

# **The Agrarian Legacies of Latin American Civil Wars in Comparative Perspective**

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Civil wars leave sharply contrasting legacies for rural communities. Drawing on three case studies – El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru – we show how the strategies of armed actors (particularly violence against civilians) shape wartime social processes at the local level. These processes include: political mobilization by various actors, the socialization of combatants into armed organizations, the militarization of local authority, the transformation and polarization of identities, the transformation of local political economies, and the transformation of gender roles. We then trace the effects of these social processes – together with state policies and reforms mandated by negotiated accords, where devised and implemented — on postwar agrarian legacies. We extend our discussion to include an initial analysis of agrarian legacies in Colombia, noting the profound and varied effects of wartime processes on agrarian social relations. We conclude with a brief discussion of the implications for policy and further research.

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The US Civil War left dramatic changes in its wake, particularly in the South. The emancipation of slaves generated changes in the forms of capital, in labor, and in social relations generally. Although there was little transfer of property in the immediate wake of the war, tenancy evolved from the dominant plantation model to the renting of small parcels and sharecropping. Merchants re-emerged as lenders, and slaves as tenants and sharecroppers. In short, agrarian inequality continued but took a new shape, enduring for almost a century until the advent of the Civil Rights Movement. Thus civil wars may sharply transform social relations, property rights, and social structure in the contested countryside in ways that may endure for decades.

The degree to which civil conflicts transform agrarian social relations, property rights, and social structures varies sharply across contemporary civil wars: the legacy of civil war in El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru are quite different, to take only Latin American cases. Yet this theme is little studied in the recent literature on civil war, which has focused on violence, conflict onset, negotiated resolution, and – to a lesser extent – on the legacy of war for political participation and state formation.<sup>1</sup> And while much research has been devoted to agrarian tensions as a *source* of conflict, they are rarely discussed as a *result* of conflict (but see Hartman (2015) on Liberia in the aftermath of civil war).

In this essay, we analyze six social processes that contribute to such legacies by transforming key actors, local social norms, and local social structures including ethnic and class hierarchies and gender relations. We show how the strategies of armed actors (state forces, insurgents, and private militias such as paramilitaries), especially their patterns of violence and of control over territory and civilian life, shape six local wartime social processes. These processes are: *political mobilization by various actors, socialization of combatants into armed organizations, the militarization of local authority, the transformation and polarization of identities, the transformation of local political economies, and the transformation of gender roles.*

This chapter begins by defining the six social processes. We then briefly summarize the strategies of armed actors in civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru, and analyze the processes for each, drawing on Wood 2008 (for the translation, see Wood (2010)). We then trace their effects, together with state policies and reforms mandated by negotiated accords, on postwar agrarian legacies. We draw preliminary lessons for the nascent peace in Colombia, after tentatively characterizing the social processes experienced during its very long civil war, and noting their profound and varied effects on agrarian social relations. As the conflict between the state and the FARC appears to be drawing to a close, our analysis may be relevant not only for scholarly understanding, but also for policy-making in the aftermath of the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Recent contributions include Bauer *et al.* (2016), Blattman (2009), Jha and Wilkinson (2012), Miguel *et al.* (2011), and Sambanis *et al.* (2015).

## 1. *The social processes of civil war*

The strategies of violence, control, and rule by armed actors fundamentally alter local social structures, relations, and norms – and thus war’s agrarian legacy. To address the relative gap in the literature on war’s social processes at the local level, we focus here on six such processes that appear most consequential for the post-war period. These processes are inherently local, as they emerge from the specific strategies deployed by armed groups in the particular locale (which can vary from unit to unit) and by the response of local civilians (which is often mediated by existing local authority and cultural norms). Note that war sometimes changes the pace of an ongoing process – as occurred with the rapid growth of an illicit coca economy in Colombia – but may also put in motion a process present only during conflict.

The six processes are:

- *Political mobilization*: During war, armed organizations and local elites often organize civilians into networks that then engage in private or public actions for political goals. These networks provide valuable resources to combatants – especially intelligence, supplies, transportation, and recruits – which ultimately transform relationships to the land and means of production in peacetime. In some settings, civilians organize themselves to resist all armed actors, a distinct form of wartime mobilization (Masullo, 2017).
- *Socialization of combatants into armed organizations*: When civilians join armed organizations (either voluntarily or under coercion), they must be socialized in the use of violence in service of the group’s goals. These socialization processes – from hazing rituals during initial training, to witnessing and wielding violence firsthand – can have profound consequences for combatants and for postwar society after their demobilization.
- *Militarization of local authority*: Armed actors, be they insurgents, state agents of members of militias, often supplant local forms of governance during war. Even when former local elites – local authorities and landlords – remain in place or in control of assets, local authority may nonetheless be militarized through an alliance with an armed actor, be it the state, a pro-state militia (which they may have founded), or even occasionally an insurgent organization. Militarization may be more profound when military rule entirely eclipses that of civilians.
- *Transformation and polarization of local identities*: Violence, the fear of violence, and the imposition of forms of control and governance by armed actors can transform and polarize local identities. Distrust and local social segregation often increase as war continues. In the face of violence by one group, local residents who are members of a targeted or third group – be it ethnic or social – may either signal their loyalty to the first group, or seek the protection of another armed actor altogether. In either case, the result is the same: limited choice for civilians, which forces new alliances and exacerbates social divisions, leading to increasingly polarized local identities. Moreover, armed organizations may manipulate local social divisions, as when they force local residents to choose

among them – “*si no estás con nosotros, estás con el otro*” – creating a polarization of public identities. And of course violence may break social relations between groups in a much more direct way, particularly through the forcible displacement of a social group, which often leaves behind an increased homogeneity of identities.

- *Transformation of the local political economy.* Where local elites are displaced, either physically from the locality or metaphorically from their usual economic activities, new forms of production and labor emerge. This process typically includes a decline in both public and private investment and a reduced scale of agrarian production, moving towards a subsistence model. As local economies contract, markets for labor, inputs, and products shrink, infrastructure including roads and bridges decline, and credit disappears. All of these changes fundamentally transform local livelihoods. In addition, other wartime processes also alter the structure of agrarian property rights: for example, the transfer of de facto property rights through wartime occupation, and (in some settings) the emergence of new markets in land. In other contexts, however, different processes may dominate. Where there are illicit crops, it is often the case that a reconcentration of land holdings occurs, rather than a fragmentation, as we will see below in the case of Colombia. Or the counterinsurgent policies of the state may strongly shape the local political economy.
- *Transformation of gender roles.* The emergence of women as economic, social and sometimes political actors during war is a common feature of conflict settings. Girls and women also participate in some insurgent forces, and sometimes in state forces as well, constituting a remarkable shift in gender roles in those settings. Gender roles may also reflect a militarization of masculinity and/or an increase in sexual violence.

In this theory-building essay, we advance two claims (see Figure 1). First, we suggest that wartime social processes are strongly shaped by the strategies of the armed actors, particularly their patterns of violence and strategies of control of territory. Second, we suggest that these social processes transform agrarian social relations and structures to varying degrees in distinct wars: for example, when new political structures govern (whether formally or not) the use of the land, or when reconstructed gender roles affect patterns in landholding and agricultural employment. Social processes also often influence the agrarian terms of the peace accord and related state policy vis-à-vis peacebuilding. In El Salvador, for example, the peace accord included provisions to transfer land to peasants who had occupied farms in contested areas (Wood 2000). The initial occupations were by insurgent “cooperatives” allied with the insurgents; later, landless families seeking land before the war’s end joined as well (Wood 2003).

**Figure 1: Agrarian transformations in civil war**



## **2. *The strategies of armed actors in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru***<sup>2</sup>

The local strategies of state and non-state armed actors are key determinants of the social processes underpinning civil war and thus of agrarian legacies. We first analyze the strategies of violence and control by armed actors during three civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru. By an actor's "pattern of violence" we mean its repertoire, targeting, and frequency of violence against civilians (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2017).

In El Salvador, leftist insurgents, who were influenced by both Marxist/Leninist ideology and liberation theology, rebelled against an authoritarian state whose military rulers generally colluded with economic elites to maintain a highly unequal society based on a labor repressive model of agriculture (Wood 2000). More than 50,000 civilians (in a country of five million people) were killed during the war.<sup>2</sup> Lethal violence during El Salvador's civil war was extremely asymmetric: state agents were responsible for 85 percent of deaths while the insurgent group, the Frente Farabundo Martí para Liberación Nacional (FMLN), was responsible only for 5 percent, with the rest unattributable (Truth Commission for El Salvador 1993). State violence to control both territory and population was widespread in the first several years of the war: entire families and villages were targeted for pro-insurgent activities on the part of a few members. The state at times initiated efforts to build civilian loyalties, including by carrying out an agrarian reform in exchange for US funding, and exerted violence more selectively after the US threatened in late 1983 to cut off military aid. However, the state returned to indiscriminate violence in response to the FMLN's 1989 offensive in San Salvador when it bombed some neighborhoods (in addition to its assassination of six Jesuit priests, intellectuals who had called for social change and negotiations). Sexual violence, although not as widespread as in some other conflicts, was also committed disproportionately by state agents (Wood, 2006). On the part of the FMLN, the overall pattern of violence through the war was one of restraint (Hoover Green, 2011). Due to strong networks of civilian support for the insurgents, the state was eventually forced to recognize that a negotiated settlement was the only exit from war (Wood, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> This section draws on Wood 2008.

The overarching pattern of violence in Guatemala was still more asymmetric than in El Salvador, as state forces carried out genocidal violence against some indigenous groups thought to support the insurgents (Ball *et al.*, 1999). More than 200,000 people were killed, more than 90 percent of them by state forces and allied paramilitary groups (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, 1999). The insurgent forces were too weak to offer protection to villagers. The state forcibly resettled more than 400 indigenous villages to towns in order to break their ties to insurgents. Although the terms of the peace agreement were broadly similar to those in El Salvador, few were implemented. In short, war did not forge the type of transformation of the political economy and political system in Guatemala as it did in El Salvador.

In sharp contrast, lethal violence in Peru's civil war was much more symmetric. Sendero Luminoso, a Maoist insurgent group that endorsed violence as an absolute value and an act of purification, was responsible for more than half of reported fatalities, and state agents for about a third of deaths and disappearances (CVR, 2003, Vol 8, third section: 317). Violence was concentrated in the indigenous highlands of the Andes and the Amazonian lowlands, and to a lesser degree, in Lima. Responsibility for the cases of sexual violence reported to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were, however, quite asymmetric, with state agents responsible for 83 percent of the reported cases of reported rape (*ibid*, Vol 6, Chap 1: 274-9). The insurgents became increasingly abusive of civilians as the war progressed, particularly after they were pushed out of their initial strongholds (which occurred in many highland areas by 1984 or 1985). Throughout the 1980s, Sendero carried out an increasing number of massacres, while state forces became much more selective in their violence (Degregori, 1999: 79). In the Amazon region, Sendero units forced entire communities to move to base camps to work on behalf the insurgency; community members were not allowed to leave, and in some camps, insurgent leaders forced girls and young women into sexual relationships (CVR, 2003, Vol 6, chap 1: 287-92).

### **3. *The social processes of war in El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru***

Across all three cases, the strategies of armed actors strongly influenced local social processes. The civilian response, albeit in a context of severely limited choice, also contributes to the form and extent of each social process.

*Political mobilization* of both insurgents and civilians varied sharply across the three cases. In El Salvador, broad networks of civilians supported the insurgents – particularly by providing intelligence – and became ever more proactive throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, including through the occupation of large swaths of farmland. In Guatemala, although there were some such networks, given the weakness of the insurgents, they were used to justify the state's genocidal policies (Stoll, 1993). In sharp contrast to both, Sendero Luminoso was increasingly coercive and also hierarchical in its relations with civilians. The mobilization of combatants also differed in the Peruvian case. Recruitment by the Central American insurgents was overwhelmingly, though not exclusively, voluntary; in contrast, forced recruitment by Sendero increased year by year in Peru.

Counterinsurgent mobilization took distinct forms across the three cases, although in all three cases such mobilization did occur at the local level. In El Salvador, agrarian elites created and led militias even before the war, drawing on their clients and local veterans. In Guatemala, the military displaced entire indigenous communities and forced adult males to participate in civil defense patrols (Bateson, 2014). In Peru as in Guatemala, the military forcibly recruited indigenous youth, subjected them to strong processes of military socialization. In response to insurgent abuse, civilians in some regions organized local self-defense forces, drawing on a local institutional form, the *ronda campesina* (Starn, 1999). They also increasingly collaborated with state forces.

Following recruitment, civilians were *socialized into armed organizations*, through formal indoctrination and training, informal processes of hazing and solidarity, and the social psychological experience of witnessing and undertaking acts of violence. The intensity of indoctrination varied sharply across organizations. For example, the FMLN's repeated political education, which emphasized the importance of respect for civilians, was in sharp contrast to the nearly absent political education of state recruits. This difference in the intensity and content of indoctrination largely accounts for the armed actors' sharply different patterns of violence (Hoover Green 2011, 2016). Sendero Luminoso similarly emphasized political indoctrination, but with sharply different content. While both forces were in the Latin American tradition of leftist insurgencies, the FMLN drew on liberation theology as well as Marxist-Leninist teaching, while Sendero developed what it saw as a fundamentally new version of Maoism (Degregori, 1999). While socialization into state militaries is not well studied, hazing and abuse of new recruits, particularly indigenous youth, appears to have been common in all three cases.

As civilians came under the control and/or were recruited by armed groups, *identities were increasingly transformed and polarized*. In Guatemala, indigenous families suffered indiscriminate state violence as the army moved across the highlands, polarizing communities between those few who continued to support the insurgents, and the many who feared the consequences of *anyone's* doing so (whatever their private preferences). In Peru, communal forms of work disappeared during the war, until their re-emergence in the limited form of rondas in some areas. Private identities also polarized in some contexts, often as a result of moral indignation. In El Salvador, as a result of widespread and indiscriminate state violence, many passed from non-violent forms of activism to support for the armed insurgents (Wood, 2003). In sharp contrast, in Peru, many passed from an ambivalent and vague support for the insurgents to a profound rejection of them as a result of growing violence against civilians (Schubiger, 2013).

In El Salvador, *the militarization of local authority* took a particular form. In conflicted regions where insurgents dominated, classes were inverted, such that former share-croppers, workers, and small farmers allied to the insurgents not only farmed on an increased scale (made possible by the absence of large landowners), but also governed through civic associations on a significant scale (Wood, 2003). An inversion also occurred in Peru, but one of generations: with the arrival of Sendero, local youths who joined came to hold authority over local elders (Degregori, 1999). In both Guatemala and Peru, military bases became the locus of the state. Even if authority remains formally

civil, typically in contested areas, it is nonetheless dominated by armed actors, guiding resource flows toward its priorities and controlling local decision making processes, including elections. In Guatemala, the military forced male residents of contested areas to participate in civil defense patrols under their command, a sharp displacement of authority to military commanders.

The *transformation of the local political economy* in the Salvadoran case was driven by the counterinsurgency agrarian reform, the flight of landlords, the emergence of a land market driven by landlord willingness to sell and remittances from the US, and the widespread occupation of farms by local organizations covertly allied with the insurgents. In contrast, in Guatemala, the military engaged in a massive project of social engineering through forcibly displacing indigenous communities from their land and way of life. In Peru, Sendero Luminoso suppressed participation in local and regional markets, forcing households to grow for their own consumption or to flee. Violence by both the state and rebels also contributed to the widespread displacement of rural households, particularly from indigenous communities (Coral, 1994).

Finally, *gender roles were transformed* during these civil wars, particularly in El Salvador and Peru. In those settings, women became interlocutors with the state in seeking the whereabouts of disappeared family members or insisting on accountability for atrocities. In all three countries, women constituted 30 to 40 percent of the insurgent forces. They also became leaders of civic organizations and social movements. In El Salvador, and likely other contexts, girls and women also play an increased role in economic production outside the home, moving from home production to the service sector in some settings. In other settings, they experienced increased access to land (but with less access to credit and markets).

#### **4. Agrarian legacies of civil war**

The strategies of armed actors, and the attendant social processes of war, transform agrarian structures and relations, but in different ways and to distinct degrees across and within countries.

In El Salvador, the agrarian sector was radically reshaped in some regions through the displacement of elites, a significant counterinsurgent agrarian reform, and the mobilization of *campesinos* in alliance with the FMLN. After the war, land was distributed significantly more equally, and *campesinos* demonstrated dramatically increased political capacity (McElhinney, 2006; Seligson, 1995; Wood, 2000). For example, *campesinos* mobilized to eliminate the agrarian debt, offered crucial support for the new leftist party, and consolidated alternative models of development in some locations.

In sharp contrast, change was minimal in Guatemala. Land remained extremely unequally distributed.<sup>3</sup> Although social relations changed to some extent, as evident in the post war political mobilization of indigenous groups, the profound changes envisioned in the peace agreement were not realized; this was in part because the

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<sup>3</sup> III Censo Nacional Agropecuario, República de Guatemala, 1979. Cited in Lastarria-Cornhiel, S. (2003).

necessary changes to the constitution failed to pass a required referendum (Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 2011). The state continues to collect very little revenue and the structure of taxation remains very regressive. Nonetheless, the war did leave some legacies, including the militarization of the Petén (Grandia, 2013), an increase in capacity for political mobilization by some indigenous groups, and a pattern of collective violence (lynching of suspected criminals) in areas where defense patrols had been imposed during the war (Bateson, 2014).

In Peru, an agrarian reform occurred *before* the war emerged. Yet land distribution remains extremely unequal, with the top one percent of farm plots encompassing more than three quarters of farmland (Censo Agropecuario, 2012). A series of laws and regulations were passed in the early 1990s as civilian support for *Sendero Luminoso* declined. Collectively, these laws allowed for the privatization of *campesino* lands, the purchase of lands by corporations, and unlimited land ownership by a single owner (Burneo, 2011). They thus partly paved the way for the expansion of agribusiness in some regions and the rapid development of mines in others. Elsewhere, the postwar period saw increased production of illicit crops (e.g., coca), a legacy of the insurgents' reliance on trafficking.

Table 1 summarizes the strategies of armed actors, the resultant social transformations wrought by civil war, and the agrarian legacies, in these three polities.

**Table 1:** Summary of three Latin American cases

<b>Process</b>	<b>El Salvador</b>	<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Peru</b>
<b>Strategies of armed actors</b>	<b>FMLN:</b> cultivation of peasant support; restraint in violence <b>State forces:</b> initially indiscriminate violence; then increasingly selective, occasional, and generally ineffective attempts to capture hearts and minds	<b>Insurgents:</b> similar to FMLN, but much less effective <b>State forces:</b> widespread, indiscriminate violence, especially against indigenous communities	<b>Sendero Luminoso:</b> more coercive approach to civilians than other insurgencies; valorization of violence <b>State forces:</b> initially indiscriminate with widespread forced recruitment; then increasingly selective
<b>Social processes</b> <i>Political mobilization</i>	<b>FMLN:</b> broad, largely voluntary networks of civilian support <b>State forces:</b> forced recruitment	<b>Insurgents:</b> more limited, voluntary civilian support <b>State forces:</b> used limited insurgent support to justify genocidal policies; forced participation in civil defense patrols	<b>Sendero Luminoso:</b> increasingly coercive and hierarchical relationships with civilians. <b>State forces:</b> later, mobilization into <i>rondas</i>
<i>Socialization of combatants</i>	<b>FMLN:</b> political education emphasizing respect for civilians <b>State forces:</b> no substantial education	<b>Insurgents:</b> Political education but less developed and frequent than in El Salvador <b>State forces:</b> violent socialization into military of forced recruits,	<b>Sendero Luminoso:</b> Coercive recruitment and indoctrination compared to other insurgencies <b>State forces:</b> violent socialization into military of forced recruits,

<b>Process</b>	<b>El Salvador</b>	<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Peru</b>
		particularly indigenous youth	particularly indigenous youth
<i>Transformation and polarization of local identities</i>	Active support for insurgents in some regions due to widespread state violence; high levels of civilian displacement	Sharp divisions between those who did and did not support insurgents; displacement of indigenous communities	As war continued, rejection of insurgents by civilians due to their violence and coercion; disappearance of communal forms of work
<i>Militarization of local authority</i>	Class inversion, with small farmers and others taking on increasing roles in governance	Militarization of local authority through the displacement or cooptation of civilian leaders and forced participation in civil defense forces	Generational inversion, with youth assuming positions of power
<i>Transformation of local political economy</i>	Agrarian reform, flight of landlords, land market driven by landlord willingness to sell and US remittances; widespread occupation of farms by allies of insurgents	Little or no transformation	Reconcentration of landholding in some areas due to illicit crops
<i>Transformation of gender roles</i>	Women as combatants, leaders in civic life, and interlocuters with the state; increased role for women and girls in economic production and access to land	Women as combatants and leaders in civic life	Women as combatants, leaders in civic life, and interlocuters with the state
<b>Resulting agrarian legacies</b>	Diversification of agrarian social relations, including land distribution and use; emergence of strong civic associations of rural poor in areas of wartime insurgent strength	Displacement of villages and families, weakening of communal ties; little transformation of landholding; collective violence in areas where civil defense patrols had operated	Creation of new agrarian structures ( <i>rondas campesinas</i> ), informing the practices of future mobilizations (e.g., anti-mining); increasing production of illicit crops; the expansion of agri-business in some regions; the rapid development of mines

## 5. Colombia in comparative perspective

At the time of writing (mid 2017), Colombia appears to be undergoing a transition away from civil war as the dominant insurgent group, the FARC, demobilizes (negotiations with the weaker ELN continue). The country is thus confronting the social, economic, and agrarian legacies of the region's longest armed conflict. While much remains to be determined, especially regarding the implementation of the recent peace deal, we here draw preliminary lessons for the country's agrarian future, based on the strategies of armed actors and the social transformations they caused. The fifty-year Colombian civil war is far longer than the other conflicts, with whole generations having experienced nothing but war. We thus might expect the social transformations to run

deeper and, arguably, persist longer into the post-conflict period. This section focuses on the most salient legacies for the country, acknowledging that there was and is extraordinary variation across regional and local settings.

Over the course of Colombia's civil war, approximately 7.2 million civilians were displaced by the direct exercise of violence (only El Salvador saw a higher per capita rate of displacement), 268,000 were killed, 47,000 were disappeared, and 31,000 kidnapped (figures for "direct victims" as of May 2017, Registro Único de Víctimas;<sup>4</sup> see also CNMH 2013). Compared to the other Latin American conflicts, there were more insurgent groups (five total) and a variety of "third" actors, such as the pro-state paramilitaries and, more recently, the *bandas criminales*, many of whom were remobilized paramilitaries (Daly 2016). The FARC and the paramilitaries killed roughly equal numbers of civilians (the figures are imprecise as the perpetrator is missing from many entries in relevant databases); the paramilitaries carried out significantly more massacres; the FARC engaged in more kidnappings for ransom (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood, 2017: 29 – 33). Both displaced civilians on a large scale, particularly away from areas of strategic or financial interest (both relied on income from trafficking in illicit crops, particularly coca).

Civilians were thus often caught between multiple armed groups, and over the course of the conflict, a single region could have passed between the control of three or four different groups. As a result, voluntary and involuntary migration toward urban centers occurred on a massive scale, profoundly reshaping the balance of power and social relations in Colombia's countryside.

In addition, while the variation across regions is immense, there is nonetheless an unambiguous overarching pattern of increasing land concentration (Ibáñez and Muñoz 2010), in particularly sharp contrast to the fragmentation of agrarian property in El Salvador. To accumulate and concentrate lands in their own hands and the those of their supporters, armed groups engaged in extensive forced dispossession (land grabs), not just forced displacement. Indeed, in the Colombian case, dispossession was a distinct tactic of war with different motivations: *strategic* (i.e. to clear territory for military or political purposes), *clientelist* (i.e. to compensate supporters), and *opportunistic* (i.e. to transfer to the armed group or affiliates as opportunities arose) (Gutiérrez Sanín 2014).

This dispossession was driven in no small part by local and international economic interests, especially the expansion of coca (which increased displacement in the Pacific and in border areas), large-scale cattle ranching (which often coincided with paramilitary violence, including massacres; Gutiérrez, Starr, and Marín.), palm oil (which often coincided with increased paramilitary presence and homicides), and mining (which led to greater land speculation and appropriation, replacing agriculture in some areas and destroying environmentally sensitive areas in others) (International Training Programme for Conflict Management, 2012). These trends not only affected the land of small farmers, who were displaced, often multiple times, but also state land. Between 2002 and 2012, a third of the state's uncultivated land that was distributed went to political and

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<sup>4</sup> Registro Único de Víctimas (Unique Registry of Victims), consulted May 7, 2017.

economic elites, many of whom were affiliated with armed groups (Revista Semana, 2012).

Finally, armed groups in Colombia infiltrated, militarized, and thereby captured authorities in many localities (López Hernández, Ávila Martínez, et al. 2010). This capture of local authority stands in contrast to El Salvador and Peru, where authorities were largely displaced. This trend likely has profound implications for the post-conflict period. In many areas, local authorities are still affiliated with former paramilitaries with a vested interest in perpetuating the agrarian and social structures that emerged during the war. In other areas, decades of war left communities able to govern themselves (Vargas, 2017). As violence has decreased, processes of historical memory – e.g., reparations to communities, the construction of local commemorative museums, and potential future testimony before the truth commission – may also form part of the emergent social legacies of war.

Nonetheless, the legacies (agrarian and otherwise) of the Colombian conflict are yet to be determined. As of writing, the main insurgent group, the FARC, is undergoing demobilization, and land restitution is ongoing, among other factors. Moreover, there is already great regional variance in postwar legacies, with some communities continuing to traffic in illicit crops and living in the relative absence of the state (e.g., on the Amazon frontier), while others have seen a dramatic uptick in agricultural production by multinationals. This tremendous regional variation poses some challenges for the peace accords, as the Colombian government seeks to address diverse social transformations and, as a result, divergent post-conflict legacies.

## **6. Conclusion**

The social processes of war occur to different degrees across conflicts (and regions within each). They nonetheless often leave behind profound legacies for the post-conflict period. Of course these legacies are often tragic and hinder progress toward sustainable peace. Yet at times, civil wars uproot or disrupt unjust social systems, offering the possibility of leveraging war's legacy for positive change. For example, in El Salvador, the democratization of social relations in rural areas, as well as of the political regime, made possible alternative, more egalitarian models of rural development in several regions. Of course, not all legacies persist. For example, the transformation of gender roles may reverse significantly in the aftermath of war as combatants return and take up positions that women held during the war.

In Colombia, while the social processes of war varied by region, they have already left profound legacies for the post-conflict period, especially for the country's agrarian future. Many will likely persist – for example, the accelerated transition to urban society; the creation of new local political structures, networks, and expectations, especially in the countryside; and the growing concentration of land, often to support international markets in coca, palm oil, and mining.

It is hard to know whether these legacies will be a net positive or a net negative for Colombia. In the meantime, though, strong rule of law, improved implementation of

the country's land restitution program, and concrete economic and social supports for former armed groups and civilian victims can help mitigate potential negative effects.

A broad research agenda follows from this analysis. By assessing regional differences within each country, scholars could link particular social processes of war to specific post-war legacies. Identification of such legacies and their generating mechanisms would contribute to the emerging literature on agrarian legacies in other contexts, beyond Latin America and twentieth century civil wars (Boone, 2017; Hartman, 2015). One issue that merits further research is how such legacies differ between conflicts that were motivated, at least in part, by agrarian inequality and those that were not. More work is also needed to understand how legacies evolve over time, the conditions that facilitate their persistence, and how negotiated settlements can mitigate against – or promote – particular agrarian legacies. Finally, these legacies can have cross-national effects, and further research can help uncover how civil war affects the agrarian and social composition of neighboring countries.

As this research agenda evolves, we must bear in mind that while social processes of war shape agrarian legacies, they need not be determinative. Policymaking by regional, national, and even international players, when informed by an understanding of the specific legacies left in the wake of war, can start to undo pernicious transformations and to strengthen beneficial ones. Civic participation through elections and also social mobilization can forge greater accountability on the part of policymakers. And research can help describe and explain the changes wrought by war, revealing problems that need addressing and opportunities that might be seized. Above all, countries emerging from war – like Colombia – can be influenced as much by the choices (explicit or implicit) that they make today, as by the lingering effects of the past.

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