



Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America

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Book Review

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Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America, Sarah Zukerman Daly (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Why do some non-state actors, under the same peace accord, go back to violence in the aftermath of the disarming and demobilization of their armies, while others remain demilitarized? In her book, *Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America*, Sarah Zukerman Daly sheds light on this puzzling empirical observation. Going beyond cross-national comparisons of post-conflict peace endurance or violence recurrence, she offers a novel theory that seeks to explain how the organizational characteristics of specific armed groups affect the likelihood of those armed groups remaining committed to peace.

Specifically, she argues that in order to understand the post-war trajectories of different armed organizations it is necessary to dig into the geography of the recruitment strategies pursued by these non-state illegal organizations. Daly tests her theory by leveraging the rich variation of the post-war trajectories of the different armed units composing the Colombian right-wing militia, *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), following the 2003–2006 peace negotiations with former president Álvaro Uribe Vélez. After demobilization, around half of the thirty-seven militia groups remilitarized within the next five years after the signing of the peace accord, while the other half remained committed to the peace agreement.

Building on bargaining and information theory, as well as on the organization and networks literatures, Daly provides a two-step theory (described in chapter 2) connecting the geographic recruitment strategies of non-state violent groups with post-war remilitarization patterns. She defines two types of non-state armed groups: those that recruit where they deploy (that is local groups) and those that recruit from places different from where they deploy (that is non-local groups).

The first step of her theory links the geography of recruitment with post-war organizational capacity. She argues that locally staffed units tend

to have stronger pre-war networks, which should translate into greater group cohesion and lower information asymmetries. Furthermore, since locally recruited ex-combatants tend to remain in the same place where they fought during war, which renders local groups' combatants more geographically clustered after war, these local groups maintain stronger networks that facilitate information sharing, monitoring, and greater group cohesion. On the contrary, members of non-local groups tend to have weaker ties among themselves and are also more likely to disperse to different areas from where they fought once they demobilize. Hence, Daly hypothesizes that local groups' power and capacity, derived from the strength of their social networks, should be preserved in the aftermath of war. Meanwhile, non-local groups' power and capacity should weaken as their post-war social networks tend to erode and are more geographically dispersed.

Daly's second step explores the effect of the heterogeneity in regional configurations of armed groups on remilitarization. A regional configuration is the layout of "armed actors (state and non-state) with overlapping or continuous zones of operation at the time of demobilization" (24). She hypothesizes that different regional configurations imply differences in remilitarization incentives and in the effectiveness of that remilitarization. For instance, in areas under the influence of local groups exclusively, there is a higher probability of continued demilitarization as the distribution of power is not changing across groups. Regional configurations that combine local and non-local groups should be more prone to remilitarization as they experience a power shift from non-local groups with diminished organizational capacity to local groups. Finally, in regional configurations with non-local groups only, there is a shift in power where units remain uncertain about their relative power. Due to information problems and this power shift, Daly predicts a weak remilitarization of both sides.

Daly tests the hypotheses derived from her theory using a multi-method approach that combines statistical analysis of original databases, extensive fieldwork in Colombia, and more than three hundred in-depth interviews with ex-combatants and government officials, as well as victims of and experts on Colombia's armed conflict. She triangulates data from eleven different surveys conducted by herself and others, which measure the attitudes and experiences of ex-combatants as well as their families and psychologists. She also geocodes fine-grained data on instances of remilitarization and compiles a rich municipal-level dataset on violence recurrence.

Chapters 4 and 5 offer quantitative tests for each of the steps in her theory. For these, she operationalizes local-groups as those with at least one third of their staff being locally recruited. In chapter 4, using two ex-combatants surveys, she provides evidence suggesting that, indeed, local groups tend to be more embedded in pre-war social networks (both horizontal and vertical).

In addition, she shows that, after war, ex-combatants who operated locally were more likely to remain in or return to their place of origin (86 percent using a recidivism survey she conducted in Colombia between 2011–2014) than those who operated non-locally (46 percent). She provides additional robustness checks to show that individual level pre-war characteristics did not differ between those who were locally recruited and those who were recruited non-locally, reducing possible selection concerns in the regression analysis.

Chapter 5 offers empirical evidence supporting Daly's predictions about the expected remilitarization patterns followed by different regional configurations of demobilized paramilitaries in Colombia. She analyzes "how local and non-local organizations strategically interact with each other and with the state, and why and how they remilitarize or demilitarize" (p. 97). She finds that her theory correctly predicts the post-war trajectories of thirty-one out of the thirty-seven militias in Colombia (some of the deviant cases are explored in depth in subsequent chapters). She complements this evidence with a municipal-level analysis, increasing the sample size and thus allowing her to include other municipal-level covariates that the literature on civil war and peace has associated with remilitarization. Here too, her theory is corroborated both in terms of remilitarization and the intensity of violence.

Chapters 6 and 7 present three in-depth case studies: Bloque Cacique Nutibara (which demilitarized); Bloque Catatumbo (which weakly remilitarized); and Bloque Elmer Cárdenas (which strongly remilitarized). These chapters provide further evidence for the causal mechanisms linking the geography of recruitment with post-war trajectories, and also offer nuance to her theory as she highlights the role of other factors that may explain conflict recurrence (that is long-term dynamics, the presence of other non-state actors, and the rents from illegal activities). Chapter 8 explores the scope of conditions and the external validity of her theory outside the case of Colombian militias. She shows that the conditions present in Colombia exist elsewhere in Latin America, as well as outside the region, and as such, sets an agenda for future research extending beyond the Colombian case.

The book makes a number of notable contributions, and in taking on such a large task, there will always be additional questions that are raised and cannot be answered in the text. For instance, while the book offers a conceptual and operational definition of remilitarization, it does not fully account for the full complexity of the phenomenon, which can take a variety of forms. While the demobilization of militias certainly created a power vacuum (leading to increased insecurity and, in some instances, to a demand for private protection of illegal activities) that was filled by old paramilitaries with a continuation of their pre-demobilization structures, new groups also emerged, sometimes led by midlevel or non-demobilized commanders, as well as by other non-state actors, such as left-wing guerrillas.

In understanding the extension of the argument to other cases within and outside Colombia, it is important to note the decentralized character of the AUC. The independent operation of these militias plays a key role in allowing the different remilitarization trajectories. Yet one open question is to what extent this logic travels to more hierarchical structures with a clearly defined and unified leadership (that is the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*). A more thorough discussion of how these internal dynamics of the AUC are expected to extend to more centralized organizations would provide a compelling addition to the final chapters of the book.

Daly's book offers novel insights on the correlates of peace endurance, and provides unique quantitative and qualitative evidence on the dynamics of post-war trajectories at the organization level. Her focus on the social networks of these non-state violent organizations contributes to the scholarship on conflict resolution and will certainly be relevant for practitioners who seek to design enduring peace agreements.

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