range of coercive measures, including the use of military force. Such actions are authorized to restore international peace and security in situations where the Security Council has determined the existence of a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression

⁵ Strengthen and Solidify peace in the aftermath of Civil Conflict; t. Peace building is a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace.

elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation."⁶ In addition, this agenda-setting UN Report focuses on the importance of preventive diplomacy, efforts made to reduce tensions before the conflicts happen. This could include the 'preventive deployment' of UN forces to avoid violence. Moreover, DDR is presented as a key pillar of securing durable peace. Therefore, the DDR constitutes a key component of most peace building initiatives, which helps to contribute to peace and stability.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) is a complex process, which includes political, military, security, humanitarian and socioeconomic dimensions. DDR is a widely used concept in the management of arms and armies, over the last two decade, which aims to contribute to a process of disarming ex-combatants, taking them out of military structures and facilitating them to integrate socially and economically into society. Main objectives of DDR are to contribute to security and stability in the post-conflict environment so that recovery and development can begin.⁷ DDR aims to deal with the post-conflict security problems that arise when ex-combatants are been left without livelihoods or support network during the transition period from conflict to peace and development. It is significant to note that DDR alone cannot resolve conflict, prevent violence or enable development, but it can help to establish a secure environment so that other elements of a recovery and peacebuilding strategy can proceed.⁸

UN defines DDR in terms of their components parts, which are Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. **Disarmament** is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, light and heavy weapons of combatants and also the civilian population.⁹ **Demobilization** is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups.¹⁰ **Reinsertion** refers to support package provided to the demobilized

⁶ Paris, R. and Sisk, T. (2009) Introduction: Understanding the Contradictions of Postwar State-building, in Paris, R. and Sisk, T. *The Dilemmas of State-building: Confronting the Contradictions of Post-War Peace Operations*. London: Routledge. P. 5

⁷Secretary-General, note to the General Assembly, A/C.5/59/31, May 2005 retrieved from http://www.unddr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction_1.aspx

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Stankovic, T., Torjesen, S., & Bleie, T. (2011). *Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: A Survey for Practitioners in Nepal*. Centre for Peace Studies, Tromso University.p.5

¹⁰ Ibid.

cantonments, which includes cash payment as well as kit support which include food, clothes, and medical services at the time of their re-entry into the community.¹¹ During **Reintegration**, ex-combatants are expected to return to civilian life, and to resettle within a community of their choice, usually with a support such as allowances, training and education, and gaining sustainable employment and income. This process often required long-term external assistance.¹²

1.4 Reintegration in Global Practice

Reintegration of ex-combatants is as noted above, an important element in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs. The United Nations (UN) defines economic reintegration as the long term transformative process where ex-combatants gain sustainable employment, income and acquire civilian status. But reintegration is not something new invented by the United Nations in recent decades. Citing the work of Bleie, 2010, Nepal has home-grown experiences in the field of "DDR". Homegrown reintegration has been undertaken by centralized states such as Nepal over the centuries.¹³

1.5 Reintegration: Nepalese Context

According to the Seven Points Agreement of 1st November 2011, between the four major political parties in Nepal there should be three options in order to facilitate a reintegration program; which were Integration into Nepal Army, cash aided voluntary retirement and rehabilitation through gaining alternative livelihood enhancing skills. The government established a Special Committee with a secretariat to oversee the DDR process. According to its own data from 2012 for reintegration, out of total 17,052 ex-combatants who participated in the official verification process of reintegration; another 1,422 ex-combatants chose reintegration into the Nepal Army, while 15,624 chose for voluntary retirement. Only six chose for rehabilitation option. These numbers should be understood in their proper political context to be discussed below.

¹¹ Sriram, C. L., & Herman, J. (2009). DDR and Transitional Justice: Bridging the divide?. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 9(4), 457

¹² Secretary-General, note to the General Assembly, A/C.5/59/31, May 2005 retrieved from http://www.unddr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction_1.aspx

¹³ Stankovic, T., Torjesen, S., & Bleie, T. (2011). *Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: A Survey for Practitioners in Nepal*. Centre for Peace Studies, Tromso

Reintegration of ex-combatants was intensely political, and considered by the political actors, analysts and scholars as a vexed issue, which delayed the peace process in Nepal for several months. The consensus between the political parties to provide major financial benefits, the so-called “golden handshake” arrangement to the ex-combatants, was a hard-won compromise, which did not have a strong support of the UN Mission and other UN Agencies in Nepal. There were several openly stated and also backstage arguments that led to the “**golden handshake**” agreement.

One of the much stated arguments was that providing the demobilized ex-combatants with a really handsome amount of cash could quickly reintegrate and demobilize the cantonments. Besides, it was hotbeds of discontents, amounting nearly to riots in the final period before the demobilization started. Ex-combatants were to settle in communities neither without proper counseling nor with any social and psychological reintegration strategies as such. On the surface it seemed like the generous cash assistance was seen by political leaders as a magic bullet.¹⁴ As Subedi has mentioned in a useful article, improper reintegration ex-combatants was risky, since they were involved in crime and political violence. The Maoist party on their side had their own plans of keeping control over their cadres and extracting parts of the cash allowance for the party coffers. Further, the controversial issue of providing financial benefits to the ex-combatants was criticized by influential agencies and experts in the international community.

As part of political settlement cash based approach was taken, coined 'golden handshake'. The ex-combatants were demobilized and sent from the cantonments into a turbulent society. They came out of the cantonments undergoing kinds of social reintegration processes that were not in every respect in line with DDR-textbooks of the international community. Arguably, they belonged to “a war family”, having close bonds to other cadres. In 2007, Maoists combatants were settled into seven main camps and 21 satellite cantonments.¹⁵ These bonds had been formed during several years as comrade fighters, but also during the excessively long period in Nepal’s cantonments. Quite many had married beyond caste and ethnic boundaries, motivated by their political ideology of creating a just society. They had, while being cantoned, created social relationships to host

¹⁴ Subedi, D. B. (2014). Conflict, Combatants, and Cash: Economic Reintegration and Livelihoods of Ex-combatants in Nepal. *World Development*, 59, p. 248,

¹⁵ Bhandari, C. (2015). The Reintegration of Maoist Ex-Combatants in Nepal. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 50(9), p.64

communities around their cantonments. Therefore, they faced huge challenges in returning to their native communities. In fact, a vast majority of ex-combatants chose not to return their village of origin; and rather settled in their former host communities close to the cantonment sites. Their settlement in and near former host communities have nevertheless been a quite challenging social reintegration process in terms of gender, ethnic and caste relations. The Relationship between ex-combatants and local communities has been to some degree marked by tension. In many communities, there were voices who expressed serious reservations about accepting ex-combatants into their circles or local community.¹⁶

However, Nepal's approach to reintegration was fairly unique; largely implemented through a national mechanism for reintegration. No doubt, many other countries have failed to carry out the DDR process wholly successfully. While it is no general agreement on whether Nepal's reintegration has been the astounding success some would like to claim, it is sure that there are certainly quite difficult problems regarding social reintegration process, and most notably in relation to caste and gender issues. Sometimes, female and male ex-combatants have been discriminated by their own communities and families.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

In Nepal, the homegrown approach taken to demobilization and so-called reintegration designed on the political level was part of a conflict ridden settlement of front stage and backstage politics. As Bleie and Shrestha have analyzed in considerable detail,¹⁷ mid-ranking cadres were simply pawns in a merciless game. Transforming ex-combatants into civilians with dignity, and livelihood capabilities were not main concerns in spite of the golden handshakes. Rather it was a screwed political problem solving approach between the political parties. Further, in case of Nepal, what was rather unique was that the cash based approach of economic reintegration was de facto combined with a complex political and social reintegration processes. Partly their processes were driven by the combatants themselves, partly by the Maoist party and partly by other states and non-state actors. Therefore, in the Nepalese context economic, social and political reintegration interrelates in complicated and poorly understood ways. The generous financial packages to ex-

¹⁶ Bhandari, C. (2015). The Reintegration of Maoist Ex-Combatants in Nepal. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 50(9), p.65

¹⁷ Bleie, T., & Shrestha, R. (2012). DDR in Nepal: Stakeholder Politics and the Implications for Reintegration as a Process of Disengagement. *Tromsø: University of Tromsø*.

combatants could quickly close the cantonments and kick-start decent livelihoods as civilians. But in Nepal's complicated social context, ex-combatants had to navigate their monies negotiating their entitlements to several claims holders, including their party, their peers and the war family, friends in the surrounding host communities and their own near and extended family, to mention the most important claimants of entitlements. This highly complex situation raises several interesting research questions about how ex-combatants have navigated the transition the 3 to 4 years after they were discharged.

Therefore, considering the current state of knowledge about these three options of reintegration, I would like to undertake my research on the second category, which is the category most popular among the Maoist combatants, the option of voluntary retirement with the cash assistance. With my research focusing on not always well understood reintegration process, I will apply the analytical notion of trajectories, in order to analyze routes of combatants from the cantonments to current status as civilians.¹⁸ The primary objective of this study is to explore how a selected group who chooses not to return to their original community, by using the multifaceted notion of social, political and economic reintegration. **This study will be centered on how this selected social category of ex-combatants have navigated several kinds of social commitments and political control, which arguably have in several ways influenced how they could utilize their cash grants for their livelihood strategies.** I am documenting and analyzing which primary and secondary concerns they had to deal with in deciding how they can utilize these precious funds.

1.7 Hypothesis

Certain key features of the interrelations between social, political and economic reintegration form basic assumptions; the extraordinary long cantonment period resulted in a powerful social consolidation of a political community of belonging, and also of a low-key social reintegration with the host communities which surrounded the cantonments. Also quite many cultivated relatively close contracts with their new "war family" and extended family during the cantonment period. It was also not uncommon to negotiate possibilities to secretly walk out of the cantonment

¹⁸ Stankovic, T., & Torjesen, S. (2010). *Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: A Survey for Practitioners. Oslo: NUPI.*

for family meeting and visits. By the time the combatants in the cantonments were often contributing to the family economy and many families and community members had strong opinions on the ex-combatants social and economic obligations.

It is likely that the prospect of a massive cash payment was in the minds of many disengaging combatants. They considered both symbolic and financial assets through which they could improve their social standing in their family and home community and assets through which they would manage to become accepted community members in their former host community surrounding or near to the closing cantonments. Now if we assume that ex-combatants tried to improve their relation and network with their families when they got the voluntary retirement, the question is if and how they actually managed to rebuild their reputation and become well respected and integrated after they were demobilized and in the first phase of transitioning to a civilian life. We know from previous research that female ex-combatants faced greater challenges than male ex-combatants. Those ex-combatants who had committed gross atrocities or had married across caste boundaries faced greater challenges. We know that some attempted to move back home, but found their homecoming so difficult not being accepted, therefore, they left and resettled elsewhere.

For others, going back to their families and natal communities was not a serious problem as they used to visit their families after the wartime and ceasefire period, and also accepted the social expectations in terms of marriage and social conduct as their respected families wanted them to. This social strategy probably helped ex-combatant to reintegrate back into their local society and provide an informal support. Their families and relatives most likely felt they had a share in the golden handshake money and helped them to choose and make the economic decisions in how to spend their cash packages. But then there are specific social and financial opportunities and constraints that I have investigated, and which may explain the trajectories of whose several thousand ex-combatants who chose to settle or resettle close to the closed down main cantonments and satellite cantonments. **This is the trajectory – based on empirical evidence of flows of ex-combatants that I am particularly interested in studying. I intend to understand better how they managed to maneuver their own individual and their family (spouse, nuclear and extended family in a double sense – i.e. - both in terms of bonds of blood and war family)**

interests given the complex frame conditions set by the government, and the political actors, not the least the Maoist party, which later split into different contending fractions.

A major assumption is that one has to have a quite multifaceted understanding of the notion of community in order to grasp how they managed to juggle continued or broken membership in a communist movement, their close war family of peers, their membership in their natal and in law families, their wider community membership and their emerging social bonds with the host community close to where they had stayed cantoned for years. Management, use and misuse of the golden handshake cash and their other economic assets and skills have to be researched in this social and political Nepalese context. These sets of assumptions differ profoundly from the assertions underpinning the standard international approach to DDR where the demobilized are assumed to be utility maximizing economic actors if capacitated through skill training and financial aid.

After the retirement, a large number of ex-combatants decided to settle together in various preferred locations instead of returning back to their villages of origin. One possible main reason for this decision is social discrimination and social conflict between different mindsets and value systems. Another reason might be for better economic opportunities in the plains of Terai compared with the Hill villages they mostly came from. The stated social factors of social stigma; or a previous record of gross wartime violations may be very important for many. It is my assumption, based on secondary sources and my study on the concerning field that they might feel more secure and safe while they are in groups of their own, thus might have decided to avoid their own community of origin, and resettle in a group in new community.

For others, the main motivating factors might have been the new opportunities in urban and semi urban plain areas, because of their involvement in violence. In order to get more solid evidence about the relative importance of social, political and economic factors and how they intersect, a study of one such community where many of the villagers are former combatants would be of considerable interest.

In the armed conflict in Nepal, there was a huge participation of women who played the central role in People's Liberation Army (PLA), where woman participation in the political arena was very limited before the Maoist insurgency.¹⁹ There was a limited decision-making role given to female, restrictions on women's freedom, and the issues of forced marriage and caste discrimination prevailed in the Nepalese society before the insurgency. However, in Nepal, we can observe several social issues prevailed which are related to gender, caste and ethnicity which can also play an important role on reintegration; which should be taken into consideration. Nepal has somewhat unique experience in a many homegrown reintegration processes. The process has been mainly politicized by the political parties. This was the top-down process and the leaders didn't consult with the ex-combatants. Economic and social dimensions of reintegration are closely related to each other. Ex-combatants slowly accommodate to the larger society. Ex-combatants are not easily accepted in society as they have their limited contacts in their natal community when they sought to return after the conflict. There were often more hindrances than opportunities when they struggled to develop their economic networks and to secure their livelihoods in the short and the longer term. How social, political and economic reintegration interacted will be sought examined in my work.

1.8 Project Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to explore how exactly the social, political and economic dimensions of reintegration have been handled by a selected group who chose not to return to their original community. This study will be centered on how this selected category of ex-combatants turned citizens have navigated several kinds of social commitments and political control, in order to somehow utilize their cash grants for their livelihood strategies. It will therefore, document and analyze which primary and secondary concerns they have dealt with in painstaking decisions on how they to utilize these precious funds. The time period investigated is after their voluntary retirement from the cantonment in 2011 to 2016 for four years of duration.

The study will assess the complex challenges of ex-combatants – turned civilians in an early and mid-stage of reintegration with a special focus on the critical linkages between the social, political and economic aspects. In other terms, my chosen approach also represents an implicit rejection of

¹⁹ Upreti, B. R. (2009). *Nepal from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*. Pinnacle Technology.

the standard theoretical understanding in DDR of the ex-combatants as primarily an economic rational actor. This assumption is not very useful in a Nepalese post-war context. One needs to understand better how the social and political processes influenced the cash based approach and how ex-combatants faced numerous dilemmas in utilizing their precious funds because of the sociological reality of Nepalese society. In this context, it is significant to understand what efforts ex-combatants made to navigate and build social networks, in order to somehow plan livelihood strategies.

This thesis will be assessing how ex-combatants actually managed to rebuild their reputation and became well respected and integrated after they were demobilized and transitioned into to a civilian life first in the early months after they were officially discharged and then in the subsequent 3-4 year period. The study examines the intricate linkages between the social, political and economic aspects of a precarious reintegration process, explaining how the ex-combatants were choosing to utilize their cash funds and in a precarious balance with their variable social and political assets.

1. To examine the skillful maneuvering efforts of ex-combatants in building and renewing their social and political networks as members of several kinds of communities during the early reintegration process.
2. To examine how these political and social strategies impacted on their planned livelihood strategies and their precarious social status, with a particular eye to how the golden handshake funds were used.
3. Based on the above points, to analyze the actual impacts of the so-called cash-based approach to the reintegration of these politically motivated ex-combatants.

1.9 Research Questions

1. What are the salient social, political and economic challenges and opportunities ex-combatants faced during their prolonged stay in cantonments and in their chosen residential communities and communities of belonging after their voluntary retirement?

2. What strategic and tactical efforts did the studied ex-combatants undertake in order to plan and implement their social and livelihood strategies during their prolonged stay in cantonments and in the early phase of reintegration?
3. Did the much debated cash-aided approach play a major role in reintegrating ex-combatants as officially stated by the Nepalese government and the Maoist national leaders?
4. How the studied ex-combatants actually manage to balance the utilization of the transferred fund - including for political purposes as party members, as members of a war family (bonds of friendship and intermarriage between comrades) and as family members (through intermarriage with civilians and decent) with a responsibility to ensure a sustainable livelihood?

1.10 Motivation for the Research Project

For years the DDR agenda in Nepal was a high profiled political issue, and the belated political deal of substantial cash payments was also heavily criticized by the international community. Comparative research on the use of cash for reintegration documents the mixed outcomes of the approach. Since so many of the demobilized in the end chose to opt for voluntary retirement, it is very important to have research-based knowledge about poorly understood features of trajectories of this category and about the motivations underlying their livelihood strategies and economic status currently. It was very clear to me in discussion with my senior colleagues in my research group The International Research Group on Reintegration of Ex-Combatants (IRGR) that better understanding of relationships between their current political, social and economic reintegration is a real priority in DDR research in Nepal.

In studying reintegration of these politically aware ex-combatants who fought for a more just society, one has to understand how they managed to relate to the internally displaced person (IDPs) and to community members who were never displaced or who left, voluntarily or involuntarily to new destinations in Nepal or abroad. IRGR has been undertaking groundbreaking research on social, political and economic reintegration in several war-afflicted countries, including Nepal. As an affiliated member of this group, I wanted to build on the group's theoretical and empirical knowledge-base and undertake a reintegration study which will really address these different aspects of the reintegration of Nepalese ex-combatants turned civilians.

There is room for a study like this one, which attempts to depict the real dynamics of social, political and economic reintegration, where the actual views and an agency²⁰ of the ex-combatants and other stakeholders are properly documented. Such context sensitive research by a Nepalese can hopefully help in better understanding of complicated reasons for and societal processes of economic reintegration, seen in relation to the social and political dimensions. This researcher has some previous experience and can build on a relevant body of research on DDR in Nepal. This study is planned and conducted under a master program in Peace and Conflict Transformation (MPCT) and can be helpful to those students and researchers who want to conduct similar research in the field of DDR in Nepal or in similar contexts where the armed movement was politically motivated and led.

Few studies have been carried out on this particular issue, using an in-depth case study approach from a new settler community with a good number of ex-combatants with families. There has not been academic research for the purposes of thesis though we can find similar research and article related to this subject. This authentic information, updated data and findings may be fruitful to government planners, policymakers, advocators, social workers, and journalists and related organizations who want to have further study and are interested in this field.

1.11 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapters discuss the conflict in Nepal, its history and explained the very notion of reintegration in a global and Nepalese context. It also discussed the problem statement and the operational research questions that will be sought answered in the study.

The second chapter is mainly focused on the methodology including tools and techniques used for the data collection and methodological issues during the study. Chapter three outlines the theoretical framework within the issues of reintegration in Nepal. Chapter four describes the data presentation and analysis which presents the data collected from the field and its analysis. This chapter also highlights the major finding of the research. The final chapters summarize and conclude the study.

²⁰ Organization providing a particular service on behalf of another person, or group

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework will build on core insights in newer critical DDR studies, including the theoretical framework and conceptual toolbox developed by the International Research Group of Integration of Ex-Combatants or IRGR. IRGR have already conducted research on the history and contemporary DDR and reintegration processes in Nepal. Homegrown reintegration has been carried out by Nepal over the centuries. Citing the work of Bleie, 2010, Nepal has home-grown experiences in the field of "DDR"²¹. In her work, she further highlights that "Nepal has got some interesting examples of home-grown DDR history that deserve to be remembered in the current context of widespread disillusion over the stalled integration and rehabilitation efforts".²² Her historical examples span from Anglo Nepal war to the case of the end of Rana rule in Nepal. This chapter on the theoretical framework will elucidate a theoretical platform and core concepts of reintegration and notion of community at various levels of scale. The community is a promising tool to analyze social reintegration in Nepal.

The notion of integration will be analyzed along three dimensions; social, political and economic reintegration, notably adapted to the Nepalese cultural, social and political context. Let me briefly explicate them here. Our understanding of reintegration is different from the traditional and standard definitions derived from a narrow program and planning theory. Reintegration can be theoretically regarded as a many-stranded societal process, which is unplanned and organic, in the sense that is unfolding within primary social relations and institutions such as family, community, friendship networks, religious groups, ethnic associations etc. Reintegration may also be a time bound planning effort, which is based on actual incentives which are embedded in a range of support programs components, as part of a (at least on the paper) coherent DDR program. As part of a planned effort, the demobilized combatants/ex-combatants may have acquired new training-based knowledge and skills, social or psychosocial counseling, been allowed to trace their relatives and spouses etc. By the end of the demobilization processes ex-combatants may have received

²¹ Stankovic, T., Torjesen, S., & Bleie, T. (2011). *Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: A Survey for Practitioners in Nepal*. Centre for Peace Studies, Tromso

²² Ibid. p.38

amnesty, some chose to join the army, others are ready to re-enter civil society in search of sustainable employment for missing family members perhaps in the search for forgiveness or revenge, or expecting to receive recognition for their long years of sacrifice from the civil society.²³ I do agree with Bleie and Shrestha's key argument in a major research report that reintegration should not be narrowed down to program support, since it is a broad social and political process which takes a long time, often a number of years before ex-combatants have changed their social status fully, and totally altered their violent behavior, and transformed themselves into able and trusted by civilian citizens. Primarily, reintegration as program support is a narrow "starting-pad" of skills training, resettlement support, employment counseling and support for the relocation.²⁴ Bleie's definition is as follows: "reintegration is a broad and multifaceted process in which program support that fighters receive only plays certain and sometimes rather a significant part".²⁵ In other terms, the starting-pad is simply a limited aid for an early phase of reintegration, the ex-combatants has to use his or her talents, social capital and diligence in order to carve a decent living for her/himself and their family, granted they still have close family members.

I like to make use of Bleie and Shrestha's analytical notion of trajectory, as an entry point to discover empirically specific movements of combatants after they have left the armed group. Trajectories involve complex empirical patterns of movement during the time period from the departing of an armed group until reintegrating into civilian life. Their lives can vary extremely during this critical time period.²⁶ It is important to take into account that all those combatants who choose to enter a formal reintegration program follow a trajectory for some weeks or months. But once they are discharged and have exited the gates of the cantonment they will form a number of distinct trajectories. One major movement constitutes all those who return to their home villages and towns. Another major flow may be constituted of ex-combatants who after a short interval in their natal communities, leave and resettle somewhere else in their native country and rebuild their family and community connections. Following the armed conflict, many never return to their natal communities for a range of war and conflict-related reasons. The new settlements might be in

²³ Bleie, T., & Shrestha, R. (2012). DDR in Nepal: Stakeholder Politics and the Implications for Reintegration as a Process of Disengagement. *Tromso: University of Tromso*.p.14

²⁴ Ibid. p. 14

²⁵ Ibid. p. 4-5.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 3

densely populated urban areas, huge metropolis or in a quiet countryside. It is quite common to migrate to a foreign country, be that due to stigma, fear of imprisonment or a dream for a better life. Further study highlights that "activities that ex-combatants involved may range from employment in the formal economy and local political participation."²⁷

Reintegration is complex processes, connected with the social, political and economic dimension involving in a corresponding way. Reintegration processes are interlinked in complex ways which have to be conceptualized, based on solid economic, social and political data. Economic integration has in DDR theory been assumed to be the most important factor, based on the idea of the ex-combatants as economic actors. Scholars N. Colletta and R. Muggah have outlined social and political factors at 'national' or 'macro' levels as well as at 'local' or 'micro' levels though this might get varied from country to country.²⁸ Their study also highlights that the standing of the post-war country and its ability to attract donors is a factor to reckon with. Nepal is certainly a case of strong aid dependence. DDR was as earlier commented a crucial element of the initial aid-supported and financed peacebuilding efforts.

It was only in the mid-phase of reinsertion and cantonment that the key political forces in Nepal managed to partially steer the reintegration efforts in a more “homegrown” direction.²⁹ This program policy of a cash-driven rehabilitation package, based on the assumption of the ex-combatants as a rational economic actor on has received considerable criticism in the last decade, as DDR theory incorporated insights from social anthropology, rural sociology and political science. I like to study the economic dimension by making use of the notion of livelihoods as established in the sustainable livelihood approach. The British Department for International Development (DFID) has developed a ‘Sustainable Livelihood Framework’ (SLF) which is one of the most generally used livelihoods frameworks. DFID outlined a version of Chambers Conway’s definition of Livelihoods. This approach has theorized the relations between poverty (as process and outcome) and development at large by using analytical tools of DFID Sustainable Livelihood Framework. Basically, I will apply a definition of livelihood as means of living, mobilizing

²⁷ Ibid. p.3

²⁸ Colletta, N. J., & Muggah, R. (2009). Context matters: interim stabilisation and second generation approaches to security promotion. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 9(4),

²⁹ Stankovic, T., Torjesen, S., & Bleie, T. (2011). *Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: A Survey for Practitioners in Nepal*. Centre for Peace Studies, Tromso, p.10

capabilities to earn including income and a range of assets. Therefore, this study will also try to study the impact of a cash-based approach on securing a livelihood during a selected reintegration process - a trajectory of ex-combatants who chose to settle near their former cantonment.

A crucial question is; how can we conclude that ex-combatants are truly integrated or not? After the voluntary retirement from the cantonments, combatant's movement can be simply departure to the home village or can be range to more complex. As they depart from the group, the destinations of combatants might be different. They may be resettling in rural host communities, or in urban areas, or migrating abroad for short or long term.³⁰

Following the voluntary retirement of the ex-combatants, many combatants decided to live together with other ex-combatants and their host community at preferred locations, without returning to their community of origin. Whereas, the process of reintegration includes acceptances of ex-combatants in the society, building trust with the local and forming economic way of livelihood. It is important to understand the views of local community people and views of ex-combatants about their sense of belonging and their readiness and ability to reintegrate into the post-war society. Ex-combatants have to face problem in day to day lives when they do not get the support of their family while returning back to their society.

Lack of support from the family and community brings the precarious issues of future economic sustainability for the ex-combatants. These economic issues should be theorized in the context of trust in informal social relations and survive and coping strategies. This renders important to grapple analytically with the notion of community.

2.2 The Multi-dimensional Notion of Integration

The term reintegration refers to ex-combatants returning to civilian life and communities, whereas during the ex-combatants reintegration in Nepal, it was discussed as integration into the national security forces. The understanding between the Maoist leaders and those combatants was that signing the CPA would lead to the integration of several thousand combatants into the Nepal

³⁰ Ibid. p.3

Army, forming a new force which would serve a 'New Nepal'.³¹ The common understanding among the cantoned combatants was that such army integration would be the main trajectory for most of them. These expectations were unfulfilled in a screwed political game which led the civilian and army leaders to develop so stringent criteria for army recruitment of the Maoist fighters so that in fact most got excluded consideration as soldiers in the security forces. The excluded comprised not only the disabled and seriously injured combatants, including women with children but also large groups of able-bodied were male and female combatants.

Basically, the concept of reintegration includes activities and ideas of belonging, having exited the armed group. Reintegration is a process in which fighters very gradually change their status from "combatant" to "civilian", also changing their violent behaviors and giving rise to civilian activities that are considered positively by the society at large.³² These changes in behavior can be view in three areas; social, political and economic. Social reintegration denotes that combatants build contacts and relations with mainstream communities and their own families and reduce and ends their armed activities with the militia networks. Political reintegration refers to entering mainstream politics at the local, regional or national level, and in peaceful ways ending the violent means of creating a just society. Economic reintegration involves a range of economic efforts leading to in the long term sustainable employment.³³

IRGR has been promoting two related understandings of reintegration; firstly reintegration as social, economic and psycho-social processes of self-integration and integration through planned interventions; and secondly a narrower definition of integration through programs, adopted by national governments and international organizations.

2.3 Political Reintegration

As it comes to DDR-theory understands of political reintegration. It is assumed that in order to be effectively integrated, ex-combatants should feel and see that they are equally treated as other citizens of the country. In case of Nepal, for many ex-combatants, the process of demobilization

³¹ Robins, S., Bhandari, R., & Ex-PLA Research Group. (2016). Poverty, stigma and alienation: Reintegration challenges of ex-Maoist combatants in Nepal.p.36

³² Bleie, T., & Shrestha, R. (2012). DDR in Nepal: Stakeholder Politics and the Implications for Reintegration as a Process of Disengagement. *Tromso: University of Tromso*.

³³ Ibid.

was considered a great betrayal and humiliation by the Maoist leadership since the leaders had relinquished the revolutionary SSR politics of large-scale integration into the Nepal Army.

2.4 Social Reintegration

In DDR-theory, social reintegration is conceptualized as a process by which ex-combatants change their identity from soldiers to civilian and transform themselves into the society; both transforming themselves and the views of the surrounding civilian society. This includes multiple processes, where ex-combatants go through the various stages, re-connecting with family, friends and various communities. These complex processes help to rebuild trust in the community and increase a confidence in ex-combatants as co-citizens that can be fully included into the civilian society. This will help to empower ex-combatants personally and contribute to mending the social fabric of the Nepal society. Theorizing community as outlined below helps to better conceptualize social reintegration in a Nepalese context. In Nepal social values and more are deeply gendered and caste-based; I will therefore build on the theoretical insights of moral communities, as outlined in Bleie's studies from Nepal and Somalia.³⁴

2.5 The Notion of Community

The standard IDDRS guidelines and programming manuals identify community "as a particular kind of lived place with a certain level of social cohesion". In contrast, T. Bleie has offered a much multi-dimensional theoretical understanding of community, which extends from the community as a habitat to the community "as a space with varying degrees of belonging or an imagined community with spatial boundaries". Furthermore, she insists we should categorize community as a citizen-based, be that a national community, a community of believers in a political cause or in a faith.³⁵

In the Nepalese context, society is still very much based on influential social relations, which play an anonymous and powerful role in deciding how individuals operate and plan their futures. So, in a way it is essential to have a multifaceted approach to social, political and economic reintegration. Selection of the informants for the collection of data during fieldwork was mainly in the lowlands

³⁴ Bleie, T (2012). Post-War moral communities in Somalia and Nepal: Gendered practices of exclusion and inclusion. CPS Report Series. *Tromsø: Centre for Peace Studies*.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p.12.

of Central Nepal, more specifically Chitwan, which was nearby to the former cantonment. Basically, I am assuming that they belong to a trajectory of ex-combatants who because they were not warmly welcomed in their home communities, sought other viable solutions for resettlements that to some degree solved their sense of belonging to a set of different communities of belonging.

Based on this theoretical refined concept of community, I shall try to conceptualize how they actively juggled membership in different communities of belonging, including also the notion of war-family as a community of both combatants and ex-combatants, bound together with a strong sense of camaraderie and certain political values. I like to explore how they could reconcile belongingness to this war-family with resettlement in recent settler communities around their old cantonments. One may say theoretically that their new home settlements where several ex-combatants families live together also is a war-family community to some degree. I like to investigate how the ex-combatants have as social actors sought to build and consolidate their new communities, by actively build collaborative networks and community organizations, and sustain local arenas. These are no doubt communities in the making, different from the classical idea in DDR-theory of communities of residence as the sites ex-combatants were originally from.

This theoretical approach also challenges conventional ideas of “home and “homecoming.” It can be argued that new reintegration research should be much more sensitive to theorize “home” as an emotional and cognitive category, recognizing that being a combatant is a transforming experience which also alters his or her sense of belonging to the ordinary civilian society and polity. As in the case of Nepal, one may argue the decade-long war experience, followed by nearly 6-years in cantonments created an extraordinary sense of belonging to a deeply politically motivated war community. The sense of belonging was also politically anchored, based on the ideology of the Maoist movement. It is also relevant to seek to understand how the combatants and ex-combatants were political actors in an array of Maoists organizations, all soring under a big “umbrella”. Many of these Maoist organizations became legitimate “over-ground organizations”, including a parliamentary party (who in periods have been in government), and a wide range of youth organizations and labor unions. Several of these organizations had a range of both official and unofficial income sources that financed their activities and growth. The politics of reintegration by the so-called “golden handshake” should precisely be understood as an element is such post-war

politics of creative “rent-seeking” behavior. I have attempted to investigate evidence for such behavior in the cantonments and during demobilization and disengagement.

2.6 Economic Reintegration

The United Nations (UN) defines economic reintegration as a long-term transformative process whereby ex-combatants gain sustainable employment and income while acquiring civilian status.³⁶ Basically, during reintegration processes in Nepal, ex-combatants adapt and adjust to civilian life, having sustained themselves economically for a full decade as cadres in a vast political and military structure. Having been feed and fought for their party and movement for many years, economic independence was a challenging and somewhat alien idea as long as they lingered in the cantonments. When the options for exiting was negotiated over their heads politically, the lower-ranking cadres felt somewhat betrayed and unprepared their new lives as reintegrated as retired. They were just sent out of the cantonments with a substantial cash endowment, with minimal counseling and education, and not always well-founded ideas of how to manage their precious cash for longer-term sustainable livelihoods.

2.7 Sustainable Livelihood Framework

In consolidating my theoretical approach to economic reintegration, I will also engage with the notion of a sustainable livelihood framework. The framework enables an understanding of ere the different resources, which can be combined in order to carry out viable livelihood strategies, achieving certain outcomes. I will try to take reason around human capital, physical capital, financial capital, natural capital and social capital, building on the Sustainable Livelihood Framework. I assume this framework can be used in my empirical study of outcomes (both social and economic) in different stages of the reintegration process.

Livelihood can be made sustainable when someone manage or survive while recovering from stresses and shocks and continuing to maintain their capabilities and assets both now and in the future, without damaging the natural resource base.³⁷ **Human Capital** has fundamental importance

³⁶ UN. (2006). *Integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration standards*. New York: United Nations (UN)

³⁷ Morse, S., & McNamara, N. (2013). *Sustainable livelihood approach: A critique of theory and practice*. Springer Science & Business Media

in making use of all other related forms of assets.³⁸ I shall attempt to use it to analyze if ex-combatants in my case acknowledge the importance of education and skills - especially the vocational skills and health as important forms of capital required earning a decent living.

Material assets owned privately, as well as public structures, are considered **Physical Capital**. It has to be understood how those ex-combatants who didn't return back to their communities of origin spent their cash on buying lands and houses, as important elements of physical capital. Access to public infrastructures like road, electricity, telecommunication, drinking water and use of transportation is difficult in rural areas. Even in remote areas of Terai, the access of this infrastructure is very difficult.

Social Capital should be understood as referring to the relationships and networks that individuals can activate and build. Networking of ex-combatants as a 'war-family' form part of this capital and is useful for an understanding of social reintegration.³⁹ **Financial capital** refers to such source as the cash package that ex-combatants received as retirement packages and to other sources of available financial capital mobilized by their family entitlements. Overall, human, social and financial capital play important roles in securing livelihoods of ex-combatants during a complex reintegration process.

Based on the above briefly outlined theoretical notions from DDR-studies, I intend to collect and analyze my data. This chapter represents an effort to establish a theoretical understanding of core concepts of reintegration, including the notions of community, trajectory and sustainable livelihood framework.

³⁸ DFID, U. K. (1999). Sustainable livelihoods guidance sheets. *London: Department for International Development(DFID)*.

³⁹ Subedi, D. B. (2014). Conflict, combatants, and cash: Economic reintegration and livelihoods of ex-combatants in Nepal. *World Development*, 59, 244

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the methodological approaches and methods that I applied in the research. Especially it deals with the research design, methods, tools, and techniques used, and the method of analyzing my data. This chapter also discusses the advantages and challenges of the method and tools chosen for data collection. Finally, this chapter overall presents important aspects of the process of data collection, while discussing experiences and reflections from the fieldwork.

3.2 Reintegration of Ex-combatants in Nepal

Reintegration of ex-combatants is an important element in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Programs. Reintegration of ex-combatants is one of the major tasks done in post-conflict period. When the armed conflict ends, combatants who engage directly in the struggle often have social, political, economic, and psychosocial needs. Therefore, during the reintegration processes, it is important to consider these factors.

In the context of Nepal, the insurgency was waged by the Nepalese Communist Party (Maoists) against the Nepalese state from 1996 to 2006. While the insurgency was ended by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) following the 19 days-long peoples' protests against the Monarchy called the Peoples' Movement - II, the strife and contestation between the mainstream political parties and the Maoist still continued to take place. The issue and agenda of People's War were forgotten and not addressed properly when those leaders are ruling the government and those issues with the young peoples who fought in the war were not discussed as a political agenda.

The international Community welcomed the political settlement of the conflict, and also offered technical assistance and supervision for the implementation of the peace agreement. The United Nation's Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) was established as a political mission headed by the special representative of the Secretary General in order to achieve these goals. The Seven Point's Agreement was signed between four major political parties in Nepal on November 01, 2011. The offered three programmatic integration options according to this agreement were to integrate the

combatants into Nepal Army; to facilitate cash aided voluntary retirements; and to rehabilitate by enhancing livelihood skills.⁴⁰

According to the data presented in 2012 by Special Committee Secretariat for Reintegration; Out of 17,052 ex-combatants who participated in the official verification process of reintegration, 1,422 ex-combatants were reintegrated into the Nepal Army, while 15,624 received voluntary retirement package. Only six ex-combatants chose the rehabilitation program.⁴¹

Rehabilitation includes a package of education, training and vocational opportunities. This rehabilitation package was supervised by the Relief and Rehabilitation Unit of the Ministry of Peace and Construction. The reasons behind only 6 ex-combatants to choose this option were because the UCPN (Maoist)⁴² persuaded them to opt for the cash option. The combatants did not value much the vocation training that was provided in the cantonment due to lack of hope and confidence that the skills could later be converted into employment.

3.3 Selection of Study Area

When I worked on my research design, I considered if I should undertake investigations in a quite large number of communities with ex-combatants or rather opt for doing investigations in a select number of communities. I chose to opt for a design based on three sites, two rural and three metropolitans. I have assumed such a concentration would be necessary in order to ensure that I as a researcher could build a basic report with my informants by actually spending some time in a few chosen locations. I presumed this would also help create a trusting situation between the researcher and the targeted potential informants, which in turn could improve the quality of my data as well. As I am mostly trained in qualitative methods, it was a quite obvious choice to mainly rely on qualitative methods.

⁴⁰ Bhandari, Chiranjibi. "The Reintegration of Maoist Ex-Combatants in Nepal." *Economic & Political Weekly* 50.9 (2015): 63-68.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

For the purpose of my operational research agenda, fieldwork was conducted and the respondents selected using the snowball sampling. This sampling method was used in Chitwan, Rupandehi and Katmandu.

Fieldwork was conducted in Chitwan in Padampur Village Development Committee (VDC), Rupandehi in Sainamaina Municipality, in Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Katmandu during the period of July and August 2016. Padampur is a VDC in Chitwan district that lies in the central region of the southern belt of Nepal. Earlier this village was known as one of the remote areas of Chitwan district due to the lack of facilities such as transportation, electricity, and roads. However, despite these difficulties, this village is one of the best places for agriculture. In Padampur, Tharus are central ethnic/indigenous group with a large population. Others include Brahmin, Chhetri, Tamang and Gurung. After development initiatives by the locals and government, Padampur is one of the attractive locations for living and recognized as one of the model villages in Nepal. As this was a newly created settler area with recently migrated hill peoples in addition to its indigenous Tharu residents, it is popularly known for a better location for new settlers and famous as a planned model of rural development. In contrast, Kathmandu is the capital city of Nepal and Rupandehi is one of the major cities in western development region.

According to the data from District Development Committee (DDC) Chitwan, castes and ethnicities are commonly distributed in Padampur. The largest number of households (hh) are from Tharu (44%; 889 hh), Brahmin (22%; 444 hh), and Chhetri (8%; 161 hh) castes/ethnicities. Eleven other small caste groups constitute the remaining 26% of the population (540 hh).⁴³ The total population of Padampur is 14,924 whereas it was 11,037 with 1,928 households in 2005. The village is divided into nine wards with four residents representing each ward on the Village Council.⁴⁴

In comparison to the previous one, the updated census on 2014 from Central Bureau of Statistics produce a report where the total population is 14,924 which comprises of 7,104 male and 7,820

⁴³ Dhakal, N. P. (2011). *Assessment of residents' social and economic wellbeing in conservation resettlement: A case study of Padampur, Chitwan National Park, Nepal*. University of Minnesota.p.6

⁴⁴ Ibid.13

female with the household of 3231.⁴⁵ When we classify this data according to ethnicity, Tharu comprised the highest population with 34.36%, a way more than Bhramin (17.38%), Tamang (16.44%) and the other small ethnic group like Newar, Magar and others. Out of this total population, the mother tongue of 6,233 is Nepali, 390 are Maithili, 5,100 are Tharu and 2,066 are Tamang.⁴⁶ Those ex-combatants who settled in Padampur are mainly Brahmin, Chhettri, Magar, Newar, Tamang and Dalit. Padampur has basic infrastructures with telephone and electricity facilities, along with a health post, a post office, and a high school. Agricultural production is the major economic activity in Padampur; with main crops like rice, maize and mustard.

The selection of these sites was done first since I was especially interested in studying ex-combatants who did not return to their original home communities and secondly since I knew there would be a higher number of ex-combatants in these locations. Early in my fieldwork I made an estimate and found that more than 200 families have settled in Padampur VDC, Chitwan. This is located closely to Shaktikhor, where the Chitwan main cantonment was based. I had easy access to the respondents as these ex-combatants, were based in the same area. I designed as a principal tool semi-structured interview form, which was the basis for collecting data on how they came to settle in the area and how they pursued reintegration socially, politically and economically.

Apart from Chitwan, there were quite a number of ex-combatants who were based in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. These ex-combatants have shifted to the capital city in search of economic opportunities.

3.4 Data Collection Strategy and Techniques

The methods are mainly based on primary data, collected from the field. Apart from the primary data, I also made use of secondary data based on official statistics and primary evidence produced by other scholars. Since my research is mainly based on primary data, the selection of the sites for data collection, and study design will be elucidated to some degree. This research is mainly focused on qualitative methods and therefore, both primary and secondary data are qualitative in nature.

⁴⁵ Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal, March 2014

⁴⁶ Ibid.

While collecting primary data, I used my personal network - including a journalist in Kathmandu and one local journalist in Chitwan. A friend from Chitwan was working for national and local media. He had good information about the ex-combatants and the reintegration process as he was actively involved in reporting during the reintegration process. His involvement in various organizations helped me to identify the ex-combatants. This contact was well-known in the community where the ex-combatants were living. I got his help only to establish the initial contact with the respondents. He was helping me at that critical stage, by introducing and briefing the locals about my project and also providing me additional information about the community. During interviews, I was interacting with the ex-combatants and their families personally, without the presence of my friend or any other assistant.

Therefore, I went to the research area and met with the ex-combatants. As those combatants were engaged in different sectors and business, we had to go to their working places. I had a telephone conversation in advance and had explained them about my purpose of getting appointments for a meeting. There was also a peace library in Padampur, established by one organization, which was coordinated by ex-combatants. It was a very helpful arena for collecting vital information regarding the settlement and available household of ex-combatants. I got the contact numbers and the information about their settlements of ex-combatants from the one working in the peace library. After a few days of introduction, I started meeting them personally for informal interaction and interviews. The combatants were rather happy to answer my questions when I told that my research was solely for an academic purpose. I gathered information through personal interviews, focus-group discussions and observations of the ex-combatants and their families. I even participated in discussions with local and national level political leaders and researchers working in this particular policy and practice area. I interviewed local civil society leaders, government officials, and experts too. In total 30 persons were interviewed, including 15 ex-combatants and 15 experts in this area.

It should be noted that the primary source of data is the in-depth personal interviews. But I have strived to complement my own processed data with secondary data based on relevant hardcopies or online research articles, books, and official publications, including statistics. My search criteria for secondary information have been related supplementary evidence about reintegration as a

longitudinal process, and on the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants, evidence that could either lend support or compliment or question my own no doubt limited database.

3.5 Qualitative Method of Data Collection

Qualitative research method was used to collect data through personal interviews and discussions, where the researcher was seeking to understand ex-combatants daily lifestyle and the sources of livelihood. The personal interviews were conducted based on the pre-organized set of questions that were tested. I revised the questionnaire after I interviewed few respondents. I added some necessary questions and removed those which was not important and which my informants found it uncomfortable to answer. Moreover, I revised the questionnaire and made it short and with limited and relevant questions. I encouraged the informants to share their experiences and information related to my queries and later asked them toward the end of each interview if they had missed to tell me vitally important information or wished to correct any of the information they had shared so far.

Bryman (1998) describes that qualitative research permits students to make in-depth understanding and study behaviors, their views and experiences, using a holistic framework through subjective and systematic methods.⁴⁷ A significant strength of qualitative research design is its ability to provide difficult textual descriptions of how people experience a predefined research issue.⁴⁸ It brings information regarding the perceptions, beliefs, opinions and emotions of individuals. Accordingly, when I was in the field for the data collection, I strived to develop a rapport with my respondents. I sought to establish a trusting atmosphere by asking them about the day-to-day affairs and general questions about the village, agriculture, weather and climate and their children.

I tried to talk informally, in order to help them to feel free and talk to me later during the interview sessions. Before starting an interview, I asked them if they would consent me or not for taking recording the conversation and taking the pictures. Likewise, I assured them that all those conversations either private or confidential would not be disclosed and not used anywhere else than in that research. All those data were gathered in the form of texts.

⁴⁷ Bryman, A. (2003). *Quantity and quality in social research*. Routledge. p.78.

⁴⁸ Qualitative Research Methods: A data collector's field guide, FHI

Since I chose a research method of in-depth in nature, hence, the number of participants had to be limited. This method is supportive and effective to describe the invisible or hypothetical factors of the society, like socioeconomic status, gender roles, and religion and ethnicity.⁴⁹ In order to collect data, I made a pre-organized set of questions. As I have mentioned earlier, I made the revision of the questionnaire in the field. My pre-prepared checklist was quite long and time-consuming. I realized and experienced once having the first interviews with the respondents. So, I accordingly modified and made it shorter, remember not to miss the really important questions, given my operational research agendas. Therefore, this method was quite useful in delivering the descriptions of ex-combatants' experiences, and their opinions stated with emotions.

In addition to the semi-structured interview methods for the data collection, I also used field notes, as the semi-structured interviews were complemented with in-depth and open-ended questions. Those rich notes were analyzed during the data analysis stage, back at my university.

3.6 Informants Selection

I used three different sets of questionnaires to interview the ex-combatants, the political party leaders and the DDR-experts working in this field. The different questionnaires were designed to gather specific information from the different respondent groups.

Selection of respondents was planned before the fieldwork. To collect the data from the different respondents, I categorized them and formed checklists. It was planned to interview around 30 persons, which as mentioned included ex-combatants, DDR-experts and practitioners in this area, including political party leaders from different political parties. By this intake, I hoped to collect vital data from different key stakeholders in the reintegration process. The main checklist was structured, following discussions with my supervisor. In relation to my research key questions, I combined as noted personal interviews, focus-group discussions and observational methods. The rationale behind the selection of different categories of informants and the mix of research tools was to collect evidence about a diversity of personal life histories and reintegration strategies and intakes to the overall reintegration process

⁴⁹ Ibid

These interviews sought to promote two-way communication where both the researcher and respondents had an opportunity to raise further questions and make clarifications. Most of the interviews were conducted personally in one to one interview method which helped the respondents to have a dialogic interview. I asked them to share their personal experiences during the reintegration process and their involvement in an engaging and comfortable manner. I was listening and noting down the interview and probing them with different critical questions in order to encourage them to explore the issues deeper. This also allowed me to discuss a number of sensitive issues. Before under and after the semi-structured interviews were carried out, I undertook observations, which were helpful as I could to some degree validate data that I had gathered during interviews with other respondents.

The respondents were informed that they would be interviewed as ex-combatants or as experts. Though the ex-combatants didn't want to recognize themselves as ex-combatants and they didn't want to recall pasts which had brought them pain and suffering, they still went through the entire interviews. During these interviews, respondents were allowed to discuss what they have experienced and what kind of role and involvement they had during the conflicts. However, during these interviews, I felt it hard to decide the exact number of questions that need to be asked to gather enough information related to the research subject. It was also experienced that the semi-structured interviews were time-consuming unlike closed-ended questions; it gives freedom for the respondent to respond openly and even talk out of the discussion topics and area.

3.7 Access to Informants and Organizations

In social science research, approaching in a sensitive manner targeted communities and informants are considered as one of the major challenges. This is due to various reasons, such as lack of access to the informants, informant's willingness to respond, lack of interest of respondents in research subject etc. Apart from approaching respectfully the targeted informants, ensuring data quality is another key challenge a researcher has to face. One main strategy is to make use of the right "gate keepers" In my case, this was a local journalist and a coordinator of a peace-library. The other contact person was the coordinator of the peace library in Padampur VDC who was one of the female ex-combatants. This contact was established through one of the ex-combatants. The coordinator was aware of all the ex-combatants residing in that area. This contact was also helpful

for me to access library that was enriched with several books related to conflict and peace. Through this library, they have conducted several meetings and training for combatants, peacemakers, and for the parties involved in peace activism. When initial contact was made via the gate-keepers, I used the snowball-sampling method in selecting respondents.

With regard to local organizations, I communicated with a government officer in the municipality. Through this contact, I was able to collect different information on the ex-combatants who were actively involved in the Padampur division while holding leadership positions in the community. Apart from that, I was able to gather information from local level political leaders who were actively involved in different organizations.

Most of the time, I contacted ex-combatants through their friends, organizations who worked in peace and conflict sector and the government offices. In some cases, I visited ex-combatants' houses with the journalist who had contacted these respondents. In order to gather information on the acceptance of ex-combatants in the society and the community, I had informal discussions with the school teachers and headmaster.

It was challenging to interview the respondents, as they were reluctant to share the information to their efforts in changing the identity of ex-combatants to the civilians. This will be discussed later on the insider and outsider topic and subtopic challenges during the field visit in detail. Since the research topic is one of the sensitive issues related to the conflict, it was somewhat challenging for them to discuss the topic.

3.8 Focus-Group Discussion

Focus-group discussion represents a more interactive kind of involvement with multiple respondents, by use of a moderator. The reason behind conducting research through focus-groups is to gather in-depth information from a collective group who meet and discuss the same topic.⁵⁰ This approach allows gathering data quickly.

⁵⁰ Curtis, Bruce, and Cate Curtis. *Social research: A practical introduction*. Sage, 2011,p.104

In the context of this research, focus-group discussions were conducted with a group of ex-combatants, their family members, and the community people. Discussions were conducted in Padampur, Chitwan. During these discussions, I used the Nepali language, which made participants understand the purpose and the context, as every participant could understand and speak Nepali very well, even if their mother tongue was not necessarily Nepali. In order to analyze the collected data, I translated and transcribed it into English. Through these intensive discussions, I was able to understand the diverse views of the participants in the same issues.

3.9 Observations

In research, observation method in collecting data supports the sources of data gathered on the particular subject. The advantage of observation is that we do not have to rely on respondents' willingness to provide information but we can directly see what they are engaged with rather than verbal testimony. During the fieldwork, I was actively listening, interacting and questioning the respondents and experts in the subject matter. The background information which I collected prior to fieldwork like the social setting of the villages, and about the respondent was useful to have observations during the fieldwork. It also helped me during the field visits to be familiarized with the area and to build a rapport with the respondents. Because of this, I was able to understand the social setting and environment of the community. Since I had the background information and the experience with the previous respondents, I was accepted into the community and was able to gather quality data. During these discussions, it was also observed that the emotions and personal thoughts were brought into discussions.

3.10 Data Analysis

All the interviews from the field were noted down as field notes, which were translated into English. To fulfill the research objectives, data gathered from the field were analyzed and presented in a succinct and cogent manner. Both primary and secondary data were organized and presented during the analysis of this research.

The primary data collection was done through well-organized field notes. Secondary data was as already described above, gathered from different sources, and used in developing my theoretical

framework and the analytical concepts. Furthermore, my use of secondary sources also helped to validate and support my analysis and to identify gaps found during analysis of my data.

3.11 Insider Vs. Outsider

An issue of insider and outsider was not a major challenge to me. Being myself a native of the country, the language was not a major barrier in conducting the interviews and discussions. I felt as nearly an “insider” who could communicate directly with the respondents without any translator and interpret the oral and non-verbal messages and signs clearly.

In social science research, an insider-role refers to situations where the researcher knows the same languages as same as informants/respondents, sharing several basic notions, values and experiences, as participants in the national or local cultures. Though Nepal has multi-cultural societies, in my case, we shared same languages; religions and festivals. Being Nepali as the official national language; everyone speaks Nepali, some might speak Nepali with different tone who have their especially who are from *Janjati*⁵¹ background which might have the variation but the listener can perceive the intended meaning. The researcher also should have the same identity as age, gender, and class and ethnicity.⁵² An outsider does not have above-mentioned features and is not familiar with the social setting and people in the research area.⁵³ In my case, there was not a language problem as I am a native of the country and all the participants answered in Nepali.

I made effort in familiarizing and understanding the social setting, living areas of these ex-combatants and their day-to-day activities. It was also noted that being friendly with the respondents and feel of insider helped in building rapport and being accepted in the respondent's community. The informal communications and the interactions helped me in collecting quality data.

⁵¹ The term Janajati is related to social composition. The word Janajati or Jati refers to the group of people outside of caste system. However, now this term Janajati has become interchangeable with (indigenous) Adivasi. Both reflect the characteristics of indigenous people.

⁵² Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8(1), 55

⁵³ Hellowell, D. (2006). Inside out: analysis of the insider–outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research. *Teaching in higher education*, 11(4)

I made all effort to be neutral and unbiased in collecting facts and information. Though in many interactions, I felt as an insider, in some occasions, the feeling of an outsider has arisen due to my ethnicity and caste background, where most of the ex-combatants who involved in the Maoist conflict were from the so-called lower caste background and different ethnic group.

Asselin (2003) has suggested that "it is best for the insider researcher to gather data with her or his "eyes open" but assuming that she or he knows nothing about the phenomenon being studied."⁵⁴ She further explains that even though the researcher might be the part of the culture under certain study, he or she might not be familiar with the subculture. Whereas, Rose (1985) argues that, "there is no neutrality; there is only greater or less awareness of one's biases, and if you do not appreciate the force of what you are leaving out, you are not fully in command of what you're doing".⁵⁵

Robert Merton (1972) defined the concept of the insider as "an individual who possesses a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members". Here he describes the community as a wider concept than just an organization. He further explains that being an insider researcher does not mean the same as being currently a member of the community being researched.⁵⁶ Merton has further suggested outsider as the "researcher is not a priori familiar with the setting and people she or he is researching".

Actually, some researcher argues that at the same time researcher can be both insider and outsider to some extent in qualitative research in the social science. There might be some components of insiderness on some extents and some elements of outsidersness on other dimensions.⁵⁷ For an example, if a researcher is a male and interviewing other male participants, there we can find the element of gender dimension. Additionally, if a researcher is a young male interviewing relatively older male, there may be an element of outsidersness on an age dimension.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 55

⁵⁵ Ibid. 55

⁵⁶ Hellowell, D. (2006). Inside–out: analysis of the insider–outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research. *Teaching in higher education*, 11(4), 484

⁵⁷ Ibid. 490

Furthermore, I was an outsider to the extent that I was interviewing the ex-combatants where I was not belonging to and with whom I was not familiar with. Even the language and the word would be different if those ex-combatants had been interviewed by another researcher from the same group. I understood that sometimes I shared experiences, opinions and perspectives with ex-combatants while discussing with them and at other times I did not. It is not that I saw myself as an outsider instead of an insider, however, all the participants were not the same and differences could be observed.

3.12 Challenges During Field Visits

During the data collection process, I found it difficult to access and approach the respondents. This was due to several reasons such as lack of interest to share information, the ex-combatants' intention and efforts to change their identity from ex-combatants to civilians and their social need of letting go of the painful and disturbing past and to move forward with the community. I was very concerned and careful with the word that I selected while having the interview and used the respectful Nepali words to comfort them. The data collection process was time-consuming due to the limited access to the respondents' house; their houses were quite scattered and far away from one another. Hence, I made efforts in obtaining the prior appointment to have discussions with the respondents.

However, I was only able to interview one or two respondents in a day. It was also noted, most of the ex-combatants were working as laborers to earn their day-to-day livings. Rest ex-combatants who did not earn any living claimed that they were engaged in their household activities. Due to these reasons, respondents agreed to allocate limited time to share their views and ideas. Not only that but also respondents were showing less interest in responding while indicating that the time spent in responding has taken away the time in earning money for their living. Since the respondents were reluctant to respond to the questions, I made efforts to explain the importance of such information by mentioning that the research was done to build academic knowledge on that issue.

3.13 Research Limitations

The research area of this research is based on the reintegration option of cash-based retirement. This is one of the options the ex-combatants had with the peace agreement. While the research area is on voluntary retirement, the primary objective of this research is to explore how a selected group who choose not to return to their original community has handled exactly the social, political and economic dimensions of reintegration. Therefore, this research was conducted on the group mentioned and do not include those who reintegrated into Nepal Army and those chose rehabilitation programs. Therefore, the research was only limited to the voluntary discharged ex-combatants who received the cash-based retirement from the cantonments.

Due to the nature of the qualitative research methods, a limited number of ex-combatants were interviewed. The primary data was gathered through personal interviews and it was difficult to determine the number of participants to gather quality data. The fieldwork for this research was only done in the selected districts in Nepal and do not the cover overall scenario of Nepal. Therefore, the finding has been generalized based on the data collected from the selected sample. Also due to the time limitation, I only interviewed and had discussions with few communities and respondents.

This research is focused in an area related to conflict and peace and therefore the subject itself is sensitive in nature. As the data collected is qualitative, findings and analysis became more challenging and time-consuming. Finally, as the purpose of the study is to fulfill the academic requirements for the master degree, the time constraints also became a major limitation. However, fieldwork was planned and conducted in an organized way to overcome the limitation mentioned.

3.14 Ethical Considerations

Prior to the interviews, clearly mentioned information sheets were provided to the respondents. The purpose and objectives of the data collection were clearly mentioned in the information sheets. I also shared basic information with respondents, the details such as the topic of the research and the overall process associated with the research. Prior permission was sought to record the interviews and discussions. Confidentiality and privacy of respondents were considered and

therefore, the information and notes were kept with data security. Participation in the research was voluntary and participants had their right to stay anonymous.

3.15 Reflection From the Field

The issues related to the ex-combatants and the reintegration is sensitive and directly related to an embittered armed conflict. As mentioned in *The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: A practitioner's guide* by Bernard Mayer (2010), conflict may have different dimensions of perception, feeling and action. Conflict involves the feelings of anger, sadness and fear. Therefore, as human needs integrate from "survival to psychological concerns, and the identity based needs for community, meaning intimacy and autonomy", so different people have different attitudes and perceptions towards conflict in general which helps to shape their behavior in a particular conflict.⁵⁸

Ex-combatants and the communities who are directly affected by the conflict are reluctant to discuss and bring up any memory from the painful past. In many cases, ex-combatants faced extreme stigma. Only a few returned to their home communities when most of them decided to settle in new place; with their friends circle. Most of the combatants were looking for anonymity, or shifting to those communities where people were not affected mostly by conflict. Those ex-combatants who returned without getting nothing that they aim but whereas been characterized as 'disqualified' which has a literal meaning in Nepali as "*Ayoggya*", meaning unqualified, which stigmatized them more. Female combatants who did inter-caste marriages during the Maoist movement or in the cantonment were not welcomed back by their families or communities. So, this ex-combatants wanted to hide their background and do not want to remember the past which is painful during the conflict period.

Therefore, it was observed that the respondents were reluctant to share the information and experiences during the interviews. Some respondents were emotional such that while they were expressing, they were in tears. Due to these ex-combatants are trying to change their identity from ex-combatants to the civilians.

⁵⁸ Mayer, B. (2010). *The dynamics of conflict resolution: A practitioner's guide*. John Wiley & Sons.

Furthermore, prior to the field visits, I had a discussion with the research supervisor on the questionnaire and the checklist for the field visit. I was also advised and informed on how to interview ex-combatants, the question styles and the questions that I should refrain from asking. In this chapter, I have sought to present the methods, tools, and techniques used in my study and to reflect over my positionality as a native field researcher, and the limitations of my research approach and methods.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on data presentation and analysis of empirical evidence. The chapter begins with presenting informants profile and background in a brief, followed by a presentation and analysis of own data organized in line with my earlier theoretical outline of reintegration as multifaceted and process oriented. As I have argued that social reintegration is of overarching importance and in several ways set the terms for economic reintegration, I shall start with discussing these primary data first and also contextualize my findings in a broader context. I will then discuss the political dimension of reintegration before I turn to economic reintegration and the debate about the risks of resorting to violence as civilian or by reengagement as armed fighters.

I have already made clear; I made the deliberate choice of studying a group of ex-combatants who have sought to reintegrate in the host community near to their old cantonment. This group of ex-combatants was my principal group of informants. In this sense, they all decided not to reintegrate in their communities of birth, childhood and adolescence. In spite of this uniform decision of mainly social nature in a dire post-war context, they have a rather diverse social background, record as former fighters and opinions on their current livelihood situations. Since de-engagement, demobilization and reintegration have been a drawn-out process and remain an evolving process, I will structure my presentation along with a timeline, starting with the excessively long cantonment period, a troubled political agreement which set the terms for integration (into the conventional Nepal Army), rehabilitation and reintegration. I follow my selected group of informants through demobilization and their early years of reestablishing a civilian status, struggling to make a decent living for themselves and their households and wider “families”, be that their own kin by blood bonds or marriage or their war-family or adopted host community.

The operational research questions as stated earlier are the following: 1) what are the salient social, political and economic challenges and opportunities ex-combatants faced in during their prolonged stay in cantonments and in their chosen residential communities and communities of belonging after their voluntary retirement? 2) What strategic and tactical efforts did the studied ex-

combatants undertake in order to plan and implement their social and livelihood strategies during their prolonged stay in cantonments and in the early phase of reintegration? and 3) Did the much debated cash-aided approach play a major role in reintegrating ex-combatants as officially stated by the Nepalese government and the Maoist national leaders?

In order to answer these research questions, a toolbox of research techniques has been applied including not only the questionnaire which is drafted prior to the field visits but also it has been tested there before settled. All the interviews were conducted using Nepali language as this is the researcher's mother language and all the informants speak it fluently, although some of the informants of *Janajati* background have other first languages. Confidentiality and privacy of my respondents were seriously considered. Therefore, all collected information and supplementary notes were kept under a series of safety measures, including data security. Since most of the approached ex-combatants hesitated and felt uncomfortable about approving recording the interviews, this was not done. Identification of all the informants is coded by the numbers (E.g: Respondent 1, 2 etc.). Interviews in Nepal were complemented by observational data and reference to an array of secondary sources, including official statistics and previously published relevant research. The interviews in the field were recorded as notes on-the spot, and later digitized, transcribed and painstakingly translated from Nepali to English.

Following my return to Norway and my Department/Centre, I established an inventory of all my different types of primary and secondary data sources, and also full lists of all respondents in the anonymous form. My secondary data sources comprise significant research articles and other publications related to my research area, produced by other senior DDR researchers in my own research group (IRGR) and by other institutions and individual scholars. For a more detailed discussion of my research design, methods and research tools, I refer to the methodology chapter.

4.2 Informants Profile In Brief

In order to investigate my research questions the main technique has been semi-structured interviews with 30 respondents of different military and civilian backgrounds. I selected for in-depth interviews 15 ex-combatants and a diverse group of 15 persons from the government, the political parties, and the civil society. The last diverse group included 2 high-level politicians from

two political parties Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre) and Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist), also known CPN (UML), an official of Government of Nepal (GON), Coordinator of the Technical Committee for Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation of Maoist Army Combatants, formed under the Special Committee by Government of Nepal, one DDR researcher, and a number of specialized peacebuilding practitioners. I also interviewed and discussed with the non-combatant informants who were the interviewed ex-combatants close family members, civil society leaders, a leading journalist and not to forget, a member of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nepal. Although asking especially the former combatants about their armed past, is absolutely sensitive (confer my methodology chapter). Even so, I judge my data fairly reliable and would say that most of my respondents shared their views, experiences and perspectives on how they viewed the overall reintegration process. Focused group discussion was arranged with peoples from the local community in order to incorporate their views and the selection of key informants were made to cover those ex-combatants where their presence is pretty higher.

Informants profile is categorized in the table listed below. This table presents informants social and demographic background, age category, gender, health status, marital status, ethnic/caste background, category and rank; (any kinds of lasting injuries or disabilities) and current locality of residence.

Table 1: Informants profile

S.N.	Name	Sex	Category and Rank	Age Category	Marital Status	Injuries and Disability	Ethnic Caste Background	Place
1.	Re ⁵⁹ 1	F	Platoon Commander	30-40 Years	Married	Disabled	Magar	Padampur, Chitwan
2.	Re 2	M	Company Commander	30-40 Years	Married	Injured	Dalit ⁶⁰	Padampur, Chitwan

⁵⁹ Respondent

⁶⁰ Dalit, meaning "oppressed" in Sanskrit and "broken/scattered" in Hindi, is a term for the members of lower castes of India and Nepal. The term is mostly used for the ones that have been subjected to untouchability

3.	Re 3	M	Section Vice Commander	30-40 Years	Married	-	Dalit	Padampur, Chitwan
4.	Re 4	M	Company Commander	30-40 Years	Married	Injured	Tamang	Padampur, Chitwan
5.	Re 5	F	Battalion Commander	30-40 Years	Married	-	Magar	Padampur, Chitwan
6.	Re 6	F	Platoon Vice Commander	40-50 Years	Married	-	Brahmin	Padampur, Chitwan
7.	Re 7	M	Company Vice commander	30-40 Years	Married	Injured	Dalit	Padampur, Chitwan
8.	Re 8	M	Battallion Commander	30-40 Years	Single	Disabled	Magar	Padampur, Chitwan
9.	Re 9	M	Battallion Commander	40-50 Years	Married	-	Newar	Padampur, Chitwan
10.	Re 10	M	Platoon Vice commander	40-50 Years	Married	-	Tamang	Padampur, Chitwan
11.	Re 11	M	Platoon Commander	30-40 Years	Married	-	Chhetri	Kathmandu, Nepal
12.	Re 12	M	Section Vice Commander	30-40 Years	Married	-	Magar	Kathmandu, Nepal
13.	Re 13	M	Company Commander	30-40 Years	Married	-	Chhetri	Kathmandu, Nepal
14.	Re 14	M	Brigade Vice commander	20-30 Years	Married	-	Magar	Kathmandu, Nepal

15.	Re 15	F	Company Vice Commander	30-40 Years	Married	-	Dalit	Sainamaina, Rupandehi
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Data Sources: Fieldwork in Nepal, Summer 2016

Based on the above list, 10 out of 15 respondents are from Padampur, Chitwan due to the choice of the selection of the ex-combatants resettled close to the Shaktikhor Cantonment in Chitwan. The entire respondents are aged between 30 to 50 Years and they belonged to different ethnic and caste background. While leaving the cantonment they hold prominent rank and categories on PLA. It can be observed from the above table that 5 out of 15 are disabled and injured. 12 of the respondent whom I interviewed were married and other 2 as divorced and one ex-combatant who was disabled was unmarried. This listed ex-combatants who are from Padampur are living in poor condition, surviving with the day to day labor work, but 2 ex-combatants who are doing their business are living with an average standard.

4.3 An Endless Cantonment Life and Exit Options

Cantonment life requires an early introduction in my empirical presentation, since it has played a paramount role in influencing social, political and economic reintegration. Political instability in Nepal after the forged peace agreement in 2006 and lacking consensus among the major political parties on the modalities of integration between the PLA and NA left the PLA combatants confined in several main and satellite cantonments for more than six years. The time spent in the cantonment is regarded as the waste of time by most of my respondents, but not all.

As will be highlighted in the citations from the interviews below, many felt they are imprisoned, with no civilian political role, and being offered skills training of variable relevance for later employment. They underlined as expressed below, that their long cantoned years were filled with military and ideological training, which would not be important as a future civilian. Many recalled that in earlier the first months in the cantonment, the facilities were very basic. The ex-combatants explained that they early on had very difficult living and sanitary conditions. Only during the second and third years, life as cantoned combatant became more organized and fairly comfortable

in terms of facilities, be that living quarters, sanitary facilities, facilities for leisure and training. As revealed below, as life dragged on, some chose to start their fully adult civilian life by getting married to a comrade.

During my stay in the cantonment, we should stay disciplined. I felt like we were in a cage. We were locked in. I stayed for six years, but relationship with my family and parents is good same as before. We did not have much freedom, could not go where we wanted too. But, I got married inside the cantonment ⁶¹

I was PLA platoon Member. I participated in major battles of Nepal especially in Palpa, Taulihawa, Butwal and many more. But in the cantonment we had a good rest, without any stress. It was peaceful. ⁶²

I stayed six years in the cantonment; we were looking for alternative ways to work. We only knew how to fight. It was like a life in a prison. Mobile was banned in the cantonment and there were no internet services. There was a controversy of monthly salary inside the cantonment. I got married in the cantonment. ⁶³

My experience during the cantonment period is like a prison. It was very difficult than while we were outside during the conflict period. We were confined and staying in the particular place. We have to go through the everyday military training. It was like we were in jail. ⁶⁴

For years as about 20,000 combatants were confined to a country-wide network of cantonments, the public debate about different exit and so-called reintegration options raged. Although a proper analysis of this public debate is beyond the scope of this thesis, I like to make a brief contextual remark. The word 'reintegration' is not common in Nepal and its translation into Nepali as 'Punaekikaran' was felt unfamiliar and even politically objectionable. The argument was that “reintegration” implies a return to a “normal” society after somewhat breaking conventional norms

⁶¹ Respondent 3

⁶² Respondent 4

⁶³ Respondent 5

⁶⁴ Respondent 8

of the Nepalese society. Maoist waged what they termed Peoples' War in order to transform the hierarchal Nepalese society, chancing its very social fabric. Therefore, the term "reintegration" was not only unfitting, it was ideologically problematic to the Maoist civilian and military leadership and its cadres and combatants.

It was heated debate which ensured overloaded terms and their meanings, not only the Nepalese public participated, but also international agencies and various research and expert groups. Also, the Centre for Peace Studies was a highly visible voice in the 2009-2012 periods, arguing for accommodation to Nepalese realities. The Centre published a popularized handy booklet on DDR in both English and Nepali, which was distributed in around 5000 copies to members of parliament, other political leaders and NGOs, district authorities and Village Development Committee (VDC) chairman throughout Nepal.⁶⁵

While the term reintegration remained contested, it was often used to refer to reintegration into Nepal Army (NA). As noted, this term remained unaccepted by the (UCPN) Maoists and many combatants. Since they tended to argue, they have not done anything wrong; and should not have to go for "rehabilitation" a term they thought was synonymous to reintegration. But the debate at the level of lower and mid-level cadres was probably more nuanced. This is at least what my informants seem to express when I asked them if cash aided approach a good way to reintegrate ex-combatants?

*I do not call it as reintegration, nor rehabilitation. The government forcibly sends us back. They just threw us out from the cantonment. We thought of choosing reintegration into the army and everyone wanted it. But there were certain requirement criteria by the government which we lacked.*⁶⁶

The concept of reintegration is not wrong, but due to few party leaders, they could not plan well. It all turned out different from what we initially thought of. Initially, there was a plan of reintegrating 6000 PLA into the army. But it got restricted by certain strict criteria in line with the

⁶⁵ Stankovic, T., Torjesen, S., & Bleie, T. (2011). *Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: A Survey for Practitioners in Nepal*. Centre for Peace Studies, Tromso University

⁶⁶ Respondent 5

*Nepal Army's standard recruitment rules, such as requirements for formal education and age. It would be better if the government could integrate us into security forces than voluntary retirement. There was a low number of integration into the army.*⁶⁷

This citation also pinpoints a very important fact about exit options. Many guerillas had wanted to pursue a military career but were either discouraged by the strict requirements. Or, they were at a certain point of time deliberately sought convinced by their political and military leaders to reconsider, and opt for a return to a civilian life. It should be remarked that the traditional elites (having family members in top ranking positions in the army) feared a massive influx of communist cadres into the NA. Therefore, even the demand for certain technical requirements of entry should be understood as part of an ever present political game around a political and military settlement.

The combatants remained in the cantonments, in line with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), that the Maoist army would be limited and restricted to so-called “temporary cantonments”, following the verification and (limited) monitoring by the UN’s Political Mission (UNMIN). It should be recalled that as per the Agreement of December 2006, the management of arms and armies established certain conditions for both PLA and Nepal Army, which included restricted activity and movement, monitoring of weapons, cantonment and barracks and cleaning of minefields. It should be noted that the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) role in supervising the cantonments was severely limited. It was the Maoists own commanders who supervised the cachets of weapons which were kept inside the cantonments.⁶⁸ As the Maoist saw themselves as victors, they had insisted on this agreement as it would allow them to return to armed struggle if necessary. Chitwan was the central region cantonment with Third and Fourth Division of combatants.

⁶⁷ Respondent 8

⁶⁸ Robins, S., Bhandari, R., & Ex-PLA Research Group. (2016). Poverty, stigma and alienation: Reintegration challenges of ex-Maoist combatants in Nepal.p.17



Figure1: Map of Nepal where Shaktikhor, Chitwan was the central region cantonment

Ex-combatants spent more than five years in the cantonment before the final decision was made for so-called reintegration into the army and civilian life. The process was basically top-level politically negotiated, without serious consultation with the mid and lower level fighters who lingered in the cantonments. There was a strong chain of command practice inside the Maoist party and army, resulting in a sense of disempowerment of the several thousand cantoned combatants who were mostly allowed to present their views to their top-ranking leaders. The excessively long time the cantonment and demobilization process took, comes out very clearly in the frustrated statements of many of my informants who stayed (with one exception) in the main cantonment Padampur in Chitwan. Among the cantoned combatants, there were few thousands so-called Verified Minors, whom international society especially pushed the government to release from the cantonment and reintegrate them. The UN formed a quite comprehensive inter-agency program for the verified minors and late recruits (VMLR) demobilization and reintegration. This process created a considerable stir in the cantonments and in the national debate. Again the debate raged about use of terms “Verified Minors” (was seen as insulting by many), which kind of training

packages they should get while being cantoned and as starting-pad for civilian life. In December 2009 it was decided by the government of Nepal to discharge VMLRs from the cantonment site.⁶⁹ When this researcher in the summer of 2016 interviewed one top Nepalese military official involved in this process, he was fairly critical about both the handling of the Maoist leaders and indirectly also about the UN's program for VMLR.

While interviewing with one of the Maoist leaders, this top official accepted that Maoist party did some mistakes when releasing the minors on 2010, without what he called satisfactory training and relief packages. This in his view resulted in the VMLRs publically vented dissatisfaction. He also argued that the leadership must be held responsible for the politically motivated technical demands on the Maoist combatants' integration with the security forces. As he acknowledged, due to the strict criteria, the number of combatants that opted for integration was unusually small. He seems to regret this outcome and also that so few opted for rehabilitation, based on skills and training packages. He argued this option would have had a greater long-term effect on sustainable livelihoods than retirement by golden handshake - in the longer run.⁷⁰

Following the discharge of the VMLR in December 2009, it took few years before a final demobilization and to discharge combatants from the cantonments that what was agreed upon and not implemented. At different stages, different kinds of training and in-kind or cash options were proposed and hotly debated. In an interview with B. Sharma, the official coordinator of Army Integration, Secretariat of the Special Committee, he argued that "we have proposed 60 different types of vocational training for former combatants as rehabilitation packages. But the Maoist leadership came out strongly in favor of an immediate cash package. Cantoned combatants were in his view given enough time to make decisions on the alternatives, either to reintegrate into the army or voluntary retirement or rehabilitation.

Based on the slogan "integration into NA is voluntary", around 3000 fighters showed their keen interest in the first phase of conscription. Nevertheless, due to the already above debated rigid

⁶⁹ Independent Evaluation Of The Un Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP) In Nepal, Final Report, Transition International;2013

⁷⁰ Interview with Agni Prashad Sapkota, Central Committee Member, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre)

criteria, only 1,462 met the set standard requirements. In this decision making process, the Maoist leader played hypocritical double-standard politics, agreeing on one thing politically in front of TV cameras and UN officials, but delivering different messages with false promises to their cantoned cadres and fighters. This is one main reason for anger and distress between lower-ranking combatants and their commanders directed towards the political Maoist leaders. The mid-level commanders and rank-and-file combatants came to lose their trust in their own leadership.

Coordinator Sharma maintained during the interview that, technically speaking could 6,500 combatants have been integrated into Nepal army. In this view (he is himself a retired top-ranking general) this would have been a respectful integration to PLAs. But Sharma added, that in retrospect, the outcome of reintegration has turned out to be a win-win situation for the Maoist leadership and Nepal Army. The Maoists achieved largely what they wanted in the latter phase of the negotiations; that is massive voluntary retirement with cash, and modest numbers of their cadres opting for integration into Nepal Army and rehabilitation. And most importantly, the former general added, even Nepal Army should be content as there are no hostilities in Nepal now."⁷¹

The process of final discharge was concluded in 2013. It is noteworthy that the process was accelerated once the procedure was brought under the complete control of SC and its secretariat and the reintegration process was successfully completed. Following the decision made by the Supervision Committee on 10th April 2012, the weapons stored at cantonment sites was delivered to the Nepali Army by the monitoring teams from the seven of the main cantonments.⁷²

4.4 Settlement in New Host Communities

It is against the above tumultuous national process, the interviews with the ex-combatants who were discharged from Padampur, are to be analyzed. It is very difficult to trace exactly the number of ex-combatants demobilized and discharged from Padampur that returned to their native communities. Most of the discharged opted for the cash package, as it was considered by themselves as providing them with the option to settle in new neighborhoods instead of returning back to their communities of origin (mostly in the hills of Nepal). Basically, most of the

⁷¹ Rtd. General Balananda Sharma, the coordinator of Army Integration, Secretariat of the Special Committee.

⁷² Bhandari, C. The Reintegration of Ex-Maoist Combatants back into Nepali Society Draft

discharged ex-combatants settled in urban and semi-urban areas near to the east-way highway of Nepal.

They settled especially in Padampur of Chitwan (my main but not only investigation site), Sainamaina in Rupandehi, Purandhara and Bijauri in Dang, Rajhena and Kohalpur in Banke and Sandepani in Kailali.⁷³ A Large number of ex-combatants moved to big cities like Biratnagar, Pokhara, Nepalgunj, and in capital city Kathmandu, searching for employment opportunities.



Figure 2: Map of Nepal with Maoist cantonment location

A certain not easily quantifiable proportion of ex-combatants returned to their origin communities and settled there. These ex-combatants returned to their villages and came to hold positions in local organizations like Community Forest User Group (CFUG), School Management committees and Drinking Water Management Committees.⁷⁴ Why they opted for such a return has not been a subject for my investigation, but one may assume the reasons are composite, including solid backing from family and neighbors for participation in People's War and might be they ex-combatants possessed leadership and other specialized qualities their communities needed in the

⁷³ Based on several interview

⁷⁴ Subedi, D. B. (2014). Conflict, combatants, and cash: Economic reintegration and livelihoods of ex-combatants in Nepal. *World Development*, 59, 241

reconstruction phase. Perhaps they had not committed any major war crimes or atrocities in their own native localities. These are some possible reasons, which other scholars to some degree have investigated.

Those are obviously not in my sample of interviewed ex-combatants from Padampur. It is also clear from media in Nepal and from other reports that a good number of ex-combatants migrated to the Gulf countries for foreign labor employment. I will later make a brief comment on push and pull factors for migration.

Integration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants is an important part of the Nepal peace process which was one the important agenda of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in November 2006. After a decade-long conflict, as a result of negotiation between the government of Nepal and rebel party Maoist, CPA has been signed. The United Nations assisted the government of Nepal during the registration and verification of all the Maoist ex-combatants. UNMIN assisted on registration and verification of Maoist army. In 2007, during the first phase 32,250 Maoists combatants were registered but when UNMIN determine the eligibility for integration, several combatants were absent.⁷⁵ The combatants remained for a quite long time in the cantonments on à different location in Nepal which was prolonged due to the debate among the leaders of key political parties.

Unlike in other countries affected by the conflict, where UN mission has a major role in assisting the governments to disarm and demobilize the combatants and destroy the arms and weapons under a DDR program. In fact, In Nepal Agreement on the Monitoring and Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA) did not provide the full mandate for UN. Maoist leader Prachanda claimed that Maoist rebels were different from the other rebel forces and should be treated them as a legitimate army, not as a defeated force.⁷⁶ This affected while reintegration of the ex-combatants and when the Maoist party came to a power, decisions were made with the advantage to the ex-combatants future by a multi-party mechanism- a special committee from the government.

⁷⁵ Robins, S., Bhandari, R., & Ex-PLA Research Group. (2016). Poverty, stigma and alienation: Reintegration challenges of ex-Maoist combatants in Nepal.p.17

⁷⁶ UNDP. 2011. Registration and Verification report: assistance to peace process in Nepal (APPN). UNDP

4.5 The Nepalese Post-War Context and Ex-Combatants' Reintegration Strategies

In the late phase of cantonment and during the demobilization process, the cantoned combatants' calculus about which reintegration option to choose and where to settle - were informed by several partly conflict-ridden concerns. Directly or indirectly, the relations between ex-combatants and their home communities were deeply affected by not only the war-experiences in general, but by the specific moral repute of individual male and female combatants in their home areas and by the reaction to the much publically debated so-called golden handshake. In the eyes of many civilians who had suffered greatly during the civil war, lost their home, being subjected to violence and displaced internally (IDP), the whole idea of a massive cash sum to the guerrillas was provoking and objectionable. Some community people thought the ex-combatants were rewarded for the massive violence they had committed during the war. This was contrary to themselves, who had lost their dear ones and their properties during the decade of armed conflict with no compensation in sight or legal process.

4.6 Social Reintegration and Social Network Building

In general, ex-combatants who did not return to their places of origin chose to form rather closed communities of combatants in a different location in Nepal. Total Number of 15,624 ex-combatants opted for voluntary retirement and discharged from the cantonments. In Padampur VDC in Chitwan where my field work was undertaken, there are 200 ex-combatant households with almost 120 families.⁷⁷ Likewise, about 100 households have settled together with local communities in Purandhara, Dang district and nearly 200 families are settled in Bijauri VDC in Dang district. In the same way, more than 100 families have settled in Kohalpur Banke and about 50 in Sainamaina, Rupandehi.

During their stay in the cantonment, many cantoned combatants started buying land and e constructed houses and relocated their family members there. So, they started in-fact settling during their stay in the cantonment. Unsatisfied with the cantonment life, they were slowly seeking their own options for a return to civilian life later on.

⁷⁷ Based on interview

While having an interview with experts my concern was on the challenges that have been faced and are facing by ex-combatants during the process of social reintegration. Based on the interview with an expert he mentioned that; *Ex-combatants had a psychological impact on this transition due to the fear of socialization and uncertainty of their future. This fear and the tension grew when they were settled in cantonments. They also had to go through financial difficulties as they lost their salaries as a result of the corruption took place at the commanders' level. During the time in the cantonment, they were skilled in making arms and bombs and they only developed their skills related to the same, as a result of lack of other skills. Ex-combatants were left with money in hand without proper professional training for future jobs, they were uncertain about their future with a decent job due to lack of skills. Therefore, it was evident that their future was insecure; however, the ones who had political support or had other connections were able to overcome these obstacles.*⁷⁸

There were also ex-combatants who did not face many difficulty as they were in contact with their family even during the conflict period, through calls, personal letters and visits. During the quite long ceasefire periods, combatants were allowed to visit their family. This was beneficial to them, as they received informal and moral support during their later settlement. My data indicates that it made it easier for them to get advice for selecting the location for resettlement, for livelihood options and investments. Those ex-combatants who joined the Maoist movement on the permission of their family, to a large degree opted for returning back to their communities.

*I stayed in cantonment for almost six years but the relationship with family and parents were same. Even though we did not have much freedom, I was aware of my family and their health. We could not go anywhere we wanted.*⁷⁹

When discharged, ex-combatants were looking for an opportunity to build their civilian status and to normalize their lives. Many who felt they were not warmly welcomed in their natal communities and they were afraid of prosecution or revenge. Therefore, they naturally sought to find other options, which are settling in the host community near to their own cantonment in Padampur.

⁷⁸ Interview with expert

⁷⁹ Respondent 3

*We have been living in the Cantonment for last four years. Now, we are staying together and cooperatively with the villagers. They also very understanding including older generation. In cantonments, we used to involve in the military training with guns and involved in physical exercise. Here we are cooperating with everyone. I know I have to help and be friendly with everyone to stay in a community.*⁸⁰

My own sample of informants settled in Padampur with their spouses who were also their comrades. Life was difficult for single/unmarried ex-fighters to establish themselves and reintegrate in Padampur. Therefore they were severely underrepresented in my sample of informants. The dilemmas faced by female combatants have been researched by the former MPCT-student and IRGR-affiliate Sharada Khadka.⁸¹ This particular group of combatants faced not only double standards in Maoist-ideology about motherhood and armed struggle. They also encountered very conservative moral ideas of gender roles in their home families and communities, as T. Bleie has documented in-depth in a report.⁸² Many female combatants feared that they would face difficulties to return home, due to the community perceptions regarding gendered roles, inter-caste marriage and their former 'aggressive' lives during the conflict. Out of the four female ex-combatants interviewed, all respondent stated they felt more empowered as a woman after joining the Maoist PLA. It is evident from the interview cited below, that they felt equal with their male comrades when they fought together, and that this empowering exposure stood contrasted with their sense of value after being discharged. They expressed during the interviews that they felt politically and physically very different from other Nepalese women. This made the option of settling in Padampur more attractive than returning home. Maoist claimed that 40% of ex-combatants fighters are women, but during verification from UNMIN 20% of them were women which is a very important number in a country like Nepal.

During the initial stage in this village, we discussed and planned together. We were looking for options and was assessing if we could raise animals or get some work from jungles which are

⁸⁰ Respondent 3

⁸¹ Khadka, S. (2012). *Female combatants and ex-combatants in Maoist Revolution and their struggle for reintegration in post-war, Nepal* (Master's thesis, Universitetet i Tromsø)

⁸² Bleie, T. (2012). Post-War Moral Communities in Somalia and Nepal: Gendered Practices of Exclusion and Inclusion. *Tromsø: Center for Peace Studies*, 9.

*closed by. We also thought of initiating new things. In this new community, we were total of 16-17 household. It was a new settlement where there was no water, electricity and road facility. We rented rooms and stayed in the previous day and discussed plans at least to build small houses for shelter. I was engaged with different organizations; therefore, it was not very difficult for day to day living. It has become easier as we are staying together. It would have been difficult if we were staying alone. The settlement was easy as this place is close by to the cantonment.*⁸³

The challenge for women to return to their native Nepalese society was also made more difficult by their inter-caste marriages while being cantoned. The whole issue of social stigma due to inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages will be commented below. Another group facing severe challenges in returning home were disabled ex-combatants. Their abilities as household providers were limited and they were in need of quite costly medical assistance. They knew life in the hills demanded very hard physical labor and agility - moving along steep vertical trails and hillsides, these prospects may be daunting to many disabled and severely injured.

Social and cultural norms underpinning the relation between older parents and offspring affected male and female ex-combatants somewhat differently. It is a norm in Nepal that Parents has to be cared by their sons. Therefore, men as heads of households are responsible for their families including their old parent's necessities such as health expenses, daily needs for food and beverages and other necessities. And not only so, from a cultural perspective of social responsibility, sons need to provide large amount of money for investing and celebrating religious ceremonies, marriages and other regular annual festivals. Several of my informants put emphasis on their duties for ceremonial expenditure. Even if they settled away from home in Padampur, they could not avoid such responsibilities. They also stated that they were invited to ceremonies and for festivals which required traveling to their native home. Their presence is expected in life-cycle ceremonies related to birth, death and marriage in terms of cost and attendance. My data based on interviews with 15 respondents, shows that one third (5 ex-combatants) spent sizable amounts of money on visiting their parents, attending ceremonies and looking after their aged parents who lived elsewhere. Others respondent who did not spend their cash on festivals are due to their less contact with their families and or they are not in contact with the families in their home community.

⁸³ Respondent 5

For me, it is very difficult to adjust to the new community. Now, I am here in different society. It is very confusing; I feel like I am blindfolded. I did not have any idea what I am doing as it was a very quick decision and I was not ready for this. If I go back to my village, I do not have same views and perspectives, it is totally different. I cannot agree with them. Most of my friends are in the United Kingdom, and some are in British Army. Now we have a different rank. Villagers hate us and reject us from the society. They welcome the one who comes from the abroad. They like the one who has money. They do not treat us good but when any of coming from United Kingdom they are so much welcomed. They did not even recognize me, so I am staying in this place. I got married in the cantonment and registered.⁸⁴

The government should have given us certain land where we could start our own business. I lose my friends and network in my birthplace and I selected this place. I am in contact with my parents and my friends.⁸⁵

One of the experts during an interview shared that; if ex-combatants had chosen a rehabilitation option, social stigma could have been minimized after regular counseling and mentoring. Sometimes, ex-combatants by force chose to stay unemployed or low paid job due to the social stigma and hatred as they have to leave their families and village and also some ex-combatants they cannot go back to village and work as a farmer due to his/her identity of PLA fighter who fought for social and economic change.

It is found that almost all of the interviewed ex-combatants preferred to integrate into the security agencies rather than returning back to civilian life. During interview, almost all of the respondents expressed reintegration as the only option for them and two or three preferred to return back to civilian life. Ex-combatants believed that integration as an achievement of the objectives that they joined for the PLA and they see that integration as the respect for the CPA.

⁸⁴ Respondent 9

⁸⁵ Respondent 5

So far in this chapter, I have sought to elaborate in brief the political context in which reintegration and integration options were politically negotiated, without much influence of the great mass of mid and low-ranking disarmed combatants in Padampur and elsewhere in Nepal. I have also sought to start unraveling the difficult social and cultural dilemmas the cantoned male and female fighters had to try to encounter and somehow handle in deciding which option to choose and where to settle and build their futures. In brief, I sought to describe some of the concrete dilemmas which motivated a quite large number of ex-fighters to settle close by their old cantonment, such as in my primary case from Padampur.

Below in this sub-chapter based on my interview data, I supplemented my own observations and secondary data, I will describe and analyze in greater detail the social reintegration process from the time in the cantonment, and during the first 5-years after they exited and started demanding social reintegration effort.

The focus is mainly on how to reintegrate along two-community dimensions; establishing a new community of residence near to the old cantonment and at the same time not breaking drastically all ties to what we can call a “war-community”, as a community of belonging.

Unlike most other countries, Nepal has an experience of using cash payments as a major input lead to long term reintegration process. The process was heavily politicized and made decisions on the top level and leaders did not consult with PLA; mostly surrounded by the discussion of army integration. The number and modality of integration between NA and PLA influenced the entire process of management of ex-combatants which undermined the genuine process of rehabilitation. However, ex-combatants aim to integrate into Nepal army rather going through the rehabilitation program.⁸⁶ In other words, ex-combatants were dreaming for their quick and fundamental changes in their lives. Therefore, a number of ex-combatants had already left the cantonments and planned their reintegration on their own. Large Number of combatants decided to go abroad for employment and other chose to go back and settled themselves with their families. Also, ex-combatants settled their families near cantonment sites and help their families in household works.

⁸⁶ Subedi, D. B. (2014). Conflict, combatants, and cash: Economic reintegration and livelihoods of ex-combatants in Nepal. *World Development*, 59, 246

In a useful work of D.B Subedi, he has come up with some compelling reasons why Maoists preferred cash instead of a full-fledged reintegration program. He argued that there was a possibility of mishandling the cash as a number of ex-combatants already left the cantonments and many ex-combatants who get voluntary retirement can still work for Maoist party. Subedi mentioned that Maoist commanders encouraged their fellow soldiers for choosing cash-based retirement, rather than going for the rehabilitation program.⁸⁷ His findings are quite consistent with my own findings.

My own data, to be elicited below, reveals that the discharged ex-combatants to a variable degree were really well prepared with a consistent strategy for social and economic reintegration. Some had no well taught through ideas or even less so any future plan for where to settle and what do in order to secure their livelihood. The lacking preparedness in spite of such long period of cantonment might seem quite inexplicable. But I have found that one main reason was that the top commanders did not really permit any sound flow of information about the political negotiations about the terms for reintegration, down to the level of rank-and-file combatants in the cantonment. This information closure, can to some degree explain why quite many were unaware of the politically negotiated options and which opportunities the different options would provide. Out of my 15 ex-combatants, respondents 6 ex-combatants had started planning where to resettle (in their host community) and had initiated buying land or constructing houses close to the cantonments. They had quite deliberately and strategically started to develop close relations with the surrounding community during the cantonment. Once discharged, they had a social base to build on and started doing community work, planning developmental projects like constructing drinking water, graveling roads and bringing electricity grid where no such were in place.

These above mentioned developmental activities can be observed in Padampur, Chitwan. Later they started participating on different community level meeting and organizations to participate in the social network. Celebrating festivals and sending children to school, inviting their parents to their new home and getting in interaction with friends and family. Establishing a new enterprise or small business also helps them to build their social network. Ex-combatants were actively engaged in the leadership position or as a member of a different organization, microfinance or at school.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 246

Five respondents, I interviewed were leading in different organizations, school, credit and finance as a key leadership position.

4.7 Involvement in Community Building Projects and Organizations

I am affiliated with local peace committee, cooperative, an organization called Pro-public and also I am the coordinator of the Peace library which is established by Pro public. I am initiating various local level development projects like electricity, underground water, and pole for the electricity, club and school buildings and maintaining and graveling road.⁸⁸

After the reintegration, a group of ex-combatants has a great contribution to the local economy. It has helped a lot to boost the money. The money was invested locally and in the community. Further, they have been actively engaged and involved in club, school and involved on to resolve conflict at a community level. They are socially engaged too and working in different leadership positions which are the positive dimensions and they have a contribution to local peace.⁸⁹

Reintegration process should arguably be analyzed as a long-term process, rather than a short-term problem solving approach. One can see in retrospect that reintegration program should have been designed by consulting with ex-combatants and addressing their grievances, rather than making them pawns in a political struggle decided at a political level. One can argue that even a rehabilitation program, aided with cash, and would be pretty effective in terms of long-term reintegration if all the three dimensions had been addressed in a systematic and balanced manner. In my judgment, considering my own and other evidence, the cash based option was understood as a problem solving tool. In the name of implementing peace, ex-combatants were sent out of the cantonments into a war-torn society without any supporting services that could help transforming them into to content dignified civilians.

It was in my analysis that there is no any support provided to ex-combatants in terms of holistic approach including all the reintegration dimensions, not even psycho-social support to them. This was a serious lacking, as my data, consistent with other studies, document that to experienced

⁸⁸ Respondent 7

⁸⁹ Interview with expert

social stigma and discrimination. And not only so, as already discussed, many ex-combatants also felt betrayed by their own leaders as the terms for the reintegration process and program was a crude political bargaining process

4.8 Political Reintegration of the Ex-Combatants

Maoist's combatants and cadres were largely recruited from rural areas from the marginalized communities, such as indigenous or Janajati⁹⁰ and lower caste Dalit.⁹¹ My interview data shows that my informants were voluntarily recruited, but this does not tally full with other more comprehensive studies which show that recruitment was to some degree done under threat, mainly among the under-age or younger. The main finding in my own data, which has also been found in other studies, is that the cantonments were part of both a national political community as well as being a war-family. This will be elaborated below and also how it impacted their scope for being politically engaged citizens.

4.9 A War-Family Network and Relations

Ex-combatants who participated in the conflict for several years and stayed in the cantonment for six years developed friendships and network inside their own circles. They could not have good connections with the people outside their group of ex-combatants who constituted a war-family. They were very close to one another, and shared same feelings and experiences, forming family-like ties with each other. At a national level, the Maoist's ex-combatants regarded the People's Liberation Army as such as a war-family.

Hazan, 2007 explained this insightfully; when an individual take responsibility in war; he or she becomes the member of that war family through a common ideology and purpose. So that, war has

⁹⁰ The term Janajati is related to social composition. The word Janajati or Jati refers to the group of people outside of caste system. However, now this term Janajati has become interchangeable with (indigenous) Adivasi. Both reflect the characteristics of indigenous people.

⁹¹ According to the UN data, nearly 90 percent of the combatants are of hill origin; among those of Terai origin and the indigenous domination

an integrative function their participation in conflict integrates them as a "War Family."⁹² Involvement of the combatants in the insurgency unites into the communist war system. Therefore, this explains that combatants have a mutual sense of belonging and unity when they work together under one command system. Especially during the reintegration process, a number of ex-combatants detached from this "war family" and keeps them on distance those who have distress from the war and party politics and started a life with a new civilian identity. There are several reasons why ex-combatants keep them away from the party which can be that their relations wanted them to break away from the Maoist; then dissatisfaction with the party leadership for their false promises.

4.10 Perspectives of Ex-Combatants on the People's War and the Political Party as a Community

Most of the ex-combatants blamed the party leadership for failing to decide and directing the mass movement when signing the Peace Agreement. A number of the ex-combatants agreed that they fought for change and transformation, or as they said, "for the good purpose". Moreover, they experienced that they had achieved much of their political agenda through their valiant struggles.

*I do not regret by joining the Maoist Movement, I could experience and be the part of the change that we have today. I am proud to be the combatants*⁹³.

*The Maoist party is here today due to our involvement on the conflict, I have seen many friends who are disabled and injured and living very difficult lives, there were lots of us who gave our life to the party but leaders they could not decide in our favor. Our political objectives hasn't been completed*⁹⁴

4.11 Economic Reintegration of the Ex-Combatants

Ex-combatants articulated their worries about their livelihood. Mostly ex-combatants experience is related to livelihood insecurities. Not limited to exploring the use and misuse of cash, I have tried

⁹² Hazen, J. M. (2005, November). Social Integration of ex-combatants after civil war. In *United Nations Expert Group Meeting entitled "Dialogue in the Social Integration Process: Building Peaceful Social Relations—By, For, and With People* p.4.

⁹³ Respondent 7

⁹⁴ Respondent 3

to dig out how the ex-combatants are able to establish their secure livelihood. A livelihood is a means of making a living, with their capabilities and also relates to means of living which includes food, income, and assets.⁹⁵ In the context of Nepal, in a negotiated peace process, the process and outcomes of DDR are shaped and influenced by politics in one way or other; therefore while understanding the complex relationship between the political economy of peace and conflict, politics might facilitate but also obstruct outcomes of DDR program.⁹⁶

I wanted to be self-employed or start a small business. We just got 5 lakh each, which is not a big money whereas the price of land was so high, but also we together got the land and made a house. I bought the motorbike on the installment. The government they fulfill their target to send PLA to their places. The government thought PLA will go back to their places, but they did not think what PLA can do only with Five Lakh cash??⁹⁷

With the five lakh I got, we built a house and spent on our household things. We bought the land and made a house. My husband, he tried to go to Japan so we spent some money on that, but we could not get succeed. My husband also passed SLC from the cantonment. I do not have any special training so I stay at home doing housework.⁹⁸

Numbers of ex-combatants are self-employed, which is a common livelihood option. Ex-combatants started vegetable farming, poultry farming, dairy farming, and goat farming. Others have established grocery shops, hotels and restaurants, tea shops, and internet cafés. These small enterprises are mostly in local areas. Therefore, there is quite some evidence suggesting that ex-combatants have found fairly successfully managed to reintegrate economically through self-employment. Those ex-combatants who maintained good relationships with their natal communities and families have undoubtedly benefitted from the financial and moral support of their natal communities.

⁹⁵ Chambers, R., & Conway, G. (1992). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century*. Institute of Development Studies (UK).p.7

⁹⁶ Bleie, T., & Shrestha, R. (2012). DDR in Nepal: Stakeholder Politics and the Implications for Reintegration as a Process of Disengagement. *Tromso: University of Tromso*.

⁹⁷ Respondent 3

⁹⁸ Respondent 4

4.12 Cash-Based Approach to the Reintegration of the Ex-Combatants

Cash given to the ex-combatants was kind of seed money to reintegrate into society with the aim that if they could invest in their plan as soon as when they get back to the community. Though it was top down approach and politically decided from few political leaders. Ex-combatants were not given proper counseling on which area they can invest or what they can spend the cash given. In equivalent currency, an ex-combatant received around five thousand US dollar. Many opted for conventional investment strategies, and bought land and constructed houses. They bought unregistered land at a cheap price. Some rather invested in more expensive land purchases in main urban areas in Chitwan. Especially ex-combatants who were husband and wife teams disposed of sufficient money for such investments. My data also document a range of investments in small businesses, like boutique hotels, small shops, vehicles and farmland. If I take my own interview data on face-value, only a limited number of ex-combatants have misused capital on non-productive consumer goods like alcohol and entertaining friends.

When ex-combatants resettled; house and household goods constituted the main priority for them. And as already noted, in terms of investments, they generally bought fixed assets like land and house. Those combatants, who returned back to their communities, did not need such large investments, as they could resettle in existing houses which belonged to their family members. Selected ex-combatants spent their money on agro-based enterprises and some invested in micro enterprises. Those ex-combatants, who migrated to foreign counties, spent their money on fees for consultancy and medical services; high visa fees and air travels. Most my interviewed ex-combatants had to expend quite much money for regular the household budget; including food consumption, house renovation, clothing, house appliances and fees for education and health services for children and spouses.

*With the five lakh I got from the government, we built a house and spent on our household things. We bought the land and construct a house. My husband tried to go to Japan for employment and spent some money for processing, but he could not get succeed.*⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Respondent 4

During the interview, it was noted that only a small number of ex-combatants spent their cash on consumption of alcohol and purchasing mobile or motorbike or for their entertainment. But, those respondents whom I interviewed shared, they spent for a good cause.

I used my money on buying land and making a house for me. I think I used for good cause. There are some people who are not using their money properly, they use alcohol and bought the bike and they do not think about the future, but their number is very less.¹⁰⁰

Spending on buying motorbike is used for both productive and unproductive purpose; sometimes they used as a means of transport for their employment.

In my opinion most of the PLA they used the money they received, but only few they spent on alcohol. Some have started their small shop, some buying the vehicle (tractor) for the income generation. They spent money on buying land and even they could not build a house so they went to work as a labor in construction too.¹⁰¹

Apart from a small number of ex-combatants who could not recognize money, they were spending on girls, alcohol, and there are cases who went to prison and one two cased who were caught with the guns. So others are doing work.¹⁰²

4.13 Financial Assets

Self-employment or employment, migration and unemployment, are the three pillars of the main livelihood strategies. The cash package/or golden handshake is the basic source of financial capital of my studied ex-combatants. However, many combatants spent a fairly sizable amount on day to day household expenditures and saving the remaining amount as the financial capital. Some ex-combatants had received additional financial support from their biological families.

¹⁰⁰ Respondent 2

¹⁰¹ Respondent 7

¹⁰² Respondent 8

4.13.1 Rights to Ancestral Property

Ex-combatants received additional financial support from their biological families as well. Though those ex-combatants resettled in different locations, they reestablished relationships with their biological families and got some degree of financial support. Those ex-combatants who had succeeded in maintaining good relationships with their community and family and had families that were relatively affluent got fairly substantial economic benefits and moral support, which supplemented their own capital assets like the gold handshake cash and other income they earned during the cantonment.

4.13.2 Earnings Accumulated During Cantonment Period

It is found that most of the male ex-combatants spent their money on their daily needs, alcohol and entertainment which they received monthly in the cantonment whereas female ex-combatants saved cash from the monthly allowances as well. One of the respondents shared that he used to spend his monthly allowance sending to home for his parents and buying clothes and on his daily expenses.

I spent monthly allowance on buying daily needs for me like buying brush, Colgate. So I did not save much. Female they used to save out of it, but we could not. We were getting per month 6,500 per month later months.¹⁰³

During the cantonment, the monthly money they gave was not enough. I used to call home, buying food and snacks and I was not married at that time. I used to travel to the home in six months or in a year.¹⁰⁴

Most of the respondent shared that they never got their full payment on monthly allowances and they got it partially. Further, they shared that they have to pay the levy for the party from the monthly allowances as well.

¹⁰³ Respondent 5

¹⁰⁴ Respondent 4

*We did not receive the complete salary during staying in the cantonment. We are supposed to receive nine thousand per month but we received only 4 thousand after deducting the levy for the party.*¹⁰⁵

4.13.3 Loans from Saving and Credit Groups or Bank and Finance

Apart from other sources, it is very challenging to access financial capital for ex-combatants. But, there are couples of other ways of accessing credit facilities that are through the banking system or finance or acquiring loans from saving and credit groups with higher interest rates. Subedi, D.B study suggests that ex-combatants could not access credit from banks or finance as they required the deposit or guarantee, such as land or house.¹⁰⁶ As ex-combatants settlement was mainly on government land or Ailani Jagga (refer to subsection Land in low price) this is mentioned before on the different subtopic. These combatants bought land at low price as the land is not registered with the government (Ailani Land) and other staying on Sukumbasi land (landless) which doesn't succeed as banking guarantee. Therefore, accessing credit in the formal sector was very difficult for the ex-combatants. However, during the interview, ex-combatants shared that they could access loan from saving and credit groups. Even, a group of ex-combatants formed saving and credit groups which are an informal mechanism, which helped for saving culture and address the financial problems of ex-combatants through the easy access to credit. The study explored that, in a condition where ex-combatants lacked financial capital or confidence to initiate a business, the war family becomes a source of accumulating capital through joint investment, (the cash package from the retirement) as well as they started a joint partnership business which could also offer moral support to them.

4.13.4 Golden Handshake

The cash package is the basic source of ex-combatants financial capital; however, most of the cash was used to meet household requirements. In addition, when husband and wife got the golden handshake, they collected their money together and invested in buying land, house or starting a business. Apart from this, some received additional financial support from their biological families which is discussed on separate subtopic. The cash packaged was categorized into four option,

¹⁰⁵ Respondent 1

¹⁰⁶ Subedi, D. B. (2014). Conflict, combatants, and cash: Economic reintegration and livelihoods of ex-combatants in Nepal. *World Development*, 59, 245

those who are ranked in the lowest received Nepalese Rupees Five lakh¹⁰⁷ while other highest rank received Six, Seven and Eight Lakh.¹⁰⁸

*With the five lakh I got, we built a house and spent on our household things. We bought the land and made a house.*¹⁰⁹

13 out of 15 of the respondents who were interviewed said that they spent their money on buying land and constructing a house and others they spent on household and medical treatment.

4.14 Land in Low Price

Ex-combatants are staying to the close by an area near to the Shaktikhor main cantonment in Padampur, Chitwan. These combatants bought **land at low price** as this land is not registered in the government (Ailani Land) and other staying on Sukumbasi land (landless). Those ex-combatants bought the lands close to that area when they are staying inside the cantonment. They bought a land which did not cost much and settled here. They did not have enough money to plan and settled instantly as soon as they got the discharge. So they thought of buying land and making a place to stay on that money they received from the government.

Most of the combatants who decided to settle near to the Shaktikhor Cantonment, in Padampur Chitwan occupied the public land, Known as *Aailani Jagga*¹¹⁰. However, this public land doesn't have basic infrastructures like road networks, electricity, and drinking water. To access this above mentioned services individual should submit a land registration certificate and recommendation from VDC. But, when ex-combatants decided to settle on this land, they lack official document. Despite this, ex-combatants have managed to get those services on their own initiation. Therefore

¹⁰⁷ Equals to USD 5000

¹⁰⁸ Interviewed with Expert in Kathmandu

¹⁰⁹ Respondent 4

¹¹⁰ Aailani Jagga: Land owned in common by all, represented by the government. Public land is outside national forest and owned by public institutions such as local government body, schools or religious institutions. In Nepal, public land includes mainly; Parti ailani (barren unregistered land), public pond, roadside, canal side, riverbank and institutional lands. These lands are also called as wasteland as these are rarely used or used as open grazing land. Public land in Nepal is not owned by an individual but is informally used as a traditionally managed land resource: road sides, wells, springs, ponds and bunds, grazing fields, cemeteries. (Livelihoods & Forestry Programme, 2003).

access to the basic infrastructure was comparatively better in condition who is settled in urban areas.¹¹¹

4.15 Vocational Skills and Training

Vocational training was provided in the cantonment to prepare fighters as a civilian. Many ex-combatants cash opportunity for their education those who gave the exam of SLC and passed the examination. During their stay in the cantonment, GIZ and Norwegian embassy in Kathmandu supported for their education to attend SLC exam and this facilitated many ex-combatants to complete the high school education and achieve a certificate. It was noted during the interview that training programs had a positive impact on their lives during reintegration for their livelihoods.

My husband has the skill of driving and he is an electrician. He has the license. I got the tailoring, sewing and knitting training from GIZ during the cantonment. So if we can earn money we will buy the vehicle and he can drive it. We are saving monthly in the cooperative.¹¹²

I got driving skills and computer training in the cantonment. Some they got 3, 4 training and some did not get. I spent monthly allowance on buying daily needs for me like buying brush, Colgate. So I did not save much. Female they used to save out of it, but we couldn't. We were getting per month 6,500 per month later months.¹¹³

Ex-combatants used this opportunity to develop their education and passed their School Leaving Certificate (SLC) and others exam from the cantonment. However, respondents mentioned that, they did not receive the training and they could not be benefited from that program. The vocational training they provided was regarded as less valuable, as most of the ex-combatants could not receive it. Even though there are several combatants who are using these skills and gaining employment. There are four ex-combatants out of the total number of respondents who stated that they did not get any vocational training while they were in the cantonment. However one of the respondents said that he is using his skills in daily work.

¹¹¹ Subedi, D. B. (2014). Conflict, combatants, and cash: Economic reintegration and livelihoods of ex-combatants in Nepal. *World Development*, 59, 243

¹¹² Respondent 1

¹¹³ Respondent 5

*Now I work whatever job I get, labor work, constructing houses, and electrical work. I have a good relation with everyone.*¹¹⁴

Ex-combatants said during the interview that, "those training were not conducted effectively, and it was only a medium to receive grants and donations from various agencies. Further, it was a good income source for organizations and commanders. They have also expressed concern on the training available and argued that it is not useful and inappropriate.

*Some PLA they got 3, 4 training and some did not get any.*¹¹⁵

*Most of the ex-combatants did not use the skills and training after they are back to the community, they did not utilize in professional life. Ex-combatants should go through the level I II and III, they can get level II trainings when they complete level one. But most of the ex-combatants did not complete the training as well.*¹¹⁶

Whereas, one the female ex-combatants said that, she paid the full amount for the training but she could only get the class for 5, 6 days. Therefore, she shared there is misuse of money on that as well, from the leader in the cantonment.

4.16 Push and Pull Factors of Migration

For mostly, the main motivating factor to settle in the urban and Terai areas is in search of employment opportunities. Therefore, **pull push factors of migration** is another reason for their settlement in urban areas. Ex-combatants could get the employment for their daily lives and also they can educate children sending to better private school. In addition, ex-combatants did not have enough capital money to invest or to start an enterprise or business. They spent money given from the government on buying land and constructing a house. Whereas, there were ex-combatants who have to look over their parents and have to pay the loan they have used for.

¹¹⁴ Respondent 2

¹¹⁵ Respondent 5

¹¹⁶ Interview with expert

A big number of ex-combatants migrated to abroad especially in golf countries in search of their economic opportunities. Important number of ex-combatants who were not present on regrouping process have already left the country for foreign employment.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, some ex-combatants migrated as an unskilled labor for the low paid jobs, due to lack of skills and experience.

4.17 Ex-combatants as Peace-builders

Since most of the VMLRs are identified as "disqualified" they faced stigma in the society and they return without anything, therefore, were rejected from the home and families too. However, interaction with community people and involvement in social activities will help them to reduce the stereotypes, and these VMLRs would also be an opportunity for peacebuilding efforts in the community.

My respondents who were voluntarily retired shared during the interview that, they are the agents of change rather the victim. It is challenging for peacebuilding that, communities' peoples should accept the ex-combatants as the Civilian and part of the society; therefore it would easily reintegrate ex-combatants. This is very much important for social cohesion, economic sustainability and sustainable peacebuilding.

*I meet my friends in community program; we have the dialogue group and doing regular interaction and discussion. I am also working for dialogue facilitation and meditation center where we facilitate conflict related situation. We are working together, organizing different sports program and also we worked together during the time of earthquake to collect the reliefs and working at local level together.*¹¹⁸

4.18 Feelings of Humiliation

One of the female ex-combatants shared that she was leading other combatants and was responsible as commander during the conflict. She **feels humiliated** to go back to her home and serve as a housewife and get back to her own roles. She could not achieve what she was heading

¹¹⁷ Subedi, D. B. (2014). Conflict, combatants, and cash: Economic reintegration and livelihoods of ex-combatants in Nepal. *World Development*, 59, 245

¹¹⁸ Respondent 5

for the agenda of Maoists and women empowerment, so she has settled into a new place with others ex-combatants. Bleie et. al, a study on Nepal outlines that, "female ex-combatants have also faced rejection and domestic violence on the basis of pure rumors of breaches of gender norms during and after conflict".¹¹⁹

4.19 Chances of Resorting to Violence

During the conflict in Nepal, high level of discipline in Maoist movement is one of the characteristics. It was observed as a top-down effective chain of command and control structures during the conflict. Therefore, it is rare to go again to violence unless the party leaderships make a decision to go back to war; or from more organized splits from the mainstream party with radical agendas. Successful reintegration has to be focused on diminishing social inequalities which will decrease a concern in joining a revolution in future.

*UN, International communities, and organizations were against the cash grants approach, which was proposed to be given to ex-combatants during their voluntary discharge. They were arguing that the cash will be misused and ex-combatants will not invest them in a productive area or this will drive them towards violence. It was also noted that currently, the Criminal activity is very rare from the ex-combatants, however, there is news reporting related to it.*¹²⁰

In terms of violence, there are incidents in different parts of the country which has followed in the society. Nepal police have arrested several ex-combatants with arms and weapons and there are cases who engaged in crimes and violence.¹²¹ But if this situation escalates and ex-combatants will be unemployed, there is so likely to resort to violence. Respondents add that there are examples where ex-combatants get involved on other split parties of U-CPN Maoist and new criminals group. Frequently in war-torn countries, these ex-combatants are important in the initiating of

¹¹⁹ Stankovic, T., Torjesen, S., & Bleie, T. (2011). *Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: A Survey for Practitioners in Nepal*. Centre for Peace Studies, Tromso University.

¹²⁰ Interview with an expert

¹²¹ Three Arrested with Illegal Arms in Rupandehi retrieved on 5th September, 2017. <http://nepaliheadlines.com/three-arrested-with-illegal-arms-in-repandhei/>; <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/maoist-cadre-arrested-in-possession-of-italian-pistol/>

organized violence. The lack of economic opportunities, the presence of small arms and experiences of insecurity appear insufficient in explaining the resort to violence.

Out of my 15 informants, 8-9 ex-combatants can be said to be engaged politically in local politics. It is commonly noticed that the more senior and experienced PLA – an estimated 5,000 – were introduced into the Young Communist League (YCL) and not the cantonments. There are a large number of militarily trained and skillful ex-combatants those have been involved on the YCL and however, it is important to note that others, including late recruits, were given military and political training during their long stay in the cantonments. It was revealed on the media as termed “new” were targeted for military and arms training. The study highlights that late recruit interviewees disclosed that they had only learned how to handle a gun, make bombs, etc. after they had come into the cantonments.¹²² Other 3 respondents are involved in different local and community organizations.

It is important not to forget the ideological training given in the cantonments as well as during the war. The effectiveness of that training for those ex-combatants unwilling to go to war, but still work for the party is clear. While blaming political leadership, ex-combatants still stated that they believed in the Dahal-led Maoist party, Maoist (Center). They also expressed willingness to follow programs and policies of the party if leader treats them in a “respectful” manner. One ex-combatant stated he was with the Baidya faction, working for the party and attending the program. My male respondents were almost affiliated with the different political parties of Maoist as there has been 3, 4 factions. Those still work for the party and attend the program and campaign. 2 respondents shared their involvement with Dr. Bhattarai, Naya Shakti and one mentioned his affiliation with Netra Bikram Chand (Biplab)-led CPN Maoist. During the interview, two of the male and other four female respondents did not show any interest to serve in any political party rather focus on their own business. However, these political networks become all the major significant given that many ex-combatants are living in settlements together.

¹²² Chautari, M. (2013). Political Risk and Excombatants. *Policy Brief*, (9).

4.20 A Sense of Insecurity

Ex-combatants have a **feeling of insecurity** as they were involved in crime and atrocities during the time of conflict. They feel insecure to go back to their home community and settled there. They feel more secure and safe when they are in groups of their own.

*It was a sudden decision that ex-combatants are reintegrating back to the community. As they were expecting that they will be reintegrated into security forces. They could not plan well to manage the life after cantonment. They have the feeling of insecurity about their livelihood, family and future. They were trained by Maoist ideology but they did not plan for the future. Ex-combatants were also frustrated due to the longtime stay inside the cantonment.*¹²³

4.21 Comfortable Daily Lives

Whereas, while having an interview with one of the experts on DDR, He mentioned that ex-combatants were used to the Comfortable daily lives when they were confined for six years in the cantonment, they got all the services inside the cantonment.

*Most of the ex-combatants are settled in Urban or Terai areas and they did not return back to their community. There are others issues as problems as well, but one is due to the facilities available in urban areas.*¹²⁴

He said life with all facilities, food and good shelter, playground and ex-combatants they are well aware that it is a tough life in hill area, so they preferred to settle in the Terai area with their family.

4.22 Acceptance and Mutual Harmony

Other factors which motivated ex-combatants to settle in the new place are due to the network with friends of same interest and experiences. One informant was motivated by the good community who can understand ex-combatants as the members of that community understand them very well.

¹²³ Interview with expert

¹²⁴ Interview with expert

*We have a good relation with society and people. There is no distinction between former PLA and public. They asked us to lead and do some positive work in the society. There are lots of former PLA here in the same community who are doing daily labor work to live. They are working in the field. They have to struggle to send their children to school.*¹²⁵

This community lies close to the cantonment, so during their stay on the cantonment period and after the discharge they have mutual harmony and tied with the villagers while buying land and participation in the community work. Another reason why community welcomed them is that this community has not been directly affected by the conflict.

4.23 Injuries and Disabilities

In total, around 10-15% of the total ex-combatants were injured and disabled.¹²⁶ Out of ex-combatants verified by UNMIN almost 3,000 are disabled and 1200 ex-combatants are severely disabled.¹²⁷ However, in my respondent group, 5 out of 15 were disabled. No additional support was given to them during the reintegration program, so they are suffered more while gaining employment and to survive and meet their basic needs. Although they get support from a distinct program under Ministry of peace and reconstruction which is quite problematic to access due to bureaucratic difficulties. Most of the respondents, who have a disability, were facing challenges to get the health care and support with their financial capability.

*I do not want to go back to home. Our friends are doing well and we feel bad when we are living like this. It is very difficult for me due to my disability and living in the hill area. So we are doing a small business here. Our neighbors and political party's persons treat us nicely.*¹²⁸

Ex-combatants were injured and disabled during the conflict time. Several combatants are disabled and it is difficult them to manage their day to day lives. When interviewing the ex-combatants researcher found that it is difficult them to walk on the hill area and can manage hardly in the plain area. Those ex-combatants who lose their leg and got bullet injured are facing such problem. Most

¹²⁵ Respondent 8

¹²⁶ Fieldwork, 2017; Interview with expert

¹²⁷ Robins, S., Bhandari, R., & Ex-PLA Research Group. (2016). Poverty, stigma and alienation: Reintegration challenges of ex-Maoist combatants in Nepal .p. 34

¹²⁸ Respondent 8

of the ex-combatants preferred to stay in plain or Terai area where they can get access to transportation, and other daily basic needs.

I am a disabled and have injuries on a leg. It is very difficult to walk on the hill area due to my leg.

¹²⁹ *Though I get the support from the government, it is not enough and I need to do my treatment myself.*

¹²⁹ Respondent 1

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

The objectives of the study is to examine in some depth the multi-faceted reintegration efforts of Nepalese Maoist ex-combatants who either during the cantonment period or during the discharge phase, made the deliberate strategic choice of not resettling in their natal home communities due to social stigma, accusations of war crimes or lacking support for their armed participation in the Nepal's decade long insurgency. These ex-combatants represent a trajectory of discharged and disengaged former guerrillas, for whom social reintegration strategies so to say trumped other concerns and set the overarching terms for their subsequent social, political and economic reintegration strategies. The study attempts to unravel and analyze their subsequent many stranded social reintegration efforts by use of a social science theory of community studying how their economic reintegration efforts unfold from the cantonment period until about 4-years after they are discharged and embarked on a demanding reintegration.

The trajectory of ex-combatants mainly subjected to an empirical enquiry chose to opt for the so-called retirement option, characterized by the much hyped and debated "golden handshake" or cash-based approach. The study has sought to document and analyze the resettled ex-combatants' economic strategies, within which the cash-based approach plays a major (but not the only role) in an array of livelihood strategies. Those strategies revolve around different kinds of compromises between meeting consumption requirements, social obligations, political obligations (rent seeking by commanders and political leaders) and economic investments. This research is based on a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and field observations. Own primary data has been sought supplemented by use of a range of relevant secondary sources, including official statistics, DDR-relevant news in the mass media, and DDR-relevant literature. Latter spans from UN-reports to independent studies on DDR and reintegration in particular. This studies multi-faceted social science approach to reintegration has applied a theoretical framework with supporting analytical concepts mainly developed by the International Research Group for Reintegration (IRGR). This researcher is a student affiliate of IRGR.

The study's introductory chapter began with definitions of key reintegration concepts and by providing a context analysis about Nepal's armed conflict, the role of DDR in the country's peace-building efforts and the quite complicated politics which has set the terms for reintegration processes and programs in Nepal since the formalized Comprehensive Peace Agreement was forged in 2006. Chapter two has outlined the theoretical framework of the study around the pivot of a multi-dimensional concept of reintegration. Also, the key analytical concepts of trajectory, community and sustainable livelihood strategies have been sought clarified. Following the theoretical chapter, the third chapter has focused on the research methodology in terms of research design, methods, tools, techniques, and the opportunities and constraints of my deliberate choices. Chapter four has presented my own empirical data (supported by complementary secondary sources of high relevance) and sought to analyses major findings.

5.2 Reintegration, Livelihood and Development

The complicated interfaces between social and economic reintegration of the studied ex-combatants should be considered having some policy relevance for the ongoing reintegration process in Nepal. Not the least so, since this is an evolving still risk-prone process, this in terms of speed and progress of genuine reintegration is very challenging. As I have sought to make clear, the very term reintegration should be applied with considerable attention to Nepal's slowly changing and in several respects conservative social norms and morals as it comes to marriage, gender roles and an individualized lifestyle. The Maoist mass movement including its combatants and current ex-combatants fought for a political agenda of social transformation of caste, ethnic and gender hierarchies. Therefore, they have a right to expect that the social fabric and society must change and they are key change agents. Their exposures as mid-ranking commanders and rank-and-file combatants during the excessively long cantonment period and the period following their discharged and disengagement taught them several painful lessons, which this study has outlined. Their fairly successful strategies for reintegration, including a sense of social dignity and belonging, overall security and securing decent livelihoods (for themselves and their families), should be analyzed within this overarching framework of understanding the root causes of the armed conflict and the very fact that the Maoists considered themselves as victors. The study has exposed that, expansion on their businesses and other means of economic recovery partly depends on relatively successful socio-economic reintegration integration into their old host community close to the cantonments and also that they do not radically break ties with their war-family. As my

data exposes, relatively successful economic reintegration in the early precarious period following discharge and release of the golden-handshake cash, also enabled the ex-combatants to both considerate and expand social contacts and to maneuver politically. Most of the studied ex-combatants have opted for a self-employment based livelihood strategy.

This study (in line with state-of-the art knowledge in reintegration studies) brings to light that reintegration is a very long and complex process as ex-combatants, very gradually change their own identity, seek to rework trauma and heal physical wounds, experiment with role negotiations and seek to position themselves as responsible and trustworthy members of their new home local community, while also meeting at least some of the ceremonial and economic obligations towards their extended family in the mid-hills and to former comrades (as members of a war-family). The study has highlighted several challenges ex-combatants face and try to solve as the unemployment rate in the public and private sectors were high due to the decade-long insurgency. Given this dire unemployment situation, the study shows they have opted for various adaptations as self-employed. Relatively few have part or full-time employment in the public sector. Some of those who have taken on voluntary roles as community leaders and local politicians managed to convert their social and political capital into economic gains. It seems clear from the interviews that long-term underemployment or unemployment constitute a real risk factor for feelings of humiliation and grievances, which can be exploited for criminal and political gains and in the longer term, pose threats to community security and also for national security. It is therefore, very important to ensure that the challenges and risks related to the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants are understood properly and fully considered in design, planning and implementation of targeted community development and reconstruction programs and local service delivery. One has to recognize that Nepal will have to struggle through different phases of reintegration of its former Maoist combatants for many years ahead, even if national politics between new and old parliamentary parties become less confrontational and polarized than it has been in recent years.

Economic development interventions should strengthen and help the ex-combatants and their families and communities to sustain their jobs and create new, in order to make self-employment more secure and sustainable, bolstered by highly relevant skill training and business support. In the current post-war situation, my data illuminates that there are several challenges to ex-combatants in finding lucrative job opportunities in a highly competitive market of Nepal's war-torn economy, given their modest level of education and skills. In addition, the social reintegration process, in

terms of acceptance in their old and new communities, which affects their changing identity from military to socially respected citizens, matters a lot. Therefore, it is very important to provide job-relevant skill trainings and viable employment opportunities, acknowledging the simmering underlying frustrations and insecurities. Consequently, the former combatants' willingness and capability to truly "reintegrate", mainly depends on developing sustainable livelihoods, and balancing their commitments to a range of communities of belonging, locally and nationally. My study highlights that it is very supportive (in furtherance of reintegration) to include other community members (including formerly IDPs and members who remained civilians through the conflict) in the program at the community level, ensuring that they also benefit from the reintegration program both directly and indirectly. This will help mending already simmering grievances and avoid further conflict escalation at the community level. Addressing the root causes of the conflict, will not only gradually end the conflict, but also provide several golden opportunities for economic and social reforms. The bottom line is genuine acceptance of former combatants as valuable community members in the communities, nurturing community cohesion and inclusive economic development locally.

5.3 Analytical Contribution of the Findings

In this sub-section I will try to summarize my main findings, relating them to my initial research questions and hypothesis. There were several social, political and economic challenges and opportunities that ex-combatants sought to meet and exploit during their long stays in cantonments and their later selected communities, following their voluntary retirement. This study has mainly focused on the reintegration strategies of the ex-combatants who did not return to their original home community. They rather opted to resettle and build new civilian lives, especially in settler communities, which are characterized by continued influence of the political armed movement they initially joined during the conflict years. Therefore, the study highlights how these former combatants have struggled to overcome several challenges, rebuilding their life as civilian under economic frame conditions they were not really prepared for. The study focuses on a trajectory of ex-combatants who for a range of reasons did not migrate abroad, unlike many of their comrades who made it to the Gulf countries. This study highlights why respondents had been reluctant to return to their old communities. The exposed reasons are complex, ranging from moral rejection/social stigma (hitting female ex-combatants especially viciously), demands for retribution

(claims of war crimes), broken social relationships for other reasons, and clashes between ingrained conservative moral values and ex-combatants' politically radical ideas of social respect and justice. While they have to some degree found a breathing space as agents of transformational change in their new Terai community, life there, also have many challenges. Apart from the nearly unavoidable early difficulties of transitioning from a military to civilian life, there exists a rather widespread sense of betrayal, directed at both their own political leaders and other mainstream political leaders. The transformational grander societal project they fought for, have in some respects stranded due to political "horse-trading" and will to compromise a visionary radical political agenda. Ex-combatants to some degree feel they have "lost" the peace although they "won" the war. It is also evident from my finding, that for some sub-grounds of ex-combatants such as the disabled and those with severe permanent injuries, life in Padampur is somehow livable (though never easy) compared to an eventual life as resettled in road less hill villages, where physical ability means everything for being considered a valuable family member and neighbor.

Further, I have sought to answer if the much debated cash based approach to retirement has proved effective in reintegrating my group of ex-combatants. According to the general argument about prerequisites of sustainable livelihood, cash is supposed to help to move ex-combatants out of the cantonment and provide them with a platform for livelihood security. But in Nepal, the manner in which the golden handshake was conceived and converted into a key programming element, largely failed to contribute to any noticeable longer-term changes in the livelihoods of ex-combatants. A well-founded economic reintegration policy could function as a powerful means of addressing insecurity and violence in the post-conflict situation. But it has so far not been the case, due to rent-seeking politics, corrupted political bargaining, and perhaps too much reliance on foreign support for DDR-programming. While Nepalese like to call the reintegration "homegrown", this is a term that may require some honest public discussion and unbiased reintegration research. Any truly successful reintegration process would require an intense level of understanding why so many young people chose to exit the guerrilla army and become ex-combatants in the first phase of demobilization and then how they have struggled to reintegrate so far. The cash-based scheme has mostly worked "to shift" ex-combatants from cantonments to old and new communities. As already underlined above, this narrow notion of cash-based economic reintegration lacks a community-centered approach in reintegration, which could have promoted social cohesion. Furthermore, we should be aware that focusing only on ex-combatants and

ignoring other deprived and vulnerable groups who are war victims, stifles grievances and even create new sources of conflict in a war-thorn society.

I have in my analysis applied the theoretical notion "war family" as part of my composite inquiry of "communities of belonging", and would argue this has proved quite fruitful in understanding how complex social reintegration really is in Nepal. I have also found that many ex-combatants have to balance their commitments to former comrades (some currently their neighbors) with their continued obligations to their own extended family in the hills and their own family members in their new community of residence. My findings suggest quite many ex-combatants have managed to improve their complex social networks after voluntary retirement, becoming well respected co-citizens in their new settlements as they transitioned a civilian life in Padampur. They are holding major leadership positions in different local organizations. It seems clear that female ex-combatants have faced greater challenges than male ex-combatants in social reintegration, although ex-combatants regardless of sex face difficulties in being accepted if they have spouses from a different caste or ethnic group than their own.

Reintegration programs can to some degree help to contribute revitalizing a local level economy and the recovery of any community. If external funding for economic reintegration is used effectively for vocational and business training, kick-starting employment opportunities and small businesses, this can be a "win-win effect" improving the lives of both ex-combatant families and the local community as a whole. To gradually achieve a sustainable local economy, which contributes to an overall cohesive and peaceful Nepalese society, proper coordination among governmental actors, the private sector and local civil society is a must.

This research has found that most of the ex-combatants who managed to return to civilian life and initiate their own livelihood independently, have succeeded quite easily. Those ex-combatants, who opted for voluntary retirement, seem to have faced fewer challenges in society in terms of acceptance and social rehabilitation, even though they also have had to tackle several challenges. One such set of difficulties in accessing employment stems from their lack of official documents, including birth, marriage and citizenship certificates etc. There was no any support (as part of the rehabilitation package) ensuring the production of such vital legal documents. A number of ex-combatants also deliberately hide their identity and their association with the Maoist Party in the

community, in order to ease their social and political reintegration in their new places of residence. The voluntarily retired ex-combatants who started building relations with the host community while being in the cantonments had more time to adjust to the post-war society.

Returning to some vulnerable sub-groups of former combatants, most notably the disabled and severely injured lack of proper health facilities or counseling services during the cantonment period and during demobilization has had several long-term consequences for their reintegration. One cannot overstate, how critically important psychosocial counseling would have been and remains during rehabilitation.

Even though I have not particularly investigated psycho-social reintegration, this researcher is quite convinced that many ex-combatants still suffer from depression and trauma. The consequences for themselves, their close families, communities of belonging and the society at large remain poorly understood by the authorities and their former political leaders.

5.4 Community-centered Approach to Reintegration

Community members condemned the reintegration process for not involving community members and community people which could be more effective reintegration process and to support acceptance of the returning ex-combatants into the community. A vocational skill which was offered to the ex-combatants in the cantonment was not effective as they see it as a lower status profession. They assumed that it will prevent them from gaining respect in the society as they joined the Maoist to assured themselves for being more respectful in society.

Additionally, the central focus of the social reintegration is the issue of transforming the identity of ex-combatants. First, they worked as revolutionary actors and later they are confined to the cantonment for several years. It should be recognized that there are few examples where DDR program have been fully successful. During reintegration, local context should be in priority and have to initiate by national actors together with support from government and civil society. For a successful DDR process, community centered support should be central to reintegration and should give priority to psychological support, education and economic opportunities. The cash-based solution became more of a mere problem solving approach because the management of ex-combatants is seen as a task of implementing the peace agreement rather than a process to transform ex-combatants into civilians.

DDR process is more likely to be unsuccessful if there is lack of mediatory interaction between local communities and ex-combatants. DDR often follows 'top-down' approaches. Such approaches are mostly focused on combatants and ex-combatants. Such an approach may possibly have harmful consequences since one fails to recognize and respond to the actual needs of a variety of community interests. The consequence may be a slowed down development process and weakened community cohesion. Successful DDR requires trust-building and sustained exchanges between ex-combatants, governments, International organizations and the concerned communities, as part of a collective stakeholder approach.

Finally, this study is another illustration of a well-known fact in reintegration studies; reintegration is an exceedingly lengthy and complicated process. In any war-to-peace transition, countries face multiple challenges to post-conflict economic recovery and overall development. Multiple grievances represent one among the many inevitable consequences of armed conflict and most importantly, new grievances will occur, if not peace-building efforts pay balanced and equally serious attention to the strategic and practical needs of ex-combatants, conflict victims and unemployed youth. Within this broader policy framework, reintegration of ex-combatants may enhance human, social and physical capital, and prove to be a well-spend public investment in building a truly peaceful and social just post-conflict society. Bottom-up and genuinely community-centered approaches may within this policy vision definitely bring greater benefit to a society longing for prosperity and greater social harmony.

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