

**Civil Society Organizations in Demobilization and
Reintegration:
the Ties and Lives of Ex-combatants in Lebanon**

By

Nassim AbiGhanem

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Supervisor: Erin K. Jenne

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Abstract

The efforts of local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) often go unnoticed in the process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Registration (DDR). In theory and in practice, activities that local CSOs in DDR are tasked with are limited to dialogue sessions between ex-combatants, with community members in conflict and enhancing vocational skills of ex-combatants in preparation for the job market. Nevertheless, research conducted on CSOs as designers and implementers of DDR processes is limited. Namely, the scholarly work in this area lacks the conceptualization of the conditions and mechanisms that allow local CSOs to emerge as a significant actor in the design and implementation of activities that are sustainable in demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants. The central question this research posits is: what role do CSOs have in demobilizing fighters away from the battlefield and reintegrating them into larger society?

This research builds on a case study in the city of Tripoli where local CSOs were active in designing and implementing DDR programs during the violent clashes between the Sunni's and Alawittes' militant groups between 2011 and 2014. Utilizing Social Network Analysis (SNA) to unpack the relational ties that local CSOs foster in conflict contexts, I focus on the concept of brokerage as an essential component for effective DDR programs whereby CSOs forge ties between members of both fighting camps. To triangulate this work, I adopt life course analysis using biographical narrative interviews with the ex-combatants to follow the impacts that the activities conducted by the CSOs' networks had on their lives.

The findings of this research show that: first, as highlighted by the SNA, the local CSOs were successful in DDR by being the brokers between the two warring factions. Brokerage was highly effective in demobilizing and aiding ex-combatants in reintegration through slowly bridging ex-combatants from both communities. In turn, the CSOs' activities encouraged ex-combatants to work together for the city.

Second, the CSOs' bridging network activities were essential to put ex-combatants back on the civilian life path. The CSO's network and operations were a turning point in the lives of ex-combatants, moving them away from a militant life trajectory into a civilian life. The network's

activities strengthened the network further, allowing for an even more robust nudge of ex-combatants towards peace.

Third, both analytical frameworks explain how the CSOs' network broke the ties of ex-combatants with their commanders, prohibiting the latter from maintaining the leverage to remobilize them in the future. The presence of the network allowed ex-combatants to rebuild their social capital with the CSOs, other ex-combatants and members of the community.

Finally, this research draws out a set of practical strategies for CSOs to be effective in DDR. These strategies do not necessarily apply to all contexts but form a solid base that CSOs can build on. Furthermore, this research contributes to developing a conceptual framework that would lead to more successful CSO-based DDR programs based on the CSOs' prioritization to bridging across fighting factions and creating spaces for ex-combatants to express themselves.

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1 Introduction

I used to wake up every morning thinking only about my weapons and how to kill someone from Jabal Mohsen, I hated them and that is all I wanted to do. Now, everything changed. I used to think of a machine gun and a pistol and now all I think of is paint and how to master my craft and improve my skills. – Sami

Sami was 20 years old when he became a fighter during the violent armed conflict between Jabal Mohsen and Bab el Tabbeneh in the city of Tripoli in Lebanon. He categorizes himself, and his friends, as victims of the war. He is now a 'painter' who draws murals and takes on projects for the municipalities and relishes the work on exterior designs of buildings in Tripoli. He learned these skills that now made him employable through the various workshops he attended with a local Lebanese NGO working in Tripoli. Sami also began to understand his old foes from Jabal Mohsen and that they were both victims of a war, loaded with unreasonable hatred and fueled by political warlords and the political elites of the city. He now has friends from the 'other side' and enjoys a great deal of connections that increases the number of painting projects he takes on. Sami's friends are now from both neighborhoods, not only from Bab el Tabbeneh where he was born and raised. Through the activities he attended at MARCH NGO, he met young men, just like him from Jabal Mohsen who he shares more with than he initially thought. The only difference is that he is Sunni, and they are Alawites.

At the first instance, while reading the above story, one would attribute this transformation to the Sami - primarily so and certainly true – but secondly to MARCH NGO, a local organization that worked with cases similar to that of Sami to ensure the demobilization and reintegration of combatants who fought on the front lines separating Jabal Mohsen and Bab el Tabbeneh neighborhoods.

As the war broke out in Syria in 2011, the questions about violent spillover to Lebanon were questions of when rather than how or if. Everyone feared that the next step would be the extension of the conflict to Lebanese soil. After all the political divisions in Syria were very similar to those in Lebanon. In fact, some scholars went so far as to consider the war in Syria as an extension from the political divisions that started in Lebanon (Gade, 2017). Research on violent spillover in civil war often emphasizes that the domino effect is highly likely for neighboring countries with similar cultural, social, and political formations (Kalyvas, 2006; Black, 2013). According to the same

literature, neighboring countries with relaxed border controls and similar ethnic and religious foundations are likely to witness an extension to the war (Stefanova, 1997). Large influxes of refugees from Syria and the political fragility of the host state, Lebanon, are additional factors that result in the spillover of the conflict (Young et al. 2014, Gade, 2017).

The intertwined political cleavage in Lebanon meant that the naturally pro-Syrian and pro- Iranian regime (in support of Alawites and Shiites) and the anti-Syrian anti-Iranian regime proponents in Lebanon will fight a proxy war (Darwich and Fakhoury, 2016). The logical outcome of the Lebanese political scene should be that Lebanon falls within the regional conflict that has been surging up, as it is another country that is nested within the Middle East North Africa's (MENA) wider conflict between geopolitical and international actors separated along the lines of a Sunni-Shiite divide (see Jenne, 2015). Kramer (2017) emphasis that by stating:

The civil war in neighboring Syria is no longer a Syrian domestic affair but includes religious extremists declaring the aim of establishing an Islamic caliphate that includes the entire Levant. Arms and supplies are purchased by the emirates in the Arabian Gulf and channeled through Lebanon to factions opposing President Assad in Syria, which has led to Syrian incursions and divided much of Lebanon into supporters and opponents of Assad (2017, p.118).

As the war erupted in Syria, simultaneously in Lebanon in 2011, the strong Sunni Prime Minister Saad Harriri's government resigned with the resignation of one third of the cabinet who were part of a unity government. The 11 ministers were all either representatives of Hezbollah or representatives of their allied political parties, who were supporters of the Assad Syrian regime. The announcement of the resignation of the ministers came while Harriri was meeting President Obama in the Oval office. The timing of the resignation signified the show of strength of Hezbollah and its allies over the political scene in Lebanon, and, accordingly, to thwart any attempt by the anti-Hezbollah and anti-Assad opposition to benefit from the eruption of violence in Syria. Prime Minister Najib Mikati, a businessman from Tripoli who claims an independent political position but, back then, an avid opponent to Harriri, took up office as the new Prime Minister of Lebanon in 2011 until 2014. During PM Mikati's reign, the intensity of violence in Tripoli swelled significantly.

The armed violence in Tripoli is best described as intermittent. During the three years and 11 months, twenty rounds of armed violence flared up in a non-consecutive fashion. The timings of the rise in tension and violence were largely unclear. Similarly, the violence would end abruptly in other instances. At the same time, NGOs, including MARCH and Fighters for Peace (FFP)

galvanized their efforts to try and contain the violence despite clear indication that weapons were being distributed to myriad of men from both neighborhoods. In February 2014, at the end of the former President Michel Sleiman's term, the Lebanese political elite agreed on the formation of a new cabinet led by Prime Minister Tammam Salam, an honest figure who stood at an equidistance between all political factions. Soon after, a timid security plan was applied in the northern city of Tripoli to put an official end to "one of the episodes of a regional and sectarian proxy conflict" (Gade, 2017, p.189).

The end of violence was in fact the result of a political truce between sectarian political parties in Lebanon. There were no national disarmament or demobilization plans for the fighters in the city of Tripoli. If any, a few fighters who were visually Sunni radicalized were imprisoned for a short period of time, along with some of the Alawite fighters from Jabal Mohsen. The leader of the Alawite political party could flee to Syria, while the mid-level commanders from both sides were left to their own devices, supposedly without political support or financial backing. Like the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war in 1990 that saw no comprehensive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) plans (Karame,2009), the smaller scale war of Tripoli also ended without DDR processes by the Lebanese government or any exogenous mediator. In fact, rifles and shotguns were left with the fighters and heavier artillery remained in the hands of the mid-level commanders. It was believed that the arms were purposefully kept signaling willingness to flare up violence in the future whenever needed. Sunni groups maintained a narrative for the importance of their arms so long as the Alawiite backed Hezbollah maintain their arms. Moreover, it was beneficial for political elites to maintain control, to a certain extent, over fighters who were ready to be mobilized again in the future for political gains if necessary (Lefevre, 2014).

The efforts of local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), meanwhile, started in 2012 and continued with activities on the demobilization and reintegration of fighters. Disarming them was a more challenging task for these local CSOs, but keeping the arms served as a guarantee for fighters who did not trust in a fair disarmament process. Weapons ensured that the groups from both sides did not feel weaker than the other. CSOs focused on ensuring that ex-fighters reintegrate in their own communities socially and economically. Efforts to bridge relationships between ex-fighters from both sides safeguarded a more reliable peace across the two neighborhoods.

Hence, the violent spillover to Lebanon was limited; geographically, to the city of Tripoli in North Lebanon and in its impact on the country. The eruption of violence was sporadic and included less than expected casualties. Moreover, many of the involved fighters were demobilized within a relatively short period of time. Work from local CSOs was immediate and they operated in an unsecure environment against all odds. The above makes Lebanon a least likely case that shows resilience against the influx of war from "next-door Syria" (Gade, 2017, p. 2). Moreover, provides and interesting outlook to the exceptional ability to demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants of a 4-year armed violence – although some argue that its roots go back to the 1980s. For the scope of this research the focus remains on the 4-year armed conflict between 2011 till 2015. Without an international or nationally designed DDR program, against all odds, the armed conflict did not proliferate across Lebanon, and the country remained remarkably stable (Gade, 2017). The intensity of the conflict reduced over the years and a considerable number of fighters were successfully reintegrated. They have gained new vocational skills and opportunities in the job market that would be able to support them and their families without having to resort to organized militant groups or crimes. This posits the question how much of an impact these CSOs had on the demobilization and reintegration of the fighters?

2 The Puzzle

There is a conceptual gap in the literature on DDR when it comes to investigating bottom-up initiatives. A large chunk of the work highlights the successes and failures of DDR programs as post-conflict missions (Arjona and Kalyvas, 2012; Berdal, 1996; Carames, 2006, 2008; Colletta and Cullen, 2000; Cox, 1995; Barbara, 1999, 2004). Likewise, the literature has not delved in depth into the DDR programs that are formulated and implemented by local non- governmental actors. The understanding is that for disarmament to be successful a strong third-party intervention, stronger than local CSOs, is required (Paffenholz, 2006; Rouw & Willems, 2010; Waldorf, 2013;). The work on CSOs and local turns is thus limited to the wider literature on peacebuilding with conceptualization on how CSOs (some specify NGOs) can assist in small scaled social cohesion and activities that support larger peace agreements (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006; Paffenholz, 2014). Moreover, the literature on DDR considers DDR processes as highly politicized ones because the capacity to demobilize large numbers of combatants is usually only possible through warlords' bargaining power (Carranza-Franco, 2019). This has driven scholarly research to focuses on the

analysis of international intervention in DDR. Baas (2012) and McMullin (2013) highlight the drawbacks of such analysis. They claim that the literature debate on DDR tends to focus on the role of multilateral organizations in the design and implementation of the DDR programs which are often not based on the perceived needs of the combatants. Thus, internationally led DDR programs have prioritized the security and economic agendas over the social and political realities that the communities faced (Ottaway,2002; Cramer, 2006; Muggah, 2010).

Torjesen (2013) suggests that research activities on DDR should focus more on the ex-combatant's experience. This is where the seminal work by Humphrey and Weinstein (2007) on individual micro-level analysis comes to address the reasons as to why some individuals pick up arms while others do not. This work, however, builds on these ideas and asks **what role, if any, do Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have in demobilizing fighters away from the battlefield and reintegrate them into the larger society?** In answering this question, I explore **if CSOs could design and implement demobilization and reintegration.**

3 Argument in brief

I argue that, in the city of Tripoli in Lebanon the local CSOs designed and implemented DDR programs through a conjunction of three factors that made this possible: (1) local CSOs positioned themselves as bridging actors across the two warring sects, (2) utilized the combatants' networks structures and built more non-violent objective ties to them rather than disbanding the command and control structure, and (2) provided vocational skills to pursue jobs that would sustain combatants' as opposed to monetary support. The above are further examined through adopting Social Network Analysis (SNA) and Life Course Analysis (LCA).

First, the positionality of CSOs as brokers between two groups of combatants from two different sects has been very effective in mitigating conflict using their hyper-local social capital to demobilize combatants. Brokers are individuals or organizations acting as individuals who "facilitate transactions between other actors lacking access to or trust in one another" (Marsden, 1982, p.207) and "between whom it would be valuable, but risky, to trust" (Burt, 2005, p.164). This research shows that the position of brokers that CSOs put themselves in contributed in two ways. First, it sets them as the 'people to-go-to' when the ex-combatants are in need, including social, economic, or even political mediation. The brokerage position vests power in CSOs to reinforce peaceful communication between warring factions and has shown individuals the

commonalities they have with the 'enemy' rather than the differences. Second, by being brokers, CSOs create networks that attract more combatants who initially may approach them to benefit from the resources that CSOs have collected. With time, those opportunistic combatants were nudged into becoming an active member of the network through engaging with the events and activities the network in sum performs.

Second, the newly produced networks by the CSOs build on the network ties of the paramilitaries, in most cases between the combatants and expands them to include commanders and combatants from the opponent factions into one bigger network. The same violence networks are then transformed into a new larger cross-communal network with components of the commanders and combatants from two warring factions with ties amongst themselves and with the CSOs. This goes to show that, contrary to the literature on DDR, the social networks of violence do not necessarily need to be disbanded. In fact, the social network structures can be used and be bridged as components within a larger socially integrated network because of the closeness of some of its members to other members who CSOs may not be able to reach. The assumption that the UN makes (UNDP, 2006) in the importance of breaking the social networks created by the military life because the loyalties of the combatants will move from allegiance to the warlords to institutions is, thus, refuted.

Third, the provision of sets of vocational skills to ex-combatants to pursue future jobs in the market was more effective than the common practice in DDR of providing economic support through financial resources and stipends. These skills could be put into action in different temporal and spatial occasions allowing combatants to pursue work opportunities without stigmatization and without questioning the steps after they spend the monetary support provided from the DDR program. Likewise, these set of skills ensured that the ex-combatants did not relapse into violence.

Fourth, the CSO networks intervened as turning points in the life trajectories of ex-combatants. As the war and its lords' recruitment strategies were a turning point that shifted their lives from a civilian one to a military one; CSOs networks and activities provided choices that were previously non-existent for the combatants. In that, the networks and activities became another turning point that would shift the ex-combatants to civilian life again.

Finally, the case of Tripoli has shown that those networks can, in fact, remain intact because they have a higher potential to reach more individuals who can be demobilized. A significant number of ex-combatants in Tripoli were keen to move away from being foot soldiers. They viewed themselves as victims who would rather be able to provide the economic needs of their families without risking their lives. The stories from ex-combatants collected in Tripoli show that before CSOs' DDR programs ex-combatants believed that the only path outside their poverty was through picking up arms. When new pathways were presented, non-ideologically driven ex-combatants were willing to explore them despite initial reluctance. As the process was going on, it attracted attention from the ideologically consumed combatants through leading by example. As a result, there was an exponential growth of demobilization of ex-combatants. Since the violent conflict in Tripoli between 2011-2014 was based on sectarian lines, social reintegration was not a challenge as some of the combatants were viewed as defenders in the eyes of their own communities. However, reintegrating nationally, as in seeking to relocate or find work outside the city of Tripoli, remains challenging.

The success of the Lebanese CSOs in Tripoli regarding the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants is not due to any specific blueprint from government or plans by national political leaders, but rather the CSOs themselves. This was possible through the imaginative intervention of local CSOs who managed to secure external funding to support local initiatives that worked and "match[ed] the best of reintegration programs worldwide" (Rolston, 2007, p. 259) in community development.

One should, however, not draw an overly rosy image on the endless possibilities of CSOs in designing and implementing DDR programs. As mentioned earlier, these initiatives cannot and do not disarm combatants but work with the fact that they remain armed to guarantee their security. Moreover, the problems that are common in nationally and internationally designed DDR programs remained visible in the contexts where CSOs replaced them. For example, when the CSOs became overloaded with the influx of combatants, they were not able to cater to all combatants in terms of vocational training or establishing ties with opportunities in the private sector. As such, where support was promised and was not materialized, the conditions of the ex-combatants deteriorated and a sense of disappointment disincentivized them to return. Ultimately, without a plan from the national government or international institutions, CSOs are only able to achieve interim stabilization with little clarity on the long-term abilities to sustain DDR programs.

However, these problems are not exclusive to programs initiated by CSOs. As Colletta and Muggah (2009) point out, if interim stabilization arrangements are not tightly connected to overarching peace- and state- building frameworks then long-term successes are hinged on individual choices.

4 Research Design and Methods

While the project looks at a single case study, I apply a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods for a sub-national case at the micro-level to conclude a set of characteristics that allow former fighters to mobilize and demobilize, as well as to draw out a set of characteristics that allow CSOs to perform vitally in DDR. The quantitative method is quantitative aspects of Social Network Analysis (SNA), while the qualitative methods include the qualitative aspect of SNA and Life-course Analysis. Two rationales motivate my single-case study. First, as previously mentioned, the case of Lebanon represents a least likely case where existing conceptualization do not explain the complex realities of DDR in Tripoli (Levy, 2008; Gerring & Cojocar, 2016; Gade, 2017). Additionally, Lebanon did not go through any official DDR programs after the end of the 1976-1990 civil war. It was believed that the presence of the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF) in Lebanon would be a guarantee for the non-relapse of violence. Hence, after the SAF withdrawal from Lebanon, it was expected that relapse to violence would prevail. Nevertheless, this reductive understanding is based on the fact that the Lebanese security sector has not been involved in designing and implementing DDR programs nor putting an end to armed violent skirmishes. Moreover, the Lebanese case presents a revelatory case. The fact that an embedded unit of analysis focuses on the life-story of former-combatants who were mobilized, demobilized, and reintegrated provides a novel opportunity that is usually difficult to access, even though the presence of former-fighters is not unique to Lebanon.

Hence, this research focuses on the slice of the combatants in Jabal Mohsen and Bab el Tabbeneh. The people who I interviewed do not represent all fighters who participated in the four-year war, nor do they represent the complex sectarian-political landscape across Lebanon. Nevertheless, they are a sample that is representative of Tripoli's political and sectarian cleavage because they have been combatants and members of the two militant groups in Tripoli. More importantly, the selected group of respondents represents the motivations and the different paths that have attracted individuals to and away from armed violent conflict. Thus, the selection of respondents had to

come from the pool of ex-combatants who underwent CSO DDR programs in order to collect insightful information on these processes in particular.

I explore to ways to measure the impact of CSOs. First, by using Social Network Analysis(SNA) I try to identify and measure how much CSOs played a bridging and brokerage role between the two sectarian communities. As such, if CSOs appear to have bridged two or more ex-combatants, then their roles would have facilitated social cohesion and demobilization. As the social and political reintegration requires creating new ties with the civil society and the community at large, social network analysis serves as an accurate tool to measure the success of the CSOs in these instances. Building on SNA theory and understandings of social capital and bridging, I map out the social networks established upon the interference of CSOs in the conflict geographies of Tripoli. Social network analysis unpacks the relational connections built between CSOs and ex-combatants as imperative to understand how relations can demobilize ex-combatants and maintain the demobilization through creating avenues of reintegration.

The second measure is the life paths of the ex-combatants. In that, I use life course analysis methodology through biographic narratives and oral history of the ex-combatants. In so doing, I trace the conjunctures in the lives of the ex-combatants that were influenced by CSOs. Life course analysis allows researchers to focus on multiple-factor explanations and conclude a combinational model with many variables, if necessary, when studying longitudinal timeframes. The concept allows for identifying historical events and sociological interactions outside the personal life as well as with the personal attachment to these events. Despite life stories constituting chronological and sequential trace of events, this approach, specially conducted through interviews, allows the participant to convey meanings and evaluations of these events on his life and his small community around him/her (Elliot, 2005). As Brannen (2013) puts it: “life stories provide holistic and processual accounts both through the concept of the life trajectory and the hermeneutic aspects of the life” (Brennan, 2013, p. 2). Therefore,many processes can be discovered through this approach and trace the flow of information that is usually more difficult to get through process tracing. For example, if after participating in CSOs events and activities, ex-combatants decided to drop their arms, or whether the influence of CSOs assisted in reintegrating the fighters into society, economically and socially; then we can single out their intervention as an important factor. Additionally, this method provides a voice to people who have not been heard and have been perhaps shamed or even prosecuted. Researchers who may have studied Lebanon may have

worked with them as quantity rather, without personal considerations of their experiences, traumas, and emotions.

5 Data collection and Positionality

By using grounded-theory research, I formulate a testable central research question that directs my research and helps explain some action, interaction, or processes by deriving inductively from the data that is collected. Hence, the conceptual framework would be grounded in the data collected. Substantive theories tend to explain more specific, everyday situations than do more formal, all-encompassing theories. It is imperative for any sound research to triangulate the findings and analysis. In this research, evidence was obtained from interviews, observations, research logs and documentation. The data was accumulated by different methods but all bearing the same question as a part of a more articulate triangulation. The convergence of my data increases my confidence in getting the true picture.

Primary data was collected over the course of a two intermittent fieldwork trips in a three-year research period (2017-2020). In each trip, I spent 3 months in the field in the city of Tripoli in Lebanon. Being Lebanese myself, it was easier to communicate in my mother language and find my way around the city that I have visited several times before the beginning of my research. The data was collected through interviews following two main avenues. One essential avenue was to interview CSOs that operated DDR activities in Tripoli, and the second was interviewing ex-combatants whose life-course indicate their mobilization and demobilization. Both set of respondents is necessary for measuring the role of CSOs in the lives of the ex-fighters. Thus, I primarily initiated contact with the active CSOs in the city who have been active during and after the outbreak of armed conflict. The organizations were identified from a list mapped during my desk research on CSOs who initiated DDR related activities between the Jabal Mohsen and Bab El Tabbeneh neighborhoods. Arranging semi-structured interviews with the managers and executive directors of the CSOs was an important first step to (1) contextualize the operations of the organizations and their goals; (2) identify the activities that included the utilization of social capital for bridging combatants across the two warring groups and activities that included the demobilization and reintegration of the combatants, and, lastly, (3) through CSO managers and directors reach out to a sample size of ex-combatants who I conducted biographic interviews with.

The challenge in interviewing ex-combatants stemmed from their ability to trust me as a researcher. These individuals are in constant fear that speaking about the past is in a way collecting information to possible future indictments. As such, I approached the CSOs who the ex-combatant's trust. Additionally, as a researcher I spent some time with the ex-combatants to get them to know me as a researcher. The CSOs vouched for my credibility and integrity. I also needed to set certain protocols in place that would address the combatants' fears. For example, I never learned the real full names of the combatants myself. I ensured them that I would use pseudonyms in this work and, as a result, I would not require their names for the interview process. Consent forms were collected through identifying ID numbers I created for each of the combatants.

Another key requirement to ensure that I gain the ex-combatants' trust was through spending time with them outside the research work. In other words, I needed to be a participant in the community during my fieldwork and to spend my time in the same places they do, in the same coffee shops and talk about topics outside my research. This included watching football games or just simply working and preparing my teaching assistantships in the coffee shops. With the days, the ex-combatants grew to trust me and consequently opened more on their experiences during the conflict. However, I also identified a tautological problem that would rise from relying solely on the ex-combatants who were snow sampled from the CSOs themselves. Hence, being a participant observant also allowed me to foster connections with ex-combatants directly, who would also recommend me their fellow friends who might not have been active members in the CSOs that I study but have participated in selected activities or received some of their services. From interviews with such individuals, I could control for any bias that my participants actively working with the CSOs during my research period could have.

The interviews themselves were also divided into two sets of protocols. The first focused on questions that are useful for drawing out relational information the combatants have with the CSOs, fellow combatants from the same sectarian warring faction and ties they have built with combatants from the opposing warring party. These questions were short and simple, but significant to draw the maps of the social networks of the ex-combatants and where the CSOs fall in them. In turn, this allowed me to conduct the SNA and generate the quantitative results that gave insight into the broader social networks that formed through the DDR processes. The other part of the interviews was biographic. In essence, the combatants were asked to orally narrate their stories. The biographical-narrative method with ex-combatants allowed the respondents to tell the

story of their whole life without interruptions and setting their own chronological structure that they deemed suitable, contrary to a pre-devised list of questions (Baumann et. al, 2021). As such, how they tell their life story (narrative) while understanding the social interpretations (interpretive) behind it was key to contextualize and ensure non tautological data collection. Only after phase one of the interviews were done, whereby ex-fighters notified me about their social ties, I asked the interviewees if they would allow a second phase in which I could ask more specific questions on events they underwent and tells me more about their life story. This latter approach allowed the interviewees to shed light on significant social experiences and put in context the role that CSOs played in their lives.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were used while interviewing the managers and directors of CSOs. This approach was applied to understand the choice of activities established and programs initiated by the management, sources of funding and their own monitoring and evaluation for their success and failures. The data collection from these interviews were key in identifying the exact activities that encouraged combatants to move away from armed conflict. It also provided me with information on the challenges that the CSOs faced in convincing the ex-combatants to demobilize and how the CSOs managed to break the ex-combatants' ties with their warlords. The interviews with CSO leaders also informed me about the process by which they secured funding while discussing in depth instances when the international donors were reluctant to support them.

6 Roadmap of the Dissertation

The dissertation constitutes seven chapters that are structured as follows. Chapter 1 provides a succinct introduction to the research. Chapter 2 provides a historical background on the conflict in the city of Tripoli in Lebanon including its root causes, progress over time and the different instigating variables. The chapter also highlights the connection between the armed conflict in Tripoli and the broader regional conflicts between Sunni/Shiite and Sunni/Alawiite signaling the immense challenge the CSOs had in front of them as well as the significance of the conflict to the broader regional politics. In chapter 3, I outline the DDR literature gaps and discuss the relevance of this research in contributing to new understandings and possible approaches to DDR programs. Chapter 4 provides a theoretical literature and I explore the concepts of social capital, trust, and brokerage, which set the stage to discuss the additions that social networks

analysis and the concepts of social capital of the DDR program initiator brings to the DDR programs. Likewise, the chapter highlights the importance of local actors who know the community and its members in being part of DDR processes. Moreover, perceptions of behaviors and benefits of social capital and brokerage in DDR programs inform the level of success that DDR program initiators have towards stability and violence reduction.

Chapter 5 highlights in detail the measurements and concepts of social network analysis and their quantitative computation. The data collection and methodology of SNA is put out in details and the data is analyzed by the results that were generated using Python programming language as an essential network analysis tool that generates accurate results. In this chapter, calculations of constraint and effective size measurements demonstrate the positionality of the CSOs as brokers in the network, bridging the combatants from both warring factions allowing for a more stable demobilization and violence reduction. This chapter sets out a novel approach to evaluate and assess DDR programs, regardless of who the implementer is.

Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the impact of the DDR programs by CSOs on the paths and life trajectories of the ex-combatants. In this chapter, personal stories of the ex-combatants are narrated highlighting that the intervention of CSOs in nudging them away from the battlefields. Coupled with SNA, life course analysis wraps up the novel approach in assessing DDR by following the lives of the ex-combatants beyond the reintegration activities. Lastly, Chapter 7 discusses more general theoretical and policy-relevant insights that can be deduced from the analysis of the city of Tripoli DDR process, especially in the opportunities and limitations of hyper-local DDR practices by CSOs.