



# A Theory of Civilian Noncooperation with Armed Groups

Civilian Agency and Self-Protection in the Colombian Civil War

Juan Masullo J.

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute

Florence, October 24, 2017



European University Institute  
**Department of Political and Social Sciences**

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## **Abstract**

This study deals with the collective roles that civilians come to play in the context of civil war. Concretely, it documents and analyzes a little studied pattern of civilian agency: civilian noncooperation with armed groups. It develops a theory that specifies where and when civilians are more likely to organize themselves to refuse non-violently to cooperate with armed organizations. Where territorial control is shifting, where violence against civilians has recently spiked, and where targeting is perceived as unavoidable, a desire for noncooperation is likely to evolve. However, this desire is not enough for us to observe organized noncooperation. Campaigns of noncooperation are likely to emerge when desire meets capacity for collective action. Localities with a prior history of mobilization and/or with the support of external actors are more likely to count on the leadership and the associational space needed for organizing action. These conditions are found to be individually necessary and jointly sufficient across three different ideal types of noncooperation: oblique, pacted and unilateral. Complementing this set of expectations, the study specifies a limited number of cognitive and relational mechanisms that explain the pathway towards noncooperation.

Civilian noncooperation is proposed both as a strategy of community self-protection and a form of contentious politics. In this sense, the study bridges scholarship on the micro-dynamics of civil war, civil resistance, social movements/collective action and civilian protection. The analysis is embedded in a three-stage research design that combines within-case analysis, cross-case structured and focused comparisons, and paired comparisons of positive and control observations. The empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative, was gathered during two separate waves of field research in warzones using different techniques of data collection. These included over 150 individual and group interviews with civilians and (ex)combatants, memory workshops, collective map-drawing and timeline-building exercises, and direct observation.

The goal of this study is accomplished to the extent that it succeeds in the art of combining parsimonious theorization of an outcome with the smells and sounds of the complex processes that give life to that outcome. In other words, providing sensitive simplification and empirically falsifiable claims is as important as offering a realistic and fair account of the lives of the communities I lived and worked with over the past years. Ultimately, it is for the reader to judge.



**A mi padre, Eduardo Masullo.**

“The Dharma Gates are infinite; I vow to enter them all.”



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# Acronyms

ACAT	Peasant Association of the Atrato.
ACCU	Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá.
ACDEGAM	Association of Cattle Ranchers and Agricultural Producers of the Magdalena Medio.
ACMM	Peasant Self-defense Groups of Magdalena Medio.
AI	Amnesty International.
ANAPO	National Popular Alliance.
ANDAS	National Association of Solidarity.
ANUC	National Association of Campesino Users.
APB	Self-defense Groups of Puerto Boyacá.
ATCC	Peasant Worker Association of the Carare River.
AUC	United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia.
BCN	Bloque Cacique Nutibara.
BHG	Bloque Heroes de Granada.
BM	Bloque Metro.
CAB	Front Carlos Alirio Buitrago.
CARE	Center of Accompaniment for Reconciliation.
CERAC	Conflict Analysis Resource Center.
CGSB	Coordinadora Guerillera Simon Bolivar.
CIJP	Inter-congregational Commission of Peace and Justice.
CINEP	Center for Investigation and Popular Education.
CNMH	National Center of Historical Memory.
CNRR	National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation.
CPRs	Communities of Populations in Resistance.
CRIC	Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca.
CSP	Civilian Self-Protection.
EA	Eastern Antioquia.
ELN	National Liberation Army.

EPL	Popular Liberation Army.
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.
FOR	Fellowship of Reconciliation.
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.
IACtHR	Inter-American Court of Human Rights.
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross.
INCORA	Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform.
INDERENA	National Institute of Renewable Natural Resources and Environment.
IR	International Relations.
JAC	Local Junta Council.
Joppaz	Youth Project of Peace.
MAC	Broad Colombian Movement.
MAS	Death to Kidnappers.
MM	Magdalena Medio.
MOIR	Revolutionary Independent Labour Movement.
MRL	Liberal Revolutionary Movement.
OIA	Indigenous Organization of Antioquia.
ONIC	National Indigenous Organization of Colombia.
PBI	Peace Brigades International.
PCC	Colombian Communist Party.
PC-ML	Marxist Leninist Communist Party.
PCSJA	Peace Community of San José de Apartadó.
R2P	Responsibility to Protect.
SENA	National Learning Service.
SJA	San José de Apartadó.
UCM	Municipal Civil Union.
UN	United Nations.
UNDP	United Nations Development Program.
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund.
UNO	National Opposition Union.

## *Acronyms*

UP Patriotic Union.

ZoP Zones of Peace.



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Panza, estás presente en cada una de las páginas que vienen.

# 1

## Introduction

*Baghdad, Iraq.*

### **Heavens in a Firestorm**

During one of the peaks of Baghdad's sectarian violence, the ethnically mixed neighborhood of An Nil managed to keep violence away from its streets. Shiite, Sunni and Christian lived side by side in relative peace when violence was killing or displacing residents of several nearby neighborhoods. By December 2006, residents assured that no one had been kidnapped or forced to flee. When asked why this was the case, neighbors noted that they were very close to each other and that they had committed to protecting their neighborhood and preventing sectarian militias from penetrating their community. No army or international organization did the work. Neighbors themselves decided not to cooperate with any faction and instead made collective efforts to protect themselves from violence. They got organized and addressed the "bad people" to get them to stop the attacks and attempts to enter their neighborhood. Like An Nil, other neighborhoods in Baghdad have refused to host, support, or join Al Qaeda in Iraq and Ja'ish Mahdi Army, the main sectarian militias that were operating in the city. This has made these areas, what Carpenter, (2012) has called "heavens in a firestorm".<sup>1</sup>

*Idjwi, Congo.*

### **An Island of Peace**

In one of the deadliest conflicts since World War II, inhabitants of Idjwi – as small Congolese island situated between Congo and Rwanda – do not fear for their lives as many other compatriots do. Against the backdrop of a long and bloody war, there has been no mass fighting in Idjwi in 20 years. This absence of violence has not resulted from one hegemonic armed group controlling the area, neither from the job of the state. It has been civilians, through active local organizations, the ones who have taken on their hands the task of bringing order and peace to the island. They decided not to count on armed groups or resort to violence of their own to deal with their daily affairs. Instead of resorting to one of the many militias that operate in the surroundings to solve local disputes, they have relied on their own local, nonviolent organizations, such as religious and youth groups. They have refused to participate in armed factions and actively countered attempts by fellow residents to set up militias. As in Idjwi, with the support of international NGOs and working through local churches, other communities in easter Congo have set up peace committees. Led by local leaders, these committees seek to solve domestic conflicts, preventing

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<sup>1</sup>This vignette is based on a 2006 CBS short reportage "A Baghdad Neighborhood Without Violence".

daily problems from escalating into violence and exacerbating ethnic divisions. Representing the different village's tribes, as well as religious affiliation, they have persuaded armed groups to negotiate an end to violence.<sup>2</sup>

*Ixcán & La Sierra, Guatemala*

### **The Communities of Population in Resistance**

In Guatemala's civil war, thousands of peasants fled their rural villages in the face of violent repression by the army in the early 1980s. The state forces were fiercely trying to wrestle territorial control from the rebels. Finding themselves living between two armies, many peasants left their lands and tried their luck in larger cities or took refuge in Mexico. Others, instead, hid in largely unpopulated mountainous and jungle areas of the country. Ixcán and La Sierra in the Department of El Quiché, were two of such destinations. In these remote adopted territories, hundreds of peasants organized themselves into "communities of population in resistance" to cope with war and its effects. They refused to submit to the army as much as they refused to get involved in guerrilla or paramilitary activity. Despite of Government's allegations of the opposite, these communities have been resolutely unarmed and have not cooperated in any possible way with any armed faction. Drawing on social cohesion and self-governance, they have silently resisted death and attempts by armed groups to control them, remaining in hiding for over a decade.<sup>3</sup>

These three stories go against the common depiction of civil wars. Rather than a conflict between macro-actors, where the protagonists are rebels, paramilitaries and the state forces, they spotlight the role of unarmed civilians. Rather than violent dynamics, nonviolent contention comes to the forefront. They contradict views of civilians as passive victims or resources to be plundered. Ordinary people, leveraging the strength of collective action, take matters into their own hands to provide themselves and their communities with protection. This is the kind of war story that this study aims to draw attention to.

This study is about the roles that ordinary civilians come to play in the context of civil war to protect themselves from violence and its effects. While it is decisively a story about war, it is one of building hope collectively to cope with it. While still victims, civilians here feature, first and foremost, as agents of change who take enormous risks to collectively promote their own agendas and life projects. While still playing a central part, violence features here as a force leading to the creation of nonviolent local orders.

The critical role of civilians in shaping war processes has been long recognized. Civilian support has been identified as indispensable for the advancement of armed groups' strategic objectives, for their survival and for their success. "Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation", asserted Mao Tse-Tung in *On Guerrilla Warfare* (1937). This statement, crystalized in the "hearts and minds" maxim that has guided insurgent and counter-insurgent campaigns all over the world, suggests a decisive role for civilians.

While the interest of many who have underscored civilians agency has been in how civilians

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<sup>2</sup>This vignette is based on Autesserre, (2016) and blogposts from Congo Peacebuilding, <http://congopeacebuilding.com/building-peace>.

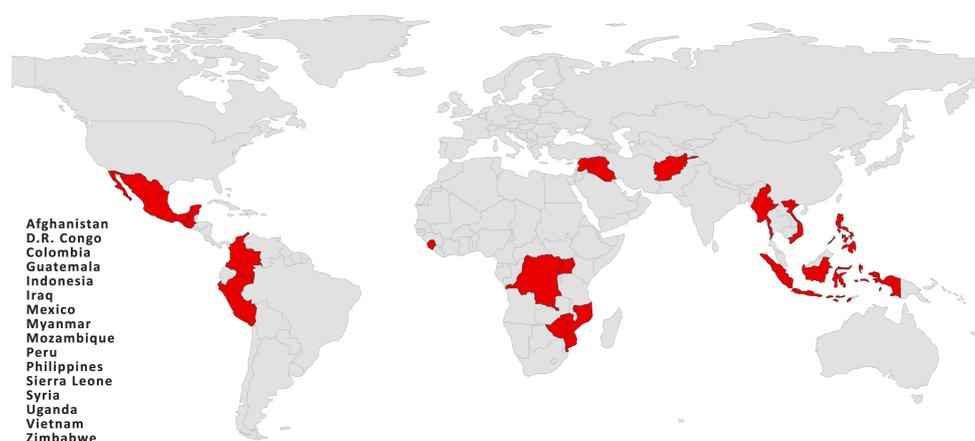
<sup>3</sup>This vignette is based on the OAS' Fourth Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Guatemala (CIDH, Chapter VIII), EPICA and CHRLA, (1993) and M. J. Taylor, (2007).

may further armed groups' organizational ends, contribute to their survival, or shape their behavior in crucial areas such as the production of violence, this study is different. It is driven by an intrinsic interest in a dimension of civilian agency that is independent from (and even contrary to) armed groups' strategic interests. I seek to underscore a role for civilians in war that is not epiphenomenal to what armed organizations do and seek. This role is to provide protection to their communities via what I term civilian noncooperation.

While we have a good understanding of what counts as civilian cooperation and of its main determinants, we know little of how the flip-side of cooperation looks like. To be sure, many civilians flee their homes. In fact, studies on wartime migration confirm that a considerable number of civilians who do not join the ranks of armed groups or cooperate with them, displace from their villages or neighborhoods. Support and flight, indeed, seem to be civilians' dominant strategies.

In this dissertation, however, I show that there is more to civilian agency than cooperation and displacement. Under certain conditions civilians can organize themselves to refuse to cooperate with armed groups. This might come as no surprise, as newspaper and academic articles have reported various stories of communities organizing into self-defense groups to counter armed groups with violence of their own. The *Rondas Campesinas* in Peru, the *Kamajors* in Sierra Leone, and the *Civilian Joint Task* in Nigeria are well-known examples.

Nevertheless, counterintuitive as it might sound, in this study I show that self-defense can also be organized without recourse to violence. This is exactly what the three short vignettes illustrate: despite potentially mortal risks and hard-to-overcome obstacles, civilians have collectively and nonviolently opposed armed groups' interests and taken a stand against cooperating with them in any way. While still far less common than cooperation, displacement and violent responses, unarmed campaigns of noncooperation as the ones we will be studying here are more frequent than what any theory of civil war and collective action would predict. Just to give a rough indication, through secondary sources and consultation with country experts, I have identified such campaigns in at least 18 countries that have gone, or at the moment of writing are going through, a civil war (see Figure 1.1).



*Figure 1.1:* Map: Instances of Noncooperation in the World

Source: Author's creation.

Despite being highly consequential for the trajectories of armed conflicts and the lives of civilians, these responses have been routinely overlooked in the literature and thus have seldom been taken into consideration in international efforts to protect civilians. To begin filling this gap, this dissertation presents a theoretically informed and detailed empirical treatment of several campaigns of noncooperation in the Colombian civil war. Common to the experiences explored here is the decision of ordinary peasants living in rural areas to leverage the power of collective action to say “No!” to heavily armed groups by engaging in innovative experiments of community-level self-protection.

The cases selected, in fact, constitute courageous statements of solidarity, community cohesion, and self-governance in spite of and in response to violent conflict. Together with the experience of neighboring villages, they also show that, even when living in the same environments, situated within seemingly similar war dynamics and facing similar choices, not all civilians have enduring reasons to engage in noncooperation. Moreover, the cluster of cases analyzed here shows that even when civilians are willing to mount noncooperation, this is not enough for a campaign to emerge. Many communities indeed fail in their attempt. Finally, they are also demonstrative of how noncooperation can take different forms. Noncooperation can involve different levels of defiance, imply particular forms of armed group-civilian interaction, and require varying levels of organization.

This variation defines the main research questions I aim to provide a compelling answer to in this study:

- *Why does civilian noncooperation emerge in some localities and not in others?*
- *Why do some ordinary villagers have enduring reasons to run life and death risks to refuse to cooperate with heavily armed groups while their neighbors do not?*
- *Why do some communities manage to successfully organize a noncooperation campaign while others fail to do so?*

I address in detail the question of why noncooperation takes different forms elsewhere (see Masullo, 2017a). Nonetheless, in the Conclusion of this study I offer a brief summary of that argument.

Academic studies (mostly single case studies of a descriptive – and sometimes normative – nature), and NGO reports have increasingly documented experiences of noncooperation around the world. However, the phenomenon is yet to be carefully conceptualized and theorized. Scant effort has been made to tackle these questions systematically. Despite of some recent academic contributions, there is no established literature on civilian noncooperation within the field of civil war studies. While a rich research program has been recently proposed for the study of armed noncooperation in the form of militias (Jentzsch et al., 2015), nothing similar has been done for its non-violent sibling.<sup>4</sup> Related bodies of scholarly work, such as those linking social movements to political violence, examining civil resistance campaigns in repressive settings or exploring self-protection strategies in armed conflicts, provide useful conceptual and theoretical tools for

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<sup>4</sup>An ongoing first attempt to do so is the Special Issue on “Civil Resistance in Armed Conflicts” in the *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* that I co-edited with Maia Hallward and Cecile Mouly (to be published in December 2017).

the study of noncooperation. However, none has yet provided answers to these questions.<sup>5</sup>

Balancing concept formation and theory building, thick description and parsimonious theorizing, and iteratively going from induction to deduction, this study seeks to bring clarity to the empirical phenomenon of civilian noncooperation and set the foundations for a unified research agenda on the topic. In what follows, I present a summary of what the reader will find in her journey.

## The Concept

While the core objective of this dissertation is theory development, before stepping into that business, I carefully conceptualize noncooperation. I identify its internal attributes and draw its boundaries within a field of related terms. I define civilian noncooperation as a set of coordinated and sustained actions that civilians autonomously deploy to refuse to cooperate with each and every armed group present in their territory. I take civilian noncooperation as form of contentious politics by which civilians make claims to armed groups in a way that affects the latter's strategic interests (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001; Tilly and Tarrow, 2015). As such, noncooperation is more than one-off demonstrations for peace or against violence. It is a sustained campaign that involves repeated interactions among civilians and between them and armed groups. In this sense, it implies coordination, and, thus, it is more than self-help strategies to avoid violence or everyday forms of resistance *à la* James Scott (1985). Finally, it is a grassroots phenomenon that emerges from below and is largely community-initiated – which does not exclude the fact that existing networks can be socially appropriated for the emergence of the campaign or that actors external to the community can come to support civilians.

The concept builds on a long tradition of political thought and practice that dates back to Mahatma Gandhi. While elsewhere I have proposed that community-initiated militias can be an expression of armed forms of noncooperation (Masullo, 2017b), in this study I focus exclusively on its non-violent expression. If Ackerman and DuVall, (2000) established in *A Force More Powerful* that nonviolent action can be effectively used in democracies and nondemocracies alike, here I show that it can also be mobilized in the violent context of civil war.

Civilian noncooperation varies within conflicts, across conflicts, and over time. Thus, its range of empirical manifestations is wide. Here I identify one meaningful dimension along which noncooperation campaigns vary – the level of confrontation involved in the campaign – and propose a typology of three ideal types of noncooperation. The first is *oblique*, where civilians refuse to cooperate with armed groups through overt and visible actions but do so in an indirect way, through activities that are not openly related to war dynamics. As such, it does not imply a direct expression of defiance and becomes less confrontational. The second is *pacted*, where action is direct but the concrete mechanisms upon which the campaign rests result from rapprochements or dialogues between armed groups and civilians. As it involves addressing armed groups and openly expressing their decision to withdraw or deny cooperation, this type implies more confrontation. Finally, the last one is *unilateral*, where civilians refuse to collaborate

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<sup>5</sup>There are some exceptions. In the past few years, a handful of scholars have made important contributions to the study of different dimensions of what I call here noncooperation. I recognize these studies explicitly in the literature review presented in Chapter 2, discuss them as alternative explanations in Chapter 3 and engage with them throughout the dissertation.

with armed groups in an overt way and, rather than establishing a channel of communication to broker with armed faction, they unilaterally define, design and implement the mechanisms and forms of action. This type implies the higher degree of confrontation.

In this study the reader will navigate through stories of communities that deeply cooperate among themselves, and that activate trust, solidarity and social cohesion to collectively protect themselves from violence. Viewed from this perspective, the term “noncooperation” might sound misplaced and even misleading. Nonetheless, as I highlight from the title of the study, what the study in fact deals with is civilians cooperating *among* themselves to engage in noncooperation *with* armed groups. The choice of the term “noncooperation” builds on a theory of power that claims that to rule the ruler needs the compliance of the ruled, as much as from the empirical observation that in irregular civil war armed groups need and seek civilian cooperation. If armed factions need civilian cooperation for the production of violence as Kalyvas, (2006) has convincingly theorized, civilian noncooperation could be a powerful strategy to short-circuit the mechanisms of violence and provide communities with some protection.

## The Theory

In this study I propose the emergence of civilian noncooperation as a function of both the evolution of a desire for noncooperation and the capacity to act upon that desire. A preference for noncooperation evolves from situational incentives that are endogenous to war, while the capacity to organize a noncooperation campaign depends on the community’s social context, history and internal composition.

I argue that a preference for noncooperation is more likely to emerge when three conditions, proposed as individually necessary and jointly sufficient, obtain: When and where territorial control is in flux (C1), violence against civilians increases (C2) and civilians perceive that they are being targeted collectively (C3). While in the face of increased violence civilians’ need for protection become especially pressing, shifts in territorial control dramatically diminish armed groups’ capacity and/or willingness to protect civilians. This situation renders cooperation in exchange of support futile. Collective targeting equalizes the risks of becoming victim regardless of what one does or refrains from doing, and shocks civilians moral expectations more than any other form of targeting. Moral and emotional consideration, such as feelings of deep injustice and moral outrage, fuel civilians willingness to refuse to cooperate with armed groups, not only to protect themselves, but also to do something to face the wrongdoings of others. Finally, the perception that one is being targeted for being part of a given group, creates the basic conditions for a collective response. The best response of a given peasant is likely to depend on the responses of those who are similarly targeted, and a community-level response will be more attuned to the type of threat they face.

Noncooperation campaigns, however, do not always take off when and where a desire for noncooperation has evolved. Stopping here would lead to over-predicting the phenomenon. Communities need material and nonmaterial mobilizing resources to transform this desire into contentious collective action. Those communities that count on active associational spaces (R1) that can be socially appropriated for mobilization and on existing local leadership (R2) that are willing to take a big portion of the risks of initiating action and the costs of working towards preference convergence are more likely to be able to coordinate organized noncooperation. These

mobilizing resources commonly come from inside the community, particularly from previous experiences of collective action and from functional local structures of community congregation and participation, such as the Church or communal boards. Nevertheless, when actors external to the community are brokered into the process, they can compensate for the lack of mobilizing resources and provide a community with capacity for collective action. When desire meets capacity, we observe noncooperation campaigns.

These conditions activate several mechanisms that trigger noncooperation. Cognitive mechanisms, such as the (trans)formation of the beliefs civilians hold of armed groups and collective threat perception, alter individual and collective perceptions of the situation. This pulls villagers away from cooperation (or inaction) and pushes them to consider new courses of action that can yield some protection and that are in line with their moral and emotional expectations. Relational mechanisms, such as social appropriation of existing associational spaces and brokerage with actors external to the community, alter existing connections among villagers and between them and external networks of support. This facilitates preference convergence and effective coordination, reassuring risk-averse villagers and providing them with mobilizing resources to act under the complicated conditions imposed by war.

The emergence of noncooperation is proposed here as a complex social process by which ordinary civilians living in warzones struggle to provide themselves with basic levels of protection. They do so aware of the fact that survival is a condition for the realization and continuation of their life projects. While the process is formally endogenous to war, it is proposed as depending on both situational factors and characteristics of the social structure and history of the communities which can even precede the war itself. Alongside risk calculations, moral and emotional considerations play a central role. While cognitive conversion is necessary for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation, cognitive mechanisms are triggered by changes in the environment in which civilians are embedded and can only take the form of coordinated action when relational mechanisms are activated.

To capture the complexity of this process, a deep engagement with the communities was needed.

## The Data

I conducted demanding (and very exciting!) field work in several warzones in Colombia, involving multiple field trips to different communities in two separate waves (in 2014 and 2015, plus an exploratory study in 2012). I lived with the communities in their own contexts and spent most of my time in activities other than (explicitly) gathering data. This type of engagement allowed me to develop a rapport with villagers that enabled me to gather better data and to develop greater aptitude to judge its quality. On the one hand, it allowed me assemble evidence beyond the standard narratives one commonly gets in first and short visits – especially when researching sensitive topics. On the other hand, it provided me with enough knowledge of the internal dynamics of the communities and of the strategic context in which they operate, which fine-tuned my ability to identify potential biases, develop awareness of them and, when possible, work towards overcoming them.

I collected a wealth of micro-level, fine-grained data on the social and institutional history of the warzones I was studying – dating back to their settlement processes –, their war trajectories,

the choices civilians confronted and the roles they came to play during different stages of the war, the presence of and influence of local social and political organizations, and the existence and fate of community leaders, among other subjects. I gathered the sort of causal-process observations that are needed to explain complex and dynamic processes of contention involving strategic decision-making (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2008, p. 317, 2001, Chap. 10; Jasper, 2004, p. 11). Accessing this evidence, and being able to understand its context-dependent nuances, would have been impossible had I followed a less ethnographic approach, let alone through other data collection techniques such as surveys or behavioral-game experiments.<sup>6</sup> As envisioned by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, (2001), the instigators of a mechanism-based approach to contentious politics, field work proved to be the best way to explain the process of mobilization into noncooperation, identifying not only the conditions of its emergence, but also identifying and specifying the nuts and bolts through which the process unfolded.

Most of the data come from sustained face-to-face interaction with residents of the localities where I conducted field work, including participants and non-participants in noncooperation campaigns. I used traditional techniques of data collection, such as individual and group interviews (I conducted over 150 interviews with peasants, members of armed groups, state officials, and NGO and INGO staff, among others), but also experimented with other less common techniques, such as memory workshops and map-drawing exercises. Informants were selected purposively (i.e., not randomly) to ensure a wide range of vantage points that did not privilege any single perspective.

To cross-check these causal-process observations, which were sensitive to problems associated with memory or ex-post reconstruction in light of present strategic contexts, I also drew on data-set observations. I relied on quantitative data on violence against civilians and violent events by armed groups coded from sources other than the actors involved (press releases) and recorded as the events unfolded. I used existing datasets produced by two research centers in Colombia, the Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC) and the National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH). While using off-the-shelf datasets, I manually processed them in a way that they matched the (micro) level of analysis I was working with – village and/or hamlet level.

None of the techniques for collecting qualitative data proved consistently stronger than the other, but in combination, they were highly complementary as they provided different types of evidence. Many times I found myself accessing to those dark corners – where key pieces of evidence happen to be hiding – by turning to alternative techniques, after the first one proved insufficient. Working with multiple sources and with two different types of observations gave me the opportunity to both triangulate and combine evidence in a way that the weaknesses and potential biases of one stream of data were countered by another.

## The Design

This data collection process was embedded in a carefully designed subnational research structure that, informed by the potential outcomes framework, involved both within-case and cross-case

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<sup>6</sup>Now that the theory is developed, these techniques can be of special use to test the theory. Behavioral games can be a useful way to gain more internal validity by testing out some of the mechanisms proposed as linking conditions to outcomes and surveys can be of use to gain representativeness and external validity. In fact, in a collective project, still in its early stages, I am designing ways to test some of the proposed mechanisms with behavioral games.

process tracing of purposively selected cases.

The foundations for this study were laid by an exploratory case study, fully inductive, of one major campaign of noncooperation in Colombia that I conducted in 2012. This study provided enough context knowledge for carefully conceptualizing the phenomenon and for laying the foundations for theory development. In this exploratory case study, I identified some of the main tenets of my proposed theory, as well as potential alternative explanations. With these theoretical priors in mind, I designed and conducted a subnational comparative study to gather new pieces evidence in a more focused, theory informed way, from both the same case and new cases. In an iterative process between theory and data, between induction and deduction, that involved refinements and updating as new evidence became available, I formulated the theory I propose in this dissertation. This part of the study unfolded in three different stages.

First, I conducted within-case analysis of three campaigns of noncooperation, located in different areas of the country and experiencing their own war trajectories. These campaigns represented each of the three different types of noncooperation identified by the proposed typology: oblique, pacted and unilateral. By tracing change over time in each of these cases, I established the process by which noncooperation emerged, identifying both conditions and mechanisms and eliminating alternative explanations. Second, I conducted a structured and focused cross-case comparison between these three campaigns. In doing so, I identified the idiosyncratic elements of the process in each case and distilled what were the constitutive elements of the process. Third, I conducted paired comparisons between each of the three campaigns and control cases following a logic of geographical proximity at the very micro-level to match positive and negative cases. This was the final and more decisive test for the proposed theory and what ultimately enhanced the confidence on the power of its inference. With this, I ruled out the possibility that the same process was also present in “non-treated” cases and made sure that the elements that I had identified actually help to tell apart localities where noncooperation is likely to emerge from those where it is not.

The approach I followed was highly influenced by studies of strategy (Schelling, 1960; Jasper, 2004) and by the relational and dynamic turn in the study of contentious politics (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001). My proposed theory pays particular attention to the interactive and strategic dynamics that take place in the process by which civilians coordinate collective action, underscoring the interdependent nature of civilian decision making. For example, it stresses the role that leadership and mobilizing sites play in allowing civilians create common expectations about the intentions of others and converge on one course of action. Noncooperation as understood here could be formalized as a game in which civilians have a common interest, but need to find the way to signal their preferences to each other and to create consistent expectations to find the assurance they need to act.

However, my theory does not only look at the internal dynamics of civilians. By treating noncooperation as a “response”, it also looks at civilian behavior given the behavior of armed groups. Some of the central conditions the theory identifies, for example control shifts and increase in violence against civilians, as well as the triggering mechanism that it specifies, for example belief transformation and resentment, depend on changes in the behavior of armed groups. Although I recognize that the strategic interaction between civilians and combatants is not as fleshed out as that between civilians, the theory explicitly contends that armed groups’

behavior (changes in their behavior, to be more precise) is what determines civilians' best responses. Here, the most appropriate formalization would be that of a mixed-motive game with mutual dependence, where the relationship between civilians and armed groups is neither one of pure and complete antagonism (as civilians try to avoid violence as much as armed groups try to avoid noncooperation), nor one of pure and complete common interest.

Finally, while civilians–armed groups constitute the main dyad of interaction, the theory does not isolate them from its larger relational field. I did my best to reconstruct the process by which noncooperation emerged taking into account the role played by a multiplicity of actors. I sought to account for this larger field of contention by identifying relational mechanisms that link actors within communities (e.g., ordinary villagers to local leaders), as well as communities to external actors (e.g., the Church, national NGOs, regional state agencies). Thus, relational mechanisms, such as social appropriation and brokerage, feature prominently in the analytical narratives that this study offers.

I do indeed hope that this dissertation reads as an analytical narrative (Bates et al., 1998, 2000). It is a narrative in that it tells the story of the complex and courageous process by which some civilians, but not others, engaged in organized forms of noncooperation to protect themselves. It is analytical, in the sense that an explicit theory that is being proposed disciplines and distills the narrative, defining what is more and less relevant to explain the process. Much as in the work of the proponents of these narratives, this study explores the histories of concrete cases, examines the choices civilians inhabiting them made and the process and outcomes that these choices yielded. However, as in related studies that deeply influenced this one (e.g., Petersen, 2001; Wood, 2003; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001), the range of mechanisms linking the identified conditions to the outcome are not limited to rational choice and game theory, as was the case when analytical narratives were first introduced. The present narrative uses rationality as a benchmark, as a point of departure (as in, e.g., Schelling, 1960; Gambetta, 1993), but it ultimately goes beyond it to account for a complex process that involves a combination of rational, emotional and moral consideration.

A view that embraces narrow rationality and does not take into consideration social preferences and other-regarding motivations (see, e.g., Bowles and Polania-Reyes, 2012) is likely to fail in capturing the essence of the choices that civilians make in war, especially when it comes to taking enormous risks to protect themselves from violence and its negative effects. With this broadened view in mind, the goal of this study is successfully accomplished to the extent that it develops a theory that engages in sensitive simplification and yields empirically falsifiable claims, as much as it provides a realistic and fair account of the processes the communities under study went through. Paraphrasing Bates et al., (2000, p. 689), I did my best to engage in that art-work of combining theorization with the smells and sounds of the process I was trying to explain. Ultimately, it is for the reader to judge.

## The Roadmap

The thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I introduce the explanandum of the study. I develop the concept of noncooperation and propose a typology of forms of noncooperation. Closing this chapter, I review four bodies of literature and make the case that despite of providing useful elements for the study of noncooperation, for different reasons, they have not carefully

conceptualize it, let alone theorize it. These are: International Relations (IR) literature on civilian self-protection, social movement studies of political violence, the emerging agenda on civil resistance, and the established research program on the micro dynamics of civil wars. In Chapter 3, I propose a theory to explain the emergence of civilian noncooperation in civil war. I identify both the conditions under which noncooperation is more likely to emerge, and the mechanisms that link these conditions to the outcome of interest. After doing this, I discuss how some of the main alternative explanations I considered in this study fail to explain the emergence of noncooperation. By focusing on concrete theories and hypotheses, rather than on entire research programs or bodies of literature, this discussion elaborates on and complements the literature review presented in the previous Chapter. Chapter 4 describes in detail the research process, the research design, the type of evidence used in formulating the theory, and the data collection process. Here I discuss the logic and structure of the comparison, the strategy for selecting cases, issues related to biases and weaknesses of different streams of data, and my approach to field work. This constitutes Part I of the dissertation.

Part II turns to empirics. It is comprised of three chapters, each of one dealing with one of the ideal types of noncooperation identified by the proposed typology. In Chapter 5, I begin with the most confrontational type, unilateral noncooperation; I then proceed to pacted noncooperation in Chapter 6, and close with the least confrontational one, oblique noncooperation, in Chapter 7. To facilitate comparisons, the structure of all three chapters is the same, although in each chapter I zoom in on some conditions and mechanisms more than in others. I begin by tracing in detail the trajectories of war in each of the localities under study, to then introduce the campaign of noncooperation that constitutes the core of the chapter. I proceed then to provide an analytical narrative of how the campaign emerged, empirically illustrating how each of the elements identified in the theory took form. Then, I introduce the control case, illustrating how one (or more) conditions identified by the theory was absent and how its absence altered the working of the cognitive and relational mechanisms that lead to noncooperation emergence. The central goal of Part II is to explain the cases by mobilizing rich and compelling empirical evidence, with the proposed theory structuring and disciplining the story being told.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I very briefly sum up the main components of the theory proposed to explain the emergence of civilian noncooperation campaigns and provide a short summary of an argument that I advance elsewhere to explain why noncooperation campaigns take different forms when they emerge. Having done this, I take two final steps to close this study. First, I highlight the relevance of the the subject and the theory for: (a) the advancement of our scholarly understanding of how civil wars operate on the ground and why ordinary people engage in high-risk collective action; and (b) improving policy interventions in crucial areas such as the protection of civilians, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. Second, I openly recognize what I consider the main limitations of my design and theory, and open up some lines for future research that might help improve the present theory and advance a research agenda on civilian noncooperation.



## 2

# Conceptualization

In this chapter I set the stage for the theoretical and empirical sections of the dissertation. In Section 2.1 I introduce the explanandum of this study – civilian noncooperation. I situate it within a broader portfolio of civilian responses and provide a typology of forms of noncooperation that capture one key dimension of variation: the level of confrontation involved. In defining and delimiting the concept, I make and justify choices about what falls within the scope of the study. In Section 2.2, I take a rationalist approach to collective action to spell out the puzzle of civilian noncooperation in civil war. I do this by assessing the relative average costs and benefits of noncooperation *vis á vis* alternative responses that are available to civilians living in warzones. The main research question of the study stems from this puzzle. However, while the answers that I provide include a discussion of cognitive mechanisms that are related to the rationalist tradition, the theory I propose goes beyond the narrow rationalist model by marrying them with relational ones. Finally, in Section 2.3, I present the four main bodies of literature that inform the study and to which I make a conceptual, theoretical and empirical contribution: civilian-self protection, social movements, civil resistance and civil wars. I discuss both the opportunities that these bodies of work offer and highlight their shortcomings, making explicit current gaps. I close by zooming in on those works that speak more directly to the phenomenon of noncooperation, something I elaborate further in Chapter 3 while presenting my own theory and discussing alternative explanations.

### 2.1 What is Civilian Noncooperation?

Noncooperation is one possible way in which civilians living in warzones can respond to armed groups. As civilian choices are likely to be contingent upon social context and conflict dynamics, civilians tend to shift responses over time in light of new emerging conditions, usually as a function of their relative success in terms of providing them some safety. Thus, noncooperation should not be seen as a stable role that civilians take on. As warned by Fujii, (2011, p. 8), while categories are static, conflicts are dynamic, and this dynamism can shift actors' relations, perspectives, motivations and identities in ways that shape their responses to war. As a consequence, we see civilians adopting different roles in the course of one same war. The life story of Bintu, a young woman in war-torn Liberia in the early 1990s, is illustrative of this reality. As she confronted different challenges and opportunities, she went from trying to remain as uninvolved as possible to self-staging as a victim in order to take humanitarian aid, to cooperating with one side in

exchange for protection via girlfriending, to finally taking up arms (Utas, 2005).<sup>1</sup>

This realization has implications for the conceptualization of noncooperation. It requires us to locate it within a wider range of possible responses and to define it *vis à vis* them. Thus, as a point of departure, based on the stylization of civilian agency proposed by Arjona, (2010a), I locate noncooperation within a wider portfolio of civilian responses to armed groups (see Figure 2.1). While to study noncooperation one does not need to examine all these other responses, I follow the lead of existing studies (e.g., Barter, 2014; Petersen, 2001; Fujii, 2011) and take this menu of responses as the broader context of civilian choice within which the decision for noncooperation is made.

By doing so, I underscore the fact that even if constrained to varying degrees by war, civilians do make choices. Rather than characterizing civilians as either helpless victims or fully free actors, I follow Utas, (2005) and Lubkemann, (2008) and take them as tactical agents engaged in the difficult task of navigating war. As the goal here is not that of ascertain moral or legal responsibility, I opt for a broad definition of civilians: all individuals who do not participate in the military activities of any armed organization either as full or part-time members. The category extends to civil servants and political activists, and includes all those living in warzones, who even while collaborating with armed groups beyond a coerced minimum, do not take part in any military activity.<sup>2</sup>

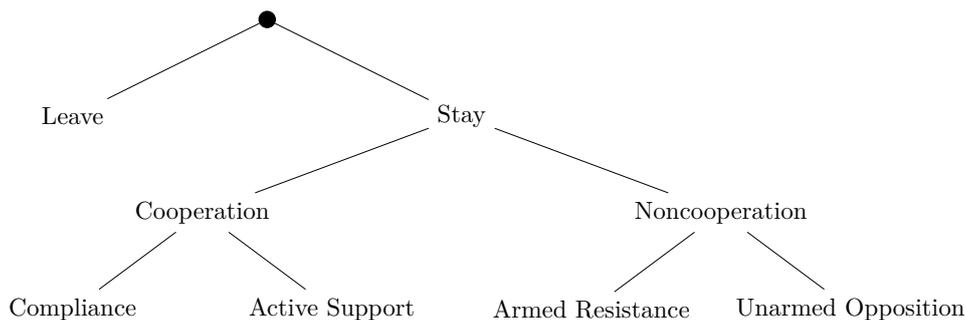


Figure 2.1: Portfolio of Civilian Responses to Armed Groups

In civil wars, particularly in those of an irregular type (Kalyvas, 2005), armed groups seek to control (Kalyvas, 2006) and even govern (Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly, 2015; Arjona, 2016b) territories. Thus, when armed groups arrive in a given locality, residents need to respond. In this process, first of all, civilians have to choose whether to stay or leave. If they leave, as Steele, (2009) has shown, they can choose different destinations in order to minimize the costs of displacement and maximize the prospects of security in a new locality.<sup>3</sup> However, unlike Steele, (2009, p. 424), I do not take the choice of staying as a strong signal that civilians will collaborate with armed groups. Those who stay put can equally cooperate or not cooperate with armed groups (Masullo, 2015). In this study I detail the process by which the latter becomes more likely.

<sup>1</sup>The novel *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* by Anthony Narra provides a vivid illustration of this shifting roles in the context of the Chechen wars. I thank Egor Lazarev for inviting me to read this book.

<sup>2</sup>For a more elaborate discussion on this crucial category, see Masullo and O’connor, (2017).

<sup>3</sup>I reckon that those who leave can also support forms of noncooperation from their new destinations, as we have seen in several conflicts with people in exile or diasporas. Moreover, leaving can in itself be an act of cooperation refusal. However, here I focus on civilians present in a given locality and who have to interact with armed groups on a regular basis.

The behaviors that may count as cooperation have been studied widely (e.g., Kalyvas, 2006; Wood, 2003). Broadly speaking, they can be divided into two types, both benefiting armed groups in a direct way: compliance and active support. The former entails any civilian action that occurs in response to an order given by the armed group, while the latter entails behaviors that civilians follow without being given any order, explicit or implicit (Arjona, 2010a, 2016b).

In contrast, we know little about what counts as noncooperation, the flip-side of cooperation. Noncooperation designates a set of behaviors by which civilians refuse to collaborate with *each and every* armed group present in their territory, including state and non-state armed forces. In this sense, it directly and/or indirectly affects armed organizations' strategic interests and, thus, is costly for them (Arjona, 2010b). In this light, this conceptualization differs from treatments that consider active cooperation with the rival actor (i.e., defection) to be the opposite of cooperation (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 104). In fact, at the core of noncooperation is the idea of neutrality and nondiscrimination; regardless of any attitudinal preference, behaviorally civilians refuse to collaborate with every armed group. In this light, defection would count as cooperation rather than as noncooperation.

My understanding of neutrality also differs from existing treatments. This term has been commonly taken as an inert state before taking sides (Petersen, 2001) or as a manifestation of acquiescence to whichever side is in power that does not indicate tacit support (Kalyvas, 2006; Fujii, 2011).<sup>4</sup> Challenging the view that non-participation is equivalent to free-riding (Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007), I underscore that neutrality in the context of civil war implies action.

This conceptualization of noncooperation, like the term itself, draws on a long tradition of political thought that dates back to Mahatma Gandhi. Noncooperation (and the neutrality it implies) is not only presented as an intensely active state (Gandhi, 2001, p. 161); it also gets its leverage from the same theory of power that stresses the fact that authority depends upon the consent of the ruled. If the ruled withdraw their cooperation, authority begins to weaken (Sharp, 1973). In the words of Gandhi (2001, p. 157), "...no Government can exist for a single moment without the cooperation of the people, willing or forced, and if people suddenly withdraw their co-operation in every detail, the Government will come to a stand-still". I take the concept from this tradition and bringing it to the considerably different context of civil war.<sup>5</sup>

Given that civil wars fragment power (Kalyvas, 2006; Tilly, 1978), the withdrawal of cooperation here does not regard the government alone, as was the case in the context from which it emerged. In civil wars, civilians withdraw any form of cooperation from every armed party to the war, including, but not limited to, the armed forces of the state. While "stepping out of the conflict" might seem at odds with Gandhi's idea of noncooperation as a form of "getting into the fight", I contend that in a context in which armed groups seek exclusive and complete collaboration (Kalyvas, 2006), "remaining out of the fight" constitutes in fact a form of fight.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>If seen within Petersen's (2001, p. 8) scheme, the proposed idea of noncooperation would be situated somewhere between  $-1$  and  $+1$ , and would imply no sideways moves.

<sup>5</sup>To my best knowledge, in the field of civil war studies the term of noncooperation as part of the menu of responses that civilians have at hand was first used in Arjona, (2010b). In fact, Arjona was the first who unified the plethora of terms used to indicate civilian cooperation (support, collaboration) under the term "cooperation", which paved the way to the study of noncooperation. I build on her view on civilian agency and develop the concept of noncooperation.

<sup>6</sup>As will become evident, an important departure of the present treatment from the tradition of political thought it builds on, is that unlike Gandhi's idea and practice, noncooperation here can also take an armed form. However, in this dissertation, for the reasons discussed below, I focus exclusively on nonviolent forms of noncooperation.

This “fight” can rest on acts of commission, omission or a combination of both. However, as stressed in the civil resistance (Schock, 2013) and social movements (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001) literatures, these acts need to circumvent the explicit and/or implicit conventional political channels established by authorities – which in this context include state and nonstate armed actors. While a form of voice, civilian noncooperation it is not fully equivalent to what Barter, (2014), building on Hirschman, (1970), defined as voice in his menu of civilian strategies in the context of war. In his view, voice – which are attempts to communicate complaints or grievances – can be perfectly performed through channels established by the armed actors and can actually serve in their best interest. Thus, not only does voice not imply a refusal to collaborate, but, under some circumstances, can even constitute a form of cooperation. In fact, this is why some armed groups have been open to voice and have even facilitated channels to receive feedback, as the Free Aceh Movement did in some Acehnese villages where it designated civilian representatives (Barter, 2014, pp. 80, 82, 90).

In Gandhi’s (2001, p. 34) original understanding, noncooperation is a force that may be used by individuals as well as by communities. This is something that has been highlighted also in the emerging literature in International Relations (IR) on Civilian Self-Protection (CSP). To be sure, individual noncooperation is theoretically possible in the context of civil war. However, here I focus on collective and organized expressions of noncooperation, excluding everyday forms of resistance that fall short of defiance, are usually “less risky”, and imply little or no coordination (Barter, 2014, p. 21; Scott, 1985). I second Arjona, (2015) and Kaplan, (2013b) in contending that organization is what is likely to provide unarmed civilians with some extra leeway in facing armed groups. This is, in fact, what Alther, (2006, p. 281) concluded from her experience supporting different campaigns of noncooperation in Colombia as a practitioner: a community that is organized is better able to protect itself from sudden threat and is in a position to start developing its own protection capacities. While it might be “cheap” and instructive for an armed group to get rid of one individual who refuses to cooperate, it would not be so with an entire community. The words of José, an elder villager who has been engaged in a highly confrontational experience of noncooperation in Northwestern Colombia, illustrate this point very clearly:

Here, a young guy refused to do favors for armed groups. One day they told him “we need you to bring us a bundle of yucca and one of *revueltos*”. He said “No, no. I am not going to”. They killed him right there. They just killed him! And how about us? They treat us bad, but they don’t do this to us. We are organized.<sup>7</sup>

This does not imply that noncooperation can only take highly organized forms, such as that of the campaign in which José is engaged, which developed its own school with alternative pedagogical approaches and its own fair trade structure to sell the community produce. As the empirics of this study reveal, while the focus is exclusively on collective expressions of the phenomenon, campaigns of noncooperation can involve different levels of coordination and organization.

Focusing on organized campaigns also directs our attention towards the most crucial challenges civilians face in mounting a campaign of noncooperation, leading us to study the most puzzling

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<sup>7</sup>Interview ID. 42, March 2014. All interviews cited in this study were conducted by the author in 2012, 2014 and 2015. This project was approved by the Board of the EUI. All the subjects agreed to participate in this study. I was explicitly authorized to use all the testimonies that I cite in this study. To guarantee the anonymity of my interviewees I use pseudonyms throughout.

(and under-explored) aspects of phenomenon (see Section 2.2). A whole new set of intriguing questions, to which this study aims to provide answers, appear. These include: how a shared desire for noncooperation evolves; how civilians converge on a preference for noncooperation; where mobilizing resources come from; and why people engage in campaigns where high risks meet very uncertain benefits, among others.

Moreover, if noncooperation is to be consequential in terms of shaping other processes and outcomes of war, this is more likely to be the case when it takes a collective form. Organized campaigns of noncooperation can alter the behavior of armed groups towards civilians (Kaplan, 2013b,a; Mouly, Hernandez Delgado, and Garrido, 2016; Arjona, 2016b, 2015), promote demobilization (Mouly, Hernandez Delgado, and Gimenez, 2017), transform civilian identities (Masullo, 2012) and create community-level capacities for peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction (Masullo, 2018).

As a form of contentious politics, noncooperation brings civilians and armed groups into sustained interaction. It differs from sporadic and sometimes ephemeral acts of protest against violence, demonstrations for peace and other one-off events. While these events may involve the refusal to cooperate with armed groups, they are far more common and often have undefined or abstract targets. As an illustration, from a dataset of “collective actions for peace” in the Colombian civil war, only 4.9% of all acts of peace mobilization would qualify as what I term noncooperation (García-Durán, 2005; see also García and Aramburu, 2011).

To be sure, campaigns of noncooperation might well comprise one-shot opposition events, such as demonstrations and marches. Thus, focusing on sustained campaigns allows to capture the whole range of contentious actions that noncooperation might involve.<sup>8</sup> For example, as part of a sustained effort of noncooperation that has lasted for more than 20 years, the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (PCSJA) has organized multiple protest events involving several contentious performances, such as marches, public declarations, and petition signing, among others. In the fall of 2010, around 70 members of the PCSJA in Colombia marched for 10 days through the streets of Bogotá in a display of communal identity, resilience and international solidarity, and carried the message of “Peace and community is possible. End violence! Support models for a new Colombia.” (Masullo, 2015, Chap. 6).<sup>9</sup>

The noncooperation campaigns studied here are grassroots. They are community-initiated. Civilians themselves are the primary decision-maker and are the main actor advancing the campaign.<sup>10</sup> This does not exclude instances in which civilians receive support, accompaniment and/or guidance of actors that are not strictly part of the community, such as the Church, NGOs and/or international organizations. For example, with the support of the Inter-congregational

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<sup>8</sup>Here I follow the literature on civil resistance (Chenoweth and Lewis, 2013) and understand a campaign as a series of observable, continuous and purposive events that bring civilians and armed groups into sustained interaction for anywhere from days to years, but that are distinguishable from one-off events.

<sup>9</sup>This public demonstration was called the *Grace Pilgrimage*. A one-hour documentary following this “pilgrimage” step-by-step is available online: <http://www.hopeforcolombia-film.com/>.

<sup>10</sup>This is consistent with existing studies that have documented experiences of what I term here noncooperation. For example, IR scholars have defined CSP as strategies “in which the *primary decision maker* is a civilian or group of civilians” (Jose and Medie, 2015, 2. Emphasis is mine). Similarly, in an initial understanding of Zones of Peace (ZoP), Mitchell and Nan, (1997) distinguished between ZoP constructed “from the bottom up” and those mainly promoted by “outsiders”. Finally, in her work on civil resistance in Colombia, Hernandez Delgado, (2004) has divided experiences into grassroots, those promoted by national and international NGOs, and those established by local authorities. This is also consistent with recent work on militias, that has distinguished between community-initiated militias and state sponsored ones (Jentzsch, 2014).

Commission of Peace and Justice (CIJP) – a national Catholic-based NGO – and Peace Brigades International (PBI), the Cacarica Communities at the Colombia–Panama border returned to their lands after being displaced and established the “Nueva Vida Humanitarian Zone”, a campaign of noncooperation which designates an area in which armed actors are not allowed to enter. Similarly, as a joint effort of various actors including even local authorities, residents of the village of Las Mercedes, at the Colombia border with Venezuela, launched the “Friends of Peace” campaign to inform armed groups about their refusal to get involved in the war (Idler, Garrido, and Mouly, 2015).

However, experiences that are fully promoted by external actors fall outside of the realm of noncooperation. This is the case of, for example, the “Rikhey Zone” demilitarized zone created in Congo in the 1960s by the United Nations (UN) to protect civilians from violence. These experiences not only sideline most of the challenges civilians face when mounting noncooperation, but many times act on behalf of the state or external actors working directly or indirectly with the state. This makes the claim of neutrality dubious to say the least.

Finally, noncooperation can take both nonviolent and violent forms. There are no reasons to assume that there are contexts where only one of these forms can be mobilized. Not even in civil wars, were many would expect aggrieved civilians to respond with violence of their own taking advantage of the violent atmosphere around them. Therefore, the concept proposed here leaves room for both forms, but treats them as alternative, discrete choices. As mentioned, civilians can pass through different roles in the course of a civil war, including both violent and nonviolent ones. I share this key insight with Petersen, (2001) and other scholars (e.g., Fujii, 2011). However, I do not conceptualize the process (necessarily) as one by which civilians progress through different stages all the way towards armed resistance, such as the one Petersen observed in the context of Soviet occupation. Whether to engage in nonviolent or violent noncooperation can perfectly be a dichotomous choice.<sup>11</sup> In this view, nonviolent campaigns are not to be seen as residual to violent campaigns and are not to be taken as a force “to be used only by the weak so long as they are not capable of meeting violence by violence.” (Gandhi, 2001, p. 34).

To guarantee some causal coherence and facilitate research exploring the causes, in this study I focus exclusively on nonviolent forms of noncooperation. To fall within the sample, campaigns had to be prosecuted by unarmed civilians who do not use violence or the threat of it against armed groups (see Chapter 4 for a detailed description of the case selection strategy).<sup>12</sup> This excludes forms of armed resistance, such as the community-initiated militias that we have observed in many civil wars across the world (Jentzsch, 2014; Jentzsch et al., 2015), from the Self-defense Committees that emerged in northern Peru in the late 1970s to the more recent anti-Boko Haram Civilian Joint Task Force in Nigeria.

Even if the grievances leading to violent and nonviolent forms of noncooperation may be similar, treating them separately makes analytical sense, especially for a first-stage effort to theorize emergence. Apart from the fact that once civilians take up arms it can be safely argued

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<sup>11</sup>Here I follow the emerging literature on civil resistance, which in this respect differs from various treatments of the topic in social movement research (Schock, 2013). This understanding not only allows covering a wider range of variation (see Masullo, 2017b), but also enables examining how violent and non-violent forms relate to each other; why civilians choose one or the other form of action; as well as the processes by they emerge, evolve, and bring about outcomes.

<sup>12</sup>The concept, however, remains initially agnostic about whether this unarmed character is pragmatic/strategic or normative/principled (Schock, 2005, xvi, fn.1), and whether it results from a deliberate choice, the unavailability of arms, or some sort of cognitive inaccessibility. All these are open empirical questions worth tackling.

that they become fighters and thus they leave the realm of civilian noncooperation, we should not expect the processes by which nonviolent and violent rebellion emerge, evolve, and bring about outcomes to be the same. In fact, in light of the work of students of civil war (Arjona, 2016b), civil resistance (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011) and armed resistance (Finkel, 2015), it is reasonable to think that the dynamics of forming or participating in armed forms of noncooperation are more similar to those of participating in armed rebellion than to those of nonviolent resistance campaigns. Not only the choices to be made are different, but also the skills needed as well as the physical, informational, commitment, and moral barriers (see Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011).

This justification finds empirical backing in the the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) data as well as in recent research. In terms of onset, for example, Cunningham, (2013) has found that (for the case of self-determination disputes) some factors (e.g., economic discrimination and political exclusion) have the same effect on the likelihood of nonviolent and violent campaigns, other factors (e.g., group size) have opposite effects, and still others (e.g., state capacity) only affect one of these campaigns. Similarly, in terms of context, Chenoweth and Lewis, (2013) has found that the context of both differs drastically: in fact, population size, seems to be the only predictor these campaigns have in common. To be sure, these findings deal with macro level outcomes that differ substantially from the level at which noncooperation is played out. Thus, more research looking into, for example, the early stages of mobilization is to be done if we are to identify whether factors that promote or undermine nonviolent or violent resistance differ. This is not to suggest that nonviolent resistance does not share mechanisms and processes with armed resistance. In fact, supporting the claim that nonviolence is a form of contentious politics (McAdam and Tarrow, 2000), this study provides evidence that many of the cognitive and relational mechanisms that have been identified in other forms of struggle (including armed rebellion), play a central role in process by which nonviolent noncooperation emerges.

To summarize, I propose the following as a working definition of noncooperation for the present study: *a set of coordinated and sustained nonviolent actions that civilians autonomously deploy to refuse to cooperate with each and every armed group present in their territory.*

## A Typology of Noncooperation

Civilian noncooperation varies within conflicts, across conflicts, and over time. The range of empirical manifestations of noncooperation strategies is wide. Despite the current dearth of scholarly work on the topic, case studies documenting experiences in different parts of the world provided a good initial indication of the forms of civilian noncooperation that one can reasonably expect to find on the ground. Subsequently, extensive fieldwork in Colombia revealed a more detailed picture of the range of variation and allowed the identification of one dimension that particularly warrants scholars' attention: the level of confrontation. Being more or less confrontational refers to the type of interaction established between civilians and armed groups, but does not necessarily imply more or less disruption.

The conceptual typology I offer here identifies three ideal types of nonviolent forms of noncooperation along a continuum that runs from oblique noncooperation on the less confrontational end to unilateral noncooperation on the more confrontational one, with pacted noncooperation in between (Figure 2.2).



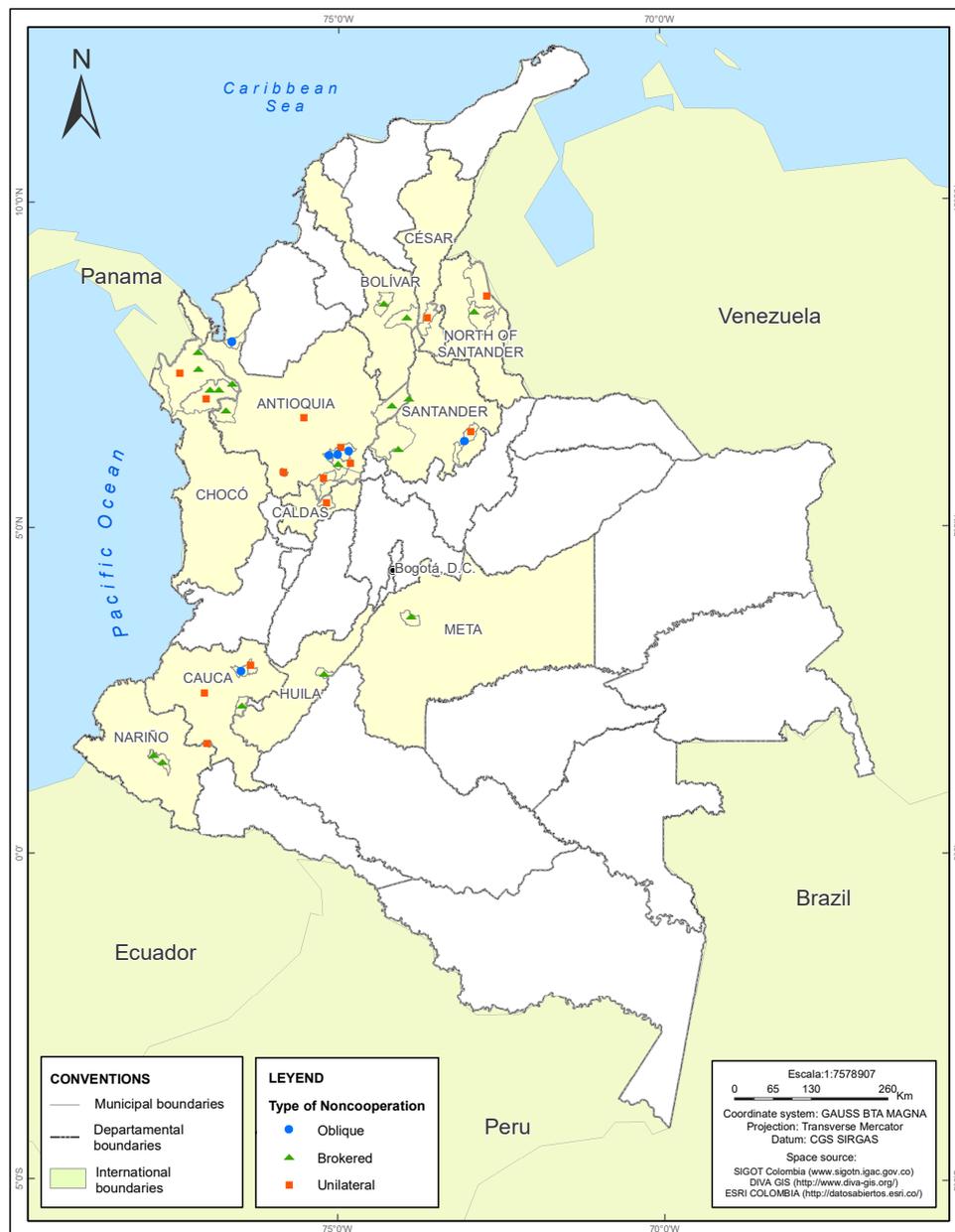


Figure 2.3: Map: Instances of Noncooperation in Colombia (by type)

Source: Author's creation

without publicly declaring it, and many times remain carefully circumspect and institutionally invisible.

Naturally, as noncooperation is *masked* behind other activities, direct interaction with armed groups is minimal and supposes a lower level of confrontation. Rather than substantially building a new order, as in Hobsbawm, (1973), civilians seek to “work the order to their minimum disadvantage”. However, as we will see in Chapter 7, civilians (at least organizers) are well aware of the oppositional nature of what they are doing. Camila, an active promoter of a campaign of oblique noncooperation in Colombia, described the activities they engaged in as “civil disobedience” with a “dissimulation mechanism”, and added that it was done that way to avoid being “questioned or sanctioned by [armed groups].”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

### **Pacted Noncooperation**

In pacted forms of noncooperation, action is direct but results from rapprochement or dialogue between armed groups and civilians, many times involving negotiations. Instead of disguising their refusal, civilians address armed groups to inform them about their intentions and to bargain with them the concrete form noncooperation would take.

Although there is dialogue and bargaining between the parties involved, it is premised on the non-negotiable choice of not taking sides or supporting either group in any possible form. While a direct and overt, the fact that there is some sort of negotiation between the parties, tempers the degree of direct confrontation. Chapter 6 presents a campaign in the Colombian village of La India where after several meetings with the different armed organizations present in their territory, civilians and combatants agreed on joint-mechanisms that would allow civilians to stay in their village without taking part in the war. David, a founding leader of this campaign, without any probing, explicitly noted that dialogues [with armed groups] were their only weapon and that negotiation was their only strategy of action.<sup>16</sup>

Instances of this type of noncooperation have been identified in various conflicts beyond Colombia. This is the case, for example, of the peace committees in Uvira and Kalehe in Congo, set up to put an end to violence. Villagers teamed up to persuade leaders of surrounding armed groups to negotiate. For months they worked together towards an agreement that satisfied everyone involved and that defined ways to monitor its implementation (see, Autesserre, 2016).

### **Unilateral Noncooperation**

In unilateral forms of noncooperation, civilians refuse to collaborate with armed groups in an overt way, but without establishing a channel of communication to negotiate with them. They unilaterally define the norms of behavior that will rule noncooperation and design and implement their own mechanisms and institutions.

As it involves no consultation, let alone negotiation, and the parties do not agree on joint mechanisms to regulate their interactions, the degree of confrontation between civilians and armed groups is higher in this type of noncooperation. As we will see in Chapter 5, a campaign of noncooperation of this sort might involve a public declaration and the designation of an area, visibly defined with banners, where armed groups can not enter and/or transit. Confrontation, while still unarmed, can even turn physical, as it has happened in repeated occasions with the Nasa Guard, an indigenous community engaged in a unilateral campaign of noncooperation since the beginning of the century in the Colombian Department of Cauca. In their attempts to keep armed actors away from their territories, they have found no other way that literally push them off their lands.<sup>17</sup>

This typology reveals that, unlike what Scott's (1985) seminal work on everyday form of resistance would suggest, even under conditions of generalized repression or surveillance, civilians can still choose publicity over stealth (Jasper, 2004, p. 9) and organization over individual self-help. As in Gandhi's (2001, p. 6) understanding, noncooperation is not a weapon of the weak. While identifying distinct types, this typology does not imply that civilians cannot move from one

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<sup>16</sup> Author's Field Notes, March 2014.

<sup>17</sup> The events of July 2012 in a Nasa village are illustrative. See "Indígenas expulsan a 100 soldados de base militar del Cauca" *El Espectador*, 17.07.2012

type to the other over time. For example, in 1999 in rural West Aceh an independent *ulama* unilaterally formed the HUDA (League of Acehese Islamic Boarding School Ulama) in open opposition to both warring sides operating in the area. As the conflict intensified, they scaled back and continued with their opposition in more oblique ways: through Islamic teaching; referring to both warring sides as not real Muslims; indicating that joining either side was against the Qur'an, and focusing on messages of peace in their sermons (Barter, 2014, p. 87; Miller, 2008, p. 40). Taking into consideration this variation while theorizing emergence is vital, as it prevents truncating the sample towards the most organized and confrontational campaigns that are most visible.

## 2.2 The Puzzle of Noncooperation

*Prior to the massacre, about 70 percent of the prewar inhabitants of El Mozote [Morazán department, El Salvador] left; several dozen of these had enlisted in the ranks of the ERP [the Popular Revolutionary Army] or supported the government. Those who did none of these things were murdered.*

– Binford, (1996) *The El Mozote Massacre*

As defined here, civilian noncooperation is, first and foremost, an act of refusal to cooperate with armed groups; a statement to opt out of war. As such, given the centrality of cooperation for the advancement of irregular war (Tse-Tung, 1961; Kalyvas, 2006; Wickham-Crowley, 1992), it imposes costs on armed groups. This makes of civilian noncooperation a highly risky enterprise. In fact, many civilians who have opted for noncooperation have paid for it with their lives. Leaders of El Salvador's repopulation movement were terrorized by the armed forces, and their communities were bombed. Similarly, Colombian communities engaged in noncooperation have been constantly targeted by military, paramilitary, and guerrilla groups, and hundreds of their members have been murdered. Thirty-seven members of the PCSJA, a campaign of unilateral noncooperation, were killed within the first three months after their declaration of neutrality and over 200 members (out of approximately 1500) were killed during the first 15 years of the campaign. Similarly, the three main leaders of the Peasant Worker Association of the Carare River (ATCC), a campaign of pacted noncooperation in the Santander Department in Colombia, were massacred by the paramilitaries a few years after their community had launched the campaign.

In order to achieve their strategic objectives, or even to guarantee their own survival, armed groups seek civilian compliance.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, armed groups are likely to see noncooperators as a threat and even consider them their direct enemies. As a Colombia peasant put it, civilians seem well aware of this: "... a united community is an obstacle for the armed actors. They are interested in power, but we subvert that. So they want to get rid of us any way they can." (cited in Alther, 2006, p. 284). Given that armed groups derive power from the consent of their followers, noncooperation is perhaps *the* key challenge. When cooperation is denied and forms of community organization are set up, the sources of power on which armed groups depend can enter under serious threat. As coercion is the response for which the institutional machinery is the most extensive and well-established in armed groups (Mason and Krane, 1989; Kalyvas,

<sup>18</sup>This is especially the case for irregular civil war, the specific type of warfare that has been dominant in the post-World War II era (Kalyvas, 2005; Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010).

2006), the most likely reaction against noncooperators is violent repression.

In his study of everyday forms of resistance, Scott, (1985, p. xvi) observed that it is “... rare for peasants to risk confrontation with authorities over taxes, cropping patterns, development policies, or onerous new laws.” This should be all the more true when these “authorities” are armed groups ready to meet violence against them. Given large power asymmetries between armed groups and civilians, as the epigraph of El Mozote massacre during El Salvador civil war illustrates, taking sides or fleeing seem much safer than staying put. This is even more so if staying put means fighting back as in noncooperation. Under these circumstances, what motivates and enables unarmed, ordinary civilians caught in the middle of war to refuse to cooperate with heavily armed combatants is far from obvious.

However, as armed groups try to avoid civilian noncooperation and civilians try to avoid violence, the relationship between these two is neither one of pure and complete antagonism, nor of pure and complete common interest. In game theoretical terms, their interaction is a mixed-motive game with mutual dependence (Schelling, 1960), suggesting that there is some room, even if minimal, for noncooperation to emerge. Without claiming that civilians choices *vis á vis* armed actors are fully or always cool-headed, the strategic character of the situation at hand makes rationality – as a benchmark rather than as a description of reality (Schelling, 1960; Gambetta, 2005, 1993) – a good framework from which to set up the puzzle, as well a useful point of departure for the development of theory. Consequently, in what follows, I spell out the puzzle of noncooperation as a collective action problem. In doing so, I emphasize the coordination problems associated with collective action that civilians living in warzones face in mounting noncooperation; a kind of strategic interaction to which I devote much attention in this study.

### Noncooperation as a Collective Action Problem

Since its inception by Olson, (1965), the collective action problem has been central in the study of mobilization in the civil war, social movement and revolution literatures.<sup>19</sup> Collective action problems, sticking to Olson’s standard structure, are commonly posited as situations in which individuals weigh the costs and benefits of joining a particular campaign before deciding whether to take part. More specifically, the framework deals with the individual decision of whether to join others or not to work towards the provision of a (public) good that is nonrival and nonexcludable. The problem arises from the fact that while the benefits are public, the costs are borne privately, giving individuals an incentive to let others do the work and free-ride.

However, forms of collective action differ in regard not only to the distribution of benefits and costs, but also to the risks that those who take part are likely to face (Ostrom, 2007, p. 187). In the context of civil war, the risks associated with civilian collective action are likely to be particularly high. Indeed, civilian death rates in civil war tend to be substantially higher than those in other contexts where scholars have treated collective action as “high risk”, such as in military and authoritarian regimes. To cite but one example, as Wood, (2003, p. 8) shows, the civilian death rate in El Salvador’s civil war – by no means the bloodiest civil war in history – was 28 times higher than that of the military regimes of Argentina and Chile – two of the most

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<sup>19</sup>For a few central works that have applied this paradigm or had critically engaged with it in the study of rebellion, see Tullock, (1971), Tilly, (1978), Popkin, (1979), Lichbach, (1995), and Wood, (2003).

brutal dictatorships in South America. It follows that, under the conditions of ongoing civil war, violent repression is likely to become a critical factor in the decision calculus by which civilians make choices and thus a major determinant of their behavior.

Consequently, in this study I treat risks as analytically different from costs and focus on the former (McAdam, 1986, p. 67). In doing so, I depart from standard applications of Olson's framework. I posit the puzzle of noncooperation largely as one of expected dangers (risks), rather than one of expenditure of time, money and energy (costs). Following Tilly, (1978, pp. 98-100), I emphasize violent repression as a central force raising peoples' risk and thus serving as a negative incentive for mobilization.<sup>20</sup> I central assumption is that repression is inherently disagreeable and, consequently, something the average civilians would seek to avoid or at least minimize. In this light, understanding the emergence of noncooperation implies taking into account the fundamental fact that civilians are likely to lack reassurance and be afraid to act even when they feel they have strong reasons to do so.

However, students of collective action, especially social movement scholars emphasizing political opportunity, have noted that the decisions regarding engaging in collective action are not shaped by risks alone. The way "threats" and "opportunity" combine is central.<sup>21</sup> In the words of Goldstone and Tilly, (2001, p. 183): "A group may decide to bear very high costs for protest if it believes the chances of achieving success are high, but the same group may decided to avoid even modest costs of protest if it believes the chances of succeeding are low." In light of this assertion, before analyzing the expected risks of noncooperation I look into the benefits sought through noncooperation and the expected probability of successfully securing them.

### **The expected benefits of Noncooperation**

As armed groups' violence seriously undermines civilian security, protection from violence and its effects becomes a central good at stake in civil war. In fact, in exchange for loyalty and collaboration, armed groups guarantee civilians that they will not impose violence upon them and promise to protect them from other armed factions' violence as well. Nonetheless, as war is a dynamic process and the balance of power at the local level is likely to change several times during the course of war, civilians are likely to find themselves in situations in which protection is under-supplied. Is it under these general circumstances that I expect noncooperation to emerge as what IR scholars have recently called CSP (Jose and Medie, 2015; Gorur and Carstensen, 2016).

It is in this light that protection from violence and its effects constitutes the fundamental "benefit" that civilians pursue via noncooperation.<sup>22</sup> Doing so does not imply that civilians have no "life projects" other than survival, but it highlights the fact that guaranteeing basic levels of protection is, generally, a condition for the achievement of other goals. In their seminal work on

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<sup>20</sup>Other social movements scholars, such as Zwerman and Steinhoff, (2005), have argued the opposite: i.e., that activist may look for ways to stimulate repression against them in order to more effectively advance their claims. I believe it is reasonable to assume that in a civil war, civilians living in warzones are unlikely to "ask for trouble" in the way these two authors found activists had in the relatively peaceful settings of the United States and Japan.

<sup>21</sup>Here, opportunity refers to the chances that collective action will lead to success in achieving a desired outcome.

<sup>22</sup>Kaplan, (2013b) takes a similar approach and focuses on whether and how instances of that here I call civilian noncooperation reduce the levels of armed groups' violence against civilians. Arjona, (2015), in contrast, looking at areas where one armed group has achieved dominant presence, explores another benefit of noncooperation: autonomy from rebel rule.

Zones of Peace (ZoPs), Mitchell and Nan, (1997) note that some of these Zones focus exclusively on protection from direct physical violence (negative peace, in Galtung's (1969, p. 184) terms), while others seek to fighting against structural and symbolic forms of violence (positive peace, in Galtung's terms) by fostering social inclusion, promoting social justice and participatory dynamics, among others. As the empirics of this study clearly reveal, my focus on the former does not ignore these broader set of goals, but highlights that to move towards them, basic levels of protection need to be secured.

Civilians have reasons to believe that the odds of bringing about protection via noncooperation are low. First, they know that the successful achievement of this goal depends, at least to some extent, on armed groups adapting their behavior and tailoring their strategies to those of civilians. In other words, noncooperation is successful in providing protection to the extent to which armed groups find themselves forced or compelled to accept and respect the civilian choice of opting out of war and withdraw any form of cooperation.<sup>23</sup>

Second, organized noncooperation is likely to be one of those instances in which virtually universal participation is needed for the successful attainment of the socially desirable benefit. In noncooperation campaigns, the chance of net loss is extremely high as only a very small number of defectors/spoilers is needed to do damage, leaving others to pay the costs while reaping no benefit.<sup>24</sup> A few civilians not complying with the behaviors agreed as the basis of a noncooperation campaign, for example passing information to an armed group about the behavior of others in the community, is likely to be enough to undermine protection and fuel a cycle of violence based on denunciation and retaliation.

Let's take the case of San Pablo, a municipality in Southern Colombia situated in a coca cultivating area with presence of multiple armed groups. In 2000, the population there declared the municipality a "peace territory", successfully launching a campaign of noncooperation. However, only a short time later the entire experiment was strongly undermined as residents were not homogeneous in their preference for noncooperation. Some still adhered to the armed group that had long controlled the area, creating several intra-community divisions. With participation not being universal, noncooperators failed in keeping armed groups away from the community and signalling their neutrality. This further undermined the security of the population and lead to the weakening and almost death of the initiative.

In game theoretical terms, if a small number of players opts out, everyone is likely to receive a zero payoff. Almost every player has an effective veto over the entire play of the game (Ostrom, 2007, p. 194).<sup>25</sup> Knowing that such a strict commitment to demanding rules of behavior is a condition for the potential achievement of their goal, civilians are likely to believe that the odds of enjoying the benefits of noncooperation are low (and this is especially the case when civilians reckon that establishing a solid system of sanctions is no easy task).

Finally, the achievement of sustained protection is likely to be subject to long-term horizons while the risks of noncooperation predominate in the short run. Armed groups have incentives

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<sup>23</sup>The mere idea of civilians conditioning the behavior of armed groups via opposition is fairly counterintuitive. However, when armed groups find significant difficulties in winning civilians' full-fledge support and *fully* controlling a given locality, they are likely to become mostly concerned with limiting defections and preserving *some* level of control over the territory. In these circumstances, as a second-best option, they may tailor their strategy to civilian responses (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 233; Kaplan, 2013b, p. 352,a; Arjona, 2016b).

<sup>24</sup>For this type of collective action, see Bicchieri, (1997).

<sup>25</sup>Here, rather than displacing, opting out means staying in the locality but not complying with the rules of noncooperation.

to curtail attempts of noncooperation from the very beginning, as it is easier for them to stop a noncooperation campaign when civilians are trying to organize it, than when they are already well organized. The case of La Caimana in the Colombian Department of Santander is illustrative. Right after Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) realized that community leaders were attempting to organize villagers into a noncooperation campaign, they kidnapped them and gave them the option to leave the area or be killed. The leaders left and the campaign failed to emerge (see Chapter 6). Benefits instead need to wait: only after long months of noncooperation in which many villagers were killed, did the PCSJA begin to enjoy some basic level of protection and other benefits stemming from their campaign (see Chapter 5).

To be sure, civilians are attentive to the longer-term implications of their choices (see e.g., Utas, 2005). This is all the more true when they realize that war is not an event or state of exception, but rather a social condition under which they need to rethink and redesign their life strategies (see Lubkemann, 2008, p. 247). However, recovering basic levels of protection is reasonably to be seen as something that can hardly wait. Civilians' choice for noncooperation is likely to be informed by a strong sense of urgency (Elster, 2009).

All in all, the odds of obtaining self-protection via noncooperation are fairly uncertain, highly demanding in terms of commitment and participation, and attuned to long temporal horizons. Thus, from the perspectives of benefits, observing noncooperation campaigns on the ground is puzzling. Now then, how does noncooperation look in terms of risks associated with it?

### The expected risks of Noncooperation

I have already made the case that civilians run mortal risks when opposing armed groups in the context of civil war. However, if one is to make the point that observing noncooperation is puzzling, arguing that potential non-cooperators are likely to face high risks, albeit necessary, is insufficient. As both social movement and civil war scholars have rightly put it, a group of people may choose to accept the risks associated with a given course of action if the risks of alternative courses seem comparable or even greater (Goldstone and Tilly, 2001; Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007). Thus, the expected risks associated with noncooperation need to be assessed *relative* to the other choices that civilians might have at hand. Not proceeding in this manner could easily lead to a descriptively inaccurate and analytically misleading depiction of noncooperation as strategy of self-protection available to civilians.

Noncooperation is puzzling as long as the average risks that noncooperators are likely to face, at least analytically, differ from those of: (a) joining the ranks of armed groups or collaborating with them; (b) fleeing, and (c) free-riding. In what follows, I analytically consider the average risks associated with noncooperation against these three possible responses.

As noncooperation implies the refusal to cooperate with *every* armed organization present in a given locality, it yields the protection of none and is likely to attract the enmity of all. Left to their own devices, it is reasonable to expect noncooperators to be exposed to higher levels of violence as compared to those who join the ranks of an armed organization and those who collaborate with them. Combatants, unlike noncooperators, count on the armed protection of their fellow fighters and, mistakes aside, are exempt from the violence coming from their own group. Moreover, they have access to the skills, resources and networks that in one way or another are likely to increase their odds of surviving in the midst of war (Kalyvas and Kocher,

2007).

In relation to collaborators, noncooperators do not count on the protection (even if imperfect) that armed groups offer in exchange for loyalty. Even if the armed group is not in a position to hold to this offer and protect civilians from the assaults of another group, it is reasonable to expect that it will *at least* try to avoid victimizing those who are loyal. Even if armed groups may perceive “not taking sides” and “supporting the other side” as one and the same (Barter, 2012, p. 557), noncooperators are exposed to reprisals from all sides. This was the case in Guatemala’s civil war, where not taking sides (neutrality) was no more acceptable to the guerrillas than to the Army, as both parties claimed to represent the people and to be their legitimate authority (Stoll, 1993, p. 120). Similarly, in Colombia, during the administration of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002–2010), which restlessly aimed at recovering the state’s presence and control over the entire country, civilian noncooperation campaigns were not only seen as a threat by armed groups but also by the government, who view in them an unacceptable restriction to its sovereign right over the territory (Mitchell and Rojas, 2012).

If this is the case for noncooperation relative to participation and cooperation, what are we to expect for fleeing? Under conditions of fear, uncertainty and danger, exit is likely to become a sensible option.<sup>26</sup> The large numbers of wartime migrants around the world provide an indication of how widespread this response is. In most contemporary war-torn countries, despite the risks involved (Wiesner, 1988, p. 101; Kalyvas, 2006, p. 236; Koloma Beck, 2012, p. 127), fleeing has been one of the most common protective strategies that people have followed to cope with violence.

This is the case as civilians can (and do) choose their destination in a way that minimizes their risks of being targeted. For example, they can move to a rival group’s stronghold, cluster with others similarly targeted or seek anonymity in a different area altogether (Steele, 2009). Furthermore, in some instances, armed groups might push civilians to displace and even facilitate the process (by protecting them while “On the move”), as under some circumstances getting rid of the disloyal is in their strategic interest (Kalyvas, 2006; Steele, 2011, 2017). None of these scenarios is available to civilians who choose to follow a noncooperation strategy. As I have argued elsewhere (Masullo, 2015), staying put is *commonly* a first order condition for noncooperation.<sup>27</sup> Thus, when it comes to risks associated with becoming a victim (of lethal violence), there are good reasons to think that, on average, fleeing is likely to be less risky (or undetermined at best) than noncooperation.

Finally, noncooperators are also likely to run more risks relative to what Kalyvas and Kocher, (2007) call free-riding (i.e., not participating). If free-riders succeed in going unnoticed or in publicly hiding their private preferences, there are to be exposed only to random violence. Noncooperators, in contrast, are likely to be targeted precisely because of their choice of not

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<sup>26</sup>Displacement is often portrayed as largely headless and devoid of strategic calculation. For many, it is virtually a “nondecision” driven by the reflexive instinct for survival. However, empirical evidence from different conflicts shows that it is often a strategic choice (although not a free one) for coping with violence and seeking safety. As such, it can involve deliberation and decision-making processes about when and where to go, as well as with whom (see, among others, Slim, 2007, p. 73; Lubkemann, 2008, p. 185; Adhikari, 2012, 2013, p. 127; Steele, 2009, 2011, 2017; Lozano-Garcia et al., 2010; Moore and Shellman, 2007, 2004).

<sup>27</sup>There are some exception to this rule. A noncooperation campaign can emerge while civilians are in displacement and part of its aims can be, in fact, that of returning to their lands. The Cacarica Communities in the Colombian department of Chocó, as well as the Communities of Populations in Resistance in Guatemalan, constitute illustrative examples of this possibility.

taking sides. Therefore, besides the baseline likelihood of being victims of random violence, to which all those who stay put should be equally exposed, noncooperators are also likely to be selectively and collectively targeted.<sup>28</sup> In fact, as it will become apparent in the following Chapter, the type of targeting is a central force shaping the emergence of noncooperation.

In sum, noncooperation is puzzling both from the perspective of benefits and risks, as civilians are likely to believe that the chances of succeeding are low and the risks of acting are quite high. Moreover, while the structure of the campaign is vulnerable to free-riding, selective incentives do not seem to be the most appropriate solution to the problem. The fact that prospective noncooperators run high risks, face very uncertain prospects of enjoying benefits and act upon little (if any) expectation of material payoffs, suggests that motivations are more complex than standard cost-benefits calculations and basic self-regarding material preferences. The proposed theory aims to account for this complexity, even at the cost of losing some parsimony.

### Noncooperation as a Coordination Problem

A central dimension of the collective action problem that civilians face in mounting noncooperation pertains to strategic interactions among themselves. Besides the strategic situation they face *vis à vis* armed groups, they face one among them. For not cooperation to emerge, civilians need to *coordinate* action. To do so, they first need to converge on a preference for noncooperation and make clear to each other that their preferences are similar, something that is central for creating assurance. In other words, for a *shared* desire to evolve civilians need to communicate. The nature of this strategic interaction, unlike that between civilians and armed groups, resembles what in game-theoretical terms has been labeled pure common-interest game between partners. Games in which players need to find the way to signal their preferences to each other and to create consistent expectations for coordinated action to take place (see Schelling, 1960, pp. 89-99). When working towards making mutual preference converge on noncooperation, as well as towards revealing and signaling preferences, civilians in warzones are likely to face acute problems of perception and communication.

Civil war dynamics impose severe obstacles for civilians to concert on a strategy to follow with some basic degree of certainty. Signalling preferences and communicating commitment to others (i.e. making others think that one will do  $x$ ) in the midst of war is a difficult and risky enterprise. Violence is likely to push civilians into retreating to their private realm. Face-to-face interactions between civilians, especially involving larger groups, are commonly prohibited, or at least monitored, by armed groups. Combatants seek to closely surveil information flows and event to cut off communication. Moreover, the common practice of denunciation that feeds cycles of civil war violence at the local level (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 176-195) heavily undermines trust among civilians. Civilians lack reassurance when it comes to signalling their preferences and have enduring incentives to falsify them publicly (Kuran, 1995). As the emergence of noncooperation implies preference convergence and mutually consistent expectations, these problems of perception and obstacles to communication make it puzzling also from a coordination point of view. In this study I theorize and empirically illustrate the conditions under which individual desires for noncooperation are more likely to evolve, as well as the factors that facilitate moving from

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<sup>28</sup>For collective targeting, see Steele, (2011, 2017) and Gutierrez Sanín and Wood, (2017).

individual to shared desires.

This is the general landscape of the decision calculus for noncooperation in civil war. Despite its bleakness, as in other similar settings where no coordinated and collective action was easily predictable (e.g., Karklins and Petersen, 1993), several civilians have followed a strategy of noncooperation to protect themselves. Theoretical accounts from related literatures (e.g., civil war, revolutions, social movements, civil resistance) provide useful guidance to understand noncooperation in civil war. However, for a variety of reasons, they have not addressed the phenomenon concretely or have provided only sideline, inadequate or incomplete solutions to this puzzle. In what follows I broadly review these strands of literature in general. In the next chapter, while sketching out my proposed theory and discussing my alternative explanations, I engage more explicitly with concrete theories and hypothesis available in these literatures.

### 2.3 Literature Review

Different strands of scholarly literature in political science and sociology have touched on issues related to civilian noncooperation and, thus, provide important insights for its study. The most relevant fields and subfields in these disciplines are the emerging IR literature on civilian self-protection, social movement studies of political violence and repression, the growing civil resistance literature on organized nonviolent opposition to repressive actors, and the civil war program on the micro-dynamics of civil war. Despite of important contributions, none of these literatures has concretely addressed noncooperation, leaving it both under-conceptualized and under-theorized.

The role that civilians play in war, especially in what has to do with protection, is the central concern of the emerging IR literature on CSP. This work, however, remains largely descriptive and has ignored analytical distinctions that are crucial for the understanding of civilian noncooperation. Particularly, when documenting CSP strategies in different parts of the world, this literature has emphasized individual self-help responses, rather than coordinated strategies, missing the specific challenges associated to collective action in high-risk settings. Social movement and civil resistance scholars, on the contrary, have focused on collective behavior and have underscored civilian agency even in the face of heavy repression. Nevertheless, their insights are also limited, as most of this work has not engaged in detail with the specific ways in which civil wars operate on the ground. This gap has been successfully filled by students of civil war, who in the last decade have decisively shifted the attention from macro-process (onset, duration, termination) to the micro-dynamics and social processes that define life in warzones. However, when it comes to agency, this literature has put most of the emphasize on armed actors, rather than on civilians, and has been dominated by a interest in violent dynamics and interactions.

In what follows, I broadly outline the opportunities each of these *fields* have offered for a more systematic study of noncooperation, at the same time as I identify and highlight in more detail why and how they have failed to grasp the phenomenon. As scholars in some of these fields have recognized,<sup>29</sup> despite studying many of the same phenomena there has been a lack of dialogue and engagement between these literatures. As a result, these fields have developed

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<sup>29</sup>See, for example, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, (2001), Tarrow, (2007), and Schock, (2013).

largely in “cordial indifference” to each other’s findings. I contend that the integration of these related literatures not only allows us to better understand noncooperation strategies in civil war, but also improves our social-scientific understanding of broader subjects that are at the heart of noncooperation: civilian behavior in war; collective action in high-risk settings; civilian protection in war, and strategic nonviolent action, among others.

### IR Studies on Civilian Protection

Since the end of the Cold War the international community has displayed increased willingness to protect civilians caught in armed conflicts. This is clearly reflected in the development of the thematic concept of the “Protection of Civilians” within the United Nations’ “Agenda for Peace” in the 1990s, the agreement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (ISAC) upon an explicit and encompassing definition of protection in 2000, and especially the development of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) framework from late 2001 onwards.<sup>30</sup> In light of these developments, it became common understanding that when a state fails to protect its citizens, the international community, enabled by different regimes in international law, take this role. Naturally, the discussion (and practice) has focused on action done *to* civilians rather than *by* them (Jose and Medie, 2015, p. 2). This despite the fact that UNDP’s emerging concept of “human security” stressed that “people should be able to take care of themselves” (UNDP, 1994, p. 24).

More recently, however, IR scholars (as well as practitioners and policy-makers) have responded to the persistent limitations of several humanitarian, peacekeeping and development operations around the world by turning their attention towards the potential of endogenous sources of protection, underscoring the diverse strategies individuals and communities have followed to navigate through war. The concept of CSP, defined as “activities undertaken during armed conflict to preserve physical integrity in which the primary decision maker is a civilian or group of civilians” (Jose and Medie, 2015, p. 2), has gain some room and concrete strategies have been documented in different parts of the world (see, e.g., Mégret, 2009; Baines and Paddon, 2012; Clark-Kazak, 2014; Suarez and Black, 2014; Jose and Medie, 2015; Gorur and Carstensen, 2016).<sup>31</sup>

This growing literature has highlighted a crucial aspect for the study of noncooperation that other relevant bodies of work have overlooked: even in a context of constrained choice, such as that of civil war, civilians have agency. By refocusing the locus of decision making from external actors to civilians, this literature has left behind the “humanitarian way of constructing ‘victims’ as essentially passive, depoliticized and in need of international intervention” (Mégret, 2009, p. 580). However, given its exclusive focus on protection, these studies have not linked the specific ways civilians “navigate” in war with patterned conflict micro-dynamics. To the extent that these strategies bring civilians some protection, important empirical and analytical distinctions have been overlooked.

First of all, this literature has paid little attention to the distinction between civilian

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<sup>30</sup>The concept of R2P appeared for the first time in a December 2001 report by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS, 2001, p. 2) and was finally adopted in 2005 by the UN General Assembly in its World Summit Outcome, A/RES/60/1.

<sup>31</sup>Two projects in particular have documented a very diverse array of cases in very different parts of the world. See the “Civilians in Conflict” series by the Stimson Center and the L2GP Initiative.

cooperation and noncooperation. For example, under “accommodation strategies”, Baines and Paddon (2012) include different types of cooperation/support with armed groups as long as civilians fall short of becoming full-time fighters or laborers. To be sure, cooperation with armed groups can bring protection. However, ignoring the cooperation/noncooperation distinction is problematic as these responses is likely to impact differently other civil war dynamics that are likely to directly affect civilians prospects of survival (e.g., levels of control, the type of targeting, type of rebel governance).

Another relevant omission is the distinction between violent and nonviolent strategies (see, e.g., Mégret, 2009, pp. 591-592). Although it is a fact that civilians have joined together to counter armed groups violence with organized violence of their own, while protecting some people, violent strategies can put others at higher risk. Likewise, even when created to protect civilians, violent strategies can turn against civilians, such in the case of the Civil Defense Forces in Sierra Leone. According to the 2005 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, these forces, initially created to protect civilians form the Revolutionary United Front, became the main perpetrators of violence against civilians. Furthermore, given that a goal of this literature is in part to better inform international actors in their task of protecting civilians, these distinctions should be attended to with more care, as they are likely to affect choices of which CSP strategies to support and when and how to best do so.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, although some studies have explicitly considered individual and collective self-protection strategies,<sup>33</sup> predominant attention has been given to uncoordinated, individual self-help actions. Highlighting that “much can be done by way of self-help in terms of individual security strategies” (Buzan, 2007, p. 51), this literature has made an explicit case for emphasizing the context of the everyday, mundane and minute routines (see, e.g., Suarez and Black, 2014, p. 5). To be sure, this approach has allowed this literature to captured very subtle strategies, but at the same time it has prevented it from studying the challenges many civilians face in warzones when it comes to concerting and advancing organized CSP. This omission becomes all the more problematic if we consider that, under some circumstances, it is organization what provides civilians with some extra leeway to protect themselves from violence.

These omissions are clearly reflected in Jose and Medie’s (2015) typology, which includes three types of strategies: non-engagement, nonviolent engagement and violent engagement. Although they rightly make the distinction between nonviolent and violent engagement, under nonviolent engagement they lump together behaviors such as providing labor and acting as an informant (forms of cooperation) with neutrality and peaceful resistance (forms of noncooperation). Moreover, the typology is agnostic about whether these conduct is individual or collective. To be sure, this does not invalidate their effort, but certainly calls for a more nuanced approach.

## **Social Movement Studies**

In contrast to CSP, the main focus of social movement studies has been collective behavior. However, despite their close attention to how the context has a decisive impact on all these

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<sup>32</sup>In fact, a systematic discussion of the moral hazards involved in international organizations supporting self-protection initiatives is missing in this literature.

<sup>33</sup>For example, Clark-Kazak, (2014) makes a clear distinction between “getting by” (everyday and individual), “getting back at” (everyday and collective), “getting out” (long term and individual), and “getting organized” (long term and collective) strategies.

processes, the field has not yet engaged thoroughly with the context of civil war. This results, at least in part, from the field's long bias towards the study of Western parliamentary democracies and reformist movements, what Tarrow, (2016) calls the "stock-in-trade of the social movement field". Even the first social movement studies of political violence focused on relatively small and clandestine violent groups in Western democracies in the 1960s and 1970s (see, e.g., Della Porta, 1995; Zwerman, Steinhoff, and Della Porta, 2000).

More recently, however, an expanded scope to non-democratic settings has stimulated work that provides relevant insights for the study of collective action in civil war settings. First, the move away from Western democracies raised awareness about the need to pay as much attention to threats as to opportunities and, thus, of factoring risk into the analysis of collective action (McAdam, 1986; Goldstone and Tilly, 2001). Second, by introducing the analysis of political violence within the wider context of Tilly's (1978) repertoires of action, it became clear that violence is part of a movement's repertoire and that political opportunities and available resources can shape the method of action protesters choose (e.g., violent or nonviolent). Third, work on movement repression has shown that violence links movements to opponents in consequential ways, noting for example that state repression and countermovement violence can shape the level and forms of mobilization. In this way, social movement studies have helped to contextualize and in a way de-exceptionalize the study of violence (Bosi and Malthaner, 2013), making the examination of the interaction between violent and nonviolent contention in both nonviolent and violent contexts possible.<sup>34</sup>

However, this literature presents important shortcomings. First, social movement scholars interested in political violence have focused mostly on violent actors and on the emergence of political violence. By emphasizing on processes of escalation and radicalization (shifts from nonviolent to violent repertoires) resulting from interactions mainly between the state, rival groups and countermovements,<sup>35</sup> these studies have neglected the roles unarmed civilians play in war. Second, these scholars have seldom taken seriously the specificities that define the setting of civil war and that are likely to shape forms of wartime collective action such as noncooperation. When studying violent settings, they have privileged authoritarian regimes (many times with a problematic sample bias towards regimes already in transition) and/or hybrid regimes (e.g., Loveman, 1998; Osa and Corduneanu-Huci, 2003). When cases of civil war have entered into their samples, they have been frequently lumped together with other "repressive" situations.

Moreover, valuable efforts such as providing typologies of political violence (Della Porta, 1995; Tilly, 2003; Bosi and Malthaner, 2013) or identifying mechanisms that travel across different types of violent settings (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001; Tilly, 2003), have been too macro and/or too general to capture the specific (micro) dynamics of civil war that shape civilian noncooperation. Third, their state-centered perspective, in which governance units are largely limited to agents or institutions of the state (Earl, 2006, p. 129; Della Porta, 2008, p. 224; Goldstone, 2015), have prevented movement students from embracing the crucial fact that in

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<sup>34</sup>For reviews of how social movements have approached the study of political violence and the topics that this literature has given more attention to, see Della Porta, (2008) and a Special Issue on Political Violence and Terrorism edited by Goodwin, (2012b) in the journal *Mobilization*. For reviews and critical assessments of how repression has been treated in social movements research see C. Davenport, (2007) and Earl, (2011). Finally, in early 2016, the blog *Mobilizing Ideas* dedicated a series of essays to "Civil Wars and Contentious Politics"; see <https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/category/essay-dialogues/civil-wars-and-contentious-politics/>.

<sup>35</sup>See, for example, Alimi, Bosi, and Demetriou, (2015)

civil wars the centers of authority, control and repression are multiplied and go far beyond state actors. Thus, contentious interactions that do not directly involve the state as an object of claims or as an agent of repression have gone almost unnoticed. Finally, in terms of levels of analysis, most of the work exploring the effects of context on forms of political violence or the repression–mobilization nexus, exploits cross-country variation.<sup>36</sup> This has precluded movement scholars from studying organized civilian responses to armed groups, given that these shaped at the very local level, exhibit a great deal of subnational variation, and are likely to be independent from the general character of the regime or the national macro cleavages of war (see Chapter 4).

As Braun, (2016a) recently noted, the links between political violence and local collective action have been rarely theorized or empirically studied in this literature. Consequently, the highly localized forms of protective mobilization, such as noncooperation in civil war and rescue operations in the context of the Holocaust (Braun, 2016b), have been routinely overlooked. This omission does not only respond to the high level of aggregation at which movement scholars usually work, but also to the fact that public claim making is often considered the essence of movement activity. Campaigns that, deliberately or not, do not attract much attention or in which activists might have reasons to remain relatively covert, do not make it to newspapers or statistical records and thus have fallen outside the attention of many movement scholars.

### Civil Resistance Studies

While the CSP literature seems agnostic about the distinction between violent and nonviolent responses, and social movement (and civil war) scholarship has focused chiefly on violent actors and dynamics, the emerging field of civil resistance has brought nonviolent action to the forefront. This work has established the crucial fact that violence is not the only (nor necessarily the most effective) form of contention, not even in contexts largely defined by widespread violence. Scholars in this field assume that there are no contexts where violence is the sole vector of mobilization. If violent resistance can be mobilized and be effective, then civil resistance can also be mobilized (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011; Schock, 2013). Unlike social movement studies that tend to see the choice among conventional, nonviolent or violent forms of action as a natural ordinal escalation, civil resistance students usually treat these as a nominal and discrete choice (Asal et al., 2013) that vary for example according to how constrained the context is (Chenoweth and Lewis, 2013; Cunningham, 2013).

With this approach, this scholarship provides important tools for examining why civilians in the midst of violent conflict opt for nonviolent methods and how this choice is related to violence. Moreover, it has highlighted the collective, transformative potential of unarmed, organized civilians even in the face of seemingly inauspicious political opportunities. As Chenoweth and Ulfelder, (2015, p. 2) put it, “the theory of civil resistance places civilians as the primary active agents prosecuting conflict against a state opponent.” In fact, civil resistance is defined as “the sustained use of methods of nonviolent action by civilians engaged in asymmetric conflicts with opponents not averse to using violence to defend their interests” (Schock, 2013, p. 277). With these foundations, this literature constitutes a central guide to the study of collective nonviolent action in civil wars in general, and of noncooperation in particular.

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<sup>36</sup>A clear exponent of the former line of research is Tilly, (2003). As for the latter, the literature is vast; see, among others, Gupta, Singh, and Sprague, (1993), Fein, (1995), Francisco, (1995, 1996), Hegre et al., (2001), Regan and Henderson, (2002), and Carey, (2006, 2010).

Nevertheless, scholars in this tradition have not yet addressed the phenomenon of noncooperation in civil war.<sup>37</sup> Apart from some interesting preliminary insights about the differences between drivers of nonviolent campaigns and civil war onset (Chenoweth and Lewis, 2013), neither this literature has yet engaged in a detailed examination of the particularities of civil war. Most of this work has focused mainly on the democracy/nondemocracy distinction (e.g., Schock, 2005; Svensson and Lindgren, 2011) and even if often countries that have experienced civil war have been included in some samples, the focus has been too general to capture its specific dynamics.

This has been further deepened by the centrality this literature gives to the state; its reliance on aggregate data; and its privileged focus on large-scale campaigns with maximalist, state-level goals. Like social movement scholarship, this literature has identified the state as *the* opponent of civil resistance. This is despite stating that civil resistance is mounted against actors who held power and are ready to use violence to satisfy their interests, and of explicitly recognizing that it “may effectively confront violent nonstate actors” (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011, p. 277). Due to this bias, scholars have failed to capture instances of nonviolent resistance that challenge *de facto* authorities other than the state and that are local in their scope and practice, like many armed actors in civil war. Aggregate data sacrifices important levels of nuance, making it virtually impossible to capture instances of nonviolent action that take place at the subnational level in response to localized civil war dynamics.

In addition, their focus on macro and maximalist goals (e.g., regime change, ending foreign occupation, and/or secession) has led scholars to overlook more micro goals that are equally important and challenging in the context of civil war, such as protection from violence or autonomy from rebel rule. Finally, given a chief interest in assessing success/failure of nonviolent campaigns, this literature has claimed that “effective civil resistance is absolutely dependent on *mass* mobilization” (Chenoweth and Ulfelder, 2015, 3, emphasis added) and thus has focused largely on the *extent* of mobilization. This has left aside campaigns that are more localized and thus mobilize relatively fewer people, such is the case of civilian noncooperation.

Most of these limitations are clearly reflected in the otherwise high-quality datasets this field bases most of its empirical analyses, such as the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NACVO) (Chenoweth and Lewis, 2013) and the Major Episodes of Contention (MEC) datasets. For example, for a resistance campaign to make it into NAVCO, a series of coordinated, contentious collective actions with at least 1,000 observed participants must be followed within a year by another contentious event with 1,000 or more observed participants claiming the same maximalist goals. Once participation during peak events no longer reaches 1,000, the campaign is considered concluded. Thus, as Chenoweth and Lewis, (2013) warn, researchers using these data should qualify findings as applicable only to *major* campaigns with *maximal goals* and a *high level* of sustained participation over time.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Two notable exceptions, by authors that have dealt with the phenomenon working in the intersection between the fields of civil resistance and civil wars, are Kaplan, (2013b) and Masullo, (2015).

<sup>38</sup>Note, however, that efforts to collect data on campaigns that are smaller in size and that may have had reformist goals are underway (Chenoweth and Ulfelder, 2015, p. 22).

## Civil War Studies

The field of civil war studies can be roughly divided into two major approaches: macro-level, cross-national studies and micro-level, subnational studies.<sup>39</sup> The first approach has focused on macro processes of civil war (such as onset, duration, termination and recurrence), had generally treated civil war as present or absent based on thresholds of —usually lethal— violence, and has relied mostly on country-level data for the identification of structural determinants of civil war. Given this focus and level of analysis, this is not the most relevant approach for the study of civilian noncooperation.

In contrast, the micro-level approach relies on subnational, micro-level data and focuses on the behavior of individuals, households and communities living in warzones. Unlike any other body of literature discussed here, work in this tradition takes seriously the micro-foundations of civil war (see Kalyvas, 2008) and the local realities in which actors live and make choices (Arjona, 2014). Scholarship in this tradition has generated empirically testable arguments about what actually happens in civil war settings, addressing dynamics and processes that are likely to affect the emergence of noncooperation. These include: levels of territorial control, patterns of violence against civilians and systems of order and governance, among others. Following Kalyvas' (2003, p. 481) observation that civilians “cannot be treated as passive, manipulated, or invisible actors”, researchers in this approach have taken into account the role of the populations living in warzones in the production of these dynamics and processes. In doing so, this tradition has provided theories about when and where some civilian responses, such as participation, cooperation and displacement, are more likely.

Nevertheless, as with the work on political violence by social movement scholars, this literature has focused primarily on violent actors and violent dynamics. In fact, Kalyvas' (2006) seminal work, which shaped this tradition markedly, has been criticized for reifying violence, thereby ignoring the relationships between violent and nonviolent forms of contention (see Tarrow, 2007, pp. 591-592). The core of this work, as Mampilly, (2011, p. 6) put it, has emphasized mostly the “more salacious aspects of insurgents interactions with civilians”. Nonviolent activities have been particularly overlooked in this literature. Even if the growing literature on rebel governance has begun to underscore important dimensions of civilian–combatant interactions that go beyond violence and coercion (Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly, 2015; Arjona, 2016b; Mampilly, 2011; Kasfir, 2005),<sup>40</sup> civilian behavior that is not violent (or is not related to the production of violence) has still received scant attention. And this is the more true for civilian collective action. Indeed, Arjona, (2016b, p. 40) explicitly notes that, just like studies on rebel governance, work on civilian collective responses during war awaits for explanations of why does it take place at certain times and places, but not others.

When examining nonviolent civilian collective action, most of the existing work has focused either focused on pre-war mobilization and mobilization into armed groups (e.g., Wood, 2003; Staniland, 2014) or post-war collective action as a legacy of conflict (for a meta-analysis of this literature, see Bauer et al., 2016). Notably less analyzed has been the ongoing collective

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<sup>39</sup>Note that there are very valuable recent efforts to bridge both levels and underscoring the meso-level. See the Special Issue in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* edited by Balcells and Justino, (2014).

<sup>40</sup>In an explicit effort to look into the non-militaristic world of jihad, a fascinating recent volume edited by Hegghammer, (2017) opens the door to a broader understanding of the plethora of cultural practices that underly the life of militant islamists.

action by civilians that takes place *during* war. Apart from studies of protest in the context of civil war – which by the way seldom take place in warzones –, mobilization to oppose armed groups have not received enough attention in the literature.<sup>41</sup> Thus, an important part of the complex social processes that shape civil war locally and that are likely to be associated with the emergence, sustenance and outcomes of noncooperation have been bracketed. If we are to capture and understand civilian noncooperation, we need more direct insight into “the broader set of interactions that violent organizations constantly engage in with local communities” (Mampilly, 2011, p. 6).

However, in the last few years some scholars have taken a fundamental step towards the systematic study of this broader set of nonviolent interactions. Barter, (2014), borrowing categories from Hirschman, (1970), has studied several nonviolent strategies that civilians living in warzones can follow: flight, support and voice. By highlighting voice as an option, his work opens a window into the study of noncooperation. Even if noncooperation does not perfectly overlap with Barter’s (2014, pp. 78–86) understanding of voice –as his category includes non-oppositional forms of engagement such as diplomacy and advocacy work–, it clearly constitutes a form of voice. In this sense, the present study further specifies one dimension of what the author considers voice and addresses what Barter, (2012, p. 564) himself considers one of most fundamental questions about voice that is still to be addressed: “why, despite severe costs, do civilians raise their voice in the midst of armed conflict?”

In her effort to theorize the emergence of different forms of social order, Arjona, (2015, 2016b, pp. 65–73) has explored in detail what she calls resistance to armed group rule. This is directly related to civilian noncooperation. However, given her primary interest in rebel rule, her work mostly deals with areas where one armed group is hegemonic and where violence against civilians is relatively limited. Thus, the areas where organized efforts of self-protection might be more urgent, such as where armed dispute prevails, fall outside her scope. While in her work armed groups are the ones in charge of bringing order to warzones, this study theorizes the conditions under which civilians can organize themselves to bring local order. Moreover, beyond a useful distinction between partial and full resistance, Arjona’s work has not yet delved deep into the variation this response exhibits on the ground. The typology I propose here, as well as the detailed treatment of three different types of noncooperation that I provide, begins to account for this variation.<sup>42</sup>

In this sense, my study of noncooperation can be seen as an extension of Arjona’s theorizing efforts. An extension that is of special relevance, given Mitchell and Ramirez’s (2009, p. 260) accurate observation that there are reasons to think that the emergence and sustenance of these type of responses in an area contested by multiple groups is likely to be more complex than in one “stably controlled” by one group. By studying civilian behavior in the context of disorder, I not only side with Arjona’s claim that behavior cannot be understood in isolation from processes of local order creation (Arjona, 2008), but also extend her work beyond contexts of rebelocracy and aliocracy.

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<sup>41</sup>Some exceptions are Arjona, (2016b, 2015), Carpenter, (2012) Kaplan, (2013b), Masullo, (2015), and the collaborative work by Idler, Garrido and Mouly. See also the aforementioned Special Issue to be published by the *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* on “Civil Resistance in the context of Armed Conflict”.

<sup>42</sup>I undertake the task of exploring some of the determinants of this variation elsewhere. See Masullo, (2017a).

Kaplan's (2010) work on civilian autonomy constitutes perhaps the most direct contribution to the study of noncooperation to date. In particular, his work has importantly advanced our knowledge of the impact of concrete campaigns of noncooperation on armed group's violence against civilians. He has come up with innovative and compelling ways of isolating the effect of these initiatives on anti-civilian violence (Kaplan, 2013b) and has identified ways in which civilians can effectively nudge armed groups to abide by rules of nonviolence (Kaplan, 2013a). Nevertheless, given his preferred focus on outcomes, several aspects of the phenomenon, beginning with a careful conceptualization and categorization, as well as questions regarding its emergence and sustenance overtime, are still to be explored. To be sure, a well-defined concept and a simple but coherent typology will help improve the fundamental task of assessing the impacts of different forms of noncooperation.

Finally, by undertaking a human-centered approach to peace and stressing that civilians are involved in building sustainable peace after and *during* war, peace scholars have provided rich surveys and descriptions of what they often call "grassroots peace initiatives". Within this literature, the work on ZoP and/or peace communities by Mitchell and collaborators (Mitchell and Nan, 1997; Hancock and Mitchell, 2007; see also Valenzuela, 2009) was pioneer in providing empirical and conceptual foundations to the study of what I term noncooperation. However, mostly concerned with understanding the processes of implementing peace (rather than the dynamics of war), a main focus of this work has been on how these experiences contribute to both local and national peace (Hancock and Mitchell, 2012). Questions regarding the factors that induce and strengthen these initiatives, or the mechanisms through which they affect other civil war processes, have captured far less attention in the peace studies literature Alther, (2006, p. 282).<sup>43</sup> More recently, however, Mouly, Idler, Hernandez and Garrido, building on experiences from Colombia, have built on this foundations and made relevant contributions to a better understanding not only of the trajectories of "peace territories" (Mouly, Idler, and Garrido, 2015; Mouly, Garrido, and Idler, 2016), but also of their outcomes (Idler, Garrido, and Mouly, 2015; Mouly, Hernandez Delgado, and Garrido, 2016). As should become apparent, this work, both empirically and conceptually, heavily informs this study.

This chapter introduced the concept of civilian noncooperation and provided a typology of the different forms it can take. I made the case that observing noncooperation campaigns is puzzling, as civilian need to overcome pressing obstacles to collective and coordinated action. I reviewed the opportunities and limitations of four main bodies of literature in political science and sociology that are the most relevant for the study of civilian noncooperation. In the following chapter, I propose a theory that identifies the conditions under which civilian noncooperation is more likely to emerge and details the micro-foundations linking these conditions to the outcome. Complementing the literature review presented here, I close the next chapter by discussing concrete alternative explanations that come from specific theories and hypotheses proposed by scholars in the fields that I have discussed.

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<sup>43</sup>For a clear exception and a comprehensive critical review of the way peace studies have dealt with the local and with civilian efforts to build peace, see Ehrlich, (2016).

### 3

# A Theory of Noncooperation in Civil War

This chapter lays out a theory of civilian noncooperation in civil war, singling out both the conditions under which noncooperation is more likely to emerge and the micro-foundations linking these conditions to the outcome. It results from a back and forth process from induction to deduction, from empirics to existing theories of civil war, social movements and civil resistance. I first conducted a single case study in 2012 from which I developed basic theoretical intuitions that were then revised, refined and confirmed through a subnational comparative research design involving clusters of positive and control cases (see Research Design in Chapter 4).

As other scholars that have attempted to explain instances of collective action inside and outside the context of civil war, I treat the emergence of noncooperation as a function of (i) the evolution of a shared desire to refuse to cooperate with armed groups,<sup>1</sup> and (ii) the capacity to collectively act upon this desire.<sup>2</sup> The theory builds on the observation that civilian choices, their objectives and their strategies, originate in processes that are endogenous to war, as much as in the social and institutional realities of the localities where war unfolds, realities that can even precede the conflict. As Lubkemann, (2008, pp. 221-222) rightly observed,

... it is impossible to understand the social objectives, interactions, and life strategies of inhabitants by focusing solely ... on their war-time experiences ... without reference to the specific history of pre-conflict social relations and local social organization that continue to actively inform ... war-time imagination.

Therefore, the proposed theory takes into account the strategic, social and institutional context in which civilian noncooperation emerge.

The key point of departure is the assumption that civilians living in warzones try their best to avoid, prevent or mitigate victimization.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, they carefully and continually take stock of their choices. They assess and reassess their risks, weigh the actions they have available and

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<sup>1</sup>I follow Wood, (2003, p. 231) in the use of *desire* instead of other terms used in the context of choice, such as preference. Desire highlights better the emotional and moral components of civilians' willingness to participate in risky action. When these components enters into the picture, choice does not always fit the well-ordered, transitive, complete and stable structure that the term preference commonly imply.

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., Ruggeri and Costalli, (2017), Arjona, (2016b), and Yashar, (2005).

<sup>3</sup>This is a reasonable assumption that has been made in other studies examining civilian choice in the context of civil war. See, for example, Kalyvas, (2006), Steele, (2009) and Arjona, (2016b, p. 47).

formulate different self-protection tactics. These tactics change over time, as civilians update and adapt their responses according to the changing dynamics of war. This explains why it is common to see people changing roles over the course of the same war, as the life story of Bintu in the Liberian civil war briefly introduced in the previous chapter dramatically reveals. This is the case for civil wars, as much as for responses to oppressive regimes and foreign occupations (Petersen, 2001), and even genocide (Fujii, 2011).

That civilians assess and reassess, update and adapt their responses to provide themselves some protection in the challenging setting of civil war is amply evidenced in the literature. For example, during the peak of the civil war in north Uganda (2003–2005), tens of thousands of civilians developed a preference for “night commuting” or temporarily displace to shelters created in the bushes to escape rebel attacks and abduction. However, as war progressed, they switched from avoidance to accommodation when and where they noted that rebels or the Ugandan military were unavoidable, finding ways to cooperate with armed actors without joining them (Baines and Paddon, 2012). Similarly, peasants that were forced to flee from their villages in rural Colombia chose destinations according to what they deemed safer. Their choices were moving to a rival group’s stronghold, clustering with others similarly targeted, or seeking anonymity in a city or different region (Steele, 2009, 2017).<sup>4</sup>

Based on repetitive interactions with armed groups, which sometimes extend even to decades, and in light of their own experience of violence and that of others surrounding them, civilians develop heuristics. As war progresses and becomes a more “normal social condition” (Koloma Beck, 2012; Lubkemann, 2008), civilians understand better the behavior and tactics of armed groups, become more cognizant of the logic underlying violence and the behaviors that are likely to spur retaliation. Even violence becomes formative, shaping people’s perceptions of who they are and how they interact with their social and physical environment (Feldman, 1991). These processes allow for civil wars to radically transform beliefs, perceptions, strategic understandings and existing relationships (Wood, 2008). To be sure, civil war settings do not generate enough information about all potential courses of action that civilians might follow, nor all the likely outcomes, and all the strategies of other actors. This impoverishes the quality of civilian decision making, especially when it involves coordinated and collective action (Ostrom, 2007, p. 196). However, as I show in the empirical sections of this study, in the face of imperfect information civilians still make choices and can find, within their social structure, the resources to overcome the challenges that the lack of information imposes on collective action.

Reflecting the two constitutive parts of the theory, the chapter is divided in two main sections. In Section 3.1, I advance an argument about the evolution of a desire for noncooperation, focusing predominantly on localized war dynamics and the mechanisms that link them to civilians’ incentives. In Section 3.2, I shift the focus to social and community structures and provide an argument about community capacity for collective action, exploring the main sources from which civilians draw mobilizing resources. While the first part of the argument draws, refines and expands existing theories of civil war, the second part brings social movement and collective action literature to the context of civil war. I link necessary and sufficient conditions to the emergence of noncooperation by marrying cognitive mechanisms from the rationalist tradition with the relational mechanisms that have been put forward in the contentious politics tradition.

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<sup>4</sup>There is also ample evidence from other high-risk settings outside the context of civil war. McAdam, (1988) provides a detailed account in his work of participation in the Freedom Summer.

A final section (Section 3.3) discusses briefly some alternative explanations that were considered while developing this theory, explanations to which I will return in the concluding section of each of the empirical chapters. Here I also discuss the general absence of environmental mechanisms from the theory.

### 3.1 The Desire for Noncooperation

Consistent with existing findings from research on other civil war processes involving civilian choice, I argue that the desire to not cooperate is only weakly explained by deeply and long-rooted motivations and ancient antagonisms or hatreds.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when explaining the evolution of a desire for noncooperation, which many times may involve moving away from longstanding cooperation with one actor, I stress instead situational incentives defined by the strategic context in which civilian living in warzones operate.

Civilians value their own security, as well as that of their relatives and friends. They do so not only because the care about “naked survival”, but because fear and uncertainty of living under the constant risk of victimization undermines the quality and dignity of life, undercuts agency, shocks moral expectations and jeopardizes life projects. Living in the shadow of violence civilians are likely to make choices and adjust their behavior in ways they believe might “limit damages” (Leites and Wolf, 1970, p. 129). Noncooperation thus evolves from localized war dynamics that produce disorder, induce uncertainty and undermine security. Under these circumstances, civilians have incentives to consider different responses that may help them recover some basic level of protection.

Civil war here is understood as an armed contestation over sovereignty between different organizations entailing mutually exclusive claims to authority (Tilly, 1978, p. 191; Kalyvas, 2006, p. 16). To achieve this goal, armed groups seek to control (Kalyvas, 2006). In the areas they come to control, they invest in creating social order as it maximizes the benefits that control offers (Arjona, 2016b). This order allows for the provision of public goods, of which one of the most important, for both armed groups and civilians, is security. Armed groups use the provision of protection as a selective incentive to harness the support and loyalty of the population (Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 151-160).

While civilians are likely to collaborate with the armed organization that is able to credibly provide them with protection, cooperation in exchange for support is not fixed. If changing war dynamics lead them to believe that another actor has more capacity or is more willing to provide security, they might well shift their support (defect), sometimes overriding normative commitments and political allegiances. However, if they come to believe that none of the armed actors has the capacity or is willing to provide protection, they are likely to explore alternatives to take protection into their own hands. Under these circumstances, noncooperation becomes an available course of action. Table 3.1 illustrates the expected civilian responses in a simplified security provision scenario of a civil war fought by only two armed factions.

Conditional on a decision to stay put, the theory expects that a desire for noncooperation will evolve when civilians find themselves in a situation in which no armed actor provides

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<sup>5</sup>See Kalyvas, (2006) for denunciation; Arjona and Kalyvas, (2012) for recruitment and engagement in violence, and Fujii, (2011) for participation in genocide .

		Armed Group Y	
		Reliable	Unreliable
Armed Group X	Reliable	Multiple Defection	Cooperation with X
	Unreliable	Cooperation with Y	<b>Noncooperation or flight</b>

Table 3.1: Armed Groups Provision of Protection and Civilian Responses

reliable protection.<sup>6</sup> This logic is equivalent to the process of militia formation. As Jentzsch, (2014, pp. 32-33) has theorized, community-initiated militias form when the population neither receives sufficient protection from the insurgent nor from the incumbent forces. In fact, as I argue elsewhere (Masullo, 2017b), community-initiated militias are a clear expression of armed noncooperation.

Now then, what are the conditions under which civilians are more likely to find themselves in a situation in which no armed group can protect them so as to consider noncooperation a self-protection strategy? This first part of the theory spells out three conditions under which civilians are most likely to find themselves in a “unreliable-unreliable” situation that, through a set of cognitive mechanisms, can spur the evolution of a desire for noncooperation:

- C1 Shifts in territorial control
- C2 Increase in violence against civilians
- C3 Civilians’ perception that targeting is unavoidable

### C1. Shifts in Territorial Control

A desire for noncooperation is most likely to evolve in localities where territorial control is in flux. As the provision of effective protection requires territorial control by one faction, civilians are more likely to find themselves under-protected precisely when and where control is shifting and the outcome of the shift is still unknown.<sup>7</sup>

Shifts in territorial control follow armed groups’ tactical military decisions to move into a new territory (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 213). When the new actor arrives, the established actor can respond by either leaving or fighting back.<sup>8</sup> When the established actor lacks the military means to defend its territory and has no social base in the hosting population, it might well withdraw. In this case, a smooth and quick control shift will follow. Conversely, when it enjoys some military capacity to counterattack and/or counts on popular support, the control shift is likely to be contested and take longer.<sup>9</sup> It is in this second scenario where a desire for noncooperation is

<sup>6</sup>I openly reckon that an “unreliable-unreliable” situation can also lead to a desire to flee. In this regard, the argument is indeterminate. For the sake of theorizing, I have bracketed the choice between leaving and staying and focused on the choices of those who stayed. Nevertheless, as many people in the areas I studied did displace, in the empirical chapters I touch on the issue of displacement. Although my design does not allow me to provide evidence for this, my preliminary intuition is that those communities that have a better capacity to coordinate organized responses are more likely to avoid displacement. See Steele, (2017, 2009).

<sup>7</sup>Jentzsch, (2014, p. 32) argues that communities form militias when competing armed organizations enter into local military stalemates. While stalemates are not equivalent to control shifts, they share a central device that is behind the emergence of both armed and unarmed noncooperation: control being constantly under threat leads to a failure on the side of armed groups to protect the population.

<sup>8</sup>My argument assumes no anarchy: every arriving armed actor will find an established one that up to then has had some degree of control.

<sup>9</sup>Although Kalyvas, (2006, p. 206) observes that the frequency of control shifts is higher in zones 2 and 4, these shifts are theoretically possible to/from any of Kalyvas’ five zones.

most likely to evolve. Thus, the crucial temporal dimension of the argument is the fraction of time between the arrival of the new actor and the consolidation of the shift. That is, the interim period in which a tactical military decision has altered the balance of control, but the direction of the shift is still undetermined.<sup>10</sup>

Contested shifts of control break existing equilibria of interaction between civilians and combatants. In the face of competition, armed groups' strategic time horizon is likely to shift to the short-term (Arjona, 2016b, pp. 48-55; Metelits, 2010, Chap. 2). Preserving their military advantage, amassing the material and nonmaterial resources that control makes available before the rival does, and even securing their own survival become armed groups' main strategic concerns. Longer-term objectives, such as defining and developing reciprocal relationships with civilians or establishing systems of governance are likely to become ancillary. The value they assign to providing civilians with protection (as well as other public goods) is likely to be discounted. As Kasfir, (2015, p. 26) puts it, "...deciding not to govern may be a strategic calculation to concentrate resources in order to survive."<sup>11</sup>

While the arriving actor concentrates its efforts on wresting control from the established one, the latter is likely to focus on resisting the penetration of the former. Even if the established actor has already set up a social contract with civilians, rather than investing resources in observing it and enforcing rules of behavior, it is likely to focus on fight the challenger. The immediate and opportunity costs of using resources to provide civilians with protection and maintain order are way too high when control is shifting: if the arriving actor takes over, such efforts are gone (Arjona, 2016a, pp. 48, 54).

To be sure, armed groups are not the same and the way they view their relations with civilians vary sharply (Gutierrez Sanín, 2008; Weinstein, 2007). The argument does not suppose that these differences fully fade away when territorial control shifts. However, I contend that control shifts undercuts armed groups' capacity to provide protection, even of those that are strongly committed to civilian wellbeing. As we will see in the empirical chapters, this was the case with multiple fronts of two different guerrilla organizations in the Colombian civil war. Even if the established actor is willing to show restraint in its use of violence and to protect its popular base, in the face of fierce rivalry it might well find itself lacking the capacity to do so. It follows that for noncooperation to emerge, civilians need not to be before roving bandits or opportunistic insurgents (Olson, 1993; Weinstein, 2007). Even activist insurgencies are likely to redirect their resources towards organizational survival and military advantage so that they can retaining or gaining territorial control. The ability to exercise effective protection is a function of territorial control (Kalyvas, 2006).

In addition, armed competition brings about disorder and disorder, in turn, induces uncertainty into civilian life (Arjona, 2016b, p. 51).<sup>12</sup> This makes it hard for civilians to create more or less stable expectations about armed groups' behavior, hampering their ability to adjust their behavior in ways that might minimize their risk of victimization. While cooperation is civilians' dominant strategy (as it leads to pleasing the armed actor and obtaining benefits) when there is

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<sup>10</sup>Note that one possible equilibrium following control flux is even contestation between factions – situation well captured by zone 3 in Kalyvas' model. I here argue however that the period of shift differs from the equilibrium of contestation in ways that are consequential for the production of violence and the choices of civilians.

<sup>11</sup>See also, Arjona, (2016b), Kasfir, (2005), Metelits, (2010), and Sánchez de la Sierra, (2015).

<sup>12</sup>Apart from armed competition, Arjona's theory identifies other two pathways to disorder: group indiscipline and changes in the macro-politics of the war.

control and order (Arjona, 2016b, p. 67), when two or more factions are fighting for control and disorder reigns, the best civilian response is not as straightforward. As Dillon, (1999, p. 299) observed for the war in Northern Ireland, “[t]hose who are caught between the two sets of players will never know when the rules are being changed or the true nature of the game”.

Under these circumstances, civilians are more likely to survey alternative courses of action to recover basic levels of protection. As armed groups are unlikely to deliver protection in exchange of cooperation, civilians are likely to reassess the payoffs they attach to support (Kalyvas, 2006; Arjona, 2016b, p. 50). Provided a decision to stay put, this updated payoffs structure renders noncooperation a more available course of action, as responses that otherwise would have seemed too risky might be considered.

Counterintuitively, the fierce confrontation between armed groups over a territory can open up opportunities for mobilization. As social movement scholars in the political process tradition have noted (Tarrow, 2011; McAdam, 1982), when a new actor challenges an existing order, opportunity structures shake. Cracks in the existing political order might emerge and the existing equilibria of interaction might change. In fact, shifts in territorial control can be seen as realignments in the war’s political power structure at the local level that make the mobilization of civilians more likely. Focused on fighting each other and neglecting civilian protection, armed factions in a way cancel each other as potential partners for civilians. In doing so, they push civilians to rule out cooperation as a course of action, even if they had cooperated with one faction for a long time.<sup>13</sup>

It is not at all uncommon to observe ordinary people taking on the task of creating order in the face of insecurity and uncertainty. There is ample evidence from various non-civil war settings, including rural landowners in the Shasta County in California (Ellickson, 1991), villagers in post-war rural Guatemala (Bateson, 2013), residents of South African slums (Bearak, 2009, 2011) and marginal neighborhoods in Bolivia/Cochabamba (Goldstein, 2012) and vigilantes in post-Mubarak Egypt/Cairo (Fadel, 2012). Here I argue that this is also the case in civil war. Rather than acquiescence and passive submission, C1 expects action to be the response to insecurity and disorder.

## C2. Increase in Violence Against Civilians

Wartime social processes are strongly shaped by patterns of armed group violence (Wood, 2008, p. 541). Accordingly, C2 posits that a desire for noncooperation is more likely to evolve when shifts in territorial control (C1) are coupled with an increase in violence against civilians.<sup>14</sup>

In irregular civil war armed groups care about civilian support.<sup>15</sup> This is particularly the case when two or multiple armed groups are competing for the same territory. In such circumstances, armed groups might seek out nothing short of full and exclusive cooperation. This is in fact one of the central tenets of Kalyvas’ (2012, p. 663) control–collaboration model: the imperative of

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<sup>13</sup>Note however that my argument is not necessarily one of mobilization driven by an increase in the prospects of success due to changes in the political opportunity structure. As in Einwohner, (2003) and Wood, (2003) studies of high-risk mobilization, I posit that a noncooperation campaign can be initiated even in the face of little or no expectation of success. I come back to political opportunity structures and cost–benefit explanations in Section 3.3, where I discuss alternative explanations.

<sup>14</sup>While here I focus on nonviolent forms of noncooperation, this argument is consistent with recent findings from research on the creation of militias, an expression of armed noncooperation (see Jentzsch, 2014, p. 32).

<sup>15</sup>For detail discussions on the centrality of support, see Kalyvas, (2006), Wickham-Crowley, (1992), and Johnson, (1962). A particular exception to this claim would be genocidal campaigns, where armed organizations seek to annihilate an entire population. Genocides are likely to happen in the context of civil war (Shaw, 2003).

preventing civilian defection becomes particularly salient when territorial losses and military defeats mount up. When control is in flux, armed factions are likely to force civilians to take sides and even signal their allegiances openly. The war in Indonesia provides an illustrative example. While several Malays in ethnically mixed south Aceh managed to remain neutral during the first stages of the war, as the war progressed and competition increased, armed groups did no longer accept this response and forced civilians to unequivocally take sides (Barter, 2014, p. 67).<sup>16</sup>

Under competition, armed groups become especially suspicious about civilian behavior. When two or more armed organizations coexist in the same locality and fight for its control, civilian defection becomes more possible (as multiple factions are accessible to civilians) and more costly. Under such circumstances, armed actors become more serious in preventing defection and more likely to use violence to this end. Given that information about civilian allegiances and behavior in areas where control is in flux tends to be particularly poor, armed groups (especially the arriving faction) are unlikely to have any other means to induce cooperation and deter defection than violence (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 225; Arjona, 2016a, pp. 53-54, 64-65). The following vignette from the Ugandan civil war illustrates well this situation:

Civilians in Atiak, an area that neither the rebels nor the Ugandan military fully controlled, were punished in their hundreds: in 1995, up to 300 persons were killed in a single massacre led by the late Commander Vincent Otti, who would eventually assume second-in-command of the LRA [Lord's Resistance Army]. Before the killing began, Otti sat his victims down in a grassy area and lectured them on their lack of loyalty to the LRA. Government soldiers were also harsh and routinely rounded up civilians and detained them illegally, accusing them of collaboration with the LRA. Civilians suffered (Baines and Paddon, 2012, p. 236).

The observation that competition between groups is likely to increase the overall levels of violence is in fact well established in the civil war literature.<sup>17</sup> Metelits' (2010) theory, for example, posits that the central variable explaining the move from contractual to coercive relationships between armed groups and civilians is active rivalry and provides evidence from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement. Examples abound. The Communists in the Greek civil war became more coercive towards civilians when they began to lose territory to other forces (Kalyvas, 2015). The Salvadorian regime resorted to "extensive and egregious" violence when and where it felt more threatened by the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (Wood, 2003, pp. 9-10). The reaction of the Uganda National Liberation Army was not different: to each

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<sup>16</sup>To be sure, there are some exceptions. For example, in some areas of the province of Usulután in El Salvador, Wood, (2003, pp. 150, 153-154) found that despite of contestation between the government and the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation, it was possible for some civilians to remain neutral beyond a coerced minimum of support. This minimum generally included the provision of water and sometimes food to armed groups passing by.

<sup>17</sup>Social movement scholars, especially those focusing on the mobilization-repression nexus, have also theorized the link between competition and increases in repression. For example, the "threat approach" proposes that regimes undergoing turbulent changes are more likely to see dissent activities as highly threatening and thus to recur to violence to silence them. Threat and weakness precludes elites to resort to other non-violent alternatives, and this applies both to state and non-state agents of repression. For reviews of the "threat approach", see Davenport, (2000) and Earl, (2003, 2006).

loss they experienced to the National Resistance Army, they increased the size of its offensives and the intensity of its attacks on civilians (Kasfir, 2005, p. 280).

Moreover, these changes do not only regard the frequency and levels of violence, but also its repertoire.<sup>18</sup> For instance, Kalyvas, (1999) and Ziemke, (2008) have found that massacres in Algeria and Angola occurred when one armed faction was losing ground to other armed group. Similarly, the Shining Path carried out an increasing number of massacres when it was pushed out of its initial strongholds in the Peruvian highlands in the mid 1980s (Degregori, 1999, p. 79). Beyond lethal forms of violence, Steele, (2017, Chap. 2) notes that also expulsion (displacement) is most likely “during an effort by counterinsurgents to conquer new territory and wrest control from insurgents.”<sup>19</sup>

In light of this ample evidence, my theory posits that when C1 and C2 obtain in tandem the evolution of a desire for noncooperation becomes more likely.<sup>20</sup> In other words, both conditions are proposed as jointly necessary for noncooperation (but not yet sufficient). Two central cognitive mechanisms operate here: alienation from the new state of affairs and the (trans)formation of civilian beliefs about armed groups. Both led to detachment from cooperation and to the exploration of alternative courses of action.

Civilians are likely to regard the new circumstances (disorder, uncertainty, increased insecurity) created by armed competition as a public evil, which in turn creates incentives for searching for alternative state of social relations with armed organizations. “Because system alienation means that the political order is regarded as a public evil, we can say that repression raises the preference for an alternative political order that is regarded as a public good” (Opp and Roehl, 1990, p. 524).

In parallel, swept into this “public evil”, civilians are likely to update their beliefs about armed actors. Exposure to new patterns of violence and/or behavioral repertoires from armed groups can lead to a changes in beliefs or in confidence in existing beliefs (see Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, 2006, p. 795). Evidence from different civil wars in fact suggests that civilians do change their beliefs after new experiences of violence, including those they held of factions they used to support. For example, Kocher, (2002) notes that evacuated Kurds in the Turkish civil war came to resent their experiences supporting the insurgents after experiencing displacement.

Without previous ties with the arriving actor, civilians are likely to form a negative believe about this group from the very first interactions with it. Not only its arrival triggered a state of affairs that they dislike, but this group, deprived of local information, is likely to present itself mainly as a coercive agent. Cooperating with this organization is largely out of question. With the established actor the story is more complex, as in many occasions civilians had already formed positive beliefs about the organization. Here, rather than belief formation, belief transformation needs to take place. Moral and emotional considerations play a central role in this transformation.

Having had a reciprocal relationship for some time and formed expectations of protection in exchange for cooperation (that sometimes are backed by explicit promises made by armed groups), civilians are likely to deeply resent violence from the established group. Resented

<sup>18</sup>For the distinct dimensions that constitute a pattern of violence, see Gutierrez Sanín and Wood, (2017).

<sup>19</sup>Note however that this association is not automatic and one might find exceptions. Armed groups’ internal institutions and control mechanisms may limit the behavior of armed groups (Hoover Green, 2011) even when control is shifting and disorder is raining.

<sup>20</sup>Note that this is not to claim that increases in violence against civilians (C2) *only* take place in the context of control shifts (C1.)

and morally outraged at repression coming from an actor they did not expect to target them (or worse, expected to protect them), challenges their system of beliefs and pushes them to re-evaluate the motivations they had for cooperating with the established actor and to seek out for alternative responses. Civilians might even come to blame this actor for the new state of affairs and disapprove their continued presence in the locality (Lyall, 2009). This transformation not only detaches civilians from cooperating with this faction, but also pushes them to explore alternative responses that are more attuned to their moral and emotional aspirations.<sup>21</sup> An assessment of a dislikable new state of affairs, where the role of different actors in creating it is taken into account, is likely to create an opening for noncooperation.

Before moving to the third and last condition, it is worth underscoring the following theoretical consideration. By positing that C1 and C2 are likely to obtain in tandem, my argument identifies a gap in Kalyvas' (2006) Control–Collaboration Model. While Kalyvas' model predicts little or no violence in areas where control is evenly contested (Zone 3), my argument suggests that we are likely to see an increase in violence against civilians in areas where control is being contested. While this apparently contradicts Kalyvas' predictions, I claim that we are looking at two different moments. My argument is about the dynamics of *shifts* in territorial control, rather about the statics of equilibria of contestation. While predictions in terms of violence differ in these two different *moments*, the model's overarching expectation holds: violence is inversely associated to the levels of territorial control.

Kalyvas' model does not specify concrete expectations about violence when control is “moving”. By focusing on areas where territorial control is in flux, I depart from the static equilibria of control that are represented by each of the five zones in the model. While an equilibrium of contestation might yield low levels of violence against civilians, movements away from and/or towards this equilibrium can lead to different predictions. Besides a wealth of qualitative evidence, fine-grained quantitative data from the city of Barrancabermeja in Colombia (G. Vargas, 2009) and cross-national data from all African countries (Masullo and Vlaskamp, 2018) backs this assertion. Refining Kalyvas' model by looking at situations when control is flux might help explain contradicting findings and allow for a more dynamic logic of violence in civil wars.

### C3. Civilian Perception that Targeting is Unavoidable

C3 builds on the intuition that different forms of targeting prompt different reactions from civilians and, thus, are likely to generate different individual and community level outcomes. An increase in violence against civilians (C2) stemming from control shifts (C1) is necessary for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation, but not sufficient. The way civilians perceive targeting plays a *necessary* role in the process. A desire for noncooperation is more likely to evolve when civilians come to perceive violence as unavoidable, which is most probable when they are being targeted on the basis of a group identifier. Moreover, I further argue that in the face of this form of targeting (collective), civilians are also more likely to develop a preference for a collective response over individual self-help strategies to protect themselves and their communities from

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<sup>21</sup>For the role of moral outrage in motivating risky collective action, see Wood, (2003). More the emotion of resentment as a force behind forms of resistance, see Petersen, (2001). Finally, for a theoretical framework that connects emotions to collective action and that delves into the questions of belief transformation and detachment, see Ruggeri and Costalli, (2017).

violence.

The dominant theories of violence against civilians have focused on two types of targeting: selective and indiscriminate. In C3 I follow Kalyvas, (2006) and define violence as selective when targeting requires the determination of individual guilt; this is, when it is done on the basis of civilians' individual behavior. However, instead of adopting the selective/indiscriminate dichotomy, I follow recent work that has challenged this conceptual foundation, I take into account a third distinct type: collective targeting. I restrict indiscriminate violence to random targeting, and define collective violence as that targeting entire collectivities based on group-level identifiers, such as village of residence, political loyalties or ethnicity (Gutierrez Sanín and Wood, 2017; Steele, 2017). Collective targeting is, thus, selective at the group level and indiscriminate at the individual level.

Recent research has underscored the importance of treating collective violence as an independent type of targeting when analyzing both civilian and armed groups behavior. For example, Gutierrez Sanín and Wood, (2017) illustrate the importance of this type of targeting for achieving a better understanding of the logic of massacres in the Colombian civil war. Similarly, Masullo and O'Connor, (2017) argue that to make sense of specific instances of PKK violence against civilians in the Turkish civil war, an understanding of targeting that reveals its collective nature is needed. More directly relevant for the present argument, Steele, (2017, 2009) has linked collective targeting to civilian decisions to flee from conflict-affected areas, convincingly showing that when civilians are targeted collectively, their best options for avoiding violence differ from those targeted selectively or indiscriminately. Balcells and Steele, (2016), comparing displacement patterns in Colombia and Spain, show that this insight holds for both irregular and conventional civil wars.

While C3 builds on these insights, it emphasizes civilians' perceptions rather than armed groups' (inferred) intentions. Rather than the "objective" features of targeting, attribution of threat is what triggers a desire for noncooperation. I argue that to understand how targeting shapes civilian responses, the way civilians *perceive* targeting is the most relevant. Take the example of an armed group that enters a village with a list in hand of people to be killed. If after the massacre civilians still perceive that combatants proceeded randomly or relied on a group identifier, their responses are likely to be shaped by this perception and not by what armed men intended. As a former paramilitary from the Colombian municipality of San Carlos told me, "even if we arrived with lists of names and ID numbers (*cédulas*), people thought that we were killing whoever we wanted and that is why they did not like us."<sup>22</sup>

The centrality of (threat) perception has long been established in the field of International Relations (IR), especially in studies of inter-state war (Fearon, 1995), international crisis (Cohen, 1978), deterrence (Schelling, 1977) and alliance formation (Walt, 1985), among others. Already in the 1970s, Cohen, (1978) had noted that "When threat is not perceived, even in the face of objective evidence, there can be no mobilization of defensive resources." While still under-explored in civil war research, recent studies have incorporated threat perception in their analysis. For example, Shesterinina, (2016) argue that the way individuals in the Georgian-Abkhaz war of 1992–1993 perceived threat shaped their decisions to participate or not participate in the war. Similarly, Adhikari, (2013) showed that the more civilians perceived violence as a threat during

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<sup>22</sup>Author's Field Notes, August 2015.

the Nepalese civil war, the more likely they were to flee. Its relevance goes beyond dynamics during war: Bateson, (2013) showed that violence experienced during war, by affecting threat perceptions, can shape civilian responses to insecurity in the post-conflict period.<sup>23</sup>

Violence has a demonstrative effect; it serves an instrumental function. By altering the payoffs civilians assign to particular actions, it shapes their behavior (Kalyvas, 2004, p. 100). It is precisely in this sense that Gambetta, (1993, p. 2) has noted that in the business of mafia, violence is more of a resource than a final product, and that M. V. Uribe, (2004, p. 132) has concluded that violence in the Colombian civil war is not only punitive, but also preventive, against all those who could potentially be or become supporters of the other faction. C3 builds on this foundation but stresses that the message violence delivers varies according to the type of targeting.

When violence is perceived as selective, civilians can better estimate their risks of being victimized and adjust their behavior accordingly to escape violence. Selection sends clearer messages. The following testimony from a peasant during the Mozambican civil war illustrates this well:

When the Matsanguise arrived they looked for the secretario and for the teacher and for the militias. They killed one of the militias, but the others had warning and ran away to the FRELIMO village. [These troops] did not do anything else, and when we saw this then we knew that it is *only if you were FRELIMO* that you had to be afraid (Lubkemann, 2008, 144, emphasis added)

This is not the case with indiscriminate and collective forms targeting. These are unintelligible and unpredictable for civilians (Leites and Wolf, 1970, p. 109). While in the face of selective violence cooperating with the dominant actor in exchange of protection is likely to be an effective response, when targeting is indiscriminate or collective, maintaining or withholding support from one group or the other is likely to be futile (Kaplan, 2010, p. 352; Mason and Krane, 1989, pp. 181, 188).<sup>24</sup> “When violence is indiscriminate”, Kalyvas, (2006, p. 154) writes, “compliance is almost as unsafe as noncompliance, because the ‘innocent’ can do little or nothing to escape punishment and the ‘guilty’ are no more (and sometimes less) threatened”.

However, when civilians perceive violence as being indiscriminate (random), they can still sense that they can somehow step out of the way of violence. Individual self-help strategies, such as avoidance or double-dealing, can provide some protection. Trying not to be in the wrong place at the wrong moment might help. In contrast, when they perceive targeting as collective, they can reasonably believe that violence will chase them regardless of how much they try to avoid it. Except for exit, there seems to be no other course of action to avoid violence. When one is targeted for belonging to a group (especially when belonging implies some ascriptive features) escaping violence becomes virtually impossible.

When civilians attribute unavoidability to violence they are more likely to develop a preference for noncooperation. Civilians might come to believe that expressing dissent to those who exercise violence does not necessarily increase the risks of becoming a victim. Like in Nazi extermination

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<sup>23</sup>Beyond the context of civil war, Maher, 2010 has showed that perceptions of threat were also central in the move from everyday resistance to overt collective action in Nazi extermination camps,

<sup>24</sup>A similar argument is advanced by Frohlich and Oppenheimer, (1974, 1973) in the context of tax revenue and violence.

camps where collective revolt occurred (Maher, 2010), I argue that the imminence of death is likely to alter civilians' incentive structures in ways that make noncooperation more likely.<sup>25</sup> Noncooperation might come to be seen as not necessarily more dangerous than other courses of action.

Having a preference for selective forms of violence, in the absence of means to target individuals based on their behavior (due to lack of information, for example), contesting armed groups can benefit from using a civilian's type as a proxy for collaborating with the enemy. When the arriving actor enters a new locality, it needs to stimulate defection by signalling the population the costs entailed in continuing to collaborate with the established actor. In the absence of information about individual loyalties, rather than proceeding randomly and risking a backlash, using a collective proxy to infer people's loyalties and exercise violence against them is second best (Steele, 2009, 2017).

While most of the work on targeting has stressed that non-selective violence alienates civilians from the faction that exercises it (the arriving faction), I argue that this type of targeting can also distance civilians from the established actor. On the one hand, collective violence is likely to render evident the inability of the established actor to protect civilians. On the other, it could lead civilians to believe that it is because of the continued presence of the established actor that they are being targeted.

Furthermore, becoming increasingly concerned about civilian defection and gradually more deprived from local information, the established actor is also likely to resort to group identifiers to infer civilians (changing) loyalties. The established actor might blame and treat as defectors residents of entire villages where they are losing ground. This situation is likely to reinforce the transformation of the beliefs civilians held of the established actor and fracture deeper their relationship.

Under such circumstances, to escape from this otherwise seemingly unavoidable violence, fleeing becomes a likely option. In fact, many civilians do flee in what some scholars have called "a journey to safety" (Lozano-Garcia et al., 2010; Steele, 2009). Indeed, in all the cases explored in this study, noncooperation in fact emerged after many civilians had left their villages. However, for a variety of reasons, not everyone displaces (Steele, 2009; Adhikari, 2013) and, among those who stay, a preference for noncooperation might evolve as the best option to convince all armed groups that, despite belonging to any given group, they are really opting out of war.

### **Shared desire: the basis for collective responses**

When targeting is collective, civilians' assessments of risk, as well as their decisions of how to best achieve some level of protection, are likely to depend on the (expected) decision of others who are equally targeted (Steele, 2017, Chap. 2). I argue that when violent threat is perceived as being directed towards the collectivity (rather than the individual), incentives for a collective response are more likely to evolve. This is especially the case when threat is perceived as imminent and unavoidable. Two different sets of considerations play a role here: the first, rational and self-regarding; and the second, emotional/moral and other-regarding.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>See also Goldstone and Tilly, (2001) and Finkel, (2015)

<sup>26</sup>Note that emotional and moral considerations do not necessarily go in opposition to strategic or rational considerations (Aminzade and McAdam, 2001; Elster, 1998; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, 2004; Jasper, 1997; Wood, 2001).

When civilians sense that violence is aimed at the annihilation of their entire group, they are likely to believe that their chances of survival could be enhanced through collective responses (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 155; Abrahms, 2006). This is especially the case if others that are being equally targeted also decide to manifest their dissent. As in other risky settings, civilians might find assurance on others and seek safety in numbers (Karklins and Petersen, 1993). Assuming a normal distribution of “risk thresholds” within the group that is being collectively targeted, the more people that are willing to stay put and engage in noncooperation, the more others will follow suit (Granovetter, 1978). When the group of (organized) noncooperators is larger, armed groups’ moral and repetitional concerns might favor restraint and thus risks of victimization might decrease.

In addition to this risk calculations, I argue that collective targeting also activates other-regarding social preferences (Bowles and Polania-Reyes, 2012; Bowles, 2016) that make collective action more likely. I contend that collective targeting is stronger (than other forms of targeting) in shocking moral expectations and spurring shared emotions – such as indignation, resentment and outrage – that make collective responses prevail over individual ones.<sup>27</sup> My argument seconds the assertion that emotions triggered by facts that happen to others are especially important in explaining mobilization (Costalli and Ruggeri, 2015; Ruggeri and Costalli, 2017). However, it further specifies the logic by stressing that when “others” are targeted because of being part of the group to which one also belongs, those shared emotions are more easily activated and have a stronger impact on peoples’ reactions. Concretely, I stress that attribution of injustice helps to produce collective action by acting as a “moral tipping point” that can transform demobilizing emotions (such as some forms of fear) into mobilizing ones (such as indignation, resentment and outrage).<sup>28</sup> And, when targeting is collective, many of the factual and potential victims are likely to be regarded as innocent and thus violence is more likely to be seen as unfair, unjust, arbitrary and unjustified.

Gutierrez Sanín and Wood, (2017, p. 211) have noted that mobilization in high-risk circumstances is hard to fully comprehend by looking only to self-regarding preferences. In this study I theorize and empirically show that taking into account these considerations is relevant for understanding the evolution of a desire for noncooperation. If we restrict the argument to narrow rational considerations, our theoretical expectation should probably be no collective action at all. When civilians are targeted because of belonging to a group of which one cannot easily detach (having lived in a given village or, even more so, being part of a certain ethnicity), they are likely to come to the realization that engaging in oppositional action will not necessarily increase the risks of being victimized (targeting is not based on behavior). However, all things being equal, taking action entails an opportunity cost (Moore, 1995, p. 434) and engaging in oppositional collective action could end up justifying further violence. Thus, from a purely rational cost–benefit calculation, one would expect civilians to prefer inaction. However, the proposed theory expects civilians not to be indifferent about the wrongdoings and arbitrariness of

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<sup>27</sup>Although without making an argument about types of targeting, other studies have shown an association between these emotions and collective action. See, for example, Wood, (2003), Petersen, (2001, 2002), Costalli and Ruggeri, (2015), and Ruggeri and Costalli, (2017).

<sup>28</sup>Attribution of injustice has been identified as a mobilization driver in many instances of collective action, dating back to the making of the English working class (Thompson, 1966). Even by means of lab experiments, movement scholars have shown that the way people respond to authorities is shaped by the extent to which the actions of the latter are regarded as just or justified (Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina, 1982).

others. As with peasant collective action in El Salvador (Wood, 2003, p. 225), in the emergence of noncooperation, risks can come to be seen as meaningful sacrifices that move people from inaction to action.

To sum up, a desire for noncooperation as a self-protection strategy is likely to evolve in localities experiencing contested shifts of control (C1), where violence against civilians is increasing (C2) and where targeting is perceived as unavoidable. These three conditions, individual necessary and jointly sufficient, activate a combination of rational, moral and emotional considerations that push civilians to consider noncooperation as a response to recover a basic level of protection. A desire for noncooperation is likely to evolve not because it appears costless (noncooperation is a costly enterprise), but because the average risks associated with it, *vis á vis* other responses, are no longer necessarily higher, as much as because social preferences push people to value action in the face of injustice over doing nothing. The mechanisms linking C1, C2 and C3 to the evolution of a desire for noncooperation are primarily cognitive and operate mostly through changes in perceptions, beliefs and moral expectations. When C3 enters into play, another bundle of (still cognitive) mechanisms, such as safety in numbers/threshold-based calculations and attribution of injustice, set the basis for collective action by helping the move from individual to shared desire.<sup>29</sup>

While this set of conditions and mechanisms are central for the emergence of organized noncooperation, they are not sufficient. Even when a desire for noncooperation has evolved and the foundations for this desire being shared are set, not every community manages to organize a noncooperation campaign. The conditions and mechanisms outlined in this first part of the theory do not take into account variation across communities in terms of capacity for collective action. To observe noncooperation campaigns on the ground, capacity for collective action is needed. Consequently, the second part of the theory singles out two factors that shape community mobilizing capacity, and identifies a set of relational mechanisms that link people together and facilitate coordination and organization.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.2 The Capacity for Collective Action

A theory of the emergence of civilian noncooperation that addresses solely the evolution of a desire would be necessarily incomplete and could lead to an over-prediction of the phenomenon. Noncooperation campaigns are not ubiquitous in those localities where three conditions outlined in the previous section obtain. Regardless of how aggrieved civilians may be and how urgent their need for self-protection is, they are not magically driven into campaigns of noncooperation. Individual desires need to converge and people need to get organized. Channeling desire towards collective ends requires coordination, organization and mobilization. The capacity to do so is not equally distributed among communities and, rather than assumed, needs to be accounted for (e.g., Yashar, 2005, p. 71; Shorter and Tilly, 1974, p. 38). This second part of the theory

<sup>29</sup>The family of mechanisms taken into consideration in this part of the theory are based on McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, (2001) and Petersen, (2001). Most of the concrete mechanism were taken and adapted from Elster, (2007), Arjona, (2010b) and Petersen, (2001).

<sup>30</sup>The articulation of these two parts of the theory is somehow similar to the logic proposed by Petersen, (2001, p. 16) to explain resistance to opposition in two different stages. While for the the move from 0 to +1 positions individual (cognitive) mechanisms might be enough, for the move from +1 to +2 community-based (relational) mechanisms are needed.

deals precisely with the transition from “uncoordinated individual dissatisfactions” to “collective assaults on the holder of power” (Rule and Tilly, 1975, p. 50).

Civilians willing to mount noncooperation face several obstacles to collective action. In the face of a credible and constant threat of violent repression, mobilizing unarmed civilians to oppose heavily armed groups is hard to accomplish. Moreover, the disorder and uncertainty associated with control shifts (C1) creates incentives for civilians to conceal their private preferences in public and hinders information flows. This imposes hard-to-overcome obstacles to preference convergence, which is a must for coordinated action (Schelling, 1960). Moreover, civilians commonly count with little lead-time to organize a campaign. Sometimes the might be even acting against deadly ultimatums, as was the case for residents of the hamlet of La Unión (Chapter 5) and the village of La India (Chapter 6). To overcome these obstacles, material and nonmaterial mobilizing resources are needed.

I argue that a campaign of noncooperation is more likely to emerge among those aggravated communities that possess the resources needed to initiate coordinated and collective action. The argument follows Tilly’s (1978, p. 10) early understanding of mobilization as the acquisition of collective control over resources. In this view, it builds on a long tradition in social movement studies that, from schools as different as Resource Mobilization and the Political Process, have taken resources as a central explanatory variable in accounts of collective action. However, it does so without suggesting that resource availability dictates the desire for collective action, let alone that grievances are constant over time and across space, as was the case in early Resource Mobilization accounts. As should be clear from the first part of the theory, the desire to refuse to cooperate with armed groups is not at all an invariant property of civilian life in civil war settings.

While many studies that have underscored the role of resources have focused on the “interjection of external resources” (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Zald and McCarthy, 1979), my argument contends that the sources of these resources can be both internal and external to the community. Therefore, to identify these sources, one needs to look into the structure and history of communities, their surrounding social and political environments, and the external actors that come in to support them. My argument singles out two main factors providing a community with the resources needed for collective action:

- (i) Availability of mobilizing sites
- (ii) Availability of leadership

Via these two factors, I expect variation in the past history of collective action and local institutional arrangements across communities to explain why we observe noncooperation strategies in some, but not in every, locality where a desire has evolved.

(i) and (ii) might be available in a given community from previous experiences of collective action and/or a tradition of community work. Unlike existing accounts that focus mainly of pre-war experiences (Arjona, 2015), my argument leaves room for these experiences to have taken place both before the war or during previous rounds of war (i.e., before the arrival of a new group challenging territorial control). This is crucial, as even the experience of living under the rule of an armed group that allows for civilian participation and promotes participatory

forms of community governance can leave a community better equipped for collective action (A. R. Vargas, 2017).

In addition, the presence of external actors (regional, national and international) can compensate for the absence of these resources in a given community. These actors can affect both (i) and (ii), serving as mobilizing sites, offer training in leadership or, as in the experience of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (PCSJA) (Chapter 5), even provide leaders to accompany the community in the process of mounting noncooperation. By leaving room for actors external to the community to play a role (and empirically detailing how they come to do so through the mechanisms of brokerage (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001)), the theory recognizes that in the process by which noncooperation emerges, there is agency beyond armed groups and civilians. Therefore, even if the theory emphasizes civilian agency and its interactions with armed groups, acknowledging the role of actors beyond this dyad is needed if we are to move towards a strategic account of civilian noncooperation (Jasper, 2004).

### Availability of Mobilizing Sites and Associational Space

Social movement scholars have long emphasized the role of established organizations or associations in providing groups of aggrieved people with the capacity needed for advancing collective action. One of the main exponents of the political process tradition, McAdam, (2003), in the early 2000s identified this to be one of the three most established findings in social movements research. Examples abound. In the United States the civil rights movement emerged from within institutions that were central for the southern black community, such as the Church (McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1986, Chaps. 3 and 4), and the anti-war movement emerged from northern residential college campuses (Orum, 1972). Outside of the United States, independent theater companies played their part in the emergence of the Civic Forum Movement in Czechoslovakia (Glenn, 2003) and the Catholic Church was a central player in the emergence of the dissident movement in Poland (Osa, 1997). Similarly, Chile's anti-Pinochet mobilization was importantly shaped by shantytown associations influenced by the Communist Party (Schneider, 1995).

Consistent with these studies, I argue that counting on these mobilizing sites (McCarthy, 1996) is a central factor providing a given community with the capacity for organizing civilian noncooperation. I expect capacity to be higher in those localities where civilians manage to draw on these sites to coordinate and organize action. As McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, (1988) put it, it is in these "...existing associational groups or networks of the aggrieved community that the first groping steps toward collective action are taken."

Regardless of the purposes these sites were set up for, I argue that they can contribute importantly in overcoming the enduring obstacles to coordinated and organized action that civil war imposes on civilians. While most of the evidence for the theoretical centrality of mobilizing sites in social movement research comes from more or less peaceful settings, these sites are expected to be even more catalytic in the context of civil war. Repression is a central obstacle for collective action, not only because it induces fear and elevates the costs and risks of action, but also because it hampers communication (Schock, 2003, p. 706). The constant efforts by armed groups to isolate individuals, closely monitor their behavior and cut off communication and information flows, render these sites even more crucial.

In warzones, especially in those going through control shifts and where disorder and uncertainty

reigns, civilian information about the expectations of other villagers tend to be very poor. In a context in which armed groups are actively monitoring communication and almost anyone can be an informant, distrust finds its way and civilians have incentives to falsify or hide their private preferences (Kuran, 1991, 1995). As the case of San Carlos (Chapter 7) vividly reveals, not only armed groups do prohibit public gatherings, but civilians themselves might opt to retreat to the private sphere and do their best to minimize interaction with others to avoid being implicated.

When the decision of one villager is dependent on the decisions of others, coordinating expectations becomes a central task. As all cases analyzed here reveal, mounting noncooperation is a clandestine enterprise, and as with many efforts of clandestine organization, numerous exchanges of information between potential participants are required (Petersen, 2001, p. 18). Mobilizing sites can serve this purpose. They can be used as spaces where people meet, communicate, and exchange information. By creating a “supportive group environment”, they can trigger individuals’ willingness to speak out (Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina, 1982), allowing villagers to get clues about the intentions of others, facilitating the establishment of social expectations. As Knight, (1992) argued in his classic treaty on how social institutions affect social choice and outcomes, mobilizing sites here grant actors access to information that help them formulate expectations about the actions of others, expectations with which they can decide upon their best course of action.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, they can provide physical places for civilians to meet clandestinely at the expense of armed groups infiltration. Churches and medical centers, two of such sites that were used in the campaigns analyzed here, can be used as sanctuaries in the midst of war (Mitchell, 2007).

Moreover, beyond facilitating the process of interdependent individual decision making regarding whether to join or not the campaign, these sites also serve as collective fora for groups to deliberate and make choices about how to act jointly (Goldstone, 1994, p. 142). As these sites enjoy higher degrees of organization and formalization than community members alone, they are likely to have material and nonmaterial resources that people willing to mount a noncooperation campaign alone are likely to lack. These sites can become key centers for social aggregation, linking villagers together, vitalizing community interaction, reinforcing community solidarity and cohesion, and providing a sense of protection.

When these sites operate at the very local level and are deeply embedded in the everyday life of communities, they become harder for armed groups to fully penetrate. The Lithuanian struggle against occupation provides a good illustration of this logic from the different, yet risky setting of foreign occupation. While the Soviets were able to control communication between regions and cities, they did not manage to do so between local communities (Petersen, 2001, p. 24). It is precisely for these reason and at this level (the locality) that that I expect these sites to make a difference in terms of capacity for collective action.

While the role of these sites have not yet been explored for the type of responses studied here,<sup>32</sup> scholars have shown that they play a role in shaping wartime migration decisions. Communities

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<sup>31</sup>Here I focus on information flows as the mechanism, but Knight identifies a second one: sanctions. To be sure, some campaigns of noncooperation (commonly the more complex ones) develop systems of sanctions. My sense is that these sanctions actually play a more central role in sustaining these campaigns over time rather than in its emergence. For an argument stressing the role of information flows, expectations and the emergence of collective action in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, see Chong, (1991).

<sup>32</sup>Kaplan’s (2010) emphasis on the role of the Local Junta Council (JAC)s in efforts to assert civilian autonomy constitutes a notable exception.

are better suited to collectively avoid displacement and cope with violence when they seek a strategy of protection through existing community-level organizations (Adhikari, 2013; Steele, 2009, 2017). Not unlike the way that forest-user groups and mothers associations played their part in allowing villagers to collectively avoid displacement in the Nepalese civil war (Adhikari, 2013), I expect equivalent local sites to shape the capacity of communities to stay put and engage in noncooperation.

The exact form these sites take is likely to vary greatly from one setting to another. Nevertheless, rather than expecting (only) the highly formalized and complex Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) that many scholars in the resource mobilization tradition have taken as the building blocks of mobilization,<sup>33</sup> my argument stresses the less formalized structures that are available in everyday social life, that are an integral part of village life and that are highly embedded within the social structure of communities. In the context of rural Colombia, as the empirical chapters reveal, these sites range from small peasant and producers associations to slightly more formalized institutions such as the JACs (Chapter 6) and the *Pastoral Social* of the local Catholic Church (Chapter 7).

More formalized and less localized sites, including even national and/or international level established organizations, are also contemplated in the argument. Rather than influencing the extent to which civilians can rely on existing community resources (such as ties, reciprocity, cohesion), can play a pivotal role by compensating for absence or weakness of these resources. As we will see in the empirical part of this study, in the context of Colombia these external sites can range from regional organizations, such as the Diocese of the Catholic Church (Chapter 5) and governmental regional agencies for rural development (Chapter 6), to highly formalized and very complex ones such as national and international NGOs and even international organizations (Chapter 5).

My argument does not account *directly* for variation in the strength, density, frequency and centralization of social ties, nor for differences in community composition and/or shared culture, and other features of the social structure of communities that scholars have routinely identified as shaping capacity for collective action (Tilly, 1978; Oberschall, 1972; Marwell, Oliver, and Prahl, 1988; Granovetter, 1973; Petersen, 2001; Ostrom, 1990, 2007, 1998). However, by theorizing mobilizing sites in its more localized and embedded expression, it indirectly accounts for several of these factors, including social ties, social norms, trust and social cohesion. As I show empirically, mobilization sites influence the extent to which people rely on these factors to mount collective action. Moreover, these sites are what make more probable that a long history of strong social ties, which are common to the rural villages that I studied, carry over to decisions regarding noncooperation despite of the interruption of social interaction that civil war commonly implies. Like Petersen, (2001), I show that “normative inertia” positively affects chances for collective action, adding that mobilizing sites are a central vehicle.

The fact that the argument is agnostic regarding the concrete content or purpose of these sites suggests that the link between them and collective noncooperation is not automatic. Putting these sites at the service of emergent noncooperation is a process that requires agency and that may even involve conflict regarding fundamental elements, such as goals or means. As with the formation of insurgencies, where pre-war political parties, religious organizations, and student

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<sup>33</sup>For the first formulation of the concept of SMOs, see Zald and Ash, (1966) and for a more detailed specification of its meaning and operation, see McCarthy and Zald, (1973).

and veteran associations had to be repurposed for rebellion in the initial stages of mobilization (Staniland, 2012a, 2014), these sites need to be repurposed for noncooperation. Consequently, rather than treating these mobilizing sites as an structural features of communities that facilitate collective action, my argument takes them as arenas of social interaction and empirically accounts for the process by which they are appropriated.<sup>34</sup>

I argue that social appropriation (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001) is the central mechanism by which these sites are channelled and repurposed for mounting noncooperation.<sup>35</sup> As we will see in the empirical chapters, to socially appropriate these sites, villagers had to achieve some fundamental level of resonance. As in several instances of collective action, this process involved a big deal of deliberation and framing (Benford and Snow, 2000) around the purpose of self-protection and the commitment to non violent action. Both, in particular the latter, became central for socially appropriating the Adventist Church (Chapter 6) and external actors, such as national and international NGOs (Chapter 5).

This appropriation work was largely advanced by community leaders, as was the case in the Mississippi freedom struggle (McAdam, 1982; Payne, 2007) among many other instances of collective action. This takes us to the second factor singled out by the proposed theory: the availability of leaders.

### Availability of Leaders

Beyond mobilizing sites, I identify leadership availability at the community level as the second factor shaping communities' capacity for collective action. I expect communities that count on community leaders ready to push for an opening for noncooperation to have a higher capacity to mobilize a noncooperation campaign that those were leadership is absent. These leaders commonly come from within the community or its immediate social environment and have emerged as such through previous experiences of collective action or community work. In the process of advancing collective action, they have developed skills and gained legitimacy within the community that can be tapped into in subsequent mobilizations. They become central human and interpersonal resources for the community (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004, p. 127; Morris and Staggenborg, 2004, p. 180).

Leaders have been found vital in other accounts of oppositional collective action in risky settings. For example, Finkel, (2015, p. 350) argues that, given the skills they possess, leaders are a sufficient condition for sustained Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. Similarly, (Petersen, 2001, Chap. 4) shows that the work of as many as two leaders, which he calls "centralized actors", can make a community structured enough for engaging in rebellion against occupation forces. With a natural experiment type of design, Johnston, (2012, p. 50) demonstrates that without leaders insurgent campaigns are not likely to prosper. Despite this centrality, and the attention the have received in related bodies of literature,<sup>36</sup> the role of leaders have been overlooked in the

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<sup>34</sup>Here I build on early criticism regarding the structural bias in social movements research (Goodwin and Jasper, 1999).

<sup>35</sup>The potential tensions between these sites and collective action, and thus the importance of social appropriation, is well illustrated in Payne's Payne, (2007) work on the Mississippi Movement. The author shows in detail how activists had to engage in important efforts to overcome the conservative nature of the local black clergy to transform the Church into a mobilizing site.

<sup>36</sup>Leadership has been a recurrent topic in international relations scholarship, in particular in the field of security studies. See, for example, Chiozza and Goemans, (2011) and Saunders, (2014).

contentious politics literature, including studies of civil resistance and civil war (Nepstad and Bob, 2006, p. 1).

Variation in leadership availability at the community level might respond to different causes. However, a very common cause in the context of civil war is selective decimation or expulsion. Community leaders are often assumed to be politically loyal to one of the sides in contest (Wood, 2008, p. 556); therefore they face a higher likelihood of victimization, especially when an arriving group enters a new territory with the aim of wresting control. The Peruvian civil war provides infamous examples of communities in the rural highlands and in urban neighborhoods in Lima, where all leaders were stripped away when the Shinning Path's cadre first emerged (Burt, 1998). Post peace-agreement Colombia also provides a concerning example of this situation: 28 community leaders were killed between the end of November 2016, when the peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) came into effect and the end of March 2017.<sup>37</sup>

Among members of a community, existing local leaders are the most likely to adopt mobilizing forms when needed (McCarthy, 1996, p. 148). They are likely to be in a better position to facilitate communication and information transmission between members of the community, which is essential in the process of deciding whether to go or not into a noncooperation and in coordinating and organizing participants once the decision has been taken (Chwe, 2001; McCarthy, 1996, p. 142; Ostrom, 2007, p. 192). Moreover, as recognized nodes or hubs, leaders are in a privileged position to stimulate the recognition of shared desires and work towards convergence, disseminating clues of how others in the villager would behave. They can facilitate coordinated action by informing community members about the intention of others (Frohlich, Oppenheimer, and Young, 1971). This becomes a fundamental coordination task in situations of disorder, where even if people's motivations are aligned, they can hardly form accurate expectations about the expectations and potential behavior of others (Schelling, 1960).

Moreover, leaders can become compilers and generators of common knowledge, a basic but consequential task for the emergence of collective action (Tarrow, 2011). Providing access to and consolidating information has been argued to be an overlooked function of social structures in the face of uncertainty and disorder of some areas in civil war (Shesterinina, 2016, pp. 412, 417). In the empirics (see, especially, Chapter 6) I show that leaders do a large part of this work and that, in doing so, they can work towards redefining the threats and offering solutions attuned to that redefinition. Building on the legitimacy they have within the community, they can forge a group-level account of the threat that the changing conditions of war imply for the community. In this process, which in social movements scholarship has been termed "attribution of threat" (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001; McAdam, 2003), leaders can promote noncooperation by underscoring the role that civilians play in the production of violence (by acting as informants, through cycles of denunciations and counter-denunciations) and provide a narrative in which tactics such as neutrality or/and nonviolence seem as viable courses of action.

Last but not least, both as first-movers and as the visible face of a campaign, leaders facilitate collective action by internalizing a big chunk of the costs and risks associated with noncooperation. By taking into their own hands some of the more risky tasks (for example, holding meetings in private, engaging armed groups, publicly denouncing atrocities), they can lower the threshold of participation of more risk averse villagers who, not willing to take part in the most risky tasks,

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<sup>37</sup>If we add all the community leaders who were assassinated in 2016, the figure increases to 135.

might be ready to support the campaign through other activities (such as engaging in community work). In this sense, leaders provide assurance. They lower the “tipping point” by taking a big portion of the risks and logistical costs involved in noncooperation (Karklins and Petersen, 1993; Read and Shapiro, 2014). By exercising risk-embracing leadership (Read and Shapiro, 2014), they can push forward with a cooperative opening in situations where opportunities for collective action seem very narrow and threats are credible. In this regard, by looking at leaders, this study complements and expands existing accounts of collective action based on threshold and tipping models. Rather than assuming the presence of first movers, I account for them and for variation in their presence.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, if these leaders have forged their leadership through previous experiences of collective action or community work, they can draw on the capital they had mobilized to appropriate and repurpose the mobilizing sites from where they advanced this work in the past (like the church, peasant associations or village councils) and call on the existing loyalties of group members on behalf of a noncooperation campaign. The role of the head of Adventist Church in the Colombian village of La India, which became a central leader of perhaps the first noncooperation campaign in the country, did exactly this: take advantage of his position both as the head of the Church and leader of the campaign, managed to mobilize several dozens of members of the Church into noncooperation (see Chapter 6). The civil rights struggle in the United States again provides another illustrative example of this process. To turn black congregations into mobilizing sites for the civil rights movement, it was leaders who redefined the aims and identity of the Church to accord with the aims and identity of the emerging struggle (McAdam, 1982; Payne, 2007).<sup>39</sup>

In sum, in the uncertain and risky setting of civil war, leaders can launch what Read and Shapiro, (2014) named “strategic hopeful action”: action based on calculated risk-taking and inspired by the hope of building a better future in the face of virtually imponderably complex circumstances.

### 3.3 Alternative Explanations

Civilian noncooperation has not been theorized before. Therefore, in the process of developing the theory presented before, there were no concrete existing explanations of noncooperation emergence I could formally pit my theory against. Nevertheless, in developing it, I cast my net as widely as possible to contemplate multiple possible alternative explanations. I considered several theoretical insights from the civil war and social movement/collective action literatures that, while not addressing noncooperation in itself, dealt with similar phenomena or with aspects that could potentially play a part in the processes by which noncooperation emerges. In this section I broadly outline the most relevant alternative theoretical insights that were taken into account in the theory development process.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Also see, Petersen, (2001, Chap. 9).

<sup>39</sup>It follows from this argument that communities without leaders will have a hard time in overcoming obstacles to coordination and collective action, even in the presence of available mobilizing sites. However, consistent with the general structure of the second part of this argument, the absence or weakness of community leadership can also be compensated (or strengthened) by actors external to the community that provide training in leadership or even put leaders at the disposal of communities.

<sup>40</sup>Here I followed criteria 1 of Bennett and Checkel, (2014b, pp. 21, 23) best practices for good process tracing: “Cast the net widely for alternative explanations.” I elaborate on this further in Chapter 4, where I detail the

Classical general explanations of collective action and social mobilization does not take us far in explaining the emergence of noncooperation. As I introduced the puzzle of noncooperation as a collective action problem, the first alternative explanation to the theory that I propose that logically comes to mind is the core solution that the Olsonian tradition has proposed: selective incentives.<sup>41</sup> According to Olson, (1965, p. 51), separate and selective incentives are the *only* means to get rational individuals to act in a group-oriented way. Is this a plausible solution to the puzzle of noncooperation emergence?

If a noncooperation campaign is successful in bringing protection, this benefit is largely available to all those who live in the locality regardless of their participation in the campaign. Protection is (at least to some extent) a non-excludable good. To deal with this issue, some campaigns have established mechanisms of membership (such as ID cards or posters visibly designating houses where members live) which could serve as community solutions that substitute for selective incentives (see Lichbach, 1995). However, as leaders of the campaigns analyzed here explicitly told me, not only it is very hard to exclude nonparticipants from enjoying the good of protection in practice, but also there are moral commitments that prevent them from deliberately excluding nonparticipants. Doing so is accepting the cold fact that some villagers might be killed, something which is at odds with the normative spirit of most noncooperation campaigns.

This means that free-riding is possible and thus that the structure of decision-making underlying the choice for participating is amenable to be shaped through selective incentives. However, my empirics show that selective incentives – at least in their purely material form that has been privileged in the rationalist framework – did not play a role in motivating participation in the campaigns I analyzed. This is in part because it is hard to think of any material selective incentives that could be powerful enough to offset the risks involved in noncooperation campaigns. It is highly unlikely that civilians will participate in a campaign upon confidence of receiving selective gains when the most likely reaction of armed groups is harsh repression. This prevented first-movers from even considering this as an option. Moreover, even if they would have considered it, the reality is that rural populations living in warzones have hardly any individual side payments to be dispensed to participants above and beyond the public benefit they aim to achieve via noncooperation.

As for negative incentives, the story is not different. To be sure, some systems of sanctions (sticks) have been set up in some campaigns (as severe as being expelled from the campaign, as happened in the PCSJA – see Chapter 5). However, these sanctions have been commonly meant to contribute to its sustenance, punishing participants who do not comply with the rules of behavior defined by the campaign. In this sense, these sanctions are commonly developed *afterwards* to guarantee compliance rather than to ensure participation and, therefore, are not helpful in explaining emergence.

As I show in the empirical analysis, if solutions that are available *only* to participants are to play a role in the process of emergence of noncooperation, these are likely to be of a different nature. Unlike material incentives, moral and emotional drivers such as those discussed in

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research design of this study.

<sup>41</sup>In the form of carrots or sticks, selective incentives are private goods available to people on the basis of whether they contribute to bring about a public good. Carrots (rewards) go to those who participate and sticks (punishments) to those who do not participate. See also, Popkin, (1979).

Wood's (2003) work on insurgent collective action in El Salvador and in Petersen's (2001) work on resistance to occupation in Eastern Europe, do feature in my proposed theory.

Explanations based on political opportunity structures (POS) neither take us far in explaining the emergence of noncooperation. In its most fundamental formulation, a POS approach would more likely predict no mobilization in the face of the conditions under which noncooperation emerged. As I my theory expects, noncooperation is more likely to emerge when and where violence against civilians increases (C2) and potential victims perceive repression as unavoidable (C3). Violence, a central expression of what POS models call threat, commonly narrows, rather than widens, the structure of opportunity (Goldstone and Tilly, 2001). Thus, in the language of the POS tradition, noncooperation emerges more in the context of threat than of opportunity.

Civilians were well aware of both the increasing levels of violence and armed groups' resolve to use violence to silence dissent. As I was told in the PCSJA, by the time villagers decided to mount noncooperation, they had seen armed groups beating and even killing those few who dared to not comply with the latter's rules. Therefore, it can neither be argued that villagers mis-perceived an opportunity, thinking that violence was subsiding and/or armed groups were going to easily respect their claim to neutrality. As several testimonies reveal, peasants knew that the opportunity to mobilize was very narrow and that the cost to be paid for doing so could be very high. Indeed, several peasants died in the process. Nevertheless, as I highlighted when discussing C1, work on political opportunities do help to make sense of some aspects of the process. For example, the fact that when control is shifting armed actors cancel each other as providers of protection, opening up room for a desire for noncooperation to evolve, can be read from a political opportunity type of explanation. Contestation creates fractures in the power structure, which generates a need to mobilize for self-protection.

Consistent with my theory, some Colombian scholars have suggested that this type of responses emerge *because* of violence and not due to its absence. One line of argument has stressed concrete, particularly salient violent events as the key trigger of civilian collective responses to armed groups (Mitchell and Ramírez, 2009, see, e.g., Rojas, 2007). Among these events, scholars have identified the centrality of, for example, the kidnapping of a popular municipal mayor or a particularly brutal massacre. To be sure, salient violent events can play a central role in, for example, transforming villagers beliefs of perpetrators or in shocking their moral aspirations. However, the cluster of cases comparatively analyzed in this dissertation speak against this being a necessary (let alone a sufficient) condition. This study features campaigns of noncooperation that emerged in localities where residents, when reconstructing the process leading to noncooperation, did not stress one particular violent event (the case of Youth Project of Peace (Joppaz) in Chapter 7) or stressed several concrete events (the case of PCSJA in Chapter 5). This suggests that if one theorizes a salient violent event as a condition for emergence, one would fail to explain the emergence of some campaigns as well as the timing of others: why campaign *x* emerged after the third massacre and not after the first one? The proposed theory does ignore that salient violent events can play a role, but in theorizing goes beyond these events to locate them within longer trajectories of violence and war. The focus is in the *process* of the production of violence, rather than on the singular events.

In line with this view, a second line of argument has highlighted "social fatigue" resulting from violence accumulated over the years as a condition for the emergence of noncooperation

campaigns. García-Durán, (2006), for example, has argued that this fatigue allows people to overcome the “fear threshold” that violence imposes and pushes them from passive acceptance to opposition and resistance. While is the case that civilians who engage in noncooperation have been exposed to violence for a long time and did express “fatigue”, I contend that this line of explanation can be misleading as it focuses on continuity rather than on change. As the theory I propose here posits, it is changes in the patterns of violence, rather than the stable accumulation of violence over time, that alter civilians rational calculations beliefs, moral expectations and. Without carefully theorizing change in the trajectories of violence and war, a theory of “social fatigue” cannot help us understand the timing of emergence.

A third kind of explanation shifts the attention to the social context and internal composition of communities. Collective action and social movement scholars have identified social ties and social norms as especially relevant in facilitating collective action, especially when it comes to high-risk campaigns (Della Porta, 1995; Goldstone and Tilly, 2001; Tarrow, 2011; Tilly, 2005; Petersen, 2001; Ostrom, 2007). Affective obligations (Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina, 1982), and even reputational concerns (Chong, 1991; M. Taylor, 1988), are more likely to guide individuals towards collective action in communities in which people share prior norms and interact on a regular basis. These aspects, to be sure, do play a role in the emergence of noncooperation, something that my proposed theory captures when dealing with capacity. However, the micro-level at which civilian noncooperation is shaped (village level) suggests that in virtually every locality “strong ties” are likely to bind civilians together and that face-to-face interactions are likely to take place on a regular basis. Moreover, the fact that we are dealing with rural communities, makes reasonable to expect that these ties, and the sort of social norms that stem from them (norms of reciprocity, norms of fairness), are almost built-in mechanisms of these communities (Scott, 1976).

For social ties and social norms to have explanatory power when accounting for collective action capacity, they need to exhibit some variation across localities. Unlike explanations that look at ties and norms directly, my theory recognizes the role of both but posits that, rather than “groupness” or “communityness” itself, what increases the capacity for collective action is variation in the availability of “mobilizing sites”. Due to war, the availability of this sites varies across communities. In some localities violence has made these sites inoperative or even inexistent, while in others they have survived to different degrees. The presence of these sites allow ties and norms –which are part of virtually any village community in rural Colombia– to survive war disruption, and make it possible for peasants to activate them and repurpose them for mounting civilian noncooperation.

Furthermore, unlike other available explanations of collective action that have linked the role of social norms to community structural characteristics, such as size and homogeneity in Petersen, (2001), I argue that as long as one stays at the village-level, the availability of these sites is what really affects the existence and operation of social norms. Even if all of the communities I studied were peasant, rural communities, they varied in size and composition. The campaigns I studied went from 50 up to 12.000 participants and emerged in hamlets, villages and populated centers. Moreover, as Chapter 6 suggests, ethnic and religious homogeneity was not a precondition for activating ties and norms. Building on the availability of mobilizing sites and existing leadership, a community including a mix of afro-Colombian and mestizo populations coming from different

parts of the country, some of which were Adventist and others Catholic, managed to put these ties and norms at the service of a campaign of pacted noncooperation.

Beyond these general explanations of collective action, recent work in the field of civil wars has dealt with the phenomenon of civilian resistance, which is very close to noncooperation, especially when it takes the more overt and confrontational forms. The work of Kaplan, (2013b) deals with a clear expression of pacted noncooperation and explores one of the cases considered in this study. However, as his work focuses mostly on another dimension of the phenomenon – the extent to which these campaigns reduce violence against civilians, it does not explain emergence.

Arjona, (2016b, 2015), although concerned with responses to governance rather than to violence, has theorized the emergence of resistance to rebel rule. As her argument goes, armed groups opt for more comprehensive systems of governance (rebelocracy) in areas where they expect no resistance from the civilian population, and for more minimal forms (aliocracy) where they anticipate it. Like I do in my theory, Arjona notes that civilian resistance is a function of both the willingness and capacity to resist. However, in her explanation the same one variable – the quality of local institutions (in particular dispute resolution institutions) – shapes both. “Communities with legitimate and effective institutions are likely to be both willing and able to resist rebelocracy”, she contends (Arjona, 2016b).

The local institutions that are in place prior to the arrival of the challenging armed group do feature in my theory. They play their part in shaping community capacity for collective action. Along with other elements that are part of the local organizational history and local social context of the localities that I studied, what Arjona calls local institutions are part of what I call available mobilizing sites or associational spaces. Moreover, the existence of these institutions can also constitute sources of leadership, the other element I theorize. However, in the context of protection from violence, the grievances that forge civilians desire for noncooperation are independent from these local institutions, regardless of their quality. As I show in the empirics, well organized communities, with efficient and legitimate local institutions, neither mounted noncooperation of their own accord, nor did they join an already emerging campaign (see control cases in Chapter 5). The grievances that push civilians to refuse to cooperate with armed groups in the face of acute violence in the context of disorder are thus different to those that push them to resist rebel forms of rule in the context of social order. For the former, the quality of local institutions is not enough and, therefore, a theory of noncooperation, needs to carefully account for these grievances.

Identifying the source of both desire and capacity in the same variable for noncooperation as understood here risks arguing that willingness to engage in collective action is determined by the capacity to do so. As in classic theories of social movements, grievances risk becoming insignificant (or taken for granted) in the process of emergence. In contrast, I contend that communities with enough mobilizing resources to engage in collective action, need strong and enduring reasons to mobilize these resources into noncooperation. In Chapter 5, I show how two communities with the capacity to engage in collective action did not mobilize into noncooperation given the absence of the situational conditions that I posit as central for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation. Using the same variable to explain capacity and emergence in an explanation of noncooperation risks over-predicting the phenomenon.

Moreover, the fact that Arjona’s explanation of civilian resistance to rebel governance is

based on an idea of preservation (a high-quality institutional structure) limits further its power to explain the emergence of noncooperation as a self-protection strategy. In her work, what drives civilian preferences for resistance is people's desire to preserve their current local system of governance. Here, in contrast, civilians engage in noncooperation campaigns largely to create a new reality, which might even include the establishment of a new comprehensive system of community governance (such as those described in Chapters 5 and 6). As long as having low quality institutions does not imply that a given community has no capacity for collective action, civilian noncooperation can perfectly emerge in communities where civilians do not view their institutions as effective and legitimate. In this regard, focusing only where there is a desire for preservation, can lead to under-predicting the extent of the phenomenon. If we consider other sources of grievances different to a threat to high quality local institutions as motivating civilian oppositional responses to armed groups, we will be able to identify other instances of civilian noncooperation in context where disorder, rather than order, reigns.

A final set of arguments that was relevant for the development of the proposed theory establish an association between forms of targeting and civilian support and mobilization. While it is definitely useful to think about how civilians respond to repression, these theoretical arguments do not account adequately for the process by which noncooperation emerges. A long tradition of scholarship, from Mason and Krane, (1989) to Kalyvas and Kocher, (2007), has advanced versions of the argument that in the face of indiscriminate violence nonparticipation becomes more risky (or, at least, as risky) than participation in insurgencies for civilians. These scholars, thus, expect that civilians join one side when they face indiscriminate violence from the other, leaving virtually no room for other responses such as organizing themselves to oppose armed organizations. As Goodwin, (2001) eloquently put it, when targeted indiscriminately, civilians have no other way out than joining the insurgents.

This line of explanation did not hold for the emergence of noncooperation mainly because of two reasons. First, it assumes that one actor (largely the state) is exercising indiscriminate violence and another one (largely the insurgents) is willing and in the capacity to provide some basic level of protection. As I show in this study, this is not always the case. When control is in flux (C1), civilians are likely to face violence coming from all sides and no group is likely to have the capacity or/and will to provide any protection. Second, it does not make a distinction between indiscriminate (random) and collective (group-based) targeting and does not contemplate how targets perceive violence. I argue that both elements are central in shaping civilian motivations for noncooperation (C3). If civilians perceive that their are targeted as a group they are likely to believe that violence is unavoidable and search for responses that consider the responses of others that are equally targeted.

Finally, Finkel, (2015) has linked forms of targeting and the capacity for collective action. Studying anti-Nazi Jewish resistance groups, he argued that the nature of the repression a given community is exposed to in  $t_{-1}$  shapes the skills a community needs to organize sustained (violent) resistance. capacity to engage in armed resistance in  $t_{+1}$ . Segments of the population that were exposed to selective repression in pre-mobilization times developed the skills needed to mount and lead underground, clandestine activities of armed resistance. As Finkel, (2015, p. 351) notes "...during the Holocaust, places and groups that were subject to pre-World War II selective repression were more likely to have sustained resistance to Nazi onslaught than those

that were not.”

While persuasive, this logic did not help explain civilian noncooperation and this is the case mainly because it does not consider the “dark side” of selective repression. Past experiences of selective repression can in fact push people to develop skills that are useful for civilian noncooperation. As the cases explored in this study show, organizing noncooperation demands clandestinity, even if the outcome is a campaign of overt unilateral and/or pacted noncooperation. However, experiences of selective violence, if effective, can also leave a community without leaders to instigate new rounds of collective action in the future. Not only can it kill many leaders, but as is common in the context of civil war, it can prompt many others to flee. If those segments of repressed population die or leave, even if the skills for resistance were developed, it would be impossible to capitalize on them in subsequent episodes of collective action.

Moreover, harsh experiences of selective repression might also undermine the collective efficacy perception (Klandermans, 2013) that a given community assigns to engaging in collective action in general. Both the lack of leadership and the a negative collective efficacy perception can negative affect the emergence of a new campaign of collective action, unless there is a generational break – as the experience of San Carlos in Chapter 7 details. The legacy of selective repression can be the complete opposite of what Finkel expects. This suggests that perhaps there is a threshold after which his theory does not hold, threshold that is likely to be surpassed in the context of civil war.



## 4

# Research Design

This research project began in 2012. At that time, I found several journalistic and NGO reports, as well as descriptive (and commonly normative) case studies, of instances of what I here call civilian noncooperation. As useful as these secondary sources were, they fell short of careful conceptualization, let alone systematic theorization. Moreover, existing theories of civil war and collective action alone failed to explain various aspects of the phenomenon, including its emergence. Therefore, the main aim I set myself to accomplish was two-fold: (i) to provide a careful conceptualization of noncooperation, surveying the breadth of the phenomenon and probing its range of variation (Chapter 2); and (ii) develop a theory to explain its emergence (Chapter 3). The central research question was: *Why does noncooperation emergence in some localities and not in others that are similarly situated in the war and that share a common social and institutional past?* This chapter presents the research design and the data used to develop the theory I proposed in the previous chapter.

The theory is the outcome of a 6-year process that involved a back and forth from deduction and induction; theory and empirics. Given the stage of knowledge of the phenomenon, the main objective of the dissertation was theory development. However, the process by which the theory was developed involved the reasoning of both hypothesis generation and hypothesis testing. Moreover, as I was dealing with a phenomenon about which we know little, detailed description was as important as rigorous explanation. Therefore, presenting the story of hundreds of villagers in rural Colombia that engaged in noncooperation from their own point of view and using their own voices, is was important for this dissertation as the development of theory. Like similar works that highly influenced my own (Petersen, 2001; Kriger, 2008; Wood, 2003; Lubkemann, 2008; Nordstrom, 1997), I tried my best to provide an accurate sense of these peasants' lives and the choices they were confronted with while living in warzones that remains true to their experiences as they were shared with me through immersive civil war.

## 4.1 The Research Process & the Structure of the Comparison

### First Stage: Preliminary Case Study

The first stage in the research process was a preliminary, exploratory case study of an instance of noncooperation conducted in 2012: the case of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó

(PCSJA).<sup>1</sup> This study was an inductive effort to trace the process of emergence of noncooperation moving backwards from the outcome of interest, a noncooperation campaign, to the potential determinants and micro-foundations of its emergence. The spirit was that of “soaking and poking”, collecting as much primary and secondary data as I could. Although I used the Contentious Politics framework in its revised version as a guide (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015), I was as open as I could be to all kinds of possible alternative explanations and was willing to follow the evidence wherever it took me, just as Bennett and Checkel, (2014b, p. 18) advise researchers to proceed when the state of prior knowledge of a given subject is low.<sup>2</sup>

The concrete outcome of this first case study was a paper that provided a detailed empirical treatment of the PCSJA in the light of the main concepts and analytical tools of the contentious politics framework (Masullo, 2012). This first approximation was vital for the development of the project. First, it provided a richer understanding of the context and the phenomenon I was studying, which in turn gave me a better sense of the “class of events” noncooperation represents, a basic step for drawing inferences from within-case analysis (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 17). This allowed me to conceptualize the phenomenon more precisely, identifying its constitutive features as well as one particularly relevant dimension of variation, the degree of confrontation, which led to the typology proposed in Chapter 2. Being able to identify noncooperation and its different forms, allowed for the construction of a population of cases of noncooperation in Colombia (see Map in Figure 2.3 in Chapter 2) from which to select cases for further comparative research. A good conceptualization of a given phenomenon, constitutes a necessary step for good theorization (Staniland, 2012b; Gerring, 1999).

Second, it allowed me to single out a first set of theoretical insights about the process by which noncooperation comes about. In dialogue with existing theories of civil war, social movements and civil resistance, I deductively drafted a theory of the emergence of noncooperation. A considerable amount of the data that I collected in the first case study did not make it to this preliminary theory. Only the more promising conditions and factors uncovered were formalized and observable empirical implications were derived from them to be corroborated both against new evidence from the same case as well as other cases in Colombia during the second stage of this project. This preliminary theory served as the basis for defining the structure of the comparison and for disciplining the collection of data I undertook in my subsequent field research trips in 2014 and 2015.

### **Second Stage: Structured and Focused Comparison**

The second stage in the process, from which the current version of the proposed theory was developed, comes from a research design involving three different levels of within-case analysis and structured and focused comparison. For each of these levels, the technique employed was that of process tracing, in which I tried to combined different approaches to the method with the two-fold objective of generating historical narratives for explaining specific cases and theoretical and analytical narratives seeking generalization (see Caproso, 2009; Beach and Pedersen, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup>I strategically chose one of the best known campaigns of noncooperation in Colombia, which had been documented widely by national and international NGOs to make sure that I was going to have access to rich secondary data, rather than relying exclusively on primary, interview data.

<sup>2</sup>In this first stage of the research I followed criteria 1 and 8 of Bennett and Checkel’s (2014b, pp. 21, 29-30) best practices for good process tracing: “1. Cast the net as widely for alternative explanations” and “8. Be open to inductive insights.”

These three levels were:

1. Within-case process tracing of three campaigns of noncooperation;
2. Cross-case comparisons between these three campaigns and;
3. Cross-case comparisons in which each of these three campaigns was matched to a control observation.<sup>3</sup>

Within-case analysis over time allowed me to trace in detail the process by which noncooperation emerged in three localities in three different regions in the Colombian civil war. Each of the three campaigns represented one of the three distinct types of noncooperation identified by the proposed typology: oblique, pacted, and unilateral. Here I followed Tarrow's (2010, 240, emphasis added) intuition that "if we want to know why a particular outcome *emerged*, we need to understand *how* it occurred."

In doing so, I proceeded both deductively to test the observable implications of the preliminary theory that I had developed in Stage 1, and inductively to discover potential alternative or complementary conditions and mechanisms that explained the outcome of interest.<sup>4</sup> This proved crucial for moving from the wide pool of potential explanations I left Stage 1 with to a set of potentially individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions under which noncooperation was likely to emerge.

Structured cross-case comparisons of these three campaigns allowed me to distill these conditions and micro-foundations further. It helped me move from a process that unfolded over time within individual cases to an analysis across three different cases. If the same conditions and mechanisms identified in one campaign were at work across three different campaigns representing distinct forms of noncooperation, confidence about their necessity and sufficiency would increase. Moreover, this comparison enabled me to extract the essence of the phenomenon and distinguish it from the idiosyncratic forms that it took in each context. With these cross-case comparisons I was able not only to specify better the path by which noncooperation emerged, but also to make inferences about the process of emergence more generally.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, matching each of these campaigns with control cases was the final and more decisive test for the proposed theory and what ultimately enhanced the confidence of the power of its inference. This was the necessary step to rule out the possibility that the same process (with its conditions and mechanisms) was also present in "non-treated" cases. The probative value of the components of my theory hinged thus on whether they were identified in the positive cases, but not in the control ones. The analytical baseline of the strategy of paired comparisons, as formalized by Tarrow, (2010, p. 244), is that of "eliminating the possibility that the dependent variable can have occurred even in the absence of the independent variable". However, as I was moving from the outcome backwards, I turned the logic on its head and used it to eliminate

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<sup>3</sup>I use the terms "control case" and "negative case" interchangeably throughout this chapter.

<sup>4</sup>This was the second time (now in Stage 2) that I had put in practice criteria 1 and 8 of Bennett and Checkel's (2014b, pp. 21, 29-30) best practices for good process tracing: "1. Cast the net as widely for alternative explanations" and "8. Be open to inductive insights."

<sup>5</sup>This logic is related to the argument about the utility of process tracing in addressing the possible presence of equifinality (Bennett and Checkel, 2014b, p. 19). Instead of affirming different paths as viable explanations in individual cases even if the paths differ from one case to another, leverage here comes from affirming an equivalent path across cases that, even if part of the same "class of cases", exhibit different values on the dependent variable.

the possibility that the conditions that I had theorized were also present were the outcome of interest was absent. If the components of my theory were in fact individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the emergence of noncooperation, it had to effectively spare positive from negative localities. At least one of the hypothesized conditions had to be absent in those localities where noncooperation did not emerge.<sup>6</sup>

This three-level comparative structure highlights the value of combining within-case analysis (George and Bennett, 2005) with focused (Slater and Ziblatt, 2013) and paired comparisons (Tarrow, 2010) when conducting process tracing. Moreover, by conducting dual-process tracing within each pair of positive and control cases, it recognizes the value of bringing the fundamental logic of the potential outcomes framework, developed mostly in the context of quantitative and experimental studies (Morgan and Winship, 2007), to rigorous qualitative comparative research.<sup>7</sup> By following the fundamental logic of the potential outcomes framework, which emphasizes the importance of counterfactual observations, I was able to get insights from negative cases that would have not been possible through within-case observations of positive cases alone no matter how good the process tracing was. While I already had good confidence on my theory given that it held across different forms of noncooperation, in the absence of a counterfactual, my findings were still necessarily tentative. Process tracing in control cases allowed me to test that at least one of my hypothesized components was absent and that its absence was related to the absence of the outcome through a convincing process with logical mechanisms at work.

The design of Stage 2 of the research contemplated multiple visits to each locality (where the campaign emerged) during the same field trip, as well as two separate waves of fieldwork. The first wave was conducted in 2014 (from March until July) and the second one in 2015 (from May until October). Visiting the same localities multiple times brought important advantages in terms of the quality of the data that I collected (I elaborate on this below). Leaving a considerable period of time between both waves of fieldwork allowed me to process and analyze the data before facing the field again. This gave me the chance to refine the theory in light of new evidence uncovered during the first wave that was either contrary to my initial explanation or that I had just not contemplated. From here, I drew new observable implications to be tested during a second trip against new evidence from within the same cases. If in the spirit of falsification I were to find in my second trip that new evidence would fit the modified theory better than the original one (that was still of use as tentative alternative explanations), confidence on my refined explanation would further increase (Bennett and Checkel, 2014b, p. 18; Lakatos, 1970). Being open to inductive insights at this stage, as I was in my preliminary case study in 2012, proved vital to stumble upon new potential conditions, factors and mechanism and accept them as opportunities to rethink and update my original explanation. This served as a preventive device against confirmation biases, as well as an opportunity to follow up my efforts by addressing this new insights with improved theory.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Here, again, I follow item #7 of Bennett and Checkel's (2014b, pp. 21, 29) best practices for good process tracing: "7. Combine process tracing with case comparisons when useful for the research goal and feasible." See also, Lyall, (2014).

<sup>7</sup>Some other scholars have recently brought these insights to qualitative comparative work. For example, Trejo, (2012) notes that his case selection strategy followed the logic of natural experiments and Arjona, (2016a) uses what she terms a process-driven natural experiment to compare three villages and trace the effects of the quality of local institutions on wartime social order.

<sup>8</sup>I here once again follow item #8 of Bennett and Checkel's (2014b, pp. 21, 29-30) best practices for good process tracing: "8. Be open to inductive insights." See also, Pouliot, (2014).

## 4.2 Case Selection

This study employs a sub-national research design in a single country experiencing a civil war: Colombia. The current war in Colombia began in the 1960s, but finds its origins in a previous armed conflict between supporters of the traditional political parties of the country, the Liberal and the Conservative, known as *La Violencia* (1948 – 1958). In the aftermath of this bipartisan war, the government failed to address the most pressing social and economic problems of the country – were most of the violence took place, especially issues related with land inequalities and poor rural conditions. In response to this situation, the protagonists of the current war emerged. In the mid 1960s the main left-wing guerrilla groups were formed, including those that will feature prominently in this study: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) in 1964, and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) in 1967. Over the years these groups grew notoriously, both in number of members and in military capacity. FARC went from 8 fronts in 1975 to 65 in 1995 and the ELN from 6 to 65 (Arjona, 2016b, p. 91).

The growth of these rebel groups, which held a clear communist agenda, increasingly threatened the economic interests of powerful and wealthy rural local elites in several parts of the country. As a response, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, these elites created several self-defense and paramilitary groups which operated locally and/or regionally in different areas of the country. Many of these, such as the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU), the Peasant Self-defense Groups of Magdalena Medio (ACMM) and the Self-defense Groups of Puerto Boyacá (APB), will also feature prominently in the empirical chapters. In 1997, many of these groups came together under a national confederation and created the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), the largest paramilitary organization that existed in the country. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, with this scenario of multiple actors fighting for the same territories, the country saw a dramatic transformation in the patterns of violence: not only did the targeting of civilians became more frequent, but the repertoire of violence grew wider. The final report prepared by the Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2013) concluded that around 220.000 persons have been killed in this war (between 1958 and 2012), 80% of whom were civilians. Beyond lethal violence, 25.000 have been reported as disappeared, 27.000 as kidnaped, and over 1.700 as victims of sexual violence. The more dramatic figure is, nonetheless, that of displacement: no fewer than 6 million Colombians have been displaced in this war – around 15% of the population. In 2005 the AUC demobilized and in 2017 the FARC signed a peace agreement that is in full implementation phase at the moment of writing. In the meanwhile, the government advances negotiation talks with the ELN in Ecuador.<sup>9</sup>

Colombia is a good case to study the micro-dynamics and social process of civil war, for several reasons. First of all, it fits the two fundamental scope conditions of the proposed theory: an instance of (i) civil war that (ii) is fought irregularly. Moreover, the Colombian war exhibits considerable within-country variation in the ways armed groups established territorial control and fought for it, the patterns of violence that these processes involved, and the ways civilians responded to armed groups' strategies. It also presents variation in many other variables

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<sup>9</sup>In this dissertation I do not present an overview of the Colombian civil war. Excellent summaries have been recently published (see, e.g., Arjona, 2016a, Chap. 4; Daly, 2016, Chap. 3; Steele, 2017). For a much more extensive and detailed treatment, see Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2013). However, in each of the empirical chapters I present a detailed treatment of the local and regional dynamics of the war in the areas I studied.

that, even if not directly related to civil war dynamics, are potentially relevant for a theory of noncooperation, such as the settlement history of villages and communities and the presence and influences of social organizations and associations in the rural areas. In addition, multiple instances of civilian noncooperation have emerged in the country, featuring different forms and located in regions with different pre-war and war histories and with presence and activity of different armed groups' fronts and blocks.<sup>10</sup> All in all, Colombia offered great opportunities to exploit variation that was relevant for the phenomenon under study while keeping constant several regional and national factors.<sup>11</sup>

From a logistical and practical point of view, studying Colombia also presented advantages that should not be discounted. First of all, despite the ongoing civil war, it was possible to conduct immersive fieldwork in remote rural warzones. Security conditions have undoubtedly improved from the mid-2000s onwards, and especially during the period I conducted fieldwork. FARC, the major rebel group in the country's war, went through a peace process that began the same year I embarked on this process and came to a successful end as I am writing these words.<sup>12</sup> During this period, FARC declared several unilateral cease fires that were largely respected.<sup>13</sup>

Second, as a Colombian who grew up, studied and worked in the country, I had wide and first-hand knowledge of the history of the place, its civil war, the different regions, the people and the language before embarking in the project. This enormously facilitated the logistics involved in planning and conducting field work, for example in what had to do with contacting and partnering with NGOs and local researcher centers that served as gate-keepers). Moreover, it proved central to built trust with communities, which was essential for ensuring the good quality of the data collected. Finally, given a long tradition of studying the country's conflict by local and international scholars, detailed descriptions and analysis of war dynamics in various regions of the country, plus good qualitative qualitative data were available for me to draw on.<sup>14</sup>

However, as the proposed theory reflects, a big deal of the process by which civilian non-cooperation emerges involves interactions between actors at the very local level, rather than the national one. It is at this level where shared desires are formed, preference converge, and community structures that make leaders and mobilizing sites are available. Consequently, I worked at the meso-level, conceived in civil wars as the level of communities or local social groups and organizations, including processes such as community collective collective action

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<sup>10</sup>Although not census data, I identified over 30 campaigns of noncooperation in 18 of Colombia's 32 departments.

<sup>11</sup>Recent important contributions to our understanding of how civil war operates and the legacies it leaves have resulted from studies that explore subnational variation in Colombia. See, among others, Arjona, (2016b), Daly, (2016), and Steele, (2017).

<sup>12</sup>This helped me define the "starting rule" for the data collection process. As Lyall, (2014, p. 191) notes in reference to Wood's research in El Salvador, civil war researchers sometimes just take opportunities to field work that are exogenously created by lulls in fighting. Here I am following criteria #5 in Bennett and Checkel's (2014b, pp. 21, 26-27) best practices for good process tracing: "5. Make a justifiable decision on when to start."

<sup>13</sup>Security conditions did, however, affect this study and forced me to modify my original research design and case selection. For example, right before my second wave of field research, in the summer of 2015, the FARC broke a cease fire that had unilaterally established some months before. This led to increased military activity in particular in the Department of Cauca, where I was planning to explore an "out of the sample" (i.e., a non-campesino community) instance of noncooperation. Despite of having achieved access after long months of negotiations, the leaders of the campaign strongly encouraged me to postpone my visit. As this was during my last field trip, I had leave the exploration of this case out from the dissertation.

<sup>14</sup>However, these data, both qualitative and quantitative, was either inexistent or unavailable at the level of disaggregation I worked (most datasets, for example, are at the municipal level). Although I made use of existing quantitative datas (see below), I did my best effort to triangulate different datasets and sources to process it and desegregate it to the right level of analysis so as to avoid falling into ecological fallacies.

and local leadership (Balcells and Justino, 2014, p. 1345). Therefore, while Colombia was the country-case of irregular civil war, as in similar studies that have studied civilian choice (Steele, 2017, e.g., Jentzsch, 2014; Wood, 2003), the specifics of the research designed were defined at the a subnational level. Comparisons at this level, as opposed to a cross-country comparisons, prevents researchers from neglecting internal heterogeneity that is potentially crucial for both description and theory (Snyder, 2001), as well as allows for collecting the fine-grained data that is necessary to conduct good process tracing (Checkel, 2008).

Concretely, my unit of analysis was the locality. Here I followed Arjona's (2014, p. 1364, 2016b, p. 66) insight that the locality is the main locus of interaction between armed groups and civilians, as well as where their choices are made. Moreover, as Petersen, (2001, p. 18) has noted, "if the regime [in this case, armed groups] is highly effective in isolating communities and preventing communication between them, the locality may be the only basis for organization". Thus, leverage is likely to come from variation within localities over time and across them. What the locality concretely is (geographically speaking) varied across cases: in some of my cases the locality took the form of the village (*corregimiento*), while in others it was the hamlet (*vereda*).<sup>15</sup> Both are sub-municipal, largely rural spatial units. Whether I ended up focusing on one or the other was a function of the specific way in which social and community life was structured, defining where social interaction took place. Rather than defining one fixed unit as "the locality" (the village *or* the hamlet), what revealed relevant was to identify the spatial unit that was socially and culturally most meaningful for campesinos themselves. This is, what civilians themselves, through their social and cultural practices, conceived as their local reality (many times defined around the market place). This is particularly consequential for this study, because as Scott, (1979) has argued, the mobilization potential of peasants is likely to be forged at that very localized level, where interests are experienced, and motivations and moral expectations (such as those of what is just and not) are formed.

This unit of analysis presents important advantages relative to other possibilities, such as the campaign, commonly used in the civil resistance literature (Chenoweth and Lewis, 2013) or the community, as in Petersen's (2001) work. The locality allows to go beyond the single-actor, movement-centric perspective that has dominated the study of social movements and capture what some scholars in the field began to referred to, although with slightly different labels, as "the field of interaction" (Goodwin, 2012a; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001; Fligstein and McAdam, 2015; Jasper, 2004). This is, the arena in which multiple actors, rather than movements or social movement organizations (SMOs) alone, make choices and interact among each other. As the proposed theory reflects, the emergence of noncooperation entails changes in the behavior of both armed groups and civilians and alterations in the equilibria of interaction reached by both over time. The locality allows to capture the crucial fact that civilian choices and responses are entangled in complex ways with the behavior of armed actors.

Moreover, the locality allows to look beyond this main dyad of interaction, civilians–armed groups, giving room for actors other than civilians and armed groups to play a role in the process of emergence of noncooperation. This proved especially relevant when it came to theorize the

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<sup>15</sup>Colombia is divided into 32 Departments (equivalent to States in the United States) and each department is then divided into municipalities. There is a total of 1122 municipalities. Municipalities are in turn divided into villages (*corregimientos*) and villages are subsequently divided into hamlets (*veredas*). Although not recognized as an official political-administrative division, in rural Colombia both *corregimientos* and *veredas* are the central spatial reference that structures social life.

determinants of the capacity for collective action, where actors external to the community had a say. In this way, the locality opened the door for a relational and strategic understanding of noncooperation: civilians, armed groups, as well as other players, inhabiting the same universe, make choices and react to others' choices (Jasper, 2004, p. 5). As with most instances of collective action, from marches to social revolutions, noncooperation does not “arise solely from [civilians'] internal conversations, but is powerfully shaped by their manifold and shifting interactions with authorities, opponents, allies, and publics.” (Goodwin, 2012a, n.p).<sup>16</sup>

### Positive Cases

Having defined the level and unit of analysis, I proceed now to spell out the logic and strategy for selecting cases. I followed George and Bennett, (2005, pp. 17, 77-78) and defined civilian noncooperation as the “class of events”.<sup>17</sup> This class defines the outcome to be explained and the phenomenon to make inference about. Consequently, positive cases are to be localities where a campaign of noncooperation, as defined and delimited in Chapter 2, did emerge. To guarantee that this is the case, selected localities had to host:

- a successful campaign of noncooperation;<sup>18</sup>
- a campaign that relayed exclusively on non-violent methods of action; and
- a campaign that resulted from a community-led initiative.

In addition, one first-order condition needed to be met in order to make sure that the campaign was in fact a response to armed groups' strategies:

- at the moment when the campaign emerged, the locality was a warzone.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, to strengthen comparability across campaigns, some theoretically relevant homogeneity was guaranteed:

- the inhabitants of the localities were (largely) peasant;<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>As reported in the data section below, this recognitions had implications in terms of the data to be gathered. Both for process-based and data-set observations, I had to gather data on civilians as much as on armed groups, state officials, and other potentially relevant actors that comprise the field of contention in which noncooperation emerges.

<sup>17</sup>If I were to apply more strictly George and Bennett's taxonomy, I could further specify that the “broad phenomenon of scientific interest” is civilian responses to armed groups in civil war settings; the “class of events” is civilian noncooperation, and the “subclass of events” is non-violent forms of civilian noncooperation. In this order of things, I would be selecting positive instances of this subclass of events.

<sup>18</sup>Successful in the most basic sense of not having failed in the attempt to mount it.

<sup>19</sup>I follow Arjona, (2016b, p. 22), and define a warzone as a locality where at least one non-state armed group has constant presence. Conceptually, this implies areas where there is a frequent interaction between civilians and armed groups, beyond sporadic incursions and one-off events.

<sup>20</sup>This criteria not only restricts our attention to the rural world, but also implies some exclusions. While a peasant community may include Afro-Colombians (as the case of the Peasant Worker Association of the Carare River (ATCC)), it excludes communities that are exclusively indigenous or Afro-descendent. This is an important scope condition for the proposed theory, as it is well known that the relationship between peasants and armed groups (particularly guerrilla groups) is significantly different from that between armed groups and indigenous communities. Moreover, the deep-rooted institutions of indigenous communities suppose important differences in terms of collective action capacity compared to peasants communities. These differences might alter the workings of both parts of the theory.

Furthermore, to gain inferential leverage, some theoretically relevant variation was allowed at the level of the independent variables:

- the localities were located in different regions of the country, with different prewar and war histories;
- the localities had presence of different armed organizations as well as of different blocks and fronts from each organization.

Finally, to avoid a non-variance design and make sure that I was not truncating the sample of noncooperation and explaining only one violence it can take, variation in the form of noncooperation was introduced:

- the localities hosted campaigns representing each of the three forms of noncooperation identified by the proposed typology.

Following these criteria, I ended up with three distinct localities hosting three different and independent campaigns of noncooperation. The first locality is the village of San José, located in the municipality of Apartadó, department of Antioquia, in the region of Urabá. This locality hosts the PCSJA, a campaign of unilateral noncooperation that emerged in 1997. The main armed organizations operating in the area during the period of study were two leftwing guerrilla groups, the FARC (Front V) and the EPL; one of the largest regional paramilitary groups in the country, the ACCU; and the XVII Brigade of the national army. The second locality is the village of La India, located in the municipality of Landázuri, department of Santander, in the Magdalena Medio region. Here, the ATCC, a campaign of pacte noncooperation emerged in 1987. The main armed groups that operated in the village were: FARC's Front XI, two paramilitary groups, the APB (referred to by residents also as the Death to Kidnappers (MAS)) and the ACMM, and the Battalion Reyes of the national army. Finally, the last locality is the municipal center and surrounding hamlets of the Municipality of San Carlos, in the department of Antioquia, in the region of Eastern Antioquia. Here, in the late 1990s, an campaign of oblique noncooperation took form under the name of Youth Project of Peace (Joppaz). The main armed organizations here were: FARC's Fronts IV and XLVII; the Front Front Carlos Alirio Buitrago (CAB) of ELN; and the Bloque Metro (BM) of the paramilitaries.

Table 4.1 summarizes the main features of the positive cases:

*Table 4.1: Positive Cases*

Locality	Region	Campaign	Main Armed Groups
San José	Urabá	PCSJA - Unilateral	FARC-V; EPL; ACCU; XVII Brigade
La India	Magdalena Medio	ATCC - Pacte	FARC-XI; APB/MAS; ACMM; Battalion Reyes
San Carlos	Eastern Antioquia	JOPPAZ - Oblique	FARC-IV & XLVII; ELN-CAB; BM

## Negative Cases

While positive cases were localities hosting campaigns of noncooperation, negative cases were localities where the outcome of interest did not emerged. However, as in the vast majority of the

localities in the regions I studied noncooperation did not emerge, I needed further criteria to select those localities that were theoretically more relevant. Consequently, following a long and diverse tradition in comparative research, I sought to maximize resemblance between negative and positive localities in as many respects as possible (except from their value on the dependent variable) (Przeworski and Teune, 1970, p. 32; Ragin, 2000, p. 60; Skocpol, 1984, p. 378; Goodwin, 2001, pp. 6-7). To do so, I followed a logic of “geographical proximity” operating at the very local level and selected localities that neighbored my positive cases and where I had good reasons to believe that noncooperation had a real chance of occurring (as opposed to a nonzero probability). In this regard, the central principle guiding my strategy for selecting negative cases was the “possibility principle” as defined by Mahoney and Goertz, (2004).

First, the most basic condition for civilian noncooperation to have a real possibility of emerging was that the locality was a warzone. Second, given that a first-order condition that underlies the emergence of noncooperation is a decision by civilians to stay put, to constitute “communities at risk of mobilization” (McAdam and Boudet, 2012), at least a portion of the population of a given locality had to stay put. If people flee from the locality, not only do they “leave” my sample (as the unit of analysis is the locality), but their choice also renders impossible the emergence of noncooperation. Thus, neighboring localities that were emptied during war, which was especially common for instance in the Municipality of San Carlos were about 85% of the rural hamlets were left inhabited, were not considered as potential negative cases.<sup>21</sup>

Besides these two basic criteria, to maximize “possibility” I also relied on the hypothesized elements of my proposed theory following a “Rule of Inclusion”: any case included as a control should exhibit at least one element hypothesized by the proposed theory as being related to the emergence of noncooperation (Mahoney and Goertz, 2004, p. 657). Occasionally I lacked detailed information about surrounding localities before actually conducting research on them. Even so, in each locality I selected as controls I had good reasons to believe that at least one of the elements singled out by my theory, regarding either desire or capacity, was present.

The close proximity between the units that I was comparing (note that I am dealing with sub-municipality units) maximized the chances that inhabitants of controlled localities experienced the presence of the same armed organizations (even the same Fronts or Blocks) and were exposed to very similar civil war dynamics. In addition, it was very likely that both positive and negative localities shared (at least some aspects of) a common social and institutional context. For example, it was very likely that inhabitants of both localities went through very similar, if not the same, colonization processes; were exposed to the same local institutions and social associations and were influenced by the same political movements and parties as these commonly operate in units larger than single hamlets. Moreover, this social proximity that came with physical proximity (reflected in and reinforced by, for example, the fact that in some cases they shared the same market place) also provided reasons to believe that the absence of noncooperation did not simply result from “cognitive unavailability” (Kalyvas and Sanchez-Cuenca, 2005); that is, that residents ignored that noncooperation was a possible course of action.

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<sup>21</sup>Note, however, that a noncooperation campaign can emerge while civilians are in displacement and part of its aims can be, in fact, to facilitate a return to the land. The Cacarica Communities in the Colombian department of Chocó, as well as the Communities of Populations in Resistance created in the Guatemalan civil war, are illustrative. While some tweaks may apply, I expect my theory to help explain the fundamental aspects of the process of emergence of these cases too, focusing however on the conditions of the locality from which they were initially expelled, rather than those of the locality where they were resettled.

Besides this “logic of proximity”, the belief that some of the hypothesized elements were also present in the “negative localities” came from interviews with inhabitants of “positive localities” or state officials or NGO staff operating in the area. Informants not only pointed to the fact that in some neighboring localities noncooperation did not emerge or residents opted not to join the campaign, but indicated that inhabitants were exposed to similar war dynamics and shared many aspects of the social and institutional context. However, as happened with some of my first potential candidates for “control localities” in the village of San José de Apartadó, if once I began to trace the process in negative cases I realized that there were strong grounds to impugn the possibility principle, I would desist and look for other localities.

To sum up, the criteria for the selection of negative cases were:

- negative localities constitute warzones;
- a portion of the inhabitants of the locality stayed put;
- negative localities neighbored positive localities;
- at least one of the factors hypothesized by my theory was present.

Following these criteria, I ended up with three pairs of matched cases. The PCSJA was matched to the experience of two hamlets, La Balsa and Las Playas, located in the village of San José de Apartadó, less than 5 kilometers from the main settlement where the Peace Community emerged. The ATCC was matched to the experience of La Caimana, a group of four hamlets in a neighboring village, 28 kilometers from La India, where the Peasant Association emerged. Finally, the Joppaz was matched to the experience of El Jordán, a village within the municipality of San Carlos, 22 kilometers away from where the campaign was launched.<sup>22</sup>

These paired comparisons, taken together, provide evidence that both a desire for noncooperation *and* a capacity for collective action need to be in place for noncooperation to emerge. The case of La Caimana, for example, illustrates well that even when the desire for noncooperation has evolved (and even when counting on an example to follow – the ATCC), in the absence of capacity for collective action, noncooperation does not emerge. They also show that discontent is not ever-present in deprived groups and that capacity does not necessarily drive desire, as some central schools in social movements scholarship have implied (e.g., Jenkins and Perrow, 1977). The communities from La Balsa and Las Playas, in the absence of a desire, did not engage in noncooperation despite of having strong collective action capacity within their communities and the possibility of joining an already emerging campaign (the PCSJA) that was effectively signaling to have the capacity to do so. These control observations, which followed a counterfactual reasoning where it was impossible to observe both outcomes in the same locality, provided insights that would have not been possible with the within-case analyses of positive cases alone, giving greater confidence about the validity of the theory (see, Lyall, 2014).

As the proposed theory singled out multiple elements as shaping the emergence of noncooperation, each individual pair comparison speaks to specific individual aspects of the theory, rather than to it as a whole. The matching procedure yielded a pool of three paired comparisons that helped isolate individual components of the theory. Given that these elements were theorized

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<sup>22</sup>Distances were measured using Google Map’s measurement tool. The distance through existing roads is larger.

as individually necessary and jointly sufficient, the absence of one of them in a negative locality (note that in light of the Inclusion Rule at least one of these elements was present), provided evidence of its necessity. El Jordán strengthened the claim of necessity for C1, La Balsa & Las Playas for C3, and La Caimana for F2. Table 4.2 summarizes the main features of negative cases.<sup>23</sup>

Table 4.2: Negative Cases

Pair of Cases	Preference	Capacity	Condition Absent
JOPPAZ → El Jordán	No	Yes	C1
PCSJA → Las Playas & La Balsa	No	Yes	C3
ATCC → La Culebra	Yes	No	F2

Given that control cases were localities at real risk of mobilization, they constitute “hard cases” for the proposed theory. In fact, after tracing the process of each of these negative localities, I corroborated that many (but not all) of the hypothesized elements of the theory were in fact present. For example, in terms of the evolution of a desire, in La Balsa and Las Playas C1 and C2, but not C3 were present. And in the case of La Caimana, besides from C1, C2 and C3 being present (this is, a desire for noncooperation had evolved), F1 was also present but not F2. This not only makes them “relevant negative cases” according to Mahoney and Goertz’ (2004) principles, but also strengthens the value of the evidence they provide. Put it differently, even when these negative localities were “most likely” cases for noncooperation to emerge, it did not. If all the same process detailed by my theory, with its conditions and micro-foundations, was found to have unfolded in these control observations, they would prove my theory wrong. The fact that the elements singled out by the proposed theory successfully spared negative and positive localities apart, was a decisive test.<sup>24</sup> These procedure that I follow makes clear that my theory provides clear measures of falsifiability: without one of the conditions proposed as individually necessary and jointly sufficient, civilian noncooperation is unlikely to obtain.

### 4.3 Data & Data Collection

I collected a wealth of micro-level data, involving both causal-process observations and data-set observations Brady and Collier, (2010, p. 12). While the core of the evidence for this study is original data collected in the field that takes the form of observations on the context and process of noncooperation, I complement this evidence with existing data-sets on violent event that I processes and further disaggregated for the localities I studied. Together, these data allowed for both triangulating and combining evidence in a way that the weaknesses and potential biases of

<sup>23</sup>Ideally, the design would have included two additional control cases, one to test the necessity of C2 and another one for F1. However, I contend that even in the absence of controls for these conditions, the combination of within-case analysis and cross-case comparisons, provides good evidentiary grounds to also theorize F1 and C2 as necessary. This should become clearer from the empirical treatment of each pair of cases. Nevertheless, I reckon that conducting hoop and/or smoking gun tests on both C2 and F2 is needed to square out the design and the theory. In this sense, in light of criterion #10 of Bennett and Checkel’s (2014b, pp. 21, 30-31) best practices for good process tracing, this gap reveals that not all good process tracing is conclusive and delineates avenues for further research.

<sup>24</sup>Here, although in relation to negative cases, I follow criterion # 4 of Bennett and Checkel’s (2014b, pp. 21, 29) best practices for good process tracing: “4. Take into account whether the case is most or least likely for alternative explanations.” See also, Jacobs, (2014).

each different stream were countered. I gathered fine-grained data on the histories of the localities under study, dating back to their settlement processes, covering both pre- and during-war experiences. I collected rich information on the social structure of the communities inhabiting these localities, including ethnic composition, religious affiliations, the strength of social ties and operation of social norms, and the availability of spaces for social congregation and community interactions. I traced the presence of and influence of local organizations, participation in social and political movements, and the existence and role of community leaders. Moreover, I gathered detailed data on localized war dynamics and social processes, including patterns of territorial control and violence, the roles the civilians played, and the way they interacted with different armed groups.

### Process Observations

I conducted about a year of fieldwork divided in two different waves in 2014 and 2015 in which I made multiple visits to each locality, involving long-term engaged presence. As the proponents of the contentious politics approach put it, “fieldwork is the method perhaps best suited to the demands of a mechanism-based approach to the study of contention” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2008, p. 317). In the field I followed different techniques to collect detail and diverse observations on the context and process of civilian noncooperation. Most of the data come from sustained face-to-face interaction with the actors involved (including participants and non-participants), a strategy that has been demonstrated to be key for gathering fine-grained information about mobilization processes in the context of civil war (e.g., Shesterinina, 2016; Wood, 2003; Jentsch, 2014). These interaction-based techniques included memory workshops, map-drawing exercises and individual and group interviews. These type of techniques are especially suited to the evidence needed for the study of choice as they provide the understanding and information that the explanation of strategic choice requires (Jasper, 2004, p. 11).

The chief technique used in this project was interviewing. During the two waves of field work (and the preliminary), I conducted over 150 semi-structured interviews and plenty of conversational, open-ended interviews with a wide array of actors that played a role in the process of noncooperation. This included peasants, afro-Colombian and indigenous communities; active and demobilized members of state and non-state armed organizations; local, regional and national state officials; staff of national and international NGOs and IOs operating in the areas under study; as well as local journalists and scholars. Most of these interviews were, nevertheless, with peasants living in the localities under study, including those who had engaged in noncooperation and those who did not.

The choices that I studied were made several years ago (in the case of the ATCC in 1987, the PCSJA in 1997, and the Joppaz in the late 1990s/early 2000s) and the process that shaped them (as I argue in this study) took off years before the decision was made. Therefore, in each locality I tried my best to speak to every single resident who was present at the moment of the choice and who lived through the process leading to it. Consequently, the main profile of my interviewees was that of older residents, especially for the cases of La India and San José de Apartadó. However, in all three localities, I also conducted less structured interviews and workshops with young residents, which while not present when the choice was made, knew the history of the campaign through accounts transmitted by elders. Having this “second-hand”

accounts helped me to fact-check the evidence I was getting from more structured interviews, as well as to get new insights to explore further in subsequent encounters with key informants.

To get a balanced view of the process, I interviewed the founding mothers and fathers of the campaign, those that were leading it at the moment of my research, as well as ordinary residents that participated in the campaign but had never played any leadership role. While getting the insights of leaders and learning in detail about their roles was central for my theory (see F2 in my argument about capacity), interviewing “rank-and-file” noncooperators was vital to overcome some of the biases common in studies relying exclusively on testimonies of “elite members” of social movements. Not only did their perspectives and experiences differ importantly as they had different access points to the process (and were mobilized by different triggering mechanisms), but interviews with ordinary participants often provided more critical and less linear accounts compared to those of leaders. By contrasting these different voices, I learnt that some leaders had the tendency to overstate their agency and/or aggrandize the process.

The campaigns I studied were largely based on one main settlement, where a large number of participants lived and where most of the activities and meetings related to the campaign took place (La Holandita for the PCSJA, La India for the ATCC and San Carlos municipal center for Joppaz). Nevertheless, all three campaigns went beyond these settlements and covered several neighboring hamlets, including hamlets as distant as eight hours walking through the dense jungle or by canoe through rivers. While my first and main point of access to, and contact with, each of the campaign was through these main settlements and its inhabitants, I made important efforts to interview villagers from other hamlets. My intuition here was that the peoples’ experience and perspective of the process could vary according from where they lived. Not only did I take advantage of daily or weekly events that gathered people from different hamlets in the main settlement (meetings, community days, market days), but I spent considerable amounts of time (and energy!) visiting as many hamlets as I could to interview its residents. In the hamlets where I could spend longer periods of time, I tried to interview at least one member of each household and I was attentive to keeping a gender balance.

The efforts of getting to talk to people other than leaders (who are relatively more accessible) and to interview residents from more remote areas paid off. In the end, this was what allowed me to go beyond what Tilly, (1999) once called “standard stories”. The testimonies that I got from (some) leaders or residents of the main settlements, especially during my first visits (before deep immersion) and particularly in those communities that had received more attention from the press, NGOs, and even scholars, felt like oft-told stories following a script. Compared to what secondary sources had reported, these testimonies yielded little new evidence.

Interviewees were thus selected following a purposive strategy. I sought to interview people whose experiences during the war represented a wide variety of roles (e.g., joined the ranks, cooperated, displaced), choices regarding noncooperation (participating, not participating, engaging in more/less confrontational forms), and positions with the campaign (founder, leader, ordinary member). As in other studies that have followed a similar strategy, such as Fujii’s (2011, p. 30) work on the Rwandan genocide, this allowed to “capture a wide range of vantage points to ensure that the data did not privilege any single perspective”. In his powerful essay on the complexities and perplexities inherent to prisoners’ life in Nazi extermination camps, Levi, (1986) eloquently illustrates how testimonies, written or oral, are highly conditioned by the particular

roles people come to play and, consequently, all carry their own biases. The perspective of “ordinary prisoners” was short-sighted due to the cold fact of having a killing apparatus in front of them which prevented them to see beyond their most immediate needs. In turn, the perspective of the “privileged prisoners” (those given any role that would give them a small edge to cling to life, such as sub-helpers of prison barrack guards) was conditioned by the privilege itself. Capturing multiple viewpoints, and deliberately working around each perspective’s potential biases, proved to be central for constructing a balanced account of the process. Developing and maintaining this multi-perspectival orientation (Snow and Trom, 2002, p. 154) would have been virtually impossible had I followed a random strategy to select informants.

Interviews follow a semi-structured format based on a set of questions informed by theoretical priors. These priors came from my proposed theory (in its preliminary and refined forms) and were complemented by context-based information I had gathered before visiting each locality for the first time. As in the work of other scholars in the field, my interviews were framed as oral life histories (Trejo, 2012, e.g., Auyero, 2003). On the one hand, life histories provided a window into human agency, offering access to motivations, perceptions, emotions, and commitments. They emphasize how history and external events intervene in the private ideational, shaping consciousness and transforming beliefs. These insights are central for understanding the complexities around choices to participate or not in risky collective action (Della Porta, 2013, p. 43). On the other hand, besides individual level personal accounts, as in Petersen’s (2001) work on resistance to occupation in Eastern Europe, these oral histories were central to produce the detailed insight needed to examine the process leading to community-level organization.

Framed as such, my interviews flowed more as a conversation than as a survey or even a semi-structured interview. Even if I had a clear sense of the questions I needed to ask and the topics I had to cover based on carefully designed interview instruments, the order of the questions and the flow of the interview was defined by the way respondents structured their life histories. Interviewees were asked to answer questions about their own personal experience before and during war, and their views on the social and institutional histories of their communities. The emphasis was not that of revealing hard facts, but more that of understanding what events meant to people who lived through them. This provided a wealth of data on the roles people played and the choices they made before and after war. Moreover, they were a window into peoples’ changing perceptions, beliefs and normative commitments, which happened to play a central role in the process (as reflected in the proposed theory).

I engaged deeply with the communities living in the localities I studied. I lived in their villages and spent most of my time in activities other than (explicitly) gathering data. I removed cocoa pods from trees dried their beans, worked in community gardens (*huertas*) in the mornings, helped reconstruct trails when rapidly growing weeds covered them, supported teachers at rural schools, participated in locally organized potlucks (community *sancochos*), played with kids, and practiced sports with youngsters. These activities, not (directly) related to my research, allowed me establish some level of rapport with villagers that enormously improved my understanding of the context and the ways of villagers. This allowed me to address sensitive issues that I could have not covered with a less ethnographic approach to the field, let alone through other data collection techniques such as surveys. As Wood, (2003, p. 32) experienced in her ethnographic research in El Salvador, “residents’ willingness to respond to questions concerning the history of

the war in their own community and their own participation or not in political violence depends on a relationship with the researcher that is more personal ....” A cursory comparison of the information that I got in my very first (pre-rapport) interviews with that from later iterations clearly reveals that I was able to gather data that would have been beyond my reach had the relationship remained exclusively formal. For example, with out the possibility to describe the situation in its whole complexity and discuss this in detail with me (sometimes on repeated occasions), villagers – to avoid stigmatization – would have been reluctant to recognize that for many years the had cooperated, for different reasons and to different degrees, with the faction that had dominant control of their village.

I visited every locality several times in each wave of field work and repeated the same localities in both waves.<sup>25</sup> As for other researchers that followed a similar strategy, making multiple visits over time presented several advantages (e.g., Fujii, 2011; Wood, 2003). First, it allowed for recognition and for signaling to villagers that I was not there just to extract information and then forget about them, which was a concern than some explicitly voiced. Upon my return, villagers would even greet me for holding to my promise and coming back. This also made people more comfortable to speak to me about sensitive topics. For example, only after some visits and several interactions with the same informants, did some leaders of the PCSJA underscore that the work they had done with the Communist Party and other left-wing organizations in the past proved very useful for organizing the Peace Community. To avoid being associated with FARC, something that undermines the nonpartisan and neutral stand on which their noncooperation campaign rests, leaders overlooked this issue until their were convinced that I was going to treat this information with care (i.e., with all its intricacies and not to judge the Peace Community). Together with the trust built by establishing a rapport with my respondents, visiting them on several occasions and talking to the same people more than once, had an enormous impact on the quality of data that I collected as well as on my ability to analyze it, as it gave me clues of the potential biases of my evidentiary sources. Moreover, it was key in my quest of going beyond Tilly’s (1999) “troubled standard stories”. Those respondents who in my first visit seemed to follow a standard script, provided more complex and richer accounts in subsequent interviews when they knew me better.

Second, it gave me the chance to learn from my interviews, identifying what worked and what did not. This lead to modifications of the instruments, such as eliminating/adding questions or changing the way I was phrasing them, which allowed me to gather new pieces of information. I was able to do this especially before my second wave of field work, as I had the chance to listen to the audio and read the transcripts and do a preliminary analysis.

Third, it gave me a sense of how much and what type of data was missing, which was key to move forward in a more focused way and make a justifiable decision on when to stop the data gathering process. Each time I left the field, I had the chance to compare the testimonies I had collected. This process revealed not only discrepancies (both between testimonies of two different interviewees and between two testimonies by the same person) that were later dealt with, sometimes even addressing them explicitly with informants, as well as silences and gaps that I later filled in.<sup>26</sup> After completing each visit, I made lists of people that I had to contact in

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<sup>25</sup>Except from San Carlos, where I conducted all my field work in 2015.

<sup>26</sup>Being able to identify silences in interviews has been considered by ethnographers almost as important as getting people to speak about events. Warren’s (1998) ethnographic work (and personal reflections after it)

the next visit, including people I had planned to interview but did not manage to get a hold of and people I has not considered but who were repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as relevant to the process. I treated these pending key interviews as unavailable (“classified”) information at  $t_0$  to be uncovered at  $t_1$ . That is, as unavailable evidence that lowered the upper limit of the probability I could attach to the likely veracity of my explanation at  $t_0$ . Consequently, before each new visit I generated concrete expectations about what the unavailable evidence could indicate once I managed to interview these key actors. If such expectations were borne out, as they were in several but not all occasions, they would constitute strong confirmatory evidence for my theory (Bennett and Checkel, 2014a, p. 19). When I had no pending key actors to interview and new interviews were not yielding new names, I took this as a good indication to stop the data collection process.<sup>27</sup>

I combined individual interviews with group interviews and other techniques for collecting collective accounts. Interested in collective action, which involves the collective formation of meanings and identities, and the processes of moving from individual to share desires, I made an effort to gather collective accounts to avoid my reconstruction of the processes being no more than an aggregation of individual perspectives. During group interactions, ordered individual accounts were challenged, passively or actively, by other fellow participants, a dynamic that illuminated how community members collectively reconstructed and framed the process of emergence of noncooperation. The combination of these different streams of data granted access to how individual reconstructions integrate into a collective account and how collective meaning is formulated in that integration, processes that are central in the study of collective action (Della Porta, 2014; Blee and V. Taylor, 2002, pp. 107-109).

Apart from group interviews, I conducted memory workshops and map-drawing exercises with villagers. These two techniques have been found particularly effective in helping respondents recall past events and ease them back into specific time periods, in ways individual or group interviews might not.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the overarching aim of both techniques was to trigger memory. While the central objective of memory workshops was to improve my understanding of how things unfolded over time, that of map-drawing was to get a better sense of spatial dynamics. Sometimes maps and timelines revealed discrepancies between individual accounts, which after following up on them allowed me to pin down dates and places more accurately.

The central objective of the memory workshops was to build time-lines of the most significant events that marked the trajectories of each locality and the lives of the communities inhabiting them, from its settlement processes to the moment in which the choice for noncooperation was made. While conducting them, I was especially attentive to capturing when the different local organizations in the locality were formed, when the main armed groups arrived, and the ways in

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on indigenous mobilizations in Mayan Guatemala provides a vivid illustration of this. See also Wood, (2003, pp. 39-40).

<sup>27</sup>Here I follow criterion #6 of Bennett and Checkel’s (2014b, pp. 21, 27-29) best practices for good process tracing: “6. Be relentless in gathering diverse and relevant evidence, but make a justifiable decision on when to stop.” This is a more complex variant of the “stopping rule” using in many studies based on interviews: data collection stops when the researcher has heard the same stories repeated across different respondents (see, e.g., Wood, 2003). I have to acknowledge, nonetheless, that I would have benefited from a back-end final visit to each of the localities after drafting the full manuscript, something that unfortunately was not possible due to time and financial constraints.

<sup>28</sup>For work that has made use of memory workshops to study similar subjects in the context of the Colombian civil war, see Arjona, (2016b) and several reports of the National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH). Carpenter, (2012, p. 198) also made use of these workshops in her study of resilience in Bagdad neighborhoods.

which territorial control and violence patterned over time. Identifying accurately the timing of these processes resulted vital for my argument. Let's take the case of pacted noncooperation. My theory states that territorial contestation triggered by the arrival of an armed group (C1) is central for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation. If this is the case, why is that the ATCC emerged in 1987 when the paramilitaries arrived in the municipality in 1982? While municipal-level accounts are right in stating that the paramilitaries from Puerto Boyacá arrived in late 1982/early 1983, as I detail in Chapter 6, this group only arrived in La India, where the ATCC emerged, in 1986. I was able to capture this timing-related, within-municipality variation through the exercises of building timelines.

Map-drawing exercises can be considered a variant of the memory workshops: as Wood, (2003, p. 49) noted from her experience of having campesinos in El Salvador making maps, these “were explicit exercises in social memory as participants recalled events of the civil war and discussed and celebrated its legacy as they drew”. However, while memory workshops sought to identify time trajectories, map-drawing exercises aimed at mapping these changes spatially. I asked participants to draw maps of their hamlets at specific points in time (e.g., life under the tight control of one armed organization or under contestation between two or more, the spatial distribution of armed groups' presence in year  $x$  and  $y$ ) or to represent what they considered key events I knew that, for example, had shocked their moral expectations or spurred solidarity and unity (e.g., a collective displacement) or altered community structure (e.g., the formation or arrival of an influential local organization). Sometimes I asked people to draw maps from scratch, on other occasions I asked new respondents to work on maps “under construction” that I carried with me.

Other scholars in the field have used the technique of map-drawing to collect data from rural communities. Petersen, (2001, Chap. 3 and 6) did so with elderly Lithuanians in his study of resistance against occupation in Eastern Europe and Wood, (2003, Chap. 7) with campesinos in El Salvador in her study of insurgent collective action. As in their work, what the maps formally documented constituted a rich source of information. For example, the map presented in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.2) represents a key event that was brought up in several interviews: residents of the rural hamlets who had not displaced by the early-1997 were forced to leave their houses and concentrate in the populated center of the village. Apart from documenting information that I already knew (e.g., that this took place in the presence of both guerrilla and paramilitary groups), this map revealed new pieces of evidence. For example, that the Catholic Church and the Red Cross (mobilizing sites and external actors) were already supporting villagers months before the declaration of noncooperation. I did not know this, as most of the interviews I had carried until then had reported that these actors came into play only after the Peace Community had been formed.

Beyond the information that can be gleaned from the maps themselves, I used these exercises as an opportunity to collect information from data stemming from interactions among villagers while they were making the maps. These interactions were different from those of group interviews, as here I played no mediating role. Participants would discuss among each other about, for example, the presence of one group in a given hamlet, the boundaries of an area under control of one armed faction or the other, or the year in which a given external actor arrived in the village. These discussions pushed them to think harder, recall better and reconsider their individual

memories.<sup>29</sup> As in the work of Wood, (2003, Chap. 7) in El Salvador, the process of making these maps not only revealed important events about the history of each locality, but also the perceptions and normative commitments of their makers.

I am fully aware that data collected through testimonies is subject to different types of problems and biases, especially if one takes into consideration that what I investigated were choices made decades ago. A central concern highlighted by several scholars that have made use of these data, is related to problems associated with memory.<sup>30</sup> As Bulgarian-French historian and moral philosopher Tzvetan Todorov (2016, 2010) has powerfully argued, memory is selective. People recall some events and forget others, implying that what one reconstructs through testimonies is what people remember rather than events or processes themselves.

Portuguese writer José Saramago once noted that “Memory is selective and tends to delete the hard bits, building memories based only on the sweetest bits.”<sup>31</sup> Building on experimental evidence, Wood, (2003, 33-34, fn. 3) has argued the opposite and noted that the events experienced in civil war are the type of events that are most likely to be remembered given their intensity and unpleasantness. It is hard to infer with precision from a collection of testimonies what is being recalled and what is being omitted. Even if the bias is in the direction that Wood notes, the same experimental evidence also suggest that while people recall very intense events, for example violent ones, they tend at the same time to have less recall of what happened before and after. Omitting the “hard bits” and only recalling the “sweet” ones is as dangerous for process-based explanations and inferences as lucidly recalling the “hard bits” and omitting all the rest.

The fact that I collected testimonies from a multiplicity of actors, representing different pre-war and war experiences and who had taken different roles during the conflict, and that I conducted memory workshops to stimulate collective recall, certainly helped to counter these problems and provide better accounts of the processes that unfolded in each locality. However, to further counter issues associated with selective memory and strategic recall, I triangulated different streams of oral and non oral evidence. To compare and weight the evidentiary status of oral sources and improve its interpretation, I conducted archival research in the areas I studied. I collected archival material endogenously generated at different points in time by the communities engaged in noncooperation and their support networks. These included briefings, petitions, letters to government officials, documentaries, pamphlets and membership plates (like the ones presented in Chapter 6 in Figure 6.2). As most of this material was produced while events were unfolding and under different strategic contexts, these data are less sensitive to the different tricks memory can play on oral sources and to strategic reporting. Moreover, as this material does not represent post-fact rationalizations, they reflected better some of the confusion and uncertainty surrounding the process as it unfolded, something that is not always easy to grasp in the more linear and organized accounts coming interviews (see Lubkemann, 2008, p. 160).

Finally, I also reviewed local and regional newspapers for the periods of time I was most

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<sup>29</sup>I thank Elisabeth Wood for calling my attention to this “other side” of map-drawing, something she was not fully aware of when she used these technique and that proved very useful in my case. As she has noted, even jokes and gossip during these exercises can become useful pieces of information. See Wood, (2006, p. 376).

<sup>30</sup>For a detailed discussion, see Wood, (2003, pp. 33-40).

<sup>31</sup>This comes from a 2006 interview the Saramago conducted by Carlos Payán in Paris four years before the writer’s death. “Saramago: la realidad es otra.” Translated from Spanish by the author. Available online: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2007/06/24/sem-saramago.html>.

interested in. Beyond public archives (mostly at the municipality level), immersion in the field opened up the opportunity to review private archives. In San José de Apartadó and San Carlos, I met two women who had kept personal archives of the history of the war in their localities. After repeated interactions, I was invited to their houses to review this material. Unlike archival research in a library, going through an archive together with people who went through the events that are being described in the files became a great opportunity to delve deeper into this information. For example, in San Carlos, I took me several sessions to analyze the material with the woman who kept the archive in her backyard. Each time that I identified a piece of evidence I was particularly interested in, she was keen in providing more information, sharing with me her opinion as well as that of others in town, and sometimes even challenging the way the media portrayed the events (which proved useful to critically analyze media reports). To be sure, these archives were not systematic in any respect, but included a wide variety of written and visual material that I could have hardly accessed elsewhere or otherwise. This material, that included documents distributed by armed actors themselves, provided important pieces of evidence that spoke to crucial aspects of my theory: for example, the arrival of a new armed group and the logic of collective targeting.<sup>32</sup>

### Data-set Observations

To further strengthen the evidentiary basis of the proposed theory, I used village-level, time-series data on armed groups' violent events and violence against civilians. These included number of clashes between factions, unilateral actions (one-sided events) by each faction, deaths (including civilians and combatants), homicides, and massacres among others. These data came from two organizations based in Bogotá, the Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC) and the CNMH and allowed me to trace the evolution over time of specific civil war dynamics that were central for my argument (armed groups presence, territorial control, violence against civilians) in the localities under study.<sup>33</sup>

While these were “off-the-shelf” datasets, I did not use them as they came. The lowest level of aggregation of these dataset is the municipality (for the vast majority of the events, especially in the CERAC data). Thus, it covered areas that were larger in size (and in population) than the unit of analysis I use in this study. This was particularly problematic, as they surely obscured the within-municipality variation from which the comparisons on which the theory is based obtain leverage. Consequently, I made efforts to disaggregate these datasets to match right level of analysis. First, I contrasted the event information from both sources (CERAC and CNMH) to take advantage of the fact that they provided sub-municipal information for some events and these events were not always the same. Second, I took advantage of the detailed knowledge of violent dynamic in the localities I was studying that I had achieved over the years working in the field. Based on this knowledge, I was able to adjudicate the hamlet/village of some particularly salient events (for example massacres) in the data set that had no sub-municipal information.

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<sup>32</sup>By trying to get a multi-perspectival account of the process, and by combining and triangulating different, my data collection procedure reflected detail awareness of the potential biases of my sources. In doing so, I followed criterion #3 of Bennett and Checkel's (2014b, pp. 21, 24-25) best practices for good process tracing: “Consider the potential biases of evidentiary sources.”

<sup>33</sup>For a detailed presentation of CERAC's data, with inclusion and exclusion criteria, see J. Restrepo, Micheal Spagat, and J. Vargas, (2004) and J. A. Restrepo, Michael Spagat, and J. F. Vargas, (2006). For CNMH's data, visit <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/micrositios/informeGeneral/basesDatos.html>.

Third, some of the events I had no precise location information about were discussed with key informants who had detailed local knowledge, leading to some exclusions. Although imperfect, this procedure minimized problems of over-aggregation common to civil war empirical studies (see Kalyvas, 2008).

These data-set observations provided a picture of war-dynamics that is consistent over extended period of time. This broader picture was key to corroborate information coming from testimonies. For example, if an informant noted that in year  $x$  a new armed organization arrived and challenged an established actor, I should observe an increase in unilateral actions by the arriving faction or of clashes between both faction in the time-series data around year  $x$ .<sup>34</sup> Moreover, beyond triangulating different streams of data to corroborate the same part of my theory (for example, C1: territorial control in flux), combining these two types of observations also allowed me to provide more appropriate evidence for different parts of the theory that, given their nature, had different evidentiary demands. For example, while data-set observations of the number of homicides or massacres in a given locality over time can provide strong evidence for C2 (increase in violence against civilians), it tell us little about C3 (how violence was perceived by civilians), something to which we can only access through oral sources.

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<sup>34</sup> A clash refers to a direct encounter between two or more armed groups resulting in armed combat, while a unilateral event is a one-sided violent event by one armed group. A clash can take place without a unilateral event, and a unilateral event can be carried out without a clash.



# 5

## Unilateral Noncooperation

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore the most confrontational form of noncooperation considered in this study: unilateral noncooperation. In this form of noncooperation civilians unilaterally design and establish their own mechanisms to refuse to collaborate with armed groups. Unlike pacted forms of noncooperation (Chapter 6), no channel of communication is established with armed groups to inform, consult or discuss intention, let alone to design joint-mechanisms to stay “out of war”. Unlike oblique forms (Chapter 7), the activities undertaken by civilians are directly related to war and noncooperation is unequivocally signaled to armed groups.

The empirical material for this chapter comes from the village of San José de Apartadó (SJA), located in the municipality of Apartadó in northwestern Colombia. I analyze three different experiences, all coming from the same village and located less than 5 kilometers away from each other. The first one is a positive case, the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (PCSJA), a campaign of unilateral noncooperation. The other two are control cases; two “communities at risk” of mobilization in which noncooperation did not emerge. An indigenous community in the hamlet of Las Playas and a group of evangelical peasant families in the hamlet of La Balsa.

Qualitative data were collected in three separate rounds. First, in the Spring of 2012, an initial exploratory study of the PCSJA was conducted. I rigorously reviewed the secondary literature available on the case and conducted 15 interviews mostly with members of the PCSJA’s national and international support network. This preliminary study yielded rich contextual data and a set of plausible explanations that were the basis for setting up the comparative study.<sup>1</sup> Building on these initial insights, immersive field visits to the village were conducted between March and August 2014 and June and September 2015. During this period I engaged closely with residents of the village, which gave me access to a wealth of micro-level data. I conducted around 50 individual and group interviews, memory workshops and map-drawing exercises with residents of the village of SJA. This included participants and non-participants of the PCSJA and residents of Las Playas and La Balsa. Apart from peasants, I interviewed social and political leaders, representatives of the local government, active and demobilized members of state and non-state armed groups, and staff from the national and international organization that support the Peace Community.

In addition to these oral sources, I closely revised a private archive kept by the Community

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<sup>1</sup>For more details on this first exploratory stage of the study, see Chapter 4

and a public archive kept in the capital city of the municipality of Apartadó.<sup>2</sup> Finally, I processed available quantitative municipal-level data on violent events and violence against civilians, disaggregating it at the village level. These different sources of data were combined to provide evidence to different parts of the argument – that required different types of data –, as well as triangulated for validation and cross-checking.

In this chapter I trace the process by which the PCSJA emerged. The chapter is structured in the following way: In the next two sections, I detail the changing trajectories of war in SJA (Section 5.2) and present the process by which the PCSJA was created in response to these changing war dynamics (Section 5.3). Then, Section 5.4 explains it in light of the elements outlined in the theory proposed in Chapter 3.

It argues that the campaign emerged when the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)'s historical control of the village was seriously challenged by the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU), a paramilitary organization that arrived from the neighboring department of Córdoba to wrestle FARC's control. The arrival of the ACCU, along with a fierce confrontation between the forces of the state and the FARC, led to a sharp increase in violence against civilians in the village. Civilians perceived this violence as being collectively targeted, leaving them virtually no way to escape from it and affecting large numbers of innocent peasants. A desire for noncooperation evolved from these changing war dynamics. Given existing mobilizing resources left by a long and strong tradition of social and political mobilization, and the help of external actors who provided robust support to villagers, peasants from San José had the organizational capacity to act upon this desire. Finally, in Section 5.5, I follow the strategy of paired comparisons (Tarrow, 2010) and analyze the experiences of Las Playas and La Balsa. Less than 5 kilometers away from the place where the PCSJA was formed and settled, despite being exposed to virtually the same civil war dynamics, residents of these two hamlets stayed in their hamlets and did not join the Peace Community. This last section deals with this puzzling divergent outcomes, which provide additional leverage to the argument of how civilian perceptions of targeting shape a desire for noncooperation. I conclude by summing up some essential aspects of the chapter.

## 5.2 Trajectories of War in Apartadó

The PCSJA is located in northwestern Colombia in the municipality of Apartadó, department of Antioquia. The municipality comprises about 600 square kilometers of rural flatlands and mountains, anchored by one mid-sized city, Apartadó. The village of SJA, divided into 32 hamlets, is the largest of the four villages of the municipality. It is a fully rural village populated by peasants dedicated largely to agriculture. While most grow cacao and beans in small and mid-size portions of land, a few others work in the large banana industry. San José is the first point of entry to the Abibe Mountains, the core of the country's "Banana Belt",<sup>3</sup> one of the five sub-regions comprising Urabá (See Map in Figure 5.1).

The Urabá region is about one-tenth the land mass and population size of Colombia and

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<sup>2</sup>I also had access to rich data collected in this public archive and digitalized by Abbey Steele. I am grateful to Abbey for allowing me to review her data and for sharing with me key contacts in the region.

<sup>3</sup>The Banana Belt is a large area of banana and plantain plantations in the municipalities of Apartadó, Chiguiridó, Carepa and Turbo.

is of great value for the country's commercial relations, agro-industrial activities and export economy. It serves as a continental corridor between South and Central America via the Panama Canal, a hinge area between the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans, and a bridge connecting the departments of Córdoba, Chocó, and Antioquia (See Map in Figure 5.1). Due to this strategic geographical location and economic value, Urabá quickly became one of the hearts of Colombia's civil war. Armed groups rapidly learned that whoever controlled this area would gain a military advantage to a big portion of the country's northwest. Consequently, apart from functioning as a pathway for smuggling arms and drugs, the Abibe Mountains became a rearguard zone for left-wing guerrilla groups (Maria Teresa Uribe de Hincapié, 2004; Romero, 2003).

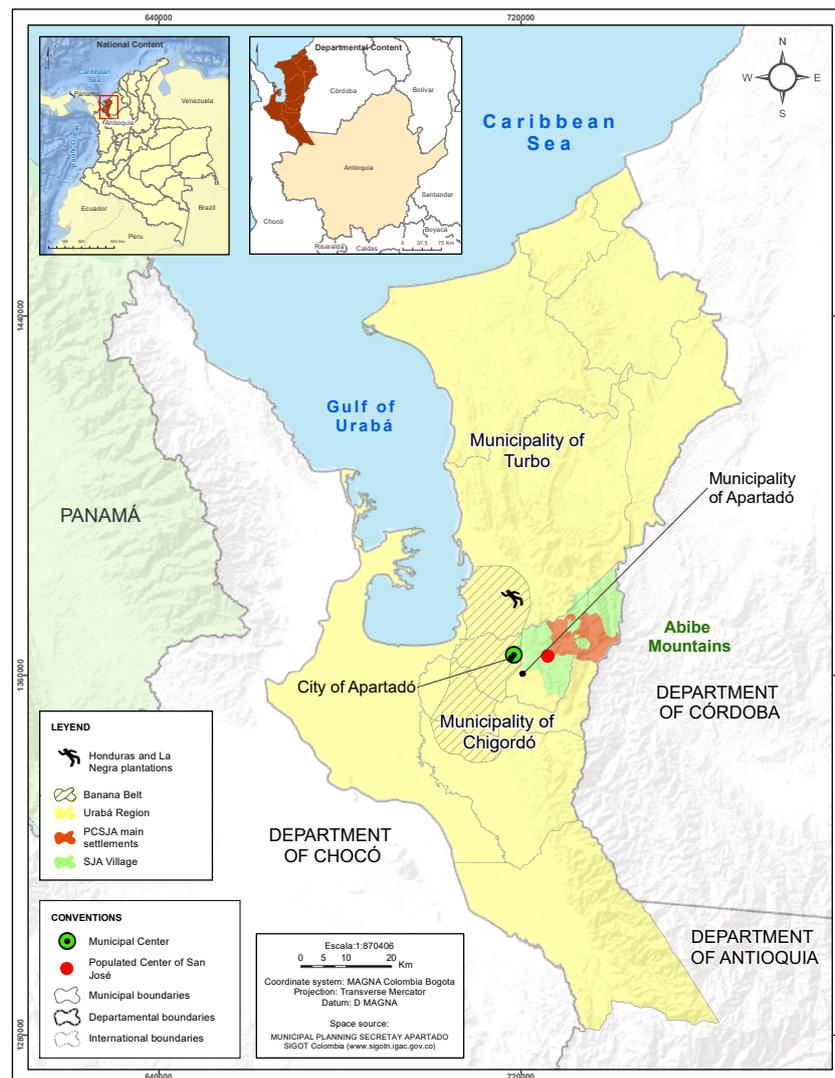


Figure 5.1: Map: Urabá Region

Source: Author's creation

Sparsely populated between the 1920s and the early 1950s, initially by indigenous communities and subsistence farmers,<sup>4</sup> the region experienced an abrupt population increase in the late 1950s and 1960s (Parsons, 1968). The emerging agro-export banana industry and the construction

<sup>4</sup>Three main indigenous groups have been present in Urabá: the Sinu, the Embera Katio, and the Cuna. The latter is originally from the region, while the other two arrived in the context of the Thousand Days' War in 1899 and 1902.

of new roads connecting the region with important urban centers, attracted a large number of people from different parts of the country, many fleeing from *La Violencia*,<sup>5</sup>) and led to fast economic development and integration of the region. By the mid-1960s, these transformations, barely regulated by the state, led to intense social and labor conflicts between banana plantation owners and workers, large cattle ranchers (in some cases with strong ties to drug trafficking), and campesino settlers (Carroll, 2011). In this socially agitated context, several civic, communal and campesino associations emerged and trade unions were formed.

During the same period, two rebel groups, the FARC and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), arrived in the region. Following a more general pattern identified in the country (Daly, 2012), the rebels settled themselves in the same areas where liberal guerrillas had influence in the 1950s (María Teresa Uribe de Hincapié, 1992): the EPL in the north of the region and FARC in the south.<sup>6</sup> In the village of SJA, in the early 1970s, the same lands where the PCSJA was to emerge more than two decades later, the FARC capitalized on the work advanced by the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) and founded their V Front, one of their most powerful units. FARC entered San José with a fundamentally rural insurgent project, gaining the sympathies of many peasants by promoting social transformation around land issues. As time passed, they expanded their agenda, permeating trade unions linked to the banana industry, which gave them great appeal too in the more urban areas of Apartadó (Steele, 2017, Chap. 5).

From the 1970s, and throughout the 1980s, the rebels permeated and radicalized most of the already existing social and political movements in Urabá (Carroll, 2011; Bejarano, 1988; Ramírez Tobón, 1993). They established strong links with trade unions and actively engaged in organizing banana workers and worked alongside existing political parties.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, they rapidly gained important social and political support from large portions of the population. Moreover, as an outcome of a peace process between President Belisario Betancur (1982 – 1986) and the FARC, the rebels (along with a larger coalition of left-wing movements and parties) created the Patriotic Union (UP). The UP became one of the main political forces in the region and was widely welcomed in the municipality of Apartadó. In fact, when popular elections were extended to the mayoral level in 1988, Diana Cardona, a candidate of the UP, won the municipal election of Apartadó.<sup>8</sup>

While in the 1980s some rivalries emerged between the EPL and the FARC due to competition for peasants and banana plantation workers' sympathies (María Teresa Uribe de Hincapié, 1992, p. 190), these were subsumed under the Coordinadora Guerrillera Simon Bolivar (CGSB), a rebel coalition created in 1987. Throughout the 1980s, the rebels were too strong for the military to combat or for the paramilitaries that were operating in neighboring areas to penetrate (Steele,

<sup>5</sup>*La Violencia* refers to a ten-year civil war between 1948 and 1958 between the two traditional parties of the country, the Conservative and the Liberal, waged mostly in the country side.

<sup>6</sup>The National Liberation Army (ELN) had also presence in Urabá (although almost virtually none in SJA) through its front Astolfo Gonzáles, which demobilized in 1993. However, relative to the other two insurgent groups, this insurgency did not manage to establish any strong territorial presence or exert real social and political influence in the region (Hernandez Delgado and Salazar Posada, 1999, 40, fn 100; García and Aramburu, 2011, p. 300)

<sup>7</sup>The trade union Sintrabanano and the PCC were linked to the FARC, while Sintagro, another major trade union, and the Marxist Leninist Communist Party (PC-ML), were linked to the EPL. Union membership, and by extension, association with either of the clandestine political parties, was largely determined by the plantation where they worked, rather than an ex-ante political preference (Steele, 2017).

<sup>8</sup>Cardona's was killed two years later. Her assassination is not at all an isolated case. Virtually all of the members of this party were assassinated by 1998. For a chronicle of the life and death of the UP, see Dudley, (2004)

2017, pp. 136–137).

In this period SJA became essentially a zone of FARC's hegemonic control (Ramírez Tobón, 1997, p. 102). FARC's Front V established what Arjona, (2016b) terms a rebelocracy. Their rule was not only a military one. They regulated a broad spectrum of community affairs and, through the PCC and the UP, they exerted wide political influence in the village. The UP was particularly strong in SJA (Hernandez Delgado and Salazar Posada, 1999, pp. 62-63). Almost every single person I spoke to in San José supported this political party in one way or another. Historical community leaders of the village, such as Bartolomé Cataño, one of the founders of San José, represented the UP in the municipal council and the departmental assembly. As Reiniciar, a local NGO, reported, the case of San José is perhaps the most representative and successful instance of political work and influence by the PCC, the FARC and the UP working together. They managed to organize all 23 hamlets and counted with the support of pretty much every resident (Reiniciar, 2006, pp. 47,49).

While it is common to have villagers recognizing the political work and influence of the UP, it is much less common to have them explicitly underscore FARC's control and influence. This is not only because FARC is an illegal organization, but also because villagers of SJA, especially those that joined the Peace Community, have long suffered the effects of being stigmatized as an 'insurgent community'. However, as the following exchange reveals, building trust and interviewing people in several occasions over time, allowed me get to this sensitive issue:

ME: Did they [FARC] control this area at that time [the 1980s]?

GABO: Well ... Yes. I can't lie. They had a lot of power ... They were a very strong force [through the UP].<sup>9</sup>

According to several testimonies, FARC's hegemonic control of SJA, along with the peaceful coexistence of both rebel forces, lasted slightly more than a decade. It began to break up only in 1991 with the (partial) demobilization of the EPL.<sup>10</sup> FARC actively supported EPL dissidents who did not demobilize and together attacked fiercely *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad*, a political movement created by demobilized rebels representing the interests of workers and trade unions. This upending of alliances provided an opening for paramilitary violence (Steele, 2011, p. 431). FARC's violent persecution of the *Esperanzados*<sup>11</sup> pushed several demobilized EPL members to join the ranks of the paramilitaries from the neighboring department of Córdoba or to created their own self-defense group, the *Comandos Populares*. Although I did not find evidence of wide presence and activity of the *Comandos* in SJA, informants that worked with the UP in the village recognized that they did weaken FARC's influence in the village by threatening and killing many members of the UP.

Although paramilitary groups had made some sporadic presence in the region during the 1980s,<sup>12</sup> it was in the first half of the 1990s, sponsored by local elites and drug traffickers, that they arrived with the intention to stay and clear the area of insurgents and any expression of the organized left. Fidel and Carlos Castaño, two of the main leaders of what later became the largest

<sup>9</sup>Interview ID. 16, May 2014.

<sup>10</sup>The EPL demobilized in 1991 under the government of President César Gaviria (1990 – 1994). Around 2000 rebels joined the process.

<sup>11</sup>*Esperanzados* was the name given to the members of *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad*.

<sup>12</sup>There are denunciations of their activities dating 1985 and one massacre perpetrated by them is registered in 1989 (García and Aramburu, 2011, 320, fn, 7).

TABLE 5.1 Timeline: War Trajectories in San José de Apartadó

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1995	●	Arrival of ACCU in the Banana Belt
1996	●	First incursion of the ACCU to SJA (hamlets of Arenas Altas, Arenas Bajas and Guineo)
1996	●	May: Paramilitary massacre in the hamlet Los Mandarinos, in the village of SJA
1996	●	June: March to the city of Apartadó and occupation of the Coliseum
1996	●	August 16th: Bartolomé Cataño, founding father of SJA, killed in the city of Apartadó
1996	●	August 29th: the Army killed two campesinos, later presented as “false positives”
1996	●	September: Paramilitary massacre in San José’s populated center, four community leaders killed, including Local Junta Council (JAC)’s president
1996	●	Second half: most of the residents of San José’s populated center flee
1996	●	Monsignor Isaiás Duarte, Diocese of Apartadó, proposes the creation of a “neutral zone”
1996/1997	●	Establishment of paramilitary roadblock in <i>Tierra Amarilla</i> . Around 30 people killed in 9 months
1997	●	“1997 Displacement” – Most villagers move from rural hamlets to San José populated center
1997	●	Beginning of the year: Paramilitary (with the Army and demobilized EPL members) incursion in San José’s populated center, two community leaders killed
1997	●	March 23rd: <b>The PCSJA is created</b>
1997	●	March 28th - early April: Paramilitary & Army incursion in SJA; bombing of the area and combats with FARC. Some peasants died, several signatories flee fled, including community leader Pineda
1997	●	October 6-7th: FARC’s massacre against PCSJA members, including founding leader Ramiro Correa

paramilitary confederation in the country, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), commanded the ACCU, the main paramilitary group in the region. Although operating outside of the formal structures of the state, this group shared with the State the aim of neutralizing the advancement of FARC. In fact, in several occasions the Army has been accused of complicity in paramilitary activity (Romero, 2003).<sup>13</sup>

In 1994 the ACCU entered Apartadó and by 1997/1998 they had the FARC “on its heels attempting to regain its historical presence” (Steele, 2017, p. 138). By the end of the decade, FARC were already pushed to the geographical margins of the region, towards the neighboring Department of Chocó and the Eastern Antioquia region. While the paramilitaries managed to submit to their authority large portions of the Urabá region, including the city of Apartadó (M. V. Uribe, 2004, p. 89), they did not manage to do so with a group of peasants who, after displacing from their hamlets, settled in the abandon houses of the populated center of San José and organized into the the PCSJA.

### 5.3 Unilateral Noncooperation in San José: the PCSJA

By the mid-1990s, the village of SJA, as well as several urban neighborhoods of the city of Apartadó, became central targets of strategic displacement. To gain control of the area, the arriving paramilitaries aimed to get rid of the inhabitants of what they considered “insurgent areas” in a process labelled by Steele, (2017) as “political cleansing”. Residents of San José coincide in stating that every rural hamlet in the village was virtually empty by 1996/1997. In the face of escalating violence, between 1994 and 1996 many residents had left to the city of Apartadó or to Medellín, the capital of Antioquia and Colombia’s second largest city. Those who stayed were eventually forced to leave the more rural and remote areas of the village, relocating themselves in the populated center of San José. Several peasants had to leave their houses behind following explicit ultimatums from the paramilitaries. As a resident from La Unión recalled, the paramilitaries once irrupted into their hamlet and said: “You have five days. If in five days we find a kid, an old man, an old woman, no matter who they are or what are they called, we do not care. We come to cut heads off.”<sup>14</sup> And this was not only a threat: “they came and started to kill people only after three days”, a peasant leader recalled.<sup>15</sup>

The relocation to San José’s populated center is remember by villagers as the “1997 displacement”. This process, which happened to be fundamental for the emergence of the PCSJA, is vividly illustrated in Figure 5.2. This picture resulted from several map-drawing and memory exercises organized in the field aimed at reconstructing the trajectories of war in the village. When villagers where asked to pick crucial events and illustrated them, many coincided in depicting the “1997 displacement”. Many participants provided inputs and the final elaboration was the work of one of the Community’s central leaders, who is also an artist. The map shows the moment in which residents of 12 rural hamlets relocated to San José, a ghost town by the

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<sup>13</sup>General Alejo Rito del Río, the commander of the Army XVII Brigade that covers the area of Apartadó, was detained in 2001. He was denounced by one of his subordinates, Colonel Carlos Velásquez, for colluding with paramilitaries. Later on, demobilized paramilitaries explicitly acknowledged that they carried out several joint operations in alliance with Rito del Río. See “Rito Alejo en su Laberinto”, *Revista Semana* August 27, 2001 and an interview with paramilitary commander Hector Veloza, alias HH, in *Contravía*, available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHloPn1Uxeg>.

<sup>14</sup>Interview ID. 44, June 2014.

<sup>15</sup>Interview ID. 43, June 2014.

time when they arrived as residents had already left, leaving their houses behind.

When we arrived in San José, there were no more than three families. Apart from that, houses were empty. So we arrived there and occupied those houses. Each family occupied one or two houses. We had to be very careful not to damage the doors or the things that were left there because none of it was ours. We did not want the owners to find their things ruined if they were to come back.<sup>16</sup>

This event remained in the memory of villagers as central in the process of organizing noncooperation: as one leader shared in a memory workshop, “through this displacement we all gathered and got closer to each other.”<sup>17</sup> Rafael, a founding leader of the Peace Community, asserts that it was right after that displacement, while they were living together in San José, that they made the most fundamental decision: “we will try out the last option we have to avoid leaving our lands, we will try this move [noncooperation] to see what happens.”<sup>18</sup>



Figure 5.2: Map Drawing: Displacement 1997

The drawing details how villagers gathered in the populated center [bottom center] coming from different parts of the village. It shows that this was done in the midst of fierce confrontation between different armed factions [left lower and upper corners –note the different uniforms] and that some lost their lives in the process [right upper corner]. It also gives testimony of the support of the Catholic Church [note the two nuns] and of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) [note the ambulance], which became central in the support network of the

<sup>16</sup>Interview ID. 40, June 2014.

<sup>17</sup>Group Interview ID. 7, March 2014.

<sup>18</sup>Interview ID. 36, May 2014.

community during the emergence of the campaign. Finally, it highlights the centrality of the *Cooperativa Balsamar* [two-story building in the bottom center], one of the associational spaces that strengthened a tradition of community work and forged community leadership, and that was later socially appropriated for the purposes of the campaign, as we will see later in Section 5.4.2.

Beyond the final product, in this exercise I learnt that for many villagers displacing within the municipality and temporarily occupying empty houses in San José became vital in the process of noncooperation, as it facilitated coordination and spurred solidarity. As in other cases of mass displacement, such as in mid-1999 in Aceh (Aspinall, 2008, pp. 128-133), this act went beyond self-preservation and is regarded by villagers as an act of resistance in itself. Avoiding further displacing to places from where they could hardly come back was a way to resist the pressures of armed groups. Some founding leaders highlighted that leaving to Apartadó at that time, even if for a short period, was like giving the village away to the armed groups.<sup>19</sup>

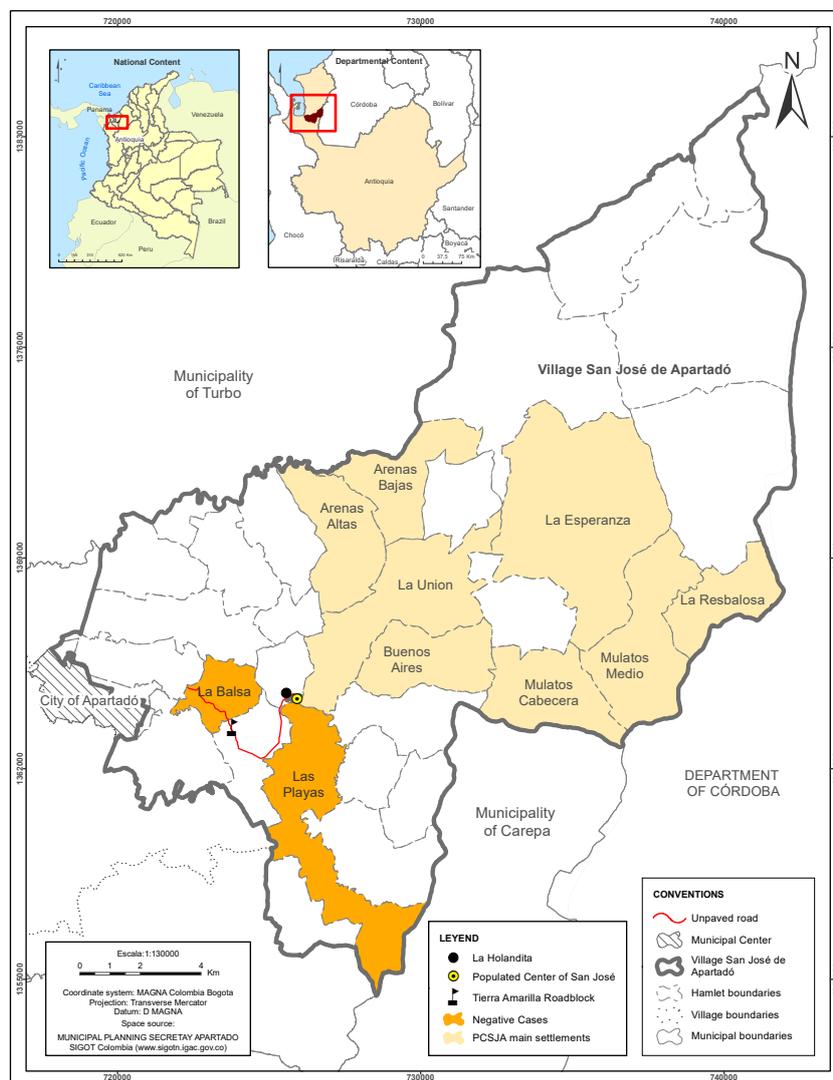


Figure 5.3: Map: Village of San José de Apartadó

Source: Author's creation

As important as it was, this event constitutes only one step of a long process leading towards

<sup>19</sup>Author's Field Notes, May 2014.

noncooperation that had started some months before. In late 1996, around 800 villagers had marched from San José to the city of Apartadó and established a temporary refuge in the city's coliseum. Once there, they denounced 22 extrajudicial assassinations, four cases of forced disappearance, eight cases of torture, one bombing and several cases of forced displacement.<sup>20</sup> After some negotiations with a government-sponsored commission, the peasants went back to their villages and, upon their return, some leaders were assassinated. According to different informants, as well as in the memoirs of the community and documents that I found in a local archive, this was the key immediate antecedent for the creation of the PCSJA.

In view of this repressive response, a group of about 1200 villagers opted for self-organization in order to find a collective, campesino-based solution to the problem. They sought the support of external actors, to whom they exposed their determination to not leave San José while, at the same time, opting out of war. They reached out to the Church for advice and support and, together, they discussed and analyzed different alternative paths to avoid further displacement and protect themselves from violence. Inspired by a proposal by Monsignor Isaías Duarte, the then Bishop of Apartadó, the remaining villagers unilaterally declared themselves neutral in the conflict and established the PCSJA.<sup>21</sup>

In doing so, they pledged not to participate in any possible way in the war and disavow any form of cooperation with all armed groups, including the national Army and the Police. At the core of their commitment to noncooperation was the refusal to provide any form of intelligence to any armed groups present in their territory. By then, villagers had learnt that providing information about the whereabouts of the enemy or the behavior (and loyalties) of their fellow neighbors was only feeding cycles of violence. In addition, with flags, symbols, billboards and fences, they explicitly delineated and designated physical areas where Community members would live and where armed groups, without distinction, could not move around, let alone stay over.

With international representatives and members of national NGOs, the Catholic Church, and the local government in attendance, they publicly signed and presented a declaration in the populated center of San José on March 23rd of 1997. In this declaration, they stated their commitment to noncooperation and informed armed groups operating in the area about their choice. Although some sources indicate that the Church approached armed groups before this public declaration to inform them about villagers' intentions (Hernandez Delgado and Salazar Posada, 1999, p. 76), the creation of the PCSJA involved no negotiations between peasants and armed groups and no joint mechanisms to regulate their interactions were agreed upon. The declaration contains the basic principles, norms of behavior and organizational structure that villagers unilaterally defined and that since 1997 until today, have governed villagers' daily lives.

A large majority of those who initially signed the declaration ended up fleeing the area as they witnessed armed actors' repressive response. Only five days after the public declaration, the paramilitaries launched a week-long armed incursion into the Community's area of influence, killing several of its members, including important leaders. In the end, it was a group of about 500 campesinos who held to their choice for noncooperation and, in their own words, "assumed

<sup>20</sup>See Alfredo Molano, "La Violence en Urabá", *El Espectador* 05.08.2012.

<sup>21</sup>Isaías Duarte was later killed on March 16th, 2002 in the city of Cali by two assassins presumably hired by the FARC. "Sicario salió 72 horas de la cárcel para matar a monseñor Duarte", *El Tiempo* 01.02.2012.

the process as the only possibility to survive and live with dignity in the midst of war.”<sup>22</sup> On December 23rd 1997, in the occasion of their nine-month anniversary, those who stayed revised the original Declaration and fine-tuned it to reflect the new circumstances and represent the will of all the villagers.<sup>23</sup> Unlike what Carpenter, (2012, p. 193) observed in neighborhoods of Baghdad, where displacement undermined efforts of noncooperation with sectarian militias, displacement here “selected into the processes” those that were more strongly committed to noncooperation, rather than those that were more easily preyed on.



Figure 5.4: Banner in La Holandita

Source: Picture taken by the author

Since its creation, members of the Peace Community have lived according to the following fundamental rules of behavior, established by article 3 of the declaration and publicly displayed in the banners delimitating their area of influence (see Figure 5.4).<sup>24</sup>

- Not to participate, directly or indirectly, in hostilities
- Not to carry or own arms, ammunitions and/or explosives
- Not to provide logistical support to any of the armed groups
- Not to turn to any of the armed groups to manage or resolve internal, personal or communal disputes
- Participate in community work projects; and

<sup>22</sup>“La Historia Viva”, document produced by the community as part of their effort to leave a record of their experience.

<sup>23</sup>I later refer to the months between March and December 1997 as the “consolidation period”. While continuing to work in close cooperation with external actors, during this period villagers made an effort to take more control over the whole process, something they tried to reflect in the new version of the Declaration.

<sup>24</sup>For a more detailed description of the PCSJA, including an outline of its organizational structure, and an analysis of their decision to stay put and their choice for nonviolent methods, see Masullo, (2015, Chap. 4).

- Fight against injustice and impunity<sup>25</sup>

The armed groups' immediate response was increased repression, each side accusing members of the PCSJA of collaborating with the enemy. As Figure 5.7 shows, the two years succeeding the unilateral declaration of noncooperation saw high levels of violence against civilians. According to data collected by Center for Investigation and Popular Education (CINEP), 47 members of the Community were killed during the first nine months of the campaign.<sup>26</sup> Although the situation improved in the subsequent years, armed groups continued to see the PCSJA as a threat. By its 15-year commemoration, Peace Brigades International (PBI) (2012) reported 210 assassinations in the form of homicides and massacres.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, beyond lethal violence, the repertoire of violence against the PCSJA has included, almost on a daily basis, threats, sexual abuse, burning of houses, roadblocks, blockades of foodstuffs, displacement, robbery of livestock and crop destruction, among others (Giraldo, 2010). Even to the date of writing, months after the culmination of the peace agreement between the government and FARC, members of the Community have received threats from a paramilitary organization created after the demobilization of the AUC, the Gaitanista Self-Defenses of Colombia.<sup>28</sup>

According to several testimonies and INGO's reports, the main perpetrator of violence against members of the PCSJA has been the ACCU, many times in alliance with the XVII Brigade of the National Army.<sup>29</sup> In CINEP's database, 130 out of 150 homicides reported from March 1997 to October 2005 are attributed to the paramilitaries and the national army. However, violence has also come from the FARC. In the memory workshops and context interviews through which the timeline in Table 5.1 was constructed, residents highlighted, for example, a massacre committed by the FARC in October 1997, in which one of its founding leaders, Ramiro Correa, was killed.<sup>30</sup> This assertion is consistent with the quantitative evidence presented in Figure 5.8, which shows that both the paramilitaries and FARC victimized civilians in San José.<sup>31</sup>

Compared to the other campaigns analyzed in this dissertation, the PCSJA campaign is highly confrontational. By the mere fact of not leaving, villagers opposed the paramilitaries and, in the case of La Unión for example, challenged their explicit orders. Moreover, by unilaterally refusing to provide intelligence, refuge or any type of goods and delimitating an area where armed groups could not enter, they went against armed groups' strategic interests. They engaged in noncooperation precisely when both the arriving ACCU and the established FARC needed

<sup>25</sup>In addition, although not listed in the Declaration (but visible in Figure 5.4), members of the Community have committed not to sell or consume alcohol within the perimeter of the PCSJA. These are the basic norms of behavior as formalized in December 1997.

<sup>26</sup>For a detailed chronology of these violent events, see Giraldo, (2010).

<sup>27</sup>See also Amnesty International, (2008).

<sup>28</sup>Personal communication with members of the PCSJA. See also, "Temor por presuntos mensajes de autodefensas en San José de Apartadó", *El Tiempo*, 11.07.17; and "Paramilitares ofrecen hasta 2 millones mensuales para reclutar a jóvenes en el Urabá antioqueño", *RCN Radio*, 29.07.17.

<sup>29</sup>PBI (2010) has denounced the state for its role in more than 90% percent of the cases of violence against the PCSJA.

<sup>30</sup>See also HRW, (1998, pp. 156-158)

<sup>31</sup>Note that these data were collected at the municipal level. Based on information gathered in the field, secondary sources, reports of events included in Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC)'s dataset, and by contrasting this dataset with data collected by the National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH), I managed disaggregate data as much as I could to meet the village-level I was working with. However, I am certain that the data still suffers of over-aggregation and thus needs to be taken with caution. It is likely, for example, that the difference between the number of civilian deaths by FARC and the paramilitaries in the village of SJA alone is larger than what Figure 5.8 reports.

civilian support the most. It is when armed groups lack control and face competition that the information possessed by the local population, for example, becomes more valued (Kalyvas, 2006). As expressed in a collective exercise with current members of the Internal Council, noncooperation was regarded as “the only way to avoid the guerrillas, the paramilitaries and the army to get rid of us.”<sup>32</sup> Regardless of the outcomes it yielded, its creation was thus a direct response to violence and was conceived primarily as a civilian self-protection strategy. Although counterintuitive, several practices that lie at the core of the PCSJA *modus operandi* were in fact designed to explicitly protect villagers from violence. Examples include the decision to only work the land or pick up the harvest in large groups, the creation of an unarmed vigilance committee and the establishment of a permanent body of external accompaniment, the distribution of whistles to inform others about the presence of armed groups, and even the decision to not sell or consume alcohol, among others.<sup>33</sup>

## 5.4 The Emergence of the PCSJA

The PCSJA emerged in early 1997, precisely the period in which more violent events were registered and violence against civilians reached unprecedented levels. Given the extraordinary risks that could be anticipated from such a confrontational campaign of noncooperation and the many obstacles that coordinated action under such circumstances is likely to entail, the emergence of the PCSJA results particularly puzzling. Opportunities were narrow and the prospects of success were bleak. In the following two sections I offer an analytical narrative that, by identifying and analyzing how the elements identified by the proposed theory obtained and interacted, makes sense of the emergence of noncooperation. While situational factors that were endogenous to the changing war dynamics were central for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation, social and community context were crucial for providing villagers with the mobilization and organizational resources needed for collectively mounting a campaign.

### 5.4.1 The Desire for Noncooperation

The arrival of the ACCU to a territory that for many years had been under FARC’s social order of rebelocracy transformed the patterns of interaction between villagers and armed groups. Territorial contestation between FARC, the ACCU and the forces of the state affected civilian life in dramatic ways. The paramilitaries and the army targeted civilians just for living in an area of FARC’s influence. In turn, in the face of active rivalry, FARC, concerned about civilians defecting to the arriving faction, became more coercive in their treatment of civilians and even began to target them. With violence coming from all factions and none of the armed groups being in the position to provide reliable protection, civilians came – after intense deliberations – to the conclusion that organizing into noncooperation was their only option to provide themselves with basic levels of protection from violence. In line with the theory outlined in Chapter 3, it was the interaction between dynamics of territorial control, civilian targeting and threat perception that drove the evolution of a desire for noncooperation.

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<sup>32</sup>Group Interview ID. 7, March 2017.

<sup>33</sup>The logic behind the norm of not consuming alcohol responds to the idea that while drinking or when drunk, people are more likely to mingle with armed groups, provide information and/or get involved in unwanted disputes.

### Territorial Contestation

*Oh God! That was so tough! The paramilitaries arrived one Thursday at 7 in the evening [around December 1996] and shouted “The ACCU arrived in Apartadó and here we are staying. We are going to control this area by fire and sword!”*

– Consuelo, Peasant leader. *San José, Antioquia* (2014)

This is how Consuelo, a funding leader of the PCSJA, recalls the arrival of the paramilitaries in Apartadó. After this war declaration, as she had work with different left-wing organizations in the area, she hid for about four months. One day the paramilitaries caught her and she still wonders why they did not kill her. Like many peasants that lived in San José through this period, the only explanation she can give is “luck” or “God’s help”.

This was not the first time that San José peasants heard of or saw paramilitary groups. Some older interviewees recall that, already in the late 1970s, a group of narco-traffickers entered Urabá to amass land and sustained initial processes to self-defense groups. They also remember that in the 1980s paramilitary groups coming from Puerto Boyacá perpetrated acts of violence. Among these acts, one remains vividly in the memories of the people of Urabá: a 1988 massacre that took place in Honduras and La Negra, two banana plantations in the neighboring municipality of Turbo (see body symbol in Map in Figure 5.1).<sup>34</sup> As tough as these incursions were, the situation in 1996/1997 was completely different. Then, in the 1970s and 1980s, their presence was sporadic and they showed no intention to stay. Moreover, FARC in San José, and the EPL in some areas of the region, provided civilians with protection and were strong enough for the military to fight them or for the paramilitaries to penetrate more decisively (Steele, 2017, pp. 136-137).

Testimonies note that while in the mid-1970s FARC had no hegemonic control, it was clear for villagers that they were gaining ground. Their presence was still in “small groups”, they had to “act in a semi-clandestine way” and commuted from one place to another “only at night”. Even then, villagers recall when they presented their revolutionary project to the local population, they stressed that they were going to protect their supporters from any possible retaliation by the state. Villagers believed this, as on several occasions the rebels were able inform residents of possible clashes with the army beforehand so they could avoid being in the cross-fire.

By the 1980s FARC had fully established in the villager and began to move freely day and night. Simón, a leader from the hamlet of La Unión, noted that by the 1980s “they were wherever they wanted to be, at any time of the day”. There was no need to hide anymore. When asked about how civilians responded to their permanent presence, Simon recognized that “many people supported them and passed them information ... and brought them food. When the army troops were coming, they [FARC] knew how many they were and where they were coming from.” When I probed him about why people cooperated, he did not hesitate in recognizing that “at that time the population believed in them”.<sup>35</sup> In a group interview with members of the PCSJA’s Internal Council, one participant stressed that FARC not only controlled the area militarily, but also took care of community disputes and “organized all that social investment in the region: schools,

<sup>34</sup>For more information on this massacre, see *Rutas del Conflicto*, Available online: [<http://rutasdelconflicto.com/interna.php?masacre=116>]

<sup>35</sup>Interview ID. 43, June 2014.

health centers.”<sup>36</sup> During the 1980s and the first part of the 1990s, FARC established in San José what Arjona, (2016b) calls a rebelocracy.

Villagers recall this period as a “peaceful” one. Velandia, another leader from La Unión, vividly describes life in his hamlet during these years in colorful terms: “Life here was good! There were taverns, a lot of shops, here people sold cacao, panela. We had many of the things we needed here. We had no need to go to [the populated center of] San José or to the town [of Apartadó] because we had shops here. Every weekend there were parties, dancing, it was good fun here!”<sup>37</sup> While he recalls shops and parties, others highlight that they could safely work their land without fearing being killed. When I asked about rebel behavior towards them, almost every respondent coincided in stating that FARC did not harm civilians, to which some added that “they even tried to help the population so they could work.”<sup>38</sup> So, even if life was challenging from an economic point of view, the rebels tried to improve the living conditions in the area. Apart from helping establish school and health services, I spoke to peasants who even received loans from FARC for agricultural projects that could benefit the entire community.<sup>39</sup> For many years, directly or through trade unions and the UP, FARC worked hard to defend peasants collective interests, awakening strong programmatic resonance and winning the hearts and minds of many residents.

During this period FARC established close ties with many San José villagers. I found no villager, including members and non-members of the PCSJA, that had not interacted more than once with the rebels. Despite of having good reasons to hide this information, some noted that as neighbors and relatives joined the ranks as part-time militias, the FARC were living among them.<sup>40</sup> This is consistent with secondary historical literature of the Urabá region, which stresses that in particular in the village of SJA insurgents were very successful in developing a strong rapport with the civilian population.

This changed drastically in the mid-1990s when the ACCU irrupted into the village. As in Consuelo’s opening words, multiple sources concur that 1996 was a critical juncture. In a set of preliminary interviews I carried out in 2012, a volunteer of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) already told me that while people remember “the decade of the 90s as that of the intensification of the conflict, if it was about one particular year, all will say it was 1996 with the arrival of the paramilitaries.”<sup>41</sup> He was right in almost every context interview and memory exercise that I conducted in subsequent field visits to San José, every villager identified the arrival of the paramilitaries as the breaking point and several concretely pointed at 1996 as the crucial year in which things dramatically changed. In fact, as reflected in Timeline in Figure 5.1, which was built collectively with villagers and contains the events residents recalled as particularly salient in the trajectories of war in San José, most of these transformative events took place in 1996 and 1997.

Not only oral sources provide evidence that this was the crucial year in which the equilibrium of interaction between civilians and armed groups broke. Archival research revealed that sources produced at that time by actors external to the community also identified the arrival of the

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<sup>36</sup>Interview ID. 7, March 2014.

<sup>37</sup>Interview ID. 40, June 2014.

<sup>38</sup>Interview ID. 30, June 2014.

<sup>39</sup>Author’s Field Notes, June 2015.

<sup>40</sup>Author’s Field Notes, June 2015.

<sup>41</sup>Preliminary Interview, April 2012.

paramilitaries in 1996 as a critical juncture. A report by the *Pastoral Social* of the Catholic Church, for example, wrote that while “the inhabitants of the Abibe Mountains felt increasingly pressured by the paramilitaries since 1993 ..., it was in 1996 that the pressure became unbearable.”<sup>42</sup>

This transformation in the war dynamics, the move from a FARC held rebelocracy to a situation in which control was in flux due the break through of the paramilitaries, was a central condition for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation. While during FARC’s control villagers had no incentives to challenge their rule and cooperation was the best response they had at hand, the shift in territorial control pushed them away from that status quo and made them explore other responses more attuned with the new situation:

... '96 was the zenith of the incursion of the paramilitaries along with the army ... It was so strong that we were obliged to make different choices. And it is because of that, because of all those violations, that we were forced to organize ourselves as a neutral community ...<sup>43</sup>

To be sure, the paramilitary challenge took place in the entire Urabá region. However, whereas in the north of the region the ACCU rapidly managed to defeat the rebels and become the central military actor, in the Abibe Mountains, including SJA, the rebels fiercely resisted their advance. In 1997, precisely in these areas, Ivan Márquez, a central figure of FARC’s Secretariat, took the lead of Front V in an effort to restore and revitalize its military line and fight the paramilitaries more effectively. Under his command, the rebels managed to move from a defensive position back to an offensive one. As a demobilized FARC fighter recounts, during these period, they even managed to get to the main ranch of Castaño (the founder of the ACCU) in Juan José and El Diamante.<sup>44</sup>

The fact that FARC managed to resist the advancement of the paramilitaries and that the village of SJA did not move smoothly from rebel to paramilitary control had important implications for civilian life. San José residents experienced a prolonged period in which it was unclear who was who, who had a relative advantage, and who was going to end up controlling the area. In contrast to the type of social order that characterizes periods of rebelocracy (Arjona, 2016a), Jasmin, a peasant who later became part of the PCSJA’s Internal Council, described this period as one of disorder: “here we lived in disorder; it was a very disorganized war. Before all that happened life was good ... But [then] the peasantry began to suffer.”<sup>45</sup>

In this period of disorder, as Figures 5.5 and 5.6 show, both clashes between the state forces and FARC and paramilitary unilateral actions increased substantially from 1995 onwards. Both type of violence events, which are characteristic of an area that is being contested and where no armed group has dominant control, reached a peak in 1996 and 1997, precisely when the PCSJA was formed. In fact, these transformations were deeply felt (and resented, as we will see later) by residents. Rafael describes the confrontation between the FARC and the forces of the state as “cruel”, stressing that villagers found themselves in the middle of the crossfire of a war that was not theirs. He recalls that “in addition to lots of land troops, there were airplanes and

<sup>42</sup>Document produced by the *Pastoral Social*, 2001, pg. 96.

<sup>43</sup>Group Interview ID. 7, March 2014.

<sup>44</sup>“Frente 5 de las Farc, protagonista de la guerra en Antioquia” *Verdad Abierta*, 12.11.12. Available online: [<http://www.verdadabierta.com/component/content/article/11-periodo-1/4293-frente-5-de-las-farc-protagonista-de-la-guerra-en-antioquia>]

<sup>45</sup>Interview ID. 8, March 2014.

helicopters from the air force bombing the village.” According to him, “combat could last for one and two weeks”. It stuck in his memory that “when there were clashes it felt like the mountains were falling apart. Bombs and bursts of gunfire everywhere. It was terrible!”<sup>46</sup>

The use of helicopters and airplanes bombing the area remains in the memories of several villagers as one of the cruelest form of violence, as it can be seen in the upper left corner in the drawing in Figure 5.2. Under such circumstances, working the land became prohibitively dangerous, obliging many peasants to leave their crops and livestock behind, which complicated further their economic situation.

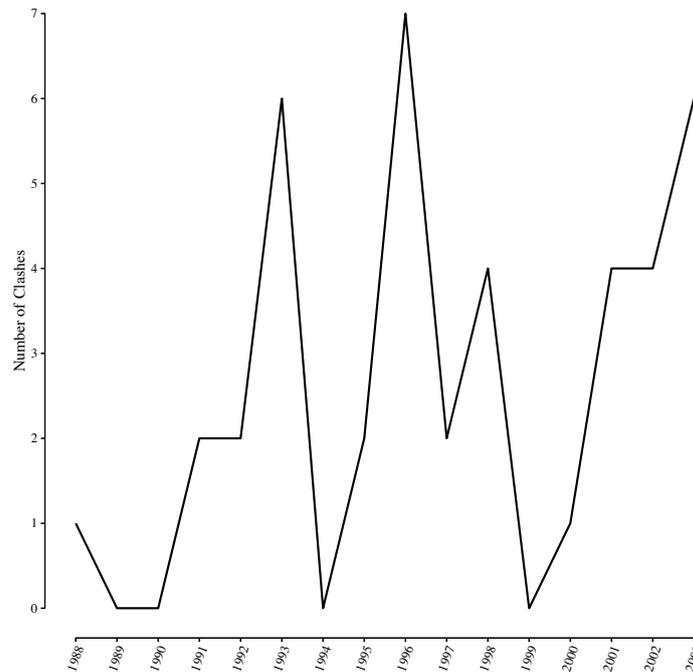


Figure 5.5: Clashes between FARC and State Forces, Apartadó

Source: CERAC data. Processed by the author

In addition, civilians experienced this confrontation in the form of confinement. Their mobility was not only drastically reduced due to the risks associated with finding themselves in the middle of a combat. From late-1996 and for a period of about nine months, the paramilitaries established a roadblock in *Tierra Amarilla*, the main entrance to the village of San José and the only one that grants access to cars (see black flag in Map in Figure 5.3). According to the Inter-congregational Commission of Peace and Justice (CIJP), about 30 people were killed at this roadblock and many others were disappeared (Rueda, 1998, p. 44). As a leader of the Community put it in a group interview, “people could not go 100 meters away [from the populated center of San José] because armed groups would kill them.”<sup>47</sup>

This roadblock limited civilians’ capacity to bring food and medicines from the city of Apartadó to their hamlets, which worsened their alimentary and health conditions. As a villager recalls, “You could not bring a single sack of water to San José because they [the paramilitaries] said that everything that entered was for the guerrillas ... People were starving ... You could pass

<sup>46</sup>Interview ID. 36, May 2014.

<sup>47</sup>Group Interview ID. 7, March 2014.

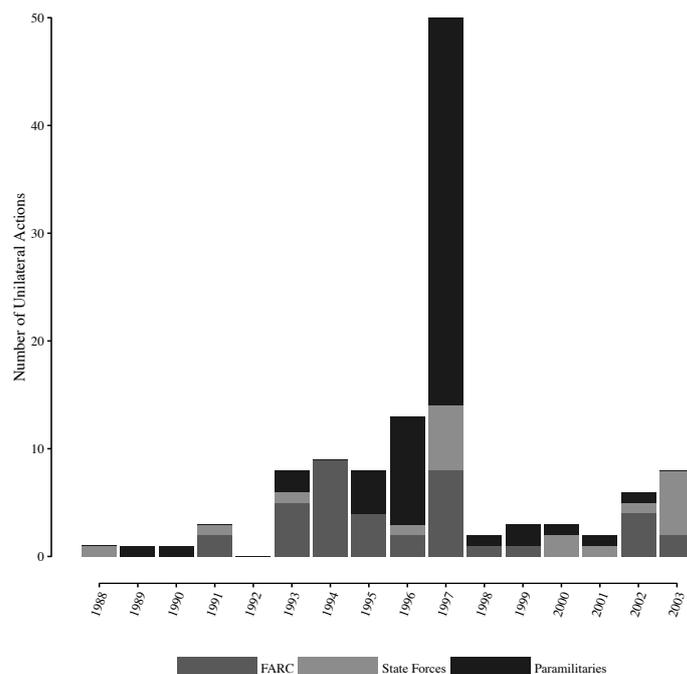


Figure 5.6: Unilateral Actions by faction, Apartadó

Source: CERAC data. Processed by the author

with 10.000 pesos [around 4USD] in goods on the condition that you would not be seen again in 15 days. What could families with eight children do with that?”<sup>48</sup> As this testimony reveals, the decision to place this roadblock resulted directly from the logic of territorial competition. Paramilitaries controlled the amount of goods civilians could bring in because they feared that they were going to end up in the enemy’s hands. They did not know what was going on in the rural hamlets, as they had control of the road but not in the interior of the village. Jasmin’s anecdote at the roadblock dramatically reflects this logic:

Once I had to go out [of the village], so I was asked to buy some medicines for my niece and another friend of mine. I went down [to the city of Apartadó] and bought the medicine. I was coming back with my things when the *chivero* was stopped at the paramilitary roadblock.<sup>49</sup> They asked “Who got this medicine?” As I have been always like this, I took responsibility and said that it was mine. When I said that, the commander said “get out the car immediately!” I got out of the car with the thought that I was going to die. Whoever is asked to get out, gets killed. So I got off and leaned against the jeep. They stepped in front of me and unlocked their rifles. They said that I was lying, that the medicines were reported to be for the guerrillas. I told them that was impossible, as I had not seen the guerrillas recently as we were staying always in San José’s populated center [at this point guerrillas were hiding in the more remote rural areas].<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup>Cited in (Hernandez Delgado, 1999, p. 82)

<sup>49</sup>*Chiveros* are collective jeeps that transport people from the city of Apartadó to the rural areas of the municipality. To date, it is the main means of transport that takes people and goods in and out the village of San José.

<sup>50</sup>Interview ID. 8, March, 2014.

Jasmin lived to tell the tale. Like Consuelo, she believes that it was either luck or God that saved her life. Unfortunately, this was not the case for dozens of peasants who lost their lives in *Tierra Amarilla*.

These changes in the dynamics of territorial control activated mechanisms that triggered the evolution of a desire for noncooperation. In contrast to a situation of rebelocracy, where civilians count on clear rules of behavior and there is some level predictability regarding actors behavior (Arjona, 2016b), this flux in territorial control induced high levels of uncertainty into civilian life. Peasants recount that the constant feeling was that of ending up in the middle of the crossfire anytime, anywhere. It was not clear for civilians which faction had a comparative advantage.

Under such circumstances, San José peasants learnt that FARC would not provide any protection from paramilitary violence even if they were willing to do so – which according to some informants, was the case. When discussing this issue in a group exercise, leaders of the Peace Community rhetorically asked me: “Who can protect you from bombs coming from the sky or from bullets coming from each side of the mountains?”<sup>51</sup> As Consuelo put it, “While a lot of people was dying, they [FARC] could not do anything to protect us even if they wanted, because the paramilitaries had already entered.”<sup>52</sup> In light of these new conditions, cooperation was no longer the viable response it had been when FARC had dominant control and could provide protection in exchange of support.

Velandia explained this change in the pay-offs they assigned to cooperation in a clear way:

[W]e realized that we could not continue as we did before. I won't deny it, when there was only the FARC here, they would ask “Could you do me a favor? Could you bring us something from the city center?” and we would do it. But now, no! This is too dangerous.<sup>53</sup>

Some villagers began to discuss possible courses of action to cope with the situation and avoid, or at least mitigate, violence against them. However, they were not clear at all about what exactly could be done. By that time, Álvaro Uribe, then the Governor of Antioquia, proposed “active neutrality” as the best way for civilians to protect themselves from violence and stop the war that was being waged. His proposal implied being *neutral* in relation to the rebels and the paramilitaries, while *active* in cooperating with the Army. Villagers position towards this proposal, nonetheless, was clear:

[Active neutrality] was too dangerous for us because this area is one of guerrilla influence, where also the Army and the paramilitaries are present. So if we are going to talk about neutrality it has to be in relation to all the factions, because if we side with one or the others, well, they will kill us.<sup>54</sup>

The way they saw Uribe's proposal reveals already that they knew that noncooperation was virtually their only way out if they were to stay in San José. Cooperation with any party, including the faction they had supported in direct and indirect ways, was out of question. A desire for noncooperation was evolving.

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<sup>51</sup>Author's Field Notes, March 2014.

<sup>52</sup>Interview ID. 11, March 2014.

<sup>53</sup>Interview ID. 40, June 2014

<sup>54</sup>Cited in Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 384).

### Violence Against Civilians

Between 1991 and 1996, according to data collected by CERAC, in the central area of Urabá the number of violent events by armed factions increased in 230%. Local sources indicate that this sharp increase was largely driven by violent dynamics taking place in the municipalities of Apartadó and Turbo (García and Aramburu, 2011, pp. 315,320). With this increase in violent events, the number of civilian deaths increased too. In 1995 alone, the Coroner's office recorded 265 deaths in Apartadó, a homicide rate of nearly 400 per 100.000 inhabitants. In line with these regional and municipal trend, the levels of violence against civilians in the village of San José increased steadily and substantially from 1994 onwards, reaching a peak in 1997 (Figure 5.7).

This increase in civilian deaths is integral to the shift in territorial control outlined above.<sup>55</sup> As a local priest of the Catholic Church explained, “[The paramilitaries] wanted to push [the guerrillas] back so they would lose contact with the people, and lose their power. In order to carry out their strategy, the tactic they used was the perverse one of draining the sea.”<sup>56</sup> While Figure 5.7 shows an increase in civilian deaths, it is worth noting that the rise in civilian victimization went beyond lethal forms. As Rafael, a community leader from San José highlighted, apart from killings, the paramilitaries “burnt houses and our food, stole our hen, our pigs, our donkeys, killed one or two cows and ate them, beat people...”.<sup>57</sup>

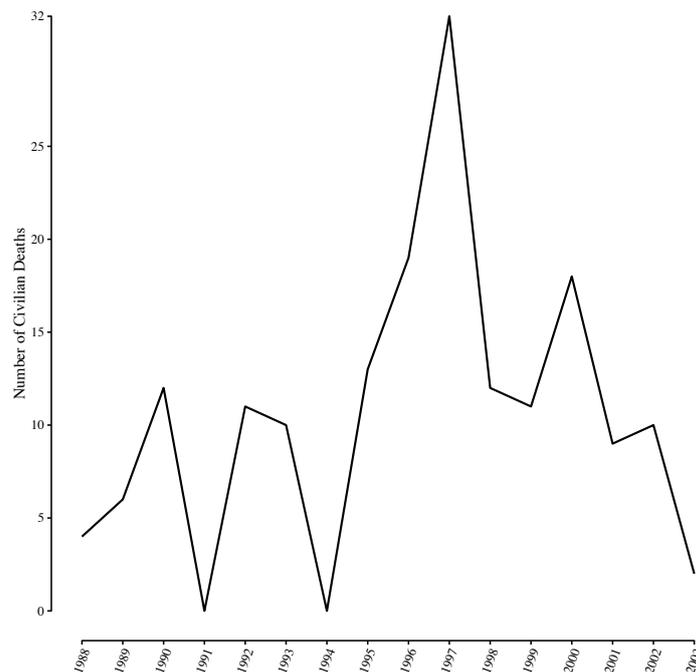


Figure 5.7: Total Civilian Deaths, San José de Apartadó

Source: CERAC and CNMH data. Processed by the author

<sup>55</sup>See Chapter 3 for a discussion of how this maps onto Kalyvas' Collaboration–Control Model.

<sup>56</sup>Cited in Steele, (2017, p. 148)

<sup>57</sup>Interview ID. 36, May 2014. All these other forms of violence, before and after the creation of the PCSJA, are vividly recorded by Jesuit priest, Javier Giraldo (2010) in *Fusil o toga, toga y fusil. El Estado control la Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó*. However, this account focuses almost exclusively on violence coming from the state forces and the paramilitaries, not the FARC. As I discuss below, the rebels also victimized San José villagers., and this played a central role in shaping civilians responses.

While a big portion of anti-civilian violence was perpetrated by the paramilitaries, quantitative data clearly shows that the FARC had also its own share (see Figure 5.8).<sup>58</sup> While some of my interviewees recalled some instances of FARC's violence against them during the period of rebelocracy, in line with the predictions of Kalyvas' (2006) Collaboration–Control Model, their accounts reveal that this violence was largely selective. For example, Rafael explained that, “If someone was told not to steal and still did it, [FARC] would call that person and advise him not to do it again. If the person continued, well ... they used to say 'we do not have prisons, our prison is the cemetery.’”<sup>59</sup>

This was no longer the case from the mid-1990s. With changes in the frequency of violence, the targeting also changed. The general trend that García and Aramburu, (2011, p. 325) identified for the entire Urabá region when the ACCU's challenged FARC's control is generally consistent with what San José villagers experienced between 1994 and 1997. The arrival of the paramilitaries “triggered the vendetta of the rebels against the alleged social bases of the paramilitaries in a strategy that made use of the same means used by their hated enemies and that had the effect of multiplying the number of homicides”. As we have observed in other civil wars, such as in Algeria (Kalyvas, 1999) and Angola (Ziemke, 2008), as FARC were losing ground to the paramilitaries in San José they began to target civilians. In a collective exercise with villagers with the aim of understanding the logic of violence during this period, some very acute peasants read the situation exactly in these terms: “... Armed groups, of either kind, are strong where they have control, but when they see that they will lose it, they want to terrorize people, they want to induce terror and kill ... this was the only option they have to shatter people.”<sup>60</sup>

Residents recount that with the growing presence of the ACCU and the Army in San José, the FARC became more concerned about civilian defection. A demobilized rebel explained to me that while they knew that civilians could hardly meet paramilitaries in the rural hamlets, they were well aware that they were always in *Tierra Amarilla* (the roadblock) and, thus, that villagers had access to them.<sup>61</sup> As a consequence, FARC began to force civilians to take sides and even to unequivocally signal their allegiances. Those who would not do so, were automatically taken as supporters of the paramilitaries and the Army. As such, they became military targets.<sup>62</sup>

Rafael, who noted that FARC's violence during their hegemonic control was minimal and explained that targeting was selective, notes how the situation changed when control began to shift:

... when we, the civilian population, saw ourselves in the midst of the crossfire, the situation became increasingly tougher ... The forces of the state were killing peasants saying that we were guerrilla collaborators, and the guerrilla also began to kill people. They did not do it anymore because of people being thieves or not obeying. No! ... In the middle of that confrontation, they began to incriminate peasants more and

<sup>58</sup>As Steele, (2017) shows, this was not only the case in rural Apartadó. In a desperate attempt to retain strength in the urban areas of Apartadó, rebels also targeted civilians and committed massacres that marked the life of Apartadó's urban residents.

<sup>59</sup>Interview ID. 36, May 2014.

<sup>60</sup>Interview ID. 7, March 2014.

<sup>61</sup>Author's Field Notes, September 2015.

<sup>62</sup>This coercive pressure to take sides and signal them overtly is at the core of villagers decision not only to be neutral, but also to signal their choice in the clearest possible way, such as demarcating their territory using banners with unequivocal messages (see Figure 5.4) and carrying IDs on them indicating their membership of the PCSJA.

more.<sup>63</sup>

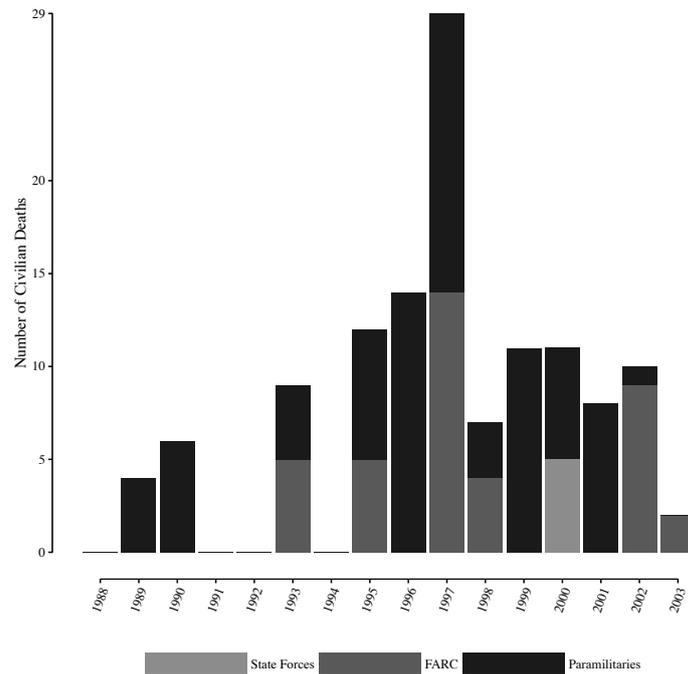


Figure 5.8: Civilian Deaths by perpetrator, San José de Apartadó

Source: CERAC and CNMH data. Processed by the author

This testimony is particularly noteworthy. The standard accounts of what happened in San José tend to stress that anti-civilian violence was perpetrated almost exclusively by the paramilitaries. This is the version that one is likely to get the first time one talks with villagers (as well as in most of the secondary literature). However, reflecting the gains of visiting several times the same sites and interviewing the same people more than once (see Wood, 2003, Chap.2; Fujii, 2011, Chap.1), the same villagers that first mentioned paramilitary violence alone, also began to underscore rebels violence. Moreover, they directly linked this violence to their choice for noncooperation. From this more nuanced accounts, I understood that the transformation of the beliefs they had of FARC was a central mechanism linking violence against civilians to the evolution of a desire for noncooperation.

San José villagers deeply resented FARC's violence. Witnessing the abuses of a group that for years protected and provided for them activated moral and emotional considerations that pushed them away from cooperation with the rebels and to consider a response that involved no cooperation with any faction.

Already in the early 1990s, seeing how some EPL ex-combatants joined the paramilitaries, villagers began to question their relationship to the rebels. Several informants highlighted as particularly salient in their belief formation process the fact that they identified former rebels committing violent acts, not only massacres, but also robbing animals and destroying houses, now dressed as paramilitaries and even militaries.<sup>64</sup> In light of these events, many villagers came

<sup>63</sup>Interview ID. 36, May 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Hernandez Delgado and Salazar Posada, (1999, p. 64) provides rich testimonies that reflect how San José villagers transformed their beliefs about rebels.

to believe that it was not only lack of capacity that prevented FARC for protecting civilians, but also unwillingness. Moreover, as they saw rebels use repertoires of violence (e.g., massacres) that they associated exclusively with the paramilitaries, they came to believe that there was no big difference between the two. This new set of beliefs, and the resentment that came along, shaped irreversibly the way civilians were going to relate to FARC. Many civilians developed an emotional and moral antipathy towards the rebels. As in other instances of collective action, such as resistance against an occupying regime (Petersen, 2001) or supporting an insurgent movement (Wood, 2003), this resentment motivated villagers to accept the risks involved in noncooperation.<sup>65</sup> The killing of community leader Ramiro Correa in a massacre in October 1997, right during the period of consolidation of their Community, was definitive in this process.

### Civilians' Perception of Targeting

While Figure 5.7 shows a sharp increase in the number of civilians casualties, and Figure 5.8 shows that the responsibility for the bulk of these deaths lies with both the paramilitaries and rebels, these data do not tell us much about the type of targeting, let alone about the way civilians perceived it. Combining these data-set observations with process-based observations (Brady and Collier, 2010) collected in the field, reveals that there was also an important shift in the way civilians perceived targeting and that this shift was a critical condition for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation among San José villagers.

In their sporadic incursions into San José during the 1980s, as in the period immediately following their arrival in the mid-1990s, the paramilitaries – many times in alliance with the Army and EPL deserters – mostly targeted community and trade union leaders, as well as visible members of the JAC and UP. However, as contestation deepened and the most visible leadership had been killed or had fled, violence became significantly less selective. When asked about the type of targeting, the first responses that I would hear portrayed violence as being indiscriminate, almost random. Expressions such as “they were killing everybody”, “it did not matter what you did or did not do”, “that people [armed groups] had no discrimination” were common.<sup>66</sup>

However, probing deeper into the topic, it became clear that villagers did not perceive threats as fully random. Many respondents revealed that they perceived that they were being targeted because they were considered part of the insurgents' social base of support. Jasmín put it bluntly:

They [the paramilitaries] were not killing us because they identified us with something but because of the idea that has always existed about us, those who live in the rural areas, are rebel communities. This stigmatization has always existed, and by then and in this area much more because the rebels moved freely in all this village. The village of San José is comprised of 32 hamlets and the guerrillas were present in all of them!<sup>67</sup>

Similarly, when asked who was being targeted at the paramilitary roadblock in *Tierra Amarilla*, Luis, an active militant of the PCC and of the UP, stated:

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<sup>65</sup> Authors such as Jasper, (1998, p. 406) have also underscored resentment as a mobilizing force in the context of street protest.

<sup>66</sup> Interview IDs 39 and 42, respectively. April and June 2014.

<sup>67</sup> Interview ID. 8, March 2014.

They were not killing because *fulano* was part of the UP or *peranito* was part of any other thing. There they were killing whoever they wanted. Kids, anyone ... they killed five and six year old kids! So here you can see that they were not killing because *fulano* was supporting the rebels or because *perano* was part of the UP...<sup>68</sup>

These testimonies coincided with interpretations in the secondary literature. For example, Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 380) has stressed that residents of SJA became the main military objective of the paramilitaries and were being killed for “the mere fact of living there.”<sup>69</sup>

Neither the category of selective violence, nor that of indiscriminate violence, captures well the nature of the targeting that Jasmín and Luis described. Villagers of SJA were being targeted based on group/identity categories; that is, they were targets of collective violence (Gutierrez Sanín and Wood, 2017; Steele, 2017). Given the historical ties that San José residents had with the FARC, the arriving paramilitaries, in the absence of more precise information about the loyalties of villagers, used geographical location and membership/participation in political organizations as a proxy to make inferences about the loyalties of villagers. There is evidence that paramilitaries used information revealed by local elections to collectively target some specific neighborhoods and rural communities. Those areas where the UP was successful were taken as FARC-influenced areas and their residents were consequently targeted (Dudley, 2004; Steele, 2017). Among these communities, the peasantry of San José was taken as a unitary actor and was made a military objective.

Getting to armed group’s intentions regarding targeting is tricky. Moreover, in line with the proposed theory what at the end of the day really matters in terms of civilian responses is how villagers perceive the targeting. However, primary and secondary sources provide good indications that the paramilitaries in fact followed a group-based logic when it came to targeting civilians. The demobilized paramilitaries I spoke to, as well as the declarations by Herbert Veloza – top commander of the ACCU – in a 2013 sentence issued against him and during the *Justicia y Paz* audience with victims that I attended in Bogotá in 2015, all claim some selectivity in their targeting.<sup>70</sup> However, it becomes clear that selection was not made at the individual level. Entire hamlets, with the reputation of hosting “insurgent communities”, in the words of Veloza, were targeted collectively. In line with these declarations, a secret report prepared for the Commander of the Army at the time described the logic of paramilitary violence in the following way: “The paramilitaries shoot at auxiliaries and presumed collaborators of the FARC and the ELN, the political leaders of the UP and the PCC and *the population that lives in regions of influence of these groups*”.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, as peasant voices go, in some concrete hamlets the paramilitaries were explicit about their targeting logic: in both La Unión and Playas Altas, residents were ordered to leave their lands otherwise they would be killed because of living on “insurgent soil”.<sup>72</sup>

In addition, there are indications that the XVII Brigade of the army also used geographical location to further their effort to neutralize FARC and its base of support. General Alejo Rito del Río, the then chief commander of this brigade and known as the “pacifier of Urabá”, was accused by Colonel (r) Carlos Alfonso Velásquez of withdrawing troops in 1996 from some specific rural

<sup>68</sup>Interview ID. 14, March 2014.

<sup>69</sup>See also Ramírez Tobón, (1997, p. 139).

<sup>70</sup>I am enormously grateful to Enilda Jiménez for inviting me to accompany her to this audience and for sharing with me the story of her family as victim of the war that was waged in Apartadó.

<sup>71</sup>Cited in Steele, (2017, 150, Emphasis is mine.) – Emphasis is mine.

<sup>72</sup>Interviews IDs. 8 and 13, March 2014

areas in the Urabá region because he knew that the paramilitaries would arrive. In an interview, Velásquez noted that the areas that were abandoned shared a reputation of supporting the FARC and that everyone knew that, following the withdrawal of the Army troops, the paramilitaries would come and commit massacres. The village of San José was top in the list of such areas.<sup>73</sup>

In the face of collective targeting, in accordance with Steele's (2017) theory, many people left San José. Supporting several testimonies regarding the timing of the largest waves of displacement in the village, quantitative data from governmental sources show that the first peak of displacement in the municipality took place between the years 1996 and 1997.<sup>74</sup> Those who stayed in the territory were left to their own devices, facing violence from both factions and with no one to protect them. As the aforementioned Colonel's interview reveals, not only were the militaries leaving civilians of San José alone, but were also colluding with the paramilitaries to target them.

These changes in the dynamics of war activated another set of mechanisms that, along with those presented in the previous two sections, led to the evolution of a desire for noncooperation. Residents became more cognizant than ever of the significance of confronting the challenges of living in an area where control was in flux. They came to realize that, in order to survive, they needed to partake in their own protection and destiny. Moreover, feeling that violence could get them at anytime, the need to recover a minimum level of security led to a clear preference for early over later action, what Elster, (2009) calls urgency-based action.

For starters, the perception of targeting being collective created a sense of inescapability from violence. As an elder from la Unión put it, they all knew they were going to be killed, they just did not know when their "turn" was coming or when the "day that they just take all of us and kill us at once" was going to arrive.<sup>75</sup> As noted before, villagers could only explain why they survived as if it was either a matter of luck or because "God wanted it that way".

This type of targeting left little room for any individual action to be effective in terms of avoiding violence. Informants noted that some villagers tried some individual self-help strategies, such as double-dealing, and all of them eventually got killed. Collective targeting is not a function of what people do or refrain from doing, so there was little San José villagers could individually do to step away from the path of violence. This perception pushed people to believe that if there was something they could do to improve their protection and continue with their life projects, that had to be collective. Collective targeting pushed villagers to find solutions to violence together with those who were equally targeted (see Steele, 2017).

Moreover, the fact that targeting was perceived as virtually unescapable equalized the chances of being killed that villagers attached to different possible courses of action. This lowered the threshold for responses that otherwise would have been seen as too risky, making noncooperation more available. For example, when I asked Fernando, a founding member of the PCSJA if he did not fear being killed because of unilaterally mounting noncooperation, he noted: "I was resolved to die. If they kill me because of this [setting up the Peace Community], they kill me. In any

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<sup>73</sup>Cited in Steele, (2017, pp. 151–152)

<sup>74</sup>Although revealing, these data need to be read with caution as in 1997 a new law ( Law 387) mandated the creation of a system to monitor the displaced population in the country. Thus, while this peak reveals the levels of displacement at the time, the increase relative to previous years could be reflecting only an improved effort to measure and monitor the phenomenon.

<sup>75</sup>Interview ID. 39, June 2014.

case, here peasants were not going to survive.”<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that what made noncooperation more available as a course of actions was not only a rational calculation. As we have seen in many other instances of contentious collective action (Jasper, 1997, Chaps. 6, 15, 17; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, 2004; Wood, 2003), calculations of potential payoffs here interacted with deep moral considerations. As implied in Gandhi’s understanding of noncooperation, some villagers like Fernando came to accept to pay the ultimate price.

Moral outrage (Wood, 2003), rooted in a sense of what is just and unjust, played its part in shaping civilians preference for noncooperation. As several informants noted, it was not only about taking protection into their own hands, but also about not taking part in the wrongdoings of others. This moral activation of agency responded to the fact that many peasants regarded as innocent were being killed. Collective targeting expands the pool of potential victims in a way that more people considered innocent are likely to be targeted. As an elder from San José put it, “many peasants that were not guilty of anything were killed, guilt of nothing! ... The paramilitaries killed many peasants because of supposedly partnering with the FARC, but many many people were killed in vain.”<sup>77</sup> Similarly Velendia complained that armed actors proceeded without carrying out any sort of investigation: “All of them [armed groups] harmed us. ... they do their things without even investigating if the person really was what others said, they killed without trying to find out anything.”<sup>78</sup>

The killings of so many people that were regarded as innocent shocked civilians’ moral expectations (see Jasper, 1997, Chap. 6). Taking a stand against these acts served as a whistleblower for not participating directly or indirectly in these unjust acts. Moreover, it made clear that whatever the concrete form of their response, it must imply a strong refusal to collaborate with those responsible for these acts.

#### 5.4.2 The Capacity for Noncooperation

The perception of targeting being collective led to the realization that if there was something civilians could do to avoid displacement and survive the war, it had to be collective. In this section I present a detailed treatment of the factors that provided San José villagers with the capacity to organize a campaign of noncooperation. In line with the proposed theory, I focus on how previous experiences of collective action and the supportive role of external actors provided the associational spaces and the leadership needed to facilitate coordination and organize collective action.

Although most of the existing community and political leaders of the village had left San José or were killed by the time the PCSJA was created, many of those who came to lead the process were active members of political and social organizations in the past. Thus, they were socialized into norms of participating in collective work and had experience running local institutions. Moreover, this long tradition of collective action left associational spaces, such as the JAC, that were activated and repurposed for noncooperation. However, existing mobilizing resources were only one part of the story. The severe situation peasants were living in San José by the mid-1990s forged, through brokerage, the creation of an network of external actors that were

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<sup>76</sup>Interview ID. 34, May 2014.

<sup>77</sup>Interview ID. 24, May 2014.

<sup>78</sup>Interview ID. 40, June 2014.

ready to support the launching of the campaign of noncooperation. Mobilizing resources that were absent in the village were compensated by a strong and dedicated network of local, regional, national and international individuals and organizations. This network contributed with basic material resources vital to survive in a situation of siege, provided training in leadership, created a sense of security by affecting armed groups' costs of victimization, and gave validation and encouragement in critical moments.

### Previous Experiences of Collective Action

*For an organizational process as the one of the Peace Community to exist, there has to be a long imprint that goes well beyond their choice for neutrality on the 23rd of March.*

– Gloria Cuartas *Mayor of Apartadó (1995–1997)*<sup>79</sup>

More than three decades of multiple forms of social organization and mobilization in the village of SJA left important legacies of collective action that were tapped into when the time to set up the PCSJA came. These previous experiences of collective action exposed campesinos to collective work, which was essential for developing bonds of trust and reciprocity and for showing villagers that they could take part in shaping and/or building local grassroots institutions to address their own needs. These legacies can be traced back to the process of colonization of the area in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Colonizing San José was anything but an easy process. When the first settlers arrived in the village, the place was wild and the state was conspicuous by its absence.<sup>80</sup> The few original settlers that remain in the area have vivid memories of the amount of work it took to make their way through the dense jungle. To give me a sense of the remoteness and wildness of the place, some informants mentioned the diversity of wild animals they encountered in their way. Some respondents linked the tough conditions they initially met and the myriad of adversities they had to go through to the evolution of a sense of social interdependence and an awareness of the need to work together. This sense was facilitated by the fact that many of the settlers were coming from the same areas of the country, shared some general political views and were empathetic towards each other as they had experienced similar violent processes in their towns of origin during *La Violencia*. From the profiles of the original settlers that I could reconstruct in the field, I learnt that most of them came from Liberal municipalities in the Department of Antioquia (mainly, Peque, Dabeiba, Urama and Frontino) and many of them were in fact fleeing from Conservative violence.<sup>81</sup>

Colonization during the 1960s and 1970s advanced through land invasions. Many villagers in fact recall building trails and shelter as the first tasks for which they got organized. Later on, the lack of basic public services became apparent and pushed them to deepen their collective work. Javier, an elder that arrived from Peque when “there was no soul” in San José, recalls with pride when they set up the first *escuelita* (small school) in the hamlet of Mulatos. He explains that having a house to host the school was a condition for them to begin demanding services from

<sup>79</sup>Interview ID. 125, September 2015.

<sup>80</sup>Archival work indicates that the Emberá indigenous community of Las Playas settled there before the 1950s. However, none of the original settlers I spoke to indicated their presence.

<sup>81</sup>See also, Reiniciar, (2006) and G. I. Restrepo, (2006)

the state (such as sending public teachers).<sup>82</sup> As in El Salvador, where land occupations were central for subsequent insurgent collective action (Wood, 2003, Chap. 1), land occupations in SJA shaped subsequent civilian collective action in other domains, such as noncooperation with armed groups. In fact, it was common to have villagers identify the seeds of “resistance” in these initial processes of colonization (Hernandez Delgado and Salazar Posada, 1999, p. 57).

Through this collective work they not only learned to work together, but also led to the organization of associational spaces and the forging key alliances with local actors and organizations that years later played a central role in proving villagers with the capacity needed to mount noncooperation. Peasants were not alone in the effort of colonizing San José. Javier remembers that at some point a regional governmental institution, Corpourabá, provided food baskets of 30kg to those who devoted three days a week to open trails to connect the different hamlets of the village.<sup>83</sup> However, the role of the PCC and the National Association of Campesino Users (ANUC) is what elders underscore the most. While a radical faction within the ANUC promoted land invasions as a strategy to force agrarian reform, the PCC actively supported and guided the settlement of peasants and helped them organize from the very beginning of the process.

The accelerated pace of population growth that followed the expansion of the banana agro-industry (as well as other infrastructural transformations in the Urabá region) put new issues on the agenda and made peasant organization and mobilization go beyond land invasions (María Teresa Uribe de Hincapié, 1992, p. 163). Through more standard contentious performances (Tilly, 2008), such as marches, demonstrations and civic strikes, the peasantry demanded more favorable working conditions and the provision of public services from both the state and the companies in the banana industry. Although these developments took place in different areas of Urabá (e.g., Turbo, Arboletes and Currulao), they were noticeably stronger and more frequent in Apartadó (García, 1996, pp. 92-93; Ortiz Sarmiento, 1999, pp. 94-96). As some of my interviewees noted, many residents of SJA, even if they did not work in the banana industry, got involved in workers’ mobilization. As is to be expected, in this phase of mobilization trade unions became a vital catalyst in organizing villagers further.<sup>84</sup>

One of the organizational forms that peasants recall as the most significant during these two decades of intense mobilization is the JACs. The many obstacles they found when they arrived in San José constitute in the memory of many the steppingstone for the creation of the first JACs. For example, Jasmín, a local leader from La Unión, the hamlet that for many years had the most active JAC in the village, affirms that the JAC was the first concrete organization that took form in San José and notes that it was created out of “pure necessity” as “there was nobody to make claims, no body to get things done”.<sup>85</sup> Through these communal boards peasants advanced further the colonization of the area and worked towards the satisfaction of basic needs. From their early years, these boards became the central space for civic participation and engagement, and new leaderships emerged there. In fact, it was through an invasion led by the JAC (with the support of ANUC) that the village of San José was formally founded in 1976.

As in similar forms of civilian collective action found in the Colombian war (see Kaplan, 2010), the JACs were a vital association space for the creation of the PCSJA. In the initial stages

<sup>82</sup>Interview ID. 46, June 2014. See also Hernandez Delgado and Salazar Posada, (1999, p. 54).

<sup>83</sup>Corpourabá was a state initiative first promoted in the early 1970s to promote and guide Urabá’s Development Plan.

<sup>84</sup>Sinrabano was created in 1964 among sympathizers of the PCC and Sintagro in 1972.

<sup>85</sup>Interview ID. 8, March 2014.

of mobilization and organization, the JACs were socially appropriated (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001) by the community to discuss what to do to cope with the changing dynamics of war. Rafael, one of the founding leaders of the PCSJA stressed that the initial idea of noncooperation came from a group of peasants working with what, at the time, remained of the JAC. “We were frightened, a lot of fear, because many members of the JAC had been killed already. There was still some JAC left, and there we started to think of a proposal [of how to respond to war].”<sup>86</sup> Indeed, it was peasants who led the different JACs, such as Bartolomé Cataño and Luis Eduardo Pineda, who became central actors in the creation of the Peace Community.

In the 1980s, and until the arrival of the paramilitaries in the mid-1990s, the mobilization process entered into a whole new phase. Rebel groups capitalized on the existing organizations to mobilize supporters and advance their insurgent agenda. The FARC penetrated political parties, trade unions, and even the JACs. They promoted peasant organization in both direct and indirect ways (García, 1996, p. 80).<sup>87</sup> As many elder residents stress today, the penetration of the FARC into their organizational process stimulated, and in a way justified, repression from the forces of the state and from the paramilitaries. However, while it is common in the Colombian historiography to depict social organizations as victims of armed groups, in the village of SJA (as in other places of Urabá), the rebels undoubtedly strengthened many of the existing organizations and, by using means of action that were not part of these organizations’ repertoire, allowed for more ambitious contentious projects and for extra pressure on their opponents (Romero, 2003, p. 170; Hernandez Delgado and Salazar Posada, 1999, p. 32).<sup>88</sup>

In fact, during the period of rebelocracy in San José the creation of the *Cooperativa Balsamar* and the UP, both in 1985, constitute two of the most significant experiences in terms collective action in the village. *Balsamar* was an experiment of peasant empowerment and engagement around the production and management of cacao. Following the CAPACA –Training for Peasant Participation– methodology, the Cooperative put into practice strategies to promote peasant participation and collective work, such as *convites* and *manos cambiadas*.<sup>89</sup> A large majority of San José villagers took part in *Balsamar* and, according to regional project evaluations, this cooperative was one of the most successful peasant organizations in Urabá (Aparicio, 2009, p. 101). In fact, some interviewees still recall it as a profoundly edifying experience of communal work. Gloria Cuartas highlights that the Cooperative consolidated communitarian labor relations that people still have today and considers it “a milestone for understanding the organization, the sense of defending the territory and of doing community work, and the joint-decision making [of the PCSJA].”<sup>90</sup>

Beyond a legacy of empowerment and collective work, the links between *Balsamar* and the emergence (and trajectories) of the PCSJA have, literally, a material expression. During the

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<sup>86</sup>Interview ID. 36, May 2014.

<sup>87</sup>In the early 1960s the Abibe mountains were home to traditional Liberal guerrillas and were the retreat area for important *guerrilleros* such as Julio Guerra and Pedro Brincos (Roldán, 2002; G. I. Restrepo, 2005, p. 101). However, neither in my fieldwork nor in my review of primary and secondary material, did I find evidence of their presence and role in the village of SJA itself.

<sup>88</sup>This is the case, for example, of the most salient invasions that gave life to the neighborhoods of La Chinita and Policarpa, just a few hundred meters before *Tierra Amarilla*, the entrance to the village of SJA (Steele, 2017, chap.5).

<sup>89</sup>CAPACA stands *Capacitación para la Participación Campesina*. It was a methodology promoted in the 1980s by the Colombian National Learning Service (SENA), a public institution focused in the development of programs of professional formation (SENA, 1984).

<sup>90</sup>Interview ID. 125, September 2015.

1997 displacement, the building of the *Cooperativa* in the populated center of San José, as the drawing presented earlier depicts, was a central associational space for displaced villagers. It was used both as shelter for several families and as a space where villagers could convene and coordinate action. As some testimonies go, exchanges in which civilians coming from different hamlets learned more about the intentions of others, as well as meetings in which the idea of establishing a Peace Community was discussed, took place in this building. *Balsamar* was socially appropriated for preference convergence and for coordinating action.<sup>91</sup>

The year 1985 also saw the creation of the UP. The UP initially harnesses villagers' support by working through the JACs. Important community leaders, like Bartolomé Cataño, passed from leading the different JACs to being elected officials in UP lists. Pacho, who was tasked by the local chapter of the UP to gear and monitor support for the party in the village, recalls that almost every community leader in the village, including many of those who ended up comprising the first Internal Council of the PCSJA, in some way or another worked with the UP. It was hard to find a "single soul" in San José that did not vote for the UP or who had never participated in the meetings the party used to organize, Pacho highlighted emphatically.<sup>92</sup>

To my surprise, given the costs this could have for them and for the Peace Community in terms of stigmatization, some leaders recognized their past in the PCC and/or the UP, and linked it directly to their job in setting up the experiment of collective noncooperation. Consuelo, for example, noted:

I believe that the experience of having been a communist and part of the UP was a privilege ... I was involved in everything: parent associations, the JAC, peasant associations, I helped organize trade unions and banana workers ... Look, since I was in the Communist Party I developed the skills needed to organize people, to help those who suffer ...[in the context of creating the PCSJA] we had to lead a whole new process and we did not know well what were we doing. But we had the experience in the PCC and the UP to build on.<sup>93</sup>

The joint efforts of unions, clandestine and legal political parties, and even the FARC, of organizing peasants throughout almost 30 years, left legacies that was effectively tapped into by villagers when it came to mounting noncooperation. On the one hand, even when many community leaders were killed or left the village, this long tradition of mobilization left activists, who participated in movements, parties and different peasant associations, that were ready to put their experience at the service of mounting noncooperation. On the other hand, this long tradition of collective work left associational spaces that, even if dormant or severely weakened because of war, were available for peasants to socially appropriate (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001) and repurpose for setting up the peace community. In addition, and of crucial importance, these previous experiences of collective action left positive shared beliefs about the importance and rewards of expressing dissent collectively to redress grievances; what movement scholars

<sup>91</sup>Moreover, the piece of land where the Community resettled in 2005 was own by the Cooperative. The hamlet is known as "La Holandita" (small Holland in Spanish), as the project that originally gave birth to *Balsamar* was funded by the Dutch Technical Mission. This project stated that the land and assets of the cooperative were to be used by any peasant organization that followed the spirit of empowerment and self-government envisioned in the initial project. (Aparicio, 2009, p. 109).

<sup>92</sup>Interview ID. 9, March 2014.

<sup>93</sup>Interview ID. 11, March 2014.

call “collective efficacy” (Klandermans, 2013). In contrast to the experience of San Carlos, were respondents highlighted the costs rather than the benefits of previous experiences of collective action, where the experience of a strong civil movement that met harsh repression undermined residents of the municipality with a negative belief about the efficacy of collective action (see Chapter 7), villagers in SJA underscored how the memories of collective action incentivized them to find a collective response to the changing dynamics of war.

The fact that the FARC played an important role in helping the peasantry to organize in both direct and indirect ways, has been, to be sure, costly for the PCSJA. Both the forces of the state and the paramilitaries have taken advantage of this past to stigmatize the Peace Community. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this came from ex-President Álvaro Uribe, following a massacre against the Peace Community in February 2005. In that occasion, he declared: “...there are good people in this community of San José de Apartadó. But, as people that have lived there have noted, some of its leaders, sponsors and supporters have been seriously denounced, by people that have lived there, of supporting FARC and of trying to use the Community to protect this terrorist organization.”<sup>94</sup> It is a fact that the FARC and the members of the PCSJA share a common past, in which many peasants that became members of the Community cooperated with the rebels in different ways and some might have even join their ranks as part-time militias. It is also a fact that members of the community, including some of its most notorious leaders, actively supported and even worked for the UP, a left-wing political party closely linked to the FARC. These links, and a past in which they coexisted with the rebels for many years, has made particularly hard for the Community to credibly signal its neutrality. However, as the treatment of noncooperation (and civilian agency in general) stresses here, the roles that civilians come to play during war are not fixed; on the contrary, they tend to switch several times over the course of war. Therefore, we can perfectly see the same person or group of people moving from cooperation to noncooperation; a move that might imply both attitudinal and behavioral transformations. In this sense, noncooperation can perfectly evolve among people that used to cooperate with an armed organization.

### **External Network of Support**

The leaders that were available the associational spaces that existed in San José in early 1997 in spite of violence came from within the community and evolved through deep local experiences of collective action and community work. However, external actors as well played a central role in shaping villagers’ capacity for collective action. Both before its initial Declaration in March 1997, and especially during the process of consolidation during the first nine months of existence, a network of local, national and even international actors provided villagers with material and nonmaterial resources that were key in their mobilization effort.

### **Local Actors**

Local actors, that were external to the community but interacted with villagers on a regular basis, accompanied and advised peasants in the process of exploring alternative ways to cope with

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<sup>94</sup> “Por qué Santos pide perdón a la Comunidad de Paz”, *Verdad Abierta.*, 10.12.2003. Available online [<http://www.verdadabierta.com/victimas-seccion/los-resistentes/5065-por-que-santos-pide-perdon-a-la-comunidad-de-paz>]

their situation. Among these actors, the first and perhaps most important one, was the Catholic Church. In fact, the mere concept (and label) of “peace community” came from it. Already in 1995, in the neighboring municipality of Turbo, Monsignor Tulio Duque publicly promoted the creation of peace communities as a strategy of civilian self-protection (Hernandez Delgado, 1999, p. 72). None of the members of the community I spoke to reported being aware of this. However, almost all of them remember Monsignor Isaías Duarte Cancino, the then Bishop of Apartadó, as one of the initial instigators of the PCSJA. Apparently influenced by the Liberation Theology and the experience of the Basic Ecclesial Communities in places such as Brazil (Aparicio, 2009, p. 107), Duarte Cancino had proposed the formation of a neutral zone in SJA already in 1996.

The Church came to the process by initiative of the peasants themselves. After having discussed among themselves what to do for several days, even months according to some accounts, some villagers decided to reach out the Church for support. Priest Leonidas Moreno received peasants in that occasion at the the Diocese of Apartadó:

I remember well when peasants from La Unión arrived in my office to ask me what do to, where to go. They told me that the Army had gone to them, said that although they had no issues with them ... they had to leave within 15 days, otherwise the slasher [*mochacabezas*] will come and get rid of everybody ... They said that they had asked the rebels what to do and their reply was that the time to join their ranks had arrived.<sup>95</sup>

When asked about the decision to seek support from the Church, Rafael recognized that, despite being resolute about staying put and refusing to cooperate with *any* of the parties in contest, they were not clear about how to do it and thought that the Church could help in this regard. He was right. Given that within the local Church some people, such as Tulio Duque and Duarte Cancino, had already thought about possible ways to respond to the situation, the Church had some clearer ideas of how to go about it and eventually proposed the idea of setting up a “peace community”. With time, the Church not only became a key actor supporting the peasants, but also a place where people met more or less regularly. Counting on this meeting place proved central to deliberate and coordinate actions, especially for those who came to lead the process of setting up the Peace Community. The founding fathers recalled that if it was not in the health center of San José, it was in the Church where they had the foundational discussions to set up the Community. Living under the constant surveillance of multiple actors, counting with some places where they could meet more or less clandestinely, gave them the space they needed to push the project forward.

Another local actor that villagers remember as key in the process is Gloria Cuartas. Representing a multi-party consensus, Cuartas became the Mayor of Apartadó in January 1995. As she explained to me, the political project they put into practice during her three years in office focused mainly on accompanying victims and denouncing violence at the national and international levels. In doing so, she forged coalitions with other actors that eventually became key players in the network that came to support the Community. Cuartas stressed that she could not do much to support the process as she could not work directly with villagers as she was representing a state that victimized civilians.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, several of my interviewees

<sup>95</sup>Cited in Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 381)

<sup>96</sup>Interview ID. 125, September 2015.

recall her role in harnessing humanitarian assistance for the displaced population in San José as vital for the emergence of the Peace Community. For example, some interlocutors underscored that when they were practically confined in San José's populated center due the paramilitary roadblock in *Tierra Amarilla*, Cuartas was one of the few who could enter the village, with the ICRC, to bring food supplies and medicines.

Not many villagers seemed aware, however, of Cuartas' role in linking peasants in San José to external actors that would not have supported the community as they did without her brokering work. As in several other instances of contentious collective action, brokerage was a central mechanism at work in the emergence of noncooperation in San José (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001). Documents found in Apartadó's archive and interviews with members of national and international organizations that support the Peace Community, made Cuartas' brokerage role apparent. In early 1995, as part of the task of investigating and denouncing what was going on in Apartadó, she created the Commission for the Verification of Violent Actions in Urabá.<sup>97</sup> Some actors who took part in this Commission, such as national NGO's based in Bogotá, became aware of the situation in the village and came to actively and closely support the process.

### National Actors

Amon these actors, CINEP and CIJP, and in particular two individuals working for these organizations, Javier Giraldo, a Jesuit priest, and Eduar Lancheros, a human rights defender, played a definitive role in the emergence of the Peace Community. Cuartas and the Commission made the encounter between CINEP/CIJP possible. She described the arrival of these actors in the following terms:

When the Peace Community was created, Priest Giraldo and Eduar were already present. They arrived as part of a very deep conversation we were having about what was going on in the area, especially about the claims against Rito Alejo ... CINEP proposed a regional humanitarian agreement and as part of this process we analyzed the creation of a commission to investigate what had happened in the area, like a Truth Commission without judicial consequences.<sup>98</sup>

Cuartas considers this as a "great moment of encounter", as Giraldo and Eduar arrived precisely when San José villagers needed them the most. San José had lost most their main community leaders to violence. According to records she kept as a Mayor, during her time in office, around 1.200 people were killed. When we discussed these records with some detail, she stressed that those who had the capacity for political action – including many peasant and community leaders – were the first to be killed and were clearly overrepresented. These data are consistent with the several testimonies that noted that when the ACCU first arrived were selective in their targeting, killing and displacing leaders of peasant associations – including the JACs – and trade unions.

As original documents from both CINEP and CIJP reveal, by the time they got in touch with villagers in San José, they were already working to defend and protect civilians in warzones in

<sup>97</sup>Some archival secondary material found in Apartadó refer to this Commission as the "Comité de Vigilancia Epidemiológica en Violencia". This was probably the official name, here I stick to the wording used by Cuartas in our interviews.

<sup>98</sup>Interview ID. 125, September 2015.

other regions of the country. This meant that, when they arrived in San José, they had experience in dealing with communities exposed to war, especially those suffering from displacement. Upon their arrival, these organizations worked through the few JACs that were still operating in the village. Even if they were external to the community, this gave them legitimacy within the community and allowed them to build on existing resources to channel their support more effectively. Existing associational spaces were also functional for getting the most form actors who wanted to support the peasants.

In was in these spaces that these organizations gauged civilian intentions. For example, they learnt that those who were living in San Jose's populated center were resolute to stay put and had discussed alternatives that could make this possible. They also identified existing (or potential) leadership with whom to work and give form to the possibility of declaring a Peace Community, which they knew about from the Diocese.<sup>99</sup>

When these organizations came to support the process, San Jos'e had already lost most of its leaders. Therefore, one of their central contributions was to work with those who were more active in dealing with community affairs and strengthen existing leadership and forge new ones. They conducted workshops in leadership and discussed with villagers the ways in which the idea of neutrality could be put in practice. In this sense, they built on the skills that some villagers had from previous experiences of collective action and compensated for what was lacking as a result of the new round of violence the village was going through. In doing so, as villagers repeatedly highlighted, Eduar and Giraldo themselves became vivid examples of what a leader should be. The results of this work were noteworthy. As many respondents noted, every member of the first Internal Council of the Peace Community received formal and/or informal training from these two organizations. It is in this sense that Cuartas highlights that the existing "organizing energy" of San José found in these two organizations the "echo" they needed to mobilize into collective action.<sup>100</sup> The network that was being forged between peasants and these national actors, as with the emergence of several indigenous movements in Latin America, provided spaces within which peasants could strengthen existing leadership skills or gain new ones (see, Yashar, 2005, p. 73)

In addition to providing the community with leadership skills, they also played a crucial role in encouraging participation and validating the process. This was especially crucial when many of the initial signatories of the March Declaration left San José – including historical leaders such as Pineda – as a result of armed groups' violence against members of the Community. When they saw the immediate response of armed groups to their Declaration, hope began to lessen and fear to increase. Many villagers were seriously doubting the odds of surviving as noncooperators. Even external actors that supported villagers decision to stay put began to consider that displacement was perhaps the most prudent response. At this critical juncture, when shuttering the campaign seemed to be a real possibility, villagers asked the CIJP to provide constant accompaniment as a condition to continue with their struggle. After intense discussions, Eduar accepted.<sup>101</sup> This gave the process the momentum it needed and helped to create an encouraging environment. This second round of displacement selected the most committed, and, with the support of the CIJP that stated "if residents want to stay, then were staying too", the

<sup>99</sup>See, also, Hernandez Delgado, (1999, p. 76).

<sup>100</sup>Interview ID. 125, September 2015.

<sup>101</sup>Interview ID. 36, May 2014.

Community grew stronger.

Finally, one more national organization that played an important role in the process of emergence was National Association of Solidarity (ANDAS). I first heard of this organization through Consuelo, as it was one of the many collective enterprises in which she got involved before setting up the PCSJA. When asked about her job at ANDAS, Consuelo described it in the following way:

I was one of the secretaries writing the statements that ANDAS would send to Amnesty International ... Our job in ANDAS was to denounce what was going on in the region. We visited the hamlets, check on peasants ... ask them what they thought about the situation and ask them what could we do. When the [1997] displacement took place, we reached the Red Cross to get some aid for the people that displaced [to the populated center of San José].<sup>102</sup>

I then learned that when villagers first reached the Church, they also got in touch with a regional chapter of ANDAS. This organization had already a relationship with peasant leaders of San José. When peasants occupied the Coliseum of Apartadó in June 1996, ANDAS supported the process by demanding high-level officials of the national government, including the then President Ernesto Samper (1994–1995), to take measures regarding the situation in the village.<sup>103</sup> Although Consuelo mentioned that ANDAS provided some training and provided survival goods to peasants during the 1997 displacement, the role of this organization was recalled by members of the Community mostly as one of “blaming and shaming”. ANDAS made several efforts to voice nationally and internationally what was happening in San José, denouncing before not only the government, but also international organizations such as Amnesty International (AI), the acts of violence of both state and non-state armed groups.

### International Actors

The work of both ANDAS and the Commission created during Cuartas administration, gave San José visibility beyond borders. Given the small size and remoteness of SJA, the international visibility that the PCSJA has gained is quite surprising. Not only have several international NGOs supported the process, but the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has requested the adoption of precautionary measures on its behalf and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) has requested provisional measures for its members.<sup>104</sup> This international visibility was largely promoted in the late 1990s by different international humanitarian actors that landed in Urabá responding to the alarming levels of violence (especially displacement) that the region was experiencing. The intense activity of international actors in the region has let some observers to refer to it as the “globalization of confrontation” (González, 2011, p. 24).

However, as the focus of this study is on emergence, referring to the international actors that provided villagers with some extra capacity to mount noncooperation in 1996 and 1997 as part of that “globalization of confrontation” would be misleading. Most of this upward scale shift

<sup>102</sup>Interview ID. 11, March 2014.

<sup>103</sup>Colombia Support Network. Online Archive. Available: [<http://colombiasupport.net/archive/199607/andas.html>]

<sup>104</sup>See 1997 IACHR measures online: [<http://www.cidh.org/medidas/1997.sp.htm>] and the Resolution of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, of the 24th of November 2000.

(Tarrow, 2005) took place well after its creation and many of the actors who have been central for the sustenance of the Community over time were not in place when the Community emerged.<sup>105</sup> However, as has been outlined already, there were some international actors onboard before its creation thanks to the brokerage effort of different local and national supportive individuals and organizations. A clear example is the ICRC, which was part of Cuartas' Commission and had links with ANDAS, as was denouncing violence internationally in coalition with AI.

In fact, the founding members of the Peace Community recall the role of the ICRC as particularly relevant. As Rafael told me, they were essential in two different moments. First, during the 1997 displacement, their humanitarian assistance, mainly in the form bringing in food and medicine supplies, was very important. Second, their physical accompaniment was essential during the consolidation process. Leaders of the Community initially thought that the physical accompaniment of the Church (mainly national nuns) was going to be enough to protect them from armed groups' violence via increasing reputational costs (see Mahony and Eguren, 1996). However, with over 30 members killed in the first months, they realized that to be effective accompaniment needed to be international. Thus, this role was taken over, informally as it went beyond their mandate, by the ICRC.

To be sure, these network of actors contributed significantly to the PCSJA's social organization and coordination. In addition to concrete organizational assets, such as survival goods and training in leadership, it created what movement scholars have called a "supportive group environment" (Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina, 1982), providing villagers with confidence and hope in the whole process during the periods they needed it the most.

With so many external actors actively participating in the process, it was natural that at different junctures the work of these external actors was crowding out, to some extent, that of local residents. For example, as some leaders recognized, many villagers felt that in the drafting of the first version of the declaration the external actors took over and they did not feel fully represented in the text.<sup>106</sup> However, in the period of consolidation that followed (March 1997 – December 1997), local leaders took a more active and autonomous role and amended the Declaration in the nine-month anniversary of the Community. This dynamic relationship between peasants and these external actors, reveal that even when highly embedded in the community, they cannot be reduced to one another (Yashar, 2005, p. 73). Moreover, it makes apparent that even when working together, the campaigns that emerge might well have different organizational identities and goals than the networks on which they build and, therefore, they can sever their relations and even criticize some of aspects of them or the work they are doing.

Since then, as Cuartas noted, the Internal Council had set clear limits to external supportive actors. When asked about the balance between the grassroots process and the role of external actors, she expressed that, in her view, there were two complimentary realities:

Without the organizational strength of the people and without that history [of collective action] they came from, the process would have not prospered, as it was actually the case of other communities where the Father [Javier Giraldo] participated.

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<sup>105</sup>For a more detailed treatment of the upward scale-shift (Tarrow, 2005) of the PCSJA, see Masullo, (2012, 2015, Chap. 5).

<sup>106</sup>Interview ID. 36, May 2014.

But at some point the power of the community met the support of the accompaniment and, I think, there was a fusion that allowed their success.<sup>107</sup>

## 5.5 Two Control Cases: Being selected out of violence

To get the main settlement of the PCSJA from the city of Apartadó one takes a collective jeep know as *chivero*. Each time that I took a *chivero* during my first trip in and out the community, I sat next to at least one *indígena*. They always hop off/on a few kilometers before/after La Holandita. After getting deeper knowledge of the village, I learnt that there was an Emberá indigenous *resguardo* (Reservation) in the hamlet of Las Playas. This indigenous group has been there since the 1950s, did not leave its hamlet during war or join the Peace Community, and still survived.<sup>108</sup>

This was surprising, as the dominant narrative I was getting from San José villagers stressed that by the time of the Declaration virtually everybody had been killed or had fled the village. This was what both the members of the Peace Community and the few individuals that lived around but did not join the campaign would say when asked about the history of the village. In contrast to this view, I also learned that a small community of about six evangelical families living in the neighboring hamlet of La Balsa neither left nor joined the Peace Community. I set myself to understand how these two groups managed to do so. If my theory was right, at least one of the central factors that I singled out as explaining the emergence of noncooperation should be absent.<sup>109</sup> After conducting research with these two communities, I found out that one condition that I proposed as necessary for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation was in fact absent: While residents of these two communities were well aware of the shifts in territorial control the village was going through (C1) and of the spike of violence against civilians that was taking place (C2), they perceived that this violence was not against them (at least not to the extent as it was against other villagers).

As Map in Figure 5.3 shows, Las Playas and La Balsa are located only few kilometers away from the populated center of San José, where in 1997 the PCSJA was born. Given this geographical proximity, it was reasonable to expect that residents of Las Playas and La Balsa were swept into the same civil war dynamics that led to the evolution of a desire for noncooperation in neighboring hamlets and lived through the similar social and political processes that gave villagers the capacity to mount the Peace Community. In other words, there were good reasons to expect that noncooperation was a real possibility for residents of these two hamlets and, therefore, they could constitute informative negative cases. Not only is the fundamental “inclusion criteria” (Mahoney and Goertz, 2004) met, but “cognitive unavailability” (Kalyvas and Sanchez-Cuenca, 2005) also cannot explain the fact they did not join the PCSJA.

All three groups were living in the same territory when the first JACs were created, when

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<sup>107</sup>Interview ID. 125, September 2015.

<sup>108</sup>A *resguardo*, a system of communal landholdings, is the most important institution that regulates the lives of indigenous populations in Colombia. Emberá is an indigenous ethnic and linguistic group with presence in Panamá, Colombia and Ecuador. In Colombia, most of the Emberá people are concentrated in the Departments of Chocó and Antioquia, but there are also communities in Córdoba, Caldas, Risaralda, Valle and Nariño. (OIA, 2001)

<sup>109</sup>I spoke to many of the few individuals that were leaving in the area of influence of the PCSJA but were not part of it. My original plan was to get leverage from this group of nonparticipants as a control observation to straighten confidence on my theory. However, I quickly learned that most of them, in fact, left San José at some point and returned later, when the situation had improved.

San José was founded as a village through a land invasion, when trade unions linked to the banana industry began to channel villagers demands and helped organize the peasantry, and when the UP became the main political force in the village. Moreover, they all were exposed to the same civil war dynamics. All three groups went through a long period of rebelocracy by the same Front of the same armed organization. FARC's Front V area of influence covered the entire village of San José and even extended to other parts of the Abibe Mountains. Moreover, all witnessed the sudden arrival of the same paramilitary group, the ACCU, and experienced implications of living in a contested zone. For example, all went through the same situation of confinement for several months in 1996/1997, as the paramilitary roadblock was situated right next to La Balsa, at the beginning of the only the entrance to San José (see black flag Map in Figure 5.3). In addition, all of them witnessed the increase of violence against civilians that followed the arrival of the paramilitaries. Stories about dead bodies lying down next to the unpaved road and fierce attacks between the FARC and the forces of the state in the village were as common in my interviews with people from the PCSJA as from Las Playas and La Balsa.

However, from the very first interviews it became clear that the Emberá people perceived this violence in a different way. They felt that that they were “selected out” from this violence, at least to some extent. Interviewees noted that some members of their community had been victims of violence. They stressed several instances of non-lethal violence, related for example to reduce mobility and confident, but only shared with me some concrete incidents of lethal violence. Although in their accounts violence against them was not as vividly stressed as in testimonies from peasants inhabiting other hamlets, it became clear not only that they were well aware of the violence taking place in the village, but also that they were indeed victimized.<sup>110</sup> In spite of this, they had the perception that violence was not directly against them, which in turn led them to believe that there was no need to join the effort of the peasants in San José or mount a noncooperation campaign of their own.

When probed to elaborate on this perception, some residents of Las Playas explained that the internal regulations that govern Emberá life, when respected, yield protection. To be sure, there is some dose of mysticism in this belief. However, an analysis of documents containing their internal norms that were handed to me by a social worker in Las Playas, made apparent that their regulations include norms of behavior that can in fact short-circuit the logic of violence and protect compliers from becoming victims of violence – or, at least, lead them believe that they are likely to be shielded.

Their regulations encompass explicit mechanisms to deal with issues of order and security, as well as to manage and resolve internal conflicts. They involve the presence of indigenous guards that seek to protect and preserve their culture and customs, and control closely the entry of people external to the community to their territory. Although mechanisms to resolve internal conflicts have been always in place in the community, as this is one of the central functions of the *jaibaná*, this task was highly formalized with the constitution of the Reservation in the 1980s. As an authority dealing with these issues told me, while before the establishment of the Reservation it could happen that some internal disputes involving members of Las Playas were discussed outside of the community, for example in the JAC, after 1980s turning to a third party to solve a conflict became increasingly uncommon. This was in stark contrast with the modus operandi of

<sup>110</sup>Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that, according to the Commission organized by Cuartas, violence did affect less the Emberá.

most of the peasants in the village, for whom it was normal to turn FARC to solve community, family or personal conflicts during the times of rebel hegemonic control.

Their regulations also prohibit members of the community to speak about the doings or whereabouts of other members of the community. This becomes especially strict when it comes to people outside the Reservation and is coupled with monitoring and enforcing mechanisms. In fact, as an authority of the Reservation told me, some residents of Las Playas have been punished because of “mingling” with armed actors and some have been even expelled. In the fog of war, where denunciations and false denunciations become a central vehicle of civilian victimization (Kalyvas, 2006), this simple rule became crucial as it reduced information flows out of the Reservation and minimized gossip and false accusations.

Until the early 1980s Las Playas was not yet a reservation and the community was not as organized as they are today. Although they had their authorities (the *jaibaná*), my interlocutors recognized that they still relied on existing local institutions to govern (some of) their own affairs and, thus, had more interaction with the political and social organizations of the area. This was the case both for the PCC, especially its youth chapter, and later on the JAC.

However, in 1981, in an effort to strengthen their organization, they established themselves as a Reservation and defined their authorities better, formalizing an indigenous council (*Cabildo*). With this change, they committed to work more decisively towards autonomy and self-rule and upheld the mandate that the Reservation is in charge of the social and economic development of the community. This took place precisely when FARC was establishing itself as the ruler in almost every corner of the village. Acting on the principle of indigenous autonomy, they withdrew their participation from local institutions and organizations, and began to rely almost exclusively on their own institutions and mechanisms. As an Emberá authority put it, “In 1982, to get organized, we left behind the politicians, the peasants and the JACs. We did not want to have a decision-maker other than us anymore.”<sup>111</sup>

At that time it was hard to foresee the course that the trajectories of war in the village were going to take. Nevertheless, this decision turned to be crucial when, in the first half of the 1990s, the ACCU challenged FARC’s control of San José and used participation in local organizations and associations as a proxy to target FARC collaborators. As the Emberá people did not take active part in any organization and had no leadership in them after 1981, they were somehow spared apart from the dynamics of the war. On the one hand, FARC, as in other areas of the country (e.g., Cauca), did not consider them as their main constituency and, thus, put less pressure on them to obey their rules and rely on their institutions. Compared to peasants, indigenous people were “no body” (*un nadie*) to the rebels, they “weren’t their strong social base.”<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, their decision to stay away from the social and political processes of the village took place before the creation of the UP, which became the main left-wing political force in the village and participation in it was used by the paramilitaries to infer loyalties (Steele, 2017). Therefore, when members of the *resguardo* saw an increase in violence in San José, even if many suffered its consequences, they perceived it as being primary against peasants that were associated with FARC or the UP; not again the indigenous people.

Testimonies show that this in fact shaped their threat perceptions and subsequently the choices they made. Even if this was not what they were looking for when they decided to organize

<sup>111</sup>Cited in Salazar Posada, (1999, p. 161)

<sup>112</sup>Testimony cited in Hernandez Delgado and Salazar Posada, (1999, p. 179).

into a *resguardo*, they became aware that that decision, compared to peasants from other hamlets, situated them in a different position with regards to the dynamics of war in San José. In the words of an indigenous leader: “We have a difference and an advantage [compared to peasants, for example] ... we are part of an ethnic group and others [armed groups] know that they cannot put us in the same basket in this conflict. In this war this is what has saved us and it has helped us a lot.”<sup>113</sup> Residents from Las Playas were well aware, perhaps even more than peasants from other hamlets, that violence was not killing people at random. They seemed aware that armed groups were targeting entire groups and that, given their indigenous conditions, but also their own recent history, they were not part of that group. Perceiving themselves as being excluded from the group that was most under threat, they had less pressure to displace (Steele, 2017) and less reasons to join a campaign of noncooperation in search of safety. In fact, some respondents noted that joining the Peace Community was seen by their authorities as even more dangerous.

This is not to say that residents of Las Playas did not experience armed groups intervention or violence. My informants noted, for example, that rebels not only used their lands to transit from one place to another, but were also repeatedly found to have slept overnight by their *tambos* (indigenous huts). Moreover, they also suffer direct threats and lethal violence. For example, as several residents recalled, the community’s health promoter was once threatened, apparently by FARC members and three of their members were found killed. When trying to understand whether these events altered their perception about targeting, I found out that it did not as members thought that it happened because some people of the community did not respect the regulations and provided armed groups with (false) information about their fellows.

Indigenous regulations and mechanisms play an essential role in the explanation of why residents of Las Playas did not join the PCSJA. Moreover, in making sense of why they survived, residents of Las Playas give vital importance to the fact that as indigenous populations they are different from the peasants of other hamlets in San José. This provides grounds to reasonably think that it is an “indigenous effect” that is doing the work (in terms of explaining the absence of the outcome) rather than a different perception of targeting. Although this is undoubtedly a central part in the story of Las Playas, the experience of La Balsa, provides extra leverage to my argument about perception.

The families that stayed in La Balsa were not indigenous. They were as peasant as all the others that joined the PCSJA or displaced in the mid-1990s. However, their religious affiliation set them apart. Unlike most peasants of San José, who were (at least nominally) Catholic, these families were part of an evangelic group. As an informant explained to me, being part of this group kept them away from many processes that were taking place in the village. They did not identify with most of the movements that shaped the social context in the village. As with residents of Las Playas, apart from having some interaction with the JAC, they never took active part in unions or political movements/parties, including the UP. As a resident told me, the only group they took part in was one for reading the Bible. To a large extent, they were “apolitical”, as a villager put it.<sup>114</sup>

To be sure, “faith in god” played a central role in shaping their perceptions of targeting and their choices. However, having been as uninvolved as possible in the mobilization processes and political dynamics of the village, and thus not feeling a central part of this social context, made

<sup>113</sup>Cited in Salazar Posada, (1999, p. 181)

<sup>114</sup>Author’s Field Notes, July 2015.

them believe that the violence that was taking part around them was not necessarily against them. As the Emberá did, these families felt that it was safer to continue living as they had done so far than to get involved in the Peace Community.

To be sure, these are no fully clean negative cases. Readers could argue, for example, that these communities, by not getting involved in the social and political processes of the village, were already practicing a form noncooperation. In this view, more than negative cases, they would constitute positive ones. This could be especially argued for the indigenous people of Las Playas. However, while establishing a Reservation implied some elements of what I call here civilian noncooperation, their experience still provides extra leverage to the argument. Two elements are worth highlighting in this regard. First, their decision to establish a Reservation and withdraw from the social and political processes of the village was fully independent from the dynamics of war. Second, their commitment to remain as uninvolved as possible and to avoid getting involved in existing movements and organizations (armed or unarmed), reflected an indigenous commitment to self-governance and autonomy rather than a refusal to cooperate with armed groups *per se*.

I also reckon that the treatment I give to this case differs from standard interpretations of how indigenous communities have responded to war in the Colombian scholarship – especially in the Department of Antioquia. Existing work has focused on entire indigenous groups (e.g., Nasa or Emberá), aggregating the individual experiences of different communities in departmental or regional level studies (e.g., indigenous peoples of Chocó or Antioquia), or in larger organizations that represent indigenous peoples (e.g., National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) or the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC)).<sup>115</sup> This degree of aggregation obscures important nuances in the way concrete indigenous communities read their own processes of organization and development *vis á vis* the armed confrontation taking place in and around their territories.

Las Playas is a case in point. To the best of my knowledge, existing studies have only analyzed it (and not explicitly) as part of the experience of the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia (OIA) (e.g., Salazar Posada, 1999; Ramirez, 1997; OIA, 2001). The OIA is a large organization that aggregates multiple reservations located in the department of Antioquia funded in 1985. It comprises around 16.000 people, of various ethnic groups (Zeny, Tule and different types of Emberá) and covers an area of about 250.000 hectares of land (OIA, 2001). Through this organization, in 1994 the indigenous communities of Antioquia made an explicit declaration of active neutrality. While the community in Las Playas was then (and still today) part of this organization and was well aware of this declaration, aggregated accounts of the OIA do not allow to see the different views and experiences of the multiple communities and reservations it comprises. When asked about this declaration the authorities of Las Playas expressed that for them it did not represent any braking point, as for what was central was the process of organization that had began in the 1980s independently of the dynamics of war. Moreover, as with other indigenous communities in Urabá, for example those from the Bajo and Medio Atrato (González, 2011, p. 27), for leaders in Las Playas, taking that declaration as a breaking point, would have made them an actor of the war when what they preferred was to exercise their autonomy on the basis of their internal mechanisms.

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<sup>115</sup>To be sure, there are exceptions. See, for example Vásquez' (2005) study of a Reservation in the Córdoba.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the emergence of unilateral noncooperation, the most confrontational form of noncooperation considered in this study. By tracing in detail the process by which the campaign emerged, it showed how the conditions outlined in the proposed theory obtain. However, the analytical narrative aimed to go beyond the statics of identifying conditions. The chapter sought to specify the concrete and dynamic ways in which these conditions unfolded within the particularities of the case. In this sense, for example, more than in the following chapters, I emphasized on the workings of external actors of support in the creating associational space and strengthening existing leadership that allowed peasants to organize when opportunity for action were narrow and constraints numerous.

This added dynamism to the explanation. Not only did it help to identify concrete cognitive and relational mechanisms that linked the specified conditions to the outcome (that, as we will see, are constant across different cases), but also allowed accounting for change over time both in the dynamics of war and the choices civilians made. For example, the move from a situation of FARC's rebelocracy where most people cooperated with the insurgents (in different ways and to varying degrees) to a campaign of noncooperation with every faction would have not been possible in the absence of cognitive mechanisms that transformed the beliefs villagers held of the rebels. Similarly, the brokering work of the Catholic Church and Gloria Cuartas, linked peasants in the remote area of San José to national (and even international) actors willing to support them and that, otherwise, would have likely remained unconnected. This, which resulted from a clear relational mechanism – brokerage, proved to be definitive in providing the community with the capacity to mount a campaign of noncooperation that is highly demanding in terms of coordination and organization.

Finally, through a paired comparison with a control observation where noncooperation did not emerge, this chapter zoomed in into the *necessary* nature of one of the conditions proposed in the theory: the perception of targeting (C3). The theory passed the definitive test of this comparison, as it proved useful to set apart positive from negative cases. (If conditions were individually necessary, for the theory to have real explanatory power, at least one condition had to be absent.) The last part of the presented the experience of two communities, located in the very same village of San José, which for different reasons perceived that the increased levels of violence emerging from the shifting balance of territorial control was not against them. With this perception, residents did not have enough motives to join the noncooperation campaign that was emerging in the village, neither to organize a campaign of their own. As villagers from these communities noted, to protect themselves from violence it was safer to not engage in noncooperation.

This chapter showed in a clear way that historical allegiances of communities with armed groups play a central role in defining both the *when* and *where* of noncooperation. Even if all the other conditions obtain and communities have the capacity to act collectively, we should not expect noncooperation to emerge when an arriving armed group challenges the control of an established one in hamlets where communities did not have a close relationship with the latter. This is the case because collective violence (or the perception of it) is the type of targeting that is behind the evolution of a desire of noncooperation and collective targeting is more likely to take place in hamlets with historical allegiances. Beyond emergence, this crucial aspect is

likely to shape the trajectories and outcomes of noncooperation. For example, communities that have long cooperated with armed groups, participated in organizations and associations that are directly or indirectly associated with them, or where social processes have been supported by rebels, are those that will surely face harder obstacles to signal neutrality in credible ways and that are more likely to be stigmatized. This, to be sure, hinders their prospects of self-protection through noncooperation.



## 6

# Pacted Noncooperation

## 6.1 Introduction

PEASANT: Until today we have accompanied you, but from now on we have decided to face the situation ourselves ... from now on ... you won't demand more favors from us; food, transport, nothing like that ... we won't respond to your calls for political meetings ... you can fight against the army and the MAS [paramilitaries] if that's what you want, but leave us alone ... And if what you want is to kill us, do it right away.

FARC: We can't promise you anything, because there are people that give us orders. But we will try to present your proposals to the high ranks.<sup>1</sup>

This is a fragment of an exchange between a community leader and a mid-ranking officer of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). It comes from the first meeting that the peasants of El Carare held with the rebels in their attempt to launch a campaign of noncooperation based on dialogue and negotiation with each and every armed group present in the lands they inhabited. Following this first meeting, peasants met with representatives of FARC's Central High Command (*Estado Mayor*), the paramilitaries and the National Army. Through intense bargaining, they established, in 1987, the Peasant Worker Association of the Carare River (ATCC), a pioneer experiment of pacted noncooperation in Colombia.

In pacted forms of noncooperation, negotiation and dialogue with armed groups are the central devices for both the emergence and sustenance of a campaign. While in unilateral forms the rules of the game are defined by civilians alone and imply a radical break in civilian-combatant interactions, in pacted forms civilians establish and maintain an open and constant channel of communication with armed groups. Action here is direct, but comes after some form of tacit or explicit agreement with armed groups, or at a minimum, previous discussion of civilian intentions. The concrete mechanisms and institutions to advance noncooperation vary from campaign to campaign, but they commonly result from bargaining between the parts involved and many times are jointly designed and implemented. Notwithstanding this, these campaigns are premised on the non-negotiable choice of refusing to take sides and cooperate with any faction. The fact that there is some sort of negotiation between the parties and that dialogue is central for its advancement tempers the degree of direct confrontation involved in the campaign.

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<sup>1</sup>Cited in Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 331)

Civilians have engaged in campaigns of pactured noncooperation in several armed conflicts across the world. In Colombia alone, I identified 18 experiences in 9 out of the country's 32 departments (see Map in Figure 2.3 in Chapter 2). One illustrative example comes from the village of La Plaza in the Department of Bolívar. When both the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN) threatened to launch a massive attack in the town to challenge paramilitary control, instead of evacuating residents stayed put and, with the support of the diocese, organized a "Dialogue Commission" to negotiate with armed groups. After several meetings, they agreed that civilians were not going to support any armed faction and that armed actors were not going to fight in inhabited areas, use civilian houses as shelter, and/or abuse civilians in any way. Similarly, far away from Colombia, in the Congolese villages of Uvira and Kalehe, residents set up "peace committees" to persuade armed groups to put an end to violence. After negotiating for months, they reached an agreement that satisfied everyone and set up a system to monitor its implementation. These are some of those few islands of peace in a country deeply affected by war and violence (Autesserre, 2016).

In this chapter, I explore the emergence of this type of noncooperation in what is, to my best knowledge, the first campaign of the sort in the Colombian civil war: the ATCC. I show how a desire for noncooperation evolved from a situation of disorder created by the arrival of the Peasant Self-defense Groups of Magdalena Medio (ACMM), a paramilitary organization that was increasingly gaining strength in the region, to El Carare, one of FARC's strongholds in the department of Santander. With territorial control shifting between these two groups, violence against civilians became more frequent and noticeably more lethal. While the arriving paramilitaries targeted peasants for living in areas historically controlled by the insurgents, the rebels not only lost the capacity (or will) to protect villagers but also began accusing (and consequently targeting) them for facilitating the penetration of the paramilitaries into the region. Under such circumstances, those villagers who did not flee came to the realization that the only way to survive was to distance themselves from armed groups in the clearest way possible and engage in a collective strategy of self-protection. Building on existing community leadership, the Adventist Church and support from some regional governmental agencies, organized villagers addressed armed groups and negotiated ways to get their they right to live and work respected.

While the core of the chapter is devoted to tracing the process by which the ATCC emerged, as in the previous chapter, in the last section I follow the strategy of paired comparisons and contrast this process with that of La Caimana, a neighboring village where noncooperation failed to emerge. In the previous chapter the negative case provided extra leverage by illustrating how a preference for noncooperation did not emerge in two otherwise communities because residents did not perceived targeting as unavoidable (C3 of my argument). In this chapter, the focus shifts from the preference for noncooperation to the capacity for collective action. Despite having a preference for noncooperation and a concrete successful example to follow (the ATCC), villagers from La Caimana did not manage to set up a noncooperation campaign due to the absence of leaders. While the experience of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (PCSJA) emphasized previous experiences of collective action and the role of external actors, this chapter puts the accent on the role of leadership.

The empirical material was collected during several visits to El Carare in 2014 and 2015. The main data collection technique was interviewing. I conducted a total of 34 semistructured

individual and group interviews with residents of various hamlets, including members and nonmembers of the Association, its founding fathers and past and present community leaders. I also interviewed local government officials, as well as members of the police and the army. In addition, I spoke with demobilized members of non-state armed groups, including an area commander of FARC and some ex-paramilitaries that operated in the area. During my visits, I lived in the houses of residents, assisted meetings of the ATCC's Board, and accompanied its then president in his daily affairs. Therefore, a wealth of data comes also from informal conversations and participant observation that I recorded as field notes every evening.

Second, a very rich source of data was a local archive. Since its creation in 1987, the Association has kept crucial documentation in a dark and humid room in La India, the main settlement of the ATCC. I was lucky that my first visit to La India coincided with an effort of the National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH) to preserve and organize this archive. This allowed me to help the team of Memoria Histórica and a group of local high school students to classify all these documents according to date and content and store them in new, dry boxes. In doing so, I got a good overview of all the materials that remained (as well as of what was lost) to then review the most relevant files in detail. Third, I reviewed secondary literature, including a comprehensive report produced by the Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011, of which I was also able to access some of the primary material.<sup>2</sup> Finally, I combined and triangulated my qualitative data with existing quantitative data on violent events and violence against civilians collected by the Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC) and the CNMH.<sup>3</sup>

The structure of the chapter is as follows. In the next section, I describe the trajectories of war in La India from the colonization of El Carare region in the early 1960s to the emergence of the ATCC in the late 1980s. In doing so, I present a timeline I built with my interviewees highlighting the events they consider the most significant in how they experienced war. In Section 6.3, I introduce the ATCC campaign, detailing its pacted nature. In light of the different components of the proposed theory, in Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2, I explain how a preference for noncooperation evolved among villagers and where the capacity to collectively act upon this preference came from. Here, more than in other chapters, I stress the role of leadership in overcoming both collective and coordination problems. In Section 6.5, I introduce the control case of La Caimana, providing extra evidence for the centrality of leadership in shaping a given community capacity for collective action. Finally, I conclude by summing up findings and reflecting on the puzzle of why FARC negotiated noncooperation with the villagers of La India but refused to do so with the inhabitants of the neighboring hamlets of La Caimana.

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<sup>2</sup>I am deeply grateful to the CNMH, in particular its director, Gonzalo Sánchez, and one researcher, Gloria Restrepo, for giving me access to primary material, allowing me to help them in the process of setting up the archive and introducing me to the residents of La India. While still maintaining my independence as a researcher, I am convinced that this was the best way to access the community and gain trust.

<sup>3</sup>In 2013 Oliver Kaplan published a ground breaking article on the ATCC (Kaplan, 2013b). My analysis complements his work as our focus and goals are different. While his article seeks to assess whether the ATCC was successful in reducing levels of violence against its members, the objective of this chapter is to explain the process by which the Association emerged. Except from very informative personal exchanges we had about our understandings of the ATCC, our data are also different. We both rely on original fieldwork and his quantitative data was pooled from the Center for Investigation and Popular Education (CINEP) datasets and publications, and a report by the Equipo Nizkor. For this study I also examined these sources, but used them largely as secondary qualitative evidence to triangulate the primary data I collected in the field. A book by Kaplan, which includes a chapter on the ATCC, is in press at the moment of writing. This source was not reviewed for the elaboration of the present chapter. I enormously thank Oliver for his constant advice and encouragement.

## 6.2 Trajectories of War in El Carare

The ATCC is located in El Carare region, in the Department of Santander in north central Colombia. Members of the Association are peasants from several rural hamlets and most live in the village of La India, situated by the banks of the Carare River. Even if some associates live hours away from each other (walking distance or by boat), they commonly gather during weekends for the market in La India, where the Association still holds its regular board meetings. La India is located in the municipality of Landázuri. However, the closest municipal center, and its main urban point of reference, is the municipality of Cimitarra, about a 45-minute drive through an unpaved road that cuts across a dense forest of rubber and cacao trees, with coca plantations here and there. With the construction of the Cimitarra–La India road in the late 1960s, La India became the main populated center of El Carare and emerged as the main port for the trade of wood and plantain (see Map in Figure 6.1).

Until the late 1940s, vast portions of El Carare were vacant lands (*terrenos baldíos*). Its colonization only began when peasants from other areas of the country arrived after fleeing from *La Violencia* (1948–1958). However, by the early 1960s, most of El Carare, especially where La India sits today, still remained hidden in the wilderness. Julio, the head of the Adventist Church in the region and a founding father of the ATCC, was among the first to arrive in these lands. He recalls well that when he sat foot in what today is La India, back in 1961, “there were no boundary lines, it was all one jungle ... There were some houses in Santa Rosa [see Map in Figure 6.1] and a very small trail to Cimitarra along which we entered. We were the ones who built the road you see today [connecting La India to Cimitarra].”<sup>4</sup>

The people who colonized and populated El Carare came from different parts of the country, leading to a very diverse population makeup. Most came from the Department of Santander and engaged in agricultural work, growing corn, yucca, plantain and cacao. Others came from the Department of Antioquia (and to a lesser extent Caldas) and worked mostly in cattle ranching. Finally, a considerable number of Afro-Colombians, many connected to the Adventist Church that Julio established, came from the Department of Chocó. They worked in the lumber business or river-related activities, such as fishing, transporting people on canoes/long-tail boats (or *motores*, as known by locals), and *guaquería*.<sup>5</sup> Even if the colonization period was one of peaceful coexistence between these diverse population groups, their settlement patterns and main economic activities segmented the territory: Chocoanos settled by the banks of the river, while Santanderanos and Antioqueños did so in the south and north of the region respectively. These divisions, even if not always easy to manage, did not prevent the evolution of a cohesive community in the area.

As in San José, the weak presence of the state and the unregulated nature of the colonization process, pushed people to organize and take matters into their own hands. The first memories of communal work that villagers have date back to the challenges of colonizing the area and settling there. Among their main collective accomplishments, villagers highlight the establishment of the first community home (*hogar comunitario*) in La India and the construction of the Cimitarra–La India road. Through the Local Junta Council (JAC), settlers also took care of basic regulatory

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<sup>4</sup>Interview ID. 24, March 2014.

<sup>5</sup>*Guaquería* in this context refers to the unearthing and sale of emeralds and other gemstones from the bottom of the Carare river.

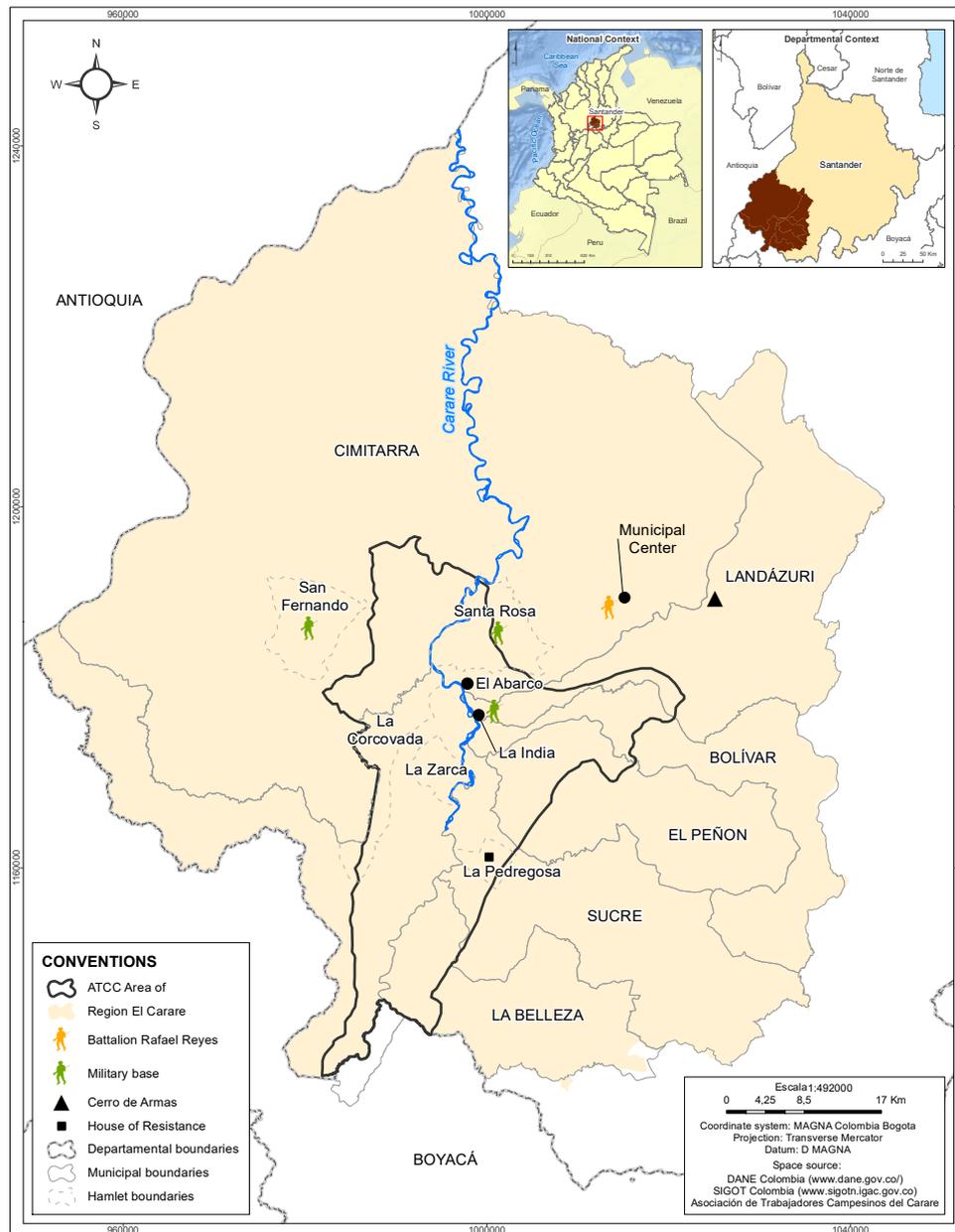


Figure 6.1: Map: ATCC in its Departmental Context

Source: Author's creation

functions, such as drawing land boundaries and solving community disputes, and demanded the provision of basic services such as water and electricity. In these processes, residents became close to each other despite marked differences of place origin and ethnicity.

Different organizations, from legal left-wing oppositional movements to armed insurgencies, came to fill in the governance void that the absence of the state left. First, in the 1950s, liberal guerrillas made El Carare their rearguard zone. Notorious rebel leaders, such as Rafael Rangel, settled in these lands. Later on, in the mid-1960s, in an effort to expand its presence from Puerto Boyacá to the entire Magdalena Medio and become a national guerrilla movement, the FARC arrived in El Carare. Consistent with the national pattern identified by Daly, (2012), FARC took advantage of the space the liberal guerrillas left after their demobilization and little after their arrival, in 1968, it created Front IV in these lands. Notoriously, the first FARC group to

TABLE 6.1 Timeline: War Trajectories in La India

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1966	•	Arrival of FARC (Front IV) in El Carare
1968	•	Arrival of ELN in El Carare
1975	•	Establishment of army's Battalion Reyes in Cimitarra
1975	•	Establishment of military base in La India
1978 – 1982	•	Imposition of the <i>carnetización</i> by the army
1981	•	300 peasants march to Cimitarra and camp there protesting against army's repression
1982	•	Arrival of the paramilitaries (the APB & ACMM) in Cimitarra
1983	•	August: Paramilitary massacre in the hamlet La Corcovada, 10-day incursion
1987	•	May 15 and 19: Ultimatum by the army and the paramilitaries
1987	•	May 21: First meeting with FARC (Front XI) in El Abarco
1987	•	May 21: <b>Creation of the ATCC</b>
1987	•	May 28: First meeting with army (and paramilitaries) in La India
1987	•	June 11: Second meeting with FARC (High Council – <i>Estado Mayor</i> )
1987	•	July 5: Second meeting with army – high-level officers
1987	•	December: FARC's assault on Saúl Castañeda, ATCC's secretary
1989	•	January: FARC's High Council ratifies agreements
1990	•	February 26: Paramilitary massacre of ATCC's three main leaders and journalist Duzán in Cimitarra's municipal center
1991	•	February 5: Top Paramilitaries commanders (APB) ratify agreements in Puerto Boyacá

settle in the region emerged in the exact same place where Rangel had one of its main groups, the *Cerro de Armas* (see Map in Figure 6.1) (A. Vargas, 1992, p. 83).

To penetrate the area, FARC tapped into the work advanced by the Communist Party, present in El Carare since 1958, and rapidly managed to harness villager support. Throughout the 1970s, the rebels expanded notoriously: Front IV went from 40 members in the early 1970s to 268 in 1979 (of which at least 103 were armed) and then to 850 in 1982. In 1979 it split into several fronts and Front XI became in charge of El Carare. From its initial 150 members in 1981, by the time the ATCC emerged in 1987 Front XI had 400 (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011, pp. 92, 118). Throughout these years FARC's control became hegemonic: they had presence day and night and took care of almost every affair in the region, from public order to family disputes. They established a rebelocracy (Arjona, 2016b).<sup>6</sup>

Tomás, a founding member of the ATCC, while describing his arrival the region in 1973, provided a good sense of the extent of FARC's control at the time:

When I entered here [El Carare], to this port [La India], to this river [El Carare], I arrived in the same canoe with a group of *guerrilleros*. When they saw that there was a person that was not from here ... they came to me immediately and asked: "What about you?" "Who is recommending you?" "Who knows you?" They were in command ... I said: "I go to La Pedregosa [a hamlet in the village, see Map in Figure 6.1], I have a place there. I will settle there, I have a piece of land that is more or less ready to be colonized." They replied: "Ah, ok. Yes, you can and in these days we will visit you to explain what our movement about is all about to you, and stuff like that."<sup>7</sup>

The ELN also arrived in the region in the late 1960s. However, they never really managed to get hold of these lands, let alone to gain the hearts and minds of the population. A historical leader of this rebel organization recognized that entering and establishing in El Carare was not an easy task: "We arrived in a FARC zone ... where the peasants were already organized by the Communist Party so we had to change the door-to-door style we had to relate to our peasant base. The group of FARC we found was still militarily and politically weak, but there was good work by the Communist party."<sup>8</sup> Not only the Communists and FARC made things harder for the ELN. Shortly after the ELN arrived, they committed a massacre in Santa Rosa which stimulated a strong repressive response from the state and created deep discontent among the population. As a resident noted, "[p]eople discarded them [the ELN] because they sillily did a massacre and then a lot of people were captured. They had to leave because the peasants did not support them."<sup>9</sup> By the early 1970s they left the region. While the short period in which both rebel groups coexisted involved some clashes, villagers do not recall this period as violent. Confrontations were sporadic and rarely involved the peasantry.

Since the early years of colonization and until the mid-1970s, the presence of the forces of the state was sporadic and largely limited to the populated centers of La India and Santa Rosa.

<sup>6</sup>The periodization of the changes in territorial control that I present here is based on the testimonies I collected through interviews and the exercises conducted to build the Timeline presented in Table 6.1. This periodization is largely consistent with that of other researchers, in particular Hernandez (2004, pp. 323-326).

<sup>7</sup>Interview ID. 21, August 2014.

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, alias Gabino. Cited in Medina, (1996, p. 100)

<sup>9</sup>Cited in Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 317)

The army only entered El Carare decisively when FARC's hegemonic control in the rural areas coupled with the growing electoral success of the National Opposition Union (UNO) – a national coalition of left-wing forces – in Cimitarra's Municipal government.<sup>10</sup> Reacting to this situation, in 1975, the army established the Battalion Rafael Reyes in Cimitarra and, one year later, set up military bases in La India, San Fernando and Santa Rosa (see Map in Figure 6.1) (Garcia, 1996, p. 92).

The arrival of the army inaugurated a new period in the trajectories of war in La India (and El Carare more generally) that dramatically changed the life of civilians. Under the command of Colonel Néstor Espitia, the army launched a highly repressive counterinsurgency campaign. After many years of living under FARC's rebelocracy, villagers experienced a first period of military dispute between 1975 and 1982. To weaken the rebels, the army strategy was to target its social base through several repressive practices. The one that civilians recall and resent the most is what came to be known as *carnetización*. Villagers were required to carry an ID card, issued by the army, which allowed them to freely move in the area. The card, to grant free movement, had to be regularly updated at a local military base located in the airport – for many, hours away from home. Interviewee after interviewee highlighted that people were detained and tortured when updating this card, and if someone was found with an expired card, imprisonment for several days would follow. The frequency in which villagers had to update the card varied from person to person, and some had to do it more than once a week.

Tomás, who earlier gave a sense of the control FARC had when he arrived in La India in the early 1970s, shared with me his own experience with the *carnetización*. His testimony reveals how life had changed by the early 1980s:

TOMÁS: Between 1980 and 1981 I think I was detained more or less 100 times ... 200 times

I was detained in that airport. I had to go there and they would hit me with a stick.

They kicked you and hit you with a stick there.

ME: That many times!?

TOMÁS: Well, I had to update the *carnet* every three days. And they called me; they called me to beat me up.<sup>11</sup>

Along with this repressive practice, a campaign to intimidate peasants was launched. Under the name of “Democratic Armed Movement against the Insurgents” (*Movimiento Democrático Armado contra la Subversión*), flyers threatening peasants for collaborating with FARC were distributed in almost every rural hamlet. People did not know who the Movement was. Nonetheless, according to several testimonies and secondary sources (e.g., Equipo Nizkor, 2001b), the army's battalion and Colonel Espitia himself were behind it. This was, in fact, the first expression of paramilitarism that villagers of El Carare witnessed. However, it was not until 1982 that the paramilitary groups penetrated the region, giving birth to a second period of dispute (1982–1987).

<sup>10</sup>Left-wing movements and political parties began to gain support in the urban areas of El Carare, especially in Cimitarra, since the 1960s. Although still part of the dominant bipartisan system of the time, the first opposition movements to have any electoral success were the National Popular Alliance (ANAPO) and the Liberal Revolutionary Movement (MRL). Then, in the 1970s, the UNO became the main political force, a coalition that included opposition movements that were clearly outside of the bipartisan logic and some had links with rebel groups, such as the Colombian Communist Party (PCC), the Revolutionary Independent Labour Movement (MOIR) and the Broad Colombian Movement (MAC). In Cimitarra they won the majority in the Municipal Council (Equipo Nizkor, 2001b, n.p).

<sup>11</sup>Interview ID 21. August 2015.

Then, in the words of one peasant, the “paramilitaries did what the militaries could not do: kill people outright.”<sup>12</sup>

As FARC had done some decades before, the paramilitaries arrived in El Carare from the neighboring municipality of Puerto Boyacá. The main paramilitary groups that entered and operated in the region were the Self-defense Groups of Puerto Boyacá (APB) – referred by residents as the Death to Kidnappers (MAS), commanded by Arnubio Triana (alias “Botalón”) and the ACMM, commanded by Ramón Isaza (alias “El Viejo”). The goal of the paramilitaries was clear: clear the Magdalena Medio (MM) of insurgents just as they were doing in Puerto Boyacá, the “anti-subversive capital of Colombia”. If they were going to accomplish this task effectively, they had to attack the FARC in their strongholds. Consequently, a big part of their efforts concentrated in El Carare, beginning with the hamlet of La Corcovada, known for the historical presence and influence of both the PCC and the FARC (see Map in Figure 6.1). In August 1983 the paramilitaries irrupted in the hamlet with a military operation that lasted for 10 days. Displaying a repertoire of violence and a logic of targeting that was unknown to the peasants, the APB attacked both from the air and on the ground, killing eight civilians, stealing animals and destroying most of the houses. Following this incursion, the APB grew very quickly and, sharing power with the ACMM, the paramilitaries became the dominant actors in the region and established their main center of operations precisely in La Corcovada.

During the second period of dispute, the paramilitaries substituted the forces of the state as the central agents of repression. With the aim of controlling and surveilling the population, they replaced the *carnetización* with the creation of “self-defense juntas”, small groups of armed men spread out in several hamlets to closely monitor peasants’ behavior. The largely non-lethal violence civilians experienced during the period of dispute between the FARC and the army, with the arrival of the paramilitaries became increasingly lethal and the repertoire of action widened. Homicides, massacres and forced disappearances became more frequent. The project Colombia Nunca Más describes this change as a move “from kicks and club blows to bullets” (*de las patadas y los garrotazos a las balas*) (Equipo Nizkor, 2001a, n.p).

The paramilitaries strengthened their counter-insurgent campaign by cooperating with cattle ranchers, large land-owners and drug traffickers from the region. Tired of the extortive practices of FARC and with a wealth of economic resources, these local elites became the perfect counter-insurgent ally. In 1982 an association of wealthy individuals willing to defend their economic interests and protect themselves from extortion and kidnappings, the Association of Cattle Ranchers and Agricultural Producers of the Magdalena Medio (ACDEGAM), was created. ACDEGAM quickly became not only a vital source of financing for both the MAS and the ACMM, but also the non-militaristic, social and legal facade of the counterinsurgency strategy. By providing social services and club goods to affiliated peasants through a system of “communal shops”, it provided incentives for many villagers to switch sides and withdraw their support from FARC. As Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2011, p. 130) put it, ACDEGAM was “the gentle face of paramilitarism” in the region.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Interview ID. 65, August 2015.

<sup>13</sup>For the relationship between the ACMM and ACDEGAM, see “Autodefensas Campesinas del Magdalena Medio” *Verdad Abierta*, 15.10.08. Available online: [<http://www.verdadabierta.com/bloques-de-la-auc/420-autodefensas-campesinas-del-magdalena-medio>]; and “La máquina de guerra de Ramón Isaza” *Verdad Abierta*, 22.09.10. Available online: [<http://www.verdadabierta.com/justicia-y-paz/versiones/487-autodefensas-campesinas-del-magdalena-medio/2743-la-maquina-de-guerra-de-ramon-isaza>].

The arrival of the paramilitaries effectively challenged FARC's (already fractured) control of El Carare and curtailed considerably the rebels' popular support. However, while the paramilitaries first entered Cimitarra in 1982 and by 1983 they had gained control of some places, such as La Corcovada, in some other areas FARC managed to resist their advance. In places such as La India, the paramilitaries had to wait until 1985 to have permanent presence and their definitive incursion only took place in 1987. It was in this period, when the paramilitaries were advancing and the rebels were still resisting, that the ATCC emerged in La India.

### 6.3 Brokered Noncooperation in La India: the ATCC

On the 15th of May 1987, militaries and paramilitaries together convened peasants for a meeting in the main square of La India and delivered a clear message: villagers had to choose between joining them, joining the rebels, leaving the region or being killed. This remains in the collective memory of peasants as *the ultimatum* and is considered the main antecedent leading to the creation of the ATCC. Despite of the fear this credible threat generated, a group of about 12 community leaders held an almost permanent ad hoc assembly for about three days to analyze each of these options. After careful consideration, they came to the realization that there was *another* course of action: staying put without cooperating with any side. In the words of Tomás, they concluded that “No one will die; nor will people side with any armed group. We are from here, we are *colonos*, so they will respect us. We will be neutral ...”<sup>14</sup>

Instead of making a unilateral declaration of their choice, as we saw in the case of the PCSJA, villagers opted to address armed groups, inform them of their choice, try to get them to buy into the process, and discuss the concrete form it would take. Against the expectation of villagers, the group of peasants that went into the jungle to talk to armed groups was not immediately killed. Armed groups actually listened to them and, after tense discussions and several rounds of dialogue, fundamental agreements were reached.

Villagers plainly expressed their determination to stay in their lands while not taking any side in the conflict. The practical implications of this were not minor, None of its members was going to provide any sort of support to any of the armed groups present in the territory. Peasants were not going to do favors to armed groups, they were not going to feed them, welcome them in their houses, or transport them in their canoes along the Carare river. Moreover, they were not going to attend any more political meetings convened by them and were not going to turn to them to deal with community issues. As a campaign of noncooperation, their decision rested on behavioral neutrality and nondiscriminatory treatment of each and every armed group present in the area. Therefore, the conditions they presented to the FARC in the first meeting were the same they exposed to the military and paramilitaries in subsequent dialogues. Their refusal to cooperate was unequivocal from the very beginning: In the words of an ATCC peasant, “whoever calls himself ATCC has to declare himself neutral in regards to armed groups.”<sup>15</sup>

Armed groups accepted civilians decision and agreed to keep try to keep them outside of the war as much as possible. While they did not commit to reduce their military activity in the area, they did agree not to use the civilian population as a human shield. Sofia, a central member of the ATCC board today and only a teenager when the Association was created, highlighted

<sup>14</sup>Interview ID. 21, May 2014.

<sup>15</sup>Peasant testimony cite in Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2011, p. 326)

that the practical implications of these agreements were central of their protection. "... if they [the paramilitaries] were going to attack the guerrillas, they would inform us beforehand so we would remove the people for the area ... the guerrilla also informed us where they had planted landmines so that we would not pass by."<sup>16</sup>

This is how noncooperation emerged in La India on the 21st of May 1987. The date corresponds to the first dialogue peasants had with FARC's Front XI, as it was the first time they acted as a collective and were recognized as such by their interlocutors. These rounds of dialogue institutionalized the birth of the ATCC. Still operating today, 28 years after its creation, the Association's area of influence is a piece of land of approximately 100.000 hectares comprising 37 hamlets in the rural peripheries of six different municipalities of the Department of Santander: Landázuri (where La India is located), Cimitarra, Bolivar, El Peñon, Sucre and La Belleza (see Map in Figure 6.1).<sup>17</sup> By the time of my last field trip to El Carare (Summer 2015), the president of the Association estimated that between 4.800 and 5.200 people lived in the 37 villages.<sup>18</sup> However, living in the area does not immediately grant membership. While membership during the initial years was conceived loosely, it has been formalized over time. Becoming a member, which is fully voluntary and can be cancelled whenever people feel like it, grants some rights (such as voting in board elections), and implies some duties. Members of the Association make an explicit commitment to abide by the norms of noncooperation, make a modest financial contribution, attend meetings and engage in some community work. Documents I found in the ATCC archive noted that the Association initially counted with about 650 members.

Josué, a colonizer of the area was the main leader and first President of the Association. Known for his tough character and for being very direct, he opened the first meeting with FARC. His words were as follows: "We did not come here for you to impose conditions on us. We came to set our own."<sup>19</sup> However, as in any negotiated process, armed groups also set conditions. Mostly concerned about losing ground to their rivals, they first and foremost insisted that civilians address the other factions and present them with the same "terms and conditions".<sup>20</sup> This was clear from the initial respond they got from FARC: "these conditions that you are demanding from us are not fair. You would have to impose them also on the army and the paramilitaries, who are your main enemies." (Garcia, 1996, p. 196). Both FARC and the paramilitaries needed reassurance that peasants were treating the other groups in the same way, so they demanded the agreements be public and that they be informed about whatever was pacted with the other factions. They also stressed that the Association could not oblige any villager to become a member and stop supporting them. Julio, who participated in all the originating rounds of dialogue, recalls a commander of FARC insisting on this particular issue: "as we eat and drink as you do, if there is a villager that wants to collaborate with something, the organization [the ATCC] can not prohibit him to do so."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Interview ID. 65, August 2015.

<sup>17</sup>The hamlets are the following. In Cimitarra: Bocas del Vinagre, Caño Tilia, El 15, Frias, Maracaná, Platanillo, Sta. Rosa, Valiente, El Abarco and Vinagre Medio; in El Peñon: Amarilla, Danubio, El Indio and El Ventilador; in La Belleza: La Ceiba; in Landázuri: Brasil, Horta Medio, La India and Zu; and in Sucre: La Caoba, La pedregosa, La Yumbila, Mateguadua and Pescado.

<sup>18</sup>The last census, carried out by the ATCC, is from 2001, reporting that 3372 persons lived in their area of influence.

<sup>19</sup>Peasant testimony cited in Sanz de Santamaría, (1992).

<sup>20</sup>ATCC Archive, "Breve Historia de la Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare, desde su fundación del 18 de mayo de 1987."

<sup>21</sup>Interview ID. 24, March 2014.

In addition, FARC stressed that villagers should refrain from asking them for any of the services they had been offering, such as resolving community disputes or providing protection. In practical terms, this turned to be highly consequential for the ATCC, as managing community conflicts has been, to date, one of the most demanding tasks of the Association.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the geographical limits of the ATCC's area of influence were, at least to some extent, defined by armed groups; to the north by the paramilitaries and to the south by the rebels. In the words of a founder member of the ATCC:

[The rebels] said: “ok, from the mountain range to that side we respect you, that is your India, but from the range to this side do not come. If you come, we kill you”. The paramilitaries also said that they will respect La India, but that from La Corcovada to that side we should not enter.<sup>23</sup>

These demands, coming from both the FARC and the paramilitaries, were restated throughout the years, especially when new commanders arrived in the region or when the ATCC's board changed.<sup>24</sup>

While this reveals that armed groups acceptance of civilian noncooperation was not unconditional, the most clear expression of the pactured nature of the campaign rests on the mechanism that the parts agreed upon to deal with one of the main drivers of violence in the area: accusations regarding civilian allegiances. This mechanism, effective in terms of protection as Kaplan, (2013b, p. 355) convincingly shows, tackles directly the logic of how violence operates and short-circuits it. Civilians and combatants came up with a procedure to investigate threats against alleged collaborators. It was agreed that when a member of the ATCC was accused by an armed group of cooperating with another armed faction, a group of conciliators would carry out an investigation before she was punished. These conciliators were specifically assigned this task by the Association's board. So instituted, the armed group agreed that innocents would be spared and the guilty would be able to stay in the region conditional on good behavior or could be asked (and sometimes financially supported) to leave the ATCC area of influence. If she would stay and not reform her behavior, the ATCC would acknowledge that it could no longer provide protection and the armed group could mete out punishment.<sup>25</sup>

Despite having set up this system, signalling neutrality and compliance in a permanent and credible way was everything but an easy task. To do so, villagers came up with innovative strategies. To credibly demonstrate that they were being transparent with all sides, they recorded the most important meetings they held with armed actors. Tomás remembers that they would start their dialogues by sharing with armed men what was discussed with the other factions and, when available, show them the recordings.

Josué used to arrive, seat down and say: “Look my commander, the agreement with them [the FARC] was this and that ... look, listen to this”. And they would listen to

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<sup>22</sup>This function remains to be a central responsibility of the ATCC: in 2015 I had the opportunity to accompany the President of the Association to mediate a long-standing and very intense dispute between two families regarding to the delimitation of their lands.

<sup>23</sup>Interview with peasants. Cited in Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2011, p. 30).

<sup>24</sup>ATCC Archive, Letter written by the second president of the Association, May 1995.

<sup>25</sup>This stylized description of this joint-mechanism draws on several interviews with ATCC leaders, but its concrete formulation is based on Kaplan, (2013b, pp. 354-355). In this paper, Kaplan convincingly shows that this mechanism was successful in decreasing the levels of anti-civilian violence in the area of influence of the ATCC.

everything! [The paramilitaries] would listen to what we said to the guerrilla groups or the colonels, the colonels would listen to all that was said to the guerrillas, and the guerrillas would listen too. All of them ...<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, summaries of several of the meetings were written down, sometimes in great detail, and kept in their archive as “actas” (record of proceedings). These actas were available if any faction were to request them.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, villagers also made recourse to more symbolic ways to signal their neutrality. For example, as a document from 1989 notes, they deliberately changed the language they used to communicate with the rebels and explicitly informed FARC’s Front XXIII commander that they were going to refrain from using “camaraderie language”. With this they sought to avoid the paramilitaries or militaries doubting their neutrality.<sup>28</sup> They also made use of visible symbols, such as carrying a white flag in their canoes to signal that no armed men were being transported.<sup>29</sup> More costly signals were also used, such as refraining from hanging out with members of armed groups, even when they were not armed or uniformed. This included activities they used to share, especially during the market day on Saturday, such as having a beer, dancing, playing *tejo* or billiards.<sup>30</sup> For some villagers, this meant they would have to refrain from interacting with some friends or relatives. For women, it implied not dating or even flirting with armed men. Even if sharing these spaces did not necessarily imply any form of collaboration, villagers decided to do so to minimize the space for accusations as well as to deliver a clear message about their determination to opt out of the dynamics of war.<sup>31</sup>

In a workshop conducted with leaders of the Association, another central challenge for the emergence (and early functioning) of the ATCC was highlighted: sorting members from non-members. The fact that not every person living in the ATCC’s area of influence joined the campaign opened room for free-riding. To avoid problems associated with free-riding, especially those emerging from armed groups thinking that the Association was not respecting the agreements due to the behavior of non-members, villagers tried different things. These included personal ID cards that members would carry on them to license plates/posters that members would place visibly in their houses. Figure 6.2 shows examples of old and new versions of these license plates/posters. The new version stresses the key message of the Association: “Our contribution is to peace! Don’t count on me for war. Here were are ATCC. Please do not insist. Live in Peace, Go ATCC.”<sup>32</sup> However, when discussing the issue of free-riding, Sofia recognized that besides providing several public, non-excludable goods, they have on many occasions interceded deliberately for non-members involved in cases of accusations and threats.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that noncooperation emerged from a pacted process does not mean, however, that

<sup>26</sup>Interview ID. 21, May 2014.

<sup>27</sup>While the records are unfortunately not accessible anymore, several of these Actas are.

<sup>28</sup>ATCC Archive, Acta # 44, 1989.

<sup>29</sup>Interview ID. 65, August 2015.

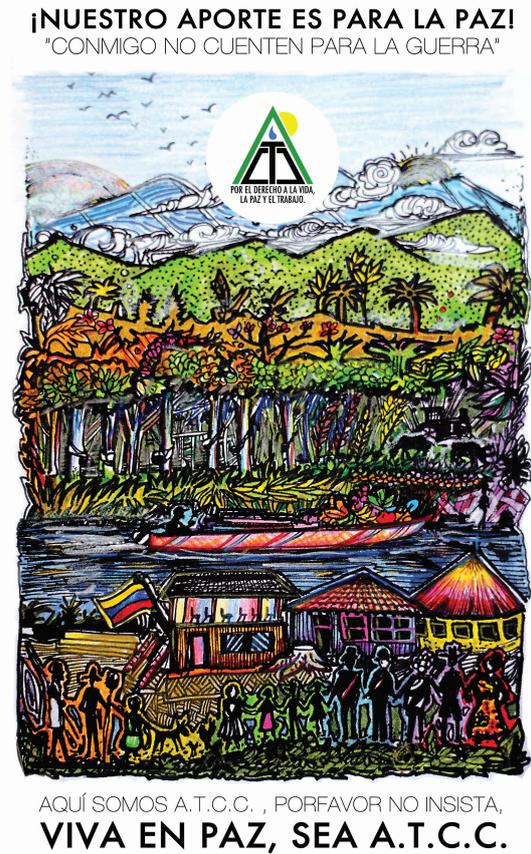
<sup>30</sup>*Tejo* is a traditional game in Colombia, very popular in several rural areas. It consists of throwing a heavy disk made of steel across an alley towards a board covered with clay and with small paper envelopes containing gunpowder. The aim is to hit these envelopes and make them explode against a metal ring that lays under the clay. *Tejo* is a very popular game in La India, around which many peasants meet for long hours during the weekend.

<sup>31</sup>Interview ID. 65, August 2015.

<sup>32</sup>Poster (b) was designed by Colombian artist Santiago Ayerbe and me as a way to thank the community for hosting me in my several visits and sharing with me their testimonies. During my first trip to La India in 2014 I learnt that the board was willing to update their plates/posters but they were short of funds. They allowed me to invite Santiago to La India for a couple of days in which we collected the visual material he needed to put



(a) Poster 2008



(b) Poster 2015

Figure 6.2: ATCC Membership Posters

armed groups have always respected the ATCC. As with the PCSJA, the paramilitaries and the army have repeatedly stigmatized the Association as being allied with FARC. This was clearly reflected, for example, in a communique produced apparently by the army and distributed among the residents of Cimitarra during the initially years of the campaign. Under the title “Attention Citizen of Cimitarra”, the ATCC was explicitly presented as a facade of the FARC. Moreover, both the rebels and the paramilitaries have exercised violence against members of the Association. As early as December 1987 (i.e., half a year after the ATCC’s creation), FARC attempted on Saúl Castañeda’s life, who was then the Association’s secretary. When the ATCC’s Board addressed the rebels to clarify the events, the latter explained that they had heard that leaders of the ATCC were violating the agreement by serving as informants of the army and forcing peasants to join the campaign. Later, in February 1990, in the municipal center of Cimitarra, the paramilitaries massacred the three top leaders of the ATCC, all members of the board: Josué Vargas (the president), Saúl Castañeda and Miguel Barajas, along with Silvia Duzán, a journalist working on a documentary about drug trafficking and elections in the area for the UK’s Channel 4.

These concrete events aside, Kaplan’s (2013b) research has convincingly shown that the mechanisms on which the campaign rests are a central factor in explaining the decrease in the frequency of violence against civilians in the ATCC’s area of influence after the launching o the

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together this poster.

<sup>33</sup> Author’s Field Notes, April 2014.

campaign. To be sure, the massacre in Cimitarra was a strong setback for the process. However, after even considering calling the whole campaign off, this event backfired: villagers elected a new board and continued with the process with determination. The Association still stands on its feet.

### Negotiation and the degree of confrontation

Today we want to reach a sincere and unanimous agreement with the FARC and then we will seek the same with the military and the paramilitary groups ... We simply seek to live in peace and work; we are not your enemies. This is not a meeting against the guerrilla, but against all those who violate our rights.<sup>34</sup>

These were the words with which Josué opened the dialogue with FARC's Central High Command one month after the creation the ATCC. Even if the words came from the most contentious leader of the Association, they reflect well the less confrontational nature of this campaign. Unlike the PCSJA, the ATCC considered that breaking radically and unilaterally the channels of communication with armed groups and fully suspending the interactions with them was not going to bring any positive results. On the contrary, to facilitate negotiating with armed actors, they opted to build on and take advantage of existing ties between civilians and combatants. As a peasant put it, "we need to have a relationship with the armed actor ... To dialogue one needs to take advantage of many things, of this neighbor having a good relationship [with an armed group], of this commander being the uncle of this or that person ..." <sup>35</sup> Tapping into the embeddedness of armed groups into the community (especially FARC), the ATCC established mediators to keep the dialogue flowing.

When collectively discussing this issue with peasants from La India and explicitly drawing comparisons with the experience of the PCSJA, they expressed that they found problematic to get too confrontational. In fact, as one can read in a testimony cited in Garcia, (1996, p. 275), some members even tried to temper Josué's confrontational spirit:

The thing is that if you continue like this we will end up bad, because your are fueling the tiger too much and the tiger at some point gets annoyed and scratches us. You are crossing the line. So far the enemies have respected us; they have even felt pity. But let's not fuel them too much; its not convenient.

This less confrontational approach had practical implications that are in stark contrast with the way the PCSJA dealt with similar issues. For example, while armed groups are fully banned from entering the hamlets of the Peace Community and villagers do enforce this by physically confronting them, in the ATCC's area of influence armed groups have the right to transit and stay over, as long as they do not use members' houses for shelter or enter in spaces designated for exclusive use of the Association or take advantage of services provided by and for members. These include, for example, the Association's headquarters in La India, the "Room of Resistance" in La Pedregosa, and the canoes that the Association had for their exclusive use. Moreover, while the PCSJA prohibits shop owners to sell products to armed groups, armed groups can buy

<sup>34</sup>Josué words cited in Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 332)

<sup>35</sup>Peasant testimony cited in Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 340)

from any store located in the area of influence except from the “community shop” members ran for some years in La India.

Maintaining constant dialogue with armed groups to some extent tied the hands of peasants. Compared to the restless and constant efforts of the PCSJA to denounce armed groups’ violations and military activity nationally and internationally, the ATCC agreed with armed groups to follow a different approach. Rather than making public denunciations, they would first address the high commanders of the armed group to clarify the events or, at most, address the judicial branches of the state. As a member of the Association put it, “... I am convinced that denouncing does not build peace. By shouting one does not fix the issues of this country. When you shout, you provoke people.”<sup>36</sup> Although several leaders told me that this approach was their own choice, in their archive I found evidence that Henry Perez, the head commander of the APB, explicitly demanded that any act of violence (committed by the paramilitaries), instead of being denounced, should be informed to the Colonel in Cimitarra or to the paramilitary commander in charge of the area where the act took place.<sup>37</sup>

Members’ take on denunciation became even more cautious following the massacre of 1990. In that occasion, members position was the following: “Instead of making public accusations of the killings of our leaders, we need to intensify our efforts to get closer to those who declare to be our enemies in order to demonstrate them that, in practice, for us no one is an enemy.”<sup>38</sup> At the end of the day, the Association is comprised of peasants with diverse positions and sympathies towards each of the armed groups. The force that brought them together was the desire to put an end to the crimes against them (Equipo Nizkor, 2001b, n.p). Negotiating, rather than making a unilateral declaration, was a way of mounting and advancing noncooperation without declaring a war *against* armed groups. For them, noncooperation fundamentally means being neither in favor, nor against anybody.<sup>39</sup>

## 6.4 The Emergence of the ATCC

### 6.4.1 The Desire for Noncooperation

In this section I show that the three conditions identified as necessary for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation were in place in La India when the ATCC emerged in 1987. I trace the processes by which they came about and link them to different sets of rational, emotional and moral mechanisms that moved villagers from the status quo (which for many meant to cooperate with one or another faction, mostly FARC) towards noncooperation.

#### Territorial Control in Flux

Paradoxically, with the guerrillas, life was tranquil here. They controlled everything over here. If there was a problem regarding land boundaries, they were here to solve

<sup>36</sup>Peasant testimony cited in (Hernandez Delgado, 2004, p. 343)

<sup>37</sup>ATCC Archive. Letter from Orlando Gaitán, President of the ATCC, May 1995.

<sup>38</sup>Peasant testimony in Garcia, (1996, p. 292). For many members of the Association, this massacre was in fact a reaction of the paramilitaries to the international visibility and denunciation of their activity that would follow from the documentary that Duzán was preparing.

<sup>39</sup>This crystalizes the analytical distinction discussed in the Chapter 2 between attitudinal impartiality and behavioral neutrality (see also Kalyvas, 2006; Valenzuela, 2009). Peasants behavior was fully neutral in terms of refusing to cooperate with armed actors, but this did not deny existing cognitive partialities.

it. If there was a family problem, between a wife and a husband, they were here to solve it. You lived tranquil because there were some rules, like a regulation that if you respected ... well they would not mess with you.<sup>40</sup>

Most of my older interviewees remember the decade between 1965 and 1975 as one in which “life was good”. None of them denied the presence of FARC. On the contrary, as in the opening citation, some residents – sympathizers and non sympathizers of FARC – explained that this was so thanks to the presence of the rebels. Residents of El Carare enjoyed the order and predictability characteristic of a rebelocracy (Arjona, 2016b). FARC not only took care of public order and security in the area, punishing thieves, sexual misconduct and the consumption of marihuana, but also solved community conflicts, imparted justice and coordinated the provision of several collective goods and services.

FARC’s behavior towards civilians during this period involved little coercion. Interviewee after interviewee highlighted that the rebels were mostly concerned with selling their political project. Rather than terrorizing civilians, they sought to instruct peasants politically. Villagers recalled that rebels used to convene collective meetings and visited their houses regularly to talk about their cause. Some villagers, after several visits to La India, recognized openly that they were convinced by FARC’s political and social views. Hearing this directly from peasants was surprising. Not only because it did not come up in my initial interactions with them, but also because of the costs (in terms of stigmatization) that it could entail.

These testimonies are consistent with documents produced years before my interviews. In a statement presented by the ATCC at the National University in Bogotá in October 2002, the Association described life in the region in 1965 in the following terms:

At that time the guerrillas were busy introducing their political and social goals. Their actions were characterized for being humanist and, of course, very convincing. Because of this, the majority of the inhabitants of the region followed with eagerness and enthusiasm the lessons of the revolutionaries of the time.<sup>41</sup>

When FARC was in control, peasants were allowed to approach the rebels and express their views, even if these implied some dissent. Equivalent to what Barter, (2014) observed in some areas of Aceh with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), FARC was open to peasants’ “voice” and even set up channels to facilitated it. Villagers told me they knew who to talk to in their hamlet if they needed to pass any message to FARC’s commanders and felt that rebels would listen and even change their behavior. On one occasion they were able, for example, to get FARC to stop storing stolen cattle in their lands as this could easily attract retaliation from the army (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011, p. 89).

The following dialogue with David, a historical community leader of El Carare and founding father of the ATCC, illustrates well life under this period of rebelocracy. His words are particularly telling, as he claims that he never sympathized with the FARC, that he was never convinced by their project.

ME: During the period of guerrilla control, how was life here? Here in the town and in the surrounding hamlets?

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<sup>40</sup>Interview ID. 64, August 2015.

<sup>41</sup>Cited in Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 318).

DAVID: The guerrillas were the ones who managed the region. They were the law. They settled issues of land, family disputes, all the problems that neighbors could have. Also thieves. They controlled thieves too. Rapists too ... They were the law. And people were already used to always make every complaint to the guerrillas. Whatever it was.

ME: And how was the relationship with the people? Where they coercive?

DAVID: No. At the beginning they convinced the community. People worked for them from the heart because of their ideals, their teachings about social change.

ME: Would they protect people if there was a need?

DAVID: Yes. They said that getting the people united, organizing the people, will eventually push the army's withdrawal. They said that they were going to be the owners of the state.<sup>42</sup>

During this period, peasants did not simply sympathize with FARC's political project. Several supported the organization in different ways and to different degrees, and some even took a more active role, joining the rebels as *milicianos* or *células*. In addition, FARC's rebelocracy in the rural areas was complemented and reinforced with the electoral success of left-wing movements in the more urban areas. As mentioned before, the UNO, which in the area had evident links to FARC, became the strongest political force in the 1970s in Cimitarra. The Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2011, p. 18) report described this situation as a "left-wing politico-military order."

However, this order would end up being disrupted in the mid-1970s with the arrival of the army. As unequivocally reflected in the quantitative event data, violent dynamics were altered. As Figure 6.3 reveals, precisely in the years in which the military established its Battalion in Cimitarra (in 1975) and its military bases in La India, Santa Rosa and San Fernando (in 1976), there was a sharp increase in the number of violent events in what later became the ATCC's area of influence. Most of these events were unilateral actions aimed at controlling the population and deter them to cooperate with the rebels. Curfews were established in every *caserío* (group of houses) and there was a ban on transiting the main roads connecting these *caseríos* and the main populated centers, such as La India and Santa Rosa, and the municipal centers of the region, especially that of Cimitarra. Establishing this tight control over the population, chiefly reflected in the practice of *carnetización*, the army sought to make sure that villagers were not supporting the rebels, at least not with material goods. In fact, one of the controls peasants resented the most was that imposed on the amount of food they were allowed to bring to the rural helmets. "We were not allowed to bring food. If one would go to La India or Santa Rosa [populated centers] and bring some food back [to the more rural hamlets], they [the army] would look through the receipt and tell you 'today you can go with this, come for the other part later'."<sup>43</sup>

Despite the army's challenge, FARC managed to retain control of considerable parts of the region. According to Julio, peasant support was central in FARC's successful resistance against the army in this first period of contestation. "[T]he majority of the people supported the guerrillas, so they protected them. For example, they informed them when the army was coming."<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the abusive treatment by the army backfired in some areas, pushing several

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<sup>42</sup>Interview ID. 6, March 2014.

<sup>43</sup>Interview ID 21, May 2014.

<sup>44</sup>Interview ID. 24, March 2014.

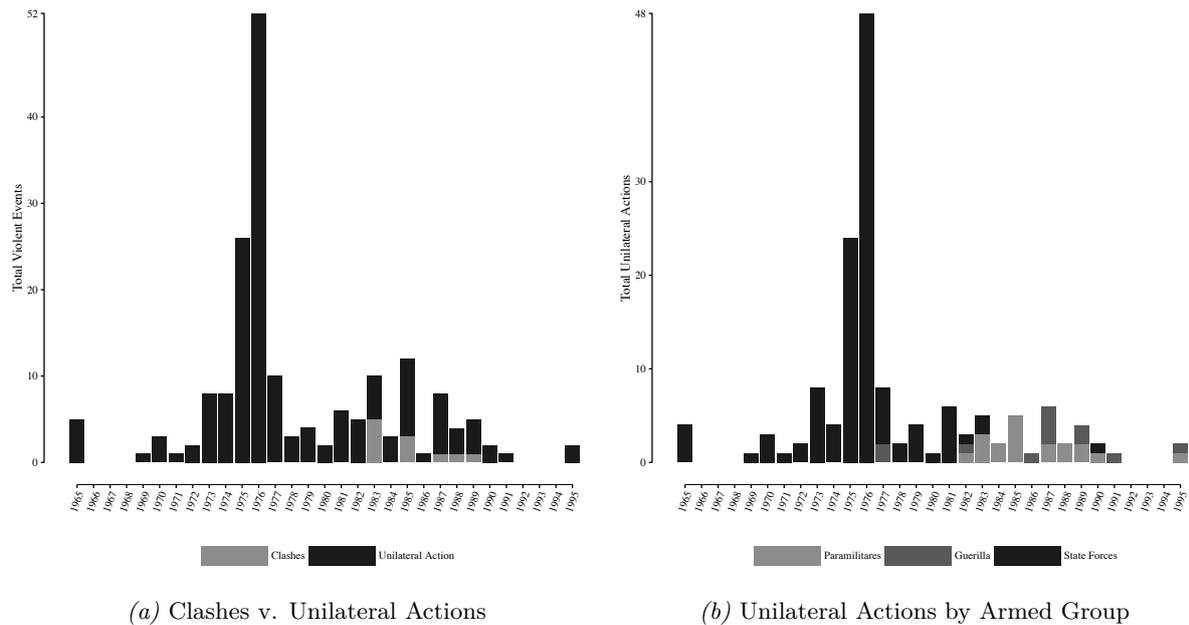


Figure 6.3: Violent Events in ATCC Zone of Influence

peasants to join rebel ranks (Equipo Nizkor, 2001a, n.p). As Julio put it, “those peasants who were abused [by the army] ended up supporting the guerrillas even more ... almost the majority of the peasants stood against the army, because they abused and tortured innocent people.”<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, this confrontation did affect FARC. I also gathered evidence suggesting that the relationship between FARC and villagers began to weaken during these years, especially in those hamlets from where FARC fell back. FARC began to change their approach to civilians in the face of the army’s challenge. For example, one of the practices that villagers resented the most was FARC Front XI’s policy of land distribution, known as *parcelización*. At first, villagers accepted and some even welcomed it. However, according to several testimonies, as the pressure from the army intensified, the policy became increasingly arbitrary and began to be used as a strategy to harass (*hostigar*) peasants that FARC believed were collaborating with the army.<sup>46</sup>

When the paramilitaries arrived in Cimitarra in 1982 and progressively began to penetrate the rural areas, the balance of the dispute changed significantly. They substituted the army in their task of controlling the population as a strategy to weaken FARC. The military activity of the army, measured in the number of violent events, almost disappeared in the 1980s and was progressively replaced by the paramilitaries. The year 1981 was in fact the last in which the forces of the state were responsible for the majority (if not all) the violent events registered in ATCC’s area of influence. From 1982 onwards, although at substantially lower levels, the paramilitaries became the protagonists (see Figure 6.3).

The paramilitaries proved to be more successful than the army in weakening FARC’s control. With their incursion, the rebels rapidly began to lose ground. FARC progressively left some areas behind and settled in the more mountainous parts of the region, especially in the municipalities of El Peñon and Bolivar. However, in some specific areas, such as El Abarco and La India, the insurgents fiercely resisted the advance of the paramilitaries. It was precisely in these places

<sup>45</sup>Interview ID. 24, March 2014.

<sup>46</sup>Author’s Field Notes, August 2015.

where the civilian population suffered the most. Territorial control in the region was in flux.

By 1987, when the ATCC emerged, FARC had lost already some areas, such as La Corcovada, Santa Rosa and San Fernando, but retained a comparative advantage in some rural hamlets, such as El Abarco and surroundings. At the same time, it was fiercely competing for the control of other areas, such as the village of La India. Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2011, p. 307) described the situation as one where “there was no clear control by any of the armed groups and both had presence in the same territories.” Borders were very diffuse and there were several gray zones. Moreover, this re-organization of the space took place in such a short fraction of time that it was hard for civilians to read who was where and accommodate their behavior accordingly. Uncertainty and fear began to define social life. “When the *paracos* arrived, fear was real. The worst fear of my life ... One lived with fear all the time in this region. One could not sleep, one could not relax because at any time any armed group could arrive”, one elder women noted.<sup>47</sup>

In La India people did not want to leave their houses as they feared that any faction could kill them at any time. Those who lived in hamlets where one group had a comparative advantage had also a hard time, as moving from one area to another became too risky – a situation we will also see in the municipality of San Carlos in the next chapter. As a peasant told me, the paramilitaries controlled the canoes that were going up the river to the more isolated rural hamlets where the rebels had more control, at the same time that the guerrillas controlled those that were going down the river to the populated areas where the paramilitaries had more control.<sup>48</sup> With control in flux, the equilibrium of interaction that civilians had had with FARC until then changed. While civilians had no enduring reasons to cooperate with the arriving actor (perhaps except from the incentives provided by ACDEGAM), the new situation invited them to update their beliefs about FARC and reconsider whether it was worth supporting them.

Villagers witnessed and experienced a considerable behavioral change on the side of FARC. As predicted by available theories (e.g., Metelits, 2010), in the face of active and credible rivalry, the rebels became more coercive and less open to dialogue towards civilians. David words stress this clearly:

With the arrival of the MAS, the guerrillas began to screw things up. They started to kidnap, to kill and banish people ... They began to leave the revolutionary cause their conviction of social change aside. They began to leave this for money or for other ideas, and it was then when they gave more room to the MAS and the army to advance.<sup>49</sup>

Villagers understood that the most minimal interaction with the arriving actors could be enough to undermine years of co-existence with FARC and be taken as an indication of defection, leading to violent reprisals. Increasingly, many peasants began to see in FARC a victimizer comparable to the army or the paramilitaries. This is precisely the way Julio read the situation: “the guerrillas say that they are the ‘Peoples’ Army’. Still today they say that. But it happens that, as with the others [the paramilitaries], they are the enemy of the peasants, because they were killing us, and they still do it.”<sup>50</sup> On both ideological and moral grounds, peasants deeply resented this

<sup>47</sup>Interview ID. 19, May 2014.

<sup>48</sup>Interview ID. 69, August 2015.

<sup>49</sup>Interview ID. 6, March 2014.

<sup>50</sup>Interview ID. 24, March 2014. “People’s Army” refers to FARC-EP, where EP stands, in Spanish, for *Ejército del Pueblo*.

change, which eventually led to an attitudinal break between the peasantry and the rebels that created an opening for noncooperation to emerge.

As for the paramilitaries, apart from ACDEGAM, they did not seem to have any intention to win the “hearts and minds” of peasants. As I will show in the next section, they arrived with the assumption that every peasant of the area was a rebel supporter and, therefore, was a target rather than a potential ally. Testimonies stress that the paramilitaries never really tried to convene villagers to explain who they were or why they were there (as FARC did some decades ago). As one peasant put it, “they arrived killing, conducting massacres.”<sup>51</sup> Moreover, minimizing even more the room for potential civilian cooperation, the paramilitaries had no ties with the population of El Carare. When I asked residents whether they recognized paramilitary men when they arrived, they not only responded in the negative but repeatedly referred to them as foreigners or outsiders (*forasteros*).

With these changes in the dynamics of war, cooperation with any of the armed groups did not seem to be appealing for villagers. However, territorial dispute was not enough to push peasants towards organizing a campaign of noncooperation. If this condition was necessary and sufficient (C1), we should have then observed the ATCC emerging already in the first period of dispute between FARC and the army. Why was this not the case? In line with the theory advanced here, in the next section I argue that other two conditions (C2 and C3) for the emergence of a desire for noncooperation obtained only during the second period of dispute that followed the arrival of the paramilitaries.

### Violence Against Civilians

The theory advanced in this study proposes that a particular configuration of the patterns of violence is likely to generate a situation in which civilians feel an urgent need for protection and a recognition that the only way out is to take matters into their own hands. In this section I show that the patterns of violence changed in crucial ways when El Carare was swept into a fierce competition for territorial control between the rebels and the paramilitaries. The second and third conditions singled out by the theory obtain in this context: an increase in the violence against civilians and a perception among civilians of this violence being unavoidable. Moreover, this case further suggests that the effect of violence and perceptions of violence on civilian choices is stronger when violence is lethal.

The civilian population was disproportionately affected by the war in El Carare. According to counts available in secondary sources, approximately 10% of the population of the region was killed over the 12-year period leading to the emergence of the ATCC (Kaplan, 2013b, p. 352). Restrepo’s (2005) estimate is 530–585 lethal victims. The situation does not get any better if we focus only on the areas that came to be part of the ATCC’s area of influence. As Kaplan, (2013b, p. 361) noted, which is consistent with CERAC/CNMH’s data, the Association’s area of influence suffered higher conflict-related homicide rates than neighboring hamlets in El Carare. Most of these victims were peasants. In fact, for the years following the arrival of the paramilitaries, my quantitative data shows an almost perfect overlap between total deaths and civilians deaths in the ATCC’s area of influence. Figure 6.4 strikingly reports only a couple combatant victims, in 1983, for the entire period between 1975 and 1990.

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<sup>51</sup>Interview ID. 17, May 2014.

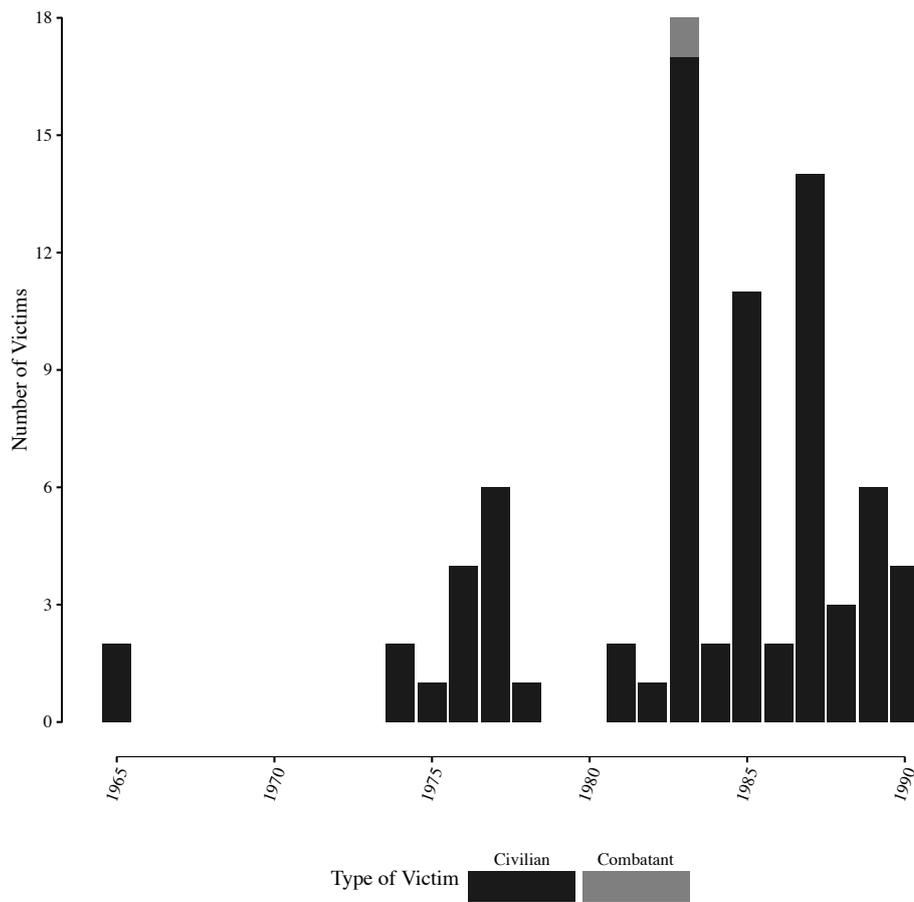


Figure 6.4: Civilian v. Combatant Deaths in ATCC Area of Influence

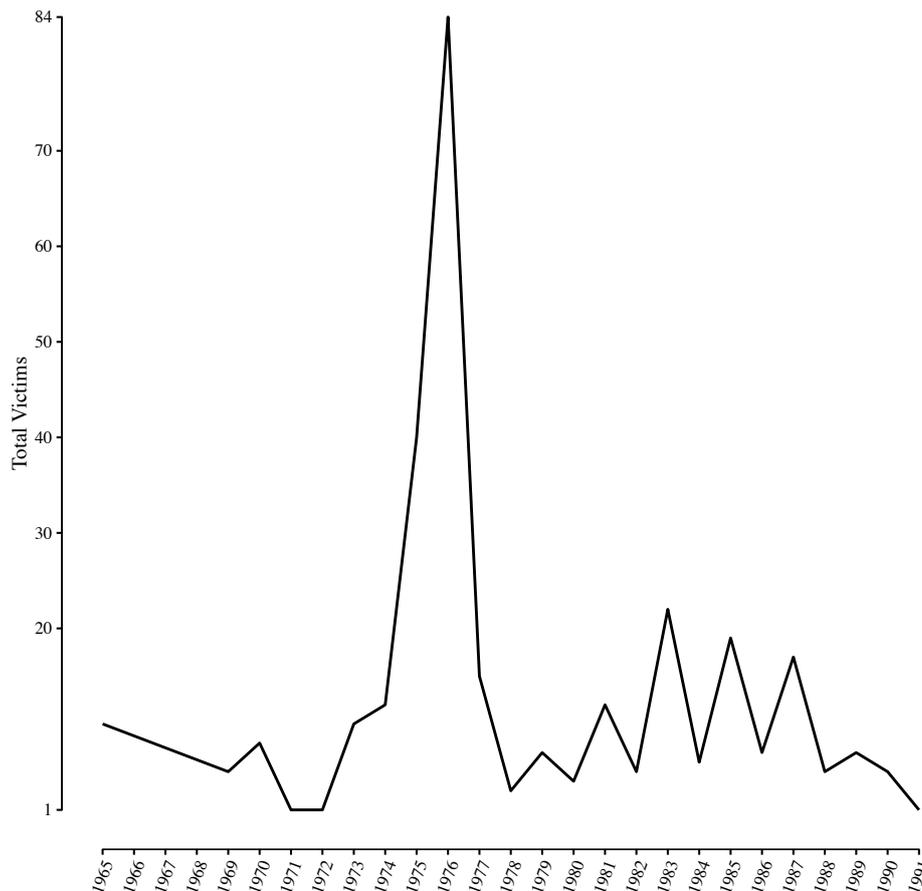


Figure 6.5: Violence Against Civilians in ATCC Zone of Influence

As outlined in the previous section, when the army launched its counter-insurgency campaign, the security situation for civilians changed drastically. Quantitative data supports the account provided in the previous section based on peasant voices. Figure 6.5 shows that what became the ATCC's area of influence saw a clear increase in violence against civilians precisely in the years (1975 and 1976) when the army established its Battalion and its military bases. Most of this violence resulted from unilateral actions (rather than from clashes between factions, which were almost absent for the entire period) and the main perpetrator was, in fact, the army (Figure 6.3).

Despite this violence, villagers were not left fully unprotected. Many interviewees noted that even if FARC many times could not do much to prevent violence coming from the army, rebels made efforts to protect them. Moreover, they highlighted that while it is true that FARC became more coercive and arbitrary in their handling of civilians (exemplified in policies such as the *parcelización*) the insurgents did not torture or detain peasants as the army did.

With the arrival of the MAS and the ACMM, this changed dramatically. Living between three armies, civilian security conditions deteriorated notoriously. Some of my informants described this situation as the "Death triangle" (*triángulo de la muerte*), stressing that rather than fighting against other, armed factions were at war against the peasants. These accounts are also backed by my quantitative violent event data, which shows a surprisingly low number of clashes between factions. In fact, in what became the area of influence of the ATCC, clashes were only reported in five years and always with a minor share in the total number of violent events (i.e., most of

these events were unilateral actions) (Figure 6.3).

The levels of violence against civilians in the area of influence of the ATCC increased beginning in 1982 (Figure 6.5). To be sure, these levels are not comparable with those observed during the first period of contestation: the total number of civilian victims between 1982–1987 was substantially lower than in 1975 and 1976 alone. One could reasonably argue that this difference between periods casts doubt on my argument that a desire for noncooperation evolves when there is an increase in anti-civilian violence. If this was really the case, how is that the ATCC only emerged in 1987 and not in 1975?

I argue that this was the case, in part, because the first necessary condition of my argument (i.e., territorial control in flux) did not obtain between 1975–1982: the army’s challenge to FARC did not lead to a shift in territorial control. However, this is also explained by the nature of the changes in the patterns of violence against civilians. If we disaggregate these patterns and look beyond the level of violence, just as Gutierrez Sanín and Wood, (2017) suggest, it becomes apparent that the change in civilian victimization that villagers experienced was not only one of frequency. With the arrival of the paramilitaries, the repertoire of violence also changed. This became manifest initially in my interviews. When asked to describe violence in each of the two periods of dispute, almost every respondent accounted for a change from non-lethal to lethal forms of violence. While peasants described the army’s violence during the first period in terms of “abuses”, “insults”, “beatings” and “torture”, they referred to “killings”, “homicides” and “massacres” when discussing paramilitary violence during the second one. This change is also reported in primary sources I found in the ATCC’s archive. For example, in a document from 1989 the Association noted that “the military was not able to dominate the peasants and neutralize the guerrillas by torturing, threatening and *carnetizando* people ... the last alternative was to kill.”<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, these testimonies are well supported by my quantitative event data. The data presented in Figure 6.5 combines both lethal and non-lethal forms of violence. As such, it does not capture the change that villagers repeatedly underscored. However, if we desegregate these data by type of violence, it becomes manifest that while most of the violence from 1975 to 1982 was non-lethal, in the period from 1983 up to the creation of the ATCC, non-lethal and lethal forms coexisted, with the latter being the most frequent. While before 1982 the share of lethal violence in the total number of events of violence against civilians, including the 1975/1976 peak, was of about 10%, in the period after the arrival of the paramilitaries this share went up to around 70% (Figure 6.6).

Another change in terms of repertoire that came up in several interviews was the use of massacres. Villagers noted that this form of violence was practically unknown to them before the arrival of the paramilitaries. Only a few of my informants recall massacres before 1982 and those who did referred to the same event when the ELN first arrived in the region. In contrast, between 1980–2010, 33 massacres were committed in the region, out of which 23 took place in the few years between the arrival of the paramilitaries and the emergence of the ATCC.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup>ATCC Archive. “La Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare y el Proceso de Paz” (1989, pg. 19).

<sup>53</sup>CNMH Massacres Dataset. This data set covers the period 1980–2010, so it does not allow me to compare the period before the arrival of the paramilitaries. However, using the same criteria of Memoria Histórica (i.e., killing of 4 or more people in the same place and data), in CERAC’s data I was able to identify only three massacres in the period between 1965–1980. Note that CNMH data is collected at the municipal level. Thus, the figures I present here correspond to the municipalities that constitute the Carare region and not to the hamlets that

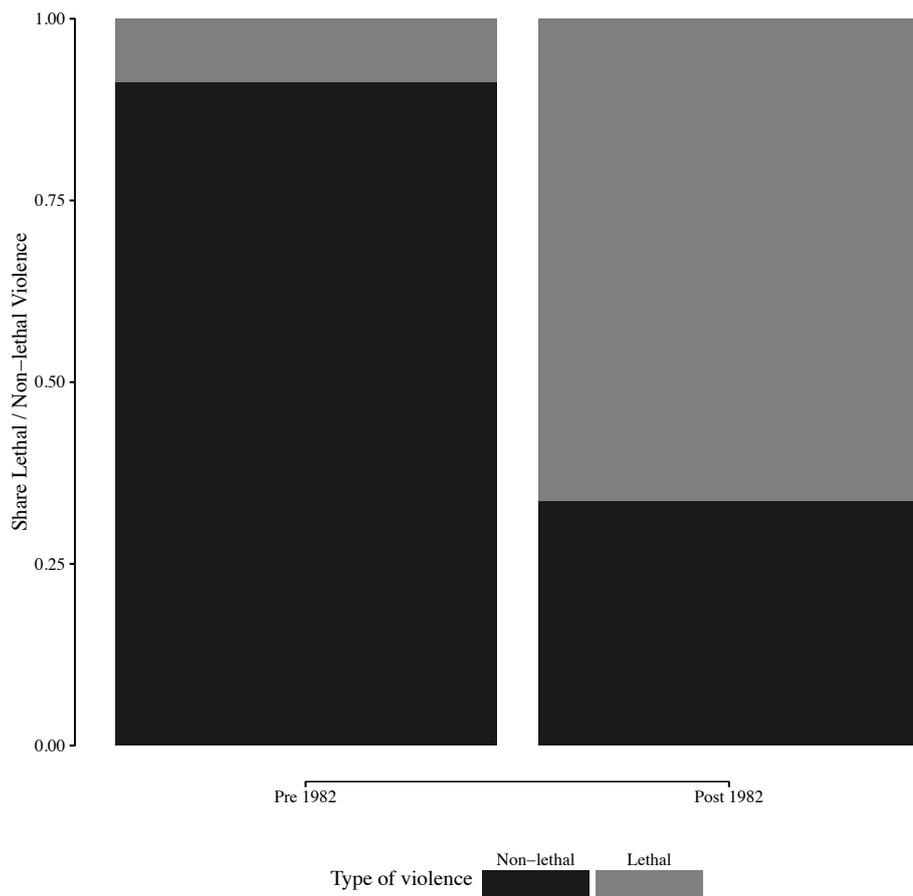


Figure 6.6: Type of Violence Against Civilians in ATCC Zone of Influence

This change in repertoire explains, in part, the high levels of (lethal) violence experienced by villagers in the second period of contestation compared to the first one. These new patterns of violence diminished the security conditions of civilians and transformed their threat perceptions dramatically. In both qualitative and quantitative terms, civilian victimization in each of the two periods analyzed differed substantially. Besides the fact that during the first period of dispute the army did not manage to seriously challenge FARC's control, these differences in the patterns of violence (beyond frequency) explain why a preference for noncooperation evolved only in the second period.

### Type of Targeting and the Perception of Inescapability

In line with the proposed theory, these transformations in the patterns of violence led civilians to perceive targeting as unavoidable. As one peasant expressed, "That war was against the peasants. Violence was against peasants. One could not do really do anything because then immediately you were targeted."<sup>54</sup> Even if both the paramilitaries and the rebels argued that they were being selective in their use of violence, civilians perceived this violence as being collectively targeted. In this sense, it left no room for them to individually do something to avoid it.

comprise the ATCC's area of influence. Even if I did not count the massacres that took place in areas that I was sure were not part of the area of influence, these figures are likely to overreport the number of massacres.

<sup>54</sup>Interview ID. 19, May 2014.

David recounts that when the MAS entered the region they “did not speak to anyone, they did not have meetings with anybody. They just arrived killing.” While they arrived in La India announcing publicly that they were going to get rid of the rebels, they targeted “everything that moved in favor of the guerrillas.”<sup>55</sup> This meant, to a large extent, all those living in the areas that the FARC had long controlled. In line with this perception, the Equipo Nizkor described paramilitary violence in the region in the following terms:

In this region, more than a model of self-defense, the paramilitary model had a clear counterinsurgent bias that was directed against the so called “social base of the guerrilla”. This is, against the population that lived in the territories where there was presence of insurgent groups. Equipo Nizkor, (2001b, n.p)

Several testimonies coincide in stating that for a short period upon their arrival the paramilitaries mostly targeted well-known supporters of FARC (largely members of its *células* in the rural areas) and leaders of left-wing movements (mainly in the more urban areas). However, after this period, not knowing who else to target on an individual basis, testimonies reveal a change in the logic of targeting. The paramilitaries quickly began to target entire hamlets that were especially known for being FARC strongholds. This was the case, for example, in La India, La Corcovada, San Fernando and Santa Rosa (see Map in Figure 6.1). Julio, a resident of La India, stressed that the MAS left notes in which they explicitly said they were coming to get rid of La India “because all that area was *guerrillera*.”<sup>56</sup> It is noteworthy in this regard that among the many violent events villagers of El Carare suffered during long years of violence, the ones that informants recalled the most when building the trajectories of war (see Timeline in Table 6.1) were three massacres: one in La India (in 1983) and two in La Corcovada (in 1983 and 1985), all three perpetrated by the paramilitaries.

In point of fact, the hamlet of La Corcovada is perhaps the crudest example of collective targeting on the basis of geographical location in the entire region. According to data collected by the CNMH, the residents of this hamlet experienced four paramilitary massacres, which killed 25 peasants between July 1983 and March 1987. Among these events, the one that peasants more vividly recall is first one in La Corcovada, where not only 8 peasants were killed, but several were detained and tortured, most of the houses were fully destroyed, and several animals were stolen. The military operation lasted about 10 days; the hamlet was first bombed from two helicopters and then around 100 armed men took over. As in many other cases of paramilitary massacres, the perpetrators argued that they attacked the population because they were deemed FARC supporters and even left flyers explaining that this was the cause.<sup>57</sup> Following this event, virtually all residents had to look for refuge in the municipal center of Cimitarra. Reflecting on this collective stigmatization based on geographical location, a paramilitary commander of the area once described La Corcovada as a “communist village” (*aldea mamerta*) devoted to the study of Marxism (Medina Gallego, 1990, p. 182).

Beyond collective targeting, desertion also shaped civilians’ perceptions that violence was inescapable. Desertions seem to be a common practice in situations where territorial control is

<sup>55</sup>Interview ID. 6, March 2014.

<sup>56</sup>Interview ID. 24, March 2014.

<sup>57</sup>For a description of these events, see Equipo Nizkor, (2001b). To consult CNMH’s massacres database (1980- 2012), see “Bases de datos ¡Basta ya!” available online [<http://www.centrodehistoriahistorica.gov.co/micrositios/informeGeneral/basesDatos.html>].

in flux. In the previous chapter, when control was shifting from the rebels to the paramilitaries in San José, we saw the rebels of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) deserting to the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU). Here, we also saw FARC members deserting to the arriving paramilitaries, including many high-level commanders (such as El Zarco, El Mojao and Ramó) (Garcia, 1996, p. 153). As in San José, desertions had important practical implications for the way in which civilians experienced violence. In fact, villagers of La India explicitly underscored that "... the switching sides between groups by the deserters made the situation of peasants way too complicated."<sup>58</sup> It not only induced uncertainty about who was who, but also became a source of information about civilian loyalties. Counting on information of how the residents of El Carare related to FARC during the many years of control, the paramilitaries targeted hundreds of civilians. Cristian describes well this situation:

Not only with the arrival of the paramilitaries, but also with the desertions of the guerrillas, everything got worse. Many guerrillas deserted and joined the army or the paramilitaries. They had information from their time as rebels. They knew stuff so they would point the finger. Many of them were there when a family had to give the guerrillas something to eat or something like that. So they would go to the army and say: "look, that person cooperates with the guerrillas, he gives them food."<sup>59</sup>

During rebelocracy virtually every villager collaborated with the FARC in one or another way. Therefore, having a deserter pointing the finger at you was almost a certainty, and debunking these accusations, if any room was left for this, was virtually impossible. An elder illustrated this inescapability in the following terms:

[Armed groups] used to tell you: "Ok, you go there and do me this favor". And one had to do it. We had to bring them things from town, for example. When they asked "bring this or that from town", one had to do it because if not [interviewee mimics being killed] ... And if one did the favor, then repression came from the other side. Don't you see? There was no way out!<sup>60</sup>

This sense of inescapability did not come only from paramilitary violence. From the early 1980s, FARC began to increasingly victimize civilians. Several villagers noted that in this second period of dispute, the FARC became increasingly distrustful of the civilian population. The rebels accused them of allowing the paramilitaries to penetrate into their communities, assuming that the successful takeover of some hamlets resulted from information and support provided by defecting peasants.

When asked about these change in behavior, a former commander of FARC recognized that the presence of the paramilitaries forced them to become "more strict with peasants". With the counter-insurgency campaign launched against them more and more peasants became informants and they had to target them.<sup>61</sup> However, villagers noted that while the rebels claimed to target *sapos* alone, they were "shooting and then asking". This contrasted with the way they dealt with information about villagers during the period of rebelocracy and even of dispute with the

<sup>58</sup>Cited in Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 325)

<sup>59</sup>Interview ID. 64, August, 2015.

<sup>60</sup>Interview ID. 19, May 2014.

<sup>61</sup>Interview ID. 71, August 2015.

army. Peasants noted that then commanders had tried to find out whether the information was truthful, relying on their own *células* or even the presidents of the JAC.

Worsening this perception of inescapability, civilians found themselves in a situation in which not only all factions were targeting them, but none was offering any reliable form protection. In the words of a founding father of the ATCC, “while all groups were killing us, nobody was there to defend us anymore.”<sup>62</sup> Neither the army, nor the paramilitaries had any intention to protect civilians. On the contrary, they targeted civilians as the “social base of the rebels”. As for FARC, while they kept on promising protection, this was not credible under the new circumstances and there were no clear signs that they were actually willing to do so. Several informants noted that when the army had challenged FARC’s control back in the 1970s, even while they failed to provide security on many occasions, they made visible efforts to protect civilians from violence. For example, in a workshop with leaders of the ATCC in which we discussed the issue of protection, Cristian and David recalled that commanders used to give them early warnings about locations where they were expecting to fight the army so they could leave beforehand.<sup>63</sup>

In contrast, in the 1980s, in face of the paramilitary challenge, FARC physically retreated from many areas, leaving peasants alone. In that same workshop, none was able to single out any clear attempt to protect them from paramilitary violence. They noted that when the MAS arrived in the region, the FARC explicitly told villagers that they would not allow the paramilitaries to enter La India and that they needed their collaboration to effectively protect the village from the arriving actor.<sup>64</sup> However, as a peasant stressed, “when the paramilitaries arrived [in La India], they would shoot once and the guerrillas would run away, leaving the poor peasants alone ready to be killed.”<sup>65</sup> The sense was not only that they did not have the capacity to protect them, but that there was also a lack of will. Another peasant noted that “there were several massacres by the MAS to which the rebels could have responded militarily, but instead they left, they hid.”<sup>66</sup>

The fact that FARC came to be seen not only as increasingly arbitrary in their policies but also as a direct perpetrator was definitive in pushing villagers away from cooperation with them. Besides the fact that collaborating with a group that did not have the capacity or was not willing to protect them made little sense in light of their urgent need to recover a minimum of protection, moral and emotional considerations push civilians apart from the rebels. The change in FARC’s behavior towards civilians constituted a moral shock for many villagers, especially for those who deeply believed in the rebels’ cause. Moreover, it further fed the negative belief civilians began to form of FARC in the previous period through arbitrary practices such as *parcelización*. Most campesinos were disenchanted and some even felt betrayed. Julio noted that when leaders met to discuss what to do after the ultimatum, a central reason to rule out the option of joining the rebels or continue collaborating with them was because they felt “fooled” by them.<sup>67</sup> This moral shock pulled peasants away from collaborating with the FARC and, as in many other instances of protest (Jasper, 1997), became a central mobilizing force.

Besides cooperation with the rebels, they could have also joined the paramilitaries. However,

<sup>62</sup> Author’s Field Notes, April 2014.

<sup>63</sup> Workshop with leaders # 1. Author’s Field Notes, April 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Workshop with leaders # 1. Author’s Field Notes, April 2014. Interview ID. 17, May 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Interview ID. 17, May 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Peasant testimony cited in Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2011, p. 124)

<sup>67</sup> Interview ID. 24, March 2017.

the same considerations to not cooperate with FARC hold for the other actors. With no side willing or with the capacity to provide protection, in the context of territorial control being in flux, joining any side would just lead to retaliation from the other. “If they threw their lot in with the army or the paramilitaries, the guerrillas would surely find out and kill them. And if they joined the guerrillas in the hopes of protection, the paramilitaries would have no mercy.” (Kaplan, 2013b, p. 354). Moreover, the only interaction villagers of El Carare had had with the military and the paramilitaries to that date had been a highly coercive one. For them, as a peasant put it once, both the paramilitaries and the army were “synonyms of death and abuse”. Morally (let alone ideologically), they were very far from these two groups.

Cristian put it bluntly: “here [in the Carare] we are orphans of the guerrillas, orphans of the military and orphans of the paramilitaries.”<sup>68</sup> As orphans of all groups, they deeply resented all three factions and fully distrusted them. In fact, as noted in a memoire in which villagers summarized the antecedents for the creation of the ATCC, they stressed that by 1987 they had “lost trust in all armed groups.”<sup>69</sup> This generalized distrust of all armed organizations made clear that whatever they would do would exclude any form of siding with them.

However, villagers explained that since the arrival of the military in 1975, and in particular after the swoop of the paramilitaries, armed groups put particular pressure on civilians to take sides. The ultimatum of 1987 was the maximum manifestation of this. Therefore, being individually neutral was not really an option. Moreover, following a “wait and see” policy or other forms of self-help strategy, such as avoidance or accommodation, like the ones Baines and Paddon, (2012) observed in northern Uganda, were also out of consideration. Some noted that when they knew that the MAS was coming, they used to leave and sleep in the bushes.<sup>70</sup> However, they were aware that this was not sustainable in the long run. As Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2011, p. 308) reported, not even cautious behavior increased the probability of escaping violence. When asked about these courses of action, using vignettes from existing studies, respondents with no hesitation told me that there was no room for that. Tomás was blunt in this regard: “Like that? Individually? They would get rid of all us, one by one!”<sup>71</sup>

Having ruled out cooperation with any of the factions and any form of individual self-help strategy, the remaining option was to leave. Many villagers did leave El Carare. However, for those who for one reason or another stayed put, noncooperation became more available as a course of action. In fact, in a way displacement served as a sorting device that made coordination and cooperation easier among those who stayed. As Tomás put it, “almost all of those who stayed were from the town [La India populated center] and we all knew each other well, almost like family. So we could communicate better one to one.”<sup>72</sup> Being there alone, in the middle of the confrontation, also served as a unifying force. In the hamlet of La Pedregosa, for example, an old woman remembers how fear pushed them together and how “being together” became a form of coping with violence: “at that time, we all began to gather there [in a communal house], to prepare food together, there we also slept over, so it was there were we started resisting.”<sup>73</sup> Moreover, displacement left in the territory those who, for different reasons, were more resolute

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<sup>68</sup> Author’s Field Notes, April 2014.

<sup>69</sup> ATCC Archive. *Antecedentes*.

<sup>70</sup> Interview ID. 24, May 2014.

<sup>71</sup> Interview ID. 21, May 2014.

<sup>72</sup> Interview ID. 21, May 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Interview ID. 19, May 2014.

to take risks and try something new. This included leaders like Josué, Julio and David.

Julio, who never left, remembers that they knew they had to do something, but had no idea about what that something could be. None of the options offered to them was viable, so they had to come up with their own alternative. While community leaders came up with the idea of staying and not cooperating with anybody, noncooperation was not cognitively available to most villagers and there were plenty of coordination obstacles to spread the idea among the population so that villagers' preferences could converge. Overcoming these problems was a must for civilian noncooperation to take form. How did they overcome them? Where did the organizational capacity come from? I present a detailed treatment of these issues in the following section.

#### 6.4.2 The Capacity for Noncooperation

During the years when control was in flux, what villagers call the “criminal law of silence” governed in El Carare. Jorge, a resident of the region and a member of the ATCC, described this law as “you saw what saw and could not say a word, because if you speak out you die.”<sup>74</sup> Civilians could not deliberate about what was going on, let alone to voice what they thought about it. On the one hand, there were implicit and explicit rules controlling interactions between villagers. For example, several informants noted that it was too risky to gather in public in groups larger than three people, as this was something that armed groups would punish (see also Hernandez Delgado, 2004, p. 328). On the other hand, many villagers underscored that they actively decided to avoid talking with neighbors as distrust and uncertainty were widespread due to cycles of denunciations and counter-denunciations.

To be sure, this lack of trust among villagers and the generalized uncertainty that are common in places where disorder emerges due to competition (Arjona, 2016b, pp. 50-55), created obstacles for collective action that are not easy to overcome. This was in fact the face of the “law of silence” that Jorge underscored when discussing obstacles to organized action. He noted:

You couldn't share your views with others, because you did not know who was working with the paramilitaries. You had to keep everything to yourself ... we did not trust each other because at that time some worked for the paramilitaries and others for the guerrillas ... That was the atmosphere we lived in.<sup>75</sup>

While the idea of noncooperation had evolved among community leaders and many other villagers might have also thought about it, transforming this into a shared preference was everything but automatic. For coordinated action to take place, villagers needed to find the way and assurance to signal their preferences to each other and create consistent expectations (Schelling, 1960, pp. 89-99). In line with the proposed theory, in this section I argue that leaders who were available from previous experiences of collective action were central in allowing preference convergence and thus played a pivotal role in the process leading to the creation of the ATCC in 1987. Moreover, I underscore the role of external actors in providing organizational and material resources that were crucial for the consolidation of the Association between 1987 and 1990.

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<sup>74</sup>Interview ID. 17, May 2014.

<sup>75</sup>Interview ID. 17, May 2014.

### The role of leaders

We always consider the moment of the dialogue [as the birth of the ATCC] ... but it happens that before that there were some leaders. Before creating the organization, without even having a name for it, there were some leaders that were worried about the violence that was taking place, so they began to say to each other “no, we need to stop this”.<sup>76</sup>

Both before and after the 1987 ultimatum, community leaders began exploring possible ways to cope with war among them, talking with other villagers to gauge their intentions, and spreading the word of noncooperation among the population at large. In doing so, they were the first to break the “criminal law of silence” and accepted the bulk of the risks associated with organizing an independent peasant response when different factions were fighting for the loyalty of villagers. This was a fundamental condition to set forth an opening for collective action in El Carare.

They were very wary in their movements. The price to be paid if armed groups found out about these meetings was likely to be deadly. The odds of being caught were high. On the one hand, as David noted, armed groups used “to send a lot of intelligence. They sent *paracos*, they sent guerrillas, to see what were we saying, to see what were we doing.”<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, as Tomás noted, “[I]n every hamlet there were what at the time we called *sapos* ... people would go and report to the guerrillas, saying: ‘In that area there are having a meeting about something we don’t know about.’”<sup>78</sup> Thus, meetings had to be clandestine. Moreover, making things even more difficult, they counted on little lead time. The ultimatum came with an expiration date. Even if the exact number of days varied from testimony to testimony, it seems that they were given no more than 15 days.

Before the ultimatum, these meetings were mostly reactive, convening people to discuss how to deal with concrete acts of violence. They involved no more than four or five leaders plus a few neighbors, usually direct victims and their relatives. Although long term plans were not discussed, these meetings allowed leaders to get a sense of what villagers were thinking about the war and gauge the support they could eventually harness if they were to organize the population.

After the ultimatum, these meetings grew bigger and more proactive. About a dozen community leaders gathered in an almost permanent assembly for several consecutive days. This time they were analyzing the options left to the community by the armed groups. The idea of organizing to stay put and engaging in noncooperation emerged from this assembly. Deciding that this was the way to go was not an easy process. Leaders had diverging ideas of what was the best course of action. For example, as mentioned before, even when they had already decided to mount noncooperation, whether the campaign was going to be armed or unarmed was an issue of intense discussion. However, the biggest challenge was to ensure the participation of the population at large. Leaders were cognizant of not being able to launch a noncooperation campaign by themselves alone. To be successful, they knew they needed to create an enduring (almost universal) constituency; the presence of a few spoilers could be deadly. As Cristian put it, “with a few villagers that turn their backs on us, we all can get killed”.<sup>79</sup> The obstacles to

<sup>76</sup> Peasant testimony cited in Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2011, pp. 314-315)

<sup>77</sup> Interview ID. 6, March 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Interview ID. 21, May 2014.

<sup>79</sup> Author’s Field Notes, April 2017.

achieve this were abundant and leaders had a long way ahead.

For starters, in an area in which many villagers had supported the rebels for years and some others had already begun to act as informants for the army or the paramilitaries, leaders had to work towards reshaping residents' preferences to achieve a basic level of convergence. Moreover, in a context of increasing distrust and generalized fear, leaders had to encourage villagers to reveal their private preferences in public. To do so, they had to meet with the larger population to persuasively present the alternative of noncooperation. However, as holding large meetings was too dangerous, leaders went door-to-door to talk with villagers and held small-scale clandestine meetings. The central message they tried to convey, according to Tomás, was a simple but dramatic one: "or we get united, or we die."<sup>80</sup> They explained to the population that the only way to stay in their lands and procure some basic level of protection, was to refrain from providing any sort of support to any of the armed factions and from turning to them to solve community disputes. Leaders who pressed this process forward, such as Julio, referred to this period as the "silent campaign" (*campana silenciosa*):

[T]he silent campaign did not last too long, as we did not have a lot of time. We went from person to person. As we [leaders] knew more or less who was not involved with the guerrillas, we told them: "we are doing this and that. We are organizing a board to refuse to collaborate with the guerrillas, because the guerrillas are us". So that person would say, "I agree, we agree" and so on and so forth. We were consulting with people, as this couldn't be done in public ... I called it the silent campaign ... we could not do it in public as politicians do. It was like talking to people in secrecy.<sup>81</sup>

Leaders divided the village's territory among them. David explains: "One leader covered the areas up there [the north of the village] and talked to the people living over there. Those who lived down here [in the populated center of La India], talked to those from the area. And those who came from further down [the south of the village], talked to residents down there ... So we parceled out the territory and began to organize the people like this."<sup>82</sup> Leaders' main job at this stage was to provide a coherent narrative that re-defined the problem, stressing the role of civilians in the production of violence, and offering a potential solution attuned to this redefinition. In doing so, they acted as transformative leaders (Rotberg, 2012; Read and Shapiro, 2014).

However, unlike many transformative leaders who tend to come from outside of existing social and political structures (Zeitsoff, 2017), leaders in the experience of the ATCC came from within the community. They emerged as community leaders by actively engaging in collective work when the area was first colonized, as well as by participating in some of the main local institutions, such as the JACs and the Adventist Church. For example Josué, perhaps the most visible figure of the whole process, was first the president of one of the most active JAC of the region. In turn, Julio – another of the first settlers of the region – is also the founder of the Adventist Church in La India and still today serves as its main pastor and head. This leadership landscape contrasts with the experience of the PCSJA, where not only many of the historical leaders had been killed or fled by the time the Peace Community was created, but also one of the

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<sup>80</sup>Interview ID. 21, May 2014.

<sup>81</sup>Interview ID. 24, May 2014.

<sup>82</sup>Interview ID. 6, April 2014.

central leadership figures, Eduar Lancheros, was an external actor coming from a religious-based organization in Bogotá.

In this sense, both the JACs and the Adventist Church became central associational spaces for shaping preferences and coordinating action in El Carare. They became sites where information could flow relatively freely from leaders to ordinary campesinos. In fact, when I asked the leaders how the word was spread in such a repressive context, they described that they would first approach the presidents of the JAC and then address the villagers of each hamlet. They proceeded this way as they knew better the people from the JAC and, in turn, those working in the JACs had a better sense of the loyalties and behavior of the peasants living in the hamlets under their jurisdiction.<sup>83</sup>

The Adventist church was also a central site for preference convergence and for encouraging people to mobilize. The church settled in area from the early years of colonization and since then, it has been a focal point for collective action. Julio noted that organizing peasants is not necessarily a characteristic of the Adventists per se, and has not been a common feature of the institution in Colombia. However, he explains that when they opened the church in La India, there was nothing in the area; literally, “the Adventist Church began in the middle of the jungle”. Therefore, the church was deeply engaged in organizing the *colonos* in the early experiences of collective work that gave birth to La India.<sup>85</sup> During those initial years, the region saw the emergence of some of the leaders that many villagers consider as indispensable for the emergence of the ATCC. People like Julio, for example, forged his leadership by playing a central role in the construction of the road connecting La India and Cimitarra, as well as ensuring electricity to arrive in the populated center. Moreover, being the first to engage in community work in La India, the church was also a central actor in setting up and managing the first JACs. Stressing the relationship between these two sites, Julio noted that he was the first president of the JAC in La India and the majority of its members were actually adventists.

During the peak of lethal violence, when isolation was noticeably weakening the community’s social fabric, the church served as a place for social aggregation. When asked about the role of the Adventist Church in the emergence of the ATCC, Cristian said: “The church did not speak much about the conflict or related things, but it was a center of congregation for the people. At that time, there were no hamlets along the banks of the river, so there were little places where people could congregate. The church was that for villagers.”<sup>86</sup> Moreover, as several villagers underscored, the church provided a “divine” sense of protection precisely when they needed it the most. Without any probing, Tomás, himself a member of the Church, stressed that “it gave us protection; praying was our protection. This is how the church helped.”<sup>87</sup> This sense of protection was not only important for those who had been members of the Church for years, but for the population at large. As Cristian noted, “In the most complicated moment, a lot of people got closer to the church; like in search of protection, salvation. It wasn’t the case that all were members of the church, but many people began to join.”<sup>88</sup> Even if most adventists in La

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<sup>83</sup>While these Boards were an important mobilizing site for the emergence of the ATCC, it is important to note that by 1987 not many were active. In fact, Cristian noted that then only three were functioning and insisted in qualifying the role they played in the whole process.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>85</sup>Interview ID. 24, May 2014.

<sup>86</sup>Interview ID. 64, August 2015.

<sup>87</sup>Interview ID. 21, May 2014.

<sup>88</sup>In fact, once the ATCC was created and became the source of protection for its members, many people left the Church. Interview ID. 64, August 2015.

India are afro-Colombians coming from Chocó, since the settlement of the village the church has been an integration force, open to everybody and creating bridges between people coming from different areas.<sup>89</sup>

Without any probing, Julio made clear that he deliberately used the church to shape peoples preferences and beliefs regarding participation in the conflict and, in particular, the use of violence.<sup>90</sup> He, as well as some of his closest followers, gave me several examples of how he connected concrete teachings of the Bible to the war that was being waged in the village. The message was always one of peace, members of the church remember. It was commonly stressed, directly and indirectly, how by being involved with armed factions one would inevitably promote violence in one way or another.<sup>91</sup> While this was always the spirit of Julio and the Adventist Church, Daniel, an adventist who also serves as a pastor in La India, noted that with the increase in violence against the population the message of peace and non-involvement became increasingly more explicit.<sup>92</sup>

Leaders coming from the church also played a central role in defining the form of noncooperation, in particular its nonviolent character (see Masullo, 2017a). As mentioned before, influential leaders like Josué were of the idea of forming a self-defense group to use violence of their own to protect the community from armed groups. Julio remembers well the day he discussed this issue with Josué. They were in the hamlet of Santa Rosa. Josué told him “man, we need to do something because these people will finish us. Let’s arm ourselves as people are doing in Puerto Boyacá.” Julio was unequivocal in his reply: “Yes, we [the church] are here to collaborate, but not with arms. The adventist people don’t kill.”<sup>93</sup> As they were aware that to be successful they needed the support of the entire community, Josué and the other leaders that entertained the idea of armed noncooperation gave up on it. They understood what recent theories of nonviolent action have argued: armed opposition sets higher barriers (some of them moral) for participation than nonviolent action (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2011). In El Carare this was especially true for the Adventists. In sum, while social movement studies have highlighted the role of violent entrepreneurs in spurring of collective action (Della Porta, 2013; Tilly, 2003; Costalli and Ruggeri, 2015), in this campaign (as in the other two introduced in the previous and following chapters) what I found are leaders serving as “entrepreneurs for nonviolence”.

Beyond having the organizational skills to organize people developed through their work with the church or/and the JACs, what made these leaders successful in working towards convergence and in mobilizing villagers, was the privileged position they enjoyed within the community. For example, Julio, in his position as Pastor, had access to many villagers on a regular basis and the power to shape peoples’ beliefs and preferences by turning to the Word of God. Similarly, Josué, as the President of one of the few functioning JACs, had constant interaction with villagers of several hamlets in the region. Moreover, it was war itself that put some villagers in that privileged position. As leaders were targeted disproportionately, some of them became well-known and

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<sup>89</sup>In Colombia the Adventist Church was officially founded in the early 1920s in the Caribbean coast. Soon after it expanded to Cali and the Pacific coast. From the 1930s the Colombian Pacific Mission has been one of the main Adventist missions in the country. Several of its members come from the Department of Chocó, a department with coastlines on both the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans and known for its large Afro-Colombian population. From there it was brought to El Carare, via the many colonizers that came from that part of the country.

<sup>90</sup>Interview ID. 24, May 2014.

<sup>91</sup>Interviews IDs. 21, 24 and 25, May 2014.

<sup>92</sup>Interview ID. 25, May 2014.

<sup>93</sup>Interview ID. 24, May 2014.

respected within their community for questioning the actions of armed organizations. In the words of Grupo de Memoria Histórica, (2011, p. 55) “War managed to weaken trust and solidarity, it only left alive the admiration for leaders who questioned armed domination.”

This was clearly the case of Josué. By challenging practices that deeply aggrieved the population, such as the *carnetización* and the *parcelización*, he showed that manifesting dissent was possible, encouraging other residents to be less passive in their relationship with armed groups and providing some assurance for them to reveal their private preferences. Referring to Josué’s leadership, Cristian noted that:

It was not his capacity to organize or direct which contributed so much to the creation of the ATCC. He was known for his character. He feared nothing, confronting nobody. At the time of the *carnetización* he walked around without his ID or with an expired one ... this is how people knew him, as some who was not afraid of anything. In this sense, he served as a leader because he gave people an example of how to overcome fear.<sup>94</sup>

Leaders, as first movers, also played a central role by exercising risk-embracing leadership. By pressing forward with a cooperative opening against all odds and in spite of the high risks involved, they embraced “strategic hopeful action” (Read and Shapiro, 2014, p. 41). This was indispensable for the emergence of a noncooperation campaign under the circumstances residents of El Carare were facing. A small group of leaders took a larger share of the risks associated with organized noncooperation in crucial moments of the processes: breaking up the “law of silence”, convening an assembly right after the ultimatum, approaching the FARC for the first time, and becoming members of the first ATCC Board. As a peasant put it, “Josué did not found the organization. We all founded the organization. But he was the one who exposed himself ...”.<sup>95</sup>

By exposing themselves, they not only set the process in motion, but also lowered the threshold of risky action for the more risk-averse villagers, allowing for more participants to join the campaign (Granovetter, 1978). This risk-embracing attitude and the threshold dynamic that it unleashed, are most clear in the gradual growth of participation in the initial rounds of dialogue. In the first dialogue held with FARC in El Abarco on the 21st of May, about 30 people participated, 12 of which were leaders. While many peasants had already agreed on launching a noncooperation campaign by the time of the meeting, most were too afraid to attend. As testimonies go, they stayed in La India convinced that their leaders were going to be killed upon their arrival to El Abarco. The others who decided to accompany their leaders did not dare to address the rebels and left to the leaders the job of presenting the proposal. Josué noted that while 15 or 20 people had a clear idea of what they were doing, the others were there only to witness how the guerrillas would kill them or kick them out. In contrast, only 20 days later (the 11th of June), around 2,500 people participated in the second meeting with FARC, now with its High Command. By early July, when they first met with high level officials of the military, informants refer to about 3,000 participants. While these numbers vary from source to source, the gradual growth in participation is apparent. As a peasant put it, “[w]hen people saw the

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<sup>94</sup>Interview ID. 64, August 2015. When discussing the issue of leadership with my interviewees, almost every villager told me stories about how Josué refused to be passive in the face of armed groups’ abuses and many recalled a particular meeting FARC convened in El Abarco to parcel Josué’s farm. In that occasion, by openly challenging their policy, Josué made apparent how arbitrary and “anti-peasant” the rebels were becoming..

<sup>95</sup>Peasant testimony cited in Hernandez Delgado, (2004, p. 348)

good results of the work that was being done, many more people supported the organization and became part of the board.”<sup>96</sup>

All in all, it is clear how leaders were central in moving from grievances towards collective action. Leaders coming from previous experiences of collective action that date back to the years of colonization and that forged their leadership in local institutions such as the Adventist Church and the JACs, help explain the capacity peasants of El Carare had to launch the ATCC. As reflected in the following testimony, peasants are well aware of this:

There was a group of key people with the qualities and capacities needed to achieve the objectives that we had set for ourselves. That was our great advantage. We had people like Josué, but also people that had been in the region for a long time and knew well all our problems ... [I]t was clear that it was not magicians who got the organization going. We had a group of men with the capacity and commitment to do it. Otherwise, it would have been useless to try.<sup>97</sup>

### **External sites of support**

To be sure, the story of the emergence of the ATCC is not only one of leadership. The theory proposed in this study identifies external actors as another central source of mobilizing resources that can grant a given community with the capacity needed to engage in collective action. In the previous chapter we saw how local, national and even international actors played a vital role in the emergence of the PCSJA. In this pact campaign, regional and national actors also provided villagers with resources that were important for mobilizing noncooperation. Nevertheless, compared to the experience of San José, external actors feature less centrally. Moreover, there are important differences both in the type of actors that intervened and the roles they played. Rather than national NGOs, the main external actors supporting the ATCC were state agencies operating regionally. Furthermore, a big portion of the mobilizing resources they provided were of a material nature. Additionally, while the Association certainly gained international visibility and international actors came to support the process, this happened only years after its creation and thus their role was unimportant in terms of emergence and initial consolidation.<sup>98</sup>

While campesino relationships with the army had been very bad since the first time the forces of the state established a presence in the region in the mid-1970s, villagers have always maintained cordial relationships with the few civic institutions of the state that have operated in the region. As David explained, these relationships were facilitated by the work that, very early in the 1960s, left-wing movements and parties did from the urban municipal centers, in particular that of Cimitarra. Having been represented for several years in the municipal council, these movements brokered with some public agencies that, despite of the general absence of the state, tried to promote rural development in the region.

Every now and then these agencies visited the rural areas, in particular populated centers such as La India, allowing community leaders to establish direct and independent relationships (i.e., not mediated by politicians in Cimitarra) with them. This proved vital, as when the

<sup>96</sup>Peasant testimony cited in Correa, (1990, p. 162).

<sup>97</sup>Peasant testimony cited in Correa, (1990, p. 162)

<sup>98</sup>Just to mention two notable examples of the international support and recognition, in 1990 the ATCC was awarded the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize and in 1995 the United Nations Community Award. Both recognitions came with important material resources that allowed the campaign to materialize key projects.

political balance switched and left-wing movements lost representation at the municipal level in the late 1970s, some local leaders managed to maintain a channel of communication with these agencies (through the JACs, for example). In this way, when villagers decided to organize into noncooperation, some of these agencies provided material support that, while not relevant at all for the decision to launch the campaign, proved to be of special importance for the consolidation of the process.<sup>99</sup>

Among these agencies, the one that villagers recall the most is the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA). This institute was created in the early 1960s with the expressed aim of addressing the inequalities of rural Colombia by distributing public lands, expanding zones of colonization, improving the rural infrastructure and offering credits for agricultural projects. When peasants were still uncertain about having enough material capital to push the ATCC forward, the Cimitarra office of the INCORA jumped in and supported the process. In July 1987, few months after the foundational dialogues with FARC, the institute convened a forum to learn about the progress made by the Association and identify some of the main needs of the community. Following this forum, the INCORA gave villagers a loan to buy two *motores* (canoes) and to set up a community store in La India. When discussing the role of these external actors, villagers underscored how important was for them to count on their own *motores* in terms of self-protection. Having no option than sharing the main means of transport of the region with armed actors had been for long a central source of gossip and accusations feeding cycles of violence against them. The community shop, in turned, enable the Association to provide their members with basic goods at a better price, as well as to have stock in crucial periods when armed confrontation confined them and access to products was scarce.

It is the case that when discussing the role of the INCORA most interviewees stressed how this agency supported the process materially. However, there was one villager, part of the Association's board and with a detailed knowledge and understanding of the process of emergence, who went beyond this narrative. He in fact noted that even if what the formally got from this agency was material, having a state agency in charge of rural development believing in the process was of great symbolic significance. He noted that for the founding leaders this was a strong source of encouragement and validation and explained that this was the case because it was the first time in their lives that they saw an agent of the state caring about peasants.<sup>100</sup> Even if no one else mentioned this in my interviews, when I later shared this interpretation and asked what they thought, some older residents agreed with it and even went on and elaborated on it. One villager, for example, noted that this encouragement transformed the way they saw the state and shaped the way they have related to it over the past 28 years of noncooperation with armed groups (Note the difference in the way the ATCC and the PCSJA relate to the state).

Beyond material resources, that forum also brought Miguel Barajas to participate in the process. Barajas was an agronomist working for INCORA who, soon after the forum, became the manager for the INCORA office in Cimitarra and began serving informally as a technical advisor to the ATCC. He, and the resources provided by the INCORA, proved crucial in the task of drafting a Development Plan for the ATCC (presented to the government in 1989), communicating with external actors, and sharing the experience of El Carare peasants outside the region. In doing so, he brokered with several public institutions that later came to support

<sup>99</sup>Conversation with David. Author's Field Notes, March 2014.

<sup>100</sup>Interview ID. 6, April 2014 (especially in a follow up in 2015).

the ATCC, such as the National Institute of Renewable Natural Resources and Environment (INDERENA) and the National Learning Service (SENA). He also gave the campaign visibility in the country's main newspapers (such as *Vanguardia Liberal*, *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador*) and attracted the attention of Colombia's most prestigious universities (such as the National University and University of Los Andes in Bogotá). Barajas eventually left INCORA, moved permanently to La India, and became a full member of the ATCC and its board. He was killed by the paramilitaries in the 1990 massacre. Villagers remember him as a "highly educated expert", something equivalent to how peasants in San José regarded Eduar Lancheros, and particularly highlighted his communicational skills, especially in written form. These skills, according to many founding members, was what enabled the Association to communicate with the broader public.<sup>101</sup>

The Governor Office of the Department of Santander also supported the consolidation of the ATCC in its early months. Through the National Rehabilitation Plan (PNR), a program launched in the 1980s with the aim of bringing the state to the more depressed areas of the country, the Office provided villagers with tools to work their land and supported them with funds for agricultural projects. This program was in fact geared towards those areas that were suffering the most from the activity of armed groups. In addition, they contributed with logistical issues in key areas for the consolidation of the Association. For example, they brokered with the military to set up a meeting between villagers and the general commander of the II Division of the army (Hernandez Delgado, 2004, p. 333).<sup>102</sup> This took place after villagers failed to get hold of high level officials of the battalion in Cimitarra when they first approached them to negotiate noncooperation. On that occasion they had no other option than to dialogue with low-ranked soldiers at the hamlet-level bases, who were not open to their proposal. They noted that FARC was not going to respect the agreements and stressed that the only way villagers had out of the conflict was to arm themselves.

Finally, what about the Catholic Church? When prompting villagers to talk about the role of the church, the emphasis was commonly on the Adventists. Only some scattered references to the Catholic Church came up in my interviews. When asked why this was the case, leaders explained that the Catholic Church, through the Diocese of Barrancabermeja (the second largest city in the Department of Santander), has been always aware of the situation in the rural areas of the region and in some occasion has been an active supporter of the peasants. However, they noted, that during the process of setting up the Association, the diocese was not present, or at least, not really involved. They recognized that already during the period of army repression, the diocese stood with the peasants. For example, villagers recalled that in 1981, when a group of 300 peasants marched to Cimitarra protesting against army's abuses, it was the the parish who mediated between them, the local government and the military. This, in fact, was made possible

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<sup>101</sup>About a year after its creation, *Vanguardia Liberal*, Santander's major news outlet, had already published several articles about the Association. On the 4th of February 1990, he wrote an article in the Sunday Readings (*Lecturas Dominicales*) of *El Tiempo*, the most widely read section of the most popular newspaper in the country. In this article he criticized the intellectuals for ignoring the processes that were unfolding in the country while talking about violence and peace. In presenting the ATCC to the country, he provided a vivid account of the violence experienced in the region, naming and shaming the main perpetrators. Many villagers, however, considered this a strategic mistake that violated their take on denunciations and even linked it to the events in which Barajas was later killed.

<sup>102</sup>Like the Catholic Church, this office provided logistical support to the ATCC to organize the return of several displaced families to La Corcovada. Interview ID. 17, May 2015 and ATCC Archive, *Breve Historia*.

their return to La India. This was the first contact villagers remember they had with the Catholic Church. However, Jorge noted that the Diocese came to support the ATCC only after their official creation, and that it played an important role in the Association's early consolidation. For example, villagers recall that the Diocese provided humanitarian assistance in critical moments, distributing food supplies and assisting the return of many displaced people.<sup>103</sup> They also served as brokers with international organizations that came to support the Association when the process was well on its way, such as Caritas Switzerland and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

## 6.5 Control Case: Noncooperation in the absence of leaders

*They kept on trying to get to organized ... very, very clandestinely. But they, by themselves, were not able to do so. They needed their leaders to take the lead and fight in the front, so they could back them up. But they just couldn't take the lead.*

– Peasant leader. *Cimitarra, Santander* (2014)

As mentioned before, the ATCC quickly gained national (and even international) recognition. This was in part thanks to the work of Barajas, who put the experience of the peasants of El Carare in the headlines of several regional and national newspapers and news channels. Media attention attracted universities and international organizations and introduced the experience of the villagers of La India to audiences in Colombia. However, there was a parallel process, supported by INCORA and SENA, through which the experience became known not to people in major cities, but to other peasant communities in the Magdalena Medio that were also experiencing the war.

This was the case, for example, of a peasant forum of the Carare-Opon region that was celebrated in the town of Barbosa (Department of Santander). This was the third edition of such forum, and this time the main objective was to discuss a “Plan for Peace” for the region. As was to be expected given the subject, the ATCC played a protagonist role. Leaders from the Association shared their experience with peasants coming from several communities in the entire department.<sup>104</sup> As a consequence, several communities got interested in the experience and asked the leaders of the Association if they could visit La India and learn more about the process. The leaders agreed and they received visitors from many different parts of the country.

David was one of the leaders in charge of welcoming these visitors. In several conversations I had with him, he told me about various communities that, after visiting La India and learning about the process, went back to their villages and tried to replicate the experience. “[T]hey stayed two or three days, observed everything, spoke with the people and then left to see how they could organize their own communities.”<sup>105</sup> As with the diffusion of community initiated militias (Jentzsch, 2014, p. 58), a community that successfully managed to organized a campaign, promoted the initial diffusion of noncooperation to neighboring communities.

Peasants from the municipalities of El Carmen de Chucurí and San Vicente de Chucurí, both in the Department of Santander, or San Pablo and Cantagallo in Bolívar, came to learn from the

<sup>103</sup>Interview ID. 17, May 2015.

<sup>104</sup>ATCC Archive, “Tercer Foro Campesino del Carare-Opón”, December 1988

<sup>105</sup>Interview ID. 6, March 2017.

ATCC experience. For the many communities that David mentioned, I was able to confirm some cases. For example, I learnt that after many years of co-existing with six different rebel fronts, in particular the ELN, when the army entered the municipal center of El Carmen to dispute the rebels' control in 1989/1990, about 4.000 villagers, led by the presidents of the JACs, decided to approach the commanders of ELN's Front Capitán Parmenio and told them about their decision to be neutral. Later, they did the same with the arriving forces of the state.<sup>106</sup>

From the many communities that visited La India, one happened to be an interesting control case for my argument: the experience of La Caimana. In the same region, El Carare, and exposed to the same armed groups around the same period of time, a group of villagers (initially) failed to launch a campaign of noncooperation. Apart from variation across space (why did it work in La India and not in La Caimana?), this case also allowed me to exploit variation across time (why did it fail initially and then it succeeded?). As a "failed case", it enables me to look into the necessity of second part of the proposed theory, the capacity for collective action (what happens when a desire for noncooperation has evolved, but a community has no capacity to organize noncooperation?). More specifically, serving as a good contrast space for the story of La India in which leaders feature prominently in shaping the community's capacity to organize, this case enable me to look into what happens with a community that has no leaders.

La Caimana is a small area of four rural hamlets north of La India, in the municipality of Cimitarra, next to a brook from which it takes its name.<sup>107</sup> Located no more than 30km away from La India, it neighbors the northeastern boundaries of the ATCC's area of influence (see Map in Figure 6.7).<sup>108</sup> Due to different processes, related to the way the JACs were organized and the fact that they are located "on the other side" of the municipal center of Cimitarra, these hamlets had their own leaders and followed their own social process.<sup>109</sup> However, in terms of their war trajectories, the situation was not very different. FARC's almost hegemonic control of the area during the 1960's and 1970s also covered this area, and the same rebel fronts that operated in what became the area of influence of the Association operated there too. Both areas went through the same period of repression from the Battalion Reyes and saw the arrival of the paramilitaries during the same period. Villagers were similarly stigmatized as "insurgent communities" by the counter-insurgents that eventually took control of the area.

When the area of influence of the ATCC was defined, these hamlets were defined as off limits. The reasons for this boundary definition are not clear. Some villagers claim that it was because those hamlets were on the other side of the municipal center (see Map in Figure 6.7) and thus residents never really interacted with those of La India. This makes sense, as they do not share a market place or any other congregational spaces. In any case, aware of what was unfolding in the neighboring village, community leaders wanted to add their hamlets to the ATCC. They visited La India, were they were told (like many others) that the Association

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<sup>106</sup> Author's Field Notes, August 2015.

<sup>107</sup> I use this name a to refer to the entire area comprising four hamlets, one of which is called La Caimana . I was initially told that the experience of La Caimana involved five hamlets. However, after investigating more about the experience, respondents only identified four hamlets with concrete names. Note that, as with the hamlets that form part of the ATCC's area of influence, many hamlet names are given by the people and do not correspond to divisions recognized by the municipal entities. Therefore, it could that what some consider five hamlets, others consider only four.

<sup>108</sup> This distance corresponds to the estimate of what would be a straight line between the two places. The distance if you take the only unpaved road connecting both places is 64km.

<sup>109</sup> Author's Field Notes, August 2015.

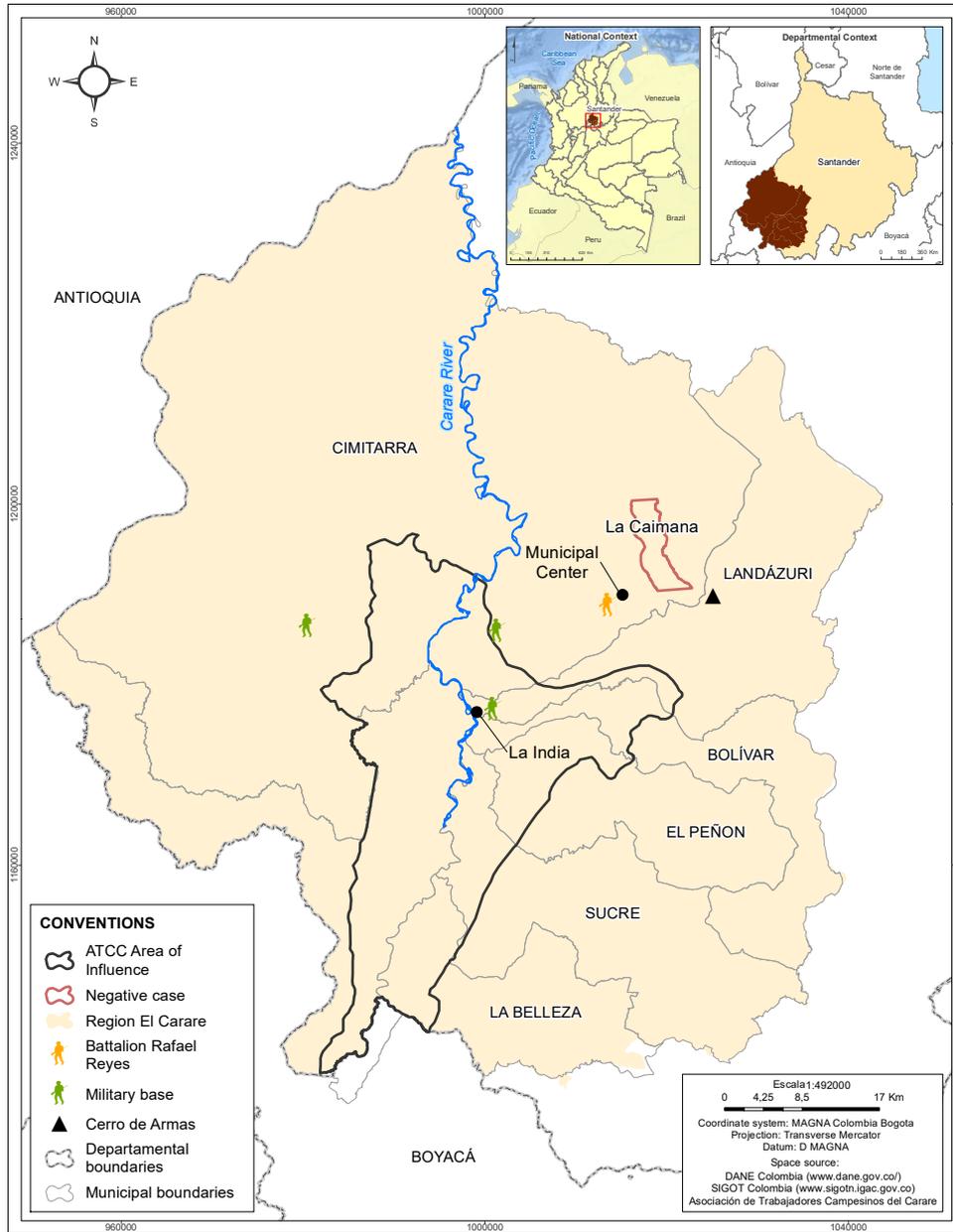


Figure 6.7: Map: Negative Case, La Caimana Area

did not think that expanding to territories where they do not know the people well was a good idea. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Association shared with villagers from La Caimana their experience and provided advice so they could mount a similar independent campaign in their hamlets. The leaders stayed in La India for some days, learnt about the process, and went back to organize their community. In the process, they went back to La India several times and maintained a channel of communication with the board.

Back in their hamlets, they presented the idea to the residents and began to organize villagers. The process seemed to be moving forward until the FARC learnt about it. Knowing their intentions, they threatened the leaders, asking them to leave the region otherwise they would be killed. They had no choice but to leave. They fled their hamlets, leaving nonetheless the idea planted in the heads of villagers. As the opening quote indicates, in the absence of their leaders some residents continued to try and organize the campaign. However, villagers response was not the same. Not only many residents did fear the same fate of their leaders, but also they did lack the skills and experience to convene and organize people. At this stage, despite sharing a preference for noncooperation, having the initial work done by their leaders and counting on the model and support of the ATCC, noncooperation failed. The reasons why FARC did not want to pact noncooperation with this villagers are unknown and puzzling. Especially if we considering that the same Front (XI) was in charge of the entire area. However, this might be suggesting that armed groups might tolerate one community doing this, but not its diffusion. When I asked a former commander of this Front about this, he claimed not to be aware. Nevertheless, in line with my interpretation, he noted that it is one thing to have one village negotiating with them and another very different thing to have several telling them what to do.<sup>110</sup> The following exchange with David supports this interpretation:

DAVID: We told them [leaders of La Caimana] that we [the ATCC] were not going to go there and help them out. We told me: “Do not invite us there because us, our presence, would harm you even more. But go ahead [organizing peasants] and whenever you want to know something, come here. Whatever thing you might need to know, come here, learn it and then leave. But there we don’t go because that can be worse.”

ME: Why did you think it could be worse for them?

DAVID: Because the guerrillas, armed groups in general, don’t want to see that there are people over there talking about the ATCC. This upsets them. They did not want the thing to grow further. Remember that they even put us some boundaries?<sup>111</sup>

After about two years in exile, their leaders finally came back. While residents were not able to organize the campaign of noncooperation, they managed to address FARC and ask them to allow their leaders back. FARC accepted, but with one condition: “Ok, come back, but stop with the ATCC thing.”<sup>112</sup> When the leaders returned, they addressed the ATCC, presented them with

<sup>110</sup>Interview ID. 71, August 2015.

<sup>111</sup>Interview ID. 6, April 2014 (and follow-ups in 2015). As noted earlier in this chapter, the boundaries of the ATCC’s zone of influence reflect to some extent the geography of war as defined by armed actors (recall that one of the aspects that was “pacted” between armed groups and civilians was the area to which the agreements would apply). Therefore, one cannot argue that the exclusion of La Caimana from the ATCC’s area of influence was random. Consequently, FARC’s different response to the them could also be explained by the different strategic value that rebels give to each of the areas. While certainly plausible, I did not find any evidence pointing in this direction.

<sup>112</sup>Interview ID. 6, March 2014.

their situation and asked for advice. The recommendation of the ATCC then was to continue organizing the people, but in secrecy and without making any reference to La India. This was exactly what they did. They kept on organizing and encouraging the people “stealthily, very stealthily” (*calladitos, calladitos*).<sup>113</sup> Just like leaders of La India had done some years before, they mobilized people in a clandestine way, meeting up with villagers in their own houses and warily spreading the word and doing all the planing.

In the early 1990s, once they felt people were convinced and committed (“*concientizada*”), they decided to launch the campaign, address the rebels and informed them of their decision: “Do us the favor and respect us. We do not work with you anymore. You can come here as many times as you want, but don’t count on us. We won’t chase you, you aren’t our enemies, but don’t count on us.” Without giving it any name and without making any reference to the ATCC whatsoever, villagers engaged in a noncooperation campaign that developed independently, but built on the model of the Association. What was not possible in the absence of leaders in a first moment, was possible when they were back. According to David, villagers in these hamlets organized better than the ATCC itself. To illustrate this claim, he provided an example. When coca cultivation came back to the region in the early 2000s, armed groups managed to convince villagers of La India to grow crops in the ATCC’s area of influence. They failed to do so in La Caimana. The message there was blunt: “Whoever wants to grow coca here, has to leave. Nobody grows coca here.” Unlike the ATCC, organization and discipline in La Caimana enable residents to stick to the norms of noncooperation and refrain from participating in activities that involved armed groups, such as coca cultivation.<sup>114</sup>

This control case shows that having a preference for noncooperation is not enough for a campaign to emerge. Collective action capacity is a necessary condition. Moreover, this case provides extra leverage to the argument that the availability of leadership is a central force shaping a given community capacity to organize noncooperation. Both within-case variation over time in the experience of La Caimana, and cross-case variation between this experience and that of the ATCC, provide weight to my argument about the centrality of leaders.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined the second type of noncooperation covered in this study: pacted noncooperation. It presented a detailed empirical treatment of the processes by which the ATCC emerged in the village of La India as a response to an ultimatum given to residents by the army and the paramilitaries. Civilians were given the option to join one of the factions in contest, leave the area or die. Instead, building on strong existing leadership coming from local communal boards and the Adventist Church that was a pivotal cohesive force in the community, they opted to stay put and organize into a campaign of pacted noncooperation to protect themselves against violence. As a control case, this chapter introduced the experience of the neighboring village of La Caimana and traced the trajectory that led to an (initially) failed attempt of noncooperation. Through an analysis of cross-time variation of the experience of La Caimana and cross-case variation between it and the experience of La India, this paired comparison provided additional

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<sup>113</sup>Interview ID. 6, March 2014.

<sup>114</sup>Interview ID. 6, March 2014. Author’s Field Notes, August 2015.

confidence to the argument stressing the centrality of available leadership for the emergence of noncooperation.

The experience of La Caimana, in particular the reaction of FARC, raises crucial questions regarding a subject that I did not cover in this study (as my case selection sought to guarantee some level of independence between positive cases): the diffusion of civilian noncooperation. FARC's different response to villagers from La India and La Caimana seem to suggest that while one campaign of noncooperation in a give area is tolerable, more are too costly. If this was the case and we were always to see a second campaign in the same area failing, this would suggest that the possibility of noncooperation depends to a large extent on the permissiveness of armed groups. I do not believe this is the case. The fact that La Caimana community managed to organize when their leaders were back supports the overarching claim advanced in this thesis that organized civilians have in fact some level of independent leverage *vis á vis* armed groups.

# 7

## Oblique Noncooperation

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the last form of noncooperation analyzed in this dissertation. It corresponds to the left end of the continuum proposed in Chapter 2 and represents the less confrontational form of noncooperation analyzed in this study. In oblique forms of noncooperation civilians oppose armed groups in a coordinated and sustained manner but, unlike the other two forms explored in the previous chapters, they do so in an oblique, *disguised* way. They disguise it not in the sense of concealing, as civilians do engage in overt and visible actions, but in the sense of advancing it through activities that are not openly and directly related to war dynamics. Thus, without publicly declaring noncooperation and/or overtly opposing armed groups, civilians do refuse to cooperate with armed groups and with the rules of the game imposed, implicitly or explicitly, by them.

I explore this type of noncooperation by exploiting within-municipality variation in San Carlos, a municipality located in the Department of Antioquia, in the region of Eastern Antioquia (EA). I trace the process by which a campaign of noncooperation emerged led by a group of youths to counter the effects of violence on their community's social fabric and prevent further recruitment. To leverage my argument about the emergence of this campaign, I compare the trajectories of war and the way civilians responded to armed groups in the municipal center of San Carlos and the village of El Jordán, about 40 kilometers to the east. In the previous chapters negative cases provided additional confidence in the proposed theory by exploring the necessary nature of the targeting condition (C3) and the availability of leadership. The experience of El Jordán here shows that when control shifts in a quick, stable and almost uncontested manner from one armed faction to another (C1), we are not likely to observe a noncooperation campaign taking form.

The main empirical material for this chapter comes from 52 original interviews and workshops conducted in the field during the spring and summer of 2015. I interviewed residents of San Carlos, mostly from the municipal center and surrounding hamlets and from the village of El Jordán. In addition to these formal interviews, I had the opportunity to have informal individual and group conversations with several demobilized fighters (mainly from Bloque Metro, a paramilitary faction that operated in the municipality) who are part of a reintegration process. When the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) demobilized in the early 2000s, about 40 ex-combatants

of the blocks that operated in the region opted to stay in San Carlos.<sup>1</sup> To complement and triangulate this oral data, I analyzed several primary and secondary sources, including a private press archive kept by a local woman in San Carlos,<sup>2</sup> reports from 24 workshops with residents of El Jordán on the topic of forced disappearance, and several logbooks containing the experience of war of several residents of the municipality to which I was given access by the Center of Accompaniment for Reconciliation (CARE) in San Carlos' municipal center.

The EA region observed several collective responses to war violence throughout the 1990s, especially in the second half of the decade, precisely when violent events and violence against civilians began to escalate in the region. The repertoire of collective action was wide, including demonstrations at central squares, days and marches of silence, and public white flag-raising, among others (G. I. Restrepo, 2011, p. 143). In these responses, the Diocese of the Catholic Church and local authorities, in particular mayors, were central in convening different sectors of society and approaching armed groups – primary the National Liberation Army (ELN). Most of these actions were regional in scope. Some counted on the participation of all 23 municipalities comprising EA and even led to the creation of regional actors such as the Provincial Assembly and the Provincial Peace Council (García and Aramburu, 2011, p. 137). Some of these actors became United Nations Development Program (UNDP) “best practices” of how to face the challenges imposed by war (see UNDP, 2003, Chap. 19).

As it is to be expected, these multi-actor, regional-level campaigns have captured the attention of most of the studies examining civilian coordinated responses to war in the region (e.g., García and Aramburu, 2011; G. I. Restrepo, 2011).<sup>3</sup> However, although war and its daily effects were the foci of action of these responses, the bulk of these initiatives hardly qualify as noncooperation. Rather than sustained campaigns, many constitute one-off manifestations of dissent (see Chapter 2 for this distinction). Rather than a refusal to cooperate with armed groups, they were expressions of what Maria Teresa Uribe de Hincapié, (2006, pp. 72,74) calls a “pacifist discourse” and the targets, rather than armed groups, many times were “unknown, undefined or abstract” (García Villegas, 2005, p. 49).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as time passed, many of these initiatives evolved into more institutionalized processes with broader and more abstract aims, such as promoting regional development, democracy and citizenship, abandoning its focus on war and blurring out its grassroots origins (García and Aramburu, 2011, p. 145). As a former mayor of San Carlos put it in an interview, many of these initiatives “became a bureaucratic thing more than something about action.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I was asked not to record these conversations and to treat them as informal chats, rather than formal interviews.

<sup>2</sup>The archive is not systematic, but it includes a large sample of articles about violence in San Carlos during the 1990s that the resident used to clandestinely collect when she managed to travel to Medellín. There were some press articles from major national newspapers, but the bulk of the information comes from *El Colombiano*, a departmental outlet. Although most of these articles are retrievable online, spending several days going through them with the woman who kept them in her place proved to be an extraordinarily rich source of information. While we discussed many of the events reported in the press, she provided context and interpretations, revealing discrepancies on how the media portrayed the events and residents experienced them.

<sup>3</sup>The Report on displacement in San Carlos by the Grupo de Memoria Historica, (2011) and Ehrlich's (2016) dissertation on grassroots peacebuilding are two exceptions. Nevertheless, civilian noncooperation was the subject of these studies and none of these studies covers the campaign I treat here in more detail.

<sup>4</sup>To be sure, there are some exceptions, such as the campaign of “humanitarian reapproachments” advanced by mayors to negotiate “sanctuaries” with ELN rebels in the early 2000s, which resembles what I term pacted noncooperation.

<sup>5</sup>Interview ID. 92, May 2015.

Localized responses rarely feature in these studies. Within-region variation has not been leveraged, let alone within-municipality. When the local features in these regional accounts, it is usually as part of an analysis of what McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, (2001) call “upward scale-shifts”: moves from local to regional, national or/and transnational contention. When studies have looked at local civilian responses, they have highlighted strategies such as “pragmatic accommodation” or “double-dealing” (e.g., Grupo de Memoria Historica, 2011, Chap. 5; Gonzáles, 2011, p. 30), which do not always involve coordination and do not necessarily constitute expressions of civilian noncooperation with armed groups (see Kalyvas, 2006; Maria Teresa Uribe de Hincapié, 2006, p. 72).

However, fieldwork revealed that residents of San Carlos have come up with concrete and visible ways to collectively refuse to collaborate with armed groups. For example, a group of school teachers working in both rural and urban areas refused to stop doing their job even when doing so was an implicit (and in some cases explicit) order from the different factions operating in the area, mainly the paramilitaries. Not only did teachers understand that other residents could follow suit if they stayed, but they also understood that they could reinvent their role as teachers to provide accompaniment and psychosocial assistance to kids and their families. Another visible example is that of a theater and music group that used cultural activities to fight against social disintegration and, particularly, youth recruitment. Their aim was to keep youths away from war and use theater and music as a vehicle for voicing dissent.<sup>6</sup>

A third example, which will be the focus of this chapter, is the Youth Project of Peace (Joppaz): the experience of a group of high school students who launched a campaign of street evening activities in the municipal center to convene neighbors to play board games and share a communal potluck. By doing so, they challenged a dusk-to-dawn curfew implicitly placed by armed groups and, by working mostly with high school students as organizers, they fought youth recruitment. Relative to the other experiences analyzed in this dissertation, this campaign involved lower levels of confrontation with armed groups. However, it does constitute an instance of noncooperation in that civilians refused to cooperate with implicit and explicit rules of behavior established by both the rebels and the paramilitaries, and sought to minimize youth participation in armed organizations – mostly in paramilitary ranks.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the next section I provide an overview of the local trajectories of war in San Carlos in its regional context. Then, in Section 7.3, I offer a detailed account of the process by which Joppaz was launched. In Sections 7.4.1 and 7.4.2, disciplined by the structure of the proposed theory, I offer an analytical narrative of the conditions and mechanisms that led to the emergence of this campaign. Examining variation over time in the municipal center of San Carlos of both war dynamics and civilian choices, I explain why the campaign emerged *when* it did. Finally, in Section 7.5 I examine the control case of the village of El Jordán, where civilian noncooperation was not organized. With the cross-space comparison, I not only show the necessary nature of contested shifts of control (C1) as a condition for the emergence of noncooperation, but also explain why it emerged *where* it did. The chapter concludes by summing up the main findings and offering a brief theoretical reflection about the

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<sup>6</sup>The powerful play *Asfalto* (Asphalt) put together by a group of six youths who resisted displacement is perhaps the most visible outcome of the efforts of this group. Fragments of the play are shown in the equally powerful documentary film *Aquí me quedé* (Here I stayed) by Foronda and Echavarría, which narrates the stories of several individuals who stayed in San Carlos, including one school teacher. The documentary is available <https://vimeo.com/103910123>.

long-term effects of repression on mobilization/demobilization and the benefits of undertaking a generational approach in study of collective action.

## 7.2 Trajectories of War in San Carlos

The municipality of San Carlos is located in northwestern Colombia in the Department of Antioquia, about 120 kilometers away from Medellín (Antioquia's capital) and is one of the 23 municipalities of the EA region (See Map in Figure 7.1). This region experienced dramatic transformations in the 1970s, when huge infrastructural investments were made for the construction of the Medellín airport, the Bogotá and Medellín highway, and a comprehensive hydroelectric network (EA is today the principal generator of electric energy in the country). These projects, in particular the construction of dams and reservoirs for hydroelectric purposes, implied fast population growth and large money inflows, with deep social, economic and environmental impacts. An area traditionally based on peasant agriculture had to quickly adjust to the fast pace of industrial expansion. In the 1980s these transformations led to heightened social struggles, the formation of different civic organizations and, subsequently, the emergence and expansion of left-wing guerrilla groups.

The EA is divided in four subregions: the high plateau, the paramo (in the south), the woodlands (in the center-north) and the reservoirs (in the north-east). San Carlos is located in the reservoirs area and comprises around 15% of the region's population. It is divided in three villages (Samaná, Puerto Garza and El Jordán) and 76 hamlets. Seven rivers run through its territory and it hosts four hydroelectric power plants (Punchiná, Playas, Jaguas and Calderas) that together produce about 20% of the country's electricity (See Map in Figure 7.1). According to projections based on the latest census data (DANE, 2005), around 65% of its population is rural and, in contrast to what we observed in the village of La India in the previous chapter, 98.7% of its residents are white.

Relative to Urabá and the Magdalena Medio, armed conflict arrived late to EA. While rebel groups decided to conquer areas that were more integrated into the political and economic life of the country in the late 1970s, it was only in the late 1990s that the region observed sustained conflict activity and became an area of confrontation between left-wing guerrillas and right-wing paramilitaries. Most of this violence concentrated in the reservoir area, thus affecting San Carlos significantly.

During the 1970s, as a response to the negative impacts of the infrastructural transformation taking place in the region, a strong regional group, the Civil Movement, emerged in the region. By the time the rebels were establishing their presence in EA, this movement faced serious state and paramilitary repression under the excuse of being aligned with the insurgencies. This generated high discontent among the population and a growing perception that non-violent forms of collective action were too risky and not effective as channels for social change. This perception and the growing discontent among the population, opened up fertile ground for rebels expansion and strengthening in the region (González, 2011, p. 11). The ELN founded two powerful fronts in EA: the Carlos Alirio Buitrago and the Bernardo López Arroyabe, and made both the woodlands and reservoir areas (especially the rural parts of San Carlos and Granada), as well as the Bogotá–Medellín highway, their main areas of influence. ELN presence became apparent in San Carlos in 1986, when the rebels killed Roberto Loaiza in the urban

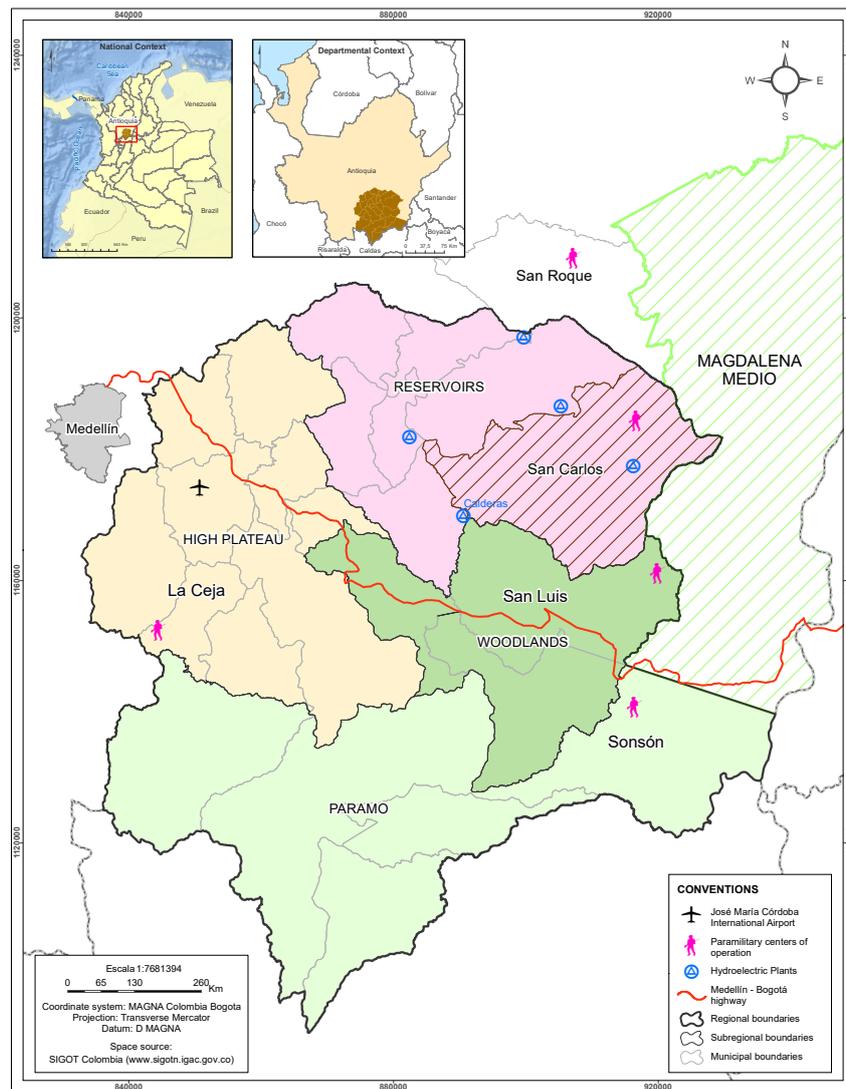


Figure 7.1: Map: Eastern Antioquia Region

Source: Author's creation

center, accusing him of collaborating with the squads that had killed several leaders of the Civic Movement. During these initial years, the ELN exhibited restraint in their handling of civilians and even sought to protect them from state and paramilitary violence. As in the killing of Loaiza, they were largely selective in their targeting.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) first arrived in the region in the late 1970s in an effort to expand their influence from the Magdalena Medio and Urabá regions. FARC's Front IV entered EA through the reservoirs and paramo areas and established a base of operations in the neighboring municipality of San Rafael. Shortly after, FARC's Front IX entered San Carlos and settled in the hamlet of San Miguel (See Map in Figure 7.2). As with the ELN, during this first period FARC's presence did not disrupt the normal development of civilian life; on the contrary, it accompanied and promoted civilian initiatives (Observatorio, 2007, p. 130). For many years FARC and ELN coexisted in the region and even carried out joint operations. In fact, the first time that rebels took over (*toma*) the municipal center, in December 1990, was in a ELN-FARC operation. Reflecting how freely and comfortably they moved in the municipality

in those years, they entered the town “without even shooting one bullet”.<sup>7</sup> In fact, this is the only one of the several *tomas guerrilleras* that interviewees recall as not violent.

However, following FARC’s VIII Conference in 1993, this insurgency began to consider the presence of other guerrilla groups in its territories a threat to their project. Consequently, they increasingly confronted the ELN in EA as in other the areas were both had coexisted. This military challenge, along with counterinsurgent efforts advanced by both the paramilitaries and the army, led to the almost disappearance of the ELN in the early 2000s. As conversations with a former ELN insurgent of the area revealed, the gradual defeat of its organization led several ELN rebels to desert and join the paramilitary groups that, by the end of the 1990s had arrived in the region.<sup>8</sup> As we saw with the demobilization of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) in Urabá in the early 1990s, ELN desertions in San Carlos, through denunciations of previous rebel collaborators, contributed to the increase in violence against civilians that were observed upon the arrival of the paramilitaries in the municipality.

Paramilitary organizations, such as the Peasant Self-defense Groups of Magdalena Medio (ACMM) and Death to Kidnappers (MAS), were known already in the early 1980s by some San Carlos residents, especially by those who were active in the social struggle against the constructions of dams. Paramilitary squads had made some sporadic incursions into the region to attack the Civil Movement, killing several visible leaders. However, in the late 1990s the paramilitaries became known to every single resident, regardless of its past history of protest or its political preferences. The Bloque Metro (BM) – a faction of the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU) –, determined to established permanent presence in the region, “broke through” (*rompieron zona*) in San Carlos. They came with the clear objective of getting rid of the rebels (and their base of support) and controlling the main corridors connecting the region with Medellín (Romero, 2003, p. 131).

Arriving from the neighboring region of Magdalena Medio (MM), they entered San Carlos through the village of El Jordán – that borders with the MM (see Map in Figure 7.1). The recently created BM stormed into San Carlos in March 1998 with a massacre that remained in the memory of every resident I spoke to as a breaking point in the trajectories of war. With time, the paramilitaries managed to have permanent presence in all 23 municipalities and established several centers of operations in the region, including a central one in the village of El Jordán.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the BM, the Bloque Heroes de Granada (BHG) and the Bloque Cacique Nutibara (BCN) operated in the region one after the other. Although shifts from one block to the other involved some infighting, they did not diminish the control the paramilitaries had achieved in large portions of San Carlos and the region. They were the dominant armed actors until late-2003, when the paramilitaries began to demobilize under the framework of the *Justicia y Paz* process for the demobilization of the AUC led by then President’s Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002–2010). In fact, the BCN was the first faction to demobilize.

The advance of the paramilitaries also coincided with the intensification of the army’s presence in the region. Military operations and clashes with the rebels became increasingly more frequent in San Carlos (see Figure 7.3). With the financial support of the ISA, a company in charge of

<sup>7</sup> *El Colombiano*, December 27 1990

<sup>8</sup> Author’s Field Notes, August 2015.

<sup>9</sup> The other bases where located in San José (La Ceja), La Danta (Sonsón), El Prodigio (San Luis) and Cristales (San Roque). See Map in Figure 7.1

the operation of the electric and telecommunications systems in Antioquia, the army established four military bases in the region. Moreover, in 2002, under the framework of President Uribe's "Democratic Security Policy", the Fourth Brigade launched a definitive offensive to recover control over the region. The arrival of the paramilitaries, the increased presence of the army and the confrontation that followed, amounted to the sharpest increase in violent activity and violence against civilians in San Carlos' war trajectory. This was not only brought up in almost every interview I conducted, but is also well reflected in the quantitative data presented in Figures 7.3 and 7.4.

This is the multi-party war scenario that residents of San Carlos had to navigate. Table 7.1 presents a timeline built together with several informants identifying what residents recall as the most significant events in San Carlos war trajectory. It reflects well how war dynamics drastically changed in the late 1990s. It shows a clear increase in military activity by both the paramilitaries and the rebel groups, as well as fierce competition to control the municipal center. Under these circumstances, with control switching hands from one faction to another on a regular basis, most of the residents left the municipality. In fact, San Carlos stands out as an example of extreme displacement in the Colombian war. According to the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (CNR), from a population of 25.840, around 20.000 people fled between 1985 and 2010.

Many sancarlitanos left to neighboring municipalities or major cities (around 800 families left to Medellín).<sup>10</sup> Around 50 out of San Carlos' 76 hamlets were totally or partially abandoned (Grupo de Memoria Historica, 2011, p. 29). Many migrants first moved from their rural hamlets to the municipal center, clustering with others similarly displaced in search of protection and with the hope of being able to return to their hamlets shortly. Most of them eventually left the municipality all together. Among those who stayed, several, especially young males, joined armed groups (mostly paramilitaries) or collaborated with them in one or another way.

However, as the next section underscores, not everybody left and among those who stayed in San Carlos' municipal center not everyone joined or collaborated with armed organizations. During the peak of violence against civilians, against the expectation of standard political opportunity structure theories of mobilization (for a synthesis, see Meyer and Minkoff, 2004), some residents undertook collective action to refuse to cooperate with armed factions, avoid recruitment and counter the negative effects of violence on their communities.

### 7.3 Oblique Noncooperation in San Carlos: Joppaz

Jaider is today a promising young political leader of San Carlos. In the late 1990s he was only a high school student in the municipal center of San Carlos. He was not involved in politics, but was active in the activities organized by the *Pastoral Social* of the Catholic Church. He recalls well the day when one of his classmates broke the silence and asked him and some of his friends whether they wanted to do something to counter the violence that was being waged in town. By that time, historically present rebel groups and the arriving paramilitaries were disputing the control of the municipal center. Young people, mainly males, were constantly approached by the different armed actors to join their ranks. Some of Jaider's classmates had in fact already joined

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<sup>10</sup>"La asombrosa historial del retorno a San Carlos". *La Silla Vacía*. 06.02.2011 Available online: <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/la-asombrosa-historia-del-retorno-san-carlos-21498>

TABLE 7.1 Timeline: War Trajectories in San Carlos

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1970s	• Social mobilization of the Civil Movement
1980s	• Guerrilla Control; Sporadic paramilitary incursions and selective targeting of the Civic Movement
1997	• August: Eliseo Muñoz, president of El Jordán's Local Junta Council (JAC), is killed, marking the definitive arrival of the paramilitaries
1997–2004	• Rebels and paramilitaries fight for control of the municipal center
1997–2001	• Most (75%) residents displace. Large numbers leave the municipality, others move from rural hamlets to the municipal center
1997	• August: FARC kills Ricardo Jiménez, candidate for mayor, at a roadblock
1998	• March: Bloque Metro massacre in San Carlos municipal center
1998	• August: FARC takes over the municipal center and destroys the Police post
1998	• October 25: Paramilitaries take over the municipal center
1999	• January 2: Nervardo Morales, mayor of San Carlos, is killed in the municipal center's main square
1999	• August 7: The Police withdraws from San Carlos' municipal center for security reasons
1999	• August 7–11: FARC takes control of the municipal center
1999	• August 11: Paramilitaries take control of the municipal center during the "Water Festival" ( <i>Fiestas del Agua</i> )
1999–2000	• <b>JOPPAZ is created and oblique noncooperation campaign is launched</b> (until circa 2003)
2002	• March 21: FARC attacks an ambulance on the road connecting the municipal center to El Jordán. Five people killed
2005	• Displaced people start to return to San Carlos

armed factions and some were doing intelligence work at school and patrolling the town's streets at night. School was using as a recruitment pool, especially by the arriving paramilitaries. Aware of this, Jaider and some of his classmates decided to meet after school hours in a quieter place. They set an appointment in the library of the *Casa de la Cultura*. Not many classmates showed up that day. They were six in total, including Jaider and his girlfriend: four women and two

men. Discussing these topics was riskier for men; a female majority does not come as a surprise.

That meeting gave birth to Joppaz. Besides its name, Joppaz never had an organizational structure, internal regulation, or statutes such as the ones we saw in the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (PCSJA) and the Peasant Worker Association of the Carare River (ATCC). According to its founders, it was the first youth social group created in the midst of the conflict in the municipality and probably in the entire EA region. By the late 1990s, the population, and in particular young people, counted on very few spaces to interact with each other. War had put on hold the existing groups and people had begun to avoid gathering in public spaces due to the risk of being caught in the middle of the crossfire or of being implicated in the conflict. Camila, at that time actively involved in Joppaz and today a pivotal social and political leader of San Carlos, notes that “people became estranged from each other. The idea was ‘I stay in my house and try to be as little as possible with others, so that if someone gets in trouble then the thing won’t be with me too.’”<sup>11</sup> As in other warzones, such as in the highlands of Peru during the Sendero war (Wood, 2008, p. 545), people retreated from social interaction and lived isolated from even their relatives and neighbors. This was severely weakening many traditional forms of mutual aid and jeopardizing the community’s social fabric. Distrust was widespread among residents and solidarity ties were being seriously eroded in San Carlos’ municipal center.

Jaider and his colleagues addressed the *Pastoral Social* for support and express their disagreement with what armed groups were doing in town. “We want to carry out some actions, we want to mobilize people”, they ventured.<sup>12</sup> From then onwards, in secrecy and with the support of the parish, Joppaz began to organize social activities every evening in the streets of the municipal center to counter armed groups’ attempts to isolate and subjugate the population. They were creating spaces for residents to meet and interact again. Concretely, they wanted to defy the implicit dusk-to-dawn curfew that armed groups had placed in town. Because of gunfire, firecrackers, and bombings, people feared to be outside of their houses after 6pm. “All shops closed and no one stayed out. Everybody ran and hid”, remembers Camila.<sup>13</sup> Even the elders who used to meet and chat in the central park after the afternoon mass, had to go straight to their houses and sometimes walk with their hands up so they were not mistaken, Esteban recalls.<sup>14</sup>

One participant of these activities, who later became a pivotal social and political leader in the municipality, noted that the curfew “was an order: Nobody could go out to the streets. Whoever went out was a military target. Of whom? Of whichever armed group was in the streets.”<sup>15</sup>

However, the youth behind Joppaz understood that the functioning of this order relied fundamentally on the acquiescence of residents. Therefore, without making any reference to the conflict whatsoever, they convened people to play board games and make *chocolatadas* (i.e., preparing hot chocolate in huge pots for everybody to drink). The first evenings the activities were organized in the “street of the firefighters” (*Calle de los Bomberos*), one block away from the central square. Organizers draw chess and parcheesi boards on top of their night tables

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<sup>11</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

<sup>12</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

<sup>13</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

<sup>14</sup>Group Interview ID. 84, September 2015.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Pastora Mira cited in the documentary “Memorias del Éxodo” prepared by the National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH).

and took them out for people to play. For the potlucks, one person would bring the pot, other would contribute with *panela*,<sup>16</sup> other chocolate, and each one would bring his or her mug to drink from. In order not to be seen as too defiant, people always convened in the *Calle de los Bomberos*. When they began to move to other streets, they stayed away from the streets they knew armed groups used to patrol nightly or where they knew members of these groups lived, such as the *Pasaje del Sol*, *La Variante* or the *Calle de las FARC*. With time, the activities spread to almost every neighborhood in the municipal center, including areas close to the rural hamlets surrounding the urban center. Jaider recalls:

We began to visit other areas, streets and entire neighborhoods to integrate the community. We had nothing else than the will to do something and mobilize people. We arrived at one street and invited those living there: “Let’s go out, let’s do something together, let’s play bingo, let’s chat, let’s share some time together. Let’s put on a song and listen to music”.<sup>17</sup>

Each afternoon, around 5 or 6pm, the night tables were set out on the street. Some evenings they played until 10 or 11pm and every now and then, around 7pm, they stopped playing to pray. Although the organizers were a small group, the population at large welcomed the campaign and many residents took part in it. Initially only those who lived in the street where the activity was being organized would join. As time passed, people began to go to other streets. From a group of 8 or 10 that showed up in the first evenings, participants went up to 50 people, estimates Pedro, a volunteer firefighter who joined and supported the campaign since the very first evening.<sup>18</sup> The street activities became almost a routine; people got used to them. If for some reason there was no activity one night, people would ask the next morning what happened and stress that these activities were “the only thing we have here”.<sup>19</sup> According to some interviewees, the campaign went on for about three to four years.

Armed actors were aware of the campaign. Jaider remembers that more than once they followed them to streets and neighborhoods. Sometimes it was the guerrillas, others the paramilitaries; the latter more often than the former, given that they were gaining increasing presence in the urban areas. “[T]hey were alert to whatever we were doing. They attended some of the activities and listened to whatever we said with special attention.”<sup>20</sup> However, they never tried to interrupt the games or the prayers, let alone to attack participants. When asked about why they thought their activities were respected, interviewees underlined the fact that they were “just playing”, that “playing cards does not hurt anyone”, and described the activities as “innocent” and “naive”.

Being busy with something that apparently had nothing to do with the war was vital for the emergence and success of the campaign, as it was not seen as too much of a threat. Camila put it clearly: “Because we were together around one concrete activity, they never did something to us. This was not the case when, for example, two or three people were seen standing together at a corner of a street chitchatting. These people were usually shot dead or threatened because

<sup>16</sup>*Panela* is brown sugar paste used to make a hot or cold drink with lime, *agua de panela*, or to sweeten other drinks, including coffee or chocolate, especially in rural Colombia. *Panela* is locally produced in San Carlos.

<sup>17</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

<sup>18</sup>Interview ID. 82, September 2015.

<sup>19</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

<sup>20</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

'they might have seen something they were not supposed to see.'<sup>21</sup> In fact, the demobilized paramilitaries I spoke to did not remember these activities as an act of defiance, even if aware that residents were violating some implicit rules imposed by war.<sup>22</sup>

This does not mean that the street activities were free of risks. Participants recalled that on several occasions, while playing, they heard gunfire nearby and had to hide. On some occasions, they even had to sleep over in the houses of those who lived on the street where the activity was taking place. The "innocent" nature of the campaign did not mean that it did not involve a refusal to cooperate, let alone that organizers and participants were unaware of the challenge it implied. Camila, for example, described the campaign as "civil disobedience": "We said: 'we need to disobey! Cooperate with the bad guys? No! They are the bad guys and they take action. We are the good guys and do nothing? No! We need to do something!'"<sup>23</sup> However, the concrete meaning of taking part in these activities varied across participants. For Pedro, for example, the street activities were "an escape from war" and a "way of letting go." He remembers how important these spaces were for him and his firefighter colleagues: "when we came back from picking up a dead body or carrying out a task that stressed us badly, that was our escape."<sup>24</sup>

As the testimonies of the organizers go, the campaign was carefully thought through as a response to war. At the basic level, they aimed at creating a space where people could find some distraction from the routine that war had imposed. However, beyond this basic level – albeit very important –, the goals of Joppaz were multiple and, naturally, evolved over time. All in all, they clustered in three main kinds.

- 1 **Counter social isolation and estrangement.** The campaign aimed at reactivating social interaction between residents to close armed groups inroads into the community, combat distrust, and preserve the community's social fabric. As Jaider put it, "we forgot who was living next door. We were forgetting that there were children living in the town, that there were friends."<sup>25</sup>
- 2 **Prevent residents, mainly young males, from being recruited.** The campaign aimed at preventing recruitment by getting young people busy and stimulating reflection about the individual and social costs of joining armed actors. In some cases, organizers even advanced targeted efforts in this regard. They tried to identify and approach specific kids they knew or thought had already the idea of joining an armed group and made an extra effort to get them involved. In their wording, they were "stealing people from war."
- 3 **Assist the displaced and prevent further forced migration.** The campaign aimed at helping inhabitants of the municipal center to recognize the arriving rural population and facilitate its integration to prevent new residents from displacing again. Moreover, in this regard, the organized youth assisted efforts to accommodate inflows of displaced people. For example, Jaider recalls their active role in coordinating the arrival of a massive group of people coming from three neighboring rural hamlets (La Turkiada, Arenosas and Betulia – see Map in Figure 7.2) to escape a massacre in January 2003.

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<sup>21</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

<sup>22</sup>Conversation with a group of demobilized paramilitaries. Author's Field Notes, September 2015.

<sup>23</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

<sup>24</sup>Interview ID. 82, September 2015.

<sup>25</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

Although in some accounts organizers presented each of these as objectives the campaign had from the onset, a more nuanced analysis of the testimonies suggests that the first two were initial goals, while the third emerged from the needs that were identified on the go. In any case, together, they reveal how Joppaz' campaign constitutes an instance of civilian noncooperation with armed groups that aimed at protecting civilians from violence and its negative effects.

To be sure, there are residents of the municipal center that never took part in these activities and, thus, do not consider them as central to the way they navigated through that period. This is the case of Fernanda, who was around 15 years old at the time of the Joppaz campaign and lived in a street close to the central park. When discussing these activities in a group interview, she explicitly noted that she did not remember participating in these activities and, consequently, that they were unimportant for her to cope with war.<sup>26</sup> However, many people I spoke to did recall them as an important device to navigate through war.

Perhaps Joppaz could not do much to directly reduce the levels of violence and protect people from getting killed, as the experience of the ATCC in fact did (see Kaplan, 2013b). Nevertheless, organizers understood that the lack of interaction among residents was destabilizing social relations by instilling distrust among neighbors, friends and relatives. By bringing people back together, they hoped to make their community less vulnerable to the effects of violence. Moreover, participants began to use these spaces to remember the victims, reflect upon what was going on, spread a message of peace, and dissuade residents from cooperating or joining armed groups. For example, in some neighborhoods residents began to draw maps of San Carlos on the street and place candles in certain areas in memory of deceased relatives and friends.

These performances evolved naturally and some became regular practices with time. This is the case of providing psychosocial accompaniment to people who had lost relatives and organizing emergency responses, such as helping the firefighters to look for the disappeared or pick up the bodies of those who were killed. Although with no ethnic component to it, Joppaz is a vivid illustration of Varshney's (2001) argument on the link between civic engagement and peace. Spaces created through everyday forms of engagement that promote interaction and communication help people organize in times of tension and can function as a feedback loop that can strengthen people's belief in the possibility and benefits of undertaking peaceful collective action to face violence.

## 7.4 The Emergence of Joppaz

As with the PCSJA and the ATCC, Joppaz emerged precisely where and when theories of collective action would expect no mobilization: high levels of violence coming from multiple armed groups with the capacity to respond with heavy repression. Nevertheless, situational factors endogenous to war that pushed civilians towards a desire for noncooperation and social context and community characteristics that made collective action possible met to spark the emergence of an oblique campaign of noncooperation. The next two sections develop these two parts of the argument in detail.

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<sup>26</sup>Group Interview ID. 84, September 2015.

### 7.4.1 The Desire for Noncooperation

In this section I make the case that a prolonged period of territorial dispute over the control of San Carlos' municipal center in the late 1990s, along with changes in both the frequency and the type targeting of violence against civilians altered the equilibrium of interaction between armed groups. This alteration required learning and accommodation on the side of civilians, pushing the majority to leave the municipality and those who stayed put to consider noncooperation as a self-protection strategy.

#### Territorial Contestation

*...there were only them [the rebels] and when there is only one group there are no problems. You get used to living with that ... But later, the paramilitaries arrived and the real war came with them.*

– Anibal, Campesino from *San Carlos, Antioquia* (August 2015)

Gloria, a 60-year old woman who has lived all her life a few meters away from San Carlos' central square, recalls that in the years in which the guerrillas were the only armed actor in town, FARC rebels were “seen in the municipal center regularly” and even “organized parties in which they even offered meat to everyone”. When asked about what FARC did when the army patrolled the town, without hesitating she said that FARC would confront them and stressed that in the surrounding rural hamlets they would even “make themselves kill in order to protect the *campesinos*”. When asked about the ELN, she noted that they were also present in the area, but that the ones who “ruled the game” in San Carlos were the FARC and that both guerillas rarely fought each other. Moreover, she noted that when the ELN showed up in the municipal center, it was together with the FARC.<sup>27</sup>

However, when asked about what the rebels did when the paramilitaries entered San Carlos in the late 1990s, her faced and tone of voice changed. Almost with tears in her eyes, the first thing she noted was that it was then when “things got really terrible for the population.” She stated that when the paramilitaries began to come to town more frequently, they FARC began were seen less often or at least less openly. They began to hide in the surrounding rural areas and showed up in the municipal center only to startle the paramilitaries when they knew they were around. She highlighted that after dusk “you would only hear boots”, referring to the noise of soldiers of different factions running in and out of what in the evenings seemed a ghost town. It was then when she lost many of her friends and relatives; “it was not due to displacement, it was due to homicides or massacres.”<sup>28</sup>

As in Anibal's opening quote, almost every person I interviewed coincided in stating that life in San Carlos was good and tranquil when only the rebels were around. When going deeper into this, people tended to stress that one thing is to live with one faction that controls and a very different one is to live with two or more groups fighting for control. Urban residents noted that they could talk to everybody and hang out in the central square as late as they fancied. Rural residents stressed even more emphatically that they could work the land and that there was plenty of food for everybody. Even the most critical voices reckoned this fact. Among these

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<sup>27</sup>Interview ID. 78, August 2015.

<sup>28</sup>Interview ID. 78, August 2015.

voices, Camila described the situation with the following proviso: “In the ’80s and until the mid-’90s the town lived in a ’fake calm’, there were armed actors [guerrillas], but they controlled the territory and their killings were selective. But this was fake. Life was tranquil, yes, but you knew you were living with the enemy next to you.” This situation was dramatically altered when, in her words, “the Right [the paramilitaries] arrived and stated ’here we are and here we stay’”.<sup>29</sup>

The paramilitaries’ strategic choice of moving from sporadic incursions to establishing a permanent presence constituted in fact a breaking point in the development of war trajectories in San Carlos. This was perhaps the most recurrent assertion in the context interviews and workshops with which the Timeline in Table 7.1 was built and is consistent with both quantitative event data (see Figure 7.3) and existing secondary literature and archival data on the case (Olaya, 2012; Grupo de Memoria Historica, 2011). In 1998 the dominant control the guerrillas had of the municipality for over a decade was seriously challenged by a faction of the ACCU. Pacho vividly remembers the day when they arrived:

Look, that was in 1997, 1998. This is something I will never forget, never. A helicopter started to go round over the town. *Tiquí, tiquí, tiquí* [sound of helicopter] in the sky. The helicopter started to throw papers. We all were seeing the helicopter overflying and throwing papers. When the papers landed in the park and all over the hamlets, because they threw them all over the place, the paper read ... it was a pamphlet, a small pamphlet, half a sheet ... it read: “Soon paramilitaries in the area. Guerrillero \$#\$%, #\$\$%\$.” Well, and indeed it took less than 6 months for all the onslaughts, massacres, denunciations, breaking of doors, taking people out of their houses to begin.<sup>30</sup>

The choice of the ACCU to move more decisively into San Carlos came from a direct order from Vicente Castaño, one of the main commanders of the AUC. Ricardo López Lora (alias La Marrana or Robert), previously a member of the FARC’s Front V, was one of the key men in charge of establishing the paramilitaries in the region. As the testimonies from the Peace and Justice Unit of Medellín go, he was selected in Apartadó by Ever Velosa (alias HH) – one of the chief commanders of the ACCU in Urabá – to carry a clear task: get rid not only of the rebels, but also whoever he considered “undesirable” in the entire EA region.<sup>31</sup>

This task was conducted outstandingly. However, the paramilitary faction that undertook this job, the BM, did not immediately become San Carlos’ hegemonic armed actor – at least not in the entire municipality. In some areas more than others, the rebels fought back and managed to resist the paramilitary advancement. In fact, almost every account highlighted in one way or another that the municipality was “divided”. The main two zones were the west-central and southern areas, considered guerrilla zones, and the northeastern areas, paramilitary zones. “[W]e lived with invisible borders,” explains Jaider, “There were two San Carlos. The San Carlos above La Holanda and the San Carlos below La Holanda. San Carlos above La Holanda was considered the home of a bunch of guerrilleros, and all residents were taken as *guerrillo*; and

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<sup>29</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

<sup>30</sup>Interview ID. 92, September 2015.

<sup>31</sup>*Versiones Libres* Medellín Victims Unit. September 2009. “Vicente Castaño llevó las Accu al Oriente Antioqueño”. *Verdad Abierta*. Available online: [<http://www.verdadabierta.com/la-historia/1824-vicente-castano-llevo-las-accu-al-orient-antioqueno/>].

below La Holanda, all were taken as paramilitaries, all were *paracos*.”<sup>32</sup> (See yellow and pink areas in Map in Figure 7.2).

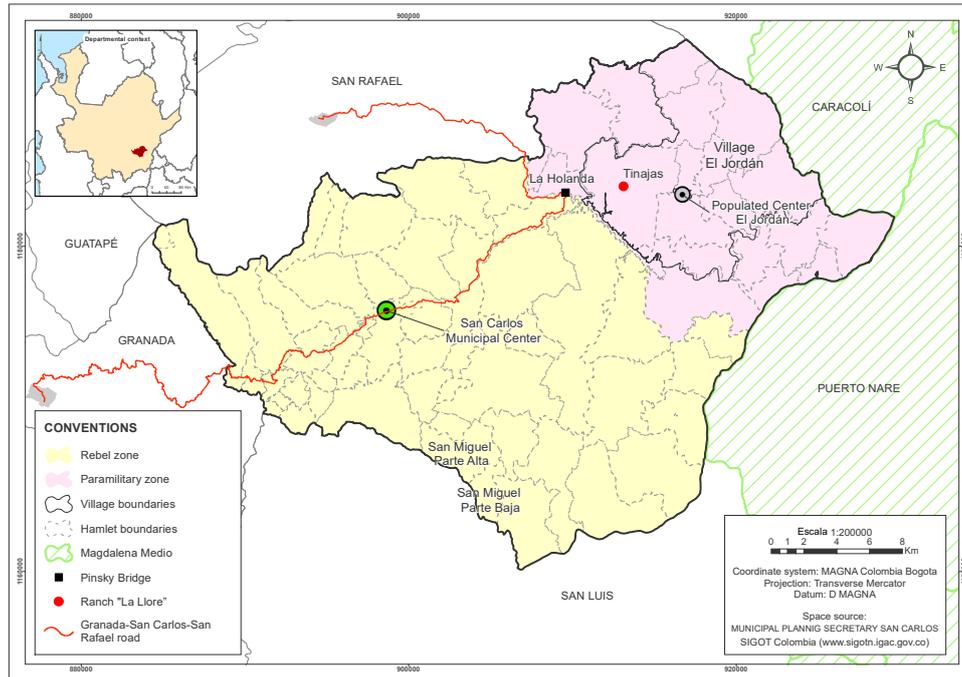


Figure 7.2: Map: Municipality of San Carlos (late 1990s, early 2000s)

Source: Author's creation

This depiction, which is the most common in macro narratives of the war in San Carlos, gives the idea of a relatively neat partition of the municipality throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, some interviewees, especially those who stayed in the municipal center, revealed that the distribution of control was more nuanced. As reflected in the map in Figure 7.2, in the areas bordering the MM region the paramilitaries got rid of the guerrillas and quickly established dominant control and in some areas, mostly those bordering the villa of Santana in the municipality of Granada, a guerrilla stronghold, the paramilitaries did not initially enter. These areas fit more or less nicely in the neat partition accounted for in some interviews. However, there were other areas where the paramilitaries tried to enter and the rebels resisted fiercely. As Raúl, a resident of the municipal center, put it, the conflict got really “tough” (*bravo*) in those places where the guerrillas “formed their own resistance”.<sup>33</sup> In these areas, instead of a quick shift from one actor to another, control remain in flux for a period of about five years (1998–2003), especially in 1998 and 1999.

This was the case in San Carlos' municipal center, where for a long period residents could not tell which armed actor was actually in control, as this could change even on a weekly basis. Borrowing an expression common among residents, the municipal center was a “no mans land” (*tierra de nadie*). The rebels, the army and the paramilitaries (the latter two many times operating together) were constantly entering the municipal center and were permanently present in the surrounding areas to control entrance and exit. Reflecting a central indicator of territorial contestation (see Kalyvas, 2006), testimonies noted that while one group patrolled the streets

<sup>32</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

<sup>33</sup>Interview ID. 81, September 2015.

during the day, the other waited until dusk to enter the town. Although interviews with the state forces noted that by mid-1998 the police had a permanent post next to the main park and thus were constantly present in the territory, interviews with residents stressed that while this was the case, the Police patrolled only the main streets and rarely did so after dusk.

As another indicator of control being in flux and the area being contested, the two entry points to San Carlos were under the control of different armed groups. The paved road from the municipality of San Rafael was controlled by the paramilitaries, while the road from the municipality of Granada was under the rule of the rebels (see Map in Figure 7.2). Armed groups tried to tightly control people's mobility and to blockage the transportation of goods, as armed groups knew that civilians had easy access to the enemy and feared residents supporting the enemy. Camila explains that if an armed group, no matter the faction, would see a campesino transporting his harvest, as in San José de Apartadó, the assumption was that she was transporting food for the enemy. In the best case scenario, the food would be seized and she would be allowed to continue her way. In the worst case, as happened with many bringing supplies by bus from outside the municipality, the person would be killed.

“One just couldn't move”, recalls one resident of the rural areas who relied heavily on transport to sell and exchange his produce. “There were no means of transport, drivers feared for their lives”.<sup>34</sup> Residents tell that the FARC first began to regulate the hours in which buses could operate, but as they felt more threatened they began to fully restrict mobility on the roads they controlled. First people could only commute before 5pm (as they had more control during day time), then they decided that only one company could offer the service, and finally they declared every car a military objective. Paramilitaries proceeded in a similar way. Mantilla, a merchant in San Carlos municipal center who never left and never closed his grocery shop, recalls that no car entered the municipal center for a period of more or less three months. At least four of the trucks he used to stock his grocery shop were stolen.<sup>35</sup> A former mayor of San Carlos, who always lived in the municipal center, described the situation as an “odyssey”:

If you were to go from here [municipal center] to the bridge [see Map in Figure 7.2], you would find the army or the police. If you walked 10 km more down this road, you would find the guerrillas. Walk another 5km and you would find the paramilitaries.<sup>36</sup>

Both those who stayed and left recall vividly that with territorial contestation violent activity increased substantially. “With these three [FARC, the paramilitaries and the army] fighting this place became war all the time”, recalls Gloria.<sup>37</sup> This rise in violent activity is well reflected in the quantitative data. After virtually no violent events in the first half of the 1990s, the second half saw a steep increase that led to a peak in 2000–2001, precisely the time when Joppaz was launched (Figure 7.3).

Clashes between factions increased from 1997 onwards – mainly between the state forces and the FARC (Figure 7.3). However, more than clashes it was the constant attempts to take control of the town, (which not necessarily implied clashes) what residents remember most vividly as an indicator of control being in flux. When asked about territorial contestation, unlike the

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<sup>34</sup>Interview ID. 115, September 2015.

<sup>35</sup>Interview ID. 88, September 2015.

<sup>36</sup>Interview ID. 92, September 2015.

<sup>37</sup>Interview ID. 78, August 2015.

case of the PCSJA where what first came to villagers' minds was literally being caught in middle of the cross-fire, Sancarlitanos recalled more how it became normal to have different armed groups constantly entering the town, claiming to be the new ruler, and asking for cooperation and loyalty. Although not the perfect proxy for *tomas*, the increase in unilateral actions that we observe in Figure 7.3 gives a good sense of this change.<sup>38</sup>

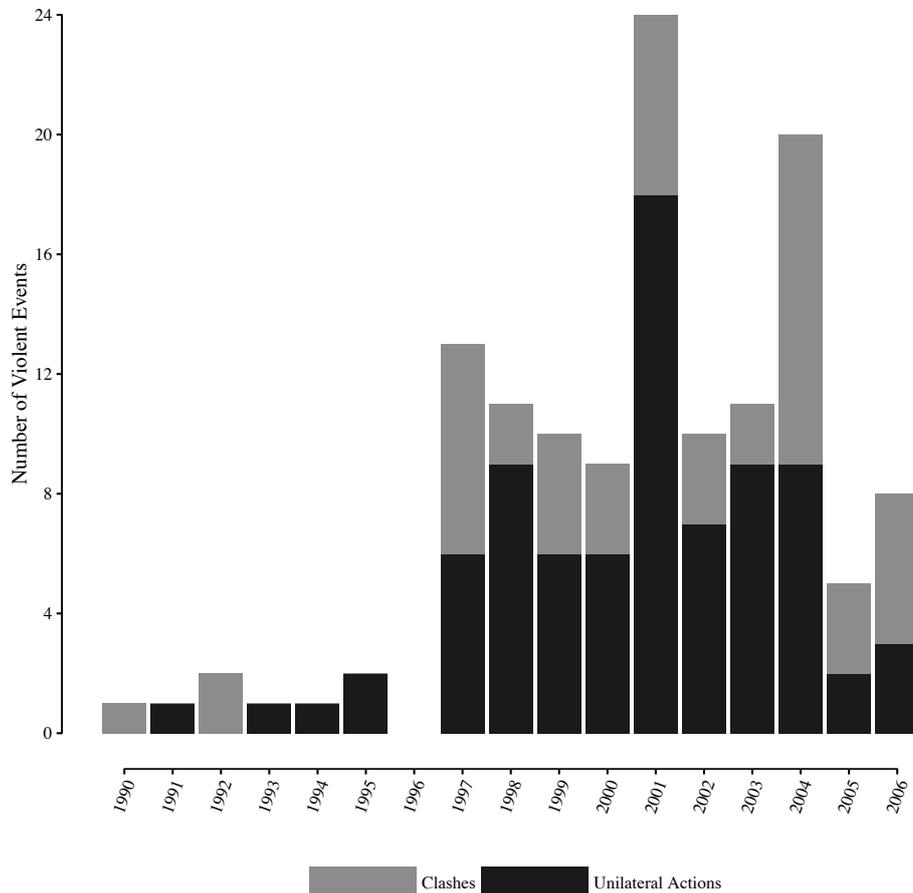


Figure 7.3: Total Violent Events, San Carlos

Source: Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC) and CNMH data. Processed by the author

When discussing territorial control, Gloria told me about once when the town had “three or four governments in eight days.” She did not remember the exact date when this happened, but she labeled it as the “best and most absurd manifestation” of what happened in town with the arrival of the paramilitaries.<sup>39</sup> After crosschecking this claim with press articles from 1998 and 1999 retrieved during fieldwork from a private local archive, I learned that she referred to the events of the summer of 1999. As part of a larger strategy to prevent civilian casualties as a collateral effect of insurgent attacks on police posts, the National Police decided in early August to remove their post from San Carlos’ municipal center – as well as from several municipal centers in EA – claiming lack of guarantees for their officers.

Soon after the police left San Carlos, FARC entered the town. They convened a meeting

<sup>38</sup>Here it is important to note that this figures should be read with caution and taken only as general approximations, as they visualize municipal-level data.

<sup>39</sup>Interview ID. 78, August 2015.

in the central square and told residents not to worry about the absence of the police, as they were going to stay in town permanently and take care of public order and security. However, after three days of patrolling the streets and moving in town with almost full freedom, they suddenly left. Many respondents that recalled these events noted that this was quite unexpected, as many had come to believe that FARC was going to actually take control of the municipal center. According to Olaya, (2012, p. 247), they did so because they expected a paramilitary incursion.

The following day, in the midst of the celebration of the *Fiestas del Agua* (Festival of the Water) and after having seen the ELN rebels hanging out among the population, a group of about 200 paramilitaries entered the town, killed some civilians and forced more than 100 people to gather in the town's sports center. While they were preparing a massacre in the coliseum, FARC rebels came back and opened fire against them, allowing civilians to escape. Two days after, it was the ELN that irrupted into town, bombing the empty police post. Again residents were gathered in the same central square and were offered protection in exchange of support. The rebels encouraged civilians to organize under their guidance to prevent the paramilitaries from taking control. Shortly after the meeting, the army attacked the municipal center from a helicopter and entered the town to re-establish order.<sup>40</sup>

The same former mayor of San Carlos, who referred to life when control is in flux as an "odyssey", described these events in the following way:

President Andrés Pastrana decided to withdraw the state forces from San Carlos, San Luis, from several municipalities in Antioquia. This means that he left several towns fully unprotected, without police. He took away every single man, so the population was left at the mercy of armed group. Monday the ELN, Tuesday the FARC, Wednesday the paramilitaries. All of them wanted to command and all of them said they were the authority. In a single week, we saw all of them in town claiming to be in command.<sup>41</sup>

Beyond this concrete event, which is exceptional in several ways, press articles provide further testimony of this restless struggle by different armed factions to take over San Carlos' municipal center. Press reports from the period between August and October 1998 reveal how control fluctuated from one group to the other in this period. In August, after receiving a formal request from the municipality, two Colonels of the National Police patrolled the area to decide whether or not to send reinforcements. The same day that the Colonels were walking through the streets of San Carlos during daylight, in total absence of non-state armed groups, the FARC arrived after dusk. They attacked the police post and a military base in the neighboring rural hamlet of Dosquebradas. After some clashes, the state forces retreated and the rebels began to move freely in the town for some weeks. One month after, the paramilitaries distributed pamphlets from a helicopter overflying San Carlos, announcing their definite arrival and threatening FARC and whoever collaborated with the rebels.

As a preventive measure, soldiers from the military unit Héroes de Barbacoas settled in the urban area. However, about a month later, around one midnight in October, the BM of

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<sup>40</sup> *El Colombiano* 09.08.99 and 11.12.99; *El Tiempo* 13.08.99; . These events were also reported in secondary literature (Olaya, 2012, pp. 245-250; Villamarin Pulido, 2014, p. 391) and vividly described in several interviews.

<sup>41</sup> Interview ID. 92, September 2015.

the ACCU burst into the town, went round the main streets looking for what they considered guerrilla collaborators and committed one of the worst massacres the town has witnessed (See Table 7.2 in Section 7.5). One week after, the ELN carried out an attack in retaliation for paramilitary activity and told residents of the municipal center that they were under control now and their orders were those to be followed, especially if they did not want to see the town under the command of the BM.<sup>42</sup>

This situation did not change substantially until the mid 2000s, when the paramilitaries gained an important advantage in terms of control. A group linked to the BM, commanded by Línderman Colorado, alias “El Panadero” (the baker),<sup>43</sup> established a permanent “office” few meters north of the central square. They forced the FARC to leave the area and hide in EA’s woodlands. For the first time in several years, the paramilitaries managed to have permanent presence, day and night, in the municipal center. “[Y]ou saw them around every day, walking and holding their weapons, cueing, patrolling every sector. At night, they stayed until late in the bars, drinking alcohol” (Olaya, 2012, p. 281).

They squatted in some of the houses that displaced people had left behind and secured control of neuralgic points of the town, such as *La Variante* (the main road crossing through the municipal center that used to be under rebel command when control was in flux), and the *Pasaje del Sol*, a narrow pedestrian alley connecting the central square to one of the main streets of the town. The *Hotel Punchiná*, the tallest building on *La Variante*, which was the property of a well-known drug trafficker of the area, became their headquarters.<sup>44</sup> According to several testimonies, including conversations with demobilized paramilitaries under the command of *El Panadero*, these places were used to administer the control of the municipal center as much as to commit several atrocities, including sexual violence and terrible acts of torture. Given this, the hotel became known as *La casita del terror* (the small house of terror) and the *Pasaje del Sol* as the *Pasaje de la Muerte* (the death alley).

All in all, during the period when control was in flux, an important learning and adaptation process took place in a way that was central for the emergence of Joppaz. Going back to the words of Anibal, with which I opened this section, residents of the municipal center understood that life in an area where control is constantly shifting from one faction to another is substantially different from life under the control of one dominant actor. Sancarlitianos learned that their behavior was likely to yield different outcomes under these two different situations. Concretely, they understood that cooperating with (or simply obeying) either the rebels or the paramilitaries was not going to bring them any protection – even if armed groups, especially the rebels, were making this promise explicitly. They came to believe that, on the contrary, it could actually expose them to more violence. This was not only because it could lead to accusations and retaliations in a way that was not possible were only the rebels were in town, but also because, as Anibal put it, “we know who is the man today, perhaps tomorrow, but never the day after

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<sup>42</sup> *El Colombiano* 04.08.98 and 05.08.98; and *El Mundo* 29.09.98 and 29.10.98. These events were also vividly described in several interviews.

<sup>43</sup> “El Panadero” arrived in San Carlos’ municipal center to work in a bakery and left to join the National Army. However, sometime after he came back as a mid-range paramilitary designated from the paramilitary’s center of operations in El Jordán as the person in charge of the group operating in the municipal center. He was later killed by members of his same group (*El Colombiano*, 15.07.07)

<sup>44</sup> Reflecting how much things in the municipality have changed in the recent years, this building today hosts the CARE, where active members of what was Joppaz work to promote reconciliation among residents. For these change, see Parish, (2015), Ehrlich, (2016), and Masullo, (2018).

tomorrow.”<sup>45</sup>

The following fragment of a group interview with a young male resident of a rural hamlet and a young female resident of the urban center illustrates well this learning process:

ME: Wasn't the best strategy to just do whatever each group asked you to do?

ESTEBAN: Yes.

FERNANDA: Humm ... but you would be accused of collaborating with the enemy by the other group.

ESTEBAN: Yes. You are right. What happens is that in the time where there was only one group [the rebels] it was easy. You saw them, said hi and that was it. And if there was something they wanted you to do, you just did it. But when the other group [the paramilitaries] arrived to fight for this territory, things were different. It happened that if you went to the shop to buy something for one group because you were asked to, you immediately became a military target for the other group.

ME: So, in that sense, would you say Fernanda that it was easier to live under the control of one armed group?

FERNANDA: Yes, of course.

ESTEBAN: Obviously. When there is only one group, they rule. They are the ones who establish the law. Let's say that if you live in that area, that area becomes a zone of comfort for you as there is nothing that really threatens you. There is fear, for sure. Right? They are armed groups. But let's say that you feel less vulnerable because if you do what they say nothing happens.<sup>46</sup>

The recurrent ebb and flow of control in the area also induced disorder and uncertainty into civilian life, favoring the evolution of a desire for noncooperation further. “We did not know who was going to arrive? Who had left? What was going to happen? Who was going to get killed next? We lived like crazy people.” recalls Gloria.<sup>47</sup> This unpredictability led residents to realize that it was naive to believe that any armed group would manage to stay permanently and protect them, even if willing. As Jaider noted, the only instruments they had to face the situation were to be found within their own community. Therefore, if something was to be done to improve their security condition it had to come from the community itself.<sup>48</sup>

It was precisely this belief that the organizers of Joppaz tapped into to launch the campaign. The positive response from the community at large, in part, also responds to how widespread this belief was. However, to fully understand how this desire for noncooperation evolved, one more ingredient needs to be analyzed: the way residents of the municipal center perceived they were being target.

### **Violence Against Civilians**

With territorial control in flux, the patterns of anti-civilian violence substantially changed. According to Esteban, the strategy of both rebels and paramilitaries to deliver the messages “we are here and we are the authority” or “we are still here, we haven't left” was the use of

<sup>45</sup>Interview ID. 113, September 2015.

<sup>46</sup>Interview ID. 84, August 2015.

<sup>47</sup>Interview ID. 78, August 2015.

<sup>48</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

violence against the population. During this period the municipality observed a peak both in lethal violence (Figure 7.4) and displacement (Grupo de Memoria Historica, 2011).

Residents of San Carlos' urban center and surrounding rural hamlets had witnessed violence against civilians before the arrival of the paramilitaries in the late 1990s. However, not only the overall levels of violence were significantly higher from 1998 onwards (see Figure 7.4), but also the repertoire and targeting of violence changed substantially.<sup>49</sup> Before the arrival of the paramilitaries, the repertoire of violence was narrower, limited mostly to homicides, affecting mainly people involved in protest activity. In the late 1990s, while homicides continued, massacres became more frequent: of the 32 massacres registered for the period 1985–2010, only one took place before 1998 (See Table 7.2 below in Section 7.5).<sup>50</sup>

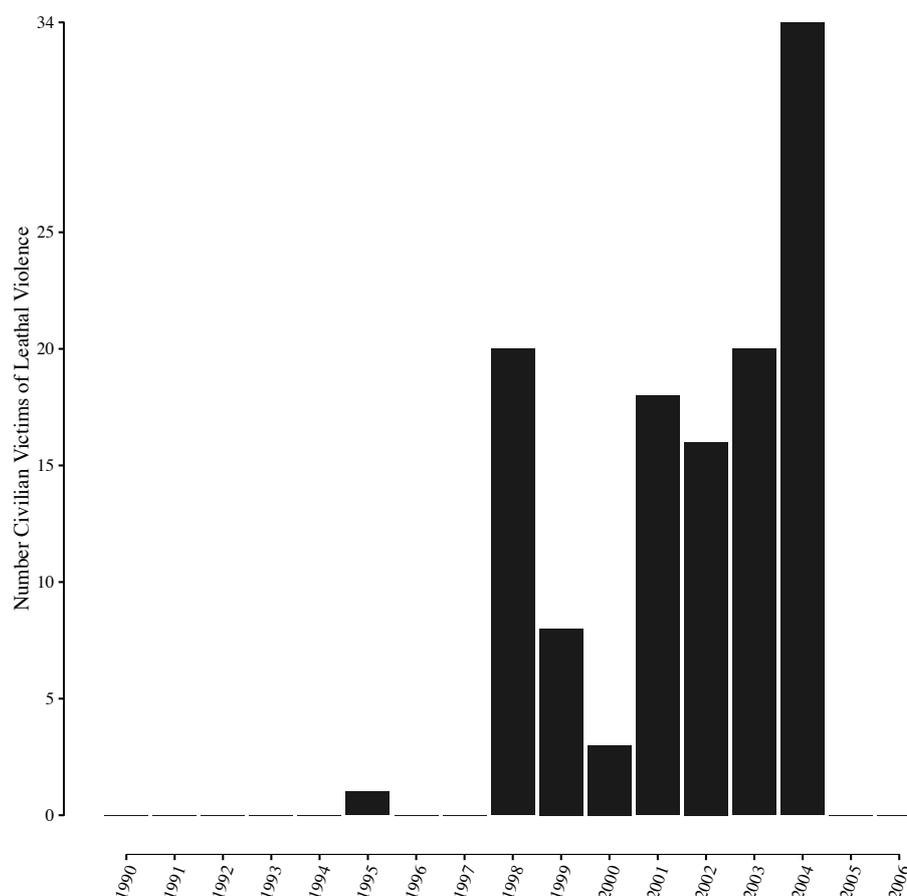


Figure 7.4: Civilians Deaths, San Carlos

Source: CERAC and CNMH data. Processed by the author

While the war was between multiple armies willing to control the municipality, in those areas where the FARC fought back the advancement of the ACCU, it was waged largely through civilians. Almost after each attempt of one group to take over the municipal center, the other group would follow with violent reprisals against the population. The logic of violence was that

<sup>49</sup>Gutierrez Sanín and Wood, (2017) define a pattern of violence as a configuration of repertoire, targeting, frequency, and technique; where the repertoire refers to the forms of violence groups regularly engage in and the targeting to the subset of all possible civilian targets regularly attacked by a group.

<sup>50</sup>Note that these data is for the entire municipality, not only for the municipal center. However, 12 took place in the urban center or/and surrounding rural hamlets.

of tit for tat. A priest that was in service in the region during the height of violence, described this situation as: “The logic of war was that if the guerrilla killed a person, eight days after the paramilitaries would arrive and kill another one. And, once again, the guerrillas came back and did the same.”<sup>51</sup> On the side of the paramilitaries, this was in fact an explicit policy. About a year after their arrival, the BM openly declared that for each guerrilla attack they would kill ten peasants (CINEP, 1999).<sup>52</sup>

However, as the words of the priest clearly reveal, anti-civilian violence not only came from the paramilitaries. When I managed to go beyond the standard narratives of what happened, several informants coincided in noting that also the rebels began to target the population. From these testimonies, one can conclude that the changes in the patterns of violence resulted not only from the paramilitaries’ attempt to induce fear among the population in order to break up (assumed) links of support between Sancarlitanos and the rebels, but also from a change in rebel behavior towards the population. Although the arrival of the BM was the force spurring the change in patterns of violence, residents observed that the rebels, after having provided order and protection in many areas of the municipality also turned against them. Reflecting a behavioral pattern that has been identified in other civil wars, such as in Algeria (Kalyvas, 1999), Peru (Degregori, 1999, p. 79) and Angola (Ziemke, 2008), the rebels became increasingly more coercive as they were loosing ground.

In San Carlos this was the case for both the FARC and the ELN. The latter became more abusive to civilians when they faced active rivalry from the FARC, the paramilitaries and the army. This happened towards the 2000s, the years immediately before the ELN’s almost complete defeat in the area (González, 2011, p. 19). This was particularly evident in the rural areas surrounding the municipal center, where this group continued to have some presence until they practically left the municipality. Peasants recount that besides some instances of lethal violence, an already very weak ELN began to force civilians to provide them with food and shelter and to steal their animals and produce.

The change of behavior of FARC was even deeper. Not only the frequency of their violence against the population increased, but also their repertoire of violence changed. After about 30 years of presence in the area without having committed a single massacre, the FARC committed four in three years (see Table 7.2 in Section 7.5). There is evidence suggesting that the increase in FARC’s military activity in the region was explicitly ordered. In 1998, the high ranks of the organization (the Estado Mayor of the José María Córdova block) ordered the creation of what became known in the region as the *Bloquecito* (small block). This group, of about 500 men from both Fronts operating in EA, the IX and the XLVII, had the explicit mission of stopping the advance of the paramilitaries coming from MM. The top commander of the newly created *Bloquecito*, Jesús Mario Arenas (alias Marcos), was known for his brutality in handling civilians. Under his command, the population of San Carlos (and of EA at large) not only saw an increase in violence, but also witnessed forms of violence that were unknown to them.<sup>53</sup> During *Justicia y*

<sup>51</sup>“Las Farc cosecharon odios en el Oriente antioqueño”, *Verdad Abierta*. 08.02.2014. Available online: [<http://www.verdadabierta.com/procesos-de-paz/farc/5236-las-farc-cosecharon-odios-en-el-oriente-antioqueno>].

<sup>52</sup>Of course the paramilitaries did not hold on their words. However, just to have an idea of the magnitude of the situation, according to the around 5.000 attacks on the infrastructure took place in the municipality between 1985 and 2010 and, according to local authorities, most of these events took place between 1997 and 2004 (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011).

<sup>53</sup>It is said, for example, that when Marcos was commanding Front XLVII, many of the Front’s victims were found beheaded of his.)

*Paz* hearings in 2013, demobilized FARC fighters of the region highlighted that in the *Bloquecito*'s attempt to contain the strengthening of the paramilitaries, many civilians were in fact killed. Testimonies noting alias Marcos brutal approach towards the population include those of Elda Neyis Mosquera (alias Karina), a former commander of Front XLVII who carried out several military operations in the region with alias Marcos and knew him well.<sup>54</sup>

This change in FARC's behavior radically transformed the way many residents of San Carlos saw the group. As a resident of the municipal center put it, "while some [villagers] were indifferent and others were even sympathizers, with all that violence, with all those massacres, people turned their backs and stopped believing in them and in their promises."<sup>55</sup> While only a few of my interviewees knew about the *Bloquecito* or alias Marcos, most of them coincided in stating that FARC's violence against the population increased notoriously around 1998, precisely the year when the *Bloquecito* was created and alias Marcos came to command the area. The way FARC proceeded in this period ended up weakening the organization and alienating the population. As *Verdad Abierta* put it based on testimonies by alias Karina and others, "FARC attempted to respond to paramilitary brutality with barbarity of their own until the point that they didn't have a single friend on those lands [EA in general]."<sup>56</sup>

The fact that anti-civilian violence was coming not only from the paramilitaries, but also from the rebel groups that once used to protect the population, was an essential trigger of the Joppaz campaign. It not only explains the movement away from cooperating with the rebels, but also helps explain why neutrality and non-discrimination became a central tenet of the campaign. Not only civilians ruled out cooperation as a course of action as it was unlikely to bring protection in exchange (i.e., change in the payoffs attached to cooperation), but they also updated their beliefs regarding guerrilla groups. The following words of a peasants from a helmet surrounding the municipal center is illustrative of this transformation:

Since I have memory, there has been guerrilla here. But then the guerrilla then was not one, let's say, that use to kill people. Before they were not like they are today. If we are realistic, they had lost the ideals for which they were fighting. Today they fight for political power, for drugs, for money, for arms. The ideas they fought for, those of helping the weakest, don't exist anymore. That's over. So it was then that the worst war began, because they also started to kill the very residents of the town, the peasants.<sup>57</sup>

This change in beliefs applies as well to elder campesinos who, after having coexisted for several years with the guerrillas in a cooperative and not repressive relationship in which the latter really watched over the *campesinado*, still had a some sort of attitudinal preference for them. As in Zimbabwe's war of independence (Kriger, 2008, p. 20), guerrilla coercion in San Carlos prove to be deeply damaging for rebels' popularity even where they enjoyed extensive popular support and have been close to the population. This was the crucial breaking point in

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<sup>54</sup>See "Las Farc cosecharon odios en el Oriente antioqueño" *Verdad Abierta* 08.02.2014 Available online [<http://www.verdadabierta.com/procesos-de-paz/farc/5236-las-farc-cosecharon-odios-en-el-oriente-antioqueno>] and, among others, *Justicia y Paz* hearing of September 12th 2013 of the High Court of Justice of Medellín with ex-members of the José María Córdova Block.

<sup>55</sup>Interview ID. 78, August 2015.

<sup>56</sup>"Las Farc cosecharon odios en el Oriente antioqueño" *Verdad Abierta* 08.02.2014 Available online [<http://www.verdadabierta.com/procesos-de-paz/farc/5236-las-farc-cosecharon-odios-en-el-oriente-antioqueno>]

<sup>57</sup>Interview ID. 81, September 2015.

the relationship between the civilian population and the rebels, both the ELN that was in its way out and the FARC that had more capacity to resist the advancement of the paramilitaries. As the online portal *Verdad Abierta* put it in a recent article on the FARC in the EA region, “To the brutal paramilitary reaction, the rebels competed in barbarism till the point that they had no friend left in those lands.”<sup>58</sup> In this sense, this belief transformation prove to be central for the evolution of a desire for noncooperation.

While in other wars, such as the one in Afghanistan (Lyall, Blair, and Imai, 2013), combatant identity seems to have a strong effect on civilians attitudes towards armed groups, in San Carlos it seems to have had little impact. Violence from an arriving actor with no historical links with the population, such as the paramilitaries, led to bitter indignation and resentment as much as rebel violence did. The way civilians responded to an increase in violence against them was not really conditional on the group that inflicted harm. This explains why the self-protection strategy civilians came up with did not differentiate among factions. As many residents stressed, at some point all armed groups became the same from the perspective of those who stayed in San Carlos.

This included the non-state armed groups as much as state armed groups. This wave of civilian victimization reinforced the negative belief residents had already formed about the military after the harsh repression the Civic Movement experienced in the 1980s. As in their effort to neutralize the Movement decades before, in their attempt to counter the insurgency in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the forces of the state were largely perceived as allied with the paramilitaries. Concrete events in which it was evident for the population that the army was working in coordination with the paramilitaries remain vivid in the memory of several residents. One such event is a massacre that took place in March 2001. That day, a Saturday, 100 paramilitaries of the BM entered the municipal center and killed 11 women and two men, including the president of the JAC. This dramatic event took place despite the presence of the army in the area (as the Resplandor Operation of the National Army was in full exercise). The BM came from the village of El Jordán, which implied that on its way to the municipal center it passed by the military base that provided security to the electric power plant of Playas, as well as through the check point the army had established by the bridge as part of the Resplandor Operation (see Map in Figure 7.1.)

This negative belief of the army and an increasing perception that they were collaborating with the paramilitaries, completely ruled out the possibility of coming up with a protection strategy that involved the forces of the state, such as the “active neutrality” that the then governor of Antioquia, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, had proposed for warzones in the Department of Antioquia couple of years before. This detachment from the state forces was so deep that even people who worked for the local government distrusted them. “... the army had lost credibility. People did not have hope in the army anymore, in the state itself. I worked with the municipal administration, but I did not really trust it ... there was too much infiltration. By this I mean, many people involved with the paramilitaries.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>“Las Farc cosecharon odios en el Oriente antioqueño” *Verdad Abierta* 08.02.2014 Available online [<http://www.verdadabierta.com/procesos-de-paz/farc/5236-las-farc-cosecharon-odios-en-el-orient-antioqueno>].

<sup>59</sup>Interview ID. 92, September 2015.

### Type of Targeting and Civilians' Perceptions

With these transformations in the dynamics of violence, civilians' threat perceptions also changed. When asked about the specifics of the violence experienced before 1998, without any probing, almost every respondent gave an account of how the Civic Movement was decimated and several even recalled specific names of leaders that were killed. In contrast, when I asked about post-1998 violence, expressions like “they [both rebels and paramilitaries] were killing whoever they came across with” were common and residents described the situation as a “war against everybody”. Jaider vividly described violence in this second period as “they [both rebels and paramilitaries] were even killing the dogs that barked”. This was the perception most civilians had even when the paramilitaries entered the town with lists of people to kill (sometimes even including addresses) – which could be read as a clear signal of selectivity. Residents saw in these lists a mere justification to get rid of the population from areas the paramilitaries did not control and that had been under rebel influence.<sup>60</sup>

Pacho, the former mayor of San Carlos that I have cited before, told me once that at some point he became particularly interested in understanding why the different factions were targeting the population so much. He was convinced that to bring peace to the municipality, he first needed to understand the logic of violence. During my visit we discussed the nature of violence for a long time. His position was in line with most of the testimonies I was collecting. To understand violence in San Carlos one has to think in terms of two different periods: before and after 1998. However, his view was more sophisticated, as it went beyond the fact underscored by most interviewees, which was that the frequency of anti-civilian violence had increased. He insisted that with the arrival of the paramilitaries the ways in which civilians were targeted changed dramatically, claiming that violence in San Carlos increasingly got less selective as time passed. When asked to elaborate on this, he opted to illustrate his point by highlighting the widespread use of mines by the different armed factions:

This began with the territorial struggle. They [armed groups] started to put mines where the enemy use to pass. The thing was so bad that they even stepped on their own mines because they forgot where they had planted them. That happened a lot. The paramilitaries stepped several times on their own mines. However, it was the guerrillas the group that used mines the most.<sup>61</sup>

Supporting Pacho's statement, the Grupo de Memoria Historica, (2011) reported that San Carlos was in fact the second municipality with more mines in the entire country. The report estimated that around 600 mines were planted in San Carlos and, at the moment of writing, 170 victims of landmines had been registered in official records.<sup>62</sup> The use of landmines, indeed, reveals a change in the type of targeting in the direction noted by the former mayor, as it is a weapon of war that does not discriminate between victims. Moreover, the fact that very few landmines were reported before the arrival of the paramilitaries shows that in post-1998 not only the form of targeting changed, but also the repertoire of violence grew wider.

When discussing targeting with residents, the first impression one gets from civilian testimonies is that targeting was almost random. However, once I asked them to elaborate further, it became

<sup>60</sup>Several interviewees referred to these lists in this way. See also Olaya, (2012, p. 231).

<sup>61</sup>Interview ID. 92, September 2015.

<sup>62</sup>Information provided by the Mayor's Office in San Carlos, September 2015.

clear that many perceived violence as collectively targeted, and not random. This was especially the case when it came to paramilitary violence. The way several respondents made sense of the fact that the paramilitaries were killing more people from some areas than from others was that the arriving group targeted residents of the municipal center and surrounding rural hamlets because these had been areas of strong guerrilla influence for many years.

In fact, conversations with demobilized paramilitaries confirm that commanders explicitly ordered them to treat people living in specific areas, including the urban center, as military targets. Arriving from a different region, the paramilitaries lacked information about local dynamics and local loyalties. This was especially the case in the urban center, as most of the pre-existing social ties the paramilitaries had with local population were in the village of El Jordán, which neighbors the region of MM, from which they came (see Map in Figure 7.1). Therefore, they found no other alternative to get rid of the potentially disloyal than using geographical location – a group-level identifier – as a proxy.

Although less salient in residents' testimonies, rebel violence followed a similar targeting logic. This became clearer at the roadblocks rebels established on the key entry points to San Carlos' municipal center. When control was in flux in the municipal center, and the paramilitaries had already established control over some areas of the municipality and the guerrillas still preserved it in some other areas, taking the main means of transport, the "escaleras",<sup>63</sup> was seen by residents as one of the most risky enterprises. As the paramilitaries did in San José with the "chiveros", the FARC used to stop the "escaleras" and kill many passengers.

When I asked who was most likely to be killed at the roadblocks, residents again tended to depict this violence as random. In a group interview on the subject, one woman was very explicit in this regard. She noted that "it was not that they [the guerrillas] knew that in a given car there was this or that other person. No! They were just shooting."<sup>64</sup> However, when going deeper into the topic, it became clear that, over time, residents learned that this violence followed some more nuanced logic. Several informants described that even if it was the case that they would stop the "escaleras" randomly, passengers were commonly asked where they lived or where they were coming from or going to. The answer to these questions was definitive. For example, as Jaider put it, "if you were from El Jordán [controlled by the paramilitaries], there was nothing to do: you were a sure target. If you were from that other side, towards Granada [controlled by the rebels], the guerrillas would let you continue."<sup>65</sup> Rebels took residents from paramilitary-controlled territories, and even people who for some reason had to go to or through these areas, as collaborators or sympathizers. Escaping from this was virtually impossible. Like Jaider noted, one cannot "make void" (*hacer tabula rasa*) the fact that one lived in this or that hamlet for years or that one had relatives here or there.

To be sure, not all violence was perceived as collectively targeted. On some occasions, residents were cognizant that individual behavior was being used as a selection device by both factions. However, the behaviors that were taken as signals of loyalty or collaboration with the enemy were so minimal that even this targeting became virtually unavoidable. For example, as Raúl counts:

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<sup>63</sup>"Escaleras" are colorful buses – privately-owned means of collective transport – that transport people and produce within the municipality and connect San Carlos with neighboring municipalities.

<sup>64</sup>Interview ID. 84, September 2015.

<sup>65</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

If you would go down that way and maybe one of those [rebel combatants] says hi, then people would inform that you were a paramilitary. Simply because they greeted you. And if you would go up that way and up there someone [paramilitary combatant] says hi, then people would inform that you are a rebel ... and we did not even know who was a rebel or a paramilitary or who was one greeting.<sup>66</sup>

As in this example, behaviors that led armed groups to take someone as a collaborator of the enemy involved conducts that civilians could not choose to not do. For example, shop owners were targeted for selling products to either side. Mantilla, the owner of one of the few (if not the only) grocery shops that never closed in the municipal center during the peak of violence, ended up more than once on the kill lists of both the rebels and the paramilitaries for this reason. In a conversation we had, he described the situation he was caught in:

For me it was really hard ... I don't ask people for an ID before selling; in my shop we ask for money. So, I sell to whoever comes in ... the transaction is a commercial one. Something very different is to send three sacks of food to one armed group for them to eat or work. No! That is to collaborate with that group. But if I sell them is just because they have money to pay. And if sometimes I gave them something for free, it is because I had no choice. They threatened me and if I had refused, then I would have had to leave and close.<sup>67</sup>

The situation for peasants living in rural hamlets surrounding the municipal center was not different in this regard. They were taken as collaborators and targeted for doing the “coerced minimum” (Wood, 2003). This is, giving water and sometimes food to combatants passing through, or not resisting them when they came to steal hen and cattle. This was the case for Pedro, who before joining the voluntary firefighter group was a peasant in a rural hamlet nearby. He left his land and went to the municipal center after the rebels accused his entire family of supporting the paramilitaries. His father, under threat of being killed, had given three hens to the paramilitaries. Pedro explained that although it is true that most campesinos “supported” armed groups at some point, they did it either because they were coerced to do so, as his father was, or because of their naive way of “being”.<sup>68</sup>

Elaborating on this, Jaider explained that not denying food or shelter to others is something that is almost built into the campesino way of living. “When one, two or three armed groups pass by our house, we offer *agua de panela*, a chocolate or things like this. It can be any faction, that does not matter ... If you happen to pass by, independently of who you are, we serve you.”<sup>69</sup> When discussing this topic, Raúl stressed that this has been always the case and that it did not happen only because these groups were armed. To provide an example, he noted that it was also like this with the workers that came to San Carlos from different parts of the country (and even abroad) to work for the hydroelectric plants. “[P]eople naively open the doors of their houses to whoever arrives. ‘You do not have where to sleep? Then come to my place, come sleep over.’”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Interview ID. 81, September 2015.

<sup>67</sup>Interview ID. 88, September 2015.

<sup>68</sup>Interview ID. 82, September 2015.

<sup>69</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

<sup>70</sup>Interview ID. 81, September 2015.

During the period in which territorial control was in flux, people working for the government began to be considered by the rebels a military target. At the beginning this was the case only with those who had some relationship with the forces of the state –the military and/or the police. Pacho, the former Mayor of San Carlos, notes that in that period “many girls were killed because of dating a soldier or a policeman.”<sup>71</sup> However, as the paramilitaries began to win some ground in the municipal center and to penetrate some local government institutions, those working with any agency of the state, even if performing the most basic functions, were targeted by the rebels. Given that the main local government agencies are all based in the municipal center, many of its residents had some sort of link to one or another of them. As Pacho highlighted, the local government was the main employer in San Carlos. This complicated further the situation for residents of the municipal center, strengthening their perception that violence was practically unavoidable.

The assassination of Enrique, the third of Jimena’s brothers to die in this war, is an unfortunate example of this form of targeting. A Thursday the car her brother was driving was stopped at a guerrilla roadblock and he and his colleagues were killed by FARC rebels. He was killed while on duty as a driver for the Attorney’s Office. Jimena’s restless efforts to investigate the motives of this assassination led her to learn that he was killed because, as a state worker, he was assumed to be siding with the military and, indirectly, with the paramilitaries.

These forms of targeting (by geographical location, by place of work and by “collaborating” with a coerced minimum) share the fact that they created a deep sense of unavoidability among civilians. Many ended up leaving San Carlos, including many of those who initially moved from the rural areas to the municipal center to avoid leaving the municipality altogether. However, among those few who stayed, this form of targeting made evident the urgent need to engage in some sort of self-protection strategy.

Before the definitive arrival of the paramilitaries, rebel groups sought to protect civilians from both paramilitary and military abuses. Interviewees routinely recalled events that for them it was evident that rebels not only promised protection, but were actually in the capacity to provide it. For example, testimonies of a group of miners who survive a massacre in which paramilitaries from MM killed 17 miners in 1998, stress that the only reason they managed to escape was because the FARC had adverted them of the paramilitary incursion and explicitly advise them to leave the area.<sup>72</sup> Older residents note that this type of early warning was common, especially by FARC, and they believe that it saved the lives of many. A second illustrative example comes from 1989, when the ELN kidnaped Nevarado Morales, San Carlos’ mayor, to put pressure on the government to respect human rights in the municipality and in the region. On that occasion, the rebels released Morales on the condition that the then Governor of Antioquia stopped what the ELN called the “dirty war against the civilian population”.<sup>73</sup>

This was to change completely when territorial control entered in flux. When discussing the issue of protection during this period, no one recalled a single instance in which they saw a real intention from any faction to protect civilians. When I asked explicitly if someone was doing

<sup>71</sup>Interview ID. 92, September 2015.

<sup>72</sup>See *El Colombiano*, 23.07.1988.

<sup>73</sup>See *El Colombiano*, 10.07.1989. From the testimonies I collected, as well as from the quantitative data I used in this chapter, is hard to tell whether this worked. However, what is most relevant here is that thanks to these actions civilians believed that rebels were not only willing to protect them but had the capacity to explicitly attempt to do so.

something to protect them when the municipal center was under contestation, Camila reacted strongly: “The protection of whom? Of no one! Neither ‘the purple’, nor ‘the brown’ could guarantee security under these conditions.”<sup>74</sup> Informants noted that on several occasions, when both the rebels and the paramilitaries were taking control of the town for short periods of times, armed men explicitly stressed that they would take care of the population and that security in the municipality would be on their hands. However, given how fast control was shifting from one faction to the other, civilians knew this was not possible even if armed groups really meant to do so. What almost every respondent highlighted was that they were left fully unprotected, at the mercy of God or to their own luck.

After so many unmet promises of protection, most civilians not only distrusted the possibility of having an armed faction protecting them, but many reached the point where they did not want any armed group providing security – not even the state forces. Some residents came to believe that if they were to expect a real change, it had to come from their own efforts. And, as Jaider highlighted, for some it also became clear that if there was something to be done, that had to be together, as they were all “in the same boat”.<sup>75</sup> As falling victim to violence became so imminent and unavoidable, Joppaz’s organizers believed that doing something to face the situation, was hardly going to put them at more risk, especially it was not done in an overt manner. In other words, the perception of inescapability lowered the *relative* risks organizers associated with mounting a campaign of oblique noncooperation, which made this response more available.

Nevertheless, if the expected risks of engaging in noncooperation were equal to those of not doing anything, why did residents prefer noncooperation over inaction or displacement – as many others actually did? An explanation based solely on *relative* risks does not solve the issue of why organizers of Joppaz opted to do something and residents to join the campaign (considering, for example, that there were costs of opportunity related to taking action. (See Moore, 1995, p. 434)).

As with the PCSJA and the ATCC, the perception of being collectively targeted activated another set of considerations that help explain why those civilians who organized and participated in the Joppaz were not indifferent about taking action. These considerations, although still deriving from the same localized war conditions, go well beyond risk calculations.

The realization that violence was mostly affecting innocent civilians created a deep sentiment of injustice and moral outrage. Some residents described the transformation in the dynamics of war of the late 1990s as a move towards “war against the innocent”. When asked who was most affected by post-1998 violence, Esteban affirmed it was “those who were never implicated”. According to him, “95% of the victims had nothing to do with the conflict”.<sup>76</sup> When discussing this same issue with Camila, she provided her own figure, a more conservative one: “about 80% of the victims had nothing to do with the war”.<sup>77</sup> To be sure, these figures are not based on any systematic data. Nonetheless, they tell an important story of perceived victimization. Survivors knew the victims well, as many were their neighbors, friends and relatives. They had good reasons to believe that, unlike what victimizers were saying, that they were innocent victims.

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<sup>74</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

<sup>75</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

<sup>76</sup>Interview ID. 84, September 2015.

<sup>77</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

The perception of those who lived in the rural areas was not different. A peasant explained to me that during the first months following the arrival of the paramilitaries, those who suffered the most were in fact those who “did not owe anyone anything”. This was the case, given that it was them who had no real reason to leave. Most of those who had collaborated with the rebels found the way to leave on time. He was actually in the latter group, something that provides more weight to his testimony. He told me that he never joined the ranks of the ELN as he was never attracted to arms. However, he used to do them favors and help them with logistical issues, so he knew them well. When he began to see armed men he did not know walking around his hamlet, he was clear that the time to leave had arrived. He knew these were paramilitaries, something that the rebels later confirmed. He then moved to Medellín and only recently returned to San Carlos.

I was wise [*vivo*] and left fast, before they came to get me. I knew I was the next one ... There was nothing to do. I could have joined [the ELN] to avoid getting killed, but as I never liked that thing [arms], I opted to leave. I left quickly to Medellín.<sup>78</sup>

Morally outraged due to what was happening, and facing the urgent need to do something to protect themselves and their community, organizers came to interpret the extra costs of doing something and the potential risks of refusing to cooperate with armed groups as a meaningful sacrifice. Attribution of injustice, as in the patterns of insurgent collective action that Wood, (2003) identified in El Salvador, motivated organizers to move from inaction and take action. They decided to take the bulk of the costs and risks associated with mounting the campaign (see Read and Shapiro, 2014). However, given the widespread perception of targeting as being collective and affecting largely the innocent, they knew the pool of potential participants was large and expected many residents to join the campaign. The fact this war was unjustifiably affecting residents of the municipal center and surrounding helmets just because of being from there, made them believe that they were not going to be left alone in the streets.<sup>79</sup>

This mix of mutually reinforcing rational and emotional/moral considerations spurred a desire for noncooperation among the population and encouraged the youths of Joppaz to take action in spite of the relative costs and expected risks. However, in order to see this desire materialized in coordinated action, this group of youth needed organizational and mobilizing resources. In the next section I cover this second component – capacity for collective action – which is indispensable for the emergence of noncooperation in civil war.

#### 7.4.2 The Capacity for Noncooperation

Despite a long and strong tradition of collective action in EA, in which the municipality of San Carlos played an active role, Joppaz emerged in a social context that feared collective action, believed little in its efficacy, and provided virtually no existing leaders to guide the campaign. This was the outcome, to a large extent, of the high levels of repression that the Civic Movement experienced in the 1980s and that eventually led to its disappearance. In this section I argue that even if this limited the the available mobilizing resources Joppaz had at hand (especially

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<sup>78</sup>Interview ID. 97, September 2015.

<sup>79</sup>Interviews IDs. 77 and 79, August 2015.

relative to the other experiences explored in this dissertation), organizers counted on enough capacity to transform a desire for noncooperation into concrete collective action.

Joppaz was not forged by the type of historical community leaders that we saw organizing peasants in La India. It was high school students who, despite not being leaders, did have some experience organizing activities given their involvement in different groups linked to the Pastoral Social of the Catholic Church. The campaign neither counted with the support of the type of external actors that we saw promoting the Peace Community in San José. Joppaz did not attract the attention of a plethora of national and international actors that were already supporting larger and more visible initiatives in the region. However, this group of high school students found in the local Church and in a group of volunteer firefighters enough associational space to launch the campaign. While the Church had some experience organizing public expressions for peace, the firefighters had wide experience helping victims and knew better how to interact with armed groups. This existing knowledge facilitated the emergence of Joppaz, as these actors closely supported and guided the youth that came to lead the process.

### **Previous Experiences of Collective Action**

In the 1970s residents of EA fiercely reacted against the infrastructural mega-projects that were taking place in the region. Representing different sectors of society, including merchants, teachers, students and peasants, each municipality organized into civic boards and together created the General Assembly of Civic Boards of Eastern Antioquia. Residents demanded compensations and participation in the decisions regarding how to manage these projects. Protested against corruption, the poor provision of public services and the increases in the cost of living resulting from the great influx of people coming from outside to work in the construction sector. In this dynamic context of collective action, San Carlos was particularly strong and determined. For example, during a large civic strike in 1984, when all the other municipalities in the regions decided to step back, San Carlos' inhabitants went on for several more days, organizing street protests almost on a daily basis.

The experience of these years is one of successful mobilization as much as one of heavy repression. Already in the first civic strike in the region, organized in 1978, protesters faced heavy repression by the state. In San Carlos the mayor gave explicit orders to repress protesters and to place the municipal center under curfew. This was, nonetheless, only the first, and perhaps the mildest, of the multiple encounters San Carlos activists had with repression. In subsequent strikes, facilitated by the provisions of the National Security Statute of Turbay's administration (1978–1982) and later on strengthening by the work of paramilitary squads coming from neighboring regions, repression took the form of forced disappearance and assassination of leaders and activists.<sup>80</sup>

According to my interviews, numerous cases of torture of residents of San Carlos took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and many activists were forced to leave the region. The

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<sup>80</sup>This administration is (in)famous for having restricted civil liberties in a way with little precedents in the country. Shortly after taking office, Turbay called a state of siege and established the National Security Statute of 1978 to counter the growing rebel activity in the country as well as narco-trafficking. However, this Statute went harshly after multiple left-wing movements, regardless of whether they had links with armed insurgencies or not. The Statute, which was only lifted in 1982 when Turbay was about to leave office, suppressed popular manifestations of dissent in many areas of the country, including EA. Techniques such as forced disappearances and torture were used and widespread human rights violations took place in the country.

testimonies I collected are in line with the detailed account offered by Olaya, (2012), a local historian who reconstructed the history of violence in the municipality. The traditional political class, feeling threatened by the strength the Movement was achieving, opted to criminalize social protest and associate activists with the guerrilla groups that by that time were gaining visibility in the region. Media reports of the time from *El Colombiano*, Antioquia's main news outlet, reflect well this strategy. Activists were commonly referred to as "subversives", "rebels", "insurgents", and "anarchists", among others.<sup>81</sup>

With this framing, the interests of the political class aligned with those of the paramilitary groups that were beginning to make some sporadic incursions in the EA from their home base in MM. The MAS, the same paramilitary organization that featured prominently in the emergence of the ATCC, overtly and increasingly targeted the Movement, threatening and killing many of its leaders and visible figures.<sup>82</sup> This violence was highly selective and, in many cases, public. Several older informants vividly recall, for example, the assassination of one of San Carlos' well-known leaders, Gabriel Velásquez. At 8.30PM, while having a coffee in the kiosk situated right in in the central square, Gabriel was shot in front of many other residents.

While the decimation of the Movement was taking place, rebel groups were expanding their area of influence into EA. However, instead of revitalizing social mobilization as they have done in other areas of the country, armed confrontation (mostly between FARC and the army) further weakened the Movement (Olaya, 2012, p. 146). In fact, as the UNDP, (2010) reports, the increasing presence of armed groups in EA rose considerably the levels of violence against the Civic Movement. As in other civil wars, such as in El Salvador in the 1970s and Sri Lanka in the early 1980s (Wood, 2008, p. 543), political mobilization in San Carlos was supplanted by armed conflict. In the words of Gonzalo Sánchez, the Director of the CNMH, San Carlos experienced both the rebels effort to "instrumentalize social protest" and the paramilitaries attempt to "neutralize every initiative of collective action." (Grupo de Memoria Historica, 2011).

There was no agreement among my interviewees regarding the date when Civil Movement became fully inactive. Many recall the third strike of 1984 as the last large mobilization. However, the last noticeable mobilization of the Movement reported in San Carlos that I found in secondary sources was in 1988 (L. Uribe and Botero, 1998; Olaya, 2012, p. 146). Regardless of the exact date, it is a fact that by the end of the 1980s the movement had been decimated and San Carlos exhibited virtually no protest activity. As a social leader expressed in an interview: "We can't tell which is the point that marks that the Movement was over and that something new began. But what we are certain of is that it disappeared. The Civic Movement was finished." (cited in García and Aramburu, 2011, p. 66).

García and Aramburu, (2011, 149 –fn 13, 180 –fn 36 ) report that by the end of that decade most leaders of the Movement had been killed or had fled. According to data from Center for Investigation and Popular Education (CINEP), between January 1988 and October 1991, 66 activists were killed. To be sure, not every single member of the Civil Movement was assassinated or left the region permanently. However, among those who few stayed, my interviews revealed that many felt it was too risky to mobilize and had no interest (and hope) in collectively voicing discontent. At least not through nonviolent means of action. Some of those who still wanted

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<sup>81</sup>The newspapers correspond to the first half of 1984, when the third regional civic strike took place and, thus, the Movement reached more media attention.

<sup>82</sup>For the MAS in EA in general and in San Carlos in particular, see Olaya, (2012, 148-149, fn 129).

to continue the struggle, found in the rebels, primarily in the ELN, a better way to do so (see García and Aramburu, 2011, p. 90).

Besides the Civil Movement, residents of San Carlos also tried to channel their discontent through more conventional means. In the early 1980s a group of residents created the Municipal Civil Union (UCM) to participate in local elections.<sup>83</sup> While they secured some seats in the municipal council for consecutive periods, this political success was again met with repression (Velásquez, 2009). Written death threats were slipped under the doors of UCM members (a practice known as *boleteo*) and many ended up leaving the municipality. This was the case of last elected official, Jorge Morales, who resigned and moved to Medellín. Little after, he was killed there. By 1986, the movement disappeared from the political arena (Olaya, 2012, p. 95).

San Carlos saw little nonviolent social mobilization in the 1990s. In my interviews as well as in secondary sources (see Olaya, 2012, pp. 18, 197), I came across only some scattered references to a communal initiative that emerged in the early 1990s. A few residents noted that the name was “United for San Carlos”. Incentivized by the new dispositions established by the 1991 Constitution – namely, more local autonomy for municipalities –, and with the support of some local NGO’s (such as the *Colectivo de Derechos Humanos* and *Semillas de Libertad*) and the energy sector, some residents organized into community associations. Operating through what by then were already very weak JACs, these associations wanted to have a say in the management of the municipality to promote its recovery from the negative effects of war. I did not manage to collect enough evidence of this process as to assess how strong and effective it was. However, interviewees recall that this experience was also stigmatized as being promoted by guerrilla groups and became a target of the paramilitaries. From those who referred to it, is easy to infer that this experience reinforced civilians’ individual and collective believe that collective action was too risky and that concrete benefits were virtually impossible to obtain from it.

All in all, San Carlos indeed experienced a very active civil society in the 1970s and part of the 1980s, displaying great organizational capacity both locally and regionally. However, the legacies of these experiences, in terms of collective action capacity, were negative for the most. The most evident legacy is the absence of community leaders ready to set in motion new rounds of collective action. This stands in stark contrast to the campaigns analyzed in the previous chapters, especially the ATCC were historical leaders who colonized the area played a vital role in organizing noncooperation.

However, the negative legacy of this experience had also a subjective dimension that is equally important. The experience taught activist and non-activists that both local authorities and the paramilitaries were ready to use violence to silence their voices. Olaya, (2012, p. 90) is right in noting that the experience of the Civic Movement constitutes “an unforgettable experience” that remains “recorded in the minds” of the inhabitants of San Carlos. My interviews back this claim. However, when I asked those who participated or witnessed these mobilizations to go deeper into their experience, it becomes clear that one legacy is low levels of what social movement scholars call “collective efficacy” (Klandermans, 2013). Most of the Sancarlitanos who stayed in the municipality, participants and nonparticipants in prior mobilizations, did no longer believe that organized action would help to redress the negative effects of violence, let alone to provide them with some protection from violence. Some interviewees even stated explicitly that this

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<sup>83</sup>This movement was first called *Movimiento Acción Sancarlitana* (MAS), but they changed the name to avoid being associated with the paramilitary group that used the same acronym.

event constituted a serious disincentive to further engage in collective action (see, also, Olaya, 2012, p. 133). This included participants and sympathizers of the Civic Movement, from whom one would not expect to hear this. In fact, several were initially reluctant to recognize this as an unfortunate legacy of their their experience.

In spite of these legacies, we observed organized noncooperation taking place in the municipality. It follows that in San Carlos, the organizational and mobilization capacity that made possible the Joppaz campaign did not come from previous experiences of collective action – at least not from this more visible experiences. In the next two sections I describe and analyze the factors that made collective action possible and that solve this puzzle.

### External Actors & Available Associational Space

Like in the PCSJA and the ATCC, the Church is part of the explanation of why Joppaz managed to emerge in a social context that was not at all ripe for mobilization. However, rather than the regional diocese, it was the *Pastoral Social*, at the very local level, who supported the group of youth from the very beginning and provided some associational space for the campaign to be mounted.<sup>84</sup>

The most important mobilization resource that the *Pastoral Social* provided was a relatively safe physical space in the middle of war for organizers to coordinate action. Joppaz took advantage of the fact that the house of the *Pastoral*, located to the left of the municipal Church *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*, was to some extent a sanctuary (Mitchell and Hancock, 2007) in a town constantly exposed to the presence and incursions of different armed factions. Rodolfo, a priest who served in San Carlos as well as in other municipalities in the EA during the most intense periods of war, noted that organizing this type of activities in the Church was a natural thing to do, as in this region armed groups have tended to respect the Church and have tried to keep it outside the military confrontation.<sup>85</sup> The *Pastoral* was not only safe in terms of being shielded from military attack, it was also relatively free from armed groups' infiltration and control. Unlike other social groups and spaces in the municipality that were surveilled and constantly intimidated by armed groups, such as schools and merchant associations, the groups linked to the *Pastoral* were seen as less threatening. For example, a woman leading the theater group linked to the *Pastoral* noted that the same kids that were constantly approached by armed groups for recruitment purposes at school, were never approached while in the theater group.<sup>86</sup>

Given these advantages, the house of the *Pastoral* was used by organizers to meet, share their perceptions and discuss possible actions. By the time Joppaz was created, speaking about the conflict and what to do about it at school was particularly dangerous. Armed groups,

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<sup>84</sup>Although this actor is deeply embedded in the community, the fact that the *Pastoral* is backed by a larger organization that provides resources and a particular status that local residents alone did not have, I treat it as analytically external to the community. The Diocese of Asunción of Río Negro, the one covering the municipality of San Carlos, did have an active role in initiatives other than Joppaz that focused mostly on mediating with the rebels (especially the ELN) when someone was kidnapped or disappeared.

<sup>85</sup>Interview ID. 114, September 2015. To be sure, armed groups' respect for the Church was limited. For example, a former mayor of San Carlos, made reference to two concrete cases in which the paramilitaries did not respect the Church. Priest Jesús Mari'ia Navas, had to leave to Chile and bishop Flavio Calle Zapata had to move to a different diocese because of paramilitary threats. The paramilitaries accused them of supporting the rebels because of the mediation work they had advanced. Interview ID. 92, September 2015.

<sup>86</sup>In fact, taking the opportunity of this infiltration-free space, this theater group put together the play "Aquí nos quedamos" in the middle of the confrontation. The play tells the story of all those who did not leave and denounces many of the atrocities armed groups committed against the population.

mostly the paramilitaries, were using male students as patrolmen and some female students were dating armed men. Gathering in public spaces was also dangerous, as armed groups were highly suspicious about these meetings and on some occasions severely punished them. Under these circumstances, counting on a relatively safer associational space to meet after school hours was a vital organizational resource.

Jaider remembers that once the initial group of six classmates decided to do something, each of them had different ideas about what could be done. He does not remember precisely the proposals that were made, but he does recall that not all of them were complementary and that each of his classmates had different expectations. Some cared more about countering recruitment, others more about countering displacement. There was also the idea, for example, of organizing public demonstrations to explicitly ask all armed groups to leave the municipal center once and for all. It was in the *Pastoral*, and with people serving there, that they finally agreed on the idea of organizing street activities to reactivate social interaction. Collectively trying to make sense of what was going on in town, they realized that the lack of interaction between neighbors was actually facilitating recruitment and promoting displacement. As in other instances of collective action, this associational space was central for framing the problem and defining a response to it.

Moreover, people serving at the *Pastoral* were crucial informational hubs for organizers to know about other youths they could count on to organize the activities. In the midst of the war the *Pastoral* became for many, especially young people, a place to share their concerns and reveal their real feelings about what was going on in the municipality. This proved crucial for preference convergence. In fact, it was through the *Pastoral* that organizers realized that many other classmates were not attracted by the incentives armed groups were offering and were also interested in doing something to prevent armed factions to further penetrate their school and their community. Finally, the *Pastoral* provided encouragement and validation. In this regard, several interviewees recalled the role of one particular priest, Father Hector Blandón, who got deeply involved in this initiative. Organizers explained that for them it is vital to know that the priest thought that what they were planning to do was right. Although not all of them were devout Catholics, they highlighted the importance of feeling that an institution that has been so central in the community life of San Carlos, and a well-known and well-respected personality in town, such as Father Blandón, supported and even encouraged them to mount the campaign.

All in all, the support of the *Pastoral* proved to very effective. The associational space they provided escaped armed groups control in ways that other more formal organizations, such as the JAC – which was crucial in the emergence of ATCC – did not. According to records of who later served as the head coordinator of all the JACs in the municipality, only five out of 78 JACs were active in the municipality by the time Joppaz was created. Moreover, these were heavily infiltrated and instrumentalized by the paramilitaries.<sup>87</sup>

The second actor that supported the emerge of Joppaz was a local body of volunteer firefighters. This corp initially formed little before the peak of the war. Then it had 35 members. However, only six months later, two of its members were killed, urging many to leave the group. Only 12 volunteers remained. Despite its reduced size, this group became central for the emergence of the campaign. Leveraging the fact that their post became a sort of information and assistance point for the population, the firefighters became a key organizational resource for Joppaz. Having had

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<sup>87</sup>Interview ID. 95, September 2015.

to deal with several relatives of people that were killed or disappeared, they had a better sense of the beliefs of victims and could form better expectations of how the population would react to the campaign. Moreover, as their post was perhaps the only place in town that remained “open” and with its lights on during the evenings, they had received people every now and then that just wanted to chat or share a cup of *agua de panela*. Thus, they knew that many residents were longing for places to meet up with others. Jaider noted that it was a great source of encouragement when they heard from the firefighters that they expected many people to participate in the activities.

Further, the firefighters had more experience in facing and interacting with armed groups than the average citizen. This, as both organizers and participants highlighted, was important in helping people to overcome fear and providing assurance. In fact, it was because of the social recognition they enjoyed within the community that the first street activities were organized in the *Calle de los Bomberos* (“Street of the firefighters”). When asked about this choice, Camila explained that they did so in part because they wanted to provide company to the firefighters as they used to stay awake until late. She stressed, however, that this was also a strategic move, as they expected more people to join if the activities were associated with the firefighters. To date, this street remains in the memory of many residents as a symbol of resistance and solidarity.

Unlike other regional-level responses to war that gained more visibility in EA, this local campaign did not count on the support of the local authorities, such as the mayor of the municipality or the governor of Antioquia, nor that of regional, national or international NGOs or international organizations. Not even prominent NGOs that were involved in organizing and supporting some initiatives in the region, such as Conciudadania, Colectivo de Derechos Humanos or Semillas de Libertad, played a central role in this campaign.<sup>88</sup> However, the support of both the *Pastoral Social* and the group of firefighters provided enough material and nonmaterial organizational and mobilization resources for a desire for noncooperation to crystallize into concrete coordinated and sustained action.

### External Actors & Available Leadership

By the time Joppaz was created, San Carlos counted with virtually no leaders ready to engage in new forms of collective action. “All those civil groups that were formed were extinguished because all leaders had to leave to preserve their lives. Same for some city councilmen,” stressed one resident.<sup>89</sup> Not only visible figures of the Civil Movement and the UCM, but also presidents of the JACs and peasant leaders working for the local government were assassinated or exiled. War managed to destroy the little that was left from these years of active contentious politics. Between March 1998 and July 2001 alone, the initial years of fierce confrontation between the rebels and the paramilitaries, 16 leaders were killed in massacres: four community leaders, two peasant leaders, two JAC presidents and six active members, and 2 leaders working for the local government.

Joppaz was advanced by young people with no previous history of activism. When asked

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<sup>88</sup>Conciudadania, for example, supported experiences such as that of the Conciliation Council in the neighboring municipality of San Luis that sought to establish humanitarian dialogues with the ELN in 1996 and the Constituent Assembly of Mogotes in the Department of Santander that in 1998 mounted one of the best known experiences of noncooperation in the country.

<sup>89</sup>Testimony cited in Grupo de Memoria Historica, (2011)

about leadership, Jaider recognized that the organizers of the campaign, him included, were not leaders and were not seen as such by the community. He noted that they were “just students”. Several residents who took part in the activities support this view. They noted that while they knew who the kids organizing the activities were and recognized some of them, none was particularly visible in the municipality before the campaign. Unlike the case of the PCSJA, where the founding fathers and mothers of the Peace Community built on their experience in left-wing political parties, trade unions and peasant associations, organizers here had to learn much of their job on the go. The accounts of how the campaign emerged and how the first evening activities were organized, underscore the promoters’ lack of experience.

Nevertheless, when probed to describe himself and the other organizers in more detail, Jaider noted that they were a “group of youth that were very good at convening others”.<sup>90</sup> In fact, Jaider, as well as many of those who actively engaged in mounting the campaign, had always been interested in community and social affairs. Since he was a kid, to channel this interest, he was involved in organizing multiple activities with the *Pastoral Social*. This was also the case of Camila. Even if the *Pastoral* was not the place for youths to profile themselves as leaders, their participation in these activities exposed them to community work. When I asked Jaider why he thought they were “good at convening people”, without hesitation he explained that he had invited the community several times to participate in activities organized by the Church. These activities were fully unrelated to the conflict, and they were convening people in the name of the Church. Nevertheless, these experiences taught them how to reach people and persuade them to take part in activities.<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, organizers received direct and indirect guidance by people serving for the *Pastoral*. It was them, for example, that made explicit that the framing of the activities should not be one of “against war”, but one “in favor of peace.” Therefore the name “Joppaz”. Father Blandón was a central figure in this regard. He had already organized some one-off public demonstrations of peace in San Carlos, such as walking around the central square carrying the crucifix with several residents following with candles. Even if the same performances did not carry into the Joppaz campaign, there are some fundamental continuities. For example, the activities were carried out in the evenings – when people used to lock themselves in their houses. Their neither involved any overt manifestation of dissent, nor targeted armed groups explicitly. From these experiences, the *Pastoral* had witnessed the advantages (in terms of minimizing risk) of oblique activities. This valuable experience was put at the service of Joppaz and provided organizers with guidance on how to best do things.<sup>92</sup>

The firefighters also played their part in helping the initiators of Joppaz mount and lead the campaign. By carrying out their responsibilities, they had faced armed groups in several occasions and had even defied some of their implicit rules. For example, as local *imam* did during the war in Aceh (Barter, 2014, p. 86), firefighters went and looked for bodies of people they knew were killed and tried to provide a proper burial for them, something that was openly punished by armed factions – especially by the paramilitaries. Building on their experience with armed groups, which perhaps no other resident of the municipal center had, they guided organizers

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<sup>90</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

<sup>91</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

<sup>92</sup>As should become apparent from this discussion, the Church played a central role here in tempering the level of confrontation involved in this campaign. I elaborate on the effect of ideas and moral commitments on the form of noncooperation elsewhere. See Masullo, (2017a).

on how to interact with armed groups in the eventual case of them attempting to interrupt the evening activities. Moreover, as with Eduar in the PCSJA, some of these firefighters, in particular Pedro, came to support the campaign but ended up acting as leaders of the campaign.

In sum, the organizer's experience organizing activities with the *Pastoral Social* before the peak of the war and the supportive role of both the Church and the firefighters compensated for the absence of historical leadership and helped overcome the obstacles imposed by a negative perception of collective action. The experience of Joppaz in turn forged a new generation of leaders in the municipality. Camila stresses that the campaign institutionalized a sort of youth movement for peace, giving some kids visibility within the community and sparking off collective action in the municipality. In fact, this proved crucial for post-conflict reconstruction work when violence subsided following the demobilization of the paramilitaries in the mid-2000. Many active organizers and participants of Joppaz went on to participate in different regional platforms and became central actors in San Carlos successful experience of grassroots peace-building (Masullo, 2018; Ehrlich, 2016, See, also). Some of them were invited by national NGOs and even the governor of Antioquia to participate in different peace efforts, doing advocacy and receiving training in peace-building and reconciliation. Jaider, for example, continued his effort to fight recruitment in a well-known initiative promoted by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) called *Nuestra Opción es la vida* (Our option is life). Today, both Jaider and Camila are well known social and political leaders in the municipality and both went into local politics.

## 7.5 Control Case: Living under the control of one group

*I think that when there is one armed group present in a given area, whichever the group, people at some point get used to it. It is not that people promote it, but get used to it. It is like when you commit a sin, you get use to it.*

– Mantilla, Grocery shop owner from *San Carlos, Antioquia* (2015)

The village of El Jordán is located in a historically strategic area for commerce connecting Antioquia and the MM since the nineteenth century, about 40 kilometers away from the municipal center (see Map in Figure 7.2). Although comprised of mostly rural hamlets, the village hosts the second largest populated center of the municipality. Given its proximity to the MM region, the paramilitaries first entered San Carlos through El Jordán and, capitalizing on existing family and local ties, there they established one of the main centers of operation for the entire EA region. When 30 of San Carlos 74 hamlets were fully abandoned and 20 partially emptied (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011), several residents still lived in El Jordán. However, while those who stayed put in San Carlos' urban center organized into forms of noncooperation with armed groups such as Joppaz, not a single resident of El Jordán I spoke to remembers similar campaigns taking place in their village and none reported having considered organizing or joining something of the like. In this section, through a within-municipality paired comparison between the experience of San Carlos municipal center and the village of El Jordán, I provide extra evidence to the argument by showing that when one of the conditions proposed as necessary is absent, noncooperation is not likely to emerge: (C1) shifts in territorial control.

The 25% of the residents of San Carlos who stayed in the municipality when large numbers fled were far from evenly distributed in the territory. Informal records that some residents

Table 7.2: Massacres in San Carlos 1980–2012

	Date	Location	Perpetrator	Lethal Victims
1	1995 - August	El Jordán	Not Identified	4
2	1998 - March	El Jordán	Paramilitaries (Bloque Metro)	6
3	1998 - October	Municipal Center	Paramilitaries (Bloque Metro)	13
4	1998 - October	El Jordán (La Holanda)	Paramilitaries	13
5	1998 - December	El Jordán	Paramilitaries (Bloque Metro)	4
6	1999 - June	El Jordán (La Holanda & Santa Isabel)	Paramilitaries (Bloque Metro)	12
7	1999 - August	Municipal Center	Paramilitaries (Bloque Metro)	6
8	1999 - November	El Chocó (PC) & La Esperanza	Paramilitaries (Bloque Metro)	7
9	1999 - December	Municipal Center	Paramilitaries	5
10	1999 - December	El Chocó (PC)	Paramilitaries	8
11	1999 - December	La Esperanza, Pio XII & La Holanda	Paramilitaries	8
12	2000 - February	“Puente Alcance”	Paramilitaries	4
13	2000 - April	Samaná (village)	Paramilitaries	4
14	2000 - April	La Villa	Paramilitaries (Bloque Metro)	15
15	2000 - May	Municipal Center / El Chocó (PC)	Paramilitaries (Bloque Metro)	4
16	2000 - October	Municipal Center	Paramilitaries	4
17	2000 - December	San Miguel	Paramilitaries	5
18	2001 - January	Municipal Center (La María)	Paramilitaries	4
19	2001 - February	Municipal Center (Peños)	Paramilitaries	5
20	2001 - February	Municipal Center & El Chocó (PC)	Paramilitaries	5
21	2001 - March	Municipal Center	Paramilitaries	13
22	2001 - March	Municipal Center	Paramilitaries	5
23	2001 - June	No info	Not identified	5
24	2001 - November	El Chocó (PC) (Buenos Aires)	Paramilitaries	4
25	2002 - March	El Chocó (PC) (Buenos Aires)	Rebels (FARC IX Front)	5
26	2002 - May	Vallejuelos & Puerto Rico	Paramilitaries	9
27	2002 - July	San Miguel & Santa Rita	Not identified	7
28	2002 - November	El Chocó (PC) (Buenos Aires)	Paramilitaries (Bloque Metro)	8
29	2003 - January	El Chocó (PC) (Buenos Aires)	Rebels [n.i]	4
30	2003 - January	Arenosas, Dosquebradas, La Tupiada & Dinamarca	Rebels (FARC IX Front)	17
31	2004 - July	Samaná (village)	Rebels (FARC IX Front)	7
32	2004 - September	Santa Rita	Rebels (FARC)	4
33	2004 - November	Sardina Grande	Not identified	5
34	2005 - January	El Vergel	Paramilitaries (Bloque Héroes de Granada)	7

Source. CNMH's Data and Information from “Rutas del Conflicto”.

Note. Where the paramilitary block or rebel front is not indicated is because my sources did not identify the particular actors.

kept and that I could access during fieldwork,<sup>93</sup> show that most of the people who avoided displacement navigated through war either in San Carlos' municipal center or in the village of El Jordán. This is backed by data from the national census of 2005 that shows that the 13,000 people that lived in San Carlos by the mid-2005 were still mostly concentrated in these areas. That a big proportion of those who did not flee were in the municipal center is not surprising. Like in several municipalities of the EA (e.g., Granada), many campesinos moved from their rural villages to the municipal center either because they did not have the means to go farther or because they hoped to return to their land shortly. The fact that a large group of people stayed in El Jordán, instead, is more puzzling and seems to be better explained by factors related to its particular war trajectory.

In August 1997 the president of the JAC of El Jordán, Eliseo Muñoz, was killed. Allegedly, the FARC was responsible for this crime. Eliseo Muñoz was one of the 9 brothers of Gabriel Muñoz Ramírez, alias Castañeda, one of the head commanders of the BM. Several interviewees state that this event marked the definitive advent of the paramilitaries in the village. Three different paramilitary blocs established permanent presence in El Jordán over a period of approximately 8 years: first the BM, then the BCN and finally the BHG. The BM, under the command of alias *Doble Cero* and Castañeda was the first to enter the village in 1997, push the rebels out and establish dominant control. Then the BCN replaced the BM in 2002. Finally, with the demobilization of about 900 members of the BCN in 2003, the first bloc to join the demobilization process of the AUC, the control of El Jordán passed on the hands of the BHG. While these shifts involved some fighting and implied some adaptation from the side of civilians (see Osorio Campuzano, 2013, pp. 144, 149), paramilitary control in El Jordán was stable and competition with the guerrillas did not take place there. The following dialogue with Orlando, a 50 years old peasant from El Jordán, describes well this situation:

ME: You said that when the paramilitaries arrived in El Jordán, they settled there. How was that process?

ORLANDO: Yes. Through coercion, using any means, with bullets, with whatever they could, they established themselves there. A lot of people died because of acting as informants, because they were of the other group [the guerrillas] ...

INTERVIEWER: So, at some point, the guerrillas left El Jordán?

ORLANDO: In one way or the other, the guerrillas began to loose strength there. They began to leave and leave until the point that the place remained only of the other group [the paramilitaries]. It was like that. They were the authority in the village, of the entire territory there.

INTERVIEWER: And didn't the guerrillas fight back? They never entered the village thereafter?

ORLANDO: No. There were no clashes in El Jordán with the guerrillas. They were still present in the municipality, but outside the village. Right? On the roads.

Unlike the municipal center of San Carlos, where residents experienced the coexistence of multiple armed actors fighting for territorial control for an extended period, in El Jordán the

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<sup>93</sup>These records are now available at the CARE. Similar numbers were shared with me by the police inspector of El Jordán.

paramilitaries quickly became the only authority. In in the municipal center we saw that at some point factions did not manage to establish permanent control for period longer than a few days, in El Jordán the paramilitaries ruled for about 8 years. Their control was completely overt, visible to all. Residents recall that commanders used to spend the day sitting at a table next to the kiosk in the center of the town, right in front of the Church. Even Carlos Castaño, who was one of the main leaders of the AUC nationally, used to come to visit, landing a helicopter in the village. Their rule went beyond fundamental security and public order functions. They rapidly established a comprehensive system of governance. As an old resident of the village put it, the paramilitaries “fulfilled the functions of the police inspector, they arranged marriages, they solved land disputes and community conflicts” (cited in Osorio Campuzano, 2013, p. 144). They even decided were civilians could and could not shop.

The paramilitaries kept the village safe from guerrilla presence and incursions. Residents affirm that for several years they did not see any rebels around their village. The paramilitaries were able to establish clear rules of behavior for its residents. As Arjona, (2016b) has theorized, this induced order and predictability in civilian life. Residents of El Jordán were able to identify some patterns in the way paramilitaries were targeting civilians and, accordingly, manage to adapt their behavior in ways that could substantially minimize their likelihood of falling victim. Even if not all residents were happy with the new ruler and they felt at more ease with some blocs more than the others, my interviewees agreed that they felt safe in El Jordán as they were aware that the situation was not like that elsewhere in the municipality. Residents reckon that life was easier than in the municipal center because the paramilitaries in the village were more “sophisticated and decent” (Osorio Campuzano, 2013).

In fact, after having “cleaned” the area of left-wing activists and guerrilla supporters, residents perceived that they were somehow shielded from violence. On the one hand, they identified that as long as they respected the rule of the game of the paramilitaries, they were not going to be targeted. On the other hand, as the paramilitaries were successful in preventing guerrilla groups from entering El Jordán, as long as they stayed in the village, residents also felt generally shielded from guerrilla violence. Moreover, as clashes were very uncommon in the village, they did not even fear finding themselves caught in the middle of the crossfire.

Furthermore, El Jordán villagers highlighted the fact that, although the paramilitaries were a coercive and violent group, they had the chance to talk to the commanders and intercede for their lives if there were allegations or misunderstandings – an option that was not at all available to residents of the municipal center. To be sure, this flexibility resulted itself from the dominant control the paramilitaries achieved. However, testimonies indicate that it had to do also with the “rooted” nature of the group. Both Castañeda and *Doble Cero* came from large landowner families of the village and were well-known by the community before the paramilitary period. The Castañeda was not only a very rich family linked to the business of cattle-ranching, but also one that was politically visible. As mentioned before, the brother of Castañeda, Eliseo Muñoz, was the president of the village’s JAC and a town councilman. *Doble Cero* grew up between Medellín and his family farm in La Llore, in the hamlet las Tinajas (see Map in Figure 7.2). Many people respected his family and knew him from his childhood, as La Llore gave jobs to several villagers for many years.

Building on these existing ties, soon after the BM arrived in town, they were successful in

recruiting locals, especially youths who, as various informants noted, were high school students during the day and served as patrolmen during the evenings. These local roots made them closer and more accessible to residents. On the one hand, this gave the group a huge informational advantage that allowed them to be more selective in their targeting, making residents feel that the ruler was less arbitrary. This undoubtedly facilitated the task of navigating war in El Jordán. As Orlando put it, "... the guys, the commanders, many were from the village, so they knew everybody there and knew more or less who was who ... this could actually save your life", as actually happened with many villagers.<sup>94</sup>

The particular profile of *Doble Cero* and the BM, that he founded in eastern and northwestern Antioquia, as well as in Medellín, also made things easier for civilians living under their control. *Doble Cero* is, in fact, almost an outlier in the history of the AUC. He is considered one of the "purest" paramilitaries. He was deeply committed to countering the advance of the guerrillas and his focus was always defeating them. Giving this commitment, he explicitly refused to get involved in the narco-trafficking business and openly criticized others who did it. His group, at least that operating in El Jordán, was a very cohesive and disciplined group. This facilitated the creation of order and the establishment of predictable expectations about the behavior of his men. When groups enjoy internal discipline, order is more likely to emerge and govern civilian-combatant interactions, and life for the population is relatively easier (Weinstein, 2007; Arjona, 2016b).

To be sure, as the words of Orlando cited before made apparent, the process by which the paramilitaries established control in El Jordán was not free of violence. Several villagers lost their lives during the first months following the arrival of the paramilitaries. In fact, upon their arrival, between March 1998 and June 1999, the paramilitaries carried out 4 massacres in El Jordán (see Table 7.2). However, in stark contrast to the municipal center, judging from the profile of the victims and consistent with several testimonies, there are indications that this wave of violence was largely selective and perceived as such by residents. One of the violent events with which the paramilitaries broke through and that several villagers from El Jordán recall as what marked their advent is the massacre of March 1998. Following orders by Castañeda, paramilitaries from the BM forced six people to leave their houses at night, tortured them and finally killed them in one of the bases the BM had in El Jordán, in a place called Pinski (see Map in Figure 7.2). All six victims were active members of El Jordán's JAC. They were specifically searched for and at least one of them, a school teacher, had received explicit threats. Residents say that they were killed because of protesting against the way the local government, at that time already infiltrated by the paramilitaries, was managing public funds.<sup>95</sup>

Although massacres are a repertoire of violence usually associated with indiscriminate targeting, in this case it reveals careful selection. This type of targeting is consistent with the one that can be inferred from anecdotes of violence shared by some of my respondents from El Jordán, as well as documented in secondary literature (see, e.g., Olaya, 2012, p. 211). For example, when asked about people from El Jordán who got killed *in* the village,<sup>96</sup> residents recall mostly the assassinations of social and community leaders. This contrasts starkly with the

<sup>94</sup>Interview ID. 115, September 2015.

<sup>95</sup> See *Rutas del Conflicto*. Available online [<http://rutasdelconflicto.com/interna.php?masacre=397>].

<sup>96</sup>I learnt in the field that when discussing this it was particularly relevant to specify that it happened *in* the village. This was the case because many villagers of El Jordán were killed by the guerrillas on the roads and many villagers from other areas were killed in El Jordán by the paramilitaries.

responses I got in the municipal center when delving deeper into the type of targeting. There, as noted before, almost every interviewee felt that armed groups were killing people whose only “sin” was to live in an area that was under the influence of the rebels for a long time. Moreover, as the BM gained control, anti-civilian violence became less frequent and, as noted earlier, residents came to believe that the group was in fact investigating before killing (Osorio Campuzano, 2013, p. 147).

As Kalyvas’ (2006) theory would predict, violence declined and became more selective as the paramilitaries gained territorial control. In fact, revealing both spatial- and across-time variation in line with my argument, out of the 25 massacres the paramilitaries committed in San Carlos, only five took place in El Jordán and none took place after they established dominant control by the late 1990s (see Table 7.2). This change both in the frequency, repertoire and targeting of paramilitary violence, provided villagers from El Jordán with information to better assess the risks of falling victim and adapt their behavior accordingly, allowing them to get used to the new emerging order. As Mantilla’s words in the opening quote noted, the following testimonies provide evidence of this adaptation process that made civilian life in El Jordán easier (relative to the municipal center) and explain why a desire for noncooperation never evolved.

... at the beginning there was a lot of fear, total fear about everything. Later, though, it became quite normal. Our friends were dating paramilitaries ... a lot of kids here are sons of paramilitaries of this area. All of us started to get use, or let’s say, to accept that they were here in town, that they were the authority ... <sup>97</sup>

To be sure, residents of El Jordán continued to witness violence in their village throughout the entire period of paramilitary control. However, most of this violence were homicides of people the paramilitaries abducted and brought to the village to be killed. It was not violence against residents of El Jordán. This was what happened, for example, with Camila’s daughter, who in 2001 was kidnapped in San Carlos and then killed in El Jordán. Jaider described how commanders in El Jordán arranged cars to go and pick up concrete residents from San Carlos’ municipal center – like shop owners – with whom they wanted to meet. Many of those that were taken to El Jordán eventually disappeared. Being called was almost a death sentence.<sup>98</sup> As residents of both San Carlos and El Jordán dramatically summarize the situation: El Jordán put the *paras*, and the municipal center put the death.

Conversations with demobilized rank-and-file paramilitaries confirmed this practice. Commanders explicitly asked them to proceed in that way to signal power and resolve in El Jordán and to create uncertainty in other areas. It is precisely in this way that a young community leader of El Jordán makes sense of this practice:

... they [the paramilitaries] managed to control the entire sector till the point that they went to other places, brought people and kill them here [in El Jordán]. What I mean is that they organized everything! “We need to bring that person from San Carlos, we need to bring that other from San Rafael, or from Guatapé or El Peñol [neighboring municipalities]” ... they managed to arrive in all these places ... the really coordinated everything!<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup>Testimony cited in Osorio Campuzano, (2013, p. 145).

<sup>98</sup>Interview ID. 79, August 2015.

<sup>99</sup>Interview ID. 103, September 2015.

In stark contrast with the experience of the municipal center, where people thought of violence as virtually unavoidable and found no party that could offer reliable protection, residents of El Jordán saw in the paramilitaries an actor that could offer protection and that was accessible to them. This situation made cooperation – at least in the basic form of compliance – the best course of action to secure basic levels of security and continue with their lives. As Ortiz, (2001, p. 71) observed for the Colombian civil war at large, once a group establishes in one locality, regardless of its political identity, the majority of the inhabitants tend to accept this group’s authority as a fact. In light of the argument advanced in this dissertation, this explains not only why more people stayed in El Jordán relative to other areas of the municipality, but also why a desire for noncooperation did not evolve among them. In fact, inquiring about the distribution of risks among the population, when I asked Camila why she believed that people living in areas with stronger paramilitary presence felt more safe, without any probing she provided a clear illustration of my argument:

In order to protect themselves, the *paras* managed to keep their areas cleared of guerrilla presence. People learnt some parameters that ordered life. There was no confrontation, so violence was lower. A lot of people left those areas too, but when [the paramilitaries] made an area their zone of command, their center of operations, people identified that there was only one group that could hurt. So if that group said “you have to behave in this way”, the best thing they could do was to obey and they could stay without risking their lives.<sup>100</sup>

## 7.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined the experience of Joppaz, a campaign of oblique civilian noncooperation that emerged in the municipal center of San Carlos in EA. Joppaz was set up by a group of high school students to counter the effects of war on the life of the few residents that stayed in the municipality when the paramilitaries of BM fiercely challenged FARC’s control and violence against civilians peaked. The campaign aimed at re-activating social interaction among neighbors as a means to avoid further recruitment and displacement. While the cases in the previous chapters were more geared towards the reduction of (lethal) violence, this campaign constitutes a self-protection strategy more of the type of what Carpenter, (2012, p. 186) has labeled “resilience management”. In her study of neighborhoods in Baghdad that refused to host, support or join sectarian militias, she defines this term as organized efforts to restore community relationships and prevent the move into even more undesired configurations. Finally, as a control case, this chapter examined the trajectories of war and civilian responses in El Jordán, a village in the east of the municipality. The within-municipality paired comparison between the municipal center and El Jordán provided additional confidence on the validity of the theory by revealing the necessary nature of the C1: if control is stable in the hands of one faction, civilians are unlikely to develop a preference for noncooperation.

By focusing on a campaign in which noncooperation takes an oblique form, this chapter is likely to remind the reader of James Scott’s work (Scott, 1985, 1987). I want to take this opportunity

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<sup>100</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

to briefly stress both the similarities and differences between this type of noncooperation and Scott's everyday forms of resistance – a topic that I briefly discussed in Chapter 2.

This form of noncooperation is similar to Scott's everyday forms of resistance in that it is oblique. Just as with the peasants Scott studied, some organizers of Joppaz stressed that an added advantage of organizing activities that were not directly related to war and that involved no direct confrontation was that of denying armed groups an easily discernible target. Moreover, one of the reasons to include these less comprehensive form of noncooperation in this study is in fact equivalent to Scott's motivation to study everyday forms of resistance. That is, to explore a wider range of variation of noncooperation that is not captured by the more organized forms that have captured the attention of most scholars (see Scott, 1987). Like Scott, I am of the idea that a vast range of what counts – and should count – as civilian noncooperation involves no overt manifestation of dissent and no direct confrontation with armed factions. Therefore, if we focus only on experiences such as that of the PCSJA, we will miss a big deal of what civilians actually do on the ground in the way of noncooperation and Civilian Self-Protection (CSP). In this sense, there are similarities both in the type of strategy, as well as in the motivation to study it.

However, oblique noncooperation is certainly different from everyday forms of resistance in that it is collective. In fact, not only it is collective in nature, but in the case explored here it explicitly aimed at collectively combatting social isolation.<sup>101</sup> Scott not only argued that there is no requirement that resistance take the form of overt protest, but also of collective action. In his own words, everyday forms of resistance require “little or no planning” and “they often represent forms of individual self-help” (Scott, 1987, pp. 429–420). In this dissertation, as a form of contentious politics, noncooperation requires organization and is necessarily an instance of collective action. It is not fully clear why, for example, the peasant resistance to the zakat in the Malaysian village that Scott studied did not involve more organized forms of action. From his analysis it seems that peasants did not have the need to do so as there were less costly and less risky forms of resisting effectively. Nevertheless, in his very detailed treatment of community structures there is no evidence that peasants actually had organizational and mobilizing resources (material and nonmaterial) available for social appropriation as to engage in more organized (if still oblique) forms of action. If the absence of these resources explains, at least in part, the absence of collective forms of resistance in Scott's villages, then this lends external support to Part 2 of my theory. However, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

Finally, I would like to close this chapter by stressing how the relationship we observed between the experience of repression of the Civic Movement and the emergence of Joppaz decades later provides useful insights for rethinking and refining existing theories of collective action. It is common in both in social movements (e.g., McAdam, 1986) and civil wars (e.g., Arjona, 2015) literatures to take previous experiences of collective action are a strong predictor of subsequent mobilization. To be sure, this is not mistaken. In fact, the case of the PCSJA explored in Chapter 5 provides additional support for that argument. However, the experience of Joppaz shows that repression can also have long-term demobilizing effects. In stark contrast to the positive effects Finkel, (2015) found in the context of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, selective repression against the Civic Movement diminished the residents capacity for mounting collective action: leaders were lacking and a negative perception of the efficacy of collective action

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<sup>101</sup>I thank Sidney Tarrow for calling my attention to this subtle, but important point.

haunted residents.

Nevertheless, the successful experience of Joppaz revealed as well that actors that are external to the community and are willing to support mobilization efforts can compensate for this lack of capacity. Moreover, the fact that the campaign was launched by high school students who did not directly experienced repression, suggests that there might be a need for a generational break to overcome memory shocks. The experience of San Carlos might constitute an additional example of this path to mobilization that we have observed in very different contexts, such as that of post-repression Spain and Hungary. In line with this way of reasoning, the specific role that the youth played here might be underscoring the benefits of undertaking a generational approach in the study of civilian responses to war. In her study of peasants' relationships with guerrilla movements in Zimbabwe's war, Kriger, (2008) had already shown the analytical value of such approach.

## 8

# Conclusion

In the prologue of the report *Basta Ya! Colombia: Memories of War and Dignity*, a memorial to hundred of thousands of victims of over 50 years of civil war in Colombia, Gonzalo Sánchez, the Director of the National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH) – the agency with the legal mandate to produce the report – noted:

For decades the victims were ignored in the face of discourses that legitimized the war, which at times vaguely recognized them under the generic label of the civilian population, and, even worse, pejoratively described them as the object of “collateral damage”. From this perspective, they have been considered as residual effects of war and not as the nucleus of the efforts to regulate it (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2013, p. 17).

With *Basta Ya!*, plus over 20 reports of emblematic cases produced by the CNMH over the past 10 years, the take off of an increasingly stronger movement for historical memory, and the long-awaited Victims Law of 2011, Colombia began to seriously recognize victims for what they are: victims of a war waged, to a large extent, against civilians. As historian Daniel Pécaut crystallized in the title of a collection of some of his most influential essays on the Colombian conflict, this has been, first and foremost, *Una guerra contra la sociedad* (A war against society) (Pécaut, 2001). In fact, from at least 220.000 deaths reported between 1958 and 2012, 80% were unarmed civilians (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2013).

I can only applaud this recognition and celebrate the transformation that it has triggered in a country where large portions of society remained, for many years, passive, if not indifferent, to what was going on. Nevertheless, with this dissertation, I have aimed to push even further. I have called for the recognition of victims not only as victims – which they certainly are – but also as agents of social and political change.

## Relevance within Academia

For those who live in warzones, life continues in spite of violence. In protracted conflicts, such as the Colombian, war becomes the normal course of things rather than a state of exception for many. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that victims carry on with their lives and, to navigate war, make choices to avoid, prevent or at least mitigate violence.

In this study, far from complete free will, civilians have been presented as tactical agents that make decisions and take action within the opportunities and constraints defined by war. As should be apparent by now, this set of opportunities and constraints differs significantly from those of peacetime and even from those found in other repression-ridden contexts. While survival is not necessarily the only consideration driving civilian choices, when victimization becomes a latent possibility it does gain centrality in almost any decision making calculus. Even if they care for things that go beyond their security and that of their beloved ones, they are clear that survival is a first order condition for any other life projects they might have. This makes the study of civilian choice in general, and of civilian-self protection strategies in particular, of special relevance in any effort to understand how war operates on the ground.

Civilians choices are of critical importance as they have the (sometimes surprising) power to shape the way armed groups' behave and the strategic decisions they make, affecting dynamics and processes that define how wars unfold. The type of violence that armed groups exercise, for example, depends on civilians decisions to provide them with information (Kalyvas, 2006); the system of rule that armed groups establish in the territories they control depends on communities willingness (and capacity) to resist (Arjona, 2016b, 2015). In fact, the mere possibility of civil war occurrence, ultimately, depends on civilian choices. If civilians are unwilling to create and/or to join an armed faction to challenge the state, the chances of seeing civil strife are minimal.

Here I have focused on one of these choices: civilian noncooperation. I have sought to bring conceptual clarity to a phenomenon that, despite of being highly consequential for the life of many living in warzones and of having the power to shape the trajectories and outcomes of war, is still poorly understood. I have defined noncooperation as part of a broader menu of responses available to civilians and have proposed a typology that captures one relevant dimension of variation: the degree of confrontation involved. Noncooperation campaigns are proposed as both a form of contentious politics and as a subset of self-protection strategies. As such, unarmed organized civilians are here presented as agents that make claims on armed actors bearing on the latter's strategic interests, leading to sustained coordinated efforts on behalf of civilians' interest of protection from violence and its effects.

While studying the trajectories and outcomes of noncooperation is also of special relevance for the advancement of a research program on the subject, in this dissertation I have focused on explaining and theorizing emergence. I have offered a theory to explain when and where civilians are more likely to engage in noncooperation. To explain the process by which noncooperation campaigns emerge, I have identified a set of conditions, stemming both from localized war dynamics and the social context in which communities are embedded, as well as a limited number of cognitive and relational mechanisms that trigger action. I have worked with a purposively selected set of cases within a focused and structured comparative research design involving within-case analysis of campaigns of noncooperation, cross-case comparisons of campaigns representing each of there three types in the typology, and paired comparisons of positive and control observations. This cluster of cases, bearing on the fundamental logic of the comparative method and the potential outcomes framework, and following the most recent advancements in process tracing, provide confidence in my findings.

Noncooperation is surely not the most common among civilians choices. Cooperation and displacement are much more recurrent. Nonetheless, it is part of the menu of responses that

civilians have at hand to respond to armed groups' pressures. As such, studying it *vis á vis* other responses would lead to a more sophisticated apprehension of civilian agency in the context of civil war, which is vital for refining and extending existing theories of civil war as well as for the development of new ones. As Arjona, (2014) rightly put it, civilian choices feature in many explanations of conflict processes and several of our theories, both about macro outcomes and micro dynamics, make (usually implicit) assumptions about civilian behavior. To understand better why some people flee, one needs to understand why some stay behind. To understand better why some people cooperate, one needs to understand why some actively refuse to provide any form of support. To understand why some communities form militias to protect themselves, one should understand why others, while also opting for community self protection strategies, stick to violent methods.

Studying nonviolent forms of noncooperation as a self-protection strategy is, however, of great relevance as a subject of its own. As Kaplan, (2013a) has argued, civilians are better positioned than perhaps any other actors (including international organizations tasked with the protection of civilians) to nudge armed groups in changing how they conceive of using violence. They commonly have a sort of local knowledge and information that is rarely available to external actors and that can prove vital for the task of protecting themselves (Baines and Paddon, 2012). Moreover, they often have close social ties with armed combatants, many times as neighbors and relatives, which puts them in a position that can facilitate the task of persuasion by leveraging moral and emotional forces.

Among the resources unarmed civilians have available at hand to persuade armed groups to desist from violence, Kaplan, (2017) has recently highlighted the use of rhetorical traps – publicly made claims that leverage ideological and moral commitments of armed groups. If this is true for civilians in general, it is more so for those who manage to organize into noncooperation campaigns. Making use of the power of collective action and brokering with several actors external to their community, the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (PCSJA) has shown an enormous potential to make public claims both nationally and internationally to impose costs on armed groups. Similarly, by negotiating mechanisms with armed groups to advance a noncooperation campaign, the Peasant Worker Association of the Carare River (ATCC) has not only led to a measurable reduction of violence against civilians (Kaplan, 2013b), but has also facilitated the demobilization of combatants operating in the area (Mouly, Hernandez Delgado, and Gimenez, 2017). Moreover, building on the collective action capacity gained through these campaigns, noncooperators can become central figures in local grassroots peacebuilding efforts, even when national peace is not in the horizon. In San Carlos, for example, the organizers of Youth Project of Peace (Joppaz), built on the legitimacy gained through their noncooperation campaign to take into their own hands the task of post-conflict reconstruction in areas as key as locating the disappeared, facilitating returns of displaced population, and stimulating reconciliation among victims and victimizers (Masullo, 2018).

Jentzsch, (2014) has rightly noted that much of the research on armed conflict has focused on the interactions between state forces and insurgents, overlooking what she called “third actors”. While in her work these “third actors” are militias, paramilitaries, and self-defense forces, I show that these can also be civilians engaged in nonviolent noncooperation. As the cases explored here testify, noncooperators develop new collective identities and activate new boundaries. In doing

so, they become social and political actors during war, leaving vital community-level legacies in terms of, for example, self-governance. Being able to recognize the existence of actors and what they did during war is not only a moral duty (central to the task of reconstructing the memory of victims), but also a springboard to a better understanding of crucial dynamics of war and its social legacies.

## The Road Ahead

As much as I am satisfied with what this study had accomplished, I am aware of its limitations. These shortcomings help define the route ahead to move towards a more complete theory of civilian noncooperation. Before closing this dissertation by identifying what I think are some of the main policy implications of this study, I highlight some of the questions that were left unanswered and that call for more research.

### Explaining Form of Noncooperation

The main missing piece is an explanation of the variation in form. In the context of my research design the cross-case comparisons had the objective to test whether the elements that I was finding in one case representing one type of noncooperation were also present in other cases representing other types. Proceeding in this way has allowed me to identify the conditions and mechanism that travel across cases. Consequently, these conditions and mechanisms, free of the idiosyncrasies of each case, became part of the theory, not as covering laws, but as elements that recur despite of differences. While this way of approaching the cross-case comparison increases the confidence in my findings, I reckon that it also makes apparent a set of questions of particular importance that need to be addressed for reaching a comprehensive understanding of the emergence of noncooperation.

*Why communities, facing incentives to engage in noncooperation and having the capacity to coordinate action, engage in more or less confrontational forms of noncooperation?*

*Why do we see some communities disguising their actions, others negotiating the workings of their campaign with armed actors, and others unilaterally declaring noncooperation?*

This study has featured three campaigns, in three different regions of Colombia, which featured different armed organization and to which war “arrived” in different points in time. Despite these differences, and the many idiosyncratic features of each of the singular processes that accounted for in each of the case studies, when looking across cases the emergence of noncooperation presented important similarities. All of them emerged when territorial control was shifting, when violence against civilians has (therefore) recently peaked, and when civilians perceived this violence as unavoidable. These localized conditions shaped the evolution of a desire for noncooperation. Moreover, all three communities were able to act collectively upon this desire as they tapped into mobilizing resources that were available in their localities thanks to a combination of a prior history of mobilization and the support of actors from outside the community.

The mechanisms that were activated by these factors and that ultimately triggered collective action were also constant across each of the three campaigns. For example, in all three campaigns

the changing patterns of violence pushed villagers to update the beliefs they held about armed groups. This cognitive mechanism pushed civilians away from cooperating and created an opening for noncooperation. Similarly, available mobilizing resources did not translate in collective action capacity automatically. In each of the three campaigns relational mechanisms were needed to capitalize on this resources; social appropriation of existing associational spaces and brokerage to bring in external actors made possible the move from desire to action.

Despite these surprising similarities in the processes of emergence, each of the three communities engaged in different types of noncooperation, varying from little to direct confrontation with armed organizations. What explains this variation? I contend that this a different research question and that we should not expect that the elements that explain emergence also explain form. Providing a definitive and detailed answer to the puzzle of form goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, as it is part of the larger project of which this study is part, I have also collected and (preliminarily) analyzed data to this end. In what follows I briefly present three factors that might help us answering this question. While none of them alone provides a definitive answer, it is possible that combination of them will do.

The first factor that I have identified as potentially shaping the form of noncooperation is the degree of organizational capacity. The more collective action capacity a community has, the more confrontational the campaign is likely to be. As I have shown, all three campaigns in this study had enough capacity to mount noncooperation. However, they also exhibited considerable variation in the degree of organizational capacity. This variation maps more or less well into the variation in form that we observe in a way that is in line with the implications of this argument. Joppaz, the campaign with the lower degree of collective action capacity engaged in an oblique campaign, whereas the ATCC and the PCSJA, with a considerably higher degree of organizational capacity engaged in pacted and unilateral campaigns respectively. To be sure, the strong leadership villagers from La India counted on and the strong support peasants from San José harnessed from external actors allowed them to envision and create a more comprehensive and sophisticated campaign of noncooperation. There is no doubt that organizing a Board to constantly negotiate with armed groups as in the ATCC case, or organizing a system of fair trade or alternative education to ensure autonomy as in the PCSJA case demand higher organizational capacity than what the youth in Joppaz required to organize their evening activities. However, this argument alone cannot explain the full range of variation that we observe. The ATCC and the PCSJA are two communities with comparably high levels of organizational capacity which, nonetheless, engaged in two different forms of noncooperation that exhibit different degrees of confrontation.

A second fact to be considered is the response villagers (leaders, organizers) expect from armed groups to their decision to engage in noncooperation. Noncooperators are aware of the varying risk involved in different forms of action and are likely to adjust their repertoire of action in light of the response they anticipate from armed organizations. The higher the degree of repressive violence from armed groups organizers expect, the less confrontational the campaign is likely to be. After all, noncooperation is, to a large degree, a self-protection strategy.

This line of argument helps explain (at least in part) the choice of Joppaz for an oblique campaign and (although to a lesser extent) of the ATCC for a pacted campaign. Organizers of Joppaz were explicit in noting that their choice for what they referred to as “dissimulated

activities” was to avoid spurring more violence from armed groups. Camila, one of the key actors in the campaign, noted that they came to the realization that if the activities were not directly related to the dynamics of the conflict, the armed groups would not think that it was something against them or a way to break the rules they had imposed.<sup>1</sup> When inquiring about this in La India, none of the leaders was as explicit as Camila was. However, when delving deeper into the topic of “dialogue”, many informants stressed that having a constant channel of communication was a form to contain armed groups’ violence or, at least, to constantly gauge what their potential reaction could be. In this regard Cristian noted that if the ATCC would have proceeded unilaterally, then armed groups could have done the same in their use of violence.<sup>2</sup>

These testimonies clearly reveal that organizers did factor the response they expected from armed groups into their choice of what type of campaign to launch. However, this second factor cannot explain the PCSJA’s choice for a unilateral form of noncooperation. The implication of the argument would be that organizers of the Peace Community opted for a highly confrontational campaign because they had some level of confidence that armed groups would respect their declaration of neutrality. My interviews (and the actual response of armed groups) clearly disprove this. While organizers were of course hoping that armed groups would respect their choice, they were well aware of how determined (and capable) armed groups (in particular the arriving paramilitaries) were to use violence to clear the area of disloyal peasants. Leaders (and supporting actors) highlighted that from the beginning they were aware that it could take some time before armed groups would respect their campaign. Dramatically proving leaders right, most of the violence against members of the Peace Community came in the short period of time following the unilateral declaration of noncooperation. If the expected response were the sole force shaping the form of noncooperation, we should have observed a considerably less confrontational campaign in San José.

The third and last factor that I have identified is of an ideational nature. While in the context of civil war risk assessments become a central driver in civilian decision making, civilian choice does not only follow strategic reasoning. As Steele, (2017, Chap. 2) has noted in her study of wartime migration, civilian choices are also a function of political preferences and loyalties. In line with this insight, I contend that ideational factors also have an independent role in shaping civilians’ choice of repertoire of action. This both in the choice for nonviolent forms of action, as well as in terms of the degree of confrontation involved.<sup>3</sup>

In line with Gutierrez and Wood’s (2014) definition of ideology,<sup>4</sup> I found that ideology shaped the *form* in which villagers in all three campaigns sought to achieve their goals. Normative commitments to nonviolence, coming from within and from outside the community (especially through the Church, Catholic in San José and San Carlos and Adventist in La India ), pushed civilians towards a preference for non-violent forms of action. Moreover, the exposure of villagers to revolutionary, oppositional ideologies, linked to the influence of social movements, political parties, trade unions and even armed groups that have operated in the area, influenced the level

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<sup>1</sup>Interview ID. 77, August 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Interview ID. 64, August 2015.

<sup>3</sup>For a detailed treatment of this argument, see Masullo, (2017a). For an account of ideational explanations in which ideas have an independent role, see Jacobs, (2014).

<sup>4</sup>The authors define ideology as “A set of more or less systematic ideas that identify a constituency, the challenges the group confronts, the objectives to pursue on behalf of that group, and a (perhaps vague) program of action. Moreover, some ideologies prescribe strategies and institutions for the realization of those objectives.” (Gutierrez Sanín and Wood, 2014, p. 214).

of confrontation involved in the campaign.

### **Staying vs Leaving**

With very few exceptions, such as the Communities of Populations in Resistance (CPRs) in Guatemala or the Cacarica Communities in Colombia that have engaged in noncooperation while in displacement, staying put is a first order condition for the emergence of noncooperation. In this study I sought to understand the choices made by those who stayed behind, bracketing the choice between staying and leaving. Although I asked my informants about why they decided to stay when most of their neighbors and relatives were fleeing (recall, for example, that about 75% of the population of San Carlos had left by the moment that Joppaz emerged), I did not work with those who left as to have any form leverage into the choice. In other words, my sample constituted those who stayed. Others who have studied the behavior of those who stay have proceeded in similar ways, and the same goes more most studies on displacement. Therefore, there is still much to learn about this crucial decision. While the *power of staying put* is part of the magic of noncooperation, understanding better this choice and theorizing it would only complement the proposed theory and help to better specify it. This becomes even more important if one considers that the war conditions that I identified as shaping the evolution of a desire for noncooperation are, in many respects, similar to those Steele, (2017) identified prompting collective displacement.

### **Civilian–Combatant Dynamic Interactions**

Second, the strategic approach I sought to use in this study did much of its work when it came to understanding the interdependent decisions of civilians as they interact *between* them and with actors operating in their localities. In Chapter 6, for example, I detailed how more villagers joined the ATCC campaign as they saw that others were doing so, finding the assurance needed for risky collective action in the safety of numbers. Similarly, in Chapter 7, I detail how organizers of the Joppaz campaign began organizing the activities in the “safety” of the street where they lived and where they knew that neighbors would participate. They did so with the aim of signalling residents of other streets that the campaign could be successful, as well as to gauge the intentions of others with whom they had less interaction. The first evenings were vital for them to generate the needed expectations regarding others willingness to participate before expanding the campaign to other streets in the municipal center.

Moreover, the relational mechanisms that connect the availability of associational spaces and of leadership to capacity for collective action operated by facilitating coordination among civilians and was central to allow them converge on one course of action, noncooperation. For example, the way civilians socially appropriated the Church and repurposed their job in their communities to support noncooperation was vital, in different ways, for the emergence of noncooperation in all three campaigns.

Nevertheless, the dynamic interaction between civilians and armed groups still has room for development in the theory. As it stands now, it is clear that the best response of civilians depends on how armed groups behave. In fact, the theory is built on the idea that changes in war dynamics, lead to alternations in the way armed groups behave towards civilians which, in turn, create incentives for civilians to withdraw their support or move away from inaction.

However, the analysis does not get back to armed groups in the sense that I have not formally incorporated how civilian choices – for example their choice for one for of noncooperation over the other – depend on the what they expect the response of armed actors would be. While I do not expect that this would change the theory substantially, doing so would surely enrich the explanation of the process by which noncooperation unfolds and would allow to include more *opportunity* in a story that is heavier on *constraints*.

### Theorizing Mechanisms

Third, I believe that analytical narrative of the process accomplishes its goal of presenting an explanation of noncooperation that is attentive both to conditions and mechanisms. Without the conditions identified, it would not be possible to understand what triggers the mechanisms that ultimately lead to noncooperation. Likewise, without the specified mechanisms, the narrative would be poor and little analytic, as it would be to the imagination of the reader to give logic content to the arrows that connect the boxes. Nevertheless, I reckon that there is still work to do on the side of the mechanisms. One the one hand, as it stands now, the narrative theorizes conditions and uses mechanisms to make sense of how these conditions are linked to the outcome of interest. This is fine as, indeed, this is what mechanisms do in a theory. However, the theory could gain from theorizing also which mechanism is more likely to be activated and when, as other mechanism-based explanation do in similar settings (e.g., Petersen, 2001). One the other hand, my account of mechanisms can also improve by specifying how the identified mechanisms are sequentially ordered in the unfolding of the process by which noncooperation emerges.

The work ahead reveals something that is common to several studies relying on process tracing: conclusive process tracing is good, but not all good process tracing is conclusive (Bennett and Checkel, 2014b, pp. 30-31). This stems not only from the fact that the approach is very demanding in terms of gathering data, but also from the fact that it largely proceeds by updating confidence in the explanation in the light of new evidence. For example, new evidence is likely to become available, especially given the new conjuncture that will provide more access to the armed groups' side of the story, opening a door to strengthening the that part of the strategic interaction. All in all, this study, more than a "gladiator style of analysis, where one perspective goes forth and slays all others" (Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009, p. 721), is a version of (hopefully good) inconclusive process tracing. I believe that the lacking elements identified in this last section, rather than undercutting my argument, show clear avenues on how we can work towards conclusiveness.

### Relevance beyond Academia

The study of noncooperation is not only relevant from a scholarly point of view. Noncooperation gives life to social processes that are likely to be of especial relevance for domestic and international interventions *during* and *after* war. Oxfam GB's Humanitarian Protection Adviser, Andrew Bonwick, (2006), once noted that support from international actors can be done well only by understanding the factors that shape the way civilians behave in war and made explicit reference to campaigns that fall within what here I have termed civilian noncooperation. What has been accomplished in this study, and what lays ahead in a research agenda on noncooperation in

particular and on civilian agency in general, would certainly help us move towards the more sophisticated knowledge that organizations interested in humanizing and or ending war are calling for.

Learning about civilian noncooperation in a way that allows us not only to recognize the phenomenon on the ground but that is also able to capture important analytical distinctions (e.g., individual v. collective, violent v. nonviolent, direct v. indirect) could certainly be of help for external actors aiming at protecting civilians in war. It could serve, for example, as a more general guide for the difficult task of identifying which local initiatives to support and how to best do so. This knowledge can be central for avoiding compromising the credibility of their organizations and/or going against their institutional fundamental principles. Moreover, and perhaps most important, this knowledge could be the key for not undermining community-initiated efforts or putting civilians at more risk when trying to support existing efforts. The moral hazards involved in supporting these initiatives from the outside are many and very complex, thus they should not be underestimated.

Identifying and categorizing the different forms that noncooperation takes on the ground (e.g., the types identified in the proposed typology) could also significantly strengthen the existing civilian protection framework. Noncooperators face many obstacles in initiating and maintaining their campaigns, let alone in getting armed groups to respect their choice – even in campaigns of brokered noncooperation. As some of the cases explored here neatly illustrate, support from external actors can prove decisive for the emergence of noncooperation, as they can provide communities with the mobilizing resources they may lack. Also, by giving visibility and demanding victimizers' accountability, they can raise the public relations and reputational costs to armed groups. Raul, an elder member of the PCSJA, is recognizant of this: “Without those people [international accompaniment] we are nothing. They [armed groups] would just kill us. Even they have said it: 'we respect the community because of those blondies [referring to foreigners]'. As soon as they see them, they leave.”<sup>5</sup>

However, to do this well, external actors need to be able to identify and understand the type of campaigns they are willing to support. For example, raising the visibility and profile of unilateral forms of noncooperation can be an effective strategy. A strong international network of support has allowed the PCSJA to denounce the crimes against them beyond borders, leading to especially important outcomes.

While this has worked well with unilateral campaigns of noncooperation, such as the PCSJA and the Cacarica communities in Colombia, it can prove deadly for oblique, and even brokered, forms of noncooperation. Visibility might be precisely something that oblique noncooperators are seeking to avoid, as we saw in the Joppaz. Likewise, international denunciation can lead to the break up of the type of agreements that civilians reach with local armed groups. For example, villagers of the ATCC explicitly noted that to maintain fluid dialogue with armed groups and to have them respect the agreements reached, it was vital to keep international denunciation at the minimum. They learnt this the hard way: a few years after launching their campaign, the BBC arrived in their village to shoot an international documentary about violence in region, zooming in on the ATCC experience. The paramilitaries responded with increased coercion, killing three of the main leaders of the Association and the journalist in charge of the documentary. Although

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<sup>5</sup>Interview ID. 13, March 2014.

interpretations vary, I was told that they felt that this form of denunciation was not part of what they had negotiated with civilians in the first place.

Understanding better how civilian noncooperation works is also relevant for negotiating inclusive peace agreements. If noncooperation campaigns are not identified at all or are poorly understood, negotiation teams are likely to exclude noncooperators from the process, overlooking the opportunities they may offer and the obstacles they may suppose. In my last visit to La India (September 2015), several villagers from the ATCC were asking themselves why the teams that recently signed the peace agreement in Havana between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) did not involve them actively in the process. After 30 years of experience negotiating local forms of peace with paramilitaries, militaries and guerrillas, they had good reasons to believe that they had something to say and contribute.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, some leaders of the PCSJA noted that even if they were addressed as victims within the framework of the negotiations, none of the sides really understood the point that they were a self-governing community, with a collective identity, that had created order and peace in a given territory for several years.

Identifying variation in form is also of relevance in this regard. Brokered forms of noncooperation are more likely to facilitate dialogue and mediation with armed groups for peace negotiations than unilateral forms that imply a more confrontational interaction or oblique that avoid engaging armed groups. Understanding better the different ways in which local peace can interact with national peace is a task we still have at hand (Hancock and Mitchell, 2012). Learning more about civilian noncooperation, in a way that recognizes the new identities, capacities and cleavages that war creates at the local level, is a way to move forward in this direction. It has been noted that understandings of war that take only into account interactions between states and insurgents, ignoring “third actors”, can lead to incomplete peace agreements (overlooking, for example, militias) (Jentzsch, 2014). Here I stress that these understandings of war, when they fail to recognize the collective roles that civilians take during war and the legacies they leave, are also likely to lead to incomplete peace agreements.

Finally, a better understanding of noncooperation and what it entails might prove useful for developing targeted post-conflict reconstruction and peace building policies and programs. As Barter, (2014, p. 13) put it, “the potential for civilians to build peace will be in large part determined by their choices in war”. Experiences of brokered noncooperation, for example, have already proved successful at facilitating the de-mobilization and re-integration of combatants into the society (see Mouly, Hernandez Delgado, and Gimenez, 2017). Similarly, experiences of oblique noncooperation have also shown that they have the potential to forge new local leadership with the capacity and legitimacy to engage in effective grassroots peace building efforts (Masullo, 2018).

The experience of the CPRs in Guatemala (recall one of the vignettes with which I opened this dissertation) after the Peace Accords in 1996 have shown both the opportunities that noncooperation experiences can offer for post-war reconstruction, as well as the risks of undermining these identities and capabilities if ignored. While the CPRs have played an integral role in Guatemala’s post-war reconstruction (Sanford, 2006), the educational reform that followed the peace agreement disrupted the grassroots educational process that these communities developed

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<sup>6</sup>See also, Masullo, (2015, pp. 75-78).

during war (Veliz, 2013). This could happen in Colombia too, if efforts to build alternative education systems, forms of working the land, and trading the produce that have been developed in some of the most comprehensive campaigns of noncooperation that I had identified are not recognized and respected by the state in its effort to bring order all around the country.

Moreover, what noncooperators are likely to demand and expect from these policies and programs is likely to differ from those of, for example, displaced populations or collaborators. Not being able to identify noncooperation campaigns on the ground may leave them excluded from policies aimed at helping those who were affected by war. For example, victim reparation efforts in post-conflict situations tend to focus on the most visible and better understood forms of victimization, such as lethal violence and displacement. Noncooperators in Colombia, such as those from the Peasant Association of the Atrato (ACAT) and the few residents of the municipality of San Carlos that avoided displacement and engaged in oblique noncooperation have stressed that because they never displaced, they have not been eligible for most of the assistance programs that the state is putting forward for the reparation of war victims. “We are known as the ‘resisters’ because we never left, and there is nothing out there for the ‘resisters’” noted an active participant of the Joppaz campaign in my last visit to San Carlos.<sup>7</sup>

Even if formally dealing with the same people, noncooperation, as many other forms of contentious politics, gives rise to new collective identities, new alliances, new cleavages and new oppositions. This transforms the positioning of actors within the political and social arenas in ways that are likely to endure over time. These new constellations of collective actors, that become centers of political and social power, are to be recognized not only as people engaged in the urgent task of self-protection during war, but also as actors that shape the new social and political order that is to emerge in the aftermath of war. Learning more about noncooperation, and recognizing it as a phenomenon that emerged from war and that leave legacies, will be key for the effective materialization of what Sergio Jaramillo, Colombia’s High Commissioner of Peace, defined and promoted as “territorial peace”.<sup>8</sup>

By ignoring what civilians do during war time and the ways in which this shapes their lives, we are not only hindering the advancement of our understanding of civil war processes, but also preventing our work to inform other actors to assist civilians caught in war more effectively, negotiate more inclusive peace agreements, and build stronger and durable post-conflict orders. After spending months living with villagers that have been engaged in noncooperation for long periods of time, some for over decades, I leave this project with no doubt that noncooperation is part of what Nordstrom, (1997) considers the most political decisions that communities make in war and which people will have to live with in the aftermath of violence. Therefore, its relevance cannot be confined to the realm of academia.

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<sup>7</sup>Author’s Field Notes, August 2015.

<sup>8</sup>On March 13th 2013, Sergio Jaramillo gave a speech at Harvard University called “Territorial Peace”. An edited version of the speech is available online: [<http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/images/events/15-05-12-Colombian-Peace-Event/4-Territorial-Peace-in-Colombia—High-Commissioner-for-Peace.pdf>]



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