

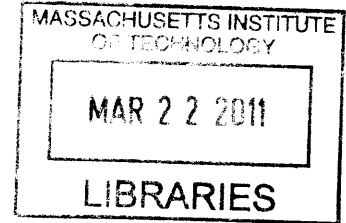
Bankruptcy, Guns or Campaigns:  
Explaining Armed Organizations' Post-War Trajectories

by

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**ARCHIVES**

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## Abstract

This project seeks to explain what happens to armed organizations after they sign peace accords. Why do they dissolve, return to war, or form non-violent socio-political entities (political parties or civic associations)? To explain variation in post-war outcomes, my argument centers on the human geography of armed groups. Recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns generate distinct configurations of a) collective capacity, b) relations with civilians, and c) inter-armed group dynamics. I propose that, if a rebel or paramilitary unit recruits in a geographically concentrated area and deploys its fighters in their home communities, the organization will persist and transform into a socio-political entity after disarming. If instead the organization recruits in a dispersed manner, deploys its soldiers away from their towns of origin, and the soldiers either return home or displace to a third locale, the group will disintegrate; it will lose its capacity for collective action. By bankrupting some organizations and preserving others, demobilization has differential effects on armed group capacity. Where it weakens a group, it destabilizes the territorial bargains between the ex-armed group and state and between the group and its contiguous, non-state armed actors. As a result, resumed war becomes likely. If instead, the distribution of power within the system is maintained, the groups will, over time, fully demilitarize and be brought into the state's legal framework. This dissertation is based on rich data collected during fourteen months of fieldwork in Colombia from 2006 to the present during which time I went inside each demobilizing organization to reconstruct and map its post-war trajectory. Exploiting Colombia's unparalleled comparative laboratory for this research, I test the effect of recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns on organizational outcomes using two strategies. First, I conduct a detailed, controlled comparison of armed groups in three regions of Colombia based on interviews of over 200 ex-combatants, civilians, and

victims. The second strategy combines these qualitative sources with quantitative ones to evaluate the proposed hypotheses on the entire universe of municipality-armed group dyads in Colombia (n=1040). For this analysis, I rely on municipal-level violent event data, interviews of nearly 100 Colombian experts on the armed conflict, a database of seven years of news articles, and statistical evidence from a series of surveys of former paramilitaries (n=31,472). The empirics provide strong support for the proposed model. The project has significant implications for debates on reintegration, state-building, consolidating peace, reconciliation, decriminalization, and transitions to democracy.

## Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	5
 <i>Part I.</i>	
1. Introduction	8
2. Theory of Post-War Trajectories of Armed Organizations	24
3. Research Design & Methods	38
4. Historical Narrative of Colombia's Violence	45
 <i>Part II.</i>	
5. Bankruptcy	73
6. Campaigns	137
7. Guns	195
 <i>Part III.</i>	
8. Colombia's Insurgencies, 1964–1984	235
9. Conclusion	269
Appendix A. Challenges of Remilitarization Research	285
Appendix B. Elite Interviews & Document Collection	290
Appendix C. Survey Methodology	292



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*Part I.*  
**Chapter 1**

**Introduction**

**I. The Puzzle: Three Divergent Outcomes**

Juan Pinilla, Camilo Ospino López, and Felipe Villegas<sup>1</sup> all fought in the Colombian paramilitaries and disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated during the peace process of 2003-2006. Their trajectories diverged, offering insights into the varying outcomes of demilitarizing groups during war to peace transitions.

*Campaigns*

Juan Pinilla surrendered his gun and demobilized with the Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN) on the November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Juan had done the things that most in his Medellín shantytown did. He joined a neighborhood posse at age 10, a gang at age 12 and an armed faction, either rebel or paramilitary, at age 14. On his way home one night, he witnessed the rape of his neighbor, Ana María. He was powerless to stop it. After the rapists stormed his home and threatened him with torture and execution if he opened his mouth, Juan created a rival gang (*combo*) with his childhood companions. He had observed that the most popular and feared kids in the city were those with motorcycles, arms, and money – those that belonged to the gangs. With his *combo*, he rid the area of the rapists' group and cleansed the thieves, drug addicts and petty criminals from his beloved neighborhood. Several years later, his gang joined the ranks of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara paramilitaries who promised them protection and pay. As a paramilitary, Juan operated as a hitman, assassinating everyone on his lengthy to-do list:

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<sup>1</sup> A majority of my interviews were conducted in confidentiality and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement and changed in the text in order to protect my respondents and to adhere to the Human Subjects Protocol. I therefore do not cite my interviewees' names unless they granted me permission to do so. These names have been altered (Ex-paramilitaries, interviews by author, Medellín, Bogotá, and Apartadó, January – July, 2008).

guerrilla militiamen, rival paramilitary fighters, leftist sympathizers, and unauthorized drug dealers.

When Don Berna ordered Juan to disarm as part of a peace process, he obeyed. After relinquishing his gun, he and his BCN comrades returned home to live amidst the communities they had abused, patrolled, extorted, and governed; the communities they had never left. Their former armed employer, the BCN, *endured*, transforming into a powerful, non-violent, proto-state organization with a monopoly of ‘social work’ in Medellín’s poor neighborhoods and possession of several local government posts. All 4,000 of his fellow ex-combatants joined. The organization laundered its extensive, illicitly accrued resources and financed its continued reign over Medellín. Its now ‘licit’ domination remained unchallenged for several years.

### *Bankruptcy*

On December 10<sup>th</sup> of the following year, Camilo Ospino López, disarmed with 1,434 fighters from another paramilitary group, the Bloque Catatumbo, on the Venezuelan border. Camilo was from the far off coastal region of Sucre. Before joining the *autodefensas*, he had completed his mandatory military service and returned home to find his parents massacred by the guerrillas for not complying with their extortion dues. Driven by a desire for revenge, Camilo tried to rejoin the Colombian armed forces. He also craved the respect, status, and adventure he had reveled in with a gun. He was turned away. The local mayor recommended him instead to a paramilitary commander in the region who had a reputation for paying his foot soldiers well. Soon after joining the paramilitaries, he was deployed to the drug and rebel producing Catatumbo region near the Venezuelan border, some 800 kilometers from his home. For three years, he trudged through jungles and mountains, embattling the guerrillas and civilian communities.

After surrendering their guns, he and his ex-combatant colleagues and leaders dispersed back to their homes in the coastal regions of Urabá, Córdoba, Sucre, and Atlántico and his paramilitary brigade *dissolved*. Already uprooted by the war, Camilo chose not to return home as there was little left for him there. With no ties to the Catatumbo region, he decided to migrate instead to Bogotá which promised anonymity and work in the capital's shantytowns. He evaporated into civilian life and maintained no ties to his former comrades. Camilo's expired Bloque Catatumbo left a power vacuum on the Venezuelan border that quickly filled with a miscellany of actors from the underworld: rearmed paramilitary factions, pre-existing criminal mafias and narco-trafficking cartels who became embroiled in persistent fighting.

### *Guns*

Two years later, a third soldier, Felipe Villegas, disarmed with the last of the 34 paramilitary factions – Bloque Elmer Cardenas (BEC) and its 1,536 fighters on the Panamanian frontier. Felipe had joined the paramilitaries fifteen years prior after demobilizing with the EPL guerrillas. The EPL's political party – Hope, Peace and Liberty – was massacred by the FARC who accused it of betraying the revolution.<sup>2</sup> Fearing for his life, he joined his former enemy's ranks – the paramilitaries – who promised him protection in exchange for his military savvy, penetrating intelligence and widespread social web. His years in the BEC were spent managing the paramilitary group's extortion and trafficking activities and recruiting fighters native to the region.

After disarming, Felipe and his local, ex-combatant comrades continued to live where they had patrolled and joined the BEC's civilian reincarnation, 'Constructors of Peace.' Felipe worked on one of Constructors of Peace's palm plantations and spent all of his free time with his former paramilitary companions. He kept his radio and resumed his daily reports to his battalion

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<sup>2</sup> EPL stands for Popular Liberation Army; the FARC are the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

ex-commander, alias, 'El Gato.' 'El Gato' was his source of guidance, employment, and security. He was not alone in turning to 'El Gato' for assistance. When members of the community wanted to build a school, punish a thief, find work, or collect a debt, they went to see 'El Gato.' Two years after disarming, rumors circulated of the 'Paisas,' a remilitarized faction comprised of BEC's neighboring Bloque Héroes de Tolová. Threatening pamphlets, a series of assassinations, and civilian protests announced its emergence and encroachment of BEC territory. Felipe was called back to full-scale war by 'El Gato' who remilitarized his battalion in the form of the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia.

## **II. Introduction**

Bankruptcy, Guns, or Campaigns. These are the puzzling, divergent trajectories of demilitarizing groups, which my project seeks to explain. Militia, paramilitary, and rebel groups disarm across the globe and yet we have a surprisingly weak understanding of why they dissolve, endure, and redeploy for war or peaceful politics. In Nepal, the Maoists crowned their transition from underground insurgency to open politics with a victory in the 2008 elections while in Guatemala, the URNG could not muster sufficient support to succeed as a legitimate political actor. In Afghanistan "militia leaders in the north still command the loyalty of thousands of fighters who can be mobilized quickly" (RFE 2007) while in Sierra Leone, the RUF "is obsolete" (UN 2003). This variation remains underexplored and poorly theorized. And yet, the war termination literature points to the centrality of disbanding armed groups and turning them into political entities and the UN considers "demobilizing combatants [to be] the single most important factor determining the success of peace operations. Without demobilization, civil wars cannot be brought to an end and other critical goals – such as democratization, justice and

development – have little change for success” (UN 2004). A better understanding of the mechanisms that generate distinct post-war outcomes is a prerequisite for productive theory-building on post-conflict state-building, consolidated peace, reconciliation, and transitions to democracy.

This project seeks to fill this gap and explain what happens to armed organizations after they sign peace agreements and disarm. Why do they dissolve, return to war or transform into non-violent socio-political entities such as political parties or civic associations? To do so, it adopts an organizational approach that impacts how we think about many important questions in social science and challenges the micro and macro level analyses that dominate the civil war research agenda. This project emphasizes the explanatory leverage of human and social geography, contesting the causal priority afforded physical terrain and natural resources in the peace scholarship. Methodologically, the analysis assumes a multi-method, sub-national approach and disaggregates organizations to their most critical units.

To explain variation in armed groups’ post-war trajectories, my argument identifies two key factors. First, I find that where armed groups recruit and deploy their fighters determines the combatants’ network structures and post-war migration and thus, whether the organization survives or disintegrates. It also determines the group’s embeddedness in the civilian population and its ability to maintain political influence without arms. I conclude that non-local rebel and paramilitary groups, which recruited their fighters from dispersed regions, are prone to disintegration. In contrast, local militarized groups, which drew a majority of their recruits from the communities in which they fought, are comprised of combatants who are strongly linked to each other, remain concentrated in the zone of deployment post-war, and are entrenched in their communities. These local groups thus face a high probability of persisting and forming



legitimate political entities after disarming.

Second, by bankrupting some organizations and preserving others, demobilization has differential effects on armed groups' collective capacities. Where it weakens a group, it destabilizes the territorial bargains between the group and state and between the group and its contiguous, non-state armed actors. It also creates high levels of noise and optimism around the extent to which it has done so. As a result, renegotiating bargains becomes difficult and resumed war likely. If instead, the distribution of power within the system maintains, the militarized groups will, over time, fully disarm and be brought into the state's legal framework.

This Introduction advances in two sections. It specifies how the project contributes to key questions in Political Science and challenges existing theoretical explanations of post-war outcomes. The chapter concludes with a road map for what lies ahead.

### **III. Micro and Macro Approaches**

Scholars who write about peace analyze either the individual or country units of analysis. The micro approach seeks to explain variation in individual ex-combatants' reintegration success. It studies why former fighters vote, find jobs, avoid psychological trauma, and behave as normal civilians and points to characteristics of the ex-combatants such as their age, education, and exposure to violence during the war.<sup>3</sup>

Despite a recent push to the micro level, the majority of civil war research remains at the country level. The macro approach seeks to explain why countries experience recurrent war or

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<sup>3</sup> Humphreys and Weinstein 2007 finds that former soldiers who experienced greater violence in Sierra Leone prove less likely to reintegrate successfully. Blattman and Annan Forthcoming concludes that soldiering has detrimental effects on economic, but not psychological, reintegration and Blattman 2009 argues that abduction leads to increases in political participation in Uganda. An ongoing study by Mvukiyehe, Samii, and Taylor investigates the micro-dimension of peacekeeping in Burundi. Several policy-oriented works evaluate UN and World Bank DDR program designs (Colletta et al. 2006; Pugel 2006 (Liberia); CHF International 2007 (Liberia)).

peace and focuses on the role of security guarantees and addressing the grievances that lead to war in the first place.<sup>4</sup>

Missing is a literature on the organizational dynamics of conflict resolution and peace building. How can we study the peace process in El Salvador without knowledge of the FMLN and ORDEN? How can we research reintegration in Sierra Leone without exploring the trajectories of the RUF and Civil Defense Forces? Organizations are critical actors in the post-war environment and can enable us to understand why organized violence reappears and why peace consolidates and what that peace looks like. Accordingly, this project places the organization at the center of its causal story of war to peace transition.

While an exciting, new literature has emerged on organizations during war, studying their onset, recruitment, repertoires of violence, and governance strategies, this literature has not broadened the analysis to armed organizations *after* a peace is signed.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, I have devoted several years to extending this research agenda to the post-war period, getting inside the opaque, secretive, armed structures, and understanding how individual fighters live within their constraints. I have collected original, fine-grained data on demilitarizing groups that enable me to build theory and test hypotheses at this level of analysis at which little work has been done.

#### **IV. An Organizational Approach**

‘Organizational weapons’ are “a source of power [which when] tapped ... may be ... diverted to other, more far-reaching aims.” – Philip Selznick<sup>6</sup>

By placing the organization at the center of the analysis, this project generates theory on several critical spheres of conflict studies: a) the inner workings of rebel and paramilitary groups;

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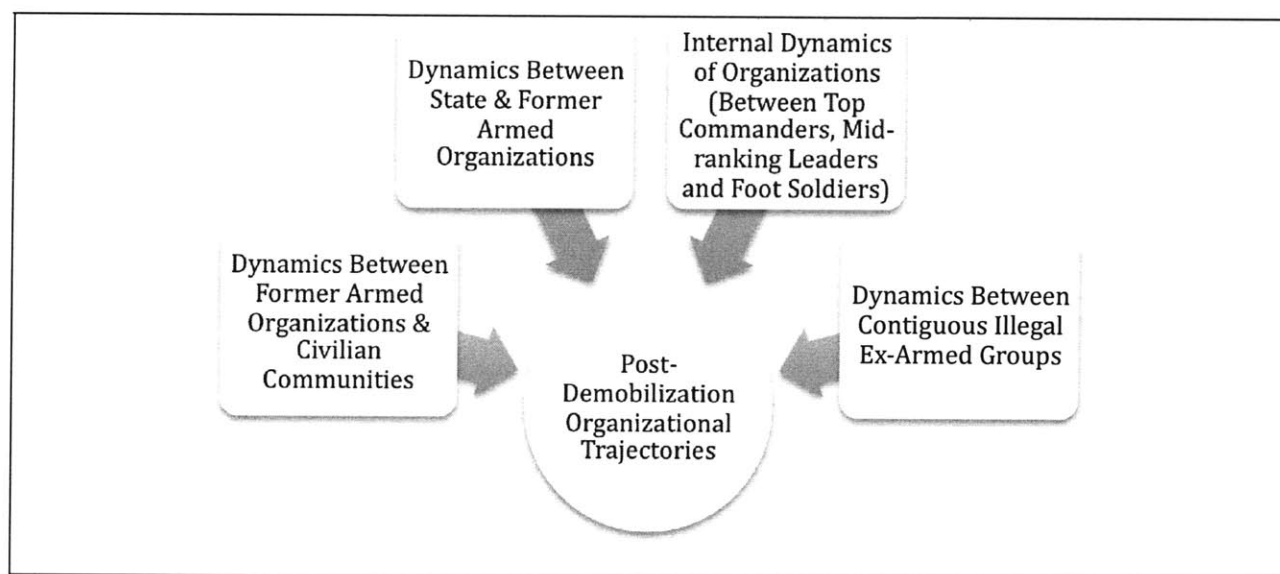
<sup>4</sup> Walter 1997, 2004; Toft Forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup> Kalyvas 2006; Wood 2003, 2006; Petersen 2002; Kasfir 2009; Weinstein 2006; Lichbach 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Selznick 1952.

b) the alliances and disputes between these groups; c) their dynamics with the state; and d) the interactions between them and civilian communities (Figure 1). The project then synthesizes these usually separately analyzed spheres to gain traction on the macro post-war landscape.

**Figure 1. Inputs into the Analysis<sup>7</sup>**



I will briefly break down the project’s contribution in each of these spheres and then suggest how, combined, the project refines our existing thinking on civil war and peace.

First, the project offers a lens into the opaque interior of armed structures. It demonstrates how strategic decisions at the upper rungs of leadership, such as those of soldier deployment, interact with micro decisions at the lower tiers of command, such as those of migration, to generate distinct organizational outcomes: survival or bankruptcy. The project further explores where institutional stickiness and lock-in dominate, rendering group trajectories path-dependent, and where instead there exists maneuverability for policy to impact outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> In turning this dissertation project into a book manuscript, I plan to also consider the dynamics between the armed organization and external states and the international community.

<sup>8</sup> For path dependency theory, see North 1990; Pierson 2004; Mahoney 2000.

Second, by examining the dynamics between former armed entities and between these entities and the state, the project facilitates revisions to *interstate* conflict theories of *intrastate* war.<sup>9</sup> Using micro, field-based data,<sup>10</sup> it indicates the conditions under which illegal non-state actors can be treated justifiably as states and when this analogy with the international system reaches its limits.

Finally, the project enhances our process-oriented understanding of the relationship between ex-combatants and their communities and generates new insights into civilians' rejection, tolerance and even endorsement of coercive rule and its legacies. The project confers agency upon non-combatants rather than treating them as passive by-standers to the fate of their communities' governance.

Weaving together these pieces, the project finds the common, critical thread to be human geography; where individuals are, and who they are tied to, matter immensely in explaining inter and intra group dynamics. Mapping this geography yields interesting refinements of our conventional wisdoms of war and peace.

## **V. Divergence from Conventional Wisdoms of Post-War Outcomes**

This study questions the deterministic role afforded resources in explaining post-war outcomes. The political economy of war theories predict that resource-rich groups are more likely to remilitarize and splinter, and are less likely to form socio-political entities than are resource-poor units.<sup>11</sup> While focusing on processes during war, resource determinism offers four

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<sup>9</sup> Interstate theories applied to intrastate realm include Walter 1997; Fortna 2004.

<sup>10</sup> This sub-national data contrasts with most existing studies of intrastate violent outcomes which use national-level data: democracy scores, natural resources, life expectancy, GDP, etc. See, for example, Walter 2004; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Collier et al. 2003; Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2001, 2002; Hegre et al. 2001; Reynal-Querol 2002; Gleditsch et al. 2002; Murdoch and Sandler 2002; Reynal-Querol 2002; Ron 2005; Sambanis 2002; Fearon 2004.

<sup>11</sup> This scholarship has three variants: 1) 'greed' (Collier 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Grossman 1999);

implications for the post-war environment: a) armed units endowed with natural resource wealth, criminal opportunities or external support attract opportunistic joiners and thus suffer greater principal-agent problems and vulnerability to organizational fragmentation; b) resource-rich groups commit greater and more arbitrary violence against the non-combatant populations<sup>12</sup> and, as a result, are less likely to muster the civilian backing necessary to be *able* to form legitimate political organizations;<sup>13</sup> c) these groups are driven by material motivations and are thus unlikely to *want* to form socio-political organizations; and d) loot-based groups, in stark contrast to socially-endowed, ideological armed units, are fundamentally greedy and thus lack incentives to commit to peace; war constitutes a more efficient means to their desired end: supra-profits. These claims have been heralded by scholars, journalists, and practitioners alike. A majority of leading academic articles on civil war focus exclusively on the presence of natural resources and their link to conflict outcomes.<sup>14</sup> References to thugs, warlords, and narco-terrorists abound in journalistic accounts and imply that these labels have explanatory value.<sup>15</sup> And practitioners aiming to separate allies from enemies, hang tightly to these motivational labels.

In resource determinism's critical case of cocaine-saturated Colombia, the geographic distributions of drugs, trafficking routes, gems, oil, and extortion opportunities provide a surprisingly weak guide to organizational outcomes: war recurrence, bankruptcy, or campaigns. I find that resources can explain military strength and expansion, international legitimacy, and corruptive capacity, but cannot account for variation in the inner workings of armed groups, their

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2) 'organizational economics' (Weinstein 2002, 2006); and 3) capacity (Seymour 2008; Johnston 2008). I group the first two strands together. The only difference in their predictions is that the greed theory assumes organizational endurance while the organizational economics variant asserts that resource-rich groups suffer principal-agent problems and splinter.

<sup>12</sup> Weinstein 2006; Weinstein and Humphreys 2008.

<sup>13</sup> De Zeeuw 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Humphreys 2005; Lujala 2003; Ross 2006; Østby, Hegre and Raighleigh 2008; Skaperdas 2002; Keen 2000; Auty 2004; de Soysa 2000; Bellows and Miguel 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Several examples of journalistic references include *New York Times* 2009, 2010.

relations with civilian populations, their interactions with the state, or their inter-illegal armed faction dynamics. A quick look at armed groups' trajectories around the world provides credence to this finding. There are cases of resource-rich groups that disappeared (Sierra Leone's RUF), remilitarized (Angola's UNITA, Peru's Sendero Luminoso), and became political parties (Mozambique's RENAMO, Sudan's SPLA/M, Lebanon's Hezbollah). Similarly, there are examples of resource-poor groups that disintegrated (Colombia's EPL), returned to fighting (Nicaragua's Contras), and formed peaceful socio-political organizations (Nepal's Maoists, El Salvador's FMLN). Important variation exists within similarly resource-endowed groups.

The study also disputes the explanatory hegemony currently held by credible commitment problems in accounting for patterns of resumed war. This theory asserts that the post-civil war environment is anarchical, and thus ex-adversaries cannot credibly commit to disarmament.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, ex-combatants cannot trust that the government will keep its peace promises after they surrender their weapons (Walter 1997; Fearon 2004). Accordingly, absent security guarantees, ex-combatants opt for rearmament while wars, which end with peace terms that reduce the security dilemma, are more likely to avert renewed violence. These peace terms include external guarantees by credible and committed third-parties and internal guarantees of security sector reform, power-sharing arrangements, and de facto partitions.<sup>17</sup>

This project undermines the explanatory power of commitment problems by demonstrating that there are shocks to the system that cannot be predicted or prevented. In these cases, 'credible commitment' is not the dominant mechanism. Demobilization can constitute one such shock. It can suddenly alter organizational capacity, bankrupting some ex-armed groups

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<sup>16</sup> See Posen 1993; Snyder and Jervis 1999 for the civil war onset corollary of this thesis.

<sup>17</sup> On external guarantees, see Walter 1997, 1999; Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Fortna 2004. On security sector reform, see Toft forthcoming; Call 2007; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Licklider 2009. For key works on power-sharing, see Lijphart 1977; Horowitz 1991; Roeder and Rothchild 2005. Kaufmann 1996 champions the partition solution.

while preserving others, but then its effect ends. It follows that the anticipated distribution of power in the next period mirrors that immediately following demobilization. There is no expectation of a *future* shift in strength and thus the parties should be able to reach a bargain (Powell 2006). Additionally, the effect of demobilization on relative power is *not foreseen*.<sup>18</sup> Armed groups would *not* have demobilized had they predicted they would be bankrupted or weakened by doing so. The credible commitment argument purports to explain the post-conflict environment and yet, it cannot offer analytic leverage on the success and subsequent failure of bargaining. While certain interstate logics have been applied indiscriminately to domestic contexts, those of informational problems and mutual optimism have received scant attention in the intrastate domain.<sup>19</sup> This project constitutes a first attempt to incorporate information asymmetries within organizations into our models of war to peace transitions.

This project also questions pure, agency-based causality and confers support to institutional approaches. While leaders' decisions and strategies are key to explaining the organizational forms that emerge, this project finds high levels of path-dependency. Leaders' future decisions are *constrained* by how they have engineered the organizational 'machine,'<sup>20</sup> specifically, where they recruited and deployed their soldiers. These variables therefore gain causal priority.

An additional divergence from dominant accounts lies in the study's shift away from the 'popular support' approach. The conventional view holds that civilians will support ex-combatants if they endorsed the armed group's platform or if the combatants used 'less' violence

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<sup>18</sup> There is little work on the effects of unforeseen shocks on bargaining. Muhammet Bas and Andrew Coe are working on modeling this phenomenon.

<sup>19</sup> For these theories application to the *interstate* arena, see Fearon 1995 for information problems. For mutual optimism theory, see Blainey 1988.

<sup>20</sup> Miller 1992, p. 2.

while at war.<sup>21</sup> Implicit is an assumption that there are acceptable levels of violence and that, irrespective of the use of massacres, kidnappings, homicide, and coerced taxation, ideological affinity will translate into civilian endorsement. Against these common claims, this project finds so-called popular support puzzling. Why would a family, victimized by years of extortion, their son ‘disappeared’ by the actions of a rebel group, ‘support’ the group? Because the family shared its Marxist ideology? Because its combatants did not exterminate the entire village, only their son? I find that civilians rarely ‘support’ violence and ideological affinity does not generate non-combatant tolerance for ex-combatants’ influence over civilian affairs; rather human ties, sticky social institutions, and retrospective voting do. The term ‘popular support’ needs to be explained and imbued with meaning before it can be claimed to be a cause.

Finally, by focusing on armed organizational legacies, this project challenges the common assumption of a semblance between the variables that lead to war in the first place and those that lead to its recurrence.<sup>22</sup> It also questions the academic standard operating procedure of treating war as a two-party game between the state and rebel group<sup>23</sup> and demonstrates the importance of looking at the multitude of actors in civil wars, especially at the prevalent and entirely understudied paramilitary structures.<sup>24</sup> Finally, it highlights the analytic efficiency of disaggregating these structures to their most causally relevant units of analysis.

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<sup>21</sup> Manning 2004, 2007; de Zeeuw 2008; Söderberg 2007.

<sup>22</sup> All of our datasets and even our theories lump together war onset and war recurrence. Both are coded ‘1’ and explained using the same logic.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Mason and Fett 1996.

<sup>24</sup> An exception is a new project on pro-state militias: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/militias/>. See Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe 2009.



## **VI. Road Map**

The project divides into three sections.

### *Part I*

Part I, comprising Chapters 2-4, introduces the dissertation's theory, research design and empirical data. Chapter 2 outlines the schematics of the argument and locates the project's focus on the organization in contrast to previous studies, which have examined the post-war landscape at either the macro or micro units of analysis. Chapter 3 specifies how I test the proposed logic against the strongest alternatives. It introduces the chapter's multi-method approach, which nests detailed process tracing of battalions in three regions within a quantitative analysis of all battalion-community dyads in Colombia. It further justifies the sub-national research design, which facilitates the collection of detailed information about where armed organizations recruit and deploy, their relative power, and their post-war trajectories. This chapter further presents the rich sources from which the project draws including survey, interview, violent event, and ethnographic data. Chapter 4 introduces the comparative laboratory for this research: the Colombian paramilitaries. Thirty-six paramilitary organizations, comprising 31,671 fighters signed peace accords with the government and disarmed between 2003 and 2006. They exhibited significant divergence in their post-war paths, allowing me to exploit within country variation to maximize my number of cases while holding many confounding factors constant. This fourth chapter provides the historical background on the Colombian paramilitaries in general and on the three regions that feature prominently in the project's empirical analyses.

### *Part II*

Part II – Chapters 5-7 – disentangles the determinants of armed organizations' post-war trajectories. Chapter 5 – *Bankruptcy* – explores the challenges of war to peace transitions for

organizational survival. It shows how armed groups' recruitment and post-war migration strategies account for some groups going bankrupt after disarming while others retain a capacity for collective action through the two mechanisms of multifaceted networks and physical clustering of former combatants. It therefore highlights the inner workings of armed organizations in the aftermath of a peace accord. Chapter 6 – *Campaigns* – focuses on variation in former armed groups' leverage over social and political civilian affairs and on why non-combatants endorse or reject ex-combatants' influence. The model centers on deployment strategies and their effects on a) the social networks between combatants and civilians, b) victims' levels of anger at their perpetrators, c) the perceived shadow of the future of ex-fighter–civilian interactions, and d) the stickiness of institutions of authority. This chapter shows how configurations of deployment and migration produce varying levels of embeddedness, which in turn translates into differing abilities to rule without opposition. The chapter maps the dynamics between formerly militarized actors and non-combatants communities. Chapter 7 – *Guns* – turns to the inter-armed group processes to understand divergence in remilitarization and demilitarization. It shows how demobilization may prompt changes in the distribution of power and thereby destabilize the system of mutually-dependent bargains between non-state actors and between the state and each rebel or paramilitary faction. It explores how the bankruptcy of some organizations and survival of others, as documented in Chapter 5, alters the parameters underpinning the formal and informal peace bargains and, in so doing, fractures the delicate peace architecture. Remilitarization is the result. It contrasts this trajectory with that of dyads whose power differential withstands the upheaval of demobilization and thereby cements the demilitarization regime.

Part II draws on evidence from the three comparative case studies to qualitatively evaluate the logic and from extensive survey data to quantitatively assess the model. Each of these chapters presents in greater detail the schematics of the argument and takes a different slice of the organizational evolution of the armed group: its survival, its involvement in society's civil and political life, and its return to violence. Each sets the argument against the alternatives and provides rigorous tests of the observable implications. Part II thus tests the validity of the theory as applied separately to each of the post-war trajectories.

### *Part III*

Part III, comprising Chapters 8 and 9 takes the theory beyond the Colombian paramilitaries to assess its explanatory weight in other contexts. Chapter 8 uses sub-national data on the emergence of rebellion in Colombia to evaluate the project's logic against the dominant accounts of civil war recurrence. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, it does not find mountainous, impoverished areas, saturated with lootable resources to be most prone to insurgency. Instead, the conditions able to account for the geographic variation in rebellions' emergence are the organizational legacies of war: dense social capital and networks for violence and reservoirs of insufficiently demobilized and reintegrated ex-combatants. The project's final chapter skims the world for evidence of the theory's generalizability and specifies the impact of the project on the study of war to peace transitions and the study of violence more generally. It concludes with the policy implications for practitioners aiming to dismantle rebel and paramilitary structures, harness their collective capacities, neutralize their coercive logics, and redeploy them for peaceful politics.

## Chapter 2

### Theory of Post-War Trajectories of Armed Organizations

#### I. A Theory of Post-War Trajectories

What happens to armed organizations after they sign peace accords and disarm? Why do they disappear, remilitarize or become non-violent socio-political entities (political parties or civic associations)? This chapter outlines the broad brushstrokes of the project’s theory while Chapters 5-7 fill in the fine-grained details of the three outcomes: bankruptcy, campaigns, and guns.

In this project, I argue that rebel and paramilitary groups’ recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns interact to generate distinct post-demobilization trajectories (Figure 2). Concurring with Hunter 1997’s critique of modes of transition theory, I opt for a dynamic approach that explains variation in ex-armed groups’ paths over time.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 2. Variation in Post-Demobilization Trajectories<sup>26</sup>**

		<i>Recruitment, Deployment &amp; Migration Patterns</i>	
		<i>Densely Networked and Clustered Combatants</i>	<i>Weakly Networked and Dispersed Combatants</i>
<i>Distribution of Power</i>	<i>Preserved</i>	Campaigns	Latent Coercive Entity
	<i>Altered</i>	Guns	Bankruptcy

<sup>25</sup> Stepan 1988 offers a path dependent explanation for states’ divergent civil-military relations post-dictatorship. Hunter 1997 critiques Stepan’s approach arguing that it is necessary to look not only at continuity in military prerogatives but also at change. I concur and therefore aim to explain both the ex-armed organizations’ initial post-demobilization trajectories and their evolution over time.

<sup>26</sup> In Colombia, in the aftermath of demobilization, we observe 40% of the paramilitary structures going bankrupt, 33% forming demilitarized socio-political entities, and 27% returning to guns.

## *Organizational Challenges of War to Peace Transitions*

In order to secure a peace accord, an armed group must pose a sufficient threat to the state such that the state prefers to bargain than continue fighting. To pose a sufficient threat, the armed group must overcome the key organizational challenges of asymmetric information,<sup>27</sup> externalities,<sup>28</sup> and adverse selection.<sup>29</sup> During an armed group's transition from war to peace, these challenges resurface. Specifically, uncertainty and misinformation are pervasive. While at war, combatants live according to orders. They awake, eat, walk, steal, torture, kill when ordered to; they act as part of a collective, not as individuals. Then, one day they are ordered to disarm and, from night to day, they become civilians again. In the aftermath of demobilization, the group's organizational mission and goals also become in flux and its regime of cooperation is disrupted. Ex-fighters do not know if their former group will transmute, what it will become, if they will be called back to fight, and if they will face judicial ramifications for their participation. It follows that the common knowledge, shared perceptions of trustworthiness, and informal norms that maintained cooperation during combat are destabilized, requiring a recalibration of the entire network of mutually reinforcing expectations and programmed responses (Miller 1992; March and Simon 1958). At the same time, combatants may recognize that their competency in the use of violence (extreme asset specificity) will render them redundant in a demobilized organization or in civilian society (Chai 1993). The organization's fighters also often come to

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<sup>27</sup> Asymmetric information exists in organizations because "the knowledge of which we must make use never exists in concentrated or integrated form but solely as the dispersed bits of incomplete and frequently contradictory knowledge which all the separate individuals possess" (Hayek 1948, p. 78).

<sup>28</sup> Externalities result because each member's productivity is a function of others' efforts; the benefits of the labor are divided equally, but the costs of the work effort are individual thus creating opportunities for individual shirking. Team production (producing violence, community work, political campaigns, etc.) is especially prone to externalities.

<sup>29</sup> Adverse selection arises because potential recruits' skills and commitment are often unobservable, proxied only by rough indicators. Moreover, information is asymmetric; only the potential recruits know their true value. Given these conditions, organizations end up with lower quality hires (Coase 1960; Moe 2001; Miller 1992). Weinstein 2006 applies the key findings and logic of organizational economics to the study of armed organizations.

believe that, by signing a peace accord, their commanders are shirking.<sup>30</sup> Commanders rarely consult their subordinates before agreeing to demobilize and thus, the rank and file and mid-ranking leaders are transformed from combatants to non-combatants without anyone seeking their consent.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, commanders often negotiate peace terms that serve their individual self-interests rather than those of their subordinates. Incentives to desert escalate and sustaining the group's capacity for organized collective action becomes difficult.

### *Organizational Survival vs. Bankruptcy*

I argue that one type of organization finds itself well-positioned to overcome these challenges: an organization whose combatants enjoy *multifaceted networks* and remain *physically concentrated* after disarming, enabling the organizations to retain a structure and disciplined collective action.

*Multifaceted bonds* are pre-war networks that foster trust, deepen 'identity-movement' linkage,<sup>32</sup> guarantee repeated interactions, and thus produce norms of reciprocity that keep individuals linked to and cooperating with the organization. The dense social ties further confer to the organization an endowment of institutionalized normative authority, information about members' reputations, and a rich array of positive and negative sanctions that enable ex-armed groups to continue policing contributions and effectively monitoring participants even after they have demobilized (Ghosh and Ray 1996). Finally, recruitment through multifaceted networks mitigates the adverse selection problem by providing more accurate information as to the

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<sup>30</sup> See North and Weingast 1989 for a discussion of the conditions under which employees trust their managers. During war-to-peace transitions, armed leadership rarely complies with these conditions. For example, UNITA leaders left their men to go to Luanda where they were rewarded with houses and cars (*Africa Confidential* 2002).

<sup>31</sup> In a survey conducted of 120 former fighters who returned to arms post-demobilization, 54% responded 'No' to the question, "If you had *not* received the order to demobilize, would you have demobilized?" (Zukerman and Gonzalez 2008).

<sup>32</sup> See McAdam 2003; Kenny 2009.

recruits' 'true selves' (degree of honesty, commitment to the cause, and competence).<sup>33</sup> Thus, organizations characterized by these multidimensional bonds are more likely to be staffed with employees that will act in the organization's interest even after the fighting has ended. Combined, these assets render densely networked organizations more likely to survive the challenging conditions of war to peace transitions.<sup>34</sup>

*Physical Clustering*, meanwhile, protects and strengthens the social capital between comrades<sup>35</sup> and, by facilitating continued face-to-face interactions, lowers information asymmetries, reduces transaction costs of monitoring, and renders sanctioning of misbehavior credible. It thus reduces incentives for subordinates and commanders to defect. To police, punish, and reward, one must possess information on the subject's whereabouts. Networks and physical clustering provide this. Additionally, geographical concentration of former fighters generates a longer shadow of the future; these ex-comrades will continue to interact into the indefinite future as displacement is highly costly. Last, former commanders and foot soldiers' close personalized exchange creates a host of side-payments to influence each other's behavior including "social acceptance, personal services, or other motivating factors" (Miller 1992).<sup>36</sup> By defecting, former combatants lose their friends and, in some cases, their families. They also signal untrustworthiness. Their former comrades cannot tell if their decision not to participate in the organization implies that they wish to remain neutral (stay home) or to instead defect to the

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<sup>33</sup> For adverse selection theory, see Simon 1957; Williamson 1975, Alchian and Demsetz 1972. Networks also socialize people to specific sets of values, ideologies and worldviews.

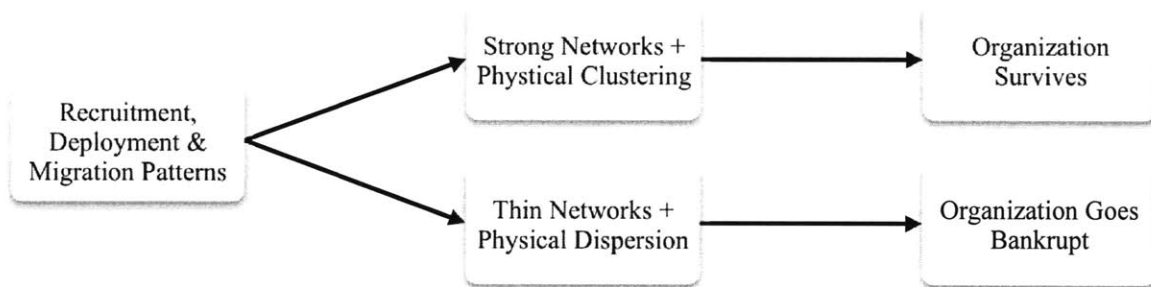
<sup>34</sup> The role of community ties in achieving collective action has also been emphasized in the study of mobilization and cooperation within ethnic groups (Fearon and Laitin 1996).

<sup>35</sup> I treat social capital as a neutral category and "political multiplier" in line with Berman 1997 and Putnam 2000. Berman 1997 shows that when we define robust civil society neutrally as high levels of associationalism, it is equally likely to strengthen bad equilibrium points such as fascism, terrorism, authoritarianism, or remilitarization as it is good ones such as democracy (or socio-political entities). See also Popkin 1979; Coleman 1988; Tarrow 1998 for how social capital can act as receptacles of collective action to be appropriated for future forms of cooperation.

<sup>36</sup> Other authors writing on the effect of interpersonal ties on cohesion include Laumann 1973; Gross and Martin 1952; Friedkin 2006.

other side (provide information to the government or enemy force). Even though disarmed, it can be suicidal for ex-fighters to desert as they possess valuable information, which can jeopardize their comrades' amnesty, extradition rulings, illicit earnings, or civilian political futures. Their comrades may choose to silence them through assassination rather than risk this information's revelation. Thus, physically clustered groups' intimate knowledge about their participants deters defection; ex-combatants must continue to signal loyalty and remaining part of the organization is the best way to do so (Gould 1995). In sum, iterated interactions through physical concentration and multifaceted bonds linking combatants to their formerly armed organization enable the local group to sustain disciplined collective action. These networks and geographical clustering, as will be elaborated upon in Chapter 5, are a function of armed organizations' recruitment, deployment and post-war migration patterns.

*Mechanism #1: Recruitment Patterns & Post War Migration*



Where these bonds and physical clustering are lacking, organizations are prone to disintegration. Without dense ties, these organizations' fighters have more diffuse trust and weaker norms of reciprocity. Geographically dispersed, expectations of future interactions diminish and ex-combatants face little incentive to cooperate; defection snowballs. Isolated, superiors do not know where to find their subordinates so monitoring costs escalate. Lacking social solidarity and face-to-face interactions, "each [ex-]soldier is theoretically freed from

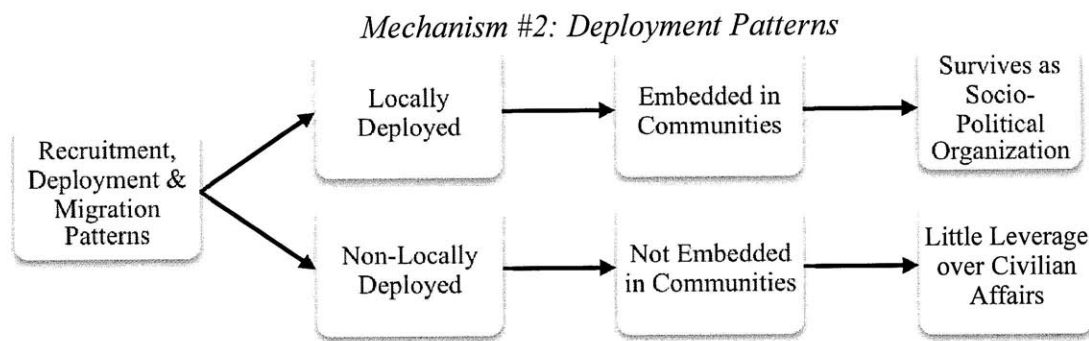


constraint and may pursue individual rather than group ends;” organizational bankruptcy becomes likely (Bearman 1991).

### *Campaigns*

If its networks and geographic distribution favor organizational survival, the resultant structure may reinvent itself as a socio-political organization with leverage over civilian affairs. Its ability to do so depends on its embeddedness in the communities, which is a function of its deployment strategy. Groups, which station their fighters in their home communities, comprise combatants who are tied to the civilian population through familial, friendship, neighborhood, and other networks. Evidence suggests that these networks reduce victims’ levels of anger and facilitate reconciliation. Moreover, given the high cost of displacement, the community members recognize that the combatants will continue to reside in their neighborhoods for at least the medium term, thereby extending the shadow of the future and encouraging cooperation. I propose that this embeddedness allows local demilitarizing organizations to exercise influence over civilian affairs without the manifest use of arms. It affords the former combatants the authority and endorsement to potentially gain votes, regulate economic activities, dictate social norms, and administer local justice without community resistance.

If deployed far from their homes, combatants lack these ties to the civilian communities and the prospect of enduring future interactions. Accordingly, non-combatants resist and reject the non-local groups’ presence and governance and denounce their ‘silent guns.’ Not embedded in the communities, these non-local armed groups prove unable to form legitimate socio-political entities after disarming.



In sum, recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns determine if a former rebel or paramilitary group disappears or not and, if it survives, if it is able to form a legal socio-political organization. The distribution of power determines if the group returns to violence or not.

### *Guns*

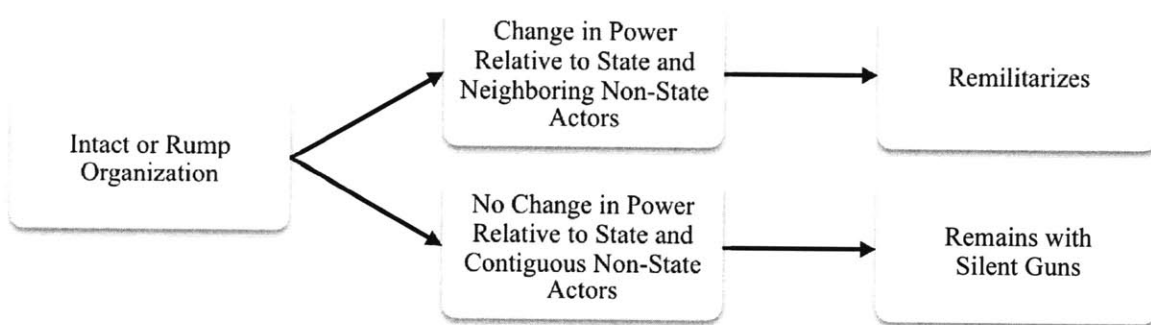
#### *Altered Distribution of Power*

At time=1, militarized entities (state and non-state) broker formal and informal deals, which result in cooperation and the successful demobilization of the non-state armed groups. Demobilization shocks the capacity of some groups – thinly networked and dispersed ones – while preserving others. It thereby upsets the distribution of power between certain dyads and changes the parameters underwriting the interdependent bargains. The bargains' terms therefore require renegotiation. However, due to organizational pathologies and information short-circuiting *within* organizations, there is wide variance surrounding and thus disagreement about the estimates of relative power, complicating the bargaining process. Mutual optimism and remilitarization result. This is not a story about bargaining indivisibilities or commitment problems, but a story about the difficulty of determining an *organization's* relative power after it

has demobilized and when there are private information and incentives to misrepresent *within* an organization. Thus, if the demobilized group’s power shifts relative to its neighboring armed actors (either it is weakened or strengthened by demobilization), a return to violence is likely. Its altered strength is not commensurate to that prevailing when it negotiated the terms of its peace accord.

It should be noted that local groups’ organizational assets – multifaceted networks and physical clustering – are critical to the group sustaining the collective action required for remilitarization. Specifically, these assets constrain the individual former fighters in the following ways: 1) they link the ex-fighters’ status to the network; 2) they apply social pressure to cooperate with their former comrades to whom they are densely connected; 3) they afford the leadership the credible sanctions necessary to re-recruit; and 4) they provide reassurance that, if a faction of the web remobilizes, others will follow and that it will be safe to follow (Petersen 2001).

*Mechanism #3: Distribution of Power*



I assume in this analysis that the state seeks the Weberian goal of a monopoly of the use of violence within its borders. Thus, following a peace negotiation, it seeks to act as a revisionist actor, expanding its power and reasserting its authority in regions under illegal armed group control. However, it can do so either through contestation or through co-optation. Drawing on

Stepan 1988's conception of civil-military relations during democratic transitions, I treat the ex-paramilitary organization as a military exiting from power with its prerogatives and power to a greater or lesser extent intact. I propose that the state chooses a level of 'articulated military contention' – the extent to which it will challenge these prerogatives – based on the extent of the demobilized group's bankruptcy. If the demobilized group is weakened relative to the state, the state will be emboldened by its superior force and the power void left by the decaying army. Accordingly, it will not respect the group's territorial sovereignty and will seek to circumvent the group's authority in its zone of control. The government will do so (often with international community backing) by building schools, infrastructure, police stations, health clinics etc. (reconstruction) or by engaging in more direct forms of contestation. Its actions will be perceived as offensive and can spark defensive, if feeble, redeployment by the weakened ex-rebel or paramilitary unit.

#### *Preserved Distribution of Power*

Where demobilization does not shock the distribution of power, but instead leaves the (usually networked, clustered) group's relative power unchanged, the state will ally with it and assert its presence in the former armed group's zones of operation by cooperating with the group and recognizing its sovereignty. Additionally, the bargains will hold between the ex-rebel or paramilitary group and its contiguous non-state armed actors.<sup>37</sup>

It should be noted that, under the following, empirically rare set of circumstances, the bargains will also hold in the case of a weakly networked, physically dispersed organization: a) the unit's contiguous factions weaken to commensurate degrees; and b) the state, due to its resource constraints and state-building priorities, lacks the capacity or will to deploy its

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<sup>37</sup> Provided they are similarly networked and clustered and thus survive demobilization intact.

institutions to the group's territory; either the areas are non-strategic or deployment is too expensive.

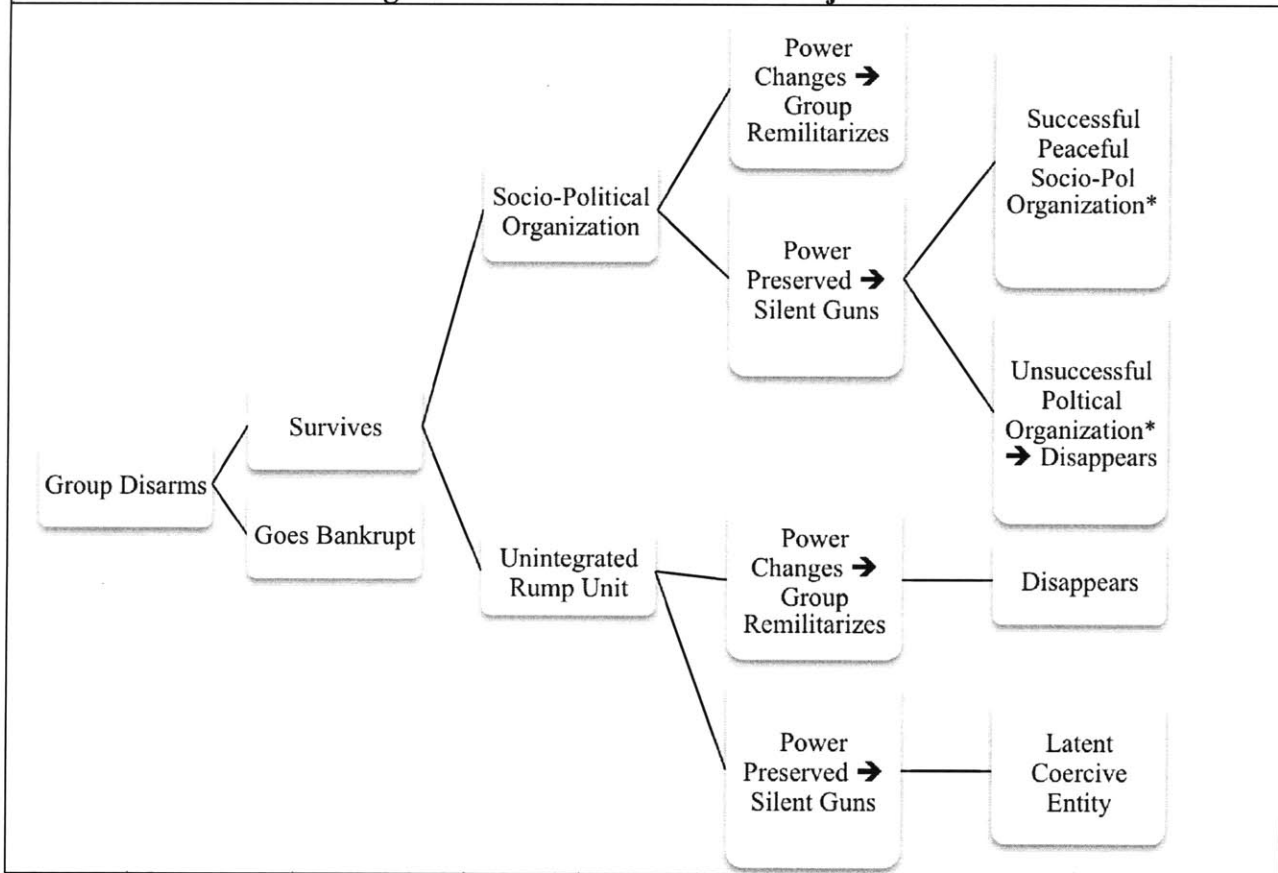
Where the distribution of power is preserved, the groups will initially exist with what I call 'silent guns.' They have disarmed, but remain in an unstable state of latent coercive capacity from which they can easily remilitarize. Their combatants maintain arms in caches or under mattresses and their elite regiments remain on alert. Over time, if the power differentials maintain, the bargains will crystallize and the groups will be brought fully into legality, passing from 'passive guns' to no guns. The ex-armed groups' prerogatives will decrease as will the likelihood of conflict in later periods.

Remilitarization at this point proves difficult, costly, and slow and is thus unlikely; the organization's ex-combatants have been socialized back into civilian life. The mechanisms that sustain the local group's organizational collective action – dense bonds and physical concentration – are subject to decay, decreasing over time.<sup>38</sup> This creates a dynamic element to the organizational capacity. Specifically, over time, former combatants' civilian networks strengthen and pose what McAdam 2001 calls "negative influence attempts" to remobilizing. Moreover, the ex-soldiers' self-concepts become less closely correlated with the group and their dependence on the group diminishes. It follows that the collective structure weakens and ultimately becomes co-opted, contributing to state capacity. Figure 3 illustrates these proposed post-war trajectories of demilitarizing organizations.

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<sup>38</sup> This is similar to what happens during military transitions. Hard-liners may wish to instigate a coup, but may no longer be able to; cohesion and collective action within the military erodes.

**Figure 3. Post-Demobilization Trajectories**



\*Note: It is beyond the scope of the project to explain the success or failure of the socio-political organization over time.

## II. Assumptions and Scope Conditions

### *Armed Organization & War Outcomes.*

This study examines paramilitaries, militias, warlords, and rebels that are territorial in nature, fought asymmetric wars,<sup>39</sup> and have signed peace accords with the government. I focus only on groups that end their fighting through negotiated settlements. I do not include militarily defeated groups because their post-war trajectories – extinction – are over-determined. However, I do analyze weakened organizations many of which, despite being coded ‘defeated’ by the war

<sup>39</sup> Kalyvas 2005. Military asymmetry between armed actors contrasts with ‘symmetric nonconventional warfare,’ which can be observed in civil wars that accompany processes of state collapse. According to Kalyvas, these latter wars [entail] the disintegration of the state army and its replacement by rival militias.”

outcome literature's dichotomous scale,<sup>40</sup> proved sufficiently strong to be party to a peace treaty and to form socio-political entities and/or remilitarize. Chapter 5 explores the 'military defeat' hypothesis explicitly. I use the word 'post-conflict' or 'post-war' at the organizational not the country level to refer to the fact that the groups under investigation have signed a peace accord and are thus in a post-conflict stage. The country, however, may still be at war with other armed factions.

#### *Unit of Analysis.*

I examine several units of analysis. First, I look at the armed organization, which signs a separate peace accord with the government. In the empirical cases explored in this project, these organizations comprise approximately 1500-3000 combatants and divide into territorial units (battalions) that usually span several communities. I then break these organization into each of the places in which they operated, generating battalion–community dyads. This enables me to explain local, regional, and national dynamics and to account for factions of an organization taking divergent trajectories. I also evaluate the argument on the individual ex-combatant unit of analysis. The data determines which level of analysis I use. Wherever possible, I use the battalion-community dyadic level as this is where the exciting causal processes are taking place.

#### *Remilitarization*

While I speak to the peace literature on "rearming," I do not use the term 'rearm' because post-conflict environments and their formerly armed organizations swim in weapons. Organizations, which are not truly disarmed, cannot rearm. However, they can remilitarize. I should emphasize that remilitarization refers to the *same* armed group returning to fighting

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<sup>40</sup> Fortna 2005; Toft Forthcoming; Mason and Fett 1996.

and/or illegal activity within *five* years of the peace accord.<sup>41</sup> The distinction between *new* and *renewed* groups is important because new groups, at least initially, lack capacity and confront Olson's collective action problem. Thus the policy implications for how to fight these groups is distinct from those for a remilitarized insurgent or counterinsurgent group. The project's focus on groups that return to war rather than new armed actors also stems from the fieldwork-based conviction that organizational legacies are important and thus the causes of *remilitarizing* are not the same as those of *militarizing* for the first time.<sup>42</sup>

*Non-Violent Socio-Political Organizations: Political Parties or Civic Associations.*

Socio-political influence may take a variety of organizational forms ranging from a formal political party to a co-opted existing party or a civic association. Existing studies focus exclusively on power-sharing arrangements. I assert that post-war groups may form political parties, but are also likely to continue to buy off parties, form NGOs, or hire lobbyists that defend their interests without directly competing in the electoral process. Accordingly, I extend the analysis of armed groups' transitions into non-violent socio-political entities beyond the formal political arena.

*Path Dependence*

While process and path dependency play an important role in my argument, the path is not deterministic; rather commanders choose their recruitment and deployment strategies during the war and ex-combatants choose where to migrate post-war. *Agents* make these strategic decisions. However, they are subject to a strong lock-in effect at which point the process gains

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<sup>41</sup> The five-year period has become standard in the quantitative literature on civil war. I employ it as a result of my observation of a decaying function to organizational legacies and because it is practically infeasible to follow the ex-combatants throughout their lives and account for their individual trajectories. Most peace studies only study the first months or year after demobilization. Thus, this study extends the time horizon. Nonetheless, the longer term post-conflict dynamics are poorly understood and merit greater study.

<sup>42</sup> This finding contrasts with Walter 2004.



causal dominance and determines the trajectories of the organizations and, partially, of their individual members. The strategic decisions are endogenous to the conflict, but they exert exogenous influence over what happens after they are executed and path dependency assumes the reigns.

### **III. Conclusion**

On balance, how does my theory measure up? It has the attributes of good theory. In addition to having theoretical importance, the theory has wide explanatory range and predictive richness. It explains an array of important outcomes (recurrent war; reintegration of former combatants; post-war state-building; consolidated peace; and armed group-to-socio-political party transitions). Moreover, the variables can be shaped by human action; hence the theory offers prescriptions for controlling the outcomes it frames.

The following chapter outlines how I go about testing this theory. It presents the research design, methods and data I employ to evaluate if the empirical reality and order of events are congruent with the predictions and if the human subjects spoke and acted as the model would forecast.

## Chapter 3

### Research Design & Methods

#### I. Introduction

This project employs a multi-method,<sup>43</sup> sub-national approach and uses original data collected over 14 months of fieldwork in Colombia. I engage in several tests of the predictions of the theory. The first three evaluate the theory's internal validity using micro and intermediate-level data on the Colombian conflict. The fourth test, only partially completed, assesses its external validity on a set of cases worldwide. I build on Lieberman 2005 and nest a 'thick,' in-depth investigation of a few cases within a statistical analysis of 1040 observations. The empirical chapters of the project substantiate the claim that the variables of recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns have the greatest explanatory power over the observed variation in armed groups' post-demobilization trajectories.

#### II. Case Selection

My unit of analysis is the armed organization. Therefore a sub-national research design is appropriate. Additionally, to evaluate my argument requires detailed information about where armed organizations recruit and deploy, their relative power and their post-war trajectories. Collecting this information from extremely secretive organizations, as a practical matter, can proceed only one country at a time. Additionally, war zones require the triangulation of information and multi-method research designs because the data is imperfect, confidential, guarded, and subject to manipulation and the strength of each method can compensate for the weakness of the others.

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<sup>43</sup> I adopt the logic that variable-oriented large-n work and case-oriented small-n work should operate in cyclical and iterative dialogue to generate logically coherent, empirically probable, accurately causal theories. See Ragin 1987.

I thus chose an extraordinary comparative laboratory for this research: the Colombian paramilitaries. Thirty-six paramilitary organizations, comprising 31,671 fighters signed peace accords with the government and disarmed between 2003 and 2006. They exhibited significant variation in their post-disarmament trajectories while operating in a single country. I analyze these outcomes both cross-sectionally and diachronically.

This case selection has several advantages. First, as recommended by King et al. 1994 and Lijphart 1971, it maximizes cases and controls by exploiting within-country variation. Second, it facilitates tightly controlled sub-national comparisons while ensuring a high degree of unit homogeneity, limiting unobserved sources of variation between units, and holding broadly constant development levels, historical legacies, state military strength, political regime type, social cleavages, and political economy (Snyder 2001). Third, these cases exhibit variation on the key alternative explanatory factors enabling an assessment of the relative merit of rival hypotheses. Finally, the reintegration of the paramilitaries was underway during my fieldwork, providing the rare opportunity to conduct extensive interviews and surveys and observe the transition to peace while minimizing chronic problems of recall. Of course, my aim is to determine if the proposed logic also operates in other contexts around the world. I return to the question of the model's generalizability in the Conclusion.

### **III. Empirical Tests of Internal Validity**

The first test of the theory is a detailed controlled comparison of armed organizations in three regions of Colombia. The universe of potential cases for this test includes all armed organizations that have signed a peace accord and demobilized. Within this population, I select units that hold the greatest number of fixed-effects constant while providing variation on group

recruitment and deployment strategies and post-war migration patterns. I engage in comparisons both cross-sectionally across organizations and their sub-units and longitudinally to test the dynamic, time-specific elements of the model. My cases include Medellín's Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN), a paramilitary organization that, after disarming, formed a socio-political organization. It sustained disciplined collective action, but did not remilitarize. My other cases are the Norte de Santander's Bloque Catatumbo (BC), which dissolved post-demobilization, and Urabá's Bloque Elmer Cárdenas (BEC) and Héroes de Tolová (BHT), which at the time of demobilization formed NGOs that were later used as the basis for armed redeployment.

Case studies facilitate the richly detailed accounts necessary to evaluate the proposed explanatory factors, intervening factors and complex causal processes. Using these qualitative methods, however, requires intimate familiarity with and nuanced understanding of the cases. I thus went inside each organization and reconstructed and mapped its post-demobilization trajectory. To analyze these three case studies, I engage in within-case congruence tests as well as process tracing to see how the predictions generated by the model and rival theories fare against the empirical record (George and Mckeown 1985).

I first employ congruence procedures: a within case method of causal interpretation which compares the predicted values of the explanatory and outcome variables with their observed values in actual post-war environments. I track the extent to which changes in the outcomes of interest co-vary with changes in the factors provided by the model. Then, using the process tracing method, I trace the mechanisms by which the causal variables translate into outcomes.

I look for evidence about how pre-war network configurations and migration patterns of local versus 'returnee,' 'squatter' or 'displaced' groups affect demilitarizing organizations'

ability to sustain collective action. I also trace the decay functions of these variables. For each case, I map the armed group's deployment decisions and explore this factor's effect on the group's relationship with the non-combatant communities. Next, I examine the interactions of geographically contiguous organizations to understand the mechanisms that prompt some groups to return to fighting. Finally, I probe the impacts of divergent state-building strategies on demilitarizing organizations both across time and space. Throughout the analysis, I check for omitted variables that may account for both armed groups' recruitment, deployment, and migration patterns and their post-war outcomes.

I seek to exploit the case studies for several other purposes, namely, to assess if the causal mechanisms are homogenous across cases, to develop improved measurement of the concepts for large-n testing, to identify additional relevant variables, and to assess the role played by rival hypotheses.<sup>44</sup>

For the case studies, I rely on qualitative evidence and survey material to reconstruct the divergent paths of these armed structures from 1990-2009. I collected chronologically unbroken accounts of the unique histories of each region and armed organization over the course of one-three months of fieldwork in each research site during which time I conducted interviews of over 200 ex-combatants (including demobilized fighters who had remobilized and those who had run for office) and a large number of victims, community members, military personnel, and civil society leaders. I also engaged in extensive participant observation. Wherever possible, I aimed to crosscheck the information gathered and to reconstruct social histories from all different perspectives.

The other tests of the theory combine these qualitative methods with quantitative analysis to evaluate the plausibility and generalizability of the hypotheses on the entire universe of armed

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<sup>44</sup> For discussions of case study methods, see Munck 2004, Ragin 2004; and Skocpol and Somers 1980.

organizations and ex-combatants. Doing so ensures against selection bias, internal inconsistencies, and incorrect probabilistic claims. I use a large-n approach, first employing the *bloque* (paramilitary brigade) as the unit of analysis (n=36), then exploiting the *frente* (counterinsurgent battalion) (n=128) and *armed group-municipality* dyads (n=1040), and finally disaggregating to the individual unit of analysis (n=31,671). For this analysis, I measure these groups' recruitment strategies, pre-war networks, deployment decisions, post-demobilization migration, embeddedness, physical clustering, relative power and post-disarmament outcomes.

#### **IV. Data Sources**

To map these variables, I conducted semi-structured interviews of over 150 Colombian experts on the armed conflict including professors, think tank researchers, international organization personnel, government officials, journalists, and clergy. To complement these interviews, I engaged in content analysis of the armed organizations' records and gathered the academic, think tank, and government data and research conducted on my topic. Additionally, I compiled articles from ten national and regional newspapers from 2002 to the present that document the peace negotiations, demobilization process, and rearming phenomenon and coded the stories about the war and peace phases of the armed groups (See Appendix B). I further interviewed several of the top paramilitary commanders and gained access to their confidential testimonies under the Justice and Peace Law. I engaged in participant observation in 21 of the 36 paramilitary brigade's zones of operation. Last, I collaborated on the construction of a municipal-level violent event database of paramilitary, guerrilla and state violence 1960-2007 that includes 29,000 events.<sup>45</sup> In addition to these diverse data, I incorporated the results of a

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<sup>45</sup> My original database covers the period 1960-1984. I then gained access to the CEDE data, which includes all violent events 1984-2007. See Chapter 8 for a detailed discussion of this database.

series of nine surveys, which included a nationally-representative survey of 28,235<sup>46</sup> ex-paramilitaries and guerrillas, a survey of 2,245 of the demobilized soldiers' nuclear families, and a survey of the 226 psychologists<sup>47</sup> who treated the ex-combatant population and thus had an intimate understanding of their reintegration. These surveys of former combatants were administered by the Colombian High Council on Reintegration (ACR)'s psychologists with my supervision. I also analyzed the results of Organization of International Migration (OIM) surveys of 31,472 ex-paramilitaries<sup>48</sup> and 5,004 civilians living in communities with a significant demobilized presence. Finally, with the help of the Organization of American States' Peace Mission (OAS-MAPP), I conducted a survey of 120 ex-combatants who remilitarized post-demobilization, were captured and then imprisoned. I personally interviewed 40 of these former combatants in the prisons of Bogotá, Medellín, and Cúcuta (See Appendix C).

From these materials, I am able to derive various measures of where former combatants originated, fought, demobilized, and migrated, facilitating composite measures of social ties and physical clustering. The data also provides detailed information on the communities' perceptions of the armed groups' embeddedness both pre- and post-demobilization. Using information on the ex-combatants' networks and associations I can further estimate the extent to which the organizations remained intact and the ex-combatants participated collectively in social and political activities. Additionally, I derive measures of armed factions' relative power and assess if sub-units returned to commit acts of violence. Last, from these data, I gain proxies of control factors such as natural resources, leadership, abuse, military strength, terrain, state presence, and local political-economy.

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<sup>46</sup> A more comprehensive ex-combatant survey has 15,540 respondents. See Appendix C.

<sup>47</sup> The psychologists were also asked questions about specific ex-combatants in a survey corresponding to 2,817 demobilized fighters.

<sup>48</sup> I also gained access to two more comprehensive OIM surveys of 11,703 ex-combatants nation-wide and 3,207 former fighters in Medellín.

## **V. External Validity Test**

Finally, several shadow cases from around the world will test the theory's external validity. Specifically, I evaluate the generalizability of different parts of the argument on cases including the Sierra Leonean Kamajors, Filipino militias, Iraqi Awakening Groups, Aceh counterinsurgents, Afghan militias, and Guatemalan Civil Defense Forces. For these shadow cases, I conducted interviews of peace negotiators and former combatants from each of the countries and complement the primary materials with secondary literature and expert interviews. This test is currently underway. Its very preliminary findings are discussed in the Conclusion.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Qualitative and quantitative fieldwork produces a rich fabric of data and facilitates the analysis of multiple perspectives and voices. The stories are painful and their protagonists have trusted me to weave them into a narrative that will shine light on a tangled, complex war and to generate improvements, however small they may be, in the reintegration and peace processes. I turn now to a historical narrative of this tangled violence, its paramilitary protagonists, and the peace accords that are the jumping off point for this study.



## Chapter 4

### Historical Narrative of Colombia's Violence

This chapter introduces the paramilitary organizations that emerged across Colombia. It describes the social and human terrain in which they formed, the dynamics of their violent expansion, and the puzzle of their disarmament. It then describes the historical landscapes of the three in-depth case studies, which feature prominently in the project's empirical material. With a clearer understanding of the conditions that gave rise to effective paramilitarism in these three regions, we can turn in subsequent chapters to discussions of how and why they diverged post-war.

#### I. Rise of the Paramilitaries

The contemporary Colombian conflict has roots in *La Violencia*, the civil war that raged from 1949-1958 between the Liberal and Conservative Parties.<sup>49</sup> At its conclusion, an inadequate demobilization and reintegration process and altered power distribution spawned the reactivation of conservative, liberal and communist guerrillas in arms, initially in the form of *bandoleros* and 'independent republics,' but over time as organized guerrilla structures (FARC, ELN, EPL) and private security forces.<sup>50</sup> With the introduction of the drug economy to Colombia in the late 1970s and the adoption of kidnapping and extortionary financing tactics, the guerrillas began to pose a serious threat to the military, landowning elite, drug barons and political class.

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<sup>49</sup> This conflict killed between two and three hundred thousand civilians over its course (see Guzmán et al. 1962, pp. 287-93).

<sup>50</sup> FARC stands for Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia; EPL is the acronym of the People's Liberation Army and ELN stands for the National Liberation Army. See Sánchez and Meertens 2001 and Pizarro Leongómez 1991 for the historical context in which these three armed organizations emerged. Villamarín 1995; De La Torre 1980; and Aguilera Peña 2006 offer accounts of the ELN; Arango 1984, Arenas 1985, and Alape 1989, 1994 provide narratives of the FARC's origins. On the EPL, see Villarraga and Niño 1994 and Calvo 1987.

Accordingly, these diverse sectors of society began to form regional ‘self-defense’ units. Unlike typical insurgent forces, these militarized units did not begin as a single, cohesive, politically-driven organization; rather the paramilitary phenomenon was highly regionalized with small groups, of usually no more than 100 combatants, forming in different parts of the country to repel guerrilla thefts, extortions and intimidation. These units included rural armies and death squads (resembling *autodefensas* in Peru and peasant patrols in Guatemala), urban vigilante units and gangs, hit men and drug-cartel franchises. Some were sponsored by landowners and cattle-ranchers who equated the guerrillas’ peace negotiations in the 1980s and 90s with surrender of the country to the leftist rebels, an outcome that threatened their control, status, and livelihoods.<sup>51</sup> They thus supported the rise of the paramilitaries to derail the peace process and protect their interests.<sup>52</sup> Other paramilitary factions enjoyed the patronage of drug-traffickers,<sup>53</sup> who needed security for their illegal businesses and extensive lands bought with laundered monies.<sup>54</sup> And still others were facilitated by state corruption and the Colombian security forces.<sup>55</sup>

In the early 1990s, the smaller guerrilla groups (M19, EPL, CRS, PRT, QL<sup>56</sup>) opted for peace with the government, disarming in exchange for amnesty and political aperture.<sup>57</sup> The

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<sup>51</sup> Romero 2003; Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2007.

<sup>52</sup> The Patriotic Union, FARC’s political arm, was already gaining impressive electoral results as was EPL’s Party: Hope, Peace, and Liberty.

<sup>53</sup> For example, in 1981, the Medellín cartel created a militant group, ‘Death to Kidnappers’ (MAS), aimed at executing anyone connected to kidnapping.

<sup>54</sup> See Reyes Posada 2009 for an excellent account of this ‘counter agrarian reform’ whereby drug traffickers and paramilitaries acquired vast expanses of land through illicit deeds, forced displacement of peasants, and laundered money.

<sup>55</sup> Law No. 48 of 1968 provided legal grounds for the creation of paramilitary forces until 1989 when it was overturned. In 1994 and 1995, Decrees 356 and 368 then served as the basis for *Convivir*. See Gallego 1990; *El Tiempo* 2010a.

<sup>56</sup> Castro, Arenas, and Bateman 1980 and Villamizar Herrera 1995 provide histories of the M19. For details of this reintegration process, see Dirección General para la Reinserción 2000; Turriago and Mora 2003. Over 7.300 former guerrillas disarmed between 1990 and 2002 (Small Arms Survey 2006).

<sup>57</sup> This peace process brought a new constitution, which significantly altered Colombia’s political landscape. After the EPL’s demobilization in 1990 in Urabá/Córdoba, the paramilitaries also ‘disarmed’ briefly by the logic, “We were fighting the guerrillas, but if the guerrillas demobilize, our *raison d’être* no longer holds” (Beatrice (Sister of Top Former Paramilitary Commander), interview by author, Apartadó, June 2008). After disarming, the

FARC and ELN remained in arms. The expansion of these two latter guerrilla armies and their decisions to fund themselves through drug trafficking and indiscriminate kidnappings and extortion justified the paramilitaries' growth throughout the 1990s. At this point, FARC battalions reached the outer limits of Bogotá and, to the majority urban population, it seemed that the 'revolution' might succeed. Accordingly, the paramilitaries found their ranks filling, their coffers overflowing, and their ability to operate with a *carte blanche* from the government increasingly limitless.

## II. Paramilitary Expansion

In 1997, attempts to unify the autonomous self-defense factions under a sole command with a political identity bore fruit in the creation of the paramilitary confederation: the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC).<sup>58</sup> While ostensibly operating under an umbrella organization, the paramilitary brigades (and, in some cases, battalions) retained a high degree of sovereignty and self-sufficiency, to the point that they often fought amongst themselves more than they battled the guerrillas.<sup>59</sup> The confederation had two objectives: political legitimatization<sup>60</sup> and expansion. As to the first, it sought political status for the paramilitaries

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paramilitaries formed an NGO: Fundazcord. However, the *paras'* territorial disputes with the FARC prompted their remilitarization. See Corporación Observatorio para la Paz 2002.

<sup>58</sup> The AUC was created and led by Carlos Castaño of the Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá, a long-standing and powerful paramilitary group on the Caribbean coast.

<sup>59</sup> Freddy Rendón Herrera, alias 'El Alemán,' Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Medellín, 5 June 2007. During his free version, 'El Alemán' admitted that "Castaño was the head of the paramilitaries, but that they did not receive direct orders from him ... The AUC was organized as a confederation ... While in Castaño's statements, it appeared to be an organized structure, that was not the case in practice. Each block was autonomous in its decisions."

<sup>60</sup> In 1990, the paramilitaries began to signal that they were *politically*-oriented organizations as opposed to profit-seeking gangs. To do so, they made public statements and adopted 'statutes' that referred to their "ideological platform" based on "fundamental principals" such as the "natural right of legitimate self-defense," the state's duty to defend its citizens and the right to private property. Among the key political objectives cited were politically and militarily opposing guerrilla organizations, filling the vacuums left by the state in terms of security, social order and justice, and participating actively in local political life. The paramilitaries also drafted a historical narrative of their

that would pave the way for an eventual negotiation with the government to gain amnesty and guarantees of no extradition to the US. At the same time, drug trafficking blurred with the counterinsurgent platform and the paramilitary groups became motivated not only by cleansing territories of the guerrillas, but also by controlling strategic regions of coca cultivation, trafficking routes, drug laboratories and shipment locations run by the rebels. The paramilitaries expanded through three means: 1) they deployed their forces to other regions; 2) they co-opted existing self-defense groups in other zones of the country;<sup>61</sup> 3) they ‘sold’ the paramilitary ‘brand’ as a franchise to those able to recruit, combat, raise funds and control territories (Guáqueta and Arias 2008). Over the course of the 1990s, the resultant, disparate counterinsurgent groups expanded their power over the entire country. They achieved significant military successes against the FARC and ELN, extracting the guerrillas from expansive territories first in the Atlantic Coast (Urabá, Córdoba) and middle Magdalena Medio (Barrancabermeja), and then slowly extending to the Venezuelan border (Catatumbo region), eastern plains (los Llanos) and southern departments.<sup>62</sup> Between 1997-2005, the paramilitaries killed at least 9,354 individuals, tortured 990, disappeared 1,694 and displaced a large fraction of the more than 3.5 million internally displaced persons.<sup>63</sup> The testimonies of former combatants have uncovered over 40,400 crimes.<sup>64</sup> The paramilitaries’ 31,671 fighters attacked not only the insurgents, but also the society they believed to be harboring the insurgents – leftist social movements, political parties, civil society, and unions. 281,661 victims have registered with the Attorney General.<sup>65</sup> The paramilitary brigades further managed to permeate all facets of

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origins, which portrayed them as victims of the state’s inability to provide security against guerrilla hostility. Guáqueta and Arias 2008. See also *El Colombiano* 1997.

<sup>61</sup> There were over 400 *Convivir* Organizations operating across Colombia. *Revista Alternativa* 1997.

<sup>62</sup> Echandía Castilla 1999.

<sup>63</sup> CINEP 2004a and CINEP 2004b, 2005. Global IDP Project 2005; Amnesty International 2005.

<sup>64</sup> *El Tiempo* 2010a.

<sup>65</sup> *El Tiempo* 2010a.

Colombia's society, politics, and economy.

Between 1999 and 2003, they significantly modified the political geography of 12 departments, partially transformed others, won substantial parliamentary support (controlling 35% of Congress), influenced presidential elections, and captured local governance.<sup>66</sup> They exerted influence in nearly half of Colombia's municipalities. Politicians saw the paramilitaries as advocates in their electoral competitions. The paramilitaries had the ability to render a politician's term successful by restoring order and 'peace' and affording him/her retrospective votes. They also had the capacity to intimidate and buy off voters, 'eliminate' political rivals, coerce voter abstention, and transport voters between districts.<sup>67</sup> In addition to their influence over formal politics, the 'warlords' also managed to exert control over informal political and social transactions in their bastions and gain "immense spaces of legitimacy."<sup>68</sup> For example, they mediated disputes among inhabitants over land boundaries, old debts, and marriage, regulated and extracted tributes from the economy, engaged in 'social cleansing,' and constructed an alternative order in many localities where they came to be recognized as the 'state.' This was exaggerated by the fact that Colombia has traditionally suffered institutional absence in much of its national territory and a weak military incapable of effectively combating the FARC and ELN guerrillas. Following the logic 'an enemy of an enemy is a friend,' the armed forces saw an ally in the *autodefensas*; both sought to cleanse the country of rebels.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Romero 2008. See also Rangel 2005.

<sup>67</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo Reports 2002, 2004.

<sup>68</sup> Duncan 2006.

<sup>69</sup> Former military officers also joined the paramilitaries, specifically those facing severe sentences for human rights abuses committed while in the Colombian armed forces. These officers faced the choice of going to prison more or less for life or fleeing justice and joining an illegal armed group. Many opted for the latter. They could join the FARC, ELN or paramilitaries. They had no affinity with the first two and thus chose to join the *paras*. The marriage of convenience was the following. The paramilitaries offered the ex-military personnel security and protection from the law and, in exchange, the ex-military officers provided the paramilitaries training and organizational management. Many of these ex-military officers are quite well known such as alias '101' and 'Camilo.' (Former Military Officer, interview by author, Bogotá, February 2008).

Over time, the paramilitary phenomena developed into a multi-faceted army with regional alliances with the military, police, businessmen, judges, social elite, narcos, *campesinos*, and politicians.<sup>70</sup>

### III. Timing Ripe for Peace Negotiations

In May 2002, Álvaro Uribe won the Colombian presidency and commenced a process of negotiation with the paramilitary jefes. The timing was ripe for this process. The failure of the government's peace talks with the FARC in 2000-2001 meant that public opinion had turned against the guerrillas and began to favor a military strategy to deal with the insurgents.<sup>71</sup> The FARC had taken advantage of the Caguán demilitarized zone during the peace talks, using it as a safe-heaven for drug trafficking and preparation for further war. As a result, the guerrillas' prospects of regaining a future seat at the negotiating table diminished and the paramilitaries became redundant; they were no longer needed as a safeguard against peace deals with the FARC. Additionally, the paramilitaries perceived themselves to be at their best moment militarily and politically, and only likely to decline in the future.<sup>72</sup> Colombian society was taken with a strong desire for peace and a growing intolerance for violence and human rights abuses. Under pressure from the terms of Plan Colombia,<sup>73</sup> the Colombian military and establishment began to distance themselves from the paramilitaries.<sup>74</sup> The *paras* thus saw their ideological support eroding. According to one commander, "I demobilized [when I did] because it would be

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<sup>70</sup> Despite tacit links with the political and military establishments, the Colombian paramilitaries do not resemble those of other countries (such as those of Central America) because they were autonomous from the state and were neither created by nor under the control of the state (Camilo Echandía, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006).

<sup>71</sup> Andrés Pastrana Arango (Former President of Colombia), interview by author, Washington DC, June 2006.

<sup>72</sup> Andrés Restrepo (Professor, Universidad Nacional), interview by author, Bogotá, August 2006.

<sup>73</sup> Plan Colombia is the US military/anti-narcotics aid package for Colombia aimed at combating drug cultivation and trafficking and strengthening the Colombian armed forces. Since 1996, Colombia has received \$6,477,606,292 in U.S. Aid. See <http://justf.org>.

<sup>74</sup> Guáqueta 2007.

very sad to demobilize when I was losing and had my head down.”<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, the large flows of US military aid strengthened the Colombian armed forces and enabled them to finally take over the paramilitaries’ work of battling the FARC and ELN and providing ‘security’ to the country’s regions. Uribe’s lynchpin policy, “Democratic Security,” aimed to achieve precisely this.<sup>76</sup> Through a bolstering of the armed forces, creation of a network of civilian informants and peasant soldiers, and a strong offensive against the guerrillas, Uribe sought not only to militarily recapture territories from the rebels, but also to reestablish state presence, rule of law, and institutions in these territories. Thus, the paramilitaries had achieved their ideological counterinsurgent goals. The strengthening of the security forces further meant that the military would keep the guerrillas “at bay and away from the [paramilitaries’] various strategic interests.”<sup>77</sup> Importantly, the paramilitaries also saw an ally in President Uribe and trusted him on a personal level. While governor of the state of Antioquia in the 1990s, he showed himself to be very sympathetic to the paramilitary cause. One ex-combatant told me, “We turned ourselves into *Uribe*, not the state, not the Attorney General, to Uribe.”<sup>78</sup> The paramilitaries’ allies in Congress, motivated by their “skeletons in the closet,” also proved willing to advocate on the *paras*’ behalf.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, the paramilitaries *greatly* valued the offer of no extradition to the US on drug-trafficking and money-laundering related charges.<sup>80</sup> They found the terms of demobilization very

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<sup>75</sup> Manuel de Jesús Piraban (Ex-Paramilitary Commander), interview by author, Bogotá, 15 September 2008.

<sup>76</sup> This is part of the ‘National Consolidation Plan’ (PCN), which is sometimes also referred to as ‘Integrated Action.’ See Center for International Policy 2009.

<sup>77</sup> Guáqueta and Arias 2008.

<sup>78</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Santa Marta, 13 April, 2008.

<sup>79</sup> See Nalepa 2010. Nalepa finds that the threat of revealing the ‘skeletons in the closet’ of anti-communist politicians helped ex-communist parties transfer power without violence. Similarly, fear of disclosure of the *para-política* scandal rendered many congressmen and senators willing to acquiesce to the paramilitaries’ demands. Knowledge of the politicians’ skeletons facilitated a deal.

<sup>80</sup> The extradition issue has remained highly contentious since the late 1980s when Pablo Escobar and the “*No-Extraditables*” carried out their campaign of violence. Escobar claimed that “he would prefer a Colombian grave to

generous, affording them the much needed and desired amnesty and the ability to preserve and launder their illicitly earned goods.<sup>81</sup> The paramilitary commanders were “walking a tightrope and realized that if they didn’t comply with this peace process, they could say goodbye to a political process. The US would enter and grab them for drug trafficking. They would lose their legitimacy.”<sup>82</sup> It should be emphasized that these illegal non-state armies did *not* face defeat or stalemate, conditions which generally precede peace negotiations. It was thus *despite* extraordinary military, economic, and political power and exorbitant rents from drug-trafficking that the top-tier paramilitary leadership proved willing to pursue a demobilization process. The mid-ranking paramilitary leaders and foot soldiers then followed suit principally because “they received the *order* to surrender their arms.”<sup>83</sup> The minority that “would have disarmed even if they had not received the order,” pointed principally to their exhaustion with the war, with doing ‘bad things,’ and with illegality, and to their desire to dedicate themselves to their families.<sup>84</sup> Most, however, entered the ceasefire and subsequent peace process only out of loyalty and submission to and fear of their superiors.

In November 2002, the paramilitaries issued the Declaration for the Peace of Colombia, in which they formally announced a ceasefire effective January 1<sup>st</sup> 2003 and initiated peace talks.<sup>85</sup> At this juncture, a rift between the paramilitary commanders emerged over the

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an American prison” (William Quintero, interview by author, Bogotá, February 2010). The top paramilitary commanders demonstrated similar preferences despite the new dynamic of the International Criminal Court. Now, the US judicial process, under which the commanders are tried for drug-trafficking charges, should be preferable to that of the ICC under which they would be charged with crimes against humanity. The US system also grants them judicial certainty – the court system will uphold the sentences – and the possibility to negotiate the court’s verdict in exchange for intelligence on trafficking. In contrast, the Colombian law is much less reliable, creating high levels of judicial insecurity (Conflict analyst, interview by author, Bogotá, January 2008). Nonetheless, the ‘top jefes’ tended to *strongly* oppose extradition and, if extradited, begged the Colombian government to allow their return.

<sup>81</sup> Bruce Bagley, interview by author, Bogotá, 10 July 2006.

<sup>82</sup> Hernando Corral, interview by author, Bogotá, 20 July 2006.

<sup>83</sup> Many of my rank and file ex-paramilitary interviewees repeated this statement.

<sup>84</sup> Recidivist Ex-paramilitaries, interviews by author, Bellavista Prison, Medellín, May 2008.

<sup>85</sup> From 2002-2006, certain paramilitary brigades, which had not yet demobilized, continued to grow, expand and carry out violent attacks despite ostensibly being in the full swing of a peace process.



*autodefensas* financing themselves through drug trafficking and the increasing power of *narcos* within the self-defense structures. On one side of the debate was Carlos Castaño, ‘El Alemán,’ ‘Doble Cero,’ and to a lesser extent ‘Jorge 40’ and Mancuso. They believed that the *paras*’ participation in the illegal coca industry had become an important indicator as to whether they were criminals or politically-driven organizations with whom peace negotiations would be legitimate. Accordingly, they envisioned the paramilitaries limiting if not ceasing their drug trafficking activities, kidnappings and massacres.<sup>86</sup> On the other side of the rift were Vicente Castaño, ‘Don Berna,’ Macaco, ‘Los Mellizos’ and ‘Gordo Lindo,’ among others, who were deeply entrenched in the drug business and would not agree to reduce their trafficking and extortions.<sup>87</sup> Dissent triggered public finger-pointing between self proclaimed, ‘legitimate’ self-defense forces and those accused of being ‘opportunistic criminals.’<sup>88</sup> This debate led first to Vicente Castaño’s April 2004 order to torture and execute his own brother, Carlos, and then, in May 2004, to the assassination of ‘Doble Cero.’<sup>89</sup> These murders diffused the power of the anti-narco lobby within the paramilitaries.

#### **IV. Peace Accords: A Process with a Life of its Own**

The Santa Fe de Ralito Agreement of July 2003 resulted in peace accords between the government and each of the 34 paramilitary blocs and the subsequent, staggered disarming of their 31,671 combatants between 2003 and 2006. Concurrently, Uribe initiated an individual demobilization process whereby paramilitary and guerrilla combatants could desert their armed

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<sup>86</sup> These leaders feared the U.S. Justice Department's requests to extradite them and the State Department's inclusion of the paramilitaries on its list of international terrorist groups. See Osorio 2004; Castaño 2001; Cívico 2009.

<sup>87</sup> *Cambio* 2004.

<sup>88</sup> Guáqueta and Arias 2008. See also *El Tiempo* 2002a; *El Tiempo* 2002b; *El Espectador* 2002.

<sup>89</sup> Rumors indicated that Carlos Castaño intended to strike a deal with the DEA to provide information about Colombia’s drug trafficking mafias in exchange for judicial benefits.

groups and receive amnesty and reintegration benefits. 18,781 paramilitaries and guerrillas have disarmed under this latter process.<sup>90</sup>

In order to set the stage for the project's analysis of the post-demobilization trajectories of the paramilitaries, it is worthwhile to get inside the heads of the *para* commanders and the government negotiators to understand how they weighed the pros and cons of cooperation at different stages of the process.

In 2002, all of the commanders arrived at the negotiation table in Santa Fe de Ralito with the firm intention not to go to jail as, in their words, they had come to the table *voluntarily*, as an undefeated army, and at the peak of their military expansion and power. They further envisioned the peace process preserving their economic fortunes and legalizing their power. Commanders Jorge 40, Mancuso, El Alemán and others imagined themselves making the leap from a privileged position in the criminal underworld to a commensurate one within the law's bounds. Specifically, they intended to become high profile elected officials (governors or senators). These men possessed the robust social bases, bank accounts, and political recognition necessary to do so. When they rode through coastal Colombia, crowds of civilians cheered them on. When they looked in the mirror, they saw heroes basking in the gratitude of their countrymen for "saving Colombia" from the insurgents.<sup>91</sup> Millions of dollars hid in coffers under their floorboards. And they had embroiled civil servants from all walks of political life from state health workers to congressmen in the far-reaching *para-política* scandal. Accordingly, these paramilitary leaders assumed that, with the peace process, they would simply transform their

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<sup>90</sup> Data as of July 2010 (Alta Consejería para la Reintegración 2010).

<sup>91</sup> At first, the paramilitary commanders envisioned involvement with local and regional politics, but over time, they believed they would gain positions of national stature. Their formation of the Político del Movimiento Nacional de Autodefensas Desmovilizadas speaks to this fact (Colombian Journalist, interview by author, Cambridge, MA, 11 April 2007).

entire organizational machine into a politically legitimate one.<sup>92</sup> At the core, the commanders were convinced that they would win a favorable deal and that, were the deal to be derailed, they could return to war.

These expectations were shared by external observers. Analysts of the process had no doubt that “in the future, it will be very difficult to apply a canon of justice or lessen the influence the [paramilitaries] have conquered in the regions.”<sup>93</sup> They believed the *para* forces and power to be shielded, elusive, and untouchable. They did *not* anticipate any paramilitary group disintegrating or losing its extensive social, political, economic or military leverage.

This trajectory envisioned by the paramilitaries and outside observers did not play out as planned. It is critical to understand that, once underway, *processes exert their own causal force*. The demobilization of the *autodefensas* was not the result of a strategic plan designed in advance and executed by the paramilitaries or the government; rather, it resulted from a series of junctures and crises, which were only resolvable through further demobilization. At each of these critical moments, powerful paramilitary leaders, already seated at the negotiating table and facing situations each day more adverse and contrary to their original beliefs about the process, evaluated that it was more costly to leave the peace process than to remain within its bounds.<sup>94</sup> These moments recurred until some of the commanders no longer had the option to withdraw from the table, until they found themselves in a maximum–security prison with no alternative courses of action, until some of their structures went bankrupt. In this sense, the demobilization

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<sup>92</sup> Macaco was an exception. “He had little interest in politics though his right hand man, Ernesto Baez did. During the war, Macaco would merely buy off the political bureaucracy and judiciaries without promoting a ‘political project’” (Conflict Analyst, interview by author, Bogotá, January 2008). Rodrigo Tovar Pupo (‘Jorge 40’), in contrast, assessed that the “best way to gain political power was not to buy off the existing political class, which would only serve to corrupt them, but rather to finance simple people with perhaps no political experience and to get them into power.... For this reason, you see many new parties and politicians coming to power on the coast.” (Conflict Analyst, interview by author, Bogotá, October 2007).

<sup>93</sup> Valencia 2005.

<sup>94</sup> I am very grateful to Daniel Acosta for his excellent insights into this process and for sharing with me his working paper on the subject.

of the paramilitaries should not be interpreted as a leap into the abyss from which the commanders surrendered every possibility of remaining armed. At every step, they firmly believed that they could still opt out until suddenly they could not. I will briefly tell this unwritten story. In many respects it resembles democratic transitions; dictators would never have allowed aperture if they had known what it would lead to: their demise.

In 2003, the government said to the paramilitaries: “All the judicial rights of the process will be decided by Congress.” In so doing, the government told them, “You have to convince the country, the people, that you deserve more lenient sentences and protection and whatever else it is you want.”<sup>95</sup> Even the 35% of Congress, which the *paras* ‘controlled,’ could not guarantee their proposed peace terms. Suddenly, flexing their muscles proved counterproductive and only provided fodder for those who accused the paramilitaries of systematically violating the ceasefire and being unworthy of political status and lenient judicial terms.<sup>96</sup> In 2003, a hurricane of national and international criticisms of the Government’s ‘Alternate Judicial’ bill hit.<sup>97</sup> To counter the critiques, build credibility, and sway local and foreign opinion in their favor, the paramilitaries agreed to demobilize one brigade as an act of good will. This first demobilization occurred in the absence of any effective government guarantees that the Santa Fe de Ralito informal pacts would be honored. With their finances, arms, and recruiting capacities still intact, this first demobilization did not constitute a point of no return for the paramilitaries.

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<sup>95</sup> Acosta 2008.

<sup>96</sup> Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, FIDH, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights were especially vocal critics of the bill.

<sup>97</sup> The government submitted a bill to Congress proposing an “alternate judicial” regime that would permit the paramilitaries to forgo standard sentences for a variety of crimes, including human rights abuses, crimes against humanity, and drug trafficking.

## V. Popular in the Shadows; Scorned in the Light

It should be noted that these waves of criticism came as a rude awakening to the paramilitary commanders. They were shocked to learn that their societal support had limits. They went from being anti-subversive heroes in their *regions* to being portrayed as villains, common criminals, narco-traffickers, and heinous human rights abusers in the *national* media. Even their political allies in Bogotá began to betray them. The paramilitarization of Colombian politics went from being the norm to a scandal (*para-política*).<sup>98</sup> “We are like prostitutes, by night [while in clandestinity] we are the most sought after whereas by day [when we come out into legality],”<sup>99</sup> many politicians, business elite and citizens “[feel] the need to dissociate publicly from [our] ‘contamination’ or hush about existing contacts.”<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile, the government took an extra step and declared that paramilitaries guilty of crimes against humanity would not be allowed to participate in elections or form political parties. This was not the political power and process the paramilitary commanders had envisioned.

Despite the unanticipated and adverse turns the process was taking, most of the commanders believed it a better bet to remain in the process and watch it unfold than to withdraw and lose the benefits that they had achieved thus far. After all, they retained the option of pulling out at a later date if necessary (or so they thought). This logic triggered a second phase of demobilizations to quiet further critiques and as an “apology for the excesses committed during the cessation of hostilities.”<sup>101</sup> With each paramilitary brigade demobilized, however, the paramilitaries’ bargaining power eroded and the process tied their hands tighter. The frontiers of

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<sup>98</sup> A 2007 survey showed that politicians, in certain regions, would be punished electorally for links with the paramilitaries. Responding to the question, “Would you vote for at least one of the politicians accused of paramilitary connections?” only 3% said yes in Barranquilla, 12% in Bogotá and 42% in Valledupar. In another question, 78% responded that it is unforgivable for politicians to have formed pacts with paramilitaries. Regional variation was high. *Revista Semana* 2007.

<sup>99</sup> Baez 2006.

<sup>100</sup> Guáqueta 2007

<sup>101</sup> Acosta 2008.

their possibilities closed in as their expectations of what was feasible became deflated. The final law met with the commanders' approval despite it being significantly less attractive than what they had imagined when they came to the table several years prior.

In the calculations of the paras, what was seemingly not contemplated was that once demobilized, the government would defect. The first assault on their promised benefits was the government's *unilateral* decision in August 2006 to terminate the commanders' special permits that allowed them to move freely around the country and to instead concentrate them in the detention center in La Ceja, Antioquia. Sixty commanders complied but several escaped, including Vicente Castaño and the Mellizos brothers. Next, in December, the government transferred the paramilitary leaders to the maximum security prison in Itagüí.<sup>102</sup> The commanders acquiesced; at this point, fleeing would elicit the whole power of the state against them. Moreover, they remained committed to allaying the government's fears about their intentions and demonstrating their dedication to the process. Recall that, at the beginning of the process, serving jail time was inconceivable for the commanders. Now, several years later, they accepted this decision with little resistance. In this sense, it is critical to examine the timing of the events and circumstances that led to the paramilitaries' demobilization. "A comparative analysis of only two time cuts – before demobilization, and post-demobilization – would miss a whole chain of events and contexts that were crucial in driving the leaders of these powerful armies to demobilize."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Rubini 2008.

<sup>103</sup> Acosta 2008.

*Justice.*

The final version of the peace bill, the Justice and Peace Law (Law 975),<sup>104</sup> was approved on June 21, 2005. It dictated that individuals guilty of crimes against humanity (mostly the commanders and mid-tier leaders) would receive reduced punishments of five to eight years in prison and would not be extradited to the US. In exchange, they had to make full and honest confessions of their actions and engage in monetary and symbolic reparations.<sup>105</sup> These lenient judicial benefits would be lost if the paramilitaries failed to confess to the whole truth or broke their promise of ‘no repetition’ by committing criminal, illegal and/or violent acts. It was on this basis that 14 paramilitary commanders were extradited to the US in May 2008. Meanwhile, the members of the irregular armed groups with no pending charges of crimes against humanity (mostly foot soldiers) who were guilty only of “political crimes” (rebellion, sedition, treason, rioting) fell under Law 782 of 2002 (revised as 1106 of 2006), which granted them full pardons and reinsertion assistance.<sup>106</sup> It should be noted that the peace negotiation did not involve significant government concessions. It did not introduce security sector reform or enact policies designed to facilitate paramilitaries’ political reintegration: favorable electoral conditions, guaranteed congressional seats, or power-sharing arrangements.

While the accords did not afford the paramilitary commanders what they had envisioned, they also did not dismantle or neutralize the paramilitaries’ political, economic, or social structures of influence, just their military ones. Many brigades, for reasons posited in Chapters 2

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<sup>104</sup> See the English translation of the Justice and Peace Law: <http://www.coljuristas.org/justicia/Lawpercent20975.pdf>. The purpose of the law is “to facilitate the processes of peace and individual or collective reincorporation into civilian life of the members of illegal armed groups, guaranteeing the victims’ rights to truth, justice, and reparation.” See also Kalmanovitz 2009. 2,700 paramilitaries have registered under the Justice and Peace process.

<sup>105</sup> See Justice and Peace Law, Article 8, which stipulates that reparations take the form of restitution of assets, payment of compensation, access to rehabilitation procedures, and guarantees of no-repetition.

<sup>106</sup> These exclude atrocious acts and barbarism, terrorism, kidnapping, genocide, homicide outside combat and civilian victimization. See Law 782, 2002.

and 5, proved able to shield their structures from dissolution. In addition, the peace agreement developed a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program to transition the ex-combatants back into civilian life.

## **VI. DDR Program**

The disarmament procedures were the following: each paramilitary organization concentrated its members in a specific site for approximately three weeks, during which time the combatants and their weapons were registered and basic medical and psychological assistance was provided. Thereafter, the combatants could migrate to the towns of their choosing and enroll in the Ministry of Interior's reintegration program.<sup>107</sup> In August 2006, the government replaced this program with the High Commission for Reintegration (ACR),<sup>108</sup> which significantly revised and improved the regime.<sup>109</sup> Taking into account 'lessons-learned' from DDR programs worldwide, the Colombian program quickly became a model for other countries embarking on war to peace transitions.<sup>110</sup> The ACR shifted the program's focus from short-term 'reinsertion' to long-term and sustainable 'reintegration.' Rather than having the transition from militarized to civilian life be time constrained, the new program dictated that the ex-combatants would 'graduate' from the program only when they were deemed 'reintegrated.' For some, this could take a year; for others, a decade. Additionally, rather than assume reintegration to be a uniform process, the ACR plotted each individual ex-combatant's trajectory over time, registering his/her

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<sup>107</sup> Andres Davila (Director, Ministry of Interior's Reintegration Program), interview by author, Bogotá, August 2006; Jaime Polanco (Ministry of Defense's Disarmament and Demobilization Program), interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006.

<sup>108</sup> Presidencia de la República, Alta Consejería para la Reintegración Social y Económica de Personas y Grupos Alzados en Armas

<sup>109</sup> The collectively demobilized paramilitaries, who are the focus of this project, benefitted less from these changes in the reintegration program as they had already been in the program for as many as two years. The chief beneficiaries were ex-combatants who entered the program post-2006 (mostly individual guerrilla defectors).

<sup>110</sup> The international conference on DDR held in Cartagena in May 2009 speaks to this fact. It gathered DDR specialists and practitioners from countries around the world.



psychological, social, vocational, educational, and civic attributes and tailoring his/her program accordingly.<sup>111</sup> The benefits were also broadened to include not only those conferred to all Colombian citizens (health, education, and security), but also services specific to the beneficiaries' needs as ex-combatants (psychological counseling and monitoring, legal guidance on Laws 975 and 728, and citizenship education).<sup>112</sup> The former combatants, for example, were obligated to attend weekly workshops in which they learned 'how to be civilians.' These sessions aimed to undo the moral codes learned within the illegal armed factions and to instill Colombian Law's norms of justice. According to several psychologists who intimately monitored the ex-combatants' psychological, economic, and social reintegration:

Many ex-combatants are proud of their crimes when they demobilize. They do not feel guilty about them at all because they have not been taught normal values. But as they engage in the social-psychological workshops, they begin to feel more guilt. So the emotional trauma that ex-combatants experience is at times low when they demobilize, but may increase over time ...because the reintegration and reconciliation programs teach the former combatants what emotions they are supposed to feel.<sup>113</sup>

In addition to psychological services, the ex-combatants also received monthly stipends and economic reintegration assistance. The program assisted them in finding jobs, offered them vocational training, and created macro agro-industrial projects to employ them. Third, the ACR's customized reintegration programs shifted from a benefits-only approach to a benefits-in-exchange-for-responsibilities one. No longer did the ex-combatants receive subsidies with no strings attached; instead, the economic support became conditioned on and varied according to

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<sup>111</sup> ACR 2008.

<sup>112</sup> Frank Pearl (High Commissioner for Reintegration), interviews by author, Bogotá, August 2007 – May 2009.

<sup>113</sup> ACR Psychologist, interview by author, Bogotá, 2007. This concurs with the findings of Blattman and Annan 2009.

the individuals' commitment to and performance in the DDR Program (i.e. number of workshops and courses attended).<sup>114</sup>

This was an important change in a regime populated by ex-paramilitaries who believed they deserved gratitude for their patriotic service (fighting the guerrillas) and for agreeing to demobilize when *they did not have to* (they were not defeated). In many ex-combatant and community workshops I attended, the former paramilitaries exhibited a strong sense of entitlement. They argued that, because they demobilized and thus did the country a favor, they deserved a wide range of benefits including homes, permanent jobs, televisions, etc. This 'benefits-oriented' approach generated resentment among the victims who did not receive commensurate assistance or services from the state. Many of the conflicts that arose between victimizers and victims post-war appeared to be less about past crimes and more about the post-demobilization benefit scheme.<sup>115</sup>

Last, the reintegration program became community oriented. The definition of program 'beneficiaries' was extended to include not only ex-combatants, but also their families and the 'recipient' communities in which they lived. These populations became eligible for reintegration program services and assistance.<sup>116</sup> Thus, in one of the only cases worldwide, DDR and transitional justice merged and the reintegration program became involved with reparations and reconciliation.

Despite the sound design and execution of the ACR process, it proved unable to compete with the forces set in motion during the war, namely the combatants' recruitment and deployment patterns. I return to a discussion of the implications of the study's findings for reintegration policy in the Conclusion. I turn now to the historical backdrop of the paramilitary

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<sup>114</sup> Frank Pearl (High Commissioner for Reintegration), interviews with author, Bogotá, August 2007 – May 2009.

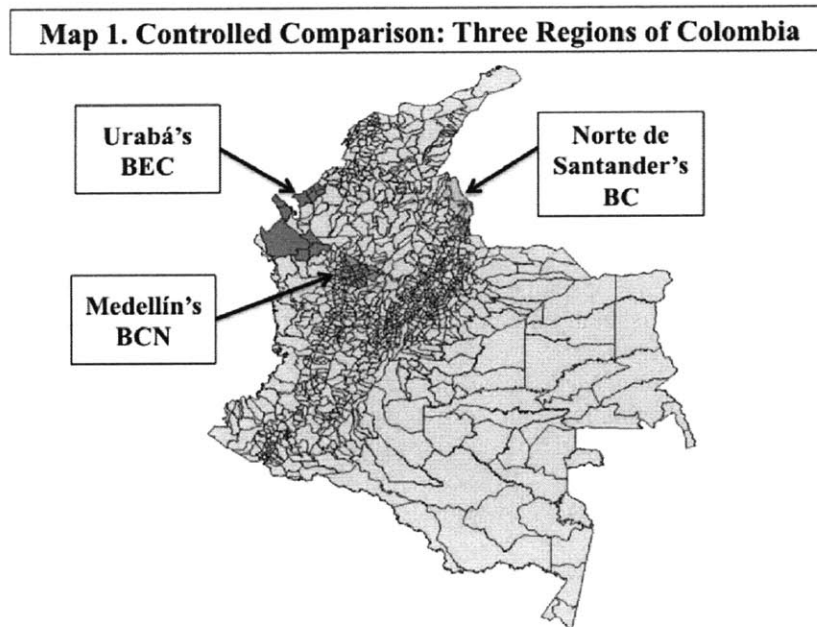
<sup>115</sup> Santiago Jaramillo, (Medellín's Victim Program), interview by author, Medellín, February 2008.

<sup>116</sup> High Commission for Reintegration, Community Division Director, interview by author, Bogotá, August 2007.

case studies.

## VII. Case Studies: Three Paramilitary Regions

This dissertation analyzes all of the paramilitary structures that emerged from the mid-1980s through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century across Colombia, but focuses particularly on armed organizations in three regions: Urabá, Medellín, and Norte de Santander. The paramilitaries' war in Urabá began in the mid 1980s when, tired of kidnappings and extortion, landowners, cattle-ranchers and banana plantation owners formed self-defense forces. The paramilitaries came to Medellín in the mid 1990s when the mafias became politicized. And the *paras* emerged on the violence scene of the Venezuelan border at the end of the 1990s as part of a campaign to root out the guerrillas from Norte de Santander. These case studies constitute a tightly-controlled, sub-national comparison *across* paramilitary groups *within* a single war *over time* that holds broadly constant development levels, colonial legacies, state military strength, political regime type, social cleavages, and political economy.



*Campaigns: Medellín's Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN)*

Any *paisa*<sup>117</sup> can tell you that Medellín's Valley of *Aburrá* has suffered four wars over the past thirty years. First, beginning in the 1980s, the rural guerrilla organizations (FARC, ELN, EPL) sought to create urban militias in Medellín.<sup>118</sup> The militia groups' "armed proselytizing" and authoritarian presence brought a first wave of violence to the Antioqueño capital<sup>119</sup> and engendered local gangs.<sup>120</sup> One ex-rebel explained to me, "The militias killed the thieves and then became the thieves. They killed the rapists and then became the rapists. I hated this so I left the militias and formed a gang to resist their presence."<sup>121</sup> Thus, by the late 80s, Medellín had militias and gangs.

During this period, Pablo Escobar also rendered Medellín synonymous with the cocaine trade.<sup>122</sup> The Medellín cartel, which at its height enjoyed profits of \$60 million per day, launched a campaign of violence to pressure the Colombian government to outlaw extradition to the US for drug offenses.<sup>123</sup> Thus, added to the mix of gang and militia specialists in violence, were the mafia's terrorists, private security, and paid assassins (*sicarios*). Eventually, in 1993, a rogue faction of Medellín's mafia, *PEPES* ('Persecuted by Pablo Escobar'), in collaboration with US Special Operation Forces, DEA, CIA, and Colombia forces captured and killed Escobar.

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<sup>117</sup> *Paisa* is the slang term for the local population of Medellín, Colombia's second largest city, and the surrounding areas. Colombia has very strong regional identities and the *paisa* one is among the strongest.

<sup>118</sup> See Medina Franco 2006; Jaramillo Arbeláez 1994.

<sup>119</sup> These groups were urban self-defense gangs infused with revolutionary political ideology. They were highly fragmented with 10 separate groups operating by 1993. The government of President César Gaviria (1990-1994) demobilized 800 of their members, in the aftermath of which, the militia forces linked directly to the FARC and ELN consolidated their presence.

<sup>120</sup> Gustavo Villegas, (Ex-director of Medellín's Reintegration Program), interview by author, Medellín, 4 March 2008. According to Villegas, the militias applied strict rules to the barrios such as prohibiting girls from wearing low-riding jeans or short skirts. The gangs resisted these rules. See also Ceballos Melguizo and Cronshaw 2001, pp. 110-131.

<sup>121</sup> Former BCN Commander of *Comuna 6*, interview by author, Medellín, 26 February 2008.

<sup>122</sup> See Salazar 2001.

<sup>123</sup> In 1991, Medellín had the highest per capita murder rate in the world with a monthly average of 529 homicides. García et al. 2005.

After Pablo's death, his gangs remained active but without the cartel's disciplining structure. According to a mid-ranking paramilitary commander who formerly worked for Escobar, "There were many *pelaos*, 'sons' of the boss [Pablo], who were left abandoned. This is when the third war began between the remaining criminal groups to gain control of the city,"<sup>124</sup> its drug sale points and extortion and selective assassination markets. Diego Fernando Murillo Bejarano, alias 'Don Berna,' a former member and founder of *PEPES*, inherited Escobar's principal narco-trafficking structure – the Office of *Envigado* – and won this war, becoming the most powerful chief of Medellín's underworld.<sup>125</sup>

Don Berna transformed his criminal apparatus in Medellín into a *paramilitary* organization with hegemonic control of the region.<sup>126</sup> To do so, he built upon the well-developed industry of violence staffed with the diverse actors who had starred in the city's earlier wars and co-opted the gangs, hitmen, offices, and powerful gangs.<sup>127</sup> In the metropolitan area, Don Berna's structure became the *Bloque Cacique Nutibara* (BCN) while in the rural areas, specifically eastern Antioquia, it became the *Bloque Héroes de Granada* (BHG).

On November 25, 2003, the Bloque Cacique Nutibara signed a peace agreement with the Colombian government and demobilized 868 combatants and 497 weapons.<sup>128</sup> However, because the BCN's disarmament was the first of the paramilitary processes, its outcome remained uncertain and many of the BCN combatants preferred to remain outside of the process.<sup>129</sup> As a

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<sup>124</sup> Ex-BCN Commander of *Comuna 4*, interview by author, Medellín, 25 February 2008.

<sup>125</sup> See [www.verdadabierta.com](http://www.verdadabierta.com), which is an effort by the think-tank, Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP), and the magazine *Semana* to reconstruct a collective memory of the armed conflict.

<sup>126</sup> In the mid-1990s, faced with security problems, Don Berna fled Medellín and sought refuge with his former *PEPES*' comrades, the Castaño brothers who, after the fall of Escobar, had formed the paramilitary structure, Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU) in Colombia's northwest frontier. With the Castaños' backing, 'Don Berna,' adopted a new alias 'Adolfo Paz' and transformed his structure into a powerful, paramilitary organization in Medellín.

<sup>127</sup> Diego Murrillo, alias 'Don Berna,' Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Medellín, 16–17 July 2007.

<sup>128</sup> Alto Comisionado para la Paz 2006.

<sup>129</sup> Piedad Moreno (OAS - MAPP), interview by author, Medellín, 21 February 2008.

result, the bulk of the BCN's military structure joined the Bloque Héroes de Granada (BHG),<sup>130</sup> demobilizing with this group on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2005 in San Roque, Antioquia. In total, 2,033 BHG combatants relinquished 1,120 arms.<sup>131</sup> Due to the almost indistinguishable nature of the BCN and BHG, I will herein consider them as one case, calling them the BCN or Bloque Cacique Nutibara.

In the chapters that follow, I consider how the Bloque Cacique Nutibara's social history made it a local group, comprising *paisa* recruits that were deeply embedded in their communities. As a result, this paramilitary organization survived after surrendering its arms. It overcame the challenging conditions of war to peace transitions and retained the loyalty of its staff, the hierarchy of its structure, and the support of its non-combatant base. It formed a large-scale, socio-political NGO that transformed from a manifestly coercive entity to a latent, and eventually, demilitarized one. Comprising roughly 4,000 ex-combatant members, the NGO, Corporación Democracia, engaged in extensive 'community activities' and ran its members in local elections. Ultimately, the networks and physical clustering of the Bloque began to erode such that the organization lost its ability to remilitarize. Given this weakened organizational capacity, the state gradually enhanced its presence and authority in the marginal neighborhoods long under illegal armed control and co-opted the BCN's ex-combatants back into civilian life.

### *Guns: Urabá's Paramilitary Factions (BEC & BHT)*

Urabá is the heart of Colombia's agricultural riches: bananas, African palm, wood, and

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<sup>130</sup> While the organization demobilized in two stages, this did not imply a split in the brigade; rather it was a strategic decision as a kind of insurance policy. The demobilized members of the BCN and the still active BHG combatants remained close friends and the active BHG paras never threatened or assassinated the demobilized as has occurred in other processes where demobilization was deemed betrayal. (For example, in the aftermath of the EPL's demobilization in 1991, the FARC and a spoiler faction of the EPL killed off many of the demobilized.)

<sup>131</sup> Alto Comisionado para la Paz 2006.

cattle. Additionally, it boasts an extensive natural port, the international border with Panama, mountainous terrain, and dense jungle. Accordingly, for four decades, it constituted a “territory of war,” attracting all of the country’s diverse armed actors. They aimed to gain access to the region’s recruits, sanctuaries, taxes from agricultural plantations, and trafficking routes to Central America for illicit arms imports and drug exports.<sup>132</sup> The persistent presence of armed actors in Urabá and their willingness to fight bitter wars over the region for nearly half a century suggest that it was a critical breeding ground for criminal and political experts in violence.<sup>133</sup>

In the 1960s and 70s, Urabá became an epicenter of Colombian labor activism, unionism, and guerrilla activity. Each guerrilla group infiltrated a union, formed a political party, and fought a fierce war for the ‘hearts and minds’ of the ‘radical’ banana laborers. The FARC controlled the union Sintrabananeros; Sintagro belonged to the EPL; and the ELN directed Sindejornarelos.<sup>134</sup> The FARC commanded the communist party and the Patriotic Union (UP), which won several municipal governments and the EPL enjoyed significant electoral success through its political branch, *Esperanza, Paz, and Libertad*. In the late 1980s, the fighting between the guerrilla armies experienced a brief reprieve, only to end tragically when, in 1991, the EPL signed a peace accord with President César Gaviria, demobilized its army, and transformed into a legal political party.<sup>135</sup> To prevent the EPL from dominating the elections and gaining popularity in the unions and to punish it for disarming, the FARC began an extermination campaign against the civilian constituency of the EPL and its demobilized

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<sup>132</sup> Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social 2001.

<sup>133</sup> It should be noted that Colombians tend to term anywhere there are militarized actors a “geo-strategic region” and do so only in a post-facto fashion. As a result, most of the country has been deemed strategically important and the term’s significance has been diluted. Despite this problematic and over-inclusive coding of ‘strategic zones,’ Urabá proved an incessant war zone.

<sup>134</sup> The ELN had a more minor presence in the region.

<sup>135</sup> Ramírez Tobón 1997.

combatants.<sup>136</sup> A bloodbath ensued. As a result, a dissident group of the EPL, the Bernardo Franco front, joined the FARC's side to assassinate the EPL ex-combatants who, in self-defense, formed the militias: Comandos Populares.<sup>137</sup> The conflict degenerated; each armed coalition indiscriminately attacked the social base of the other.<sup>138</sup> The Comandos Populares allied with the paramilitaries and, together, they rid the banana and cattle areas of the FARC guerrillas and established military, social, and political hegemony. The FARC were forced to withdraw to the jungles of Chocó and Mutatá.<sup>139</sup>

These paramilitaries emerged on Urabá's violence scene first in the 1980s as los Huelengues, then as 'Las 70,' and then as the Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá.<sup>140</sup> They operated in association with banana planters, cattle ranchers, merchants, and other members of the business community.<sup>141</sup> The Urabá/Córdoba self-defense forces divided into five sovereign groups: the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas, under the command of Freddy Rendón Herrera, alias 'El Alemán,' who controlled the north of Urabá Antioqueño and Urabá Chocoano;<sup>142</sup> the Frente Turbo, led by Ever Veloza García, alias 'HH,' who patrolled Turbo; and the Frente Bananero, commanded by Raúl Hasbún, alias 'Pedro Bonito,' who held Apartadó, Carepa, and Chigorodó.<sup>143</sup> In the zones to the east of Urabá operated two other armed actors, the Bloque

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<sup>136</sup> Duncan 2007.

<sup>137</sup> See Ortiz Sarmiento 2007.

<sup>138</sup> Sandoval 1997.

<sup>139</sup> García 1996; Madariaga 2006.

<sup>140</sup> Dairon Mendoza Caraballo, Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Medellín, 16 September 2008.

<sup>141</sup> Corporación Observatorio para la Paz 2002; Molina 2001.

<sup>142</sup> The original self-defense forces in Necoclí were formed by the family of Necoclí mayor, Carlos Correa (Alejandro Toro (Director of Construpaz), interview by author, Necoclí, 3 July 2008). The Bloque Elmer Cárdenas also ran a website: <http://www.acbec.org/> which is now archived.

<sup>143</sup> Eleuterio (OAS-MAPP Peace Monitor), interview by author, April 2008. The Frente Bananero was also referred to as the Frente Alex Hurtado (*Revista Semana* 2008).



Héroes de Tolová, under the command of Diego Murillo, and the Bloque Córdoba, under the leadership of Salvatore Mancuso.<sup>144</sup>

On 25 November 2004, the Bloque Bananero (the combined Frentes Turbo and Bananero) demobilized 451 fighters and surrendered 351 arms in Turbo's El Dos. The Bloque Córdoba then disbanded its 925 combatants on 18 January 2005 in Tierralta, followed by the Bloque Héroes de Tolová's 464 soldiers on the 15 June 2005 in Valencia. A year later, Uribe's High Commissioner for Peace reached a peace accord with the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas to dismantle the BEC's five battalions in three stages. On 12 April 2006, the BEC's Frente Costanero surrendered 220 arms and 309 fighters in Necoclí, followed by the Frentes Dabeiba and Pavarandó on 30 April 2006 with their 484 soldiers and 360 weapons in Turbo, and the Frentes Norte Medio Salaquí and Chocó's 743 combatants and 488 arms on 15 August 2006 in Unguía.<sup>145</sup>

These brigades embarked on the demobilization journey from a position similar to Medellín's BCN. They were, for the most part, staffed with local recruits with strong ties to the non-combatant communities they had patrolled during the war. However, unlike the BCN, the Héroes de Tolová (BHT) disarmed in close proximity to an armed faction, Bloque Córdoba (BC), which experienced a downgrade in its capacity. This relative weakening of the Bloque Córdoba undermined the equilibrium of the peace regime. The BHT and BC could not agree on the new transfers necessary to avert war and thus, after a period of quiet, they returned to violence. Already remilitarized, the BHT then challenged the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas' battalions, sparking their redeployment. In the chapters that follow, I seek to understand the timing and pattern of this remilitarization in Urabá.

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<sup>144</sup> See Martínez 2004.

<sup>145</sup> Alto Comisionado para la Paz 2006.

*Bankruptcy: Norte de Santander's Bloque Catatumbo*

Until the late 1990s, Norte de Santander was a bastion of the guerrilla armies, principally that of the ELN with the FARC and EPL enjoying a more minor presence. These armies were deeply entrenched in the petroleum unions of Tibu and campesino villages of Catatumbo. After instigating mass mobilizations in the 1980s without success, the ELN began bombing campaigns against the oil pipelines, kidnappings of prominent figures, and terrorist attacks on infrastructure to pressure the government to afford the population greater social services. The FARC and ELN also became heavily involved in the cultivation of coca. The guerrillas had 'taken' most of the rural, jungle region in the north and west of the state and had a strong urban militia presence in Norte de Santander's cities. The rebels permeated all aspects of life and the Colombian military and police presence remained extremely limited. In La Gabarra, for example, when the army patrolled the five blocks from its base to the park, the entire brigade would have to go because "if only five soldiers went, they would certainly be killed."<sup>146</sup>

In 1998, a group of 200 paramilitaries from Córdoba, Urabá, and other parts of the coast set out on an 'expedition' to conquer the Venezuelan border area motivated both by a desire to rid the area of the insurgents operating in the Catatumbo region and to access the expansive and lucrative coca crops and border smuggling opportunities. After a brutal campaign against the rebels and civilians, the paramilitaries managed to gain control of the flat region along Colombia's most important border, the urban centers including the department's capital city of Cúcuta, the roads and bridges, and much of the economically strategic petroleum and drug producing zones.<sup>147</sup> The jungle remained the guerrillas'.

On December 10<sup>th</sup> 2004, the Bloque Catatumbo demobilized 1,434 soldiers and

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<sup>146</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Cúcuta, April 2008.

<sup>147</sup> See Fundación Progresar 2004.

decommissioned 1,114 weapons in Campo Dos. The BC also surrendered 11 vehicles, 2 boats, 8 canoes, 15 engines, 45 mules, and 161 rural properties they had taken and used for logistical support.

Unlike the Urabá and Medellín paramilitary brigades, the BC had engaged in dispersed recruitment and was thus characterized by thin social networks. Additionally, its fighters spread out throughout Colombia after demobilizing. Without the multifaceted ties or physical clustering, the BC went out of business post-demobilization. In so doing, it left a power void, which contiguous paramilitary forces remilitarized to seize, narco-trafficking cartels struggled to capture, and the state sought to fill. As a result, no coercive entity gained hegemonic control and levels of violence and criminality remained high.

The three paramilitary organizations considered in depth in this study (BCN, BEC, and BC) launched their campaigns in roughly similar contexts of state capacity, corruption, insurgent threat, and ideological struggle. Their fighters joined for the same mixture of security, emotional, and economic reasons. They committed similarly heinous crimes against humanity and were relatively strong upon disarming; none faced military defeat. In fact, Bloque Catatumbo was one of the most militarily *effective* paramilitary brigades in Colombia and yet, it went bankrupt. All three were active in illicit economies with the BCN – the organization, which *demilitarized* and remained *intact* – the most deeply entrenched.<sup>148</sup> The three structures demobilized under the

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<sup>148</sup> Medellín was an epicenter of the drug trade. In 2008, there were 762 sell-points for drugs and cocaine-dealers earned a monthly profit of five million dollars. “While Medellín is not where the crops are grown and most of the drugs do not physically pass through Medellín; it is the center for the business, administration and contacts for narco-trafficking.” Additionally, it was one of the places of highest domestic drug sales and consumption in Colombia. (Medellín Government Official, interview by author, Medellín, February 2008); One Ex-BCN Commander described his barrio, “There are 38 drug points for marihuana and 25 for crack and other kind of drugs. The location of these points is plainly known by the community.” Interview by author, Medellín, 25 February 2008). The paramilitary commanders’ testimonies under the Justice and Peace Law further spoke to the extent of the BCN’s narco-trafficking (Juan Carlos Sierra Ramírez, alias ‘El Tuso,’ Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Medellín, 28 June 2007). Similarly, situated on the Panamanian and Venezuelan borders, the BEC and BC operated

same peace terms with the same guarantees of their security and power. The only key ways in which they differed fundamentally was in their recruitment, deployment, and migration.

### **VIII. Road Ahead**

The remainder of this dissertation explores how these differences in recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns shape the post-war trajectories of armed organizations. Specifically, it analyzes the effects of these patterns on the ability of the organization to retain a collective capacity to mobilize for future activities, to preserve influence over civilian affairs to transition into a legitimate socio-political actor, and to remain demilitarized, surrendering the opportunity to return to war. It addresses these questions by examining the BCN, BEC, and BC case studies in qualitative depth and all paramilitary-community dyads in statistical breath. I begin by considering how and why armed groups vary in their ability to avert organizational bankruptcy in the aftermath of war. Chapter 6 explores the ‘*campaigns*’ outcome and Chapter 7 takes on the ‘*guns*’ trajectory.

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in resource-rich terrain with coca cultivation, laboratories and opportunities for cross-border smuggling. The resource-endowment argument actually predicts the exact opposite of that which occurred in these cases.

***Part II.***  
**Chapter 5**

**Bankruptcy**

**I. Introduction**

During war-to-peace transitions, some armed groups retain an organizational structure capable of collective action while others disintegrate. In Liberia, “the capability of ex-combatants to mobilize themselves for any purpose remains strong” (Littman 2009).<sup>149</sup> Meanwhile, in Sierra Leone, the RUF “has poor prospects for survival...None [of the leaders] commands much rank and file loyalty, and even if they wanted to, it is extremely unlikely they could rally ex-combatants” (ICG 2004). In Colombia, the Bloque Catatumbo went bankrupt while the Bloque Cacique Nutibara and Bloque Elmer Cárdenas survived as powerful, cohesive organizations.

This chapter asks why we observe variation in the ability of a former armed organization to remain collective-action capable. It presents a theory of post-war cohesion and its observable implications and then discusses the three paramilitary case studies. It concludes with a statistical analysis of post-war bankruptcy, which evaluates the proposed model against the strongest alternatives.

**II. Alternative Explanations**

The question of what happens to armed organizations’ collective capacity after they demobilize is understudied. Theories that study war recurrence or rebel-to-party transitions assume organizational endurance<sup>150</sup> while those that study demobilization and reintegration

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<sup>149</sup> See also Utas 2008, p. 4.

<sup>150</sup> See Walter 2004 for a study of war recurrence and de Zeeuw 2008 for a project on rebel-to-party transitions.

assume organizational bankruptcy and individual combatant atomization.<sup>151</sup> No one has studied variation in the ability to collectively act after the organization has demobilized and the necessity of waging war has been removed. Armed groups achieve some level of structured action with disciplining control and a command structure. What happens to this? Why does it endure in some cases and dissipate in others? Several answers emerge implicitly from the literature on collective action.

Participation in high-risk collective action has occupied scholars of political violence for decades. Theories of recruitment have focused on what fighters want, a motivational approach to participation. Some of these theories focus on selective, material incentives, using the terms ‘greed,’ ‘consumers,’ and ‘criminally-driven’;<sup>152</sup> others emphasize collective and non-material incentives, employing the labels ‘grievances,’ ‘investors,’ ‘ideologically-driven,’ and ‘pleasure of agency.’<sup>153</sup> The post-war corollaries include the following:

*Resources.* One answer derives from Weinstein 2002 and predicts that resource-poor groups recruit through nonmaterial interests whereas resource-rich groups attract opportunistic, salaried joiners and suffer greater principal agent problems and vulnerability to organizational fragmentation. Accordingly, we should expect economically-endowed organizations to go bankrupt post-war.<sup>154</sup>

*Ideology.* An alternative means of maintaining collective action, which may also serve to sustain collective action *after* war, is through ideology and collective benefits. Existing accounts propose that strong ideology, appeal to ethnic, religious, and cultural identities, and commitment

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<sup>151</sup> See Humphreys and Weinstein 2007.

<sup>152</sup> On material motivations, see Grossman 1999; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Weinstein 2006.

<sup>153</sup> On non-material incentives, see Wood 2003; Petersen 2001.

<sup>154</sup> See Weinstein 2002, 2006.

to a long-term organizational goal should strengthen individuals' identification with the movement and thus the movement's ability to survive post-demobilization.<sup>155</sup>

In contrast to these two models, I focus not on what fighters want, but where they are and whom they are connected to. This can be called the human geography of organizations. I evaluate the explanatory power of motivational approaches to post-war collective action (resources and ideology) and find them unable to explain the observed variation.

*Leadership* The scholarly literature and anecdotal evidence highlight another possible answer: leadership. It is posited that certain leaders, by nature of their commanding power, aura, and charisma, prove better able to retain the loyalty of their subordinates and keep their organization united (after a demobilization process). Names of especially charismatic military leaders abound. While plausible, it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess a leader's 'cohesive' capacity independent from the outcome.

The presence or absence of leaders at the high rungs of the command chain may also determine post-war organizational endurance. The US Army Counterinsurgency Handbook adheres to this logic. It maps different configurations of insurgent networks based on the existence of their commanders and then directs soldiers to behead the organizations in order to reduce their collective capacity. Post-peace agreement, many leaders are subject to imprisonment, assassination, or extradition. Evidence from cases such as Peru's Sendero Luminoso and Angola's UNITA suggests that 'decapitating' the top leadership of an armed group may cause its bankruptcy. We should thus expect organizations whose top leaders are isolated from their subordinates to be less likely to survive.

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<sup>155</sup> Wolf 1969; Scott 1976; Calhoun 1991; McAdam 1999; Varshney 2002; Wood 2003.

### **III. Recruitment, Deployment, and Post-war Migration Patterns**

Organizations vary in where they recruit and deploy their soldiers, and soldiers vary in where they decide to migrate after they have demobilized. Recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns generate distinct configurations of collective capacity. This project does not aim to propose a comprehensive theory of recruitment, deployment, or migration; rather these are inputs into the analysis. However, a brief discussion of these concepts is necessary to ensure against omitted variable bias: that these factors are caused by some underlying phenomenon that also explains variation in post-war bankruptcy.

#### *The Logic of Recruitment & Deployment*

At their outset, armed organizations rarely span the state's entire territory; rather, they concentrate in very specific geographic locations. These first cells of the organization are generally composed of recruits native to the regions. While some organizations remain extremely limited in scope, most seek to strengthen militarily and expand territorially. Organizations face several strategic options to expand to another region. They can send a sole commander from the home region (HR) and raise an army in the non-home region (NHR) either through new recruitment or by co-opting an existing armed actor in the region if one exists (deployment from HR=0%). They can instead send a battalion and supplement it with recruits from the non-home region (deployment from HR=50%). Or they can rely only on fighters from the home region and incorporate no soldiers native to the NHR (deployment from HR=100%). These constitute the recruitment and deployment strategies of an armed organization and they vary across organizations and within a single organization over time. I argue that which specific individuals are deployed is usually random.



How can we explain variation in these strategies? There are several reasons why a minimal threshold (few combatants from the HR) is not an optimal approach. First, the organization may wish to station its recruits away from their ‘home regions’ in order to make them ‘soldiers first;’ to maximize loyalty to the mission and army over loyalty to family and community.<sup>156</sup> Second, even if the militarized unit plans to co-opt an armed group in the NHR, no commander wishes to go into combat without his trusted ‘buddies’ by his side. As one ex-combatant explained to me, “There were no commanders local to the zone, they were all from elsewhere because of social networks.” He gave me the following example: “You are American and so if you had to choose people to help you with an operation or something, you would choose your best friends from America. If you were doing a very risky attack, you would want to be surrounded by ‘your people’ because you trust them and because you also want them to have privileges, you want the best for them, and so the commanders from [HR] brought their best friends and their best friends got the best positions in the organization [in NHR].”<sup>157</sup> The third reason for not recruiting in the NHR is related to the first: the expanding unit cannot trust that members of the native population are not loyal informants of their enemy because only the potential recruits have accurate information about their ‘true types.’ Given this private and thus asymmetric information, the armed group is wary of integrating native soldiers into its ranks.

These conditions, of course, may change over time if the organization improves the lives of the inhabitants in the NHR and thus, the population associates these improvements with the

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<sup>156</sup> In the Soviet and Yugoslav armies, for example, soldiers were not allowed to operate where they were from. Similarly, Simón Bolívar’s army in Peru was comprised of all Venezuelan recruits. The logic behind this deployment is that “homogeneity is induced by decoupling civil and military society; company solidarity is a by-product of this separation” (Bearman 1991). Other armies, however, such as those of the Confederacy and, in many cases, the Colombian self-defense forces, tried to induce social solidarity by the tight coupling of military and civil society. “Thus, each company was organized within one county, and soldiers volunteered to serve with other men from their local area – many of them neighbors and kin... The model army was an aggregation of separate local militias.” (Bearman 1991).

<sup>157</sup> Mid-ranking Commander (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, Cúcuta, April 2008.

armed group's rule and confers them trustworthy recruits. Drawing soldiers then enables the militarized organization to recruit additional members of the native population through these soldiers' social ties. Doing so reduces the adverse selection problem by providing accurate information about different individuals' values and loyalty. Thus, we should anticipate that, in zones of expansion, an armed group is initially composed of 100% soldiers from HR, but that over time, this number decreases.

There are, however, additional military considerations besides unit cohesion that will reduce even the initial endowment below 100%. One of these is intelligence. The 'invading' troops require some local information from the beginning. Thus, we should expect the initial composition of the group to immediately drop to say 90%.<sup>158</sup> Additionally, these are illegal armed forces that must maintain covert supply chains. For this reason, the units may transport their combatants to the NHR, but then rely on the local population for non-strategically vital inputs such as food, transportation, and medicine. Thus, the non-local armed unit will begin to contract local cooks, drivers, doctors, navigators, and mechanics. Given the high cost, time, and risk of transporting men from other regions, if the unit requires additional military manpower quickly, it may also recruit some local foot soldiers (though usually no high ranking officers).

Finally, the marginal cost of recruitment is not equal across all sub-sections of the native population in the NHR. Thus, there may be certain groups from which the non-local armed group can easily draw committed recruits even in the absence of territorial control or strong ties to the community. These sub-groups arise because of the multitude of reasons why individuals participate in high-risk collective action. They include a) those especially sensitive to material incentives (the poorest or greediest); b) those affected adversely by the incumbent armed group's

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<sup>158</sup> How foreign occupations manage intelligence and ally with local collaborators may provide interesting insights into these dynamics.

strategy of violence and governance (extortion, kidnapping, violent death, and social norms); c) those with personal security problems in need of protection; d) those driven by resentment or anger whose status has been reversed or whose family members have been murdered; e) veterans who return from military service with no other marketable skills besides their expertise in violence; f) youth hoping for adventure ... the list goes on. Therefore, ease of recruitment does not correlate with territory. Commanders recruit for unit cohesion, but also for intelligence, commitment to the 'cause' and ability to provide certain inputs. Thus, group composition will usually prove less than 100% from the home region (HR).

These patterns complicate when we consider more than two locations – HR and NHR – and consider instead HR, NHR<sub>1</sub>, NHR<sub>2</sub>, NHR<sub>3</sub>, NHR<sub>4</sub>.... Say, following the logic above, that the commander chooses a level of 70% to deploy from the HR to NHR<sub>1</sub>. This means that 70% of the force that operates in NHR<sub>1</sub> is from the HR and 30% is from NHR<sub>1</sub>. Next, the organization decides to expand further to NHR<sub>2</sub> and chooses the same deployment threshold of 70%. This means that the composition of the army that operates in NHR<sub>2</sub> is 49% from HR, 21% from NHR<sub>1</sub> and 30% from NHR<sub>2</sub>. Taking it one region further, the force in NHR<sub>3</sub> will be 34.3% from HR, 14.7% from NHR<sub>1</sub>, 21% from NHR<sub>2</sub> and 30% from NHR<sub>3</sub>. What we see is that, given a constant rule and deployment according to quotas, the dispersion of the soldiers' towns of origins increases as the organization expands.

Thus, we get variation in the dispersion of the soldiers' towns of origins. This has two implications for organizational capacity. One, it signals the density of pre-existing ties between combatants. Two, it partially contributes to variation in post-war migration patterns and thus, physical clustering or dispersion of combatants after demobilization. Before exploring the causal

weight of pre-existing ties and post-war physical clustering and delineating the observable implications of the model, I will briefly touch on the concept of post-war migration patterns.

### *The Logic of Post-War Migration*

Individuals surrender their arms and then choose to ‘go home’ to their towns of origin, remain in the zone of operation, or displace to another region, which is neither their home nor their war theater.

“Returning home, where this is possible for individuals, is often a key step in reintegration programmes.”<sup>159</sup> The concept of relocating combatants back to their towns of origin constitutes a central tenet of the international community’s (UN, World Bank, OIM) demobilization and reintegration doctrine.<sup>160</sup> Those who operated where they are from thus have a very strong tendency to remain in their war zone after disarming; they are already home, often still living with their families. This tendency, while still strong, is less marked among combatants who operated away from their towns of origin.

Combatants deployed to regions far from home are ‘displaced’ by the war. They may not return to their communities for the following reasons: their towns of origin may not be safe; they may fear rejection by their families and neighbors; or their lands may have been occupied, their communities destroyed, or their families forcibly uprooted by the war.

Additionally, relative to local combatants, these ex-combatants face significantly reduced costs of displacement as they are already far from their homes. Some remain in the region in which they fought<sup>161</sup> because they a) may have found a partner and built a family while fighting;

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<sup>159</sup> UNDDDR <http://www.unddr.org/>.

<sup>160</sup> See Stockholm Report; World Bank: <http://www.mdrp.org/>.

<sup>161</sup> Governments may also influence these ‘displaced’ combatants’ migration. States often do so temporarily by gathering former combatants in cantonments or concentration areas in their war theaters. However, given international ideology and the potential that these non-embedded groups would redeploy, this is an empirically rare strategy. In Sierra Leone, the state pursued occupational relocation whereby combatants were located to zones with

b) may benefit from a vested economic interest in their former zone of operation; c) may enjoy the power they exercise in the zone, or d) may be ordered by their superiors to retain a foothold in the theater.<sup>162</sup> However, because these combatants are not embedded in the communities in which they operated (as documented in Chapter 6), they prove more likely to displace to another zone, which is neither their town of origin nor their sphere of operation. They choose this place according to a standard migration logic: wherever provides the best economic, security, and network package. Each combatant may have a different optimal location based on this logic. Very often, the non-locally deployed former fighters migrate to large urban centers where employment opportunities are perceived to be high, they enjoy contacts from their home communities, and they can disappear in anonymity and reduce their security risks.

Combining recruitment and post-war migration patterns, I find that if an armed organization recruited from *disperse* geographic locations and its combatants either return home or displace to third zones after disarming, the organization will experience a low level of physical concentration of its members.<sup>163</sup> Only if a majority of its soldiers remain in the battle zone after surrendering their arms will the group face a high degree of clustering of its ex-combatants.<sup>164</sup> If the organization instead recruited in a *concentrated* area, its fighters have a high likelihood of remaining in a delimited territory if they migrate home or continue to reside in the war theater (these are the same in the case of local combatants). Only if the fighters displace

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employment opportunities. In some cases, this can facilitate physical clustering (Megan MacKenzie (Belfer Fellow, Harvard University), interview by author, Cambridge, MA, 10 December 2008).

<sup>162</sup> It should be noted that these zones generally hold strategic value; the groups identified them as regions to which they wished to expand. Thus, the commander may assign a unit of combatants the task of keeping a foothold in the zone or opportunistic mid-ranking leaders, seeking to take advantage of their superiors' disarmament, may act autonomously. In countries with a well-developed criminal industry, the commander may also sell off factions of the organization and their respective territories to criminal mafias.

<sup>163</sup> Strong indoctrination programs during the war could potentially offset this tendency by rendering non-local fighters' migration decisions interdependent. Ex-combatants would settle together in geographically demarcated zones rather than returning to their families or pursuing separate economic opportunities. Socialization likely proves influential only in organizations that displace combatants from their civilian lives, engage in infrequent reassignment, and retain recruits for very long periods of time (Griffin 1988).

<sup>164</sup> UN 2006.

to third locations – neither their homes nor battle zones – are the soldiers unlikely to cluster (See Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Post-War Physical Clustering of Ex-Combatants**

		<i>Dispersion of Recruitment</i>	
		<i>Dispersed</i>	<i>Concentrated</i>
<i>Post-War Migration</i>	<i>Go Home</i>	Low Clustering	High Clustering
	<i>Squat in War Theater</i>	High Clustering	High Clustering
	<i>Displace: Neither Home nor in War Theater</i>	Low Clustering	Low Clustering

Before turning to the model’s predictions about bankruptcy, let me continue the discussion begun in Chapter 2 of what multifaceted ties and post-war concentration buy an organization.

*Multifaceted Ties*

Multifaceted ties are pre-war networks that produce social bonds and norms of reciprocity that keep fighters linked to the organization even after disarming. These ties are strong when combatants share their towns of origin which afford them denser interpersonal bonds (family, friendship, community, school, and employment links) but also shared world views, preferences and knowledge; common culture, slang and food tastes; perceptions of trustworthiness; mutually reinforcing expectations and programmed responses; and a sense of their personal interests and identities merging with those of the community. Thus, in the project’s model, geographic dispersion of recruitment determines strength of ties.

To understand the density of ties produced by sharing a town of origin, it is important to outline the Colombian concept of the *vereda*. Such a concept likely exists in most societies, but

especially in ones that are not fully modernized or in which internal migration levels are low. *Veredas* are rural neighborhoods or hamlets though the concept has some salience in the urban *barrios*. According to Fals Borda's ethnographic accounts, *veredas* create "distinct locality groups" whose inhabitants form strong "ties among themselves as well as with the land on which they live" and this gives them their identity. "Kinship ties are extremely significant." The neighborhoods are like "extended families." They are "endogamous – most people are familiarly connected in one way or another... endogamy is so generalized that an attempt to trace those lines in a sociogram result[s] in a great accumulation of lines." Families live in the same *vereda* for many generations and "there is a strong tendency for heads of households to settle in [the neighborhood] with their families for their entire lifetime." Additionally, the use of a toponym is widespread. When asked their identities, "the local people refer to themselves as 'from [X *vereda*]' as this says it all. The name of the neighborhood tells any Colombian (especially those from the broader region) the individuals' political affiliation, their friends, what places they frequent, and what families they are from. As these family names have been handed down in the locality for generations, it is relatively simple to know who is local and who is not (1962, 40-41). Thus, 'shared town of origin' produces a sound proxy for multifaceted networks.

Of course, Colombia has experienced high levels of forced displacement. However, much of this displacement has been of a collective nature in which the populations recreate their *veredas* in the regions to which they are displaced. According to Fernán González, "Neighbors, families, friends, towns all moved together, they transplanted themselves. They had very, very strong ties and so they reproduced their original *campesino* societies and norms in their new zones."<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Fernán González, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006. Abbey Steele finds this form of displacement to be especially prevalent in cases of collective targeting by armed groups (Steele 2009).

There are other ties, some real and others ‘imagined,’<sup>166</sup> which might spark these same cohesion–sustaining mechanisms though most are of a one-dimensional nature. As we will see below, military service is one of them. Shared ethnicity and political affiliation may be others. Additionally, socialization during war is possible especially in certain types of organizations (where transfer between brigades is low, decoupling of civil and military life high, and tours of service long). For parsimony, I limit the formal analysis to ties based on locality, which my fieldwork suggested are the strongest, most durable, and most complex ones. I will touch on other kinds of ties while discussing the qualitative evidence.

### *Geographic Clustering*

Physical concentration, meanwhile, as outlined in Chapter 2, serves to protect and strengthen the social capital between comrades and, by facilitating continued face-to-face interactions, lowers information asymmetries and reduces incentives for subordinates and commanders to defect. It also extends the ‘shadow of the future’ for interaction, enhancing the cooperation regime.<sup>167</sup>

## **IV. A Theory of Post-War Collective Capacity**

### *Divergent Configurations*

To predict the extent of bankruptcy of an ex-armed organization, my model stipulates that it is necessary to combine these recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns (See Figure 5). Different configurations generate distinct social networks and physical clustering and thus divergent probabilities of organizational survival.

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<sup>166</sup> See Anderson 1983.

<sup>167</sup> See Axelrod 1984 and Fearon 1998 for discussions of the role of shadows of the future in facilitating cooperation.



**Figure 5. Post-War Organizational Bankruptcy versus Survival**

		<i>Multifaceted Networks</i>	
<i>Post-War Physical Clustering</i>		<i>Weak (Dispersed Recruitment)</i>	<i>Strong (Concentrated Recruitment)</i>
	<i>Low</i>	Bankrupt	Intermediate Case* (High decay rate)
	<i>High</i>	Intermediate Case	Strongly Intact

\*Note: If dispersed, social capital between combatants erodes rapidly.

*Observable Implications*

*H<sub>1</sub>*: Organizations characterized by low recruitment dispersion, and thus dense ties, and high post-war clustering should preserve a strong capacity for collective action.

*H<sub>2</sub>*: We should observe armed groups whose social bonds are instead thin, and whose fighters disperse to different places, to go bankrupt.

There are two intermediate cases:

*H<sub>3</sub>*: Armed groups which recruited in a concentrated fashion, but whose combatants dispersed after demobilizing will retain an initial intermediate capacity for collective action, but this capacity will dissolve quickly.

*H<sub>4</sub>*: Finally, we should expect armed groups with weak pre-war networks and high post-war clustering to constitute an intermediate case of post-war organizational survival. These groups’ fighters originate from multiple regions, but do not return home after disarming; rather, they concentrate in their combat zones as ‘squatters.’

**V. Post-War Collective Capacity in Practice**

Having set forth the parameters of a model of post-war organizational survival, I turn to evaluating the model’s analytic value in the three case studies. I explore how armed groups navigate the path from war to peace. I look at the inner workings of the organizations, at the dynamics between the leaders and followers and between the combatant colleagues. I seek to understand how and why commanders vary in their recruitment decisions and former fighters in their migration choices and ask whether these strategies can account for variation in group bankruptcy and individual defection in the aftermath of peace accords. The chapter concludes with a quantitative analysis of the model.

## Medellín's Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN): Bankruptcy Averted

### *Local Recruits*

The BCN was comprised of armed elements that were local and linked to the neighborhoods in which they operated. The BCN commanders all hailed from Medellín. To fill the ranks of their organization, they built upon the region's well-developed industry of violence.<sup>168</sup> Through a complex process of annihilation, negotiation, absorption, and domination,<sup>169</sup> they co-opted and recruited the 'primary' elements of the conflict – the neighborhood gangs (*parches* and *combos*). *Parches* were adolescents' first encounter with violence, their 'kindergartens in criminality.' A *parche* consisted of a small group of friends who 'hung out' and became involved with minor criminal and violent activities in their neighborhoods. The BCN also came to reign over all of Medellín's *combos*, the next tier in the hierarchy of violence. *Combos* were criminal organizations composed of between five and twenty members, which were very territorial and local in nature, but sold their services to more sophisticated armed groups. *Combo* members were stationed on the street corners of their communities and patrolled several-block radiuses. They constituted the link between the neighborhood populations and the macro armed groups. In 2000, Medellín had 221 *combos*, comprising 6,991 men.<sup>170</sup> 37% of the BCN fighters claimed to have belonged to a gang prior to joining the paramilitaries.<sup>171</sup> To recruit these micro gangs, the BCN adopted the following methods as described by a BCN commander: "My work was to ... conduct a study neighborhood

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<sup>168</sup> Diego Murrillo, alias 'Don Berna,' Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Medellín, 16–17 July 2007.

<sup>169</sup> Instituto de Estudios Políticos de la Universidad de Antioquia 2007.

<sup>170</sup> Alonso Jaramillo (Ex-Militia, Scholar of the Conflict, and Director of the Security Branch of the Reintegration Program), interview by author, Medellín, 27 February 2008.

<sup>171</sup> This data was provided by the Programa Paz y Reconciliación. This figure is, however, an underestimation for two reasons. One, a majority of the BCN former members joined the BHG and demobilized with this latter group. The ex-BHG fighters were not asked this question. Two, many non-combatants demobilized with the paramilitaries in order to gain access to the economic, educational, and psychological benefits of the reintegration program (See Appendix C). These individuals are unlikely to have belonged previously to a gang.

by neighborhood; to do a census of how many boys were in each *combo* ... We completed this work in the neighborhoods, contracting all of Medellín's *combos* to be part of our ranks."<sup>172</sup> In addition to the primary violent actors, the BCN also commissioned the 'secondary' elements of organized crime – the hitmen-for-hire (*sicarios*), offices,<sup>173</sup> and powerful gangs (*bandas*).<sup>174</sup> These *bandas* (*Terraza, Triana, Frank*) were the most organized and powerful of the criminal entities. Less territorial, but strongly hierarchical, each *banda* specialized in a certain type of criminal activity: bank robbery, kidnapping, extortion, narcotrafficking, etc. Finally, the BCN recruited the 'tertiary' elements of the war – the 'traditional armed actors:' insurgents and counterinsurgents.<sup>175</sup>

### *Multifaceted Networks*

The Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN) was thus composed almost entirely of local fighters from the 'HR (Home Region)'. 75% of the BCN combatants were born in the city of Medellín and its surrounding area.<sup>176</sup> Moreover, a majority of the BCN combatants had strong ties prior to joining the paramilitaries. During my conversations with ex-combatants in Medellín, many reported having friends (from elementary school and their neighborhoods) or family members

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<sup>172</sup> *Revista Semana* 2005.

<sup>173</sup> It is important to note that the *Oficina* (Office) should not be understood as a physical space; rather it was an association of distinct criminal structures to coordinate assassinations, robberies, kidnappings, extortions, and drug trafficking. See Instituto de Estudios Políticos de la Universidad de Antioquia 2007, p. 54. Former paramilitary commander, Doble Cero, described the *oficina* as the "office of complaints and claims, or the Attorney General of the narco-traffickers, which by following certain existing norms among the mafias, repair[ed] 'inconveniences' generated by the narco business in exchange for a 30% cut on the profits at stake."

<sup>174</sup> These structures enjoyed sophisticated arms, equipment and personnel and tended to sell their services to the highest bidder. Jorge Gaviria (Director Medellín's Reintegration Program), interview by author, Medellín, 19 January 2008. See also Marin and Adarve 2001.

<sup>175</sup> Ex-BHG Combatants, interview by author, *Comuna 4*, Medellín, 18 February 2008. To subjugate the tertiary elements, Don Berna's army had to wage war against the other paramilitary structure with a presence in Medellín: the Bloque Metro. Metro's commander, alias 'Doble Cero,' was opposed to the ascendance of narco-traffickers within the paramilitary organizations. He consequently defected from the Self-Defense Groups' federation (AUC), causing its remaining members to declare war on him. After vicious fighting with Metro, Don Berna prevailed, killing Doble Cero and "absorbing" Metro's structure and members. See Espinal, Ramírez, and Sierra 2007; Cívico 2009.

<sup>176</sup> These figures come from the nine surveys described in Appendix C. 67% of BHG were born in this zone.

(siblings, cousins, partners) already in the BCN structure prior to joining. My interviewees who had previously belonged to a criminal group (*parche*, *combo*, or *banda*) attested to having a “very strong sense of belonging” to these groups. When the paramilitaries summoned the leaders of their gangs and offered: “join us or face the consequences,” they opted to join in a collective fashion (those that did not were killed). Most of these ex-combatants reported that they also came to strongly identify with the Bloque Cacique Nutibara, suggesting that their loyalty to their *combos* transferred to the BCN. One former fighter described to me, “In the criminal world, I was a rogue, a scoundrel (*pillo*), then when I entered the Bloque Cacique Nutibara, I was a paramilitary (*paraco*). It was a very big responsibility. Before, I made money myself. In the BCN, I was paid to *do things*.” Ex-combatants I interviewed felt part of a larger mission, of a movement that afforded them a status upgrade. “I felt much more respect from the community when I joined the paramilitaries, it collaborated with me much more.”<sup>177</sup> Cacique Nutibara members who had not belonged to a criminal gang also testified to joining collectively with their groups of friends. In the context of few economic opportunities and excessive abuses by the guerrillas’ militias, when their friends said, “let’s go join the *autodefensas*, it will be cool,” they went. Sergio Mauricio specified his ties with other combatants: “They were the boys with whom we had always done everything together, with whom we had studied together.” As a result of these long-standing relationships and friendships, the BCN comrades’ ties tended to run deep. The co-optation of these preexisting, micro, armed groups with intimate knowledge of their community members’ reputations also conferred to the BCN the block-by-block reconnaissance necessary to staff itself with the most trustworthy members whose loyalty would persist beyond a ceasefire.

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<sup>177</sup> Recidivist Ex-combatants, interviews by author, Bellavista Prison, Medellín, April-May 2008.

The BCN linked the small neighborhood-level armed units into a disciplined, hierarchical organization. Former combatants describe the changes they experienced as they graduated from their *combos* and joined the paramilitaries. “In the *paras*, it was more tense, you had to ask permission for absolutely everything. You had to report everything. Criminals don’t have to ask permission for anything; you are your own boss.” Another explained how, “In the BCN, it was much more rigorous, I had more responsibility.” “It was more repressed because I didn’t have the liberty that I had when I was in the *parche*,” added his friend. In a final interview, a former Cacique militant captured the essence of BCN membership: “I became less rational in that I stopped measuring the consequences of my actions because I had to obey orders, period.”<sup>178</sup> The BCN commanders appointed neighborhood level mid-ranking officers, which exploited the deep local knowledge of the *combos* to target defectors. The neighborhood gangs possessed an elaborate informant network, which enabled the BCN commanders to credibly threaten punishment for disobedience and reward good performance.

#### *Physical Clustering of Combatants After Disarmament*

On November 25th at dawn, the BCN soldiers left their homes to disarm. They went downtown to the Palace of Expositions where the formal disarmament ceremony took place. They were then transferred to a ‘concentration area’ in a nearby town, La Ceja, to be registered and “re-educated” in civilian affairs. Three weeks later, they boarded 32 buses, which *returned them to their homes*.<sup>179</sup> They “arrived back to the neighborhoods in which they had combated, street by street, with the militias, guerrillas, and Bloque Metro paramilitaries... now, they arrived as civilians, hoping to redo their lives.”<sup>180</sup> Thus, 98% of the BCN paramilitaries remained in

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<sup>178</sup> Ex-combatants (BCN), interviews by author, Medellín, March–April 2008.

<sup>179</sup> See High Commissioner for Peace, Luis Carlos Restrepo’s statements prior to the BCN’s disarmament, “All members of the BCN will go to their homes” (Yarce 2003d).

<sup>180</sup> Yarce 2003e.

Medellín post-demobilization.<sup>181</sup> Contrast this with the non-local Vencedores de Arauca of which only 6% remained in this bloc's zone of operation or the Frente Vichada of which 0% opted to continue living where it had fought.<sup>182</sup>

The simple facts that the BCN combatants had multifaceted networks, and were geographically concentrated post-demobilization, facilitated collective action and enabled the structure to endure. It did so in the form of the Democracy Corporation (Corporación Democracia (CD)), which was founded on December 10, 2003 as a result of the peace agreement. All of the 868 members of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara and the 2,033 Bloque Héroes de Granada combatants automatically joined the Corporation; it was part of the terms of their demobilization. Thus, according to most members, the decision to join the Corporation was voluntary, but automatic.<sup>183</sup> CD President Acevedo outlined how the “bloc did not lose its structure; organizationally nothing changed. It maintained the same pyramid and hierarchy as it transformed from illegality to legality.” The top commanders became the directors of the Corporation. The second and third-tier leaders became official CD members of the board. They carried out the Corporation's operations and activities through the mid-ranking commanders who became the ‘coordinators.’ As in the former military structure, these ‘coordinators’ were each charged with a territorial zone (usually several neighborhoods) and a group of 37 demobilized combatants.<sup>184</sup> They received direction and funding from the headquarters of the CD.<sup>185</sup> Finally, “the paramilitary rank and file became the Corporation's assembly (member base).”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> 85% of the BHG soldiers remained in Medellín and the surrounding area in which they had operated.

<sup>182</sup> These figures derive from the nine surveys described in Appendix C.

<sup>183</sup> Ex-BCN Commander and President of the Corporación Democracia, interview by author, Medellín, 22 February 2008. See also the Corporación's website: [www.corporaciondemocracia.org](http://www.corporaciondemocracia.org) and the peace accord: Alto Comisionado para la Paz 2003.

<sup>184</sup> Alcaldía de Medellín 2007.

<sup>185</sup> Gustavo Villegas (Former Director of Medellín's Reintegration Program and Former Secretary of Government), interview by author, Medellín, 4 March 2008.

<sup>186</sup> Acevedo (President of the CD), interview by author, Medellín, 2008.

According to the Corporation's former legal representative: "In the CD, everything works by orders. The boys never attend a meeting or participate in a project of their own volition. They do so only if the coordinators give them the order. The demobilized are very loyal to their jefes."<sup>187</sup>

The Corporation operated as a mechanism of control for the commanders to keep tabs on their rank and file and maintain them in line and loyal.<sup>188</sup> One of the coordinators described his job, "My principal commitment is to ensure that my men do not violate the parameters of the peace agreement."<sup>189</sup> Another commented, "I believe that my leadership has increased [since demobilizing]... if it hadn't then I wouldn't have the moral authority to direct the 100 to 120 boys [ex-combatants] that are here in the neighborhood."<sup>190</sup> The CD structure legitimized the status of the commanders and mid-ranking officers and perpetuated their often-authoritarian governing style. As a result, the rank and file was unable to exit the hierarchical structure.

The rank and file and commanders continued to interact face-to-face on a frequent basis and to maintain their rapports. An interesting comparison can be made between the BCN combatants who reintegrated where they had operated militarily and the ex-paramilitaries from other brigades who had operated elsewhere in the country but migrated to Medellín to reintegrate (heretofore called *Returnee* and *Displaced* ex-combatants). In response to the question, "How would you describe your current relationship with the leaders of your former armed group?," the demobilized from BCN demonstrated much closer relations with their former superiors, characterizing these relationships as 'respect,' 'friendship,' 'support,' and 'gratitude.' In contrast, *Returnees* and *Displaced* (non-local combatants) described their relationships with their ex-commanders as "non-existent" (45%) or "distant" (33%). Only 7% of ex-BCN combatants

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<sup>187</sup> Former legal representative of the Corporación Democracia, interview by author, Medellín, 3 March 2008.

<sup>188</sup> Former legal representative of the Corporación Democracia, interview by author, Medellín, 3 March 2008.

<sup>189</sup> Ex-BCN commander, *Comuna 4*, interview by author, Medellín, 2008.

<sup>190</sup> Quoted in Programa de Paz y Reconciliación 2007.

responded this way. The *Returnees* and *Displaced* went further to express that what they most enjoyed about their demobilization was “not being a member of a Bloque with the hierarchy and restrictions that such membership implies.”<sup>191</sup> Non-locally deployed groups did not possess the dense networks and physical concentration necessary to maintain hierarchical bonds.

While non-local armed organizations’ leadership was disintegrating, the BCN commanders, especially Don Berna, continued to enjoy normative authority. According to BCN ideologue, Fabio Acevedo, “The whole BCN organization rotated around Don Berna – he was the central axis.” Piedad Moreno, an OAS Peace Mission verifier, described the demobilization ceremony of Héroes de Granada: “On the date of the planned disarmament of the BHG in Antioquia, Don Berna found himself in the neighboring state of Córdoba,<sup>192</sup> but the *muchachos* refused to demobilize until he had arrived. So the government was forced to transport him in a helicopter to the farm where the demobilization ceremony was occurring.” Moreno continued:

It was the most impressive scene: 2,033 men and women of very diverse backgrounds all over the hills dressed in white, waving white flags, holding huge signs reading, ‘thank you for the peace.’ When Don Berna arrived, symbolically from the sky, everyone cheered. His combatants were awe-struck, euphoric, deeply moved at his presence. Many shed tears. It was so special for the combatants to see him. He was their king, their “gangster,” a martyr [especially as he had survived so many attempts against his life and so much violence]. They were emotional at the sight of him.<sup>193</sup>

Don Berna continued to exercise normative power both among the mid-ranking commanders and among the base even once he was behind bars. CD President described to me, “Don Berna continues to be our leader, very much so. He is so powerful in the organization, not just

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<sup>191</sup> These data are derived from the Organization of International Migration’s survey of reintegration program beneficiaries (Sistema de Acompañamiento, Monitoreo, y Evaluación) (See Appendix C). The survey was applied to 1111 of the 1384 ‘Returnees,’ 742 of the local 868 BCN ex-combatants and 1411 of the 1568 ex-BHG; thus, nearly the entire population of former fighters in Medellín.

<sup>192</sup> Don Berna had been accused of the murder of a congressperson during the ceasefire and had turned himself in.

<sup>193</sup> Interview by author, Medellín, 21 February 2008.



militarily, but because he is a man of ideas.”<sup>194</sup> While in the Colombian prisons, Berna received daily visits from his men and continued to run Medellín from his cell (to such an extent that he was extradited).

The Democracy Corporation maintained its members through credible threats of coercion, norms of reciprocity, and side-payments that were possible due to their physical clustering. Combatants’ coordinators knew where their ‘boys’ lived and worked and thus had the means to discipline them. Additionally, all of the former fighters’ friends belonged to the Corporation and so exit from the group would have risked these relationships. The Corporation further influenced its members’ behavior through the side-payment of social acceptance. As will be illustrated in Chapter 6, the paramilitaries enjoyed the tolerance of the local population in the majority of Medellín’s neighborhoods. This meant that the ex-BCN members were not ashamed to be identified as ‘demobilized persons’ and associated with a network of ex-combatants; rather, they perceived such membership as affording them higher status and influence. The side-payments at the commanders’ disposal also included economic and legal benefits. The Corporation helped the ex-combatants find employment, funded their projects, and provided them legal counsel. In return, it gained their loyalty (at least in the medium run). Former BCN fighters launched businesses, NGOs, and campaigns together, which further strengthened their ties and the collective structure. Ex-BCN soldiers in *El Pesebre*, for example, formed a small farming cooperative at which all the ex-combatants from the neighborhood worked and Walter, the former commander of *Santa Cruz*, created an association, which washed buses and employed all of his former soldiers. Cooperatives of this sort proliferated all over Medellín with the exception of several neighborhoods in *Comuna 13* discussed below.

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<sup>194</sup> Interview by author, Medellín, 22 February 2008.

In sum, repeated interactions through physical concentration and multifaceted bonds linked local combatants to the BCN organization and enabled the local group to sustain disciplined collective action. The BCN's chain of control survived and the organization stayed intact post-demobilization as the Democracy Corporation: "the organization which represents the ex-combatants of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara."<sup>195</sup>

*The Counterfactual: Comuna 13*

Up until now, the analysis of this case has focused on the trajectory of the local BCN paramilitaries in the majority of Medellín's neighborhoods. However, there were several neighborhoods of Medellín in which the BCN fighters were *non-local*: *Independencia I, II, III, El Salado*, and *20 de Julio* (neighborhoods of *Comuna 13*).<sup>196</sup> These communities provide an illuminating counterfactual while maximizing the level of controls. *Comuna 13* had a divergent social history to the rest of the marginal areas of Medellín. The guerrillas' militias were deeply entrenched in the communities and local family networks. Whereas in the other zones of Medellín, communities "supported the paramilitaries,"<sup>197</sup> in *Comuna 13*, when the paramilitaries entered in 2002, "90 percent of the population supported the rebel militias."<sup>198</sup> Thus, the BCN, mistrustful of the *Comuna 13* population,<sup>199</sup> deployed its fighters from other *barrios* of Medellín to *Comuna 13* in the aftermath of the military Operation *Orión*.<sup>200</sup> The BCN never recruited in the neighborhoods of *Comuna 13*.

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<sup>195</sup> Alto Comisionado Para la Paz 2003.

<sup>196</sup> I use the term *Comuna 13* for the purpose of exposition. However, I am referring to the five neighborhoods of *Independencia I, II, III, El Salado*, and *20 de Julio*. The paramilitaries were local to other neighborhoods in *Comuna 13* such as *El Pesebre*.

<sup>197</sup> Recidivist Ex-Combatants, interview by author, Bellavista Prison, April 2008.

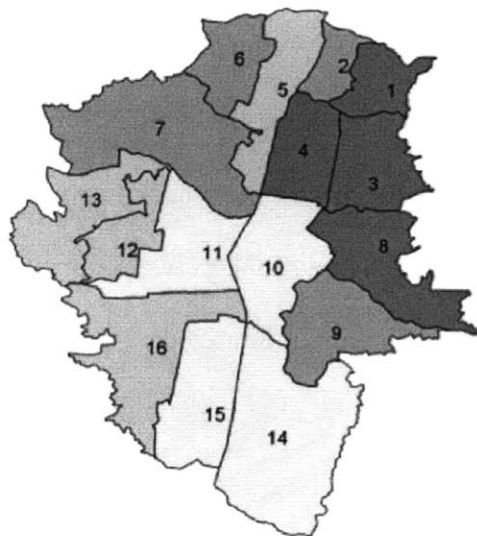
<sup>198</sup> Ex-BCN Combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 13*, Medellín, March 2008. See also *El Colombiano* 2002a and *El Colombiano* 2002b.

<sup>199</sup> Whereas in other neighborhoods, former paramilitary combatants openly admitted to having previously belonged to the guerrillas, ex-BCN fighters in *San Javier* scorned at this idea: "We have only ever fought *against* the subversion" (Ex-combatants (BCN), interview by author, *El Pesebre*, *Comuna 13*, Medellín, March 2008).

<sup>200</sup> Gustavo Villegas, interview with author, Medellín, 4 March 2008. See also Restrepo 2003; Defensoría del Pueblo

Accordingly, post-demobilization, relatively few ex-BCN fighters remained in *Comuna* 13; most returned to the neighborhoods in which they had grown up. Additionally, during the war, the BCN combatants had occupied many homes of victims they had displaced in *Comuna* 13. The transitional justice process and pressures from the civilian population forced them to return these homes to their rightful owners and to migrate back to their communities of origin on the other side of the city. Whereas 182–400 former combatants lived in *each* of the *Comunas* 1 (*Popular*), 8 (*Villa Hermosa*), 3 (*Manrique*), 4 (*Aranjuez*), and *Bello* after the demobilization, only 79 total lived in *Comuna* 13 and, of these, only 13 had operated there during the war (See Map 2). The BCN battalion that had fought in *Comuna* 13 disappeared and its fighters joined the intact, former BCN combatant associations proliferating elsewhere in Medellín, in the zones in which the BCN had deployed locally.

**Map 2. Number of Ex-Combatants by *Comuna* Post-Demobilization, Medellín**



\*Note: These figures are from the Programa Paz y Reconciliación in 2008. The majority of ex-combatants were concentrated in and local to *Comunas* 1, 3, 4, 8 (with 182-413 ex-BCN fighters in each of these communities). *Comunas* 2, 6, 7, and 9 each had between 81-181 ex-BCN combatants. The communities shown in the lightest shades, including *Comuna* 13, had low ex-combatant

2002; Aricapa 2005. The library in *Comuna* 13 also collects fascinating social histories of the violence.

populations (the paramilitaries did not recruit in them). *Comunas* 5, 10, 11, 14, 15, and parts of 16 board Medellín's river and highways, which run through the city's center. These are wealthier, more developed neighborhoods, which never fell under armed group control. *Comuna 13* is thus an exception and interesting counter-case. It had a non-local paramilitary force deployed to it during the war.

### **Urabá: Organizational Capacity Preserved**

“They demobilized, but ... kept the same structure. The paramilitaries are hidden in their activities... They do it to control territory.” – Yimmy, Justice and Peace Inter-Ecclesiastical Commission, interview by Human Rights Watch, 2010<sup>201</sup>

#### *Local Recruits*

Similar to the majority of the BCN's battalions, the organizations which operated in the northwest corner of Colombia – Urabá – were composed of local fighters. I focus here on the trajectory of the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas (BEC) as it is emblematic of that taken by several armed groups in Urabá, including the Bloque Héroes de Tolová (BHT) and Frente Bananero (FB). I highlight the counter-case of the Frente Turbo at the chapter's end.

Bloque Elmer Cárdenas recruited *and* deployed its soldiers in Urabá during the war. Its commanders and foot soldiers were thus densely bonded and stayed physically concentrated after disarming. As a result, the demobilized BEC enjoyed a collective-action capable structure and a network of loyal recruits. In contrast to Medellín's BCN, however, it used that structure to redeploy and that network to lure its former fighters back to war. Chapter 7 explains variation in remilitarization across time and space. Here I look only at collective capacity, which can be used for any social, political, or economic action, militarized or not.

Nearly all the BEC recruits were local to the communities in which they had operated.<sup>202</sup> In his testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Commander 'El Alemán' referred to his armed

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<sup>201</sup> Human Rights Watch 2010. This case is also briefly described in the US Department of State 2009, p. 75.

<sup>202</sup> Freddy Rendón Herrera, Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Medellín, 5-6 June 2007.

group's territory as the "communities that we influenced and *from which came our men.*"<sup>203</sup> He went on, "65% of the group's members were afro-descendents, 32% *chilapos*, and 3% indigenous because they were inhabitants of the zones of operation."<sup>204</sup> The ex-combatant surveys indicate that 80% of BEC fighters deployed in their home region. While there was inevitably some transfer of men between the battalions, former political commander, Alejandro Toro, confirmed, "Each of the BEC fronts was comprised of people who were native to each zone. In the northern Urabá, we recruited from Necoclí and Arboletes. In Chocó, we recruited chocoanos, etc. We did not send people from Urabá Antioqueño to fight in Chocó because it didn't work. They did not know the zone; they weren't accustomed to the rivers, to the mosquitoes, etc.... Many of the fighters even lived with their families while they were operating with our self-defense forces."<sup>205</sup>

### *Multifaceted Networks.*

The BEC paramilitaries exploited two social webs to fill their ranks: the network of the People's Liberation Army (EPL) and that of Urabá's Convivir. These webs afforded the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas *multifaceted networks*: social links that created trust and social pressures that bonded combatants to the BEC after surrendering their weapons.

The paramilitaries (re) formed in Urabá in 1991 amidst full-scale war between the FARC and 'demobilized' EPL rebels and exploited this violence. The deepening of the conflict led hoards of ex-EPL guerrillas to bandwagon with the paramilitaries and join their ranks for

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<sup>203</sup> *Revista Semana*, 2004b. Emphasis added.

<sup>204</sup> Freddy Rendón Herrera, Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Medellín, 5-6 June 2007.

<sup>205</sup> Interview by author, Necoclí, June 2008.

security.<sup>206</sup> The result was an unexpected alliance between insurgents and counterinsurgents to defeat the FARC.<sup>207</sup> The Bloque Elmer Cárdenas thus gained access to and capitalized on the EPL's wide-reaching social web of militants, a web several decades in the making. These ex-EPL soldiers (*Esperanzados*) were densely bonded and possessed the deep local and territorial knowledge and intelligence to recruit the most loyal members whose commitment to the movement would endure after the war. For this reason, paramilitary commander, Carlos Castaño, referred to the FARC's extermination campaign of the *Esperanzados* as the FARC's "worst error and the first step to its destruction in the Banana axis of Urabá."<sup>208</sup> The paramilitaries married this strong insurgent network with a strong counterinsurgent one: that of *Convivir*, the cooperative neighborhood watch groups.<sup>209</sup> It follows that a majority of the BEC combatants enjoyed strong ties prior to joining the paramilitaries and the *paras* were able to recruit "the most committed youth."<sup>210</sup>

These multifaceted networks survived the DDR process. A former combatant in Caurallo described to me "the union, unity, and cohesion among the demobilized."<sup>211</sup> During community gatherings, the demobilized sat together in a group; they remained friends; they laughed together;

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<sup>206</sup> Faber (Director of Superban), interview by author, Apartadó, June 2008. The exact number of *Esperanzados* that joined the paramilitaries is a matter of debate. The Left and ex-EPL political party underestimate the numbers. However, my interviews pointed to the significance of the paramilitaries' recruitment of ex-EPL combatants. For example, in the early 1990s, Luis Fernando worked with the EPL peace process. He claimed that a huge number of ex-EPLs entered the *autodefensas* (Luis Fernando (Director of SENA's Programs for Ex-Combatants in Urabá), interview by author, Riosucio, Chocó, July 2008). Another ex-combatant confirmed that a majority of the members of his EPL dissident group joined the *autodefensas* because "the war was so fierce at this moment in Urabá and so many demobilized were being killed by the FARC. Carlos Castaño protected all of us. If it hadn't been for him, we would have all been killed." My interviewee had been shot twice by the FARC, once in the chest, once in the arm (Demobilized from Bloque Bananero, interview by author, Apartadó, 26 June 2008). See also García 2001.

<sup>207</sup> Romero 2003.

<sup>208</sup> Aranguren Molina 2001.

<sup>209</sup> The *Convivir* were private, armed organizations for surveillance and intelligence (Cooperativas de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada). They were comprised of civilians organized and trained by government authorities to protect their neighborhoods against crime and violence. See Duncan 2007; International Crisis Group 2003.

<sup>210</sup> Ex-paramilitary (Former EPL Member), interview by author, Apartadó, May 2008.

<sup>211</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Caurallo, Urabá, 3 July 2008.

they continued to *parchar* (hang out).<sup>212</sup> In explaining his enduring relationship with the other ex-combatants, one former BEC member told me how he does everything with the other demobilized; he works with them, studies with them; “we are all very good friends.”<sup>213</sup> This theme was repeated during my interviews.<sup>214</sup>

### *Physical Concentration After Disarming*

In Urabá post-demobilization, the combatants returned home to their ‘regular residences’ (usually where they were already stationed) or collectively relocated for occupational purposes to one of the BEC’s strongholds where the *Construpaz* projects were to be developed. There, they stayed in encampments of former fighters.<sup>215</sup> These two trends in the ex-BEC soldiers’ post-war migration meant that they remained physically clustered. Eighty six percent of the ex-BEC fighters continued to reside in the zones they had patrolled.<sup>216</sup>

The geographical concentration of the combatants also meant that the strong hierarchical relationships and command and control structure endured into the reintegration phase. BEC’s leader, El Alemán’s, relationships with some of his subordinates remained so close that they called him ‘papá’ (father).<sup>217</sup> “Whereas in other regions, many of the mid-ranking commanders were trying to take pieces of the brigades for themselves, grab at the loot of the brigade, position themselves to have part of the structure, territory, and economic resources after the demobilization, here in Urabá, that didn’t happen.”<sup>218</sup> In part, the local nature of the top, mid,

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<sup>212</sup> These observations partially derive from meetings I attended in Carepa and Chigorodó of the ‘Leadership Formation Course’ run by SENA for ex-combatant and civilian leaders in the communities, 25 June 2008; 26 June 2008.

<sup>213</sup> Ex-combatant (BEC, Coordinator of *Construpaz* in Riosucio), interview by author, Riosucio, 2 July 2008.

<sup>214</sup> Ex-combatants (BEC), interviews by author, Apartadó, Necoclí, June 2008.

<sup>215</sup> Diego Garcia (OAS-MAPP), interview by author, Bogotá, 24 January 2008.

<sup>216</sup> These figures derive from the surveys discussed in Appendix C. According to reintegration personnel in Riosucio, the demobilized combatants insist, “I want to be with my family; I want to be in my community” (Reintegration Personnel, interview by author, Riosucio, Chocó, June 2008).

<sup>217</sup> *Revista Semana* 2006.

<sup>218</sup> Ex-combatant (BEC), interview by author, Necoclí, June 2008.

and low-level officers prevented this; remaining in the zone, they left no vacuum to exploit, but also “the leadership was clear, and the BEC was very unified at the moment of demobilization; it had a clear command and control structure.”<sup>219</sup> In the aftermath of disarmament, OAS Peace Monitor, Helena, reported that “El Alemán still ha[d] total control... The demobilized [were] always saying, ‘We need to ask our *jefe*’s permission.’ The hierarchy [was] intact. The demobilized use[d] the words, ‘*jefe*,’ ‘*patrón*.’... El Alemán still enjoy[ed] the solidarity and the loyalty of his men. He [was] a charismatic leader,”<sup>220</sup> who also shared multifaceted bonds with his men. For example, when the authorities ordered El Alemán’s transfer to prison, his ex-combatants (and some civilians) collected signatures to petition the Attorney General to annul the accusations against him and enable him to return home to Urabá. Similarly, when he gave his first testimony in Medellín under the Justice and Peace Law, 150 of his ex-combatants arrived in 13 buses from Necoclí to show support for their leader. Even once in prison outside of the Urabá region, he exercised influence over his men, if not directly, then through his brother, Daniel Rendón (‘Don Mario’). The local nature of the commanders and BEC’s institutionalized hierarchy facilitated the BEC’s organizational survival.

As a result, the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas’ collective action persisted in the form of a civic association, *Construpaz* (Constructors of Peace). It retained its social capital, organizational know-how, war training, territory, command and control, mid-level commanders, recruits, corruptive ties with the state, and non-denunciation by civilian communities. It was on the basis of this structure that ‘Don Mario,’ was able to construct the remilitarized Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC). Essentially, irrespective of the motivations for remobilization, the

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<sup>219</sup> Alejandro Toro, interview by author, Necoclí, July 2008. “The BEC enjoyed a high level of organization, most of its members had an identification card, good health, received salaries...” (OAS 2006)

<sup>220</sup> Helena (OAS-MAPP Peace Monitor), interview by author, Cali, November 2007.



Bloque Elmer Cárdenas had the organizational structure to do so. The Frente Turbo, as will be explored briefly below, did not.

*Social and Organizational Capital* According to Lieutenant Colonel of the National Police of Urabá, “It is not difficult for ‘Don Mario’ to rearm because of his brother, ‘El Aleman’ [BEC’s top commander] who gave him all the contacts and the military and organizational structure.”<sup>221</sup> A senior government official shared this view: the remilitarized BEC “is the strongest rearmed group in Colombia,” he argued, “because it acquired an already existing organizational structure. It is easy to go from latently to actively armed.”<sup>222</sup>

After demobilizing, all 1536 BEC ex-combatants “voluntarily joined” *Construpaz*.<sup>223</sup> The NGO, in turn, preserved the BEC’s hierarchical management apparatus; the commanders kept tabs on the mid-ranking officers who, in turn, monitored the activities of the rank and file.<sup>224</sup> *Construpaz* closely replicated the former paramilitary brigade’s organizational structure. For example, it had an ‘advisor’ stationed in each municipality who patrolled the ex-fighters in his/her theater and reported regularly to the top command in Necoclí.<sup>225</sup> Ex-combatants confided that, at *Construpaz* meetings, the leaders would collect their cell phone numbers and addresses.<sup>226</sup> The civic association also provided the former foot soldiers’ employment, which deepened their dependence on their superiors. Specifically, the BEC members were required to invest 80% of their individual monthly reintegration stipend in the Cooperative, which used the funds to start ‘productive projects’ of rubber, yucca, pepper, and wood. These projects then

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<sup>221</sup> Colombian National Police, interview by author, Carepa, Urabá, July 4, 2008.

<sup>222</sup> Interview by author, Bogotá, 24 January 2008.

<sup>223</sup> Ex-combatant (BEC), interview by author, Riosucio, 2 June 2008. However, according to an international peace monitor, “There was no discussion pre-demobilization about the creation of this organization, the demobilized weren’t informed before demobilization, just at the moment of demobilization, they were told to ‘sign on the dot’ and then told, ‘Voilà you are members of Construpaz’” (Interview by author, Necoclí, July 2008).

<sup>224</sup> Ex-combatants (BEC), interviews by author, Riosucio, 3 July 2008.

<sup>225</sup> Coordinator of BEC Ex-combatants, interview by author, Riosucio, 2 July 2008.

<sup>226</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Necoclí, June 2008.

provided the ex-fighters jobs and salaries, strengthening their association with and loyalty to the BEC structure. According to former political leader, Alejandro Toro, the BEC decided it needed to support the *muchachos* in their reintegration process so that they would not “flee the organization.”<sup>227</sup> Construpaz further ensured that the formerly militarized group outbid the state for the ex-combatants’ loyalty by minimizing the former fighters’ interactions with the government reintegration program. Essentially, the Cooperative “auto-managed” the demobilization of its soldiers, depending only minimally on the state.<sup>228</sup>

‘Don Mario’ exploited this social capital to return to militarized illegality.<sup>229</sup> Specifically, he drew roughly two-thirds of the structure back into arms while leaving the other third as a ‘front organization’ staffed with ‘civilians’ who could serve specific functions.<sup>230</sup> To account for the large share of the organization lured back into arms, the model would predict that the ex-militants’ strong bonds and negligible post-war emigration from Urabá enabled the commanders to re-recruit their subordinates on a significant basis.<sup>231</sup> The vast majority of the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia were ex-paramilitaries; few were new recruits.<sup>232</sup> Conflict analysts described to me, “It is not a phenomenon like in Norte de Santander where the rearming is crime, crime mixing with individual ex-combatants. In Urabá, it is *only* collectively demobilized ex-combatants.”<sup>233</sup> The recruitment mechanisms were fivefold.

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<sup>227</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Necoclí, July 2008.

<sup>228</sup> Gersen Arias (Analyst, Fundación Ideas para la Paz), interview by author, Bogotá, July 2008, May 2009.

<sup>229</sup> Colombian Army Intelligence, Brigade 17, interview by author, Carepa, 4 July 2008; Ex-paramilitary commander’s family member, interview by author, Apartadó, June 2008.

<sup>230</sup> Some ex-paramilitaries find themselves “by night, armed with rifles [in the remilitarized units] and by day, participating in the reintegration program.” They negotiated a partial affiliation with the redeployed armies (Ex-combatants, interviews by author, Bogotá, 20 May 2008).

<sup>231</sup> National Police, interview by author, Carepa, 4 July 2008.

<sup>232</sup> National Police, interview by author, Apartadó, June 2008. BEC Ex-combatants in San Pedro, Riosucio, Chigorodó, and Carepa all ostensibly joined the remilitarized units.

<sup>233</sup> Interview by author, Bogotá, 20 May 2008. Emphasis added.

The first was that of social networks. Construpaz' director explained, "Many who have joined the [renewed] armed groups do so because of their links of friendship, because of the social webs."<sup>234</sup> The BEC combatants' multifaceted networks linked their status and identities to the organization and applied social pressures to cooperate with their former comrades to whom they felt strongly linked. These networks also provided each individual ex-soldier reassurance that, if a part of the BEC network remobilized, others would follow and that it would be safe to follow; norms of reciprocity were activated (Petersen 2001). An ex-combatant confirmed to me: "If you are friends with someone [a demobilized] and he rejoins an armed group and you are talking with him, you are assumed to be an informant of the group and so you are killed or threatened by the enemy. So basically, you can't even talk with your friends unless you rejoin."<sup>235</sup> A perverse form of social pressure driven by the 'enemy's' collective targeting based on guilt by association seems to have been operative. Rearming by some ex-paramilitaries had reverberating negative externalities on the entire reintegration process. The pressures were also vertical; the mid-level commanders called mostly on the members of their former units to re-join. They retained the normative authority, respect, and influence to exercise pressure on the demobilized soldiers previously under their command. The ex-combatants' membership in *Construpaz*, meanwhile, kept them "strongly connected and in constant communication" with their mentors and superiors.<sup>236</sup>

The second mechanism was coercion. The physical concentration of the former combatants afforded the leadership the credible sanctions necessary to draw their fighters back to violent, illegal activity. The mid-level commanders knew where their former subordinates lived, where they worked, where they hung out, where their families were, rendering punishment

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<sup>234</sup> Interview by author, Necoclí, 3 July 2008.

<sup>235</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Caurallo, 3 July 2008.

<sup>236</sup> Conflict Analyst, interview by author, Necoclí, 27 June 2008.

feasible and facile. There is evidence that some ex-combatants received death threats for not joining the remilitarized groups.<sup>237</sup> Others reported being forcibly recruited and given the choice: join, die, or leave. Many joined. Others displaced, a fact confirmed by the multiple petitions by ex-combatants to transfer their ‘humanitarian aid’ to other municipalities. The petitions testified, “There is no security for us in Urabá.”<sup>238</sup> The wave of selective homicides of demobilized offers further evidence of rearmed groups’ threats being brought to fruition. This leads to a third mechanism: safety. Recruiters promised the former combatants their security. In an environment in which many demobilized were caught in the crossfire between illegal, militarized actors, former paramilitaries may have preferred to be inside the protective ring of a rearmed group than outside of it. Fourth, ex-fighters were given economic incentives to join the ranks of the redeployed armies. It is estimated that recruiters offered ex-paramilitaries 1,000,000-1,200,000 Colombian pesos (\$500-\$600) in exchange for their renewed, military service.<sup>239</sup> Finally, *Construpaz* and its productive projects provided the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia natural venues at which to recruit former combatants. *Construpaz* kept a detailed database on its ex-fighters<sup>240</sup> and, according to community member testimonies, its productive projects served as “guises” for “pseudo-clandestine gatherings of former members of the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas.”<sup>241</sup> At a *Construpaz* assembly in Unguía, “it became clear that there were serious doubts about the projects ... However, it serve[d] as a recruiting ground for the demobilized to re-enter the armed struggle with Don Mario’s armed unit.”<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Alta Consejería para la Reintegración, Security Division, interview by author, Bogotá, 20 May 2008.

<sup>238</sup> Alta Consejería para la Reintegración and the Organization of International Migration, interviews by author, Bogotá, 30 January 2008.

<sup>239</sup> Ex-combatants, interviews by author, Urabá, June 2008; These figures were confirmed by conflict analysts, interview by author, Bogotá, 2008.

<sup>240</sup> Ex-combatants, interviews by author, Necoclí, June 2008.

<sup>241</sup> Demobilized paramilitary leaders called meetings under the false pretense of discussing the projects or reintegration process, but “really they were just recruiting” (Interview by author, Apartadó, July 2008).

<sup>242</sup> Community Member, interview by author, Unguía, February 2007.

Thus ‘Don Mario’ acquired an intact organizational structure with an ample and ready pool of roughly 1,000 recruits to lure back into arms.<sup>243</sup> It therefore comes as little surprise that, once remilitarized, ‘Don Mario’ was observed to have a very developed organizational structure with mid-ranking commanders in all the principal municipalities. The Reintegration Program’s Urabá director told me that the “Bloque Elmer Cárdenas’ command structure [was] intact so the leaders [could] be called to rearm at anytime, especially in the north of Urabá and in Chocó,” the BEC’s traditional zone of territorial influence.<sup>244</sup> The Colombian intelligence branch classified the AGC as having a unified command, intact hierarchy, and the active participation of commanders, mid-ranking commanders, and rank and file. In one interview with an international aid worker, I was told that, “El Alemán is directly supporting his brother’s recruitment of the BEC’s mid-level leaders.”<sup>245</sup> When the army’s intelligence unit mapped the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia organization, it found the top two leaders to be ‘El Alemán’s’ brother, ‘Don Mario’ and El Alemán’s military commander, Jhon Freddy Manco Torres (‘el Indio’ or ‘Don Alberto,’). It traced the second and third tier of leaders<sup>246</sup> and similarly found them all to be former paramilitaries: ‘Cebecilla,’ ‘Yiyo’ (head of finances), Juan de Dio Usuga Davia, ‘Giovanni’ (commander of Turbo), ‘Nicolas’ (leader of Arboletes and Necoclí), ‘Guerillo,’ ‘El Profe,’ and ‘Flaca.’<sup>247</sup> These were the BEC’s ‘cadre:’ “the permanent staff of leaders who train recruits and *around whom new units may be built* ... the corps of professional soldiers preserved in peacetime as a basis for ... [remilitarization].”<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Army intelligence unit, interview by author, Carepa, July 2008. See *El Tiempo* 2009a.

<sup>244</sup> Alta Consejería Para la Reintegración Regional Director, interview by author, Apartadó, 4 June 2008.

<sup>245</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Apartadó, 27 June 2008.

<sup>246</sup> It proves difficult to verify some of the commanders’ identities because they demobilized under different names and different ranks within their organizations. This is the case, for example, with ‘Mario Alfa 1,’ ‘Mario Alfa 5,’ ‘Picua’ and ‘El Calvo.’

<sup>247</sup> Army Intelligence, Brigada 17, interview by author, Carepa, 4 July 2008. See *El Tiempo* 2009a.

<sup>248</sup> Selznick 1952, p. 18. Emphasis added.

In sum, because of the BEC's local recruitment and deployment and its combatants' negligible emigration from Urabá, it was able to avert bankruptcy and preserve an organizational structure in much the same way as Medellín's BCN. However, in contrast to the BCN and as explored in Chapter 7, this structure remilitarized to maintain influence over the territory of Urabá. I turn now to the Bloque Catatumbo and to explaining why its sophisticated coercive structure went bankrupt.

### **Norte de Santander's Bloque Catatumbo: Bankruptcy**

#### *Logic of Deployment*

The paramilitaries had several reasons to deploy soldiers to the region of Norte de Santander: 1) to “weed out the guerrillas” and liberate the resources critical to the Colombian economy (land, urban areas, petroleum, carbon, and gold); 2) gain access to the coca and to deny the guerrillas this source of funding; and 3) stop cross-border support for the FARC, ELN and EPL from Venezuela.<sup>249</sup> Thus, a random set of 200 paramilitaries were deployed from the coastal region of Córdoba and Antioquia to the Venezuelan border, some 600 kilometers away, drawing recruits as they went. One ex-combatant, Jorge Mario Garzón, explained this process to me. He joined the Bloque Córdoba in his home region in San Jorge and operated in a unit comprised of 450 men.

After eight months, the commander of Bloque Córdoba came to the base and said, ‘We’re going to Norte de Santander. We are taking 150 men. The whole structure is going to be transplanted so it will be ready to deploy immediately there.’ The commander said, ‘Who wants to go?’ but most of us didn’t want to go because [Norte de Santander] was far and because it was a dangerous zone, others because they had arrest warrants and so they didn’t want to travel between states by road because they were worried they would be stopped. So it became obligatory for 150 of us to go. The commander just chose us randomly. The commander paid for our passage and told us where we had to report in Norte de Santander. We

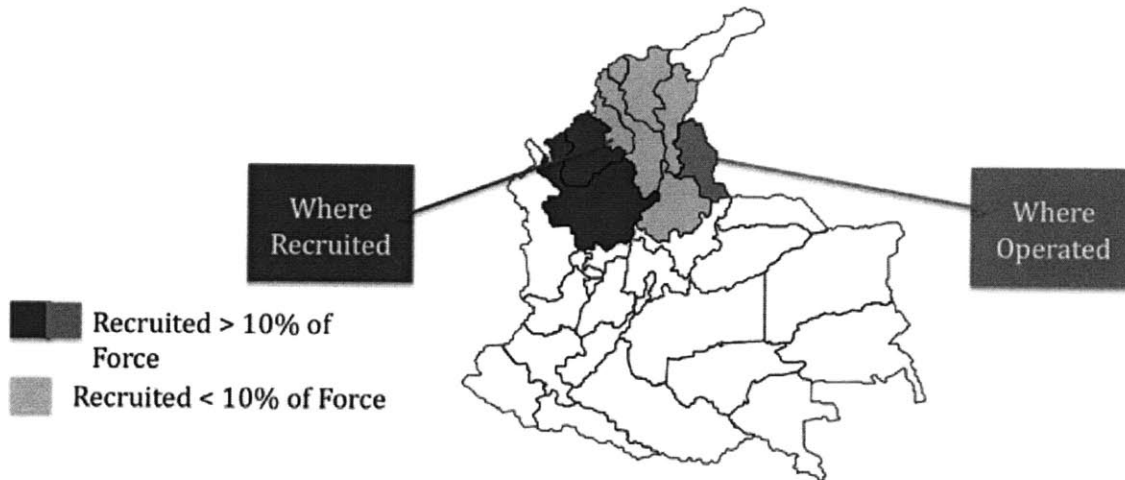
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<sup>249</sup> Fundación Progresar 2004.

traveled as civilians all separately. If we didn't show up, the commander said, 'We have all your information, we know where your family lives.' I took the bus first to Cúcuta and then to La Gabarra where I located the farm where we were supposed to meet. There I found a large part of my structure from Córdoba. We were told that our goal was to arrive to El Tarra which was completely under guerrilla control and that our whole unit of 150 would operate together to do so.<sup>250</sup>

Other of my interviewees belonged to Urabá's Frente Bananero and were then "transferred" to the Bloque Catatumbo in 1999 to "help build the paramilitary base there."<sup>251</sup> Still others were recruited from the Autodefensas in Puerto Berrio,<sup>252</sup> from the *Convivir* in the south of Cesar and from the urban, coastal regions of Cartagena, Barranquilla and Santa Marta.<sup>253</sup> Mapping the recruitment locations of the Bloque Catatumbo generates the following dispersion index.

**Map 3. Bloque Catatumbo: Recruitment and Deployment Patterns**



*Logic of Recruitment*

The BC demonstrated a strong lack of trust of local Norte Santandereños due to the fact that "they were believed to be infiltrators and active collaborators of the guerrilla. Accordingly, there was a marked resistance to and thus very limited recruitment of locals."<sup>254</sup> According to one of the top commander's bodyguards, "The *paras* of Bloque Catatumbo also called the Norte

<sup>250</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 3*, Cúcuta, 28 May 2008.

<sup>251</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Urabá, June 2008.

<sup>252</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Cúcuta, 29 May 2008.

<sup>253</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 8*, Cúcuta, 3 June 2008.

<sup>254</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo analyst, interview by author, Cúcuta, April 2008.

Santandereños slow-witted, so for that reason, they recruited only very few of them.”<sup>255</sup> Another local was turned away when he tried to join the paramilitaries because, according to his testimony, “They were not accepting people from Norte de Santander.”<sup>256</sup>

Thus the vast majority of the Bloque Catatumbo (BC) combatants were what Carlos Castaño called “autodefensas nativas” from Córdoba, Urabá, Sucre, Cesar and other parts of the coast.<sup>257</sup> The different ethnic composition and accents of these regions made it easy to determine the soldiers’ origins. Those from Cúcuta and near the border have a Venezuelan accent, those from Córdoba are afro-descendants and those from Urabá are *paisa*. During a conversation with one of the commander’s bodyguards in Cúcuta’s prison, I was told, “All of the members of my group in Catatumbo were black [from the *Costa*]. There were only 6 whites.”<sup>258</sup> Recurrent in my interviews was this theme that the majority of the fighters in the respondents’ units were from ‘outside of Norte de Santander.’ A former BC combatant described, “All of the *muchachos* from my brigade were from other parts. There was no commander local to the zone because of social networks. The commanders from Córdoba and Urabá brought their best friends whom they trusted and so their best friends got the top ranks in the organization.”<sup>259</sup>

However, the Bloque Catatumbo did recruit some locals. At the brigade level, the survey evidence indicates that 28% of Bloque Catatumbo fighters were local to the region. They were concentrated principally in Puerto Santander and Ocaña. Anecdotal evidence provides further support of this recruitment. According to an ex-paramilitary now living in Comuna 3 in Cúcuta, of his BC company, 32 were from Córdoba and 8 were from Norte de Santander, but the top

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<sup>255</sup> Camilo’s Bodyguard, interview by author, Cúcuta Prison, 2008. This was verified in other interviews in which I was told that ‘People from other places [outside of Norte de Santander] are better.’” (Ex-BC combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Cúcuta, 4 June 2008).

<sup>256</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Cúcuta, 5 June 2008.

<sup>257</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo, interview by author, Cúcuta, 2008.

<sup>258</sup> Camilo’s Bodyguard, interview by author, Cúcuta Prison, 2008.

<sup>259</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Puerto Santander, 9 June 2008.



commander was *paisa* (from the region of Medellín).<sup>260</sup> The BC leaders recruited some locals partially because they needed intelligence. One ex-combatant from Urabá confirmed, “The Cordobeses and Urabeños arrived without any knowledge of the zone of Norte de Santander.”<sup>261</sup>

Even in the guerrilla dominated communities, the *paras* sought out sub-groups willing to defect. Given the private information – that only the potential recruits knew their true level of commitment to the guerrillas – the *paras* had to be clever in their strategies for uncovering the locals’ preferences. When the paramilitaries arrived to *El Tarra*, they sought to target a section of the population whom they believed would potentially prove willing to collaborate with them – the merchants – who had “supported the guerrillas out of obligation and were tired of paying extortion fees.” Some of these therefore provided information as to who supported the guerrillas “out of their hearts,” out of conviction.<sup>262</sup> The *paras* executed these ‘irreconcilables’ and protected their informants.<sup>263</sup> Another strategy was pure deception. A former BC member told me how he had been driving taxis between Cúcuta and Puerto Santander prior to joining the *paras*. He narrated:

One day, I got caught in a ‘guerrilla’ roadblock in Aguaclara. The combatants had the armbands of the FARC. These men organized a meeting with all the people they had stopped to ask how the situation was on the road and seek intelligence about the status of Puerto Santander. The paramilitaries had done a quick incursion of Puerto the week prior in which they had killed one guerrilla. In the meeting, a woman spoke up and said, ‘The *paras* are coming, you have to stop them, they are already trying to enter the town,’ demonstrating her support for the guerrillas. Others were quiet or gave incorrect intelligence. When the meeting was over, the soldiers took off their FARC armbands and underneath were the armbands of the paramilitaries. They took the woman outside and shot her. This was their way of figuring out who were the guerrillas’ sympathizers. I was very collaborative in the meeting and so the paramilitaries asked if I wanted to join them.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 3*, Cúcuta, 28 May 2008.

<sup>261</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, Apartadó, 26 June 2008.

<sup>262</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Tibu, June 2008.

<sup>263</sup> Petreus 2009.

<sup>264</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, Puerto Santander, April 2008.

In addition to intelligence, the paramilitaries also needed support and supply networks. Many of those recruited in Norte de Santander were not part of the military structure; rather they were taxi drivers, cooks, apartment owners, nurses, financiers, informants, coca pickers, and logisticians.<sup>265</sup> One ex-combatant described, “When they first arrived, the paramilitaries rented apartments in the military’s barracks. I took them around because they didn’t know Cúcuta. I washed their cars and ran errands for them.” Slowly, he was brought formally into their ranks.<sup>266</sup> The paramilitaries also needed people to cut the coca leaves. Thus, they had armies of *raspachines* (coca pickers) working for them. Some of these ended up joining their military structures as foot soldiers. “I was a *raspachín* of coca for three years in La Gabarra. It was the only job available there. I got tired of it and so I ended up being able to enter the paras who were there in 1999.”<sup>267</sup>

Finally, while community-based networks provide multifaceted bonds, there are other one-dimensional networks, which the paramilitaries exploited in Norte de Santander to overcome adverse selection problems. One of these was the veteran web. The top commander of the Bloque Catatumbo was a retired high-ranking military officer. Military service was compulsory in Colombia. If one dodged it, there was a fine, which only the elite could afford. Convoys would come through periodically to gather up military-age boys. After the required 18 months of service, the ‘veterans’ returned home to their communities. Many enjoyed their time in the military and found themselves convinced by the counterinsurgency doctrine, high on the adventure of war, skilled in combat and not much else, longing for the automatic provision of

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<sup>265</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, *Comuna 3*, Cúcuta, 30 May 2008. Author also interviewed ex-combatants who served as mechanics and cooks. Further confirmation was provided by Will Fredo (Director Fundación Progresar), interview by author, Cúcuta, 9 June 2008.

<sup>266</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, *Comuna 3*, Cúcuta, 28 May 2008.

<sup>267</sup> Ex-paramilitary Leader in Aguaclara, interview by author, Aguaclara, Norte de Santander, 10 June 2008.

food, clothing, and shelter that the army provided, and missing the routinized life of the military. Accordingly, veterans, having completed their tours of duty, sought to rejoin the Colombian armed forces. Some of these were refused. They deemed the paramilitaries their next best option.

At the same time, the paramilitaries needed to increase their manpower rapidly in order to patrol the vast border region of Norte de Santander and they ideally sought people with “expertise in arms and combat.”<sup>268</sup> Thus they used “the social webs of the *ex-militares* to recruit and to recruit trustworthy people.”<sup>269</sup> Many of the *paras* in Norte de Santander were ex-military personnel who were linked to the combatants from their time together in the army. One ex-combatant told me that as many as 50% of the soldiers of his unit were veterans.<sup>270</sup> Former BC militant, Tomás, explained, “Local people joined the paramilitaries only through friendship links because in order for a local to enter, he had to have a friend that would respond for him, be completely accountable for him. He had to be someone trustworthy who had friends in the organization. You couldn’t enter if you didn’t know people in the group.”<sup>271</sup>

Many of my respondents confirmed the veteran path to BC recruitment. One recalled, “I was unemployed and tried to join the army three times, but they would not receive me... My friends convinced me, ‘lets go to the *paracos* [paramilitaries].’<sup>272</sup> Another, José Luis, was in the army for four years in Norte de Santander as a counter-guerrilla. “I liked it. I got used to it. After serving, I didn’t find a permanent job, only seasonal, unreliable work. During this period, I always went to visit my friend from the army in prison. My friend said, “I have a friend from my army battalion who is working with the paramilitaries in Puerto Santander... So I went to Puerto Santander to visit his friend and eight days later, he called me and offered me work with the

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<sup>268</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 8*, Cúcuta, May 2008.

<sup>269</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Puerto Santander, May 2008.

<sup>270</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, *Comuna 6*, 3 June 2008.

<sup>271</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Cúcuta, 9 June 2008.

<sup>272</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 3*, Cúcuta, 25 May 2008.

*paras*. Most of the members of the battalion were from other parts of the country, but I was able to join because I was reliable.”<sup>273</sup> Another of my interviewees completed his military service and then returned home to the south of Cesar and could not find a job. “They train you in all military matters, but then leave you with nothing to do after. You have all the military skills and have become accustomed to the military way of life.” He tried to join the army as a professional soldier, but there “was not room for me.” His former lieutenant from the army offered to introduce him to the *paras*. “I was accepted into the paramilitaries only because of the recommendation of my lieutenant.”<sup>274</sup>

### *Logic of Post-War Migration*

Thirty-four percent of the BC soldiers remained in Norte de Santander after demobilizing. The rest returned to Cordoba, Urabá, and other coastal areas. Most importantly, nearly all the commanders returned home, leaving a vacuum in the power structure.<sup>275</sup> The commanders who stayed were killed.<sup>276</sup> I interviewed several members of the Bloque Catatumbo in Córdoba and Urabá and they unanimously told me, “After the demobilization, all of my compañeros and I from Urabá returned home to Urabá.”<sup>277</sup> Those who stayed in Norte de Santander confirmed this, “Almost all of my battalion compañeros were from Córdoba or the coast or were *paisas*. They all left Norte de Santander to go home after disarming.”<sup>278</sup>

Those who remained in Norte de Santander who were not from there did so because a) they were scared to return to their lands because armed groups still operated there; b) they did not have a family that would take them in or forgive them; c) they feared that they would create

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<sup>273</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, *Comuna* 6, 15 May 2008.

<sup>274</sup> Ex-combatant #1, interview by author, *Comuna* 8, Cúcuta, 3 June 2008.

<sup>275</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, *Comuna* 3, Cúcuta, 28 May 2008.

<sup>276</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, Cúcuta, May 2008. Newspaper articles from *La Opinión* 2004–2006 confirmed this.

<sup>277</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, Apartadó, 26 June 2008.

<sup>278</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, *Comuna* 3, Cúcuta, 28 May 2008.

security problems for their families and friends were they to return home; d) they perceived better economic opportunities in the border cities through contraband; e) they believed that they would be safer on the Venezuelan frontier because, were anyone to chase them, they could easily cross the border and find sanctuary; and f) they had found wives and/or built families in Norte de Santander while operating in the department.<sup>279</sup> Most of these ex-paramilitaries who had operated in Catatumbo in the north of Norte de Santander displaced to the department's capital city of Cúcuta to reintegrate. There, they were able to disappear in anonymity into the urban, social fabric of migrants, displaced victims, and impoverished vagrants, and maintain no links with their ex-BC employer. One told me, "I couldn't stay in La Gabarra [in Catatumbo] because the *barrio* recognized me for all I had done. I couldn't return home to Córdoba because the guerrillas were there and knew that I was a *paraco*. Here in Cúcuta, I could start anew. I didn't know anyone in Cúcuta so it seemed a city I could vanish in."<sup>280</sup> Another similarly told me, "I could never go back to Catatumbo. I would be killed immediately as I would be identified as a paramilitary. In Cúcuta, no one knows I am a demobilized."<sup>281</sup> While some of these ex-combatants had strong incentives to go home, "I haven't seen my land in 12 years...my family wants to see me...I have many nieces I have never met," they nonetheless remained displaced out of fear, fear in some ways of the unknown.<sup>282</sup> How would they be accepted back? Would it be safe? Somehow life on the run seemed preferable for these already uprooted individuals.

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<sup>279</sup> Coronel Paez (Policía Nacional), interview by author, Cúcuta, 30 May 2008; ACR Regional Director, interview by author, 28 May 2008; Ex-combatants, interviews by author, Norte de Santander, May 2008.

<sup>280</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna* 3, Cúcuta, 28 May 2008.

<sup>281</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna* 8, Cúcuta, 3 June 2008.

<sup>282</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna* 8, Cúcuta, 20 May 2008.

**Table 1. Bloque Catatumbo's Recruitment, Deployment & Post-War Migration Patterns**

<i>Department</i>	<i>% of BC Combatants from Department</i>	<i>% of BC Combatants who Operated in Department</i>	<i>% of BC Combatants who Live in Department Post-war</i>
Antioquia	11%		11%
Atlántico	1%		3%
Bogotá	0%		2%
Bolívar	6%		2%
Cesar	4%		6%
Córdoba	31%		27%
Magdalena	2%		2%
Norte de Santander	29%	100%	34%
Santander	2%		2%
Sucre	8%		8%

Note: These data derive from the ex-combatant surveys described in Appendix C.

*Organizational Outcome In Zone of Displacement (Cúcuta)*

All of the ex-combatants I interviewed in Cúcuta explained that there exist no social networks between the demobilized Bloque Catatumbo fighters and no associations comprising ex-BC fighters. These ex-paramilitaries maintain low profiles, move continuously, and try to recede into the city's passageways. One former combatant told me, "We all concentrated in Campo Dos for the disarmament ceremony and then all of my compañeros went their own ways. Nothing remained. I don't know what happened to them."<sup>283</sup> Another told me, "There are many demobilized paramilitaries in the capital city of Norte de Santander, but it is not safe to be seen with other demobilized. I only have friends from my *barrio*. I have no demobilized friends. I only go out till 9pm if I go out at all." Nearly all of my interviewees confirmed, "I have no contact with the other demobilized.... I have nothing to do with them. I only see them when I go to pick up my reintegration stipend or when I go to a DDR workshop."<sup>284</sup> "I live in the city

<sup>283</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 3*, Cúcuta, 28 May 2008.

<sup>284</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Cúcuta, 28 May 2008. Reiterated by Ex-Bloque Catatumbo, interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Cúcuta, 3 June 2008.

where I can disappear because you never know how many enemies you have. I never leave the house and have moved six times since I demobilized,”<sup>285</sup> another confided in me. “There is no corporation of demobilized, there are no leaders of the demobilized... they are no social networks between the demobilized,” were other words repeated in my interviews.<sup>286</sup> A former foot soldier added, “There is extreme lack of trust between us former comrades... no one asks questions and no one would answer. I don’t even know where the other ex-combatants live.” Another summed it up, “nothing remains of my Bloque Catatumbo. It has no social influence, no military influence, nothing.”<sup>287</sup> “There is no longer a hierarchy, the structure of the paras of Norte de Santander has disappeared. There are no rural structures, no commanders or leaders... there are just illegal businesses and hitmen,” a think tank analyst and human rights activist confirmed.<sup>288</sup>

There were two BC battalions that diverged from this dominant trajectory – those that operated in Puerto Santander and Ocaña. I return to these in Chapter 7.

### *Organizational Outcome In the Zone of Return*

The mechanisms that sustained Urabá’s Bloque Elmer Cárdenas and Medellín’s Bloque Cacique Nutibara’s organizational collective action, namely multifaceted networks and physical clustering, were largely absent in the case of Norte de Santander’s Bloque Catatumbo. Since the fighters’ origins were more geographically dispersed, at least 66% left Bloque Catatumbo’s zone of operation and many scattered. With low expectations of future interactions, these ex-paramilitaries faced few incentives to cooperate with the organization; defection escalated.

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<sup>285</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Cúcuta, 4 June 2008.

<sup>286</sup> Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Cúcuta, 3 June 2008.

<sup>287</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, interview by author, *Comuna 8*, Cúcuta, 3 June 2008.

<sup>288</sup> Fundación Progresar analyst, interview by author, Cúcuta, 30 May 2008.

The case of the large numbers of concentrated BC *returnees* to the zone of Urabá provides an interesting case to explore. Whereas the local Bloque Elmer Cárdenas and Frente Bananero fighters remained strongly linked to their former organizations and part of the ex-combatant civic associations, businesses, and security forces (Superban, Constupaz, Special Services), the paramilitary *returnees* to Urabá, who had been deployed to Norte de Santander and elsewhere, but returned home to reintegrate, interestingly did not belong to any organization comprising former paramilitaries. A civilian community leader in Carepa explained to me, “The Bloque Elmer Cárdenas and Frente Bananero [local groups] are more organized than the members of any of the other [non-local] brigades. They have associations. Other brigades need to be brought into the process and need to become organized.”<sup>289</sup> Similarly, a former combatant from the Frente Bananero, now a member of Superban offered, “I would like to see the other *muchachos* not from Frente Bananero having projects as well.”<sup>290</sup> These *returnees* to the zone retained only thin relationships with their leaders. According to the Urabá reintegration program director, “The difference between those who arrive having operated elsewhere [such as those of the BC] and those who operated here is that those arriving from elsewhere come and ask, ‘Who is commanding here?’ They arrive without their leaders and don’t have authority figures or a hierarchical structure. This is very different from those that fought here... Those that operated elsewhere also tend to maintain a lower profile.”<sup>291</sup>

*Frente Calima/Turbo.* Another interesting counterfactual case is that of Frente Calima/Turbo under the command of Ever Veloza García, alias ‘HH, who wished to remilitarize in his home area as a *returnee*, but lacked the organizational collective capacity to do so because his structure had been *deployed elsewhere* and thus went bankrupt.

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<sup>289</sup> ‘Taller de Formación de Liderazgo,’ Participant Observation by author, Carepa, 26 June 2008.

<sup>290</sup> Ex-combatant (Frente Bananero), interview by author, Caurallo, Urabá, 3 July 2008.

<sup>291</sup> ACR Regional Director, interview by author, Apartadó, July 2008.



During the nineties, Ever Veloza commanded the Frente Turbo in the northern and eastern zones of the banana axis of Urabá. In 1996, he was elected to be part of the expansion of the self-defense movement and was deployed to the Pacific state of Valle de Cauca<sup>292</sup> where he met with narco-traffickers and business elite to strategize how they might replicate the successful ‘self-defense’ model of Urabá.<sup>293</sup> HH’s Bloque Calima was the result. In 2004, having operated ‘non-locally’ for eight years, HH demobilized his brigade in Valle de Cauca and returned home to Urabá.<sup>294</sup> While HH ‘reintegrated into civilian life’ in Urabá, his absence from the zone in the eight years prior meant that he did not enjoy territorial control. He wished to reclaim it;<sup>295</sup> it was his home, the region he formerly commanded, and a zone of riches. However, he lacked an organization with which to do so because his brigade had been deployed ‘non-locally.’ It was an ‘expeditionary’ force, which left Urabá in the mid-nineties with a small core of combatants and continued to recruit as it expanded. Its ranks thus included soldiers from 88 different municipalities. Whereas 75% of the ex-combatants from Frente Bananero, upon demobilizing, reported that they intended to live in one of five municipalities concentrated in Urabá, those of Bloque Calima chose 97 different municipalities, with no one municipality exceeding 20% of the

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<sup>292</sup> Comisión Colombiana de Juristas 2006.

<sup>293</sup> Deployment was relatively random and involuntary. HH, for example, went unwillingly to the Pacific coast. He wished to remain in Urabá. “He went to Vicente [his mentor and commander] and said, ‘It is different trying to work in the territory of the narcos. It is so much harder because I don’t have the EPL and armed forces as my allies who are reliable; rather I have the narcos who not only work with me, but also with the guerrillas and so I can easily be crossed by them.’ He asked Vicente to let him leave Valle and return to Urabá and Vicente said, ‘No, you can’t leave.’ So HH had to remain in Valle for the rest of the war.” (Gersen Arias (Fundación Ideas para La Paz), interview by author, Bogotá, 17 July 2008).

<sup>294</sup> HH demobilized as the ‘commander’ of the Frente Bananero even though he had not operated in the region for years. He was ordered to do so to protect the FB’s real commander, Raúl Hazbún’s reputation as an upstanding *bananero* with no judicial processes against him. Raúl demobilized as a foot soldier to avoid enrolling in the Justice and Peace process (Faber (Director of Superban), interview by author, Apartadó, June 2008). The Castaños decided to protect Raúl because he had developed the model of using the legal *Convivir* to fight the guerrillas and gain extortion monies (Convivir Popayan). Raúl also brought in lots of money through the extortion of the bananeros (Conflict analyst, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2008).

<sup>295</sup> Ex-combatants (Frente Bananero), interview by author, Turbo and Apartadó, June 2008.

fighters.<sup>296</sup> Thus, after relinquishing their arms, the Calima paramilitaries, including the second and third-level commanders, dispersed. In HH's notoriously honest testimonies under the Justice and Peace law, he reported, "not knowing the whereabouts" of five of his top commanders ('el Rolo,' 'el Colochó,' 'Gallo,' 'Ronald' and 'Perro Mocho'). Of his remaining leaders, two were in Medellín ('Julian' and 'Alex'), three were in prison ('Maturó,' 'Pata de Palo' and 'Pescadito') and the rest were dead ('Julian,' 'Gregorio,' 'Juan Onorte,' 'Martin,' 'Daniel,' and 'Bola de Cacao'). Only one of his commanders, his brother, Giovanni, was with him in Urabá. In total, only 35 of 555 ex-Calima members migrated to Urabá. As a result, HH lacked a structure to 'retake' Urabá. Interesting, co-opting or "borrow[ing] a structure"<sup>297</sup> proved unfeasible. HH sought to chop off or seduce the local, urabeño Frente Bananero's leadership and then "appropriate the structure, use it, implant himself in it."<sup>298</sup> Given the security and coercive motivations for rejoining an armed group, it would seem HH could have quite easily achieved his objective, equipping himself with an organization through arm-twisting and forced recruitment.<sup>299</sup> It was therefore "impressive that HH was not able to co-opt the former Frente Bananero."<sup>300</sup> My respondents gave me clues as to why. "He was not a leader of the zone, didn't have support there," conflict analyst, Gersen Arias told me. Carolina Rodríguez of the High Commission of Reintegration similarly explained, "HH had only recently arrived to the zone ... HH was not really a commander in Urabá. He was the commander over there, of Calima."<sup>301</sup> When I asked the director of Superban if HH was able to recruit his men, he responded, "He took

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<sup>296</sup> Organization of International Migration 2004a; Organization of International Migration 2004b.

<sup>297</sup> Conflict analyst, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2008.

<sup>298</sup> Director of Superban, interview by author, Apartadó, June 2008.

<sup>299</sup> It should be noted that HH did pursue coercive means of recruitment. Many of those not in favor of the Bloque Bananero's structure being used for HH purposes and goals, he had killed by hitmen. Demobilized leaders in the banana axis confirmed this. HH was implicated in "social cleansing" of demobilized who would not reenter his armed group.

<sup>300</sup> Academic, interview by author, Bogotá, January 2008.

<sup>301</sup> ACR Urabá Regional Director, interview by author, Apartadó, July 2008.

his men from Calima... He didn't take anyone from Superban *because HH wasn't of the Bloque Bananero.*"<sup>302</sup> The social network mechanism seemed to trump the coercive one and the ex-soldiers of Frente Bananero remained loyal to their formerly armed organization.

Unable to 'borrow' the Superban structure or recruit combatants who had operated in Urabá, HH faced three sources of soldiers to staff an organization: 1) ex-Calima combatants (of which there were few); 2) new recruits; and 3) *returnee* fighters. HH recruited some new youth. However, they lacked war and criminal training and indoctrination. He also recruited former paramilitaries that were recruited in Urabá, deployed elsewhere and then returned to their families in Urabá post-demobilization; their structures had disintegrated. These were thus individual recruits, rather than collective ones. Several of these *returnee* ex-combatants, lacking orientation and looking for someone to command them, became a puddle of recruits for HH. Thus HH was able to mobilize a small force in San Pedro de Urabá.<sup>303</sup> However, it was quickly defeated. With the state after him, HH fled the flat, open banana axis and journeyed to the vast, state-less, eastern plains of Meta. In April 2007, he was captured. The cases of Bloque Catatumbo's *displaced* fighters in Cúcuta and Bloque Catatumbo and Bloque Calima's small fraction of *returnee* fighters in Urabá suggest that low levels of geographic concentration and thin bonds prompt post-war bankruptcy or, at best, weak collective action capacity.

## VI. Quantitative Analysis

Accordingly, if my argument is correct, organizations' recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns should affect the likelihood that they disappear. I predict that pre-war networks and post-war physical clustering should be negatively correlated with bankruptcy.

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<sup>302</sup> Emphasis added. While it may seem unlikely that the Director spoke honestly with me about his men rearming, he openly admitted that some of his *muchachos* had joined the ranks of Don Mario.

<sup>303</sup> This was his mentor, Vicente Castaño's former stronghold.

Specifically, organizations characterized by low recruitment dispersion and high post-war clustering should preserve a strong capacity for collective action while we should observe armed groups with weak pre-war networks and low levels of post-war geographic concentration going bankrupt. Armed groups which recruited in a concentrated fashion, but whose combatants dispersed after demobilizing will retain an initially intermediate capacity for collective action, but this capacity will erode very quickly. Finally, we should expect thinly tied, highly clustered armed groups to constitute an intermediate case of post-war organizational survival. To test this hypothesis formally, I estimate the following model:

$$Survival = \alpha + \beta_1 Clustering / Networks + \beta_2 Loot + \beta_3 Lead + \beta_4 Defeat + \beta_5 Ideol + \epsilon$$

The dependent variable – organizational *Survival* – captures the degree to which organization *o* retained its capacity for collective action and averted bankruptcy. I first estimate the model using a survey-based index version of *Survival* and employing ordinary least squares analysis. I then use a dummy measure of *Survival* based on qualitative evidence and employ logit analysis. For both estimation techniques, I cluster the standard errors on the organization. To allow for sufficient power, I specify the model without fixed effects. The formal test of the impact of clustered recruitment and post-war migration is  $H_0 : B_1 > 0$ . The model further controls for several other factors, which are predicted to correlate with organizational bankruptcy. Specifically, I include measures of resource–richness, leadership, military defeat, and ideological cohesion. For models employing the bloc–municipality dyad as the unit of analysis, I control for organization fixed effects and municipality fixed effects, indexed by the variables *I*. By incorporating these fixed effects, I account for all location-specific, time-invariant organization-level unobservables that may affect the likelihood that an organization-municipality dyad will disappear. I also test the logic on the individual level of analysis (n=30,935 ex-

combatants).

*Measuring Bankruptcy.* To determine if a group has disappeared, I create an index of the ex-fighters, their families, and psychologists’<sup>304</sup> responses to eight related survey questions. (See Appendix C for the survey methodologies). The questions ask about the horizontal and vertical components of the former armed structures. I derive weights to create a single measure: the *Survival* index.<sup>305</sup> I then take averages at the brigade and brigade–community dyad levels. I also evaluate the argument on the individual ex-combatant unit of analysis. Survival at the individual level can be thought of as a continuous spectrum ranging from complete defection from the former armed organization (a value of ‘0’) to highly sustained membership in the entity (value of ‘1’).

The measures used to construct the index employ three types of questions. First, I ask about ex-combatants’ ties with their former comrades in arms. Specifically, the interviewees are asked about the former fighters’ social networks, face-to-face interactions, norms of reciprocity, and mutual dependence. Second, respondents are questioned about the ex-combatants’ relationships with and reliance on their ex-commanders and the extent to which the chain of command has been dismantled. Finally, I include responses to questions that explicitly ask about the survival of the organizational structure (see below for question wording).

*Recruitment Dispersion and Multifaceted Networks.* To measure pre-war networks, I evaluate two proxies. The first takes data on ex-combatants’ self-reported department, municipality, and neighborhood of origin and municipality-level data on their former armed

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<sup>304</sup> Each ex-combatant is assigned to a psychologist, called a ‘tutor,’ with no more than 120 ex-paramilitaries per tutor. The tutors give the ex-combatants their monthly stipends, run the required social-psychological workshops, which the ex-combatants must attend twice a week, and conduct house visits to every ex-combatant.

<sup>305</sup> Future iterations of this quantitative analysis will evaluate the findings based on this conceptualization of the bankruptcy/survival index against results using an index based on factor analysis. Additionally, more comprehensive corrections will be incorporated to deal with potential biases resulting from the survey design and enumeration, including sampling and non-response biases.

groups' zones of operation. The latter is based on triangulated data from three different classified sources: the Colombian High Commissioner for Peace; the Organization of American States' Peace Mission; and the Attorney General's Justice and Peace Division,<sup>306</sup> and from one open source: *Verdad Abierta*.<sup>307</sup> Combining these data, I extract a measure of whether each of 22,605 combatants operated where s/he was from (*Operated Where From*). I then take the average at the brigade level. At the brigade level, this variable ranges from 4% of the unit being local to their war theater to 80% being local with a mean of 35%. For the second measure, for each ex-combatant, I take the percentage of their former armed groups' recruits who shared their town of origin. This measure ranges from .05% to 71.35% with a mean of 9.03%. Again, I take the average at the brigade level.

*Post-War Migration and Physical Clustering.* To measure post-war physical clustering, I employ a similar strategy. First, I obtain a measure of if each ex-combatant remained in the zone in which his/her former armed group operated – *In Zone* – as this constitutes the dominant means by which the ex-combatants remained geographically concentrated.<sup>308</sup> Based on data on 30,935 ex-combatants, I obtain an aggregated measure of the percentage of each armed group's members that remained in the group's 'war theater' post-demobilization. This variable ranges from 1% to 98% with an average of 53%. Comparing these results with the geographic dispersion of the combatants to different Colombian departments supports the use of this measure as a proxy for physical clustering; armed groups with low levels of ex-combatants *In Zone* witnessed their members spreading out throughout Colombia to as many as 24 departments

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<sup>306</sup> This source incorporates data derived from the confidential testimonies of 2,700 ex-paramilitary top and mid-ranking commanders.

<sup>307</sup> See [www.verdadabierta.com](http://www.verdadabierta.com).

<sup>308</sup> I constructed a municipality-level database (n=1065) and entered the armed groups that operated in each municipality. Some municipalities had no paramilitary groups while others had a maximum of five groups. I then merged this data with the individual level survey data on each ex-combatant's former paramilitary faction, town of origin and place of current residence.

whereas those with high levels of former fighters ‘*In Zone*’ had combatants living in only one or two departments. Second, I calculate the percentage of each combatant’s former militarized comrades who live in his/her current municipality of residence. Some ex-combatants live in a community in which no other ex-paramilitaries from their armed group reside while other former fighters share their towns of residence with 90% of the combatants from their ex-bloque. The mean is 15%. I also derive a brigade-level average of this measure. In future stages of analysis, I will employ GIS to extract geographically-based dispersion measures of recruitment and post-war migration that will take into account the distance between localities. This will mirror techniques used by population and public health studies.

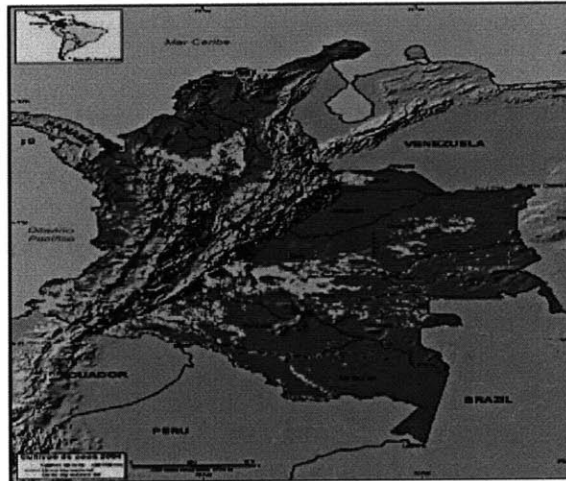
#### *Alternative Explanations*

*Resource-Richness.* According to Weinstein 2002, loot-based groups attract opportunistic joiners and suffer greater principal agent problems and vulnerability to organizational fragmentation. We should thus expect access to resources to be negatively correlated with group survival:  $H_1 : B_2 < 0$ . To test this hypothesis, I create a measure of *Drugs* that estimates the hectares of coca and poppy crops in the armed group’s zone of operation prior to demobilization. I derive this data from satellite imagery, taken by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime & Colombian Government’s Integrated System to Monitor Illicit Crops (SIMCI) in 2000. I also evaluate a more nuanced measure, *Loot*, which includes data on the presence of oil fields, pipelines and refineries, emerald and gold mines, and drug crops, laboratories, and smuggling routes.<sup>309</sup> For the individual level equation, I look at if there is ‘loot’ in the ex-combatant’s municipality of current residence.

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<sup>309</sup> *Gems* indicates emerald, sapphire, and aquamarine locations identified in *The Oxford Economic Atlas of the World*, 1972 and gold and emerald mine locations from CEDE data; *Oil* is coded “1” for municipalities with oil

**Map 4. Density of Coca Crops, Colombia, 2000**



Source: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2000

*Leadership* The presence or absence of leaders at the high rungs of the command chain may also determine post-war organizational endurance. Post-peace agreement, many leaders are subject to imprisonment, assassination, or extradition. I thus include a dummy *Decapitated Leadership (Lead)*, which takes a value of 1 if the top leaders are isolated from their subordinates and 0 otherwise. We should expect a negative correlation between *Lead* and organizational *Survival*:  $H_2 : B_3 < 0$ . I further test a measure of the fates of the mid-ranking commanders, which derives from the psychologists' responses to the question, "Do the mid-tier leaders maintain a leadership role in the community in which you work?"

*Group's Military Defeat*. The war outcome literature proposes that negotiated settlements yield less stable peace than do military victories (Fortna 2004; Toft forthcoming) and implicitly predict that militarily defeated groups should be more likely to disappear. The individual-level logic is that no one likes to be on a losing team and thus defection escalates. The formal test of the impact of war outcome on organizational bankruptcy is:  $H_3 : B_4 < 0$ . To measure military

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fields, pipelines, or refineries. US Department of Energy maps provide this data; *Landvalue* measures the average value of each municipality's land.



defeat, I construct a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if, in the year prior to demobilization, a large share of the armed faction's combatants defected to another armed group or if the armed faction suffered a large number of battle-related deaths.<sup>310</sup> This measure, *Defeat*, relies on ex-combatant interviews and violent event data.

*Group Ideology.* It is predicted that armed groups characterized by stronger ideologies are more likely to retain the loyalty of their former fighters and avert bankruptcy. The formal test is  $H_4 : B_5 > 0$ . For this variable, I use expert's coding of the nature of the organization – pure *autodefensa* or pure narco to approximate the paramilitary group's allegiance to a rallying political platform.

## **Results**

Analysis of the data presents strong and consistent support for the proposed model. Multifaceted networks and post-war physical clustering are significantly correlated with organizational survival across all specifications of the model, measures of the variables, and units of analysis. The data offers little support for resource, military outcome, ideology, and leadership-focused arguments. In fact, loot in the armed group's zone of operation and decapitated top leadership had the opposite effects predicted: they produced cohesion rather than division. I first discuss the results at the meso units of analysis and then disaggregate to the micro ones.

### *Armed Organization and Armed Group–Community Dyad Results*

A critical issue in evaluating armed groups' post-war outcomes is determining the appropriate unit of analysis. Most qualitative analyses use the macro organizational level (FARC,

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<sup>310</sup> In future iterations of the project, I plan to use an approximation of military strength: the number of the paramilitary bloc's fighters in the municipality relative to the estimated total number of troops in the zone. In the absence of municipal level troop levels, I use the dummy described above.

AUC, UNITA, Afghan militias). However, many of the important and exciting causal processes occur at either the level of the sub-faction or that of the sub-faction – community dyad. The 36 paramilitary brigades in Colombia, called *bloques*, broke into 128 battalions and operated in 1040 municipalities, generating 1040 *bloque*-municipality dyads. Table 2 reports the armed brigade-level results. Then, Table 3 undertakes a preliminary analysis at the battalion unit of analysis. Table 4 explores the sub-faction–community dyads.

Variables	(1) Organizational Survival <sup>b</sup>	(2) Organizational Survival <sup>b</sup>
<i>Networks + Clustering</i> <sup>a</sup>	0.334** (0.161)	0.333* (0.165)
<i>Loot</i>		0.220 (0.344)
<i>Decapitated Leadership</i>		0.313* (0.176)
<i>Military Defeat</i>		-0.246 (0.251)
Constant	1.013*** (0.159)	0.715*** (0.235)
Observations	36	36
R-squared	0.112	0.219

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

<sup>a</sup> At the organizational level, *Networks* is measured as the percentage of the brigade’s combatants who operated in their towns of origin (*Operated Where From*); *Clustering* is measured as the percentage of the armed group’s fighters living in their combat zone after demobilizing (*In Zone*).

<sup>b</sup> Organizational Survival is measured as the average of the brigade’s combatants’ organizational survival/bankruptcy indexes.

I code the sub-faction (battalion) level outcomes by triangulating diverse sources of data. These sources include seven years of press reports, over 200 interviews of ex-combatants, participant observation in the former zones of operation of 21 of the 36 paramilitary blocs, 100 interviews of experts on the conflict, Organization of American States (OAS) Peace Monitors’ reports, intelligence data, paramilitary commanders’ testimonies under the Justice and Peace Law, and municipal-level violent event data. I create a dummy variable, *Bankruptcy*, which takes a value of ‘0’ if the organization retains a collective capacity; ‘1’ if it has largely gone bankrupt.

A more nuanced coding will be undertaken in future iterations of the analysis. I present the results below.

<b>Table 3. Logit Analysis of Determinants of Battalion Bankruptcy versus Survival</b>	
Variables	(1) <i>Bankruptcy</i>
<i>Networks &amp; Clustering</i>	-1.991*** (0.403)
Constant	0.721** (0.287)
Observations	128

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

For the organization–community analyses, I run the regressions averaging the bankruptcy indexes of the ex-combatants in each municipality–armed group dyad. This level of analysis measures the extent to which armed organization *o* in municipality *m* has survived or gone bankrupt. The prediction is: the greater the proportion of local fighters that remain clustered in the zone, the higher the likelihood that the organization in that locale will remain collective-action capable.

**Table 4. OLS Analyses of Survival of Armed Brigade – Municipality Dyads**

Variables	(1) Survival of Armed Brigade– Municipality Dyad	(2) Survival of Armed Brigade– Municipality Dyad	(3) Survival of Armed Brigade– Municipality Dyad
<i>Pre-War Networks</i> <sup>a</sup>	0.0484*** (0.00461)		
<i>Post-War Clustering</i> <sup>b</sup>		0.0407*** (0.00338)	
<i>Networks &amp; Clustering</i>			0.0231*** (0.00199)
<i>Loot</i>	0.0778* (0.0466)	0.0822* (0.0459)	0.0793* (0.0461)
<i>Decapitated Leadership</i>	0.223*** (0.0567)	0.214*** (0.0559)	0.219*** (0.0561)
<i>Military Defeat</i>	-0.148* (0.0859)	-0.146* (0.0847)	-0.147* (0.0850)
<i>Strong Ideology</i>	0.0882* (0.0487)	0.100** (0.0479)	0.0925* (0.0481)
Constant	0.107** (0.0505)	0.111** (0.0497)	0.106** (0.0499)
Observations	1040	1040	1040
R-squared	0.124	0.150	0.143

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%.

<sup>a</sup>*Pre-War Networks* is proxied by the percentage of the brigade *o* from municipality *m*

<sup>b</sup> *Post-War Clustering* is measured as the percentage of brigade *o* currently residing in municipality *m*. I test these independently and then sum them (*Networks & Clustering*).

Consistent with the predictions, paramilitary factions characterized by more concentrated recruitment and post-war migration faced a higher likelihood of successfully navigating the organizational challenges of war to peace transitions, averting chronic defection, and maintaining collective action to potentially form socio-political entities or redeploy for war. These results are robust in the bivariate and multivariate models and across the three levels of analysis. The effects are substantively and statistically significant. A one percent increase in the combined percentage of *In Zone* and *Operated Where From* corresponds with a 33% increase in the 0.75 to 2.5 survival index at the brigade level; being a clustered and densely networked organization decreases the chances of bankruptcy by 87% at the battalion level. The substantive effects at the

organization–community dyad unit of analysis are much smaller, but they remain statistically significant.

*Leadership.* Contrary to the conventional wisdom, decapitating the top leadership of an organization does not seem to contribute to its collective bankruptcy (Tables 2 and 4). This finding is consistent with this project’s case-based findings and focus on middle management. Appealing to Selznick again: the ‘cadre’ is “a highly manipulatable skeleton organization ... [It] is the permanent staff of leaders who train recruits and around whom new units may be built. More broadly, the term may refer to a corps of professional soldiers preserved in peacetime as a basis for the wartime army.”<sup>311</sup> These were the *mandos medios* (middle commanders) of the paramilitaries who possessed highly specialized knowledge and the direct contact with and loyalty of the foot soldiers.<sup>312</sup> When I measure the effect of intact mid-level leadership,<sup>313</sup> I find a positive, significant relationship with organizational survival across specifications of the model. Moreover, the explanatory weight of recruitment and post-war dispersion remains.

*Loot.* At the organizational level of analysis, *Loot* proved an insignificant predictor of organizational bankruptcy as demonstrated in Table 2. However, at the organization–community dyad level (Table 4), resource-richness enhanced the likelihood of survival at the 10% significance level. I discuss this result below.

*Defeat.* Consistent with the war outcome literature’s prediction, military defeat or weakness dooms an organization to bankruptcy (See Table 2 and 4). However, as Table 5 shows, this result does not hold at the micro level.

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<sup>311</sup> Selznick, 1952, p. 18. Emphasis added.

<sup>312</sup> Miller 1992. Gustavo Duncan confirmed the very specialized nature of the training and knowledge of the *mandos medios*. “It is knowledge that one cannot just gain from one day to the next ... so rearmed units will be built around these leaders,” (Gustavo Duncan, interview by author, Bogotá, 29 October 2007).

<sup>313</sup> For this measure, I take the psychologists’ responses to the question, “Do the mid-ranking commanders maintain leadership roles in the community in which you work?” I then average their responses at the municipality level, merge this data with that on ex-combatants’ location of residence, collapse it by their former ex-bloque.

### *Individual Ex-Combatant Level Results*

I next evaluate the proposed logic on the individual level of analysis. Strongly networked and geographically concentrated combatants should have a lower likelihood of defection. Consistent with this hypothesis, ex-combatants who remain physically clustered and who share pre-war networks with a large fraction of their former militarized comrades prove more likely to sustain their membership in their ex-armed group while ex-fighters who lack pre-war bonds and who find themselves physically isolated from their paramilitary colleagues demonstrate a greater tendency towards defection. Specifically, a 20% increase in the percentage of one's former comrades living where one lives (the proxy for clustering) corresponds with a 30% increase in the sustained membership index. These effects hold in the fully specified model. As predicted, the clustering effect seems to trump the pre-war network effect in explanatory value.<sup>314</sup> This implies that a group strong in networks, but highly dispersed may face a greater likelihood of bankruptcy than a group weak in networks, but densely concentrated; the decay function for the former is steeper than that for the latter. The proposed logic of post-war migration also seems to hold. Those that operate where they are from prove significantly more likely to 'be home' after disarming than those that operate far from their towns of origin.

Model 1 in Table 5 presents the fully specified model. The significance of the networks and clustering mechanisms holds as does the counterintuitive finding about leadership decapitation. Against resource determinism, I find that ex-combatants residing in zones of *Loot* proved *more* likely to retain their membership in their former armed organizations. Additionally, individuals belonging to armed groups characterized by stronger political ideologies were more

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<sup>314</sup> This may, however, reflect variation in the precision of the proxies with post-war clustering more accurately captured than pre-war networks for two reasons. Town of origin does not indicate how long an individual has resided there. Additionally, individuals who come from the same place do not necessarily know each other while, given their history of combat together in the same group, individuals living in the same place post-war do likely know each other.

likely to defect than those participating in more ‘materially-motivated’ or greedy groups. Together, these findings undermine the resources’ thesis and point to the capacity–enhancing rather than capacity–degrading effects of resources. These results ironically return us to a key finding in the collective action literature: selective incentives prove effective at sustaining organizations irrespective of ideology. Economically-endowed groups may be *more* likely to remain cohesive than “politically” or “socially” endowed ones.<sup>315</sup>

The findings also suggest that individual ex-combatants who belong to losing teams, characterized by military defeat, are no more likely to defect. However, this effect is inconsistent with the organization level analysis presented above.

The final models (2-4) present more fully specified models in order to speak to the individual reintegration literature. This literature is highly developed in the policy arena with several recent contributions from academia, most notably Humphreys and Weinstein’s 2007 piece.<sup>316</sup> These studies equate effective DDR with organizational bankruptcy. Humphreys and Weinstein state, “Successful reintegration requires that combatants break their ties with the warring factions, so that previous command and control structures no longer operate in the post-war period.” One of their dependent variables measuring effective reintegration is thus “*broken ties to faction*, that captures the extent to which combatants still turn to faction leaders for assistance” (p. 18). While I do not find such a conceptual equivalence between bankruptcy and reintegration success, I nonetheless use this opportunity to compare my results against theirs and to test the effects of gender, education, and abuse on ex-combatants’ likelihood of sustained or broken ties to their former armed faction. The policy implications of this project for reintegration theory and program design are elaborated upon in the Conclusion.

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<sup>315</sup> Popkin 1979 and Olson 1965. These selective incentives include salaries, food, clothing, support to one’s family, work, land, and drugs.

<sup>316</sup> See also Pugel 2006; Mvukiyehe, Samii, and Taylor 2010.

**Table 5. OLS Analyses of Determinants of Individual Defection versus Sustained Membership**

Variables	(1) Sustained Membership in Organization	(2) Sustained Membership in Organization	(3) <sup>b</sup> Sustained Membership in Organization	(4) <sup>c</sup> Sustained Membership in Organization
<i>Networks + Clustering</i> <sup>a</sup>	0.0105*** (0.000212)	0.0103*** (0.000223)	0.00915*** (0.000317)	0.0105*** (0.000322)
<i>Loot</i>	0.0788*** (0.0180)	0.0946*** (0.0184)	0.155*** (0.0204)	0.0903*** (0.0197)
<i>Decapitated Leadership</i>	0.305*** (0.0350)	0.312*** (0.0356)	0.292*** (0.0367)	0.316*** (0.0368)
<i>Military Defeat</i>	0.0512 (0.0516)	0.0427 (0.0522)	0.0459 (0.0583)	0.0465 (0.0585)
<i>Strong Ideology</i>	-0.232*** (0.0179)	-0.222*** (0.0182)	-0.153*** (0.0203)	-0.205*** (0.0205)
<i>Abuse</i>			0.000125*** (1.18e-05)	2.41e-05*** (8.90e-06)
<i>Female</i>		-0.108*** (0.0329)	-0.0751** (0.0338)	-0.0885*** (0.0339)
<i>Education</i>		0.0566*** (0.0113)	0.0497*** (0.0126)	0.0585*** (0.0126)
<i>Age</i>			-9.01e-06 (1.81e-05)	-1.29e-05 (1.82e-05)
Constant	0.992*** (0.0339)	0.836*** (0.0455)	0.803*** (0.0541)	0.810*** (0.0550)
Observations	16706	16038	14316	14316
R-squared	0.154	0.149	0.132	0.126

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

<sup>a</sup> Pre-War *Networks* is proxied by the percentage of ex-combatants from individual *i*'s armed group who share *i*'s town of origin. Post-War *Clustering* is measured as the percentage of the ex-combatants from individual *i*'s armed group who share *i*'s post-demobilization town of residence. *Networks & Clustering* is the sum of the two percentages.

<sup>b</sup> Model 3 estimates the model with *Abuse* measured as civilian casualties committed by the paramilitaries in the zone in which the ex-combatant *resides*.

<sup>c</sup> Model 4 estimates the model with *Abuse* measured as the paramilitary-inflicted civilian casualties in the ex-combatant's former zone of military combat (committed by his/her faction).

Humphreys and Weinstein find the prospect of defection to depend largely on the abusiveness of the units to which the ex-combatants belonged. They find age and gender to be unimportant predictors of organizational survival. In contrast to their findings, I find the effect of



group abusiveness to be substantively *negligible*. I test abusiveness of the individuals' former armed factions (Model 4) and also that of the factions that operated in the regions in which they currently reside (Model 3). Neither has a substantive impact. Instead, I find that individual ex-combatants are more likely to break their bonds with their armed group if they are geographically isolated and have thin pre-war ties to their colleague combatants. They are also more likely to do so if they live in a resource-poor region with few opportunities for loot and if they belonged to a group characterized by 'political' rather than 'criminal' creed.

Last, contrary to Humphreys and Weinstein 2007's findings, I find gender and education to have significant impacts. Specifically, females proved less likely to remain connected to their former armed employers and more highly educated individuals proved more likely to do so. While reintegration models focus on these two variables,<sup>317</sup> we have little theory to explain why they might matter. I propose two reasons why gender might link with defection. First, many female combatants are not directly part of the armed organizations. Rather, they hang around the fighters, sleep with the fighters, feed the fighters, hide the weapons of the fighters, and are related to the fighters<sup>318</sup> and, thus, when the call to demobilize comes, they are invited to accrue benefits from the DDR process as well (See Appendix C). Second, if alternative networks 'pull' ex-combatants away from the formerly militarized web, the pull of family and children operates more strongly on females than males. While both demobilized men and women I interviewed claimed to desire a return to and the development of their family lives, the women's actions in this respect spoke louder than the men's words. These differential trajectories of male versus

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<sup>317</sup> United Nations 2006; Pugel 2006.

<sup>318</sup> There were few women in the *military* ranks of the paramilitaries. However, women were deemed "critical for intelligence as they were less noticeable and were good at gossiping and finding out stuff" (Ex-combatant Woman, interview by author, *Comuna 2*, Medellín, 6 March 2008). They played these support roles or were merely linked to the paramilitary combatants.

female ex-combatants merit greater theoretical attention. With respect to the relationship between education and individual defection, the mechanism is likely one centered on status. More educated recruits often climb the ranks to leadership roles within the armed groups. They therefore resist the status reversal that comes with demobilization and hold tighter to their ties with the organization in which they enjoyed respect and power.

## **VII. Conclusion**

This chapter looked at the interior of armed organizations. Bankruptcy versus survival was its object of inquiry. It revealed vast differences in the ability of former paramilitary structures to endure and carry out collective action. Data drawn from nine surveys and over 300 in-depth interviews point to divergent patterns of recruitment, stationing, and migration and their strong links with organizational endurance.

The chapter put to test theories that aim to make sense of divergence in organizational capacity and cohesion. Arguments that locate the causes of fragmentation in the fates of top leadership perform less well. Theories that predict that resource endowments determine organizational outcomes find disconfirming evidence in the cases of Urabá, Catatumbo, and Medellín. Explanations that suggest that strength of group ideology predicts post-war organizational survival are also challenged by the data. The existing models cannot account for the observed variation across the paramilitary brigades or former combatants. Instead, organizations' social and human geography proves better able to account for empirical realities on the ground in Colombia.

The enduring organizations explored in this chapter act as receptacles of collective action and embody influence – social, political, economic, and coercive – that can remilitarize or ‘be

diverted' to non-violent politics. The next chapter explores this latter outcome: when and why former paramilitary structures maintain social and political influence over civilian affairs without the manifest use of force. The chapter turns outward from the organization to look at the dynamics between former militarized groups and civilian communities.

<b>Component Survey Questions: <i>Index of Organizational Survival</i></b>
<p>[Surveys of Ex-Combatants]            * <i>Currently, who makes up a majority of your friends?</i>            Former comrades from your armed group / People who did not belong to your armed group / A mix of former comrades and people who did not belong to your armed group</p>
<p>* <i>If you had economic problems, to whom would you turn?</i>            To your family / To friends who were not part of your armed group / To former comrades from your armed group / To your ex-commander / To government entities / No one / Other</p>
<p>* <i>If you had security problems, to whom would you turn?</i>            To your family / To friends who were not part of your armed group / To former comrades from your armed group / To your ex-commander / To government entities / No one / Other</p>
<p>* <i>Who helped you get your job?</i>            Family members / Government Officials / Friends or Ex-commanders from your armed group / Friends that did not belong to your armed group / Classified Ads / No one / Other</p>
<p>* <i>Who did you ask for help in finding a job?</i>            Family members / Government Officials / Friends or Ex-commanders from your armed group / Friends that did not belong to your armed group / Local politicians / Classified Ads / No one / Other</p>
<p>* <i>Are a majority of your friends at work former combatants from your armed group?</i>            Yes / No</p>
<p>* <i>How often are you in touch with your ex-commander?</i>            Frequently / Sometimes / Rarely / Never</p>
<p>* <i>How do you view your relationship with your former commanders?</i>            Friendship / Respect / Support / Dependence / Submission / Gratitude / Non-existent / Distant</p>
<p>[Survey of Ex-Combatants' Families]            * <i>Currently, who makes up a majority of the ex-combatant's group of friends?</i>            Former comrades from the armed group / People who did not belong to the armed group / A mix of former comrades and people who did not belong to an armed group</p>
<p>* <i>Does the ex-combatant remain in contact with his/her comrades from his/her former armed group?</i>            Yes / No</p>
<p>[Survey of Ex-Combatants' Psychologists]            * <i>Do the mid-ranking commanders maintain a leadership role among the ex-combatants?</i>            Yes / No</p>

\* *Did the paramilitary structure that operated in the municipality remain intact post-demobilization?*  
Completely intact / More or less intact / Not very intact / Not at all intact / The paramilitaries never had a structure in the municipality

## Chapter 6

### Campaigns

#### I. Introduction

The battalions in Medellín maintained a capacity for collective action, but why were they able to become socio-political organizations with extensive influence over civilian affairs? An Organization of International Migration survey conducted of 2,827 civilians in Medellín and Norte de Santander found that 88% of civilians in Medellín evaluated the presence of the ex-combatants in their neighborhoods as positive whereas only 48% of those in Norte de Santander expressed these sentiments. Similarly, 41% of the civilians surveyed in Medellín viewed the ex-combatants as protectors whereas only 6% of those in Norte de Santander did. Why, given the massacres, kidnappings, homicides, and extortion that the paramilitary battalions carried out in Medellín, does the population have this positive view and what explains the variation between the two regions?

I propose five mechanisms that account for variation in ex-combatants' embeddedness. First, local combatants who operated where they are from tend to be tied to the civilian population through familial, friendship, neighborhood, and other networks, creating a web of direct contacts that are linked to the rest of the population through similar bonds. Second, given the high cost of displacement, the community members recognize that the combatants will continue to reside in their neighborhoods for at least the medium term, thereby extending the shadow of the future. Third, evidence suggests that, surprisingly, anger levels are reduced when the perpetrators are deemed part of in-community and when the violence is perceived to be justified by the motive of protecting that community. Fourth, civilians engage in simple retrospective voting; they endogenously develop support for the armed groups based on the

groups' past governance record rather than on deep-rooted partisan (armed group) preferences. Good performance facilitates embeddedness. And fifth, institutions of authority are slow to change and thus ex-combatants' ability to exercise influence endures in the short-run even in the absence of civilian tolerance.

Highly local battalions are embedded in their communities through these five mechanisms. This provides them the authority and endorsement to successfully form socio-political organizations. In contrast, non-locally deployed combatants are divorced from the communities in which they operate and, as a result, cannot form civic or political associations after disarming.

This chapter elaborates on this proposed model to explain variation in transitions from guns to campaigns. It introduces alternative explanations for 'rebel-to-party' transformations. It then motivates this project's broader definition of socio-political influence, which extends beyond electoral politics. The third section introduces the five mechanisms linking the human geography of armed organizations with their governance of civilians post-war. I then turn to the paramilitary cases and explore the persistence of wartime social, economic, and political leverage over non-combatants in practice. Their divergent levels of leverage clarify the causal processes that connect variation in soldiers' deployment with patterns of socio-political influence in the aftermath of violence. The subsequent section outlines the quantitative strategy for evaluating the proposed framework and presents the empirical results. The chapter concludes by developing preliminary insights into varying repertoires of socio-political influence.

## II. Alternative Explanations

### *Hearts and Minds*

The most obvious and intuitive argument in the literature is that the groups best able to appeal to the social groups they claim to represent prove the most effective at transitioning into legal, political entities; they have popular support. This is the conventional wisdom of the growing, rebel-to-party transition literature. Essentially, if an armed organization has a ‘following,’ it will become a successful political party.<sup>319</sup>

This theory proves non-falsifiable. It essentially states that if a political party receives many votes, it will win. The question of course is *why does it receive so many votes?* This is the question I seek to answer below, focusing not only on the highest bar of endorsement (voting), but also on a lower bar: tolerance (not resisting former armed groups’ socio-political influence). A defense of this focus can be found below.

### *Resources & Abuse*

The resource endowment theory provides an additional explanation for divergence in ‘popular support.’ It posits that resource-rich groups’ behavior is characterized by a “total disregard for the interests of the civilian population and includes looting, destruction, and the use of indiscriminate force.”<sup>320</sup> As a result, it predicts that resource-rich groups should face rejection by the non-combatant populations after they demobilize and should be less likely to muster the civilian backing necessary to be *able* to form legitimate political organizations.<sup>321</sup> The opposite should hold for resource-poor, socially-endowed groups. Extracting just the *abuse* aspect from this hypothesis without explaining its variance, the hypothesis would be: armed groups, which

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<sup>319</sup> See Manning 2004, 2007; de Zeeuw 2008; Söderberg 2007.

<sup>320</sup> Weinstein 2006; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008.

<sup>321</sup> Weinstein 2006; De Zeeuw 2008

engaged in greater and more arbitrary violence against the non-combatant population should prove less likely to form socio-political entities after relinquishing their arms.

While I find that armed groups vary in their *ability* to form socio-political groups, I do not find this ability to be determined either by resources or by abuse. There are cases of ‘loot-based,’ abusive militarized groups that became successful political parties. Similarly, there are cases where resource-starved, relatively non-abusive groups formed peaceful socio-political organizations. Resources do not yield determinate outcomes.

The resource endowment approach makes a further claim that resource-rich groups are driven by material rather than ideological motivations and are thus unlikely to *want* to form socio-political organizations. Against this motivation claim of the ‘greed’ theory, evidence indicates that even purely criminal, rebel or paramilitary groups face strong incentives to seek political office. Access to political power enables demilitarized groups to corrupt, consume state revenues, control resource-rich territories, limit prison sentences, enjoy veto power, and guarantee that gains promised in the peace deal are not reversed once the group demobilizes.<sup>322</sup> Again, loot’s effect is indeterminate.

### *Leadership*

This chapter also challenges strictly agent-based explanations for post-war outcomes. The most important rebel and paramilitary leaders assume a central role in many accounts of divergent armed group outcomes. Indeed, the role of leadership – Colombian President Uribe and paramilitary commanders Macaco, Don Berna, Don Mario – was frequently cited during my field interviews as explaining variation. Military groups often have singular, authoritarian leaders who control all aspects of the organization and thus, in military organizations, leadership is likely

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<sup>322</sup> Many governments are highly predatory and criminal. Thus, being greedy more than ideological does not preclude a group from seeking political power and control of the government. See the literature on ‘rentier states:’ Mahdavy 1970; Beblawi and Giacomi 1987; Yates 1996; and Karl 1997.



to matter a great deal. Specifically, the scholarly literature and anecdotal evidence highlight that leaders' preferences determine what happens to their organization; it enters politics because its leadership wants it to.<sup>323</sup> While leaders' preferences, ideologies, and personalities no doubt have explanatory utility, I find that leaders' decisions and preferences are constrained by their relationships with their subordinates and the non-combatant population. The leadership literature further suffers from serious research design issues. The *ex ante* coding of leaders' preferences and ideological beliefs is often enormously difficult and preferences change over time, are inconsistent, and thus provide unreliable predictors of individual behavior and outcomes.

### *Institutions*

A fourth set of explanations derives from the power-sharing and political party scholarship. While this literature introduces an important part of the story, it focuses "more on the design and enforcement of the game than on the players themselves" (Manning 2004, 55); this literature lacks agency. Instead, it is necessary to map institutional arrangements on top of rebel and paramilitary armies' zones of embeddedness to yield meaningful hypotheses. Before explaining why and when armed groups' retain governance powers post-war, I must first broaden the discussion of political influence to go beyond only formal structures to also include informal, but equally powerful, manifestations or social, political and economic leverage.

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<sup>323</sup> A sub-set of this literature argues that leaders' preferences act in conjunction with the structure of power within the organization (whose preferences matter) to influence post-war group outcomes. Leadership is viewed not as singular, but as a small group of elites, often conceived of as hawks and doves, criminals and ideologues, reconcilables and irreconcilables (Petreus 2009; Stedman 1997; Kydd and Walter 2002; Bueno de Mesquita 2005, 2008). It follows that, if an organization's distribution of power favors the doves, it is more likely to become a political party.

### **III. Defining Socio-Political Organization**

The dominant power-sharing paradigm over-emphasizes formal forms of political leverage, namely political party formation, at the expense of informal forms of political influence (co-opting existing parties, bribery, corruption, and civic association formation).

I define a post-war socio-political organization more broadly as an association comprising ex-combatants, which engages in the following activities: runs for political office, exercises social control, administers local justice, provides social services (jobs, patronage, pork), regulates economic activities, dictates norms and even sexual behavior, taxes income, realizes community development, resolves disputes, and behaves as a proto state. This organization may be a political party, local government, community development group, NGO, or cooperative. Electorally, it may field candidates, campaign on behalf of or against an existing party, intimidate voters, threaten or bribe public officials, and receive money or favors from politicians and civil servants.

### **IV. A Model to Explain Variation in Socio-Political Influence**

To explain variation in ex-combatants' post-war socio-political leverage, I examine rebel and paramilitary groups' deployment strategies. I argue that local militarized groups, which drew a majority of their recruits from the communities in which they fought, are *embedded* in the communities. There are two components of embeddedness. One, that the civilian population tolerates or endorses the armed organization and does not reject or resist it. And two, that non-combatants look to the militarized unit as the local power. If these conditions hold, once the armed group demobilizes, it will be *able* to maintain influence over civilian affairs without the

*manifest* use of arms. It thus faces a high probability of forming a legitimate socio-political entity.<sup>324</sup>

It merits mention that ‘embeddedness’ likely co-varies with popular support, but is distinct in several ways. Endorsement is a very high standard to look at. It is partially imposed by existing studies’ exclusive focus on electoral politics in which civilians *vote* for former armed groups. By relaxing the threshold that armed organizations need to cross to have influence (i.e. no electoral ones), I also relax the civilians’ support requirements. The former armed group does not have to win the civilian population’s hearts and minds; the population must merely tolerate and not reject the group’s influence.<sup>325</sup> This is a more empirically useful form of the concept and allows us to understand one of the fundamental paradoxes of post-war politics: how demobilized illegal armed groups, despite often very high prior use of violence and abusiveness, can still enjoy community ‘support.’ It is usually not support, but something weaker: tolerance. I turn to the theory’s mechanisms, but before doing so, I briefly specify the different configurations of ex-combatants (Figure 6).

#### *Ex-Combatant Types*

I define former fighters as *Local* if they operated where they were recruited, deployed in their home region and remained there after disarming. *Returnees* are ex-combatants who were deployed to another region, but returned to their hometowns post-war. I code *Squatters* as former paramilitaries who were stationed away from homes and remained in their combat zones after demobilizing. Last, *Displaced* fighters are those that either deployed locally, but then left the

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<sup>324</sup> I do not examine remilitarized units’ socio-political influence as this influence is achieved through coercion and is therefore not puzzling and is over-determined.

<sup>325</sup> Why citizens *vote* for a former armed group is likely best studied not in the context of war-to-peace transitions, but rather in that of new political parties entering the electoral arena.

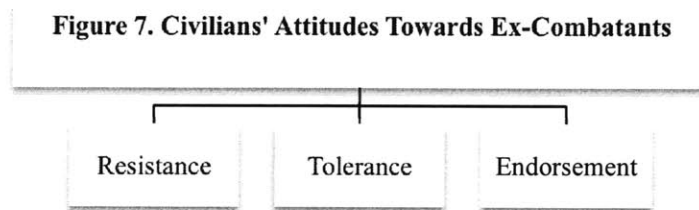
zone post-war or those that were stationed far from their towns of origin and neither returned home nor squatted in their war theaters.

**Figure 6. Configurations of Ex-Combatants**

Ex-Combatant Types	Deployment & Migration Patterns		
		<i>Operated in Town of Origin</i>	<i>Currently Residing at Home</i>
<i>Local</i>	√	√	√
<i>Returnee</i>	X	√	X
<i>Squatter</i>	X	X	√
<i>Displaced (Local)</i>	√	X	X
<i>Displaced (Non-Local)</i>	X	X	X

*The Mechanisms*

The theory’s five mechanisms linking these ‘ex-combatant types’ to socio-political leverage relate disproportionately to either the ‘tolerance’ or ‘authority’ components of embeddedness. I look first at the mechanisms generating endorsement and tolerance versus resistance.



*1. Networks → Tolerance*

Combatants deployed in their towns of origin enjoy multidimensional networks with members of the community; military and civil life remain coupled. This means that, for civilians, former fighter Juan Carlos is not only an ex-paramilitary and perpetrator of violence, but also the

son of María, the school buddy of Francisco, the former employee of mechanic Luis, the neighbor of Manuel and Alejandra, the soccer mate of Esteban, the former *moto-taxi* of Carolina, the childhood crush of Juliana, the cousin of Jaime, Jose, and Mario, the father to Daniela's children, the longtime buyer of *arepas* from Camila, the passenger on Pablo's bus, and the frequenter of Luis Antonio's bar. An example in Meta speaks to this logic: "[Edison Cifuentes] was the son of a well-known farmer and rancher from El Castillo, Meta ... [His] teenage neighbors remember him as an excellent football player and *sancochos* [stew] and riding companion." One community member recalled, "My grandmother gave him candy, he came to lunch at my house, my family spoiled him." Another added, "Edison studied with one of my sisters, we invited them to eat ice cream; he came home for meals."<sup>326</sup>

These relations create cognitive dissonance, "It was a shock to think that the same person we had known all our lives was involved in the disappearance of my brother."<sup>327</sup> This multidimensional network does not usually fully reject the soldiers and the rest of the community cannot reject this group either both because it is sizeable and because it is not an isolated web; rather, it is linked to the rest of the community through marriage, business, and friendship. This generates relative collaboration with the combatants (both while at war and after). Non-local combatants, in contrast, do not enjoy multifaceted ties with the civilian population.

## 2. Lower levels of Anger → Tolerance

The second mechanism posits that pre-war membership in the local community reduces levels of anger and thereby enhances civilian tolerance of former combatants' socio-political influence. It does not, however, reduce levels of pain, sadness or loss. Perpetrators who patrolled

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<sup>326</sup> Verdad Abierta 2010.

<sup>327</sup> Verdad Abierta 2010.

their home communities never lost ties to their communities. According to Colombian journalist, Juanita León, this facilitates reintegration and reconciliation.<sup>328</sup> The emotional logic underlying this assertion is that anger is reduced when the perpetrator is deemed part of the in-group – the community – and when the violence is justified by the motive of protecting that community. This mechanism is surprising as one might rationally anticipate the opposite to hold: anger intensifying when victimized by a social contact.<sup>329</sup>

Being part of the community exerts a similar effect on levels of anger as a truth commission.<sup>330</sup> Knowledge of the offender's identity and motivations, as revealed through multifaceted local ties, mitigates anger not via the ability to know whom to punish,<sup>331</sup> but through a different mechanism: by altering the information available to the victim. Learning the perpetrators' motives and circumstances can un-do the distorting effects of anger on information and beliefs; that is, by individualizing the perpetrator and showing his/her humanity, shared community bonds can enable victims to overcome stereotypes brought on by anger. If anger lowers victims' threshold for attributing prejudices and assigning blame and causes them to remember selectively and desire revenge, then acquaintance with the perpetrator, by providing information,<sup>332</sup> can alter the victims' cognition that the perpetrators have committed 'bad' actions against them and can offset the "action tendency" to seek punishment.<sup>333</sup> Knowing one's victimizer can de-demonize him/her despite the heinousness of the crime. It thereby enables the victim to understand, forgive, and let go of the past.<sup>334</sup> It is through these mechanisms that ex-combatants' membership in the local community reduces levels of anger at an accelerated rate

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<sup>328</sup> Juanita Leon (Colombian Journalist), interview by author, Cambridge, MA, April 2007.

<sup>329</sup> Kimberly Theidon expresses that anger is elevated when people are victimized by armed actors from their own towns (Kimberly Theidon, interview by author, Cambridge, MA, March 2007). I do not find support of this.

<sup>330</sup> See Petersen and Zukerman Daly 2010.

<sup>331</sup> Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock 1999.

<sup>332</sup> Keltner, Ellsworth and Edwards 1993; Bodenhausen, Sheperd and Kramer 1994; Lerner and Keltner 2000.

<sup>333</sup> Petersen 2006.

<sup>334</sup> See Gibson 2004.

and facilitates reconciliation. Two civilians verify the relationship between deployment and emotions:

Here, unlike in other places where the self-defense forces arrived from other areas to kill people, the boys who formed the self-defense forces here were from the communities (children of my neighbors, children of my friends). For this reason, here ... they are well received when they return from war. For this reason, there hasn't been massive rejection of these boys ... Many of the boys were children of the violence. Each one had his story and, in some way, the community saw them as justified. For this reason, the issue of forgiveness is not so difficult as they are boys from our same communities. We watched them grow up. There is a continuous interrelationship between victims and perpetrators.<sup>335</sup>

To a certain degree, not to be overestimated, victims understand that, for the paramilitaries and guerrillas, violence is their job in an economic environment that offers few alternatives and in a war in which nearly everyone has been touched by atrocity. Therefore, in some respects, the line between victim and perpetrator is blurred – both are deemed victims of an incessant conflict in which children grow up believing violence to be natural.<sup>336</sup>

### *3. Shadow of Future → Tolerance*

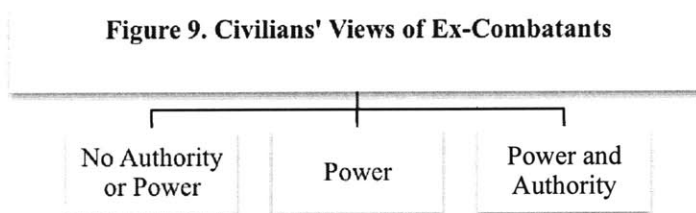
A third mechanism linking deployment strategies and levels of civilian tolerance of ex-combatants' social leverage derives from the cooperation literature. Local former soldiers enjoy a history of iterated interactions, an expectation of a long 'shadow of the future,' and interpersonal trust with the civilian communities, rendering cooperation and mutual tolerance between the civilians and former fighters more feasible (Axelrod 1984; Fearon 1998). Given the hypotheses laid out in the previous chapter – that local combatants prove unlikely to displace – the communities recognize that locally deployed ex-combatants will continue to reside in their

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<sup>335</sup> Interview by La Comisión Departamental de Seguimiento y Acompañamiento al Proceso de Desmovilización, Desarme y Reintegración, Antioquia, 14 February 2007.

<sup>336</sup> An ICTJ survey, for instance, found Colombian victims from smaller towns (likely characterized by more frequent interactions and stronger social ties between victims and victimizers) much more likely to consider the guerrillas and paramilitaries also "victims" of the conflict (International Center for Transitional Justice 2006, p. 29).

neighborhoods for the long term. Accordingly, they resign themselves to this fact and accept the former fighters in their mix.



#### 4. *Retrospective Voters* → *Tolerance and Authority*

Non-combatants do not simply identify with one armed actor over another based on their prospective ideological platforms (left or right in the case of Colombia); rather evaluations of the incumbent armed group's past performance influences citizens' likelihood of rejecting or endorsing the group in the next period. This evaluation is relative to an estimate of how well the other armed actors (state and non-state) would have performed had they been in power, weighted according to some level of uncertainty about this estimate. Citizens then predict which 'ruler' is more likely to serve their interests in the future. These evaluations are reflected in the civilians' allegiance. The civilian population either approves the status quo and supports the incumbent – the former armed group – or endorses change. Tolerance of different actors may evolve over time as the alternatives shift.<sup>337</sup> Initially, the incumbent, former rebel or paramilitary faction may represent the only viable option, but as demobilization takes hold, non-formerly militarized options may strengthen, political parties may break their ties to ex-armed groups, and the state may engage in state-building, affording a substitute source of authority. This framework enables

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<sup>337</sup> Evidence from the highlands of Peru offers support for this mechanism. The population viewed the incumbent – the state – as corrupt and abusive. Accordingly, when the rebel group, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), provided better governance, schools, etc. the population voted the state out of power and afforded the SL their endorsement. When Sendero later began engaging in re-education programs and restricting *fiestas* and liberties, their support began to erode. This points to the potential, temporal and performance-based aspect of combatant-civilian relations.



us to understand civilian support for highly abusive armed entities; there may be no viable or preferred alternative. Support is *relative* to alternatives; it is *not* absolute.<sup>338</sup>

Additionally, communities are often fearful to ‘vote out’ or reject the only authority they have because they do not know when the vacuum will be filled again and by whom.<sup>339</sup> They prefer the known, calculable risk to the unknown. Highly abusive powers can also do ‘good’ and thereby win endorsement. History is littered with popular dictators and polls suggest that citizens often prefer order and jobs to democracy and liberty. In the aftermath of long struggles, civilians are often tired of violence and want to get on with their lives. They therefore, at times, desire peace at the cost of justice and revenge.<sup>340</sup> Thus, any entity able to establish negative peace (absence of manifest violence) and economic growth may be able to reign.<sup>341</sup> In sum, we should expect communities, which perceive the ex-combatants’ rule to have brought positive changes to their neighborhoods to be more likely to look to them as accepted, and even endorsed, authority figures.

##### *5. Stickiness of Social Institutions → Authority*

Social relations and hierarchies are not quickly dismantled. Ex-combatants are known in the communities they patrol. They are accustomed to ruling the civilians and the civilians are accustomed to being ruled by the illegal armed structures. Because local former fighters do not change contexts after demobilizing, it proves more challenging for them to defect from their old habits and modes of operating vis-à-vis their communities. The path from prince to pauper is not

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<sup>338</sup> Former rebel groups’ success as political parties is often a vote *against* other parties rather than a vote *for* the rebel-to-party. The Nepalese Maoists, Hamas, and M19 are examples of this (Interviews by author, West Bank, 20 May 2009; ICG 2008).

<sup>339</sup> Fundación Progresar analyst, interview by author, Cúcuta, 30 May 2008.

<sup>340</sup> Patrick Barron (World Bank, Aceh), interview by author, Cartagena, 6 May 2009. See also Pham et al. 2009.

<sup>341</sup> In Colombia, for example, as the means of reparation, Colombians favor monuments to honor victims, money, and official apologies much less than they do education, creation of jobs, and medical attention. See ICTJ 2006.

one taken overnight. Social institutions are sticky in the short to medium term for several reasons: silent coercion, psychological power and fear, but also because of standard operating procedures; obedience becomes habit. These institutions may also lock-in further if the ex-combatants can institutionalize their influence in legitimate, legal terms. As one of my subjects explained, there is not resistance to the former militants because “they are just accepted, they are the norm, they were the law, they imposed the rules of daily life, they resolved everything in these municipalities. Nobody in these areas can imagine being obedient to another group because this one was everything.”<sup>342</sup> It follows that ex-combatants are more likely to remain powerful figures in communities in their former zones of operation, those in which they established the social institutions and authority hierarchies over non-combatants. In contrast, we should expect *returnee* and *displaced* former paramilitaries to be treated as ‘normal civilians’ by their communities, non-endowed with authority.

It may be the case that the longer the rule, the stickier ex-combatants’ power. For example, where an armed group has reigned for 30-40 years, whole generations grow up only knowing illegal armed actors as authority figures. When these generations were born, there were only militants around. When they reached forty years old, there were still only militants around and the army and police had never set foot in their towns. Accordingly, these institutions of authority are likely to endure even without arms.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo analyst, interview by author, Cúcuta, May 2008.

<sup>343</sup> Ex-combatant #2, interview by author, *Comuna 3*, Cúcuta, 28 May 2008.

## V. Observable Implications

*Local* combatants who fought and sought to reintegrate in their towns of origin should enjoy dense networks, longer shadows of the future and sticky institutions with their neighbors who view them with mitigated levels of anger.

*Returnees* should operate with more muted versions of these networks and shadows of the future – they are from the communities and thus enjoy their childhood friends and family, but they have spent usually years fighting elsewhere. Accordingly, these bonds may have eroded. Additionally, their deployment elsewhere renders their permanence in the community more questionable, shrinking the expected duration of future interactions. *Returnees* also do not enjoy the institutions of authority in the neighborhood in which they reside, having exercised their coercive leverage elsewhere in the country.

Meanwhile, *Squatter* and *Displaced* combatants share thin if any ties to the communities; uprooted, they are more transient; and, strangers to the inhabitants around them, they are stereotyped and blamed for all paramilitary violence. These two ‘types’ differ in authority – *displaced* combatants, as *returnees*, do not settle in their theater of combat and thus their interactions with the communities are between equals, between ‘normal civilians.’ It should be noted that displaced combatants are not generally ‘rejected’ as most civilians do not even know they are ex-combatants; instead, communities’ reactions to them are usually characterized as indifference. If community members learn that a displaced individual is an ex-combatant, they may stigmatize him/her, but are unlikely to resist him/her.

**Figure 10. Mechanisms of Embeddedness**

Mechanisms	Recruitment, Deployment & Migration Patterns				
		<i>Local</i>	<i>Returnee</i>	<i>Squatter</i>	<i>Displaced</i>
<i>Dense Social Networks</i>		√	√	X	X
<i>Lower Anger Levels</i>		√	√	X	X
<i>Longer Shadow of Future</i>		√	√	X	X
<i>Sticky Institutions</i>		√	X	√	X
<i>Retrospective Voting</i>		?	?	?	?

Based on these mechanisms, I predict the following relationship between deployment and migration decisions and post-war embeddedness (Figure 11).

*H<sub>1</sub>*: *Local* and *Returnee* ex-combatants should experience greater levels of acceptance and tolerance from their communities while *Squatters* or *Displaced* former fighters should be subject to higher levels of rejection by the civilian population.

*H<sub>2</sub>*: *Local* and *Squatter* ex-combatants should prove more likely than their *Returnee* and *Displaced* counterparts to enjoy power and authority roles within their communities.

**Figure 11. Variation in Embeddedness**

Component #2 Of Embeddedness	Component #1 of Embeddedness		
		<i>Resistance</i>	<i>Tolerance</i>
	<i>Low Levels of Authority</i>	Displaced	Returnees
<i>High Levels of Authority</i>	Squatters	Locals	

I further predict that:

*H<sub>3</sub>*: *Local* ex-combatants should be strongly embedded in their communities and thus enjoy high levels of socio-political influence, enabling them to form legitimate political entities (civil associations or political parties) after disarming.

*H<sub>4</sub>*: *Returnees* and *Squatters*, meanwhile, should experience intermediate levels of embeddedness and socio-political leverage with the latter subject to steeper decay in their influence.

*H<sub>5</sub>*: Last, *Displaced* should face low levels of embeddedness and influence over civilian affairs (Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Variation in Socio-Political Influence**

Leverage Over Civilian Affairs		
<i>Low</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>High</i>
Displaced	Squatters; Returnees <sup>344</sup>	Locals

How do these propositions hold up against the empirical record? In this section, I present evidence that the character of the relations between civilians and ex-combatants co-varies with stationing and migration patterns. I draw on two types of evidence: qualitative case studies of the three paramilitary regions and quantitative survey data that capture variation in the character of embeddedness and socio-political mobilization across space.

## **VI. Embeddedness and Socio-Political Influence in Post-Conflict Contexts**

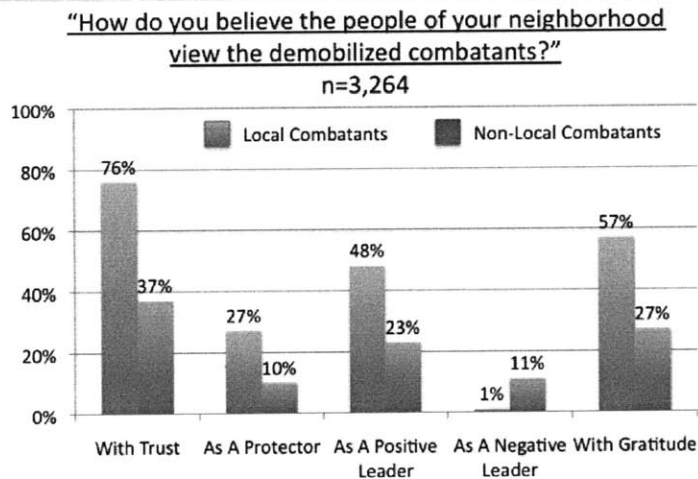
### *Medellín's Bloque Cacique Nutibara: Deeply Embedded*

The Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN) comprised local fighters, which never broke their ties with their communities. I argue that these social origins and deployment patterns embedded the BCN in the non-combatant populations of Medellín and afforded them the authority, legitimacy, and endorsement of their communities. Figure 13 contrasts the *local* BCN combatants with the non-local *displaced* and *returnee* combatants from other paramilitary factions.

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<sup>344</sup> *Returnee* armed groups may join a socio-political organization comprised mostly of *local* combatants in their home regions or may form their own, endogamous entities such as 'productive projects' and businesses to employ their ex-combatants.

Figure 13. Embeddedness



The BCN soldiers operated and sought to reintegrate into civilian life in the neighborhoods where their mothers, aunts, brothers, and childhood friends lived. It follows that, if 536 demobilized resided in a neighborhood,<sup>345</sup> each with an average social network of six family members and ten unique civilian friends, there existed a web of 32,160 community members directly linked to the former fighters. This network did not reject the demobilized and the rest of the community could not reject this group either because it was not an isolated web.

Social relations in the *barrios* were not quickly altered. The ex-combatants were well known by the community – they had hung out and protected its street corners all their lives. Therefore, their authority tended to persist without the use of manifest weaponry; the civilian citizenry continued to obey and fear them. This enabled them to translate their power in ‘illegality’ to power in ‘legality.’ The locals knew what they were capable of and knew that they still had the backing of a giant organization.<sup>346</sup> One coordinator boasted to me, “I will never lose

<sup>345</sup> This constitutes the ex-combatant population of *Comuna 1*, Medellín.

<sup>346</sup> Gersen Arias (Fundación Ideas para la Paz), interview by author, Bogotá, July 2008.

my fame in my neighborhood.”<sup>347</sup> With their milieus unchanged, their standard operating procedures vis-à-vis their communities were similarly constant.

Evidence suggests that the BCN’s embeddedness further worked against the stigmatizations and stereotypes that would have existed absent these personal social links, and surprisingly facilitated reconciliation. The victims in Medellín’s neighborhoods often knew their perpetrators and were “friends with their perpetrators’ mothers,” a fact repeated to me during several interviews. These social ties worked to mitigate emotions of anger, but left those of pain and sadness intense.

Additionally, the communities comprised retrospective voters. Despite its use of assassination, extortion, kidnapping, and massacres, the BCN improved the lives of a majority of the shantytown dwellers. The BCN ‘ran on a platform’ of doing so and made good on this promise. Thus, the community members offered it their support.

Prior to the BCN’s reign, Medellín was characterized by well-defined neighborhoods that survived long periods of violence during which one could not cross from one neighborhood to the next due to the presence of powerful, community-based, armed actors.<sup>348</sup> Those who crossed the road marking the neighborhood boundaries would be killed. Turf wars between gangs were a daily and bloody affair. For example, in *Popular*, “combats occurred day and night between two gangs – *La Galera* and *La 38* – irreconcilable enemies because one was allied with the guerrillas and the other contracted by the paramilitaries ... Many students didn’t go to class ... the gangs were waiting and would kill based on mere suspicion.” The gang *Los Triana* wanted to control the blocks between the streets 124 and 125 and the avenues 49 and 50. “If one is from Avenue 49 (and thus the zone of *Cañada Negra*) and one crosses Avenue 50, death is automatic ... We can’t

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<sup>347</sup> Coordinator of *Comuna 6*, interview by author, Medellín, March 2008.

<sup>348</sup> See Defensoría del Pueblo, ACNUR and EUROPEAID 2004.

even cross to take our sick and injured to the Hospital because it would mean crossing the sector of *Los Triana*.”<sup>349</sup> This one feud caused more than 70 families to abandon their homes and displace, especially those living on the second and third floors, which the explosives tended to hit.<sup>350</sup>

The BCN promised to end this inter-gang fighting. It also promised to end the guerrilla militias’ abuses and violence. Exploiting its powerful coercive structure, the BCN co-opted all of the armed factions into a single umbrella organization and defeated those who refused to join. From the marginal neighborhoods in the northern part of Medellín to those in the south, one could observe the graffiti on the walls announcing the BCN’s hegemony. “Self-Defense Groups: You either put on camouflage or you die a civilian,” read one message. Those who would not join died.<sup>351</sup> Thus, the Bloque Cacique Nutibara came to control 70% of Medellín,<sup>352</sup> a figure that increased following several joint military/paramilitary security operations.<sup>353</sup> Medellín and eastern Antioqueño came to be under the influence of a single paramilitary group – the Bloque Cacique Nutibara.

This hegemonic control of the territory meant that violence levels dropped significantly<sup>354</sup> (with the exception of the *Comuna* 13 which serves as an illuminating micro counter-case explored below). The number of reported killings in the city fell by 47 percent in 2003 (See Figure 14).

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<sup>349</sup> Yarce 2003a.

<sup>350</sup> Yarce 2003b.

<sup>351</sup> Yarce 2003a.

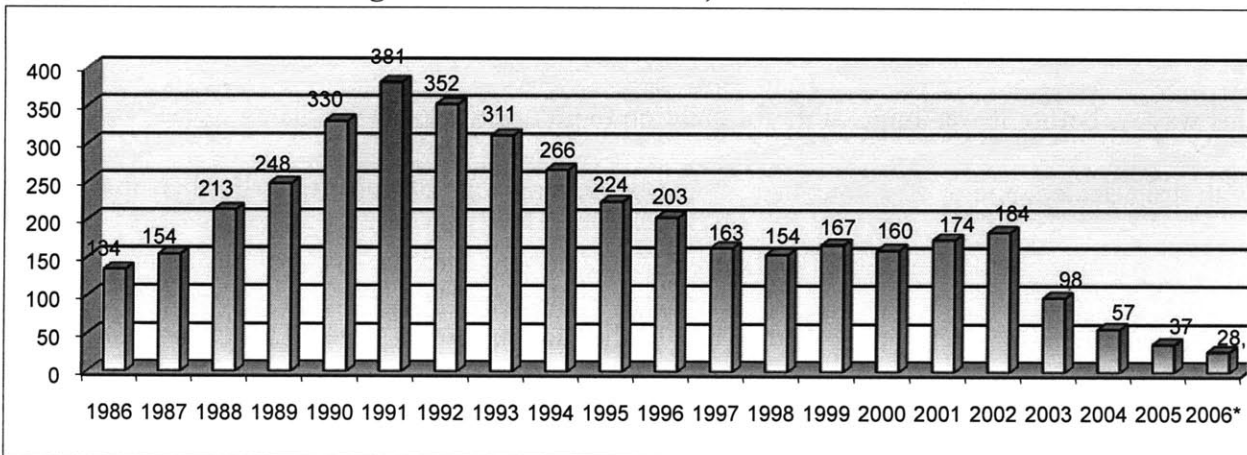
<sup>352</sup> This figure comes from a Colombian Intelligence Report cited in Yarce 2002a.

<sup>353</sup> Security force operations – *Operación Mariscal* and *Operación Orión* – launched in *Comunas* 7 and 13 in the centre-west of the city in 2002 ended guerrilla control in these areas and allowed the BCN paramilitaries to partially fill the void.

<sup>354</sup> Kalyvas 2006.



Figure 14. Homicide Rates, Medellín 1986 - 2006



Source: Programa Paz y Reconciliación, Medellín. Homicide rate is per 1,000 inhabitants.

Residents of *Popular* and *Santa Cruz* described how this statistic was felt on the ground, “Now the gangs are not killing each other block by block. Now, all of them work for the same ‘señor:’ the Bloque Cacique Nutibara.... You can now go all the way to *Zamora* because the paramilitaries have already co-opted all of the communities [on the way] ... Now you hear fighting only far away.<sup>355</sup> Thus communities began to feel that they were living in peace.

In everyday terms, this ‘peace’ in the *barrios* translated into inhabitants venturing out into the streets again, opening bakeries and markets, engaging in community service, and attending social gatherings. It meant that development, investment, and participatory politics returned to these areas, long-abandoned and silenced by over 20 years of violence. An older woman in *Popular* described how, as the conflict diminished, her dance club and group of female friends became her principal concerns; she could return to the worries of daily, civilian life.<sup>356</sup> In *Manrique*, a young man told me with relief how he was finally able to complete high school; before he could not leave his house.<sup>357</sup> “Our neighborhood has changed completely

<sup>355</sup> Yarce 2003a.

<sup>356</sup> Civilian Woman, interview by author, Meeting of *Proyecto Encuentro*, Comuna 3, Medellín, 4 March 2008.

<sup>357</sup> Young Civilian Man, interview by author, Meeting of *Proyecto Encuentro*, Comuna 3, Medellín, 7 March 2008.

because now the people are free, you can have a party in your house *tranquilo*,” commented a civil society leader in the neighborhood *Villa Hermosa*.<sup>358</sup> A resident of *Robledo* added, “I see it this way ... before it was impossible for children to go outside to play ... These parks were filled with drug-dealers and at any hour there could be an exchange of gunfire ... Further up the hill, narrow passages wind between the houses. Each nook guards a story of death and evokes memories of victims. Here fell so-and-so and further down, so-and-so.”<sup>359</sup> This changed.

As a result of the reduction in violence, the members of the Medellín shantytown communities were happy that they could return to normal life again. Moreover, they associated this ‘peace’ and contentment with the paramilitaries and, later, with their reintegration process. Several confessed to me that the “tranquility and peace that Medellín has today is thanks to the *autodefensas*.”<sup>360</sup> In a word association exercise carried out in Medellín on a random sample of 1,000 civilians with the question, “What do you think of when they hear the word ‘reintegration?’” the most frequent responses were ‘peace,’ ‘opportunity’ and ‘tranquility.’ Eight-eight percent of Medellín’s community members evaluated the presence of ex-combatants in their neighborhoods as ‘positive.’<sup>361</sup> Eighty-seven percent responded that, since the demobilization process, their neighborhood had more peace and 84% said their neighborhood had more security. The association of peace and happiness with the paramilitaries’ presence and reintegration, in turn, conferred to the BCN a degree of legitimacy and credibility, which led to the relative acceptance rather than rejection of the combatants. A civil society leader admitted: “In general the community accepts the ex-combatants because they are happy that they don’t

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<sup>358</sup> Civilian Man, interview by author, *Comuna 1*, Medellín, 4 March 2008.

<sup>359</sup> Castrillón 2005.

<sup>360</sup> Civil Society Leader, interview by author, *Comuna 8*, Medellín, 9 March 2008.

<sup>361</sup> These figures are based on Organization of International Migration surveys conducted annually since 2004 on a random sample of civilian respondents across the *comunas* of Medellín. In 2004, respondents totaled 451, in 2005 (n=501), 2006 (n=812), 2007 (n=1123). See Appendix C.

have to live in war and fear anymore.”<sup>362</sup> The BCN was known as the “great pacifier of the city.” Graffiti in one of the northeast neighborhoods announced: “Adolfo Peace [BCN’s commander] is peace in Medellín.”<sup>363</sup>

This embeddedness allowed the demobilized to continue their involvement with community activities,<sup>364</sup> which afforded them greater acceptance and deeper social control (even a monopoly over social activities and organization). Additionally, the civilian population preferred the incumbent (now the BCN) to a return to armed competition: “More than the terror due to the presence of the remains of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara structure ... is the community’s terror that another armed actor could come in.”<sup>365</sup> The BCN was conscious of this fear. One former mid-tier commander explained to me:

If we, the demobilized, are good to the community and work with/for the community, if a new group enters, the community is not going to support the new group as they are not going to be looking for a way to get rid of us. If there is harmony and we are providing the necessary social services, fiestas, and security, the community will reject any new group that comes, but will never reject us, the *ex-autodefensas*.<sup>366</sup>

Thus, as long as the reduction in violence continued, the support continued; retrospective voting remained in effect.

Finally, given the extreme costliness of displacement, the community members and former BCN combatants recognized that they would continue to reside in the neighborhoods for at least the medium term, thereby extending the shadow of the future.<sup>367</sup> María, a resident of *Popular* explained: “They are our neighbors, our family, if we don’t give them a second chance,

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<sup>362</sup> Community member, interview by author, Barrio Carpinello, *Comuna 1*, Medellín, 5 March 2008.

<sup>363</sup> *Revista Semana* 2005.

<sup>364</sup> *Revista Semana* 2004a.

<sup>365</sup> Yarce 2003c.

<sup>366</sup> Coordinator of the Ex-BCN Combatants, interview by author, Medellín, 2008.

<sup>367</sup> This is based on a series of interviews conducted by the author of women in the barrios. This includes the woman in charge of the chapel built by the paramilitaries in *Comuna 1*, the woman who is the cook for an ex-commander in *Comuna 6*, and several female civil-society leaders and members of the JACs.

they will return to violence. We cannot turn our backs on them.”<sup>368</sup> Meanwhile, the ex-BCN soldiers, conscious of their permanence in the neighborhoods, were concerned about changing the negative stigmas they may have had in the eyes of their communities and convincing their neighbors that they were heroes and that the violence was not for nothing. Ex-combatant Jesús, for example, told me, “I consider myself a martyr because I sacrificed myself and saved my country.”<sup>369</sup> His comrade, Juan Manuel, offered, “My and other *ex-autodefensas*’ motivations for seeking political power are to obtain legitimacy, to show everyone that we can be normal civilians and still important in the legality, and to change the paradigms and stereotypes that everyone has of us as bad.”<sup>370</sup> According to the former director of Medellín’s reintegration program, Gustavo Villegas, “The Democracy Corporation engages in community work so that the communities will accept the ex-combatants and no longer view them as criminals.”<sup>371</sup> Given that most of the BCN combatants were local, they also loved their neighborhoods and *wanted* to contribute to them. One ex-combatant expressed, “Even if I had the opportunity to live in *El Poblado* (the wealthiest neighborhood of Medellín), I would never leave my *barrio*.”<sup>372</sup>

While in Medellín, I visited the ex-combatants’ command center of socio-political operations in *La Sierra*. They showed me a model they had designed indicating how they wanted their neighborhood to look. It included an ecological park, a community center for youth and life, and a local government building. They could construct these models because they maintained influence over *all* of these facets of civilian affairs. They gained votes, regulated economic activities, dictated social norms, and administered local justice without community resistance. I propose that the BCN’s embeddedness in the local communities allowed them to do so. The

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<sup>368</sup> Castrillón 2005.

<sup>369</sup> Jesús (Ex-combatant), interview by author, *Comuna 2*, Medellín, February 2008.

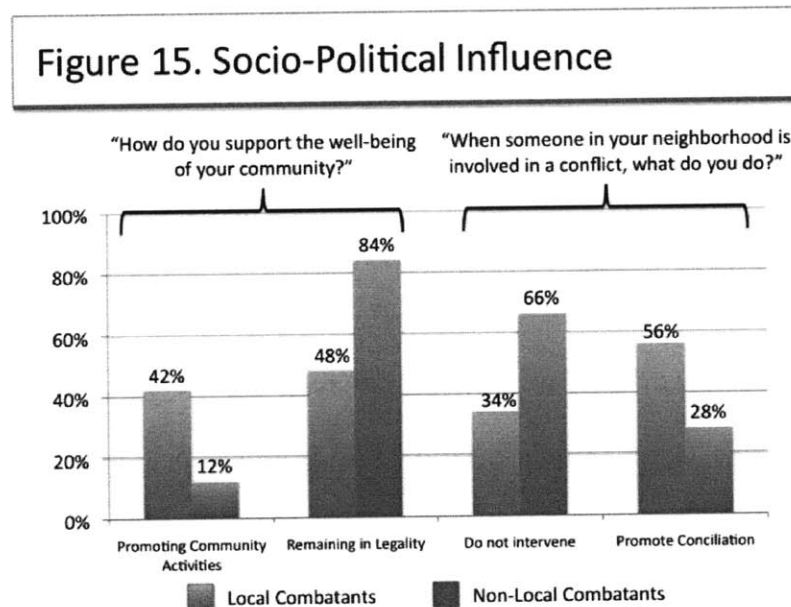
<sup>370</sup> Juan Manuel (Ex-combatant), interview by author, *Comuna 2*, Medellín, March 2008.

<sup>371</sup> Interview by author, Medellín, February 2008.

<sup>372</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Medellín, March 2008.

community members continued to tolerate their enduring control over civilian affairs and to see them as the authority, able and willing to take care of the neighborhoods.<sup>373</sup>

Two measures shown in Figure 15 look at whether the ex-combatants promoted community activities and resolved disputes. We can see that 84% of *non-local* combatants considered that the best way to support the community was by being an anonymous person and a legal individual, whereas *local*, ex-BCN combatants tended to instead promote community activities and assume an active, visible, and influential role in the social and political life of the neighborhoods in which they resided.



*Democracy Corporation: A Socio-Political Organization*

The Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN)’s NGO reincarnation – the Democracy Corporation – thus enjoyed hegemony of ‘social work’ in many of the poor neighborhoods of Medellín, and

<sup>373</sup> Herrera, interview by author, Medellín, February 2008; Male and Female Civilians, interviews by author, Comuna 1, Medellín, 4 March 2008.

won several local government positions (in the Community Action Committees (JAC) and the Local Administration Boards (JAL)).

According to the president of the Democracy Corporation, Fabio Acevedo, the BCN became “a legitimate, legal, social organization to accompany the reintegration process, coordinate the demobilized, regain the social trust lost during the conflict, and generate social, human, political, and economic development of the demobilized and their surroundings.”<sup>374</sup> He went on to outline how the 78 former mid-ranking commanders, now called ‘coordinators,’ were charged with a territorial zone and group of 15-37 ex-combatants in order to direct the Corporation’s franchise social organizations in the neighborhoods under their command. One of these coordinators, Jorge Mario, specified, “My position as the social leader of the neighborhood came directly from the military structure of the BCN in which I was the leader of the zone.”<sup>375</sup> Not surprisingly, the Corporation also enjoyed the greatest influence in the zones of the city in which the BCN’s presence during the war had been strongest and thus the institutions sticky. “This came from the work we were doing before the demobilization, the ties we had from before,” clarified the Corporation’s director.<sup>376</sup> According to journalist Gloria Castrillón, the paramilitaries “fabricated the image of a Robin Hood to extend their political project.”<sup>377</sup>

The Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN) continued to exercise its social leverage in several ways. *First*, the ex-combatants resolved problems between members of the community. One mid-ranking commander described, “Whenever there is a death in the community or a robbery, the community members call us to deal with it or to help resolve the problem.”<sup>378</sup> Another

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<sup>374</sup> Acevedo, interview by author, Medellín, March 2008.

<sup>375</sup> Ex-commander of *Comuna 3* and President of the Community Action Board (JAC), interview by author, Medellín, 19 February 2008.

<sup>376</sup> Acevedo, interview by author, Medellín, March 2008.

<sup>377</sup> Castrillón 2005.

<sup>378</sup> Ex-commander of *Comuna 4*, interview by author, Medellín, March 2008.

coordinator claimed, “I receive 10-15 visits from people everyday because someone is not paying his debt, someone’s husband hit her, someone’s wife is cheating on him, someone is taking over his land.”<sup>379</sup> Civil society leaders corroborated this, “Many people continue to go to the former combatants instead of to the police. The police does not even exist in these neighborhoods and the citizens view it with mistrust.”<sup>380</sup> The former BCN combatants responded to the community’s complaints and imposed ‘justice.’<sup>381</sup> “When there is a problem in the barrio, the [ex-paras] arrive and help, sometimes they threaten the implicated or even beat him or put him in the sewage holes for hours as punishment.”<sup>382</sup> For example, a man who refused to pay his neighbor the 300,000 pesos that he owed him was assassinated to set an example. And several drugged boys who kidnapped a mentally disabled child were exiled from the neighborhood and sent death threats.<sup>383</sup>

*Second*, the former combatants eliminated or punished people whom they deemed socially ‘undesirable.’ They established themselves as ‘moral guardians.’ For example, the local ombudsman reported that the demobilized applied punishments to women they found unfaithful. In a tragic event, they killed “a homosexual couple whom the community affirmed had been living together for over three years.” They also disciplined students who were ‘behaving badly.’ Local police agents testified that parents used the ex-combatants to punish their children physically and psychologically.<sup>384</sup> For instance, the police found a 12-year-old child in the sewer. Triangulating the evidence, it became clear that his parents had asked the demobilized to put him there as punishment for using drugs and stealing. According to civil society leaders, prostitutes

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<sup>379</sup> Ex-commander of *Comuna 8*, elected to the local government (JAL), then imprisoned on charges of criminal violence in May 2008, interview by author, Medellín, 25 February 2008.

<sup>380</sup> Community Leaders and Presidents of the local community boards (JAC), interviews by author, Sector Aures 2, *Comuna 7*, March 2008.

<sup>381</sup> Intergovernmental organization officials, interviews by author, Medellín, May 2008.

<sup>382</sup> Young Civilian Man, interview with author, *Comuna 1*, Medellín, February 2008.

<sup>383</sup> Restrepo 2005.

<sup>384</sup> Local Police Agents, interviews by author, Medellín, March 2008.

received similar treatment. An interview with an imprisoned former combatant revealed the following story:

After I demobilized, there was an elderly woman with cancer living in my neighborhood and a guy stood outside her house smoking marijuana all the time. The woman went to the ‘coordinator’ and asked him to do something about it. I was called to ‘resolve the problem.’ I went to the guy smoking marijuana and told him he had to stop doing drugs there. He responded, “You can’t tell me what to do, you’re not a paramilitary anymore, you’re not anyone.” I shot the guy. He was with two other guys, but since they hadn’t done anything, I left them alone. I was just.<sup>385</sup>

*Third*, the former combatants hosted community *fiestas*. They threw huge, well-funded parties in the poorest neighborhoods of Medellín in celebration of Christmas, New Year’s, Easter, Mother’s Day, Halloween, and a host of other holidays. For these *fiestas*, they bought presents for all the children of the neighborhood. During my visits to the shantytowns, the members of the community showed me pictures of these parties and recounted them in detail – the music, food, games, decorations, and costumes. For neighborhoods plagued by violence for decades, the importance of these celebrations cannot be underestimated.

*Fourth*, the ex-combatants, through the Democracy Corporation’s foundations, organized and funded social clubs for the elderly and children and sponsored sports teams. They also contributed to the marginal neighborhoods by mobilizing people to clean up the trash, plant trees in the parks, create tourist destinations, and construct chapels. They even formed health brigades, which linked up with the official state services to provide coverage in the marginal neighborhoods. Additionally, the ex-BCN structure funded micro-businesses from agricultural projects to enterprises that produced sweets, soft drinks, fast food, and shoes. Through these businesses, they became a large, local employer.

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<sup>385</sup> Recidivist Ex-combatant (Bloque Cacique Nutibara), interview by author, Bellavista Prison, Medellín, 18 April 2008.



Finally, with respect to formal politics, 24 ex-BCN combatants ran for the Local Administrative Boards (JAL) in the 2007 election. Three were elected. Meanwhile, many other former paramilitaries gained positions in their neighborhood Community Action Committees (JAC).<sup>386</sup> In these political pursuits, the ex-combatants were backed by the Democracy Corporation and ran on the paramilitary-allied *Movimiento Colombia Viva* party ticket. It was no longer “sufficient [for the paramilitaries] to have political power through co-opted people, now they want[ed] to assume it directly.”<sup>387</sup> According to BCN commander, Giovanni Marín: “We [the BCN] continue seeking our ideals in legality. Now we are on our way to creating a political movement.”<sup>388</sup>

### **Urabá: Social and Political Leverage Preserved**

I will only very briefly discuss the case of Urabá as it largely mirrors that of Medellín in the first two to three years following demobilization. Thereafter, as discussed in Chapter 7, the former urabeño armed organizations remilitarized and their social and political influence re-assumed a coercive nature.

*Embedded.* It is widely accepted that the paramilitaries were deeply embedded in the communities of Urabá and, despite extreme levels of violence and atrocity, enjoyed tolerance by the population that enabled them to retain leverage following the peace accords. The *autodefensas* of Urabá were native to the region and highly connected to elite classes.<sup>389</sup> Frente

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<sup>386</sup> It should be noted that the JACs have control over the neighborhood budgets.

<sup>387</sup> Conflict analyst, interview by author, Medellín, 2008.

<sup>388</sup> Niera 2003.

<sup>389</sup> The paramilitaries of Urabá were implanted in the network of the state’s coercive apparatus through the commander of Colombia’s 17<sup>th</sup> Army Brigade, General Rito Alejo del Rio. Frente Turbo commander, HH, testified, “I maintained a close relationship [with the military]; between us, we frequently offered each other collaboration. The army gave us information about the guerrillas and their members and other times, turned a blind eye before the actions that we committed. The commander, ‘Rodrigo Doble Cero’ coordinated with the armed forces, he called them by telephone and spoke with them directly.” (Ever Veloza Garcia, Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law,

Bananero commander, Raul Hazbún, one of the most prominent banana plantation owners in the region, “had all the links with the *bananeros*, the mayors, the armed forces, etc. He managed all the ‘contacts’ of the Bloque Bananero, held all the meetings with the wealthy of the area, convincing them to come onboard.”<sup>390</sup> Similarly, BEC commander, Alemán, confessed during his Justice and Peace hearings, “I knew all of the local authorities and met with all of them. I also knew all the mayors of Urabá and participated in meetings about their ‘political project.’”<sup>391</sup>

The Urabá paramilitaries were also densely linked to the *campesino* communities who, according to the social architecture of the Colombian coast, followed the will and preferences of their patrons.<sup>392</sup> When the *Esperanzados* (ex-EPL guerrillas) joined the paramilitaries, they further conferred to the *paras* their broad and deep social web of banana unionists, palm, cattle and wood workers, leftist sympathizers of the Hope, Peace, and Liberty (EPL) political party,<sup>393</sup> and ex-rebels and their families.<sup>394</sup> “The autodefensas [thus] enjoyed support from both the right and the left of the political spectrum [rich and poor]... The *autodefensas* were made up of everyone: the *bananeros*, the unions, the police, the army, the businesses, everyone.”<sup>395</sup>

It follows that the combatants were tied to the non-combatant population through neighborhood, unionist, political, former guerrilla, patronage, and other networks. 85% of the rural community members surveyed confirmed that they had no difficulties accepting the demobilized “because they were native to those communities and/or some had belonged to the

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Medellín, 26–27 November 2007). See also Human Rights Watch 2008, p. 45-47; Human Rights Watch 2004, 2007.

<sup>390</sup> OAS-MAPP Peace Monitor, interview by author, Apartadó, July 2008.

<sup>391</sup> Fredy Rendón Herrera, alias ‘El Alemán,’ Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Medellín, 5 June 2007.

<sup>392</sup> OAS-MAPP, Analysis Unit, interview by author, Bogotá, February 2008. See also Duncan 2007. The alliances with the regional leaders (patrons) brought with them the support of the patrons’ laborers, especially in the cattle region on northern Urabá. In the southern region of the banana axis, the workers were less dependent on their patrons as they were organized in strong unions.

<sup>393</sup> Carolina (ACR), interview by author, Bogotá, January 2008. The EPL’s political party, Esperanza Paz y Libertad was successful politically and very popular.

<sup>394</sup> Corporación Neuvo Arco Iris 2007.

<sup>395</sup> Beatrice, interview by author, Apartadó, July 2008.

self-defense forces that had operated right there.”<sup>396</sup> According to ACR director of Riosucio, “The community members, such as professors, civil society leaders, priests, etc. have opened the doors to the demobilized, in part because they have some familiar link with the demobilized given that the demobilized are *from here*.”<sup>397</sup> Social relations positively correlated with embeddedness.

Second, life, for some, improved under the paramilitaries’ reign. The FARC and EPL’s intra-guerrilla bloodbath had left the social bases of both groups relatively anti-guerrilla (that of the EPL became anti-FARC and that of the FARC anti-EPL). Additionally, the FARC and EPL’s abuses (extortion and kidnappings) against the banana owners caused much of the capital and jobs to flee the zone, leaving the laborers without work. As a result, unemployment and economic depression were viewed as the direct consequence of the guerrillas and the paramilitaries became preferred to the rebel incumbents.<sup>398</sup> After the *autodefensas* gained control of the region, it began to recover, pacify and grow. People in exile returned to the zone and the businesses began to operate again.<sup>399</sup> People spoke of the rebirth of Urabá and Urabá became “the model of pacification for the rest of the country.”<sup>400</sup> In his confessions, paramilitary founder, Carlos Castaño wrote:

It was worth it to kill in Urabá some 200 civilian guerrillas and some hundred guerrillas in uniform. Come and see! This region is awaking from a lethargy. There is [now] employment, education, health, harmony between the employers and employees. The unions work to save the businesses not to ruin them as happened in the past when the guerrillas operated here.<sup>401</sup>

And after disarmament, the non-combatant populations, fearing the guerrillas’ return, continued

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<sup>396</sup> Organization of International Migration 2006c.

<sup>397</sup> Interview by author, Riosucio, 3 July 2008.

<sup>398</sup> Civilian, interview by author, Apartadó, 26 June 2008.

<sup>399</sup> Ex-combatants (Frente Bananero), interview by author, Caurallo, 3 July 2008. For example, in the regions of Chocó in which the BEC had a presence, the wood companies began to operate again and even expanded.

<sup>400</sup> ICG Report 2003.

<sup>401</sup> Aranguren Molina 2001.

to look to the ex-paramilitaries for governance. Known abuses, but order, were preferred to the unknown ones, and potential disorder.<sup>402</sup>

Third, “the magnitude of the violence has made it so that in many communities, they have learned to live victims and executioners in a complex process in which the status of one and the other have not always been easy to determine because many inhabitants of the region have been one or the other thing at the same time.”<sup>403</sup> Despite high levels of atrocity, the victim and victimizer lines blurred and perpetrators’ membership in the communities facilitated reconciliation. The director of the ACR in Riosucio confirms, “All the [demobilized] are in their communities so there haven’t been problems with the victims.”<sup>404</sup>

*Construpaz, Superban, and the Special Services.* The BEC’s embeddedness permitted the powers of paramilitarism in Urabá to survive after demobilization.<sup>405</sup> The ex-Bloque Elmer Cárdenas’ non-violent socio-political organization, *Construpaz*,<sup>406</sup> constituted part of a ‘social plan’ for Urabá to “arrive at reconciliation, to improve quality of life in the communities and to prevent repetition, a return to war. This is our platform with the peace process.”<sup>407</sup> Through its programs, the demobilized combatants continued to intervene in the problems of the communities and the protection of civilians.<sup>408</sup> “If someone stole something, a chicken, some land, if someone’s woman cheated on him, everyone would turn to us.... It was hard to avoid a paternalistic relationship with the civilian population...[We were] used not just by politicians,

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<sup>402</sup> These preferences were expressed to me in several interviews with civilians in Chigorodó and San Pedro de Urabá, July 2008.

<sup>403</sup> Walker 2008.

<sup>404</sup> ACR Regional Director, interview by author, Riosucio, 3 July 2008.

<sup>405</sup> Duncan 2006. See also Observatorio del Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos 2006.

<sup>406</sup> *Construpaz* was also designed to form ‘productive projects for peace,’ projects with the paramilitaries’ money that would enable them to self-run the reintegration process. Gersen Arias (Fundación Ideas para La Paz), interview by author, Bogota, 17 July 2008.

<sup>407</sup> See also *Revista Semana* 2006. In 2006, ‘El Alemán’ designed, in collaboration with the government, the Project Social Alternative (PASO). Paso, meaning step, was symbolic of the transition the organization was making from illegality to legality (Alejandro Toro, interview by author, Necoclí, June 2008).

<sup>408</sup> Organization of International Migration 2006.

but also by the very communities to fix the school, build a road, plant seeds.”<sup>409</sup> The BEC also operated a series of non-governmental organizations, cooperatives, media outlets, and businesses that survived and provided it public license to control the territory and population. The ex-combatants of the Frente Bananero, meanwhile, formed the Association of Demobilized of Urabá (ASEDSUR), which had two associations: Superban and the Special Services.<sup>410</sup> Superban monitored and controlled the safety of the domestic distribution of bananas from Urabá.<sup>411</sup> Operating on eight hour patrol shifts with 25 stations on the roads, mobile units on motorcycles, radios and a command center to keep track of intelligence, they continued “to keep tabs on what [was] moving” and to exercise “extensive social influence” of the banana axis.<sup>412</sup> The local population assured that the *autodefensas*’ power remained “firmly intact.”<sup>413</sup> Finally, several ex-combatants ran for office and won political positions. For example, in Necoclí, Chigorodó, and Rivalino, demobilized won the posts of council and, elsewhere, they continued to influence the JACs and JALs, exerting a leadership role in the community governance system. I turn now to cases populated not with *local* ex-combatants, but instead with *displaced* or *squatter* ones.

### **Comuna 13**

*Comuna 13* provides a fascinating, micro, counter-case within Medellín while maximizing controls. Because of the non-local nature of the BCN fighters in *Comuna 13*, they were not embedded in its communities. Because the guerrillas had such deep connections in the

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<sup>409</sup> Ex-BEC commander, interview by author, Necoclí, June 2008.

<sup>410</sup> ACR Regional Director, Urabá, interview by author, Apartadó, June 2008.

<sup>411</sup> Director of Superban, interview by author, Apartadó, June 2008. Essentially, Carlos Vasquez and Raul Hasbún enjoyed extremely strong relations with the banana plantation owners and knew about all their “skeletons in the closet.” Accordingly, under blackmail, the *bananeros* agreed to a post-demobilization project that would employ the ex-combatants (Interview by author, Aguachica, April 2008).

<sup>412</sup> Observatorio del Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos 2006

<sup>413</sup> Duncan 2006.

neighborhoods, the paramilitaries' reprisals against the local population were indiscriminate.<sup>414</sup> Victims were found shot with the letters AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) inscribed on their stomachs, having been accused of being a girlfriend, friend, or family member of an insurgent militia member.<sup>415</sup> Moreover, the survivors had no links with the perpetrators to offset their anger. Conditions also never improved in these neighborhoods of *Comuna 13* to the extent they did in the rest of Medellín because the BCN was unable to achieve hegemony. As a result, those that stayed in the zone tended to be rejected by the civilian population. "There is a lot of resentment towards the former self-defense [paramilitary] groups here," commented the psychologist assigned to the ex-combatants in *Comuna 13*.<sup>416</sup> While the Democracy Corporation sought to maintain social and political influence in the zone, it recognized "that its work in the *Comuna 13* has been much more difficult because of the resistance of the traditional leaders that enjoy the support of and represent the communities and are openly against the ideas of the paramilitary forces."<sup>417</sup>

The ex-combatants who remained in *Comuna 13* kept a very low profile and tried to disappear.<sup>418</sup> Whereas in other sectors of the city, being demobilized raised one's status, in *Comuna 13*, it created security problems. "In the community's minds, there is still war,"<sup>419</sup> explained a woman in *Independencia I*. "I feel like I am in danger because people know I am an ex-combatant... it would be better if no one knew," a former BCN fighter in *Comuna 13* complained.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> Member of the Group of High Risk Youth, interview by author, *Comuna 13*, Medellín, 5 March 2008.

<sup>415</sup> Yarce 2002b.

<sup>416</sup> Programa Paz y Reconciliación Psychologist, interview by author, Medellín, March 2008.

<sup>417</sup> Conflict Analyst, interview by author, Medellín, May 2008. This was also verified by a Former Mid-Ranking BCN Commander, interview by author, Medellín, February 2008.

<sup>418</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Barrio 20 de Julio, *Comuna 13*, Medellín, 5 March 2008.

<sup>419</sup> Civilian, interview by author, *Comuna 13*, Medellín, March 2008.

<sup>420</sup> Ex-BCN combatant, interview by author, *El Salado*, *Comuna 13*, Medellín, February 2008.

The ex-combatants residing in *La 13* chose to attend the required ex-combatant psychological reintegration workshops elsewhere in the city.<sup>421</sup> Whereas associations of demobilized proliferated in the neighborhoods of the other *Comunas*, in those of *Comuna 13*, there was not a single ex-combatant organization. The ex-BCN fighters did not campaign, engage in social work, or exercise leverage over civilian affairs in their neighborhoods of *Comuna 13*. Those that engaged in social activities did so only elsewhere in the city, in the communities in which the paramilitaries were embedded.

### **Bloque Catatumbo**

We observe a similar pattern in Norte de Santander to that of *Comuna 13*. The Bloque Catatumbo (BC) fighters, for the most part, did not share social networks with the non-combatant population. According to Will Fredo, “They did not recruit here. Only 2% of the armed group was from Norte Santander.”<sup>422</sup> While the survey data suggests a higher estimate of local combatants, no account puts the fraction of native soldiers at more than one-fifth. To establish ties to the civilian population, the Bloque Catatumbo paramilitaries sought to displace the civilian communities and then repopulate them with people from their hometowns in Córdoba, Urabá and other parts of the coast. However, the *paras* were unable to make the plantations sufficiently productive and linked to principal markets to draw ‘their people’ to the zone. Thus these repopulation efforts failed.<sup>423</sup> The non-integrated nature of the BC combatants was reflected in their racial character. Due to its twisted topography, Colombia is such a highly regionalized country that different regions, even if separated by only small distances boast

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<sup>421</sup> Reintegration Psychologist for *Comuna 13*, interview by author, Medellín, 29 February 2008. Ex-BCN combatants, interview by author, *Comuna 13*, Medellín, 6 March 2008.

<sup>422</sup> Interview by author, Cúcuta, May 2008.

<sup>423</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo, interview by author, Cúcuta, 2008.

different accents, slang, skin color, and cultures that, to any average Colombia, make ‘locals’ and non-locals’ easily distinguishable. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the BC combatants were, for the most part, tall afro-descendants from the coast. “The arrival of the paramilitaries was a shock of cultures.”<sup>424</sup> One ex-combatant from Norte de Santander explained, “All of the members of my group ... were black... The local population had so much fear of them because they were dark and large and intimidating.”<sup>425</sup> The majority of the BC’s members were from “outside of Norte de Santander.”<sup>426</sup> In 1999, the population kept repeating, “The *paracos* arrived.” They say this because the men were “big men and were black. They were tall, *costeños* [from the coast]; they played dominos; they didn’t wear shirts.” This became the stereotype of the paramilitaries in Norte de Santander and the populations retained fear of anyone who fit this description even after the demobilization. To them, all afro-descendants were paramilitaries. An Organization of International Migration report described the ex-combatants in Cúcuta as isolated and alone because “of their cultural diversity, given that many of them are from other regions of the country.”<sup>427</sup>

In addition to a lack of social ties to the civilian population, the violence perpetrated by the Bloque Catatumbo (BC) was not viewed as justified in the eyes of the civilian population. The communities tended to reject the ex-combatants because “they rejected the armed group to which the ex-combatants belonged” and because “members of the community were victims of the demobilized fighters.”<sup>428</sup> Without social bonds to provide informational short-cuts about the perpetrating combatants’ motivations and human characters, desires for punishment remained high. Without reliable data on the victimizers, anger clouded and distorted the victims’ beliefs

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<sup>424</sup> Director, Fundación Progresar, interview by author, Cúcuta, 9 June 2008.

<sup>425</sup> Security guard of BC commander, interview by author, Cúcuta Prison, May 2008.

<sup>426</sup> Ex-BC combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Cúcuta, 3 June 2008.

<sup>427</sup> Organization of International Migration 2005.

<sup>428</sup> Comprehensive Survey of Ex-combatants’ Psychologists. See Appendix C.



about the past. The victims thus stereotyped and engaged in punitive behavior against the entire population of ex-combatants not just their individual perpetrators, blaming not the situations that led to the acts of violence, but the entire group of executioners.<sup>429</sup> They became “intuitive prosecutors.”<sup>430</sup> As a result, Norte de Santander witnessed the deaths of several ex-combatants, murdered in revenge by victims’ families. Other former fighters were assassinated by hired hitmen.<sup>431</sup> Any act of violence was immediately blamed on the former combatants irrespective of their involvement. These emotions and resultant actions obstructed reconciliation and generated the relative rejection of the ex-combatants. The psychologists, who possessed an intimate window into the ex-combatants’ reintegration, explained that the communities felt anger and then indifference. They stigmatized and discriminated against the ex-combatants.

Furthermore, the BC excombatants were less likely to remain in the Venezuelan border zone for the long term, a fact recognized by the civilian communities. According to Will Fredo, director of Fundación Progresar, “The *paras* never came with the intention of staying here in Norte de Santander so they didn’t create social bases and didn’t really infiltrate the institutions.”<sup>432</sup> Many I interviewed had already moved six times because “we know we have enemies.”<sup>433</sup> The Organization of International Migration found that ex-combatants in Norte de Santander change residences “constantly.”<sup>434</sup> These migration patterns reduced the shadow of the future and thus levels of tolerance between the non-combatant population and demobilized BC militants. It also produced incentives for the population to try to drive the ex-fighters from the

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<sup>429</sup> For studies of these emotional mechanisms, see Keltner, Ellsworth and Edwards 1993; Bodenhausen, Sheperd and Kramer 1994. Lerner and Keltner 2000.

<sup>430</sup> Goldberg, Lerner and Tetlock 1999.

<sup>431</sup> Fundación Progresar analyst, interview by author, Cúcuta, 30 May 2008.

<sup>432</sup> Director, Fundación Progresar, interview by author, Cúcuta, 9 June 2008.

<sup>433</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Cúcuta, 2008.

<sup>434</sup> Organization of International Migration 2005.

zone; already uprooted by their deployments, these ex-fighters' displacement thresholds were significantly lower than those of combatants native to their war theaters.

Despite the relative rejection of the former combatants, a residual part of their power nonetheless remained. This enabled them to continue to exercise control through the “stickiness” of social institutions. This type of control, however, unbolstered by endorsement, was quick to erode. In the short term, immediately after demobilization, civilians obeyed the former fighters as they would conquerors or occupiers. The population was the “social base of the paramilitaries only due to fear and pressure.”<sup>435</sup> In the medium run, these social relations mutated. One BC ex-combatant described, “When we first demobilized, I would keep threatening people, saying you should give me food, respect me because do you know who I am? But slowly, I have stopped doing that.”<sup>436</sup> The communities in Norte de Santander began to come forward and to point fingers about who did what during the war. The civilian population became the best source of information on any illegal activity. They mobilized against the presence of the demobilized. According to the reintegration psychologists, they did not collaborate with or support the ex-combatants; they “very often” did not allow the ex-combatants to participate in organizations or associations and “very often” did not permit them to engage in economic activities (establishing businesses or buying land or cattle).<sup>437</sup> “The populations did not view the *ex-paras* as counsel for advice, leadership, or dispute resolution though individuals did, at times, use them to resolve their personal vendettas.”<sup>438</sup>

Not embedded, the ex-BC fighters did not congregate in public, did not run for office, did not participate in community work or political activities and did not maintain influence over

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<sup>435</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo, interview by author, Cúcuta, 2008.

<sup>436</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Puerto Santander, May 2009.

<sup>437</sup> Comprehensive Survey of Ex-combatants' Psychologists. See Appendix C.

<sup>438</sup> Fundación Progresar analyst, interview by author, Cúcuta, 30 May 2008.

civilian affairs in their communities.<sup>439</sup> The communities resisted such influence and denounced it to the police. In contrast to Medellín, in Norte de Santander, there was not a single ex-combatant, socio-political entity. The former paramilitaries sought to avoid engaging with their neighborhoods. “They feared social rejection.” “They feared the public exposure of community activities...and being recognized” and “showing their identities.”<sup>440</sup> Divorced from their communities, ex-combatants in Norte de Santander remained hidden to protect themselves.<sup>441</sup> As a result, “there [were] no organizations of the demobilized ... nothing.” The Bloque Catatumbo (BC) lost its social, economic, political, and military influence.<sup>442</sup>

### **Quantitative Analysis**

If the framework is correct, we should observe deployment patterns significantly impacting ex-combatants’ relationships with and leverage over civilian communities. I engage in several quantitative tests of the logic proposed in this chapter. I seek to test both the relationships between deployment patterns and embeddedness and between embeddedness and socio-political influence. To recall the model’s hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>*: We should expect *Local* and *Returnee* ex-combatants to experience greater levels of acceptance and tolerance from their communities while *Squatters or Displaced* former fighters should be subject to higher levels of rejection by the civilian population.

*H<sub>2</sub>*: *Local* and *Squatter* ex-militants should prove more likely than their *Returnee* and *Displaced* counterparts to enjoy power and authority roles in their communities.

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<sup>439</sup> They did not form political groups or parties, groups of community development or community action boards. They were not part of NGOs that engaged in political activities, did not engage in any electoral political activities – campaigns, threats, running of candidates, joining political parties, intimidating voters, nothing (Comprehensive Survey of Ex-Combatants’ Psychologists. See Appendix C).

<sup>440</sup> Fundación Progresar analyst, interview by author, Cúcuta, 30 May 2008.

<sup>441</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo, Early Alert System, interview by author, Cúcuta, May 2008.

<sup>442</sup> Fundación Progresar analysts, Cúcuta, 29 and 30 May 2008.

In order to evaluate the effect of soldiers' stationing on *embeddedness*, I assess the following model:

$$\textit{Embedded} = \alpha + \beta_1\textit{Deployment} + \beta_2\textit{Loot} + \beta_3\textit{Abuse} + \beta_4\textit{Leader} + \varepsilon_{o,m}$$

*Measuring Deployment.* For over 22,500 ex-combatants, I determine a) if they operated in their town of origin (*Operated Where From*); b) if they resided in the zone in which they fought after disarming (*In Zone*) and c) if, post-demobilization, they lived in their hometown (*At Home*). Combining this information, I code the ex-combatants as described above: *Local* if they were recruited, deployed, and remained in their town of origin (*Operated Where From*=1 and *In Zone*=1 and *At Home*=1); *Returnee* if they deployed to another region, but returned to their hometown post-war (*Operated Where From*=0 and *In Zone*=0 and *At Home*=1); *Squatter* if they were stationed away from home and remained in their combat zone after demobilizing (*Operated Where From*=0 and *In Zone*=1 and *At Home*=0); and finally *Displaced* if either they deployed locally, but then left the zone post-war (*Operated Where From*=1 and *In Zone*=0 and *At Home*=0) or were stationed far from home and neither returned to their town of origin nor squatted in their war theaters (i.e. they moved to a third zone) (*Operated Where From*=0 and *In Zone*=0 and *At Home*=0).

*Measuring Embeddedness* To capture the tolerance versus resistance aspect of embeddedness, I generate indices of several measures of civilian communities' perceptions of the combatants. Respondents (civilians, psychologists, and ex-paramilitaries) were asked if and how the non-combatant communities accept, tolerate and endorse or reject and resist the fighters (see below for exact question wording). To assess if non-combatants look to the militarized unit as the local power, I use responses to survey questions about the leadership role and authority of former fighters in their communities.

*Socio-Political Influence and Organization* I predict that  $H_3$ : *Local* ex-combatants should be deeply entrenched in their communities, enabling them to form legitimate political entities post-war.  $H_4$ : *Returnees* and *Squatters*, meanwhile, should experience intermediate levels of embeddedness and socio-political leverage with the latter subject to a steeper erosion in their influence. Last,  $H_5$ : *Displaced* fighters should face low levels of embeddedness and influence over civilian affairs. These hypotheses should also apply at the armed organization–community dyad unit of analysis. To evaluate the effect of embeddedness on social and political leverage, I estimate a model in which the dependent variable, *SocPol Orgn*, captures the degree to which organization  $o$  in municipality  $m$  has retained influence over civilian affairs.

$$SocioPol = \alpha + \beta_1 Embedded + \beta_2 Loot + \beta_3 Abuse + \beta_4 Leader + \varepsilon_{o,m}$$

If my theory is correct, embeddedness should associate with higher levels of socio-political influence. The formal test of the impact of embeddedness is:  $H_0 : \beta_1 > 0$ .

*Measuring 'Socio-Political Entity.'* To assess if an armed structure has transformed into a socio-political entity, I create a weighted index of ten measures of ex-combatants' influence over civilian affairs: if they run for office, regulate economic activities, dictate social norms, administer local justice, participate in community development, and form socio-political associations (see Appendix). I then take the averages of the index *SocPol Orgn* at the bloc-municipality level. I also measure socio-political influence as a dummy variable based on the diverse sources of data outlined in Chapter 3. I evaluate the theory's key variable – deployment – against the strongest alternatives: resources, abuse, and leadership.

### *Alternative Theories*

*Resources and Abuse.* Resource richness and high levels of abusiveness should correlate with lower levels of embeddedness and socio-political influence:  $H_1 : \beta_2 < 0$  and  $H_2 : \beta_3 < 0$ . In the models, I include measures of paramilitaries' access to economic endowments (*Loot*) and violence against civilians during the war (*Abuse*) and check for multicollinearity between the two variables. I use *Loot* proxies described in Chapter 5 and employ violent event data to measure *Abuse* as the number of civilian casualties committed by paramilitaries per municipality from 1990-2003.<sup>443</sup>

*Leaders.* We should expect organizations led by politically-motivated commanders to face a greater likelihood of sustaining socio-political influence post-war. I thus control for leaders' preferences and ideological beliefs. To capture these, I rely on the coding of experts from the OAS Peace Mission, Colombian High Commission for Peace, and Organization of International Migration who were present at the peace negotiations and have an intimate understanding of the paramilitary commanders' personalities and goals. They code the paramilitary leadership in a trichotomous fashion: pure *narco* (economically driven), pure *self-defense* (politically driven), or a mix of the two. I crosscheck this information with the leaders' former membership in the Medellín and Cali drug cartels in the 1980s and early 1990s.

### **Results**

Civilian-Combatant relations are complex and to capture them requires a triangulation of different lenses and perspectives. I assess the explanatory weight of the model using data from ex-combatants, civilian communities, and third-party observers. Combined, the tests offer

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<sup>443</sup> I am grateful to Fabio Sánchez of CEDE, Universidad de los Andes for sharing this data with me.

validity to the theory as they rely on viewpoints that are all biased, but biased in different ways. We should expect ex-combatants' responses about how they are viewed by their communities to be subject to 'social desirability' bias; everyone wishes to be well-regarded and respected by those around them. This bias should be uniformly distributed across the sample and, if subjects respond to the contrary – expressing negative images of themselves in the eyes of their neighbors – these responses should be taken seriously.

Meanwhile, community members' answers may be subject to *fear of disclosure effects*. Despite the OIM enumerators' great efforts to protect the respondents' identities, the community members nonetheless may have feared repercussions for expressing negative opinions of the former *armed* persons. Fear may have been more intense in places in which the ex-combatants still enjoyed power, thus conflating the concepts of authority and acceptance and potentially inflating the measures of the latter form of embeddedness. The results may therefore suggest that civilians tolerate ex-combatant rule where they, in fact, only fear it. Analyzing the two indexes (power and acceptance) separately partially resolves this problem, but these biases should be kept in mind as we review the results. Another type of bias in the community survey derives from the timing of its enumeration. In some cases, it was executed months or a year after the demobilization of the paramilitaries. Remilitarization and wars that ensued in the aftermath of the peace process in certain regions very likely damaged the communities' view of the paramilitaries irrespective of their sentiments at the moment of the peace accords.

The third source of data on combatant-civilian relations is the *tutores*, the psychologists charged with providing the ex-combatants, their families, and communities the reintegration benefits. They met weekly with the demobilized paramilitaries, visited their homes, observed them at community events, met with their associations, and lived in their towns. They therefore

provided a valuable view of the dynamics between former militants and civilian populations. As outlined in more detail in Appendix C, the *tutores*' responses to the survey were anonymous in order to address potential sources of bias: namely employment desirability bias and fear of retribution bias. Their anonymous responses were deemed significantly more open and honest than those elicited through interviews in which their identities were revealed. I turn now to the results.

### *Ex-Combatants' Perceptions of their Relations with Civilians*

I evaluate the model first by using data on ex-combatants' own perceptions of their relationships with the civilian communities and involvement in socio-political affairs. This section thus uses the *individual* ex-combatant as the unit of analysis (n=22,500).

Consistent with the hypotheses, I find *Local* and *Squatter* ex-combatants 40% more likely than *Returnees and Squatters* to be viewed in their communities as protectors. This result holds when I control for *Abuse*, *Loot*, and *Leadership* (Table 6).

<b>Table 6. Logit Analyses of Determinants of Embeddedness: Authority</b> (Ex-Combatants' Perspective)		
Variables	(1) Authority Model	(1) Authority Model
<i>Locals &amp; Squatters</i>	0.304*** (0.0893)	0.363*** (0.0993)
<i>Loot</i>		-0.634*** (0.0987)
<i>Leadership</i>		0.157 (0.0973)
<i>Abuse</i>		-0.000196* (0.000113)
Constant	1.710*** (0.0579)	1.914*** (0.0790)
Observations	4381	4146

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%



Loot has a negative impact on embeddedness in this model. Presence of loot makes ex-combatants half as likely to be perceived as authority figures in their communities. Abuse is marginally significant, but not substantively so.

Consistent with the theory’s predictions, I found *Displaced* ex-combatants to be significantly more likely to believe that they are viewed in their communities as “normal, ordinary civilians” (See Table 7). These uprooted former fighters, living neither in their home towns nor combat zones, are 42% more likely to disappear into civilian life than *Local*, *Returnee*, and *Squatter* former fighters, a result robust when controlling for armed group characteristics. In contrast, local paramilitaries prove especially willing to have their ex-combatant status be recognized by their communities.

<b>Table 7. Logit Analyses of Determinants of Disappearing into Civilian Life</b>	
Variables	“Normal Civilian” Model
<i>Displaced Combatants</i>	0.0207*** (0.00577)
Constant	0.933*** (0.00309)
Observations	8369

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

The data further offers support to the hypothesis that *Local* and *Returnee* ex-combatants should be more likely than their *Squatter* and *Displaced* counterparts to believe that their communities endorse or accept them and do not reject them (Table 8, Models 1-3). Model 4 compares *Squatters*, the most likely to face rejection, with the other ex-combatants (grouping together *Local*, *Returnees*, and *Displaced*).

**Table 8. OLS Analyses of Determinants of Embeddedness: Tolerance  
(Ex-Combatants' Perspective)**

Variables	(1) Tolerance Model	(2) Tolerance Model	(3) Tolerance Model	(4) Tolerance Model
<i>Locals &amp; Returnees</i>	0.0823*** (0.0151)	0.116*** (0.0148)		
<i>Squatters</i>			-0.261*** (0.0197)	-0.273*** (0.0191)
<i>Loot</i>		-0.245*** (0.0164)		-0.218*** (0.0164)
<i>Abuse</i>		-0.000430*** (7.79e-06)		-0.000424*** (7.76e-06)
<i>Leadership</i>		-0.353*** (0.0155)		-0.335*** (0.0154)
Constant	0.925*** (0.0115)	1.372*** (0.0162)	1.018*** (0.00819)	1.469*** (0.0140)
Observations	22414	21189	22414	21189

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

According to the theory, embeddedness should also be associated with lower levels of anger among victims of paramilitary violence and higher levels of reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. The surveys of ex-combatants and non-combatant communities enable me to evaluate this micro-dynamic. Consistent with the prediction, I find embedded ex-combatants significantly more likely to believe in transitional justice, recognition of the harm done to victims, and symbolic and material reparations.<sup>444</sup>

#### *Socio-Political Influence*

Embeddedness also proves highly and significantly correlated with socio-political influence and organization in both statistical and substantive ways (Table 9). A one unit increase in ex-combatants' (0 to 3) embeddedness index renders the former fighters three times more likely to be part of community associations (political groups, local governments, or community

<sup>444</sup> See Zukerman Daly 2009 for a discussion of perpetrators' transitional justice.

development entities) and four times more likely to belong to ex-combatant socio-political organizations.

Variable	(1) Socio-Pol Orgn.	(2) Socio-Pol Orgn.	(3) Socio-Pol Orgn.	(4) Orgn. Membership
<i>Embeddedness Index</i>	1.266*** (0.0265)	1.334*** (0.0315)	1.366*** (0.0321)	1.033*** (0.0378)
<i>Abuse</i>		-0.000749*** (8.52e-05)	-0.000699*** (8.26e-05)	0.000964*** (2.36e-05)
<i>Political Leadership/Ideology</i>		-0.320*** (0.0466)	-0.292*** (0.0467)	-0.338*** (0.0432)
<i>Loot</i>		0.130*** (0.0478)		-0.354*** (0.0492)
<i>Drugs</i>			-0.000112* (6.33e-05)	
<i>Oil</i>			0.614*** (0.0595)	
Constant	-3.410*** (0.0338)	-3.339*** (0.0570)	-3.438*** (0.0552)	-2.126*** (0.0613)
Observations	36692	29154	29154	13935
Pseudo R-Squared	0.1164	0.1620	0.1678	0.1446

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

*Abuse's* effect is in the expected direction. Ex-combatants living in regions in which the paramilitaries carried out greater levels of violence prove less likely to seek membership in socio-political and community associations, though the substantive effect is not large. *Loot's* effect, meanwhile, points in opposite directions. The presence of drugs is negatively, though not highly, correlated with socio-political organizing while that of oil is positively associated, nearly doubling the probability of association membership. This finding underscores the need to disaggregate 'resources' and their varying impacts on armed organizations' relationships with non-combatants. If an armed organization extracts its wealth by extorting petroleum resources (oil fields, pipelines, refineries), then its business model is parasitic on multinational

corporations and on the wealthy. Under this financing scheme, the group targets the upper-class with violence and avoids alienating the lower classes. If the armed group instead depends principally on high-value illicit goods such as cocaine, heroine, and gems, it enters into a different relationship with the local citizenry. But this relationship depends on what point in the production chain the armed group exploits. If operating in the drug-growing or mineral-rich areas, the armed group must employ the civilian population. Accordingly, in these regions armed organizations form symbiotic bonds with the local populace. In exchange for protecting and enhancing the local communities' source of livelihood, the armed groups gain legitimacy and political capital (Felbab-Brown 2005). In contrast, in areas with laboratories to transform coca leaves into the drug, cocaine, armed groups require little labor, protect only limited geographic areas and put a premium on non-denunciation to the government. Therefore, they may employ rings of security and informants within the civilian population, but their work forces and thus presumably their support bases will be relatively small. A similar analysis could be performed for each type of resource and each point in the production chain of said resource and would likely yield interesting hypotheses. The effect of *loot* on post-war socio-political leverage requires more nuanced theorizing.

Interesting, and in stark contrast to Weinstein 2006, I find a *negative* and significant correlation between resources and abuse; specifically, organizations with access to drug and oil endowments were likely to inflict *lower* levels of violence upon civilians than resource-poor armed groups. Resource endowments do not seem to generate a “total disregard for the interests of the civilian population ... looting, destruction, and the use of indiscriminate force.”<sup>445</sup> The separation of the two hypotheses of abuse and loot is thus merited.

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<sup>445</sup> Weinstein 2006; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008.

Last, the data indicates that belonging to more political or ideological paramilitary factions *decreases* by 25% ex-combatants' odds of participating in social and political organizations after disarming. Criminality and politics often complement each other more than they clash.

#### *Armed Organization – Community Dyads*

I next evaluate the proposed logic using the organization–community dyad as the unit of analysis. To do so, I average the embeddedness index to this level and calculate the fraction of each paramilitary–municipality dyad's combatants that are *local*, *returnee*, *squatter*, or *displaced*.<sup>446</sup> The data, as shown in Table 10, suggests that organizations comprising ex-combatants native to the communities are more likely to be tolerated and endorsed by those communities than are ones with a majority of non-local members. Armed groups composed of mostly local fighters are also more likely to form socio-political associations in their communities after disarming. These models do not, however, account for a large share of the variation, as demonstrated by the low R-squared values. Again, the negative and significant finding of *Abuse*'s impact holds. *Loot* (cocaine) has no significant effect.

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<sup>446</sup> The paramilitary–municipality dyads constitute each municipality *m* in which paramilitary organization *o* operated. Thus, if the Bloque Cundinamarca operated in Yacopi, Pacho, and Utica among other places, its paramilitary-municipalities would include 1) Bloque Cundinamarca – Yacopi; 2) Bloque Cundinamarca – Pacho; 3) Bloque Cundinamarca – Utica. I then calculate the fraction of the ex-Bloque Cundinamarca fighters living in Yacopi, for instance, that were from there, operated there, and returned there, etc.

**Table 10. OLS Analysis of Armed Organization–Community Dyads  
(Ex-Combatants’ Responses)**

Variables	(1) Tolerance Index	(2) Ex-Combatant Socio-Political Association
<i>Fraction of Local &amp; Returnee Ex-Combatants</i>	0.325** (0.126)	0.0522*** (0.0182)
<i>Coca</i>	-5.88e-05 (3.65e-05)	-3.39e-06 (5.25e-06)
<i>Poppy</i>	-0.00248* (0.00143)	-0.000150 (0.000205)
<i>Gems</i>	-0.981 (0.914)	-0.0755 (0.131)
<i>Abuse</i>	-0.000376** (0.000190)	-3.19e-05 (2.74e-05)
Constant	0.762*** (0.0755)	0.0372*** (0.0109)
Observations	524	524
R-squared	0.035	0.022

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

#### *Communities’ Perceptions of Ex-Combatants*

For the final set of analyses of embeddedness and socio-political mobilization, I use the community as the unit of analysis and exploit the psychologist and civilian surveys. The civilians and *tutores* were asked about the ex-combatants in their communities in general without specifying to which former paramilitary faction they belonged. The responses therefore do not, for example, differentiate the communities’ sentiments towards displaced versus local former fighters.<sup>447</sup> It follows that, in order to assess communities’ views towards differently deployed ex-combatants, I must compare communities in which local combatants make up a majority of the ex-combatant population with communities populated with non-local fighters. As a proxy for this, I use the proportion of the ex-combatant population that is *local* – from, fought, and demobilized in the community.

<sup>447</sup> For example, in the aftermath of war, Turbo was home to ex-members of 23 different paramilitary brigades.

The results suggest that communities populated with *local* former militarized persons are more likely to tolerate the ex-combatants than those in which the majority of the demobilized population is non-local (*displaced* or *squatters*). Specifically, communities faced with an indigenous ex-fighter population are 2.16 times more likely to view the presence of this population as positive whereas civilians living in neighborhoods containing substantial numbers of *squatter* ex-combatants are eight times more likely to have difficulty accepting the demobilized paramilitaries.

When I include in the model a proxy for the mechanism, *retrospective voting*, the data further confirms that respondents who perceive improvement in their communities since demobilization (more security, order, peace, and community activities) are nearly three times more likely to accept the ex-combatants (Table 11).

<b>Table 11. Logit Analysis of Community's Acceptance of Ex-Combatants (Civilian Responses)</b>	
Variables	Acceptance Model
<i>Retrospective Voting</i>	1.098*** (0.0795)
<i>Fraction of Local &amp; Returnee Ex-Combatants</i>	0.693** (0.295)
<i>Abuse</i>	-4.04e-05 (2.55e-05)
Constant	-0.554*** (0.185)
Observations	4381

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

Affirming the social networks mechanism, civilians who reside in communities with large proportions of *local* and *returnee* ex-combatants prove eight times more likely to interact with the former fighters than communities with lower proportions of local demobilized fighters. Additionally, and unsurprisingly, the individual, ex-combatant survey data in Table 12 indicates

that returnees and locals have a 73% higher odds of feeling part of their communities than do their counterparts who are either ‘displaced’ or remain living in their combat zones.

<b>Table 12. Logit Analysis of Ex-Combatants’ Sense of Community Belonging (Ex-Combatant Responses)</b>	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>(1) Community Belonging</b>
<i>Locals &amp; Returnees</i>	0.546*** (0.0762)
Constant	2.071*** (0.0524)
Observations	8818

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

Given the survey’s over-representation of respondents from Medellín (see Appendix C) and the difficulty of distinguishing between the communities’ views of different ‘types’ of former combatants (*local, returnee, etc*), these results are only suggestive, rather than conclusive. Future analysis will disaggregate the Medellín survey results in order to compare across neighborhoods populated with different configurations of demobilized paramilitaries.

#### *Psychologists’ Perceptions of Combatant-Civilian Relations*

The psychologists or *tutores*’ survey provides better coverage. All of the former combatants in the program were assigned to a *tutor* and all of the psychologists responded to the survey. The psychologists’ responses are, however, also at the level of the community rather than at that of the deployment and migration configuration (local or not). I average the psychologists’ responses to the municipality level and then examine the effect of different stationing strategies on combatants’ embeddedness and socio-political influence.

Consistent with the results reported above, I find that communities populated with *local* and *returnee* combatants were significantly more likely, in both a substantive and statistical



sense, to tolerate the former fighters (Table 13). This result is robust to different specifications of the index and when I control for loot, leadership and abuse. The alternative explanations do not hold up to scrutiny. Contrary to these theories' predictions, loot has no effect and abuse marginally increases tolerance, but the impact is not significant across models.

As predicted by the theory, we observe communities in which the ex-combatants are highly embedded 2.23 times more likely to witness the successful creation of ex-combatant socio-political associations than those populated by non-embedded, demobilized populations (Table 14).

<b>Table 13. OLS Determinants of Embeddedness: Tolerance</b> (Psychologists' Perspectives)		
Variables	(1) Tolerance Index	(2) Tolerance Index
<i>Fraction of Local &amp; Returnee Ex-Combatants</i>	2.561*** (0.706)	3.083*** (0.801)
<i>Coca</i>		-0.000162 (0.000378)
<i>Poppy</i>		-0.0151 (0.0129)
<i>Gems</i>		0 (0)
<i>Oil</i>		-0.116 (0.367)
<i>Abuse</i>		0.000743* (0.000416)
Constant	1.022** (0.426)	0.676 (0.492)
Observations	89	81
R-squared	0.131	0.209

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

<b>Table 14. Logit Analyses of Determinants of Socio-Political Organizations (Psychologists' Perspective)</b>		
Variables	(1) Socio-Political Organization	(2) Socio-Political Organization
<i>Embeddedness</i>	0.801** (0.323)	0.802** (0.378)
<i>Coca</i>		-0.000753 (0.00267)
<i>Oil</i>		-0.829 (1.187)
<i>Abuse</i>		0.000971 (0.000957)
Constant	-4.493*** (1.177)	-4.511*** (1.354)
Observations	89	81
R-squared	0.1305	0.1898

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

## VII. Conclusion

This chapter took on the *Campaigns* post-war trajectory of demilitarizing paramilitary groups. To do so, it opened up the ‘black-box’ of combatant-civilian relations and proposed a theory of when, why and how former illegal armies are able to retain organized influence over their communities without the manifest use of arms. A subsequent analytic step will be to determine what form this influence assumes; when will former rebel and paramilitary groups become political parties versus informal socio-political entities?<sup>448</sup> To explain this variation, I believe it necessary to map political institutions (proportional representation, district size, viability threshold, and decentralization) atop geographic variation in deployment strategies and thus embeddedness.<sup>449</sup> The exercise will likely generate meaningful and exciting predictions about post-war politics.

<sup>448</sup> While practitioners recognize the prevalence of corruption, bribery, and informal politics during wars, the post-war literature ignores these perverse forces or expects them to end with the ceasefire. It thus focuses exclusively on power-sharing arrangements.

<sup>449</sup> Supporters cast their votes. However, the political institutions (the voting system; district structure; electoral formula; and degree of decentralization) determine how the votes are counted and thus the rebel-turned political

The next chapter explores the *Guns* outcome. It asks, when and why do demobilized organizations reactivate in a coercive fashion in the aftermath of peace processes and return to violence?

**Variables and Survey Questions**

Variables	Component Survey Questions
<i>Index of Socio-Political Organization and Influence</i>	[Survey of Ex-combatants] * <i>Have you participated in community activities?</i> Yes / No
	* <i>Are you a member of any of the following associations or organizations?</i> Legal political group or party / Union / Local government / Community development group / Sports group / Cultural association / Other
	* <i>Who makes up a majority of the members of the organization(s) to which you belong?</i> Former comrades from my armed group / People who didn't belong to an armed group / A mix of former comrades and people who didn't belong to an armed group
	* <i>How do you contribute to the wellbeing of your community?</i> Remain in legality / Promote community activities / Resolve problems in my neighborhood / Other
	* <i>When there is a problem in your neighborhood, what do you do?</i> Try to resolve the problem / Seek the help of the authorities / Resolve it in an authoritarian fashion / Become violent / Do not intervene
	[Comprehensive Survey of Psychologists]: * <i>Has the paramilitary structure continued to exist after the demobilization as a social organization or political group?</i> Yes / No

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party's probability of achieving a certain share of seats. It may also be relevant to evaluate if the former armed group's interests are represented by an existing party on the ideological spectrum. If so, the group may prove less likely to create a political party and more likely to form a civic association. Guáqueta 2007 predicts that status-quo actors will be less likely to successfully form political parties. Gisselquist 2006 posits that new parties emerge if there exists a salient cleavage unexploited by existing parties. And Downes 1957 argues that new political entrants prove likely if a shift occurs in the distribution of the population's ideological preferences and established parties cannot adjust quickly enough.

	<p><i>*In what type of political activities do the ex-combatants participate?</i>  They are members of a political party / They vote / They are candidates in political elections / They participate in campaigns for a party or candidate / They participate in campaigns against a party or candidate / They intimidate the population so that it supports a party or candidate / They are part of an NGO that engages in political activities / They threaten or bribe public officials / They receive money or favors from public officials</p>
<i>Index of Embeddedness – Acceptance Index</i>	<p>[Survey of Ex-Combatants]  <i>* Have you received any demonstration of acceptance by the community?</i>  Community members greet you on the street / Community members have extended you some kind of invitation / Community members have offered you help / You are part of a community group</p>
	<p><i>* In general, how do the members of your community or neighborhood feel about you?</i>  Appreciation / Contempt / Trust / Fear / Mistrust / Gratitude / Resentment / Acceptance / Rejection / Indifference</p>
	<p>[Comprehensive Survey of Psychologists]  <i>* Were the paramilitary groups accepted or rejected by the community before the demobilization process?</i>  Everyone supported them / A majority supported them / Few supported them / No one supported them</p>
	<p><i>* How does the community feel about the former combatants who live in the community or municipality?</i>  Respect / Appreciation / Fear / Gratitude / Anger / Hatred / Indifference</p>
	<p><i>*In general, do the members of the community collaborate or support the ex-combatants?</i>  Yes / No</p>
	<p><i>* How does the community support or collaborate with the ex-combatants</i>  Provides food / Provides housing / Provides money / Participates in activities with the ex-combatants / Gives jobs to the ex-combatants</p>
	<p><i>* In general do the members of the community reject the ex-combatants?</i>  Yes / No</p>
	<p><i>* What are the more common expressions of rejection?</i>  Insults / Public demonstrations / Graffiti / Threats from the community / They do not speak with the ex-combatants / They do not give work to the ex-combatants</p>
	<p><i>*With what frequency does the community not allow the ex-combatants to participate in organizations or associations?</i>  Frequently / Sometimes / Rarely / Never</p>
	<p><i>* With what frequency does the community not allow the demobilized to undertake economic activities (establish businesses, buy land, buy cattle, etc)</i>  Frequently / Sometimes / Rarely / Never</p>

	<p>[Survey of Civilian Community Members]  <i>* In general, how do you evaluate the presence of the ex-combatants in your neighborhood or municipality?</i>  Positive / Negative / Everything has remained the same</p> <p><i>* Do you or others in the community have difficulties accepting the demobilized?</i>  Yes / No</p>
<p><i>Index of Embeddedness – Authority Index</i></p>	<p>[Survey of Ex-Combatants]  <i>* How do you think you are seen in your neighborhood?</i>  a. As a protector / As an aggressor / Neither  b. As a positive leader / As a negative leader/ Neither</p>
	<p>[Survey of Civilian Community Members]  <i>* How does the community perceive the ex-combatants?</i>  a. As a protector / As an aggressor / Neither  b. With trust / With fear / Neither  c. As a positive leader / As a negative leader / Neither  d. With gratitude / With resentment / Neither  e. Other</p>
	<p>[Comprehensive Survey of Psychologists]:  <i>* If someone wanted to make a public investment in the community, whom would s/he contact?</i>  Local Authorities (mayor, council, other) / Priest / Ex-Commander of the armed group / Demobilized combatants / A guerrilla group / a dissident paramilitary group / An emerging criminal gang / A local gang / Other</p>
	<p><i>* If someone needed help finding a job, to whom would s/he turn</i>  Local Authorities (mayor, council, other) / Priest / Ex-Commander of the armed group / Demobilized combatants / A guerrilla group / a dissident paramilitary group / An emerging criminal gang / A local gang / Other</p>
	<p><i>* If someone had a problem of intra-familial violence, to whom would s/he present the complaint?</i>  Local Authorities (mayor, council, other) / Priest / Ex-Commander of the armed group / Demobilized combatants / A guerrilla group / a dissident paramilitary group / An emerging criminal gang / A local gang / Other</p> <p><i>* If someone were a victim of a robbery, to whom would s/he turn?</i>  Local Authorities (mayor, council, other) / Priest / Ex-Commander of the armed group / Demobilized combatants / A guerrilla group / a dissident paramilitary group / An emerging criminal gang / A local gang / Other</p>

<p><i>Community-Combatant Ties</i></p>	<p>[Survey of Ex-combatants]  * <i>Do you feel a sense of belonging to your community?</i>  Yes / No</p> <p>[Survey of Civilian Community Members]  * <i>How often do you interact with the ex-combatants</i>  Once or more per week / Once or more per month / Once or more every six months</p>
<p><i>Retrospective Voting</i></p>	<p>[Survey of Civilian Community Members]  *Since the demobilization, in your neighborhood, is there</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Peace: Yes / No / Remains the same</li> <li>b. Order: Yes / No / Remains the same</li> <li>c. Security: Yes / No / Remains the same</li> <li>d. Community Activities: Yes / No / Remains the same</li> <li>e. Other</li> </ol>

## Chapter 7

### Guns

#### I. Introduction

49% of civil wars, which ended between 1945-1999, erupted in subsequent war; 51% consolidated peace.<sup>450</sup> This variation is reflected at the organizational level as countries do not transition to peace or re-wage war; organizations do. The Bloque Cacique Nutibara retained a latent facility for violence for several years, but over time fully demilitarized, contributing to state capacity. In contrast, Urabá's paramilitaries remilitarized full-scale armies a year and a half after they signed peace accords with the government. This chapter explores war recurrence, investigating whether variation in remilitarization can be explained by examining differences in armed organizations' recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns. I find that, as result of these patterns, demobilization either preserves demilitarizing groups' relative strength and thus cements the peace regime or it exerts differential effects on ex-armed groups' collective capabilities. In this latter case, it changes the distribution of power within the system and generates high levels of uncertainty as to the extent to which it has done so. In so doing, demobilization alters the parameters underpinning the peace bargains between the state and each former armed group and between each former armed group dyad. It creates noise and mutual optimism around the new estimates of relative power, rendering bargaining difficult and war likely.

The chapter divides into four sections. In the first, I generate a theory that links recruitment, deployment, and migration patterns with variation in remilitarization. I then contrast the observable implications of this model with hypotheses that derive from several other theories, which focus on natural resources, commitment problems, and war onset variables. In the third

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<sup>450</sup> 41 of the 83 wars that ended between 1945-1999.

section, I present evidence on the processes of remilitarization and demilitarization ‘in practice’ in the three paramilitary case studies. I show how my model focusing on changes in relative power has greater leverage on the observed variation in war recurrence across time and space than do existing approaches. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of a forthcoming quantitative test of the theory. The subsequent chapter – Chapter 8 – uses violent event data on the emergence of rebellion in Colombia 1964–1984 to evaluate the project’s remilitarization logic against the dominant accounts of civil war recurrence.

## **II. Explaining Patterns of Remilitarization**

In the demobilization agreement, the state offers the illegal armed organization a package of benefits that renders the peace bargain preferable to remaining militarized and potentially revising the status quo. By signing the accords, the rebel or paramilitary actors demonstrate that they favor their assured, current power to the gains achievable through war. Given that the benefits conferred to the armed group exceed the probability of winning greater power minus the costs of fighting, the peace will hold unless one of the parameters changes (the probability of ‘winning the war’ increases or the costs of fighting decrease). Parallel to the formal bargaining process between each illegal armed unit and the government is an informal process between each pair of illegal non-state entities. War involves a multitude of actors; it is rarely a two-party game as commonly conceived in the Political Science literature.

In my model, demobilization at time  $t=1$  constitutes an exogenous and differential shock to the distribution of power, weakening some groups’ relative power while strengthening others. The shock’s effect depends on where the armed groups recruited and deployed their members and where these members went after relinquishing their arms. Simplifying the argument



presented in Chapter 5, non-local organizations, characterized by thin networks and post-war physical dispersion, erode while local ones, comprised of fighters with multifaceted ties and strong geographical concentration, preserve their power.<sup>451</sup> As demonstrated in Chapter 4, groups do not foresee the power shifts and therefore cannot avert them by fighting a preventive war (i.e. not demobilizing). The process takes unanticipated turns once the commanders are locked in. So the organizations are zapped to  $t=2$  at which point they have demobilized and there is a new distribution of power. In absolute terms, some groups' power, measured as capacity for collective action, remains constant while others' power is destroyed. This shock brings the game suddenly to the future, to the second stage of the commitment problem model, when the relatively strengthened group cannot commit not to take advantage of its stronger position and renege on the agreement. It has no reason not to. Thus, the strengthened group wants to revise the bargain, to get a piece of the pie equivalent to its new power position. But why can it not negotiate a new bargain with the relatively weakened group to avert the use of violence?

'Information problems' have not been applied to the intrastate context as information is assumed complete.<sup>452</sup> However, demobilization creates a highly uncertain environment replete with asymmetries. Prior to demobilization, paramilitary organizations have complete knowledge of each other's capabilities and commanders know their own organizations' endowments. The paramilitary groups are, for the most part, allied and militarized, with their capabilities manifest. They are involved in combats with the insurgents that merit information sharing. Moreover, their strength, demonstrated on the battlefield, is public even to their enemies. Demobilization alters this strength and creates proprietary knowledge about the extent to which it has done so. Since

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<sup>451</sup> The existing approaches assume that demobilization freezes the status quo or, if anything, diminishes the capabilities of the ex-armed group *relative to the state* through disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration and does so *equally*. I find strong disconfirming evidence of these assumptions.

<sup>452</sup> Fearon 2004 writes, "After a few years of war, fighters on both sides of an insurgency typically develop accurate understandings of the other side's capabilities, tactics, and resolve."

the armed groups demobilize, their resolve to return to fighting also becomes private information; how much do they value remaining at peace?

For there to be a plausible bargaining range, there must be a certain  $p$  – the probability that army A would defeat army B were they to confront each other – that the parties agree on and then bargain around. The civil war literature’s explanations for divergent estimates of  $p$  ignore noise and mutual optimism.<sup>453</sup> I argue that ex-armed groups are subject to organizational pathologies. In other words, private information and incentives to misrepresent exist *within* organizations. This can generate misperceptions of the organization’s relative power. Mid-level commanders have an incentive to overstate their control over their subordinates and foot soldiers have an incentive to feign loyalty, especially in organizations in which defection is punishable by death. Thus, former armed commanders can quite easily end up with inaccurate or noisy estimates of their organizations’ relative might. While I may know how I would individually fare in a fistfight with a colleague, it is difficult to assess how my organization of say MIT Political Scientists would fare against an organization of MIT Engineers. Organizational outcomes on the battlefield are difficult to predict especially where information asymmetries *within* the structures run high.<sup>454</sup>

At the same time, commanders seek to demonstrate resolve to each other and signal that they still have completely re-deployable troops while *at the same time* indicating to the government that they have fully disbanded their troops, are committed to disarmament, and are playing by the rules of the peace accord. These mixed signals generate greater divergence and

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<sup>453</sup> For mutual optimism theory in the *interstate* context, see Blainey 1988; Wittman 1979; Wittman 2001; Morrow 1985; Wagner 2000; Werner 1998; Slantchev and Tarar 2009. See also Fey and Ramsay 2009 for a critique of mutual optimism theory.

<sup>454</sup> Information asymmetries are larger in organizations with weaker networks and greater geographic dispersion. Thus, non-local former armed groups should face greater difficulties assessing their relative power (relative decline) and should be more likely to generate overly optimistic accounts of their power.

noise in the estimates of relative resolve. Demobilization–induced changes in the distribution of power combined with this inaccuracy in the measures of  $p$  reduce the bargaining domain. As a result, now relatively bolstered and relatively deflated groups may be unable to agree on a deal to avert remilitarization. They redeploy.

The same equation holds for the state except that it is rarely weakened by the illegal armed groups' demobilization.<sup>455</sup> The peace accord may, however, boost its capacity relative to the former non-state armed units. 'Local groups' do not deteriorate in capacity and thus, the bargain with the state holds. In contrast, non-local groups weaken, changing the terms of the peace accord with the state and requiring an adjustment of the arrangement. Given the variance around this erosion in capacity, the state often feels emboldened to enter the territory of the weakening former armed group to reassert its authority. In this process, however, it will be subject to a resource constraint and state-building priorities: it cannot enter all regions equally at once. Decaying armed groups in the depths of the jungle will be unlikely to experience the state's incursion into their zones of former control. The state will also be constrained by the international community, which may pressure it to purge its ties to certain former armed groups and reclaim sovereignty over those groups' territories while respecting power-sharing arrangements with other groups. These third party effects on the state's strategy are currently relegated to the model's error term. The project's conclusion discusses how they may be incorporated into the main analytic framework.

At time  $t=2$ , some groups remilitarize due to the process just described. The bargains, however, are intimately interdependent and thus if the parameters change that glue together one bargain in  $t=2$ , the other accords threaten to falter as collateral damage in  $t=3$ . The outcome of the first war between actors whose relative power shifted during demobilization alters the

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<sup>455</sup> Security sector reform and demobilization of state forces would present different scenarios.

distribution of power further. The victor is now potentially strengthened relative to its other contiguous (ex-)armies. At the same time, the victor faces reduced costs to fighting as it has already paid the sunk costs of remilitarization.<sup>456</sup> These costs include a public relations blunder: by defecting on the peace deal, the rearmed actor loses credibility and the population comes to believe that it is not interested in peace. It also foregoes the benefits the peace process afforded it in the current round and the prospects of a renewed peace and similar benefits shrink to near zero. Additionally, while fighting expends more resources than remaining demilitarized, once the start-up costs of remilitarization have been paid, the marginal cost of fighting is insufficient to open up a bargaining range with the rearmed group or to underwrite its economies of scale.<sup>457</sup> Thus, it is both the reduced costs of fighting and the shifting distribution of power, and thus benefits of militarization, that produce a second series of wars between the victors of the first war and their neighbors.<sup>458</sup> It follows from this analysis that, for demilitarization to hold, the status quo distribution of power has to hold in every dyadic relationship.

### **III. Observable Implications**

#### *Across Space & Time*

According to this model, we should expect armed organizations, whose capacity is preserved during the transition from war to peace and whose region is populated with similarly intact, formerly coercive groups, to retain silent guns initially and to, over time, fully disarm. In

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<sup>456</sup> The interstate war literature assumes the costs to war are the reductions in the pie due to damages during war. The intrastate peace literature assumes that remilitarization is costless. Both are inaccurate.

<sup>457</sup> When at peace, from a pure resource maximizing perspective, there exist bargains such that demilitarized groups will avoid redeploying.

<sup>458</sup> Fearon 1995 and Powell 2006 would both argue that this scenario would produce a preventive war, initiated by the neighboring power not involved in the first war in order to grab more resources while it still has the chance before the window of opportunity closes and the victor of the first war is significantly stronger. However, I have not found evidence of this dynamic. Nonetheless, the 'second wave' of remilitarization need not happen sequentially; it can occur simultaneously to the first.

these cases, we should observe the state respecting the organizations' sovereignty and seeking to collaborate with them in its state-building efforts. In the medium to long term, however, as the former paramilitary groups' redeployment potential erodes, we should witness the state assuming more confrontational tactics and more confidently establishing its presence in the groups' territories.

In contrast, where demobilization disperses a 'non-local' organization's weakly networked ex-combatants and diminishes its capacity for collective action, we should observe the remilitarization of its contiguous non-state armies. This wilting organization should also redeploy defensively. Aftershock waves from this initial remilitarization may reverberate through the system. Specifically, redeployment may occur in concentric circles running out from these initial sites of demobilization-induced power disparities. If these sites are strategically important, we should witness the state deploying its forces and institutions in an effort to take advantage of the power vacuum.

Before testing these observable implications against the empirical record, I present the strongest alternative models that seek to explain variation in remilitarization and war recurrence.

#### **IV. Alternative Explanations**

##### *Commitment Problems*

The most prominent explanation of divergence in post-conflict outcomes asserts that the post-civil war landscape resembles the international system; there exists no overarching government able to enforce agreements. Rebel and paramilitaries, it argues, cannot disarm because the government cannot credibly commit not to renege (Walter 1997; Fearon 2004).<sup>459</sup> These armed actors therefore lack guarantees that, once the state has strengthened, it will

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<sup>459</sup> See Fearon 1995; Posen 1993; Snyder and Jervis 1999 for the civil war onset corollary of this thesis.

nonetheless keep its word rather “than exploit[ing] its better bargaining position”<sup>460</sup> and acting as a “crafty opponent ... wait[ing] until full disengagement to strike.”<sup>461</sup> In contrast, with security sector reform, power-sharing arrangements, and third-party guarantees,<sup>462</sup> this theory predicts that the group will instead disarm as it receives credible commitments from the international community/state. It thus does not need to continue to fight now in order to “lock in a higher payoff while it still has a chance,” before it weakens in the future.<sup>463</sup>

I argue that commitment problems cannot explain variation in post-war remilitarization for the following reasons. Demobilization is a shock and then it is over so the future distribution of power (at  $t=3$ ) looks the same as the current one at  $t=2$ . There is no expectation of a *future* shift in power so the parties should be able to reach a bargain (Fearon 1995; Powell 2006).

Second, the effect of demobilization on relative power is *not foreseen*. Non-local groups would *not* have demobilized had they foreseen they would become bankrupt or weakened. They would have preferred to grab more territory and continue to initiate war preventively while they were still in a position of power because the organizations that would be strengthened by demobilization could not commit not to exploit their new relative power. This, however, applies to every period (the prospectively weakened powers by demobilization will always prefer fighting to peace because of the commitment problem). However, contrary to these predictions, these groups *do* demobilize and do so absent guarantees.<sup>464</sup> Thus, unable to foresee the power shifts, the prospectively bankrupt groups cannot and thus do not act to prevent them. These

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<sup>460</sup> Powell 2006.

<sup>461</sup> Walter 1997.

<sup>462</sup> On external guarantees, see Walter 1997, 1999; Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Fortna 2004. On security sector reform, see Toft forthcoming; Call 2007; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Licklider 2009. For key works on power-sharing, see Lijphart 1977; Horowitz 1991; Roeder and Rothchild 2005. Kaufmann 1996 champions the partition solution.

<sup>463</sup> Powell 2006.

<sup>464</sup> The small guarantees given to the paramilitaries, for example, were uniformly applied and therefore unable to re-balance the power shifts that demobilization caused.

groups then find themselves in the second stage of the commitment problem trajectory when the relatively strengthened actors renege on their agreements. It follows that, in the aftermath of demobilization, the intact, relatively bolstered groups will grab the territories of the relatively bankrupted ones.

Another form of the commitment problem hypothesis centers on bargaining indivisibilities. The logic is the following: if I give up territory to my adversary today, then my adversary will be stronger tomorrow and cannot commit not to exploit this advantage to take even more territory. Thus, I prefer not to give up territory today and instead remilitarize.<sup>465</sup> Undividable stakes may also directly induce a breakdown in bargaining and subsequent remilitarization. There are arguably some issues that we are not willing to negotiate over such as giving up our entire country and being ruled by another nation. Similarly, a former armed group may prove unwilling to have the area where its combatants' mothers and sisters live be ruled by another army. Thus, the armed group may always prefer to fight than to bargain. At the micro level, where the individuals engaging in bargaining have a personal stake in the territory, it is conceivable that the negotiation chips become inseparable. However, while these indivisibility-focused explanations are plausible, the fact that bargains were made in the past in which paramilitary factions transferred expanses of territory to each other renders this explanation empirically inconsistent.

### *Greedy Spoilers*

A second alternative explanation centers on loot-hungry spoilers of the peace. It is predicted that leaders, because of their specific goals, backgrounds and reasons for entering the armed group, form preferences that determine if the organization remains demilitarized or remilitarizes. Colombians espouse this approach, arguing that the paramilitaries who have

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<sup>465</sup> Walter 2003. Powell 2006 also makes this argument.

rearmed are those that were motivated to do so: the greedy and opportunistic ones. This hypothesis suffers from several weaknesses. One, it cannot explain longitudinal variation in rearming; why, if motivated by greed, some former armed groups do not remobilize immediately, but instead wait several years to do so. Two, it is very difficult to know individuals' motivations. Discourses cannot be trusted as militarized actors have incentives to justify their behavior with narratives. Many analysts solve this by employing the methodological dictum of observing behavior and making inferences about motivations by the logic, "If someone says, 'I don't like chocolates,' but keeps on eating them, we infer that she really likes them."<sup>466</sup> However, regardless of whether the remilitarized combatants seek resources as a means to an end or as an end in themselves,<sup>467</sup> the observable behavior is the same: rent-seeking.<sup>468</sup> In this case, observed behavior cannot distinguish between the hypothesized motivations (greed or other).

Even if we accept that some paramilitary brigades are driven purely by greed while others are not (thus explaining variation in redeployment), there remain weaknesses in the logic.

Controlling resources does not necessarily require the manifest use of arms: remilitarization; profits are not available only to militarized actors; 'silent guns' may suffice. Keen highlights this fact:

The art of facilitating a transition from war to peace may lie, to a considerable extent, in ensuring that some of those benefiting from war are in a position to benefit to a greater extent from peace. In practice, these benefits may (at least initially) be secured under some kind of 'armed peace' in which a number of players remain in a position to use the threat of force to underwrite control of economic activity... Groups that have been able to use violence to secure control of production, trade and emergency aid in wartime may be

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<sup>466</sup> Collier 1999, p. 3.

<sup>467</sup> Karl and LeBillon 2001 advocate the former position. This view, however, is becoming increasingly rare. Ballentine and Sherman 2003 assume a balanced view and Grossman 1999; Collier 2000; de Soysa 2000; and Keen 2000 argue the latter; that combatants view as the end to the war, not victory, but the abuses and crimes promising immediate rewards.

<sup>468</sup> If the militants seek wealth in the long run, they must pursue resource accumulation in the short run. If they seek lofty political goals in the long run, they must continue the struggle and thus amass finances in the short run. It, therefore, proves exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to determine armed organizations' long term motives from their short-term behavior.



able to carve out for themselves a degree of control over production, trade and development or reconstruction aid after a peace settlement.

Former armed groups often continue their licit and illicit dealings at peace through either explicit or implicit agreements (that is why they demobilized). Thus, the puzzle becomes why do we see latent arms in some cases and manifest ones in others? The greed argument cannot explain this variation.

A second weakness of the ‘revisionism’ or spoiler logic, even accepting the premise that the armed actors are greedy, is that they are not irrationally so; rather they demonstrate vulnerability to prospect theory’s endowment effect. Thus, the state is able to offer them a deal that satiates their greed and transforms them from ‘consumers’ of the war economy to ‘consumers’ of an ‘armed peace’ economy and eventually a peace one. Especially at the commander level, former combatants often prefer to get out while they are ahead, with amnesty, their resources intact, and the ability to launder and legalize their resources, then to keep increasing their pie.

It could be proposed that revisionist powers believe monitoring infeasible and thus engage in “non-serious bargaining” and “commit to vague agreements for political [or reputational] reasons” with no intention of actually enforcing the agreements (Fearon 1998). In this case, these actors use the peace process to stall for time before returning to war rested and resupplied. I argue that, were the organizations revisionist and greedy, they would not agree to disarm and demobilize. DDR constitutes a costly signal and behavior to indicate commitment to a peace process (Hoddie and Hartzell 2003).<sup>469</sup> According to Schweller 1996, cooperation, in this case demobilization, only occurs with revisionist powers if they *lack* the power and capabilities to

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<sup>469</sup> Of course, groups usually retain arms caches. However, they surrender many weapons; the ratio is usually 1 weapon per 2 combatants. Moreover, these displays (disarmament, running for office, etc) are public and thus may create standards to which their support bases and foot soldiers hold them accountable.

threaten the status quo. If they have power, they defect from cooperation (do not demobilize) in order to pursue their revisionist aims. That armed groups voluntarily disarm despite great strength suggests that they prefer the status quo to the benefits possible through continued militarized revision. They wish to legitimize their power and maintain control of their territories through non-coercive means. The benefits of demobilizing exceed the probability of winning more goodies/territory minus the costs of war for *all* armed factions that sign a peace accord. Explaining remilitarization puts the onus on the analyst to locate the factor that can account for cooperation across all cases at t=1 (disarmament and demobilization of all factions) *and* its breakdown in certain cases at t=2 (redeployment of *some* factions).

Given the issues with the greed-oriented approach, I assume uniform preferences across time and across former militarized organizations and their leaders. Specifically, I assume that demobilized units are status-quo powers that aim to maintain the control and influence they enjoyed while at war. This does not preclude greedy motives, only that these motives have been satiated. The armed group receives compensation in excess of that which it can grab (revise) by returning to war (with a certain probability of winning).

### *War Onset*

A final and dominant alternative explanation derives from the substantial war onset literature and claims that motivations for remilitarization exist everywhere and yet we only observe remilitarization in certain places ‘favorable’ to illegal armed activity.<sup>470</sup> These correlates of war include poverty, rough terrain, large populations, and loot. Chapter Eight provides a rigorous discussion and test of the model against this alternative ‘feasibility’ explanation – in the case of Colombia’s rebels in the 1960s–1980s. It finds that, empirically, money, opportunity

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<sup>470</sup> Walter 2004 applies these theories to war recurrence. Fearon and Laitin 2003 does not do so explicitly, but it relies on a database in which war onset and war recurrence are both coded ‘1’ and are thus indistinguishable.

costs, and refuge are not the limiting factors; rather, organizational structure determines the production-possibility frontier. War and demobilization change the impediments to collective action and violence's organizational legacies render onset factors' causal effects inoperative. I turn now to remilitarization in the case of the paramilitaries (2003–2008).

## V. Demilitarization and Remilitarization in Practice

This section navigates the fragile architecture of the peace regimes and explores when these regimes cement and when they fracture. In considering the three paramilitary case studies, it assesses whether variation in their organizational bankruptcy can account for these varying outcomes.

### Urabá: Variation Across Time and Space

“The [OAS Peace] Mission has a positive assessment of the effective dismantling of the armed structures of the self-defense forces [in Urabá] ... the security of the demobilized has been satisfactory. There is no evidence of incursions of other illegal armed groups in the cleared zones and the armed forces have increased their manpower. The reintegration of the demobilized group has advanced positively and within the parameters hoped for.”

– OAS Peace Mission Trimester Report, October 2005<sup>471</sup>

“Until a year ago, the victims were gaining trust and confidence and beginning to talk and become more visible. The armed groups were invisible and not affecting the communities. Then a year ago, the rearmed groups became manifest and now the victims have so much fear. The communities say ... they are the same as before, establishing the law, resolving problems, engaging in social cleansing and killing and exploiting the communities.”

–Initiative of Colombian Women for Peace, interview by Author, Apartadó, June 2008

“We, the demobilized, are rearming because the *Paisas* [another remilitarized paramilitary faction] are going to kill us... we have to unite our demobilized to defend ourselves.”

– Remilitarized Paramilitary Commander, ‘Don Mario,’ May 2008

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<sup>471</sup> OAS 2005.

Despite enjoying a roughly constant ability to redeploy<sup>472</sup> and constant incentives to continue extracting resources from and exercising influence over Urabá, the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas remained demilitarized from April 2006 till August 2007 and then remilitarized thereafter. Accordingly, neither greed nor onset correlates of war can explain this longitudinal variation. In fact, our theories are surprisingly weak at explaining the *timing* of violence. To explain variation in remilitarization, I examine shifts in the distribution of power and these shifts' effects on formal and informal peace bargains.

*Bargaining in Urabá.*

In Urabá and neighboring Córdoba, the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas, Bloque Héroes de Tolová, and Bloque Córdoba signed separate peace accords with the state. In exchange for demobilization, they received benefits including amnesty, guarantees of no extradition, reintegration stipends, and laundered assets. For each of these brigades, these benefits exceeded the probability of the brigade winning a war against the state minus the cost of fighting. The state continued to provide these compensation packages to each paramilitary brigade as long as it remained demobilized. The brigades simultaneously (or previously) signed contracts amongst themselves.

The exact content of these inter-paramilitary faction accords has not been revealed. However, our glimpses into their arrangements suggest that division of territory and monetary compensation were involved. According to a demobilized from Urabá:

There were problems between the commanders and so, after a joint operation in Nueva Antioquia, everyone from different places went back to the brigades in their areas. The Bloque Córdoba took the region of southern Córdoba, Elmer Cárdenas took northern Urabá and Urabá Chocoana and the Frente Bananero under Cepillo, took the 'banana axis.' I was under Cepillo. We didn't operate in Nueva Antioquia anymore because this was given to another commander. We had permission to go up to El Tres, but we couldn't cross El Tres because that would

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<sup>472</sup> The organizational decay function seems to set in approximately two years after demobilizing.

be invading another man's territory. And to the south, we also had our limit as there was another señor, El Alemán, there. So the whole zone was divided up into separate areas of control of different *señores de la guerra* [warlords].<sup>473</sup>

The sister of former paramilitary commander, 'Doble Cero,' after several tumblers of whiskey, confided in me that 'Don Mario' paid 'Don Berna' two million dollars not to enter the zone of Urabá; this sum was the compensation required to offset 'Don Berna's' expected payoff from invading minus the anticipated costs. This testimony was not independently verified and thus its veracity remains questionable. Nonetheless, it points to the informal peace deals between paramilitary commanders that facilitated their demobilization.

It follows that, until 2006, a cooperation regime was in effect and the paramilitary brigades of Urabá and Córdoba remained demilitarized. So what happened thereafter? Before delving into the narrative, I will quickly touch on the distribution of power at the moment of disarmament. As imperfect proxies, I use the brigades' number of soldiers and weapons and the size of their territories.<sup>474</sup> All of the units had access to abundant resources. See Table 15.

**Table 15. Relative Power of Paramilitary Organizations**

	# Combatants <sup>475</sup>	# Weapons	Size of Territory
Bloque Elmer Cárdenas (BEC)	1536	1,068	Large
Bloque Córdoba (BC)	925	393	Medium
Bloque Héroes de Tolová (BHT)	464	256	Small

On the basis of these blunt figures and qualitative evidence, it can be inferred that the power ordering was as follows: BEC > BC > BHT at the moment of disarmament.<sup>476</sup>

<sup>473</sup> Ex-combatant (Frente Bananero), interview by author, Caurallo, 3 July 2008. Another ex-combatant similarly explained to me the top command's division of territory, "In Urabá, there were three brigades: the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas; the one of Cepillo that controlled the municipalities of the banana axis towards the south; and the one of Don Berna that had the east in Córdoba. These all had separate zones of operation" (Ex-combatant, interview by author, Apartadó, July 2008).

<sup>474</sup> For parsimony, I do not include the Frente Bananero in the analysis. It was the weakest of the brigades with 451 combatants, a small territory and 351 weapons.

<sup>475</sup> It should be noted that these combatant levels included the 'support networks' of the paramilitaries (family members, cooks, informants, etc.) who demobilized with the combatants. Additionally, the ex-armed groups maintained caches of weapons. I assume support networks and caches are relatively constant across the paramilitary brigades.

Prior to demobilization, these four organizations had complete information about each other's capabilities and were thus able to avoid confrontation; they did not fight each other. The organizations shared intelligence and were involved in combat, which rendered their capabilities public information. I argue that demobilization significantly and disproportionately weakened the Bloque Córdoba, but created proprietary knowledge about the extent to which it had done so. I should note that this project's theory cannot account for the Bloque Córdoba's erosion; it was a strongly local armed unit and thus, according to the theory's predictions, should have remained intact. While the preponderance of evidence supports my argument, I relegate this idiosyncratic fact to the error term; my theory explains more of the variation than existing accounts, but its R-squared term does not equal one.<sup>477</sup>

The Bloque Héroes de Tolová, believing itself strengthened relative to the Bloque Córdoba, could not commit to maintain the current division of territory because, now more powerful, it wanted to exploit its better position and renege on the promised division of goodies. The Bloque Córdoba did not initiate a preventive war, as predicted in the literature<sup>478</sup> as the power shift was a shock and was then over. Instead, the Bloque agreed to renegotiate the bargain with the Héroes de Tolová whereby, according to diverse sources, the Héroes de Tolová was given the right to the coca crops located on the side of the road leading to the reservoir of Urrá, an area that had previously been firmly under the control of Bloque Córdoba.<sup>479</sup> However, this concession did not meet the Héroes de Tolová's growing belief that it would win the entire pie

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<sup>476</sup> Don Berna commanded both the Bloque Héroes de Tolová and the Bloque Héroes de Granada (in the Oriente Antioqueño). The latter may have strengthened the former after the remilitarization began. However, these brigades can be evaluated as separate entities given that any time someone from Medellín was sighted in Córdoba, it was reported; in small, highly regionalized towns, an outsider cannot pass for a local. These reports of *Paisa* sightings were scarce until 2008.

<sup>477</sup> I am grateful for Jorge Domínguez' insights into the equivalence of the error term in qualitative research.

<sup>478</sup> See Fearon 1995, pp. 379-414; Powell 2006, pp. 169-203.

<sup>479</sup> Sources confirming this include the police, army, religious organizations, journalists and community members. An eradication campaign in Valencia, Córdoba also may have had an effect.

(Córdoba's assets) were the two powers to confront. The Bloque Córdoba, meanwhile, had a divergent, also optimistic, estimate of its relative power. While Córdoba's commander, Mancuso, was playing by the rules of the peace accord and seemed committed to the process,<sup>480</sup> he and his field officers were also committed to protecting the Bloque Córdoba's territory against encroachment. It appears that his mid-ranking commanders convinced him that he would be able to do so, that the previous balance of power still largely held. Given the difficulty of estimating *its own* capacity for remilitarization and fighting capabilities post-demobilization, let alone the Héroes de Tolová's, the Bloque Córdoba proved unwilling to make the transfers the Héroes de Tolová found necessary to avert war. Accordingly, in 2006, the Héroes de Tolová remilitarized in the form of *Los Traquetos*.<sup>481</sup> Its remilitarization sparked the Bloque Córdoba's defensive remilitarization in the form of the *Vencedores de San Jorge*.<sup>482</sup>

According to diverse sources, the *Traquetos*, highly local to the zone, had at their disposal a large and complex organization, with excellent logistics, communication, and command and control. It was very well equipped with rifles, radios, and detailed knowledge of the terrain and communities in which it operated (the same as those that the Héroes de Tolová had patrolled). The *Traquetos* also enjoyed familial and other links with the non-combatant population, making non-denunciation nearly ubiquitous.<sup>483</sup> "Given the extreme complexity of the organization, the armed forces confirm[ed] the link between this group and the former structures

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<sup>480</sup> Mancuso, for example, engaged in manual eradication of coca with his men in order to show good faith and also to employ his ex-combatants. In so doing, he sought to gain a good reputation for his commitment to the peace and to reduce his chances of being extradited.

<sup>481</sup> The command of the *Traquetos* included Eduardo Galiano, alias 'El Profe,' a representative of Don Berna, and alias 'El Primo,' Don Berna's relative. *Los Vencedores* were similarly led and stacked with friends and relatives of Salvatore Mancuso (Colombian Armed Forces, interview by author, Montería and Tierralta, August 2007). It became clear that there was a confrontation between the two ex-paramilitary commanders and their men (International Organization Personnel, interview by author, Tierralta, August 2007).

<sup>482</sup> *El Tiempo* 2006.

<sup>483</sup> This points to a challenge of remilitarization research; rearming is reported where it is least dangerous to do so; where the rearming phenomenon is weak or where the armed group is not embedded in the local communities. See Appendix A.

of the paramilitaries that [had] operated in the zone.”<sup>484</sup> The *Traquetos* had a close relationship with narcotrafficking, benefiting from a monopoly over the purchase and sale of the coca base and processing inputs in western Córdoba.

Meanwhile, the *Vencedores de San Jorge* descended from the Bloque Córdoba’s Frentes Alto Sinú and San Jorge and operated in squads of 15 soldiers. Relatively little is known about the *Vencedores* because, after becoming visible in February 2006, they quickly withdrew and maintained a very low profile. Within a year and a half, the *Vencedores* were seemingly disarticulated and the *Traquetos* had won the war. At this time, members of the Bloque Héroes de Tolová were observed patrolling the right banks of the Sinú River, “a change in the territorial distribution that had historically maintained in the zone.” The *Traquetos* gained access to the Bloque Córdoba’s zones of control and sucked nourishment from them, strengthening in the process.

The dynamic between the Bloque Héroes de Tolová and Bloque Córdoba did not remain isolated to this dyad; rather it had significant externalities and affected all of the other bargains to which the two armies had committed. Motivated by incentives independent of their peace bargains with the state (namely the shift in power between them), both reneged on their commitments to the state under those peace accords; they returned to violence.<sup>485</sup> Meanwhile, the Bloque Héroes de Tolová’s strengthening due to its successful defeat of the Bloque Córdoba

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<sup>484</sup> Conflict analyst, interview by author, Monteria, August 2007. The Héroes de Tolová combatants were local to the zone and thus the structure remained intact post-demobilization in the form of an NGO (Observatorio del Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos 2005).

<sup>485</sup> While, in theory, this should have prompted the state to actively combat the *Traquetos* and *Vencedores de San Jorge*, in actuality, these groups, especially the *Traquetos* had successfully corrupted the local armed forces to such an extent that the top police commanders denied their existence and called them common, petty crime despite their highly sophisticated and extensive organizational structures. The state did, however, ‘renege’ on its corruptive ties in 2008 when it extradited Don Berna in part for his participation in these (re)armed groups. Whereas, in principal, pro-state armed groups usually enjoy relative immunity from state ‘counterinsurgent’ operations, if remilitarized, the state should become justified and pressured (by civilians and the international community) to combat the groups; corruption should end.



upset the distribution of power on the Urabá/Córdoba border and thus destabilized the bargains brokered between the Bloque Héroes de Tolová and Bloque Elmer Cárdenas.

Prior to the Héroes de Tolová's successful campaign against the Bloque Córdoba, its power remained stable relative to the Urabá organizations. As a result, there emerged a "tense calm," in the banana axis<sup>486</sup> and, from 2004 to 2007, "there were no incursions by other armed actors" into Urabá<sup>487</sup> All reports on the rearming phenomena that emerged in 2004-2006 did not list *any* remilitarized groups in Urabá.<sup>488</sup> This changed in 2007.

The Héroes de Tolová faced reduced costs to fighting as it had already paid the sunk costs of remilitarization. By redeploying, it had already foregone the benefits of the peace process. Its members lost the lenient judicial benefits of maximum sentences of eight years for crimes against humanity and the promise of no-extradition. Additionally, the Héroes de Tolová had to face not only its illegal armed rivals, but also the state, which was forced to at least appear to be confronting the remilitarization. Accordingly, it was in the Héroes de Tolová's interest to strengthen as much as possible; its incentive structure was that of a group at war rather than one at post-war peace. Thus, at this point, we observe it engaging in revisionist efforts and offensive expansionary campaigns. Moreover, having defeated the Bloque Córdoba, the Bloque Héroes de Tolová faced a significantly higher probability of winning a war in Urabá than at the moment of disarmament.<sup>489</sup> It had consolidated power and territory while its contiguous, ex-armed organization in Urabá, the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas, had remained demobilized, thereby not making public its redeployment capacity. For the Héroes de Tolová, this produced a perceived

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<sup>486</sup> Conflict analyst, interview by author, Bogotá, August 2006.

<sup>487</sup> OAS 2005.

<sup>488</sup> BACRIM classified intelligence reports.

<sup>489</sup> According to the sister of paramilitary commander Doble Cero, Don Mario never paid the two million dollars stipulated in the peace bargain because Don Berna decided to invade Urabá. Her testimony hints at the likely course of events (Interview by author, Apartadó, 4 July 2008).

probability of winning high enough to incentivize its incursion into the zone; the compensation package between it and the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas no longer sufficed as it was negotiated under a different power differential.

Accordingly, in mid-2007, the Bloque Héroes de Tolová, under the name *los Paisas*, began encroaching on the region of Urabá, seeking to “increase [its] presence in the region”<sup>490</sup> and sparking a war with the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas.<sup>491</sup> The *Paisas* combined the *Traquetos* with recruits sent from Medellín and Don Berna’s Office of Envigado. They arrived first on motorcycles, dressed like civilians with no camouflage, then began a selective assassination campaign against ex-BEC combatants, and finally initiated more direct offensives on the BEC structure.<sup>492</sup> This structure redeployed. It shifted from an invisible strategy to a visible one; its military influence went from latent to manifest as its men who, since April 2006, had been using handguns and radios on motorcycles, dressed in civilian clothes and maintaining a very low profile, now adopted a “military profile, patrolling in uniform in groups of 20, extending a military structure into rural areas, using heavy weaponry, and returning ‘to the same as before.’”<sup>493</sup> By August/September 2007, there was the first mention of an “emerging criminal

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<sup>490</sup> Observatorio del Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos 2007. See also Fundación Seguridad y Democracia 2004.

<sup>491</sup> Gersen Arias, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2008; Conflict Analyst, interview by author, Apartadó, April 2008. It could be argued that ‘Don Berna’ and ‘El Alemán’ were more direct adversaries than other dyads as they fell on opposite sides of the rift over drug trafficking within the *autodefensas*. However, this explanation also cannot account for the timing of the incursion into Urabá. Why did the war not break out between these two actors immediately after demobilization? Additionally, why had they not fought each other prior to demobilization given that this discord surfaced in 2000? Fearon 1995 and Powell 2006 would both argue that this scenario would produce a preventive war, initiated by the BEC to grab more resources while it still had the chance before the window of opportunity closed and the BHT was significantly stronger. However, I have not found evidence of this dynamic.

<sup>492</sup> Army Intelligence, Brigada 17, interview by author, Carepa, 4 July 2008; BACRIM (MEVEC), interview by author, 30 January 2008; President, Indigenous Association, Camizba, interview by author, Riosucio, 2 July 2008. This is consistent with Kalyvas 2006 predictions of selective violence.

<sup>493</sup> International organization personnel, interview by author, Bogotá, April 2008. The communities claim that the *autodefensas* did not demobilize, they just became less visible (Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz, interview by author, Apartadó, 2008). Superban, for example, had radios and delivered codes such as, “The green tree is leaving farm La Macarena with the package.” Green tree could have been code for the army, police, etc. For

gang of Urabá” under Don Mario.<sup>494</sup> In May 2008, Don Mario killed seven and kidnapped 25 members of the Bloque Héroes de Tolová (*Paisas*), producing a highly publicized hostage situation. In a video given to the OAS Peace Mission, Don Mario denounced the invasion of Urabá, orchestrated by Don Berna, and explained, “We, the demobilized, are rearming ... to defend ourselves.” According to the OAS, “This demonstrated the territorial dispute in Urabá between these two groups with links to the former paramilitaries; the *Paisas* were trying to enter the territory of Don Mario and kill his men.”<sup>495</sup>

By July 2008, the “conflict had died down a little.”<sup>496</sup> “In 2007 till mid-2008, you would hear that the Paisas were around ... but in recent months, they have been *silent*; they have not made a peep,” offered the head of the indigenous organization of Chocó, Camizba.<sup>497</sup> The army confirmed that the Paisas were largely destroyed in Urabá; “They have gone home ... They have a few informants, but that is all.”<sup>498</sup> By October 2008, Don Mario’s Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC) had reclaimed hegemony in Urabá. With victory, however, came externalities for the entire cooperative architecture buttressing the peace process; Don Mario’s army expanded into other regions of Colombia. By mid-2008, Don Mario’s AGC was estimated to number some 3,000 troops in Urabá with expeditionary forces being sent east and south into the interior of Colombia. I turn now from Colombia’s Panamanian border to its Venezuelan one.

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several conflict analysts, the ex-combatants’ radios and presence on all the roads constituted a form of social control (Interview by author, Apartadó, June 2008).

<sup>494</sup> It should be noted that the battles between AGC and the Paisas also occurred in Valencia, Córdoba, where the BHT had previously enjoyed absolute domination. Eventually, the AGC claimed these regions as their own (Army Intelligence, Brigada 17, interview by author, Carepa, 4 July 2008).

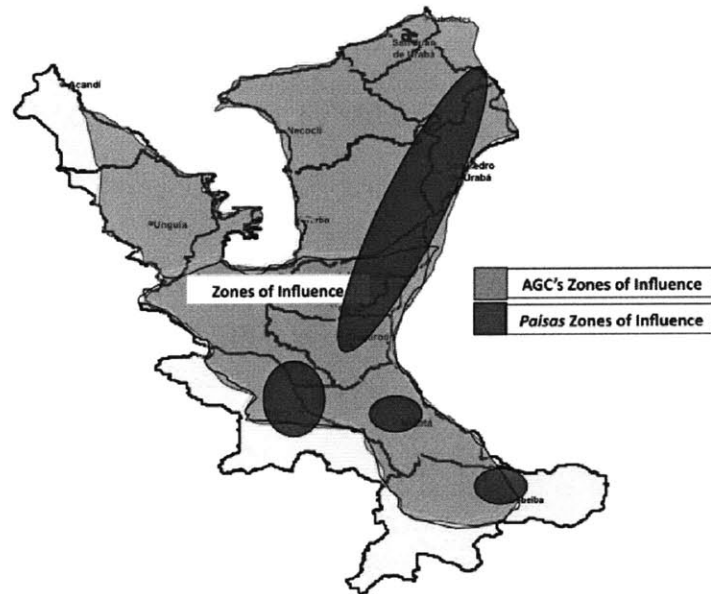
<sup>495</sup> OAS Peace Monitors, interview by author, Bogotá, 20 May 2008.

<sup>496</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, Caurallo, 3 July 2008.

<sup>497</sup> President, Indigenous Association, Camizba, Riosucio, 2 July 2008.

<sup>498</sup> Army 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade, interview by author, Carepa, 4 July 2008.

### Map 5. Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces and *Los Paisas*' Zones of Influence



Source: Colombian Army, 17<sup>th</sup> Brigada

#### **Bloque Catatumbo: A Power Vacuum Attracts Violence**

As illustrated in Chapter Five, demobilization largely bankrupted the Bloque Catatumbo (BC). Its combatants were recruited in a dispersed fashion and thus lacked dense ties. After disarming, most emigrated from Norte de Santander home to their families in the coastal regions of the country. Those that remained in the war theater of Norte de Santander interacted minimally. Thus, the BC paramilitary organization, for the most part, ceased to exist.

During the war, the BC had forged a set of agreements with its contiguous armed actors. It controlled the state of Norte de Santander; the Mellizos had Arauca; the Frente Julio Peinado patrolled the south of Cesar and the Bloque Central Bolívar had Magdalena Medio Santandereño and the south of Bolívar.<sup>499</sup> These agreements held despite ambitions to the

<sup>499</sup> The Frente Julio Peinado and Bloque Central Bolívar, however, had not been able to agree to a bargain on the Cesar/Bolívar border prior to demobilizing. Thus, unsurprisingly, the dispute resurfaced immediately following disarmament.

contrary and there was little, if any, violence observed between the paramilitary units. Interestingly, the BC even had “an implicit division of territory” with its enemies: the FARC, ELN, and EPL rebels. “*La Gabarra* was the limit of where the paramilitaries were able to extend their power. The Catatumbo River marked the limit between the guerrillas and *paras*. It was a tacit agreement. The *paras* had secured the areas important to them: the flat regions, roads, urban areas, and petroleum, gold, and copper resources.”<sup>500</sup> The BC also had a tacit accord with the state whereby the state turned a blind eye to its activities and respected its sovereignty in the regions it controlled.

Demobilization shocked and downgraded the Bloque Catatumbo’s capacity and, in so doing, undermined these agreements. In most areas, demobilization left nothing of the BC structure (in *La Gabarra*, *Tibu*, *El Tarra*, *Pamplona*, *San Calixto*, *Convención*, *Teorama* and *Ragonvalia*). The words ‘void’ and ‘vacuum’ were those observers used to describe these regions after the BC’s demobilization. In other zones, DDR instead left latent, but ‘rump’ cadres of ex-combatants who were either from the locales and ‘returned’ home or were not local to Norte de Santander, but remained there post-war. These regions included *Puerto Santander* and *Ocaña*.<sup>501</sup> Meanwhile, the collective action capacities of the neighboring, strongly local *Frente Julio Peinado* and *Bloque Central Bolívar’s Frente Sur de Bolívar* were left largely unaffected by demobilization. Their combatants emigrated minimally from their combat zones and remained highly clustered and loyal to their former armed employers. Thus the *Bloque Catatumbo* weakened both in absolute terms but also *relative* to its territorially contiguous brigades. These armed actors, both state and non-state, reneged on their commitments to the BC to respect its

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<sup>500</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo, interview by author, Cúcuta, April 2008.

<sup>501</sup> The Catatumbo brigade divided into seven battalions. Five of them were highly ‘non-local.’ These were the *Frentes La Gabarra*, *Movil Catatumbo*, *Rural Catatumbo*, *Choque Cazadores*, and *Las Mercedes*. Two fronts incorporated more local recruits: *Frente Frontera* and *Frente Ocaña*.

territorial integrity. Emboldened by their enhanced relative power, they wanted bigger pieces of the pie. So they descended like vultures on Norte de Santander to take their grab. There was no structure to deter them and uncertainty was high. Ex-guerrilla and now conflict analyst observed, “Before the demobilization, it all was very clear. It was very easy to understand what was happening. Everyone knew who was in charge, but post-demobilization, it became very unclear. Everything was in confusion.”<sup>502</sup> The invasion of these multiple actors prompted the BC rump units to remilitarize defensively in the form of the Black Eagles, Blue Eagles and Golden Eagles.<sup>503</sup> However, with only a fraction of their manpower and materiel and facing a strong invading miscellany of armed actors, they did not last long.<sup>504</sup> These actors merit further elaboration.

While conducting interviews in the prison of Cúcuta, I observed one of the inmates opening his notebook. The inner cover was tattooed with a large drawing of Black Eagles, the symbol of the remilitarized group. It was cult-like. He told me that he had been captured a month after the demobilization because a war broke out between the demobilized from Bloque Catatumbo and “those trying to enter the zone.” Those trying to enter included the “Mid-ranking commanders of the Bloque Central Bolívar (BCB) [aliases ‘Vides’ and ‘Pablo’<sup>505</sup> who] trespassed into the area with the goal of exercising total territorial control.”<sup>506</sup> Evidence of this incursion included 22 selective killings of BC ex-combatants between the December 10<sup>th</sup> 2004 and the end of September 2005.<sup>507</sup> Colombia’s most prominent narcotraffickers, Jabón, Varela, and the Mellizos, also wanted pieces of the border pie and drug smuggling routes into

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<sup>502</sup> Director, Fundación Progresar, interview by author, Cúcuta, April 2008.

<sup>503</sup> It seems that the ‘invading forces’ also called themselves by these names to confuse authorities and to convince them that the Bloque Catatumbo was the only one redeploying, thus meriting a state offensive against it.

<sup>504</sup> The three ex-combatant leaders of the Black Eagles were all killed within months of the demobilization ceremony.

<sup>505</sup> Ex-combatant (BCB), interview by author, Sur del Bolívar, April 2008.

<sup>506</sup> OAS 2005

<sup>507</sup> OAS 2005

Venezuela.<sup>508</sup> To make their grab, they allied with the local cartels (los Boyacos, Pepes, Pulpos, Mechas, and Pamplonas) who, having been subjugated to the paramilitary command during the war, now resurfaced.

Finally, the guerrillas also sought to ‘fill the vacuums’ left by the paramilitaries in La Gabarra, Tibu and El Tarra. Eight days after the BC’s demobilization, the FARC killed several inhabitants of the paramilitary’s side of the river. “Such an obstruction of the rules wouldn’t have occurred before when the territory was divided.”<sup>509</sup> “The areas *left by* the former paramilitaries are becoming constant targets” for the EPL, ELN, and FARC “with the goal of procuring those territories.”<sup>510</sup>

Meanwhile, the state also reneged on its tacit agreement not to encroach on the paramilitary territories and state-build. The remnants of the BC were insufficient to deter it and the border area was strategically important to Colombia’s economy and national integrity. As a result, Norte de Santander witnessed a military and state buildup in the years following demobilization. In 2005, the military activated the 30<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Cúcuta and, in 2006, assigned the 15th Mobile Brigade to Catatumbo. It also created an effective, elite search team charged with capturing Black Eagle members. The National Police, meanwhile, established new stations in several townships (Petrólera, Campo Dos and la Gabarra), areas that were previously “strongly controlled by the Bloque Catatumbo.” Thus the state, rather than collaborating with the former BC structure and respecting its sovereignty in its prior zones of operation as in the cases

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<sup>508</sup> Policía Nacional, interview by author, Cúcuta, 30 May 2008. A number of the top leaders of the Mellizos’ and Varela’s narco-trafficking groups were captured in the area of Norte de Santander after the demobilization.

<sup>509</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo, interview by author, Cúcuta, April 2008.

<sup>510</sup> Conflict analyst, interview by author, Bogotá, August 2006. *Emphasis added.*

of Medellín and Urabá, instead sought to circumvent the paramilitaries' authority and establish consolidated state presence.<sup>511</sup>

Where the Bloque Catatumbo was almost entirely non-local, such as in La Gabarra, El Tarra, and Tibu, the 'invaders' met with little resistance from the BC as it had fully disappeared. Consistent with the argument, in areas in which the BC had recruited some natives or its non-local combatants remained in the zone, the BC retained rump structures, which engaged in defensive remilitarization. This was the case in Puerto Santander and Ocaña where the Águilas were observed to have "a more organized structure."<sup>512</sup>

Nonetheless, because of their relative bankruptcy, these rump units proved unsustainable. An conflict analyst noted, "The Bloque Catatumbo did not incorporate any natives. For this reason, it wasn't able to 'rearm' because it did not have a consolidated structure. [The rearming] is more a mishmash of disparate, disunited actors including members of the local drug cartels."<sup>513</sup> "If the Catatumbo paramilitaries had been local, we would be seeing a huge rearmed bloc," commented an ombudsman.<sup>514</sup> Instead, the BC's Eagles "do not have a hierarchy... They are not linked to a military apparatus in rural areas. Now it is just illegal businesses and hitmen. There are no commanders."<sup>515</sup> A Police Coronel similarly observed, "The differences between before and now are that, before the demobilization, the *autodefensas* were in charge, we knew that all the paramilitary commanders were running everything, now with the new narcos, there is no clear command."

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<sup>511</sup> Army General, interview by author, Tibu, April 2008.

<sup>512</sup> Policía Nacional, interview by author, Cúcuta, May 2008.

<sup>513</sup> Director, Fundación Progresar, interview by author, Cúcuta, 9 June 2008.

<sup>514</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo, interview by author, Cúcuta, May 2008. This was confirmed in another interviewee (Ex-combatant (Bloque Catatumbo), interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Cúcuta, 3 June 2008.

<sup>515</sup> Analyst, Fundación Progresar, interview by author, Cúcuta, 30 May 2008.



The lack of a residue hierarchical structure following the BC's demobilization suggests that recruits' decisions to join the Black Eagles were largely taken on *individual* bases. Ex-combatants entered as 'common criminals' rather than as a *collective* rejoining their former structure.<sup>516</sup> Each year, the number of demobilized involved with the armed groups decreased implying that the 'rump units' disappeared, replaced by the diverse militarized factions disputing the zone in the absence of a strongman.<sup>517</sup>

I turn now to the Bloque Cacique Nutibara, which retained silent guns initially and, over time, fully demobilized.

### **Medellín: Differential Power Preserved**

Prior to demobilization, the Bloque Cacique Nutibara enjoyed territorial alliances with its neighboring paramilitary factions. Together with these factions, it had pushed the FARC and ELN guerrillas out and exterminated its only paramilitary enemy in the region – the Bloque Metro – and co-opted its structure.

The BCN's contiguous armed units were all strongly local and survived demobilization. Accordingly, the regional power differential maintained and the territorial arrangements between the former armies held. Additionally, until 2007, the local government adopted a strategy of collaboration with the BCN rather than challenging it. As a result, the BCN structure persisted in the form of a passively coercive, socio-political organization. Ultimately, the networks and physical clustering of the Bloque began to erode such that the organization lost its ability to

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<sup>516</sup> Interestingly, group weakening facilitates further bankruptcy through the following mechanism: if the organizational structure decays, other armed groups seek to enter the territory. If illegal, their means of encroaching on the territory is through selective killings of the incumbents (ex-combatants). This creates disincentives for the former combatants to associate or to have a manifest presence. Thus, fear makes them hide and the structure ends up weakening further. According to a conflict analyst, "The demobilized don't want to form any sort of a group because it is very dangerous as they do not want to be recognized as demobilized" (Interview by author, Tibu, April 2008).

<sup>517</sup> National Police, interview by author, Tibu, May 2008.

remilitarize. Given this weakened organizational capacity, the state gradually enhanced its presence and authority in the marginal neighborhoods long under illegal armed control and co-opted the BCN's ex-combatants back into civilian life.

### *Silent Guns*

After demobilizing, the BCN's civilian reincarnation, the Democracy Corporation, existed with what I call 'silent guns.' The BCN had disarmed, but remained in an unstable state of latent coercive capacity from which it could easily remobilize. According to a Medellín ombudsman, the ex-combatants patrolled the streets, but now did so without uniforms or guns. They maintained their social, political, and economic influence, but without camouflage.<sup>518</sup> The demobilized "radically changed their means of operating and their manner of being. Now they do not use direct violence, do not displace. They use latent power."<sup>519</sup> Eduardo Pizarro added: "[Today the paramilitaries' control is] more subtle; there are no hooded patrols armed with assault weaponry. It is an invisible control, with threats and camouflaged guns... and an iron fist."<sup>520</sup>

While the demobilized no longer had an overt military presence, they did operate informant networks, using mobile telephones to communicate with their leaders about what was happening in their neighborhoods. For example, if the political left was seeking to establish a presence in the communities, the former combatants reported, "We would have to speak to the commanders... to see what should be done about it."<sup>521</sup> The former fighters performed their vigilante jobs, but did so without the *use* of arms. "We speak with any strangers who enter the neighborhood, we ask them where they are from, what they are doing. Now, we start with

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<sup>518</sup> International Crisis Group 2007, p. 21.

<sup>519</sup> Analyst, Sistema de Alertas Tempranas, Defensoría del Pueblo, interview by author, Medellín, 29 February 2008.

<sup>520</sup> Pizarro Leongómez 2004.

<sup>521</sup> *Revista Semana* 2004a.

dialogue, not like before when we went straight for our guns,” explained a former BCN paramilitary.<sup>522</sup> “Before we would have just sent them to the funeral parlor.”<sup>523</sup> “Even though the ex-combatants for now do not commit crimes in the sense established by the Penal code, they have not lost their capacity for coercion,” confirmed a local civil society organization.<sup>524</sup>

The term ‘silent guns,’ however, does not preclude the former combatants’ involvement in illicit endeavors.<sup>525</sup> There were reports, some verified, others not, of ex-BCN fighters using threats, extorting, charging residents protection money,<sup>526</sup> abusing drugs, charging monies from prostitution rings and lotteries, running credit scams, and operating private security businesses.<sup>527</sup> The demobilized were also accused of controlling the population’s access to electricity and water, regulating cocaine and marijuana markets, illegally appropriating land,<sup>528</sup> pressuring politicians, and taxing transporters for the right of passage. Testimonies of former paramilitaries under the Justice and Peace Law further reveal that the ex-BCN combatants maintained caches of weapons to facilitate rapid redeployment of their troops for combat. The caches included rifles, ammunition, uniforms, and canned goods.<sup>529</sup>

During the first several years after demobilizing (2003-2006), had the BCN’s power relative to its counterparts been upset, it would have remilitarized. One mid-ranking commander

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<sup>522</sup> Restrepo 2005.

<sup>523</sup> *Revista Semana* 2004a.

<sup>524</sup> Franco 2005. See also Human Rights Watch 2005.

<sup>525</sup> ‘Silent guns’ also does not preclude manifest armed activity by other non-demobilized actors. There are many unemployed minors and young men, who never had anything to do with the paramilitaries or guerrillas, but have since joined neighborhood *combos* and gangs. The Mayor’s Program for High Risk Youth, which demobilizes gang youth is a testament to this problem. Additionally, the culture of violence in Medellín, while showing some signs of changing, endures and thus reproduces many of the primary elements of the conflict (micro-gangs). The corrupt and ineffective judicial system also means that deterrence of criminal activity is lacking and thus the incentive structure remains perverse. Finally, while the paramilitaries demobilized, the narco industry did not. And this industry requires private armies and often relies on violence. Thus, mafioso elements endure.

<sup>526</sup> Human Rights Watch 2005.

<sup>527</sup> Civilians, interview by author, *Comuna 13*, Medellín, April 2008.

<sup>528</sup> For example, the president of *La Honda’s* Community Action Board, a former combatant, illegally appropriated and sold off land to displaced persons (International Organization official, interview by author, Medellín, May 2008).

<sup>529</sup> Parmenio Usme, Testimony under Justice and Peace Law, Medellín, 2008). See also Castrillón 2005.

admitted to me, “We will be willing to retake up arms. If someone wants to enter the city – guerrilla or other – we will be there to combat them.”<sup>530</sup> “If new-armed groups try to come to Medellín, we won’t let them come in,” confessed another mid-ranking commander.<sup>531</sup> A group of ex-combatants in the neighborhood *La Sierra* similarly expressed, “Returning to arms is not an alternative, but neither is it a myth.” They described how there is a great deal of fear that other groups will try to enter and dispute their territory. If this happens, “we will return to arms.”<sup>532</sup> It did not happen because the power differentials between the BCN and the Bloques Central Bolívar, Mineros, and Noroccidente Antioqueño held.<sup>533</sup> The BCN thus deterred other actors from encroaching on its territory and did not collectively remobilize.

#### *State-Build or Co-Opt*

The local government in Medellín, as those everywhere in Colombia, wished to extend its power into the neighborhoods under paramilitary control and to regain the Weberian goal of hegemony over violence. As Colombia’s High Commissioner for Peace asserted: the demobilization of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara “will be the first step and the beginning of a long journey to regain the state’s monopoly over the means of coercion.”<sup>534</sup> However, it could only engage in state-building where demobilization had weakened the paramilitary structures. Accordingly, during the period 2003-2007, the Medellín government opted for a strategy of minimal “articulated military contention” of the BCN’s prerogatives; it did not contest the BCN’s control.<sup>535</sup> In 2008, it changed its policy and increased its levels of contention. It did so

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<sup>530</sup> Ex-commander, interview by author, *Comuna 1*, Medellín, March 2008.

<sup>531</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Medellín, February 2008.

<sup>532</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by author, *Comuna 8*, Medellín, March 2008.

<sup>533</sup> Fearon 1995; Fearon 2004.

<sup>534</sup> *El Colombiano* 2003.

<sup>535</sup> See Stepan 1988.

only after the BCN structure had begun to erode and thus, contesting its power no longer threatened a return to fighting. This next section outlines these longitudinal dynamics.

*Sergio Fajardo's Administration in Medellín (2003-2007): A Strategy of Co-optation*

A state strategy of co-optation dominated for the first years after the BCN's disarmament. Its intact organizational capacity produced a deterrent effect. Had the Medellín administration confronted the BCN's prerogatives in these years, it would have sparked a return to war with the victor unclear. The peace terms held; the government's probability of successfully state-building – winning a war against the BCN – was unimproved. It was therefore in the state's interest to cooperate with the BCN; “compromised peace [was] better than war.”<sup>536</sup>

The Democracy Corporation implicitly promised to keep levels of violence to a minimum if Mayor Fajardo allowed it to continue exercising control over the *barrios*' social and political life (and narco-trafficking). In other words, the Fajardo administration settled for a sort of ‘ceasefire’ as opposed to demanding a full dismantling of the organization and its criminal and governing functions. Accordingly, during these years, the Democracy Corporation continued to operate as a quasi-state in large expanses of Medellín and eastern Antioquia. The Fajardo government recognized that DDR processes are, by definition, *gradual* and *long-term*, and that co-optation may become possible only over time. The Medellín government's strategy mirrors that of the Colombian state everywhere the paramilitary organizations were strongly networked and clustered and thus firmly intact post-war.

Thus, in the short and medium terms, the Medellín administration collaborated with the BCN structure. It engaged in joint policing with former combatants and thereby facilitated the entry of police forces into the neighborhoods to which they had had no access in the past. Demobilized fighters were given radios so that the leaders could be in permanent contact with

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<sup>536</sup> Gersen Arias, interview by author, Bogotá, 2008.

their ‘boys’ and receive detailed, local intelligence on public order in the neighborhoods. Some of this information the ex-commanders then passed on to the police with whom they had direct phone access. Testimonies from *San Javier*, *Popular*, and *Villa Hermosa* about this collaborative relationship abound. During my interviews in 2007-8, ex-BCN commanders complained that the police acted through them because they were the ones the population turned to when there was a problem. When a new police chief was assigned to a neighborhood, the first thing s/he did was go to the ex-combatant ‘coordinator’ of the *barrio*, introduce him/herself and seek the coordinator’s collaboration.<sup>537</sup> For example, when there were several violent deaths in *Villa Hermosa* on Easter in 2007, the police went directly to the former BCN commanders to clarify the situation. The police chiefs claimed that this produced effective operations without civilian deaths. One ex-combatant boasted, “The police forces are too weak...They can’t do anything without us [the demobilized]. The police depend on us.”<sup>538</sup> A Reintegration Program officer, when asked if the people in the barrios really called the authorities, replied, “If it is a small threat, yes. If it is a big threat, no, they just kill the person, often calling on the ex-combatant structures to help.”<sup>539</sup>

### *Decay in Organizational Capacity*

Over time, however, the mechanisms that sustained the BCN (Democracy Corporation)’s organizational collective action – dense bonds and physical concentration – began to erode. Reintegration requires a psychological transformation from a military mentality to a civilian one. This transformation is slow and gradual. The Colombian government’s High Commission for Reintegration (ACR) recognized this and decided to extend the reintegration program to

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<sup>537</sup> Ex-commander (Elected to *Comuna 8*’s Community Action Board (JAC)), interview by author, Medellín, 25 February 2008.

<sup>538</sup> Ex-commander, interview by author, *Comuna 6*, Medellín, 28 February 2008.

<sup>539</sup> Ex-militia Member, Scholar of the Conflict, and Director of the Security Branch of the Reintegration Program, interview by author, Medellín, 27 February 2008.

demobilized combatants indefinitely. Doing so enabled the program to draw 80% of the former fighters in Medellín into ‘legality’ by 2008 and to erode the Democracy Corporation’s cohesion and its commanders’ power.<sup>540</sup>

The former combatants now had something to lose by returning to fighting. They were five years older than when they demobilized. “They had tested the benefits of civilian life, education, job training, legal earnings, and constructing familial and social links as non-combatants.”<sup>541</sup> These links began to pose a counterforce to remobilization. Sergio Mauricio, a former BCN combatant explained, “Now I worry about my homework, now I worry about working for the community... now I dedicate time to my children ... For me it is a luxury to sleep all night... go to bed at six at night and wake up at six in the morning having slept calmly, without having stayed up all night [patrolling]... now I think more about my family, my future.”<sup>542</sup> According to an ex-militia, “It is now easier to recruit new people to fight rather than demobilized ones... The demobilized now have a different culture among them that isn’t useful to armed groups. They have attended too many psychological workshops!”<sup>543</sup> In addition, internal divisions and splintering began to emerge within the Democracy Corporation and the “glue” that had kept it cohesive corroded.

Evidence of this organizational decay becomes clear when one compares the responses to two government actions: 1) the issuing of an arrest warrant for BCN commander ‘Don Berna’ in 2005 for the murder of Congressman Benitez; and 2) the extradition of ‘Don Berna’ to the US in 2008 on drug trafficking charges. In response to the former event, the ex-BCN combatants paralyzed Medellín for a day by shutting down all buses and public transportation in the entire

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<sup>540</sup> Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2009.

<sup>541</sup> Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2009.

<sup>542</sup> Ex-combatant, interview by Programa Paz y Reconciliación, Medellín, 2006.

<sup>543</sup> Ex-militia member and Director of the Security Branch of the Reintegration Program, interview by author, Medellín, 27 February 2008.

Metropolitan area in protest. In response to the latter event, there was no disturbance or protest of any kind by the former combatants. After several years of the state's co-opting strategy and reintegration's decaying effects, the BCN's command and control had been damaged. Its remilitarization became costly and unlikely.

As the BCN weakened, it lost its deterrent potential and its implicit and explicit bargains with other illegal armed factions and with the state broke down. In 2008, criminal, armed actors from Cali and Urabá tried to gain a foothold in Medellín. "Demobilized paramilitaries passed to second in importance in the coercive world... Currently, all the names of those disputing the illegal power in the city ... are of individuals which did not come from the ranks of the paramilitaries."<sup>544</sup> Don Berna's BCN had lost its supremacy in the city. While the BCN's capacity to return to war diminished, it still retained the Democracy Corporation structure and extensive social and political activities and influence.<sup>545</sup>

*Alonso Salazar's Administration (2008-2009<sup>546</sup>): A Strategy of State-Building*

Responding to the BCN's organizational decay, the Medellín government shifted its strategy. In January 2008, Alonso Salazar took office as Medellín's mayor and continued a policy of gradual erosion of the former paramilitary structure through co-optation. However, he coupled this strategy with policies aimed at directly dismantling the BCN.<sup>547</sup> Doing so was now possible without risking the BCN's remilitarization. After six years, the BCN's former combatants were brought into the state's legal and political framework passing from 'silent guns' to no guns. The group's prerogatives decreased and the likelihood of conflict between the state and the BCN organization diminished. The BCN passed the baton to the local government to

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<sup>544</sup> Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2009.

<sup>545</sup> Its success at maintaining and extending this influence, however, is yet to be seen.

<sup>546</sup> This analysis concludes in early 2009 when I concluded my fieldwork. I therefore analyze Salazar's administration only up to that date.

<sup>547</sup> Think-tank Analyst, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2008.



assume the lead in fighting the new forces of violence and illegality. The police’s capacity was not yet sufficient to eradicate these groups and illegality remained too culturally and economically embedded to quickly evaporate. Nonetheless, the Medellín government substantially enhanced its power. Its sovereignty was no longer restricted to a small radius in the center of Medellín; rather, by co-opting the BCN units, its reach extended into the city’s marginal neighborhoods and into the 30 municipalities to the east of Medellín. There, it began to construct a slew of new libraries, metro-cables, parks, schools, and urban and rural development projects. It began to state-build.<sup>548</sup>

## VI. Quantitative Analysis

This chapter has laid out a theory of variation in remilitarization. It predicts that armed organizations, whose capacity is preserved during the war to peace transition and whose region is populated with similarly intact, formerly militarized groups, will retain passive guns initially and, over time, fully demilitarize and reintegrate. In contrast, where demobilization disperses a ‘non-local’ organization’s thinly linked ex-combatants and downgrades its capacity for collective action, we should observe the remilitarization of its contiguous non-state armies and the deployment of state institutions. This fragile organization should also redeploy defensively. To test these hypotheses, I plan to estimate the following model of remilitarization.

$$\text{Remilitarize}_{o,m} = \delta + \beta_1 \text{PowerDiff} + \beta_2 \text{Loot} + \beta_3 \text{OnsetX} + e_{o,m}$$

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<sup>548</sup> I should note that the inter-neighborhood dynamics of Medellín provide support to the model. Because the BCN structures dissolved in *Independencia I, II, III, El Salado*, and *20 de Julio*, as shown in Chapter 5, they left a vacuum that the state’s forces and other armed actors (namely the Cali drug cartel and Don Mario’s forces) sought to fill. As a result, *Comuna 13* did not witness the same improvement in public order and enhancement of state capacity experienced elsewhere in the city 2003–2008.

The analysis is still in progress and thus I outline the empirical strategy, but do not report the results. The dependent variable *Remilitarize* captures the degree to which organization *o* in municipality *m* remilitarized. If my theory is correct, shocks in the distribution of power should have a positive effect on the likelihood of remilitarization. In formal language:  $H_0 : \beta_1 > 0$ . As with the other models, I measure the dependent variable both as a dummy and then, relying on survey data, measure it as a continuous variable, in this case: the percentage of organization *o*'s combatants in municipality *m* that have remilitarized. For the first measure, I use logit analysis; for the second, I employ OLS. I control for resource-richness and a range of factors, denoted *X*, which have been found to associate with civil war onset (militarization). This set of factors includes geographic, economic, and demographic variables. I turn now to how I operationalize these factors.

#### *Generating the Dyads*

To generate the dyads, I exploit data on the paramilitary battalions' zones of operation as outlined in Chapter 5. I then create a database of all contiguous dyads, which operated either in the same or in neighboring municipalities.

*Measuring Remilitarization.* In an ideal world, I would know exactly which individuals had returned to violence and the groups to which they belonged. I would then link these post-demobilization armed factions with the pre-demobilization ones to determine which groups had remilitarized and which had not. For the reasons discussed in Appendix A, I am unable to generate this optimal measure. However, I am able to approximate remilitarization in the following two ways: first, I gained access to intelligence briefing sessions and confidential BACRIM<sup>549</sup> data on the geographic locations of armed groups active after the demobilization

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<sup>549</sup> This is an inter-institutional agency charged with fighting the 'emerging criminal gangs' which is the government's term for all armed groups including remilitarized paramilitaries, non-demobilized factions, historic

process. I cross-check this data with qualitative information from interviews, newspaper articles, OAS Peace monitors, and violent event reports to confirm that these remilitarized units are neither new armed groups nor factions that never demobilized. I also use this qualitative data to link these rearmed factions to the former ones and to ensure that the demobilized combatants joined in a collective fashion and not as individuals (i.e. the *organization* remilitarized). I create a dummy variable *Remilitarize* that assumes a value of 1 if the group remilitarized and 0 otherwise.

My second means of measuring remilitarization is to calculate the percentage of former combatants from X faction in municipality Y who have returned to violence. To estimate this percentage, I examine two populations.<sup>550</sup> One, the imprisoned population of former fighters who rearmed, were captured, and are now imprisoned (1,797 ex-combatants).<sup>551</sup> This includes individuals who have been convicted and those awaiting trial.<sup>552</sup> Two, the ex-combatant population in the state's reintegration program (28,500). This latter population is either demilitarized or may be simultaneously committing acts of violence and participating in the reintegration program. To estimate the first population, I collected data on the captured and imprisoned ex-combatants: what armed factions they belonged to, what crimes they were accused of committing, and where they were captured. I then realized a random survey of 120 of these imprisoned former fighters (See Appendix C). For the second population of former

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narco-trafficking cartels, small-scale criminal entities, and new armed groups. The agency consists of representatives from the army, navy, air force, police, intelligence agencies, attorney general's office, and OAS Peace Mission. Information is shared between these separate institutions to estimate the location and evolution of these armed actors.

<sup>550</sup> I also estimate the population of 'non-located' ex-combatants with whom the Reintegration Program lost contact. To do so, I use survey data from the moment of their demobilization to see if they are systematically different than those that remained in the program. Excluding them does not seem to bias the sample (See Appendix C).

<sup>551</sup> 3,437 demobilized have been captured since 2003, but only 1,797 are currently imprisoned.

<sup>552</sup> Those that have been convicted can be judged to have remilitarized (assuming confidence in the Colombian judicial apparatus). Those who are still facing trial may have remilitarized or may be innocent. I also include the 1,032 ex-combatants that died while engaging in illegal activities. This data derives from the *Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses*.

paramilitaries in the government's reintegration program, I use two measures to capture the likelihood that these individuals have remilitarized. The first is an index, created using factor analysis of a series of questions about the ex-combatants' proclivity to return to violence.<sup>553</sup> The second, provided by the psychologists, estimates the number of former fighters in each municipality who the psychologists know or suspect to be involved with violent activities. I then combine these data on the two populations to generate the percentage of each brigade-municipality dyad's combatants that definitely or possibly have remilitarized.

*Shocks to the Distribution of Power.*

To capture shocks to the power differential between the units in each paramilitary dyad, I adopt three strategies. First, I calculate the difference in the bankruptcy/survival indices of the two paramilitary factions. I also test the difference in the combined network and clustering indexes. Third, I engage in qualitative coding of the changes in the relative power of the two brigade-municipality entities.

*Resources.* It is predicted that units endowed with natural resource wealth, criminal opportunities or external support lack incentives to commit to peace because they accrue supra-profits from war. We should thus expect a positive relationship between resource-richness and remilitarization  $H_2 : \beta_3 > 0$ . To test this hypothesis, I use the measure of *Loot* described in Chapter 5. I also test the 'greediness' of the leadership. To try to overcome the challenges of measuring motivations ex-ante, I exploit the coding of experts from the Organization of American States' Peace Mission, Colombian High Commission for Peace, and Organization of International Migration who were present at the peace negotiations. I had these experts code each paramilitary leader in a trichotomous fashion: pure *narco* (economically driven), pure *self-*

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<sup>553</sup> This approach may suffer high attenuation bias or high non-response rate.

*defense* (politically driven), or a mix of the two. The correlation between these ex-ante codings and remilitarization is insignificant. When asked who they believed, based on motivations and preferences, would redeploy, the experts' predictions proved highly incongruent with reality.

*International Assurances.* A prominent explanation of divergence in post-conflict outcomes asserts that, given that no government exists post-war, armed groups require third-party security guarantees to facilitate their demobilization. Thus, we should expect international assurances to negatively correlate with the likelihood of remilitarization. To capture international assurances, I count the number of international peace monitors per municipality at the moment of disarmament.

*Militarization Onset Variables.* I also include a host of variables that have been found to be correlated with civil war onset in the first place and thus may associate with war recurrence (remilitarization). Chapter 8 outlines these 'feasibility' variables – poverty, rough terrain, and demography – their predicted impacts, and their proxies in great detail and provides a rigorous test of their impacts.

While the quantitative analysis is still underway, preliminary results offer support to the model's predictions.

## **VII. Conclusion**

This chapter explores variation in the return to violence across time and space. It finds that organizations which recruit and deploy in a geographically concentrated fashion preserve a high capacity for remobilization after disarming. When demobilization protects the distribution of power between contiguous paramilitary factions, the peace bargains hold and the former armed groups remain demilitarized, able to reign over their territories without visible violence. In

contrast, downgrades in organizational capacity due to the post-war migration of a demobilizing group's combatants destabilize the equilibriums. In these cases, war becomes preferable to peace and violence ensues.

Taken together, Chapters 5-7 have explored and theorized about divergent post-war trajectories: bankruptcy, campaigns, and guns. They have argued that armed organizations' recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration patterns are powerful predictors of the paths that these groups will take upon relinquishing their arms. The next chapter provides a rigorous test of this theory against the dominant account of militarization and war: that of "feasibility conditions." It also assesses whether my theory should remain quarantined to the study of pro-state paramilitaries or if it also has analytic leverage in accounting for variation in anti-state *rebel* organizations.

<b>Component Survey Questions: <i>Index of Remilitarization</i></b>
[Survey of Ex-Combatants] * <i>Under what conditions is it justified to return to violence?</i> Lack of money or poverty / Threats to one's life or that of a family member / Lack of employment opportunities / Having being a victim / Orders of a commander / Pressure from family members / Pressure from friends / In order to rapidly obtain economic benefits or power / No reason
* <i>If someone is not respecting your rights, what is the best way to make them respect your rights?</i> Join an armed group / Support an armed group / Try to peacefully organize with other comrades from your former armed group / Appeal to the state through peaceful means / Seek a political party to defend your rights
* <i>Have you been invited to return to be part of an armed group?</i> Yes / No
[Comprehensive Survey of Psychologists] * <i>How many of your ex-combatants do you suspect or know have been involved with illegal activities since demobilizing? _____</i>
* <i>Does the individual ex-combatant reject the use of violence in the community?</i> Scale 1-5
* <i>Has the paramilitary structure continued to exist after the demobilization as a new-armed group?</i> Yes / No
[Survey of Ex-Combatants' Families] * <i>Does the ex-combatant have friends that belong to armed groups?</i> Yes / No

## Chapter 8

### Colombia's Insurgencies, 1964-1984

This chapter evaluates the project's theory against the dominant account of variation in militarization – 'feasibility conditions.' The findings both motivate the preceding chapters and are a logical extension of them. The analysis that follows begs for a more rigorous theory of why legacies of violence are redeployed in certain cases and remain dormant and unexploited in others – the principal goal of the prior sections of the dissertation. At the same time, the analysis provides a further test of the theory at a different unit of analysis – that of the municipality – on a different militarized actor – that of anti-state rebels – and in a different peace process – that of the National Front of 1958. The chapter thus establishes the generalizability of the theory and links it to the broader literature on the causes of war.

The chapter proceeds as follows: it presents the now conventional wisdom of (re)militarization – feasibility conditions – and my strategy for measuring these conditions.<sup>554</sup> It then describes the proxies for legacies of war – specifically the dense social capital and clustered ex-combatants which can be mobilized for insurgency. After introducing the coding criteria for militarization, I present the empirical results based on a dataset of 274,428 municipality-month observations. I conclude by contextualizing the statistically significant correlations and evaluating if my theory's causal mechanisms operate as predicted in the cases of Colombia's 1960s *rebel* movements.

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<sup>554</sup> See Zukerman Daly 2010 for an exhaustive explanation of the relevant literatures, data and measures.

## I. Feasibility of Insurgency: Financial Resources, Recruits, and Refuge

The conventional view of militarization and remilitarization groups the two together and codes them as '1's. 'Peace incidents' obtain a value of '0.' Scholars make no effort to separate out the causes of war recurrence from those of initial war onset.<sup>555</sup> Accordingly, while this project speaks about the *remilitarization* phenomenon, it must evaluate its logic against theories of militarization as the closest, existing, conceptual equivalents. In so doing, it links this project on 'peace and return to violence' with the overwhelming body of literature on war onset.

Set against the traditional view of armed mobilization that argues that where socio-economic,<sup>556</sup> 'personal integrity,'<sup>557</sup> or political<sup>558</sup> grievances are high, organized violence is likely, Collier and Hoeffler 2001<sup>559</sup> and Fearon and Laitin 2003 set forth their feasibility approach. Motivations for militarization, they argue, exist everywhere and yet insurgency only breaks out in some places. They conclude that "what is critical is not whether people actually have reason to commit violence, but what enables them to carry it out in particular circumstances

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<sup>555</sup> Empirically, 49 percent of civil wars that ended between 1945 and 1999 led to renewed war. Walter 2004 finds that countries which have experienced one civil war are significantly more likely to experience a subsequent war than are countries with no prior history of civil conflict. Collier 1999 similarly finds that, during the first five years of peace following a civil war, countries face a 50% risk of renewed conflict. Walter explains war recurrence using the onset variables capturing 'grievances' and Collier ignores the war recurrence finding as uninteresting.

<sup>556</sup> Scholars of this school focus on relative deprivation, inequality, poverty, and land distribution as driving violence. Representative of this school are Gurr 1970; Huntington 1968; Paige 1975; Muller and Seligson 1987; and Russett 1964. It should be noted that these categories are my own. The scholars may not identify themselves in these groupings.

<sup>557</sup> Poe and Tate 1994, 854 coined this term. It refers to the grievances, which result from the denial of freedoms from arbitrary arrest, torture, and death. Also emphasizing personal integrity grievances are Goodwin 2001; Lichbach 1987; Gurr and Moore 1997; Mason 2004; Davenport 2007.

<sup>558</sup> These include grievances arising from the denial of political participation and cultural self determination. See Linz and Stepan 1996 and Rothschild 1981 who emphasize ethno-nationalist policies as engendering armed movements; and Burton 1990 who highlights the denial of basic human needs (identity, recognition, role/participation, and psychological security) as the propeller of violence.

<sup>559</sup> Collier and Hoeffler have published a series of articles on the 'feasibility of' or 'opportunity for' rebellion. See Collier 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 1999, 2001.



... feasibility is a rare phenomenon.”<sup>560</sup> Combined, these circumstances confer rebels access to recruits, a sanctuary, and materiel and financial resources: the requisites of rebel viability.<sup>561</sup>

### *Loot*

First, ‘feasibility scholars’ posit that rebel groups require substantial financial revenues to purchase armaments and materiel. They can derive funding from high value, low-weight goods such as cocaine, opium, and gems, from extortion/‘protection’ of primary commodity extraction, or from voluntary donations from the civilian population.<sup>562</sup>

***H<sub>1</sub>***: Armed mobilization, seeking to capture and control lucrative resources should be more likely to emerge in regions of coca and poppy cultivation, sites of gem extraction,<sup>563</sup> and areas of higher land value, which afford elevated tax revenues.<sup>564</sup> Additionally, the presence of oil fields, pipelines and refineries should associate with a higher probability of rebellion.

To capture the ‘availability of financial resources’ and test *H<sub>1</sub>*, I evaluate several variables: 1) *Gems*, indicating emerald, sapphire, and aquamarine locations identified in *The Oxford Economic Atlas of the World*, 1972 and the location of gold and emerald mines from CEDE data; 2) *Oil* – coded “1” for municipalities with oil fields, pipelines, or refineries. US Department of Energy maps provide this data; 3) *Coca2000 & Poppy1994*, capturing peak coca

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<sup>560</sup> Sherman 2001, p. 28. Sherman summarizes the remarks of Paul Collier.

<sup>561</sup> These circumstances confer rebels power relative to the government. The ‘relative power’ models are based on the contest models of Gates 2002, which builds on the contest success functions of Hirshleifer 1989, 2000; Skaperdas 1996. It should be noted that these ‘correlates of war’ in the cross-country literature are now well-established. Hegre and Sambanis 2006 test the sensitivity of estimates of these correlates to changes in the conditioning set and find these factors to be robust causes of civil war onset.

<sup>562</sup> Le Billon 2001 provides a comprehensive analysis of different resources and their links with violent conflict. See also Ross 2004; Auty 2004; de Soysa 2000.

<sup>563</sup> Insurgencies in Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC, Burma, and Cambodia support this hypothesis. The presence of diamonds/precious stones is not found to significantly contribute to civil war onset in studies by Ross 2004 and Humphreys 2003. However, the results have proven sensitive to the data. As more accurate data has been compiled (Humphreys 2005; Lujala 2003; Ross 2006), the relationship between natural resources and conflict has strengthened. A sub-national study of Sierra Leone by Bellows and Miguel 2008 also confirms the natural resource–conflict correlation.

<sup>564</sup> Ross 2004 concludes that some of the most widely-cited causal mechanisms involving oil, non fuel minerals and drugs, appear to be validly related to civil conflict onset but that legal agricultural commodities are not.

and poppy cultivation and thus the regions *able* to grow drugs,<sup>565</sup> and 4) *Landvalue*, measuring the average value of each municipality's land.

### *Recruits*

*Second*, the 'feasibility conditions' theory proposes that, to achieve fighting capacity, a rebel group requires a dependable source of recruits joining at a rate in excess of the death, desertion, and retirement rates. Walter 2004 articulates this fact: "Civil wars will have little chance to get off the ground unless individual farmers, shopkeepers, and workers voluntarily choose to man the rebel armies."<sup>566</sup> Empirical studies of civil war use per capita income as a proxy for recruitment. The rationale is twofold:<sup>567</sup> one, a prospective insurgent will weigh the benefits of 'rebel life' – the income offered by the rebel organization through theft, looting, access to land, and appropriation of taxing powers – against his/her best economic alternative. In the case of low per capita income, the economic alternatives present low opportunity costs to rebel enlistment and thus generate an abundant pool of recruits; and, two, only such an economically opportunistic account of guerrilla enlistment avoids collective action, free-rider and time-consistency problems.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>565</sup> Coca Survey 2004, pp. 10, 44. It should be noted that coca was not grown in Colombia until the late 1970s and Poppy not until the late 1980s. Coca and poppy data are available only for the period 1994 – 2005. This measure thus captures regions with *potential* for illicit financial gain. Qualitative accounts provide approximations of the 'actual' zones of coca and marijuana plantings in 1960s and 1970s cultivation (*Drugs*) to enable me to test if the rebellions emerged in regions *already* cultivating illicit crops.

<sup>566</sup> Walter 2004, p. 4.

<sup>567</sup> These studies assume a rational choice logic of recruitment whereby rational decision-makers assess their predictions of opportunities and consequences of alternative actions and maximize their net benefits. Leites and Wolf 1970 were the first to lay out this methodology, which has become commonplace in the contemporary civil war literature. The translation of this income-war correlation to the sub-national level is not straightforward, as Østby, Hegre, and Raighleigh 2008 point out. Examining the spatial distribution of conflict events in the Liberian civil war, they find that relatively richer areas experienced more conflict. A similar study of conflict events in Indonesia (Barron, Kaiser and Pradhan 2004) finds no effect of income levels on violence.

<sup>568</sup> Economically opportunistic rebel groups can overcome these problems because they do not seek victory and thus do not require mass movements; the rebels need only control certain resources. This enables them to overcome the coordination problem. Furthermore, these movements encounter no free rider or time-consistency hindrances because only those who participate reap the rewards and such rewards can be used to immediately pay off other rebels (Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Grossman 1999) See also Oyefusi 2008 for a test of this theory in Nigeria using individual-level survey data.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** The lower the economic opportunities available in the local economy, the higher the likelihood of the insurgency's emergence.<sup>569</sup>

I use per capita income and also a poverty measure – “Unsatisfied Basic Needs (NBI)<sup>570</sup> – to gauge the size of the population with a low threshold for joining a militarized movement.<sup>571</sup>

### *Refuge*

Up until now, the project has not considered the role of physical geography which features prominently in the existing literatures. The ‘feasibility’ approach states that nascent insurgencies are numerically weak relative to the government. This implies that, to survive, militants must be able to hide and avoid denunciation. Dense forests and jungles and mountainous terrain provide insurgents camouflage against detection and aerial attack and facilitate free movement of their combatants and arms.<sup>572</sup> Rough terrain also confers rebels local knowledge superior to that of the government, enabling them to credibly threaten inhabitants retaliation for denunciation.<sup>573</sup> Cross-border sanctuaries provide an additional source of refuge from government troops.<sup>574</sup> It follows that:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Insurgencies should be more likely to establish battalions and engage in offensive activity in dense forests and jungles. Mountainous terrain should associate with a higher risk of militarization. And the presence of international borders should favor rebellion by providing cross-border sanctuaries and access to international arms and illicit drug trades.<sup>575</sup>

Large populations, low population density, and low road density further provide insurgents refuge by inhibiting state policing. Large municipal populations make “keep[ing] tabs

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<sup>569</sup> These approaches ignore the multiplicity of motives for joining armed groups – social networks, revenge, resentment, and security.

<sup>570</sup> Calculated with information from the 1985 Colombian Census.

<sup>571</sup> Ex-combatants, interviews by author, Colombia, June-August 2006.

<sup>572</sup> According to Colombian military analyst, Roman Ortiz, the jungle's heat interferes with the army's radar system, rendering the techniques to locate insurgents inoperative (Roman Ortiz (Military Analyst), interview by author, July 2006).

<sup>573</sup> Fearon and Laitin 2003, p. 80; See also DeRouen and Sobek 2004.

<sup>574</sup> Byman et al. 2001 explore the aid neighboring states (and their populations) offer insurgencies. This aid includes safe havens, arms, money, materiel, intelligence, training, and organizational guidance.

<sup>575</sup> See Englebert, Tarango and Carter 2002.

on who is doing what at the local level”<sup>576</sup> more difficult and the pool of potential recruits deeper.<sup>577</sup> Geographic dispersion of the population further complicates policing.<sup>578</sup> Additionally, in the absence of adequate road systems, the police and government cannot penetrate rural areas.

*H<sub>4</sub>*: Holding all else constant, larger population size and lower population density should be correlated with higher likelihood of rebellion onset.

*H<sub>5</sub>*: Low road density should favor guerrilla presence.

For H<sub>3</sub>, I use an Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi (IGAC) map series of each department’s vegetation and forests. For mountainous terrain, I exploit an elevation measure from IGAC maps 1971, which reports the average altitude of each municipality. I also construct a more detailed measure of topography, which measures if the municipality’s terrain is ‘strongly inclined’ or ‘very steep.’<sup>579</sup> This ensures that high elevation plateaus are not coded as mountainous terrain and that low altitude rough terrain is not coded as flat. I also include a dummy variable for municipalities which adjoin an international border (DANE’s Marco Geoestadístico Nacional). For H<sub>4</sub>, I use Colombian Census Data from 1951, 1964, and 1973.<sup>580</sup> I also consider a measure of municipal population dispersion: residents per squared kilometer using the Census data and municipal land area from Law 1999.<sup>581</sup> For H<sub>5</sub>, I rely on Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi political-geographic maps from 1949, 1970, and 1980.<sup>582</sup> I consider

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<sup>576</sup> Fearon and Laitin 2003, p. 81.

<sup>577</sup> Fearon and Laitin 2003 and Collier and Hoeffler 2001 find population size statistically significant at the cross-national level, but treat it as marginal analytically. See also Raleigh and Hegre 2009 for population findings using ACLED data.

<sup>578</sup> Herbst 2000 provides a seminal discussion of this demographic variable in Africa. He models state strength as proportionate to the distance from the government’s capital and dependent on infrastructure, geography and population. Collier and Hoeffler include a measure of population dispersion in their analysis, but find it only slightly significant.

<sup>579</sup> I am grateful to Fabio Sánchez and CEDE for this data.

<sup>580</sup> To avoid endogeneity, I use lagged population data to capture population levels *prior to* the emergence of a viable insurgency in the municipality

<sup>581</sup> Law provides the size (km squared) of Colombia’s departments and municipalities. For missing data, I use the department population density calculated as follows: (*Department A’s population – Sum of all known municipal populations in department A*) / (*Department A’s land area – Sum of all known municipal land areas in department A*). This measure takes advantage of all known data.

<sup>582</sup> The *Mapa Vial y Artesanal* 1976 proved the most informative.

the total kilometers of primarily or secondary roads (both paved and unpaved) and railroads in the municipality. Given the importance of river transport in Colombia, I also consider the kilometers of navigable rivers in the municipality.

## **II. Organizational Legacies of War**

### *La Violencia*

This project predicts that remilitarization differs from militarization in the first place; it flourishes in locations of past violence. These locations confer organizational residue of war resulting from recruitment, deployment, and migration patterns. Where there are changes in the distribution of power as a result of demobilization, we should witness the reactivation of this residue.

*H<sub>6</sub>*: Areas affected by *La Violencia* and its guerrilla movements should be more likely to experience insurgency than those municipalities untouched by the internecine political strife of 1946-1958.

I use two measures of ‘legacies of violence.’ The first captures where violence occurred 1946-1958. For this, I use a dummy, which assumes a value of ‘1’ if violent deaths occurred in the municipality, ‘0’ otherwise. The second measure records the presence of liberal and communist guerrillas 1948-1958. These data derive from the ‘truth commission’ of Guzmán et al. 1962. Through the Office of Rehabilitation, these violentologists narrated what happened during *La Violencia*.<sup>583</sup> I also rely on the ethnographies of Ortiz 1985; Casas 1987; Roldán 2002; and Henderson 1985; Marulanda Vélez 1973; the National Police’s *Revista de Criminalidad*; and Sánchez and Meertens 2001’s more macro data on *la Violencia*.

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<sup>583</sup> I am grateful to Fabio Sánchez and Mario Chacón for providing me access to their digitalized version of this data.

### *State-Building Priorities*

This project further posits that, in the aftermath of a peace process, the state seeks to regain a Weberian monopoly over the means of violence and to establish its presence and authority in areas formerly under armed group control. In this pursuit, it finds itself subject to a budget constraint; it cannot do so everywhere at once and must therefore prioritize. We should expect the state to deploy its forces and institutions to regions in which its capacity is weak and in which the populations pose a threat to ‘national security.’ Given the Cold War context in which the Colombian rebellions emerged, we should anticipate communism to constitute such a threat. Where state-building challenges the prerogatives of latent, coercive organizational structures, remilitarization should result.

*H<sub>7</sub>*: Insurgency should be more likely to emerge in areas dominated by the political left (Marxist-Leninism, Maoism, etc.).

*H<sub>8</sub>*: Zones with weak state presence should correlate with a higher probability of rebellion.

I use a dummy measure to test H<sub>7</sub>. It captures if a majority of the municipal population voted for leftist candidates during all elections 1930-1982.<sup>584</sup> Pinzon de Lewin 1989 compiles this data from the Colombian Electoral Statistics. For H<sub>8</sub>, I use two measures of state presence.<sup>585</sup> First, I code the municipality’s distance to the department’s capital and then calculate a variable – *State Presence* – which measures if this distance exceeds 100 kilometers.<sup>586</sup> Second, I consider a measure of the distance between the municipality and the principal economic markets.<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> Leftist candidates ran as registered Liberals until 1972, in accordance with the National Front rules. Thereafter, they ran as third parties. There was likely abstention by candidates as well. Pinzón de Lewin 1989 describes loyalty to the Left as often commensurate to that for traditional parties (29).

<sup>585</sup> Herbst 2000.

<sup>586</sup> Distance to the capital may also proxy for what Gates 2002 refers to as ethnic distance in the ethnic civil war literature. The same concept may apply to non-ethnic wars in that distance from the government may facilitate rebel enlistment, solidarity and retention, and civilian non-denunciation.

<sup>587</sup> This derives from Sánchez’ data.

I also include a final measure of *Liberal* political preferences. All violence and seven major wars between Colombia's independence and 1958 occurred along the lines of these "hereditary [partisan] hatreds"<sup>588</sup> between Liberals and Conservatives.<sup>589</sup> We should therefore expect this pattern of conflict to continue with the rebellions a reincarnation of past insurgencies.<sup>590</sup>

*H<sub>9</sub>*: Insurgent activity should be greater, on average, in Liberal Party strongholds.

For *H<sub>9</sub>*, I use two measures of Liberal party affiliation: a dummy variable indicating if the municipality population consistently voted for the Liberal Party between 1931 and 1982<sup>591</sup> and a measure of whether over 60% of the county's citizens voted for the Liberal Party in the 1946 presidential elections.<sup>592</sup>

### III. Modeling Insurgency in Colombia

To evaluate my theory of remilitarization against the dominant account, I analyze an original, longitudinal, municipality-level dataset. Before presenting the empirical analysis, I will introduce the sub-national method and data and define the coding criteria for the dependent variable.

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<sup>588</sup> Dix 1987, p. 92.

<sup>589</sup> Political parties in Colombia resembled ethnic groups; party allegiance was inherited; one's political identity was commonly known. See Schmidt 1974, p. 105. Party carnets (membership cards), first issued in the 1920s, resembled ethnic passports. Each neighborhood was politically homogenous. According to Fals Borda 1962, localities were either homogeneously Conservatives or Liberals, with mixed communities rare. When families migrated, they tended to move to neighborhoods of the same political affiliation (p. 43). Dix 1987 describes Liberals and Conservatives as "two races which live side by side and hate each other eternally."

<sup>590</sup> Schmidt 1974 writes of the post-*Violencia* era: "People still perceive of violence in terms of political parties; still conserve a large amount of partisan consciousness, continue to hate the opposition for what they believe it did and to a great degree still trust and rely upon their own party as a source of security" (p. 109).

<sup>591</sup> The variable is coded "1" – 'traditionally' Liberal – if in all elections 1931-1982 (with a maximum of one deviation) the Liberal party won a majority in the municipality. It is coded "0" if, 1931-1982, the Conservative Party won a majority in all elections (save one), if the municipality changed majority party (between Liberal and Conservative) more than once, or if the population supported a non-traditional party in more than one election.

<sup>592</sup> I aggregate the number of votes for all lists with Liberal Party affiliation and divide by the total vote minus the null vote.

*Sub-National Methodology.* The scores of empirical studies of civil war that followed Fearon and Laitin and Collier and Hoeffler's seminal pieces primarily analyze cross-national variation.<sup>593</sup> These works aggregate to the national level variables which generally vary substantially at the sub-national level. Additionally, especially at their outset, armed mobilization rarely spans the state's entire territory; rather, it concentrates in very specific geographic locations. Thus, there arises an ecological inference problem: catalysts of violence are captured at the country level while the violence and hypothesized logic is 'intensely localized.' It follows that there is a mismatch; to correctly identify the conditions favoring militarization, we must look at the conditions in the areas where the militarization began. If the rebels were active only in the flat plains, the country's rough terrain may have little to do with facilitating insurgency. National aggregates or averages do not capture the proposed micro-level mechanisms and logics of violence and thus, our now conventional wisdoms of the correlates of war have yet to be tested with the appropriate research design. Geographically-disaggregated data is required on both the incidence of militarization and the factors predicted to cause it.

This dissertation project's model, methodology, and data offer and advocate for such a sub-national analysis. Colombia, as mentioned above, is one of the 'feasibility' theories' stated prototypes and thus offers a critical case. For these theories to hold, it must be the case that armed organizations arose in the regions of Colombia where feasibility conditions were strongest.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Collier et al. 2003; Doyle and Sambanis, 2000; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2001, 2002; Hegre et al. 2001; Reynal-Querol 2002; Gleditsch et al. 2002. Murdoch and Sandler 2002; Reynal-Querol 2002; Ron 2005; Sambanis 2002; Fearon 2004.

<sup>594</sup> The Colombian scholarship makes this claim with respect to the 1990s system of violence between the guerrillas, paramilitaries, and narcotraffickers. Rare is a contemporary study of Colombia that does not focus exclusively on the drug, profit, greed and terrain aspects of the conflict. See, for example Sánchez, Díaz and Formisano 2003; Bottía 2003; Díaz and Sánchez 2004; Richani 1997, 2002; Rabasa and Chalk 2001; Sánchez 2001; International Crisis Group 2002; and Angrist and Kugler 2008 who all focus on the nexus between drugs and political violence.



The chapter quantitatively analyzes an original dataset of 274,428 municipality-month observations to determine the correlates of (re)militarization. These data include detailed, geo-referenced information on the victims and perpetrators (state, rebel, paramilitary, criminal) and on the kind and intensity of the 7,729 violent events. By exploiting this data, the analysis seeks to overcome the measurement errors in the existing cross-national and sub-national datasets, which are rarely addressed. Specifically, it introduces new, fine-grained measures which better proxy our theoretical concepts and enable causal identification to parse out divergent causal stories.<sup>595</sup> It takes great effort to collect new data in order to measure the variables in an *ex-ante* and longitudinal fashion to avoid the endogeneity that currently plagues much of the civil war literature.<sup>596</sup> Cross-sectional correlations with variables measured *after* fighting has (re)begun cannot help us disentangle the theoretically complex interpretations of the causes of war. In contrast to other existing databases on civil conflict and violence, the analysis relies not on Western, English-language news sources, but on Colombian, Spanish-language ones to avoid selection bias.<sup>597</sup> Rather than exploiting data at the country or first-order administrative level (state), this chapter, as the rest of the dissertation, uses data at a disaggregated level, in this case, the smallest administrative unit of analysis – the municipality – in order to gain precise locations of violence, but also to obtain accurate measures of the independent variables, which are usually collected by administrative units.<sup>598</sup> In addition, the data defines militarization not narrowly as

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However, correlation between the geographic distribution of the feasibility conditions and that of the insurgencies' *onset* has never been proven.

<sup>595</sup> For example, with cross-sectional data, conflict could contribute to poverty directly, as well as being driven by poverty itself.

<sup>596</sup> Most studies, for instance, rely on forest data collected in 1999 and population data for the 1990s for all data points back to 1945 (FAO 1999; CIESIN 2000).

<sup>597</sup> ACLED data are based on a number of information sources, primarily press accounts from Keesings, Africa Confidential, Africa Research Notes, African Contemporary Reports, books written on particular conflicts, and in later years, IRIN and other humanitarian agencies. This reliance on Western, English-language news reports introduces concerns of selection bias.

<sup>598</sup> Studies relying on the 100 km<sup>2</sup> grid cell format admittedly do not have sub-national data on income levels,

battles, but instead as the entire repertoire of violence that suggests the presence of a militarized organization. These include not only confrontations with government troops, but also captures of towns, rapes, kidnappings, highway piracy, extortion, guerrilla summits, electoral interferences, massacres of civilians, graffiti, attacks on infrastructure and pipelines, and displacement. Finally, nearly all studies of civil war measure militarization onset according to a threshold of either 25 or 1,000 battle related deaths.<sup>599</sup> Relying only on English-language sources, these thresholds and thus the war onsets are often erroneously determined. In the Colombian case, the rebellions were underway for 20 years before Colombia became coded ‘1’ – presence of an insurgency – in these datasets.<sup>600</sup> Measuring violence only once it has already become high intensity increases endogeneity problems.<sup>601</sup> Finally, this chapter employs the mixed-method approach of the broader project, embedding the microeconomic statistical study of violence in a detailed historical narrative that relies on guerrilla autobiographies, diaries, social histories and over 60 interviews of ex-rebels and experts on their organizations.

### *(Re)Militarization*

For the analyses, I measure the dependent variable, militarization, in two ways: first, as the incidence of guerrilla activity in municipality  $m$  in month  $t$ . The database includes 7,729 insurgent violent events based on daily reports, which collapse into 3,899 municipality-month observations. This outcome variable captures the ability of an insurgency to be active and carry

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inequality, public services, elections and other variables, which are measured by administrative units. These studies use roads to proxy for wealth. See, for example, Buhaug and Gates. 2002. However, roads capture the state capacity causal story attributed to Fearon and Laitin 2003, but not the opportunity cost one of Collier and Hoeffler 2004.

<sup>599</sup> The literature defines civil war onset as 1,000 combat-related deaths per year with both the government forces and rebels suffering 5% of the casualties. See Singer and Small 1982; Collier and Hoeffler 2001. Most empirical civil war scholars use this definition or a slight variation thereof.

<sup>600</sup> In fact, Colombia was only coded a ‘1’ for civil war in 1984, the year when a cease fire was signed with the rebels.

<sup>601</sup> The ACLED data, for example, code Burundi’s war from 2003-2009 when the war endured from 1993-2005 and code the Liberian war from 2002 when the fighting began in 1989.

out violence in a specific, geographic space. Second, I seek to capture where militarization was successful. For this analysis, I collapse the data and measure the dependent variable dichotomously as ‘1’ if a rebellion was viable in municipality *m*, ‘0’ otherwise. I measure viability by combining two sources of information: 1) the ability to carry out enduring violence. Thus, an insurgency is deemed viable if it was able to carry out three acts in the municipality; 2) I triangulate this violent event data with qualitative data on the insurgencies’ fronts (battalions).<sup>602</sup> To form a front, the militarization must have achieved a level of success in the area. Thus, front formation proxies for a viable insurgent presence. Combining these two sources of information, I code the municipalities in which the rebels established a ‘viable’ presence ‘1.’ Cross-referencing the two sources of information enables me to overcome the problem of ‘if a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?’ because violence is not a perfect indicator of successful militarization as insurgents in the forest do not need to carry out violence if they have no competition. In these cases, they thus retain only ‘latent’ structures.

This study examines the period from the insurgencies’ inceptions in 1964 to the civil war literature’s coding of Colombia as ‘civil war positive’ in 1984.<sup>603</sup> This time period (1964-1984) enables the project to speak to the empirical violence literature.<sup>604</sup> The data derives from newspaper articles from the Colombian newspaper, *El Tiempo*, taken from the archives of Colombia’s national library, *La Biblioteca Luis Angel Arrango*. The articles were photographed

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<sup>602</sup> A ‘front,’ according to the guerrillas’ military structure (and similar to that of the paramilitaries), consists of at least 110 guerrillas operating in a geographic jurisdiction. “The front organization is determined not by the quantity of men, but by the physical area occupied, that is the ‘area of operations.’” (Estatuto de las FARC-EP, Chapter 2, Article 3). See Rabasa and Chalk 2001 and Ferro Medina and Uribe Ramón 2002 for a description of FARC’s organizational structure.

<sup>603</sup> Extensive interviews with experts on the rebel organizations in Colombia confirm the appropriateness of these dates (See Appendix B).

<sup>604</sup> If I restrict the analysis to the pre-1983 period, I risk explaining a phenomenon distinct from that explored in this literature. If I instead restrict the analysis to the post-1984 period, I ignore the over 7,000 violent events carried out by rebels in the two decades prior.

and then coded. They amount to 7,665 newspaper–days.<sup>605</sup> The guerrilla front data derives from military intelligence reports and from the former Vice Presidency’s Human Rights official, Camilo Echandía Castilla.

#### IV. Empirical Analysis

Why does (re)militarization occur in some regions of a country and not in others? This analysis focuses on variation across space rather than across organizations. Table 18 shows the results of the logit multivariate analyses using *Insurgent Activity* as the outcome variable and the conceptually optimal measures of the explanatory factors.<sup>606</sup> Again, this dependent variable captures the ability of an insurgency to be active and carry out violence in geographic space  $m$  in month  $t$ . This table presents the feasibility model, organizational legacies of war model and the combined model. Table 20 presents the same analyses, but instead using *Insurgent Success* as the dependent variable.<sup>607</sup> This outcome is insurgent viability – the ability to carry out enduring violence and establish rebel fronts in municipality  $m$ . Table 19 & 21 show several robustness checks. Model 1 in both Tables 19 & 21 estimates the equation using an alternative set of proxies for the concepts and Model 2 in these tables uses rare events analysis (King and Zeng 2001). Finally, I collapse the events into cross-sectional data to see if the theory holds (Model 3 in Table 19). For greater controls, I also include measures of ethnicity and inequality in several of the models.<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Of these, approximately 240 days had newspaper pages either missing or damaged.

<sup>606</sup> The Tables present estimated coefficients. I convert these into odds ratios in the text to give a more intuitive understanding of the variables’ substantive effects.

<sup>607</sup> I also test clustering observations by department to account for the possible lack of independence of observations within the same department. Results do not change.

<sup>608</sup> For *Ethnicity*, I derive data on afro-descendent and indigenous population sizes from the Colombian census. Unfortunately, the census did not collect ethnic identity data prior to 1993. However, these populations have remained concentrated in certain regions for decades. For *Inequality*, I use land gini coefficients calculated by the Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi in 1985.

The data show that ‘feasibility’ conditions cannot postdict (re)militarization onset. Measures of the organizational legacies of war, specifically past violence, guerrilla movements, and regions identified as ‘state-building’ priorities, perform better.

### *Lootable Resources*

The descriptive statistics support the “financial feasibility” thesis; insurgency episodes, on average, had higher levels of poppy and coca cultivation than did non-insurgency episodes. However, when I control for demographic and socio-political-historical variables, these effects disappear across most specifications of the model and measurements of the variables. There is no significant correlation between the presence of gemstones and gold and the rebellions’ emergence and offensives.<sup>609</sup> The effect is similarly insignificant for the measure of emerald mines, the more lootable and historically smuggled good in Colombia.<sup>610</sup> Last, as demonstrated in Tables 18 and 20, the presence of oil fields, refineries and pipelines are not associated with systematically higher risks of insurgency onset. Only in the rare events analysis of insurgent violence (Model 5) was the effect significant, suggesting a potential, underlying effect clouded by the structure of the data in which observations positive for rebellion are relatively scarce. Only poppy growing remains significant in several specifications. However, it is highly improbable that the insurgents attacked and sought control of regions with poppy growing potential in 1964-1984 as poppy emerged in Colombia only in 1986-87.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> This effect is surprising given Colombia’s long history of emerald smuggling. However, the emerald mines are concentrated in the Magdalena Medio region, which saw guerrilla presence for reasons independent of the mines and related to past violence (Expert on the guerrilla organizations, interview by author, Bogotá, January 2008). See Richani 2003, pp. 22-25.

<sup>610</sup> Gold mines reach significance in certain model specifications. However, qualitative evidence does not offer credence to this relationship

<sup>611</sup> Thoumi 2001, p. 91. I should note that the coefficients on the other variables do not change when *Poppy* is omitted from the analysis. Coca was not cultivated in Colombia in any sizeable amount until the late 1970s and 80s. I therefore also code qualitative sources of data on marijuana and cocaine plantings in the 1960s and 70s. The marginal significance of *Drugs* remains.

The insignificance of *Coca*, *Poppy*, and *Oil* undermines the profit-maximizing “drug baronies”<sup>612</sup> thesis, both derivative of and applied to the case of Colombia. It follows that finances are not the binding constraint on insurgency; ‘soldiers never go hungry.’ The insignificance of loot *even* in Colombia points to a misconception about rebel financing. During my time in the field, I observed the diversity of armed organizations’ financing. Nearly everything can be taxed from bananas to cows to buses (that is how governments run!). Thus even small-scale business owners and peasants can provide sufficient extortion fees or ‘voluntary donations’ to support an incipient armed group. Add to these finances the resources derived from theft and kidnapping and, in the absence of high-value, lootable goods such as drugs and gems, there is still sufficient funding for insurgency. Thus, unsurprisingly, *Land Value* also proved insignificant.<sup>613</sup>

### *Refuge*

Scholars of civil war conceive of Colombia as the natural habitat for insurgency – high mountains, poor infrastructure, and unmonitored borders. Contrary to the ‘feasibility’ predictions, insurgent groups were *less* likely to establish a presence and perform operations in mountainous terrain,<sup>614</sup> though the effect is not substantively meaningful or significant across all models. Meanwhile, municipalities aligning an international border were not correlated with the risk of rebellion.<sup>615</sup> The armed groups were marginally more likely to operate in densely forested

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<sup>612</sup> Collier and Hoeffler 1999, p. 1. See also Collier 2000; Grossman 1999.

<sup>613</sup> In the rare events analysis, higher land value was associated with a *lower* risk of insurgency, further calling into question the ‘greed’ thesis.

<sup>614</sup> Colombian’s mountainous regions are, on average, more densely populated ( $r = .15$ ) and, as is to be expected, road and population density are positively correlated ( $r = .16$ ). By omitting the population density variable, Fearon and Laitin 2003 bias their terrain variables.

<sup>615</sup> *Border* proves entirely statistically insignificant in all specifications of the model. This may be the case because insurgencies need not establish themselves directly on the border to enjoy cross-border sanctuaries. The guerrillas, specifically the FARC, controlled the frontier of ‘civilization’ with little except rainforest lying between its fronts and the Venezuelan, Brazilian, and Ecuadorian borders (though notably, FARC established fronts not only on the

municipalities, though the effect is again not significant.<sup>616</sup> While the sign and significance of the coefficient on road density is consistent with the stated hypothesis, the variable is not substantively meaningful. These counterintuitive results suggest that terrain, geography, and infrastructure have been given undue emphasis in the civil war literature.

Holding the other measures constant, population level and density prove highly significant in a statistical, but not substantive sense. A one unit increase in population size multiplies the odds of experiencing an insurgency by 1; in other words it leaves the odds unchanged. Similar results hold for population density. A one percent increase in population density reduces the odds of rebellion by 10%. Theoretically, the direction of these coefficients makes sense. To keep tabs on a larger number of people spread over a larger area, counter-insurgency forces must literally spread themselves thin. However, on the basis of the coefficients' magnitudes, it is fair to conclude that these effects are unimportant.

### *Poverty*

Militarization should be higher, on average, in impoverished areas. Contrary to  $H_2$ , the rebel organizations were less likely to gain a foothold in areas of high poverty, as demonstrated by the negative, statistically significant coefficient for *NBI* – the % of the municipal population with unsatisfied basic needs. GDP per capita measures, meanwhile, proved statistically insignificant across all specifications.

In sum, the feasibility model has very low explanatory power with a pseudo  $R^2$  ranging from 0.043 to 0.059. To further evaluate the explanatory value of the 'feasibility conditions,' I employ a Wald Test which assesses the joint hypothesis that the coefficients on the feasibility

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frontier). *Border*'s insignificance does, however, suggest that proximity to population centers matters more to insurgents than cross-border refuge and control of international arms and drug smuggling routes.

<sup>616</sup> The forest data is only available for a fraction of the municipalities. I therefore do not include *Forest* in most of the models as it would restrict the sample significantly.

conditions are zero; that they have no effect. I cannot reject this hypothesis even at the 10% level (p= 0.14).

### ***Organizational Legacies of War***

Consistent with this project's framework, the measures for both past violence and past guerrilla organization were positive and highly significantly correlated with (re)militarization. The odds of rebels successfully establishing a presence are six times greater in areas affected by *La Violencia* than in areas which had not experienced past strife.<sup>617</sup> This result is significant across *all* specifications of the model, measurements of the concepts, levels of aggregations of the data, and units of analysis.

Combining these significant effects, we get a very different story of the onset of insurgency than that offered by contemporary civil war scholars. Militarization did not begin in the municipalities which conferred rough (mountainous, forested, inaccessible) terrain, cross-border sanctuaries, exploitable natural resources, and abundant impoverished recruits. Instead, insurgency proved most successful in municipalities affected by *La Violencia*, which were targeted as state-building priorities. These findings reorient the analysis away from physical geography and loot and back to the population that picks up arms and fights and the organizations that structure their collective action.

Past war and former guerrilla armies capture and proxy for the organizational legacies of violence. As Selznick indicates and this project confirms, organizations act as receptacles of collective action that can be appropriated for any future forms of cooperation: renewed insurgency, criminal activity or political mobilization (Popkin 1979; Coleman 1988; Tarrow 1998). To mount an insurgency, militants often co-opt existing collective action and networks in

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<sup>617</sup> When I measure insurgency as 'viability' (fronts combined with armed activity), this effect drops to a three times greater odds of successful militarization.



order to overcome collective action, commitment, and monitoring problems (Granovetter 1973). They may co-opt non-violent protest movements, tribes or political parties or, very efficiently, they may co-opt a previous armed structure and its social web.

Where ‘strong’ and sustained post-conflict, the militant ties constrain each ex-combatant. They apply social pressure to follow those to whom s/he is strongly connected and they link his/her self-identity and status to that of the network (Petersen 2001; Calhoun 1991). If preserved post-demobilization, the network will pull its former members down the path of the armed organization: back to rebellion, towards violent crime, or into peaceful (political) activities. In this way, the network serves as a latent structure, which can be redeployed.

While the literature often treats the FARC, ELN, EPL, MOEC, M19, PCC-ML, FUAR and the other guerrilla armies of Colombia as new groups which emerged in the 1960s as a result of urban, radical intellectuals’ instigations, in fact, they built strongly upon the organizational legacies of the guerrilla armies of *La Violencia*. It could be argued that they would not have succeeded absent these legacies, which produced the “conditions favoring insurgency” in Colombia. This previous civil war created durable rebel networks and organizations that revolutionaries in the 1960s exploited. An estimated 20,000 men bore arms in the Liberal guerrilla formations between 1949 and 1953. The peace agreement – which ended *La Violencia* – did not provide these combatants adequate demobilization, disarmament and rehabilitation programs. General Pinilla Rojas offered amnesties in 1953-4 and in 1958,<sup>618</sup> and created a

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<sup>618</sup> Rojas issued three presidential decrees offering amnesties and pardons. These proved initially successful with 7,000 guerrillas surrendering in the first ten months of Rojas’ regime. Thereafter, the programs’ numbers declined though the exactly number of ex-combatants demobilizing vary across sources. See Guzmán et al. 1962 and Molano 1980.

program for the “reincorporation of political criminals back into social [civilian] life.”<sup>619</sup>

However, the initiatives came to be underfinanced and eventually abandoned.<sup>620</sup>

The revolutionaries of the 1960s co-opted the liberal guerrillas’ structures with their contacts, social capital, war training, territory, command and control, mid-level commanders, recruits, knowledge of the terrain, and non-denunciation by civilian communities. It was on the basis of these demobilized structures that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), National Liberation Army (ELN), People’s Liberation Army (EPL), Peasant Student Workers Movement (MOEC), etc. were able to construct rebel armies.

The National Liberation Army (ELN) in Magdalena Medio emerged out of the remains of the strong guerrilla army of Rafael Rangel, which had operated throughout *La Violencia*.<sup>621</sup> It also drew on the Chispas army of Eriberto Espitia.<sup>622</sup> Similarly, Julio Guerra was a well-known Liberal politician in the south of Córdoba who, as Rangel, raised an army after the death of Jorge Eliécer *Gaitán* in 1948 in self defense.<sup>623</sup> In 1967, his organization reactivated to form the insurgent group, the People’s Liberation Army (EPL).<sup>624</sup> According to Fabiola Calvo 1985, the EPL was able to establish itself where the liberal guerrillas had operated and where the populations were familiar with the presence of the armed groups. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) also constituted a remilitarized rebel army of the ‘independent republics.’<sup>625</sup> Most of the top FARC leaders had fought in the liberal and communist armies of

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<sup>619</sup> *El Siglo* 1958.

<sup>620</sup> Guzman et al. 1961, p. 102; Additionally, Conservatives used their veto power to oppose the rehabilitation programs, claiming such programs were payoffs to former (Liberal) criminals (Dix 1967, p. 377).

<sup>621</sup> Alvaro Villarraga Sarmiento (CNRR), interview by author, Santa Marta, 9 May 2009 and Bogotá, 11 May 2009. The ELN's first power bases were the jungle and frontier zones of southern Santander, Bolivar and northeast Antioquia. For histories of the ELN, see Caycedo 1980; Pulido 1995; Gutiérrez et al. 2006.

<sup>622</sup> Pizarro 1996. See also de la Torre 1980.

<sup>623</sup> See Zuluaga 1993; Pizarro 1996.

<sup>624</sup> Alvaro Villarraga, interview by author, Bogotá, May 2009; Hernando Corral, interview by author, Bogotá, August 2006.

<sup>625</sup> Fernán González, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006.

the 1950s.<sup>626</sup> In a parallel fashion, MOEC drew on former guerrilla leaders to fill its ranks. It attracted Cauca guerrilla commander ‘El Aguillilla,’ and former liberal guerrillas of the eastern plains, Rosendo Colmenares, Eduardo Franco Isaza, and Roberto González Prieto, among others. Finally, the indigenous rebel group, Quintín Lame, formed on the foundation of an organization created years earlier by the indigenous leader Manuel Quintín Lame.

Reactivation, however, was not inevitable and not all guerrilla groups remobilized. The guerrillas retained arms in caches after the demobilization. However, they did not continue in violence. To understand why and when some armed organizations were redeployed while others fully demobilized, we must look at their recruitment and deployment strategies and changes in the distribution of power as a result of the National Front. I propose that the armed groups which were comprised of combatants local to the communities in which they operated formed latent socio-political organizations after demobilizing. Only when threatened by contentious ‘state-building’ did they reactivate. In contrast, organizations comprised of fighters, which operated far from their communities of origin, drifted into banditry and went bankrupt. This was the trajectory of the coffee-rich Cauca Valley’s guerrilla armies, which splintered post-demobilization into between 90 and 150 bandit gangs totaling over 2,000 men. These gangs eventually disappeared.

Due to their highly localized flavor – they were from the communities in which they had fought and returned to these communities after demobilizing – the armies of Rangel, Guerra, and Marulanda enjoyed dense social networks and remained physically concentrated after the creation of the National Front. These guerrilla units were also embedded in the civilian communities because “they stayed in the same area where they recruited.”<sup>627</sup> As a result, they

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<sup>626</sup> Arenas 1985.

<sup>627</sup> Fernán González, interview by author, Bogotá, August 2006.

were able to preserve their collective structures and capacity for collective action as local strongmen and political entities.<sup>628</sup> Guerra, for example, formed social/political organizations: the Juntas Patrióticas. Meanwhile, in the south of the country, in Agriari, Viota, Tequendama, Sumapaz, El Pato, Guayabero, Rio Chiquito, 26 de Septiembre and Marquetalia, the former guerrillas formed well-organized, ‘independent republics.’<sup>629</sup> These were essentially proto-states or shadow governments in which the former guerrillas (approximately 6,500 men) exercised extensive influence over the social, political, and economic lives of the civilian population. Bogotá enjoyed little if any control.<sup>630</sup>

These regions were part of the widespread phenomenon of armed colonization where rural neighborhoods (*veredas*)<sup>631</sup> forcefully displaced by the conservative army and paramilitary factions (*pájaros*) reestablished themselves around ‘colonized’ frontier lands in areas in which the state had little presence.<sup>632</sup> According to Fernán González, “neighbors, families, friends, towns all moved together, they transplanted themselves. They had very, very strong ties and so they reproduced their original campesino societies and norms in their new zones.”<sup>633</sup> These republics proved “unresponsive to government actions to improve social and economic conditions in their areas unless it was coordinated through former guerrilla leaders.”<sup>634</sup> The leaders fiercely guarded their prerogatives and influence. These communities did not look to the state for authority, security, justice, or conflict resolution; rather, they looked to the former

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<sup>628</sup> Alvaro Villarraga Sarmiento (CNRR), interview by author, Santa Marta, 9 May 2009 and Bogotá, 11 May 2009.

<sup>629</sup> Villarraga, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006; Peñate, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006.

<sup>630</sup> See Rempe 1995. Also Osterling 1989, p. 97.

<sup>631</sup> See Borda 1962’s ethnographic accounts of the *vereda* in Colombia, which he describes as a “distinct locality group,” “an extended family.”

<sup>632</sup> Ramírez Tobón 1990.

<sup>633</sup> Fernán González, interview by author, Bogotá July 2006.

<sup>634</sup> Rempe 1995; See also Ferro Medina and Uribe Ramón 2002.

guerrillas to fill this void.<sup>635</sup> The former guerrillas engaged in formal politics, maintaining “subrosa political relationships with major figures of the legitimate government and opposition involving the trade of votes, hatchet jobs, and influence.”<sup>636</sup> They “maintained intelligence nets throughout rural communities.” “The guerrillas were everything. They were the law, they imposed the rules regulating daily life, they resolved everything in these municipalities from marital problems to the cantina’s operating hours ... everything. They were the authority and were just accepted.”<sup>637</sup>

These were latently coercive structures: “largely inactive... relatively passive. [They] caused little interference in government affairs.” However, they were latent and could therefore be reactivated. In this sense “they remained a potential threat to the government.”<sup>638</sup> But why did they reactivate in a manifest form some years after demobilization? I argue that these regions’ turn to the political left and their relative evasiveness from state control rendered them a state-building priority. Moreover, US military aid shifted the distribution of power between these ‘independent republics’ and the Colombian government. It thereby changed the parameters buttressing the implicit peace bargains and rendered the bargains obsolete.

*The Left.* Consistent with *H7*, the data indicates that municipalities which consistently supported the Left proved at higher risk of militarization. Voting majority Left multiplied the odds of experiencing an insurgency by four and of having an insurgent front by six. Driven by resentment, the Liberal Party’s fiercely loyal followers defected on their party. The National Front, an exclusive, nonpartisan pact between Conservative and Liberal politicians, engendered a

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<sup>635</sup> Andrés Peñate (Director of DAS), interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006; This situation was compared to the US settlers and rangers in the West; Fernán González, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006; Francisco Gutierrez, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006.

<sup>636</sup> Maullin 1973, p. 8. See Bailey 1967, p. 561-75.

<sup>637</sup> Defensoría del Pueblo, interview by author, Cúcuta, 29 May 2008.

<sup>638</sup> Rempe 1995, 2002.

sense of horizontal identification among elites. Having signed the Front pact and forged these horizontal ties, the traditional parties *turned against* their former armed masses. For centuries, these party rank and file had proven essential to the party's success and were thus endowed with a sense of patriotism and legitimacy. Now, under the Front, the spoils of political office were divided equally between the parties, reducing politicians' need to appeal to and mobilize their constituents; electoral victory was guaranteed.<sup>639</sup> Now, rather than thanking their soldiers for their service in the heinously bloody war fought on the elite's behalf, these commanders instead called them 'bandits' and targeted them with state repression.<sup>640</sup> In a public letter, Eduard Santos announced, "We didn't authorize them ... now the guerrillas constitute an obstacle to the re-establishment of peace."<sup>641</sup> The liberal fighters' status was reversed; they transitioned from the pedestal of 'party soldiers' to an unwarranted subordinate position of 'common criminals.' These 'abandoned' Liberals, disillusioned with system politics, began casting votes for anti-system Leftist candidates.

Critically, this rendered their regions top state-building priorities. The Colombian state sought to consolidate its authority in the territories it had lost during the war. In this pursuit, it found its resources limited and prioritizing necessary. It also found itself subject to deterrence: it would respect former armed groups' territorial sovereignty and would not seek to circumvent their authority if it could not be guaranteed victory in a battle. In other words, an implicit bargain held whereby the former armed groups maintained their 'independent republics' in exchange for not engaging in violent actions against the state.

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<sup>639</sup> Dix 1987, pp. 42-5. Additionally, by granting both parties veto power on government expenditures, the Front reduced patronage, further spawning feelings of abandonment among traditional party supporters.

<sup>640</sup> Traditional party elites realized that the internecine violence was not in their political interest; it risked revolution and anarchy. They thus united and sought to eliminate the guerrillas which they had mobilized. See Sánchez and Meertens 2001, p. 19. Labeled subversive or bandits, repression of these armed groups carried less political risk and received bipartisan support (Maullin 1973, p. 67).

<sup>641</sup> Pécaut 1987.

The influx of US military aid in 1962-5 shocked the government's power relative to the former guerrillas and thereby increased its chances of defeating the guerrillas were they to fight.<sup>642</sup> This destabilized the bargains whereby the former guerrillas enjoyed autonomy in exchange for peace. The military therefore began a 'state-building' offensive. Given the Cold War context, it targeted this offensive at "communist enclaves and the bandit gangs" in areas out of the state's reach. Zones peripheral to the state proved twice as likely to experience militarization. Thus, the former guerrilla republics' shift to the left and their elusiveness from state control rendered them key targets in this military campaign. In response to the operations launched against them, the organizational legacies of the previous war became reactivated defensively. Once remobilized, they became the leftist insurgencies of the 1960s.

Thus, as becomes clear in the biographies of the insurgent commanders and foot soldiers, violence was reborn in the 1960s in the same communities that had experienced *La Violencia* and the previous civil war's protagonists were cast again in leading roles in the new era of insurgency. The 'enclaves of violence' proved a decisive factor in the onset of the FARC, EPL, ELN, and MOEC. These insurgents exploited the social capital of the former guerrilla armies. *La Violencia*, according to Maullin, had "spawned a class of men who lived by the gun, thus offering a reservoir of recruits for future political efforts requiring violence."<sup>643</sup> Areas affected by *La Violencia* thus swarmed with ex-combatants and adolescents who grew up during the civil war.<sup>644</sup> The former commanders remained densely connected to these foot soldiers and were thus able to call them back to arms; they retained the normative authority and respect to exercise pressure on the demobilized soldiers. The pressures to join were also horizontal; the fighters

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<sup>642</sup> See Fearon 1995.

<sup>643</sup> Maullin 1973, p. 23.

<sup>644</sup> Adolescents who grew up during *La Violencia* proved especially likely to join the insurgency (Sánchez and Meertens 2001, p. 22).

entered the new rebel movements because of their friendships, familial ties, and social webs. These armies thus capitalized on “multiple generations of guerrillas in the zones.”<sup>645</sup> In one of my interviews, an ex-EPL described how there were three to four generations of rebels in these zones. He said, “When you ask combatants why they joined... they respond, ‘My five brothers, my uncles, my father, my grandmother, my great-grandfather ... were all in the guerrillas. It is a family tradition.’”<sup>646</sup> If you grew up in one of these areas that had been touched by *La Violencia*, “there was something natural [even patriotic] about providing support to the guerrillas and joining their ranks.”<sup>647</sup> It was thus very common to find family and community ties among the ranks of the insurgents.<sup>648</sup> For example, the guerrillas in Tolima began under the command of Gerardo Loaiza, his five sons, his relative, Pedro Antonio Marín, and his father. The guerrilla armies thus arose in communities of chronic violence characterized by hereditary loyalty to irregular armed groups, leftist political leanings, state absence, and state repression by emboldened armed forces.<sup>649</sup>

## V. Conclusion

The dissertation project’s analytic framework provides leverage on the post-war trajectories of armed organizations and, in so doing, helps account for war onset and recurrence.

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<sup>645</sup> González, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006.

<sup>646</sup> Luis Angel, interview by author, Cúcuta, April 2008.

<sup>647</sup> Carlos Rosano (Editor, *Voz*) interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006.

<sup>648</sup> Fernán González, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006.

<sup>649</sup> This theme ran through my interviews with Alvaro Villarraga, interview by author, Bogotá, May 2009; Eduardo Pizarro, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006; Andrés Peñate, interview by author, Bogotá, August 2006; and Hernando Corral, interview by author, Bogotá, July 2006. The importance of organizational residue in facilitating subsequent violence (remilitarization) does not only apply to Colombia’s leftist *insurgencies*, but also has causal weight in accounting for the *rise* of the paramilitaries in Colombia. In an interview with paramilitary Bloque Tolima’s commander, Diego José María Goyeneche, I was told, “There is a strong relationship between the Bloque Tolima of the paramilitaries [in 2005] and the former self-defense forces of Tolima in the 1950s... really the people who were in the Bloque Tolima were the children, grandchildren, nephews, that is, the family members of these people that began in the 1950s in the region of Rio Ata in southern Tolima” (Diego José María Goyeneche, interview by author, ‘La Picota’ Prison, Bogotá, 15 September 2008).



It links not only with the study of peace, but also with the broader, extensive literature on the causes of war. This project’s insights into organizational bankruptcy, disarmament and remilitarization provide a new lens into why wars occur in some geographic places and not in others. It has explanatory value in understanding variation in pro-state paramilitary groups’ remilitarization *and* in that of anti-state rebel, insurgent, and guerrilla units. This chapter tested the project’s theory against the conventional wisdom. It stood up to scrutiny. The chapter also reasserted several central claims of the project more generally. First, it pointed to the need to reorient the study of conflict and peace away from physical geographical and economic variables and back to social, political, and human factors. Second, the organizational residue of war renders the causes of recurrent war divergent from those of initial war onset. Given that 50% of civil war ‘onset’ wars have recurred, existing datasets are populated with cases of civil war recurrence. We need to disaggregate these two types of war.

**Table 16. Variables and Data Sources**

Variable Name	Variable Description	Source
<i>Insurgent Activity</i>	Dichotomous measure of FARC, ELN, EPL, M19, MOA, FALCO, ORP guerrilla activity	<i>El Tiempo</i> 1964-1984
<i>Insurgent Success</i>	Measure of FARC, ELN, EPL, M19, MOA, FALCO, ORP sustained guerrilla violence and establishment of guerrilla fronts	<i>El Tiempo</i> 1964-1984; Echandía Castilla 1999; Military Intelligence Reports
<i>State Presence1</i>	Distance to department capital	CEDE dataset, 1960
<i>State Presence2</i>	Distance to principal markets	CEDE dataset, 1960
<i>State Presence3</i>	Periphery (Distance to capital > 100 km)	CEDE dataset, 1960
<i>Liberal1</i>	% of population which voted for the Liberal Party in the 1949 congressional elections	Estadísticas Electorales Camara 1949
<i>Liberal2</i>	If municipality population voted for the Liberal Party 1931-1982	Pinzon de Lewin 1989
<i>Left</i>	If municipality population voted for Leftist candidates 1931-1982	Pinzon de Lewin 1989
<i>Violencial</i>	If municipality affected by violence during <i>La Violencia</i> conflict 1948–1958	The Colombian Truth Commission after <i>La Violencia</i> : Guzman el al 1962; Sánchez and Chacón 2005; Ortiz 1985; Casas 1987; Roldán 2002; Henderson 1985;

		Sánchez and Meertens 2001.
<i>Violence2</i>	Presence of Liberal and/or Communist Guerrillas during <i>La Violencia</i>	“
<i>Coca</i>	Hectares of coca cultivated	Colombian National Police Force, Antinarcotics Division; UN Office on Drugs and Crime & Colombian Government, Sistema Integrado de Monitoreo de Cultivos Ilícitos (SIMCI) Data, Estadísticas Municipales
<i>Poppy</i>	Hectares of poppy cultivated	“
<i>Gems</i>	If municipality has emerald, sapphire, gold, and/or aquamarine mines	Oxford Economic Atlas of the World, 1972; CEDE data on mines
<i>Oil</i>	If municipality has oil fields, oil pipelines, and/or oil refineries	US Department of Energy; Petrobank Energy and Resources LTD: Latin American unit
<i>Mountains1</i>	Average altitude of municipality	Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi
<i>Mountains2</i>	If terrain is ‘steeply inclined’	Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi
<i>Forest</i>	If municipality was densely forested or was jungle, 1960	Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi
<i>Border</i>	If municipality adjoins an international border (dummy)	DANE, Marco Geoestadístico Nacional
<i>Roads and Rivers</i>	Kilometers of roads (paved or unpaved) and rivers, 1949, 1970, 1980	Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi <i>Mapa Vial y Artesanal</i> , 1949, 1970, 1980
<i>Pop1951</i>	Population size, 1951	1951 Colombian Census
<i>Pop1964</i>	Population size, 1964	1964 Colombian Census
<i>Pop1973</i>	Population size, 1973	1973 Colombian Census
<i>Population Density</i>	Population density, 1951, 1964, 1973	Law 1999; 1951, 1964 and 1973 Colombian Census
<i>Poverty1</i>	Poverty: % of population with “Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas” (NBI)	1973 Colombian Census
<i>Poverty2</i>	Per Capita Income, 1973	Colombian Census, 1973

<i>Ethnic*</i>	Combined afro-descendent and indigenous proportions of municipal population	Based on 1993 Colombian Census See República de Colombia, <i>Grupos Étnicos</i>
<i>Ethnic Domination*</i>	If ethnic majority constituted 45-90% of the municipal population	„
<i>Inequality</i>	Rural land gini coefficient, 1983	Colombia Land Survey, 1983

\* Measured at the department level; municipality level data is unavailable.

**Table 17. Descriptive Statistics for Insurgent Activity Models**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Obs</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean No Insurgency (n=)</i>	<i>Mean Insurgency (n=3899)</i>
Past Presence of Guerrillas ( <i>Violencia1</i> )	194796	0.1332471	0.3398425	0	1	0.1323012	0.2574728
Past Violence ( <i>Violencia2</i> )	194796	0.4631307	0.4986401	0	1	0.4611378	0.7248641
Liberal Party 1949 ( <i>Liberal1</i> )	193284	0.2385919	0.4262238	0	1	0.2386101	0.2362151
Liberal 1931-1982 ( <i>Liberal2</i> )	262841	55.87757	10.92807	40.71	98.4	55.88383	55.03571
Left ( <i>Left1</i> )	262841	0.0124638	0.1109437	0	1	0.0118819	0.0907216
Left 1931-1982 ( <i>Left2</i> )	262841	0.0393089	0.1943293	0	1	0.0382252	0.1850515
Periphery ( <i>State Presence1</i> )	194796	0.3492885	0.4767465	0	1	0.3493617	0.3396739
Distance to Department Capital ( <i>State Presence2</i> )	194796	119.6675	96.67634	0	790	119.7657	106.7704
Distance to Markets ( <i>State Presence3</i> )	194796	314.9276	118.3233	168	763	314.8109	330.248
Road Density ( <i>Roads1</i> )	206834	30909.77	43705.34	33.3	963252.6	30709.36	53249.91
Dichotomous Road Measure ( <i>Roads2</i> )	262841	.8226152	.3819948	0	1		
Road + River Density ( <i>Roads3</i> )	81554	97830.84	139350.2	612.9	1140529	97542.09	122329.9
<i>Forest</i>	91729	31975.98	99086.4	1.59	1307181	31539.45	79151.97
Average Altitude ( <i>Mountains1</i> )	194796	1327.177	878.0804	2	3087	1330.287	918.7385
Steeply Inclined Terrain ( <i>Mountains2</i> )	187992	0.8632708	0.3435622	0	1	0.8628572	0.9279732
Altitude Exceeding	194796	0.0103493	0.1012039	0	1	0.0104229	0.0006793

3,000 meters (Mountains3)							
<i>Border</i>	262841	0.0517804	0.2215837	0	1	0.0519392	0.0304124
<i>Oil</i>	262841	0.1140918	0.3179233	0	1	0.1134185	0.2046392
<i>Coca</i>	262841	57.80013	499.2866	0	9081	57.62747	81.0201
<i>Poppy</i>	262841	19.47135	84.07346	0	667	19.35848	34.64948
Gold, Emerald, Sapphire, Aquamarine Mines (Gems1)	274452	0.1248743	0.3305769	0	1	0.1241908	0.2133017
Gold Mines (Gems2)	274452	0.1129378	0.3165173	0	1	0.1122942	0.1961995
Emerald Mines (Gems3)	274452	0.0101001	0.0999908	0	1	0.010046	0.0171021
<i>Land Value</i>	187992	35.43023	61.36773	0	1690.909	35.44177	33.62553
% NBI (Poverty1)	269151	64.45295	18.27601	13	100	64.52181	55.71207
Per Capital GDP (Poverty2)	230580	10363.39	15277.19	97.89337	345256.3	10324.19	15242.18
Ethnic Dominance (Ethnicity1)	262841	0.1591647	0.3658303	0	1	0.1596353	0.0958763
Ethnic (Ethnicity2)							
<i>Population</i>	236125	21858.62	90893	72	2571548	19747.72	278005.1
<i>Population Density</i>	189252	0.855825	2.689339	0.0045832	57.87412	0.8299118	4.401738
<i>Inequality</i>	260823	0.5021207	0.1521665	0.0071	0.9404	0.5022019	0.4920082

Table 18. Logit Analyses of Determinants of <i>Insurgent Activity</i> , 1964-1984				
Variables	(1) Feasibility Model	(2) Organizational Legacies of Violence	(3) Combined Model	(4) Combined Model with Ethnicity <sup>a</sup> & Inequality
<i>Violencia</i>		1.542*** (0.233)	1.155*** (0.229)	1.144*** (0.227)
<i>Left</i>		1.497*** (0.525)	1.313** (0.579)	1.096* (0.581)
<i>Liberal</i>		0.130 (0.207)	0.576*** (0.217)	0.606*** (0.217)
<i>State Presence</i>		0.521*** (0.183)	0.682*** (0.194)	0.751*** (0.196)
<i>Coca</i>	0.000993 (0.00127)		0.00170 (0.00118)	0.00139 (0.00118)
<i>Poppy</i>	0.00249*** (0.000914)		0.00188** (0.000867)	0.00152* (0.000879)
<i>Gems</i>	1.461 (0.898)		0.468 (0.290)	0.400 (0.290)
<i>Oil</i>	0.531* (0.284)		0.354 (0.270)	0.385 (0.270)
<i>Land Value</i>	-0.00784 (0.0102)		-2.77e-05 (0.00968)	
<i>Poverty</i>	-0.0337*** (0.00600)		-0.0318*** (0.00576)	-0.0333*** (0.00585)
<i>Population</i>	1.36e-05*** (2.45e-06)		1.30e-05*** (2.39e-06)	1.33e-05*** (2.39e-06)
<i>Population Density</i>	-0.101** (0.0496)		-0.0825* (0.0479)	-0.0876* (0.0478)
<i>Border</i>	0.302 (0.843)		1.064 (0.817)	1.200 (0.814)
<i>Mountains</i>	0.430 (0.332)		0.332 (0.321)	0.311 (0.309)
<i>Road Density</i>	5.61e-06*** (1.37e-06)		5.65e-06*** (1.36e-06)	5.68e-06*** (1.37e-06)
<i>Ethnic Dominance</i>				0.752*** (0.288)
<i>Inequality</i>				0.441 (0.622)
Constant	-5.150*** (0.537)	-7.129*** (0.156)	-6.030*** (0.523)	-6.275*** (0.613)
Observations	118344	192024	116748	116748

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

<sup>a</sup> *Ethnicity* is measured at the department level with missing data. *Violencia* is measured as past guerrilla presence; *Mountains* is measured as steeply inclined terrain; *Poverty* is measured as NBI; *Periphery* is measured as 100 km from the department capital.

**Table 19. Logit Analyses of Determinants of *Insurgent Activity*, 1964-1984**  
**Robustness Checks**

Variables	(1) Alternative Model <sup>a</sup>	(2) Rare Events Model	(3) Cross-Sectional Model
<i>Violencia</i>	1.145*** (0.162)	0.623*** (0.0982)	1.454*** (0.265)
<i>Left</i>	1.266*** (0.470)	1.402*** (0.164)	0.904 (0.744)
<i>Liberal</i>	0.00776 (0.0110)	0.192** (0.0974)	0.250 (0.211)
<i>State Presence</i>	0.00190** (0.000784)	0.461*** (0.0844)	0.00389*** (0.00104)
<i>Coca</i>	0.00197** (0.000916)	0.000910** (0.000354)	0.00265 (0.00269)
<i>Poppy</i>	0.00255*** (0.000729)	0.000367 (0.000396)	0.00404*** (0.00120)
<i>Gems</i>	0.952 (0.635)	0.0732 (0.122)	1.222 (0.769)
<i>Oil</i>	0.112 (0.241)	0.484*** (0.0956)	0.0816 (0.295)
<i>Land Value</i>		-0.0111** (0.00440)	
<i>Poverty</i>	1.37e-05 (9.21e-06)	-0.0234*** (0.00232)	-5.96e-07 (1.11e-05)
<i>Population</i>	7.83e-06*** (6.06e-07)	1.13e-05*** (6.95e-07)	6.47e-05*** (9.65e-06)
<i>Population Density</i>		-0.0549*** (0.0157)	-0.0613 (0.0451)
<i>Border</i>	0.235 (0.529)	0.222 (0.453)	1.457** (0.710)
<i>Mountains</i>	-0.000356*** (0.000107)	1.465*** (0.279)	-0.000124 (0.000116)
<i>Road Density</i>	1.085*** (0.348)	5.39e-06*** (5.67e-07)	1.348*** (0.399)
<i>Constant</i>	-8.646*** (0.792)	-5.772*** (0.301)	-3.397*** (0.503)
<i>Observations</i>	184968	116748	725

Note: Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%  
<sup>a</sup> Model 1: *Violencia* is measured as past violence; *Periphery* is measured as distance to the department's capital; *Gems* is measured just using data on emerald mines: the most lootable and subject to extortion; *Poverty* is measured as per capita income; *Mountains* is measured as altitude; *Roads* is a dichotomous variable.  
 Model 2: *Violencia* is measured as past guerrilla presence; *Liberal* is measured as hegemony in the 1946 elections; *Periphery* is measured as 100 kilometers to the department capital; *Gems* is measured using emerald and gold mine data. *Poverty* is measured as NBI; *Mountains* is measured as steeply inclined terrain.  
 Model 3: *Violencia* is measured as past guerrilla presence; *Liberal* is measured as hegemony in the 1946 elections; *Periphery* is measured as distance to the department's capital; *Gems* is measured using emerald mines. *Poverty* is measured as per capita income; *Mountains* is measured as altitude; *Roads* is a dichotomous measure.

**Table 20. Logit Analyses of Determinants of *Insurgent Success*, 1964-1984**

Variables	(1) Feasibility Model	(2) Organizational Legacies of Violence	(3) Combined Model	(4) Combined Model (More Obs.) <sup>b</sup>	(5) Combined Model with Ethnicity <sup>a</sup> & Inequality
<i>Violencia</i>		1.010*** (0.295)	1.045** (0.414)	0.881*** (0.331)	1.014** (0.422)
<i>Left</i>		1.464** (0.570)	0.747 (0.907)	1.519** (0.612)	0.379 (0.919)
<i>Liberal</i>		0.254 (0.284)	0.675 (0.416)	0.449 (0.321)	0.711* (0.428)
<i>State Presence</i>		0.508** (0.257)	1.014*** (0.389)	0.686** (0.286)	1.274*** (0.421)
<i>Coca</i>	0		0	-0.00302 (0.00282)	0
<i>Poppy</i>	0.00260** (0.00132)		0.00229 (0.00145)	0.00175 (0.00118)	0.00155 (0.00157)
<i>Gems</i>	1.229 (1.165)		-0.0776 (0.588)	0.673** (0.339)	-0.189 (0.612)
<i>Oil</i>	-0.272 (0.564)		-0.617 (0.602)	-0.0398 (0.416)	-0.350 (0.583)
<i>Land Value</i>	-0.0215 (0.0255)		-0.0258 (0.0263)		
<i>Poverty</i>	0.00981 (0.0113)		0.0135 (0.0120)	0.0105 (0.00871)	0.0131 (0.0123)
<i>Population</i>	3.26e-05*** (8.32e-06)		3.95e-05*** (9.32e-06)	1.34e-05*** (3.91e-06)	3.83e-05*** (9.20e-06)
<i>Population Density</i>	-0.316* (0.176)		-0.335* (0.182)		-0.294 (0.180)
<i>Border</i>	0		0	-0.746 (1.279)	0
<i>Mountains</i>	0		0	-1.02e-06 (0.000182)	0
<i>Roads</i>	1.66e-05* (8.55e-06)		1.41e-05 (8.99e-06)	1.87e-05*** (5.58e-06)	1.55e-05* (9.25e-06)
<i>Ethnic Dominance</i>					1.550*** (0.508)
<i>Inequality</i>					0.273 (1.259)
Constant	-3.306*** (1.168)	-2.789*** (0.201)	-4.323*** (1.259)	-4.616*** (0.757)	-5.729*** (1.123)
Observations	475	762	468	727	468

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

<sup>a</sup> *Ethnicity* is measured at the department level.

<sup>b</sup> More observations are used by employing average altitude as the proxy for *mountains* and dropping population density and land value.

\*0's indicate variables that were dropped from the analysis as they perfectly predict the absence of insurgency.

<b>Table 21. Logit Analyses of Determinants of <i>Insurgent Success</i>, 1964-1984</b>		
<b>Robustness Checks</b>		
<b>Variables</b>	<b>(1) Alternative Model</b>	<b>(2) Rare Events Model</b>
<i>Violence</i>	0.571* (0.294)	0.867** (0.343)
<i>Left</i>	1.743*** (0.649)	1.481*** (0.526)
<i>Liberal</i>	-0.0191 (0.0209)	0.437 (0.347)
<i>State Presence</i>	0.00278** (0.00129)	0.679** (0.283)
<i>Coca</i>	-0.000942 (0.00251)	-0.000967 (0.00242)
<i>Poppy</i>	0.00184 (0.00113)	0.00177* (0.00105)
<i>Gems</i>	1.701** (0.798)	0.670* (0.352)
<i>Oil</i>	0.180 (0.407)	0.0107 (0.436)
<i>Poverty</i>	-7.83e-06 (2.16e-05)	0.0100 (0.0102)
<i>Population</i>	1.45e-05*** (3.87e-06)	1.29e-05 (8.57e-06)
<i>Border</i>	-0.448 (1.106)	-0.246 (0.826)
<i>Mountains</i>	-0.000267 (0.000197)	-4.81e-06 (0.000161)
<i>Road Density</i>	1.156 (0.771)	1.75e-05*** (5.64e-06)
Constant	-3.112** (1.460)	-4.467*** (0.862)
Observations	734	727

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. \*significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

Model 1: *Violencia* is measured as past violence; *Liberal* is measured as liberal ever; *Periphery* is measured as distance to the department's capital; *Gems* is measured using data on emerald mines; *Poverty* is measured as per capita income; *Mountains* is measured as average altitude; *Roads* is a dichotomous measure.

Model 2: *Violencia* is measured as past guerrilla presence; *Liberal* is measured as hegemony in the 1946 elections; *Periphery* is measured as distance to the department's capital; *Gems* is measured using emerald and gold mine data. *Poverty* is measured as NBI; *Mountains* is measured as altitude.



## **Chapter 9**

### **Conclusion**

In its search for an explanation of varying post-conflict outcomes, this project has focused on the primacy of armed organizations. Divergence in their human and social geographies cause some armed groups to dissolve while others endure and remobilize for war or peaceful politics. I have argued that variation in recruitment, deployment, and post-war migration helps us account for these trajectories taken by rebel and paramilitary armies in the aftermath of peace accords. The theory is simple, but it has explanatory range over important outcomes and prescriptive richness. The applications of the model are potentially far reaching to civil wars far beyond Colombia's borders and several mechanisms of the model may be amenable to human action. The paths of the armed organizations studied in this project fundamentally influence post-war patterns of human rights abuses and shape prospects for consolidated peace, state-building, legalization of war economies, and democratization. Policymakers concerned with these outcomes may therefore find these conclusions useful. The theory also has implications for social scientists interested in micro and macro processes of war to peace transitions, transitional justice, state formation, and path dependency. Specifying the project's implications is the task of these concluding pages.

#### **I. Beyond the Colombian Paramilitaries**

The proposed model has strong explanatory power and should operate in contexts beyond Colombia. Armed groups demobilize in the course of many other peace processes and then disappear, remilitarize and reinvent themselves. The puzzle therefore recurs across many

settings. Recruitment, deployment and post-war migration are also present in most conflict settings. Moreover, the methodology and analytic framework of this project can be replicated and applied elsewhere. There are two likely scope conditions to this project. The model should be most clearly applicable to territorially-based, militarized units and to contexts of irregular warfare characterized by military asymmetry between the armed actors.<sup>650</sup>

The diversity of the Colombian paramilitaries both in type and name suggests that *organizational* structure matters more than ideological creed or purpose for the model's generalizability. Colombian paramilitaries have used a variety of labels over their five decades in existence: self-defense forces, oligarch death squads, mercenaries, warlords, para-state armies, bandits, village patrol forces, vigilantes, terrorists, narcotrafficking organizations, and criminal gangs. My theory offers a rich explanation of these. Chapter Eight's thorough test of the model on the Colombian *rebels* of the 1960s further indicates the relevance of the theory beyond cases of pro-state paramilitaries. To realize a preliminary evaluation of the theory's external validity to organizations beyond Colombia, I conducted interviews with ex-rebels and peace negotiators from a diverse sample of wars around the world. They suggest, but by no means, prove the model's generalizability. More than that, they inspire future research to *rigorously* find the limits of the project's applicability.<sup>651</sup> I mention several examples from this cursory survey.

The Indonesian government recruited most of its militia soldiers<sup>652</sup> in Java and deployed them to Aceh. In sharp contrast, the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels were local to the

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<sup>650</sup> Kalyvas 2005. Military asymmetry between armed actors contrasts with 'symmetric nonconventional warfare,' which can be observed in civil wars that accompany processes of state collapse.

<sup>651</sup> A rigorous survey of cases worldwide would also serve to identify potential, confounding variables such as peacekeepers, peace terms, security sector reform, state's overall strength, ethnicity, and war duration, which vary across cases. These cases would further enable me to understand how *inter*-state dynamics interact with my theory, which, for parsimony purposes, focuses on the *intra*-state sphere. For my theory to be comprehensive and externally valid, I need to incorporate the roles of the international community and external states.

<sup>652</sup> The militias were called the Resistance Front Against GAM Separatists (*Front Perlawanan Separatist GAM*, FPSG).

communities of Aceh, having mobilized around family and veterans networks from the earlier Darul Islam revolt of the 1950s.<sup>653</sup> After the peace accord was signed, the non-local, government militia members dispersed back to their homes and the organizations disintegrated. Meanwhile, densely linked, physically concentrated, and deeply embedded, the GAM structure survived, the command and control maintained, and GAM transformed into a highly successful political party, victorious in the 2006 elections. An ex-GAM rebel told me, “We were from the communities where we fought and so we didn’t need to be ‘reintegrated’ or ‘reinserted;’ we were already there.”<sup>654</sup> A village head reported, “We have already accepted into the community those who have returned. There's no hostility because they too are a part of the community. Their families live here.”<sup>655</sup> The project’s mechanisms linking deployment and embeddedness appear to be potentially operative in this Indonesian context.<sup>656</sup>

In Guatemala, we observe powerful, collective vigilantism derived from the organizational residue of the local, wartime Civil Defense Forces.<sup>657</sup> In Africa, the Kamajors survived organizationally in Sierra Leone and thus the state respected their sovereignty in expanses of the country and permitted them to govern civilian affairs. The army reports, “We never go to this corner of the country and if we need to go there, we call on the Kamajors to mobilize their large numbers of combatants.”<sup>658</sup> Still capable of mass mobilization, but without a

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<sup>653</sup> Aspinall 2009.

<sup>654</sup> Nur Djuli (Ex-GAM Rebel), interview by author, Santa Marta, 8 May 2009.

<sup>655</sup> Barron, Kaiser and Pradhan 2004. Muslahuddin Daud and Kusumastuti Rahayu (Aceh Reintegration Program Personnel), interviews by author, Santa Marta, 8 May 2009. 80% of Acehnese civilians reported that they would be happy if an ex-GAM combatant married into their families (Patrick Barron (World Bank, Aceh), interview by author, Santa Marta, 7 May 2009).

<sup>656</sup> The Philippines offers further, possible evidence of the model’s explanatory value. The New People's Army (NPA) drew its cadres from organizational legacies of past war; specifically, it recruited former members from the Hukbalahap rebellion. Meanwhile, the MNLF’s was reactivated when challenged by contentious state-building (Raymundo Ferrer (Lieutenant General of the Filipino Army), interview by author, Santa Marta, 6 May 2009; Gaudencio Pangilinan Jr. (Brigade General of the Filipino Army), interview by author, Barranquilla, 7 May 2009).

<sup>657</sup> Regina Bateson (Yale University), interview by author, Cambridge, MA, 1 May 2010.

<sup>658</sup> Interview by author, Cambridge, MA, December 2008.

manifest, active military structure, the Kamajors' social and human geography seemingly determined its post-war path.

The model also has possible predictive power. The LRA abducted children from villages in Northern Uganda, but then, defeated by the Ugandan military, deployed its fighters to the Congo. Currently those that demobilize “operated away from their homes and all go back to their villages. They can go anywhere, but all go back to their villages.”<sup>659</sup> Accordingly, the theory would predict the groups' bankruptcy upon demobilization. The fighters would be accepted into their communities due to the mechanisms of social ties and mitigated anger stemming from abduction's victimization and the ex-combatants' 'returnee' status. However, dispersed to different towns of origin, these ex-fighters would not remain part of the LRA structure and would be unlikely to exercise any influence over civilian affairs.

Finally, the lessons from this study may be relevant to Iraq. Specifically, the model may provide analytic value in understanding the local, embedded Sons of Iraq – their organizational endurance, deep leverage over their communities, and ability to be co-opted by US forces willing to respect their sovereignty in the short run as a means to state build in the long term.

I turn now to the implications of the project for current and future social science.

## **II. Implications for the study of civil war and peace**

As highlighted in the Introduction, the project's organizational approach to the study of peace provides important analytic leverage at the micro and macro levels of analysis and

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<sup>659</sup> Peter Onega (Amnesty Commission, Uganda), interview by author, Santa Marta, 9 May 2009. This was further confirmed by several other individuals involved with the peace and reconciliation processes in Uganda (Damali Nakibuuka, Aporu Christine Hellen Amongin, Jacob L. Oulanyah, interviews by author, Cartagena and Santa Marta, 7-9 May 2009).

contributes to how we think about reintegration, war prevention, state-building, path dependence, reconciliation and organized crime. I briefly elaborate on each.

### *Micro Peace Agenda*

*First*, the organizational approach contributes to our understanding of demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Specifically, it challenges the conventional approach of micro-dynamics' scholars, which treats former fighters as independent agents, rather than as part of a web of ex-combatants and armed institutions that structure their decisions to reintegrate.<sup>660</sup> The micro peace literature makes the assumption that no organization exists post-disarmament.<sup>661</sup> This proves problematic for two reasons. One, it is empirically false and thus misses a *critical* part of the causal story about individual-level reintegration. Belonging to networks and organizations "makes an enormous difference in the behavior of individuals."<sup>662</sup> These institutions simultaneously determine the rules of the game and condition the incentives, restrictions, and choices of former fighters under the rules (North 1990). Thus, to understand individual-level reintegration outcomes, we need to understand when these institutional constraints endure and how fighters live within them. Organizations must be incorporated into models of reintegration.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> Humphreys and Weinstein 2007; Blattman and Annan 2009; Blattman 2009; Mvukiyehe, Samii, and Taylor 2010; Pugel 2006.

<sup>661</sup> It should be noted that while the micro literature assumes organizational dissolution, the macro literature assumes organizational persistence. Dialogue between the two levels of analysis has broken down and research on the intermediate level is necessary to repair it.

<sup>662</sup> Miller 1992; Wilson 1995; Williamson 1975.

<sup>663</sup> I am currently undertaking this analysis to evaluate the implications of the organizational-level theory of demilitarizing groups' trajectories on the *individual*-level analysis of ex-combatants' reintegration. Specifically, I examine the entire range of demilitarization from successful reintegration to returning to arms and model an ex-soldier's reintegration as a function of both individual-level variables and, critically, the outcome of his/her former organization.

Two, the micro scholarship makes an implicit normative claim that successful demobilization *requires* the disintegration of ex-armed structures and the atomization of ex-combatants. However, as this project demonstrates, atomization should not be a uniform objective. Organization bankruptcy may impact reintegration success, but it is not determinate. For example, if an organization survives and forms a non-violent political party, pulling its ex-combatants along this trajectory, reintegration should be deemed effective even though the organization endures and its members retain ties to it. Meanwhile, if an organization files for bankruptcy, reintegration is not necessarily successful. Instead, the analysis shifts to the individual ex-combatant level and, to repeat Bearman 1991's words, "each [ex-]soldier is theoretically freed from constraint and may pursue individual rather than group ends." This means that ex-combatants' transformations depend not on their organizations' trajectories, but on their individual traits and objectives. They may *individually* join a criminal or political armed group, commit solo acts of violence, transition into 'normal' civilians, or become highly politically-active citizens, but organizations' bankruptcy does not determine these outcomes.

The project's analytic framework proposes moving the variables currently on the left hand side of the reintegration equation to the right hand side<sup>664</sup> and defining reintegration success not as individual defection from one's former armed unit or 'ex-combatants' relations with family and community members,<sup>665</sup> but instead as not returning to commit acts of violence. Recidivism is individual reintegration failure. Scholars of the micro-dynamics of peace might consider relaxing their assumption that ex-combatants remain demobilized and instead seek to explain a non-truncated dependent variable that includes the extreme of reintegration failure: ex-combatants that engage in violence.

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<sup>664</sup> These studies place all variables on the right hand side of the equation, leaving no information with which to explain variation in DDR outcomes.

<sup>665</sup> Humphreys and Weinstein 2007.

### *Macro Research Agenda*

*Second*, the organizational approach challenges the cross-country studies of war and shows that, to understand why half of civil conflicts recur, requires a shift to the organizational level analysis. This shift induces a causation rather than correlation approach to the study of peace. Our literature is flooded with significant correlations, but our statistical models are only as good as our theories and our theories lie in disrepair, in great need of mechanism, process orientation and an accounting of the longitudinal dimensions of variation. We have models to explain where violence breaks out, but none to explain when they do.

The popular claim that credible commitment problems dominate post-war landscapes does not hold up to closer scrutiny. The effect of demobilization on organizational capacity is sudden and not foreseeable and therefore not predictable as is necessary for credible commitment problems to be operative and to drive remilitarization. There are other, important international relations theories that have greater salience in the intrastate domain. These include theories about information problems, the distribution of power, and variance around estimates of the probability of winning a war. Needed is a model that combines unforeseen shocks to the distribution of power with mutual optimism.

### *Path Dependency*

*Third*, by proposing that changes in the distribution of power can be unforeseen, this project confirms insights into rationality during processes. Despite the widespread use and acceptance of the phrase “only hindsight is 20/20,” when we theorize about individuals’ actions, we often assume that they have a window into the future. We say it is not rational to take an action in which the costs outweigh the benefits. However, the expected value of an action at  $t=1$

may be positive, leading one to take a path that then, once taken, turns out, at  $t=2$ , to have a negative expected value. At  $t=2$ , however, the choice set may have narrowed or the alternatives may have changed in value such that, though the least worst path was taken, its costs surpass its benefits. Leaders lose control of their destinies once the process assumes the reins.

In some respects, the processes herein described mirror those of democratic transitions. Dictators often have no intention of relinquishing power when they liberalize their political systems moderately, but the decisions to do so can have a 'lock-in' effect that brings the country down a path generated by process rather than agency. Analysis of these outcomes helps us understand the high levels of uncertainty about the future that decision-makers must face and accept.

It should be noted that, while process plays an important role in my argument, it is not deterministic; rather, organizations act *strategically*, but there is a strong lock-in effect to their doing so. Recruitment, deployment and post-war migration patterns are not the product of resources or structural conditions; rather, they are the product of decisions; they are endogenous to the war, but have strong exogenous effects on what happens after they have been adopted. These findings relate to the path dependency of social organizations and movements more generally.

### *Reconciliation*

*Fourth*, the project's window into community-combatant dynamics offers predictions about reconciliation and transitional justice. In particular, the project proposes that reconciliation should be most challenging in cases of intergroup violence, where perpetrators are not seen as members of the in-community and where ties linking victimizers to victims run thin. It follows



that transitional justice tools need to take into account *variation* in victim–perpetrator relations and emotions. This project also advocates for integrated research on reintegration and transitional justice rather than relegating these two outcomes to quarantined realms.<sup>666</sup>

### *State-Building*

*Fifth*, this project offers interesting implications for state formation. It challenges the conclusion that state-building in the developing world cannot occur absent an exogenous, structural shock. Understanding armed organizations’ interactions with the state provides endogenous paths by which states strengthen through intrastate war and peace agreements.

Tilly’s story of nation-states being built by war reaches its limits at the frontiers of the developed world.<sup>667</sup> In developing countries, as Herbst 2000 demonstrates, dispersed populations, changing international norms, and the absence of ‘highly disruptive forces’ generated enduring, weak states. The lack of pervasive interstate war, Migdal concludes, has generated an equilibrium wherein the state does not challenge the prerogatives of its ‘strongmen’ and the ‘strongmen’ do not challenge the state. Thus, models of state-building lead us to the present regime of weak states in the developing world in which social control is fragmented and often rests with warlords, guerrillas, militias, and other armed actors.<sup>668</sup> However, these models provide few means by which the states can strengthen absent a further, structural shock (war, economic depression, massive shift in political geography) that weakens the existing strategies of survival and enables the state to challenge the prerogatives of armed actors within its borders.

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<sup>666</sup> Theidon 2007.

<sup>667</sup> Tilly 1990.

<sup>668</sup> Migdal 2001. All of these models assume a Hobbesian notion of the state in which populations, if left unprotected by a weak state, turn to strongmen for survival.

Countering these static models, I propose two paths by which states strengthen absent the rare external and structural shocks. First, states dismantle weakly networked and clustered armed forces through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and then fill the power vacuums that result. Second, states sign peace accords with densely tied and concentrated forces, allow them to stay intact with latent coercive capacity and then, over time, co-opt them, their territories and the populations under their control. These means of exerting and consolidating authority represents an alternative form of state-building prevalent in many incomplete states such as Afghanistan, the Philippines, Iraq, India, and Brazil.<sup>669</sup> In these cases, the Weberian goal of a monopoly over legitimate violence is sacrificed in the short or medium term to facilitate it in the long term.

This project's organizational approach specifies the conditions under which internal war can enhance statehood. A subsequent, analytic step will be to gain leverage on when co-optation of former armed groups enhances statehood and democracy and when it instead generates narco, mafia states. When is the state the winner, consolidating the state formation project and when is the 'co-opted,' non-state actor instead victorious, corrupting the state?<sup>670</sup>

It is the state's Weberian agenda that renders interstate war theories, at times, inappropriate for the intrastate domain. This project predicts that anarchy will end and the state will reclaim its right to rule in cases in which demobilization bankrupts armed groups. In these cases, the interstate logic of treating rebel and paramilitary groups as states reaches its limit; the ex-armed groups relinquish their sovereignty to an overarching governing structure.

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<sup>669</sup> Gaudencio Pangilinan Jr. (General Brigadier of the Filipino Army), interview by author, 7 May 2009; Civilians, interviews by author, *favelas*, Rio de Janeiro, September 2006; Padre Apollinaire Malu Malu (President of the AMANI Peace Process in the Democratic Republic of Congo), interview by Author, Santa Marta, 7-10 May 2009; Petraeus 2009.

<sup>670</sup> These bargains entail non-state actors operating with immunity and monopolistic control over their sovereign territories. In exchange, the political elite gains bribes and electoral benefits.

An interesting corollary to the discussion of state formation is to think of rebel and paramilitary organizations as part of a larger spectrum of formal and informal organizations, which fulfill collective needs and adopt state functions in incomplete states. Rather than segregating insurgent and militia groups and their post-conflict reincarnations from other types of entities operative during times of ‘normal politics,’ it might be useful to look at vacuums in state power and ask, who fills them and how? I propose that my analytic framework, which maps the inner workings of the organizations and their ties to the state, communities and each other, may apply to these other structures: organized crime, party brokers, collective vigilante forces, and election thugs. A potential future research agenda emerging from my project would consider these “socio-political entities” more broadly in the context of state-building and the provision of social services.

#### *Resource Determinism, Crime, and War*

*Sixth*, in the critical case of Colombia, in which drugs and rough terrain are at their maximum value, I do not find resources to be determinative. In fact, I find them to have a negligible effect on where insurgency and counterinsurgency first emerge and on armed groups’ relations with civilians, internal cohesion, and post-war outcomes. Given that Colombia provides a valuable window into the effect of resources in civil war, it is worth reflecting on what causal power resources do and do not have.

Resources *do not* cause war, do not determine group fragmentation, do not determine the use of heinous crimes against humanity, and do not determine embeddedness in civilian populations. What illicit resources *do* impact is the likelihood of endemic, pathological corruption and non-state regulation of illicit economies (criminal groups). Resources also

provide strength to illegal groups and enable them to threaten even well-established states. Moreover, the production of illegal goods (drug crops, laboratories, trafficking routes, ports) requires protection and thus, if left unguarded by a rebel or paramilitary group, cartels will use other apparatuses of private security.<sup>671</sup> This points to a different research agenda for the political economy of war. It suggests that analysis be conducted on the effects of resources on military strength and effectiveness. The loot and war scholarship might also study armed groups' links with domestic corruption, a topic that has gained surprisingly scant attention in the literature. Additionally, as pointed out to in Chapter 6, the project highlights the diversity of resources used to fund war and the need to disaggregate how the effect of different 'products' and points in the production chain impact the structures of armed organizations. This study further suggests that, rather than marvel at the novelty that rebel and paramilitary groups can be involved in criminal activities, we should perhaps consider them again in a broader set of coercive, illegal non-state actors that includes drug cartels, trafficking organizations, gangs, and other criminal entities. Paramilitaries in Medellín and militants in Karachi look quite a lot like drug cartels in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro or Ciudad Juárez.

Existing motivation-oriented studies of war and peace have produced insoluble debates. Distinguishing between 'investors' and 'consumers,' 'the greedy' and 'the aggrieved' is, in practice, impossible. These labels are easily biased by national narratives, and do not, in my experience, constitute empirically accurate constructs. One man's freedom fighter (or self-defense force) is another man's terrorist (or criminal). Additionally, in my interviews and

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<sup>671</sup> These often include criminal organizations that existed alongside or intersected with paramilitary and rebel groups. They also include new armed structures. Thus, peace may have an insufficient impact on the shadow economies or on levels of violence. However, the policy implications to address these criminal actors may be distinct.

surveys of former combatants, the evidence repeatedly pointed to the multiplicity of motives and the resultant fruitlessness in arguing that one motivation matters at the exclusion of others.

### *Micro–Macro Linkages*

A final research agenda derives from this project. The move away from macro, cross-national research has been invaluable to gaining purchase on the causes, dynamics, and aftermath of violence.<sup>672</sup> However, our meso- and micro- dynamics of civil war agenda risks generating a plethora of theories with high levels of internal but not external validity, high levels of accuracy in the climates in which they are developed, but low levels of applicability to other contexts, great specificity of detailed mechanisms, but no broader sense of how the pieces all fit together. Our research has slowly, but commendably, moved away from aggregate, country-level observations. The next step, it would seem, is determining how we can combine our micro-level data to move back to the macro level and generate conclusions at this important level of analysis. From the perspective of this project, the question becomes, how do the trajectories of armed organizations aggregate to determine patterns of violence, peace, and politics regionally or globally?

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<sup>672</sup> This new, exciting literature disaggregates conflicts to the sub-national to understand the micro-dynamics of violence. Studies employing the conflict zones (100 km<sup>2</sup> grid cells) in Africa as the units of observation include Buhaug and Gates. 2002; Gates 2002b; Buhaug and Lujala 2005; Buhaug and Rød 2006; Eriksson and Wallenstein 2004. Østby, Nordås, and Rød. 2006 use the administrative region as their unit of analysis. Three administrative unit level studies in Indonesia include Tadjoeddin and Murshed 2007; Barron, Kaiser and Pradhan 2004; and Chen 2005. For the Nepalese case, Murshed and Gates 2005; Do and Iyer 2007; and Macours 2008 use district-level data. Beardsley and McQuinn 2009; Weinstein 2006 use the armed organization as the unit of analysis and Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2009 use the dyad. Studies employing the individual level analysis include Oyefusi 2008; Annan, Blattman, Carlson, and Mazurana 2008; Mvukiyeh, Samii, and Taylor 2008.

### III. Policy Implications

The international community's ideology of reintegration is a non-context specific recipe that views all intact structures and sustained command and control arrangements as threats to peace.<sup>673</sup> Bankruptcy is its chief objective. Thus, due to international community pressure, financing, and intervention, in the overwhelming majority of cases, states choose DDR tools that aim to break chains of command, undermine commanders' influence, atomize former combatants, and transform ex-fighters back into civilians able to disappear into their former social milieus.<sup>674</sup> Most commonly, they adopt the policy of homeward 'relocation' to affect the former armed commanders' and foot soldiers' incentives for non-cooperation. This relocation aims to return former combatants back to their families in order to reproduce civilian networks, which will compete with combatant camaraderie.

This project suggests revisions to not only reintegration theory as described above, but also to reintegration policy. 'Homeward relocation' does not disband all structures equally. In the case of local groups, a strategy to dismantle the local ex-armed group through 'relocation' produces the unintended consequence of sustaining the organization at least in the medium run. Thus, this policy ends up weakening certain groups while preserving others. Exacerbating this tendency, the international community often plays favorites, preserving groups with international legitimacy or those who can serve third party interests while undermining groups unpopular in international circles. However, doing so upsets the status-quo distribution of power.

The findings indicate that former armed organizations will remain demilitarized *only* if the power differentials maintain. Thus, it is critical that outside actors aim to preserve these. To

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<sup>673</sup> Sophie de Câmara Santa Clara Gomes (UNDP), interview by author, Bogotá, 10 August 2007. For examples of this ideology, see United Nations 2006; Colletta et al. 1996; World Bank 2009.

<sup>674</sup> See Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, which concludes that "successful reintegration requires that combatants break their ties with the warring factions, so that previous command and control structures no longer operate in the post-war period" (p. 18).

do so, third parties must recognize that usually wars are fought not between a singular rebel group and state, but rather between a *multiplicity* of actors. Informal arrangements between these actors are often critical to the architectural integrity of the peace structure. After the peace has held for several years, outside powers may induce changes in the distribution of power without risking a return to violence. However, in the early years post-war, this is often not possible.<sup>675</sup>

Where erosion in demobilizing groups' organizational capacity does occur, the state and its international backers should aim to fill the resultant power vacuums quickly. According to the model, we should expect armed units, characterized by dispersed recruitment and post-war migration, to go bankrupt. If the state enjoys sufficient capacity, it should aim to *immediately* fill these voids. If it is incapable of doing so, it should aim to instead bolster the weakening ex-armed group and facilitate its survival. It can do so by incentivizing non-local ex-combatants to remain in their combat zones (as 'squatters') to enhance physical clustering and organizational endurance.<sup>676</sup>

The international community's customary recipe also calls for the state reasserting its presence through reconstruction – the creation of schools, clinics, roads, and police stations in former armed groups' territories. Where groups survive the demobilization process, this state-building will spark remilitarization. Thus, reconstruction programs need to collaborate with rather than challenge intact, ex-armed structures.

There is one area in which the international community has its hands tied: that of information problems and the noise surrounding relative power estimates. These are key contributors to instability in the post-conflict period and yet, third parties do not have access to

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<sup>675</sup> Except if the ex-armed group goes completely bankrupt.

<sup>676</sup> The DDR program can also recognize and reward the former rank and status of fighters. Treating mid-ranking commanders as equal to foot soldiers represents a form of status reversal, which may generate resentment. The action tendency of resentment is to seek to rectify the hierarchy. This may best be achieved through violence (redeployment). See Frijda 1994; Elster 1999; Petersen 2002 on resentment.

the private information necessary to resolve the data asymmetries. If information problems trump commitment ones, third-party guarantees and power-sharing may not be the obvious solutions.

Finally, peace processes rarely bring an end to illicit political economies, even if they seek to reduce the economic benefits of war through targeted sanctions, enhanced international governance of extractable resources, and drug eradication. The persistent presence of illicit resources means that continued criminality and violence is likely even if the former armed organizations successfully demilitarize and exit the conflict.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

For populations that survive civil wars, peace accords bring hope for an end to terror's reign. At times, this hope is brought to fruition and the process brings state-building, democratization, and an end to massacres, torture and displacement. At other times, this hope fades as peace brings only more death, state absence, and coercive politics. This study offers an attempt to understand the complex processes that lead to these distinct outcomes. It exposes the inner workings of demilitarizing organizations and their dynamics with each other, victimized communities, and the state. It simplifies seemingly riotous variation and empirical chaos into a model of when survivors should expect peace to end war. It has prescriptive richness and thus hopes that human action may impact the outcomes it frames.



## Methods Appendices

### Appendix A. Challenges of Conducting Research on Remilitarization

Research in war zones is challenging. Armed organizations are extremely opaque and secretive; data is imperfect, sensitive, and subject to manipulation; protecting one's human subjects is difficult. Research on *remilitarization* in Colombia, however, was subject to several further challenges that merit mention here. One, the shadow of the transitional justice created disincentives for those involved to confess to the truth. The peace treaties between each of the paramilitary brigades and Colombian government stipulated that former fighters would enjoy amnesty and a host of reintegration benefits (monthly salaries, occupational training, health care, etc.) if they engaged in complete truth-telling and did not return to commit acts of violence. If they reneged on their side of the agreement and either confessed to only partial truths or returned to arms, the full force of the Colombian common law would be brought against them.<sup>677</sup> Thus, because a truth and reconciliation commission was underway while I was realizing interviews and participation observation, many of my demobilized subjects were concerned about the prospect of punitive action for their behavior. Additionally, they were unlikely to respond honestly to questions about their comrades as 'tattle-taling' was normally met with harsh reprisals (death). Given that former fighters were likely to censor their responses about remilitarization, I chose not to ask direct questions about *individuals'* participation in illicit activities; rather my inquiries focused on collectives and organizations. Learning about individuals' criminal and violent endeavors would have also put my respondents and me at risk; there is a danger in knowing too much.

Another challenge of remilitarization research derived from the highly dynamic nature of

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<sup>677</sup> See Law 975 (Justice and Peace Law) of July 2005 and decrees 4760 of 2005 and 690, 2898, and 3391 of 2006. See also Kalmanovitz 2009.

the phenomenon in Colombia. Rearmed groups tended to switch names often and mutate quickly; they demonstrated high levels of flexibility and the ability to respond quickly to changes in the state's counter-terrorism and counter-crime strategies. The Organization of American States' Peace Mission called it a "game of names," intended to confuse.<sup>678</sup> The combatants also intentionally sought to misguide the population and victims as to their affiliation – guerrilla, neo-paramilitary, military.<sup>679</sup> Armed personnel possessed many aliases and multiple legal names<sup>680</sup> and commanders often demobilized as foot soldiers, further confusing the analysis.

Fear of reprisals for disclosing information also manifested itself in vague, indirect statements.<sup>681</sup> My human subjects asserted that they "never know who is by their side."<sup>682</sup> While my affiliations afforded me trust, my subjects nonetheless took precautions and, at times, expressed overt remilitarization in the following ways: "The situation is *worrisome*;" "There are *inconveniences*;" "*Something is moving*." Reading too much into these statements could be risky as they were indirect. At the same time, explicit testimonies of remilitarization, while not entirely absent, were more rare. "No one wants to denounce who is behind the acts nor do they wish to speak about them," explained a peace monitor.<sup>683</sup> Where paramilitarism ran especially deep, the communities remained silent both because they were scared to speak and because they "want[ed]

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<sup>678</sup> For example, 'Don Mario's' group assumed the names Autodefensas Bolivarianas; Nuevas Autodefensas; Banda de Urabá; Los Chengues; Águilas Negras, Héroes de Castaño; and Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia. The police call them "the ones from Urabá," while others call them the "Urabeños."

<sup>679</sup> In many cases, the remilitarized units explicitly copy the uniforms of the Colombian armed forces. Thus, informants do not know if it was *los paracos* or the military operating in their villages. The guerrillas, meanwhile, only diverge in dress by their boots and their armbands (which they sometimes remove in order to misguide civilians).

<sup>680</sup> For example, Dairon Mendoza Caraballo is known by the aliases 'Rogelio,' 'El Águila,' 'Cocacolo' and 'John Dairon Mosquera Palacio,' among others.

<sup>681</sup> For a discussion about the authenticity of testimonies under conditions of fear, see Schmidt 2005.

<sup>682</sup> Initiative of Colombian Women for Peace, Interview by author, Apartadó, May 2008.

<sup>683</sup> Unpublished report, November 2006.

to protect the *paras*.”<sup>684</sup> In addition to intentional falsehoods and vague testimonies, I also received highly contradictory evidence due to 1) problems of recall despite the short lapse of time since the events, often just days or months, and at most several years and 2) erroneous hypotheses guided by the highly imperfect nature of information.

Another source of potential bias in the study of remilitarization derived from electoral politics. The presence of armed groups was viewed as a report card on the demobilization and reintegration process, one of Uribe’s ‘showpiece initiatives.’ Accordingly, Uribe supporters (including the Colombian military, police, and intelligence apparatus) called the armed groups: ‘emerging, criminal gangs,’ emphasizing that they were ‘new forces,’ unconnected to the demobilized paramilitaries (i.e. reintegration had succeeded) and purely criminal (i.e. meriting the US War on Drugs’ funded operations).<sup>685</sup> Reintegration program and military personnel sought to understate the extent of rearming in order to bolster their performance ratings. The ‘false positives’ scandal speaks to the lengths to which the armed forces would go for these ratings.<sup>686</sup> In contrast, the opposition and the left called the armed groups ‘rearmed units,’ ‘successor groups,’ or a ‘new generation of paramilitaries,’ highlighting their continued elements and links to the demobilization process.<sup>687</sup> Making my way through the weeds of these ideologically motivated labels and data proved extremely challenging.

A fourth source of information bias was corruption. Armed groups succeeded to varying degrees at infiltrating state entities through bribery, marriages of convenience, and coercion. As a result, government data could be unreliable or replete with intentional omissions; state officials’

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<sup>684</sup> Organization of International Migration, Interview by author, Bogotá, 30 January 2008. According to a conflict analyst, in these areas, “it will be hard to get information as the paras had full control and infiltration” (Interview by author, Bogotá 24 January 2008).

<sup>685</sup> See <http://www.ejercito.mil.co>

<sup>686</sup> See *El Tiempo* 2009. Stories on the scandal ran in the press frequently from April 2009 through February 2010.

<sup>687</sup> Fundación Arco Iris; Indepaz; Human Rights Watch 2010.

‘coziness’ with the armed groups created a chasm between them and their invaluable civilian informants. A demobilized from Caurallo explained to me: “The police doesn’t see. Nobody comes forth to the police with information because Don Mario’s [remilitarized] men go to it and ask who testified, who ‘told,’ and the police tell them and then the informant get ‘punished.’”<sup>688</sup> Where narco dollars were involved, bribes reached a level at which nearly no one was immune to corruption and even enemies could become friends. Thus, any of my human subjects could have been simultaneously responding to my inquiries and reaping benefits on the rearmed groups’ payrolls.

Finally, the demobilized paramilitaries had one additional incentive to misrepresent information: to gain compliance and further benefits from the state. As Urabá’s reintegration (ACR) director described: “The participants report to us that there are new groups that are seeking them out and offering them money and coercing them to join, but I don’t know if it is the truth or not because the demobilized are always threatening that if the ACR doesn’t give them more benefits or comply with everything they will return to the mountains [i.e. to illegal armed activity].”<sup>689</sup>

In order to overcome these diverse data challenges, I exploited the following techniques. One, I sought to triangulate all information and to never rely on a single source. Two, I engaged in a multi-method research design; different methods suffer different biases. Three, I aimed to develop relationships with my human subjects over time in order to increase their levels of trust. I also relied on information principally from people who had their fingers on the pulse of the communities and were deemed reliable confidantes of diverse members of those communities. Along these lines, I wore several different hats while conducting my fieldwork in areas of

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<sup>688</sup> Demobilized foot soldier (Bloque Bananero), interview by author, Caurallo, 3 July 2008

<sup>689</sup> High Council of Reintegration Urabá Director, interview by author, Apartadó, 26 June 2008.

remilitarization. Each hat afforded me a different inroad into the world of the demobilized combatants, remilitarized soldiers, victims, civil society and state's coercive apparatus. I spoke with police commanders, mayors, army officers, representatives from indigenous and afro-Colombian organizations, victim associations, reintegration program personnel, ombudsmen, attorney generals, intelligence officials, journalists, ex-combatants (both commanders and foot soldiers), remilitarized and imprisoned former paramilitaries, banana, palm, and wood plantation owners, cattle ranchers, ex-guerrillas (EPL, FARC, ELN), community leaders, politicians of the Community Action Committees (JAC) and the Local Administration Boards (JAL), Catholic priests, families of former commanders, and international organization personnel. I also consulted local and national media and NGO and government reports. Perhaps most importantly, I was wary of the information I received and analyzed it cognizant of its potential shortcomings and biases.

## **Appendix B. Elite Interviews & Document Collection**

### *Elite Interviews*

During my time in the field, I conducted over 200 in-depth interviews with experts on the Colombian civil conflict in general and the paramilitaries in particular. Every contact led to more interviews and meetings. Thus, in many respects, my elite sampling technique acquired a snowballing aspect. I interviewed professors at both national and regional universities in the fields of Political Science, Economics, Sociology, History, and Anthropology. I made sure to speak with academics at both public and private universities. I spoke with researchers at all of Colombia's major think tanks: Fundación Seguridad y Democracia, Fundación Ideas para la Paz, Corporación Arco Iris, CINEP, CERAC, CEDE, IEPRI, Fedesarrollo, CODHES, and Fundación Progresar. I also spoke with analysts and practitioners at the International Organizations present in Colombia: USAID, UNDP, OIM, MAPP/OEA, World Bank, International Crisis Group, and ICTJ. I interviewed a wide range of Colombian government officials from the intelligence branches (DAS, DIPOL, CTI, CIJIN), the security forces (Ministry of Defense, Police, Army, and Navy), the justice and human rights sectors (Fiscalía, Personería, Defensoría del Pueblo, ICBF), and policy makers (ex-presidents, senators, governors, mayors). I met with journalists from several of Colombia's national newspapers and magazines – *El Espectador*, *El Tiempo*, *Revista Semana* and *Voz* – and regional newspapers – *El Heraldo de Urabá*, *Urabá Hoy*, and *La Opinión*. I also interviewed a large number of the people working with the Reintegration Program for ex-combatants and the Reparations and Reconciliation Program for victims both at the national and local levels. Finally, I interviewed members of the church involved with conciliation and negotiation. These 'elite' interviews had very high response rates. The only non-respondents were due to scheduling issues (generally they were out of town during the dates I

was in the region). I conducted the interviews in the Colombian departments of Antioquia, Córdoba, Chocó, Bogotá, Cesar, Norte de Santander, Valle de Cauca, Magdalena, Bolívar, la Guajira, Atlántico, and Meta.

### *Document Collection*

To complement the interviews, I engaged in content analysis of the armed organizations' records and consulted newspapers, secondary literatures, and government documents. I was able to access most of the academic, think tank, and government research and data conducted on my topic. Additionally, with the help of a research assistant from the Universidad de los Andes, I collected articles from 10 national and regional newspaper articles 2002 to the present that cover the peace negotiations, demobilization process, reintegration, rearming phenomenon, and the so-called *parapolítica*. This work involved both searching the few newspapers, which had online search engines and going to the national library and regional newspaper offices and reading the physical copies of the newspapers page by page and photographing the relevant articles. Fortunately, the *Alta Consejería para la Reintegración* also hired a media firm to collect relevant articles on a daily basis beginning in January 2007 and the *Fundación Ideas para la Paz* similarly collected articles on the peace process. I gained access to these compilations of news reports. However, the former only collects information on reintegration and the latter is incomplete. Thus, I chose to complement these collections with my own. I also created a municipal-level violent event database of paramilitary, guerrilla and state violence of 43 years of data (1964-2007). This database combines a dataset I created by photographing and coding Colombian newspaper articles documenting violent events 1960-1984 and a dataset compiled by Fabio Sánchez (1984-2007).

## Appendix C. Survey Methodology

This dissertation project draws on data from nine surveys. This section presents their survey designs, enumeration strategies, and potential sources of bias.

<b>Table 22. Surveys</b>		
<i>Survey Name</i>	<i>Number Total Respondents</i>	<i>Number Usable Surveys</i>
Baseline Ex-Combatant Survey	31,472	31,472
SAME1 Ex-Combatant Survey	11,703	11,703
SAME2 Ex-Combatant Survey	28,235*	24,389
Comprehensive Ex-Combatant Survey	15,540	14,090
Survey of Ex-Combatants' Nuclear Families	2,247	2,245
Medellin Survey (OIM)	3,207	3,207
Comprehensive Survey of Ex-Combatants' Psychologists	226	226
Short Survey of Ex-Combatants' Psychologists	2,817	2,767
Civilian Community Survey	5,004	5,004
Prison Survey	120	120

\*Includes guerrillas and individually demobilized paramilitaries

### ***1. Organization of International Migration: Baseline Ex-Combatant Survey***

Organization of International Migration personnel were present in the 'concentration zones' of each of the paramilitary *bloques* prior to their demobilization. While there, they surveyed nearly the entire population of paramilitaries that disarmed: 31,472 of 31,638. The survey had three main objectives. The first was to obtain an assessment of the basic characteristics of the population as well as their expectations for the future in order to design a reintegration program that would meet its beneficiaries' needs. Second, the survey constituted the baseline data for the Sistema de Acompañamiento, Monitoreo, y Evaluación (SAME), which was created to 'accompany, monitor and evaluate' each individual ex-combatant's route back into civilian life. Third, the survey aimed to extract information on demobilized combatants' intended destination of post-war migration. This information was intended to help choose the



locations of the government's reintegration program offices (Reference and Opportunity Centers (CRO)).

Given that this survey interviewed nearly all the ex-paramilitaries, it provides me with basic information on the entire population of ex-combatants and, using the identification numbers, enables me to merge the other surveys with this database in order to understand their potential sampling biases and coverage errors.

## ***2. Organization of International Migration: SAME1 Ex-Combatant Survey***

Following the initial survey, the Organization of International Migration continued to monitor and evaluate the reintegration program (through SAME), conducting monthly surveys on the services provided. It also realized a more comprehensive ex-combatant survey. The purpose of this latter questionnaire was to gain insights into ex-combatants' perceptions about their reintegration processes. Specifically, it asked them to reflect on their integration into their communities, forgiveness and reconciliation experiences, family relations, intra-family violence, emotional control, consumption of psychoactive substances, and management of sexuality. The survey was administered through the OIM 'supervisors' who conducted semi-structured interviews with each member of their groups of ex-combatant beneficiaries (123 per supervisor). Coverage was good, but better in some places (Medellín reached 90% of the ex-combatants) than in others due to the OIM's reach; it did not have personnel in the entire country. The reasons for individual non-response to the SAME survey included: 1) the individuals could not be located; 2) they had security problems and thus preferred not to respond to the survey; 3) they were out of town at the time of the survey's application; or 4) they were either deceased, detained, or in psychiatric clinics.

### ***3. Organization of International Migration: SAME2 Ex-Combatant Survey***

Given its incomplete coverage, the OIM, in collaboration with the government's reintegration program, enumerated a third survey in 2007 (which I will call SAME2) to collect all missing data on the population of ex-combatants with which the program had contact (28,235). The missing data in this survey was almost perfectly proportionate to the ex-bloque populations, suggesting that being 'missing' was not associated with membership in any particular ex-faction.

The SAME2 survey collected information on ex-combatants' towns or origin and current residences, basic demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, family structure), employment and education histories and future trajectories, reintegration program services, health care, judicial status, security threats, and offers to rejoin armed groups. Combined, the SAME1 and SAME2 ex-combatants surveys provide relatively detailed information on 82% of the paramilitary population.

### ***4. Comprehensive Ex-Combatant Survey***

For a large-scale, individual-level survey of demobilized paramilitaries, I collaborated with the Colombian High Commission for Reintegration. This survey's population of inference was ex-combatants in post-conflict environments. The survey asked, among other things, about the ex-combatants' experiences in the armed groups, social networks, participation in ex-combatant NGOs, productive projects, political campaigns, businesses, and the conditions under which they deemed remilitarization justifiable.

*Survey Instrument.* The survey instrument, first developed in a graduate survey design course at Harvard University, benefitted from the feedback of the course professor and fellow students. It also was improved by suggestions from my dissertation committee, PRIO scholars, academics employing similar surveys in Africa, and Colombian individuals involved with the reintegration process. The Colombian Reintegration Program planned on conducting a survey similar to my own, which facilitated our collaboration.

*Sample Frame* The ACR administered monthly stipends, schooling, training, and psychological and social aid to nearly all of the demobilized individuals at 40 Centers of Service.<sup>690</sup> Each ex-combatant was assigned to a *tutor* (psychologist) with no more than 120 former fighters per tutor. The *tutores* conducted house visits to every ex-combatant (and their families) once per month in order to track their reintegration. Additionally, they carried out weekly workshops with the program's beneficiaries. These *tutores* conducted the survey. They had established rapport with and engendered the trust of the ex-paramilitaries. Additionally, the *tutores* were trained as social workers and psychologists and were therefore well suited to interview this vulnerable population. Finally, they enjoyed access to the entire population of demobilized ex-combatants. Thus, the sample frame was all ex-combatants in the Reintegration Program.

*Coverage Error.* For this research design, there were several sources of coverage error. One, 844 demobilized individuals had been killed.<sup>691</sup> Second, there were 3,171 'non-located' ex-combatants with whom the Reintegration Program had lost contact (this included individually demobilized guerrillas). To understand this population, I interviewed the 226 reintegration psychologists. Many ex-fighters exited the reintegration program and then later returned to it. I thus asked the psychologists why these ex-paramilitaries left the program, what they were doing while

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<sup>690</sup> 25,318 or 82% of the total ex-paramilitary population regularly went to these centers.

<sup>691</sup> As of May 2008.

outside the program, why they returned, and if they differed from the rest of the demobilized population in any systematic ways. I also explicitly tested if the ‘non-locatable’ ex-combatants were different than those that remained in the program by comparing these two populations’ profiles in the OIM baseline survey. Excluding them does not seem to bias the sample. It should be noted that “being located” by the Reintegration Program was oftentimes more a function of how long the ex-combatant had been demobilized than if s/he had returned to arms or not. Additionally, the mobility of ex-combatants rendered their whereabouts difficult to track.

Finally, there is an additional form of bias that plagues all the ex-combatant surveys in this study and indeed other ex-combatant surveys conducted worldwide. Not all ‘combatants’ who demobilize are part of the military structures of the armed groups, or even necessarily part of the armed groups at all. When asked if they suspect or know if any of their beneficiaries were not combatants in the guerrilla or paramilitary armies, 57% of the *tutores* responded ‘yes.’ Of their participants (on average 109 per *tutor*), an average of 6.4% were deemed not to have been combatants. This amounts to a total of 2,000 demobilized persons in the program. Ninety-three percent of the *tutores* did, however, believe that these ‘non-combatant’ participants in the reintegration process had had some link with the members of the armed groups. Of these, 41% believed them to have been friends of the members of the armed groups; 37% believed them to have been family members of the armed groups’ fighters, 16% responded that they were likely sympathizers of the armed groups, and 6% responded that they had had other functions within the groups: cooks, mechanics, drivers, forced collaborators, doctors, and girlfriends.

Even the ex-paramilitary commanders confirmed the ‘non-combatant’ status of some of the ex-combatants. For example, Ramón Isaza, in his testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, admitted, “There were many people in the demobilization that were not part of the Autodefensas

Campeñas de Magdalena Medio.”<sup>692</sup> Prior to disarmament, the government and conflict analysts estimated the paramilitaries to number 10,000 to 12,000 soldiers. Over 31,000 demobilized. The explanation given was that, for every military combatant, there were three ‘supporters’ providing intelligence, cooking food, sewing uniforms, fixing cars, etc. Thus, the numbers swelled to 30,000.<sup>693</sup> Another account held that the commanders “asked [civilians] to give their names on the list of combatants so that they would get the benefits and services (money, health, schooling) from the government. In this way the commanders enhanced their support bases.”<sup>694</sup>

I elaborate on this source of bias because the research design assumes that the ex-combatants were indeed former fighters or, at least formally belonged to the armed organizations in some way. If common civilians, their likelihood of reintegration is distinct from that of the ex-combatants. If common criminals, their likelihood of recidivism is similarly distinct from that of former paramilitaries. While the survey asked, “What was your rank and job during the war?,” the responses proved to be edited. Respondents believed that if they responded that they were “ex-combatants,” they might be tried for crimes against humanity, but if they instead said they were “supporters,” their role in the paramilitaries would be questioned and they would lose their reintegration benefits. Given the government’s official claim that all participants in the reintegration program belonged to the armed organizations and the inability of the researcher to separate out the ‘real’ from the ‘imposter’ ex-combatants in the data, I report this issue, but cannot resolve it.

*Mode.* This fourth ex-combatant survey, as the other surveys described above, used face-to-face mode for contacting respondents and conducting the surveys. The majority of individuals

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<sup>692</sup> Ramón Isaza, Testimony under the Justice and Peace Law, Bogotá, 30 April – 2 May 2007.

<sup>693</sup> The number of arms represents a reasonable estimate of the number of people in the military structure (the international standard is two arms for every person. 28,000 were turned in which puts the number of actual combatants at 14,000).

<sup>694</sup> Conflict analyst, interview by author, Bogotá, February 2008.

in the sample frame did not have telephones or internet access and thus face-to-face remained the only realistic mode. Additionally, the majority of ex-combatants had very low levels of education (50% had less than primary school education) and 12% were illiterate. Therefore, self-administered or highly technical tests would have been ineffective.

*Pilot.* The survey was piloted in four locations on 159 respondents across Colombia (Tierralta, Montería, Ibagué, and Villavicencio) with the goals of clarifying the hypotheses, refining the survey questions, and establishing the infrastructure for the full-scale survey. Focus groups were then held with the enumerators of the pilot surveys in order to gain their feedback on the survey instrument and administering procedures.

*Full Survey.* The survey was conducted on a total of 15,540 ex-combatants. The populations of ex-combatants in the sample were proportionate to the number of ex-combatants in each ex-paramilitary bloque.

### ***5. Ex-Combatants' Nuclear Family Survey***

A fifth survey was conducted of 2,247 randomly-selected nuclear families of ex-combatants. This survey was enumerated in the ex-combatants' homes, but without the former fighters present in order to create an environment of confidentiality. The idea of this survey was to triangulate the information given by the ex-combatants and to gain insights into the reintegration process from all different perspectives. Eighteen of those in the sample frame were not surveyed either because the ex-combatants lived alone and had no family nearby (15 cases), the family was deceased (2 cases), or the ex-combatants' family members were not aware that the individuals were demobilized (1 case).

The survey assessed six domains of the reintegration process: family type, family dynamics, housing characteristics, emotional control, use of psychoactive substances, and interactions with the community. The family members' answers spoke to their intimate relationship with the demobilized fighters, but also to their status as members of the civilian communities.

#### ***6. Comprehensive Survey of Ex-Combatants' Psychologists***

The sixth survey was administered to the psychologists charged with providing the ex-combatants, their families, and communities the reintegration benefits. As mentioned above, they met weekly with the demobilized paramilitaries, observed them at community events, met with their associations, and lived in their towns. The survey thus aimed to collect extensive information on the situation of reintegration, reconciliation, and remilitarization in each municipality in which the ex-combatants lived.

The instrument was piloted on a group of psychologists in Villavicencio, Apartadó, and Pereira, and was then administered to the entire population of psychologists who had been working in their municipalities for at least two months (n=226). The survey was anonymous in order to address potential sources of bias, namely employment desirability bias and fear of retribution bias. The psychologists sought positive employment reviews and thus, had the survey not been anonymous, they would have exaggerated the reintegration and reconciliation success in their regions. They also wished to uphold 'patient confidentiality' and not betray their human subjects. Last, they would have feared retribution by the ex-combatants and new armed groups for reporting on violence. The anonymous survey asked the psychologists if they felt that they could tell the ACR of their participants' involvement in illegal activities. 51% responded, 'no.'

While the majority explained this response in the following way – “I can’t ensure that the participants are involved with illegal activities, I only suspect it” – others confirmed their fear of poor evaluations, of betraying their participants’ trust, and of becoming a victim of aggression by one of the participants or an armed group. Thus, the survey’s *anonymity* proved critical. The *tutores* received the survey by email and then returned a paper copy anonymously to the ACR’s central office in Bogotá.

### ***7. Short Survey of Ex-Combatants’ Psychologists***

The psychologists of 2,817 randomly-selected ex-combatants were also asked to assess these ex-combatants’ reintegration process in order to further triangulate the evidence. This survey’s unit of analysis was the individual ex-combatant while the one described above uses the municipality as the unit of analysis.

### ***8. Civilian Community Survey***

The eighth survey was administered to civilian communities with a significant demobilized presence. The survey’s objective was to gain insights into community members’ assessments of the reintegration and reconciliation processes between the former fighters and the civilian populations.

The target population was all stakeholders in the 450 neighborhoods identified for the survey because of their large populations of ex-combatants. Stakeholders were defined as “relevant people in the political, civic and religious realms,” and “dynamics of the community, such as community leaders, mothers, housewives, members of the JACs, teachers,”<sup>695</sup> “mayors,

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<sup>695</sup> Mitchell, Angle and Word 1997.



leaders of the taxi drivers, NGOs, priests, etc.” These individuals were deemed to have “an objective reading of the communities.”<sup>696</sup>

After mapping the stakeholders according to their power and influence, the survey was administered by enumerators with previous knowledge of the neighborhoods that could identify the selected respondents. The respondents were proportional to the number of total inhabitants and number of ex-combatant inhabitants living in the neighborhoods.

The interviews were semi-structured, the conversations were open, but, during the interviews, the enumerator touched on all the specific themes in the instrument. This strategy was adopted in order to reduce mistrust and gain more accurate answers. 84% of the surveys were enumerated in the respondents’ homes, in an environment of confidentiality, which improved the quality of the data collected. The remaining surveys were carried out in public places: in churches, stores, schools, and clinics.

This survey offers a window into combatant-civilian relations. However, unfortunately, it was administered not across Colombia, but only in certain communities concentrated in Medellín, Urabá, Córdoba, and Norte de Santander, which do not constitute a representative sample of Colombian regions. Nonetheless, the survey provides reliable data in these cluster sites.

## ***9. Prison Survey***

Finally, in collaboration with the OAS-MAPP, I conducted a survey of recidivist ex-paramilitaries. The *population of inference* was former combatants who remilitarize: return to commit acts of violence after disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating. The *target population*

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<sup>696</sup> OIM Personnel, interview by author, Bogotá, 30 January 2008.

was the imprisoned population of former paramilitaries who rearmed, were captured, and imprisoned (1,797 ex-combatants).<sup>697</sup>

The project used cluster sampling. First, I established the numbers of ‘reincidentes’ (recidivists) in each prison and then sampled randomly within the five prisons with the largest imprisoned populations (to minimize cost, but ensure as unbiased a sample as possible). The list of recidivists from which I selected the random sample was compiled using databases from the Attorney General’s Office, National Police, and High Commission for Reintegration (ACR).

The survey was then administered to a sample of 120 ex-paramilitary inmates in Medellín’s Bellavista Prison, Bogotá’s La Picota Prison, Cúcuta’s Prison, and Valledupar’s maximum security and medium security prisons. Procedures for the selection of subjects within the prison were random and thus fair to all prisoners (each prisoner had an equal probability of being selected) and immune from arbitrary intervention by prison authorities or prisoners. In order to guarantee sufficient information on each of the variables of interest, I also used information on the potential respondents’ paramilitary blocs, where they operated during the war, and what type of crime they committed post-demobilization.

*Pilot.* Before realizing the full-scale survey, we conducted a pilot of five prisoners and, with this information, revised the questionnaire. We also gained a better sense of the prison system and how we could minimize the risks to our human subjects.

It should be noted that, while the prison authorities notified the individuals on my list that I wished to speak to them, they did not use the selection process to favor or punish prisoners. The prisoner’s participation in the research, moreover, had no consequences in terms of receiving benefits or punishments from the prison officials. Additionally, the respondents were not asked

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<sup>697</sup> 3,437 demobilized have been captured since 2003, but only 1,797 were imprisoned at the time of the survey in April – December 2008.

about any specifics of their or their comrades' crimes or activities during the war to ensure that they did not get in trouble with their ex-combatant colleagues and to ensure that the study had no effect on their judicial status.

Another potential concern was that prisoners who were not selected to be participants in the study would view the participants with jealousy, suspicion, or hostility. I did not find this concern to be applicable because, if prisoners wished to speak with us and express concerns about the reintegration program or their legal rights, they were permitted to do so, irrespective of their participation in the survey.

The benefits to the prison survey participants were emotional as there was no compensation for participation. The interview broke up the prisoners' relatively mundane lives, provided them the opportunity to tell their story, to explain their decisions, and to contribute to reintegration success and consolidated peace.

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