The Political Economy of Conflict and DDR in Meta, Colombia, and the Employment Life Cycle of Ex-Combatants

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Abstract

The research explores the transition from war to peace in the Colombian region of Meta, through the parallel analysis of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process, and of the individual combatants' path from recruitment to reintegration. The overall research goal is to account for the multifaceted nature of DDR within the transition from war to peace and to untangle DDR implications both in the short term for the life of ex-combatants and in the long term with regard to the implications for state formation and peacebuilding processes.

The thesis is the product of complementing research components with intertwined levels of analysis. Conceptually, the research proposes a critical read of the DDR role in war to peace transition contexts. It advances an alternative understanding of war to peace transition and of DDR based on political economy factors to explain the complexity of war mobilization and demobilization.

Secondly, through a case study, the research analyses the contemporary DDR processes in Meta in the 2000s, which include the collective demobilization of the paramilitary federation of the AUC and the individual DDR program that targeted the left-wing rebel groups of the FARC and of the ELN. The DDR analysis is complemented by an in-depth historical political economy analysis of the conflict in Meta, which traces the conflict factors that explain the rise of conflictive dynamics and ensuing formation of non-state armed groups in this region.

Last, an empirical analysis addresses the relationship between employment and conflict through the analysis of life cycles of ex-combatants. The research approaches individuals' decisions to mobilize for war and demobilize from war, within a framework of employment-seeking behaviour. It posits that the search for employment and livelihoods needs are a crucial driver for joining a non-state armed group and that employment is a key feature of a reintegration path.

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Foreword

In a professional life, the opportunity to put into words personal reflections about a project that ends, and express the gratitude to close people that contributed to it, is a rare one. And a privilege. The end of a long cycle like this doctoral program warrants a moment to lean back and reflect, broadly. It has been a privilege and a fortune to be able to deeply study and dedicate myself to this intellectual project. Ever since that fourth-grade project on the Italian flood-affected region of Polesine, the quest to understand human actions and behaviours as they form political, social and economic patterns has followed me everyday.

At 38, I am intellectually indebted to a quarter century of reading. The combination of "twenty-two little characters on a piece of paper", as Italo Calvino both poetically and brutally put it, opens the door to our imagination and construction. Intellectually, this dissertation has its roots in the work of a vast array of individuals, including Richard Overy, Cynthia Arnson and William I. Zartman, Paul Ginsborg, Ludovico Ariosto, Mary Ann Heiss, Luigi Pintor, Mia Bloom, Maurizio Valenzi, Plutarco, and a few others. Their work has been a model to excel and a source of inspiration. While I do not believe in coincidences, the end of this dissertation comes at the time when my precious books from the various authors above and others finally find a 'home', after 14 years of peregrination around the world.

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Jennifer. Her moral support, presence and kindness mean everything to me. I have the most fulfilling life I could have hoped for, and, yet, I constantly have to remind myself of it. I want to first thank Jonathan Goodhand, the supervisor of this research. His support as an intellectual mentor and as a friend has been total. I am grateful for what he has taught me, and the quality of this work reflects the quality of his advice and guidance.

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Last but not least, I of course thank my parents, Romolo and Deberah, with all my heart. They have always supported me, encouraged me to do better, and gave me the means to shape my mind set out upon my horizon. I also want to thank my parents in law, my second family, as I call it. Anne and Peter have constantly showed sincere interest in my work. A final note of thank to Valerio F., whose initial comment at my enrolment ("You will finish before turning forty") gave me a practical deadline and contributed to me staying in course. Final and most important thought goes to Stefano, my son.

List of Acronyms

ACC	Peasant Self Defences of Casanare (*Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare*)
ACCU	Peasant Self Defence of Córdoba and Urabá (*Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá*)
ACMV	Peasant Self Defences of Meta and Vichada (*Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta y Vichada*)
ACR	Colombian Agency for Reintegration (*Agencia Colombiana Para la Reintegración*)
ADO	Workers' Self-Defence (*Autodefensa Obrera*)
AUC	United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*)
BACRIM	New Criminal Groups (*Bandas Criminales Emergentes*)
CODA	Committee for the Laying Down of Weapons (*Comité Operativo Para la Dejación de Armas*)
CONPES	Colombian National Council of Economic and Social Policy (*Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social*)
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ELN	National Liberation Army (*Ejercito de Liberación Nacional*)
EPL	People's Liberation Army (*Ejercito Popular de Liberación*)
ERPAC	People's Revolutionary Counterinsurgent Army of Colombia (*Ejercito Revolucionario Popular Antisubversivo de Colombia*)
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*)
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejercito del Pueblo*)
FIP	*Fundación Ideas para la Paz*
IDPs	internally displaced persons
ISM	interim stabilization measures
JAC	District Council (*Junta de Acción Comunal*)
LAO	limited access order
M-19	Movement of April 19 (*Movimiento 19 de Abril*)
MAPP-OEA	Support Mission to the Peace Process of the Organization of American States (*Misión de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz – Organización de Estados Americanos*)
MAQL	Quintín Lame Armed Movement (*Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame*)
MOEC	Workers', Students' and Peasants' Movement (*Movimiento Obrero Estudiantil Campesino*)
PAHD	Humanitarian Assistance Program for the Demobilized (*Programa de Asistencia Humanitaria al Desmovilizado*)
PC-ML	Marxist Leninist Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Marxista Leninista*)

PEA	political economy analysis
PRT	Revolutionary Workers Party (*Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores*)
PRVC	Program for Reincorporation into Civilian Life (*Programa de Reincorporación a la Vida Civil*)
SENA	National Training Service (*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*)
SSR	security sector reform
UN	United Nations
UN-IDDRS	United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
UP	Patriotic Union (*Unión Patriótica*)
UTC	Unit of combat (*Unidad Táctica de Combate*)
XCs	ex-combatants

Introduction

A vignette from the field. In December 2012, three months after I started this doctoral program, I visited the region of Meta, Colombia, for the first time. As a social development analyst at the World Bank, I had made repeated trips to the country in support of development programs to ease the country's transition from war to peace. This time, I was involved in a training organized by the Colombian agency in charge of ex-combatants' reintegration (*Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración*, ACR). On the very first day, during a welcoming dinner for training's participants, I sat next to Cesar,[1] a 45-year old ex-combatant from the then Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC),[2] who had escaped from the group a few years prior.

Cesar was one of those men with his back straight, intense eyes and dense moustache, his voice tone confident and calm. "My father was a communist, you know", he started; to which I replied that mine was too. We established common ground between a professional revolutionary and a World Bank analyst that put us on an equal footing – the prelude of a frank and intense discussion. Cesar picked up that I could empathize with what he was going to tell me.

From humble peasant origins, Cesar grew up in a background of rural warfare, the fight for land and chronic poverty. He came from and operated in the peripheral sub-region of the Llanos – a vast plain of tropical grasslands occupying most of the south and east of Colombia. Part of the Eastern Plains, the administrative region of Meta is a 'frontier' territory, where colonization and settlement are still ongoing processes today. Characterized by inhospitable territory, lack of infrastructure, and weak state penetration, Meta suffered from land exploitation by powerful elites, unequal property structure and ensuing inequality and armed mobilization.

A strong communist upbringing and the death of his father drew Cesar into the FARC in the early 1980s. While he was a teenager, the FARC started its country-wide expansion, turning from a peripheral guerrilla movement into the powerful "People's Army." He spent the following nearly three decades in the group, performing military roles, but especially

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[1] Throughout this dissertation, real names of ex-combatant interviewees were changed with the purpose of protecting their identity.

[2] Since the November 2016 final peace agreement between the government of Colombia and the FARC, the latter has reconstituted itself into a political party with the same acronym FARC, now standing for Alternative Revolutionary Force of Common (*Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común*). Throughout this research, I will refer to FARC by the old guerrilla group's name.

conducting political mobilization among the peasantry. Cesar fully embraced the revolutionary cause and the communist ideology, which – he admitted during the interview – did not end with his demobilization.

After twenty-seven years of continuous FARC membership, Cesar took advantage of the Colombian government's offer to demobilize and reintegrate FARC members who opted for desertion. Dissecting Cesar's decision to betray the group that had constituted his entire existence is the unanswered question of this thesis. From that moment on, my work was driven by the awareness that the factors for reintegration are not only related to the quest for policy solutions, but they are intrinsically rooted in the individual and organizational pathways of men, women and armed actors through war, and in the structural factors for conflict.

Cesar's story is the point of departure and of arrival of this research. His trajectory highlighted the tight relationship between an individual path through war and peace, and the macro contextual process of permanent war in the region and at the national level. Cesar came from nothing, grew up in an area of guerrilla presence, with persistent inequality and marginalization, and statelessness – a common story among Colombian landless peasants. His life trajectory between war and peace underlines the variation and the extreme complexity of war and peace processes, and cements the refusal for single cause explanations.

I was fully absorbed by his story. After a two-hour conversation with him, I raised my head. Most people in the local restaurant were gone and my preconceived notions about what it takes for veterans to reintegrate into society were shaken, as I had learned a new level of complexity. Up to that point, as a practitioner in the peacebuilding business, my professional preoccupations concerned the identification of clear problems and the search for policy solutions.

War-to-peace and DDR dilemmas. At the outset of this research I was interested in finding an answer to the fundamental policy question about Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): 'What factors account for ex-combatants' successful reintegration into society?'. Policy-makers are concerned with the identification of these factors, so they can devise measures (i.e. policies and programs) that can contribute to successful reintegration. The encounter with Cesar and the progression of this research expanded my intellectual horizon to a more sophisticated analysis. The answers I sought laid in the exploration of the war to peace complexity, through political economy analysis.

Thus, the present research strives to understand the complexity of armed conflict at the sub-regional level, and the implications for more contextually attuned policy responses, especially those that concern DDR. With this overarching goal, the research aims to provide a comprehensive qualitative analysis of a fragile war to peace transition in the region of Meta, Colombia. This is done through a multi-level (individual, structural, and organizational) and cross-temporal (before, during and after conflict) analysis.

The research explores the non-linear process of transition from war to peace, firstly by looking at the individual paths of ex-combatants from recruitment to membership in an armed group to reintegration; secondly, by placing these individual trajectories within an organisational framework linked to their roles within rebel groups; and thirdly locating them within a wider structural context at the regional and national levels, including the DDR process. Ultimately, Cesar's individual trajectory from recruitment into the FARC, to life in the group, and to desertion embodies the ambivalence and variation of structural transition from war to peace.[3]

This research understands war-to-peace transitions, less a smooth linear movement from violence to order, than a convoluted, nonlinear and highly contested and conflictual process, in which the new rules of the game are negotiated by competing elites. Transitions can be understood as historical processes in which societies seek to improve their material condition and strengthen and/or consolidate their power against external enemies and internal competitors (Tilly, 1990).

War and peace are not mutually exclusive, or binary conditions; they frequently co-exist and overlap. This is true both at the individual level – where the lives of the ex-combatants continue to be shaped by their wartime experiences, long after the signing of a peace accord. And at the macro level, structures and institutions shaped by war persist into the peacetime. As Keen (2000) reminds us, war is not (solely) the experience of violence, nor is peace experienced as the total absence of violence.

The challenges associated with either building or consolidating peace in the aftermath of armed conflict have received increasing attention in the academic and policy communities. A new policy consensus in the form of 'liberal peacebuilding' has emerged about the need to promote peace through liberal democracy and market sovereignty. This can be understood

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[3] Although being aware of the potential vast scope of the process of transition, this research has also to make some practical decisions regarding the limitations of its scope and definitions. Without refusing the complexity of it, war-to-peace transition is here more narrowly adopted as the process through which countries move from the experience of armed conflict and lawlessness, among others, to the experience of peaceful resolution of conflicts, application of law, and addressing grievances that are at the core of conflict causes.

as a collective and prescriptive endeavour to transition countries with armed conflict and/or with fragility of institutions toward a standardized version of peace.

Nonetheless, the mixed results achieved by the liberal peace model (World Bank, 2011; Paris, 2004; Tschirgi, 2004) and the lack of deep theorization concerning peacebuilding and DDR, calls for a more nuanced understanding of DDR processes, and how they relate to stabilization and development. This research approaches peacebuilding and DDR as inherently political processes, rather than technical and programmatic interventions (Cramer, 2006; Kriger, 2003).

Elaborating upon the liberal peacebuilding model, Ottaway (2003) describes a triple transition (security, political and socio-economic) process in the aftermath of war. Security is often considered a precondition for successful war-to-peace transition; in turn, DDR and security sector reform (SSR) are seen at the core of the security transition by policy-makers. In particular, DDR programs have the stated goal of dismantling organized armed structures (rebels, illegal armed groups, regular military), proceeding to the collection of weapons, discharging individual combatants, and taking responsibility for ex-combatants' reinsertion and reintegration into society. As such, they are at the core of any transition from war to peace (SIDDR, 2006).[4]

The research goes beyond this policy level, and tries to expose the ambivalence and contestation of the transition process and of DDR. Given their operational and practical nature, policy responses tend not to be cognizant of either the complexity or the underlying politics of war to peace transitions. The policy literature on DDR views it as a technical project based on goals that translate into outcomes through measurable outputs. DDR implementers forget the political nature of post-war transition. Although DDR in Colombia has been the subject of numerous empirical studies, these failed to trickle up at the policy level (to cite only the most recent ones: Arjona and Kalyvas, 2012; Nussio, 2012; Nussio and Oppenheim, 2013; Derks, Rouw and Briscoe, 2011). In a similar vein, peacebuilding suffers from the same binary distinction between theory and practice – as Chapter 1 describes.

This research aims to grapple with the complexity of war-to-peace transitions by expanding the analytical framework through which DDR and transition are analysed. An alternative approach based on political economy analysis is proposed here. Such approach entails the awareness of the role that wars, transition processes and also DDR, all play in the formation

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[4] "Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) is a process that contributes to security and stability by disarming combatants, removing them from military structures, and socially and economically integrating them into society. DDR programs downsize armed forces, or disband them completely. They are usually part of other efforts to demilitarize (e.g. landmine removal, Security Sector Reform, etc.) and consolidate peace (e.g. justice, reconciliation, community-based reconstruction, etc.) When they shift resources to the social and economic sectors, DDR programs can also reduce poverty" (World Bank, 2009: 1).

and/or strengthening of state's institutions and societies. This role is not univocal, but rather ambivalent and based on historical contextual factors. No definitive statements come out from the application of such an approach; rather the story of DDR and transition is complexified.

Throughout history, DDR has repeatedly played an important role in state-citizen relations and in post-war social contract. In their bargaining with the state, ex-combatants use their leverage as both agents of violence and as primary state supporters to pursue their class interests, uphold their rights to citizenship and convey their demands. The variations through which states have treated demobilization and ex-combatants may explain different trajectories in state formation (Campbell, 2003).

The research also shows the specific trajectory of war and peace in Latin America, in order to more broadly situate the case of Colombia and of Meta. One of the theses that is considered here asserts that the relatively small-scale and "limited wars" experienced in Latin America is the determining factor for a more limited process of state building. Total mobilization for war is a defining experience for state centralization and sophistication of capacity (Centeno, 2003).

Scope and objectives: Research focus. Thus, the expectation here is to provide a comprehensive understanding of DDR in Meta, Colombia through the analysis of the structural conflict factors in the region, the unfolding of the DDR program there, and the individual experiences of ex-combatants. For the purpose of this research, the term 'ex-combatant' encompasses those individuals who are part and beneficiaries of the government sponsored DDR program. An ex-combatant is a male or female individual who was a member of an outlawed non-state armed group. In Colombia, these groups are defined by the state, which distinguishes them from drugs trafficking organizations and criminal groups. Although the distinction may sometimes be subtle when considering those interests, behaviours and operations among these groups have commonalities. Nonetheless non-state armed groups have an ultimate political agenda. The two main categories of non-state armed groups in Colombia are the right-wing paramilitaries (primarily, but not exclusively, the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia, in Spanish *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC); and the left-wing rebels of the FARC and of the National Liberation Army (*Ejercito de Liberación Nacional*, ELN).

The research aims to disentangle some of the dilemmas related to DDR and its implications both for the lives of individual ex-combatants, like Cesar, as well as for long-term societal-level peacebuilding processes.

The individual paths of combatants in their transition from war to peace, is examined through three phases of engagement: recruitment, membership to the armed group, and reintegration. Each of these three phases is seen through the analytical lens of 'employment' and the labor market of war/post war transition. Based on thirty-one semi-structured interviews with ex-combatants, this leg of the study examines the *pre-*, the *during* and the *post*-war experiences of ex-combatants. The focus is on the job experiences and/or livelihood strategies of ex-combatants during these three phases. As such, ex-combatants' transition in and out of war mirrors the structural process of non-linear transition from war to peace.

The central research question that seeks to capture the above goal is the following:

How has DDR interacted with the dynamics of war and peace in Meta, Colombia?

This can be further dissected in the following three sub-questions applied to Meta:

- What are the key factors that explain (repeated cycles of) recruitment and war mobilization?
- What are the key factors that shape the DDR process in Meta?
- What is the variation between individual ex-FARC and ex-paramilitary combatants when analysing their war and employment life cycles?

To answer this set of questions, a two-pronged investigation is carried out. First (Chapters 4-5), there is a historical political economy analysis (PEA) of the conflict in Meta since the XIX century, and an analysis of the DDR processes in the 2000s. Focus is both on the collective demobilization of the paramilitary federation of the AUC, and on the individual DDR program that targeted the left-wing rebel groups of the FARC and the ELN. The DDR analysis is complemented by an in-depth historical PEA, which traces the factors and the rise of conflictive dynamics and ensuing non-state armed groups' formation in Meta. Only by deeply analysing the structural factors of conflict, can the contemporary DDR processes be understood.

Second (Chapters 6-8), the research explores the war-to-peace transition in Meta through the analysis of employment life cycles of ex-combatants from recruitment to armed group's membership to demobilization and reintegration. This leg emphasizes individual, organizational and structural dynamics of transition. A focus on the life of ex-combatants is an under-explored dimension of the war-to-peace transition literature.

An employment perspective on (ex)-combatants. The lens through which ex-combatants' lives are explored is 'employment'. The research approaches individuals' decision to mobilize (or not) and demobilize within a framework of employment-seeking behaviour. It posits that the search for employment and livelihoods needs is a crucial driver for joining a

non-state armed group. The example of Cesar and of most ex-combatants is clear: they all had to make a living and the armed group out there provided that opportunity. In this sense, ex-combatants and non-state armed groups are the economic actors of an *ad hoc* labor market of war. By the same token, employment is a key feature of a reintegration path.

This is not to subscribe to a narrow rational choice approach; individual decision making is located in relation to organizational and structural factors. In fact, an employment and labor market lens is applied to a three-level analysis of: (i) the life of combatants and their employment experiences (*individual* level); (ii) non-state armed groups' behaviour with respect to recruitment strategies and career paths within the group (*organizational* level); and (iii) the political, social and economic factors and the conflict dynamics that drive men and women to join armed groups, to stay in them, and to demobilize and seek reinsertion into society (*structural* level).

The labor market of war is defined by this multiple-level framework of employment and conflict, which combines with the three stages of war-to-peace transition – before, during, and after conflict. Schematically, each level can be applied to each of the three phases of the transition: ex-combatants, non-state armed groups, and war dynamics all experience a pre-conflict, a during- and an after-conflict phase (see Tables I.1 and 3.1). As such, Cesar's life can be divided into three stages: what he did before entering the FARC and how he got recruited, what he did while in the FARC, and what his reinsertion path is. In turn, Cesar and all the other ex-combatants provide individual, organizational and structural answers for each of these three phases.

At the *individual level*, the research revisits the employment experiences of individual ex-combatants. First, it analyses an ex-combatant's life *before* entering the armed group. This phase includes the jobs he/she held before joining arms, the circumstances and the individual motivations and incentives for joining an armed group. Second, I report the individual life stories of ex-combatants *within* the armed group, considering the time spent in arms as a job experience. The objective is to unveil the different roles and 'jobs' held, and the functions performed while in arms. Third, in the *after* phase, ex-combatants reveal the circumstances of demobilization and their experience with reintegration, especially the challenges in terms of securing employment, and the jobs held since demobilization. In particular, I pay special attention to the interaction between these phases. I look at all these job experiences organically, as they constitute an (*ad hoc*) professional career.

At the *organizational level*, the objective is to give some insights on the 'human resources' of armed groups. In line with the three-phase classification, I focus on: incentives for, strategies and patterns of recruitment (*before conflict* stage); on roles and tasks within the armed

group, and career development (*during conflict* stage); and on drivers of demobilization that refer to the armed group's behaviour and strategies, as well as organizational patterns of recidivism (*after conflict* stage). This approach is in line with the emerging literature on 'rebel governance' (see Chapter 2), which is concerned with the understanding of armed groups' internal functioning and with the organizational factors that explain external behaviours (Arjona, 2008, 2014; Arjona et al., 2015; Mampilly, 2011; Menkhaus, 2010; Weinstein, 2007).

In order to apply the employment and labor market lens to the organizational level, I make the following abstraction. I consider non-state armed groups as employers *sui generis*, or social actors that in order to achieve either economic goals (e.g. drug traffickers' maximization of profits) or political goals (e.g. leftist guerrilla's change in the political and social order) need to "employ" skilled men and women (Weinstein, 2007: 43). Such abstraction does not imply a treatment of armed groups as purely economic agents – far from it. But it allows to isolate employment factors in the analysis of armed groups' formation, behaviour and strategies, and demobilization.

Finally, at the *structural level*, I examine those historical political economy factors that are associated with employment in an armed group. First, I analyse those structural drivers of recruitment, including ideology, socialization and available social networks. To explain Cesar's recruitment, it is not sufficient to look at his individual motives, but it is necessary to understand the contextual factors of war and marginalization in Meta. Second, I analyse the relationship between economic reintegration (with a focus on employment) and the challenges of current conflict and ongoing recruitment by armed groups (i.e. the recidivism phenomenon). Specifically, I assess the role and impact of employment on reintegration outcomes, and the structural factors contributing to ex-combatants going back in arms (i.e. recidivism).

Employment is conceptualized broadly. First, both the (material) livelihoods implications of employment and the (symbolic) meaning of employment are addressed. Employment is not only the material act of finding and retaining a job for the purpose of economically sustaining the household, but the meaning of employment in terms of identity is also important. In most societies, merely having a job (rather than being unemployed) is a fundamental part of self-respect, dignity and identity (Kilroy, 2012; Cramer, 2010).

Second, employment and employment-seeking are concepts that mostly apply to industrial- and service-based economies in urban environments, rather than agricultural ones. Instead, when analysing rural societies like Meta, employment assumes a much vaguer notion. Employment in rural societies often means inheriting the family's livelihoods. For example,

the marginalized rural areas of Meta that are analysed here display contexts where either meager existence as landless peasants or membership in the FARC are the only 'employment' options (Ferro and Uribe, 2002). In fact, it is the structural inequalities around land tenure and those very meager existences as landless peasants that drove armed rebellion in the first place. Thus, it makes sense to talk about 'employment' only insofar we intend it more broadly, as a life path, which is often a set course. Through such understanding, the individual decision to join an armed group can be viewed to a certain extent as a natural consequence of pre-existing conditions of poverty, marginalization and lack of options, rather than a complete rupture with previous life.

DDR implications. The analytical framework that this research applies to Meta carries important innovative entry points for the understanding of DDR. First, applying a longer timespan to the life of ex-combatants beyond the post-demobilization phase has the advantage of broadening the scope for understanding reintegration. The latter is conceptualized and applied in the research not as a standalone phase, but in interaction with individual and structural considerations that precede demobilization. Understanding if and how Cesar reintegrates into society is dependent upon understanding what led him into the conflict in the first place, and what his course during the war was. In turn, the understanding of post-war employment of ex-combatants also benefits from considering pre- and during-conflict factors.

Second, the DDR literature has generally not differentiated between roles performed by ex-combatants within the armed group – a differentiation that is, instead, fully embraced by this research. When applied to the different roles in the armed groups, the employment lens that this research proposes allows for an understanding of the combatant beyond a mere agent of violence. Cesar, for example, emphasized his role of FARC political mobilizer, working side by side the peasantry.

Such analytical framework is also useful when applied to the organizational level of armed groups. For example, as a hybrid organization, the paramilitaries simultaneously retained distinct aspects. At one moment they behaved like a private militia, at another moment they were a counterinsurgent army and at another moment they acted as a criminal quasi-mafia outfit. The implication from this hybrid nature is the diversification of individual profiles within the paramilitaries. In this space, the intended outcome of the research is to move beyond a monolithic conceptualization of armed groups and individual combatants in order to develop a more complex framework to understand war to peace transition dynamics. The understanding of the specific armed group is also functional to DDR programming.

Case study of Meta. This research adopts a case study approach to explain the aforementioned dynamics and processes. In Colombia, a country of entrenched inequalities and uneven state presence, the armed conflict has played out on many fronts for more than half a century. Its actors ranged from left-wing rebel groups to right-wing paramilitaries and state armed forces that often fought alongside the paramilitaries. Drug-related violence has been one of the engines of the conflict since the 1980s, and victims tend to be civilians caught in the middle. In the conflict lifetime, more than 220,000 people died, and over 6 million were forcibly displaced.

There is a great deal of sub-regional variation in the dynamics of armed violence in Colombia (Pearce, 1990; Holmes et al., 2008; Robinson, 2013). Geographic conditions, differential settlement patterns, a forsaken colonization process, unequal enforcement of rule of law and land tenure, among others, determine *ad hoc* sub-regional conflict dynamics and factors. Colombian history has been characterized by centre versus periphery dynamics, exacerbated by the remoteness of Colombian frontier regions, and by endemic corruption of local elites and their direct involvement in the armed conflict.

This research focuses on the administrative department of Meta,[5] which is part of the 'frontier' region of the Eastern Llanos (literally, "Plains"). In Colombia, colonization and settlements traditionally concentrated in the core provinces of the Andean Highlands connected by the Magdalena River to the Caribbean coastal port cities of Cartagena and Barranquilla, all areas characterized by temperate climates. These central regions contrast with the peripheral ones, the so-called 'frontier' regions: Eastern Llanos, Amazonia, Pacific Coast, La Guajira Peninsula, and the islands of San Andres and Providencia. The Eastern Llanos occupies around 23% of the country (see Figure I.1), but it is home to only 3.5% of the total Colombian population. Other than Meta, it includes the administrative departments of Arauca, Casanare, and Vichada (Jiménez, 2012; Rausch, 1999).

Meta is the most populated region of the Eastern Llanos and the most connected to the centre of the country. Slightly larger than Austria, Meta enjoys an obvious strategic location as the connection between the Andean centre and the south and east of the country. Like all of the Eastern Llanos, Meta has been traditionally characterized by high rates of structural conflict over land between powerful landowners and landless peasants. Historically, as a marginal region traditionally outside the reach of the state, Meta has witnessed several

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[5] Administrative departments in Colombia – *Departamentos*, in Spanish – are the equivalent of "regions" or "states" in a federal system.

colonization waves and processes. As the research demonstrates, such colonization processes are highly interwoven with the conflict dynamics.[6]

FIGURE I.1: MAP OF COLOMBIA

Source: Presidencia de la Republica de Colombia, http://wsp.presidencia.gov.co/asiescolombia/mapas.html
[Accessed on March 24, 2017]

Frontier regions have historically been sparsely populated and difficult to access due to tropical climate, inhospitable territory, poor infrastructure and communication, and diseases such as malaria. Consequently, state control, rule of law and governance practices differ markedly in such frontier regions compared to areas closer to the centre (Rausch, 1999;

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[6] In terms of economic factors and their interaction with the conflict, cattle ranching is the traditional economic activity around which land conflict has taken place in Meta and the Llanos in the XX century (see Chapter 4). Two dynamics have added more complexity to the conflict. As recently as the 1980s, a boom in drugs trafficking and the rise of criminal groups took place in parallel with the relative decline of traditional landowning elites. This process reversed the power dynamics in Meta. In addition, in the last decade, the discovery of oil reserves and their exploitation brought the region to the forefront of the national leadership's agenda. Mining also represents an emerging economic activity. Untapped economic resources in the south and the east of Colombia have been seen as a material incentive for the state to put an end to the conflict with the FARC.

Kalmanovitz, 2010). Meta's peripheral status and governance mechanism is summarized as follows: "National political elites residing in urban areas, particularly Bogotá, have effectively delegated the running of the countryside and other peripheral areas to local elites. The provincial elites are given freedom to run things as they like, and even represent themselves in the legislature, in exchange for political support and not challenging the centre" (Robinson, 2013: 44).

Ultimately, the case study emphasizes the different forms of non-state armed groups in Meta and their role. Given Meta's governance structure, armed actors have traditionally retained economic influence and social control over vast areas of the Llanos. Throughout the 20th Century, non-state armed groups in Meta and beyond assumed several incarnations: they took the form of private militias to protect large landowners' interests, bandits that exploited state absence, structured rebel groups that mobilized around Communist ideology of justice and economic rights, counterinsurgent groups, and ultimately rent seeking criminal actors that are dedicated to drugs trafficking. Each armed group interacted in different ways with local elites, namely through a process of local-level bargaining that spurred temporary local orders. The exploration of the non-state armed groups' trajectory in Meta is in line with the analytical framework proposed here that points to the variation of war and peace transition.

Research methods. Methodologically, the present research builds on the growing literature on conflict and violence that uses theoretical and empirical disaggregation on multiple dimensions, including space, time, actors, and forms of violence. Given the wide variations of conflict cases and their inherent complexity, several authors agree that the understanding of transitional dynamics from war to peace may only be accomplished through a case study analysis (Barakat et al., 2002; Justino et al., 2013; Kalyvas, 2001, 2010; Kriger, 2003; Sambanis, 2004c; Suhrke, 2011).

A sub-regional approach carries several benefits when compared with a national level analysis. The former allows for a more nuanced and context-specific understanding of structural societal and politico-economic conditions, and a granular account of policies, dynamics, and implications. A local-level lens is conducive to understanding the hybrid context in which DDR, in particular the social and economic reintegration aspects, takes place in Colombia. A sub-regional approach may also be a requirement when considering the wide regional variation that characterizes Colombia and its conflict dynamics, as it was mentioned above. Ultimately, a sub-regional analysis allows for a more direct contact with beneficiaries and communities (Justino, 2013; Kalyvas, 2001; Nieto Matiz, 2012).

Fieldwork consisted of in-depth and semi-structured one-to-one interviews with key informants and with ex-combatants, and direct observation. Between Bogota and Meta, I

conducted a total of 40 interviews with key informants and experts from research centres, international organizations, local and national governments, and from the Colombian specialized agency on DDR. In terms of ex-combatants, I built a sample of 31 individuals that I interviewed in Meta's provincial capital of Villavicencio and in the town of Puerto Gaitan. The sample is representative of the total population of ex-combatants in Meta (who are DDR beneficiaries) with respect to three parameters: gender, age, and armed group. Seventeen ex-combatants were part of the FARC, thirteen belonged to the paramilitaries, and one was from the ELN (See Annexes 1 and 2).

Structure of the thesis. Table I.1 schematically summarizes the main focus of the research. Three levels of analysis are applied to three conflict phases to produce three overarching topics: mobilization, war, and demobilization. Such schematization reproduces the emphasis of the research on the interaction between levels and phases, as *continuum* is a key concept of this research. A classification contributes to further granularity. Different methodological techniques are used to research each level of analysis: through a combination of political economy analysis and semi-structured interviews with ex-combatants and experts.

TABLE I.1: A RESEARCH ON THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WAR AND EMPLOYMENT

LEVEL / PHASE	Individual	Organizational	Structural
Before Conflict	Mobilization and Recruitment		
During Conflict	Membership to Non-State Armed Groups		
After Conflict	Demobilization, Reintegration and/or Recidivism, Continuation		

The thesis is divided into three parts and eight chapters.

Part I concerns the theoretical underpinnings of the research and exposes the limitations of the current models of understanding war-to-peace transition. It also includes the methodological foundations of the thesis.

Chapter 1 discusses war to peace transition in order to situate the debate on the theory and practice on peacebuilding and DDR. It critically addresses the 'liberal peacebuilding' project and DDR, with ample reference to Latin America. The literature review criticizes the overly technical approach to peacebuilding and especially to DDR, which has entirely missed both the broader implications of DDR and its political dimension.

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical basis for an alternative and more complex approach to understand war, transition from war to peace and DDR. The first section acknowledges the historic role that wars play in state formation processes, and it discusses other sources of order and authority that emerge during and after war. In the second section on DDR, I demonstrate how demobilization also retains a role in state formation processes. I also review the nature and the quality of the political settlement between the state and ex-combatants, which is key to understand post-war order.

Chapter 3, on the research methodology, explains how a combined macro- and micro-level analysis is designed and conducted. This includes a discussion on the main research questions, and an explanation of the research goals, components, and the related multiple levels of analysis. Second, the chapter reports on the main research techniques that are used: fieldwork phases, sampling, potential biases, and risks and mitigation. I include ethical and security considerations when conducting research "in" and "on" conflict settings (Goodhand, 2000).

Part II concerns the case study on war-to-peace transition and DDR in Meta. This portion of the study is based on interviews with key informants and on an extensive literature review in English and Spanish languages.

Chapter 4 presents a historical political economy analysis of the conflict in Meta. The analysis is centered on some of the long-term drivers of the violence in Meta, including, among others: the quest for land and the process of colonization; and the structural institutional failure that left peripheral regions in a permanent state of lawlessness and/or elites capture. The chapter also addresses the trajectory, behaviour, strategies, and incentives of non-state armed groups as they are functional to contextualize the findings from the empirical part of the thesis.

Chapter 5 narrows the focus on the dynamics of DDR in Meta during the 2000s. The chapter concerns two underlying main themes. First, how DDR and, in particular, economic reintegration and employment were designed and implemented in Colombia during Uribe (2002-2010) and Santos (2010-) presidencies. Second, Chapter 5 addresses the implications of DDR by providing an overview of the current security conditions in Meta, of the rearmament process and the formation of new non-state armed groups.

Part III includes the empirical part, consisting of an in-depth analysis of employment life trajectories of ex-combatants.

Chapter 6 concerns the dynamics and drivers of mobilization and recruitment, here analysed in a three-level framework: (i) individual motivations for joining an armed group; (ii)

structural factors that are related to conflict dynamics and which play an equally important part in the decision to go to war; and (iii) organizational explanations centered around the armed group itself, including its incentives and promises, its appeal and its strategies and patterns of recruitment.

Chapter 7 analyses the employment dynamics of ex-combatants inside the armed group. Focus is on the diversity of roles, functions and tasks, in order to give a picture of the heterogeneous 'jobs' in armed groups. It presents the differences between FARC and AUC. The chapter describes the main *professional* roles in a non-state armed group, including: military duties; propaganda and political mobilization roles; and the support roles related to logistics, supplies, and nursing.

Chapter 8 seeks to understand the way in which ex-combatants demobilize, find and retain employment after they cease to be part of an armed group, and those associated challenges. It focuses on the different dynamics that governed the demobilization of the FARC and the AUC, the dynamics and challenges of reintegration, in particular employment, and the security concerns related to the presence of emerging non-state armed groups and the phenomenon of recidivism.

PART I – Theoretical Framework and Methodology

1. Theories and Practices of War to Peace Transition

The end of the Cold War opened up a new era in international affairs. The post-Cold War phase saw a predominance of a particular model of political and economic organization of the state – i.e. liberal market-oriented democracy. Among systemic changes, the international community aimed to tackle in a much more direct and intrusive way the problems related to development. In fragile and conflict-affected countries this new attitude translated into the adoption of comprehensive peacebuilding strategies, underpinned by market-oriented reforms and liberal democracy. Liberal peacebuilding is characterized by ambitious agendas and far-reaching goals, which combine the aims of (re)building states anew and transforming societies (Duffield, 2000; Ottaway, 2003; Richmond, 2008; Chandler, 2010).

On paper, a standardized approach to development reduces complex political and economic problems to issues of weak capacity: investing in 'institutions' represents, then, the magic formula. Capacity building and governance become state's core concerns.[7] Thus, reflecting this standardized global effort, the 'peacebuilding' project was "rendered technical" (Murray Li, 2007, 2011) through an emphasis on prescriptive policies – which is also recurrent in the literature on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) (Duffield, 2000; Jabri, 2007). In turn, DDR emerged as part of the liberal peacebuilding process, and was designed to responsibly and effectively deal with armed actors.

The mixed results achieved by this model (World Bank, 2011; Paris, 2004; Tschirgi, 2004) and the lack of deep theorization concerning peacebuilding and DDR, calls for a more nuanced understanding of the DDR process, and how it relates to stabilization and development. This research approaches peacebuilding and DDR as inherent to the political process, and not mere technical and programmatic interventions (Cramer, 2006; Kriger, 2003). Therefore, I aim to give an alternative analytical approach based on historical political economy: reducing DDR to a policy issue and its implementation to a policy solution defies proper understanding of the conflict dynamics, the motivations behind actors' behaviour, the

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[7] According to De Angelis (2003), "governance is a continual process of relationship management rather than the pursuit of discrete policy goals. [...] The role of governance is not the formulation and implementation of policy but the promotion of frameworks through which problems can be addressed" (cited in Chandler, 2010: 72).

implications of DDR for the process of development and state strengthening, as well as the dynamics of transition from war to peace.

What follows is a brief review of contemporary theories and practices of war to peace transition, the liberal peacebuilding project, and DDR. This analysis is functional to highlighting the argument that such models are incomplete, both for the understanding of war and peace, and for the actual practice of supporting peace efforts. The liberal peace argument is anchored on three tropes, which are presented in the introductory section. First, the liberal peace proposition that there is a context of 'new wars' supports the argument that there should be a 'new peace', in turn, enabled by technical peacebuilding operations, including DDR. Second, the transition between war and peace is not nuanced, but explained in rigid binary terms. As a result, post-war phases are treated as a blank slate that can be shaped at leisure through intervention. Third, building peace is a purely technical exercise, centred around the process of building institutions.

The second section concerns the rise of the 'liberal peacebuilding' project, including some of the results from and the evidence of current practices and operations, with specific reference to Latin America. The concluding section is an analysis of DDR, how it originates from the liberal peace model and its role. The section highlights DDR origins and history, multiple dimensions, and conceptual and practical limitations.

This discussion opens the way to Chapter 2, which considers alternative approaches to understanding war and peace through historical political economy analysis, including: processes of brokerage, political settlement, alternative forms of order and peace, and the 'local'. Such alternative approach is functional to a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of DDR.

1.1 Conceptual Underpinnings of Liberal Peace

A context of new wars or a new context in which wars are fought? Briefly engaging with the literature on 'new' wars is important because it contextualizes the following debate on state- and peacebuilding practice, and, in turn, on DDR processes. By clarifying the alleged rise of new types of war, I will be able to sustain the proposition that DDR is not a 'new' practice in international development and stabilization of countries, but it is a process inherent to state formation and that has important implications for the social contract.

Functional to the liberal peace discourse, the 'new wars' thesis states that new realities in the international system bring a change to funding mechanisms, main actors (criminal organizations instead of rebel groups), goals (greed instead of grievance) and the technology

of war (Kaldor, 1999, 2013). Other authors focus on the transnational and spatial dimensions of armed conflicts in the new international system, which are labelled "non-territorial network wars" (Duffield, 2000; Bauman, 2001; Gregory, 2010). By arguing that actors' motivations and behaviours have shifted or that multiple dimensions overlap, new wars' characterization overshadows the structural dynamics of conflict, and in turn it simplifies the conceptualization and practice of DDR – a characterization that this research refutes.

Even though there is a recognition of a change in the way wars are funded, this distinction between new and old wars has been questioned (Kalyvas, 2001; Berdal, 2003; Kriger, 2003; Richards, 2005). The present research argues that there has been a shift in the *analysis* of conflict, and not an observable change in the ways wars start and unfold. There is a constantly evolving context in which wars are fought and which affects wars themselves, rather than a change in structural factors and root causes for violence. In fact, a political economy analysis and a case study approach to causes, actors, popular support and patterns of violence reveal many commonalities between pre- and post-Cold War internal conflicts (for example, Weinstein, 2007). Kalyvas (2001) states that as old wars were not purely driven by ideology and just causes, seemingly new wars are not exclusively the product of predatory behaviours. In addition, sweeping generalizations that old conflicts enjoyed popular support and displayed "controlled" violence, vis-à-vis todays low popular support and "gratuitous" and more ferocious violence do not hold (Kalyvas, 2001; Weinstein, 2007).

A closer examination of the motivations behind rebellion shows that these cannot be easily categorized of either political/ideological nature or as the result of opportunistic and rent-seeking behaviours. New wars are not exclusively about 'greed', as old wars were not exclusively about 'grievance'.[8] Zartman (2005) and Ballentine and Sherman (2003) assert that greed and predatory behaviours are not an end but a means: when and where guerrilla groups are able to establish a state-within-state situation, they eventually extract resources and may conceivably act in a predatory manner. However, predatory behaviours do not substitute political and historic grievances, but rather they integrate them by adding further complexity. Mainstream literature fails to recognize the multidimensionality of motives of elites, of local populations, and of external actors – a multidimensionality that this research embraces (Berdal, 2003).

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[8] The rich literature on the causes of violent conflict and critiques includes, among others: Bannon and Collier eds., 2003; Collier et al., 2003; Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; Cramer, 2002; Di John, 2008; Djankov and Reynal-Querol, 2007; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Hirshleifer, 2001; Keen, 2001; Lujala et al., 2005; Picard, 2005; Snyder and Ravi, 2005; Stewart, 2002; and Arnson and Zartman eds., 2005.

The analysis of the role of drugs trafficking in fuelling the armed conflict in Colombia from the 1980s on reveals this aspect (see Chapter 4). The rents that the leftist guerrilla of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) were able to extract from coca leaf farming were reinvested in the war effort: they were a means to an end, and not an end goal. In this sense, the FARC were able to use the increased funding available to expand their strategy and war goals (Chernick, 2005). In addition, the "greed" argument does not hold when considering the organizational incentives and the opportunity cost available to FARC recruits, for example. As Chapter 7 explains, FARC fighters are not paid, are exposed to huge sacrifices, and do not materially profit from their individual war effort. Thus, the thesis that rebel groups engage in criminal practices for the sake of it, does not hold when one scrutinizes the Colombian insurgency (Gutierrez Sanin, 2004).

As the examination of DDR also highlights, the nature and the quality of the political settlement between the state and the armed group to be demobilized determine the dynamics and ultimately the outcome of the DDR process itself (Chapter 2). A close case-study examination, in fact, reveals that peace and political settlements concern a whole range of factors that disregard and go beyond the categorization of new and old wars.

Transition from war to peace. The debate on new wars is related to the transition between war and peace, and, in particular, to the post-Cold War efforts to prevent or mitigate the incidents of internal wars, and to facilitate post-war reconstruction. As wars are not 'new', but rather display emerging features, also transition from war to peace is not a 'new' process, but rather one anchored on historical, institutional and structural factors.

Instead, the emergence of a field of practice on peacebuilding (led by international actors) after the end of the Cold War resulted in an overarching policy focus to address the physical and human consequences of war. Such focus targeted the immediate phase after violence halts, which policy makers labelled 'post-conflict'. To this, the term 'reconstruction' was added to signal the set of actions needed to be addressed during this phase. 'Post-conflict reconstruction'[9] was then adopted as an overall formula for economic, social, institutional and security activities to be performed.[10]

While politics was purposefully left out of this equation – due to obvious sovereignty concerns – the post-conflict reconstruction approach implied that sound policies and the

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[9] The term 'reconstruction' associated to the aftermath of war traces back to the American Civil War. Subsequently, it was embedded in the post-WWII order through the establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank). However, it is only after the Cold War that 'reconstruction' became an "hegemonic strategy"(Kirsch and Flint, 2011: 6).

[10] Barnett et al. (2007) compile a list of the all the terms coined and adopted by different donors and multilateral organizations to define their engagement to sustain peace (Barnett et al., 2007: 38-41)

successful implementation of programs in key areas would translate into successful war to peace transition processes. The original sin was to assume that the post-conflict reconstruction phase could move forward successfully without exploring and/or considering the dynamics of the war that had just ended. Post-conflict reconstruction was, therefore, applied as a blank slate. DDR operations – as one component of post-conflict reconstruction – followed a similar logic. The liberal peace approach intended the transition from war to peace not so much as a transition, but as an abrupt break: instead of an organic process, transition was reinvented into and disguised as an artificial reconstruction phase (Kirsch and Flint, 2011; Jackson, 2010).

Differently, the understanding of transition that this research adopts is one that highlights the complexity of transition. It takes into account the linkages between war and peace, and the legacy that war exercises on the implementation of peace. In turn, it sheds light on the wider implications of DDR and supports a political economy approach to DDR analysis. The concept of transition encompasses the dynamic interaction of, and a constantly changing process between war and peace, which have to be understood in a *continuum*. Transition is not a linear phenomenon, and war and peace are not compartmentalized mutually-excluding phases (Bourgois, 2001; Cramer, 2006; Duffield, 2000; Muggah (ed.), 2009; Pugh, 2000; Richards, 2005; Sambanis, 2004; UNDP, 2008; Marc et al., 2013). In fact, "a 'transition from war to peace' is unlikely to see a clean break from violence to consent, from theft to production, from repression to democracy, or from impunity to accountability" (Keen, 2000: 10). [11] Peacebuilding intervention needs to recognize the "inherently tumultuous transformation" that conflict-affected countries go through in order to develop institutions that address conflict non-violently (Paris, 2004: 7).

The conceptualization of transition is also helpful to get rid of the misleading label of 'post-conflict'. I believe that the term 'post-conflict' – used in policy circles to characterize a phase of intervention that aims to distance the country from war and to move it toward peace[12] – does not capture the dynamic relationship between war and peace nor the brokerage to move from one to the other. In addition, there is a grey area between different forms of violence and their phasing, which impedes us from distinguishing conflict-related violence and non-conflict violence. For example, in relation to the incidence of violence in the aftermath of war, Suhrke (2011) deems "awkward" the label of 'post-conflict violence': in

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[11] As "a social project among other social projects" (Richards, 2005: 5), war has to be stripped of the moral values that accompanies it: the depiction of war as 'evil' and peace as 'good' undermines the understanding of the causes of war and the processes associated with it.

[12] For example, the World Bank does not give a definition of 'post-conflict' countries based on whether a ceasefire or a peace settlement are in place; it opted, instead, to classify fragile and conflict-affected 'situations' based on countries' performance indicators of governance and socio-economic wellbeing.

fact, 'post-conflict' should indicate a situation where highly conflicting dynamics have disappeared, which is rarely the case. Thus, she prefers the term 'post-war', and this research embraces this definition (Suhrke, 2011: 6; Cramer, 2006).

Peacebuilding as a technical endeavour. The third core area of the liberal peace argument concerns peacebuilding as a technical (mostly externally-driven) operation to facilitate the transition from war to peace. One of the sources of the emergence of the peacebuilding initiative in the post-Cold War era has been a sudden (and for some authors only perceived) increase in the number of civil wars and domestic political violence (Kalyvas, 2001).[13] No longer concerned with the equilibrium between two superpowers, the international community engaged with global challenges, including intra-state armed conflicts. Increasingly, peace and conflict scholars and practitioners shifted their attention from inter-state conflicts to the analysis of internal conflict.

Several approaches have been devised to understand intra-state conflict, domestic peace and efforts to move from war to peace. One of them concerns the post-Cold War peacebuilding consensus: as a (mainly) top-down global governance enterprise, peacebuilding becomes a state-building project due to the multi-task, multidimensional and multilevel process that it generates. Through a stronger focus on capacity building in all sectors, liberal peacebuilding aims at building a peace that is 'self-sustained' (Richmond, 2008, 2010).

Overarching emphasis is therefore on institution-building as the key variable to break the equation between fragility and conflict onset (OECD, 2008; Ghani and Lockart, 2008). According to the liberal peace approach, institutions play a decisive role in managing conflict peacefully, meet citizens' needs and expectations, and preventing those social and economic negative spirals that lead to violent conflict (World Bank, 2011).

In turn, along side a classic concept of 'state security', a theory of 'human security' centred on individuals and societies rather than states arose. Challenges related to public health, environmental degradation, illegal trafficking, governance and institutions, poverty and famine, and violence and radicalization, among others, are all considered threats to human security. Responses envisage mixed packages of development and security solutions.[14] As it is argued below, due to multiple political, social and economic concerns, DDR mirrors this security-development nexus. In fact, on the one hand, DDR has the stated goal to disable

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[13] It is of little importance here whether the 1990s increase in the number of intra-state conflict is due to the end of the Cold War or it is due to a steady accumulation of civil wars since the 1950s (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Kalyvas, 2001).

[14] Forerunner of the new 'human security' concept was the 1994 Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which establishes the connection security-development by stating in the very first paragraph of the report that "the search for human security lies in development, not in arms" (UNDP, 1994).

armed actors (i.e. security). On the other hand, it pursues social and economic goals to enable beneficiaries (ex-combatants and, increasingly, vulnerable groups and local communities) to move from war to peace (i.e. development).

After having established the core tenants of liberal peace, the next section briefly examines the international character of peacebuilding and some trends. More importantly, it introduces some considerations on the experience of peacebuilding in Latin America.

1.2 Peacebuilding and War to Peace Transition in Latin America

Rise and limitations of peacebuilding. The word 'peacebuilding' became mainstream after 1992,[15] when the United Nations' *Agenda for Peace* defined its aim to "identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (UN, 1992: paragraph 21; Tschirgi, 2004).[16] For the following one and half decade activities related to peace-making and peacebuilding skyrocketed globally. Some of the figures that testify this hyper activism include the following: diplomatic interventions to bring wars to an end grew five times in the 1990s with respect to the 1980s; DDR operations increased by nine times between 1980 and 2008; and the number of countries contributing to UN-led peace operations more than doubled in the same period (Human Security Report, 2011: 63). Budget, scale, mandate, and number of peacekeeping operations also dramatically increased after the Cold War. More recently, peacekeeping effectiveness in avoiding war relapse has been demonstrated: post-war contexts with a peacekeeping presence were less likely to return to war than cases where a peacekeeping force was not deployed (Page Fortna, 2008; Human Security Report, 2011: 69-71).

In economic terms, the total amount of financial flows directed to fragile and conflict-affected countries[17] rose by 206% between 2002 and 2014. During the same period, Official Development Assistance (ODA) rose by 98% and it represented 32% of the total amount of flows. In addition, some 64% of total ODA was spent on fragile and conflict-affected countries between 2011 and 2014 (OECD, 2016: 106-107).

With respect to the operational nature of peacebuilding, since 1991, there has been an emphasis on technical and management aspects through prescriptive approaches and

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[15] The first use of the term 'peacebuilding' dates back to the 1970s when Johan Galtung – the father of conflict and peace studies – coined the concept of 'peacebuilding structures' to define the causes of conflict and to support local initiatives of conflict resolution toward sustainable peace.

[16] This definition was complemented by the 1995 *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace,* which sets the ultimate goal of peacebuilding as "the creation of structures for the institutionalization of peace" (Barnett et al., 2007: 37).

[17] Financial flows measured here include Official Development Assistance (ODA), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and remittances.

guidelines that nevertheless were unrealistic and "defy implementation" (Ottaway, 2003: 250-1). The literature on peacebuilding (and also the one on DDR) suffers from overly simplistic formulations for intervention and prescription for policies, but it is fundamentally unable to combine the recipes for intervention with the complex social context in which policies operate. What both the academic and policy literatures agree on is the fundamental role that 'context' and local dynamics – in political, social, economic and institutional terms – play. But it is still unclear how policy prescriptions and a framework for including a 'local' and contextual dimension can be combined – a challenge that this research takes on (Ottaway, 2003; Binswanger-Mkhize et al., 2010; Cramer, 2006; Colletta and Muggah, 2009).

Peacebuilding becomes, then, a buzzword to identify the wide spectrum of support (mostly externally-driven) to conflict-affected countries toward peace consolidation and stabilization, ultimately to achieve a self-sustained peace and development. Main focus areas include: rule of law, humanitarian assistance, good governance, DDR, SSR, and economic reconstruction. Nevertheless, its rapid operationalization and institutionalization (in 2005 the UN Peacebuilding Commission and related Fund were established) mask a lack of conceptualization and theoretical framework (Barnett et al., 2007: 52-54; Chandler, 2010; Duffield, 2000; Richmond, 2008).

The literature on the efficacy of peacebuilding is contested and not unidirectional (Cramer, Goodhand, and Morris, 2016). Despite the aforementioned evidence on the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, the record of peacebuilding intervention in the last two decades is not satisfactory, and the international community is seeking new avenues (World Bank, 2011; OECD, 2008; UNDP, 2008). The practice of peacebuilding has been marked by lack of sufficient resources, top-down policies and lack of engagement at the local level, poor coordination of projects and initiatives, and poor understanding of cultural and societal dynamics (Marc et al., 2013). Disguised under a modern version of Wilsonianism, the belief in marketization and democratization produced unsuccessful outcomes (Cramer, 2006; Paris, 2004; Richmond, 2008). Although the end goal is deemed favourable (i.e. mature liberal democracies do not fight one another and are less prone to internal political violence), there is no successful one-size-fits-all or best-practice approach. On paper, the academic and policy literatures widely agree that peacebuilding has to be a context-driven programming, in which "balance between adaptability and replicability is one that has to be weighed carefully" (Marc et al., 2013, p. 149; Barron et al., 2011; World Bank, 2011).

Experience of transition in Latin America. Given the focus of this study on Colombia, it is worth briefly examining the specificities of post-Cold War peacebuilding and transition to peace in Latin America. Mentioning some of the most significant patterns of peacebuilding,

highlighting commonalities across the region, and reviewing the record of peacebuilding in this region will help situate the case of Colombia.

Violent conflict in Latin America during and in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War has been inextricably linked to and driven by the process of political exclusion, socio-economic inequalities, and lack of democratic representation (Arnson, 2012; Pearce, 2010; Koonings and Kruijt, 1999).[18] The role of external intervention, namely the US, also needs to be acknowledged, despite this being beyond the research scope. With variation, some form of state weakness – although not pervasive – contributed to the wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, and Colombia. Although other countries in the region experienced forms of low-level insurgency and/or separatist conflicts, these five countries experienced full blown internal armed conflicts (Call and Cook, 2003).

There are some specific features that distinguish the patterns of internal conflict and peacebuilding in Latin America from the rest of the world. First, with the exception of Haiti (an outlier in the region from several points of view), armed conflict in Latin America has engulfed countries in middle- or lower middle-income status. This pattern differs from the rest of the world where so many conflicts take place in low income countries. Along similar vein, conflicts in the region do not occur in situations of state collapse or low capacity. Despite forms of weak institutions being a factor of armed conflict in the region, no country in Latin America has experienced the all encompassing state failure that is so prevalent in several conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example. The third factor that distinguishes Latin American conflicts from those in the rest of the world concerns the scale of destruction and the associated human cost from war. Wars in Latin America never reached the lethality that conflicts in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Liberia experienced, to mention just a few (Patrick, 2012).

Therefore, these institutional, social and economic factors put Latin American conflict-affected countries in a slightly different position when considering the process of transition from war to peace. In these countries, war to peace transition has been associated to and accompanied by dynamics of democratic consolidation (Azpuru, 2012).

The case of Colombia represents an extreme manifestation of the relationship between war to peace transition and democracy: representative institutions and electoral competition have consolidated amidst internal armed conflict. Colombia has had democratic institutions

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[18] A phase-based taxonomy of violent conflicts in Latin America include two preceding phases. The first one concerns the violence and conflicts associated with the preservation of traditional rural elites and related social order in the 19th Century and first half of the 20th Century. The second phase of violent conflict is about the modernization of the state and the rise of mass politics. The third phase is the one described above. Some authors says that currently Latin America experiences a fourth phase of violence where criminal actors and motivations are the prevalent ones (Pearce, 2010; Koonings and Kruijt, 1999).

for several decades, and at the same time it used to have the longest running conflict in the Western hemisphere. As it is analysed in Chapter 4, the reforms and democratic openings in Colombia that brought representative institutions at regional and local level in the early 1990s have been associated with increased armed conflict – especially at the local level and in frontier regions like Meta. At the same time, amidst an open armed conflict, the expansion of representative institutions – associated with society's sophistication – acted as a driver of peacebuilding, especially in national-level institutions and in large urban centres like Bogota and Medellin.

Despite being in conflict, during the 2000s, Colombian state and society moved into a post-conflict phase through several means, including: the collective DDR of paramilitary forces; the individual DDR of rebel fighters; the transitional justice process which put emphasis on historical memory; the attention to and reparation toward the victims of the conflict, including IDPs; the mobilization of national and local level institutions toward peacebuilding. These specific measures were accompanied by a general process of strengthening of institutions and the rule of law at all levels of the state (Rettberg, 2012). All these efforts and achievements took place amidst a shrinking but still sizable insurgency of the FARC and increasing reach of criminal armed groups.

An additional variable that the Latin American area studies on peace and conflict underline concerns the role of inequalities in fueling conflict. Relevant to this review is the extent to which peacebuilding efforts in the region have focused on addressing inequalities (of means, of access, and of opportunities). As inequalities were at the root of conflict dynamics in the region, it is worth considering the attention that inequalities received during the post-war phase by peacebuilding actors (Pearce, 2010).

The liberal nature of peacebuilding with its belief in market-oriented economy was ideologically reluctant to take on "leftist" policies of social justice and economic disparities, for example. With respect to the liberal peace approach that was adopted globally as a mantra after the Cold War, in Latin America the liberal peace practice was rich of ambivalence. First, thank to its mostly middle income level and relatively stable institutions, Latin American countries did not experience the kind of all-encompassing international involvement that some of the most fragile and conflict-affected countries elsewhere went through, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. With the exception of Haiti, no country in the region has been on the verge of state collapse for the last few decades. As a result, DDR processes have been more domestically led and adapted to local conditions and politics.

Second, while the end of the Cold War toned down the ideologization of armed conflicts and established the primacy of the liberal model, in Latin America the left-right dichotomy

outlived the demise of the bipolar world order. The ideological division persisted and assumed both national and regional dimensions. At the regional level, leftist countries have been pursuing models of development and cooperation alternative to the liberal ones, and established regional institutions that did not adhere to the liberal peace values. Because it fought a Marxist-based insurgency, Colombia traditionally leaned toward the right of the ideological spectrum, enjoying strong ties with the US (Wolff, 2015).

Central American countries were hit hard by internal armed conflict during the 1980s and beyond. El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua all experienced decade-long insurgencies and/or sustained political violence. The end of the Cold War provided the space for these conflicts to be resolved. Nicaragua embarked into a transition in the late 1980s-early 1990s, while El Salvador and Guatemala reached peace agreements to their internal conflicts in 1992 and 1996, respectively. Despite all of them witnessing political violence with strong class-based connotations, these Central American post-war cases point to a general failure at addressing income inequality – although Nicaragua was able to slightly lower income disparity in the 1990s (Boyce, 1996; Cordova Macias and Ramos, 2012; Torres-Rivas, 2012; McConnell, 2012; Wolff, 2015).

The peace processes and their implementation in El Salvador and Guatemala witnessed the direct participation of the UN, donors and the international financial institutions. The latter were criticized for how they handled fiscal resources and conditionality in El Salvador. In the name of fiscal stability, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund refused to back other members of the international community (UN and donors), which pushed the government to mobilize domestically additional fiscal resources to pay for the peace implementation. In the case of Guatemala a few years later, the peace agreement implementation was tied closely to the multilaterals' lending program in order to avoid the missteps that occurred in El Salvador. In conclusion, some authors have argued for a wider set of considerations around the fiscal space when implementing peace agreements: "donors need to pay far more attention to other key aspects of fiscal policy [besides fiscal stability]: the overall level of revenue and expenditure; priorities for public spending; and the distributional effects of both taxation and expenditure" (Boyce, 2002: 50; Goodhand, 2004; de Soto, 1999).

The next section will show how DDR is a fundamental concern of war to peace transition. It introduces the concept and practice of DDR as a core element of the liberal peacebuilding project. It will also provide some examples of DDR application to both Latin American and non-Latin American cases.

1.3 DDR: Conceptualizing and Operationalizing the Transition

Definition and evolution of DDR. The above discussion on liberal peacebuilding and its evolution is functional to the present section, in which I briefly introduce DDR. In fact, DDR is an integral part of the liberal project of state building: as such, it needs to be analysed to highlight its dimensions, limitations and short historical horizon. In the next chapter, an alternative model to approach the role of war and DDR is proposed.

As its name evokes, DDR is born as a technical operation to deal with post-war security and the fate of non-state armed groups or regular army. The rise of modern DDR is concomitant to the rise of the liberal peace project in the aftermath of the Cold War. However, long before the term DDR as a standardized program was ever coined, the downsizing of a military force in the aftermath of war is a process that has taken place since the dawn of history (see Chapter 2). From a macroeconomic perspective, in the wake of conflict, one of the state's main objectives is to reconvert a war economy into a peace economy, and to reintegrate veterans into the workforce. Reallocation of public expenditures from defence to social services represented the rationale for the World Bank's initial engagement on DDR. In turn, the state rewards those individuals that have fought in the war for their military service through benefits, either in financial terms or social status. As it is discussed in Chapter 2, in several cases DDR has redefined the social contract.

As far as the liberal peace project analysed above is concerned, the primary objective of a DDR program is to strengthen security and stability in a post-war context, in order to facilitate (and contribute to) the process of building the peace and enabling development (Box 1). Given the extreme volatility in the aftermath of war, DDR aims, first of all, at decreasing the number of firearms within society, and secondly at incentivizing combatants to disarm through the prospect of a reintegration process. The latter does not only represent a social and economic opportunity for the individual combatant, but also – in some cases – a political rehabilitation of the armed group. In such instances, an armed group lays down weapons in exchange for its transition into a legitimate political force.

Since the end of the Cold War, DDR has evolved in parallel with both the evolution of peacebuilding and the increasing frequency of peacekeeping operations. The latter were conceived after World War Two with a narrow set of objectives related to the establishment and maintenance of ceasefires and/or buffer zones between warring parties (first generation). Since the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping operations have evolved into complex and integrated missions with expanded mandates, in which peacekeeping progressively assumed role of policing, SSR, and also governance and development (second

and third generations). In terms of frequency, peacekeeping missions exponentially increased in number: from fifteen missions deployed between 1950-1989 to thirty-three in the decade 1989-1999 (UNDPKO, 2010).

Box 1. DDR Definition and Phases

As defined by the United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), DDR programs include three phases: disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. A fourth phase – reinsertion – has been added in recent times, which takes place after demobilization but before reintegration. Reinsertion is not treated as a separate phase by the UN, for example, which embed reinsertion activities within demobilization. Other actors (e.g. World Bank), instead, tend to view 'reinsertion' separately – a practice that is progressively becoming more common. It should be noted that a clear-cut division of phases derives from the policy literature concerned with guidelines and standard operating procedures (UNWG, 2006). Here is how the UN defines the four phases.

Disarmament "is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programs." (UN, 2005)

Demobilization "is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks)." (UN, 2005)

Reinsertion "is the assistance offered to ex- combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is a short- term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year." (UN, 2005)

Reintegration "is the process by which ex- combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility and often necessitates long-term external assistance." (UN, 2005)

In turn, the practice of DDR skyrocketed after the end of the Cold War too. Since 1991, more than sixty DDR operations have taken place, either originating from a peace settlement, or with a UN Security Council mandate, or sponsored by governments and nationally owned. In 2016, the United Nations had sixteen active peacekeeping operations, five of which have had support to, or implementation of, DDR programs within their mandate (the Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC, the Abyei region in Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, the Darfur region in Sudan, and Haiti).

In addition, through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN political missions without the deployment of UN troops, the UN has been supporting or participating in several other DDR operations – close to twenty UN agencies participate in DDR programs across the world. Nonetheless, these operations do not complete the record of DDR

programs globally. Several operations are run by national governments (like the Colombia DDR of paramilitaries), and also other international organizations (i.e. the World Bank), regional actors (e.g. Asian Development Bank, African Union, the Organization of American States), and donors manage or support DDR programs across the world (Muggah, 2010).

The chief feature of DDR is that demobilization of armed groups should take place in the aftermath of war, after violence has ceased. Increasingly, this sequence has been challenged by the practice of some conflict-affected contexts in which DDR is implemented amidst violent conflict. Our case of Colombia is the most relevant of this flexible approach: the DDR of paramilitary organizations in 2003-2006 was run and completed while the country was still in conflict with the guerrilla groups. Examples like the DRC and Somalia highlight a nascent approach (labeled by some authors as "next generation DDR"), in which DDR is made integral part of peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations (Muggah and O'Donnell, 2015).

The original rationale for embedding DDR programs within peacekeeping operations was to neutralize armed actors, who could be a source of instability by using force to pursue political goals in peacetime, and thus could potentially spoil and derail a fragile (or recently achieved) peace settlement. Therefore, DDR programs started off with the narrow goal of downsizing armed groups (military forces or rebels), and shifting resources from defence budget to social welfare and productive activities. As Muggah puts it, "DDR was conceived as a bounded activity, spatially, temporally and socially remote from other activities" (Muggah, 2010: 11). Often labeled as 'minimalist' due to the circumscribed approach over security, with time DDR programs expanded to a 'maximalist' approach to programming thanks to, among others, the growing debate over development-security linkages (World Bank, 2003). Minimalist DDR programs would often not contemplate 'reintegration' initiatives, opting for the more modest goal of 'reinsertion' through either cash or in-kind assistance. Maximalist approaches, instead, not only strive to design more inclusive reintegration (multiple stakeholders plus veterans), but also include SSR provisions. This latest development is related to the expansion of liberal peacebuilding itself, which increased its ambition and competences – as the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate. The combined approach of DDR and SSR is symptomatic of this growth in scope and ambition.

From a discrete technical program, DDR is currently intended and conceptualized as a 'field' (of study and of practice) of its own (UNWG, 2006). The evolution of DDR practice, the expansion of its scope and the new competences that DDR took on, and the inclusion of DDR within a larger state-building and peacebuilding framework widened the very definition and boundaries of DDR. Side-by-side with security concerns, policy-makers and planners started

associating DDR with larger peacebuilding and development goals, including sustainable livelihoods and income generation activities for former combatants, wide-scope reintegration measures to facilitate (re)absorption of veterans into communities of origin, and linkages to SSR and institution-building. In addition, DDR programs may be coordinated with support to vulnerable groups (e.g. women, children, IDPs, combatants with HIV-AIDS) and to receiving communities, and ultimately with reconciliation and measures of transitional justice (i.e. truth and memory initiatives, prosecutions, and reparation for victims).

Nonetheless, given the overly broad scope of DDR, part of the literature and the policy community advocate for a clearer distinction between DDR goals and reintegration and peacebuilding goals. A minimalist approach to DDR asserts that 'reintegration' goals should be scaled back to 'reinsertion' goals – with a small 'r'.[19] According to this line of thinking, long-term reintegration of former combatants should be instead linked to broader peacebuilding strategies at the local level, including local recovery and livelihood policies, rehabilitation of and support to conflict-affected population, and not be part of a stand alone DDR program (Muggah, 2010; Gomes Porto et al., 2007).

DDR and war to peace transition: political, security and socio-economic dimensions. The previous sub-section has argued that DDR policies embody the very link between security and development. The expansion in functions, competences and beneficiaries of DDR operations is also in line with the inclusion of social and economic development issues together with the hard security concerns of successfully disarming an army or a rebel group.

As part of a peace settlement and/or following the end of a conflict by military means, successful disarmament and demobilization represent one of the first steps toward stabilization and through which the state gains or regains the legitimate monopoly of the use of force. In parallel, reintegration programs are undertaken to facilitate and resume peacetime political, social and economic activities for former combatants, including employment assistance and absorption in the workforce, acceptance and social reintegration in communities of origin, heal of collective and individual trauma, among others (Berdal and Ucko, 2009: 109; Muggah, 2009: 154).

According to liberal peacebuilding formulation, DDR is both a first-step security-booster, and a core task in the post-war state-building project. Therefore, on the one hand, DDR pursues the short-term goal of stabilization (Colletta and Muggah, 2009); on the other hand, DDR serves an organic goal, and is supposed to ease the delivery of other pillars of post-war

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[19] Reinsertion entails a cash or in-kind package to help combatants getting back into civilian life: this kind of assistance is limited in time, targeted and does not create expectations – Box 1.

reconstruction: from infrastructure rehabilitation to local economic recovery (market integration, livelihoods and productive employment) to social development and institution building. Thus, DDR includes aspects of and has a stake in all the dimensions related to transition (i.e. security, political and socio-economic).

There is, nevertheless, a fundamental dilemma concerning the correct balance between security and development in DDR operations. In fact, there are cases in which short-term security concerns run against political and long-term development goals. In post-civil war Tajikistan, there was a trade off between achieving security (i.e. stopping violence and pacifying the country) and the liberal tenants of peacebuilding prescribing disarmament and transitional justice, among others. In Tajikistan, rewarding local commanders through political and economic incentives was functional to stabilizing the country: reintegration was carried out with limited DD. According to a security lens, then, DDR in Tajikistan is deemed successful. Nevertheless, stability was achieved at the expense of foregoing "the development consequences of an entrenchment of the economic roles of civil war actors" – indeed, a not so desirable outcome (Torjesen and MacFarlane, 2009). In similar forms, such dilemma is also present in the 2003-2006 demobilization of the paramilitaries in Colombia.

From a political standpoint, the technical literature and the practice of DDR completely missed the political underpinnings of DDR. DDR has broader implications beyond policy goals (see Chapter 2), but the liberal peacebuilding framework has reduced it to a purely technical endeavour. It is not about underestimating here the importance of disposing of light and heavy weapons, discharging and cantoning combatants, nor the quality of a reinsertion package, just to mention a few. The point is that a successful or failed outcome of DDR depends as much as on implementation requirements as on the political arrangement between those who demobilize and those who are demobilized. It also depends on a deep understanding of the motives and incentives of why a non-state armed group agrees on or is forced to demobilize (Keen, 2000; Kriger, 2003).

Therefore, the newest literature strongly argues for the inclusion of political reintegration into DDR programs (Berdal and Ucko, 2009; Giustozzi, 2012; Kriger, 2003). Undermining this dimension is the equivalent of neglecting the reality that armed conflicts are political and denying the grievances at the core of the conflict. Some of the most successful DDR intervention, in fact, are those that "formed part of, and [were] geared towards supporting, a wider political process aimed at addressing underlying sources of armed conflict" (Muggah, Berdal and Torjesen, 2009: 269).

Promising practices are underway: the theorization and implementation of interim stabilization measures (ISM) call for a greater flexibility in security-promotion intervention,

including DDR and SSR. ISM approach builds on contextualized political factors to devise security measures, with an eye on long-term development. It is an approach that is highly flexible in nature, and which does not shy away from addressing contextualized political incentives for actors. An example includes the temporary inclusion of former non-state armed groups within the security sector in order to enable ripe conditions for a political dialogue and avoid spoilers (Colletta and Muggah, 2009; Giustozzi, 2008; Lamb and Dye, 2009).

In this sense, liberal peace proponents advocate to address DDR in conjunction with SSR, as the reform of security services has not only obvious implications in terms of security, but important ramifications both in terms of governance and at the political level. In fact, SSR is an additional example of the ambitious and all-encompassing goals of liberal peace. The management and reform of security actors is considered and measured against good governance benchmarks of transparency, accountability, institution-building, rule of law and also shared representation. SSR is therefore conceptualized and implemented within the state-building project (Garrasi, Kuttner and Wam, 2009; Greene, 2008; Jackson, 2010; Sedra, 2010; Lamb and Dye, 2009).

Jackson (2010) provides a comprehensive definition of SSR scope: "SSR seeks to enhance the performance and accountability of police, military and intelligence organizations […]. SSR moves far beyond narrow technical definitions of security institutions and follows a more ambitious agenda of reconstructing or strengthening a state's ability to govern the security sector in a way that serves the population as a whole rather than the narrow political elite" (Ibid, 124). Additional dimensions that link SSR to liberal peace goals concern human security and the willingness to "democratize" security actors. On the one hand, as mentioned above, the reform of security actors should follow similar principles of institution-building and governance that are anchored on transparency and accountability of actors. On the other hand, SSR contributes to the transformation of the state-society relations through both the institutionalization of human rights and the adoption of an expanded notion of human security, alongside the classical concept of state security. This pattern is evident in the cases of the conflicts in Central America. In Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, the end of the conflicts were accompanied by efforts and commitments to downsize and "democratize" security forces (McConnell, 2012; Torres-Rivas, 2012; Cordova Macias and Ramos, 2012).

With respect to the social and economic dimensions of DDR, the tasks are daunting: from a macroeconomic perspective, one of the state's main objectives is to reconvert a war economy into a peace economy by reducing military spending, progressively reconverting the heavy industrial production to civilian use, and reabsorbing veterans into the work force (Colletta

et al., 2004; Tajima, 2009). Goodhand (2004) disaggregates the war economy into three sub-categories ("combat", "shadow", and "coping" economies) – a taxonomy that is functional to further nuancing the economic dimension of the war-to-peace transition. Each of these realms experiences a specific transition from war to peacetime economy.

"Combat economy" refers to the mobilization and production of resources for military usage. During transition, there is a macroeconomic re-adjustment of government spending that concerns the reduction of military expenditures in favour of social ones. Added to this, there is also the reconversion of the military industrial complex to civilian use. "Shadow economy" concerns the economic activities that take place outside the purview of the state during wartime. The transition of shadow economies from war to peace is less prescriptive than the combat economy as this involves incentives and interests of groups and elites. The political economy of shadow economy is not so obvious as there will not only be winners in the transition to peace, but also losers – i.e. those that profited during wartime and may not have matching interests in the peacetime economy. "Coping economy" refers to the set of efforts that the population engages in to sustain livelihoods during the time of war. Households may be subject to shortages and/or disruption of basic services, food rationing, and conscription, among others. During transition from war to peace, people's adaptation mechanism may be disrupted: thus, the coping economy needs to be careful assessed during transition. DDR raises specific concerns that relate to all three combat, shadow and coping economies, both at the macro and micro levels (Goodhand, 2004).

At the micro level, the transition from war to peace for individual ex-combatants is about their social and economic reintegration, which is mainly concerned with the welfare of the individual ex-combatant and his/her process of returning to be a productive member of society. This process encompasses multiple aspects related to economic welfare, livelihoods and employment, and the relationship between veterans, the community where they reintegrate (or integrate for the first time) and society at large (International Alert, 2010). These aspects also entail family reunion and dealing with the practical and emotional legacies of war (Nussio, 2012). Nonetheless, reintegration is broad in scope, has a long-term horizon and it is difficult to measure. In response, policy-makers adopted the more practical goal of 'reinsertion', which entails a concrete package of economic and social benefits available to ex-combatants to begin their reintegration process.

Main concerns include the degree of acceptance of former combatants into receiving communities, the ideological and practical ties to the former rebel group and its power structure, as well as allegiance to the state and the political system. In a seminal study on reintegration in Sierra Leone, Weinstein and Humphreys (2005) explored the circumstances

that either favoured or impeded ex-combatants from being accepted back in their family and/or community. The authors found that those ex-combatants that belonged to individual units responsible for atrocities were less likely to be accepted than those who belonged to units that were not responsible for atrocities (Weinstein and Humphreys, 2005).

This finding has a methodological implication: if the wartime behaviour of armed groups determines (or, at least, contributes to) the acceptability of ex-combatants into communities, it implies that to understand reintegration (and to design DDR intervention) it is not sufficient to just analyse the post-war environment. What is needed is, instead, a broader lens that connects war and peace, and that looks integrally at the process of transition. This consideration – as it is analysed in Chapter 2 – emphasizes the limitations of the post-conflict liberal peace project.

The design of social reintegration activities through the following three overlapping aspects makes a step forward in connecting reintegration to the broader process of transition. First, psychosocial assistance concerns both the psychological and social care for former combatants and victims in order to heal individual and collective trauma. Second, transitional justice includes those attempts to deal with the legacy and trauma of war, through the establishment of justice and reparations mechanisms, and truth and memory initiatives. Last, community development: support for former combatants should be coupled with community development programs of recovery in receiving areas, in order to enhance social and community cohesion and mitigate potential resentment toward veterans. Each of these three aspects has to extensively refer to wartime conditions in order to produce a successful outcome (Annan and Patel, 2009).

At the micro level, the implementation of economic reintegration includes those initiatives aimed at reintegrating combatants into the working force and the productive economy, and facilitating their sustainable livelihoods. Activities include vocational trainings and life skills, public work and community service, access to finance, land and the job market, and provision of income generation assistance (Tajima, 2009; International Alert, 2010).

A common challenge to the reintegration process is that reintegration often takes place in contexts with high social and economic vulnerability, which couple with weak institutions and physical destruction caused by the war. In response, some DDR practices strive to implement programs with a wider targeting that include other conflict-affected groups, like internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, women, indigenous communities, and the poor. Such holistic mechanism not only addresses recovery at the community level, but may also address feelings and perceptions of exclusion and disenfranchisement, thus serving a

wider purpose of reconciliation (Annan and Patel, 2009; Derks, Rouw and Briscoe, 2011; Duclos, 2012).

One more dimension that has been ignored by the technical literature concerns the variation of circumstances under which DDR takes place. A fundamental difference marks those cases where DDR, especially reintegration, occurs spontaneously from those necessitating intervention (state- or externally-driven). There are cases where demobilization has been forced upon a defeated enemy, either through repression and annihilation (as the fate of the republican forces after the Spanish civil war), or selectively (as in the case of Sri Lanka's Tamil separatists where rank and file combatants were reintegrated while mid-rank commanders were held in internment camps).

In conclusion, when addressing social and economic issues of veterans, a political economy perspective of the conflict drivers is paramount to capture the multiple levels in which DDR takes place. Micro-level research gives important insights into why individuals join armed groups. Among others, armed groups provide important social structures, networks and safety nets to individual members and their family: including both tangible (i.e. economic) and intangible benefits, such as the heightened social status that derives from being part of a violent group. This dimension is either downplayed or not well understood by reintegration programs: DDR brings the simple assumption that providing cash or in-kind assistance and vocational training may suffice to allure former combatants in the program itself (Justino, 2013: 15-16). Likewise, there is an urgent need for DDR to understand and engage with social networks and informal economies, including illicit trafficking (Marriage, 2009: 136; Colletta and Cullen, 2000).

DDR in Central America. A brief mention of the record of DDR in Central America is in order. As mentioned above, this region suffered from persistent violent conflicts up to the end of the Cold War. Then, it turned into one of the first laboratories for DDR globally. In fact, the very first UN mission with a DDR component was the UN Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) in 1989-92 mandated to monitor and verify the regional peace agreement. In 1990, ONUCA carried out the disarmament of the Nicaraguan Resistance, resulting in the demobilization of 2,759 fighters based in Honduras and 19,614 fighters in Nicaraguan territory (UNDPKO). A number of shortcomings and limitations in scope and mandate triggered the adoption of a more formalized program of DDR in the early 1990s.

Post-war El Salvador and Guatemala were two of the first few examples of DDR technical programs as such, together with Cambodia, Mozambique and Namibia. In El Salvador, over 40,000 ex-combatants from both regular army and the rebels were demobilized and reinserted between 1992-93 through the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). The

demobilization also included a "land for arms" program to provide employment opportunities and land distribution to ex-combatants (UNDPKOb; De Rouen and Heo, 2007; BICC, 1997). In Guatemala, the UN Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) in 1997 supported the DDR of 2,928 combatants of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity Group (URNG), as well as the more daunting task of downsizing state security services (UNDPKOc; Torres-Rivas, 2012).

Although these early DDR operations were functional to avoiding a relapse into armed conflict in all countries in the region, they nonetheless had mixed results when assessing the reintegration of ex-combatants. Scores of ex-combatants did not find their place back into civilian life. Since the early 2000s, some Central American countries witnessed skyrocketing levels of interpersonal violence and homicide rates, a fact that is not imputable to ex-combatants but that signals the complexity and transformation of violent conflict besides DDR dynamics.

Data and evidence of effectiveness. To conclude, it is important to make some considerations on data and evidence of effectiveness of DDR. A widely debated issue around DDR programs concerns the measures of effectiveness and the establishment of appropriate criteria of success. The growing heterogeneity of DDR processes, coupled with complex and highly context-specific settings, led in many cases to difficulty in establishing clear, realistic and measurable reintegration's goals and outcomes. To date, scholars, practitioners and policy-makers have been engaged in a debate over gaps and dilemmas in DDR theory and practice, and struggle to provide options and viable solutions. Consensus has been reached over the need for an evidence-based approach rather than a prescriptive one, for more attention to context-driven factors, and for better metrics of success and evaluation (Muggah, 2010; Schulhofer-Wohl and Sambanis, 2010; Colletta and Muggah, 2009). More importantly, some scholars advocate the need to 'unpack' and clearly define reintegration in terms of its components and scope, as well as its indicators of success and expected outcomes. This effort would enable measurement of effectiveness, carrying out evaluations, and establishment of a clear link between immediate outputs and long-term outcomes (Muggah, 2009: 89-92).

Kriger (2003) directs her main criticism toward the evaluations of peacebuilding operations in war to peace transition contexts. Almost all the criteria for success/failure of a post-war phase miss the domestic political dynamics, and focus instead on "subjective and arbitrary criteria" as measures of success (Kriger, 2003: 6). "The divorce of these measure of success from the history and politics of wars and settlements must also jeopardize the validity of evaluations of transitions. The dichotomy between war and peace which underpins studies

of transition can only be sustained by ignoring evidence" (Kriger, 2003: 12). In fact, the results from a case study analysis of a post-war country usually do not match with the peacebuilding technical evaluation. The case of Zimbabwe, for example, is deemed as a success by almost all standards of peacebuilding, but the outcome is more complicated than that and a more nuanced analysis is needed for evaluating DDR outcome. In turn, the author criticizes the evaluation of DDR programs exclusively based on security, social and economic outcomes, without paying any attention to the political implications that the policies toward veterans generate (Kriger, 2003: 8-15). In a similar fashion, Keen (2000) maintains that the evaluation of demobilization and reintegration policies for veterans should be done in conjunction with the rest of peacebuilding assistance (Keen, 2000: 16).

There is also a quantitative literature that looks at the effectiveness of reintegration provisions. For example, in their seminal examination of the DDR in Sierra Leone, Weinstein and Humphreys (2005) looked at both former combatants who were DDR beneficiaries and those former combatants that did not participate in a DDR program. Surprisingly, they did not find a different rate of reintegration into society between the two groups, thus suggesting that the DDR program did not have any impact on reintegration outcomes at the individual level. This finding gives further validity to the methodology this research adopted, which is based on a multiple-level framework of analysis (individual, organizational, and structural). By addressing these levels separately and in their interaction, I am able to better crystallize the different dimensions of a DDR process. For the Sierra Leone example, the DDR program may had been ineffective at the individual level in facilitating ex-combatants reinsertion into society; but, in theory, it could have simultaneously achieved different goals, including: contributing to security and stabilization (structural), favouring the transition of the rebel group into a political party (organizational), and helping to frame the conflict grievances from war means to a peaceful resolution mechanism (structural).

CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced some of the current intellectual and practical dilemmas with respect to two interrelated topics. The first concerns the transition from war to peace and its conceptualization. It posits that wars have political, social and economic characters, which transcend the historical moment and the specific temporal and spatial features. It refutes the claim that a new type of war has arisen since the end of the Cold War, when in fact what is 'new' is the richer analytical framework to understand conflict. Whereas new conflict factors and emerging dynamics may influence the start, unfolding, continuation and end of armed conflict, it is necessary to examine those through the lenses of political, social and economic dynamics – all of which are inherent to any conflict. In similar fashion, the chapter and the

research state that the transition process from war to peace is not a linear one. And that its phases are not clear cut.

Second, with ample reference to Latin America, the chapter has introduced the concept and practice of both peacebuilding and DDR, as endeavours that follow the halt of armed hostilities. In the eyes of funders and implementers, peacebuilding and DDR are meant to operationalize this transition, and to favour its smooth course. Unsatisfactory results have led to a reappraisal of what peacebuilding intervention can really achieve, and especially to what extent standardized formulas and policies can work. The literature review also criticizes the overly technical approach to peacebuilding and especially to DDR, which has entirely missed the political dimension. A more nuanced understanding of the political economy of conflict is necessary to a successful DDR process, beyond counting the number of discharged combatants and designing reinsertion packages.

2. Towards an Alternative Approach on War, Peace and DDR

After explaining how transition from war to peace has been operationalized through an encompassing liberal peacebuilding project, and exposing the limitations of the literature and practice on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), it is now important to put the basis for an alternative approach to understand transition and DDR. This alternative approach is based on political economy analysis and on a comprehensive understanding of war and war to peace transition related to historical political, institutional, social and economic dynamics.

As an introduction, I discuss the main critiques to the liberal peacebuilding model, which provides the rationale to introduce alternative models. Next, to understand contemporary wars and provide possible solutions for peace, it is imperative to assess the historic role that wars have had since the formation of modern states. This framework of analysis provides insights on current armed conflicts' potential role as a state builder mechanism, as well as the role of non-state armed groups in this process. These considerations lead the way to discussing alternative forms of order and peace, and the nature and functions of rebel governance.

Moving to DDR, I demonstrate how both mobilization for war and demobilization retain a role in state formation processes. I also review the nature and the quality of the political settlement between the state and veterans, which is key to understand post-war stability and order.

2.1   A Historical Political Economy Approach to War and Post-War Transition

CRITIQUES TO LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING AND HYBRID PEACE

Having accounted for the theoretical underpinnings and the evolution of liberal peacebuilding and DDR, it is now critical to briefly discuss the main critiques to the liberal model and to introduce some considerations on so-called hybrid forms of peace. Such critiques are, then, functional to introducing alternative approaches to understanding war to peace transition and DDR.

As it was mentioned in Chapter 1, contemporary peacebuilding is vast and comprehensive in its thematic areas, and as such it conflates with state building. As a (mainly) top-down global governance enterprise, peacebuilding becomes a state-building project due to the multi-task and multidimensional process that it generates. "A new "paradigm" of reconstruction has emerged, one which combines the traditional forms of peacekeeping, mediation, and negotiation, with the broad array of tasks necessary to construct, reconstruct, or even develop the infrastructures, institutions, and political, economic, and social fabric of post-conflict states." Again, DDR is perceived as one of the key elements of such paradigm (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2007: 491).

An important set of critiques asserts that democracy and market oriented economy are potentially good outcomes, but they are unobtainable in a context of state failure. "The self-image of the west is being projected where it cannot work", admits Chandler (2010: 40). Cramer (2006) laments the emergence of a standard model of reconstruction, through the devise of peacebuilding policies that reproduce Western values and practices (e.g. rule of law, elections etc.) to contexts that are not necessarily able to embrace them. Liberal peacebuilding policies may even produce unintentional consequences in terms of renewed conflict, heightened tensions and/or elite predation, resulting ultimately as counterproductive. Naïve liberal assumptions of introducing market-oriented reforms in a war-shattered country have been put forward at the expense of *ad hoc* targeted intervention (Cramer, 2006: 250-251; Keohane, 2002; Krasner, 2004, 2005; Paris, 2004; Snyder, 2000; Zakaria, 2003).

One more set of critiques argues that liberal peace may be fundamentally unable to deal with the more intangible issues regarding peace implementation. "While the liberal peace model is effective in securing the quantifiable aspects of peace (the number of housing units reconstructed, the number of former combatants processed and the like) it is less effective in managing the affective dimension of peace – reconciliation, trust, inter-communal respect" (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2007: 496). The distinction between tangible and intangible aspects of peacebuilding is crucial for the understanding of reintegration policies for ex-combatants. As it is analysed in Chapter 8, reintegration entails a combination of both material incentives and non-material ones, related to self-perception, identity, and acceptance by society.

Cramer (2006) sums up by arguing that peacebuilding policies endanger development and stability when three sets of considerations are ignored: (a) Peacebuilding is an inherent endogenous political process, not a mere technical and programmatic endeavor; thus, domestic political dynamics should be central to peacebuilding (Kriger, 2003). (b) Economic

policies should not be based on ideological and pre-cooked blueprints, but rather on the specific contexts in place. Cramer (2006) identifies 'debt', as the critical issue around which peacebuilding liberal policies of structural adjustment and market-oriented measures are introduced to post-conflict countries. Loans and economic reconstruction are granted in exchange for the introduction of liberal policies in the country itself, regardless of the context. (c) Transition dynamics are considered linear, as following a predefined path. As it was previously analysed, there is no such thing as a black and white conflict/post-conflict dichotomy, but a complex continuum of violence and its transformation (Cramer, 2006: 245-276).

Side by side with the critiques to the liberal peace project, post-liberal or hybrid peace theories have emerged. Hybrid peace focuses on: the *local* vis-à-vis the national and international levels; the *everyday* life that people living in a conflict-affected environment experience; the specific social needs and 'shared goals'; and the ensuing institutional transformation. In hybrid forms of peace, the domestic politics of peace are central. Both state and society concerns are addressed, and both retain an active role in the peacebuilding process (Burton, 1990; Jabri, 2013; Keen, 2000; Kriger, 2003; Murray Li, 2007, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2010; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2007; Mitchell and Hancock, 2012; Pugh, 2000; Richards, 2005; Richmond, 2008; Richmond, 2009).

There is a recognition that externally-driven peacebuilding policies that overemphasize institution-building at the expense of peoples' needs had the unintended consequence of widening the state's distance from society and weakening legitimacy. Instead, the processes of institution-building and social change have to account for and be driven by local dynamics, power politics, shared goals, deliberation and dialogue, even if (or, especially if) this process is contentious (Chandler, 2010; Marc et al., 2013; Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2007; Barron et al., 2011).[20]

This approach is highly relevant because the present research on DDR adopts a micro-level focus in which the lives of ex-combatants are fully analysed, beyond the dynamics of DDR. In fact, hybrid peace also concerns a methodological approach that focuses on the micro-determinants and micro-level analysis of conflict and peace. As a research subject, war to peace transition may "be contextualized more subtly, geographically, culturally, in terms of identity, and the evolution of the previous socioeconomic polity" (Richmond, 2008: 17; Duclos, 2012; Kalyvas, 2012; See also the 2014 Special Issue on Micro Approaches in the

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[20] "If the content and legitimacy of a new institution have been forged by an equitable (if messy and time-consuming) process of contestation, it is a qualitatively different entity than the seemingly similar best practice institutional form borrowed (or enforced) from outside." (Barron et al., 2011: 259).

Journal of Conflict Resolution, 58 (8); Balcells and Justino, 2014; Justino, 2013; Kalyvas, 2006, 2008).

The literature recognizes the importance of the dualism between structure and agency in the explanation of social reality (Long, 2001; Wood, 2003; Arjona and Kalyvas, 2012; Weinstein, 2007: 20-22). By acknowledging that citizens are active stakeholders of the social contract and not merely passive recipients of development intervention and external shocks, hybrid peace formulations focus on agency to explain development, conflict and change (Mac Ginty, 2010).

This view contrasts with the two main theoretical foundations on development: modernization and Marxism. Even if they reach departing conclusions, the two schools of thought share a structural and deterministic approach that maintain that political, economic and power-based structures shape social change.[21] To counteract path-dependency approaches, Long (2001: 9) and others lay "the foundations for an actor perspective on development intervention and social change."[22] A focus on the needs of ordinary citizens implies an understanding of peace as an organic outcome, which rests on multiple levels. Peace dividends at the local level may not be received as "an integrated framework, [but – concerned with their day-to-day survival –] individuals may experience the liberal peace in a piecemeal and disjointed fashion – for example, the formalization of an everyday economic exchange that previously had been in the domain of the informal economy or a changing legal code" (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2007: 497). As a consequence, peace is 'localized' and composite: it is not one but many, and acknowledging the interaction between the different dimensions that compose peacebuilding – and DDR – is paramount (Gray, 2012; Murray Li, 2009; Richmond, 2008, 2009).

STATE FORMATION AND VIOLENT CONFLICT: THEORIES AND APPLICATION TO LATIN AMERICA

The above critiques to liberal peacebuilding and overview of hybrid forms of peace set the stage for a more nuanced explanation of the transition from war to peace – an explanation that goes beyond the implementation of peacebuilding intervention. The political economy approach that is proposed here underlines first of all the broader role that war plays (and

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[21] Modernization believes in a fundamental and progressive advancement of humans in terms of their standard of living, sophistication of institutions, and complexity of technologies, among others. According to the theorization by Rostow in 1960, development occurs in stages. Modernization believes in an expansion and adaptation to the rest of the world of the Western model of transition from agrarian to industrial economies. Instead, Marxism and its several political economy emanations are concerned with the exploitative nature of the development process, which recreates unequal class structures on a global scale and favors marginalization of the periphery. Marxism has dealt with the dichotomy structure-agency as the former crushing the latter, to be defined as 'structural hegemony'.

[22] An actor-oriented approach gives prominence to human beings, their ideas and ingenuity over institutions, structures and processes, and "stresses the interplay and mutual determination of 'internal' and 'external' factors and relationships" (Long, 2001: 13).

has played in history) regarding state formation processes, as well as the role played by demobilization processes.

The experience of Europe from the 15th Century on identifies a pattern of state formation. Scholars built theories through the analysis of concepts of monopolization, centralization of authority and coercion, taxation and economic change, competing politics, as well as the role of war and violence in the state-making process (Bates, 2001; Elias, 1982; Giustozzi, 2008; Howard, 2001; Migdal, 1988, 2001; North, Wallis and Weingast, 2009; Tilly, 1985, 1990, 2003).[23]

Tilly (1985, 1990) maintains that the process of *state making* in Europe was inseparable from the dynamics of *war making* by European rulers. This included the defeat of internal competitors, and the competition and power struggle with external competitors. Often, the internal and external realms overlapped: in the early stages of the state formation process, borders were not firm and there was continuous war between states. Kings delimited their own borders (albeit unstable) and built up their military; internally, rulers proceeded to either liquidate or coopt rivals and local elites. In turn, reining in on local powers and elites allowed the state to centralize security through the establishment of police (Tilly, 1985).[24]

Both internal and external processes depended on the state's tendency and ability to monopolize and concentrate the means of coercion. Giustozzi (2008) rightly distinguishes between a *complete* monopoly of violence, which rarely occurred in history; and monopoly of *large scale* violence, which entails the absence of armed groups who are engaged in political violence that directly threatens political order. The latter is more common as armed groups may exist and violent events may occur without necessarily threatening the existence of the state and the political order (Giustozzi, 2008).

Added to the monopolization and centralization of force, a second crucial aspect in the state-making process concerns the monopoly of taxation, resource extraction and capital accumulation.[25] The rise of monarchy, reasons Elias (1982), is achieved through an effort of enlarging not only the military basis of kingdoms, but also their economic domain at the expense of feudalism, power elites and localized interests.

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[23] We take here Tilly's definition of states "as coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories. The term therefore includes city-states, empires, theocracies, and many other forms of governments, but excludes tribes, lineages, firms and churches as such" (Tilly, 1990: 1-2)

[24] By late 1700 most rulers achieved monopoly of large scale violence "[...] through most of Europe, monarchs controlled permanent, professional military forces that rivaled those of their neighbors and far exceeded any other organized armed force within their own territory. The state's monopoly of large scale violence was turning from theory to reality" (Tilly, 1985: 174).

[25] "The financial means [...] flowing into this central authority maintain its monopoly of military force, while this in turn maintains the monopoly of taxation." If one falls, the other follows suit (Elias, 1982: 346).

Failed attempts at monopolization and centralization started early on, in 12th Century France: one feudal lord would overcome his competitors and establish his rule, but he would lack the economic means to sustain his victory on the ground and expand his power base. "Europe [was] parcelled out between thousands of lords, each with his own power base, owing allegiance to a notional overlord whose authority was effective only so far as he could enforce it" (Howard, 2001: 11-12). Due to the high number of local power holders that were able to finance their own private armies, a web of alliances and enmities unravelled, but no one could sustainably prevail. This situation produced constant instability and local violent conflicts that did not permanently set the axis of power. In a nutshell, there was no ruler who could claim wide legitimacy to rule and had the means to do so (Tilly, 1990).

The main reason for the success of the 17th Century monopolization and centralization is that the economy and the control of land was progressively monetized and commercialized: a logic of profit based on money is introduced at the expense of subsistence economies primarily based on barter. In the past, rulers had to distribute land to the ruled, depleting their fortunes and properties in the process; thus, they had to constantly rely on military conquests in order to survive. Instead, kings now collected taxes and distributed incomes, not land. In turn, they were able to pursue military expansion and develop a bureaucratic class through increased financial resources. Distribution of income is "precisely what enables him [the king] to break out of the vicious circle which trapped the rulers of countries with barter economies" (Elias, 1982: 436). The diffusion of the money sector in the economy further weakened the land-centered aristocracy.

Understanding the pattern of state formation is relevant to the current case of Meta, in Colombia. It contextualizes in a longer historical horizon the process of state centralization and monopoly of violence, which – to a certain extent – is still ongoing in Colombia. As Chapter 4 analyses in depth, Meta is part of a larger region of *colonization*: throughout the 20th Century the Colombian state has made botched attempts at including frontier regions within the state. Arguably, the unequal and exploitative power of local elites gave rise to armed resistance first, and rebellion subsequently. Persistent armed conflict, therefore, delayed the state formation process, and frustrated the Colombian state's efforts at centralization. The limited outcome in achieving state centralization and monopolization of violence is a feature that Colombia shares with the rest of the Latin American region (see below for a discussion of the patterns of state formation in the region).

A further aspect that shows connections between Colombia (and other contemporary cases) and state formation's theories concerns the centralization of security and monopoly of violence. The process of defeating and coopting small private armies led by local elites can be

traced in the privatization of security through paramilitary forces that mark the conflict in Colombia. The origin of self defence forces to protect and advance local elites' interests in Colombian frontier regions has to be read in the framework of state's inability to monopolize violence. At times, local interests may be aligned with state interests; at times, they may clash. What is worth underlining is that the process of brokerage between institutions and the parcelization of security – both of which are core elements of state formation theories – can apply to modern cases, including Meta in Colombia. This point brings further granularity to the case study of Meta: such insights highlight the gradual process of brokerage and ridicule the idealistic state building project (Ahram, 2011; Romero, 2003b).

An important caveat when drawing such parallel is that in 15th-17th Century Europe the state had yet to be formed and war highly contributed to its formation. Instead, in post-Second World War developing countries – especially after decolonization – the structure and the normative legitimacy of the state are in place. Therefore, war may act more as a mechanism for either state strengthening or state failure, rather than state building (Taylor and Botea, 2008).

There are also authors who deny the state-building role played by contemporary wars. Leander (2004) states that war is instead undoing state building. Conflict and violence determining state formation in the long run is a theory that does not hold for contemporary developing countries due to globalization, which alters the mechanisms described by Tilly and others, and put in motion a process of deconstruction and decentralization of nation state's authority. This process has been described by some as neo-medievalism due to the *de facto* observable overlap of authorities and fragmentation of power in several contemporary developing countries (Cerny, 1998; Deibert, 1997; Duffield, 2000; Reno, 2003; Verdery, 1996).[26]

With respect to the 'competition to centralize control' process, the fact that today external boundaries are internationally sanctioned implies that states use military power only against internal rivals, and not externally (Leander, 2004). In fact, countries that experienced decolonization were automatically part of the international system of states without having shared its history and process. After state formation in Europe and the consolidation of boundaries, states increased their cooperation, which progressively lead to agreements. This process in practice strengthened the process of state formation at the international level with the establishment of the League of Nations first, and the United Nations later. These developments have high implications for todays' state formation: the UN system was

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[26] "Rather than concentrating sovereignty, feudal political authority was defined by its 'parceling out' (Verdery, 1996: 208). This shaped a political order characterized by multiple zones of authority with overlapping and often competing boundaries existing in relation to a weak central authority" (Duffield, 2000: 164).

extended to the rest of the world, without the rest of the world experiencing the same process that European states went through (Tilly, 1985).

In addition, the process of capital accumulation is also distorted today: the bulk of capital and resources has to be looked for in the external realm rather than the internal one, due to globalization and internazionalization of financial resources. This is a different scenario from European state formation of the 17th Century. Administrative decentralization and economic privatization also play a role in undermining state formation dynamics. Privatization disperses resources and the state is not well-endowed anymore. This means that it cannot distribute resources at local level and use capital, and that today local elites are more powerful vis-à-vis the state than they were in the state formation era in Europe. A similar process occurs with the centralization of coercion: privatization of security and squeezed defence budgets lead to more decentralized (and/or outsourced) control of security (Leander, 2004; Reno, 2003; Davis, 2003; Pereira, 2003).

State formation and war experienced different trajectories in Latin America than the rest of the world. Centeno (2002, 2003) argues that different dynamics shaped the close relationship between war and state in this region. "Latin American states do not appear to have enjoyed the structural boosts offered by warfare", which was so central to state formation in Western Europe. Nor did Latin American states practice international wars on the scale that European states did (Centeno, 2003: 82; Holmes at al., 2008: 17-18).[27]

Within the mutual relationship state-war, the Latin American case shows that "limited" wars produced "limited" states and vice versa (Centeno, 2003). The ability to conduct total war (i.e. wars of large scale) requires sophisticated institutions, efficient burocratization of the state and economic planning, and mobilization of the citizenry – all features that Latin American states never fully accomplished.[28] In other words, total wars need a strong state. The lack of – or the weak experience with – centralization process and sophistication of political institutions mirrors a weaker capacity to conduct war. In turn, strong states are also forged by waging wars. Centeno (2003) argues that the inability of Latin American states to wage total wars had unintended consequences on their ability to build strong states.

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[27] Notwithstanding the relative absence of large scale international wars in the region, one can also argue that Latin America witnessed a trade-off between interstate and intra-state violence. In the last two centuries, virtually all Latin American countries have experienced high rates of political violence (Chile, Uruguay, Mexico, Argentina and Bolivia), civil war (Colombia, Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua) or sustained levels of criminal violence (Brazil, Haiti, and present-day Venezuela and Honduras).

[28] Centeno (2003) singles out Cuba as one exception in the Latin American continent. Its permanent state of confrontation with the US equals a permanent and total mobilization, which in Cuba has taken place along with centralization, strong institutions and a high degree of social cohesion. No other Latin American state has experienced a total war as Cuba does, and no other one has developed comparable strong institutions and people's mobilization.

In turn, the lack of total war making in Latin America had consequence on attaining a monopoly of violence – failing to achieve not only a *complete* monopoly, but even a monopoly of *large-scale* violence, according to Giustozzi's (2008) formulation. Since Latin American states did not conduct total wars, they also did not have to concentrate coercive force (i.e. total mobilization) in order to do so. The result is that, to different degrees, these states witnessed a perpetual dispersion of the means of coercion, which means that they only attained a low degree of monopoly of violence. Colombia represents a perfect example of this pattern: non-state armed groups of different origins and conformation (e.g. FARC and paramilitaries) have contested – and at times threatened – the tenuous monopoly of violence of the Colombian state (Centeno, 2003; Pereira, 2003).

The pattern of limited wars that Latin American states experience is also self-perpetuating and only modifiable in the long term. Centeno (2003: 84) talks about a "cultural repertoire" that the experience of total war making requires. There is an intrinsic ideological aspect in the call for war mobilization that all states and societies have gone through during history. Total war requires individual and collective sacrifices, and these can only be attained through a symbolic apparatus that acts as a bonding and cohesive tool between state and citizens. These consist of practices of historical memory, honour and ideology. The lack of experience with total war goes hand in had with a lack of experience of such bonding process that results in mass mobilization. Thus, having avoided total war making, Latin American states also experience a lower degree of bonding between states and citizens (Centeno, 2003; Pereira, 2003).

REBEL GOVERNANCE AND ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ORDER

Alternative forms of order may result either from local-level negotiations, or from non-state armed groups that exercise 'government' functions in territories they hold. Thus, it is important to touch upon the role of non-state armed groups, including the bargaining process with the state, the ensuing 'order' and how they exercise authority. A caveat is that there is a substantial difference between rebels' ruling dynamics and those of organized crime.

There is a growing literature that looks at the contemporary role and implications of non-state armed actors in state formation and failure (edited volume by Davis and Pereira, 2003; Podder, 2012; Mampilly, 2011), including paramilitaries (Romero, 2003; Grajales, 2011), warlords (Giustozzi, 2009), mafias (Gambetta, 1993) and gangs.

Two schools of thought on non-state armed groups' functions are worth mentioning here. Some view these groups as mere warlords, who exercise control and establish authority

based on short sighted strategies, largely in pursuit of short-term economic goals (Gambetta, 1993; Marten, 2006; Skaperdas, 2002). These views not only deny the ideological character of non-state armed groups, but do also underestimate the complexity of relationships and dynamics at play that armed groups experience when they hold territory (Mampilly, 2011).

A second school of thought looks at the broader implications of contemporary non-state armed groups, asserting that such groups and their dynamics resemble those that led to state formation in Western Europe. While not denying the capital accumulation framework of scholars who see them as warlords, this school of thought considers non-state armed groups as embryonic states (Kingston and Spears, 2004; Jackson, 2003). Nonetheless, some authors challenge this view as an oversimplification which overlooks the domestic and international contexts in which non-state armed groups operate (Mampilly, 2011).

For example, paramilitaries in Colombia can be considered as part of the process of capital accumulation and state formation, because they participated in the social contention of land control and exploitation. As a result of this role, paramilitaries established delimited systems of authority and power and acted as a state formation tool through violence (Grajales, 2011). There is some tension between this interpretation and the one offered above (Centeno, 2003) asserting that limited and small-scale wars contributed to weak state formation processes. In their informality, non-state armed actors usually either resist processes of centralization and monopolization of violence through the establishment of global webs of relationships; or they get into a bargaining process with the state (Duffield, 2000: 170-187).

A series of authors offer insightful contributions. In the dichotomy state vs. non-state, Tilly (1985) focuses on the central issue of legitimacy. He provides an analogy between protection racketeers and state's governments: both provide the same service (i.e. security), but states have the authority and legitimacy, which racketeers lack. He defines legitimacy from the perspective of competing authorities: legitimacy is the "probability that other authorities will act to confirm the decisions of a given authority. Other authorities […] are much more likely to confirm the decisions of a challenged authority that controls substantial force" (Tilly, 1985: 171).

Related to this challenge, there is the issue of modern fragile states, which often times suffer from a permanent crisis of legitimacy. By observing the inherent state weakness of contemporary fragile countries, Ahram (2011) recognizes the importance of non-state armed actors in successfully maintaining security and stability. Productive approaches to state building should forego the goal of a state monopoly on violence and acknowledge the "true power" of non-state armed actors – and work with them (Ahram, 2011: 178). The point that Ahram makes is that states do not have to necessarily be monopolists: in the pursue of

order and stability, states may extend their power through brokering arrangements and fragmentation of security – instead of centralization.

Franchising out the means of violence may not automatically lead to state failure, but it may produce an alternative arrangement in which stable forms of order and security emerge. In turn, by decentralizing the means of coercion, the power of the state is not necessarily weakened. A possible outcome is that a new order emerges without the traditional centralization of the means of coercion (Ahram, 2011).

Other authors reach similar conclusions. North et al. (2007) conceptualize one type of fragmented social order in today's developing countries as limited access order (LAO). This is characterized by (i) the absence of a complete monopoly of violence, and by (ii) a bargaining process within society to control order and violence, and to divide up rents and the economic sphere among elite groups. Implications of such order include an incentive to maintain stability by avoiding war and by limiting access to potential competitors. This point is applicable to bargaining process at local level in Colombia to implement demobilization: in areas where the state is weak or not present, non-state groups administer order and violence through a local-level bargaining process, and impede other groups' influence from rising and challenging their power. Thus, to be implemented, the process of demobilization may also rely on a local-level bargaining process.

Together with *ad hoc* arrangements in the realm of security, it is paramount to recognize the specificities of war economies as well, and – at least conceptually – go beyond the rigid dichotomies of formal/informal and legal/illegal economy. If the transition from war economies to peace economies is to be executed, this will not take place through a clean slate, but through a process of interaction between structures of war and structures of peace. The term 'transition' embodies the meaning that in order to go from state X to state Y, there are intermediate steps: to a certain extent, Y would be shaped by X. A superficial or ideological read of transition, instead, would deny any space to 'war', hoping that somehow 'peace' would materialize through intervening factors. It is imperative, then, to recognize and use the structures of war, in order to move toward peace. In other words, peace can only be built through existing war structures and the relationship between the two.

With this premise in mind, war economies bear important elements that any peace strategy would need to acknowledge and to build on – not least because the livelihoods of war-affected population largely depend on war economies. In Chapter 1, I adopted Goodhand's (2004) tripartite formulation on the core functions of war economies (i.e. combat, shadow, and coping economies). There are obvious synergies between the three economies. The example of the opium economy in Afghanistan can be directly applied to Colombia and its

coca leaf economy: poppy cultivation represents a survival mechanism for the farmer (i.e. coping economy), becomes a trading commodity (i.e. shadow economy), and, through taxation, poppy is also a funding mechanism for non-state armed actors (i.e. combat economy). A transition to a legal peace economy will not happen (neither in Afghanistan nor in Colombia) without an understanding of and engagement with these three aspects. A possible approach to transitioning from war to peace economies "focuses less on containing the war economy than engaging with it, in order to harness the energies of war and build sustainable peace", concludes Goodhand (2004: 171).

As part of these nuanced understanding of order, security and economies during wartime, a growing literature on 'rebel governance' has recently emerged. The main strand of this literature concerns the role of non-state armed groups in administering territory at the local level. Predominantly present in peripheral and remote areas outside the reach of the state, rebel-controlled institutions exercise governance and authority, but do not fit within the parameter of the state or its legal framework (Arjona, 2008, 2014; Arjona et al., 2015; Mampilly, 2011; Menkhaus, 2010; Weinstein, 2007).

Before briefly discussing the main tenants of rebel governance, a relevant point for this research relates to the labour market of non-state armed groups – a complete novel dimension of the rebel governance literature. This research adopts an employment and labor market lens to the analysis of combatants' mobilization, membership to the armed group and demobilization (See Chapter 3). This aspect is widely analysed empirically (Chapters 6-7-8), but it deserves to be mentioned in connection to the theoretical material. My research artificially considers combatants as employees and non-state armed groups as employers. Thus, the patterns through which non-state armed groups recruit (i.e. hire) combatants is part of armed groups' institutions and governance mechanisms. The bonds between the two constitute an implicit social contract, which theoretically fits within the rebel governance literature.

Non-state armed groups that act as rulers and administrators have important implications for political order and for transition from war to peace, rather than state formation – says Mampilly (2011). It has long been recognized that political order only emanates from the state, and that absence of state is synonym with chaos and/or instability. Instead, this new literature challenges these assumptions by providing evidence and theoretical foundations that order and stability can result from non-state armed groups' governance. Conceptually ignoring this fact does a dis-service to efforts to support transition: such efforts may result in more successful transition if war-time institutions in place are not ignored, but they are engaged with (Arjona, 2014; Mampilly, 2011).

Mampilly (2011) also adds that because political order is seen as only emanating from the state, when non-state armed actors engage in governance activities and *de facto* authority, their threat is magnified. Lund (2006) asserts that, during war, authority is a much more fluid concept and experience than during peace.[29] Depending on the specific service provided or function administered, layers of authority may either overlap, or enter in competition with one another, or simply be absent. Thus, "it is useful not to see [authority] as stemming from one single source, but rather to focus on how particular issues (security, justice, development, taxation and others) are governed and which actors are engaged with them" (Lund, 2006: 682). The failure to understand that authority can have alternative sources compels state actors (and international ones) to exclusively respond with violence (Mampilly, 2011: 28).

Examples of rebel governance abound: state-within-state situations in which rebel groups *de facto* rule over civilian populations, by administering justice, providing service delivery and exercising violence. There are also cases where non-state armed groups rule through terror, fear and/or forced displacement (e.g. paramilitaries in Colombia; Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone).

The quality of governance and authority that rebels exercise does not only depends on their initial preference, but also on due-course adaptation and on the interaction with the population and other actors. This is why a political economy approach may be more apt to explain the complexity and the different types of relationship that characterize conflict situations (Arjona, 2008; Mampilly, 2011; Menkhaus, 2010: 181-185; Weinstein, 2007).

These insights are highly relevant to Colombia where both guerrilla and paramilitary groups *de facto* exercised authority in areas beyond the reach of the state. And where entire regions of the country have been historically marginalized and outside state control (Chapter 4). This issue is vital for the understanding of the process of demobilization. In its effort to pull out combatants from illegal armed groups and to reintegrate individuals into society, the DDR program 'competes' with the authority and the rule of non-state armed groups at local level. The understanding of how this process of 'competition' and interaction between state and non-state armed actors work will contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of recidivism. Arguably, DDR beneficiaries drop out from the DDR program and re-engage in illegal activities in areas where state presence is lower and the power of non-state armed groups is greater.

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[29] "What characterizes this group of institutions is their movement in and out of a capacity to exercise public authority. They operate in the twilight between state and society, between public and private" (Lund, 2006: 678).

POST-WAR TRANSITION

To complete this overview of alternative theories on and political economy approaches to peacebuilding, wartime order and institutions, it is necessary to briefly highlight the main challenges that the post-war phase presents, as well as the transition that non-state armed groups themselves experience. This sub-section contextualizes and gives more explanatory power to the theoretical foundations explained in the previous sub-sections.

The non-linear nature of the transition from war to peace presents a set of challenges in the immediate post-war phase. Peace is tenuous and resumption of armed conflict a constant threat. Collier and Sambanis (2002) reveal that war resumption and relapse into conflict of a country that just experienced civil war is more frequent than a new conflict in a country with no war history.[30] First, there is high unpredictability in managing the transition and the ongoing transformations in post-conflict societies.[31] The introduction of market- and democracy-oriented reforms stimulates more competition and under certain conditions may be disruptive (e.g. electoral violence), all of which compound with a typical high degree of societal conflict. Second, post-war countries lack what Paris (2004) defines "conflict dampeners" – i.e. history, tradition and societal cultural mechanisms that are in place and that favor peaceful resolution of disputes. Third, conflict-affected countries chronically suffer from weak political institutions – as the World Bank's 2011 World Development Report acknowledges (World Bank, 2011).

One clear dynamic related to war to peace transition concerns the rise and/or the transformation of violence after major war operations. In the aftermath of war, violence is not likely to abruptly cease and make way for non-violent peace and security. Transition to peace is a much more tortuous road. There are four main mechanisms to explain the emergence of post-war violence: (i) Socio-cultural factors, including a higher degree of acceptance of violence within society, and societal trauma. (ii) Institutional approach relates emerging violence to a failure of or weak institutionalization in the aftermath of war, like failed SSR and ineffective DDR (Rotberg, 2004). (iii) A political economy perspective that sees war and peace in a *continuum* considers the social and economic functions of war in terms of transformation and power accumulation. In these structural terms, a clear-cut

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[30] The finding that post-conflict countries have a 50% chance to witness conflict resumption within five years has been adopted as a warning light in policy circles in order to justify intervention in post-conflict countries. Nevertheless, it is highly controversial and has been refused by academics on several grounds: scholars (Suhrke and Samset, 2007; Cramer, 2006) have questioned the integrity and the methodological approach leading to it. Years later, the same authors have revised downward their finding – a correction that however went almost unnoticed. At the same time, it is safe to assume that post-war countries face higher risks of conflict relapse than countries with no prior history of conflict.

[31] To give one more example, Mansfield and Snyder (1995) found that countries going through a transition from authoritarian rule to democracy are more prone to be involved in an international conflict than either stable mature democracies or authoritarian states.

distinction between war and post-war is irrelevant. (iv) The nature of the peace settlement and the introduction of liberal peace reforms may determine an increase in violence or relapse into conflict (Suhrke, 2011; Hazen, 2010). Applied to Colombia's post-DDR of paramilitaries, (i), (ii) and (iii) approaches are useful to explain persistent levels of violence in areas of the country under control of non-state armed groups.

Crime and interpersonal violence have also often increased in post-war countries after large-scale armed operations ended, and have been the subject of increased attention by scholars (Cruz et al., 2012; Suhrke, 2011; Hazen, 2010; Berdal, 2011).[32] The cases of Central America are notorious. Four years after the war was over, homicide levels in El Salvador had reached a rate of 150 per 100,000 inhabitants, which was five times higher than pre-war levels (Cordova Macias and Ramos, 2012; Bourgois, 2004). In Guatemala, the homicide rate in 2009 was 49 (per 100,000 inhabitants), which was twice than the annual average during the years of the civil war that ended in 1996 (Torres-Rivas, 2012).[33] The explosion of violence in Central America is often explained through a lens of poverty, marginalization, migration and legacies from the armed conflict. Some authors argue that the failure of the institutional response in the post-war phase is largely responsible for these trends. States have either failed to implement peace agreements, or they have deliberately acted through repressive means and antagonized groups (Cruz et al., 2012).

The analysis of the different forms that violence assumes in a post-war phase is an important dimension to be explored, and highly relevant to Colombia. Here, criminal and politically motivated violence often conflate. The change in the patterns of violence, in turn, largely depends on the post-war transition that non-state armed groups experience and on the *de facto* settlement between armed actors and the state. Hazen (2010) describes post-war 'pathways' of conflict and non-conflict armed groups during transition to explore their post-war trajectories (Figure 2.1). For example, the "termination of *conflict* armed groups" pathway is related to the fact that the main conflict parties dissolve and reintegrate into legal politics.

With respect to Colombia, according to Hazen (2010), the DDR of the paramilitary umbrella of the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) led to a pathway of "transformation of conflict armed groups": paramilitaries – or what was left of them – turned into localized criminal organizations without a central structure or agenda (labelled "Criminal bands", or BACRIM by Colombian security), but with plenty of resources

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[32] Conversely, countries with high levels of crime have shown tendencies toward sporadic socio-political instability, as in the cases of post-election violence in Kenya, or riots in Brazil and Haiti.
[33] Similarly, in Italy in a five-year period after World War II, homicide rate increased by 133% when compared to a similar period prior to the war.

to keep their operations in place. Nevertheless, I would argue that these new criminal actors have an important stake in the current conflict dynamics, and that there are elements of continuity with the practices and structures of old AUC paramilitaries. Thus, contrary to Hazen (2010), I would define these new criminal groups in Colombia both as *conflict* and *non-conflict* armed groups. Regional specificities and local conflict dynamics determine whether they have a more conflict or non-conflict nature and behaviour. Therefore, paramilitaries' demise through DDR led not only to a pathway of "transformation of conflict armed groups" – as Hazen admits – but also one of "continuation".

FIGURE 2.1: POST-WAR PATHWAYS OF NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS

Pathway	Process	Examples
Termination of conflict armed groups	Conflict armed group dissolves after war	RUF in Sierra Leone
	Conflict armed group becomes political party	RENAMO in Mozambique UNITA in Angola
Continuation of *conflict* armed groups	Residual conflict armed groups who are not defeated but are no longer considered a threat	*Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) in Peru
	Residual conflict armed groups who are not party to peace process	AQIM in Algeria ex-Far and Interahamwe in Rwanda FNL in Burundi Militias in Cote d'Ivoire
Transformation of *conflict* armed groups	Conflict armed group transforms into a non-conflict armed group	GSPC into AQIM in Algeria, AUC into criminal gangs in Colombia Ex-combatants in Nicaragua into gangs
Transformation of non-*conflict* armed groups	Non-conflict armed groups become stronger and transform in post-conflict setting	Gangs into maras in El Salvador Organised crime in Tajikistan
Emergence of non-*conflict* armed groups	New armed groups emerge in post-conflict setting	Vigilantes in Liberia Localised gangs

Source: Hazen (2010): 170

2.2 A Political Economy Approach to DDR

I turn now to describe the role of DDR within state formation theories. In fact, within the state formation process, both mobilization for war and ensuing demobilization have played an important role throughout history. Before the term DDR as a standardized post-Cold War program was ever coined, the practice of demobilisation and reintegration already existed as a specific dynamic of state building and consolidation (Paxson, 1939). As states built up their military capacity and army strength in preparation for war (*mobilization*), likewise the transition from war to peace entailed a downsizing in terms of military budget, resources

and personnel (*demobilization*).[34] As a consequence, the need to downsize a military force in the aftermath of war has always been a necessity for states and large political entities.

DDR has to be put in a longer historical timeframe to highlight its fundamental strategic, political and economic functions. In fact, throughout history, disarmament and demobilization have been carried out as part of domestic political, social and economic concerns: just like mobilization, demobilization is inherently intertwined within the dialectic relationship between war and state. If war makes states and the 'specialists in violence' make war, then the post-war process of states discharging and dealing with the main actor in wars (i.e. armed forces) is a delicate and complex one. The relationship between state and the demobilized population has been one that has also defined the post-war social contract.

The role of demobilization on state formation. Nevertheless, the role of demobilization in state-formation dynamics has been surprisingly under-researched, compared to processes of mobilization for war (Campbell, 2003; Duclos, 2012). Instead, as part of the state-building process described by Tilly (1985, 1990), disbanding private armies and banditries (through either force or co-optation) was highly functional to achieving monopoly of violence and eliminating competitors. In 16th Century England, the royal family of the Tudors was able to demilitarize the great lords. Likewise, in France, by declaring the royal monopoly of force as a state doctrine in the 1620s, King Louis XIII's chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu, started an enforced disarmament process of local elites that would be complete by the end of the century (Tilly, 1985: 173-174; Tilly, 1990; Thompson, 1994). In 1648, after the Thirty Years War, most rulers had to rely on co-optation and/or coercion to induce either professional armies or private militias to disband (Wilson, 2009: 769-773).

Before the rise of full-fledge states with monopoly of force in 16th-17th Century Europe, there was a blurred line between regular and irregular forces, and between legitimate and illegitimate violence. Would-be state makers needed to broker deals with private armies and mercenaries: rulers "commissioned privateers, hired sometime bandits to raid their enemies, and encouraged their regular troops to take booty." Once war was over, troops would be demobilized, but they would continue on the same violent and pillaging activities they had engaged on during war, "but without the same royal protection; demobilized ships became pirate vessels, demobilized troops bandits" (Tilly, 1985: 173).

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[34] Analysing troops demobilization in the US after WWI, Paxson (1939) argues how both 'mobilization' and 'demobilization' were new concepts for the US: "It is not that they were unknown before its day, but they were related to matters so far removed from American experience that few used or thought about them." As a novel development, he also notes how demobilization involved much more than discharging troops to include economic and occupational re-adjustment (Paxson, 1939: 240)

As a consequence, due to the high number of elites that were able to finance their own private armies, a web of alliances and enmities would unravel in a spiral: kings would have to seek alliances with local elites, and those same elites would constitute kings' enemies. This produced constant instability, generalized violence and local conflicts. As it was seen above, the conclusion is that kings ("would-be state makers") were then looking to disarm private armies and banditries in order to concentrate and monopolize violence (Tilly, 1985). Disarmament and demobilization had therefore a precise and important function in modern history and state formation. Disarming bands was highly functional to the achievement of monopoly of violence, and cooptation or elimination of competitors.

Political settlement and social contract. An additional important area that needs coverage concerns the relationship between the demobilized and the state. And, in turn, the type and quality of both the political settlement and the social contract that derive from and define the above relationship. In this case, the demobilized can be either a rebel force fighting the state; or it can be a state military that needs to be downsized following a major war. Thus, the nature of the political settlement is a crucial aspect to evaluate the demobilization process and the ensuing state formation. For the purpose of this research, political settlement is defined beyond a formal and legalistic definition to include the underlying configurations of power, which reflect the balance of power in society at multiple levels (i.e. both central and local powers), the product of elite bargaining, and the outcome of the distribution of coercive power and rents (Di John and Putzel, 2009; Khan, 1995, 2000).

During war, conflict parties develop what Giustozzi (2012) calls "organizational capital", or the self-sufficient capacity in terms of organizational structure to sustain the war effort (Giustozzi, 2012: 6). After war, such organizational capacity comes in handy when the would-be demobilized group needs to interact with the state. As a specific social class, specialists in violence and veterans have always entered in a bargain or negotiation process with the state in order to advance their interests and political agenda. In turn, the state carefully deals with and weighs veterans' demands. Arguably, the highly defined skillset of veterans and the potential damage that unruly former soldiers would be able to inflict on the state (by acting as spoilers), urge the state to act benignly toward them.

In addition, the relationship between the state and veterans in the aftermath of war involves a process of (re)building state legitimacy and veterans' rights to citizenship. Since wars are domestic crises, in their aftermath a new social contract arises – one that involves both state and the armed groups that participated in war. Therefore, the politics of demobilization and the terms of the political settlement – as the result of a bargaining process among stakeholders – help to determine the post-war outcome (Campbell, 2003).

Most importantly, total wars entail a total mobilization by states from a material point of view, but also from an ideological point of view. Wars present the opportunity to build a strong relationship between states and citizenry, which has implications for state formation and/or strengthening. Therefore, the "cultural repertoire" that was discussed above (Centeno, 2003: 84) concerns the use of emotional tools by the state (e.g. sacrifice, sense of unity) to mobilize and coalesce citizens. In this framework, ex-combatants returning from war have played a key role to advance state strengthening: the glorification of veterans keeps the memory and the spirit of war alive, and, in turn, it fortifies the state-society relations. Examples of this dynamics abound. Thus, it is not surprising that states have placed critical importance to the post-war welfare of veterans.

Since the 19th Century revolution in military affairs with the creation of national armies, veterans pursue their class interests, uphold their rights to citizenship and convey their demands in the same way as the working class would do. Compared to the working class, though, former combatants have more leverage in their bargaining with the state as they perform the specific function of state builders (Campbell, 2003).

For example, the political weight of veterans as an influential social class is evident in post-World War I era in Western Europe and the US (Paxson, 1939; Ward, 1975). During this time, Italian liberal parties censure over veterans' needs and Mussolini's embrace of their cause contributed to the latter seizing power and enlisting veterans' constituency as an unconditional support. In fact, Mussolini focused his rhetoric of national identity and pride on the sacrifice and the mission of veterans (Campbell, 2003: 106; De Felice, 1965).

In the US, veterans have been at the centre of US national politics and discourse. The US has used veterans as propaganda tools for forging national cohesion and identity. Invariably, countries that honour ex-combatants are those that display stronger national identity bounds. Second, it is argued that the role of veterans has been key in the establishment of the welfare system in the country. Second World War in the US followed a wide expansion of domestic spending and the government sector under President Roosevelt's watch. The total mobilization during the war brought a further expansion and bureaucratization of the state. The post-war phase required a re-alignment of defence spending toward social welfare: DDR, veterans organizations and claims for veterans' pensions played a crucial role in this process (Skocpol, 1992; Davis, 2003; Browne, 2003; Bensel, 2003; Campbell, 2003).

These considerations and examples demonstrate how DDR enters in an intimate and highly contextualized relational dynamic with the state. Therefore, such considerations warn against treating DDR as a discrete and purely technical event. Instead, its broader political implications are to be taken into full account both for research and policy purposes. These

considerations suggest that the variations through which states have treated demobilization and ex-combatants may explain different trajectories in state formation. In particular, ex-combatants have come to represent a crucial tool to support the social contract between rulers and ruled. States use veterans to forge national cohesion. This is a necessary, but not sufficient condition: the degree to which veterans are glorified and made part of a national discourse contributes to determine state formation (Campbell, 2003).

A seminal study on the DDR process and peace settlement in Zimbabwe (Kriger, 2003) reveals the centrality of the domestic and local dynamics rather than the peacebuilding external intervention – which constitutes the core principle of hybrid forms of peace previously described. Kriger (2003) takes a domestic approach to peacebuilding. A focus on external intervention, in fact, puts in the shadow the internal politics, and in so doing it de-contextualizes the events. In order to understand the outcome of post-conflict, Kriger puts more emphasis on the peace settlement itself as a driver for subsequent domestic politics and peacebuilding outcomes. Her analysis is about the ex-combatants as a domestic political and social actor: she analyses how the pledges toward veterans in the peace settlements were subsequently distorted and what the consequences were for peacebuilding, stability and internal political dynamics. This type of study and its findings are key to the present research, which evaluates the DDR in Colombia and its relationship with peacebuilding outcomes.

An important difference between some of the past demobilization efforts and their implications on state formation, and contemporary DDR is precisely the role of domestic politics. Some of the above examples highlight the critical politicized role of ex-combatants in both advancing their interests, and – perhaps unintentionally – contributing to state formation. Instead, by executing DDR as a technical operation and stripping it of any political significance, the post-Cold War DDR has missed the potential to use DDR to contribute to pursue more sustainable political settlements. While it is true that most of the countries that implemented a DDR program in the last two decades are country with tight budgets and financial resources, nonetheless the political implications of DDR never made it into the policy debates around DDR.

A practical example concerns the issue of employment – which is central to this research's empirical findings. Some of the past cases show how employment was a central demand from veterans in their reinsertion path. Even for this issue, I argue that what matters, however, is the politicization of ex-combatants. Their collective engagement with policy and lobbying for their interests enables meaningful and sustainable reintegration. In other words, if and when ex-combatants are a dynamic actor that is part of the post-war discourse

and politics, their demobilization and reintegration may incorporate larger implications for the state and the political settlement. Conversely, when ex-combatants at the individual level are made passive beneficiaries of DDR packages, their issues fall short of any broader implications. Devoid of politics, DDR programs' factors for success become indiscernible.

An additional dimension related to employment concerns the relationship between combatants and non-state armed groups during war. From a labor market perspective, my empirical research highlights the interaction between the two at different stages of the combatant's life. Combatants (i.e. employees) and non-state armed groups (i.e. employers) are the economic actors of an *ad hoc* labour market. An implicit social contract between combatants and non-state armed groups ensues, which is further legitimized by the *de facto* authority and order that rest with the non-state armed group.

During recruitment, non-state armed groups allure potential recruits through different tools according to the nature of the armed group: guerrilla groups (FARC and ELN) through the use of ideology, for example; paramilitary groups through the prospect of monetary gains and personal status, among others. In both cases, such alternative career paths in the war economy relate to patterns of marginalization and inequality, which in Meta – as in many other regions of Colombia – manifested themselves through the lack of decent opportunities in the peace economy. Borrowing from Goodhand's (2004) tripartite formulation on war economies, the labor market of war includes aspects of both the coping economy (i.e. individuals who are job- and livelihoods-seekers) and of the combat economy (i.e. armed groups recruiting individuals to directly sustain the war effort).

Local-level dimensions. The political settlement between demobilized and the state and its outcome are the result of not only a centralized and national process. But they also derive from a highly contextualized local level bargaining process. DDR outcomes result from a multiple level bargaining process between the state and veterans. DDR implementation is subject to distinct dynamics at the national and local levels, and faces a series of challenges, which differ at each level. A main obstacle to the understanding of war and peace is represented by the gap between the macro and the micro level of political settlements. In fact, there is a discrepancy between the national or the top-level leadership negotiating the agreement on behalf of a rebel group, and the mid-level commanders who hold power and interests at the local level (Kalyvas, 2012).

On the ground, a different power arrangement and a re-negotiation take place concerning the actual implementation of the DDR program, outside or alongside the legal framework. Such arrangements are an example of LAO to control violence and to create a beneficial equilibrium for all the parties involved (North et al., 2007; Di John and Putzel, 2009).

Borrowing from Reno's (2000) formulation, we can refer to this parallel dimension as a "shadow state". The lower on-the-ground level of authority seems to retain a parallel power at the micro level and is able to bypass formal procedures due to its distance from the state level and thanks to its proximity to the local level.

As Giustozzi (2012) argues, on the one hand, there is the façade of the DDR program with its implementation and institution building; on the other hand, there is the 'real' process involving *ad hoc* arrangements, the distribution of rents, and local power sharing agreements. Such conceptualization, therefore, implicates a myriad of local-level DDR processes of bargaining and negotiation – each process characterized by inherent contextualized factors (Giustozzi, 2009, 2012).

Therefore, the success of DDR and of Security Sector Reform (SSR) operations does not only depend on the technical implementation of institution-building provisions, but rather on the *negotiation* and *bargaining* of those provisions. The co-optation of local ruling elites to be part of the process is key: often, this aspect is overlooked and local elites' concerns and interests are neglected. To avoid spoilers and fragmentation of security, any DDR and SSR in a post-conflict setting should start from below: through the engagement with, and transformation and incorporation of insurgent organizations or non-state armed groups (Giustozzi, 2008; Ahram, 2011; Di John and Putzel, 2009).

Peacebuilding and DDR implications from a local-level approach. From a peacebuilding perspective, part of the literature stresses the need for a greater attention on local context and self-determination, on pragmatism over strategy, and on the unfolding of local potentials. A local-level lens on peacebuilding and development is one that is concerned with local institutions, ingenuity and the local drivers of recovery (Barron et al., 2011; Bryden and Scherrer, 2012; Justino, 2013; Mac Ginty, 2010; Marc et al., 2013; UNDP, 2008; World Bank, 2011).[35]

Such approach is used for the present analysis of DDR in Colombia. There is an important operational overlap between ex-combatants and communities. Many DDR programs and local-level peacebuilding are pursuing mutually beneficial goals, in the recognition that holistic approaches – although harder to operationalize and scale up – may achieve effective outcomes. Since community development is vital for the economic reintegration of ex-combatants, it is important for DDR operations to go beyond individuals to offer help to

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[35] "The indigenous drivers perspective locates the efforts of individuals, households and communities within their socio-historical context and highlights these as the most viable platform on which to base post-war recovery and international support" (UNDP, 2008: 49).

communities for more effective peacebuilding (Kingma, 2002; Pouligny, 2004; Özerdem, 2008; Duclos, 2012; Kalyvas, 2012).

Such a more holistic approach will establish social links and connections between ex-combatants and non-combatants for social reconstruction, it will encourage community participation in decision making processes, it will strengthen community capacity for subsequent programs in communities, and it will address issues of resentment among community members. According to Berdal (1996), the importance of local level interventions is that they are more sensitive to community needs, more flexible, and are geared towards integrating both ex-combatants and non-combatants into communities.

In turn, a micro-level focus and analytical lens put greater attention on the institutional transformation that stems from conflict. If violent conflict moves along a continuum and is not a discrete event, likewise the institutional transformation that accompanies violence has to be understood as a process, which is rarely a linear one. Thus, to hope to be successful, peacebuilding has to come to terms with power structures at the local level, and "cannot disassociate itself […] from the social, economic and political institutional transformation brought about by the conflict itself" (Justino, 2013: 15). Thus, local-level peacebuilding shapes its intervention based on local indigenous dynamics of conflict (violent and non-violent) and ensuing institutional transformation. Thanks to this link with local stakeholders and context, local-level peacebuilding potentially harbours greater legitimacy within the community because peacebuilding intervention would result from a shared and inclusive bargaining process. Wider legitimacy may also lead to better development outcomes (Barron et al., 2011; OECD, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Through alternative political economy approaches, this chapter highlighted the importance of DDR beyond the policy realm of stabilization, security and socio-economic recovery in the aftermath of war. In particular, I showed the role of DDR with respect to state formation processes and provided some few additional lenses to analyse demobilization, including multi-level bargaining processes, the resulting political settlement(s) and social contract. DDR is, therefore, not only a security and development policy initiative, but also a process with multiple dimensions, of which the policy aspect is only one component.

The chapter has also provided theoretical insights that add complexity and granularity to both the analysis of transition processes, and to the understanding of war. I discussed approaches that give primacy to real practices of order and authority, which may either reproduce power relations, or transform them, or do both simultaneously. The chapter

included an analysis of governance by non-state armed groups, processes of brokerage at multiple levels, and practical application of political settlement. It underlines the continuities between war and peace in terms of violence, highlighting the continued role of non-state armed groups, who do not just vanish, but play a fundamental role in the post-war politics. It is observed how violence remains central part of the landscape of transition dynamics, and how it frequently mutates into other forms of violence. All of these views contrast with a simplistic understanding of post-conflict, and idealistic formulas of state and peacebuilding (Cramer, 2006).

After laying this strong theoretical foundation, which conceptualizes peace and conflict in a composite way and in a *continuum*, the research turns now to the case study of the political economy analysis of conflict, peace and DDR in Meta, Colombia; and to the empirical analysis of how ex-combatants experienced war to peace transition in their journey to find and retain employment. But before the empirical analysis, Chapter 3 addresses the methodological approach and foundations of the study.

3. Research Methodology

This chapter explains the methodology that this research adopted. After an extensive literature review that established the theoretical foundations and boundaries of the research, the discussion of the research methodology precedes the political economy and empirical findings from the case study on Meta, Colombia. In a nutshell, this chapter includes a treatment of (a) the research objectives and core questions; (b) how the research was conceived and designed, what approaches were chosen, and how it was ultimately conducted to meet the research goals. The chapter is divided into two main sections. First, I explain the research goals and components together with the conceptual and methodological approaches that were adopted. Second, after introducing some considerations on the opportunity and challenges to conduct research "in" and "on" conflict-affected environments (Goodhand, 2001), there is a report on the fieldwork that was conducted (its phases, the research techniques that were used and why, sampling strategy, and risks and mitigation).

3.1 Research Design, Conceptual and Methodological Approaches

This research broadly concerns the understanding of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and the transition from war to peace in the region of Meta in Colombia using separate but intertwined levels of analysis. Within the broad and non-linear transition, focus is on the – at times, cyclical – process from armed group's formation (i.e. mobilization for war) to demobilization. The overall research goal is to account for the multifaceted nature of the DDR process through complementing research components and intertwined levels of analysis.

This section will proceed as follows. I summarize the research components next, together with exposing the main research question and related sub-questions. Then, I cover the methodological approach, including the adoption of multiple levels of analysis.

This work is the result of three main research components aimed at explaining the above research goal. First, two conceptual chapters (1-2) have defined the research's theoretical foundations and have exposed the limitations of the current models of understanding war to peace transition. They highlighted how the DDR process is part of this complex transition process, which is intended as a *continuum* (Duclos, 2012; Richards, 2005). It is clear by now how demobilization serves a greater purpose than the achievement of the DDR program

technicalities and goals. As it was argued, DDR has a role that affects state formation processes, is fundamentally political in nature, and interacts with other context-specific political, social and economic processes that make up hybrid forms of peace.

Second, based on interviews with key informants and an extensive literature review in English and Spanish languages, I conduct a historical political economy analysis of the conflict in Meta (Chapters 4-5). This analysis is centered around the structural conditions (e.g. inequalities, land issues) and the conflict dynamics, their interaction, and the role they play in armed group's recruitment and formation, and demobilization. The macro-level analysis of this Colombian sub-region unveils context-specific historical political, social and economic factors that account for explaining the complexity of the war to peace transition process, and the role of DDR in this transition.

The third research component is the empirical part (Chapters 6-8), which consists of an in-depth analysis of employment life trajectories of non-state armed groups' former members (micro-level). Based on thirty-one semi-structured interviews with ex-combatants and direct observation, this leg of the study examines the *pre-*, the *during* and the *post-*war experiences of ex-combatants. The focus is on the job experiences and/or livelihood strategies of ex-combatants during these three phases.

The employment and labor market lens serves the overall research purpose because it allows to analyse comprehensively the transition from war to peace according to different levels of analysis – individual, organizational and structural. At the individual level, through employment, I am able to artificially divide the life of an ex-combatant into three distinct but communicating phases (*before* mobilization, *during* life as a combatant, and the *post-*demobilization). At the organizational level, non-state armed groups go through similar phases: formation and mobilization, war, and demise. At the structural level, the life of an armed conflict can also be divided into three mutually interacting stages (pre-conflict, during, and post-war). In turn, the individual ex-combatant's phases go hand in hand with both the path of non-state armed groups, and with the conflict stages. The micro-level transition between these three phases in the life of an ex-combatant mirrors both the trajectory of armed groups and the macro/armed conflict-level transition from war to peace.

All research components demonstrate that the war to peace transition is not a linear process: the empirical analysis of employment trajectories of ex-combatants shows that the micro-level dynamics of recruitment, armed group's membership and demobilization are not linear either (Duclos, 2012). For example, demobilized ex-combatants are at constant risk of recidivism, and new armed groups are formed on the ashes of old ones. Nor they are clear-

cut phases, but often characterized by grey areas: ex-combatants may have a foot in legality and one in illegality at the same time.

In sum, the three components provide parallel analyses with same conceptual framework and premises, but with divergent methodologies. They complement each other by providing a comprehensive multiple-level research on DDR. Based on this premise, the overarching research question is the following.

How has DDR interacted with the dynamics of war and peace in Meta, Colombia?

The following three sub-questions further define and disaggregate the research focus:

- What are the key factors that explain (repeated cycles of) recruitment and war mobilization?
- What are the key factors that shape the DDR process?
- What is the variation between individual ex-FARC and ex-paramilitary combatants when analysing their war and employment life cycles?

Combining Micro- and Macro-level approaches: Individual-based and political economy considerations. As it was stated, the present research takes a conceptual and methodological approach that combines a political economy analysis with a micro-level analysis to understand the DDR process in Colombia. Such composite approach is applied to the analysis of war to peace transition using the administrative department of Meta in Colombia as a case study. This research builds on the growing literature on conflict and violence that uses theoretical and empirical disaggregation on multiple dimensions, including space, time, actors, and forms of violence. Given the wide variations of 'conflict' cases and their inherent complexity, several authors agree that the understanding of transitional dynamics from war to peace may only be accomplished through a case study analysis (Barakat et al., 2002; Human Security Report Project, 2011; Justino et al., 2013; Kalyvas, 2001, 2010, 2012; Kriger, 2003; Sambanis, 2004c; Suhrke, 2011; Duclos, 2012).

In terms of individual-level research, this approach builds on a growing literature on the micro-determinants of violent conflict, which is concerned with the understanding of both individual experiences and local realities in the analysis of and responses to conflict and institutional change (Kalyvas et al., 2008; Justino, 2013; Sambanis, 2004c; Weinstein, 2007; Duclos, 2012). Two prominent examples and forerunner research projects on micro-level issues of violence are the University of Sussex-based "MICROCON: A Micro-Level Analysis of Violent Conflict" and the "Households in Conflict Network (HiCN)". Through a multi-

disciplinary approach, these research projects are aimed "to promote understanding of individual and group interactions leading to and resulting from violent mass conflicts."[36]

The second critical approach is a historical political economy analysis. This approach is able to unveil the structural conditions of conflict and violence, including the analysis of power relations, actors' interactions, political and economic incentives, and the sub-regional socio-economic conditions (e.g. land ownership structure, labour and class relations, economic production, drugs and trade) (Berdal, 2011). DDR and the peacebuilding processes are analysed in the framework of the political economy of the armed conflict, the balance of power between state institutions and non-state armed groups, and the local-level social and economic context in Meta.

Methodologically, the research is also fuelled by and contributes to the emerging literature on rebel governance (Arjona, 2014; Mampilly, 2011). As it was reviewed in Chapter 2, this literature is concerned with the understanding of armed groups' internal functioning and external behaviours. Among others, this includes how non-state armed groups exercise their power and authority and the institutions that they put in place. As it is summarized below, the present research makes its contribution to this literature by focusing on the labor market and the human resources of non-state armed groups.

In terms of the case study approach that is adopted here, there are benefits associated with a sub-regional approach, compared with a national level analysis. The former allows for a more nuanced and context-specific understanding of structural societal and politico-economic conditions, and a granular account of policies, dynamics, and implications. A local-level lens is conducive to understand the hybrid context in which DDR, in particular the social and economic reintegration aspect, takes place in Colombia. A sub-regional approach may also be a requirement when considering the wide regional variation that characterizes Colombia and its conflict dynamics. Ultimately, a sub-regional analysis allows for a more direct contact with beneficiaries and communities (Justino, 2013; Kalyvas, 2001: 107; Nieto Matiz, 2012: 137-139, 177).

As it was mentioned in the previous chapters, the interaction between violent conflict and peace is not static, but intended in terms of *continuum*. A dynamic and causal approach is able to trace different patterns of war to peace transition, as opposed to a purposeless approach that seeks to define and delimit cutoff points within the transition. Methodologically, only a political economy analysis can provide substantiated explanation for the non-linear transition between war and peace, and for the grey areas between the two.

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[36] MICROCON Website, http://www.microconflict.eu/index.html (accessed on December 18, 2016).

The *continuum* is also a framework to analyse the micro-level transition of ex-combatants from recruitment to armed group's membership to demobilization (Berdal, 2011; Suhrke, 2011; Duclos, 2012).

In conclusion, no single explanation of conflict is satisfactory, but the analysis of the process is the sole answer (Richards, 2005)[37]. Thus, a "composite approach" that combines micro/individual-level and macro/political economy-level approaches is the more apt to comprehensively explain the process of transition from war to peace (Barakat et al., 2002). The latter is conceptualised here as the result of a set of interactions involving the role of DDR in the transition, former combatants and their employment path and experiences, and the structural historically-based conflict dynamics. Ultimately, "it is the interaction between micromotives and macrostructures that determines the expression of violent conflict" (Sambanis, 2004c: 263).

Micro-level research on ex-combatants' employment trajectories. After justifying and explaining how the overall research has a combined macro- and a micro-level approach, I now turn to the methodological underpinnings of the micro-level analysis on ex-combatants. As it was mentioned, this leg of the research adopts an *employment and labor market* lens to explain the war to peace transition. In turn, this lens is applied to a three-level analysis of: (i) the life of combatants and their employment experiences (*individual* level); (ii) non-state armed groups' behaviour with respect to recruitment strategies and career paths within the group (*organizational* level); and (iii) the political, social and economic factors and the conflict dynamics that drive men and women to join armed groups, to stay in them, and to demobilize and seek reintegration in society (*structural* level). This multiple-level framework of employment and conflict is applied to and combined with the three stages of war to peace transition – before, during, and after conflict.

At the *individual* level, the research revisits the employment experiences of individual ex-combatants. First, it analyses an ex-combatant's life *before* entering the armed group. This phase includes the jobs he/she held before joining arms, the circumstances and the individual motivations and incentives for joining an armed group. Second, I report the individual life stories of ex-combatants *within* the armed group. The objective is to unveil the

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[37] Duffield (2000) posits that two methodologies can be used in the study of security-development nexus. By drawing a comparison from physics, the dichotomy is one of machine-organism: as a machine, we study the different parts of it, knowing that the sum of them will result in a positive outcome. Thus, the first approach is one that give prominence to aid policy as a *deus ex machina*: peace and development can be obtained by sums of aid and top-down intervention. The second approach is the one that criticizes the first one and that "emphasizes complex holistic systems in which interconnections, mutation and self-transformation are key characteristics" (Duffield, 2000: 10). By claiming that DDR outcomes are the product of the DDR program as much as they are the result of a complex array of structural conditions, dynamics and interaction, this research clearly adopts the second approach.

different roles and "jobs" held and the functions performed while in arms. Third, in the *after* phase, ex-combatants reveal the circumstances of demobilization and their experience with reintegration, especially the challenges in terms of securing employment, and the jobs held since demobilization. I also pay special attention to the interaction between these phases – i.e. between the individual ex-combatant's past life in the armed group and his/her current status of DDR beneficiary. These phases should be treated organically as they constitute life phases of men and women.

TABLE 3.1: UNDERSTANDING THE LABOR MARKET OF WAR

			A	B	C
	LEVEL / PHASE		**Individual** (Ex-combatants)	**Organizational** (Non-state armed groups)	**Structural** (Political economy of mobilization & DDR)
1	**Before Conflict**		• Jobs held before mobilization • Motivations for joining: trauma and revenge	• Recruitment strategies, patterns and incentives	• Drivers of recruitment: - Ideology - Social network - Conflict-affected area - Employment opportunity
2	**During Conflict**		• Job(s) held within the armed group • Roles and tasks in the group	• Human resources: - Training - Career development - Internal rules	-
3	**After Conflict**	Demobilization	• Motivations for D (FARC) • Perceptions on D (AUC)	• Drivers of D (FARC): - Lack of freedom - Weakened ideology and cohesion	• Drivers of D (FARC): - Military pressure - DDR program
		Reintegration	• Jobs held after war • Challenges of R (finding work)	-	• Economic R program: Employment • Impact of employment on R outcomes
		Recidivism	• Drivers of recidivism: - Employment opportunity - Sense of entitlement and power	• Drivers of recidivism: - new recruitment by armed groups - ex-combatants as experienced 'workers'	• Drivers of recidivism: - Ongoing conflict - Stigma and lack of opportunities - Social network

At the *organizational* level, as part of the literature on rebel governance, the objective is to give some insights on the human resources of armed groups. In line with the three-phase classification, I focus on: incentives for, strategies and patterns of recruitment (*before*

conflict stage); on roles and tasks within the armed group, and career development (*during* conflict stage); and on drivers of demobilization that refer to the armed group's behaviour, as well as organizational patterns of recidivism (*after* conflict stage).

In order to apply the employment and labor market lens to the organizational level, I make the following abstraction. I consider non-state armed groups as employers *sui generis*, or social actors that in order to achieve either economic goals (e.g. drug traffickers' maximization of profits) or political goals (e.g. leftist guerrilla's change in the political and social order) need to "employ" skilled men and women. Such abstraction does not imply a treatment of armed groups as purely economic agents, far from it. But it allows to isolate employment factors in the analysis of armed groups' formation, behaviour and strategies, and demobilization. The adopted conceptual framework and the empirical analysis that I carry out demonstrate that this research does not subscribe to rational choice theories, but it recognizes the complexity of non-state armed groups' motives and dynamics.

Finally, at the *structural* level, I examine those historical political economy factors that are associated with employment in an armed group. First, I analyse those structural drivers of recruitment, including ideology, socialization and available social networks. Most importantly, the power of non-state armed groups in controlling social and economic life in areas under their control plays an important role in recruitment patterns and profiles. I argue that the employment and livelihoods opportunities provided by non-state armed groups (and, by the same token, the lack of opportunities in the legal economy) represent a key incentive for men's and women's decision to join a group. Second, I broadly analyse the relationship between economic reintegration (with a focus on employment) and the challenges of ongoing conflict and ongoing recruitment by armed groups (i.e. the recidivism phenomenon). Specifically, I assess the role and impact of employment on reintegration outcomes, and the structural factors contributing to ex-combatants going back in arms (i.e. recidivism).

3.2   Ethics, Security, Fieldwork and Research Techniques

Between November 2013 and February 2014, I conducted fieldwork in the Colombian capital city of Bogota and in the region of Meta.[38] Fieldwork consisted of over 75 in depth and semi-

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[38] As a World Bank staff member and consultant working on peacebuilding programs in Colombia, I made a total of six trips to the country between 2008 and 2012. Each trip lasted on average one week. I visited several regions of Colombia, including the main cities of Bogota and Medellin, the Caribbean coast (Cartagena, Barranquilla and Santa Marta), the Oriente Antioquieño, the Uraba Antioquieño, and Meta. During my visits, I met with government officials, aid workers and project beneficiaries (including ex-combatants and IDPs), among others. I observed both rural and urban contexts, poverty and marginalization, and the perverse effects produced by the armed conflict. Thus, at the time I started the doctoral program I had developed a good understanding of the country's conflict and peace dynamics, and its regional variation. Practically speaking, throughout those years I also

structured one-on-one interviews with key informants and with ex-combatants, and of direct observation.

In both locations, I ran a total of 46 interviews with key informants. In Bogota, I interviewed 25 individuals, while in Meta I conducted 21 interviews. Eight of them were with foreigners, and the rest with Colombian nationals. In terms of their affiliation, 11 were members of international organizations or donors, 10 were part of the governmental agency for reintegration (*Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración*, ACR), nine worked with either national or local governmental peacebuilding programs, and 16 were researchers and academics in think tanks and universities.

Given the focus on Meta, all the interviews with ex-combatants were done exclusively in this region, namely in the provincial capital of Villavicencio and in the oil hub town of Puerto Gaitan, in the north-eastern part of Meta. Thirty-one interviews with former members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC), the National Liberation Army (*Ejercito de Liberación Nacional*, ELN) and paramilitary groups were conducted during this period – with the exception of one.[39]

As it is mentioned in the Introduction, while I was already a doctoral student preparing my full research proposal, I participated in a government-run study tour of DDR programs in the region of Meta in December 2012. During this occasion, I was able to preliminary test some hypotheses, meet with a number of ex-combatants and run one in depth interview with an ex-FARC member. This interview profoundly shaped by thinking (see Introduction), and it is therefore included in the sample. I had also met with and talked to several ex-combatants in Colombia during two prior professional occasions, in 2009 and in early 2012. Their stories and the dynamics surrounding their reintegration highly contributed to my passion and interest for the topic – which ultimately led me to the doctoral research.

Although I am aware of the relative small size of my sample of thirty-one ex-combatants, I think that the fact that I had repeated engagement with both ex-combatants and the dynamics of peacebuilding in Colombia over four years prior to starting this doctoral program, partly mitigates and offsets the drawback of the small sample and relative brief fieldwork of nearly four months. I nonetheless profess profound humbleness concerning my findings, and their validity.

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developed a wide network of contacts among academics, key experts, and staff members in the Colombian national and local governments, in NGOs, and in partner organizations. This vantage point allowed me to 'jump' directly into my fieldwork without the necessary and time consuming preparatory phase of acclimatizing, and finding and approaching relevant sources. Through appropriate planning, I was able to maximize the effectiveness of my time in Colombia. Indeed, my network of contacts and sources considerably expanded throughout my fieldwork.

[39] Annexes 1, 2 and 3 include a list of the interviewed ex-combatants, their basic demographics and socio-economic characteristics. Due to security concerns, I changed the ex-combatants' real names into fantasy ones.

In this section, I bring some considerations related to: (a) security and ethics when doing research in conflict settings; (b) the sample, the strategy to build it, and how interviews were prepared and arranged; (c) the risks and adopted mitigation strategies in terms of methods (i.e. selection bias), substance (i.e. to dispel potential biases in ex-combatants' answers), and in terms of logistics (i.e. safety and security); (d) the semi-structure nature of the interviews with ex-combatants; (e) the use of direct observation.

(a) Security and ethics. It is important, first, to include some considerations on the relationship between research and conflict. In particular, it is key to assess the opportunity, the risks and the challenges to conduct research "in" a conflict-affected environment and "on" a conflict-related issue (Goodhand, 2001).[40] There are concerns regarding the safety of both the subjects of the research and of the researcher. Especially in conflict-affected countries, a "do no harm" ethical consideration has to be prioritized (Wood, 2006). A detailed plan of security risks and mitigation tactics was devised early on in my research, and it is discussed here and summarized in Table 3.3.

At the time of fieldwork (2013-14), Colombia was a conflict-affected country with several areas of its territory suffering from heavy presence of non-state armed groups. Before leaving for fieldwork, in order to be aware of security risks, I gathered and assessed relevant security information on Meta and the areas that I planned to visit. This was done through exchanges with key informants on the ground and with a review of media sources.

Once on the ground, I constantly prioritized both my protection and the one of my sources when I solicited information and when I analysed data. I was highly aware of the nature and implications of my research "in" and "on" conflict. My research was highly related to conflict in terms of location and spatial dimension, and in terms of subject, but with important caveats. First of all, I researched a subject that is not deemed as extremely sensitive. I explored ex-combatants' employment life experiences throughout all three phases (*before*, *during* and *after* conflict). In fact, the unit of analysis is ex-combatants – a group that has ended its experience with war and that in theory is not compromised by current war events. I solicited information from these sources about *past* experiences of conflict, and not present ones. This factor meant that neither theirs nor my own security was compromised as a result of my research (Goodhand, 2000).

Second, in terms of location, the research took place "in" areas where a DDR program (i.e. the state) is present, and was not conducted in areas under heavy influence of non-state armed

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[40] The distinction between "in" and "on" is important: for example, research can be conducted in a location that is affected by conflict and violence, but the subject is not necessarily related to conflict and violence. Or, a study can be concerned with a conflict-related topic without being necessarily conducted in a location affected by violence and conflict (Goodhand, 2001).

groups. However, this distinction is somewhat artificial as it is often difficult to distinguish between conflict vs. non-conflict communities (Narayan and Petesch, 2010). This is especially true in a country like Colombia where the armed violence has been traditionally diffused throughout the whole country. Such situation is starkly different from a country with a separatist insurgency, for example, where demarcations are easier to draw. As it is seen in the following chapters, armed violence is also a composite phenomenon in Colombia. Here, armed actors' motivation, behaviours and degree of social control have fundamental differences: current criminal groups do not exercise forms of social control and mostly operate in the underground, whereas the FARC still exercised control and governance over certain areas at the time of fieldwork. In addition, on top of security concerns, conducting research in highly conflictive areas would have proved unfeasible as ex-combatants tend not to live in areas dominated by the FARC, for example.[41]

(b) Access to ex-combatants, definition and sampling strategy. Through the support of the regional office of the government reintegration agency (ACR) in Villavicencio, Meta, I built a sample of thirty-one ex-combatants. Although the sample's size is too small to be representative, nonetheless the sample reflects the proportions between ex-FARC and ex-AUC combatants, and it also reflects the demographics of the whole population of demobilized ex-combatants in Meta. For this research, 'ex-combatants' include only those ex-combatants who are beneficiary of the DDR program. This is important because the universe of ex-combatants in Colombia does also include those ex-combatants who for some reasons never entered the DDR program nor accessed its benefits.

A further distinction, which the empirical research stresses, is the one between ex-FARC and ex-paramilitaries. By all means, FARC ex-combatants are deserters: they escaped and betrayed the group in order to gain their status of DDR beneficiaries. They are, therefore, not representative of the FARC. At the individual level, ex-paramilitaries experienced, instead, a different demobilization process. They did not voluntarily demobilized, but accepted it – willing or not – as a *fait accompli*. It is safe to assume that some paramilitary members never – or only initially – entered the program. Thus, for the purpose of this research, the term 'ex-combatant' only includes DDR beneficiaries.

Three specific parameters drove sample selection: armed group, gender, and age. Of the thirty-one ex-combatants who I interviewed, eighteen belonged to the FARC and ELN (55% and 3%, respectively), and thirteen to the paramilitaries (42%). This percentage mostly

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[41] On fieldwork location and conflict vs. non-conflict settings, Wood (2006) stated that carrying out fieldwork in areas that were contested between the government and the rebels was beneficial to her own research. Perhaps counter intuitively, these areas were safer than those controlled by the rebels (where allegiance to the rebel cause would have been mandatory), and areas controlled by the military (where instead residents would have felt less free to speak out).

reflects the percentage variation among the total 3,035 ex-combatants in Meta: 62% FARC, 3% ELN, and 35% paramilitaries.

The male versus female variation is 84% to 16% in my sample, and 80-20 for the whole Meta population of demobilized. Similar variation also concerns age groups (See Annex 2). I also considered important to have a certain variation among ex-combatants in terms of length of time spent in arms (from a minimum of a few months to several decades), current employment status, and on family background of interviewees (e.g. rural vs. urban, single vs. married etc.).

TABLE 3.2: RESEARCH SAMPLE AND EX-COMBATANTS' POPULATION IN META AND COLOMBIA

	Number of Ex-Combatants who are DDR beneficiaries (Percentage)									
		Armed Group			Gender		Age Group			
	Total	AUC	ELN	FARC	Female	Male	18-25	26-40	41-60	60+
Sample	31 (100%)	13 (42%)	1 (3%)	17 (55%)	5 (16%)	26 (84%)	4 (13%)	21 (68%)	6 (19%)	0 (0%)
Meta	3,035 (100%)	1,070 (35%)	83 (3%)	1,874 (62%)	608 (20%)	2,427 (80%)	330 (11%)	1,962 (65%)	651 (21%)	54 (3%)
Colombia	49,550 (100%)	29,767 (60%)	3,228 (6%)	16,203 (33%)	6,616 (13%)	42,934 (87%)	2,901 (6%)	32,461 (66%)	12,625 (25%)	872 (2%)

Source: Adapted from ACR, 2017.

Because of the support received by the ACR, I would label my sample as a 'convenience sampling'. Only two interviews out of the total thirty-one were set up outside of the ACR framework. The first exception concerns a male ex-paramilitary – a taxi driver who I hired to take me from Villavicencio to Bogota. This was the only "accidental" meeting with an ex-combatant (Fujii, 2015).[42] The second exception was an ex-FARC member who was introduced to me by the regional office in Villavicencio of the Organization of American States' peace support mission in Colombia (MAPP-OEA), although he was also part of the ACR program. The taxi driver was also the only ex-combatant that I met who was not a DDR beneficiary of the ACR program. All the rest, as being introduced to me by the ACR, were indeed part of the program.

Deliberately choosing to access ex-combatants via the governmental agency carried possible biases in terms of the selection of ex-combatants and the sample's composition, first of all. Second, a more substantial potential bias was related to the quality and truthfulness of the

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[42] Due to this reason and to the fact that he was still involved with some illegal armed group, he was deeply skeptical of talking to me, did not want to be recorded, and was only available to talk about his family background and first time recruitment. The irony of this 'encounter' is that the car company that he worked for was referred to me by the ACR office in Villavicencio.

ex-combatants' answers to my questions. I will here clarify the reasons behind my decisions and the tactics that were adopted to minimize and mitigate these potential biases.

The reason why I relied on the government program for access to ex-combatants relates to security – both the ex-combatants' and mine (Nussio, 2012: 68). Non-state armed groups persist to this day, and at the time of fieldwork, Colombia was still affected by the armed conflict with the FARC. Strong FARC presence, continuous military activity in Meta (a ceasefire was not in place yet in 2013-14), and presence of criminal groups made ex-combatants extremely wary of their condition of deserters (ex-FARC) and potential recruits by active armed groups (both ex-guerrilla and ex-paramilitary).

As it will be discussed in Chapter 8, for a number of reasons, ex-combatants of any group tend to stay anonymous, not to get visible, and certainly prefer not to reveal their past armed group's membership. Demobilized FARC are essentially deserters, and, thus, considered military objective by the FARC, i.e. desertion is punished with the capital punishment by the organization. Ex-paramilitaries (but also ex-FARC), thank to their skills and curriculum, may be more prone to be recruited by new non-state armed groups – indeed, a proposition that this research explores in Chapter 8. Thus, none wants their past identity to be publicly revealed. In case they are recidivist – either ex-FARC or ex-paramilitaries – and have joined a new group, then, they live in illegality, quietly, as the nature of the business requires. In sum, access to ex-combatants without ACR support would have been not only extremely difficult in such circumstances, but also dangerous (Mampilly, 2011: Appendix).

A second point is that due to the ongoing conflict and security situation, there was still lots of stigma placed on ex-combatants, which induces them to minimize their exposure to the external. Despite government efforts through the ACR and sensitization campaigns, ex-combatants are poorly accepted within society at large, by public opinion, and even in local communities. During a workshop on transitional justice in the small town of Fuente de Oro, Meta, I heard one municipal official labeling ex-combatants as "all criminals"[43] – a poignant example of "accidental ethnography" (Fujii, 2015; see below). Discrimination against them is widespread, especially in the workplace, as reported in Chapter 8. Given these conditions – in my assessment – reconciliation is a far prospect in Colombia.[44]

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[43] However, there is lots of regional variation. Local communities' sensitivity concerning ex-combatants widely varies in Colombia today, depending on how much violence and/or abuse the community experienced at the hand of an armed group, for example. The more a community has been negatively affected by violence, the harder it is for the community itself to accept ex-combatants back.

[44] An anecdote will further reinforce this point. When I participated in an ACR study tour in Meta in December 2012, we paid visit to an ex-combatant who opened his own carpenter workshop. When I challenged him about being visible and manifesting his past identity of paramilitary member within the community and with other fellow shopkeepers, he replied that none of them were aware of his past in the paramilitaries, and that he wanted it to stay that way.

To summarize, being visible for ex-combatants meant to be either at risk vis-à-vis their old group (i.e. FARC), or at risk of being approached by new criminal actors, or of singled out by the community and likely discriminated. Thus, without the support of the ACR program, looking for ex-combatants to be interviewed would have represented a quasi-insurmountable obstacle. Doing that would have also put my personal security at risk.[45]

As a result of security issues, at the time of fieldwork, the whole reintegration program was a discreet endeavor, despite being a state-run program. It is true that there are lots of sensitization and marketing campaigns, but at the same time security concerns require vigilance and preventive measures. For this reason, the DDR program is highly centralized around the ACR, which is anchored in the President's office, and not in the ministry of social affairs, for example. Civil society plays a role as much as it is involved by and integrated within the framework of activities of the ACR. There are no independent NGO-type of activities that run either outside of or parallel to the government ones, precisely because of security concerns. As it is described below, some interviews (5) were arranged as part of community social services run by local district councils, which were nonetheless initiated by and done in coordination with the ACR. Likewise, due to security issues, there are no national or local associations of demobilized combatants that lobby for their interest – as it often happens in post-war contexts.

In conclusion, accessing ex-combatants without ACR support could have been dangerous, or at best, unfruitful. Evidence of this is the fact that the only ex-combatant that I interviewed without an introduction from the ACR – i.e. the aforementioned taxi driver – proved to be a less than satisfactory source. First of all, it took a long time to agree on the opportunity to meet, on timing and location – a first sign of his apprehension. Second, when we finally met, he told me that an interview could have been dangerous for him. As a result, not only his personal narrative and employment history were absent, but also his diffidence and hesitation impeded me to understand his perspective on the underlying dynamics of recruitment, armed group's membership, employment, reintegration and recidivism. Were all interviews similar to this one, I would have had poor material to build my argument and develop this research.

Interviews took place in the following location: over a third of them (12) were conducted on the premises of the ACR regional office in Villavicencio – a two story building in a quiet area of the city. The setting was an ample room where usually group activities would take place,

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[45] On this point, I was alerted by some other researchers who had previously done field research on ex-combatants in Colombia. There was consensus on the multiple risks (in terms of personal security and of feasibility of building a sizable sample) that I ran if I had decided to operate outside the ACR framework (Nussio, 2012).

and where only the interviewee and I would sit in. Thus, it was a setting familiar and comfortable for the ex-combatants. Five more interviews took place during a one-day community social work activity by ex-combatants. A basic room in a municipal space was arranged for the interviews. Four more interviews with newly FARC demobilized took place in the *Hogar de Paz* ("Peace Home") on the outskirts of Villavicencio. The Peace House is a national army-run facility of first reception for demobilized FARC or ELN members. Four more interviews were conducted in public locations in Villavicencio: one at a local café inside a mall, one at the University of Meta, and two in a local restaurant. Finally, the last six interviews took place in the oil town of Puerto Gaitan – 200 km. east of Villavicencio.

(c) Potential biases, risks and mitigation strategies. Given that access to ex-combatants was granted through the ACR, it was essential to emphasize the separation between my own research and the work of the ACR. In order to prevent biased answers and to dispel the perception that there were right or wrong answers (e.g. "the government reintegration program is doing an exceptionally good job"), I devoted the first few minutes of the interview to introduce myself and highlight the main issues on which I was seeking information on. This was done not only to inform the interviewees about the project, but most of all to gain their confidence through stating my independence from the ACR reintegration program, assure them of the confidentiality of their answers, and put them at ease (Sluka, 1995).

The fact that I was interested in their own life experiences related to employment *before, during* and *after* the armed group contributed to the ex-combatants' being open and not reluctant to talk. They perceived the topic of my investigation with interest and with little fear that it could backfire on them. In particular, the fact that I did not focused the interview exclusively on the reintegration dynamics, but expanded to other parts of their life, contributed to generating genuine interest among the ex-combatants who I interviewed.[46]

I always asked for permission to record the interviews, which was always granted. Repeatedly, interviewees remarked that their only concern was not to take photos of them. In addition, the fact that I was not Colombian positively contributed to gaining trust: as most ex-combatants never saw or spoke to a foreigner, they could see fewer risks from talking about their experiences to me than to a Colombian individual (Wood, 2006).

Paradoxically, despite being a source of potential bias, a critical role in obtaining ex-combatants' confidence was played by the fact that it was precisely the ACR who introduced

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[46] In fact, ex-combatants in today's Colombia have developed a bit of a 'fatigue' (and also skepticism, as reported above) with respect to being interviewed. In fact, as part of the reparation activities that ex-combatants have to fulfill in order to be fully rehabilitated, there is a mandatory interview with the historical memory centre (*Centro de Memoria Histórica*). In addition, especially for paramilitaries, there have been continuous investigations by the judiciary to either ascertain individual roles or reconstruct specific instances, like massacres and other human rights violation.

them to me. All ex-combatants – at least all the ones that I spoke to – trusted the ACR in terms of their personal security. This is because they understood that reintegration was a consolidated state policy supported by the top national institutions (i.e. presidency, defence, judiciary). Although there were cases of ex-combatants who were bitter about the received benefits or did not believe in the reintegration process itself, they all agree that the ACR would never compromise or endanger their security under any circumstance. Therefore, this fact diminished the potential mistrust: a foreign scholar interviewing them on ACR premises could have not posed a security risk to any ex-combatant.

It has also to be noted that interviewees came forward voluntarily. ACR staff would contact ex-combatants, but they were in no way pressured or induced to be interviewed. Thus, it can be assumed that those accepting to be interviewed were fairly prepared or willing to answer questions. Some ex-combatants also displayed the "pleasure of agency" in telling their story, in being listened and in having someone interested in their personal history (Wood, 2003: 377; Wood, 2008).

In conclusion, it should be added that relying on individual narratives when trying to build an argument may represent an additional knowledge bias. This bias can never be fully dispelled. Among others, personal narratives are the result of memories, perceptions, value systems and emotions, all of which are inherently subjective. Understanding the factors affecting why an individual answers a certain way is, obviously, beyond the proposition of this study. But, this is a dimension that a researcher has to be aware of. From this consideration, it results that I had to adopt extreme caution in interpreting and generalizing findings, and making conclusions.

To mitigate such potential bias, I always triangulated findings between different interviewees. These are some of the tactics that I adopted. First, I did not include findings that only one interviewee reported. Second, if a new revealing finding came up in one interview, I would probe the next interviewee on that specific point: did he/she agree with his/her colleague point of view and/or assessment? Is this story plausible? Thus, I included findings that were shared by at least more than one ex-combatant. Third, I made large use of ex-combatants' quotes to support all the important findings and points I wrote. The reader is therefore able to judge for him/herself, and either agree or discard findings. Last, I triangulated some specific important findings with key informants.

TABLE 3.3: SUMMARY OF RISK AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

RISK	MITIGATION – How I managed to circumvent the risk
Security and ethics: Compromising mine and ex-combatants' security	• Several empirical studies on ex-combatants already conducted by other researchers. • Conducted fieldwork in areas not directly affected by violence. • Took necessary precautions to protect my sources: conducted interviews within ACR premises; changed names and confidentiality.
Sample of ex-combatants was built from the ACR list of beneficiaries – not a neutral stakeholder	• Without ACR support, I would have not been available to build a credible sample, as ex-combatants tend not to get visible. • I requested variation in the sample, including: gender, age, type of and length in the armed group, length in the reintegration process.
Findings rely too much on individual narratives from ex-combatants	• Triangulate findings with other ex-combatants and key informants. • Be aware of inherent subjectivity of narratives. • Use of quotes validates findings.
Risk of biased answers on the ACR-run reintegration program	• Am not interested in the perception nor value judgment that ex-combatants place on the ACR program, its shortcomings, its outcomes. • My focus area is on their employment historic path, including armed group. Personal experiences rather than specific information or value judgment considerations.
Ex-combatants not generally open to talk about violence and/or violent events due to personal trauma, or fear of prosecution.	• Did not ask directly about violence perpetration, but about functioning of armed groups. • Ex-combatants more open to dialogue with a foreigner than with a Colombian.
Recidivism – Practical and methodological risks. Too dangerous to look for recidivist. How can I explain recidivism without talking to declared / self appointed recidivist?	• Did not make recidivism the core subject of my research. • Relied on answers from ex-combatants, whom I would ask generic questions about the *mechanism* of recidivism. They would generally self volunteer the information that they were not recidivist. Thus, focus was on the process, and on hypothetical recidivists. • Given the sensitivity of the topic and higher possibility for biased answers, I asked questions about recidivism at the end of the interview.

(d) Structure of the interviews. The interviews that I conducted with ex-combatants range between twenty-five minutes and two and half hours. The length of the interview depended on different factors: amount and quality of the information collected, loquacity, willingness and/or capacity of the interviewee, as well as his/her availability in terms of time. The interviews' average duration is of fifty-five minutes.

Interviews were semi-structured and divided into three parts: one part of standard questions and two parts of qualitative open-ended questions. An important – and obvious – caveat is that the structure hereby described is a script that I initially followed, but, given their qualitative nature, interviews then shaped quite differently from one to another. While one interviewee may have focused more on the reintegration side, another one may have had more to say on his experience within the armed group, for example. These differences depend on various factors, including the length of the time in arms, degree of ideological commitment, and personal features. Thus, the interviews are personal oral histories. Besides the structure being similar, the unfolding of the interviews were different from one to the other (Perks and Thomson, 2006).

Following a five-minute introduction about the research project and aforementioned disclaimers, the first part of the interview concerned some standard demographic questions, including: age, marital status and children, place of origin and of residence, education level, and family background (urban or rural). After a few more closed questions for statistical purposes (armed group, number of years in arms, and year of demobilization), the second part the interview was structured around open-ended questions on three main themes. This qualitative part of the interview was centered on the history of the ex-combatant, and his/her testimony and narrative about particular life events.

The first theme to be addressed was 'recruitment' or how the individual got in contact and joined the armed group in the first place. I was interested in knowing the dynamics and the context of recruitment, including: family background; how the armed group approached the individual or what the first point of contact was; how strong the armed group was in the area where the individual lived; incentives for joining; and which promises were made, if any. I let complete freedom to the interviewee to tell his/her story, but I always tried to cover the above points. My initial question was usually: "Tell me the story of how and where you grew up, and the circumstances of how you were recruited or you joined the armed group". Thus, as I mentioned, I was interested in the narrative in order to untangle the dynamics of how recruitment takes place, and understand the causes of it.

The second theme was 'employment' within the armed group. After recruitment dynamics, I directed the flow of the conversation to the role, functions and activities of the individual as an armed group member. I was interested in hearing ex-combatants' stories about what their 'job' was in the armed group – without characterizing it as such. And, in turn, if and how they changed that initial job (e.g. new roles and responsibilities, career advancement etc.). Indeed, depending on the individual's length of time in the group, this part was either shorter or longer and richer in insights. As further explained below, there is a great variation in my

sample on the 'time in arms' variable: interviewed ex-combatants' length in the armed group ranged from a few months to three decades.

After explaining their 'employment' experience in the armed group, this leg of the interview included also questions related to all of the work experiences of the interviewee, both within and outside the armed group. Thus, I asked them to tell me about jobs held before entering the armed group, in order to draw a connection between all work experiences – before, during, and, after the armed group. The objective was to draw 'life work histories' that would include the entire adult life of the interviewee, including the experiences as an armed group member. By drawing this connection between 'employment' in the armed group and employment outside of it, I was also able to assess to what extent the armed group's experience was a rupture with respect to civilian life, and the interaction between the two.

The third theme of the interview concerned the demobilization and reintegration process. Here, I followed the same script as for the other qualitative parts: I would let the interviewee lead the narrative. For FARC or ELN members I was interested in why and how he/she decided to leave the armed group. For ex-paramilitaries, I wanted to know how the individual combatant perceived and reacted vis-à-vis the collective demobilization. I would then complete the interview by asking questions about reintegration, in particular, their job history and dynamics after demobilization. This included the challenges and obstacles of reintegrating and securing a job as an ex-combatant; the perception and reaction from community members; the type of jobs more frequent for ex-combatants; and, specifically, the jobs held after demobilization.

The fourth and concluding part of the interview concerned recidivism. I deliberately decided to place this topic at the very end of the conversation, because I was aware of the controversy and danger associated to it. Many interviewees would shut down when hearing a question about recidivism. Thus, I wanted to make sure that discussing recidivism would not negatively affect the rest of the interview. Since the interviewee could have lied about it, these answers could have also possibly corrupted other areas of discussion. While obviously no ex-combatant would admit to be a recidivist – although many revealed of being approached and/or threatened – a few interviewees provided some interesting hints on how recidivism works and its dynamics.

Nonetheless, the above final format of the semi-structured interview was not predetermined. In fact, it resulted from an initial process of testing a more loose format with less specific questions, and progressively adjusting it to the current format. This testing phase concerned the first three or four interviews. The most important issue that I added as a result of this 'learning by doing' concerned employment. The draw of a link between employment and

conflict (i.e. armed group's membership) is the fruit of ex-combatants' answers and my initial analysis of such answers. There is no pre-fieldwork hypothesis on this. Instead, answers from ex-combatants, many of whom directly explained and revealed the story of their period in arms through an employment lens, were crucial in drawing a link between an employment experience and membership to an armed group. As much as *sui generis* the armed group's experience can be, there is a fundamental understanding and perception by the combatant himself to be in an occupation, or a job. Chapter 7 clearly shows how the employment-conflict nexus is displayed by ex-combatants' experiences and testimonies. In turn, these insights contributed to build my argument on the labor market of war.

(e) Direct observation. As part of my fieldwork, I also engaged in direct observation, or "accidental ethnography" (Fujii, 2015). This technique consists of observing social reality as it spontaneously happens, without the researcher's deliberate effort and/or intention to gather data. In direct observation there is no intervention by the researcher in soliciting information. Direct observation is effective as it allows the researcher to gather additional data and enrich existing one through the direct observation of events, encounters, or simple daily life. Unplanned episodes are 'real' and not constructed – as an interview might be. It is also a way to triangulate findings. Direct observation concerns the community and the social context in which the unit of analysis or the study's subject take place, including simple interactions and conversations with community members, and the researcher's own personal perceptions (Gusterson, 2008; Pinsky, 2015).

For this research, direct observation took place continuously during fieldwork. However, valuable findings were gathered only when I re-elaborated what I observed and gave meaning and depth to what I witnessed. As Fujii (2015) defines it, accidental ethnography aims at "finding revelation in the mundane". Some relevant examples include the following. I attended a one-day visit to Puerto Gaitan by the regional director of the reintegration program (ACR) for the whole Eastern Llanos. This included an exchange with the municipal mayor, in which I was able to assess the high level of commitment and participation by local authorities to the reintegration file. As it is described in Chapter 4, Puerto Gaitan is located in a remote and vast area, which is currently been sought after for oil extraction and production, and particularly prone to non-state armed groups' activities. The reintegration officials also visited DDR beneficiaries who resided in Puerto Gaitan and surrounding areas to collectively go over some new features in their benefits and to gather information about their progress and challenges.

On a different occasion, I took part in a meeting between the ACR and a district council (*Junta de Acción Comunal*, JAC) of a disadvantaged area of Villavicencio to plan activities aimed at

bringing together ex-combatants and the community. I also participated in one of the sensitization activities that resulted from that meeting. Among others, I attended a 'social work' activity in which a group of around 20 ex-combatants among both guerrilla and paramilitaries, were tasked to clean a public space to later become a community sport facility. Although I would not debate the symbolic importance of ex-combatants "giving back" to the community as an act of moral and physical repair, I could witness the ex-combatants' inherent disinterest and apathy in mechanically complying with what they perceived as an administrative requirement. A partial reason for this attitude was that the overwhelming majority of ex-paramilitaries and the totality of ex-FARC members were not from Villavicencio, nor spent their time in arms in the city. They only settled there after demobilization. Thus, their emotional engagement with the local community was limited at best, and they did not feel ownership with the symbolic reparation effort. For the sake of avoiding generalizations, it should be added that a few ex-combatants were, instead, moved by the reconciliation activities and highly committed to the community work.

CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed the overall research methods and approach that was used for this research. First, the methodological and conceptual frameworks were covered, explaining and justifying how a combined macro- and micro-level analysis was designed and conducted. I also reviewed the main research questions and components with the related multiple levels of analysis that were adopted. Second, the chapter addressed the way in which I put the methodological approach into practice. I reported how I conducted fieldwork and the main research techniques that were used. In doing so, I included necessary ethical and security considerations to be taken into account when researching conflict-affected environments.

PART II - Case Study: War to Peace Transition and DDR in Meta

4. A Historical Political Economy Analysis of Conflict in Meta, Colombia

This chapter concerns a political, social and economic historical analysis of the conflict in Colombia from the 19th Century to modern times, with a specific focus on the region of Meta. Special attention is reserved to some of the interpretations about the long-term drivers of the violence in Colombia and in the Eastern Llanos – the sub-region that includes Meta. These include the quest for land and the process of colonization in peripheral areas of the country; and the structural and persistent institutional failure that left peripheral regions in a permanent state of lawlessness and/or parallel government by elites.

The chapter also addresses the understanding of contemporary non-state armed groups' dynamics in Meta. After an exploration of the most salient conflict drivers in the region from a historical political economy perspective, the focus shifts to the dynamics of armed conflict from the perspective of the main non-state armed groups in Meta, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) and several paramilitary organizations. Understanding the trajectory, behaviour, strategies, and incentives of non-state armed groups contextualizes the empirical analysis from the interviews with ex-combatants.

The chapter is structured as follows. After a brief introduction of Meta, its geographic characteristics and some considerations over its colonization patterns, the first section addresses the historical dynamics in the region from the 19th Century to the start of the civil war in 1948 (*La Violencia*). The analysis of land tenure and of the socio-economic structure that underpins it is the subject of the second section. Section three addresses the unfolding and the implications of *La Violencia* in Meta, which represents the basis for the formation of leftist guerrilla groups in the region. Section four includes the historical events of the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of the FARC. The concluding section analyses the new conflict dynamics from the 1980s on, including: the rise of illegal crops farming and its trafficking; the parallel rise of new actors (i.e. paramilitaries); and the alternate phases of war and peace attempts between the Colombian state and the FARC.

> *The Llano appears like an ocean with its limits being the Orinoco, Amazon, and Arauca rivers; its surface is equal to that of an ocean on a calm day. Like the ocean, it makes one feel very small in front of such grandeur and also instills in one the desire to conquer it. The first impression on reaching the plain after the torturous trip through the mountains tears from the observer*

a cry similar to "Land! Land!" which Columbus' men shouted on October 12, 1492. (Restrepo, 1868. Cited in Rausch, 1999: 127)

The Eastern Llanos (*Llanos Orientales*, literally "Eastern Plains", or *Orinoquia*) is a territory that occupies around 23% of total Colombia and includes the administrative departments – *Departamentos*, the equivalent of "regions" or "states" in a federal system – of Meta, Arauca, Casanare, and Vichada. It is formed of tropical grasslands. And it is delimited by the Arauca river to the north (the natural border with Venezuela), the Guaviare river to the south, the Orinoco river to the east, and the *Cordillera Oriental* ("Eastern Mountain Chain") to the west. In this vast and sparsely populated region, density was 5.6 inhabitants per square kilometer, whereas it was 38.34 at the national level in 2002. Only 3.5% of the total Colombian population lives in the Eastern Llanos – the majority of which lives in the areas of Meta adjacent to the highlands (Jiménez, 2012: 155; Rausch, 1999: 5; Holmes at al., 2008: 12-16).

Meta is one of the thirty-three administrative departments in Colombia, and the most populated of the Eastern Llanos. It covers 7.5% of the country's surface, an area that is slightly larger than Austria or smaller than Jordan (over 85,000 Km2). It has an obvious strategic location as the connection between the Andean centre and the south and east of the country. As of 2012, Meta's population included 906,805 inhabitants. The urban-rural distribution of the population is 75.2% and 24.8%, respectively. Meta's income is equal to 4.2% of Colombian total gross domestic product (2011). Economically, Meta is the fifth largest administrative department in Colombia (Rausch, 1999: 157; FIP, 2013: 6).

Meta is composed of a number of microregions, which have specific geographic and spatial characteristics as well as political, social and economic dynamics, and colonization patterns (Nieto Matiz, 2012). Figure 4.1 maps the six microregions of Meta. The two microregions of Piedemonte Metense (literally, "at the feet of the mountain") and Castilla-San Carlos de Guaroa are the most populated areas in Meta. Here, the first settlements were established. They are geographically located at the bottom of the *Cordillera Oriental* – one of the three mountain chains that cross Colombia. Main municipalities include: Meta's regional capital, Villavicencio, which is the largest city of the Eastern Llanos; and other smaller urban centres, like Acacias, Castilla la Nueva, Guamal, and Restrepo (See Figure 4.2 for a map of Meta's municipalities).

Third, the microregion of Meta River and Villanueva corridor runs along the Meta river in the north, connecting Puerto Lopez to Puerto Gaitan to the administrative departments of Vichada and Casanare in the east. This area is sparsely populated, and socio-economically dedicated to cattle ranching and agro-industrial business. Currently, it is an oil producing area and hosts some of the greatest oil reserves in Meta. Fourth, the vast south-eastern

microregion that runs along the Guaviare river (dividing Meta from Guaviare) includes only the municipality of Mapiripan. Here, in 1997, a massacre perpetrated by paramilitaries marked the entrance of these forces in Meta as a belligerent actor (see Section 4.5). Mapiripan suffers from lack of state presence, economic isolation and poor connectivity to markets due to its geographic remoteness. Last, the Ariari and the Duda-Guayabero (see Section 4.4 and Figure 4.5) are the two areas where the FARC have had some of its strongest presence in the whole country and where its highest command ("Secretariat") took residence (Nieto Matiz, 2012: 140-142).

FIGURE 4.1: MAP OF META'S MICROREGIONS

6	Meta River-Villanueva corridor	7	Piedemonte Metense	8	Castilla – San Carlos de Guaroa
9	El Ariari	10	Duda - Guayabero	25	Guaviare River corridor - Mapiripan

Source: Adapted from Gutierrez, 2012: 28.

The analysis of the geography of conflict in Colombia provides important hints for the understanding of conflict dynamics and the behaviour and strategy of conflict actors. As it is seen in this chapter, the region of Meta – included in the broader Eastern Llanos – has been traditionally characterized by inhospitable land and colonization, marginalization from the centre and from the richer high hill regions of the country, and ensuing lawlessness and high rates of structural conflict over land.

As a marginal region traditionally outside the reach of the state, Meta has been characterized by colonization waves and processes. Colonization is at the core of the conflictive dynamics in the region, as it mostly unfolded in unequal and unregulated conditions. Different waves of colonization characterized the 19th and the early part of the 20th Century. At that time,

colonization literally meant the exploration and settlement of vast areas of uninhabited land – except for indigenous peoples – and completely outside the reach of state control and services. Unregulated land tenure and exploitation of landless peasants date back to this time and constitute the structural factors of the conflict in Colombia.

FIGURE 4.2: MAP OF META'S MUNICIPALITIES

Source: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi, 2002

In the second half of the 20th Century and following the height of the generalized violence that engulfed Colombia in 1948 (termed *La Violencia*), a wave of rural and agriculture-based colonization took place with the support of modernization programs by the state. From the mid-1950s, scores of displaced farmers and individuals in search of opportunities came to the region. Ultimately, the state failed to deliver services and modernization. In particular, a land reform and the establishment of the rule of law never materialized, which meant that the previous unequal and exploitative dynamics around land were replicated. As a reaction to this situation, the 1960s witnessed an armed colonization process, when the rise of Marxist-based guerrilla armed groups established strongholds in various parts of the Eastern

Llanos. From the 1980s, a new colonization process took place, once again characterized by the lack of state presence and the rule of law. This latest colonization wave in Meta was characterized by the rise of illegal drugs farming and production, which created a flourishing economy of illicit drugs. This process was accompanied and consolidated by the rise of a new social actor, namely the powerful drugs traffickers and affiliated non-state armed groups, including the FARC (Richani, 2002: 65-70; UNDP, 2010: 13-14; Sobrevivientes del Comité Cívico por los Derechos Humanos del Meta et al., 1997: 14-15).

4.1 Political and Conflict Dynamics of the Eastern Llanos up to 1948

Jenny Pearce's definition of Colombia as a country with multiple "political time zones" (Pearce, 1990: 286) is long rooted in Colombian history, even pre-dating national independence in 1810. Its history has been characterized by centre versus periphery dynamics, by the remoteness of Colombian frontier regions, and by persistent regionalism (Holmes et al., 2008: 12-26). If we want to understand contemporary conflict dynamics in a frontier region like Meta, it is necessary to briefly revisit territorial organization and policies throughout the last two centuries.

In Colombia, colonization and settlements traditionally concentrated in the core provinces of the Andean Highlands connected by the Magdalena River to the Caribbean coastal port cities of Cartagena and Barranquilla – all areas characterized by temperate climates. During the 19th Century and first half of the 20th Century, these areas used to encompass 98% of the population, but less than half of Colombia's geographic extension. Although percentages have changed since then, the overwhelming majority of people still lives in the core central areas. On the other hand, the five frontier regions (Eastern Llanos, Amazonia, Pacific Coast, La Guajira Peninsula, and the islands of San Andres and Providencia) were sparsely populated and of difficult access due to tropical climate, inhospitable territory and diseases. These features combined with a chronic lack of infrastructure, transportation routes, communication means, and viable sanitary conditions (Rausch, 1999; Kalmanovitz, 2010: 65-85).

Frontier regions and governance arrangements. Politically, from Colombian independence in 1810 up to 1930, frontier regions have remained on the margin of the political arena and of national elites' interests. From the 19th Century, the centre versus periphery and centralism versus federalism dynamics became permanent features of Colombia's political system. Territorial policy and the very nature of the Colombian state were unstable, resulting in a permanent political and armed battleground. Four successive

republics were established between 1832 and 1886, before the current Republic of Colombia was founded in 1886. As a sign of chronic instability and political indecisiveness, between 1832 and 1863 the boundaries of territorial administrations in the frontier were modified fifteen times (Holmes et al., 2008: 12-26).

The Llanos of San Martin (as present-day Meta and Vichada were referred to in the 19th Century) was allocated to the department of Cundinamarca during this period. To rationalize and centralize control of the periphery, a system of 'special territories' was created under the direct control of the central government. In 1892, the Llanos of San Martin was permanently ceded to national control and established as a 'special territory' (Rausch, 1999: 10, 158-159).

By 1930, ten 'national territories', as they were renamed, were established, which included all frontier regions. There were four intendancies: Choco, Amazonas, San Andres, and Meta (created in 1909); and six *comisarias* (or commissariats, units which required more central government's assistance): namely, Arauca, Caqueta, Guajira, Putumayo, Vaupes, and Vichada. Intendancies and commissariats were put under direct control from the centre and encompassed more than half of Colombia's land (Rausch, 1999).

Overall, throughout this whole period, the centre government neglected the frontier regions. In turn, by being put under tutelage from central government control, national territories were slow in developing institutions and administrative capacity. Thus, acknowledging successes and limitations of territorial reorganization in the 19th Century and first half of the 20th Century is crucial to understand why Colombia is to this day a collection of disparate regions and why achieving territorial integration is still a main policy challenge.

The role of the Catholic church. The Catholic church played an important role. During colonial times – after realizing that the plains did not contain natural resource wealth – rulers left to the missionaries the task of administering these unruly lands, and converting indigenous people to Christianity. After independence, civilian and religious authorities worked together to promote Christianization, and integration of frontier regions within the Colombian state. Since the state did not have neither interest nor the capacity to rule far away regions, central government used religious orders for administering basic functions, thank to their local presence. In the Llanos of San Martin, the order of the Franciscans was tasked to proselytize and act as a *de facto* authority for long time. Clergy's rule in the frontier regions culminated in 1902 with the signing of the Convention on Missions between the church and the state. The agreement formalized church's undisputed rule (in terms of governance, security, and education) in the special territories, and established Apostolic Vicariates and Prefectures to be assigned to different religious orders. The convention also entailed the assignment of vast amounts of public lands to the clergy in order to promote

colonization. Since 1896, the Salesians operated in the Llanos of San Martin; but in 1908 the Vatican City assigned the Apostolic Vicariate of Meta to the Montfort Fathers (Rausch, 1999: 8-9, 16, 161; Rausch, 2013: 7).

A two-party system: Liberals and Conservatives. Politically, the year 1930 saw the beginning of the sixteen-year Liberal Republic after forty-four years of continuous Conservative rule. The leftist Liberal party and the moderate Conservative party have dominated and monopolized Colombian political system since their foundation in 1848 and 1849, respectively. This two-party system prevented any other challenger from entering legitimate politics. Both parties have conveyed all political and social requests in the country – even during the darkest hours of war and violence. They have traditionally been composed of the wealthiest and most powerful political and economic elites in the country. The Liberal party has had multiple – often-contradicting – components within its ranks: next to members of the powerful oligarchy, there were leftist students, the rising urbanized middle class, and "the industrial and merchant's bourgeoisie." As it will be seen later, party's affiliation was loose, and neither a unified identity nor a party program were present (Richani, 2002: 16).

Renewed focus on the frontiers in the 1930s. The Liberal presidencies of Olaya Herrera (1930-34), Lopez Pumarejo (1934-38, 1942-46), and Santos (1938-42) included a strong focus on the development and integration of the peripheries within the country. Especially, Lopez Pumarejo's first term was characterized by a genuine effort at correcting some of the inequities and economic distortions of the Colombian system. Thus, the 1930s witnessed an acceleration in the implementation of policies of administrative reforms, education, health, infrastructure development and transport routes, security sector reform, and land titling, all of which acted as an incentive for migration and new settlers in many of the frontier regions and in Meta, especially. This shift by the Colombian state was partly due to the brief war with Peru over the border town of Leticia (Amazonas) in 1932. The border war largely exposed to Colombian elites and public opinion the fragility of Colombian borders and the neglect of frontier regions (Rausch, 1999; Gonzalez, 1989: 115-118).

The necessity was nonetheless to 'rediscover' Colombian peripheries rather than recover them – as Lopez Pumarejo first tenure's campaign stated at the time (Rausch, 1999: ix). Through his slogan "Revolution on the March", Lopez, in particular, showed a specific interest for the Llanos and Meta, to which he made frequent trips in 1936-37, and of which he sensed the economic and development potential. As a result, the 125 km motor road connecting Bogota to Villavicencio was completed in 1936, spurring trade, development and migration. Also, a 860 km road connecting Villavicencio with the capital of Vichada, Puerto Carreño, via Puerto Lopez in the east of Meta was initiated. Public works and infrastructure

development were priorities in Meta, including construction of bridges, water supply, aqueduct and sewer systems, and a long distance telephone line, among others. (Rausch, 1999; Richani, 2002: 16-18).

The education system and access to health were also strengthened. In Meta, this outcome was achieved through institutionalization and in coordination with the religious order of the Montfort. First, the national budget for education was quadrupled throughout Lopez Pumarejo's first presidency, in order to extend education to the frontier regions and to fight a nation-wide 63% illiteracy rate. Between 1938 and 1944, the budget for education in Meta increased nine-fold. Second, health units were established in the territories to prevent mortality from curable diseases like malaria and yellow fever, and to improve hygiene and sanitary levels overall (Rausch, 1999).

In administrative terms, the Department of Intendancies and Commissariats was created in 1933 (later renamed Department of National Territories). The constitutional reforms of 1936 switched control of intendancies and commissariats from the Presidency to Congress, thus ensuring more continuity and accountability in the frontier regions' affairs, but maintaining the tutelage. Then, Law 2 of 1943 removed some shortcomings of previous reform and territorial administration by regularizing national territories' legal status, improving administration and governance, and establishing electoral rules (Rausch, 1999).

Consolidation of territorial policies, and national and local turmoil in the 1940s. Both domestic and foreign policy reasons contributed to cool down the emphasis on frontier regions' development from the late 1930s to the start of the civil war known as *La Violencia* in 1948. Even though Latin America and Colombia were not a battlefield, the Second World War had an important influence on the country: Colombia sided with the Allies, declared war on the Axis in 1943, and economically contributed to the war effort.

Domestically, President Santos (1938-42) – a moderate Liberal at odds with the more left wing Liberal Olaya Herrera and Lopez Pumarejo – consolidated the latter policies toward the national territories, falling short of introducing new initiatives. The warning signs of the civil war that will engulf the country from 1948 could already be felt during Lopez Pumarejo's second term of 1942-46, which was characterized by rising partisanship and tensions both within the Liberal camp and with the Conservatives. These dynamics frustrated any new intervention toward national integration. Lopez Pumarejo even resigned one year before the expiration of his term, which was completed by Lleras Camargo. The split within the Liberals was irreconcilable to the extent that two Liberal candidates (Turbay as the official Liberal Party candidate for the moderate factions, and Jorge Eliecer Gaitan for the left) ran for the 1946 presidency, with the result of opening the way to the return of the Conservatives to

power with Ospina Perez, after sixteen consecutive years of Liberal rule (Rausch, 1999).

Political instability and tensions within mainstream politics were also reflected in rising insecurity in the peripheral national territories. The Eastern Llanos, in particular, became areas where cattle rustling, banditry and indigenous peoples' attacks were common occurrences. Given the limited infrastructure, the national government was unable to effectively police the vast territories, with the result that rising crime and insecurity affected ranchers, *colonos* and new migrants, and characterized many areas of Meta and the rest of the Llanos. In Acacias – a few dozens kilometers from Villavicencio – a penal colony was opened in 1924 until the 1960s. Due to its growing size, escapes of inmates became common, fueling rising violence and crime in the area, including in Villavicencio (Rausch, 1999: 64, 113, 167-168). It should also be noted that the nationalistic fervor that surged following the 1932 border war with Peru and that contributed to the implementation of integration policies, faded away. By the mid-1940s there was less interest in public opinion and less political will to further the integration of frontier regions (Rausch, 1999: 124).

The political battle at the national level was reflected in the intendancy of Meta, where political participation was higher than in other frontier regions of the Eastern Llanos. In Meta, the split between Liberals and Conservatives was pronounced – with the Conservatives holding a slight majority. Accusations of electoral fraud, purges and political instability within the intendancy, violent protest and politicization of police forces were the ingredients contributing to the general violence in Meta that followed the assassination of Gaitan in April 1948. These factors merged with an endemic resistance to central government authority in the Eastern Llanos – a resistance that dated back to colonial times (Rausch, 2013: 31-34).

Economic growth, the limited extent of the land titling process (which is analysed in the next section), and the rapid changes undergoing in the region contained the germs of the upcoming political violence and strife. In Meta, rapid economic gains in few sectors caused rampant speculation and higher prices, and were limited to small elites around Villavicencio and other towns. In the periphery, there were remote rural areas still marginalized and untouched by development and services. Marginalization was even more pronounced in other national territories of the Eastern Llanos, like Casanare, Arauca and Vichada, where poverty and neglect from the centre were rampant (Rausch, 1999: 182-186; Rausch, 2013: 15-16, 21-22).

Ultimately, the effort to pursue reform and modernization in the national territories came to a halt in 1948 due to the start of full-scale warfare. In the Eastern Llanos, the government did not have full control of the territory. During the following decades, it was never possible to

re-vamp reforms and policies of integration, with the result that by the end of the 20th Century Colombia was still a country in which its peripheries were unruly and outside state control. This historical process helps us to understand how and why many Colombian regions are still to this day outside government control, and why non-state armed groups are still persistent.

4.2 Land Tenure and Meta's Economy

A brief overview of the Eastern Llanos and Meta's economic trajectory is important to contextualize the political and social upheaval that characterized *La Violencia* from 1948. The 1930s political reforms of integration occurred in presence of a favorable economic trend for the region – which the reforms also contributed to shape. During the advancements of the 1930s, demographic pressures in the highlands and the economic and social toll exacted from the global economic depression that started in 1929, contributed to a rapid inflow of migrants to the Eastern Llanos. In Meta, the population rose from 11,671 in 1918 and 19,320 in 1928 to 51,674 in 1938 and 67,492 in 1951, not including indigenous peoples (Rausch, 1999: 65).

Land tenure and policies. Among pull factors for migration and colonization in the early- and mid-20th Century, it is crucial to underline the role played by (partial) land reform in the 1920s-30s, which, on the one hand, gave an incentive to small farmers to migrate to the peripheries; but, on the other hand, its ultimate ineffectiveness represents one of the structural issues of the conflict in Colombia throughout the XX and XXI centuries. But, first, it is worth making one important historical digression to understand the origins of the institution of land in Colombia.

After the abolishment of the colonial land system (based on *encomienda*, *concierto*, and *mita*), the institution of the *hacienda* (large farm) was created in early 19th Century – based on servile labor and on limited access to land. In order to support the establishment of the *hacienda* system, a republican decree dictated the parcelization and privatization of communal lands (*resguardos*) owned collectively by indigenous population. This process resulted in large landowners driving out indigenous people and small subsistence farmers from their land, and in the increase of land concentration. However, there were some notable exceptions of small farmers in Cauca, Caldas and Tolima, who resisted incorporation in the hacienda system and maintained the status of free peasantry (Richani, 2002: 12-15; Kalmanovitz, 2010: 215-231).

As an effect of these dynamics, a process of land colonization by small peasants started. A composite class that included free peasants, peasants escaping haciendas, Afro-Colombians

escaping slavery, indigenous peoples, and poor *colonos* (peasant migrants and squatters) started moving to undeveloped public lands in the frontiers, in the quest for wealth and better life conditions. However, too often, *colonos* were unable to acquire rights to the occupied lands, with the result of turning into tenant farmers for powerful large landowners. This process strengthened land concentration in the hands of few rich families, solidifying the oligarchic system. In addition, land concentration at the expense of small farmers acted as a disincentive for use of unfarmed and/or unproductive lands (LeGrand, 1986; Richani, 2002: 12-15).

This pattern of colonization and of unequal competition for land between landless peasants and large landowners that was created in the second half of the 19th Century, represents one the core issues of the conflict in Colombia throughout the 20th Century as well. In the unfolding of the different conflicts, a constant feature has been the recourse to and use of violence by social actors to solve their disputes. LeGrand (1986) estimates that approximately 450 major violent confrontations took place between landlords and *colonos* in the period 1875-1930. However, the use of violence was also extended to conflicts within the large landowning class itself. Most notably, during *La Violencia*, the dynamics were sectarian (local conflicts between parties on an ideological and political basis), more than class-based – although the latter's component cannot be discounted (Richani, 2002: 12-15).

Land reform in the 1930s. With the purpose of correcting such distortions, in the late 1920s and 30s, both judicial rulings and central government's policies seemingly sided with the small and landless farmers in their quest for titles and ownership. A series of intervention culminated in the constitutional amendments of 1936 and Law 200. The new legal framework established ownership rights for farmers after five years of working on a plot of land, set procedures of land expropriation by the state for unused or unproductive lands for a period of ten years, and institutionalized land judges tasked to settle disputes from the application of the law (Kalmanovitz, 2010: 215-231).

Despite producing an important change, the effectiveness of the new law, its application and implementation are questionable. In the Eastern Llanos, the main land system of production was the latifundio, which is characterized for being a large commercial estate of more than 500 hectares. With ownership centralized on one main landowner, the land is then allocated and administered by landless small farmers, who farm and produce on behalf of the landowner. The alternative systems to the latifundio are the minifundio and other mixed systems, which were prevalent in the highlands and the slopes of Colombia, respectively (Jiménez, 2012: 156-157).

In Meta, traditional large cattle ranchers dominated land tenure and production through an

exploitative economic system based on large concentration of rents in the hands of few. Large landowners permeated both social and economic life. Following the phase in which land was exclusively controlled by representatives of the Catholic church, a wave of colonization from the Andean regions of Antioquia and around Bogota to Meta took place at the end of the 19th Century. The newcomers displaced and subjugated the small farmers and indigenous peoples that were present at that time.

Thus, by the 1930s, most of these large landowners and cattle ranchers already held land titles. Inevitably, ranchers' claims were stronger than those originating from new *colonos*. Inadvertently, then, Law 200 of 1936 either did not have an impact on social and economic structure in Meta; or, worse, contributed to more land concentration in those cases in which the power of elites could not be infringed by medium and small farmers (Jiménez, 2012: 156-157). Such conclusions seem to be validated by looking at Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1: LAND CONCENTRATION AND ATTEMPTED REFORM

Number of Land Claims Granted in Meta and Number of Hectares, 1931-46		
Year	Grants	Hectares
1931	1	2,449
1932	3	4,886
1933	4	200
1934	58	3,741
1935	31	2,690
1936	50	748
1937	13	11,895
1938	28	2,518
1939	11	252
1940	22	1,480
1941	29	5,068
1942	22	5,725
1943	53	2,962
1944	11	1,704
1945	8	2,768
1946	10	440
Total	354	49,526

SOURCE: Diot, 1976. Adapted from Rausch, 1999: 67, 100.

First, by comparing the five-year periods before and after Law 200 was passed (1931-35 and 1936-40), it is clear that the new law did not have a substantial impact on the number of titles granted and hectares adjudicated: in fact, only a modest increase was recorded. The second hypothesis (i.e. more land concentration) can be confirmed by considering that of the thirteen claims granted in 1937 (a year after Law 200 passed) two of them totaled 11,702 hectares, whereas eleven small farmers were adjudicated only 193 hectares combined. Moreover, in the period 1939-46, of the 166 grant titles adjudicating over 20,000 hectares, six of them were for 1,500 hectares or more. These figures underscore continued high land

concentration; and also how the law strengthened the opportunity for commercial agriculture and ranching of existing land owners, at the expense of subsistence farming and *colonos* (Barbosa, 1988; Diot, 1976; Rausch, 1999: 66, 100, 165-166).

Cattle ranching. In macroeconomic terms, land titling had a positive impact on economic growth in the region. Cattle ranching has traditionally been the most important industry in Meta and in the Eastern Llanos. The number of cattle substantially increased from the mid-1920s, thank to improved pasture, to crossbreeding, and to better market connectivity with Bogota after the construction of the highway connecting the capital with Villavicencio. In turn, Villavicencio was being transformed from a village into a bustling provincial town and the most important city of the Eastern Llanos (Rausch, 1999: 178-179).

Cattle numbers seemingly increased from 49,000 in 1922 to 77,000 in 1925 up to 300,000 in 1950. One of the main projects to further growth in this sector was the construction of a local refrigerated slaughterhouse, the lack of which impeded the commercialization of larger quantities of beef. However, its ultimate construction in 1950 did not yield the expected benefits: transportation costs were still high and the refrigerated cells to go on trucks were inadequate. In political economy terms, the cattle industry was organized according to a rent-seeking logic around the latifundio, dominated by large landowners at the expense of small and medium farmers and producers. This dynamic has impeded the growth and development of a modern industry (Jiménez, 2012: 157; Rausch, 1999: 98-99, 159, 170-171, 177).

Expansion of commercial farming and other economic activities. In parallel, commercial farming expanded. Cultivation of rice and other products (corn, platanos, and yucca) was increasing from subsistence levels to being commercialized and traded to the highlands. Between 1936 and 1938, rice production and exports increased by approximately 50%. By 1947, the intendancy of Meta was the fourth producer of rice in Colombia: its value grew from 600,000 in 1936 to 5.5 million a decade later. Exports of platanos, corn and yucca also skyrocketed, and the combined value of the three crops nearly tripled between 1936-8. Oil exploration in Meta started in the 1930s, but its actual discovery only took place six decades later. Liquor production (in particular, beer) started to be an important local industry; alcohol sales quickly became the first source of revenue for Meta's budget thank to the high consumption and high taxes levied on it (Rausch, 1999: 98-99, 122, 171-173, 178).

4.3   *La Violencia* in the Eastern Llanos and its Aftermath

La Violencia **at the national level (1948-1957): Liberals and Conservatives go to war**. From 1948 to 1962, an armed conflict characterized by extremely high levels of violence and

brutality engulfed the whole of Colombia. This conflict was termed *La Violencia* due to its ferocity, its generalized indiscriminate violence, and the lack of direct involvement of the main political actors. The war was, in fact, conducted by a disparate number of guerrilla groups, bandits, and non-state armed actors, holding fluid allegiances to the two main parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives. Thus, most actors did not have a coherent strategy of war nor an end goal; although the political and, in part, ideological characters of the war cannot be denied.[47]

It is estimated that approximately 200,000 people perished in the conflict. An estimated three quarters of them were killed during the most violent phase of the whole conflict, in 1948-53. The main war theater of this first phase was the Eastern Llanos (Pearce, 1990; Pardo Rueda, 2008: 465-498).

Although widespread unrest occurred since 1946, it is the killing of Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, one the left leaning Liberal leaders and hopeful presidential candidate, on April 9, 1948 that triggered massive urban mobs and ensuing open warfare throughout the country. For its place in historiography and in Colombian national memory, Gaitan's assassination can be equated to the role of Archduke Ferdinand's death in Sarajevo marking the beginning of the First World War.

The conflict had multiple dimensions that challenge easy interpretation. Started as a political struggle between Conservatives and Liberals and limited to urban violent unrest, the conflict turned into a rural-based class strife. Urban uprisings were deadly but overall did not last long as the Conservatives annihilated labor unions that had formed since the 1920s. In rural areas, locally based guerrilla movements representing *colonos*, peasants and impoverished small farmers were in control of areas outside the government reach. Guerrilla groups held formal and informal ties with the Liberal party and its dignitaries; with time, however, they moved beyond the control of the Liberals, who lost grip and influence over their own power base (Rausch, 2013; Pearce, 1990; Pardo Rueda, 2008: 475-476).

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[47] The Colombian tradition of *Violentologos*, or scholars dedicated to the study and analysis of violent forms and conflict dynamics in Colombia, has its origin in the studies and interpretations of *La Violencia*. The first example of this tradition is dated 1962, with the first serious analysis of *La Violencia*, including its causes, drivers, and actors. The book (*La Violencia en Colombia*) was commissioned by the national government to a committee composed of monseñor German Guzman, Orlando Fals Borda, and Eduardo Umaña Luna, to analyse the causes of the conflict that erupted in 1948. The volume was the first attempt to analyse the social origins and dynamics of the conflict, treating the masses as a social actor. The most notable studies that followed include: Dix, Robert. 1967. *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. Fluharty, Vernon. 1981. *La Danza de los Millones. Regimen Militar y Revolucion Social en Colombia (1930-1956)*. Bogota: El Ancora Editores. Oquist, Paul. 1978. *Violencia, Conflicto y Politica en Colombia*. Bogota: Banco Popular. Payne, William. 1968. *Patterns of Conflict in Colombia*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. Ramsey, Russell. 1981. *Guerrilleros y Soldados*. Bogota: Tercer Mundo Editores. Weinert, Richard. 1966. "Violence in Pre-Modern Societies: Rural Colombia", *The American Political Science Review*, No.2, June 1966. Williamson, Robert. 1965. "Toward a Theory of Political Violence", *Western Political Quarterly*, March 1965.

Since its foundation in 1848, the Liberal party had traditionally been composed of a vast array of internal factions, responding to contrasting ideas vis-à-vis the country's political system and the strategies to get to power. Liberals' strategies have ranged from "a permanent reconciliation with the adversary to the proclamation of armed insurrection as the only tactic for coming to power." (Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 10). The party has always acted as a 'container' of different – and at times – contradicting positions and requests from the masses. "This range of strategies allowed one Liberal faction to use the discontent of the masses to its advantage, thereby defusing the threat of a consolidation of nationwide class-based parties that might have competed with the long-standing two-party system." (Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 10). During *La Violencia*, these contradictory tendencies are reflected in the uneasy and equivocal relationship between the Liberals, the guerrillas and the masses; and, in turn, between legality, illegality and the pursue of violence (Richani, 2002: 16-17).[48]

The centrality of the two-party system for the country's stability is confirmed by the fact that the civil war starts precisely on the day of Gaitan's slain, who represented the rising left-wing faction of the Liberal party. Gaitan's vision was centered on the masses and the working class, to break the monopoly of power of the two parties. Against the traditional oligarchies, he sought a more participatory and inclusive political system as a way to bring shared economic prosperity and social mobility. After his death, the sideline of his popular Liberal movement in favor of the elite and bourgeoisie faction of the Liberal party, created the conditions for sectarian violence. The masses could not be persuaded to stay under the Liberals' tutelage this time, and, thus, the Liberals were overcome by the events. It is the weakness and disintegration of Gaitan's centralized populist movement – which strived to lead the masses – that impeded a coordinated struggle against the Conservatives; opening, instead, the way to generalized violence, authoritarianism, and extremism (Rausch, 2013; Pearce, 1990; Pardo Rueda, 2008: 475-476; Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 10-19).

The agents of violence and armed actors that arose from the chaos that followed Gaitan's death were of different origins and politicized to different degrees. There were Communist guerrillas, Liberal guerrillas, as well as groups that resembled more banditry rather than a political outfit.[49] Guerrilla groups confronted traditional local oligarchies of landowners, who, in turn, with the support of the central government, organized local armed groups – the forerunner of modern paramilitary forces. Throughout the 20th Century, and even the 21st,

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[48] On the nature of the Liberal and Conservative parties, Sanchez and Meertens even say that "the nineteen-century wars appear to have been caused by a disturbing irrationality that characterized these two large political forces as subcultures of daily life more than as parties." (Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 9).

[49] For a discussion about banditry and its role after *La Violencia*, see Sanchez and Meertens, 2001.

common thread between the *colonos* / poor peasants and the large landowners is that neither of them relied on the state as far as their protection or representing their class interests are concerned. In different phases and shapes, both social actors established and/or supported non-state armed actors that militarily pursued their interests and protected them against the state itself. Explaining this institutional failure is key to the understanding of the conflict drivers and dynamics in Colombia (Richani, 2002: 11-12).

Ad hoc police forces and embryonic paramilitary groups (the *Chulavitas*, the *Pajaros* or the *Aplanchadores*) were established by the Conservatives – with the either tacit or explicit support from elites and the Catholic church. Mandated with the re-establishment of order, they were, in fact, determined to persecute and terrorize Liberals and guerrilla members. Loyalty and/or affiliation to one of the two main political parties were a sufficient cause for an individual to be murdered or persecuted (Dudley, 2006; Pearce, 1990; Pardo Rueda, 2008: 479-480; Isaza, 1959).

Faced with generalized insurrection, in 1949, the Conservative government of Ospina Perez dismissed Congress, passed restricting legislation on civil liberties and *de facto* assumed authoritarian powers. These special powers were sanctioned by the contested election of Conservative leader, Laureano Gomez, as president in 1950. Under their watch, the conflict and sectarianism intensified, and the levels of violence further increased.

A military dictatorship (1953-57) supported by both parties ensued, with the objective of re-establishing order. The new head of state, General Rojas Pinilla, devised an amnesty and a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program for the guerrillas, which, with the exception of the Communist guerrillas and bandits, most of the armed groups subscribed to. Together with a national plan of rehabilitation, these initiatives managed to substantially decrease the intensity of violence, but not to pacify the country. Following the demobilization, a more surgical campaign of repression and military pressure hoped to thwart the rest of the insurgents. In fact, Rojas Pinilla contributed to entrenching the conflict and to further radicalization through the persecution of Communists and through terror practices in the areas under communist influence (Pearce, 1990: 60; Pardo Rueda, 2008: 488-493).

Then, in 1957, the Conservative and Liberal parties withdrew their support to Rojas Pinilla, and legitimized an alliance that would have been impossible at the height of *La Violencia*. In 1958, the two main parties launched a bipartisan National Front, re-established the constitutional order, and sidelined the military (Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 19-20).

La Violencia in the Eastern Llanos (1948-53). At the local level, a closer look at the civil

war's dynamics reveals the multiple sub-regional conflicts within it, to the extent that it is hard to speak of one civil war. The two main parties acted as a container and a channel of local-level political battles and socio-economic issues. However, local conflicts progressively developed their own dynamic, independent from centre parties' politics (Pearce, 1990: 49; Buitrago, 1984).

The Eastern Llanos experienced one of the most violent and brutal phases of the whole war in the period 1948-53 (Pearce, 1990: 57-58). In particular, the death toll in Meta, between 1949 and 1951, is estimated at 9,000 people plus 6,000 people forcefully displaced, out of a population of 51,674 (1938) and 67,492 (1951). (Rausch, 2013: 49). Other figures put the death toll among civilians at 10,000-15,000 between January 1950 and June 1953. In the same period, an estimated 390 military personnel and 115 non-state counter insurgency members lost their life (Ramsey, 1981; cited in Pardo Rueda, 2008: 486; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 185-187).

Rausch (2013) enumerates three main causes of the war in the Eastern Llanos. First cause had to do with the remoteness and the marginalization of these frontier regions with respect to the highlands. Given geographic conditions, the Llaneros developed an aversion of and resistance to any kind of authority and central government. Second, the immobility of the social structure: society and the economy were still dominated by cattle ranching, and social and economic exploitation of peasants still resembled colonial times. Related to this, the third cause is concerned with the limited – and uneven – reach of the reforms of the 1930s to integrate the Llanos to the rest of Colombia. Although Meta was in a privileged position with respect to Vichada and Arauca, for example – where little had changed since the 19th Century – still, land ownership's contestation and economic hardship were persistent despite positive outcomes in infrastructure and modernization (Rausch, 2013: 31-32).

In the wake of Gaitan's killing in Bogota, urban violence spread to Villavicencio and to smaller centres throughout the Eastern Llanos. Within hours, Eliseo Velasquez, a charismatic leader, formed the first guerrilla group in Meta, which sieged the town of Puerto Lopez and led armed incursions into other Conservative strongholds. By 1950, nineteen guerrilla organizations totaling 2,500 combatants were present in the Llanos. In 1952-53, twenty-three armed groups covered the whole territories of the Eastern Llanos and included an estimated 20,000 combatants. Guerrillas held different political affiliation within the Liberal camp, and had different strategies and tactics to achieve their goals, but they mostly cooperated with one another. Guerrilla groups in the Llanos were fairly organized from a military standpoint, responded to an established hierarchy, were able to hold territory and to finance themselves. Nonetheless, the small population of the Llanos, its vast geography,

and the limited available resources at hand did not allow the guerrillas of the Llanos to mount a truly national campaign nor to threaten the country's stability (Rausch, 2013: 39-43; Pardo Rueda, 2008: 479, 487; Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 17).

For their part, civilian authorities in Bogota proceeded to strengthen the military in the Llanos. Terror by both state and irregular forces hit Liberal members and their supporters in the attempt to eradicate the rising guerrilla movements. More repression followed, including a 1952 scorched earth campaign by the military and the carpet bombing of several villages, including Puerto Lopez, Las Delicias, and El Turpial aimed at uprooting the guerrillas. The campaign led thousands of people to flee their homes, and renewed fighting and recruitment by the guerrillas (Rausch, 2013: 41-43).

In terms of support for the guerrilla, they mostly enjoyed high popular support in the areas under their control, especially among peasants. An interesting dynamic concerns the Liberal middle-class ranchers, who up to 1951 supported the guerrilla groups in their struggle against the Conservatives. Animated by entrepreneurial spirit and aversion to the centre, ranchers saw with favor the Liberal cause of breaking the status quo of underdevelopment in the region. Nonetheless, the alleged growing criminal character of some guerrilla groups, rising military pressure, and the prevailing insecurity and anarchy convinced ranchers to side with the military and police for the restoration of order and the annihilation of the guerrillas. An important role was also played by a government-led economic blockade of cattle pertaining to either guerrilla supporters or Liberals, through the establishment of safe-conduct passes for cattle being sold outside of the region. This practice economically strangled those ranchers who did not support the military – and was then adopted for rice producers as well. This situation resulted in deeper cycles of violence and in the creation of new paramilitary units to expel guerrillas and protect economic interests (Rausch, 2013: 40-42, 47-8; Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 19; Pearce, 1990: 57).

Nonetheless, the Llanos were not the most pressing priority for the military and the central government. Therefore, the guerrillas were able to expand, up to a point in early 1953 when they controlled 90% of the Eastern Llanos. A process of "armed colonization" by Communist factions and *de facto* self-government in many areas took place. Under the leadership of Eduardo Franco Isaza and Guadalupe Salcedo, the guerrillas established their own law, governing bodies and courts ("First and Second Law of the Llanos"), enjoying a high degree of internal legitimacy and popularity (Rausch, 2013: 43-44; Pearce, 1990: 60).

However, the guerrillas were essentially a peasant insurgency, which lacked the necessary political culture, unity and leadership's sophistication to establish an effective government, and to propose an alternative political and socio-economic system to the Conservative one.

The areas controlled by the guerrilla were, in effect, remote enclaves of "permanent refuge and often insurmountable barriers to the imposition of government authority" rather than vibrant autonomous political entities (Rausch, 2013: 49, quoting Sanchez, 1992: 93). In addition, "throughout 1952, as the guerrillas grew in quantity and quality, they sought to detach themselves from Liberal ideology and the influence of the National Liberal Directorate" – the Bogota-based Liberal leadership (Rausch, 2013: 43).

The inability of the Liberals to lead and/or to influence the guerrillas contributed, on the one hand, to the latter radicalization and ultimate defeat. On the other hand, the Liberals abandoned their proposition of changing the political and social order by forming an alliance with the Conservatives in 1957. The ultimate outcome was a *de facto* re-establishment of the oligarchic system and the preservation of the social and economic status quo in the country – which in retrospect brought several more decades of war, up to the present day.

Pacification and demobilization in the Eastern Llanos. To deal with insecurity and mounting unrest, in early June 1953, Rojas Pinilla's dictatorship devised a general amnesty for all combatants who laid down weapons. General Duarte Blum sent the following ruling to all military commands throughout the country.

> *Interpreting the will of His Excellency, the President of the Republic, Lieutenant General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, I authorize that all individuals, who in either one or other form have committed subversive actions against public order and who voluntarily surrender to military authorities by handing over their weapons, are let completely free, their life to be protected, are helped to restart their work-related activities, and are to be assisted in their most urgent needs.*[50]

In the Eastern Llanos, several guerrilla groups, as well as other irregular militias, responded favorably to the amnesty and demobilization proposals. The speed with which the surrender of weapons was organized suggests that guerrilla groups in the Llanos were eager to end the armed struggle. In reality, not all guerrilla groups responded positively to the call to end the fight. The most prominent and legendary leader, Guadalupe Salcedo, agreed to demobilize his group, receiving a great deal of attention by the media and public opinion (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). Several other guerrilla organizations scorned Salcedo for his alleged betrayal and did not agree to demobilize until the political and socio-economic conditions for which they had fought in the first place were adequately addressed. Seemingly, concerns over security for the prospected demobilized also played an important role in the decision of several groups not to disarm (Rausch, 2013: 54-58; Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 21-22).

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[50] Pardo Rueda, 2008: 485-486. Translation by the author.

Source: Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 133

In June 1953, the first demobilization process began. This included 1,124 of Salcedo's combatants along with several smaller groups: 446 guerrilla members led by Eduardo Fonseca, 256 led by Dumar Aljure, 253 led by Jorge Gonzalez, and 169 led by Carlos Perdomo. Another approximately 10,000 combatants laid down arms between August and September in the region. At the national level, over 10,000 combatants demobilized between June and September 1953. Highly symbolic public ceremonies of delivery of weapons were organized. In exchange for weapons, "each combatant received a pair of shoes, a sweater, a pair of pants, a bar soap, and food for several meals." (Ramsey, 1981: 226; Pardo Rueda, 2008: 486).

Some of the most important issues that the guerrillas negotiated with the government resemble those of today's DDR frameworks. First of all, guerrillas wanted the political character of their struggle to be acknowledged, away from being labeled bandits. Second, concerns over personal security. Third, guerrillas were assured that economic aid and social benefits would be provided to support their reinsertion into civilian life. On this point, it is interesting that of a seven-point document of requests from a group of seventeen guerrilla commanders of the Eastern Llanos to Rojas Pinilla as conditions for their surrender, employment generation for the demobilized is singled out as one of them. However, the seven-point plan was rejected (Rausch, 2013: 54-58).

FIGURE 4.4: DEMOBILIZATION IN THE EASTERN LLANOS (1953)

Source: Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 132

Ultimately, while not all groups participated in the general amnesty nor the causes of the conflict were addressed, the initiative achieved to dramatically decrease the levels of violence, and to temporarily pacify the Llanos, in particular, Meta. The demobilization's success also demonstrates the guerrilla's internal discipline and the leadership exercised by guerrilla leaders, who were able to impose their decision on the foot soldiers. This point reinforces the political nature of *La Violencia* in Meta, away from interpretations of the war as irregular banditry and mere criminality (Rausch, 2013: 54-58; Pardo Rueda, 2008: 488).

Economic recovery in Meta and the conditions for renewed struggle (1953-57). After the demobilization, Rojas Pinilla focused on the economic development and recovery of the Eastern Llanos as one of his policy priorities. No longer engulfed in violence, Meta was able to recover its momentum as frontier region with a booming economy and growing population. The latter grew to an estimated 150,000 as of mid-1955. The city of Villavicencio expanded in size (its population grew from 17,000 in 1951 to over 45,000 in 1964), improved basic services of education, health and sanitation, and modernized through the establishment of a local radio, a few movie theaters, and even hotels to attract tourists (Rausch, 2013: 58-68).

Throughout the 1950s, in order to deliver prosperity and shared benefits, first of all, the state focused on supporting colonization of abandoned public lands in selected regions of the Llanos. This policy was devised as a way to respond to the great masses of displaced peoples present in the region. As the war brought immense damage to farming and economic productivity, promoting colonization hoped to contribute to the economic recovery of the region. However, despite some well-intended initiatives – like the beginning of a colonization and modernization process of the Meta microregion of Ariari – on a macro scale, results were

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modest due to the huge toll that the violence had in these regions, lack of capacity, the geographic remoteness of several areas that were chronically underserved; as well as due to unresolved contestation over land ownership of under utilized or unproductive territories, and to the conflicts generated by the interests of powerful landowners (Rausch, 2013: 58-66).

Second, Rojas Pinilla aimed to boost the cattle industry as the engine of economic growth not only in the Llanos, but to benefit the whole country. A National Federation of Ranchers was created to improve market connectivity. In addition, to stimulate recovery, infrastructure initiatives were created to improve internal transport (construction of highways) and to boost hydroelectric power. At the institutional level, state presence was strengthened through the creation of various national institutions related to recovery (provision of public health, addressing extreme poverty, extending social security to peasants, establishment of public credit lines for farmers and ranchers etc.). To support ex-combatants' reintegration into society and their income generation, the *Oficina de Rehabilitación y Socorro* was established. Ultimately, even though the economy was growing, the factors of conflict had not been resolved. In Meta, the same old social and economic structure of large landowners and cattle ranchers persisted side by side with a now even larger mass of peasants, laborers and displaced people (Rausch, 2013: 58-66).

Although benevolent toward its people, the military dictatorship failed to consolidate peace: albeit less active, guerrillas were still present in the Llanos and in other parts of the country. With the demobilization of the more moderate groups and growing pressure on the remaining guerrillas, the Communists resisted by forming self-defence autonomous territories, from which they could launch a new armed campaign. A few incidents in Cundinamarca and Tolima, combined with allegations of broken promises toward the 1953 demobilized combatants, resulted in a resumption of armed operations by guerrillas in the Llanos in early 1957. For example, after having served as an advocate of peace and a mediator between the government and other guerrillas, Guadalupe Salcedo rejoined the armed struggle, but was assassinated in Bogota in June 1957. At the same time, the popularity of Rojas Pinilla was declining: he was forced into exile in May 1957 and briefly substituted by a military junta, until the restoration of civilian authority with the bi-partisan National Front in 1958 (Rausch, 2013: 74-78).

4.4   A Tenuous Post-War and the Rise of Communist Guerrilla Groups

The political angle. After it came out from the most acute phase of the civil war, Colombia

was politically dominated by a restricted oligarchy from both Liberal and Conservative parties – as it was when it entered the civil war. The combined threat from the rural- and urban-based fragmented insurgencies had been contained – and even manipulated into further sectarianism to the elites' advantage. The elites managed to turn peasant fighting forces, self-defence groups, banditry and guerrilla groups against one another: these forces lacked a leadership and a common vision that could translate their cause into a unified political battle – something that the FARC would achieve. "No expression of social conflict was permitted outside the control of the two traditional parties", which grew more wary of any form of dissent (Pearce, 1990: 64-65).

The power-sharing agreement between Conservatives and Liberals that gave birth to the National Front in 1958 stipulated that both parties would be equally represented in all national institutions. There would be alternation in the presidency regardless of electoral results in order to rule out the sectarianism that led to *La Violencia*. Thus, during the two decades from 1958 to 1978, three Liberal and two Conservative presidents alternated in office: namely, Liberal A. Lleras Camargo (1958-62), Conservative G. Leon Valencia (1962-66), Liberal C. Lleras Restrepo (1966-70), Conservative M. Pastrana Borrero (1970-74), and Liberal A. Lopez Michelsen (1974-78) (Rausch, 2013: 79).

The economic angle. Economically, Colombia experienced a virtuous cycle of prosperity and economic development, driven by investments in infrastructure development and modernization. The country quickly became the World Bank's fourth largest borrower globally. Colombia was the poster child for the US-led Alliance for Progress, the Kennedy administration's initiative launched to counteract the Cuban revolution and communist expansion in Latin America (Pearce, 1990: 65-66; Rausch, 2013: 87-91).

In terms of social indicators, results were limited. Despite a visible countrywide agricultural reform in 1961, its impact on structural issues of land distribution and ownership was limited. Instead, the expansion of commercial agriculture led to further displacement of poor peasants and of subsistence farming from the countryside, reinforcing the oligarchic landowners' position. In addition, low manufacturing production meant low industrial development and poor diversification of the economy (Pearce, 1990: 65-66; Rausch, 2013: 87-91).

Meta during the National Front. The Eastern Llanos received preferential treatment during the National Front era. In 1959, Meta was elevated from Intendancy to the status of *Departamento*, the institutionalization of which proved to be an enormous challenge in terms of both financial and human resources. As a *Departamento*, Meta had now representation in Congress and in all national institutions. Thus, it was now institutionally and politically

integrated into the country, participating to its political, social and economic life, and moving away from the tutelage and control from the centre. Elites were coopted into formal institutions (Rausch, 2013: 79-104).

Efforts to integrate the vast region to the core highland areas of the country continued unabated. Improvements in transport and connectivity were registered. The 1961 agrarian reform was applied in Meta through a plan known as Meta No. 1, aimed at protecting landless peasants and new *colonos* through land titling. Unfortunately, the reform's outcome in Meta resembled the one at the national level, i.e. the impacts on inequalities and on land ownership were negligible. Thank to immigration and colonization, Meta's population grew to 260,000 people in 1973 and boomed to approximately 480,000 in 1984. Meta also witnessed a dramatic increase in both cattle production, which quadrupled during the 1960s, and in farming and crop production, a considerable amount of which started to be exported (Rausch, 2013: 79-104; Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica, 2016: 93-180).

The security angle and *bandolerismo* (1958-65). During its twenty-year rule, the National Front was unable to establish peace and security throughout the country, and to come to terms with the remaining non-state armed groups, either by militarily defeating them or by launching a peace process to include them into the system. Pockets of insurgencies controlling defined local areas, or self-proclaimed 'republics', survived throughout the country, in particular, in Tolima, Cauca, Huila, Caqueta, Cundinamarca, and Meta (in the microregion of Ariari). In Meta, after demobilizing in 1953, the guerrilla of the Liberal leader Dumar Aljure rose in arms once again in the early 1960s. It took control of sixty thousand hectares in the Ariari, and in the municipality of San Martin. In 1966, Aljure refused to ally his guerrilla with the newly formed FARC. Two years later, the army eventually annihilated Aljure's guerrilla.

Nonetheless, the main security threat faced by the National Front during its first phase (1958-65) was represented by a new phenomenon, termed 'bandolerismo', or banditry. This was a direct legacy from the previous phase, and as such it needs to be framed. A fundamental transition took place in the armed conflict. After the 1948-53 peak, violence became more fragmented, diffuse and anarchic: it was harder to grasp who the main actors were, their motivation and agendas. Although the same leaders were at the head of armed groups, in the eyes of public opinion and of the whole mainstream political spectrum, guerrilla groups transitioned into being more like criminal outfits or bandits. After the 1953 demobilization, the failure to quell the remaining armed groups and to recover territories to state authority highly contributed to this transition to banditry.

There was lower ideological commitment and lower political character – precisely because

the legitimacy that the Liberal party had granted to the rebels in the past was now completely gone.[51] As a matter of fact, since there was no longer a national-level struggle between Liberals and Conservatives, guerrilla leaders' allegiances and patronage also shifted. The conflicts became highly localized: local political patrons (*gamonales*) were the first and only reference for guerrillas and bandits. Thus, this provincialism rendered the armed conflict less of a 'conflict' and more a local-level dynamics of lawlessness, competition and aversion to the new political centralism, which resembled the old one. In the areas under their control, guerrillas were still considered resisting fighters, who enjoyed high popular support from discontent peasants and local population – as it was at the height of *La Violencia*. Finally, there was also a legacy of vengeance and retribution from the destruction and sufferings of the first phase of *La Violencia* (1949-53). This legacy acted as a constant incentive for further violence (Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 21-25).

Geographically, banditry was widespread in areas where two attendant factors were present at the peak of *La Violencia*. First, areas that had been subject to high levels of repression and terrorism. Second, areas of lower political mobilization and resistance. Where peasants had been unable to politically and militarily organize themselves and guerrilla groups were weak, banditry – combined with high levels of violence, destruction and brutality – took hold. Instead, in areas with strong and entrenched guerrillas, such as the Eastern Llanos, banditry was less widespread (Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 26-27).

Rise of the FARC and Communist insurgencies in Meta and Colombia. Concomitantly, the 1960s witnessed the rise of independent guerrilla groups with a revolutionary agenda, both in Colombia and in the rest of Latin America. Guerrillas received new inspiration from the victorious Cuban revolution of 1959. In Colombia, Communist insurgencies started a process of strengthening both politically and militarily. The disparate rural-based insurgency experiences of the 1950s were re-shaped by new urban-based intellectual revolutionary movements, which based their ideology and practices on Marxist doctrines and experiences including Maoism and the Chinese Revolution, the Cuban one, and of course Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet Union. With different fortunes, several groups rose during this period (Pardo Rueda, 2008).

Some of the most significant examples include the following. The Army of National Liberation (*Ejercito de Liberación Nacional*, ELN) has been leading an armed struggle since 1964. The Workers', Students' and Peasants' Movement (MOEC) attempted to establish a stronghold in the Eastern Llanos, in Vichada, but was defeated, and ultimately split into factions in 1964. In 1967, the Popular Liberation Army (*Ejercito Popular de Liberación*, EPL)

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[51] "To be a bandolero meant, above all, to have lost political legitimacy." (Sanchez and Meertens, 2001: 22).

– an armed wing of the USSR-influenced Marxist Leninist Communist Party (PC-ML) – was established.

The FARC originated from the central region of Tolima and were formed in 1964 under the auspices of the Colombian Communist Party. For much of the 1960s and 1970s, it remained a self-defence armed organization, dedicated to the protection of the rights and livelihoods of landless peasants. As Pearce summarizes it, during this phase "communism was less a political ideology than a strategy of survival" (Pearce, 1990: 167; and Brittain, 2010: 4-14; Pecaut, 2008: 41-46; Pardo Rueda, 2008).

After holding its second conference in Ariari in May 1966, the FARC set their theater of operations in the eastern Meta microregion of Duda-Guayabero, by establishing the organization's headquarter (*Casa Verde*) in the municipality of La Uribe. The death of Aljure provided the opportunity for the FARC to further expand in the Ariari. From the onset, the FARC competed with governmental authorities in the provision of goods, services and protection for the peasants and the poorest, paving the way for decade-long confrontations. Throughout the 1970s, the FARC expanded its reach and consolidated its domination in Ariari, by winning popular support through the provision of services and the protection of landless peasants from exploitation and/or displacement. Zones of self-defence became guerrilla fronts, allowing the FARC to establish solid roots among local population – a factor that chiefly contributed to its survival throughout the 1970s, and expansion in the 1980s (Rausch, 2013: 104-116; Molano, 1992: 205; Pearce, 1990: 167-168; Pecaut, 2008: 46-50).

During the 1970s and after the defeat of most of the groups that arose in the 1960s, a second generation of guerrilla groups flourished. The most important ones include the urban-based Movement of April 19 (*Movimiento 19 de Abril,* M-19), which enjoyed the support of a young urban-based middle class; the Workers' Self-Defence (*Autodefensa Obrera,* ADO); the indigenous-based Quintín Lame Armed Movement (*Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame*, MAQL); and the Revolutionary Workers Party (*Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores,* PRT).

As far as the FARC is concerned, by its seventh conference in 1982, the organization added 'People's Army' (EP) to its name and made a leap forward in its strategy. The FARC-EP expanded into being a sophisticated and disciplined military actor in pursue of power (See Chapter 7 and Figure 7.1 for a brief description of FARC's structure). From a self-defence organization aimed at protecting its rural base, the FARC turned to an offensive strategy by building a centralized military outfit. The FARC boomed. By the end of 1983 it had tripled the number of fronts it had in 1979, jumping to 27 fronts. In 1989, the number of fronts reached 44, and by 1999 there were 60 fronts of the FARC (Figure 4.6). Its military and territorial expansion was accompanied by the establishment of strict law and order in the

areas under its control ("the Law of the Mountain"). The FARC enjoyed considerable legitimacy and popular support allowing for further internal strengthening. In Meta, the FARC exercised its military, political and social power through the Eastern and the Southern Blocs – two of its greatest and most powerful ones (Pearce, 1990: 172-174; Brittain, 2010: 16-41; Richani, 2002: 76; Sobrevivientes del Comité Cívico por los Derechos Humanos del Meta et al., 1997: 41).

Geographically, the FARC held one of its traditional stronghold in the eastern part of Meta, in the microregions of Duda-Guayabero and of the Low Ariari – where a demilitarized zone will be established as part of the 1998-2002 failed peace process. The Duda-Guayabero is a vast microregion in eastern Meta, composed of the municipalities of Mesetas, La Uribe, and La Macarena (Figures 4.1 and 4.5). It is formed by a mountainous natural park of rich biodiversity (*Serranía de la Macarena*) and delimited by the two rivers of Duda and Guayabero in La Uribe municipality. The topography makes the terrain impenetrable, and thus ideal to establish a guerrilla warfare. The Duda-Guayabero remained a FARC stronghold until the 2000s, when the Uribe government was able to militarily penetrate the region (Gutierrez, 2012: 189-191).

To the east of the Duda-Guayabero, the more hospitable microregion of Ariari represented the key territory to strategically dominate the east and south of Colombia. The Ariari can be further divided into three areas: High (north), Medium (centre) and Low (south) Ariari. High Ariari includes the four municipalities of Cubarral, El Dorado, El Castillo, and Granada. Medium Ariari is composed of the three municipalities of Lejanias, San Juan de Arama, and Fuente de Oro. Finally, Low Ariari includes Puerto Lleras, Puerto Rico, and Vistahermosa. Combined, the Ariari and the Duda-Guayabero constitute 48% of Meta's total area (Gonzalez, 2012: 12; Nieto Matiz, 2012: 140).

The Ariari had always been an area of colonization, and as a result it had been marginalized from state control, as it was explained above. Most of its population and settlements come from the massive displacement and population moves that took place during and following *La Violencia* of the late 1940s and 1950s. Thus, the people who settled in these areas were overwhelmingly landless peasants. They represented the right social base to support a revolutionary guerrilla. If the Duda-Guayabero was an area of strategic retreat for the FARC, the Low Ariari was instead an area of expansion (Nieto Matiz, 2012: 140-144; Gutierrez, 2012: 191).

FIGURE 4.5: MAP OF MICROREGIONS OF ARIARI AND DUDA-GAYABERO (META)
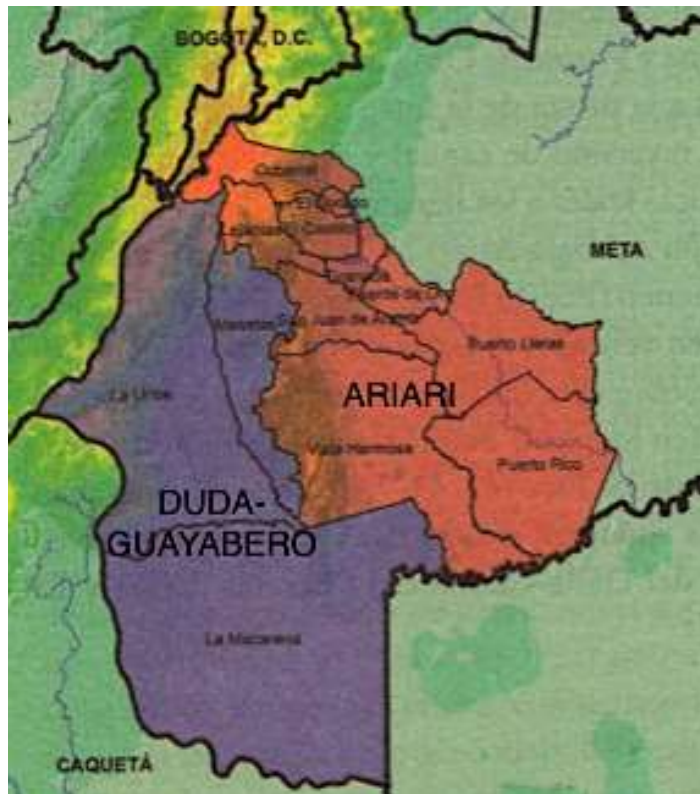
Source: Adaptated from Gutierrez, 2012: 190

The region of Ariari was also the core area of one of the most important strategic corridors in Colombia, which provided access to the whole south of the country. This corridor will come to play a fundamental strategic role in military terms from the 1980s on. The corridor runs from the rivers of Ariari, Duda and Guayabero down to the south-west of Colombia (Caqueta and Putumayo) and to the south and south-east (Guaviare, Vaupes and Amazonas). Therefore, the control of Ariari was functional to the control of the south and south-east of Colombia, providing access routes for illegal drugs trafficking, which had become a core feature of the conflict in Meta since the 1980s (Gonzalez et al, 2002: 117-118; Gonzalez, 2012: 12-13).

4.5 Conflict from the 1980s on: New Dynamics, Armed Actors and Violence

Drugs economy and a new phase of war. By the end of the 1970s, the new dynamic of drugs production and ensuing trafficking arose. Combined with the existing conflict, this new development brought a new wave of violence on a greater scale for the successive three decades, including human rights violation, forced displacement on a massive scale, and sectarian and criminal warfare. The 1975 demise of marijuana production in Mexico led

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Colombia to become the centre of illegal drugs production (first marijuana, then cocaine) for the whole Southern hemisphere. In Meta, the municipalities of Vistahermosa and Puerto Lleras (Low Ariari), San Juan de Arama (Medium Ariari), and especially La Macarena (Duda-Guayabero) experienced the rise of marijuana farming at the end of the 1970s, and of coca production during the 1980s. The expansion of coca production created a new process of colonization in the south-east of Meta and in northern Guaviare (Jiménez, 2012: 157; Rausch, 2013: 113-115; Nieto Matiz, 2012: 144-146; Sobrevivientes del Comité Cívico por los Derechos Humanos del Meta et al., 1997: 23, 38).

The intersection between distinct but linked dynamics (drugs, ongoing conflict, land issue, persistent state weakness) paved the way for multiple actors resorting to violence for different motives. The introduction of drugs trafficking created several new actors and transformed some of the existing ones. In a context of political vacuum by the state and lack of or weak territorial control, new actors controlling territory and exercising monopoly of force co-existed or competed with one another. The establishment of a remunerative drugs economy was accompanied by a fierce armed struggle in Meta for the control of cocaine producing areas and trafficking routes. The result was an exacerbation of the existing conflict dynamics and related violence (Pardo Rueda, 2008: 625-651; Chernick, 2005).

First, as far as the peasantry is concerned, the introduction of new and more profitable crops – marijuana and coca leafs – distorted the traditional crop production market. This created a rush to the region by small and medium peasants. It also spurred renewed interests by large landowners. Everyone was attracted by the surplus generated by illegal drugs farming vis-à-vis traditional crops. More profitable illicit crop plantations meant that the traditional poor landless farmers in Meta had for the first time the opportunity to earn a decent income. Coca leaf crops represented a crucial livelihood source for the peasantry and fundamentally altered the local economy.

Second, a new class of powerful drugs traffickers equipped with non-state armed organizations arose. They soon turned into outfits for social control, dedicated to protection of crops and routes, extortion, and other illegal practices. Third, drugs trafficking impacted existing actors, like the traditional elites, the peasantry and the FARC, all of which saw a shift in their value norms and material incentives, contributing to their ruthlessness and decay of norms. The drugs economy in Meta had also perverse effects on the social fabric. High revenues led to the sudden enrichment of some peasants who were overcome by the new wealth, and dissipated money on luxurious products, alcohol consumption, and prostitution (Brittain, 2010: 89-108; Richani, 2002: 70-73; UNDP, 2010: 13-14; Sobrevivientes del Comité Cívico por los Derechos Humanos del Meta et al., 1997: 23-24).

Regarding the FARC, after the demise of the Medellin and Cali drug cartels in the mid-1990s and as a result of the fierce competition with paramilitary groups for territorial control at this time, the FARC replaced drugs traffickers in some of the areas under its control (e.g. region of Caqueta) in order to step up the war effort, expand funding for it and establish tighter control to local areas. The FARC started charging taxes on farmers growing illicit crops and on facilities used for coca processing. The source of financing from taxation of illicit drugs allowed the FARC to consolidate its role as a state within a state providing governance and security, and extracting resources. Therefore, coca cultivation and trafficking changed the political economy of the conflict, including actors, funding mechanisms, means of control at local level, and political and social capital of conflict parties.

Armed actors would either fight one another for the control of strategic areas for drugs production and commercialization, like Vistahermosa and La Macarena. Or they would come to terms by dividing and allocating routes and territories through mutually advantageous agreements, in a permanent precarious equilibrium at the expense of state authority and the rule of law. Thus, the drugs economy converted into the engine of the armed conflict, which, as a result, expanded and intensified. The drugs economy came to represent the most relevant funding source for the war effort of non-state armed actors (both guerrilla and paramilitaries) (Brittain, 2010: 89-108; UNDP, 2010: 13; Chernick, 2005: 182).

Conflict dynamics in Meta in the 1980s and 1990s. In terms of FARC members and social base, as it will be seen in Chapters 6 and 7, communist ideology was the fundamental pillar for all of its members and a core tool of recruitment. The FARC expansion as a military organization from the 1980s on, necessitated of a constant wave of new recruits, who needed military training, political indoctrination etc. Thus, the FARC became a sophisticated machine which recruited among its constituency in the peasantry. Such expansion in numbers also represented a qualitative shift of FARC combatants. If Marxist political identity was the common denominator for all recruits in the 1960s and 1970s, from the 1980s a new dynamic arose. Exclusion at the political, social and economic levels became the common denominator for new recruits and the core identity of the organization. As analysed in Chapter 6, FARC recruits joined the organization mostly to escape a situation of economic misery, social exclusion and neglect from state authority in terms of livelihoods, rights, education and all basic services. In this sense, as the sole legitimate social actor, the FARC monopolized and dominated political, social and economic life, and became the only 'employer' for landless peasants. Recruitment becomes an escape from and the only alternative to political, social and economic exclusion (Richani, 2002: 62-65, 75).

From the 1980s, the expansion of the FARC and its increased revenue base is associated with

a shift in both the quantity and quality of new FARC recruits. By having an expanded army, the FARC had to increase its volume of combatants. Consequently, the strong ideological character of recruitment somewhat weakened, and new recruits were not as ideologically firm as old combatants.

The intensity of the war also changed in the 1980s, from a low intensity to a high intensity conflict. The switch in intensity was first of all a result of the offensive military strategy adopted by the FARC from 1982 on, which overturned the self-defence tradition of the FARC. The rise of drugs production and trafficking and the emergence of extremely powerful criminal actors, which directly threatened the stability and the very existence of the state, also contributed to the scaling up of the conflict in terms of intensity. As a result of these changes, the traditional areas of FARC control and/or influence started to play an important strategic role for the control of the country (Ferro and Uribe, 2002). And a fierce armed competition started, as it was mentioned above. Undoubtedly, one such area of strategic value was the Ariari in eastern Meta. The scaling up of the war meant that this region turned to be one of the important prizes in military terms, and one where the military and the paramilitary intensified their pressure.

At the national level, there is an attempted peace process by President Belisario Betancur (1982-86). The first ever national peace talks between the FARC and the government were held in the municipality of La Uribe, Meta – within the FARC core stronghold of the Duda-Guayabero microregion. The collapse of an agreed ceasefire stipulated in 1984 led to increased military pressure against the FARC, especially in the Ariari. During the 1980s, an estimated seventy-two military confrontations took place in Meta, involving indiscriminately the FARC, the ELN and the military.

During this period, much of the political violence was directed against the Patriotic Union (*Unión Patriótica* UP), a leftist political group with ties to the FARC. The UP arose in the mid-1980s as part of the Betancur peace process and the democratic opening in the country. The UP gained great popularity in Meta and in other areas of the country by joining the mainstream political arena. Its members and cadres ran for local and national elections. However, because it challenged the established socio-economic order with its land-related structural inequalities, the UP was wrongfully perceived as a FARC political wing (Sobrevivientes del Comité Cívico por los Derechos Humanos del Meta et al., 1997: 28-29). Thus, the UP fell victim of a widespread and infamous extermination campaign against all its members and sympathizers, in Meta as well as in the rest of the country. A carnage that the state was unable (and at times, unwilling) to prevent. Nationally, over 3,000 UP members or sympathizers died at the hands of rising paramilitary forces (Dudley, 2006; UNDP, 2010: 11-

12).

In the 1986 parliamentary elections, the UP won one seat in the Senate for the Meta electoral district; in the 1988 municipal elections, several UP mayors were elected in the Ariari, as well as in other parts of the Eastern Llanos, especially Arauca. Under President Virgilio Barco's watch (1986-90), the repression against the movement perpetrated by paramilitary factions – sometimes with the complicity of the military – was fierce. In 1988 alone, one hundred twelve armed attacks against UP members were recorded in Meta, the overwhelming majority of which were murders and disappearances. Between one and two hundred individuals affiliated to the UP were victims of political violence in the same year in Meta (Rausch, 2013: 113-115; Pearce, 1990: 233).

In the early 1990s, the government of President Cesar Gaviria (1990-94) launched a Constitutional Assembly to reform the institutional framework of the country, resulting in the 1991 Constitution. This phase saw the disarmament and the inclusion in the political system of a number of the second-generation leftist armed actors that confronted the state, including the M-19, the EPL, Quintín Lame and the PRT – see Chapter 5 (Bejarano, 2012: 209-211; World Bank, 2008).

In the meantime, the FARC continued its political and military expansion, despite the setback suffered in 1991 with the attack to FARC's leadership in *Casa Verde*. In 1993, the group held its 8th conference in La Uribe, where the FARC had their stronghold and headquarters. Here, the guerrilla group widened its political ambition and launched a platform for "a government of reconstruction and national reconciliation". FARC military rise progressed unabated, widening their area of influence in Meta and the Eastern Llanos. By 1998, the guerrilla group controlled an estimated 60% of national territory, corresponding to 622 municipalities. This figure represents an astonishing increase from the 173 municipalities under FARC influence in 1983 (Richani, 2002: 68, 96). In the period 1990-98, Meta was the second administrative department in Colombia for number of FARC attacks against the Colombian army – after the central region of Antioquia.

At the end of the 1990s, in a display of its military strength and in an attempt to bring the conflict to a higher level of engagement, the FARC carried out some large-scale attacks against the Colombian army and some of its local garrisons. This included Las Delicias (Putumayo) in 1996, El Billar (Caqueta) in 1998, and even the capture of Mitu, the capital of the remote state of Vaupes, which was under FARC's control for three days in 1999. Many commentators saw these events as the prelude to a general takeover of power by the FARC (RAND, 2011: 47-49; Echandia Castilla, 2011: 10-13).

FIGURE 4.6: PRESENCE OF FARC BLOCS AND FRONTS (1998)
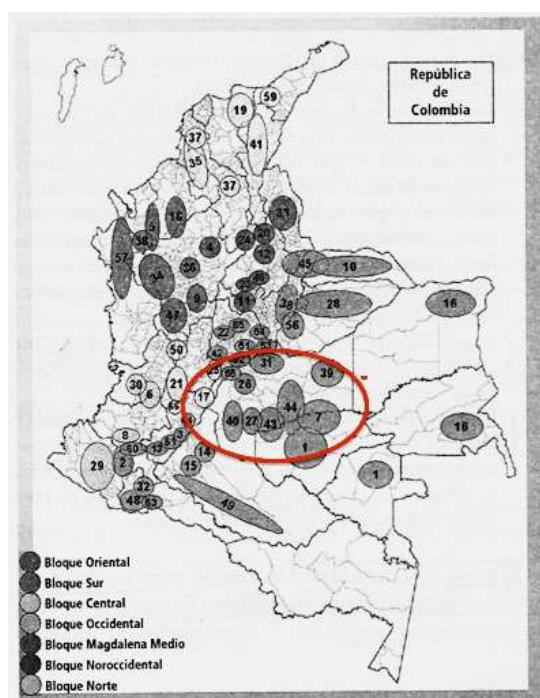
Source: Pecaut, 2008: 109

To measure FARC's impressive expansion it is worth citing the following statistics. In 1985, the FARC had a military presence in 62% of municipalities of "internal colonization" – as defined by Richani[52] – and in 44% of municipalities of "frontier colonization". By 1995, these percentages rose to 93% and 81%, respectively (Richani, 2002: 68).

During his term, President Ernesto Samper (1994-98) was unable to make any advancement on the peace front, nor was he able to militarily counteract the FARC. His successor, President Andre Pastrana (1998-2002), launched a wide peace initiative. Under the ceasefire and negotiation terms, a demilitarized zone was established in part of the Low Ariari and Duda-Guayabero microregions in Meta, corresponding to the four municipalities of La Uribe, Mesetas, La Macarena, and Vistahermosa. Peace talks were set up in the municipality of San Vicente del Caguan in the administrative department of Caqueta. The FARC were, thus, given large concessions, and the group used its military strength as leverage for the duration of the talks (UNDP, 2010: 12-13).

Oil boom. In parallel, the discovery and production of oil in the region also represented a factor that contributed to change the political, economic and conflict landscape in Meta. Oil discovery in the Eastern Llanos dates back to 1983 at Caño Limon in Arauca. A quick boom

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[52] Richani (2002) defines internal colonization as "target[ing] public or privately owned land", while frontier colonization as targeting "the border rainforest areas" (Richani, 2002: 68). Both types of colonization were featured in Meta.

followed, especially in Casanare. In Meta, oil production started in 1996 in the areas of Apiay, Castilla La Nueva, and Chichimene. By 2001, Meta was the third largest producing region in Colombia behind Casanare and Arauca, with twenty-one million barrels a year, or 11% of the total national production. The Meta-based municipalities of Puerto Gaitan, Puerto Lopez and San Martin were the ones that were more affected by the oil boom (Rausch, 2013: 116-117; Masse and Camargo, 2013; Velasco and Rocha, 2012).

The discovery of oil led to dramatic changes in the Eastern Llanos. Meta's population rose from 474,000 in 1985 to 789,000 in 2005, with Villavicencio reaching a population of 285,000 in 2003, or three times its size in 1973. A new process of colonization took place. Waves of migrants attracted by employment opportunity flooded the region, especially the small remote towns close to the oil wells. Changes in norms, cultural values and socio-economic structures were equally pronounced. An example is the expansion of the town of Puerto Gaitan where part of the fieldwork for this research was conducted. There, I inquired about and witnessed the social decay brought by the oil economy.

Rausch (2013) speaks of the creation of "a distinctive type of oil town", which almost overnight faced the surge of the oil industry and its impacts, including waves of migrant workers from other areas of the country, increase of commodity and real estate prices, environmental damages in a context of lawlessness, prostitution, petty crime, and corruption of small local officials. "The cumulative impact was a loss of a sense of identity." (Rausch, 2013: 119; and Jiménez, 2012: 157-158). Currently, there are several municipalities in Meta where there is an interest by oil companies to start exploration activities. Wary of similar perverse effects on their social fabric, municipal authorities unanimously oppose exploration and are trying to resist this penetration.

Non-state armed groups have an influence on the oil sector in Meta. By means of extortion, illegal capture of royalties and other practices, armed groups guarantee the protection of oil infrastructure and the smooth flow of oil operations. In addition, there is an overlap between oil production areas and violation of human rights (Masse and Camargo, 2013: 3, 8-14).

Notwithstanding, oil brought positive effects to the economy of Meta. The oil boom allowed for a diversification of the regional economy and the strengthening of other sectors. Cattle ranching suffered from a slow but inexorable decline that rendered the industry irrelevant by the early 2000s. Among the causes that can be listed, production methods were old and costs were constantly high. However, agriculture and farming increased. In particular, a boom in both dry and irrigated rice was recorded. The establishment of a modern factory (*Induarroz*) led Meta to be the first and second largest producer in Colombia of dry rice and irrigated rice, respectively. Another crop that experienced a great expansion in Meta was the

African palm, which was produced by the multinational *Unipalma* (Rausch, 2013: 124-125).

The rise of paramilitarism, and institutional and economic transitions. The legal framework allowing paramilitary groups in Colombia dates back to the 1960s: Decree 3398 of 1965 and Law 48 of 1968 established the legal foundation of civil self-defence organizations. Such groups were legalized as a response to the formation of Marxist guerrilla groups. In a nutshell, paramilitary's nature is founded on the protection of traditional interests (e.g. landowners) against communist subversion. Paramilitaries are a cornerstone of all modern counterinsurgency strategies by the Colombian state: paramilitaries are, thus, considered a partner in the fight against guerrillas which seek to overthrow the established social and political order (Richani, 2002: 104-105). However, it is not until the early 1990s that the paramilitaries were able to strengthen and expand, and gain national attention as a conflict actor (Figure 4.7). This latest development is, in fact, a consequence of the financial resources from the rising illegal drugs trafficking.

In the Meta region, the rise of paramilitarism is inextricably linked to the rise of illegal drugs production and trafficking. The profitable trade brought to Meta a new class of drugs entrepreneurs and non-state armed groups who were already active in the north of Colombia – a *clase emergente*, or emerging class, as it was scornfully defined by the traditional landowners. In Meta and the Eastern Llanos, these new groups adopted the same goals they pursued elsewhere: militarily contribute to the weakening of the FARC and of any communist armed group, maintain social order, counteract the kidnapping practice of the FARC, and profit from illicit drugs trafficking through the control of illegal crops farming areas and of strategic corridors (Nieto Matiz, 2012: 146-149).

However, the rise of paramilitary groups and the new wave of armed violence can not be attributed only to the nascent drugs business and to the strengthening and expansion of the FARC from the 1980s on. Two additional factors include the change in the political and institutional order in Colombia, and the decline of traditional local elites under new economic processes of liberalization. Both dynamics played a crucial role during the 1990s in changing the conflict dynamics in Meta and in the rest of Colombia (Richani, 2002: 93-132; Romero, 2003).

First, as a result of the peace process between the FARC and President Betancur (1982-86), Colombia embarked in a process of institutional decentralization – which is defined as the devolution of power and competences from central state authorities to local ones. Up to the 1980s, the President of Colombia was mandated to appoint all governors and mayors. From 1988, these institutions started to be elected by popular vote. The FARC's interest was to have elected local officials, with in mind the goal of strengthening and institutionalizing its

local power base. The state saw this measure as a way to appease the guerrilla and to slowly bring it within the mainstream political process – "decentralize to pacify" was the motto (Castro, 1998). The creation of the UP and its participation in local and national elections has to be framed within this process. In addition, the 1991 new Constitution integrated the political decentralization of electing local authorities with fiscal and administrative decentralization (Ballve, 2011: 3-5; UNDP, 2010: 16-17; Nieto Matiz, 2012: 154-158).

Nonetheless, inadvertently, the decentralization process contributed to the emergence of a new and more violent phase of the war in Meta and in several other regions of Colombia. A decentralization process can be successful when the state that implements it has already a consolidated, sole and legitimate monopoly of violence and power over its territories. In a situation of decade-long armed conflict, where powerful non-state armed groups challenge the state, and entire regions of the country are outside the reach of the rule of law and of state services, a decentralization reform is a gamble, at best. In these conditions, decentralization equals more a *de facto* institutionalization of the fragmented regions of the country, a parcelization of the state, and the solidification of armed groups. In other words, given the current situation of Colombia at the time, the decentralization reform deepened conflict dynamics and entrenched power of local elites and armed groups vis-à-vis the state. Guerrilla and paramilitary were able to siphon public resources by directly influencing local authorities, who had now a looser connection to Bogota. A new system of armed clientelism arose (Eaton, 2006: 533; Ballve, 2011: 4-5; Romero, 2003b: 179-181; Llorente and Palou, 2011: 429-430; Nieto Matiz, 2012: 155).

A second important dynamic to understand the rise and success of paramilitarism concerns the relative decline of traditional elites and large landowners. At the global level, the 1980s saw the advent of liberalization and market-oriented reforms in several Western countries. Colombia was greatly affected, in particular the agricultural sector. Rural elites in Colombia had enjoyed high rents and profits through protectionism and high barriers to trade, at the expense of optimization of production, market efficiency, and wider economic development. After tariff barriers were slashed from an average 83% in 1985 to 6.7% in 1992, the economic position of landowners was devastated. A dramatic redistribution of resources took place from the high income sectors in rural areas to the urban centres of the country, moving from an agrarian society to a progressive financialization of the economy (Ballve, 2011: 7).

As a result, the traditional class of powerful large landowners initially despised the new drugs traffickers that flooded the region. Drugs traffickers started buying large estates of land from declining traditional landowners, thus, reconfiguring the political economy of land

in Meta and other regions of Colombia (Nieto Matiz, 2012: 135-136; Reyes, 2009). In conclusion, local elites came to depend on paramilitaries to defend their dwindling resources and declining power base. Local elites saw the decentralization process and the rise of the UP from the mid-1980s as an existential threat to their privilege and interests. In fact, the UP had land reform and its redistribution at the top of its policy agenda. At the same time, the growth of the FARC in the region during the 1980s and 1990s contributed to this radicalization of the conflict, in which the rise of paramilitarism was intended as a counter offensive to the FARC expansion (Gutierrez, 2005: 118; Sobrevivientes del Comité Cívico por los Derechos Humanos del Meta et al., 1997: 28-29).

Notwithstanding important regional differences, the paramilitaries were formed by an heterogeneous group of actors. This included emerging drugs traffickers, traditional landowners elites, business owners, regional and local politicians, and members of the security services. The common denominator among all these actors was a strenuous aversion to the FARC and its military and political advancement. One of the first incarnations of paramilitary groups with a broader political objective was the MAS (*Muerte A Secuestradores*, Death to Kidnappers), which appeared in the 1980s following the rise of kidnapping practices by the FARC. In Meta, this group settled in with the name of Los Masetos (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 189).

The first important centralized paramilitary group emerged in 1994 in Córdoba under the name of Peasant Self Defences of Córdoba and Urabá (*Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá*, ACCU). The ACCU was founded by the three ruthless Castaño brothers, whose father was kidnapped and killed by the FARC in the 1980s. Then, in 1997, the Castaño brothers completed their ambitious plan to form a national paramilitary umbrella organization, the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC). Figure 4.7 shows the extension of AUC influence throughout the country at the peak of its power in 2002. The AUC was a federation of regional paramilitary structures, which were fairly independent from one another in their operations.

Paramilitarism in Meta. The month of July 1997 marked the start of paramilitary's penetration in Meta and the Eastern Llanos with the massacre of Mapiripan, a municipality located in the remote south of Meta at the border with Guaviare. A battalion from ACCU was flown in from the northern region of Uraba to perpetrate the systematic killing of around 50 individuals, and the displacement of nearly 70% of its population, with the complicity of the Colombian army[53]. The massacre was intended as a symbolic event to show the FARC the resoluteness of the paramilitaries, and that the latter was going to actively challenge FARC's

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[53] For this massacre, one Army colonel and one captain have been sentenced to 40 years in jail in 1999.

dominion in the Eastern Llanos. Mapiripan also represented a strategic objective along the Guaviare river for drugs trafficking routes (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 190-191; Spencer, 2001: 13-15).

FIGURE 4.7: PRESENCE OF AUC BLOCS (2002)
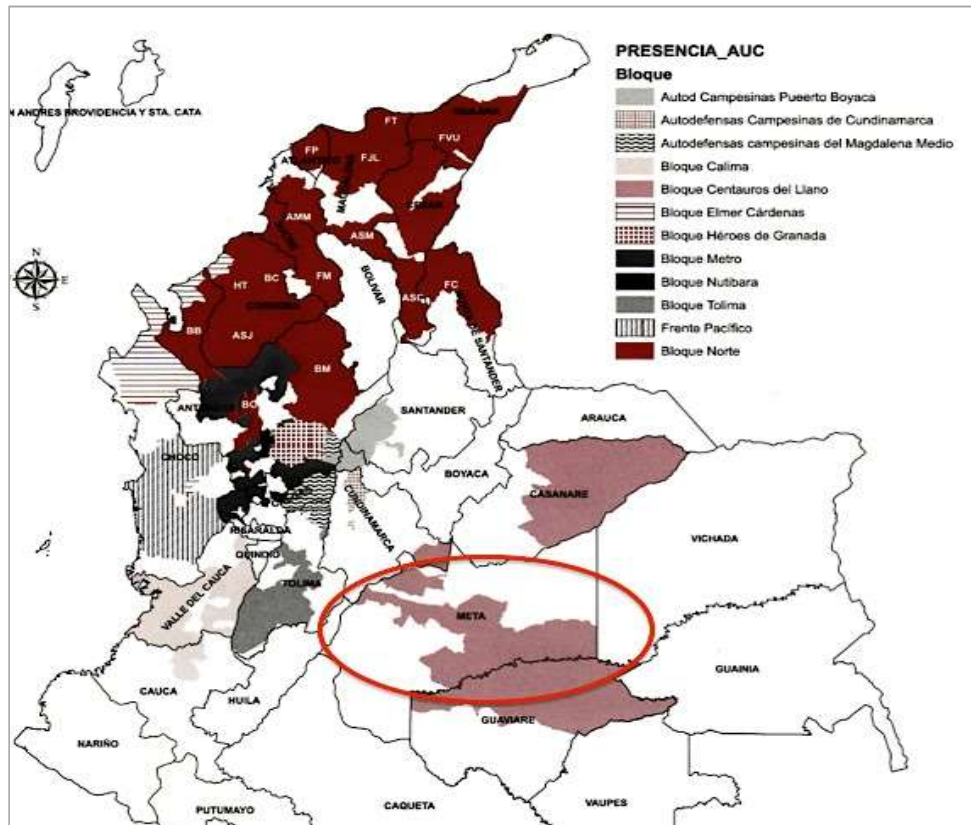
Source: Echandia Castilla, 2013: 13

In Meta, there were three main paramilitary groups that surged in the 1990s. The *Bloque Centauros* – headed by Miguel Arroyave – was the only one affiliated with the AUC and was the most powerful paramilitary group in Meta. As it can be seen from Figure 4.7, the *Bloque Centauros del Llano* established its influence over the regional capital Villavicencio, the sparsely populated south and east of Meta, and consolidated its presence in the central municipalities of San Martin and of El Dorado. The second group was the Peasant Self Defences of Meta and Vichada (*Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta y Vichada*, ACMV), which had influence in the north and east of Meta, along the Meta river connecting Puerto Lopez to Puerto Gaitan, and extending to bordering Vichada. The ACMV was lead by Victor Carranza. Although it had relationships with the AUC and the other large federation of paramilitaries, known as the *Bloque Central Bolivar*, ACMV remained as an independent group and

demobilized as such in 2005 (Garzon, undated; Echandia Castilla, 2013: 11-18).[54] The third main group was the Peasant Self Defences of Casanare (*Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare*, ACC) headed by Hector Buitrago, alias Martin Llanos, which dated back to the late 1970s. The ACC stayed independent and did not demobilize. It extended its power from Casanare to the north and east of Meta (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 183).

Between 2003 and 2004, a high intensity armed conflict took place between the ACC and the *Bloque Centauros*, which produced over 1,500 casualties. They had competing interests over strategic corridors of illegal drugs trafficking. The ACC wanted to expand to the south of Meta, while the *Bloque Centauros* sought to oust the ACC from Casanare and extend AUC's influence to the east of Colombia. The Colombian army openly sided with the *Bloque Centauros*: the army's intervention in September 2004 marked the end of the war and the defeat of the ACC. The latter did not join the collective demobilization of the AUC. Most of ACC members were captured or killed (at its peak in 2002-2003, the ACC was estimated to have 2,000 combatants), with the exception of its leader, Martin Llanos, who was finally arrested in 2012. The ACC survived as a small group with around 200 members and never joined the demobilization process (Verdad Abierta, 2009; Perez Salazar, 2011: 119-127; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 192-201).

To reach their goals, paramilitary groups employed a ruthless strategy to uproot the guerrilla and establish social control. This included massacres and killings of (real or perceived) sympathizers or collaborators of the FARC (as per the case of Mapiripan); the widespread practice of extortions; and the use of forced displacement against farmers living in areas where either the FARC had some influence, or areas that were strategically important for coca leaf farming and trafficking. As a result, the war in Meta reached a peak in levels of violence and brutality. To maintain control of their respective territories, non-state armed groups of all colors were forced to employ increasingly harsh and brutal methods for social control. In several municipalities, this new phase of the conflict resulted in a regime of terror and a climate of fear against the local population.

The state displayed an ambivalent behaviour. While officially it maintained a discourse of legality and opposition to all outlawed armed groups throughout the whole 1990s, in many cases the state itself was instead complacent of paramilitary's activities on the ground. The state tacitly supported the paramilitaries, given the common enemy that both faced, namely the FARC. Since the AUC was deliberately set up to confront the FARC, the state and the army did not have an interest in fighting it. The brutal paramilitary methods were also seen as effective to confront the FARC as opposed to the legalistic approach that the army had to

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[54] Two ex-combatants who are part of the sample for this research were part of the ACMV.

follow (Richani, 2002: 103).

The 2000s also witnessed the rise of the *Parapolítica*, a phenomenon of social, economic and institutional intersection between paramilitary organizations and the political establishment at the local and national level. The convergence of interests centered around the demise of the FARC produced alliances of convenience between local officials and paramilitary groups. In Meta, paramilitary infiltrated electoral politics through the support of specific candidates from different parties. The *Bloque Centauros* was the paramilitary group that mostly interconnected with the political establishment in the region (Nieto Matiz, 2012: 103-134).

The *Parapolítica* was based on mutual benefits. On the one hand, the paramilitaries had interest to capture public resources for their business activities, or to obtain a favorable legal framework, among others. On the other hand, corrupt politicians used paramilitaries for protection, to advance their political agenda, and also for personal enrichment. Between 2000-2006, the paramilitaries influenced the election and the policy-making of several local mayors in parts of Meta, including Villavicencio. In 2003, the *Bloque Centauros* was even able to affect the outcome of the election for governor of Meta, securing a candidate that was favorable to paramilitary's interests.

Nieto Matiz (2012) notices that the ACC achieved more political goals and tighter relationships with political elites than the *Bloque Centauros* ever did. The reason is that the ACC was an autochthonous paramilitary force: its social and economic networks were from within Meta. Thus, the ACC had a higher level of integration in the regional context than the *Bloque Centauros*, which was from the northern region of Uraba. Despite its greater resources and military strength, the *Bloque Centauros* was ultimately unable to unilaterally dominate Meta from both political and military standpoints (Nieto Matiz, 2012: 158-166, 170-179).

To this background, all armed actors aspired to establish their social and economic models to the regions under their control. By all counts, these groups exercised power on their territories, and had *de facto* sovereignty. These instances resemble those alternative orders and power arrangements that Chapter 2 discussed in greater detail. In Meta, on the one hand, the FARC established its own governance structures and economic model of land distribution to the rural areas of Vistahermosa, Puerto Rico, Puerto Concordia and La Macarena. On the other hand, as mentioned, the AUC-affiliated *Bloque Centauros* established its control over a vast area in the centre and south of Meta, around the municipalities of San Martin, Puerto Lleras, Puerto Rico, Puerto Concordia and Mapiripán. From there, it pursued a development strategy centered on agro-industrial and aero cargo projects (UNDP, 2010: 16). Thus, these alternative orders compete with one another through armed violence; at the

same time, they also necessarily interact with state institutions, including the army, and regional and local authorities.

The 2000s: political developments at the national level.[55] The collapse of the San Vicente del Caguan peace dialogue in 2002 led the overwhelming majority of Colombian public opinion to believe the inherent bad faith of the FARC in pursuing a peace deal. In the eyes of the public, the FARC used the demilitarized zone and the period of talks to politically and militarily strengthen in the areas under its control, to only reactivate the armed struggle once it achieved its objectives. The backlash from the aborted negotiation paved the way for Alvaro Uribe's conservative double mandate as President (2002-10) (Echandia Castilla, 2011).

Uribe's presidency entailed a 180 degrees reassessment of state's strategy in the conflict, in particular versus the FARC. The two tenants overturned by Uribe were the following. First, the main objective of the Colombian state became to militarily defeat (and hence, disarm and demobilize) the main rebel groups, rather than a negotiated solution. Second, re-establish the state's monopoly of legitimate force through curbing the privatization of security and the proliferation of paramilitary groups (Gutierrez Sanin and Gonzalez, 2012).

During his first mandate (2002-2006), Uribe launched a fierce counterinsurgency campaign. The so-called Democratic Defence and Security Policy aimed at re-establishing state control over areas under armed groups' and criminal organizations' influence, through both the rolling back of FARC's advancement and the containment of the paramilitaries.[56] To achieve this objective, there was a strengthening and expansion of the security sector. The army rose from 158,000 personnel in 2002 to 267,000 in 2009, while the police force went from 104,000 to 137,000 in the same period. The army also started employing more professional soldiers than using the draft (RAND, 2010: 46; Derks, Rouw and Briscoe, 2011).

Supported by public opinion, Uribe's aggressive campaign was highly effective as the FARC suffered a number of setbacks. Militarily, the government was able to recover numerous areas of the country at the expense of the FARC. Between 2004 and 2006, President Uribe launched the Patriot Plan (*Plan Patriota*), the objective of which was to produce a decisive military offensive against FARC's traditional regions of control in the south and the east of

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[55] The narrative of Chapter 4 only succinctly addresses the conflict dynamics from the 2000s on. The reason is that these most recent dynamics are intertwined with the events surrounding the demobilization of the AUC, and the post-DDR security situation of criminal groups taking centre stage. It is imperative, then, to first address the unfolding of the DDR in Colombia (with a particular focus on Meta), which will be the subject of Chapter 5. After an examination of the DDR, a concluding section of Chapter 5 concerns an overview of the more recent conflict dynamics in Meta.

[56] "The core aim of the policy is to generate a virtuous cycle in which increased security produces confidence and stability, which in turn creates an environment favorable to private investment and economic growth" (RAND, 2010: 45-46).

Colombia, including Meta and the Eastern Llanos. Faced with an unprecedented attack which highly debilitated its infrastructure and capacity, the FARC switched tactic. From large scale operations in the 1990s, the FARC went back to guerrilla warfare tactics, through hit and run attacks and sabotages (Echandia Castilla, 2011: 18-20).

During this time, the FARC suffered from an internal morale crisis – as reported in Chapter 8 by several FARC ex-combatants. The activation of an individual-based demobilization program, and the targeted killing campaign against FARC's top leadership permanently weakened the organization. Regarding the paramilitaries, they were neutralized via the collective demobilization of the AUC, its umbrella organization, and the disarmament of its nearly 30,000 combatants (see Chapter 5).

After these successes in security terms, President Uribe focused his second term (2006-2010) on the social and economic recovery of conflict-affected regions, while keeping military pressure high. This new phase was characterized by the re-establishment of state presence (via services and institutions) in areas formerly under the control of the FARC or any armed actor. Following military achievements against armed groups, it was now time to consolidate those victories through enabling services and strengthening institutions. The new approach was termed Policy for the Consolidation of Democratic Security, and was unveiled in 2007. One of the largest programs of social and economic recovery of this kind was set up in La Macarena, after the FARC was uprooted from this area (RAND, 2010: 56).

In military terms, the Colombian army focused on strategic objectives to permanently debilitate the FARC. The military carried out operations to bring the war to the FARC strongholds and attack its leadership. In 2008, the FARC Secretariat lost three of its seven permanent members: Raul Reyes and Ivan Rios were killed during two separate operations. And Manuel Marulanda, the FARC historic leader and spiritual father, died of natural causes. Scores of other mid-level commanders and heads of fronts were also either captured, killed or deserted. Then, in 2010, FARC's leading strategist and head of the Eastern Bloc, Mono Jojoy, was also killed in action. The combination of these political, military and organizational setbacks forced the FARC to the negotiation table once again, in 2012 (RAND, 2010: 56; Echandia Castilla, 2011: 21-24).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an extensive analysis of the conflict factors and historical dynamics in the administrative department of Meta. It made ample reference to the national context, without which the 'sub-regional' story would be de-contextualized. As it was demonstrated, the benefit of a sub-regional conflict analysis concerns a nuanced and deep

outlook at social, economic and political local phenomena. The sub-regional conflict analysis of Meta has also unveiled a more micro approach. Meta is made of six microregions, all of which have specific dynamics that are important to be understood both discretely and in their interaction with the other levels (sub-regional and national) (Gonzalez et al., 2012).

In conclusion, a few considerations about Meta's role and development in the 20th Century. Despite its improvements and attempts at integration with the rest of the country, Meta and the rest of the Llanos remain a frontier region, due to its geographic location, remoteness, its inhospitable living conditions, and also its economic structure. The second half of the 20th Century has certainly seen dramatic economic and population growth in the Llanos, and in Meta in particular. However, it is debatable whether this growth has brought a proportionate level of development and 'inclusion' with the rest of the country (Rausch, 2013: 133-136).

One of the causes may be that Meta has not yet developed its 'independence' as an autonomous region from the centre. In a way, Meta's economy, political leadership, administrative capacity, and social structure still depend on the tutelage from Bogota, and/or are unable to display and exercise endogenous capacity. One example concerns the city of Villavicencio, which has sprawled in the last few decades without any developmental plan and/or agreed vision (Rausch, 2013: 133-136).

A second example concerns the regional economy: Rausch (2013) and other authors (Baquero, 1990) lament the inability of Meta's political and economic elites to build a strong agro-industrial economy and market from the wealth of natural resources in its territory. A practice of 'savage' capitalism has dominated Meta's economy throughout the 20th Century through an asymmetric relationship with Bogota and the centre. In Meta and in the Llanos, there is an apparent lack of interest for the collective good, shared benefits and wealth, and local development. Instead, there is an extractive economy based on continued exports and rent seeking, insofar they are functional to the centre economy and mirror its interests. This is true for cattle ranching. As far as rice and African palm are concerned, on the other hand, large enterprises that do not reside in the region and whose taxes do not benefit the regional economy drove small and medium production firms out of business without local authorities being able to defend them. Oil production followed a similar trend – and even more perverse if we consider the social toll paid by oil rich towns. In addition, Meta's small manufacturing industry (cotton, garments, furniture), local carpenters, and sawmills remain with outdated techniques of production, unable neither to further develop nor to compete with outsiders. As per land ownership, to this day, 61% of Meta's land is owned by less than 2% of the population, in essence replicating the structural factors of conflict that persisted and fueled violence throughout much of the 20th Century (Rausch, 2013: 133-136).

5. The Dynamics of DDR in the 2000s

The present chapter complements the previous political economy analysis of the conflict in Meta by narrowing the focus on the dynamics of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in the 2000s as they relate to war to peace transition in the region. An analysis of the events surrounding the genesis and implementation of the collective DDR with the paramilitaries and the individual DDR with the guerrilla is provided. The chapter concerns two underlying main themes: (i) how reintegration unfolds, in particular economic reintegration; (ii) the implications of DDR in terms of transition from war to peace, including state formation, the security landscape and the competition between state and non-state armed groups.

The chapter is organized as follows. The first section gives an historical overview of the processes of collective demobilization of the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) and the individual DDR of members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC), with ample reference to Meta. The second section concerns how reintegration was conceptualized, strategized and implemented in Colombia during both Uribe (2002-2010) and Santos (2010-) dual mandates. This section contains a description of the benefits available to ex-combatants, and how reintegration policies evolved over time depending on programs' outcomes and on the political context. Special attention is reserved to economic reintegration and to employment considerations. These first two sections are meant to give necessary insights that serve the understanding of the empirical Chapters 6 to 8.

The third section provides an overview of the security conditions following the DDR of the AUC. It highlights the rearmament process in Meta and the formation of new non-state armed groups, pointing out both the continuities and the ruptures between the pre-DDR phase and the post-DDR phase, in terms of security, stability and the landscape of armed violence in Colombia and in Meta, specifically.

5.1　The Collective and Individual Demobilization Processes

Early DDR efforts. Disarmament and demobilization programs in Colombia have repeatedly featured throughout Colombian history. The forerunner of modern DDR in the country were the 1953 demobilization processes of guerrilla factions in Meta. As it was covered in Chapter

4, following *La Violencia*, a series of *ad hoc* DDR programs were signed and implemented in Meta, targeting a number of local rebel groups.

It was, however, not until the 1980s that DDR was adopted as part of conflict resolution mechanisms. In 1982, as part of the Betancur peace initiative, some armed groups, including ADO (*Movimiento Autodefensa Obrera*), participated in a general amnesty through Law 35/1982, which involved between 1,348 and 1,423 combatants (Villaraga, 2013: 111-115). Then, in the early 1990s, President Gaviria launched a peace plan to demobilize armed groups. Throughout the decade, the plan was embraced by a number of small rebel factions, including the EPL and the M-19. According to the World Bank citing government sources, a total of 4,817 combatants disarmed and demobilized – Table 5.1. Given the limited numbers, the state economic and social support largely contributed to successful reintegration outcomes. None of the groups that demobilized took arms again (World Bank, 2008; Derks, Rouw and Briscoe, 2011; Nussio, 2012).

TABLE 5.1: COLLECTIVE DEMOBILIZATIONS IN THE 1990S

Year	Armed Group	# of Demobilized
1990	M-19	923
1991	Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT)	208
1991	People's Liberation Army (EPL)	2,109
1991	Quintín Lame (MAQL)	159
1992	Ernesto Rojas Commando	25
1994	Socialist Renovation Current	443
1994	Medellin People's Militia	650
1994	Francisco Garnica Front	150
1998	MIR-COAR Independent Revolutionary Movement	150
Total		**4,817**

Source: World Bank, 2008: 14.

The political dimension of the 1990s demobilization was an important feature. Former leaders became politically active particularly in civil society and the non-governmental sector. This factor largely contributed to the rise of a new opinion movement within Colombian society – one that was concerned with non-violent conflict resolution efforts. Particularly, the demobilization of over 900 members of M-19 is deemed a success. Its model was based on the reinsertion of the M-19 leaders within the mainstream political spectrum in exchange for their pledge to work within the legal framework and to demobilize their armed structure. Notwithstanding good outcomes with respect to demobilization and social and economic reintegration, none of these former armed groups was able to survive the political competition, and swiftly disappeared. On this front, their most important legacy concerned both intellectual efforts and practical applications toward peace (Palou and

Mendez, 2012; Guaqueta, 2009; Gutierrez Sanin and Gonzalez, 2012; Villaraga, 2013: 116-124).

Desertion program for FARC members. In 1994, a counter-insurgency strategy to weaken existing rebel groups was unveiled. Presidential decree 1385 launched a policy to induce members of guerrilla groups, namely the FARC and ELN, to voluntarily abandon arms and surrender to public authorities. In exchange for desertion, the state would award legal benefits and the prospect of reintegration to individual combatants. Notwithstanding slight modifications that were introduced throughout different administrations, the core of this program remained standing until the signing of the final peace agreement between the Government and the FARC in 2016 (Villaraga, 2013: 124-125; World Bank, 2008).

This counterinsurgency strategy – which was the cornerstone of Uribe's democratic security policy – has been largely criticized on ethical grounds. Detractors from the left, civil society and including the United Nations asserted that such practice encouraged human rights violations by security forces. More poignantly, the desertion program delegitimized the socio-economic foundations of the conflict in Colombia, and undermined efforts aimed at a sustainable peaceful conflict resolution outcome (Guaqueta and Arias, 2011).

The state's efforts to pull out combatants from armed groups are also at the core of this research, which explores the dynamic interaction between the state and armed groups as far as recruitment and reintegration are concerned. It is argued that the two actors enter in a 'competition' on a number of issues. First, the power and the military aspects: state and armed groups fight over the control of specific areas. Second, they fight to win the propaganda war of ideas and ensuing public support. The third aspect concerns the subject of this research: armed groups recruit members within the areas under their control, while the state tries to erode this recruitment cycle, which is the life-blood of non-state armed groups. The program to induce guerrilla fighters to desert – which is here discussed – fits within this model of 'competition' between state and armed groups.

Chapter 8 demonstrates that the ex-combatants who decided to desert did not do so allured by the prospect of the reintegration benefits – or at least they did not declare that this represented an important factor in their decision to flee. According to interviewees, other factors were at play, including disillusionment with the rebel cause, and heightened military pressure, among others. Regardless of the individual motivation, there is however a link between the state reintegration program and the diminished quality of new recruits within the FARC. I argue that because thousands FARC members fled and joined the reintegration program, this factor played a role in the recruitment tactics and *modus operandi* of the

organization. By weakening the FARC organizational impermeability, the state fundamentally eroded the internal cohesion of the FARC and its way of recruiting members.

Although over 2,000 combatants deserted during the Pastrana government (1998-2002), it was only with Uribe that the policy became priority and was further institutionalized. Decrees 128 of 2002 and 2767 of 2004 expanded the policy, set economic benefits for deserters, and legally established the practice of "individual demobilization." The institutional strengthening coincided with booming numbers of individual demobilized. Between 2002 and 2016, 21,965 combatants from leftist guerrilla groups laid down arms and accessed the reintegration program. The peak number of individual demobilized was registered in 2007 with 2,934 individuals who deserted. Between 2003 and 2010, the average number of individual demobilized has been of 2,652, whereas since 2011 numbers have declined (ACR, 2013, 2017).

Since 2002, the individual demobilization process has been largely standardized. After a combatant surrendered to a public authority, he/she would initially be put in the hands of military intelligence for up to 3 days. Here, a first screening of his/her status of combatant would take place, together with being questioned by the military authority on vital information regarding the armed group. As confirmed by ex-combatants in Chapter 8, the inclusion in the program and access to benefits were dependent on the disclosure of valuable military information (e.g. location of armed units and weapons). After this initial phase, the demobilized entered the Ministry of Defence-run Humanitarian Assistance Program for the Demobilized (PAHD, according to its Spanish acronym). A thorough investigation would be conducted to determine the criminal history and legal status of the combatant (i.e. if he/she has pending charges of war crimes). During this phase – which could last up to a few months – the combatant was hosted in a "Peace House", where he/she received initial benefits and support.[57] Once this process is cleared, the combatant was considered demobilized, and legally certified as an 'ex-combatant' by the Committee for the Laying Down of Weapons (*Comité Operativo Para la Dejación de Armas*, CODA) (Derks, Rouw and Briscoe, 2011; Guaqueta and Arias, 2011).

The CODA certification marks the shift from the demobilization phase to the reinsertion and reintegration. Institutionally, each file is moved from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Interior. Up to 2006, the latter ran the Program for Reincorporation into Civilian Life (*Programa de Reincorporación a la Vida Civil*, PRVC), which included provision of healthcare,

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[57] A number of interviews were conducted with ex-FARC who were hosted in a Peace House. More details in Chapters 6-8.

education, 2-year monthly cash allowance and seed funding to start-up a business or fund a vocational training (Derks, Rouw and Briscoe, 2011; Guaqueta and Arias, 2011).

Given the booming numbers of individual demobilized – together with the parallel collective demobilization of the paramilitaries – this model was deemed insufficient. Its short-term timeframe only allowed for narrow and specific reinsertion goals. An internal evaluation also concluded that the seed funding scheme failed to produce positive outcomes as most ex-combatants lacked the required skills to effectively use the capital and build a sustainable income. Many of the other benefits also failed to reach the beneficiaries.

Once the demobilized population reached the order of tens of thousands, a more encompassing and broader policy was needed – one that used resources more efficiently, looked at the long-term horizon of ex-combatants, and that involved also society at large. As a result, the Presidential High Council for Reintegration (*Alta Consejería Presidencial para la Reintegración*, ACR) was created in 2006 to attend the reintegration needs of both individual ex-combatants from FARC and ELN, and the collective demobilized of the AUC (Derks, Rouw and Briscoe, 2011; Thorsell, 2013).

In the next section, I go into a deeper analysis of and considerations about the reintegration process in Colombia from 2006 on. Before doing that, I now provide a synthesis of the demobilization process of the paramilitaries at the national level and in Meta.

Paramilitary demobilization. Related to the pursue of military victory against the FARC, the second core element of Uribe's security strategy was the re-establishment of the state's monopoly of force. To regain the state's control over all Colombian territories, Uribe launched a dialogue with multiple paramilitary structures, including the umbrella organization of the AUC. The exploratory talks in Santa Fe de Ralito led to the agreement of July 2003 – barely one year in Uribe's first term. The framework agreement involved 22 out of the 26 main paramilitary blocs constituting the AUC, and called for their demobilization in exchange for state's support to social and economic reintegration, and judicial benefits.

The landmark "Justice and Peace Law" (Law 975 of 2005) established the legal condition for paramilitary reinsertion into society. In a nutshell, the law recognized legal benefits for ex-paramilitaries in terms of reduced sentences for those responsible for crimes against humanity. Out of 30,000+ demobilized paramilitaries, over 3,000 benefitted from reduced sentences. Such benefit came in exchange for disclosing all the truth and provide full judicial collaboration. The merits and shortcomings of the law were at the centre of polarized debates within the Colombian establishment. The peace process with the paramilitary was a top-down endeavor rather than a wide and inclusive process. In addition, the law resulted in

the unveiling of the *Parapolítica*, the scandal that disclosed the tight relationship between certain state sectors and paramilitary groups – as reported in the previous chapter (Gutierrez Sanin and Gonzalez, 2012).

Further, a detailed and more inclusive agreement between the government and the AUC was negotiated, and signed by all major paramilitary groups in May 2004. The DDR started even before the agreement with the demobilization of the *Bloque Cacique Nutibara* in 2003. By August of 2006, a total of 31,671 individuals that were part of 37 paramilitary groups demobilized as part of the agreement (Guaqueta and Arias, 2011; Nussio, 2012).

In Meta, the paramilitary demobilization intertwined with the internal war among paramilitary factions – see Section 4.5 of Chapter 4. Following the victorious war against the *Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare* (ACC), the *Bloque Centauros* was hit by an internal struggle that led to the assassination of its leader, Miguel Arroyave, in September 2004. As a result, the *Bloque Centauros* split into three groups: the faction that was loyal to Arroyave (*Leales a Arroyave*) and that retained the franchise name of *Bloque Centauros* kept its presence in Casanare; the *Héroes del Llano*, headed by Jorge Pirata, and the *Héroes del Guaviare*, headed by Pedro Oliverio Guerrero, alias Cuchillo, both of whom were allegedly responsible for the death of Arroyave, had their stronghold in Meta (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 193; Verdad Abierta, 2009; FIP, 2013).

With the end of the internecine wars, the main paramilitary factions joined the AUC collective negotiations and demobilized between 2005 and 2006. The only exception was the ACC, which, following defeat, was nonetheless on the verge of dissolution. The following section describes the events that led to the rearmament under different name of some of the groups that demobilized in the first place. By national standards, thus, the demobilization in Meta was not successful.

TABLE 5.2: PARAMILITARY DEMOBILIZATION IN META

Paramilitary group	Date	Location	# of arms surrendered	# of demobilized combatants
Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta y Vichada	08/2005	Puerto Gaitan, Meta	232	209
Bloque Centauros	09/2005	Yopal, Casanare	705	1,134
Frente Héroes del Llano y Héroes del Guaviare	04/2006	Puerto Lleras, Meta	1,024	1,765

Source: Adapted from ODDR, 2013: 90.

At the national level, there were three practical steps of the collective demobilization process, which all demobilized paramilitary groups went through. These included: an

awareness-raising phase in which paramilitary members were prepared to the demobilization. Second, a cantonment phase with the laying down of arms and the registration in the list for the CODA processing. Last, the certification of the status of ex-combatant and the start of the reintegration phase (Guaqueta, 2009; Nussio, 2012; Arias and Prieto, 2011).

There is controversy over the total number of paramilitaries who demobilized. Pre-demobilization estimates put their number between 10,000 and 20,000, with the actual number of demobilized ultimately exceeding 30,000. Speculation rose about the causes for these inflated numbers, suggesting that last-minute negotiations took place to the advantage of paramilitary units, which secured more subsidies from the state. It is also true – as demonstrated by the sample of interviewed ex-combatants – that several demobilized ex-combatants were actually in supporting roles, and not directly involved in violent events.

By all standards, the disarmament and demobilization phases have been successful in terms of collecting weapons, largely cutting ties between former combatants and the power structures of armed groups, and increasing security. Among others, the DDR programs have been one of the driving factors for the decrease of violence and drop of homicide rate in the country, particularly in main urban areas like Bogota, Medellin, and Cali. The homicide rate was halved from 70 to 35 per 100,000 inhabitants between 2002 and 2009, with the actual number of homicides going from 35,000 to 16,000 during that period. Associated with the drop in homicides, other heinous illegal practices also dramatically decreased, without disappearing though. This included extortions, massacres, and forced displacement, among others (Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica, 2015b: 137-138).

5.2 The Politics and the Policies of Reintegration

Definition of reintegration in Colombia. As it was explained in Chapter 2, the literature has largely exposed the gaps and failures of DDR programs to define clear outputs in terms of reintegration and establish feasible measurement outcomes, especially in the long term (Muggah, 2009). There is an underlying tension between short-term reinsertion and long-term reintegration (Gomes Porto et al., 2007: 137-142). If the former is more easily measurable and quantifiable, nonetheless it fails to account for long term societal dynamics involving reconciliation, for example. As it was mentioned above and is further analysed here, between Uribe's first and second term, Colombian policies shifted from reinsertion to reintegration goals when (a) the scale of demobilization dramatically increased with the DDR of the AUC; and (b) when the policy to incentivize desertion of FARC and ELN members became a core counterinsurgency strategy (Guaqueta and Arias, 2011).

In one of its programmatic documents, the Colombian National Council of Economic and Social Policy (CONPES in its Spanish acronym) defines 'reintegration' in the following terms: "The process through which the demobilized population acquire the status of civilian and obtain an employment and a sustainable income. Reintegration takes place primarily at the local level, it is part of the country's development, and it constitutes a national responsibility that can be supplemented with international support" (CONPES, 2008: 7).

This definition has two main components, namely, the individual and the structural dimensions of reintegration. At the structural level, there is an emphasis on the community level – the space where reintegration shall take place. It is at the local level that material and symbolic investments for reintegration are to be implemented. There is a reference to the national level as well, implying that achieving reintegration is a far-reaching goal, which is intertwined with broader development objectives. At the individual level, the definition highlights first of all the transition of an ex-combatant in terms of 'status'. From a 'military' status the ex-combatant transitions to a 'civilian' one, implying the temporary nature of the status of 'ex-combatant' (Interview with key informant).

Both individual and structural components of the CONPES definition are reflected in and are in line with the conceptual framework of this research. At the structural level, I conduct a comprehensive political economy of the conflict in Meta and of DDR in Colombia, which takes into account local contextual factors, actors' behaviours and incentives, and national-level political and economic dynamics (Chapters 4-5). At the individual level, I investigate the employment dynamics of the individual transition from war to peace (Chapters 6-8).

The CONPES definition also concerns the need to obtain a sustainable job in order to be fully reintegrated. This aspect stresses the productive role that an individual exercises as a member of society, and the related economic right of enjoying an adequate income. As it is amply reported in Chapters 6-8, the employment factor is not only an economic means. But it is also about regaining dignity and self-respect, and perceiving to hold individual agency within society. Because the time spent in an armed group is – among other things – an occupation and a day-to-day activity, the issue of obtaining a job after demobilization is one of the factors that most contributes to distancing the individual ex-combatant from his/her past in arms. This finding is further explored in Chapter 8.

Reintegration strategy from Uribe to Santos. To put this programmatic definition into practice (from a policy standpoint), once the Presidential High Council for Reintegration (ACR) was established in 2006 with a stronger focus on reintegration, the first step was to harmonize the benefits and the reintegration route of both ex-guerrillas and ex-paramilitaries. Although routes for the two groups were aligned, the cash allowance and the

seed funding to start a business were lower and more stringent for paramilitaries than for guerrilla members. Second, a shift to long-term reintegration implied that the original 2-year time limit for participants to stay in the program and receive benefits was abolished – as long as ex-combatants advanced in the process and completed milestones. An individual approach was also devised to attend the specific needs of each ex-combatant.

Institutionally, the strengthened ACR-led program was put under the direct control of the President's office – which gives a measure of how central the reintegration policy was for the Uribe's administration. From a programmatic point of view, the new approach led to a number of significant changes, including: a strengthened psychological assistance; the launch of training to strengthen citizenship and reconciliation approaches; the establishment of first reception centres ("Peace House") throughout the country; and a greater focus on economic reintegration through the introduction of new employment generation schemes and through stronger ties with the private sector. Some of these changes are further explored below.

The shift from reinsertion to reintegration implied also further complexity in the way reintegration outcomes are assessed. There are no agreed indicators and benchmark of success among policy-makers that work on reintegration globally, as there is no standardized practice of what it takes to achieve reintegration. Reintegration's outcomes are difficult to measure because the definition of reintegration itself is multifaceted and subject to context and to different interpretations. Reintegration is a volatile concept that defies a clear pattern of program implementation, requiring instead a longer term development approach. Many authors have argued for its separation from DDR, and for the inclusion of more manageable reinsertion goals (Gomes Porto et al., 2007: 137-142). Notwithstanding these considerations, the Colombian government signed up for an ambitious reintegration plan.

However, the ACR decided not to disclose its indicators for successful reintegration. Reason is that given the complexity of how to measure reintegration, these indicators would have been subject to criticism in their attempt to define and circumscribe reintegration. Another reason relates to the highly top-down structure of the ACR, anchored under the President's office. Although with field presence and regional offices, the ACR has always maintained a solid vertical structure. In Colombia, the information of what it takes for an ex-combatant to be reintegrated ("to graduate" in the Colombian DDR jargon) is not publicly available. By not disclosing indicators, what it takes to achieve reintegration in Colombia remains passible of subjective interpretations.

Institutionally, the ACR proceeded to establish institutional and programmatic links with other layers of government, with the private sector and with civil society. This expansion

also meant that 'reintegration' had now a wider breadth, and had direct implications on socio-economic recovery and on reconciliation. Although the program was given resources to be able to attend the booming number of ex-combatants from both AUC and FARC/ELN, it ultimately failed on a number of programmatic and institutional respects. ACR's centralized model under the President's office did not allow for a 'learning by doing' approach nor for programmatic flexibility. Instead, it was based on models that, albeit thorough, were too rigid (Thorsell, 2013; Guaqueta and Arias, 2011).

The economic reintegration program has also to be understood within the larger political context of the Uribe's presidency. The peace agreement with the paramilitaries and the resulting DDR program were the product of a centralized and top-down approach by President Uribe and his cabinet, and not the result of a larger and inclusive political process in Colombia. The demobilization of the AUC was, in fact, a controversial outcome in the country, which was certainly not a textbook case of an open and encompassing peace process. Not only civil society and the political opposition criticized it, but also local and regional authorities were completely extraneous to the process. The DDR of the AUC was perceived more like an Uribe affair than a Colombian one. In fact, the economic reintegration strategy was also a top-down one, without the input and participation of the administrative regions, for example. Among other factors, its failure is, then, the result of a lack of inclusion and consultation with stakeholders (Thorsell, 2013: 202-203).

The centralized and, to a certain extent, the secrecy of this process can be read through a political settlement lens. Peace with and DDR of paramilitaries are the result of a complex bargaining and balance of power dynamics – the full origins of which are not crystal clear. The scope and rationale of the paramilitaries' DDR have to be analysed beyond DDR itself, to weigh in other factors, including: the fact that in 2002 (a year before the agreement to demobilize the AUC) the FARC reached the pinnacle of their power threatening to overthrow the government; the resulting or concomitant US-led Plan Colombia to militarily support Colombia against the FARC and to curb the illegal drugs production and trafficking. These factors can help contextualize the rationale for the DDR.

Under Uribe, most of the focus and resources on peacebuilding would go toward ex-combatants, at the expense of other conflict-affected populations and vulnerable groups. The centralized nature of the DDR program reflected the Uribe administration's centralized security strategy, and DDR was a core part of this strategy. Nonetheless, reintegration cannot be forced upon society: a reintegration program has other dimensions on top of security. Uribe's inner circle of policy makers, instead, treated economic reintegration on the same

line as a security and military issue, discarding societal and contextual factors, and economic and labor market considerations that enable reintegration.

The election of Juan Manuel Santos to the presidency in 2010 represented a turn around for security and development policies in the country. A former Minister of Defence under Uribe, Santos departed from his predecessor and his polarizing policies. Although he kept a high military pressure on the FARC, he opened informal negotiations with the group, which led to the establishment of the formal peace process in 2012. On the peacebuilding side, the new administration passed the landmark Victims' Law (1448/2011), which ruled schemes of reparation and land restitution that aimed to compensate the millions of Colombians who had been displaced and/or affected by the armed conflict. While initially Santos enjoyed greater legitimacy among Colombians after the polarization of Uribe's rule, the final peace agreement with the FARC has been perceived as extremely divisive by Colombian society.

In turn, the reintegration strategy, which took centre stage under Uribe lost relative importance with respect to other peacebuilding initiatives. Within the first few months of President Santos administration, the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (*Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración*, which has the same acronym, ACR, as the previous one) was established. The new ACR adopted a decentralized approach, and was able to strengthen relationships with regional and local authorities. It progressively established thirty-four regional offices (*Centros de Servicio*) across the country, as of December 2016. The *Centro de Servicio* in Villavicencio, Meta – which is where I conducted most of the interviews with ex-combatants – was responsible not only for Meta but also for most of the Eastern Llanos and the southern administrative departments of Guaviare, Vaupes and Guainia (ACR, 2013; Derks, Rouw and Briscoe, 2011).

Reintegration program in Colombia. Here, I briefly revisit the reintegration route that ex-combatants follow and the range of benefits available to them. The next sub-section focuses specifically on the economic dimension of the program and the employment component. The pillars of the reintegration program are the following:

Education is a core component of the whole program. It is understood as an essential vehicle for social and economic reintegration, including labor market participation. Education needs are tailored to the individual ex-combatant. There is the expectation that primary and secondary schools are completed in order to graduate from the DDR program. The education benefits cannot be extended over six years and half.

Healthcare: Ex-combatants and their family benefit from health services for as long as they are in the reintegration program. This includes preventive care, as well as issues of mental health, addiction and domestic violence.

Psychosocial attention includes one-on-one assistance on psychological issues related to reintegration, including dealing with the legacy of war and the challenges of reinsertion, improving decision-making and conflict resolution skills, and managing interpersonal relationship. Psychosocial attention is not only a stand alone service available to ex-combatants, but it is highly integrated in the reintegration route. This principle translates into the following practice: each ex-combatant is assigned to a specific reintegration officer (in Spanish, *Professional Reintegrador*), who follows his/her file throughout the whole reintegration process. In this role, the *Professional Reintegrador* provides individualized assistance not only in terms of psychosocial reintegration, but acts as a focal point, whom the ex-combatant goes to for the provision of all other benefits too. Usually a trained psychologist, the reintegration officer is responsible for the ex-combatant's advancement toward reintegration. This centralized system around the reintegration officer was established in 2008 after the failure of the previous system. Up to 2008, the ex-combatant had to individually interface with different layers of bureaucracy to access the different benefits, creating duplication and confusion. The unintended consequence was that some ex-combatants would either abandon the program or never access some of their benefits and requirements. The centralized system around the reintegration officer is more effective as it allows for a higher degree of monitoring, and for a streamlined access to benefits for the ex-combatant.

Community reintegration. The link with community is key for (re)-establishing social ties, promoting reconciliation, and ensuring that the ex-combatant is able to establish and maintain relationships within his/her social environment. The centrality of this aspect is confirmed by the CONPES definition. The approach recognizes that social and economic reintegration largely depends on the inclusion and involvement of local communities in the process. An additional goal is to strengthen community security, including through violence prevention approaches.

As part of the community reintegration component, each ex-combatant has a mandatory requirement to complete a minimum of 80 hours of social and community work, in order to graduate from the program. These activities include public space and community area's regeneration, cultural programs, but they can also concern preventive activities with vulnerable categories. The symbolic meaning of social work programs outweighs the material impact of these activities. Although it is hard to measure the 'soft' impact of social

work, these activities do play an important role for social cohesion and reconciliation through improving perceptions of ex-combatants among community members – in a context where stigmatization of ex-combatants is high.

Community reintegration and the way it is conducted has been criticized by several of the key expert interviewees. As communities throughout the country – especially rural ones – have traditionally received little attention from the state, at times they have resented a renewed focus around ex-combatants' concerns. Several experts suggest that community reintegration should instead be part of an integrated and larger community recovery approach, rather than a process driven by the reintegration program. This would reinforce legitimacy.

Employment and economic reintegration. This research considers employment as a key component of economic reintegration. I demonstrate that there is a tight relationship between different employment experiences that ex-combatants go through during their life. Some of these experiences take place *before* being recruited in an armed group, while some take place even *during* the time spent in the armed groups. In fact, individuals gain meaningful employment experiences also when they are in arms – experiences that have an impact on reintegration and that can be valuable during the reintegration phase. Employment experiences (before and during armed group's participation) influence the way the ex-combatant reintegrate from an employment point of view. Failing to recognize and to account for these previous employment experiences when devising a reintegration program is detrimental to the very success of economic reintegration.

As far as economic reintegration is concerned, the Colombian program has two main components: namely, vocational training and income generation. The program encourages ex-combatants to enroll in *vocational training* activities (up to a maximum of two different cycles of trainings) in order to either learn or hone professional skills that can serve them to find an employment. Through a partnership with the National Training Service (*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*, SENA, which is ascribed to the Ministry of Labor), the ACR places ex-combatants into professional trainings according to individual needs and will. Vocational trainings concern virtually any profession, are conducted at different levels, and are adapted to the local labor market. The benefits related to vocational training run for a maximum of six years – provided that primary school has already been completed.

Together with the reintegration officer's counseling, ex-combatants devise a tailored plan that goes from acquiring the necessary training to finding a job. Such plan is based on the previous experience that the ex-combatant has in any given area, and his/her will. For many ex-combatants that I interviewed, the vocational training is also an opportunity to explore

potential professional careers. This applies mainly to those ex-combatants with no prior working experience except for the armed group. As it is reported in Chapters 6-7, some of the FARC members that I interviewed spent their entire life in the group, and are, thus, devoid of any professional skill whatsoever.

The second component of the economic reintegration stream concerns income generation. Income generation can, first, take the form of supporting formal employment and job placement for ex-combatants. In this area, despite modest achievements, the ACR has worked hard to mobilize the private sector to hire ex-combatants. The role of the private sector in harnessing peacebuilding and supporting DDR has been recognized as key by the literature (International Alert, 2006: 144-152). In Colombia, formal institutional links have been established on an *ad hoc* basis, including programs to train ex-combatants, provide apprenticeships etc. A further incentive for the private sector came in 2010. Under Santos' watch, the Law of Formalization and Job Creation (1429/2010) extended tax benefits to businesses which employed individuals from certain vulnerable groups, including ex-combatants (Guaqueta and Orsini, 2007; Thorsell, 2013: 192). Overall, results are encouraging. As of December 2016, 73% of ex-combatants at the national level who are, or have been, part of the program are reported to have an occupation. Of these, 70% are employed in the informal sector, and 30% in the formal one (ACR, 2016).

However, as it is further analysed in Chapter 8, ex-combatants report being subject to discrimination due to their status, including on the workplace. There is a considerable societal stigma placed on ex-combatants. To offset negative perceptions, the ACR runs campaigns to sensitize the private sector and, more recently, to increase the visibility of its employment-related activities (MAPP-OAS, 2015; Nussio, 2012). Institutionally, the reintegration program also establishes ties with local chambers of commerce and other actors. The goal is to enhance employment opportunity for ex-combatants through matching ex-combatants' skillset and labor supply with the labor market needs. Results are mixed: on the one hand, there are successful best practices of private sector involvement that have led to sustainable formal employment for ex-combatants. On the other hand, results had failed to scale up on a macro level – at least up to 2014 when fieldwork was conducted (Derks, Rouw and Briscoe, 2011; Guaqueta and Arias, 2011).

In addition to employment support schemes, the ACR may also support business plans of ex-combatants. This policy was central under Uribe whereas it became a secondary policy under Santos. Given some specific requirements, the ACR is able to provide seed funding to ex-combatants to either support an existing business or to start up a new one. Between 2003 and 2013, a total of 8,879 participants have had access to funds to either build or support a

business plan (ACR, 2013). An ex-combatant – or a group of them – designs a business plan and submit it to the ACR for approval. If accepted, the ACR provides start up capital.

Initially, funds were distributed parsimoniously, against business plans that resulted either unviable or unsustainable. Instances of corruption were reported to have taken place too. Several reintegration officers that I interviewed signaled that ex-combatants either lacked the necessary skills to set up a business or collected the funds in bad faith. As a result, the rate of plans that translated into sustainable businesses has been low, despite a considerable investment of resources from the program.

Since 2009, the entrepreneurial scheme has been subject to a number of modifications. A series of stringent criteria to vet proposals and ex-combatants who submit them are applied, including level of education, training received, and degree of participation in the program's activities. Programmatically, the scope of grants were expanded: it is now possible for ex-combatants to access a grant to support housing needs, and not only a new business, when the ex-combatant has retained a job for a minimum of 12 months.

In sum, in the last few years, there has been a consequential shift in priorities from promoting entrepreneurship to supporting employability of ex-combatants, which is currently seen as the most adapt vehicle to economic reintegration. Overall, there is evidence that the business generation program have failed to produce sufficient revenues for individual businesses and sustainable results. Although an internal study estimated that 70% of 4,750 business grants provided by the program as of 2011 resulted into active businesses, there is more evidence that points to an overall failure due to lack of entrepreneurial skills and market penetration. The shift from entrepreneurship to employability is also the result of the transition from the reintegration model under Uribe, which was focused on a one-size-fits-all approach to the Santos approach, which privileges context specificity and local level implementation (Thorsell, 2013: 189-198).

5.3   The Political Economy of Post-DDR Security in Meta

Although the demobilization of the AUC was followed by an overall decrease in violence throughout the country, still there are broader security considerations that are associated with the demobilization of the AUC and that are worth being analysed. First of all, the issue of power and order. Once the AUC demobilized, this situation created a power vacuum at the local level in several conflict-affected regions of Colombia. The vacuum concerned the political, social, economic and security orders. As it was analysed in Chapter 2, non-state armed groups establish *ad hoc* governance structures and power arrangements in the areas that either they control or on which they exercise influence. Non-state armed groups create

institutions for political control and for maintaining security, and establish a social contract with the people living in their areas – which can be based on fear and terror, for example. As part of these institutions and arrangements, armed groups also perform economic functions: they collect taxes, allocate resources and shape economic activities.

The demise of a non-state armed group is necessarily followed by a new power arrangement between other authorities, which at times may either compete or cooperate. Among new institutions that are in charge, there can be the state as well as there can be other non-state armed groups. These authorities are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they often co-exist through formal or informal arrangements. When a non-state armed group completely controls an area, still there is some influence from the state – even if it is ineffective. For example, a FARC-run municipality may still be formally headed by a mayor. In the economic sphere, arrangements that are mutually beneficial and multiple sources of power and control are even more common.

In the Colombia case, the AUC demobilization was not accompanied by a direct state strategy to regain the areas previously in the hands of paramilitary factions. This is easily said than done. Colombia's conflict is characterized by highly context-specific dynamics, as it was analysed. A homogenous national-level strategy would have not necessarily worked. In addition, demobilized paramilitary blocs were virtually scattered around the whole country. Thus, to succeed, a strategy to repossess areas from the departing paramilitaries would have been not only extremely costly, but also complex, as it would have had to involve and secure the buy-in from all levels of state authority (national, regional and local) and operate on all spheres (security, political, social and development levels). In terms of state resources, most of the state's focus and priorities were directed toward undermining the FARC. Simply, there may have not been enough capacity to also attend security and development in former paramilitary areas.

Whatever the cause, the state demonstrated weakness and/or inability to fill the power vacuum. In fact, some of the political, social and economic spaces left empty by demobilized AUC blocs were swiftly filled in by the rise of new criminal groups. To a certain extent and under circumstances that are different from region to region, BACRIM (or *Bandas Criminales*, literally "criminal bands") inherited illegal activities from the old paramilitaries (Figure 5.1). The government of Colombia has designated five BACRIMs following the AUC demobilization. These are: the People's Revolutionary Counterinsurgent Army of Colombia (*Ejercito Revolucionario Popular Antisubversivo de Colombia*, best known as ERPAC) operating in the Llanos (see a discussion below); *Los Urabeños, Los Rastrojos, Renacer* and *Los Machos*. The scale of the remobilization (or mobilization) and the nature of this process

have been debated in the literature. Given several continuities, some authors speak of 'neo-paramilitaries' or 'narco-paramilitaries', together with BACRIMs. Due to the uncertainty of definition and characterization, the two terms are used here interchangeably (International Crisis Group, 2012; Masse, 2011; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2015b; Indepaz, 2012).

FIGURE 5.1: PRESENCE OF BACRIMS (2013)

BACRIMs' Influence in Areas 'with' Previous AUC Presence (Red Color) and in Areas 'without' Previous AUC Presence (Grey Color).

Source: Echandia Castilla, 2013: 23

Since the AUC demobilization, Colombia has suffered from many security issues, some of which, however, predate the demobilization process. These include: persistent drugs trafficking and other rising illicit economic activities; process of recidivism of demobilized ex-combatants and remobilization of armed groups; rise of armed groups that are fundamentally criminal in nature with no political agenda. Arguably, these issues that have permeated the conflict in Colombia are a consequence of the original sin by the state: i.e. the failure to regain former conflict-affected areas after the AUC dissolved (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2015b; Masse, 2011).

Security and remobilization in Meta. In Meta – as well as in the rest of the country – there are both elements of continuity and elements of rupture between the pre-DDR of the AUC

and the post-DDR situation. These elements are analysed here. Notwithstanding the demobilization that involved all groups (except for the ACC), there was a high incidence of either remobilization of old groups or formation of new ones. By several accounts, the demobilization of some of the groups in the region took place only on paper. In reality, some of the old paramilitary structures and chains of command in Meta only transmigrated to new ones. In sum, there may have been more continuity than rupture for some of the group. The events described below surrounding alias Cuchillo and the formation of the ERPAC follow this script.

Nonetheless, if one assesses the post-demobilization phase from the point of view of state formation, power arrangements and competition between state and non-state armed groups, then, what may transpire is a situation in which there has been a substantial state strengthening vis-à-vis non-state armed groups. If momentarily we leave the FARC on the side, by demobilizing the paramilitaries the state was able to reassert itself politically and strengthen its feeble monopoly of violence. While it is true that there are new actors with illicit interests and political power, this situation is qualitatively different from the pre-DDR situation. Then, a nation-wide federation of paramilitary blocs with a political agenda had the power to influence – and at times dominate – the state legitimate authority.

Indeed, there are substantial differences between the AUC era and the post-demobilization phase. The context has changed from the era when paramilitary groups had a national agenda, and established a unified federation. After the AUC demise, first, there has not been a centre of paramilitary power, like the AUC, with a somewhat coherent political agenda. Second, going through demobilization, paramilitary groups have been completely taken out of the picture – as far as the state is concerned. In fact, their heirs have been labeled "criminal bands", and the state has clearly dismissed any legitimacy to this new counterinsurgent project. This is demonstrated by the surrender of part of the ERPAC in 2011: by categorically avoiding being pulled in talks with the ERPAC, the state made clear that the BACRIM issue was permanently a law enforcement and judicial one, with no political angles. As told below, the ERPAC was going to be treated as any criminal outfit (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2015b; Masse, 2011).

When one assesses the regional conflict dynamics in Meta and the state security response, there are important continuities between the two phases, i.e. old paramilitaries and new BACRIM. The new criminal groups, although equipped with an either loose or non-existent political agenda, have inherited some of the old economic interests of paramilitaries, as well as their *modus operandi* in terms of forced displacement, land eviction, and human rights abuses (International Crisis Group, 2012). From a security perspective, the new groups are

much harder to counteract. Affiliations are loose, groups are smaller, and allegiances constantly shift. BACRIMs "display a constant process of mutation in which once [a group's] leaders leave their post (either due to homicide, capture or death in combat), mid-commanders rise to power; the armed group is then either absorbed in or sold to another larger criminal structure, or disappears altogether." (FIP, 2013: 3, 19-20).

Given this context and dynamics, since the AUC demobilization and until 2013, three generations of BACRIM have operated in Meta (Figure 5.2). The first generation concerns the immediate post-DDR, with alias Cuchillo as its undisputed protagonist. Despite the demobilization of the *Héroes del Guaviare*, its leader, Cuchillo, refused to turn himself in together with the other paramilitary commanders, who were gathered in La Ceja, Antioquia. He returned to illegality to form a new group based out of Meta, the ERPAC. Given its strong leadership, ERPAC is sometimes referred to as *Los Cuchillos* (literally, "knives" in Spanish) (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 193).

FIGURE 5.2: PRESENCE OF NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS IN META (2011)
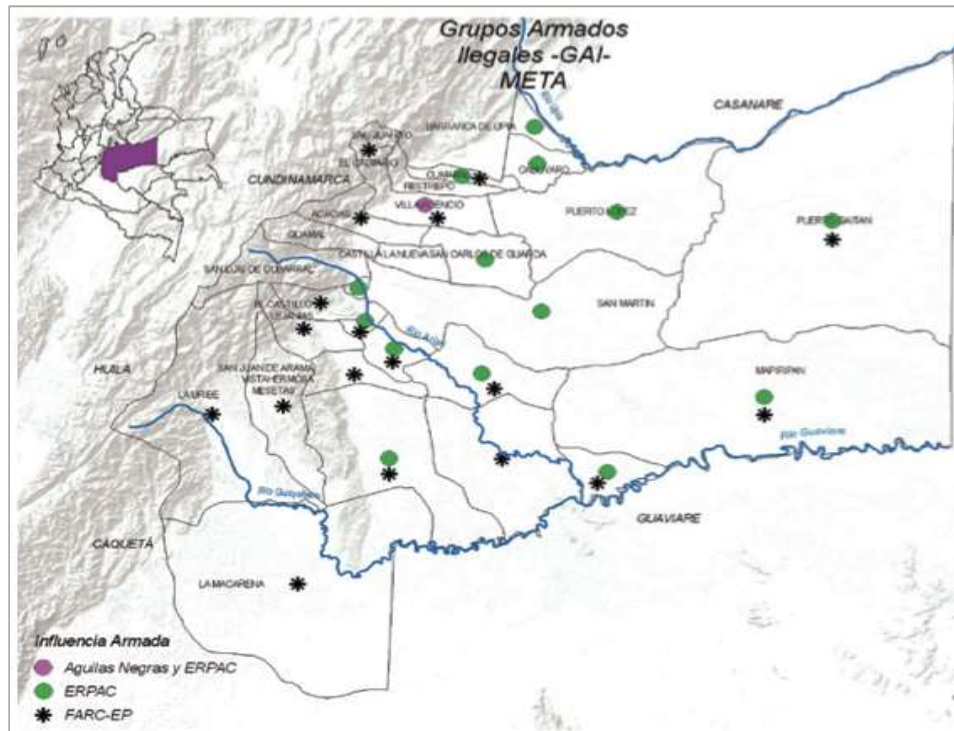
Source: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 211.

The ERPAC started an armed campaign in 2006-2007, which succeeded in defeating a rival criminal group known as *Los Macacos*, or *Paisas*. The group benefitted from the inertia of the regular military and had an estimated death toll of up to 800 casualties. The offensive aimed at controlling the Meta river corridor and those strategic areas for drugs production and

trafficking. Once again in Colombian history of war, territorial control is both the means and the end of counterinsurgent practices. ERPAC's actions were based on ruthless tactics that included forced displacement and systematic human rights violations (e.g. disappearances, threats, extrajudicial killings) against those communities that were perceived as FARC's constituents. By all means, the ERPAC operated as a paramilitary organization, intent on weakening the guerrilla and pursuing counterinsurgent plans. At the same time, it is reported that the ERPAC signed an alliance with the FARC's Front 43 to split commercial routes for drugs trafficking. Thus, the ERPAC's project was mainly an economic one (Human Rights Watch, 2010: 72-74; FIP, 2013; International Crisis Group, 2012; Echandia Castilla, 2013; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014).

One of the main difference with the pre-DDR phase in Meta is that the security context and the non-state armed groups' dynamics are now more fluid. Non-state armed groups "transformed themselves, they disappeared and reappeared according to specific circumstances and internal dynamics; therefore, what also changed was their geographic location, strategies and behaviours, all of which were based on drugs trafficking's logic and concerns." (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 270). Smaller groups are affiliated and/or pledge allegiance to bigger ones, or are even sold and bought as franchises. With the result that an accurate mapping of armed groups is not possible. For example, the infamous group of the *Aguilas Negras* (literally "Black Eagles") were reported to operate in Meta, under the leadership of Cuchillo. At its peak, in 2009, the ERPAC extended its influence to Meta, Guaviare and Vichada, and numbered between 770 and 3,000 combatants, depending on the number of franchises that are included (Human Rights Watch, 2010: 72-74; FIP, 2013).

After Cuchillo's death at the hands of the national police in 2010, a second generation of BACRIM in Meta rose under the leadership of alias Caracho. In November 2011, together with 272 combatants – an estimated third of the total number of ERPAC's members at that moment in time – alias Caracho turned himself in. This represented a unique case of a collective surrender of a BACRIM. The ERPAC's faction was not granted any legal benefit – to the dismay of some of the rank and file members who believed they were going to be demobilized. By not getting involved, the government was clear in characterizing the surrender to authorities as a law enforcement issue, and not a demobilization process (FIP, 2013: 21; International Crisis Group, 2012; Masse and Camargo Castro, 2013; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014).

The third generation of paramilitaries in the Eastern Llanos appeared in 2012. Two main rival groups rose on the ashes of the ERPAC. The first one is the *Libertadores del Vichada*.

Headed by Pijarvey and conformed by nearly 180 combatants, it has presence primarily in Vichada, and in some parts of northern Meta. *Libertadores del Vichada* pursues similar economic agendas as other BACRIMs, including control of drugs trafficking routes. This group controls the drugs trafficking's strategic corridors that run throughout northern and eastern Meta. Smaller in size and with a presence in the Ariari, the second BACRIM is the *Bloque Meta*, which has been seeking territorial expansion over the vacuum left by the ERPAC's surrender. Although the two groups were in competition, they did not openly fight one another, but they mostly used selective homicide as their way of confrontation. There are different interpretations surrounding the genesis, latest dynamics and the confrontation between *Libertadores del Vichada* and *Bloque Meta*. It is also reported that the powerful BACRIM of *Los Urabeños* established its presence in the Llanos following the demise of the ERPAC, and that they either influence or control the *Bloque Meta* (FIP, 2013: 22; International Crisis Group, 2012; Masse and Camargo Castro, 2013; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014: 269-282; ODDR, 2013b).

To assess the level of violence associated with BACRIMs and other neo-paramilitary groups in Meta since the DDR of the AUC, it is important to provide some statistics. Between 2008 and 2011, the level of incidence of these non-state armed groups has substantially increased in Meta. The percentage of municipalities with BACRIMs' presence rose from 41% to 65% in the 2008-2011 timeframe. Out of a total number of 29 municipalities in Meta, those with armed groups' presence have increased from 12 in 2008, to 13 (2009), to 16 (2010), all the way up to 20 in 2011. Such increase is mirrored at the national level too: 259 municipalities were recorded with BACRIMs or other groups presence in 2008, rising to 406 in 2011 (Indepaz, 2012: 3).

With respect to the homicide rate in Meta, there has been a substantial decrease over the last decade (Figure 5.3). Such decrease has, however, been quite irregular. Homicide rate has increased during the height of paramilitary confrontation in Meta during 2000-2003 and again in 2005-2007. Overall, it has nonetheless dramatically decreased, although the homicide rate is higher in Meta than in the rest of the country. At the national level, instead, the homicide rate has decreased steadily year by year since 2000 (FIP, 2013).

The contradiction between the parallel increase in BACRIM's presence and decrease in homicide rate is evident, and deemed of different interpretations. One observation is that the proliferation of non-state armed groups does not have to necessarily be accompanied by increased levels of violence. The multiplication of armed groups may signify a greater equilibrium in terms of authority and local-level balance of power. As it was seen in Chapter 2, political order emanates from different sources and it is not necessarily associated with

state presence. The situation in Meta and Colombia following the DDR of the AUC seems to follow a pattern in which (increased) order is the result of a more stable equilibrium between non-state armed groups.

FIGURE 5.3: HOMICIDE TRENDS IN META AND COLOMBIA, 2000-2012
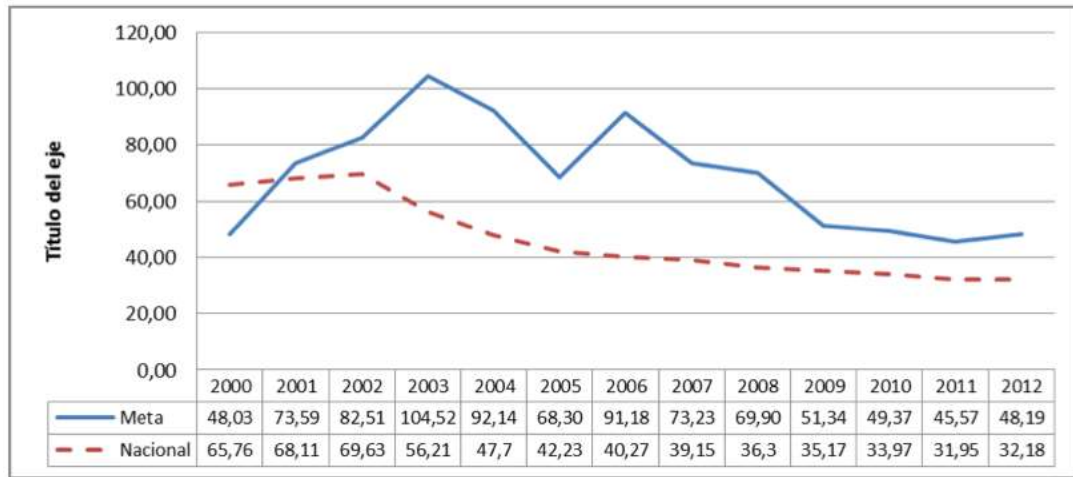
Source: FIP, 2013: 25.

Numbers and data also need to be contextualized. In the early 2000s, levels of violence skyrocketed as a result of paramilitary internal infighting, and FARC's strengthened military capacity. The subsequent DDR of the AUC and the weakening of the FARC decreased the overall levels of violence, which however started from a very high point in the first place. Nonetheless, the ambivalent data that was proposed above, give further validity to the political economy approach of this research, which sees actual balance of power and alternative forms of order and authority as the appropriate lens of analysis to understand war and post-war dynamics.

CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of the dynamics surrounding the DDR process with the AUC and with individual members of the FARC in Colombia and Meta, in particular. A review of the DDR policies has been accompanied by a thorough discussion of the dilemmas of implementing a DDR strategy in the midst of an armed conflict. In turn, the implications for state-building and formation are complex and multifaceted. If, on the one hand, the demobilization of the AUC has taken out one important actor of the armed conflict and has somewhat reinforced state legitimacy and monopoly of force, still, on the other hand, there is a cloud over the short-term security achievements and the long-term peacebuilding implications.

In parallel, the chapter has focused on reintegration, in particular economic reintegration. It has introduced the employment factor as an important variable of reintegration outcomes. This also serves as an introduction to the empirical chapters, which treat employment as a core dimension in the individual and structural transition from war to peace.

PART III - The War Life Cycle of Ex-Combatants: Employment, Mobilization and Demobilization

6. Transition From Civilian Life to the Armed Group: Dynamics and Drivers of Recruitment and Mobilization

The first important issue to be tackled is the one of recruitment, which is the first phase of the three-phase analysis on war to peace transition. It is relevant to understand the 'why' and the dynamics by which men and women join either the insurgency or the paramilitary. Since I consider armed groups as employers, then, it is important to know how and why individuals started 'working' for this peculiar employer in the first place.

In this sense, recruitment is the first step of a comprehensive analysis concerning non-state armed groups as *employers*, which also includes career paths within the organization, tasks and role, reasons for termination (i.e. demobilization) and for possible re-entry (i.e. recidivism), and the connection between job experiences before, during and after conflict.

The rest of this chapter deals with some recurring patterns of recruitment, based on the experiences of thirty-one ex-combatants, with whom I held one-on-one interviews. In line with the conceptual framework of individual, organizational, and structural frameworks of analysis, I isolated some dynamics of recruitment.

All interviews started with questions about recruitment. In particular, I was interested in hearing about the reasons and circumstances surrounding the transition from civilian life to joining an armed actor. I would ask the interviewee about the events that lead him/her to get involved with the armed group. Interviews include ex-combatants' personal story of being recruited or entering the group. I, thus, collected a number of testimonies on what the individual motivations, the context, the external incentives and the pulling factors were, as well as the existing structural factors.

By underlining the dynamics and reasons why someone goes to war, I am, in fact, making broader considerations related to conflict dynamics. As it is seen below, the question of recruitment is functional to the understanding of the structural dynamics of conflict. Hence, a three-level analysis reconciles (i) individual motivations and occurrences for joining an armed group; (ii) structural factors that are related to conflict dynamics and which play an equally important part in the decision to go to war; and (iii) organizational explanations centered around the armed group itself – including its incentives and promises, its appeal

and its strategies and patterns of recruitment. Table 6.3 at the end of the chapter summarizes the main findings.

The chapter summarizes and highlights some of the most interesting stories and insights related to recruitment that come out of the interviews. Then, it is organized along the above three levels of analysis – as all the other empirical chapters are as well. In particular, the chapter underlines one specific driver of recruitment, which has traditionally been overlooked by the literature. This concerns the lack of employment in the legal economy (including the informal sector), and the employment opportunity provided by an armed group as a motivating factor to join a group. I posit that 'employment' represents the missing factor among the recurring explanations for recruitment. The quest for meaningful employment can be hardly categorized within either individual or organizational or structural approaches, but it is a blend – a grey area that carries elements from all approaches.

An important caveat has to be added here. Dividing up the factors for recruitment in individual, organizational and structural levels is an artificial construction done by the researcher. Interviewees were simply asked to describe their recruitment and the circumstances leading up to it. Based on available data, I classified recruitment drivers according to the above three levels of analysis.

I argue that recruitment is a function of a combination of individual, organizational and structural reasons. Indeed, each personal story of recruitment is made of a unique mix of these three levels. I am not arguing that some reasons are more important than others (ideology over socialization, for example); or that some explanations are more recurring than others. What I am trying to do, instead, is to single out specific reasons in order to dissect them. The aim is to show how each reason contributes to the overall and final outcome of joining a non-state armed group. In conclusion, the single drivers of recruitment – when they are taken alone – are necessary but not sufficient ingredients to explain the phenomenon of recruitment. Instead, it is when they are analysed in their inter-relationship and complexity that the explanations of recruitment are more convincing.

The chapter deals with drivers of recruitment along the three levels of analysis (individual, structural, organizational). It is accordingly divided into three main sections corresponding to the three levels of analysis – a structure that is replicated in the following two empirical chapters. It opens with the analysis of the ways and the circumstances by which ex-combatants either joined, or were approached and recruited by non-state armed groups. At the individual level, motivations of recruitment are related to episodes of trauma experienced by the ex-combatant, which, in turn, generate feelings of revenge and hatred,

and ultimately play a role in him/her taking sides and mobilizing. The section about structural factors of recruitment include ideology and indoctrination; socialization mechanisms and the role played by social and family networks; and the structural conflict dynamics. In areas where non-state armed groups exercise power and territorial control, going to war is often one of the few options available. Thus, one of the propositions of this chapter is to test the hypothesis that the employment opportunity provided by armed groups is a key driver of recruitment. A final section on the organizational level deals with some recruiting patterns and tactics utilized by non-state armed groups.

6.1 Individual Level: Personal Stories of Mobilization

MOBILIZATION AND TRAJECTORIES OF EMPLOYMENT BEFORE ARMED GROUP'S MEMBERSHIP

All interviewed ex-combatants (including 18 ex-guerrilla and 13 ex-paramilitaries) have been keen to remember and share the story and the circumstances of their recruitment. These episodes provide valuable data that go beyond the individual account, but provide insights on the conflict dynamics, on participating actors and their *modus operandi*. This section will be divided into: first, the stories of mobilization and recruitment by ex-members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC); second, ex-paramilitaries' accounts of recruitment.

Table 6.1 includes a few features of ex-combatants' social and family background. The objective is to capture the main differences between ex-FARC and ex-members of the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) in terms of their origin.[58] One of the purpose of this chapter is, in fact, to account also for the different socio-economic starting points of ex-combatants, i.e. before being recruited by armed groups.

FARC stories of recruitment and mobilization. Cesar[59] – a 45-year-old man from Guaviare – voluntarily demobilized in 2010 after 27 years in the FARC. His story is one of the most complete and revealing – as the introduction emphasized. In a two hour interview, Cesar demonstrated to be an articulate man – a clear sign and indication of his role as a political mobilizer and leader of peasantry while in the FARC. From humble peasant origins, Cesar grew up in a background of rural warfare and fight for land. He explains how land exploitation and unequal property structure generated rampant inequality and chronic poverty, and as a consequence mounting grievances, political and armed mobilization followed.

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[58] See Annexes 1 and 2 for a full demographic profile of ex-combatants that are part of the sample.
[59] Those that appear in this research are not the real names of interviewed ex-combatants. In order to protect their identity, all names have been changed to invented names.

TABLE 6.1: EX-COMBATANTS' BACKGROUND BEFORE RECRUITMENT

	FARC (18 XCs)	AUC (13 XCs)
Social origin	Rural (17)	Small town (6), Urban (4), Rural (3)
Family background	Peasants (17)	No clear pattern: services, public sector, peasantry, illegality
Jobs held prior to recruitment	Landless peasantry (17)	Military (4). Others, mostly unstable and unsecure employment
Domestic abuse or neglect (N. of XCs who volunteered info)	8	4

Cesar's father had been a liberal guerrilla member during the civil war in the Llanos of the early 1950s; subsequently, he joined the FARC until his death in 1979, when Cesar was only 13 years old. Despite passing when Cesar was still very young, his father's figure and influence are central to Cesar's story of recruitment and political mobilization. He was raised in a rigid communist environment, permeated by profound sensibility toward injustice and class division, pride and respect for peasant work, and a strong sense of personal morality.

Cesar describes his recruitment at 17 years old as a life choice and a service: a choice of commitment to struggle on behalf of the poorest, the hard working individuals, and the exploited ones.[60] As many other ex-FARC members, he recalls the FARC often visiting and providing help to his family after his father passed. Living in an area dominated by the FARC, Cesar's family was out of the reach of the state and its services, including health and education. In such circumstances of complete state's absence, ex-combatants describe the FARC as a state within a state – an organization tasked with providing services, solving local conflicts, and sensitizing peasant communities to class struggle and land reform.

Vast parts of rural areas in Colombia have historically been neglected and marginalized areas, which the FARC turned into strongholds. The FARC would easily win the battle for hearts and minds by being close to and cooperating with its political constituency, i.e. the peasantry, and by acting as a *de facto* state. In a region of colonization like Meta and the Eastern Llanos, the marginalization feature is even more pronounced. Some areas controlled by the guerrilla were marginalized and out of the state's reach even before the appearance of the 20th Century land conflicts.

"I lived in a red zone: there, the ones that are in charge are the FARC. In those villages where they are present, they exercise full control"[61], says Roberto, a 31-year-old ex-FARC member from Vichada, who remembers the FARC visiting his family's farm since he was 8 years old.

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60 Interview held in December 2012, Villavicencio.
61 Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

Roberto was finally recruited at 16. "In these settings, in these areas, the FARC was the law. I discovered who the police and the army were when I was already a grown up. Because in these remote regions the FARC is the law, the army, and the government"[62], adds Cristina, who was abused and neglected by her family and then taken by the FARC when she was 8 years old.

Several ex-FARC members stress FARC's generosity and commitment toward helping individual households with their livelihoods as a determining factor for joining the group. Laura, 28 years old from San Juan de Arama in the medium Ariari, spent 10 years in the FARC. She says that she "was not recruited, I joined voluntarily. I was 15 years old and I enlisted because I liked the FARC, because I grew up in this environment. Where the FARC were, they would look after people, and provide help if one needed it. My mum was a single mother with three kids to be raised by herself after her husband died. Then, she remarried and I was born. But my father left too. She was left with five kids all by herself. Therefore, when there was need, the FARC would give us food, things, cooperate with supplies and logistics. I mean, they would help out. Thus, a child becomes fascinated by such behaviour and actions. And you start admiring this type of environment, and grow up with this idea. It is like a child that grows up in the city looking up to the police and saying "As a grown up I want to enlist in the military or join the police because I like it"."[63]

Similarly, Enrique joined the FARC at 9 years old, recalling that the FARC "would often come to my family's farm. We were poor and came from very humble background. And they came bringing us some food. We would eat what they gave us, a bit of rice, pasta etc. Thus, I grew fond of them, until one day I left the house and followed them."[64] As it appears from these descriptions, one recurrent feature that all ex-combatants growing up in FARC-controlled areas shared is the peasantry background and the humble origins associated with chronic poverty dynamics (Ferro and Uribe, 2002; Arjona and Kalyvas, 2012).

A second typology of ex-combatants from the FARC is those who started to operate with the FARC as external members, either because they were doing business with the FARC, or had some other role (political, for example); or, more commonly, they were young teens supporting the FARC with logistics and transportation. Nine ex-FARC and one ex-ELN members (out of a total of 18 ex-guerrilla) were involved with the rebels in some capacity before being enlisted. Walter, 19 years old, spent only eight months in the FARC before deciding to flee. He admitted of "having done favors and small things [for them] since I was very little. They would come to our land, and ask for favors like "bring this over there". I

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[62] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[63] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[64] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

would help by transporting food, supplies and documents, etc. I started [in the FARC] that way."[65]

Giovanni, 24 years old, explains in detail the transition that he experienced from his own job into being a FARC member. His family worked with cattle in a FARC-dominated area, but they were poor. "My uncle worked with cattle for different clients, including the FARC. Because the FARC also own cattle! [...] I first started working with the organization not as a guerrilla member, but as a laborer with cattle. Afterwards, I got more involved until I ended up within the FARC itself."[66]

Roberto describes how his family would cooperate with the FARC when he was a child. "They [FARC] would come to us and ask to use our truck to transport supplies and their people. We never lent it: either my dad or I would always go and take them. [...] "I won't give it to you, I'll take you", my dad would say. Therefore, I started going to the guerrilla camps, meeting people there. Progressively, I had to go and transport food, supplies, logistics. At the end, they enlisted me, just like that."[67]

Sometimes, ex-combatants got involved with the FARC for accidental reasons – for example, an economic migrant would move to an area dominated by the FARC. It is the case of Sergio, 37 years old from Puerto Lopez, Meta, who spent two years in the FARC in his mid-30s. From a poor rural family, Sergio worked not only in agriculture but also in the construction sector and as a generic laborer. He would move according to job opportunities. He moved to Vistahermosa – a FARC stronghold in low Ariari – and met with the organization while being a seller of small farming products. He started working with the FARC as "a trader, and they would pay me. I would go and buy things for them, and come back, and transport supplies. When I fully realized what I was doing, I was already fully involved and they integrated me."[68]

Fernan also had a similar experience. He spent fourteen years in the FARC, from 17 to 31 years old. Originally from San Vicente del Caguan in Caqueta – an area from where the military pulled out completely as part of the failed peace process of 1998-2002 – Fernan grew up in a humble peasant family. "Integration [in the group] occurred as they would come [to my family's farm] and meet with us, play football with us; therefore, they encourage you to follow their life path. [...] So, one starts to admire them. That is what happened to me. With time, I would go to the camp, do small jobs, move supplies, transport food with my dad's car.

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[65] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[66] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio
[67] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[68] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

I went and went back again. In the end, after two years of working with them this way, abruptly they told me: "Now, you belong to us"."[69]

As it is clear from the interviews, several ex-FARC members experienced a somewhat similar pattern. Many of them got progressively involved with the FARC to the point that the organization decided then to enlist them. To summarize, these are the most recurrent features in terms of recruitment and mobilization among ex-FARC members – all of which will be further analysed in the next sections:

- Living in a FARC-dominated area with no state presence.
- FARC acting as a state within the state and performing social and political functions (i.e. rebel governance).
- Peasantry background and poverty.
- Strong relationship between the FARC and the peasantry.
- Progressive individual involvement with the FARC would lead to mobilization: from supporting roles to full membership.

One further aspect that will be analysed in the next few sections concerns the degree to which the decision to join was a voluntary one, or it was forced. The above quotes already provide some hints to which one is the answer. In fact, I will bring evidence that there is not a single answer to this question: to some ex-combatants, the ideology, the display of solidarity and the role model of FARC members played an important role in their decision to mobilize; others, instead, perceived their recruitment almost as an abduction.

Before moving on to these aspects, let us first hear some stories of mobilization from ex-paramilitaries.

Paramilitary's stories of recruitment. Personal stories of recruitment and mobilization from ex-paramilitaries are quite different from the FARC ones. In particular, whereas ex-FARC's recruitment was quite homogenous in terms of dynamics and experiences, ex-paramilitaries that I interviewed had quite different experiences among them. First of all, there are both rural- and urban-based paramilitaries, with different backgrounds and upbringings. Second, there are ex-paramilitaries that were never in a combat role but performed a variety of different functions – or so they claim. In turn, their recruitment patterns were also different.

Nonetheless, despite more heterogeneous experiences, the motivations for ex-paramilitaries to join a non-state armed group are somewhat similar. The overwhelming majority of ex-paramilitaries refer to the lack of employment as the main cause of their mobilization. In fact,

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[69] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

the employment opportunity factor is much stronger for ex-AUC than for ex-FARC. Several stories highlight the centrality of the employment aspect and the need for a job. As per guerrilla members, recruitment is not exclusively and necessarily associated with a choice, but a whole spectrum of individual and structural factors play a role in recruitment dynamics (Arjona and Kalyvas, 2012).

Alejandro, 35 years old, is from Granada, Meta, a town that has traditionally been a paramilitary stronghold. After spending eight years in the regular army in the Amazonas border post of Leticia, and later in his hometown, Alejandro quit "because I did not see any future. You know, a professional soldier will gain the same wage all his life." He then worked in the construction sector as a day laborer, but without long term prospects – always looking for better opportunities. "I was in such situation when I was approached [by a paramilitary]. [...] He tells me: "You see, we are looking for people with military background to come and work for us"."[70]

Radamael, a 34-year-old from Villavicencio, was also a professional military for over seven years. After he quit, he went through economic hardship and unemployment, until a friend helped him to join the AUC. His military background helped, he claims. Radamael laments his lack of good judgment and poor decision-making for joining the paramilitaries, admitting that the job prospect was the main driver of his mobilization.

Holding a military background before joining the paramilitaries is a feature that four ex-AUC share, out of a total of 13 ex-paramilitaries that I interviewed. However, the number of those that were in the military could be higher because interviewees were not directly asked if they were in the military or not, but rather they volunteered the information. The point related to military background will be touched upon in the organizational section dedicated to the recruitment strategies by non-state armed groups.

Employment-seeking is the thread that links almost all the ex-paramilitaries that I interviewed. Under often different circumstances, they all relate their mobilization in the AUC primarily to the attractive employment opportunity. For example, the story of Camilo, 37 years old from Villavicencio. After he as well was employed by the military for almost three years, he quit because he started a family. Camilo moved back to Villavicencio to open an ornament and soldering workshop. However, he says that he was robbed of everything, and, as result, fell in economic hardship – he was already married by then, with two children to support. "I moved to San Jose del Guaviare; there, I asked to meet someone from the AUC.

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[70] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

[...] I introduced my self to a local commander. [...] It was very easy to tell him: "I want to enter the group"."[71]

Like Camilo, several others joined the paramilitary while job hunting under difficult personal economic circumstances. Ibarbo, a 32-year-old from Bogota, moved to Villavicencio in 2000 with his parents, who were in search of better economic opportunities. Ibarbo spent six months looking for work, unsuccessfully. "During this time, I met a friend, who operated as an *urbano* here in Villavicencio. An *urbano* is the one who manages AUC business and issues [in a given territory]. Like a politician for the paramilitaries. I started working for him and then he got me in."[72] Here as well, the employment aspect is the most important factor.

The last example concerns Maria Victoria, 34 years old from Villavicencio. At the time she was enlisted in the AUC, Maria Victoria was a single mother of two children – she now has five. Her aspiration was to be a medical nurse, but she did not have the resources to study and get the necessary training. Thus, she was introduced to someone who "could help me to study, so I would be capacitated, nothing else. That same month the guy started to help me and I started to study and to learn. One day he asked me to go with him to get interviewed with those who were helping me. Simple. I was interviewed by someone who everyone referred to as 'the doctor'. He told me that they were looking for people who would work in nursing in small towns. That is how it all happened. [...] I was not tricked or anything. The only thing I wanted was to study to bring forward my life and career. [...] Thus, I went. But I knew with whom I was going to work."[73]

In conclusion, as far as ex-paramilitaries' recruitment is concerned, the following are the most common points that came out from the interviews, and which will be analysed in the following sections:

- Ex-paramilitaries' main driver for joining the AUC is a difficult economic situation, unemployment and the job opportunity provided.
- Urban / small town background is more common than rural one.
- The AUC had extended networks in the city of Villavicencio, and in the towns of San Martin, Granada and Puerto Gaitan, which made recruitment relatively easy for individuals who wanted to join.
- Several interviewees refer to friends or acquaintances who introduced them to the AUC.
- A military background was a resume booster for AUC recruitment.

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[71] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[72] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[73] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL CAUSES FOR MOBILIZATION: TRAUMA AND REVENGE

For some of the interviewees I spoke to, the individual level played an important – sometimes decisive – role in the decision to join an armed group. Individual-level reasons, I argue, have to do with those very intimate reasons animating a person to take a certain action or behaviour, including reasons related to psychology, personal security, family issues, or perceptions.

Given the long scope of the conflict in Colombia and in Meta, individual drivers of recruitment have often to do with the traumatic legacy of war. Communities and households have suffered from waves of violence perpetrated by non-state armed groups. Sometimes, this violence is perpetrated by state security forces. In turn, repeated cycles of violence throughout several decades imply that the emotional legacy of war passes from one generation to the next. Communities, households and individuals that become victimized necessarily (and almost automatically) take sides and make a decision about who they will support.

As far as ex-FARC members are concerned, the aspect of trauma, revenge and the legacy of war as a motivating factor to go to war (or even to pick a side) did not appear at all in my interviews. No ex-guerrilla member has cited one single episode of violence against them, their family or their community as a driver for political and armed mobilization. While it could be a coincidence, I think that it is highly unlikely that in a conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions, none of the ex-FARC that I spoke to were victims of violence. Especially when, on the other hand, in interviews with ex-paramilitaries the issue of trauma and vengeance came up. But I do not have an explanation for why no ex-FARC mentioned this aspect.

With respect to the FARC, then, the drivers for mobilization that I could single out as individual-based reasons concern generic resentment and adolescent or post-adolescent crisis, low self-esteem and sense of loss. In one word, for psychological reasons. One example is Laia, 39 years old from an urban background, Villavicencio – something unique among ex-FARC members. She had a difficult family situation as she was brought up by her aunt and never met her parents. After moving to bustling Bogota, she enrolled in university to study engineering. Having to work at the same time as studying in order to maintain her studies, she progressively fell behind with her coursework. "After three years, when I was forced to drop out I was full of pain and resentment. Doors shut down for me and life itself shut. I

needed to recover from what had happened to me, from knowing that I did not have a future. […] Thus, I took this extreme decision to go and look for the group [the FARC]."[74]

There is not much insight to gain from this personal story other than to give an example for the myriad of reasons of why an individual may join a non-state armed group. Notwithstanding, Laia's actions were directed to attaining an education, and, in turn, a future job and a better life. Thus, the common thread of my research concerns Laia as well – i.e. presenting employment and employment-seeking behaviours as a framework for the analysis of mobilization. Laia abandoned everything and joined the FARC. Although her reason was not directly related to seeking an employment opportunity, the events that led her to go to the FARC have to do with seeking an education functional to a future job. In this sense, mobilization is as much as a life choice as it is an employment prospect.

The aspects of trauma and how war legacy turn into hatred and revenge are present in some of the ex-paramilitaries stories. Jairo, a 39-year-old ex-AUC mid-level commander, grew up in a remote region of the Amazon: Mitu, the capital town of the state of Vaupes. In 1998, Mitu was the theater of one of the boldest FARC military operations in history. The FARC laid siege to the remote town, defeated the weak army and police posts there, and held Mitu for two days before a decisive military operation uprooted the guerrilla. In the process, Jairo's brother – a policeman – was kidnapped by the FARC, an event that deeply marked Jairo's life and subsequent choices.

Jairo did not mention what the outcome from the kidnapping was, and if his brother survived or not. As a result of the Mitu takeover, Jairo and his family were forcefully displaced from the town. That same year, he moved to San Martin, Meta – a paramilitary stronghold – with the intention of joining the ACCU (*Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba e Urabá*), a forerunner of the AUC (see Chapter 4).

Jairo describes the reasons for mobilization as follows. "The phenomenon of the guerrilla deeply affects people's conscience; in particular, the psychological side [was affected] as a consequence of the takeover, the kidnapping, and of the fact that my mother fell ill and got crazy. All this affected me and I started developing hatred toward the organization. In addition, I had a worrisome economic situation: I did not have any money. Thus, I was determined to enter the paramilitary group here in Meta."[75] The personal tragedy behind Jairo's mobilization conflates with the more terrain economic aspect. After being forcefully displaced from Vaupes, Jairo admits of needing employment and livelihoods for him and his family. The paramilitary would be able to provide just that.

One more ex-paramilitary who describes both the trauma aspect and the employment opportunity as drivers of mobilization is Mauricio, 40 years old, from a rural background in Meta. Mauricio is currently employed by the reintegration agency (*Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración*, ACR) as a group facilitator. In fact, it is not so uncommon for the program to hire ex-combatants to act as liaisons between ex-combatants and the state.

Asked about the circumstances of his recruitment, Mauricio said: "As it happened for most of us, an array of factors contributed to my recruitment. On a personal level, I have been victimized as the guerrilla killed my mother. We were forced to leave. We had to abandon our property, which was in an area controlled by the FARC. [...] We moved to town – Granada – and we started to depend on our own. [Then,] when I started looking for work opportunity, I was alerted that yes, there is a job opportunity but you have to go to a farm to work for a man. Well, I needed work because obviously I had to bring food home and support the family. Thus, a job offer materialized to work as a driver. I said to myself: of course, I have to go."[76]

Mauricio claims that he did not know that he was going to work for the paramilitary and had he known so, he would have not accepted. Nonetheless, his mobilization started from a traumatic event which led him and his family to move to a paramilitary stronghold. As for most ex-paramilitaries, the employment factor acted as a material necessity: regardless of the individual motivation and circumstances, the need for a job is common to all ex-paramilitaries.

6.2 Structural Factors of Recruitment

LIVING IN A CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREA

A recurrent conflict dynamic in the Eastern Plains concerns individuals and communities that find themselves in the middle of active fighting among armed groups, including the military. As it stands clear from the above stories of recruitment and mobilization, the number one structural factor of recruitment and mobilization concerns the local-level power that non-state armed groups display.

Whether one group is in control of an area or not – and to what extent it exercises this control vis-à-vis the military and other non-state armed groups – directly determines the recruitment pattern and its scale in that same area. The more an armed group is powerful in a given area, the greater the scale of recruitment in that same area. As demonstrated by the interviews, individuals that are recruited in a given area do not necessarily end up being

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[76] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio

deployed in that same area, but rather they are moved around according to the armed group's needs (Arjona and Kalyvas, 2012).

The important point is the following. When a non-state armed group establishes a stronghold in either a rural or an urban area, the extent to which the group is able to militarily control the area itself – and to not be challenged by other armed contenders – determines the extent to which the group has control over local institutions. Military strength goes hand in hand with political power and influence over institutions. Thus, armed groups are able not only to control security, which is the most visible aspect of their power. But also, they exercise control and/or influence over political mobilization, administrative functions, and social and economic life in all of their aspects, via either cooptation or coercion.

Increased local power comes with the need for greater responsibility. In order to exercise such power and perform an increased number of functions – functions that are qualitatively more complex, and quantitatively more numerous – non-state armed groups are forced to increase their ranks and to widen their skillset by recruiting new members. Non-state armed groups become an attractive employer that needs to expand its workforce. Through this mechanism, armed groups influence the local labor market.

In turn, locals who experience collapse or failure of state institutions are more prone to potentially consider joining a non-state armed group than individuals that live in an area with little or no penetration of armed groups, for example. The employment opportunity provided by armed groups becomes, then, even more irresistible in the face of economic hardship. As many ex-combatants argue, the attractive job opportunity, associated with livelihood needs, played a decisive role in the recruitment pattern of several ex-paramilitaries.

Adapted to different contexts, local-level power as a factor of enhanced recruitment trends is at work both in towns dominated by the paramilitaries and in FARC-controlled rural areas. Several stories from ex-paramilitaries who were recruited in the AUC strongholds of Granada and San Martin, for example, display such dynamic. Where they exercise power, non-state armed groups become more visible, because they are unchallenged. All of which increases the easiness of recruitment. As Alejandro – an ex-paramilitary from Granada – reports, "one already knows who they are [the paramilitary], because in a small town everyone knows who everyone is. The fact that one does not get involved with them is quite possible, but everyone knows who they are."[77] Jon, ex-AUC for over 8 years from San Martin,

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[77] Interview held in November 2014, Villavicencio.

confirms this point: "In San Martin, it was not a secret to anyone [who the paramilitaries were]. People who were part of the AUC were just there… normally."[78]

The FARC established political and military strongholds in vast rural areas of the Eastern Plains, either by winning territory on the battleground or by filling a political and security vacuum in marginal areas. As many interviewees pointed out, the political and social influence from the FARC in such areas was utter. So profound was the weakness and/or the absence of the state that, throughout the decades, the FARC acted and were perceived as the sole and legitimate authority. Indeed, such overwhelming control by the FARC contributes to enhancing local recruitment.

Local communities living in FARC-controlled areas were so marginalized to the point that they never even had any contact with state institutions or never even thought of supporting the state. Individuals grew up with the FARC being the only social and political institution around them – a state within the state. In remote areas, people almost never questioned their loyalty to the FARC, nor the legitimacy of its cause. Even those interviewees who resented the FARC for forcing them into the ranks did not display any opposition with respect to the FARC's legitimacy as a fighting force. It was natural for them to be against the state and the paramilitaries.

The issue of public support toward the FARC, and to what extent it was either spontaneous or forced, generated contradicting answers in my interviews. Laia – the engineering university student drop out – believes that the peasantry's support to the FARC was always forced, because it took place either in the presence of arms, or under their direct threat. "People have to make good face to whoever comes. The army comes, and the peasant has to give them food and water. If the FARC came, you have to give them food and water. The paramilitaries come, and you have to do the same. […] The peasantry in Colombia does not have the authority to say "no". […] You have to receive [armed actors] well, because you know that if you do not, they force you out of there, or they even kill you. […] I saw the fear in the peasants' eyes when they would give me food and water. Thus, I knew that they did not do it because they cared about me, but because they had to."[79] Laia's answer is useful also when thinking about recruitment by the FARC. The psychological and concrete subjugation of the local populations by armed groups may also contribute to a feeling of inevitability of recruitment and armed group's membership.

Jaime, 36 years old from Villavicencio, spent twelve years in the FARC between the ages of 19 and 31. He says that there are several instances of public support, and that this is not always

[78] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[79] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

forced. "Politics is the means of ruling. But, in many places, weapons are the ones that rule. Several people cooperate with armed groups due to arms, due to fear. Others [support them] because they are sympathetic, or because they have family members inside the same organization."[80] Finally, another ex-FARC, Roberto, discards the forced or induced dimension of public support. According to him, "when [the FARC] gets to a village, the local population that lives there loves the group, the guerrilla; because they are the ones that support the peasantry, help with the land, and allows them to have some decent livelihood."

Whether public support is coerced or genuine, the key point here concerns the levels of penetration and influence by the FARC in the areas under their control. A Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) senior officer from the OAS Peace Support Mission (MAPP-OEA) downplays the ideological character of the conflict in favor of an analysis based on local level power by armed groups. He says that "it is about which [armed] group came about first, which one established roots, who is paying the bills, and who helps me to survive and provide a livelihood for my family. Meaning that individual, family and collective allegiance to armed groups is dependent on context, circumstances and balance of power at local level."[81]

In conclusion, the structural drivers for recruitment are strongly connected with the extensive power that the FARC exercised in these areas. And a similar mechanism applies to paramilitaries. The other structural factors that are examined below (social networks, family, ideology) are all sub-factors of the fact that non-state armed groups exercise political and military control over specific areas (Arjona and Kalyvas, 2012).

THE POWER OF IDEOLOGY

The civil war in Colombia started with the foundation of the FARC in 1964, during the Cold War. Five decades have brought several changes to the Colombian conflict dynamics, as well as to the international system. From a bipolar system centered around the US-USSR ideologically-based conflict, a transition to a multipolar world took place. Such transition led to changes in domestic conflicts as well. Arguably, since 1991, we have witnessed an apparent weakening of ideologies as a primary motivating factor for rebellions and revolutions.

On top of being the oldest active war in the Western hemisphere, the civil war in Colombia was highly ideological in its premises. The communist guerrilla of the FARC fought the Colombian state with the stated goal of overthrowing the unequal political and economic

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[80] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[81] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

system. On paper (based on FARC top leadership's statements), the ideological element is still the prevailing one. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that both within its ranks and in the political mobilization of the peasantry, ideology does not play a dominating role as it did up to one to two decades ago.

The interviews that I conducted with ex-FARC members confirm this point. The power of ideology has weakened and the ideological commitment of FARC members has progressively lowered. Older recruits in my sample (both in terms of age and seniority within the organization) displayed stronger ideological background and commitment. Incidentally, the demise of ideology within the FARC is at the very base of the older members' decision to demobilize – as it will be seen in Chapter 8.

Ex-paramilitaries express their disdain at the changes that drugs trafficking brought to the conflict dynamics and to the higher ideals for which they were fighting. Camilo, who – as we saw earlier – joined the paramilitary after losing his business and due to a dire economic situation, admits that "nowadays, someone who says that he wants to defend the ideals of Colombia is lying, because now there is no politics, but only economic interests. One joins these groups [new paramilitaries and criminal bands] in order to make money, that is it. No one thinks about the wellbeing of anyone. Put simply, it is not how it used to be before, when some ideals existed. Nowadays, illegal drugs permeate the conflict. Thus, the ideals are lost."[82]

Ibarbo, another ex-paramilitary who spent six years in the AUC, says the following. "When I joined, there was the thought and ideal of the necessity to fight against the guerrilla, because there has always been the willingness to defeat the FARC. But after a few years, one realizes that the driver of all the paramilitaries and the guerrilla is drugs trafficking. Finance comes directly from there, and no where else."[83]

Notwithstanding these recent changes, interviews with ex-guerrillas reveal that ideology played an important role as a recruiting tool through the peasantry. This is because the FARC were able to politically sensitize and educate its main political constituent, i.e. the peasantry. They established a tight relationship with the peasantry: among the many services that the FARC would provide to it, political awareness of the causes of the armed struggle was one of them.

Many interviewees cited the positive role model that the FARC played. Earlier Fernan expressed admiration for the FARC thank to their solidarity attitude. In addition, he talks about how ideology and indoctrination were crucial. "Normally, like all other kids, I would

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[82] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[83] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

study at home. [...] These people [FARC members] would run meetings in my family's farm, instilling in peasant's minds [considerations] about weapons, the struggle, the causes of war, and the reasons for keeping the fight alive. Under these circumstances, one does not have the mindset to resist to these pressures. One does not know anything! Anyway, I enlisted and I joined the FARC."[84]

For many ex-combatants, the FARC were a role model for two reasons. First, because they practically cooperated with the peasantry in their most immediate needs. Second, because the FARC were fighting on behalf of the peasantry. They were, in fact, able to bring forward the message that the peasantry would have been the main beneficiary once they won the war and took power.

In this sense, the guerrilla (but also the paramilitary) were able in many cases to win the hearts and minds of local population. Armed groups that control or exercise power over a certain area seek the active support of the local population through the provision of services and livelihoods opportunities, for example. In turn, local communities embrace rebels' grievances and ideology, and end up supporting the armed struggle. Going to work for (i.e. joining) the non-state armed group is one manifestation of this support.

Nonetheless, the latter quote from Fernan pointing at the peasantry's intrinsic weakness and ignorance of the outside world, also highlights the marginalized condition of the peasantry in Colombia, which had the FARC as its only institutional and cultural reference. As it was explained earlier in this chapter, state absence in certain areas played in the hands of the FARC's political, military and also cultural control over the peasantry.

For the paramilitaries the ideology factor was less important than for the guerrilla. While the FARC ideology was based on the sophisticated political thought of Marxism-Leninism, paramilitarism lays its ideological foundation on a generic patriotism and on the defence of the current order against anti-establishment communism. Even though we cannot consider paramilitaries as holding an ideology, nationalistic ideal values and a generic belief in 'doing good' by replacing the state – which was embroiled in its hardest crisis – cannot be discarded when analysing the phenomenon of paramilitaries.

Camilo adds some considerations on the anti-FARC ideals that inspired him to join the paramilitaries. "I have always admired the AUC commander, Carlos Castaño, who bravely fought the guerrilla. I wanted to be like him. For this reason, I also joined: because I did not agree with any of the guerrilla ideals. [...] We received news that the FARC put bombs, mined and collapsed bridges, and cut electricity. All this was outrageous." Camilo also points at the

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[84] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

perceived 'good' that the AUC did. "I wanted to get involved because the state was absent [and unable to react] to this situation. […] Within the legal framework [paramilitarism] is illegal. But if you do not look at it that way, one sees that we were doing things right."[85]

Paramilitary members would not go through political indoctrination in the same systematic way as guerrillas did. Political mobilization among paramilitaries was not part of the standard curriculum during training as it was in the FARC. In the interviews, ex-paramilitaries express their deep resentment and hatred toward the FARC and their admiration for the paramilitaries' leaders to bravely take on the fight for the sake of Colombia's survival. These two thoughts are the only common ideals among ex-paramilitaries.

SOCIALIZATION, SOCIAL AND FAMILY NETWORKS, AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

One more area of investigation in terms of the structural drivers of recruitment concerns the role of socialization processes, as well as the role played by both the social and the family context of ex-combatants. Introducing socialization is important in order to complement and play down the highly deterministic conceptualization of employment as the leading driver of armed group's recruitment. While I show that my findings go in the direction of explaining recruitment and mobilization through the lens of employment-seeking behaviours by ex-combatants, this framework still needs to be integrated by other structural factors, including socialization mechanisms and family background.

The research findings show the role played by socialization and social networks. With respect to the FARC, I showed that, in areas under their control, the FARC and the local population were often in a tight relationship permeating the whole social context. Peasantry living in FARC areas have been exposed and subject to political mobilization and ideological consciousness, before – or together with – armed mobilization. Thus, socialization mechanisms are at play: potential recruits – especially the youngest ones – join as a result of peer pressure and or social conventions, for example. After having performed small tasks for the FARC, Walter, from Mapiripan in southern Meta, ultimately joined at the age of 17 because "a girl told me "let's go, this is good!" I liked the girl, she was good looking. I fell in love and I followed her. […] She was from inside the guerrilla."[86]

The role of emulation features among several ex-paramilitaries' stories too. Some ex-AUC admitted to have joined when it was fashionable to be a paramilitary, or because they were subject to peer pressure. A social environment where non-state armed groups' recruitment

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[85] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[86] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

is the norm favors emulation among peers. Indeed, emulation and peer pressure apply when an area is tightly controlled or dominated by an armed group. Wendy, an ex-paramilitary from the *Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta y Vichada* (ACMV, which was formally not part of the AUC), says that "a lot of paramilitaries were present and working here [Puerto Gaitan, a paramilitary stronghold]; thus, that is when I was persuaded to join and I went!"[87]

Socialization dynamics also concern the role model provided by FARC rebels. The solidarity and the commitment toward cooperating with the peasantry created a bonding between the FARC and the local population. The fact that the FARC was often the only institution in place, acting as a state, created a social environment by which non-members were either FARC supporters or were dealing with the FARC through small jobs.

In turn, this social environment was characterized by contiguity and constant exchanges between those who were recruited and the local population. Several ex-FARC combatants admit of how they were psychologically attracted by FARC members when the latter visited their farms, for example. The power of guns, the nobility of their struggle, and the perceived adventure of an unconventional life in arms were powerful tools that attracted potential recruits. Thus, the role of socialization is an important factor of recruitment[88].

The role played by role models is also important for paramilitaries. In a context of rural poverty and economic depression, paramilitary members would stand out in the eyes of local population thank to their clothing and vehicles. "They arrive by car and always with nice apparel. They invite you to eat, and they show you that they act with care and concern. Thus, one immediately trusts them"[89], Alejandro says – an ex-professional soldier turned into paramilitary. Camilo pushes it even further: "In 2002, it was fashionable to be a paramilitary here [in Villavicencio]. Everyone wanted to be a paramilitary. You would see paramilitaries everywhere: nicely dressed, armed, and with a vehicle."[90]

Among ex-paramilitaries, a common pattern of socialization leading to recruitment concerns the role of friends or acquaintances. On revealing the circumstances of their recruitment, several ex-paramilitaries – including Radamael, Ibarbo and Maria Victoria – say that people they knew referred them to a local paramilitary commander or recruiter. Such a word-of-mouth system of recruitment seems quite logical: paramilitaries were illegal organizations after all, and they could not openly advertise their job openings. Thus, a personal

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[87] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.
[88] The literature on social capital has exposed some of the links between social networks, social bonding processes and the outcomes in terms of cohesion and mutual benefits. The concept of social capital is relevant here as it provides an overarching understanding of the ties that were established between the FARC and the local population; and the extent to which those ties produced social benefits that were shared (Putnam, 2001; Cox, 2009; Aghajanian, 2012).
[89] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[90] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

introduction from someone is often how a first contact was established. What is striking is that the role of socialization and friends is understated in the literature on recruitment.

In terms of family background, I have analysed whether there is a relationship between ex-combatants' family context and recruitment. For the paramilitaries, there are no common patterns of family background that are associated with recruitment, but other factors are important. Ex-paramilitaries' families were employed in a variety of industries including services, public sector, agriculture, retails, and the military. Thus, the family's professional background cannot be accounted for recruitment. It is interesting to notice that there were only two ex-paramilitaries whose family members were part of illegal organizations. The first one is Marco, a man in his mid-30s, who I met casually. He was not part of the collective demobilization: in fact, he never demobilized. He said that all his family was in the paramilitary: his father, his mother, and his siblings. The second one is Jairo, who had his brother kidnapped during the Mitu takeover. Jairo admitted that his father was a drug trafficker.

For ex-FARC, I have showed how subsistence or landless farmers were the main target of recruitment by the FARC in areas under their control. The totality of ex-FARC interviewees come from a rural family background, the overwhelming majority of whom were chronically poor, subsistence farmers or landless peasants.

A strong pattern related to families of recruits either concerns domestic neglect and/or violence, or single headed households. The interviews highlighted a common theme among several ex-combatants. Many of them describe their difficult upbringing and/or a dysfunctional family context as a factor for joining a non-state armed group. Some ex-FARC members even say that the group provided an alternative family to the violence and neglect that they experienced in their own household; with the FARC acting as a sort of child welfare support service.

Twelve out of a total of thirty-one interviewed ex-combatants (both FARC and paramilitary) were either raised by only one parent or were victims of violence and/or neglect while children. Of those, the most significant cases are five ex-guerrilla members who were recruited between the age of 7 and 12, including the only ex-ELN combatant who I interviewed. By way of example, Mono JoJoy, one of the five members of the FARC Secretariat and top military commander, grew up without his father.

Muriel, 43 years old from rural Cundinamarca, spent thirty-two years in the FARC – he joined when he was 11 years old. He describes his family situation as follows. "My father was very poor and he still is today, at 85 years old. When we moved to La Vega, Cundinamarca, I was 6

or 7 years old, which is when my mum passed away. She was young: she died at only 38 years old due to a chronic hepatitis. Afterwards, both my older brothers enlisted in the FARC. I was left alone with my dad, who was out working all day. At only 7 years old I had to prepare food for him. Also, since my mum passed, my father was hit by depression and he started drinking heavily. […] Without my mother, I was left alone, I did not have anyone's support. I was 8 years old, I did not receive an education, I had nothing, nothing. Thus, I felt lonely. Due to his depression, my dad had to drink and drink. […] I would not even have clothes. I used to go around without shoes. […] As a consequence, I started seeing the guerrilla as a viable option in order to survive. One day I told my father: "Dad, am leaving." I made a deal with the guerrilla and I started working with them as a messenger."[91]

There are also cases of domestic violence and abuse. Faustino, an 18-year-old Afro-Colombian from Nariño, lived in an ELN stronghold. Since he was 7 years old, "I would simply go with them [the ELN] because in my house there were a lot of problems. But, I was not a guerrilla member. When my dad would hit me, then I would flee and go with them."[92] Cristina revealed the terrible violence that she suffered from her mother since she was very little, and how the FARC helped her. "Seeing the abuse to which I was subject to, [the FARC] had already spoken to her [my mother] several times about it, but she would not change. Thus, one day they told me: "walk with us". And I just went. […] The way I see it is that the FARC did not recruit me; this is not accurate. They rescued me."[93] One ex-paramilitary of 42 years of age, Juan Manuel, admits that the violence that he was subject to by his father made him flee the house at 12 years old. Subsequent events led him to join the paramilitary twice: first, in his early twenties; and later in his mid-thirties.

THE MISSING INGREDIENT: THE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The 'employment' factor in the decision to join a non-state armed group, I argue, is the key factor to comprehensively understand the dynamics of recruitment and mobilization (Table 6.2). There is ample literature on the causes of mobilization, its drivers and the reasons for individuals to join a rebellion (Arnson and Zartman, 2005; Berdal and Malone, 2000; Ballentine and Sherman, 2003; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Gates, 2002; Viterna, 2006). Nonetheless, there is scarce or no interest in conceptualizing and analysing recruitment by armed groups as an *ad hoc* employment recruitment, nor war as employment, as this research aims to do (Andvig and Gates, 2010; Hoffman, 2011).

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[91] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[92] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[93] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

As it is analysed in this section, most ex-combatants (especially ex-paramilitaries) were concerned with lack of sustainable employment and of meaningful livelihoods alternatives. The majority of ex-paramilitaries were in some dire economic situation. In this sense, individuals who joined a non-state armed group did so mostly on the basis of employment-seeking behaviours. The overwhelming majority of stories from ex-combatants attribute the joining of an armed group to the lack of alternatives, to no other employment options, and to poor and marginalized contexts outside the reach of the state and the formal economy.

The degree to which employment considerations were important in the decision to join a non-state armed group, depends on a mix of individual, organizational and structural factors of mobilization. At the individual level, the search for employment by individuals needing livelihoods has been repeatedly stated in several interviews. At the organizational level, non-state armed groups put in place specific recruitment strategies (as it is analysed in the next section). At the structural level, conflict-affected areas with no state presence provided the conditions for non-state armed groups to operate (and recruit), and the conditions for which many individuals had to resort to armed groups for a job.

In FARC-dominated areas, the sole economic activity was agriculture and its small-scale commercialization – mostly, subsistence farming, which products would often not even suffice to the household's needs. As I have showed, the remoteness and marginalization of these areas prevented any social and economic actor but the FARC to be present. In such areas, there was little or no meaningful alternative to being a peasant: the only employment would be to work on the family land or as a day laborer. Thus, it derives that the concept of employment and occupation is itself distorted. Young people growing up in FARC areas could not aspire or even imagine a different life path outside the landless peasant one. "One does not know anything!" and "I had nothing!" shouted both Fernan and Muriel (Ferro and Uribe, 2002).

As a consequence, arguing that the FARC provided an employment opportunity to minors and young adults in areas under guerrilla control is a stretch. There were no employment opportunities, period. And the FARC were not offering a job. The ex-combatants to whom I spoke perceived that the FARC were offering them an alternative (and risky) life path, outside the misery of peasants' every day life. Life in the group would be hard, dangerous and physically painful. But, it would be a life of dignity, of camaraderie and of noble values; a life dedicated to a higher cause.

Indeed, these factors have different weight according to the individual and the context in which he/she grew up. Thus, which was the primary factor in the decision to join? The refusal of the intolerable every day's life or the attraction coming from the ideological and

socialization processes? Regardless, it was not a matter of employment, but rather of life path; and – as many argued – it was a matter of survival.

Notwithstanding, the employment and labor market lens becomes useful in the analysis of those ex-FARC combatants who got involved with the FARC in a gradual manner: starting with small jobs and tasks that progressively transitioned into full membership. Here, there is a tighter conceptual and practical relationship between employment seeking and FARC membership. According to the experience of several interviewees, the FARC sought the active collaboration of peasants (seemingly, young people) to its logistics, transportation, and food supplies. As I have showed earlier, several ex-FARC combatants – mostly, but not exclusively, young teens – were approached by the FARC when guerrilla members would visit farms and hold public meetings with the peasantry. After gaining their trust and using them for logistics purposes, the FARC would induce (or force) young recruits to join.

Jaime – a FARC ex-combatant who spent twelve years in the group – spoke of the tight social relationship between the FARC and the peasantry, which is at the base of the organization's recruitment. "In these areas the guerrilla is very widespread and rooted. Everyone always speaks to everyone. It is a lie when someone from rural areas says that he does not talk to any armed group." Having lost both his parents at young age, by the time Jaime was 14 years old, he moved frequently according to job opportunities – mainly in rural areas. He defined himself as a "day laborer" with no ideological or political awareness before joining the FARC. Jaime joined the organization with the same spirit with which he started several other jobs – he labeled it as just "another adventure."[94]

I argue that stories like Jaime's one are illustrative of the employment framework of this research. Given the heterogeneity of experiences (rural and urban, paramilitary and guerrilla) and the often marginal and poor social and economic context in which ex-combatants lived, I hold a wide definition of employment. This is not only limited to searching, finding and holding a formal or informal job. As I argued previously, employment in a conflict-affected rural area means working on the family's farm – with no alternatives. No other options would be available. There is therefore a more blurred boundary between employment and life. Joining the FARC is a life choice as much as an employment-seeking behaviour.

For the paramilitaries, applying an employment and labor market lens to their recruitment and armed group's membership is more straightforward. In fact, I argue that employment-seeking motivations and behaviours in the decision to join an armed group apply chiefly to

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[94] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

paramilitary groups, rather than the guerrilla. For example, Wendy, 33 years old from oil-rich Puerto Gaitan, was a radio operator for the ACMV for over six years. At the age of 19 "I would only get jobs in bars. […] I got tired of it, because I did not like that kind of work. Therefore, I was easy to get convinced, and I joined a paramilitary group."[95]

As I have argued in the introductory section, several ex-paramilitaries joined the armed group out of economic necessity and unemployment. Mauricio, for example, whose mother was killed by the FARC admits that, after being displaced, the need to economically support his family was the main driver for his mobilization. "They offered me a job as a driver and I needed to work. At that moment, I did not have a family of my own, did not have kids nor a wife, but I needed to help my two sisters who were already single mothers. This was an additional pressure I had while I was looking for work."[96] There are several other ex-paramilitaries who joined the AUC because they needed to work. Whether or not it was the primary driver of mobilization, still it is the most common factor that all ex-paramilitaries mentioned while speaking about their recruitment.

TABLE 6.2: INCIDENCE OF RECRUITMENT FACTORS

FACTORS OF RECRUITMENT	FARC	AUC
Trauma and revenge	No effect	Low
Territorial control by armed group	High	Medium
Power of ideology	Medium	No effect
Socialization dynamics and family network	Medium	Medium-High
Employment and livelihoods opportunity	Medium	High

An additional consideration relates to the heterogeneity of jobs within the paramilitaries, which indicates heterogeneity of recruitment experiences as well. Whereas in the FARC every combatant started his/her career from a low ranking soldier and received the same training, in the paramilitary experiences were diverse. Since the AUC was an umbrella of different paramilitary organizations, there was a relative flexibility among paramilitary factions in organizing their internal structure, including recruitment. Thus, as many interviews highlighted, different circumstances of mobilization led to different work experiences within the armed group. We just saw that Mauricio was recruited to be a driver – nothing else. The next chapter deals in more detail with the different jobs within the paramilitary. Here, it is important to underline that the interviews show how ex-

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[95] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.
[96] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

paramilitaries went through more diverse experiences in terms of recruitment than ex-FARC members did.

6.3   Organizational Level: Armed Group's Practices

STRATEGIES, INCENTIVES AND PATTERNS OF RECRUITMENT

This section deals with the organizational level of recruitment. After having explored the individual dynamics of mobilization and the structural drivers of recruitment, I complement this chapter on recruitment with some considerations on the non-state armed groups' behaviours, tactics and patterns in attracting and enlisting new recruits. This section includes insights on how non-state armed groups pursue recruitment of new members.

Ex-combatants' permanence in arms vary considerably.[97] As far as FARC members are concerned, there were ex-combatants recruited in the early 1980s, who stayed in the group for several decades. Others were recruited as late as 2013 and only stayed in the FARC for a few months. Consequently, recruitment patterns for this group changed over time: it is not conceivable that someone recruited in 1983 went through a similar pattern than someone enlisted in 2010, for example.

The ex-paramilitaries that I interviewed, instead, were more or less recruited at the same time, and had more or less an equal overall time spent in the group (between one and six years total). The main reason is that the AUC only officially formed in 1997, despite paramilitary groups had operated in Colombia for long time. Also, the AUC demobilized collectively, altogether. In the Eastern Llanos, paramilitary groups mostly demobilized in 2005-2006. Since the AUC was the entity negotiating the demobilization, ex-combatants refer as their time in arms only to those years when they were affiliated to the AUC, and not earlier. By the same token, my research only addresses modern paramilitarism, i.e. the AUC.

With one exception, no ex-combatant admitted of having worked for the paramilitaries before the institutionalization of the AUC. This factor, of course, may suggest that ex-combatants were reluctant to reveal a path of crime and illegality spanning earlier than the AUC. In fact, as DDR beneficiaries through the governmental ACR, they are only accountable for their AUC past.

Paramilitary groups are more volatile and less structured than the guerrillas. I argue that this also plays a role in the paramilitaries' heterogeneous recruitment tactics and internal behaviours. I have already mentioned in the last section how recruitment practices were more diverse and less structured in the paramilitary than in the FARC. As far as paramilitary

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[97] See Annexes 1 and 2 on demographic profile of ex-combatants.

recruitment behaviours are concerned, the following common features can be inferred from the interviews.

First, entering a paramilitary faction is described by ex-paramilitaries as an employment opportunity, or being offered a job. When they enrolled, ex-paramilitaries were indeed conscious of starting a path in illegality, but their main concern was obtaining livelihoods, and their intention was, thus, to secure an employment. The language that ex-paramilitaries constantly used during the interviews ('I was looking for a job', or 'I needed a job') confirms the primary importance of this aspect over other recruitment drivers. Incidentally, it is this language during the interviews that made me orient the research to an analysis of war mobilization and demobilization focused on employment and livelihoods.

The employment opportunity aspect has been discussed above, from the perspective of labor demand, i.e. the individual ex-combatants' employment-seeking attitude and behaviour. In this section, it is worth considering the supply side of labor, i.e. the employment opportunity offered by armed actors (Andvig and Gates, 2010; Specht, 2014; Cramer, 2010). Paramilitary groups have acted as employers, when needing to expand their workforce. Their recruitment was done through word of mouth, or through personal reference from friends, acquaintances or family members.

There is also a tight relationship between control and dominance over an area and the ability to effectively do recruitment. The more unchallenged a paramilitary faction was on its own territory, the more openly it was able to attract recruits. This point is confirmed by the fact that most of the ex-paramilitaries that I interviewed come from the AUC strongholds of Villavicencio, Granada, San Martin and Puerto Gaitan.

Second, several ex-paramilitaries refer to the broken promises by armed groups, saying that they felt cheated and played around by recruiters. New recruits were offered highly attractive salaries compared to the legal labor market, only to discover later that such figures were unrealistic. Wendy, an ex-paramilitary recruited at 19 years old, was allured in the group by the promise of a high salary. "They told me that they would pay me 1 million pesos and that everything would be fine. But when we arrived there, they only gave us 150,000 pesos." [98] Alejandro, another ex-paramilitary from Granada, Meta, shared a similar experience: "They told me that they would pay me 2.2 million pesos, and later they actually only paid me between 120,000 and 160,000 pesos, and without any right to leave. [...] I trusted them, and it was very naïve of me."[99]

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[98] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.
[99] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

The dynamic was the following. A recruiter would offer an attractive figure, and when the recruit would go and claim his salary, the local commander would give him/her a different amount, saying that now he was in charge and not the recruiter. Wendy explains: "They never paid us what they promised. Never. Because here [in Puerto Gaitan] they promised us something, but when we arrived there [remote areas in Guanape, Vichada] those in charge were others." The actual salary of a low ranking paramilitary member did not differ much from a local salary in a formal or informal job. "The salary [they gave us] was what we would earn here working all day [in a normal job]; 1 million would have been much more money", concludes Wendy.[100] It is clear then that this monetary incentive induced several people to join the paramilitary.

Third, in terms of profiles, the paramilitary would tend to hire people who had already work experience. Compared to the FARC, which pursued the recruitment of youths, the ex-paramilitaries that I spoke to were all adults when they were enlisted. In fact, there was no minor and the prevailing age cohort is 24-26 years old at the time of recruitment. In particular, the paramilitary preferred to hire individuals with a past in the military. This represented a guarantee that the recruit had already training in arms and self defence, had experience with discipline and hierarchy, and was resentful toward the guerrilla. As it was mentioned, four out 13 interviewed ex-paramilitaries spent time in the military prior to joining the AUC.

One more element that did not directly appear in the interviews, but is present in the literature, concerns personal trust. Duncan (2011) posits that the most important feature to be recruited by a paramilitary or criminal armed group was "loyalty, trust and certainty that [the individual] would not turn out to be an informer." Complete trust was a pre-requisite rather than previous knowledge and experience on the job (Duncan, 2011: 173). This finding is in line with many interviewees who admitted that a friend or someone of confidence introduced him/her to the armed group. As it was mentioned, then, a personal recommendation to be recruited was key.

Compared to the paramilitaries, there is no attempt whatsoever from the FARC to equate armed mobilization with employment. FARC's recruitment strategy consisted in being committed to and aligned with peasantry's interests. The peasantry has been central to the FARC with respect to its cause, strategy and institutionalization. First of all, the peasantry and its welfare is the original cause of why the Marxist-Leninist FARC rose in rebellion. Second, it is undeniable that in order to be able to survive (and, at times, to prosper) throughout the decades, the FARC has adopted a strategy of serving and working with the

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[100] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

peasantry, rather than exploiting or abusing it. Following Mao's formulation of the fish needing water to survive, the FARC relied on the peasantry as their political constituent and main supporter to strive (Mao Tse-tung, 1961: 92-93). As it was seen above, the FARC's good attitude toward the peasantry is confirmed by most ex-combatants' interviewees. Third, building political awareness within the peasantry and serving its interest are at the base of the FARC's recruiting strategy as well. Thus, the "Ejercito del Pueblo" is made of ideologically-committed members from the peasantry itself (Pecaut, 2008: 76-81).

As it was discussed in the first section, FARC's benevolent attitude toward the peasantry represents a common thread among all ex-FARC members that were raised in an area of exclusive FARC control. There is a positive value judgment with respect to the way the FARC acted and behaved toward local populations. A strategy of recruitment by the FARC was one of presenting themselves as a legitimate organization, one that was present in the wake of state's absence, and one committed to goals of solidarity and survival. The political indoctrination performed by the FARC through local communities paid off in terms of winning hearts and minds, as well as in recruiting committed members.

All interviewed ex-combatants admitted to appreciate FARC's cooperative and sympathetic behaviour toward local civilians and peasants – to the extent that this played an important role in several ex-combatants' decision to enlist. Jaime explains how the FARC "sends several people to talk [to peasants], to sensitize them about the struggle, to organize, to orient and to help. To help in what sense? They would call on peasants during public meetings to receive improvements of walking paths, bridges and streets; or they would set up community collective farms. [...] Thus, people take note and appreciate. They know that the FARC are cooperating. Ultimately, this is the strength of this organization, this is its major strength."[101]

Nonetheless, as much as the FARC entertain a close relationship with the peasantry, there is also an element of trust (and mistrust), with which the FARC has to cope. Undoubtedly, a rebel movement fighting the state for five decades without being defeated, adopted a series of strict internal rules in order to survive and to make the organization impermeable from external infiltration. Several ex-combatants underlined this aspect of profound mistrust that the organization has for everything and everyone. With respect to recruitment, the golden rule was to deploy a new recruit in an area far away from his/her area of origin or from where he/she was originally recruited. Giovanni says that the FARC "always send the new recruit to another place: because if someone enters [the organization] here, they do not let him here, they send him to another region. The one who enters somewhere else is sent here,

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[101] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

instead. This is how it works."[102]

FORCED OR VOLUNTARY RECRUITMENT?

One additional dimension that was raised by many ex-FARC interviewees is the alleged 'forced' character of recruitment, which involved mostly minors, but not only them. I will come back to this dimension in Chapter 8 when I analyse the drivers and the individual reasons for demobilization: arguably, the forced and perpetual nature of FARC's membership played a role in the individual decision to flee and demobilize. However, it is relevant to introduce the topic here because it has often been claimed that non-state armed groups practice forced recruitment (Gutierrez Sanin, 2004).

According to my interviews, there are only few ex-FARC members (3) who have been forcefully recruited, without consent nor any prior involvement with the organization. It is the case of Carlos, who was enlisted in the FARC in 2001, when allegedly the organization was forcing each household to contribute two members to the war effort. Ivan state that he felt deceived: he was told that he had to stay in the FARC forever only when he arrived at the FARC camp.

More common was the situation of being forcefully integrated only after having been somewhat involved with the FARC. A good number of ex-FARC members admitted of being forcefully recruited against their will due to their progressive involvement with the organization. After having performed tasks for and/or contributed to the FARC in some capacity, these individuals were forced into the organization. The FARC claimed that collaborators were now too exposed and could have been a liability to the FARC in case of capture. This is the case of Fernan, who – as I quoted him above – after working with the FARC for sometime, was suddenly told: "Now, you belong to us". He tried to resist, saying that he had been trustfully selling farming products for two years to the FARC. "They told me that I already knew too much about them. [...] And because of that, they added, "we do not want you to have a civilian life, but we want you to integrate"."[103] Roberto tells me a similar story. He started going to the FARC camps for small tasks, but after a while "they enlisted me. And when I wanted to leave they did not let me. Because I already knew a lot, I knew some commanders."[104]

Nonetheless, as other quotes above demonstrated, there are other stories of ex-FARC who say that the decision to join was a personal and voluntary one. The tight relationship FARC-peasantry and the mutual cooperation between them often acted as a recruitment

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[102] Interview held in November 2012, Villavicencio.
[103] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.
[104] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

mechanism. There was also a continuous indoctrination and building of political sensitization among the peasantry. Both these factors played a role in encouraging young potential recruits to join the FARC, to the point that enlisting became a quite a natural path for many of them.

Thus, there is a tension between forced and voluntary recruitment. It is debatable, for example, to what extent recruitment is voluntary – under any circumstances – when the recruit is a minor. International law is clear in this regard. Human rights law prohibits enlisting minors in armed groups under any circumstances, even if recruitment is voluntary. Recruiting and using children below 15 years old is a war crime under international humanitarian law.

FARC rules prohibit to forcefully recruit anyone against his/her will, but there is evidence that forced recruitment took place. Nonetheless, the different answers that I collected on this matter (i.e. some interviewees were forcefully recruited, while some others were not) suggests that there was not a common practice on forced recruitment. Giovanni – who admits being among those who were voluntarily recruited – summarizes this conundrum as follows. "[Someone] who grows up in the mountains does not see the army, does not see anything. He sees the guerrilla, he grows up there; the only things that one can see are weapons and one establishes a relationship with guerrilla members. They tell you that the army is bad. Therefore, a kid grows up with this [mindset]. As the army publishes its propaganda, the FARC has its own way of recruiting which is considered 'forced'. However, if we look at it deeply [we realize] that it is not forced. The recruitment that here [the state] calls 'forced', there [for the FARC] is about cultivating the potential recruit. They take people who are very young, they sweeten them, they offer them a perspective, up to the point in which the young man or woman goes in arms on his/her own will." Then, he concludes: "it turns into forced [recruitment] out there [in the camp]. Here no! When you leave, you are never forced to go."[105]

Giovanni's explanations reinforces the point about the strong ties between the FARC and the peasantry: acting as a state within the state, the FARC is able to socially and politically penetrate the peasantry, including extracting recruits voluntarily. As it was repeatedly mentioned throughout this chapter, for ex-FARC members the employment lens of recruitment applies only partially. Young recruits were not necessarily looking for an employment opportunity before joining the FARC – although some were looking for ways to survive, as Cristina testified. Rather, they were included in a social context in which the FARC was one of the few options available. Notwithstanding, although I cannot argue that FARC

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[105] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

recruits were fully driven by an employment-seeking behaviour, still, the labor market of war argument applies to the FARC case.

For ex-paramilitaries, a different dynamic was at play. There was no forced recruitment per se, although some ex-paramilitaries report that once in, they were impeded to leave the group. This is the case of Wendy, who was hired as a radio operator for six years in a remote location in Vichada. Even though she wanted to leave the group, she was not allowed to do so.

Indeed, the FARC applied strict rules and discipline not only to their internal organization, but also to their practice of recruitment. To avoid infiltration from the military or state intelligence services, the FARC had to use caution when recruiting, especially when the potential recruit had an unusual background or profile.

This is the case of Laia, for example, who wanted to join the FARC after being a university drop out. Laia fled to the jungle and after some efforts she was introduced to a FARC mid-level commander. "I told him that I studied engineering, and that while I did not complete my study, I still had a background in engineering. "I came here because I could not keep studying and I want to be with the FARC", I told him. To which he answered: "Well, you are not a very common new comer; I cannot let you in like that, I have to consult with my superiors." Thus, he took me to a small village, put me in a hostel and told me that he had to talk with people above him. He went and spoke to Mono Jojoy, who was in the vicinity at the time. For sure, Mono Jojoy ran an investigation over my life, after which he ordered that I would be taken directly to him for an interview. In the end, he was the one who let me in, or better say, the one who recruited me."[106]

More common profiles of recruits are young teens, who are more easily malleable and controllable. The overwhelming majority of ex-guerrilla members that I interviewed were recruited as minors. Thirteen ex-FARC and one ex-ELN out of a total of 18 ex-guerrilla were recruited before turning 18 years old. As we saw from the interviews, there were ex-FARC that for different circumstances (e.g. domestic violence, extreme poverty) were integrated even before they turned 10 years old. Others were recruited as teenagers, in their 15 to 17 years old. Arguably, the FARC would target young teens in order to be able to educate them to the teaching of revolution, motivate them and train them. There is ample literature on children recruitment (Gates and Reich, 2010; Andvig and Gates, 2010; Blattman, 2012; Specht, 2003, 2014; Barnitz, 1997).

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[106] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

CHANGES IN RECRUITMENT PATTERNS

In this section, it is also important to report how the decline of the ideological aspect for the FARC in the last one to two decades had a profound impact on the organization's recruitment tactics and practices. Most interviewees attribute this shift to the FARC's involvement in drugs trafficking. The opportunity to notably expand its revenues and, in turn, its power base through the production and commercialization of cocaine had the perverse effects (i) to break the internal cohesion within the group, both ideological and practical, and (ii) to fracture the ties with the peasantry. On the one hand, attracted by easy and quick profits, mid-level commanders managed to acquire more independence in their operations, favoring the rise of greed practices. On the other hand, drugs trafficking weakened the ideological commitment by the FARC, especially in their relationship with the peasantry. I will show in Chapter 8 how this factor caused several senior FARC members that I interviewed to demobilize.

Here, it is important to remark how drugs trafficking altered the relationship of trust and collaboration between the FARC and its main constituent, the peasantry, and, in turn, the impact on recruitment. Fernan captures the loosening of the cohesion between the FARC and the peasantry, and within the peasantry itself. "There was a time in which the mafia rose, the power of mafia. Thus, [the FARC] changed. We no longer dedicated our time to the people, but to money, to buy weapons, vehicles and to strengthen the group. Therefore, the people and the peasantry, which is the reason why we fought, opened. And the FARC are no longer cooperating with them. [...] [Other heinous practices] started, like the law of monetary reward for peasants, or [the practice of] spying on others. Thus, the FARC no longer hold the honesty that they used to have. Now they live like animals. And all of this is because their interest switched to money."[107] Roberto confirms the same consideration: "They [the FARC] changed their ideology from being a committed guerrilla and from being close to and cooperating with the peasantry, once they started trading with drugs traffickers. This was in 2000. Or not; it has been since 1997-98 that they started buying, themselves conducting drugs trafficking."[108]

Put in simple terms, the shift that took place is the following. Generally, all non-state fighting forces have to adopt strategies to collect resources to sustain their war effort, with no exclusions. The FARC, in order to survive and prosper as a fighting force throughout several decades, relied on the peasantry – as its political and ideological base, and its source of recruitment. Only through the support of the peasantry were the FARC able to strengthen,

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[107] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.
[108] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

via expanding their power base, territorial control, and active fighting force. Thus, in line with Communist revolutionary propositions, the FARC were using most of their political capital toward gaining peasantry's hearts and minds.

The entry of drugs' illegal economy and the potential enormous monetary gaining gave the FARC the option to strengthen and increase its power through other means. It would be too simplistic, I argue, to place all the blame on drugs trafficking without conducting a conflict analysis that included other factors. Nonetheless, in terms of timing, the moment the FARC entered the drugs economy coincided with the beginning of its political, moral and ideological decline. This shift took place between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s.

In turn, the weakening of the link between the FARC and the peasantry had a negative impact on recruiting, which draws mainly from the peasantry. With weakening ideology it is harder for the FARC to attract committed recruits. Most of all, since the peasantry provides the core of FARC's fresh recruits, the weakening of the relationship between the two, negatively affects the quality, and, arguably, the quantity of new members. Therefore, less committed members are recruited, and, perhaps, practices of forced recruitment may have been on the rise due to this reason too.

With respect to my interviews, there is a notable difference between the older members and those who were recruited in the 2000s. Mostly, I perceived the more recent recruits being less ideologically driven, and with a lower commitment toward the peasantry and the struggle. They also do not describe in detail the ideological indoctrination through which all FARC members are subject to. Juan, 22 years old from Granada, Meta, is such an example. He grew up without his parents in a marginalized context; was recruited by the FARC when he was 12, and stayed in the group until he turned 17 years old. What struck me most from his story is the lack of empathy toward the FARC: he was neither resentful toward them nor he seemed to share the ideology or the cause. The same applies to Walter, who joined the FARC in his teens to follow a girl he was in love with. On both cases, the revolutionary aspect was definitely missing.

CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of non-state armed groups' recruitment from the point of view of employment (Table 6.3). It addressed the complex and multifaceted issue of recruitment from three different levels. The expectation was to apply multi-causality to the reasons why men and women join non-state armed groups. Through the personal stories of recruitment of 31 ex-combatants, the chapter highlighted the individual reasons of

joining an armed group, the political and economic drivers of recruitment, and the strategies and behaviours by armed groups themselves to attract men and women in arms.

TABLE 6.3: RECRUITMENT AT A GLANCE: CONTEXTUAL FACTORS, DYNAMICS AND INCENTIVES

	FARC	AUC
Areas in Meta under armed group's control	- Marginalized rural areas of Duda-Guayabero, and Ariari	- Stronghold towns of Villavicencio, San Martin, Granada, Puerto Gaitan
Power of non-state armed group	- Military and social control over marginalized areas - Recruitment taking place in context of lawlessness and lack of opportunities	- Social influence in towns with strong AUC presence driving recruitment trends upwards
Dynamics of recruitment	- Strong ties with the peasantry - 'Winning hearts and minds': FARC's active role in supporting peasants as a driver of recruitment - Progressive individual involvement with FARC: from small tasks to mobilization - Most XCs recruited while teens - Voluntary recruitment; forced membership	- Difficult economic situation and unemployment are main drivers - Attractive job opportunity is a crucial incentive - Personal introduction by friends or acquaintances - Role model of paramilitaries: powerful and well-off - Several recruits previously in the Army - No possibility to quit
Recruitment strategies by armed groups	- Develop strong ties with peasantry through (a) political mobilization, (b) practical support (livelihoods, infrastructure, access to goods and services) - Target young recruits (both male and female) to build ideologically-committed members	- Recruitment pursued informally through network of family members, friends and acquaintances - Promise of higher salary than actual one - Target men with work experience – preferably in security sector - 24-26 years old is most common age group

While accounting for several of these drivers of mobilization, I have placed special focus on employment seeking and opportunity as one of the lead causes of recruitment. Jairo, an ex mid-level commander with the AUC, summarized the reasons for his recruitment. "The three most important issues for me were: revenge and anger, unemployment, and hunger. The mix of these three factors made me join. […] It was a mix of the fact that when I lived in Villavicencio I did not find work opportunities, and I suffered hunger and had unmet needs. Thus, I had to enlist. But I [also] had the raw material: I had hatred and resentment toward the guerrilla."[109]

As a concluding consideration on recruitment – which introduces us to the next chapter on employment in the armed group – I would like to point to the feelings and emotions of ex-

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[109] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

combatants once they were recruited and started *working* in the armed group. Several ex-combatants – both guerrilla and paramilitaries – would go through feelings of disillusionment once they permanently joined the group. As the hard daily life of a combatant kicks in, the passionate ideals and the myth of armed group's membership partially wane. As Horgan (2009) puts it, "a common realization for new recruits is the crushing discrepancy between the fantasies that influenced their initial mobilization and involvement, with the subsequent reality of engagement." The romantic dream view of armed group's membership and engagement is taken away.

TABLE 6.4: KEY FINDINGS ON RECRUITMENT AND MOBILIZATION

- *There is a relationship between recruitment by non-state armed groups and employment (supply and demand). There are individual, organizational, and structural ramifications of this relationship.*
- *Recruitment and mobilization are the product of a mix of individual-, organizational-, and structural-level reasons.*
- *Individual: The employment opportunity provided by a non-state armed group plays a critical (and understated) role in the individual decision of joining a non-state armed group.*
- *Organizational: Non-state armed groups pursue recruitment strategies to attract men and women within the group.*
- *Structural: Territorial control and power by a non-state armed group is necessary to pursue recruitment.*
- *Structural: In a conflict-affected area, the political economy of war determines the informality and illegality of the labor market. Employment in armed groups is often an attractive and natural option.*

For example, Ibarbo admits of having been allured by paramilitaries' display of power and money when he arrived to Villavicencio and was still not in the group. "This life is dazzling for many. You see everyone going around in trucks, with money. Thus, one believes that everything in life shines and is about money. But what you see is different from reality."[110] Some ex-FARC also underline the boredom of and disillusionment with daily life routine.

Thus, if the magic wanes and daily life in the group is rather ordinary – albeit hard and dangerous – then the armed group's experience can be conceptualized as an employment experience. The routine and tediousness of daily life in the group is a feature that is shared by the day-to-day life of any job. The next chapter is dedicated to the analysis of employment in a non-state armed group. Its findings will be helpful in drawing more links between armed mobilization and employment.

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[110] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

7. Employment in Conflict: A 'Job' in a Non-State Armed Group

This chapter analyses armed group's membership from the point of view of employment. After observing ex-combatants' experiences of mobilization and analysing the drivers of recruitment in the pre-conflict phase, this chapter delves into the second phase of '*during* conflict' – as part of the three-phase analysis of war to peace transition. Through individual stories of mobilization, the previous chapter provided the necessary insights to understand the causes and the contextual factors for why individuals join non-state armed groups. In particular, it showed how central employment seeking is to recruitment and mobilization. This knowledge ('why and how people mobilize') is now leveraged to analyse the dynamics of armed group's membership through the lens of employment. The present chapter seeks to answer the following questions: What do combatants do while in arms? And, how do non-state armed groups organize their human resources? Ultimately, the focus is on explaining the employment dynamics of ex-combatants inside the armed group.

The chapter is organized along two main lines: the individual level and the organizational one, which are in line with the multi-level analysis of this research. Nonetheless, elements related to the individual level and elements related to the organizational level sometimes conflate within the analysis, and cannot be too artificially separated. The first section on the individual level presents the stories of ex-paramilitaries and ex-guerrilla from the perspective of their day-to-day activities and duties, and the tasks that they had within the group. It describes the main *professional* roles in a non-state armed group, including: military and combat functions; the political and/or governance roles, meaning those functions related to political mobilization, control of territory and those roles that require contact with local population; lastly, there are a myriad of other roles in non-state armed groups related to logistics, supplies, nursing etc. As it was the case for the mobilization chapter, the empirical findings from the interviews represent the ground on which the analysis is built.

The second section, on the organizational level, uses the testimonies of ex-combatants to understand how non-state armed groups internally organize human resources. This includes how they deal with their employees, in terms of career development and advancement, training and capacity-building, the rules of conduct within the group (with a special emphasis of discipline and trust); as well as how armed groups deal with transfers and labor mobility, promotions or demotions. As it was explained elsewhere, the conceptual

framework of the organizational level that this research adopts, squarely fits into the rebel governance literature on the understanding of armed groups' internal functioning and organization, and external behaviours. The present research makes a modest contribution to this literature, by focusing on the human resources of non-state armed groups from the perspective and the testimonies of its rank and file members.

There is no attempt to comprehensively look at the internal organization of armed groups, since this would have required an in depth look at their internal structure – a proposition that goes beyond this research. The present study, instead, refers to the human resources of armed groups inasmuch it is reported by ex-combatants. The analysis of armed groups' recruiting patterns – which was done in the previous chapter – is complemented here by the analysis of how armed groups organize their labor force.

Some of the topics that are touched upon include: how *careers* unfold; what the patterns are for career development; how members climb up the career ladder and what skills are needed to succeed; how capacity building is structured and what trainings are available and/or required; and, finally, how armed groups make sure that their members abide by the rules and that the discipline code is enforced.

Like the previous chapter, all sections untangle the differences between ex-members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) and ex-members of the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC). As much as recruiting patterns were quite different between FARC and paramilitaries, there is also a substantial difference between FARC and AUC in terms of career structures and functions within the group. While the FARC build and are made of homogenous and polyvalent members who are able to perform multiple duties, the AUC mostly (but not exclusively) pursued labor specialization through diversified job profiles and functions. As it is explained, these different practices are the result of one being a highly centralized organization (FARC), and the other being an umbrella of units that were quite autonomous in their decision-making process (AUC).

An additional set of reasons for the differences between FARC and paramilitaries concern the level of integration of the non-state armed group within the socio-economic context. On the one hand, the FARC is a clandestine rurally-based armed organization fighting a rebellion against the central state. Its survival is dependent on its level of self-sufficiency. On top of its combat and security capacity, the FARC has to provide for itself in terms of all of its needs, including livelihoods and food, services (health and education) and all logistics. On the other hand, in areas where they were present, the AUC were more integrated within society – albeit discreetly. As a result, paramilitaries built a workforce that was more flexible and

diversified in terms of functions than the standardized 'combatant' profile that the FARC had (Gutierrez Sanin, 2008).

The great variety of roles, background and circumstances for mobilization – especially within the paramilitaries – gives an idea, first, of the complexity and multifaceted character of rebel organizations and armed actors. This study does not aim to account for that complexity, nor a typology of armed groups is part of the scope of this research. Nonetheless, through life stories of ex-combatants, the chapter on roles and tasks in non-state armed groups contributes to a more detailed and granular understanding of armed groups' organization and behaviours.

Second, by providing all these examples of roles and functions within each group, the research aims to challenge the flat and uniform notion of 'ex-combatant' among Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) scholars and practitioners. By highlighting personal stories of employment and armed group's membership, the research provides a rich picture of the different ways of being an ex-combatant.

Language of 'job'. "This was my job in the AUC"[111], Camilo says, referring to his role as social worker and liaison with the local population. The first aspect that highlights an interdependence and a tight relationship between employment and conflict is semantic. All the ex-paramilitaries who I interviewed describe their experience in arms with the language of 'employment': they all refer to it as a 'job', or as 'work'. This is hardly surprising given the circumstances under which many paramilitaries were recruited. As it was recollected in the previous chapter, the great majority of ex-paramilitaries were on the look for employment opportunities or were in a dire economic situation when enlisted. It is only natural that they refer to the phase of recruitment as an employment placement. Thus, even when referring back to their armed group's membership, they call it 'work' or 'job'. I asked Jon, for example, how the AUC allocated combatants to one functions or another, and why some went to combat and others did not. "It is very simple: it is like if you have four employees", Jon swiftly answered.[112] Then, he went on describing those four core jobs. Jon's immediate reply underscored the deep perception that combatants have of belonging to a professional context (Hoffman, 2011).

In addition, in more than one case the paramilitary organization is referred to as the 'firm' (*la empresa*) by ex-combatants. When I asked Alejandro to tell me about how the AUC worked, what its internal organization looked like, his first straight answer pointed to the similarities between armed groups and normal employers. "When there was Carlos Castaño

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[111] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[112] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

[the founder and leader of the paramilitary umbrella organization of the AUC], this firm (*empresa*) was shaped with the goal of being very organized: [there were] the articles of incorporation, the internal rules, and tailored functions."[113]

For FARC members, the identification between armed group's membership and employment is not so direct. FARC recruitment – I showed – was far more complex and encompassing than the process of simply finding work by most ex-paramilitaries. Nonetheless, as the drivers of individual recruitment in the FARC included aspects related to securing a life opportunity, also ex-FARC combatants experienced a connection between membership and employment *during* their permanence in the armed group. After all, a FARC combatant – among many other things – is a worker who – as any worker – has to comply with orders and perform tasks, and who may want a better position for himself within the organization. By the same token, ex-FARC members also often used the language of 'job.'

Giovanni explains how "I worked in the cattle industry, with cattle. From there, when I entered [the FARC], I entered by doing the same job because the FARC also have cattle!"[114] Another ex-FARC combatant, Laura, has some insights about employment and armed group's membership. Answering the question of which aspect of being part of an armed group attracted her, Laura replied that she has always liked weapons. Then, she elaborates: "I have always liked male jobs. I am no friend of women's jobs, like being in the kitchen, or in the house. No! I have always liked manual labor, even heavy lifting. Being in the house was not for me."[115] To Laura and to many other ex-combatants, being in the group meant – among other things – pursuing one's own vocation and/or feasible path in life. These answers offer a further glimpse into ex-combatants' perceptions about what meant being a member of an armed group. In fact, for ex-combatants, armed group's membership is, among other things, about what someone wants to do in life, what he/she can do, what job he/she wants to have and how he/she thinks he/she can survive and gain meaningful livelihoods.

Juan was recruited by the FARC in his early teens; and, while in combat, he surrendered to the military when he was 17 years old. In the interview, he did not display ideological commitment to the cause. When talking about leadership and direct superiors in the FARC, Juan drew an unsolicited comparison between employment and armed group's membership. Being in "the guerrilla [is] like working in a firm. When there is a change in management is like when there is a change in the commander [of the front]. [...] [In any employment], I like to work with X because he is a nice person, and he knows how to be in charge. He gives you stimulation in order to make you love your work, to make you do it well. [In the guerrilla] it

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[113] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[114] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[115] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

is like that. There are commanders who give you incentive. They give you a soda, for example: they tell you "look, take this". Small things like these give you strength and stimulation, and they keep your morale high. By the same token, there are commanders that get there and the only thing they say is, "hey, you are just coming back from a battle today; tomorrow you have to go back. The army arrived there and you have to go." Thus, they do not even give you a resting day, nor stimulation, nothing. This aspect very much demoralizes troops."[116]

These few quotes provide some preliminary insights on how ex-combatants perceive their roles, routines, functions and interpersonal relationships while in the armed group. I asked them questions about 'what they used to do' in the group, 'what tasks and functions', 'how they changed functions, if at all', 'what the dynamics and circumstances needed to be to change roles', and 'what and how internal rules within the group were perceived, if they were respected, and how contravening behaviours were sanctioned.'

I did not ask questions that directly hinted at work relationships and 'jobs'. I wanted these findings to come out without me providing the framework of analysis I was using. In fact, the draw of a link between employment and armed group's membership is the fruit of ex-combatants' answers and the analysis of such answers. There is no pre-fieldwork hypothesis that I tested on the relationship between conflict and employment. Thus, not only findings are fieldwork driven, but also the research design itself and the focus of this research has been highly affected and determined by the answers I received from the first batch of ex-combatants that I interviewed.

Answers from ex-combatants, many of whom directly explained and revealed the story of their period in arms through an employment and labor market lens, were crucial in drawing a link between an employment experience and membership to an armed group. As much as *sui generis* the latter can be and other factors be present, there is a fundamental understanding and perception by the combatant himself to be in an occupation, or a job. This chapter clearly shows how the employment-conflict nexus is displayed by ex-combatants' experiences and testimonies.

7.1   Individual Level: Roles and Jobs Within an Armed Group

COMBAT AND MILITARY ROLES

In describing ex-combatants' 'work' experiences while in arms, it is worth starting from the combat role (which all FARC members had to go through) and those other security-related

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[116] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio

roles (e.g. patrolling function, and personal security detail). First, a note about method. Generally, ex-combatants were not particularly open to share stories about violence. The reason for it is certainly personal, to a certain extent. Ex-combatants – like all humans – experience difficulty in remembering traumatic events and/or do not feel comfortable about sharing private memories of violence with a stranger.

But the reason may also have to do with their current role as DDR beneficiaries. As it was already pointed out before, I conducted most interviews within the DDR program premises – and all interviews were arranged through the program. At the time of the interview, most ex-combatants were still receiving benefits as reintegration beneficiaries. Therefore, given their status, they may have considered it a risk to share details about violent events, and any role that they may have taken up in them.

Currently, for ex-AUC members there are open transitional justice mechanisms, like historical memory, reparation to victims, and even investigations, all of which discourage ex-paramilitaries from being too open about violent events. In addition, it is to be reminded the stigma that society places on ex-combatants, not only in Colombia, but in most post-war settings. As part of their individual and psychological reintegration process, ex-combatants do not feel at ease in telling stories of violence. Two of the local social workers who interact directly with ex-combatants told me that no ex-combatant has ever spoken to them either about violence that was perpetrated or about events in battle. Given these considerations, I did not ask direct questions about violent events, which could have endangered the interview. As stated before, my questions were about roles and functions, and not specific occurrences.

In terms of the paramilitaries, ex-AUC who were recruited either without a particular skillset or with a background in the regular army, were generally directed to and employed in a security-related capacity from the beginning. Of the 13 ex-paramilitaries that I interviewed, six of them revealed of having been at some point involved either in combat or in an armed security function while in the AUC. With an 8-year military background on his resume, Alejandro joined the *Autodefensas Campesinas de Casanare* – which never integrated into the AUC – while looking for a job. "When I entered the group, I was in a military capacity. [...] When I arrived there, there was fighting and all of it", he reveals.[117] "I started as a normal patrol" in the AUC, echoes Jairo, who fled Mitu after the FARC takeover.[118]

In search for work, Ibarbo ended up in the AUC Heroes del Llano in Villavicencio, where he started working as a security detail for the city's local paramilitary commander. "He was the

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[117] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[118] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

one who enlisted me; so, I ended up working in his bodyguard team", Ibarbo says.[119] Radamael, who only stayed in the group for less than one year, says that "it was like I got there [in the AUC] and I had to do the basics: stand guard, and do the work that is required to a foot soldier, nothing else."[120]

Alejandro describes in detail the war between rival paramilitary factions in Meta, Guaviare and Casanare, which he witnessed as a medical worker. He specifies that as a medical worker he was very close to the line of fire for a long time. The interesting point he makes is about the 'how' a battle is fought from the perspective of a combatant. The war spanned over "two years. [We spent] two years fighting. And one [paramilitary combatant] would last for a maximum of 15 days. Then, he would be on leave. But the daily course of the fight is of five hours. Then, one stops and rests, and afterwards goes back to fight. And the day after, one goes again to battle. The fight [takes place] in small bits."[121] The description of how a battle unfolds day by day, told by the individuals who actually carry out that battle, underlines the very 'employment' side of war. Alejandro speaks about those aspects related to ex-combatants' shifts, the daily schedule of battle, as well as the combatants' perception about needing breaks and time away from battle. When talking about routines and functions, there is no room for ideology nor for the causes of conflict: the important point seems to be the practical part (i.e. surviving, most of all), or the employment experience – what we do, how, when and for how long.

FARC ex-combatants who admitted of having been in combat are more common. In fact, in principle, all ex-FARC members directly experienced war – which is not the case for the paramilitaries. First, the FARC is a proper army where all members go through the same military training. All recruits, with no exception, have to spend time as foot soldiers. "Everyone must participate in combat at some point, because you get trained for it", says Jaime.[122] Second, by providing a standard political training and by pursuing continuous political mobilization, the FARC enjoys a high degree of internal legitimacy and cohesion within its own ranks. As it was seen in the previous chapter, FARC members are generally highly motivated and uniformly driven by the common cause of fighting against injustice, poverty, and the state.

Therefore, the thought that the violence that the FARC employs is a necessary means to achieve higher goals, resonates with most ex-FARC combatants. Generally, they are not ashamed of it. They may regret what they did; but they still show some pride for their

[119] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[120] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[121] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[122] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

actions. Violence is sanctioned and legitimized by the political cause, and this mantra is shared by the whole organization. As a consequence, ex-FARC members are more open than the paramilitary to reveal their experiences in battle – essentially because they see combat and war as a noble endeavor.

"I grew up being in combat zones. I participated in several military campaigns", says Enrique, who was recruited when he was 9 years old.[123] The role of a foot soldier is a comprehensive one. This does not only include functions related to security or combat, but – as in any regular army – it concerns also all the organizational and logistics activities to make the army work and stay cohesive. Laura explains as follows: "What every guerrilla member [does is to] stand guard, work, find and allocate wood, prepare food. [...] One stays in the camp, does training, both military and political education. This is all that one does. Then, one needs to cooperate with the local population, like fixing a path or a road."[124]

Carlos spent three years in a FARC camp as a foot soldier. "The only thing they give you is training courses and more training courses. And thus, one gets trained to live by the internal regime, in terms of rules and statutes. One has to spend the night alert, load and transport wood; in short, one has to do everything."[125] Cristiano, who spent eleven years as a foot soldier between the FARC 7th Front and the mobile Rondon Column, also stresses the aspect of adapting to rules and life in the camp: "I arrived there [in the camp] and the first few months were very tough; the first six months. After that, one keeps the pace. They work your mind, the ideology hits you and all that."[126]

In fact, the ideology and the political aspect are the second fundamental pillar for FARC combatants – next to the military one. They go together and are inextricably linked. FARC recruits are meticulously trained in both the military and the political arts. A FARC member is first of all an individual who believes in the legitimacy of the political and armed struggle for a more just society in Colombia. Through a simple example, Jaime explains the dynamics of a FARC operation to clear a territory from military presence, and then, the task to hold and rule it. "They order you: "Get ready to go with three other combatants to village X; the army is there and you need to go and shoot at them." Fine, you go and you do it. Then, you go with four more to the same village to organize it. You go and explain the situation, the politics. "Go there and talk to them, gather them and explain them – without any threat." When you are

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[123] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[124] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[125] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[126] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

not in combat, you are studying, studying history, such as how this movement arose and the reasons behind it."[127]

Despite appearing to be an overly simplistic example, the underlining point here concerns the understanding of the compenetration and interdependence between armed struggle and political one. Without the military part, the political mobilization is unfeasible; and without the political aspect, the military confrontation loses its legitimacy and its end goal.

Security guard and personal detail. More than one ex-FARC talked about being in the security team for a mid-level commander or even a top-level one. These were *ad hoc* roles. Laia – who joined the FARC after fleeing her civil life as a university student in Bogota – started her career in the security team of Mono JoJoy, number two of the FARC at the time he was killed by a targeted operation in September 2010. For some months, Laia was one of Mono JoJoy's security detail "during the *despeje*[128] and [Mono JoJoy] almost did not move from the camp at all. [...] We were part of his immediate security, meaning, those who slept at his doorstep. We were one *guerrilla*[129], between 25 and 28. And then, in the vicinity, in the same camp, there would always be around 200 more combatants. He would sleep in the middle of three rings [of security]. But, next to him we were about 25."[130] Ivan, who for several years was in the immediate security team of Mono JoJoy as well, further explains how the ring system worked. "There was an imaginary circle. They would set a restricted area within which no one could enter without permission."[131] He explains how when other chiefs needed to enter the circle either to meet with the leader who was being protected, or to just pass, they needed to be escorted by the same security details at all times. It was an elaborate system to maximize the Secretariat members' protection.

An interesting aspect is how the role of security detail was, in fact, a highly privileged one. Such units would not go to combat and risk their life, and did not endure the constant physical and mental hardships that normal troops would go through. Ivan says: "In reality the time that I spent in the FARC I did not suffer too much because for most of the time I was in the security team to protect superiors. [...] I mean, one always suffers, but not as much as going to war, being up all night, and experience hunger. We would not eat special food, no. But, at least, one has three meals guaranteed per day. Whereas someone who goes with the

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[127] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[128] *Despeje* is commonly known as the 1999-2002 ceasefire agreement of San Vicente del Caguan between the government of President Pastrana and the FARC. As part of the negotiation and as a gesture of goodwill, the government agreed to let the FARC control an area of 42,000 square kilometers between Meta and Caquetá. Eventually, negotiations broke down and the FARC was essentially left with a large territory under its control.
[129] In the FARC internal organization, a 'guerrilla' is a military unit composed of 24 combatants – see next section and Figure 7.1.
[130] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[131] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

troops experiences days without eating anything. If someone looks for food, bombs may start falling."[132]

As a security detail for Mono Jojoy, other than standing guard, Ivan's tasks included, at times, cooking special meals for the high commands. He says this was a "delicate" business "because one would serve them food, but the moment one of them would not feel well, then the cook and the immediate staff would go under investigation." Leadership would eat the same food as troops, but prepared in a highly sanitary and hygienic environment, "with a lot of care. One could not let anyone walk through the kitchen."[133] Other than tasked with food preparation, Ivan also managed radio communication for Mono Jojoy.

It is also worth noting the way in which Ivan gained this privileged position in the FARC. He reveals that his dad knew Mono Jojoy's brother, and that thank to this connection Ivan was assigned to a relatively less risky role. However, he specifies that "my discipline has always been impeccable; I mean, I have always successfully completed my tasks." Ivan wants to make sure I understand that he could have easily been stripped of his security detail job in case he would be deficient. In this sense, the personal connection helped, but it was his individual qualities that made him succeed and/or rise versus someone else. We will deepen this point about personal skills further below, when discussing career advancement within the organization.

Nonetheless, perhaps the most important variable – when speaking of security details' role – is personal trust. In a war environment with mounting incentives for desertion and betrayal – due to the benefits of the DDR program which incentivizes combatants to surrender and betray the organization – high-level leaders have faced more and more pressure to increase their protection and scrutinize the loyalty of those around them. In fact, allegedly, the targeted killing campaign which took down the FARC leadership between 2010 and 2011, was enabled precisely by the information given by those combatants who laid down arms and joined the DDR program.

Muriel, with 30+ years in the FARC, was able to gain historical leader Alfonso Cano's trust thank to his long standing tenure in the organization. Muriel was raised by the FARC since he was 11 years old, due to the extreme poverty in which his family versed. Growing up close to Cano since childhood, Muriel ended up spending close to 20 years next to him as one of Cano's staff. His role was to allow access and move goods directed to Alfonso Cano, and to manage the transfer of external individuals who needed to meet with Cano – including foreign supporters, donors and journalists. Ultimately, Cano was killed alongside other top

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[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.

rebels in 2011: allegedly – reveals Muriel – it was one of his closest aides who betrayed him and led the army to bomb his camp.

HETEROGENEITY OF JOBS: OTHER ROLES IN THE AUC AND THE FARC

As far as AUC ex-combatants are concerned, the combat role is one among other performed functions. Several ex-AUC started in a security-related function, only to later move to some other role. Six of them shared stories about being local operatives, in terms of running operations for the organization. Such roles may have entailed functions of extortion, money laundering, drugs trafficking, but also of facilitator with the local population. But there were also more normal functions of transporting vehicles, provision of food and other supplies, guarding property etc. (Duncan, 2011: 173).

As a local head of finance, Jairo was in charge of "everything related with extortions and tax collections. For example, I was responsible for buying supplies for the group, all the food, and gasoline for all the vehicles. Basically, these were my functions, together with collecting revenues from the front. The AUC considered them revenues, whereas for the state and the law they were extortions." One similar case is Jon, who, after running some logistics functions in San Martin, moved to operations, or "department of initiatives" (*área de iniciativa*), as he defines it.[134] Here, activities concerned the collection and management of revenues coming from drugs trafficking.

A different set of functions constituted Ibarbo's job. He started as a security detail for the AUC chief in Villavicencio, and quickly rose to be his number two. "In Villavicencio, I was responsible for the transportation of money and of the injured. I would not collect extortions, that was not my job. But I would do business development with other firms. Because the AUC would do business and get into a relationship with several firms here in Villavicencio, like hospitals, clinics, car dealerships etc. Thus, I was the one that would put the face on behalf of the organization."[135] Ibarbo managed a team of seven people (called *urbanos*) to perform these functions. They would be armed, of course, but would go around in plain clothes.

To add to the variety of roles within a non-state armed group, some ex-AUC performed more basic tasks, never rose in career nor held positions of responsibility. Both Alejandro and Jairo had experiences in the AUC as medical workers, which allowed them to drop the riskier combat role in which they were in. "As front chief for medical nursery, I was in charge to bring in the injured and those who were ill, move the dead persons, and buy medications", explains Jairo.[136] A similar experience for Maria Victoria, who worked in the Bloque

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[134] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[135] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[136] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

Centauros as a medical nurse for a year and half in Villanueva, Casanare. "I used to receive those who were ill, who had malaria, infections, or pregnant women. I would take them to the hospital", she said.[137]

One more story is the one of Mauricio, who joined the paramilitary as he was looking for work in the AUC-dominated town of Granada. Asked about the job he held, he answered the following. "I travelled all the time because I was a driver. [...] My residence was the car I was assigned to. There, I would have my things, my food, and my clothes – all in a suitcase. Wherever I had the opportunity to shower or to rest, I would do it. Because I did not have a proper place that I could call home."[138] Juan Manuel says that he was a *punto* for two years. "A *punto* is someone who, as a civilian, observes people that pass by a certain area. He is on the look for any suspicious people. [...] I would observe a main road to make sure that the enemy would not pass by or come over."[139]

An interesting story of paramilitary's membership is the one of Ignacio. Ignacio is an ex-combatant who was a mechanic and who had his own car repair shop in Puerto Gaitan – a paramilitary stronghold in eastern Meta. He would fix vehicles for the *Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta y Vichada* (ACMV, a paramilitary faction that was not part of the AUC), but was not a member. His relationship with the paramilitaries could be described as a business one. Ignacio explains: "Puerto Gaitan is the second largest municipality in Colombia [for geographical extension]. On top of it, [the AUC] held all the state of [neighboring] Vichada. As these are vast regions, to go from one to another you could drive for hours and hours. Thus, they would need reliable cars, motorbikes and trucks. Since I knew of mechanics and I had a good background, I coordinated the fixing of all vehicles, without belonging to the group, but as a simple mechanic. [...] They would come and I would charged them, normally, and they would pay me. [...] I was never under the orders of anyone: I was independent."[140] Nonetheless, a local prosecutor issued an arrest warrant against him, at which point Ignacio had to flee Puerto Gaitan. When the demobilization took place, Ignacio was incorporated in the reintegration program despite never having carried a weapon nor being formally in the group nor having received any training.

Ignacio's job and cooperation with the ACMV determined his membership and, ultimately, his status as ex-combatant. Ignacio's story is important because it highlights the grey area that there may be between combatants and non-combatants within the local population. An armed group controlling a certain area shall necessarily establish relationship with the local

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[137] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[138] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[139] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[140] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

population – its economy, society and institutions, governance structure. These relationships have a direct effect on individuals, who, in turn, have their livelihoods. Thus, employment and work define the level of membership and/or affiliation of individuals to the armed group. A similar tension is also present in the FARC. In the previous chapter we saw the story of Giovanni, a cattle trader who was forcefully recruited after trading cattle with the FARC for sometime. Also in that case, Giovanni's job showed the middle (and ambiguous) way between combatants and non-combatants; and the negative implications for the local population from the presence of non-state armed groups.

Coming back to the other roles in the paramilitary, Wendy also joined the ACMV in Puerto Gaitan and was sent to a one-month military training. After it, "I trained as a radio operator; thus, they placed me to work with radios. [...] I worked with a radio equipment to connect different operatives that were in the area."[141] Wendy ended up working as a radio operator for six and half years: she was stationed in a remote rural area of Vichada in the Eastern Llanos, and only allowed to visit her family once a year.

There is gender-related consideration to be made here. Wendy and Maria Victoria were the only two ex-paramilitary female who I interviewed. Both of them were in a supporting role (a radio operator and a medical worker, respectively). What is striking is that neither of them was permitted to leave the AUC: they were, in fact, forced to stay against their will – an experience that I did not hear from any ex-AUC male. In addition, neither of them changed function or role throughout their mobilization. The latter circumstance starks in contrast with the other male interviewees, almost all of whom had more than one job in the group. This finding confirms that the AUC was a predominantly male-oriented and male-dominated organization.

The FARC, instead, practiced gender parity – at least on paper – although the interviews highlighted contradicting experiences with respect to gender. Women were subject to the same rules, training and life cycle as men were. And they were deemed the same respect. For example, Laura, the ex-FARC member who said she liked men's roles and jobs in life, said: "A guerrilla member has to do what is required: stand guard, be ready if the army launches an assault, go on explorations, work, participate in battle. I mean, you have to do everything. And it is the same for men and for women. One has to work the same. If a man works, a woman equally works. Skills are the same", implying that skills are not gender-sensitive.[142]

Laia, on the other hand, has an opposite view (and experience). "Women are second-class combatants", she says. "For a man it is easy to be a commander. For a woman, well, you need

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[141] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.
[142] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

to be more bloodthirsty, more cruel and nastier than any other man in order to be given such a role. They do not let any woman be commander" – Laia adds. She posits that she would have been a commander if not for her gender. "There is just more consideration for men. For women not!" she concludes.[143]

FARC's other roles. Interviews showed that a number of ex-FARC members were employed in other non-military capacities (Table 7.1). Non-military roles are dramatically less frequent in the FARC than in the paramilitary: as it was explained above, the FARC were a military organization in which everyone had to first be a good soldier. A first example of non-combat functions are those – highlighted above – who were security details for military and political commanders like Mono Jojoy and Alfonso Cano.

One outlier – given her past and background is Laia. She had received tertiary-school education and was a university drop out: Laia was not the typical FARC recruit from the peasantry. Throughout almost all of her permanence in the FARC, she was destined to tasks that required a certain degree of skills and education – although like everyone else she also spent time in combat. Among the jobs she had, she was a cartographer: she would draw maps and run trainings on how to do them. She did also conduct classes on how to read and write. With time, Laia moved to producing propaganda material directed to the local population. She first worked in a broadcasting unit, where they would run radio programs and statements. Then, she wrote leaflets and contributed to the draft of magazines, including one called *Resistencia* ("Resistance").

Laia raises also an important point about the infrequency for the FARC to enroll someone with the level of education she had. "Because they [the FARC] have a problem with education; I mean, the majority of combatants are individuals who never had access to education. Those who obtained an education stopped at third grade, or maximum at fourth grade. Therefore, someone who completed high school and who knows how to draw and how to type on a desktop is a highly valuable asset to them."[144] This point reveals (and confirms) the fundamental homogeneity of FARC's combatants and of the human resources available to the organization. As it was analysed in the previous chapter, the pool of candidates from which the FARC were able to recruit, overwhelmingly consisted of the peasantry. Peasants who lived in areas controlled by the FARC and with little or no penetration of state presence and services, like education, for example. It is plausible to assume, then, that Laia's consideration is valid: the FARC would view a candidate like her with favorable eyes because she would bring in a skill set which was in high demand within

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[143] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[144] Ibid.

the organization. As it was pointed earlier, the FARC leadership would also be suspicious of members like Laia, who had an unconventional past.

POLITICAL ROLES, LOGISTICS, AND TIES TO LOCAL POPULATION

This section discusses the roles and the experiences of ex-combatants who were involved and had ties with the local population in a non-military capacity. Non-state armed groups necessarily establish relationships with the local context in which they operate from several perspectives: from an economic point of view (e.g. demand of goods and services, logistics, revenue collection), from a social and political perspective (e.g. political mobilization, and winning hearts and minds), as well as from an institutional point of view (e.g. rebel governance). Therefore, armed groups 'employ' a specific set of their workforce to carry over some of these tasks.

As far as the FARC is concerned, one of the most common non-military role in the organization is the one of *miliciano*, or militia man. A *miliciano* is someone who works either for or with the FARC, but as an external member, not as a full time for-life combatant. It is a non-military function, representing a link between the FARC and the outside world. A *miliciano* may perform logistics and administrative tasks, like purchasing or transferring supplies for the organization, for example; or, he may deliver intelligence about the army's movements and position (Brittain, 2010: 35).

Giovanni explains the role of a *miliciano*. He describes the *milicia* as a "support network", and the *miliciano* as one who "operates within the same rules [as troops], but with some differences. The *miliciano* does not sleep in the mountain [i.e. in camps, with troops], does not go around in military clothes, does not carry a rifle, nor he does patrolling. Instead, he goes as a civilian [performing tasks of] intelligence and gathering information."[145] A *miliciano* is not in captivity, but carries on with his real identity with the outside world.

In charge of 23 other *milicianos*, "I would meet with them and allocate them throughout different zones to check what the army is doing, if it is there. In case they are there, [it is necessary] to know more details: how many [soldiers] there are. [Another task is to know] if there is someone new who came to the area. So, for example, if a seller arrives to an area, a *miliciano* starts investigating him – where he is from, how he looks, if he carries a camera or speaks over the phone."[146] The *miliciano* is then someone who acts and lives as a civilian, in disguise within society, and who keeps doing his civilian job. He keeps living at his/her home, and has, obviously, a very limited knowledge about the organization.

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[145] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[146] Ibid.

Sergio, who was a *miliciano* for two years before he fled, stresses the aspect of organizing the purchase and transport of food supply and goods. "They send you to buy things, and move them from one place to another. […] They do not let any civilian to enter [FARC's territory], but only someone of trust. So, one delivers shipments. The "economy of shipment", as they call it there."[147]

The most important trait of a *miliciano* is that he/she is in disguise: he keeps conducting his normal life as a civilian, but he is in reality working with the organization. They all have a cover story. In case you are questioned by the military or the police, "everyone defends himself with what one is actually doing; but you change some details. Let's say that I purchase cattle and I sell it to the guerrilla. In case I am questioned about it, I say: "no, I buy cattle for a gentleman. We work within legality: I have receipts, orders and everything"", says Giovanni.[148]

Authorities do not know a *miliciano*'s real identity. Giovanni says that once the army discovered his full identity, then, his coverage was blown and he had to be pulled out of the area in which he was in. As a result he had to go into hiding: in cases like these, in order to protect themselves and their operatives, the FARC feels obliged to fully integrate the *miliciano* as a combatant. "When a *miliciano* gets to be a military objective, after [the military] detects him as a *miliciano* with convincing evidence that you are part of the *milicia*, you are considered a member of the FARC."[149] And, thus, to avoid capture and a potential security breach for the FARC, the organization forces the *miliciano* inside the group.

Giovanni, and not only him, laments the forced transition from a *miliciano* who operates on the fringes, to being a full FARC member in a war setting. As a *miliciano* "I was in charge of up to 23 men, worked with cattle and with financial aspects [for the FARC]. I lived well with my family, they depended on me. I could buy things when I needed to."[150] This degree of freedom, independence and responsibility comes abruptly to a halt the moment Giovanni was integrated and moved into being a simple soldier with all the limitations and hardship of such life. Such forced transition from the *milicia* to the military wing of the FARC may take place because a *miliciano* is discovered by the military, and thus the FARC has to bring him in to avoid his/her capture and the associated risks for the organization. It could also be the case that the FARC does not fully trust a *miliciano*; he could be an informer of the military, for example. Thus, integration in the FARC should minimize risks. Given these risks, it seems that the role of *miliciano* is always a transient one, never permanent.

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[147] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.
[148] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.

Political mobilization and propaganda activities through the local population represent an additional set of tasks that some higher-rank FARC members who were interviewed conducted. The previous chapter underlined the importance of the relationship between armed groups (especially the FARC) and local population, when it comes to recruitment. I referred the stories of several potential recruits (mostly from the FARC) who were somehow attracted by the commitment and behaviour of armed groups toward locals, and by their spirit of solidarity and cooperation as an additional incentive for mobilization. Now, it is worth to report some of the direct experiences of ex-combatants who were in a political or a liaison role through local population.

Muriel talked to me about the "organization of the masses", a specific FARC set of activities aimed at mobilizing the population (i.e. the peasantry) and educating them about the legitimacy and the grievances animating the fight. Sergio defined this aspect as "to work for the masses", capturing the spirit of service that the FARC felt toward the local population, in terms of its politicization, awareness of injustices and sensitization to the common cause.

Cesar – who stayed in the FARC for 27 years – describes his role as political mobilizer for the FARC and peasant leader working in the organization of masses. Not knowing his real identity, the army questioned him several time, he describes, about his links with the FARC. Cesar vividly describes the scenes in which he always managed to keep his nerves in check and not betray himself. He says he has always been very sure of himself and self-confident: thus, he would not fear the military.

Enrique describes some of the tasks of establishing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, like "to talk and solve the issues taking place within local communities. [...] I devoted myself to the masses. I would frequently go with the local population and explain people why we were in an armed group. [I would tell them that] there were issues and reasons why the government did not comply [with its mandate]."[151] Political mobilization would go hand in hand with community work that FARC members would perform to assist local population with infrastructure projects, for example. In fact, it is through the community work that FARC mobilizers would gain legitimacy to do political mobilization.

After being deputy head of the school of political training for FARC members for one year, Muriel started working in the organization of masses – something that he had at his heart. "I liked to read a lot of books, to deepen my knowledge of political and cultural issues. [...] I studied the history of the FARC, of Marxism, of Che Guevara. [...] I had eagerness to understand the fight, the issues of conflict in this country, and the causes and circumstances

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[151] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

surrounding the FARC." He admits of having run "meetings with 800-900 people, in which I presented FARC's ideas and policies." Muriel defines political mobilization as "to share or explain the FARC fight and its objectives – both political and military – to the masses, the people, the communities, and the peasants. This was our work. [...] We needed to tell them the reality [...] that our struggle had an end goal and means, and it was not like how the media would depict us."[152] All FARC members who spoke about political mobilization and the "organization of masses" showcased a strong sense of pride: the political activity is perceived to be the most noble task for a FARC combatant.

AUC's social work. Concerning the paramilitaries, the AUC had also in some cases a tight relationship with locals. Two of the thirteen ex-AUC interviewees performed some political function related to local communities. Camilo spent four years in the Bloque Centauros of the AUC. After successfully rising up and being appointed as head of military training – he was a professional soldier before entering the AUC – he sustained an injury that impeded him to resume his post. He, thus, moved to delivering political training for new recruits, which then transitioned him into a political role for the AUC. Camilo describes his wider role as a local administrator who was in charge of development, security and dispute resolution. "I stayed in a local town, in a cooperative: I lived in a cooperative for two years. The cooperative is not a municipality [i.e. it is a smaller unit which establishes participatory institutions and shared economic arrangements]. [...] There, I only had contact with the local population, doing social work. This was my job in the AUC, do road maintenance, build bridges, keep mountain paths clean etc. [...] We were the ones providing life [to the local community]. It was us who were also providing employment [to locals]."[153]

The AUC would also set up alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and Camilo acted as a judge to solve local disputes. "I would help people to find solutions to their problems: if someone stole money from you, I would intercede. I was the local population's prosecutor and the one who would solve problems. Someone had to step in to enforce the law." Clearly, he underlines state institutions' absence and failure in these areas. "We would provide security to people, [to make sure that] the guerrilla would not take away things from people, or would not kill peasants' cattle. Because this is what they would do: the guerrilla would not steal the animals, they would kill them."[154]

Ignacio, the mechanic who had to flee from Puerto Gaitan after an arrest warrant against him, settled in a remote village within the same municipality. He had a similar role to Camilo's. Ignacio managed social work programs of infrastructure rehabilitation. "I started

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[152] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[153] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[154] Ibid.

doing road works, because the AUC had two bulldozers, ten dumpers and one other vehicle in the area." Since he was a mechanic, "I would fix the machinery and participate in social work with the community."[155]

TABLE 7.1: JOBS IN A NON-STATE ARMED GROUP

Frequency of Roles and Functions in a Non-State Armed Group	FARC (18 XCs)	AUC (13 XCs)
Military roles:		
In combat	17	6
Security guard	3	1
Administrative roles:		
Finance: fund raising, tax collection and accounting	1	4
Political mobilization and community work	4	2
Intelligence role, logistics and supply	6	1
Other roles:		
Medical worker	-	3
Driver	-	1
Radio operator	2	1
Capacity building: Trainer	1	1
Cook	2	-
Cartography	1	-

7.2 Organizational Level: Rebel Governance and Human Resources

After detailing the professional roles, functions and experiences of ex-combatants while in arms, this section provides some insights on the ways non-state armed groups organize their labor force (i.e. how careers unfold, capacity building). The section also comments on how certain features of or behaviours by armed groups with respect to their human resources shed light on the relationship between employment and conflict. For example, the strict discipline, the internal rules, issues of trust and of coercion all have an effect on ex-combatants' performance and on the incentives to either do better or to quit (as it is seen in the next chapter).

There is ample evidence that the way non-state armed groups organize their combatants and the division of labor within the group respond to accurate planning. With the appropriate differences, both FARC and AUC establish their own set of internal rules on how to manage

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[155] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

human resources. As this chapter shows, the link between employment and conflict is at both levels: from the ex-combatant point of view (*employee*) and from the armed group's perspective (*employer*).

A Career in an Armed Group: AUC and FARC

Among all ex-AUC members who were in a security-related role, there is the willingness to improve their condition and to raise their position within the organization. Many joined the AUC out of economic hardship: they wanted to get rich and powerful, and knew that working their way up the ladder of the organization may deliver just that. The role model of well-dressed paramilitaries and the easy access to money acted as incentives for recruitment – as it was previously showed. In the AUC, there was also more labor mobility than in the FARC, as its structure of command was more loose. Plus, a position of power in the AUC guaranteed a higher pay and, likely, better living condition. In the guerrilla, instead, careers were more rigid, and higher positions did not necessarily translate into better living conditions.

In addition, there was an immediate and practical incentive for ex-AUC wanting to move career fast: many would invariably start from a combat or patrolling role. A risky position to be in, from which all of those who I interviewed tried to quickly move out from. Notably, this represents an additional difference between ex-FARC and ex-AUC combatants. The latter – lacking a strong ideological base and, in turn, the personal drive to be in war – expressed their dismay toward a combat role, which could have led to injury or death and was, thus, more risky than other organizational or logistics positions. Ex-FARC, on the other hand, did not have that luxury: their ability to be in a less risky position was limited, at best. In addition, FARC combatants are ideological and, thus, more predisposed to accept the danger of war, because they accepted the legitimacy of it.

This is not to say that all the ex-AUC interviewees moved out of combat or patrol and had a 'career' within the organization, but there was more opportunity for labor mobility. For different circumstances (e.g. lack of capacity or talent to be in a different role, short length of time between recruitment and collective demobilization, gender role), some ex-paramilitaries stayed in the same role as they started. Five of the 13 ex-AUC interviewees had a proper 'career' within the organization. They admitted of having had progressively more responsibility and/or having changed role.

Alejandro says that he had been a medical nurse while in the regular army. After he joined the paramilitary, he was thrown into combat right away. "During the first battle there were some injured. Because there were no doctors, I said: "well, I can help, yes." Thus, I started helping with curing the injured and performing medical tasks. [...] I had a small base to

attend the injured. They would fight, and then bring all the injured to me. Afterwards, they sent me to a training on nursing and surgery. There, there were all the medical workers for all [AUC] groups. Once again, I graduated as first. Thus, they put me in charge of the main health facility."[156] Ultimately, Alejandro nearly spent his entire period in the AUC as a medical worker. Alejandro's story shows how career development and the achievement of more responsibility could take place at different levels, even in a position like medical worker.

Jairo, who ended up being a mid-level commander within the Frente Guaviare of the AUC, had a similar experience to Alejandro's. "Initially, I started in a patrolling role. Soon, though, someone asked [in the team which I was part of] if there was anyone with any medical knowledge. I raised my hand, and this allowed me to become a combat nurse after only three months I joined. […] Afterwards, they realized that I had good skills, and thus, after two more months, I was appointed as head of front for nursing."[157] Jairo's career did not end in nursing, but rather he moved to being head of finance in Casanare.

Other stories from Ibarbo, Camilo and Jon reveal the informality and the randomness through which careers would develop within the paramilitary. Arguably, there was not a clear path to rise career within the AUC. Resumes would be built on personal reference, trustworthiness, and ingenuity. Jon, who was from the AUC stronghold of San Martin, admits of having started gradually, with small tasks of delivery and logistics within the town ("*mandados*", as several define them), to later move to cash transfer. Ultimately, these functions granted him the trust of his superiors.

These examples also offer a glimpse on the variety of job experiences within armed groups. With respect to the homogenous label of 'ex-combatant', these examples show a much more complex array of jobs, ranging from medical nurse to logistics to finance. Working for an illegal outfit is the common denominator for all ex-combatants. The roles and functions that they perform uniquely characterize their individual experience. In turn, their reintegration patterns also shall differ: the homogenous category of ex-combatants assumed by DDR programs should instead acknowledge differences and be disaggregated.

According to the employment-conflict framework, a non-state armed group can be compared with a firm or with an organization – as far as its human resources are concerned. In these, there is diversity of functions performed, and individuals performing a variety of functions organically participate in the organization's life. Alejandro explained the main functions and divisions of a paramilitary group: "In the *firm*, you have those working on finance, who are in

[156] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio
[157] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

charge of accounting. They collect money, extortions etc. And they have their superior, who is the [chief] accountant. Then, there are those who manage money: they buy illegal drugs. And they also have their own book-keeper. And there is the one who buys weapons. [...] There is the principal medical doctor, who, in turn, has his own medical workers and nurses. [...] There are the recruiters, who are those in charge of pulling people in. They are paid a certain percentage for each combatants they are able to recruit. [...] Finally, there is the military command, which is headed by a commander."[158]

Despite differences among roles and functions, what any firm's employees have in common among them include the firm's goals and objectives, its internal rules, work ethics and a personal drive to succeed and improve. Employees' day-to-day job is, instead, specific. The same dynamics applies to non-state armed groups and combatants. Jobs in a non-state armed group vary, as they do in any firm or organization.

FARC's structure and roles. With respect to the FARC, 'careers' are more structured than the AUC, as the FARC is a military organization. One has to move up the ladder of the military hierarchy. In the FARC, the military structure is composed as follows (Figure 7.1). The smallest unit is the unit of combat (or UTC, *Unidad Táctica de Combate*), made of only five combatants. After which, there are squads (*escuadras*), composed of 12 members; then, there is a *guerrilla* of 24 units, after which, there is a company (*compañía*), of two or more guerrillas. A column (*columna*) is made of 110 combatants; while a front (*frente*) is composed of two or more columns – both Ivan and Muriel explain (Brittain, 2010: 27; Pecaut, 2008: 107; Richani, 2002: 77).

Everyone in the FARC starts from being a foot soldier. Like Roberto, for example: "from the beginning, [I was] a simple soldier – as those soldiers without any authority are called. Then, as time passes I was given authority of command and I got to be head of guerrilla and in charge of nearly 40 men and women."[159] He says that it took him one and half year to be promoted as head of team, and two years total to get to be in charge of a guerrilla. Fernan had a similar experience to Roberto's, although the former rose to a higher level in the FARC. "I started as a foot soldier." Progressively, over time, he rose to higher positions, getting to "being in charge of more or less one company."[160] Conceivably, Fernan's longer permanence (he stayed in the FARC for close to 20 years) with respect to Roberto, (who, on the other hand, stayed for 8 years) played an important role in Fernan's more successful career.

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[158] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[159] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[160] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

Jaime also started to rise after one year as a simple soldier. He was head of guerrilla, and ended his career as head of company in charge of two guerrillas. Muriel, on the other hand, admitted that he did not advance at all his career in the FARC – except for a brief time as head of team. "I had the capacities and everything, but I did not rise because throughout my whole time in the FARC, I stayed next to [Alfonso Cano]."[161] Muriel was in the unit of protection of the FARC leader, and the personal trust he gained through Cano, therefore, prevented him to move and be in a leadership role.

FIGURE 7.1: FARC MILITARY STRUCTURE AND HIERARCHICAL COMMAND
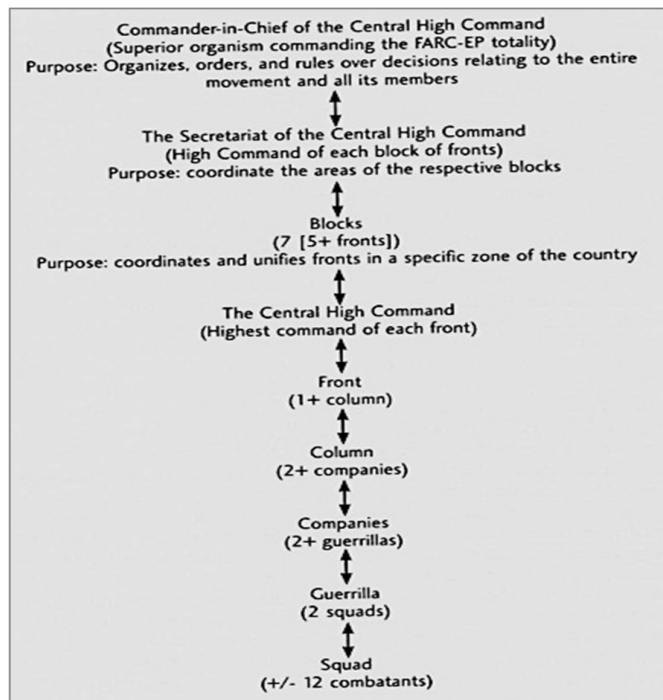
Source: Brittain, 2010: 27

When asked about what factors played a role in their career advancement in the armed group, all interviewees agreed that a mix of personal qualities and skills including being a hard worker, decision-making capacities, discipline and organization, ideological commitment, as well as combat experience and courage were key. Roberto says: "Initially, what helps someone to obtain a higher role and be in charge is behaviour: to obey and comply with orders as they are given to you. Second factor is combat. If you are a good soldier, outstanding in battle, or in a fight, this is something that allows you to rise in hierarchy."[162]

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[161] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[162] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

Jaime has a different explanation than Roberto. He stresses the importance of the moral and intellectual capacities over the military skills. "If you have intellectual capacities you can rise [in career]. Whereas, if you do not, even in the military side you will always be a foot soldier."[163] It also seems that it was quite common to be promoted, or at least that there was often demand for mid-rank officers. There was no standard time which one had to spend at a low ranking soldier level, nor there were specific tests one had to pass in order to move up. Individual qualities, behaviour and the display of those qualities were factors for career advancement.

As there was not a strict set of milestones to be accomplished in order to be promoted, by the same token, military careers were flexible and reversible. There was a constant and fluid system of rising and ascending in career within the FARC: Jaime says that this was due to contingencies and "battle plans". For example, someone who is a head of company today could be demoted to head of guerrilla tomorrow, if needed be. With the purpose of not replicating class divisions and social stratification within the FARC, a flexible system of promotion and demotion was in place. Jaime further explains: "Let us say that we are 100 combatants, and that I am in charge of all of them. However, we need to conduct an operation, and so the group gets divided [into two]. As the group gets split, I am no longer ruling over 100 soldiers, but only 50 of them. So, by dividing the group, my role lowered."[164]

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

In order to understand the human resources of armed groups, one important aspect concerns training and capacity building. The FARC and the AUC had quite different practices on this, reflecting their differences in structure, ideology and internal organization.

We have seen in the sections above that many ex-combatants pointed out to the fundamental role of, and the extent to which they were exposed to, training and capacity building. FARC members are subject to a rigid military training, and, in parallel, to a comprehensive political education on the causes and drivers of the armed struggle, and the history and the ideology of the FARC. As in any regular army, a first feature of FARC training is its rigidity and the firm discipline associated with it. "The FARC has a rigorous discipline, quite complex. Nonetheless, when one feels the revolutionary feelings, when one has the revolution in the head, thus, one is motivated to [psychologically] defend [and justify] this discipline", Muriel explains.[165]

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[163] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

When one arrives, Roberto explains, "they put you in the school[166]. In this school, they give you classes on the use of arms, on physical fight, personal defence; how you are supposed to go forward, or pull back, how to transport the injured, how to throw grenades, everything."[167] To these, Carlos adds the "training on explosives, [...] the course on special forces, and the survival course."[168] Laia explains how she was trained in a course for mid-level commanders throughout an entire year. "It was very hard, very hard. [...] They taught us how to use explosives, how to kill, how to shoot from a motorbike etc. They taught us artillery, and first aid. A commander has to know everything if he/she wants to effectively rule over others."[169]

All ex-combatants who spoke about training also remarked how the training phase had a practical (and dangerous) side. Military training did not stop at mere simulations, but there would be real life exercitations, and sometimes, even, combat. Laia says how they would bring the mid-level commander course's participants to war, in order for participants to have a chance to stand out and gain credits. "In the process, there would be the injured, and even someone died during the training."[170] Roberto underlines the normal military training, and the simulations that the FARC would conduct. "At 2AM, the trainer would give the alarm and scream to get up that the enemy arrived. Thus, one starts running; [real] grenades fall close to you, so you need to throw yourself in a trench, which could be 1.6 meter high – sometimes higher. [...] Those that do not manage to get to the trench could be hit by a grenade, and they could even die! During training! The commander used to tell us that training is like war, because in war there is no resting."[171]

In addition to the military part, there is also the political education – as it has been reported earlier. Guerrilla members had to be good combatants, but also committed revolutionaries. This aspect included classes on the history of Colombia, on the structural character of exploitation, Marxist theories, economics principles, and the history of revolutions.

As many ex-FARC combatants joined the group when they were children or in their teens, it was often the case that children were illiterate. As I showed in the previous chapter, most of those children came from the poorest and most marginalized backgrounds. Illiteracy came with the package. Several ex-combatants report how the FARC would make sure that children and youngsters learned how to read and write. Ivan says: "In our times, one did not

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[166] More than one ex-combatant referred to "the school" (*la escuela*) as the formal institutional place in which military and political training takes place.
[167] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[168] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[169] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

know how to read and write; thus, they set up groups with the goal of learning [these skills]"[172].

For their part, ex-paramilitaries describe their training and capacity-building activities as a function of their subsequent job placement. Military trainings were standard for all new recruits, as Camilo, who was head instructor, explains. Trainings were then followed by a sort of individual assessment, which would result in a job placement. According to Ibarbo, "everyone has to do both a combat training and a first aid course. Afterwards, they [AUC recruiters and commanders] look at your profile: if one has good relationships skills, if one is good at talking to people, then they send you to a community. But if someone does not know how to talk they will not send him to a town. [...] As I said, they are very good at managing profiles."[173]

The AUC methodically allocates recruits to different positions and areas. Jon confirmed this point: "This guy is more useful for the city; some other people were good at talking with peasants. To talk to a peasant is different from speaking to someone from the city."[174] People's background was also a factor in allocating combatants to tasks and roles.

Thus, with respect to the FARC, in the AUC there is a much more differentiated and targeted approach to recruits. In the FARC, everyone starts as a foot soldier, and profiles and careers are much more homogenous – as it has already been remarked. The AUC, instead, values more job placement via assessment of individual candidates' skills, background and capacities. Ibarbo also explains how this skill-based approach to job placement helped the AUC to effectively mix within society and to be in disguise.

RULES, DISCIPLINE, TRUST AND FEAR

One additional feature which has been recurrent in interviews with both ex-FARC and ex-AUC is the imposition of strict rules of conduct, both to trainees and to combatants. Several ex-FARC combatants remarked how the adoption of a strict discipline was a permanent factor of life in the camp. First of all, rules and discipline were functional to the survival of the organization: "in order for it to survive, the FARC has to be disciplined. For this reason the FARC is the oldest rebel group in the world", says Muriel.[175] More than one ex-combatant repeated what Muriel stated. There is an underlying sense of pride among FARC members – even after they left the group – about the cohesion and the self-respect that abiding by strict rules entails at the individual level.

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[172] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[173] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[174] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[175] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

Second, the above section on career development highlighted how being disciplined and complying with rules was one of the most rewarded skills for combatants when a decision had to be made about either promotions or the entrustment of more responsibility. Within the FARC, there is the recognition that successfully executing orders meant that an individual was trustful. In a non-state armed group the issue of trust operates not only at the individual level – between a superior and a subordinate, for example – but it also concerns the overall trust that the organization places on its combatants as members who would not betray the organization.

"The FARC is harsh. For the smallest issue they stop trusting someone. They mistrust!" says Giovanni.[176] On this aspect, it is worth reflecting on the rising mistrust that has been running through the FARC since the start of the individual demobilization program in 2002. By incentivizing individual FARC members to lay down arms and surrender to the army in exchange for amnesty and reintegration benefits, the Colombian state has considerably weakened the organization by (i) taking away man power from the FARC; and, most of all, by (ii) using the information that deserters had to give to the army once they surrendered, to militarily hit the FARC itself. As a response, the FARC had to protect itself even more from potential deserters and traitors. This resulted into the adoption of an enhanced mindset and culture of mistrust. No one could be trusted anymore – after even some of the leadership ranks deserted.

Here, it is worth highlighting the importance of trust and mistrust in the internal organization of the FARC, and in the interpersonal relationship between combatants. A story from Giovanni is illustrative. "When I was a *miliciano*, [there was an operation in which] a commander fell in an ambush and I was participating as a *miliciano*. I survived the ambush: when the commander was killed I threw my self in a narrow pass and I did not die. The police caught me and took me with them. But they could not find any evidence, because I was going as a civilian. So, they let me go. But the organization did not trust someone who is let go [by the police or the army]. […] They do not trust you because one has been in the army's hands. Thus, they think that the army caught [a combatant] and set him/her up [to go back to the FARC and spy on them]."[177] Laia also says that the FARC "developed a paranoia, which makes everyone mistrusting everyone."[178]

One additional aspect related to rules and trust concerns the ban for members to share details about their own private life – in terms of origins, family members, and even real names. Everyone has a *nom de guerre*, and that is all one can reveal about his identity. Ex-

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[176] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio
[177] Ibid.
[178] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

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combatants lamented with me the harsh reality of this ban: in a life that is often monotonous and extremely repetitive in the camp, combatants are prevented from sharing stories about their past life. Of course, it happens that people share their real identity after becoming friends, but in a climate of fear due to having contravened rules. Secrecy about one's own life preserves the organization from potential betrayals and provides an additional security layer to the organization.

In the AUC, rules and discipline were as strict as they were in the FARC, but with a substantial difference – which is in line with the different nature of the two organizations. While the FARC was highly centralized and its rules and discipline were codified and unanimously understood throughout the organization, in the AUC there was more room for arbitrary behaviours, hence the human rights violations perpetrated by some paramilitary factions. In other words, sanctions and their application were not necessarily codified in the AUC as they were in the FARC. In the latter, there was a proper 'rule of law', which prevented arbitrary actions outside of it. In the AUC, there were rules, but their application was subject to several factors and circumstances, including local commander's attitude, power struggle among mid- or high-level ranks, level of engagement with the local population, intensity of war with the army and/or the FARC, among others.

As a result, several ex-AUC members testify how they lived in constant fear. Jairo says that members used to "have more fear of the organization itself than of the guerrilla. [...] For whatever thing they would kill you: 1,000 pesos [USD6] were missing from a transaction, they would kill you for that! Someone got offended from a joke, they could kill you for that too. Therefore, because my career was rising fast, this generated a lot of envy in people."[179] Jairo pointed to the fact that a feeling of fear permeated his whole life while in the AUC. Mauricio, who was a driver in the AUC, says that every morning he would feel as if it could be his last day. "One never knows what can happen within the group either for envy or for some situation. [One is aware] that the group itself can terminate one's life. Thus, one does not conduct a proper life: as much as one has money and a livelihood, or drives the best car, one does not have a safe life."[180]

CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the relationship between employment and conflict through the analysis of the duties that ex-combatants performed and the roles they held in non-state armed groups. It has brought together a wide array of ex-combatants' individual experiences while belonging to either the FARC or the AUC. Focus has been on the diversity of roles,

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[179] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[180] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

functions and tasks, in order to give a picture of the heterogeneous 'jobs' in armed groups. Some strong empirical argument is presented to counteract the homogenous notion that the academic and policy literature hold on who an 'ex-combatant' is.

TABLE 7.2: KEY FINDINGS ON MEMBERSHIP IN A NON-STATE ARMED GROUP

- *Not all armed groups' employees (i.e. combatants) are engaged in violence. As any type of organization or business, armed groups have an established and organized division of labour. An armed group is necessarily made of members that fulfil all needed tasks, including recruitment, accounting and finance, strategy, operations, and logistics (drivers, cooks, nurses etc.). Therefore, the term 'combatant' is a misconception when intended as someone necessarily carrying weapons and responsible for violent actions.*
- *Within the 'non-state armed group' category, 'jobs' in paramilitary and in guerrilla are different. Due to different ideology, social background, organizational behaviour, and type of control over communities and institutions, then armed actors' internal organization with respect to jobs and division of labor also differs.*
- *There is a grey area between combatants and civilians in areas dominated by armed groups. Non-state armed groups have to necessarily establish relationships with locals and local areas, including its economy, society and institutions. There are stories of ex-combatants who, by living and working in a conflict-affected area, entered in some relationships with armed groups. Hence, there is an area of contiguity between armed groups and the local context in which they operate: such contiguity is rarely acknowledged or understood. And it has implications for individuals who may be drawn in an armed group or identified as combatants.*

After exploring the pull factors for recruitment by non-state armed groups from an employment-seeking point of view, this chapter makes one further step. It highlights the past experiences and the perceptions of ex-combatants within the non-state armed group: men and women who are trying to stay alive in the first place, but also either make a living (especially, paramilitary recruits) or contribute to a cause and a war effort (especially but not exclusively, FARC members). Many ex-combatants associate their armed group's membership to an employment experience – although a unique and traumatic one – because for many of them, this is what it ultimately was. A job.

8. Transition From the Armed Group Back to Civilian Life: DDR, Reintegration and Recidivism

The present chapter concludes the empirical analysis of ex-combatants' employment cycle by turning to the dynamics of the post-war phase. After the exploration of the dynamics and drivers of recruitment, and the analysis of how and in what capacity non-state armed groups *employ* their combatants, it is imperative to understand the way in which ex-combatants demobilize, find and retain employment after they cease to be part of an armed group. This aspect concerns the challenges of reintegration, on how to find a job and how the state reintegration program has been supporting ex-combatants. Thus, the exploration of the factors that contribute to economic reintegration, and its dynamics, complements the previous analysis by providing a comprehensive overview of the *employment* life cycle of ex-combatants from the drivers of recruitment to the challenges of post-war reintegration.

Within the broad literature on what reintegration is and how the policy practice operationalizes it, the present contribution seeks to single out the employment aspect. Some of the core questions of the overall research concern the factors that account for successful post-war reintegration. Within the multiple components of reintegration that are recognized by the literature, this chapter focuses on the role that having a job plays for an individual ex-combatant in order to feel reintegrated in society.

I argue that – other than productively occupying time – finding and retaining a job contributes to the reintegration of an ex-combatant in a number of ways. One mechanism is psychological. The war experience is an all-encompassing one, permeated by a strong and pervasive group cohesion, which may lead to a psychological identification between the single individual combatant and the armed group itself. In the post-demobilization phase, this all-absorbing life abruptly comes to an end. To the extent that an ex-combatant is able to re-build a normal life, then he/she is able to psychologically distance him/herself from the armed group's experience and move on. The experience of finding and retaining a job in society is a necessary (although not sufficient) factor to embark in that process of psychological distancing. It has to be remarked the immense challenge that an individual faces when trying to even envision a potential job, after having spent all adult life in an armed group.

From a psychological point of view, there are also some discrete issues related to finding a job that help an ex-combatant to move on: (a) interaction with other members of society who did not share the war experience. While in the armed group, a member exclusively (in the case of the guerrilla) and mostly (for the paramilitary members) interact with other combatants. Thus, the constant interaction with non-war members of society contributes to the distancing process. (b) A job gives an individual a role in society: life is work, and work gives people pride and sense of belonging (World Bank, 2013).

In terms of demobilization, this chapter will address some key qualitative differences between the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) – differences that have an impact on the two groups' members' reintegration path. FARC demobilized combatants start their reintegration process often as a result of a deliberate decision of quitting the group. Therefore, they have higher individual motivations than AUC ex-combatants, who – because of the collective demobilization of their group – join the reintegration program sometimes without the same commitment as FARC ex-combatants. On this aspect, AUC ex-combatants have presented stronger challenges for reintegration officials. However, demobilized paramilitaries are more socialized, often more educated, and to a number of accounts better prepared to re-join society. Instead, most FARC ex-combatants have spent several years completely isolated from society, have a stronger ideology, and, thus, require more support to re-adapt to society. In conclusion, as it is explored below, both groups present specific challenges for reintegration.

The chapter is divided into three distinct parts. A first part deals with factors and dynamics of demobilization. Why and how combatants decided to quit their job (FARC); and the perceptions about being put out of a job (AUC). As it was seen in Chapter 4, opposite dynamics governed the demobilization of the FARC and the AUC. The latter reached a negotiated agreement with the national government to demilitarize, and had all of its combatants collectively demobilized. The former was still an active non-state armed group at the time the interviews for this study were conducted. FARC members who joined the reintegration program left the group individually – they were, in fact, deserters. As far as ex-FARC combatants are concerned, the first two sub-sections of part one deal with the reasons why they decided to flee the group, and the circumstances that led to it. Concerning ex-AUC combatants, I give a brief overview of their perceptions and feelings about demobilization: in fact, how they felt about losing both their full-time occupation and status of combatant. Thus, this section gives some necessary context to the core analysis about economic reintegration, post-war employment and opportunities for recidivism.

The second part deals with the dynamics and challenges of reintegration from the perspective of employment. It is centered around the experiences and perceptions of ex-combatants, who overwhelmingly consider the need for meaningful, satisfactory and sustainable employment as the key ingredient for reintegration. Societal challenges are also considered, including discrimination against them.

The third and last part of the chapter concerns the greatest challenge for ex-combatants in terms of security, i.e. the power and presence of non-state armed groups. This section discusses some of the dynamics and drivers of recidivism through a composite analysis of individual, structural and organizational factors of recidivism.

8.1 Dynamics of Demobilization

WHY DO FARC COMBATANTS QUIT? CIRCUMSTANCES AND REASONS FOR DEMOBILIZATION

This section addresses the events and circumstances surrounding the demobilization of the FARC ex-combatants that I interviewed, and their motivations to take such action. In line with the multi-level framework of this research, I divided the main reasons behind ex-combatants' decision to flee the FARC into individual-, organizational- and structural-level reasons.

Demobilization due to circumstances. Contrary to the mainstream view which wants ex-FARC combatants demobilizing because allured by the government-led reintegration benefits, the findings from my interviews do not confirm this hypothesis. There is a gross simplification regarding the 'how' ex-combatants leave the group. As Table 8.1 shows, there are a number of different ways how demobilization takes place. Individual demobilization of FARC members occurs as a deliberate decision, but it can also be the result of circumstances which are beyond the individual's agency – like a permanent injury, a military capture, or an impromptu surrender.

Still, the relative majority of FARC combatants planned their escape and/or had specific motives for pursuing such action – most often a growing dissatisfaction with the organization. While lowering ideological motivation due to structural changes in the conflict is an important factor that drives many FARC combatants to demobilize, this factor is overstated by mainstream media and government sources. Together with the prospect of reintegration benefits, public opinion lists the weakened morale (and military capability) of the FARC as the only reasons why ex-combatants lay down arms.

The picture is, in fact, more varied; and more circumstances account for FARC demobilization. First, there are those who did not voluntarily demobilize. Three out of

eighteen ex-combatants were captured by the army during combat, and were later included into the reintegration program. It is the case of Cristina and Enrique, who, after being captured, decided to cooperate with military intelligence, in exchange for avoiding prosecution and benefitting from the reintegration package. Faustino was only 11 years old when he was captured by the army, and, thus, he was put into the children's authority custody. Now, at 18 years old, Faustino has been extended those reintegration benefits to support his reinsertion into society.

TABLE 8.1: HOW FARC COMBATANTS DEMOBILIZE

Circumstances of Demobilization	FARC XCs
Combatants who were captured and later joined the reintegration program	3
Combatants who, given pressing circumstances (i.e. during combat), turned themselves in, but without premeditation	3
Combatants permanently injured and unable to keep the role of a combatant	3
Combatants who demobilized for specific reasons and planned their escape	7
Unknown	2
Tot.	**18**

Second, there are those who deserted while in combat. This group (three combatants, all of them foot soldiers) did not plan ahead to leave the FARC, but rather, they found themselves in some unique circumstances which enabled them to flee. This does not mean that they did not have outstanding grievances against the FARC – in fact, they all did. However, their escape was mostly dictated by some dramatic events in which they found themselves in: they decided to surrender rather than being killed or return to camp.

Legally, combatants who are captured in combat or surrender on the battlefield should not be entitled to reintegration benefits, but be prosecuted. In fact, FARC members who are captured but who do not have serious pending charges of crime against humanity are routinely put into the reintegration program – a practice that inflates the number of beneficiaries, contributing to a distorted image of ex-FARC demobilizing due to an ideological weakening within the group.

Both FARC members Carlos and Sergio were in combat when their direct superior was killed, giving them the opportunity to surrender to the army. Speaking about their motives, both of them revealed their weakening commitment to the FARC and its strategy. Nonetheless, neither of the two admitted to have thought about escaping before it actually happened.

Subject to intense military pressure, Juan admits of "demobilizing because we spent a year with the army on our back, […] playing the cat with the mouse."[181]

I distinguish this group of surrenders who flee in the middle of the battle from those who had an actual plan and premeditated intention to leave the FARC. Juan, Carlos and Sergio were risking their lives and they took the immediate decision to flee: arguably, instinct, fear and adrenaline all played a greater role than for combatants who planned in the medium or long term to escape. The distinction between the two groups (i.e. ahead planners vs. in combat surrenders) underlines the multiple experiences through which demobilization can occur.

There are also some cases of combatants who were permanently injured, and who were no longer fit for war duties. Among the interviewees, it was three of them who were pulled out of the FARC due to an injury. Cristiano had been a FARC combatant for 11 years – he was recruited at 16 – until he sustained a serious injury in his abdomen. He said that the FARC "kicked me out. They gave me 800,000 pesos [USD400][182] and left me without any support. I had to come to Villavicencio on my own", where Cristiano had family members.[183] Roberto was also injured in combat: unable to effectively be a combatant, nor to work the land, he was denied any support by the FARC. This created grievances against the group: he fled to Villavicencio and handed himself over to the army.

Ivan was badly maimed and two of his fellows were left dead when a bomb exploded by accident next to him, in 1999. Given his injuries, he had to be evacuated to Bogota for medical care, but public authorities did not discover that he was FARC. Ivan admits that the FARC supported him and "sent money." Afterwards, the FARC provided him with a small piece of land in a FARC-controlled area of Ariari, which he had to abandon in the face of mounting military pressure. After returning to Villavicencio, Ivan was able to join the reintegration program in 2010.

These testimonies highlight the multifaceted practice of demobilization, and add some complexity to its understanding and unfolding. The stories of these nine ex-combatants (half of the total FARC interviewees) challenge the assumption of 'how' demobilization works. Instead of exclusively being the product of deliberate decisions (i.e. agency), demobilization is uneven and heterogeneous, and often takes place out of war events ('structure'). In turn, also the ways and timing in which ex-combatants join the reintegration program are diverse,

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[181] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[182] At a 2008 exchange rate – when Cristiano demobilized – of around USD 1 = COP 2,000.
[183] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

and can take place even after several years – like Ivan, who joined the program more than 10 years after his accident.

Demobilization as a result of a deliberate decision. Then, there are those who demobilized based on a deliberate choice and plan. Seven out of 18 ex-FARC that I interviewed admitted to either have planned their escape in advance, or to have had some compelling reason to leave the FARC (Table 8.2). A first order of reasons concerns family ties and/or personal feelings that are not related to the FARC, its ideology and strategy. To different degrees, personal life (such as having a family, or starting a love affair, or a pregnancy) played a role in the demobilization of four combatants.

For two of them, it was the leading reason. Laia had an affair and fell in love with a fellow FARC member. And she got pregnant. This event completely shifted her priorities from the FARC – which she had joined almost a decade earlier out of resentment and desperation after being a university drop out – to her incoming newborn. She knew that the two roles (mother and rebel combatant) were incompatible. It was not allowed to raise children in the camp.

Usually, pregnant women were either forced to have an abortion, or, at best, they were allowed to deliver the baby, but then forced to give him/her up to a family member (if available), or to local peasants (Gutierrez Sanin, 2004). After she delivered her son – Laia recalls – she immediately understood that she was not going to be able to separate from him. Together with her partner, they went through a difficult escape, reached Bogota and sometime later surrendered to the military.

Fernan – a committed FARC rebel who was recruited at 17 years old and spent the next 14 years in the group – fell in love with a FARC female combatant. She told him that she was going to flee, but, despite his devotion for her, he did not follow her. It took him two more years to escape and join her again: "I was very much in love with her, and this is the reason for my demobilization. [...] I planned it; I wanted to do it. I left it [the FARC]", Fernan says.[184] For two more ex-combatants, family ties were something that they mentioned during the interview, but which was not their leading motivation to desert.

An overarching issue to understand the drivers of FARC demobilization concerns the lack of freedom. Here, it is necessary to make some brief considerations about the forced nature of membership to the FARC and the lack of freedom (Gutierrez Sanin, 2004). As several ex-FARC testified (and as it is commonly known), FARC members are not allowed to freely leave the group once they joined. It used to be, by all means, a forced membership. There is less clarity, instead, about the origin and nature of recruitment: is this always forced or not?

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[184] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

As it was highlighted in Chapter 6, there was not a common practice with respect to forced recruitment in the FARC. Despite the FARC rules prohibiting forced recruitment, in practice this happened. Several testimonies point to the fact that given their progressive involvement and knowledge of the group, ex-combatants were forced to fully join as internal members, against their will. Giovanni, for example, did not want to go in arms. But he lucidly explains the difference between forced recruitment and forced membership. He says that recruitment is always voluntary at first, when it is a matter of joining the group: "when you leave, you are never forced to leave" and join the group, says Giovanni. Recruitment "turns into 'forced' only once the recruit is there, in the camp, and unable to quit", he concludes.[185]

TABLE 8.2: WHY FARC COMBATANTS DEMOBILIZE

Frequency of Factors Identified by Ex-Combatants During Interviews as Drivers for Demobilization	
Drivers of Demobilization	FARC XCs
Family ties and personal feelings	4
Lack of freedom[186]	2
Weakened ideology, and widening gap between FARC principles and practice on the ground	8
Incentives from DDR program's benefits and amnesty	0

Thus, recruitment may or may not be voluntary, but permanence in the rebel group is always forced. According to the ex-FARC combatants that I interviewed, there is disagreement on whether forced recruitment takes place or not; but, there is overwhelming agreement on the fact that once in the group, combatants are stripped of their personal freedom and are prevented from leaving the group.

There is also a psychological aspect with respect to lack of freedom and taking full responsibility of the action of deserting. It is interesting that to my question of "why did you decide to leave the FARC?", many ex-combatants immediately replied that they wanted to voluntarily and peacefully leave the group, but knew that there was no such option. This seems obvious. All ex-FARC members claim their right to get tired of being in the group, which does not necessarily clash with their ideological commitment to the FARC cause. In fact, despite mounting disillusionment with the organization – which several ex-FARC shared – all of them professed to still be dedicated and committed to the communist ideology.

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[185] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[186] I included 'Lack of freedom' as a standalone factor, even though 'freedom' is an overarching issue included in all factors for demobilization. Thus, despite the fact that only two ex-combatants specifically mentioned 'lack of freedom' as a driving factor for demobilization, freedom is intrinsic to and part of any story of demobilization.

The common answer they gave ("I fled because I no longer wanted to stay in the group and I wanted to be free") underlines an additional psychological consideration. FARC members feel some personal shame for having abandoned and betrayed the group. "It was a very difficult decision to take. Because one really thinks about the betrayal; that you leave behind brothers, friends, comrades and fellow rebels", says Muriel, who, in his early forties, had spent 30 years in the FARC.[187]

By leaving, they not only leave behind their whole life (including friends and comrades, way of life), but they also put at high risk those left behind. After surrendering, in fact, all ex-combatants have to reveal details of their camp and previous location to the military, in order to be accepted into the reintegration program. The betrayal is hard to accept for individual ex-combatants. Thus, it is safe to state that the decision of pulling out from the group is not an easy one to make and to support. Thus, there is some tension between the shame that many feel, the 'blame' they place on the FARC for not allowing them to leave voluntarily, and the acceptance of the full moral consequences of their betrayal.

As it is underlined in Table 8.2, the most recurring set of factors for demobilization relates to the organizational level. They concern the FARC weakened ideology and moral ground, and the widened gap between FARC principles and practice. Several ex-FARC combatants blame the organization for not practicing what it preaches. "They say, but they do not apply it", Laura says.[188] "The guerrilla does not comply with what it preaches", echoes Giovanni.[189] Carlos, 13 years in the guerrilla, ultimately surrendered to the military while under siege. Still, the circumstance of his demobilization combined with his declining revolutionary morale accounts for his demobilization. "I was already worn out, tired to keep fighting for something that I will never see, the conquest of power. […] One gets demoralized", he says.[190]

There was a growing disconnection and glaring contradictions between the FARC ideology, its activities of political mobilization through the peasantry, and the actual FARC practices and policies. In fact, the three FARC combatants (Cesar, Muriel, and Jaime) who regularly conducted political mobilization ("organization of the masses", see previous chapter) were the ones who had the most articulated views about this disconnection, about the weakening of the FARC ideology and its moral standing, and about the consequences of it in terms of the organization's legitimacy.

Jaime mentions how "drugs trafficking and other heinous practices were incompatible with FARC ideology." Even though he acknowledged FARC's effort to build infrastructure for local

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[187] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[188] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[189] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[190] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

population and to support their livelihoods, he lamented a fundamental lack of clarity on the part of the FARC. On the one hand, there is a permanent immutable roaring ideological propaganda toward the peasantry; on the other hand, there is the reality of growing difficulties and mal practices in the organization, including military defeats and loss of ground, drugs trafficking, disillusionment and weakening of internal cohesion. Telling one thing to the people while the truth laid elsewhere, represented an unbearable weight for long time rebels like Cesar and Jaime – who had to put their face with the peasantry. Muriel concludes that "big changes took place in the FARC, and one sees that it is going off course, loosing the direction, and the rules. Those same rules change", because the internal cohesion become looser and legitimacy weakens.[191]

There are also situations of grievances against perceived injustices and favoritism, on a small scale. For example, Laura – a proud FARC combatant, deeply committed to the cause – says: "I decided to demobilize for issues not related to the organization itself, but rather to the context in which I was at the moment. Meaning, the commander who ruled over me." She points to the cowardice of her superior, who would do anything to keep his unit and himself clear of battle. Or, the careless treatment he would reserve to foot soldiers. "There were things that profoundly upset me", Laura concludes.[192]

Incentives from DDR program. As it is mentioned earlier, among the drivers for demobilization, it is often cited that the incentives coming from the state-led Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program played an important role in the decision to demobilize for many FARC members. In fact, among my sample of 18 ex-combatants, there was no one who stated that the prospect of a reintegration package was a motivation to come forward. The prospect of reintegration benefits as a driver for FARC individuals deciding to demobilize did not seem to account for demobilization.

According to the interviewees I spoke to, it actually worked the other way around. In fact, an opposite dynamics was at play. To counteract the government propaganda and to dissuade combatants from fleeing, the FARC circulated stories of how the army would either make you disappear, sell you for organ trafficking, or, at best, send to jail anyone who would demobilize. And combatants would not be able to verify such information or even have access to it: thus, there was a lot of uncertainty from their part. "In a way, one had the desire to leave, but was frightened because one did not know how it would end", Roberto says.[193]

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[191] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[192] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[193] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

Counter propaganda worked, because several ex-FARC told me that they were scared to surrender to the army. Laia said that she did not want to demobilize "because I am scared, because they will take my baby away. [...] I just wanted to go home. One leaves and wants to see her own family, and stay home."[194] Cristiano says that "I had to join the [reintegration] program, but I would have not done it."[195] Together with Laia, also Ivan and Laura surrendered to the army sometime after fleeing from the FARC, not immediately; and only after hearing from other ex-FARC that the reintegration process was safe. In the case of Ivan, as it was mentioned, he joined the program 10 years after his injury that left him permanently disabled.

In conclusion, the higher numbers of FARC demobilization since the inception of the reintegration program are the result of a mix of factors. An internal loss of cohesion is undisputable, which was triggered by several factors, including: the rise of drugs trafficking and the resulting weakening in ideology; the military defeats that the FARC sustained starting with the Uribe presidency in 2002; the targeted killing of FARC leadership which also caused a decline in morale. Even though no ex-FARC admitted that the reintegration program played a role in their demobilization, still, the program was instrumental to give ex-FARC combatants a legitimate space once they left the group. The second part of this chapter deals more deeply with the meaning of reintegration for ex-combatants.

EX-PARAMILITARIES' PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOBILIZATION

The demobilization process of the AUC was of a completely different nature from the FARC one. The demise of the paramilitaries was a DDR textbook case, compared to the individual desertion program granted to FARC members. As it was seen earlier, the demobilization of the AUC was the result of a negotiation and an ensuing agreement between the Uribe government and the AUC top leadership. The agreement's provision established cantonment camps for weapons' collection, the break-up of the organization, the collective demobilization of its members, and the preparation of combatants to reenter civil life as reintegration beneficiaries.

At the individual level, ex-AUC combatants lived the demobilization experience in different ways, sometimes diametrically opposite. As AUC's roles and functions were different from member to member, so were their demobilization paths. This section briefly highlights the perceptions and the initial reactions of the ex-paramilitaries who I interviewed, about how

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[194] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[195] There is also a judicial aspect to bear in mind. When someone demobilized and entered the DDR program, the crime of sedition and unlawful weapon possession would get deleted from the criminal record – as long as one stayed in the program and did not relapse in illegal activity. Thus, Cristiano and others point to the fact that they had to enter the program in order to clear their criminal history. Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

the demobilization unfolded. There are several cases of fear and uncertainty, others of refusal and opposition, but also a case of joy and relief. The point here is to underline how AUC combatants reacted when they were put out of the job, and what the dynamics of it were. The next part addresses the issue of reintegration and the search for new employment.

"They came one day and [told us] that this was going to end."[196] This is how Alejandro, an ex-AUC medical worker, recalls the demobilization. The sentence highlights some interesting points. First, the rapidity and the immediacy of this occurrence: for many ex-combatants the demobilization took place either as a surprise or as an abrupt event ("they came one day…"). Second, the definitive nature of demobilization. It is an irreversible project; an event which the individual ex-combatant does not have the possibility to influence.

The most prevalent first reaction and feeling among ex-paramilitaries were of refusal and denial. "For us who managed the finances, we never thought that this was going to end. None of us put savings on the side, we would spend all we earned. […] So, the initial impact was quite a shock", Ibarbo says.[197] For different reasons, other paramilitaries did not want to demobilize. Maria Victoria says that she was afraid of the stigma that society would place on her, as a demobilized combatant. She hints to the fact that she would have preferred to just quit. Radamael has similar reasons, saying that "I lasted more time in the regular army than in the paramilitaries. […] I did not want to demobilize. I just wanted to go home."[198]

The lack of information surrounding the process, and the related uncertainty raised combatants' anxiety. "I did not know how this [demobilization] would unfold; I mean, we did not know anything. […] There was fear as well, because one could be killed or there could be revenges just for the issue of wearing a uniform", Juan Manuel says.[199] As it was mentioned, there was a wide spectrum of experiences. Wendy – who was a paramilitary radio operator in a remote location in Vichada – welcomed the news of the demobilization. She had not been allowed to leave the group, and only allowed to visit her family once a year. Wendy was in fact trapped, and when news of the imminent demobilization came, "for me it was a joy, because I knew I would go back [home]. […] It was like being born again after so much suffering."[200]

There were cases like Camilo, who, instead, as a mid-level commander, did not want to demobilize because of the prospect of losing his power position. When raising his concern with the commander of his paramilitary group (Cuchillo), Camilo received the following

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[196] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[197] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[198] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[199] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[200] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

answer: "Man, do you think I am happy to give up 3,500 rifles??" This exchange is revelatory about the challenges (and, often cases, the failure) of reintegrating paramilitary mid-level commanders in Colombia and elsewhere. There is a growing awareness in the policy and academic literature about the importance of being inclusive with and sensitive to combatants who held power positions. Thus, there is the need to specifically target such group in DDR programs. Given their power, leadership and network, mid-level commanders may have the ability to disrupt a DDR process and contribute to violence relapse. They often would not settle for the same benefits of foot soldiers, for example (ODDR, 2009). "It was tough, and actually very frustrating", Camilo concludes.[201]

Related to this, there is an initial generalized feeling of entitlement among several ex-AUC. Somehow, they feel that they rendered a service to Colombian society, and, so, that they should be in a somewhat special position, and not be apologetic. Moving from being an illegal combatant with a certain degree of power within society, to being a nobody, who, on top of it, has to hide his past, is a challenge in psychological terms. "People left here with the mentality of still being a paramilitary", Alejandro says. He points to the difficulty of behaving "like a normal citizen: be in line, or deal with a complaint. [...] I remember that in a bank if they did not attend us quickly, we would catch the security guard, disarm him and tie him up!"[202]

8.2 Economic Reintegration: The Employment Factor

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: JOBS HELD AFTER DEMOBILIZATION AND THE SEARCH FOR EMPLOYMENT

Those ex-FARC members who recently demobilize are held on a temporary basis (between a few weeks and three months) in the army-run "Peace House", before being referred to the reintegration program and the civilian authorities. In these facilities, ex-FARC are psychologically and practically prepared to re-join society; they get interviewed by the military and their file gets processed. As it was previously mentioned, FARC demobilized combatants are expected to reveal what they know about the FARC, including most recent location of rebel units, military strength etc. in order to access benefits of reintegration. At the same time, ex-combatants go through an initial assessment of their capacity and skills to initiate their reinsertion in society.

I had the opportunity to meet and interview four ex-FARC members who were hosted in the Peace House. The four of them had only been demobilized for a few weeks. Thus, they were able to offer an undigested perspective of their aspirations and expectations about the reintegration process. "One comes out [of the FARC] with the expectation to be helped and

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[201] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[202] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

supported", introduces Giovanni. "Not that I would want to be helped with money: I would not like that. But economically, [I would hope the program can assist me] through the provision of a job: something that would allow me to be on my feet and move forward."[203]

What is interesting is that when asked about their immediate plans and aspirations once they will be allowed to leave the Peace House, these fresh FARC demobilized all mention livelihoods and finding a job as their key priority. For example, the case of Muriel: 43 years old, 32 of which were spent in the FARC. I interviewed him four weeks after he escaped the FARC. He conveyed all of his worries and fears about being reinserted in society. And he mentions livelihoods as his chief concern: "If I go and knock on the door of a firm, they are not going to take me. I am a 43-year old with no skills. […] The government should take care of us, and Congress should pass a law to support employment generation for demobilized. If one wants a piece of land, they should give it to him/her."[204] Muriel is scared about what lies ahead for him. Still very attached to the communist ideology of solidarity and equality, this is the only time in the interview that he puts his own interests ahead of the collective ones.

Two more ex-FARC in the Peace House single out the two most important issues for them, namely employment and raising a family. Giovanni says: "I will leave here and look for a job on my own, to see what I can do in life. I will constantly run from the guerrilla, and I want to raise my children. […] If someone gives me a job, I want to be honest."[205] Carlos is more specific: "I want to find work as a truck driver and raise a family, since I never had one. Nothing more. This is all I want."[206]

Thus, recent demobilized combatants perceive the issue of having a job as an essential component and priority of reinsertion and reintegration. Ex-combatants mention jobs as the key issue for them in order to move on – together with raising a family. This finding somewhat strides with the policy and academic literature on DDR and reintegration. While livelihoods is recognized as critical, the potential transformative power of a job for an individual who comes out of the traumatic experience of war is underappreciated.

As it will be discussed, jobs have the potential to steer an ex-combatant's life toward a virtuous path of reintegration and no criminal relapse. Juan Manuel – an ex-AUC – makes the point that sustainable employment for ex-combatants is functional to community security and it reinforces peace practices. "If society gives us an opportunity to work, trust me when I

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[203] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[204] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[205] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[206] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

tell you that everyone will work and will not commit any crime. But if one is pushed away, in order to support wife and kids I would do what I need to do."[207]

All ex-combatants hinted at the very first period after demobilization as being a particularly difficult one. Coupled with the material challenge of finding livelihoods, ex-combatants experience a sense of loss and distress. They go from being members of armed groups, which are highly structured organizations, to being members of society with no link to any structure. It is common then that ex-combatants face enormous difficulties in re-adapting to 'normality'.

Expressing such feelings of estrangement is a difficult proposition for people – especially if these intimate thoughts have to come out in a conversation with an interviewer who is at the same time a stranger and a foreigner. Therefore, several ex-combatants were only able to convey most of their fears and anxieties on more material grounds, like finding a job. After spending 8 years in the FARC, Roberto lamented that "it took me one and half, almost two years to find employment in the city [Villavicencio]. It was very hard; [...] and complicated. Then, with time I managed to find work."[208] Jairo – from the AUC – echoes his colleague: "To get where I am today [a professor at University of Meta] I had to suffer a lot: I had lots of unmet needs, I suffered hunger. But I made it."[209] These and other words – as it will be explained below in more detail – underscore the social rehabilitation that these ex-combatants have gone through. Their pride of 'having made it' is much about their own self esteem as it is about reintegration. Both self-esteem and reinsertion go through the act of finding and retaining a job.

Related to this, a challenge to find new work and a recurring concern among ex-combatants – both FARC and paramilitaries – is their lack of skills and experience. Like Muriel, Laia is also aware of her age and lack of experience. "[While in the Peace House] I dreamed of having an occupation, and I wanted to study for it. But, since I was 36 years old, I would think that I was too old for it. 'When would I finish?', I would ask myself. Who was going to give me a job at 40 years old?", she concluded.[210]

As a result of this lack of skills – coupled with structural issues in the economy and labor market – most ex-combatants end up working in the informal sector, with no labor rights and no sustainability of livelihoods. Unstable working conditions enhance vulnerability and hamper the reintegration outcomes of ex-combatants – as it is recognized by the OAS'

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[207] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[208] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[209] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[210] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia in one of its recent monitoring reports (MAPP-OAS, 2015).

To put a remedy to the lack of or insufficient skills, several ex-combatants have focused on education and vocational training. The government reintegration program sets up an important focus on education and it establishes clear milestones that all combatants have to reach in order to complete the reintegration route. Laia was in the process of completing a psychology degree at the time when she was offered a job in the *Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración* (ACR) – the government reintegration agency. Two more ex-FARC females, Laura and Cristina were also interested in jumpstarting their education. Laura says: "I started the program by only focusing on studying and meeting the program's requirements, including psycho-social support."[211]

From the AUC side, Jairo, who was a head of finance in the organization, rapidly completed a 5-year university degree in public accounting, followed by a graduate program in finance. This is a successful case of reintegration, as Jairo was then hired in the Business and Administration school of the University of Meta. "Right now, I am conducting two research projects, one on ethics and social responsibility, and a second one on economic development in the Eastern Llanos. […] I am teaching six classes in financial management and analysis."[212]

Ibarbo, a former AUC mid-level operative in Villavicencio, has also been able to turn life around through his educational achievements. Ibarbo completed an undergraduate degree in marketing and advertising. He is now pursuing a post-graduate program while he works full-time in the marketing department for the machinery multinational John Deere. Ibarbo reflects on his reintegration process: "I now have my job, my university commitment, my son. Thus, it is like I found my own centre of gravity. […] My life has dramatically changed with respect to my time in arms. Now I am doing well!"[213] As mentioned earlier, self-esteem and reinsertion go hand in hand through the provision of employment.

With respect to the kind of jobs held in the immediate aftermath of demobilization, most male ex-combatants point to the inherent job and livelihood insecurity. Most interviewees state that they constantly moved between periods of unemployment and irregular work. Odd jobs in construction or day labor were the most cited ones – especially among ex-FARC. An elder ex-FARC, Raul P., who spent all of his life in the group, admits: "Construction is my livelihoods – this is my work. I support myself as a day laborer, working for whoever calls

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[211] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[212] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[213] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

first."[214] Roberto recalls: "My first job was in construction: building a house. […] I was a painter, I would fix doors and windows, and work in the actual construction. Whatever was needed. I worked there for three months."[215]

Ex-paramilitaries face similar challenges of achieving sustainable livelihoods and experiencing job insecurity. Juan Manuel, who had a short stint in the AUC, has lived off of jobs in construction since the demobilization in 2006. "Currently, I work in private security", he says, "because in construction they pay little and you have no right to severance pay nor anything. I am not earning much in private security either, but I will have my severance pay, I do not pay for transport and I live close by. And I have a stable job, instead of working one month and then not working for the next two months."[216]

Mauricio, ex-AUC from a higher socio-economic level, also talks about his experience of changing job: "Better economic opportunity drove me to change job in the past. I worked for seven years in a semi-public health provider, and I was doing fine. But one day I told myself that I wanted to look for other opportunities." Thus, among ex-combatants, there are also aspirations of and willingness for career improvement. Mauricio wondered "whether my work can have more meaning and depth, focus on other communities, and be a bit more visible". Mauricio found an opportunity to work as a liaison officer with the reintegration program (ACR). Like Laia, he works directly with ex-combatants. "I accepted [the job offer] right away as the salary is a bit higher and most of all I can do what I like, work for and support people. […] I know this reality for having been part of an armed group, and I am proud to be working on this effort now", Mauricio concluded.[217]

Roberto – ex-FARC – was able to move on by finding employment with Ecopetrol, first, and Pacific Rubiales later – two of the oil multinationals that have contracts of oil production in eastern Meta. During my visit to Puerto Gaitan – a remote town in Meta that experienced enormous growth and development after oil discovery at the turn of the century – I was able to meet with a number of ex-combatants who work in the oil industry and related services. Sergio lives in Puerto Gaitan, but does not work in the oil business. "I used to work in a hardware store, but now I have a good job. I drive a school bus: I collect children from their homes in rural settings, I take them to school and then back home."[218]

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[214] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[215] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[216] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[217] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[218] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

TABLE 8.3: EX-COMBATANTS AND POST-DDR EMPLOYMENT

Ex-combatant (Armed group)	Jobs held after demobilization / Path to reintegration
Cesar (FARC)	Farmer
Mauricio (AUC)	Administrative officer in a government-run health provider. Currently, a reintegration officer in the DDR program (ACR)
Alejandro (AUC)	Studied medicine; had to abandon due to costs, and family to maintain. Parents were carpenters. Opened children furniture business
Jairo (ACCU)	Professor of Business and Administration at University of Meta
Ibarbo (AUC)	Obtained university degree; works in sales with auto industry spare parts (John Deere); and advertising freelance agent
Carlos (FARC)	Recently demobilized; held in military-run Peace House
Walter (FARC)	Recently demobilized; held in military-run Peace House
Giovanni (FARC)	Recently demobilized; held in military-run Peace House
Laia (FARC)	English to Spanish translations; Various vocational trainings. Currently, reintegration officer in the DDR program (ACR). Studies psychology
Roberto (FARC)	Occasional jobs in construction; seasonal laborer in oil industry. Currently, full-time occupation in a medical facility and shelter house for poor individuals
Raul P. (FARC)	Occasional jobs in construction
Laura (FARC)	Several jobs in shops (bakery, cafes, pool house, liquor store)
Maria Victoria (AUC)	Owns a micro enterprise of *tamales* (street food); studying gastronomy. Abandoned the nursing career as too expensive to gain certifications
Radamael (AUC)	Doorman in a private building. With family support, he was able to borrow money to buy a taxi (current)
Juan Manuel (AUC)	Occasional jobs in construction and in private security
Camilo (AUC)	Occasional jobs in construction; escaped to Venezuela due to threats; oil worker. Currently, ornaments workshop
Jon (AUC)	Farmer
Faustino (ELN)	Minor. Completing high school
Cristina (FARC)	Works part-time in a retirement home
Pablo (AUC)	Full-time oil worker
Wendy (ACMV)	Currently, open-ended clerical officer in Puerto Gaitan municipality. Started off with social work
Sergio (FARC)	Occasional jobs in farming, and hardware store. Currently, school bus driver
Fernan (FARC)	Spent 8 months in jail after demobilizing. Occasional jobs (home delivery, receptionist in hotel). Currently, seasonal oil worker; owns small plot of land
Ignacio (ACMV)	Entrepreneur: Transport cargo company
Cristiano (FARC)	Occasional jobs in construction; seeking work in oil service in Puerto Gaitan. Currently, unemployed
Muriel (FARC)	Recently demobilized; held in military-run Peace House
Jaime (FARC)	Occasional jobs as driver, in construction, farming. Currently, street food seller
Enrique (FARC)	Occasional jobs in construction
Juan (FARC)	Minor when demobilized. Completing education. Currently, seller in hardware store
Marco (AUC)	Taxi driver
Ivan (FARC)	Permanently invalid from war-time injury. Cannot work

These examples show the different nature and types of professional engagements in which ex-combatants found themselves in. Alejandro, who spent several years as a medical worker in the AUC, promptly joined a medicine training in a private university in Villavicencio as soon as his unit was demobilized. After 3 years, he realized though that he was not going to be able to study and financially support his wife and child with only a night job. Alejandro was forced to abandon his studies then. Given his father's background as a carpenter, he was

able to set up a business of children furniture. Thanks to the reintegration program's business generation scheme for demobilized ex-combatants, Alejandro was then able to expand his production and open a retail store as well.

As far as female ex-combatants are concerned, they did not engage in work in construction. For them, job insecurity meant that they often changed jobs in shops, restaurants and in entertainment services, like bars and clubs. It also meant that to make ends meet they had to perform more than one job at a time. As discussed above, female ex-fighters were also more prone to delve into their education requirements and interests. It is the case of Laura, Laia and Cristina, from the FARC side.

Maria Victoria – ex-AUC – owns a food microenterprise, which however does not give her enough income. She is also studying gastronomy as part of her education requirements with the objective to expand her business. There are also successful cases of reintegration of female fighters. Wendy – a radio operator for the paramilitaries – was able to ultimately secure a permanent job in the municipality of Puerto Gaitan, to work as an administrative support officer. As it would be expected, it took Wendy a few years of irregular work and job insecurity to achieve a permanent position. Like Mauricio, Laia managed to secure a job with the government reintegration program in Villavicencio, as a liaison with ex-combatants to support social programs.

STRUCTURAL LEVEL: PATHS TO AND CHALLENGES OF ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION; THE IMPACT OF JOBS ON REINTEGRATION OUTCOMES

There is an important point to be made with respect to the role of employment as a factor of reintegration. From the interviews that I conducted, it appears that those ex-combatants who were able to find a job, constitute a family and feel again as full members of society, are the ones who have been able to move on from their mostly tragic past. Reinserted ex-combatants who have a satisfactory working situation have managed to put the armed group's experience behind them. By talking to successful reintegrated cases like Ibarbo and Jairo, I perceived from their story how their emotional engagement to the armed conflict belongs to the past. They have been able to put some definitive distance between who they are now and their former status of combatants. Jairo and Ibarbo experience their commitment to the reintegration program as a necessary step toward reintegration, but in their own mind they are already reintegrated.

In this sense, with respect to other ex-combatants who are still struggling to find their place in society, the two ex-AUC do not have pending grievances related to the conflict, nor frustration toward the reintegration program. In fact, ex-combatants without a stable job are

more prone to still experience strong emotional legacy from the conflict – and in some ways feel still attached to it and the past they lived through.

Wendy – a former paramilitary member with a stable job in the municipality of Puerto Gaitan – spoke about the parallel process of emotionally feeling reinserted in society and being accepted by society. The two go hand in hand: the progressive social acceptance that Wendy and others have experienced is inextricably linked to the internal process of ex-combatants who distance themselves from their violent past. Many ex-combatants remarked the point that employment and jobs can support this process of reinsertion – both in terms of being accepted by society and of feeling a productive member of the community – which is one of the core arguments of this chapter. Time helps in healing the fracture of the past. Progressively, the stigma is less and less manifest toward reinserted individuals like Wendy. "I tried to delete my past," she concludes.[219]

All ex-combatants, in fact, mention the issue of discrimination, stigma and need for anonymity. Ex-combatants not only tend not to reveal their background in arms due to security concerns, but also – perhaps most importantly – due to the widespread lack of trust from society. Ex-combatants of all groups are seen with suspicion by members of society and public opinion at large, and as a result are vastly stigmatized and individually made accountable for the armed conflict. Ex-combatants whose real identity gets revealed in the workplace, for example, are often sacked. Employers do not trust them, but are especially concerned with the reaction coming from other workers, and potential problems that such a situation may create. Stereotypes and widespread negative perceptions in society about ex-combatants grossly undermine the potential employment of ex-combatants, their absorption into the workforce, and, ultimately, their reintegration outcomes (MAPP-OAS, 2015).

Ex-AUC Camilo mentions that he found a job with one of the oil multinationals in the Puerto Gaitan area, but that he was soon sacked after news of his previous affiliation to the AUC came to light. Wendy also confirms that this has happened over and over again with the oil companies in the area. Camilo has now a decoration and ornamentation workshop, but it is unclear whether this allows him and his family to have a decent livelihood. However, his negative experience with the oil multinational due to his status of ex-combatant has greatly contributed to his negative feelings about the future and his inability to move on. "I am going through hard times because I have not been able to find a good job, and I have not had the support of anyone. Neither the government, nor anyone at all!"[220] Camilo's story is a further example confirming the crucial role of employment in reintegration outcomes.

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[219] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.
[220] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

This issue of discrimination against ex-combatants is less evident in conflict-affected contexts where political violence has ceased and where the conflict has reached some type of resolution. The context of Colombia (at the time of fieldwork in 2013-14) sees instead a persistency of violent conflict, multiple actors, and conflating political and criminal agendas. All of which is not conducive to a comprehensive reintegration process of ex-combatants at both the individual and collective levels. In such context, reconciliation – a necessity to close the wounds of war – is hard to implement as there is no buy-in from society. Because the war and the violence are ongoing. Winning the acceptance from society is "the greatest challenge", ex-AUC Mauricio – who now works in the reintegration program – says. "We need that the community opens up its doors to us, that it takes some ownership of the reintegration process itself."[221] Maria Victoria, also an ex-AUC, suffered from discrimination in one of the vocational training she used to attend. "People are not prepared for this. They are not prepared to accept us", she concludes.[222]

Nonetheless, an important tool for reconciliation concerns social work, which is one of the core requirements of the program. As all ex-combatants have to serve some time of social work, this aspect has contributed to bridging the gap between ex-combatants and the communities. Such programs are, of course, more visible and have a greater impact in terms of reconciliation and social acceptance of the demobilized when implemented in small scale communities. In large urban spaces, social work programs have struggled to make a significant impact and to link to state institutions. Wendy – from Puerto Gaitan – emphasizes how, as a result of social work programs, the social attitude toward ex-combatants drastically changed. "[The community] appreciated what we did. We painted, cleaned parks and public spaces. […] We demonstrated that we are different now, we are not people in arms."[223]

There is a (somewhat predictable) dissatisfaction with the reintegration program among those ex-combatants (especially from the AUC), who were in a position of power. The lack of differentiation and targeting among ex-combatants by the DDR program left the mid-level commanders disgruntled. They are the ones who most lost in the demobilization process: from being in a position of power (both economically and politically) to having to accommodate all needs with basic support from the program. As it is seen in the next section, some authors stress the fact that the lack of focus by the DDR program on mid-level commanders is at the origin of the recidivism phenomenon.

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[221] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[222] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[223] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.

Thus, mid-level ex-AUC's evaluation of the program is negative. Jon is one of those who deems the program useless: "I had to stay in the program because I had to respect the rules that were established, rules which the paramilitaries committed to. The program has not facilitated at all my reintegration."[224] Camilo – also in a position of power in the AUC – stresses the inadequacy of the economic offer from the reintegration program. He mocks the business generation scheme that offers a grant of the equivalent of USD1,000 to set up a business. "If you do not have a feasible plan of livelihoods and employment for demobilized, [the program] will always be a failure! [...] The truth is that I regret the decision of having demobilized, because the program has not provided me with the guarantees that were needed," Camilo concludes.[225] Nonetheless, for others like Radamael, the DDR "program helped me. For the psychological part. [...] I can now control myself; I think about things, I analyse them and then I make a decision."[226]

There is one more important difference between ex-combatants who were rank and file members and mid-level commanders. From the perspective of jobs and employment, the interviews underline a connection between the role that an ex-combatant had while in the armed group, and the subsequent post-demobilization employment path. Perhaps not surprisingly, those ex-combatants who were in charge of local finance, who were recruiters, and/or were tasked with political mobilization roles, for example, are the ones that after the demobilization have been able to secure more profitable jobs in services or the public sector.

Such consideration chiefly applies to ex-paramilitaries. The mostly egalitarian system of roles and tasks in the guerrilla fundamentally prevented the rise of differences among combatants. In the paramilitaries, instead, more diversified sets of skills among members produced different career paths and roles within the armed group – as it was explored in the previous chapter. In turn, variation also produced different paths of post-demobilization employment and reintegration.

Ibarbo confirms this point: "I know a lot of ex-combatants who were rank and file and that now they are still like that: like waiting that the tide brings them somewhere. Those who do not have the capacity to say 'Ok, I want to improve my life condition, move forward and earn more money'."[227] In contrast, some ex-paramilitaries in a position of power and influence while in the armed group – like Jairo and Ibarbo – are the ones that after demobilization were able to secure better jobs for themselves: in a university and in the car industry,

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[224] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[225] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[226] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[227] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

respectively. Conversely, the rank and files members – like Radamael and Juan Manuel – tend to find either odd, irregular and informal work with a low salary.

8.3   Drivers and Dynamics of Recidivism

The phenomenon of recidivism in Colombia is a complex one. While recently a number of publications have discussed the issue (Kaplan and Nussio, 2016; Themner, 2011; Daly, Paler and Samii, 2013; Nussio and Howe, 2013; Nussio, 2016; Daly, 2011), there is still a lack of evidence on what drives ex-combatants to re-engage in armed groups' activities or illegality. First of all, a matter of definition. Recidivism may be intended as the antithesis of reintegration. If an ex-combatant re-engage in illegality, his/her reintegration path has clearly failed. Such dichotomy (i.e. crime=recidivism, no crime=reintegration) fails however to qualitatively assess different degrees of reintegration as well as its different manifestations. In fact, non-recidivist ex-combatants have not necessarily achieved reintegration in a successful manner: there can be ex-combatants who did not re-engage in an armed group but who nonetheless are not reintegrated by a number of measurements. Therefore, recidivism should be understood as one (extreme) manifestation of failed reintegration.

This section seeks to highlight some of the dynamics and drivers of recidivism, based on the interviews with ex-combatants. A set of individual, structural and organizational issues determine the outcome of an ex-combatant becoming a recidivist. Some of these issues – which are further analysed in this section – include: the specific armed group and the block within it; the degree to which the group is involved in drugs trafficking; the origin of the ex-combatant (rural or urban, paramilitary or guerrilla); the area in which the ex-combatant settles; the attitude and behaviour of the ex-combatant (i.e. is he/she vocal, or does he/she stay quiet?); and the potential need to supplement an unstable livelihood and/or unsecure employment. Thus, there is a whole set of variables related to space, social origin, economic condition, security and family background, among others, that determine recidivism.

The analysis of recidivism complements the post-demobilization employment trajectories. As there can be several reasons why some ex-combatants fail to reinsert in society, one of them – my argument goes – relates to the lack of employment or an unstable working situation. Re-joining an armed group or engaging in criminal activities is partially a consequence of this lack of employment opportunity available to ex-combatants. Thus, recidivism is here analysed from the perspective of employment. This section addresses the question whether there is a connection between lack of job or unstable employment condition and recidivism.

Experts agree on the fact that non-state armed actors prefer to *employ* an ex-combatant over a new recruit. If armed actors behave like normal employers, then they will prefer to hire combatants who have previous work experience on their CV and who come with references. Therefore, they would look for former armed groups' members – who may be DDR beneficiaries at this point – rather than first-time recruits. As it is discussed below, non-state armed groups use coercion and threats to coopt ex-combatants into their criminal groups.

According to the ACR, as of early 2016, out of over 58,000 demobilized combatants from both paramilitaries and guerrilla, 9,4% of them committed some criminal activity after demobilization and are therefore considered recidivist (Observatorio de Paz y Conflicto, 2016). There is however an issue with how recidivism is measured: the 9,4% figure only refers to those who have been sentenced by court, and excludes those who have either been captured, are awaiting trial or have been simply charged with a crime. Therefore, given the length of judicial processes, the figure provided by the government is likely an underestimation of the phenomenon. In addition, it is unclear whether any type of crime committed by an ex-combatant automatically qualifies as recidivism, or if the ex-combatant has to be specifically charged with illegal armed group's membership.

Further constraints to the understanding of recidivism are the methodological and ethical issues associated with the study of recidivism. Undoubtedly, there is an objective bias in the answers that ex-combatants gave me when prompted questions on the recidivism issue. Re-engaging in unlawful activities – if detected by authorities – carries the immediate termination of the reintegration benefits as well as the suspension of all the legal benefits deriving from the status of ex-combatant. The law is particularly harsh with ex-combatants who are recidivist. Therefore, risks are significantly high. With this in mind, no ex-combatant would feel safe in being honest about recidivism with a researcher who has been introduced by the reintegration program itself. As it was discussed in Chapter 3, when asking question around recidivism, my strategy was to avoid direct and personal questions. Instead, I would ask questions about the dynamics of recidivism, how it works, what the incentives are for ex-combatants, and what the opportunity and the strategy of armed groups to approach ex-combatants are. Ultimately, while the risk of bias still holds, I received informative insights on the dynamics and drivers of recidivism, which constitute the core of this section. In fact, I also triangulated these findings with key informants, in order to strengthen their validity. A number of experts that I interviewed both in Bogota and Villavicencio were able to either confirm or disprove the findings from the interviews with ex-combatants.

A final note on the difference between ex-paramilitaries and ex-FARC as far as recidivism is concerned. While there is some evidence of ex-FARC being recruited by new criminal armed

groups, none of the interviews confirmed this point. Obviously, ex-FARC cannot go back to the FARC as they are considered traitors and deserters. Thus, recidivism is a phenomenon that chiefly concerns ex-paramilitaries. With the above caveats in mind, some ex-paramilitaries were open to discuss the subject of who and why would decide to go back in arms, and the underlining circumstances and dynamics. On the other hand, ex-FARC were not receptive at all in talking about recidivism: not only they predictably denied of being approached to join a non-state armed group, but they were agnostic (or silent) about recidivism, and refrained from any consideration surrounding it. Thus, the present section is built exclusively on the interviews with ex-paramilitaries as well as on insights from key informants.

INDIVIDUAL: LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES

At the individual level, ex-combatants list the lack of employment as the chief driver of recidivism, leading ex-combatants to re-engage in criminal activities or re-join a non-state armed group. Ignacio – ex-paramilitary from Puerto Gaitan – admits that he has seen many demobilized working in the oil sector. He stressed the importance of holding a job for reintegration and crime prevention purposes. "Those ex-combatants that have been sacked right now are back into criminal groups."[228] Employment is indeed an important component; nonetheless, attributing the rise of recidivism to the failure of employment generation is an overstatement. Recidivism is the product of a complex set of issues, as this section demonstrates.

Nonetheless, employment is recognized as the most immediate and direct cause of recidivism. Ex-combatants' testimonies point to the lack of or unsatisfactory employment situation as the leading cause of demobilized going back in arms. Alejandro: "As there is no job [available], therefore one falls back inside [the armed group]. [...] Notwithstanding the law which rules that if we commit crimes we get jailed and loose all our benefits, still as human beings we are concerned with the present time, and nothing else."[229] Camilo echoes this vision: ex-combatants "have to go back [to armed groups] because there is no job opportunity here. No opportunity, period."[230] Still, there is no convincing evidence claiming that unemployed ex-combatants are more likely to go back to crime than employed ones. Whether one holds a job or not becomes a factor only when it is assessed together with other drivers and enabling factors for recidivism.

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[228] Interview held in February 2014, Puerto Gaitan.
[229] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[230] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

Juan Manuel goes back to the issue of societal discrimination against ex-combatants as an important driver of recidivism. He recalls what he told one of his manager upon discovering his ex-combatant status: "When you fire me because I am a demobilized, you are making a mistake; because if you fire me, you are preventing me from having a job. Then, I go somewhere else and I still cannot find work and the whole world turns its back at me because they know that I am a demobilized. What do I do? I start committing crime! For this reason there is so much killing, stealing, massacres. Because there is people who are turned back, cannot find work, and so they go back to the groups."[231] Albeit simplistic, this view raises the point of how discrimination against ex-combatants contributes to further alienating ex-combatants and to pushing them into crime and violence again.

Some ex-combatants do also recognize the complexity of the transition process which they go through. They are less inclined to attribute all the recidivism to lack of employment, but instead state that certain individuals have a very hard time to reinsert into society. Jairo says that "the process of transition is very difficult. [...] The way you are used to earn money, get what you need, relate to other individuals in society is very different. And now for ex-combatants is very very hard. [...] I faced enormous difficulties to get where I am [i.e. faculty member at university]. Many people are not strong enough: they are offered to go back and they accept."[232]

When asked what the profile of the typical ex-combatant who re-engage in armed groups is, some ex-combatants, like Jairo, talk about weakness of character of certain individuals. Connected to the incapacity of finding employment and reinserting into society, ex-combatants lack fundamental social skills that favor reinsertion. Juan Manuel explains that "there are people who are inept to work, they are weak, they do not want to put an effort. And they are the most vulnerable to recidivism. They are people used to wait for easy fixes. [...] They fail to be social with people; they do not have the capacity to relate to other people. They do not know how to talk, how to ask a favor. [...] There are lots of people that have been back to armed groups because they do not know any better, they do not know how to look for a job."[233] In employment terms, a career transition is sometimes harder than staying in the same working environment.

Family support plays also a critical role in reintegration outcomes and is often mentioned by the ex-combatants that I interviewed as an important stabilizer in the post-demobilization phase. There is evidence that raising a family and focusing on family ties give ex-combatants dis-incentives to break the law: ex-combatants that have family seem to be less prone to

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[231] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[232] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.
[233] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

recidivism. Jon admits that "during this time [in the AUC] one does not think about anything, about danger. [...] After children are born, you soften up. You start being more careful and value personal security much more than before."[234] Radamael echoes this view: "When I was in the military and then the AUC, I never married nor I had children. I decided to raise a family after the demobilization." He is now married and has a 5-year old daughter. "Through a family, I started seeing things differently. One avoids dangerous or risky situations. [...] When someone entices you [through proposing a potential criminal activity], it is about having the moral strength to say 'no, I am not doing this because I have more important people to take care of and more important things to do'. [...] I have been living with my spouse for six years now, and she knows that I do not have anything else going on other than my job and my family", Radamael concludes.[235]

In conclusion, these considerations highlight first of all that employment is only an immediate cause of recidivism. As Jairo and Juan Manuel state, employment alone is not the issue, but it is a more complex interaction involving also the legacy of war, the lack of socialization, and poor or absent family ties that many ex-combatants experience. The linkages between these factors – together with a context of non-state armed groups' proliferation – produce recidivism.

STRUCTURAL: ONGOING CONFLICT AND POWER OF NEW ARMED GROUPS VIS-À-VIS THE STATE

The presence and persistence of non-state armed groups is undoubtedly the enabling factor for recidivism. In Colombia, DDR is not part of a post-war stability and security strategy, but it takes place amid ongoing violent conflict. It goes without saying that this factor represents an obstacle to the final outcome of the DDR program, i.e. reinsertion of ex-combatants into society. As it was seen in Chapter 5, the region of Meta – as well as several other conflict-affected areas – experienced a proliferation of new armed groups in the wake of the demobilization of paramilitaries. Such groups are more criminal in nature, and preoccupied more with control of illicit trafficking's routes rather than political goals, as paramilitary groups originally were.

According to some of the ex-paramilitaries that I interviewed, the immediate phase that followed the demobilization of paramilitary units was the most intense in terms of recruiting ex-combatants. New non-state armed groups were quickly formed to fill the vacuum left by the AUC. Radamael says: "It is no secret that at the beginning a lot of those who demobilized went back. [...] They used to say that who wanted to go back could do so."[236] Juan Manuel

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[234] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[235] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[236] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

admits of having been approached by groups in 2006 following his demobilization. "They called me twice while I was in San Martin [a traditional paramilitary stronghold in Meta], telling me to show up for a meeting run by the same people. I did not go, I changed my number and that was it."[237] Juan Manuel was never approached again, nor was he threatened. This personal event may imply that at the very beginning, in an effort to quickly re-constitute armed groups, attempts to recruit ex-combatants were done without too much follow up nor threats.

While the dynamics of new groups' formation was not extensively told by any interviewee, ex-combatants did mention that the initial failures of the DDR program were instrumental for demobilized to re-join newly formed armed groups. Radamael mentions the initial shortcomings of the agency in charge of reintegration (ACR). "At the beginning there was a lot of disorganization [within the ACR]. Things did not go very well. [The ACR] did not put a lot of attention [to people], as there was not a lot of individual support as there is now. Three months could pass without you showing up and no one would say anything. Nowadays you behave that way, and you are kicked out of the program and judicially charged. I mean, there was not the support that there is now, and there were no tools for ex-combatants' reintegration. […] [Then], one single reintegration officer was responsible for 100 or 200 ex-combatants. Today there is more support; and more control."[238]

Thus, exploiting the fluid and to a certain extent chaotic phase that followed the demobilization, new criminal groups successfully approached several hundred ex-combatants. Experts speculate that mid-level commanders were the group that was mostly affected by new recruitment rather than rank and file members. There is also agreement among experts and policy makers themselves that the reintegration program has been insufficient in targeting and addressing the specific needs of mid-level members of paramilitaries, as it was discussed before. Ibarbo shares this view: "[It is more probable that the one who] goes back to crime is the one who once had a position of power, who demobilized and is stuck at home. It is more likely that he organizes a group, manages it and gains money."[239]

In addition, there is a grey area in which some ex-combatants are with one foot inside legality and with one foot outside of it. The chapter on recruitment and mobilization has exposed the blurred nature of the boundaries between combatants, ex-combatants and non-combatants. These categories are not fixed, but there is substantial grey area between them. Not all armed group's members are combatants strictly speaking, but perform a variety of

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[237] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[238] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.
[239] Interview held in November 2013, Villavicencio.

roles. Their level and timing of engagement can also vary: there are different modalities of affiliations to armed groups. One expert confirmed that between 2007 and 2010 many ex-combatants, in fact, were in arms on a part-time basis and at the same time received reintegration benefits. As if they had a double life. Juan Manuel says that it is not infrequent that this situation occurs. However, he says, "these people are very reserved, they would not tell anybody. They could have a real and legitimate job which is only a façade."[240]

Thus, it is plausible that someone works in the legal world but at the same time entertains relationships with illegal groups, for example by performing small and occasional tasks (the *trabajitos*, or 'small jobs'). There could be the case that someone can be a recidivist and a DDR beneficiary at the same time: ex-combatants who I interviewed hinted at such possibility. The informality of an armed group makes it easier to be involved again in it. In such fluid situation, no ex-combatant is put in front of an encompassing life decision where he/she consciously signs up for a life in illegality. This happens in a much more subtle, informal and automatic way.

From a structural point of view, it is important also to consider whether recidivism is more prevalent in areas and municipalities that are more affected by the presence of non-state armed groups. If more armed groups' activity is associated with higher rate of recidivism, this point brings an important implication for reintegration and peacebuilding in Colombia. The attainment of reintegration outcomes for ex-combatants and the strengthening of peace is, thus, partially dependent on the war context as much as it is dependent on the design and implementation of reinsertion programs and strategies. Undoubtedly, the presence of armed groups and ongoing violent conflict are important constraints when trying to build peace.

To sum up, in terms of structural drivers of recidivism, the fact that ex-combatants go back in an armed group is more dependent on the context of armed groups' presence rather than on the fault of the reintegration program. There is a context of non-state armed groups which is attractive to certain ex-combatants.

ORGANIZATIONAL: NEW ARMED GROUPS' RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

As it was stated in the Methodology chapter, at the inception of this research journey I attended a study tour of reintegration programs organized by the Colombian government. During such occasion, I met an ex-AUC – I will call him Dario – who had a successful reintegration path, setting up a workshop of doors and windows. He explained how the process of re-joining a non-state armed group unfolds in practice. Dario says that armed groups do try to re-involve ex-combatants, in a somewhat casual way. They do not come with

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[240] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

a formal job offer to be part of the group, in which one is put in the position to be either in or stay out of the group. Instead, the approach is much more subtle and – in appearance – harder to detect.

By including both structure and agency, his answer was revealing. Dario referred to an informal process of co-optation that involves former peers and cohorts. He said that somebody who you know would call you and propose you to do one small job (*trabajito*), such as delivering a threat message, hiding a weapon, or even more simply moving a vehicle or transporting some supplies. Once an ex-combatant agrees on performing one or more of these, then he/she is again involved in the armed group without necessarily having made a well thought or balanced consideration. It all takes place informally, and, in appearance, casually.

The point Dario makes reinforces the 'grey area' argument explained above: some ex-combatants live with a foot in legality and a foot in illegality. Recidivism takes place informally, and sometimes even without the full awareness of the ex-combatants. As simple as it is, this answer implies that a DDR program does not occur in a social vacuum, nor it begins with a clean slate. Instead, DDR takes place in a specific social context where former combatants may still retain ties with non-state armed groups, as well as they may still be perceived as combatants by the community where they live in. This story also stresses the importance of networks and organization, beyond simple economic incentives.

An additional recurrent practice used by armed groups to pressure ex-combatants concerns threats and coercion. These are regular tools utilized to recruit ex-combatants. Several ex-combatants – mostly from the paramilitaries – admitted of having been threatened to re-join the groups. Maria Victoria (ex-AUC) says that her husband – a former paramilitary as well – was threatened. "They called and told him 'We need you, we need you!'."[241] Her husband refused, and as a result the sister was threatened and beaten. The whole family had to flee to the remote region of Vichada to avoid further threats and violence. Camilo had an even more dramatic experience. He fled to Bogota for six months, but was nonetheless discovered, and had to flee to Venezuela due to threats to his life. Obviously, threats can be related to other issues (for example, revenge), and not only to an opposition to being recruited. It is not possible to distinguish here between the different causes of why threats arose. However, many ex-paramilitaries stated that either someone who they knew or themselves were subject to threats to put pressure on recruitment.

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[241] Interview held in February 2014, Villavicencio.

CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed the critical phase of transition from non-state armed group back to civilian life. Through the testimonies of over 30 ex-combatants, it gives a comprehensive picture of the challenges and dynamics of demobilization and reintegration from the perspective of employment and livelihoods. The chapter is concerned in great deal with the perceptions and the stories from ex-combatants of how they manage to gain sustainable livelihoods, the challenges of finding employment, and the different pressures that they receive from society. On the one hand, ex-combatants have to struggle to be accepted back in society, fight discrimination and marginalization on the work place. On the other hand, they are constantly wary of the emerging non-state armed groups and the threats coming from those. The dynamics of recidivism are the result of a structural context of persistence of armed groups and violent conflict in Colombia.

TABLE 8.4: KEY FINDINGS ON REINTEGRATION AND RECIDIVISM

- *Individual demobilization of FARC combatants takes place due to multiple circumstances. Less than half report of having demobilized due to a deliberate and planned decision to flee the FARC. All others left the group as a result of a permanent injury, or because were captured or they surrendered while in combat.*
- *Ex-paramilitaries and ex-FARC experienced different paths of demobilization and associated challenges and perceptions.*
- *In the immediate post-demobilization phase, former AUC combatants (especially those in position of power) share feelings of frustration and resentment toward the demobilization process, including a perception of entitlement. Several others combine a sense of relief and fear, arguing that they would have preferred not to go through the reintegration process at all.*
- *DDR beneficiaries – whether FARC or AUC – express similar needs in terms of their reintegration process. On an individual level, they are almost all primarily concerned with issues of livelihoods and employment, stigmatization coming from society, and the need for anonymity due to security concerns.*
- *Employment is an important component of socio-economic reintegration. Together with the 'raising a family' factor, findings show that holding employment is a decisive factor for ex-combatants' perceived and real reintegration and for their own self-esteem.*
- *There is a connection between the role that an ex-combatant held in the armed group and the position he/she will have in society after the demobilization. Those ex-combatants in a position of power and influence while in the armed group are the ones that after demobilization are able to secure better jobs for themselves. Conversely, the rank and files members tend to find either odd, irregular and informal work or jobs with a low salary.*
- *Non-state armed actors prefer to employ a former member (i.e. recidivist) over a new recruit. If armed actors behave like normal employers, then they will prefer to hire combatants who have previous work experience on their CV and who come with references. Therefore, they would rather hire a former armed groups' member – who may be a DDR beneficiary at this point – than a first-time recruit.*
- *The process of recidivism takes place somewhat casually, as a result of an informal, and often personalized, process of cooptation.*

The present chapter also concludes a 3-phase journey of ex-combatants' experiences with war and peace. Centred around their experience in the armed group – which for most of them has profoundly defined their life – the three phases contain the whole employment

history of these ex-combatants: from the time before they entered the armed group and the dynamics of recruitment, to the period within the armed group, to the demobilization and the reinsertion in society. Ultimately, the three chapters have been an attempt at understanding dynamics of violent conflict through the eyes of men and women and the way they have experienced life and work.

Conclusion

The dissertation's intellectual journey started from a policy dilemma – i.e. what accounts for successful reintegration of ex-combatants. The initial exploration of this question from a policy perspective provided a series of answers, all of which were nonetheless unsatisfactory due to the lack of generalizability, complexity and depth. When attempting to understand issues around the challenges, priorities and constraints of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), a common explanation is that 'context matters' and there is need for more holistic approaches. This situation begged for an intellectual exercise able to navigate a vaster terrain, beyond DDR implementation and its challenges.

The story of Cesar that opened this dissertation exemplifies the non-linearity and ambivalence of a DDR process. Most of all, it highlighted the deeper interaction between DDR and Cesar's experiences with recruitment, membership to, and desertion from the FARC. Ultimately, this intellectual process resulted in this research, which accounts for the complexity of DDR, its far-reaching implications, its historical role, and its connection to inherently structural political issues, like order, authority and power.

As it is highlighted in the concluding chapter, my research orientation has changed from one of finding answers to policy dilemmas to one that seeks to address explanatory questions. During the course of the research, the approach shifted from 'what can be done' to 'what can be understood'. Such change of approach does not preclude the research from having concrete policy implications. Rather, it does not presume that there can be universal solutions to the question of 'what works'.

With this premise in mind, this conclusion discusses some of the main findings from this work. In its synthetic form, it revisits the approach that the research has taken and its analytical underpinnings. It then presents the main findings and the answers to the research question. The thesis also reflects the potential knowledge contribution, including some thoughts about follow up research. Some considerations on policy contribution conclude the dissertation.

WHAT WAS DONE (APPROACH, STRUCTURE, CONTENT)

This research provided a comprehensive qualitative analysis on the role and implications of DDR on the dynamics of war and on the incipient transition from war to peace in the region of Meta, Colombia. The thesis addressed the overall research goal of understanding the

interaction between the DDR process and war to peace transition. It has done so through the use of integrated levels of analysis (individual, organizational, and structural) applied to different phases, and through the discussion and adoption of *ad hoc* analytical frameworks.

I will briefly recap the approach to the research in order to connect it to the main findings.

An analytical framework based on non-linearity, and on integration of levels and phases. First, the analysis of DDR, a program which typically takes place during the post-war phase, required this research to expand the temporal frame of reference beyond post-war and to include other key moments. As post-war is inherently part of the dynamics of war and peace, the research looked holistically at the theory and practice of transition from war to peace. The transition between the two was here intended not as unidirectional nor linear. Dynamics of war and peace may overlap. As it was conceptualized, they are in a *continuum*. DDR is part of this *continuum*, and therefore the full time span of the transition is relevant. This represents the first major departure from the policy literature, which is overly concerned with the 'building the peace' phase that takes place after violence ceases (Bourgois, 2001; Cramer, 2006; Duffield, 2000; Muggah (ed.), 2009; Pugh, 2000; Richards, 2005; Sambanis, 2004; UNDP, 2008; Marc et al., 2013).

The passage from violence to peace cannot be considered as a clean rupture between the two. Rather, the research demonstrates how violence and peace are in an organic relationship in which there are perpetual points of continuity between the two. The transition from war economies to peace economies, for example, is one characterized by strong continuity. This transition involves elites, local population and economic structures, all of which do not mechanically experience the end of war and the start of peace, but rather experience the economic transition as a process. In a similar fashion, the phases within the transition are characterized by a similar lack of clear boundaries. Phases may overlap and/or repeat themselves in a non-orderly fashion. Grey areas are the norm, rather than black or white situations (Goodhand, 2004; Keen, 2000).

The non-linearity of the war to peace transition process is at the core of the research's analytical framework. Analytically, the research emphasized different elements and moments within the transition. The lifespan of a conflict is disaggregated into three phases (pre-, during- and post-conflict), which are analysed both individually and in their interaction. Not only the post-war phase is dependent on the previous phases, but also the former may last many years, beyond the implementation of DDR and peacebuilding policies. Analytically and temporally dissecting the transition is an artificial exercise: as it was mentioned, I adopt the *continuum* framework and phases are not obvious. Nonetheless, such division allows one to single out the three stages of a conflict and to assess the organic

interaction among them.

Second, the research conceptually integrates an individual-level analysis of ex-combatants, an organizational level of non-state armed groups, and a structural-level analysis. The latter is concerned with the macro analysis of war and transition process. The organizational level concerns the functioning, behaviours and patterns of non-state armed groups, which is part of the emerging literature on rebel governance. The ex-combatants' process of experiencing war and later being demobilized from it cannot be fully understood without considering the organizational dynamics of the armed groups to which they belonged during the war. The structural war dynamics and the transition to peace provide an analytical framework through which the pathway of ex-combatants is contextualized and complexified. Ultimately, the integrated framework of the three levels provided a comprehensive analysis of war to peace transition and DDR.

The employment lens. Third, the conceptual model of the research was based on the specific lens of employment and labor market of war, through which to look at these multiple-level and multiphase complex dynamics. With a relatively narrow focus, this lens was analysed against each phase and each level, and was able to capture the links between them.

Employment and the labor market of war represent an innovative approach in conflict and peacebuilding literature. Through the employment framework, the research approaches war to peace transition in its entirety. Within a coherent analytical framework, the research put together issues of conflict onset and mobilization (phase one), membership to armed groups and patterns of armed groups' human resources (phase two), and peacebuilding, demobilization and reintegration (phase three).

At the individual level, the research put under the same framework all the employment experiences of ex-combatants, including those before joining the armed group, the period in the armed group, and the job experiences during the reintegration phase. A 'career' examination of ex-combatants represents an important innovation. The general tendency is to see post-war employment reintegration as a stand-alone phase. The approach here is to consider the interaction between post war and other phases.

By the same token, the research focused on the experiences of ex-combatants within the armed group and on the internal dynamics of armed groups as far as their human resources are concerned. Through the testimony of ex-combatants, I was able to compile a profile of different 'professional figures' within the FARC and the paramilitaries. Ex-combatants recollected a variety of job roles that were undertaken and tasks that they performed. Thus, I

considered the time spent by an individual in an armed group as gainful employment: one in which the ex-combatant is an employee and the armed group is an employer.

Indeed, the experience in an armed group is a highly specific one (traumatic, from many points of view), and not comparable with other 'work' experiences. It is often, if not always, a break in one's personal history that entails a clandestine life lived outside of society. While this research did not equate an experience in an armed group to any other job, nonetheless, there is continuity – in terms of employment – in the life of individuals who join armed groups – as there is a continuity in any given career of any individual.

Data issues. This analytical framework should also be assessed within the data collection process, its challenges, constraints and limitations. The focus on employment was not predetermined, but resulted from the progression of the fieldwork and from a few initial interviews with ex-combatants. Without solicitation, many ex-combatants (especially paramilitaries) referred to their period in arms through an employment lens, as if they had a job. The draw of a direct link between employment and armed group's membership is, therefore, the fruit of ex-combatants' answers and my elaboration of them.

The adoption of the employment lens also responded to specific methodological challenges. In addition to the difficulty of conducting research "in" and "on" conflict (Goodhand, 2000), the security situation in Colombia and Meta at the time of fieldwork imposed extreme caution. A context of ongoing armed conflict with the FARC and of rising new criminal groups from the ashes of demobilized paramilitaries represented an obstacle in reaching out to ex-combatants in the first place. To circumvent security concerns, I built a convenience sample of ex-combatants that were beneficiaries of the government-led DDR program and were introduced to me by the government agency (ACR).

Nonetheless, by interviewing ex-combatants that were somehow affiliated to the government meant that potential biases in their answers could materialize. In order to mitigate those I had to seek answers that in some ways were neutral and not politicized. For example, seeking data and testimonies exclusively on reintegration, its challenges and the received benefits, would have almost certainly solicited biased answers due to the fact that the government agency was the one facilitating the interviews. Instead, a narrative and discussion around 'employment' experiences had the advantage of being perceived neutral and devoid of risks for the respondent.

MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

State, (dis)order and post-war transitions: A political economy perspective. From a structural point of view, the research emphasized the fact that war to peace transition

dynamics are better understood through categories of political order arrangements and ensuing authority and power. In political economy terms, these variables are the ones that are the most critical when assessing a conflict situation and transition. Order, authority and power define different levels of relationships and interactions, including between state and non-state armed groups, between local population and non-state armed groups, and between political and economic factors of transition, among others. Both the literature and the case study of Meta highlighted that transition is more about continuities between practices of war and peace, rather than an idealized transformation that peacebuilders strive to achieve. In other words, through the Meta case study, this research finds that a transition from war to peace can only be understood when structural factors are taken fully into consideration. In turn, peacebuilding approaches can only be effective when those structural factors are acknowledged.

A far reaching historical outlook underlines the fact that conflictive dynamics date back to the chronic marginalization of Meta and the Eastern Llanos from the country's centre of power. The system of governance in place has been centered around what Robinson (2013) describes as 'indirect rule', which is modeled after the 19th Century European-style system of controlling far away colonies. In such system, local elites retained unchecked political, social and economic authority, insofar that they did not challenge the centre's authority. Such system is at the origin of past and contemporary conflict dynamics in the region, including rise of non-state armed groups. The main tenants of theories from Tilly (1985, 1990), Elias (1982) and North et al. (2009), among others, hold when assessing Meta's historical trajectory.

Specifically, through a historical political economy analysis, the research retrieved the root dynamics of conflict onset and mobilization of non-state armed groups in Meta. Rooted in processes of colonization of remote areas, the governance arrangement between centre and periphery in Colombia has constantly impacted conflict dynamics in Meta. Some of the dynamics that are experienced in Meta include a persistent fragmentation of authority. During the 20th Century up to now, political, economic and social orders have emanated from multiple sources beyond the state, to include, among others: traditional landowning elites and rampant settlers striking deals with the centre; a rent-seeking class around the illegal drugs industry that rose in the 1980s and challenged traditional powers; the communist-inspired guerrilla groups controlling peripheral areas for decades; and the proliferation of paramilitary and criminal groups from the 1980s onward.

In Meta, state institutions have traditionally entertained an array of ties with powerful local level landowning elites that drove the colonization process. State and elites have entered

into dynamics that simultaneously included competition, cooptation, and shared interests. Conceivably, local elites pulled in the direction of maintaining or reinforcing autonomy, in many cases through informal institutions. State actors have been interested in either coopting or defeating them in the attempt to centralize authority. This process, best described by Tilly (1985), is not unidirectional, nor the state has had a consistent agenda: at times, elites have been contrasted, while at others they have been supported. Thus, the state is understood as a multiple level actor: ambivalent in its responses and behavioural patterns.

The result is that Colombia – with respect to regions like Meta – has experienced a fragmented state formation process. At the root of the rebellion cause, there is a highly unequal land ownership structure, precisely because the state has not been able to rule and mediate local dynamics in regions like Meta. Local elites and local population have been left alone to set up order, resulting in unequal arrangements, unbalance of power, and a fundamental dispute of legitimacy. (In)security is also a by-product of these botched state formation dynamics. A monopoly of violence that was never fully achieved on the part of the state has been constantly challenged by the proliferation of non-state armed groups and local elites throughout Colombian history.

DDR implications: The structural level. Seen through this lens, the post-DDR transition in Meta and the remobilization of remnants of paramilitary structures and new criminal outfits have their source in unstable power arrangements and monopoly of violence, rather than being dependent on DDR policy failures. For example, demobilization and reintegration outcomes are often put in direct relationship with the policy realm, with little consideration for the political underpinnings of DDR. Liberal peacebuilding would imply that the DDR program operate under the assumption of a clean slate, whereas the awareness of political dynamics is fundamental. An important finding of this research is the following: the understanding of post-war dynamics (including factors for successful DDR) is dependent on the understanding of – and on the assessment of the relationship with – previous moments in war dynamics, i.e. the origins and causes of war, the rise of armed groups and the unfolding of war and its conflict dynamics.

Given the overarching findings at the structural level, DDR is read through a more complex lens too. Some authors focused on the implications of demobilization on state formation. The way in which DDR is shaped forms integral part of the post-war settlement. DDR has been used throughout history as a tool to reinforce the social contract between state and society. Since the appearance of nation-states in the 19th Century, the glorification of ex-combatants and the example of their sacrifice have strengthened feelings of national belonging, and have contributed to upgrading people's status from subjects to citizens. At times, DDR has been

the fundamental link between state and society, in order to build cohesion and national unity (Campbell, 2003; Centeno, 2003; Kriger, 2003).

By the same token, the explanation of the DDR process in Meta is satisfactory only when a full picture is provided. The recidivism of ex-combatants and the rise of criminal groups in Meta are related to the unstable power arrangements that followed the DDR of the AUC in the region, and the progressive weakening of the FARC, among others. Answering the questions of how and why some paramilitary factions refused to demobilize and how new groups emerged from the ashes of old ones goes through a comprehensive political economy analysis that was provided by this research. I have stressed that entrenched local level dynamics, the state's failure to fill the void left by demobilized paramilitary factions, and the economic rents from drugs trafficking have all contributed to an uneven outcome following the DDR of the AUC.

Rebel governance and recruitment: The organizational level. A related area of findings concerns the ties that non-state armed groups establish with the local population and surrounding context. In particular, the formal and informal institutions that result from those relationships. Such ties have implications for recruitment patterns, for example, which was an important area of focus of this research.

Mobilization and recruitment are a function of social and territorial control, and of power by non-state armed groups. There is a grey area between combatants and civilians in areas dominated by armed groups. In Meta, non-state armed groups have had to necessarily establish relationships with locals communities, including in the economic, social and governance domains. During war and/or control by non-state armed groups, economic, social and political activities do not halt, but continue under different forms.

With respect to recruitment, there is a clear pattern of those ex-combatants (both FARC and AUC) who entered in some relationships with armed groups *before* becoming members of the group itself. Individuals live and work in conflict-affected areas where armed groups operate, and some individuals are eventually recruited. This dynamic calls for a granular understanding of rebel governance, and how armed groups interact with the local context. Hence, there is an area of contiguity between non-state armed groups and the local context in which they operate. The one who becomes a member of a non-state armed group is often someone who, as a non-combatant, has had some prior interaction with the armed group.

Such contiguity is rarely acknowledged, nor are the full implications of it well understood. In fact, non-state armed groups in Meta act as quasi states in areas under their control. And the pervasiveness of the social control they exercise permeates the whole social and economic

life. By stressing this point, the research underscores the complexity of conflict dynamics and the interaction between levels of analysis. To explain the complexity of war, the research highlights the links between potential recruits, local populations, armed groups' strategies, and power dynamics. Untangling these links is what gives explanatory power to the war dynamics and the transition in Meta.

Employment, recruitment and FARC-AUC variation. The research has applied an employment lens to the transition from war to peace and DDR. This framework is useful because it further expands the explanation of mobilization and recruitment patterns in conflict-affected areas like Meta. In sum, I argue that the employment and livelihoods opportunities provided by non-state armed groups (and, by the same token, the lack of opportunities in the legal economy) represent a key incentive for men's and women's decision to join a group.

Within the rebel governance and the informal institutions set up by non-state armed groups when controlling territory, I focus on the labor market of war, in which armed groups and combatants are the principal agents. This *ad hoc* labor market is constituted by a supply (i.e. pool of potential recruits and combatants) and a demand (i.e. non-state armed groups seeking members). I argue that employment represents one of the key ties between armed groups and local populations. The former needs capable and committed individuals to run its military and political operations. The latter is motivated by a matching need. Whether in time of war or in time of peace, individuals indiscriminately need to find and secure a job, as employment and livelihoods are at the core of human needs and activities. I argue, that, among other reasons, individuals join armed groups as part of an employment-seeking behaviour. This tendency was more pronounced for paramilitaries than FARC.

Empirically, the case study on Meta confirms some of these theses, and highlights the key differences between the FARC and the paramilitaries with respect to the ties that they establish with locals. In particular, I emphasize the variation between the two organizations when it comes to recruitment and mobilization. The research showed how the 'employment' lens provides remarkably different findings depending on the nature of the armed group.

When analysing guerrilla-controlled rural contexts like Meta, employment often means inheriting the family's livelihoods, which in Meta means landless peasantry in a context of social and economic exclusion. The marginalized rural areas of Meta controlled by the FARC display contexts where either meager existence as landless peasants or membership in the FARC are the only 'employment' options (Ferro and Uribe, 2002). In fact, it is the structural inequalities around land tenure and those very meager existence as landless peasants that drove armed rebellion in the first place. Through such understanding, the individual decision

to join an armed group can be viewed to a certain extent as a natural consequence of pre-existing conditions of poverty, marginalization and lack of options, rather than a complete rupture with previous life.

At the organizational level, the FARC had an elaborate recruitment system in place, which was based on cultivating potential recruits through ideology and through providing support to marginalized communities. 'Winning hearts and minds' has been at the core of FARC recruitment strategy. Suffering from permanent state absence, local communities have traditionally turned to the FARC for basic services, dispute resolution and access to markets. Recruitment represents one (important) component of FARC social control and strategy toward its constituency.

For paramilitaries, the link between recruitment and employment is even more pronounced. AUC recruiters operated in areas that were more integrated with the state and the legal economy, thus they had access to a larger labor market than the FARC ever did. The AUC recruited among the wide informal labor market that characterizes developing countries. In particular, they recruited in those grey areas between legality and illegality. What the AUC could offer was a proper job in the organization, with a competitive salary and opportunities to advance internally and build a career. It is clear how non-state armed groups devise standard procedures to recruit men and women in arms and have established career paths within their organizations. Albeit differently, both FARC and AUC had an elaborate system of human resources.

At the individual level, paramilitary recruits considered membership in the group as a job opportunity. When revealing the story of their recruitment, most ex-paramilitaries told me that they had joined paramilitary factions while they were unemployed. With respect to the FARC, most ex-AUC entered the organization while on job-seeking. They reported welcoming the opportunity to join the paramilitaries because they would be offered a higher salary than anything else they could find locally. There was only one case of a recruit who entered the AUC motivated by ideological reasons.

DDR of the FARC and recruitment dynamics. The empirical research unveiled an additional finding that puts DDR in relation to recruitment dynamics. The analysis of FARC recruitment patterns in the 1990s contributes to the understanding of the factors associated with the individual DDR program for guerrilla members from 2003 on. As I have noticed, the number of ex-FARC combatants deserting and joining the individual DDR program skyrocketed after 2003. There are several reasons why this happened, including: heightened political and military pressure under the Uribe government, important military defeats at the

hands of the paramilitaries and the regular army, and a decline in ideological and organizational cohesion, among others.

Nonetheless, this research finds a critical direct link between recruitment and demobilization patterns in the FARC. Among the reasons why scores of FARC combatants abandoned their group, it is worth singling out a qualitative shift in the recruits that the FARC was able to attract from the mid-1990s on. The empirical analysis revealed that the political and military expansion of the FARC during this decade meant that its recruitment had also to be expanded on a significant scale. The FARC had traditionally placed critical importance on the ideological aspect, as every recruited combatant had to be first a committed Communist militant. Indoctrination was a strong part of recruitment. The result was that the FARC had always managed to attract recruits with a strong ideological commitment. The FARC military and organizational expansion of the 1990s, instead, forced the FARC to somewhat loosen its strict standards, with the result that the ideological commitment weakened and/or became somewhat secondary. Thus, if the recruitment becomes less strict, it follows that the internal cohesion of the group also weakens. In turn, opportunities for desertion increase too. As my interviews showed, several of the more recent recruits were much less committed to the FARC cause than the older generation.

This finding provides further granularity and differentiation between FARC ex-combatants. There is an older guard composed of ex-combatants recruited before the mid-1990s who remain fundamentally ideological, like Cesar. My research finds that the reintegration of this group is more difficult than the reinsertion of those 'newer' FARC members, because the former tends to be more rigid in its approach to society. To complicate things though, my research also finds that the newer FARC ex-combatants are more at risk of recidivism than older recruits. By having established weaker bonds to the FARC and its cause of social justice, the newer FARC demonstrate fewer reservations in joining other illegal armed groups, which include new paramilitaries or criminal groups.

Employment in war. Moving from recruitment to actual membership to a non-state armed group, the employment lens allows exploration of the *during* war phase from a practical standpoint. As much as *sui generis* the armed group's experience can be, there is a fundamental understanding and perception by the combatant himself to be in an occupation, or a job. As it was previously mentioned, ex-paramilitaries in particular refer to their time in arms as holding a proper employed position – although they admit it was a poor choice. Ex-combatants discussed their responsibilities, tasks, and relationship with peers, superiors, and subordinates.

The empirical research makes clear that violence is only one component of an armed organization. In turn, war is understood here beyond the mere display of violence. The research showed how non-state armed groups' members are 'employed' in a multitude of job functions other than combat itself. The different roles that an ex-combatant held while in the armed group – beyond the role of 'agent of violence' – is a further sign of the complexity when analysing war, peace and transition processes.

The DDR literature has generally not differentiated between roles performed by ex-combatants within the armed group. First of all, traditionally, DDR has been applied to rebel groups or armed groups with a well defined military structure. In these situations, nearly all combatants to be demobilized were at some point individually engaged in fighting activities. They were 'combatants' in the strict sense of the term, or individuals who carry weapons and are engaged in military activities. This is the case of the FARC, which was a highly centralized military organization. All FARC members went through the same experience of military training and exposure to the battlefield. Despite the homogenous nature of FARC combatants, the research shows differences when it comes to functions and roles, as well as career advancement. A prominent role within the FARC was the one of political mobilization, whereby FARC members would work directly with the peasantry to reinforce the cohesion between the group and its main constituency.

A more marked differentiation characterized jobs in the paramilitaries. The AUC was a hybrid organization which simultaneously retained distinct aspects. Paramilitaries were concurrently a private militia, a counterinsurgent army or a criminal, quasi-mafia outfit. The implication from this hybrid nature is the diversification of individual profiles within the paramilitaries. As it is explored in Chapter 7, AUC members were not all involved in combat and/or activities connected with the pursuit of violence. Several of them only performed logistics roles: from driver to radio operator to medical nurse all the way to performing extortions, working on illegal drugs trafficking and other heinous practices. It derives, then, that this research's notion of 'combatant' is more comprehensive to include non-combat roles. In turn, such expanded notion has implications for reintegration strategies, as well as for risk of recidivism.

Reintegration or recidivism? The research also assessed to what extent practices of reintegration are influenced by wartime experiences and previous jobs. At the individual level, ex-combatants carry over the skills and experience acquired while in arms into their post-war reintegration pathway. The research found that the length of time spent in arms is an important but not decisive factor in predicting the reinsertion path of an ex-combatant. Intuitively, the longer the time an individual is a member of an armed group, the longer it

takes to reintegrate. While this is true, my research expands this assertion to include more differentiation with respect to the roles that ex-combatants perform while in arms. The findings from the research demonstrate that more time spent in arms does not equal more time needed to find a job after demobilization. In other words, the type of role and career pattern of ex-combatants have also an effect on the reintegration path.

Arguably, the disaggregation of both ex-combatants' roles and of the variables associated with ex-combatants' life cycle (including age, background, level of education, previous occupation, age of recruitment, number of years in arms, roles and functions within the group etc.) serves the objective of deepening the understanding of war-to-peace transition dynamics. Breaking the mantra that ex-combatants are not a discreet category would contribute not only to the understanding of non-state armed groups' internal organizations and behaviours, but it would also be functional to the policy level. At a minimum, disaggregating ex-combatants' jobs will create and build awareness about the differences among them. Ultimately, knowing more about ex-combatants' roles in the group and their past employment experiences may help to devise more targeted policies and allocate resources more efficiently.

A political economy lens was also able to unveil some of the dynamics of recidivism. The factors that drive ex-combatants into being re-recruited by non-state armed groups do not only concern the individual level, nor policy failures. In addition, the structural level dynamics of emerging new armed groups linked to crime is not fully satisfactory either. In line with other findings, what the research asserts is that more often than not there is continuity between the war and the post-war phase. Not only do ex-combatants find an enabling environment for recidivism, but there are also informal and deep rooted dynamics involving local level interests and balance of power. While actors may frequently change, the social and economic processes (both legal and illegal) are entrenched and may take a long time to shift.

When asked about recidivism, answers from ex-paramilitaries point to a system in which armed groups approach ex-combatants because of their previous experience in arms (the employment lens, again). Recruiters know that ex-combatants can be reliable candidates. In addition, the risk of recidivism materializes without much warning in a highly informal way. Someone you know would ask you to take care of a small task (literally, *trabajito* in Spanish; again, the employment lens), such as moving supplies, or driving a vehicle somewhere. But the request comes from an illegal entity, so once you accept you are again tied to and involved in illegality.

Thus, grey areas are the norm: recidivism takes place informally and sometimes even without the full awareness of ex-combatants. Such dynamic implies that a DDR program does not occur in a social vacuum, nor does it begin with a clean slate. Instead, DDR takes place in a specific social context where former combatants may still retain ties with non-state armed groups and they may still be perceived as combatants by the community where they live. Narratives of recidivism stress the importance of networks and organization, beyond simple economic incentives.

CONTRIBUTION AND NEXT STEPS

Knowledge contribution. From a knowledge contribution point of view, this research subscribed to a historical political economy approach to the understanding of war-to-peace transition and DDR. It emphasized the factual power and order dynamics (at local level), the complex interaction between political, economic and social variables, and the *continuum* between war and peace. Simultaneously, the research has also borrowed heavily from the recent theorization of the rebel governance literature, which is concerned with the understanding of how wartime institutions operate. Insights from this approach contribute to both an understanding of war dynamics and how civilians cope in times of war. The analysis of the different practices of war economies and their transition into peace economies is also part of this approach (Goodhand, 2004).

Through the review of this literature, a novel methodological approach, a case study on Meta, and an empirical study on ex-combatants, the research proposes some points of knowledge contribution. These include:

- Employment and labor market of war lens of analysis to look at multiple phases and multiple levels. Phases and levels are analysed both discreetly and in their interaction. This approach carries potential avenues for new and follow-up research.

- Reintegration of ex-combatants is problematized looking at their full life spectrum rather than exclusively at the post war phase. Factors of reintegration also depend on recruitment patterns and individual experiences of war dynamics.

- At the collective level too, there are links between mobilization and recruitment, war dynamics, and ensuing DDR and political settlement. The demobilization of armed groups is a political matter that follows the whole trajectory of war dynamics, and does not happen in a vacuum.

- Human resources of non-state armed groups fit into the rebel governance literature concerned with the internal functioning of armed groups and their ties to the external. Some novel insights are provided on how non-state armed groups organize their recruitment, roles

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and tasks in the group, and career paths.

Policy contribution from a broader outlook at DDR and transition. In terms of policy contribution, the study places itself within academia's and practitioners' efforts to improve responses and development interventions in conflict-affected countries. There is an underlying and unresolved tension between the ambition to set universal standards of practice and the reality of working in unique contexts that defy standardization. The ambition to devise universal solutions, in this case DDR, to address development problems has clashed repeatedly with the practical reality of contextual and structural factors. The failure to recognize both complexity and non-economic variables, as well as to understand deep contextual factors, has led to poor design and outcomes of peacebuilding programs, for example.

To be universal and provide standardized solutions, development has moved away from complexity, to become a 'bureaucracy' of development. Albeit relevant, untangling this dilemma is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, the origin of the present research comes from the ambition (and the frustration) to account for this complexity, to contribute in minimal part to untangle the dilemma between policy prescription and the very contextual history in which a policy is applied.

The main policy implication from the study is that in a context like the one in Meta, with historically-rooted conflating political, economic and criminal dimensions, DDR policies alone may be ineffective in achieving significant outcomes at the macro level. The political economy context cannot be overlooked. There should be a recognition of factual balance of power relations, and established institutional and economic ties – even when these emanate from actors that are deemed illegitimate (Mampilly, 2011).

In turn, peacebuilding strategies that are designed on paper through the unfolding of technically-engineered solutions of economic reconstruction and social recovery may be inadequate and/or not successfully applicable when the on-the-ground expertise and contextual considerations are downplayed. Usually, for large scale top down post-conflict programs and initiatives, a fine-grained analysis of power relationships, historical interactions between groups and elites, and rooted conflictive factors are not fully taken into consideration. Arguably, improvements and adjustments have been recorded in large development agencies in terms of integrating social components and political considerations to the devise of programs and strategies.

The analysis that was conducted for this research clearly demonstrates that DDR has implications far beyond the security and development realms that are commonly recognized

by development actors. DDR not only contributes to stability and security through disbanding armed groups; it not only contributes to transitional justice and reconciliation at both national and community levels through devising provisions that bring ex-combatants and society at large closer together; and DDR not only provides for the welfare of ex-combatants through material support to their reinsertion in society. In fact, the research showed that DDR has a greater long term role in state formation and strengthening of state legitimacy and institutions. Disarming non-state armed groups has concrete political implications of national- and local-level bargaining between elites. In the case of Meta, there is a critical balance between centre and periphery when assessing DDR.

DDR enters in a direct relationship with the state's efforts at consolidating the monopoly of violence. In Meta, the DDR of paramilitaries was only partially accompanied by a larger effort at expanding the monopoly of violence to peripheral areas, which have traditionally experienced alternative forms of order and multiple overlapping authorities. At the time of the demobilization of the AUC (2003-06), the conflict with the FARC was still at its height, and parts of Meta (i.e. the FARC stronghold of Ariari microregion) were under direct FARC domination. Thus, the research does not want to bring the conclusion that the DDR with the AUC failed because the state did not expand its monopoly of violence. Far from it. I do recognize that the DDR with the AUC was one step toward that direction. The point is that a DDR program cannot be made accountable for ongoing overarching war dynamics. If any, the failure consisted of setting expectations that were too high from the DDR with paramilitaries. More modest goals would have been beneficial.

In addition, the integration of three levels of analysis and a complementing comprehensive outlook at Meta's historical conflict dynamics provided insights on the conditions for sustainable reintegration and on risk factors for recidivism beyond the case of Colombia. The research explains that failed individual reintegration and recidivism into armed groups is only partially attributable to the provisions of the DDR program. Recidivism is a symptom and a natural consequence of either remobilization of existing armed groups or mobilization of new ones. In turn, the dynamics and rise of new non-state armed groups in Meta were the result of a complex interaction that involves local elites, power arrangements, existing armed groups, and economic and strategic interests on the part of the state and other actors involved.

Policy implications from the adoption of an employment lens. Conceptually, employment has been analysed here in a broader sense. Employment has not only been addressed in terms of a narrow policy level focus on employment generation. More deeply, this research addressed the question of what it means for an individual ex-combatant to

have a peace-time job after having been a member of an armed group. From this premise, the research contributes to the policy realm by exploring the meaning of employment and its impact on successful reintegration. After demobilization, the employment factor undoubtedly plays an important role in the reintegration process of ex-combatants – something that the policy literature acknowledges only to a certain extent.

Nonetheless, the full impact that the employment dimension can play at the individual level is somewhat underappreciated. The interviews that I conducted show that both ex-FARC and ex-paramilitaries who hold a job have a stronger perception of themselves as members of society – away from the armed group's experience. Thus, employment is central to the individual ex-combatant's process of reinsertion. In this sense, the transformative power of holding a job is not fully recognized. The interviews that I held brought the finding that those ex-combatants who were successfully employed overwhelmingly experienced feelings of being reintegrated and of having put their past behind, compared to those without something they could call a job – either in the legal or illegal economy.

In turn, employment reintegration policies may be more effective when the role and factors for recruitment and the life in the armed group are somewhat understood and acknowledged by policy implementers. Reintegration programs may want to consider previous employment experiences of ex-combatants when designing employment generation programs, for example.

Future research and future challenges. This set of findings and contributions introduces us to discussing some of the research that can follow up from this research. In terms of employment, there is scope to more rigorously understand how employment impacts individual reintegration; and, in turn, what initiatives can facilitate ex-combatants to secure a post-DDR employment. The point is that within the DDR literature and practice, employment has always been labeled under the rubric of 'economic' reintegration. My research has argued that for ex-combatants – as for any individual – employment plays a larger role, which involves self-esteem and feeling of holding a place in society. Nonetheless, this last statement is not universally valid. The value that individuals place on employment differs from society to society and culture to culture, it is not predetermined. For example, some societies could place a higher value on community acceptance rather than being employed or not. Thus, there is room for further research on employment, its meaning and impact on the overall reintegration of ex-combatants.

In conclusion, this academic journey has taken me to explore some of the life experiences of individuals who went through a complete cycle of war: from recruitment to membership to demobilization with the ambitious goal of trying to simultaneously analyse the details and

make sense of this individual war to peace transition as a whole process. The complementing political economy analysis has given explanatory power of this complex cycle from peace to war and back to peace, in an attempt to account for multiple levels of analysis to explain how individuals, communities and societies experience war and peace.

Reflecting on specific follow-up research is also functional to the assessment of the current situation in Colombia. Since this research was started and fieldwork was conducted, a landmark change has taken place: in September 2016, a comprehensive and final peace agreement was signed between the government of Colombia and the FARC. The agreement puts an end to the armed conflict between the two and ratifies the end of the FARC as a non-state armed group. In June 2017, the disarmament of the FARC was completed and the critical reinsertion and reintegration phases have started.

While in numerical terms the most recent demobilization of approximately 7,000 FARC members pales when compared to the over 60,000 FARC and AUC-combined demobilized ex-combatants between 2002 and 2015, the political significance of FARC's DDR is equally important, if not more. The dissertation speaks to the current situation as it portrays the far-reaching implications of DDR in terms of state formation, and in terms of sustaining the transition from war to peace. While peacebuilding discourse and policies in Colombia have been around for over a decade in the midst of armed conflict, the peace agreement provides the opportunity to step up and complete efforts at supporting the transition toward sustainable peace. As this research underlines, an approach that does not neglect nor shy away from power relationships, local-level order and the institutions that the FARC have had in place for so long, would allow for a realistic understanding versus idealistic policy formulas.

Annex 1: Profile of 31 Ex-Combatants

NAME	AGE	GENDER	ORIGIN: DEPT / MUNICIP	ORIGIN: URBAN or RURAL	STATUS / CHILDREN	FATHER'S JOB	DOMESTIC ABUSE or NEGLECT	ARMED GROUP	LOCATION (in armed group)	YEARS (in armed group)	IDEOLOGY	YEAR OF DDR	EMPLOYED (currently) (Y/N)
Cesar	45	M	Guaviare	Rural	Married / Y	Peasants	N/A	FARC	Llanos	27	Strong	2010	N/A
Mauricio	40	M	Guaviare	Rural	Separated / Y	N/A	N/A	AUC - Heroes del Guaviare	Guaviare, Meta	2	Medium	2006	Y
Alejandro	35	M	Meta / Granada	Rural	Separated / Y	Carpenter	N/A	AUC - Bloque Casanare	Casanare, Meta	5		2006	Y
Jairo	39	M	Vaupes / Mitu	Urban	Married / Y	Drugs trafficking	N/A	ACCU - Frente Guaviare	Casanare, Meta	5	Strong	2003	Y
Ibarbo	32	M	Bogota	Urban	Single / N	Services (mother)	Y	AUC - Heroes del Llano	Meta	6	Medium	2006	Y
Carlos	27	M	Tolima	Rural	Single / N	Peasants (mother)	Y	FARC	Antioquia, Tolima	14	Medium	2013	N
Walter	19	M	Meta / Mapiripán	Rural	Single / N	Peasants	N/A	FARC	Meta	1 (less than 1)	Weak	2013	N
Giovanni	24	M	Antioquia / Turbo	Urban	Married / Y	N/A	N/A	FARC	Antioquia	3	Medium	2013	N
Laia	39	F	Meta / Villavicencio	Urban	Married / Y	N/A	Y	FARC	Caqueta, Tolima, Valle del Cauca	11	Medium	2010	Y

NAME	AGE	GENDER	ORIGIN: DEPT / MUNICIP	ORIGIN: URBAN or RURAL	STATUS / CHILDREN	FATHER'S JOB	DOMESTIC ABUSE or NEGLECT	ARMED GROUP	LOCATION (in armed group)	YEARS (in armed group)	IDEOLOGY	YEAR OF DDR	EMPLOYED (currently) (Y/N)
Roberto	31	M	Vichada / Cumaribo	Rural	Single / N	Peasants	N/A	FARC	Vichada	8		2007	Y
Raul P.	48	M	Meta / Guamal	Rural	Married / Y	Peasants	N/A	FARC	Caqueta, Cauca, Meta, Tolima	27	Strong	2008	Y
Laura	28	F	Meta / San Juan de Arama	Rural	Single / N	Peasants (mother)	Y	FARC	Caqueta, Guaviare, Meta	10	Strong	2009	N
Maria Victoria	34	F	Meta / Villavicencio	Urban	Married / Y	N/A	Y	AUC - Bloque Centauros	Casanare	2	Weak	2005	N
Radamael	34	M	Meta / Villavicencio	Urban	Married / Y	Public service	N/A	AUC - Autodefensas del Carmen	N/A	1 (less than 1)	Weak	2007	Y
Juan Manuel	42	M	Meta / San Martin	Rural	Separated / Y	Peasants	N/A	AUC - Bloque Centauros	Casanare, Guaviare	1		2006	Y
Camilo	37	M	Meta / Villavicencio	Urban	Married / Y	Fisherman	N/A	AUC - Bloque Centauros	Guaviare, Meta	4		2006	Y
Jon	40	M	Meta / San Martin	Urban	Married / Y	Public service	Y	AUC - Bloque Centauros	Meta	8		2006	Y
Faustino	18	M	Nariño / Barbacoas	Rural	Single / N	Peasants	Y	ELN	Nariño	4	Weak	2006	N
Cristina	40	F	Meta / La Uribe	Rural	Married / Y	Peasants	Y	FARC	Cundinamarca, Meta, Tolima	22	Strong	2003	Y
Pablo	31	M	Antioquia (Uraba Antioquieño)	N/A	Married / Y	N/A	N/A	AUC	Norte de Santander	2	Medium	2006	Y

NAME	AGE	GENDER	ORIGIN: DEPT / MUNICIP	ORIGIN: URBAN or RURAL	STATUS / CHILDREN	FATHER'S JOB	DOMESTIC ABUSE or NEGLECT	ARMED GROUP	LOCATION (in armed group)	YEARS (in armed group)	IDEOLOGY	YEAR OF DDR	EMPLOYED (currently) (Y/N)
Wendy	33	F	Meta / Puerto Gaitan	Both	Single / Y	N/A	Y	ACMV	Vichada	6	Weak	2006	Y
Sergio	37	M	Meta / Puerto Lopez	Rural	Married / Y	Peasants	N/A	FARC	Meta	2	Weak	2012	Y
Fernan	34	M	Caqueta / San Vicente del Caguan	Rural	Married / N/A	Peasants	N/A	FARC	Caqueta, Llanos, Huila	14	Strong	2009	Y
Ignacio	48	M	Meta / Puerto Gaitan	Rural	Married / Y	Peasants	N/A	ACMV	Meta	4	Weak	2005	Y
Cristiano	33	M	Meta / La Macarena	Rural	Single / N	Peasants; retail	N/A	FARC	Guaviare, Meta	11	Medium	2008	N
Muriel	43	M	Cundinamarca / La Vega	Rural	Married / Y	Peasants	Y	FARC	Cundinamarca, Huila, Tolima, Meta	32	Strong	2014	N
Jaime	36	M	Meta / Villavicencio	Both	Married / N	Peasants	Y	FARC	Caquetá, Vichada, Guaviare	12	Strong	2009	Y
Enrique	29	M	Tolima	Rural	Married / Y	Peasants	N/A	FARC	Guaviare, Meta, Tolima	10	Medium	2006	N
Juan	22	M	Meta / Granada	Rural	Married / N	N/A	Y	FARC	Meta	3	Weak	2008	Y
Marco	33	M	Meta	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	AUC	N/A	N/A	Medium	No	Y
Ivan	47	M	Meta (Ariari)	Rural	Separated / Y	N/A	N/A	FARC	Guaviare	16	Weak	2010	N

Annex 2: Demographics of Ex-Combatants' Sample

Annex 2 provides some descriptive statistics of the sample of thirty-one ex-combatants. These statistics are drawn from data collected in the first part of the interview, which included closed questions. Together with demographic statistics, I include disaggregated data in terms of armed groups' membership, number of years in arms, etc. As it is explained in Chapter 3, the sample was built with the expectation to be representative of the larger population of ex-combatants who are part of the DDR program in Meta. An expectation which this research met.

Interviewees were predominantly males: of the thirty-one interviewees, twenty-six were males and only five were women. This uneven balance reflects the male versus female variation of the ex-combatant population in Meta, which is 80% male to 20% female. All five female interviews were of good quality and rich in content, which offsets the disadvantage of having only a limited number of female interviewees. In fact, the average time of the five interviews with women (over one hour) is longer than men's (around fifty minutes).

Eighteen participants belonged to the leftist guerrilla, including seventeen FARC members and one ELN member (divided into fifteen men and three women). Thirteen members of the paramilitary are part of the sample (eleven men and two women): ten from the AUC; two from the ACMV (a Meta-based paramilitary group which, although was not part of the AUC, it collectively demobilized in 2005); and one ex-paramilitary from the ACCU (the antecedents of the AUC). This variation mostly mirrors the percentage variation among the total 3,035 ex-combatants in Meta (ACR, 2017), which is divided as follows: 62% FARC, 3% ELN, and 35% paramilitaries. For convenience, I will speak of either "guerrilla" or "FARC/ELN", or simply "FARC" to include both the FARC ex-combatants and the one ELN member. By the same token, under the label 'paramilitary' or 'AUC' I will include AUC, ACMV and ACCU members.

With respect to age group, twenty-one ex-combatants (68%) were between 26 and 40 years old. Six ex-combatants were in the 40-60 age group (19%), while four interviewees were between 18 and 25 years old (13%). The percentages for the three age groups among all demobilized in Meta are close enough to my sample (65%, 21% and 11%, respectively). The five female interviewees were between 28 and 40. The average age is nearly thirty-five years old: ex-paramilitaries' average age is almost thirty-seven, whereas FARC/ELN are slightly younger – just over thirty-three years old.

Nearly 60% of participants were either married or in a relationship, while one in four was single. Of the female participants, three were married/in a relationship and two were single. Twenty ex-combatants have children, nine of them do not, and for two participants this information is not available. One female participant (the youngest one, of 28 years old) does not have children, whereas the other four do.

In terms of origin, family background, and location while in the armed group, the sample is made primarily – but not exclusively – of ex-combatants who come from or served in an armed group in Meta and the Eastern Llanos. Thus, they mostly come from a rural background. In particular, nineteen participants (over 60%) are from Meta; a percentage that goes up to 71% when we include the rest of the Eastern Llanos (Arauca, Casanare, Vichada, and Guaviare). The rest of the participants come from different areas of Colombia.

Nineteen participants (over 60%) state that they grew up in a rural setting; eight of them (26%) are from an urban setting (city or large town); two participants were raised in both rural and urban; and for two ex-combatants this information is not available. Of the 71% from the Llanos (twenty-two participants), with the exception of six of them who grew up either in the city of Villavicencio or in the town of San Martin, Meta, all the others come from a rural background.

With respect to the area where ex-combatants in the sample operated while pertaining to the guerrilla or the paramilitary, twenty-four out of thirty-one participants (77%) mentioned either Meta (sixteen ex-combatants) or another location in the Eastern Llanos (mostly Guaviare) as their theater of operation. In addition, half participants (fifteen) stated that their family (parents or caregivers) belonged to the peasantry (often chronically poor)[242]. For nine participants the information about family background is not available, thus we can assume that the group with peasant origins may be even larger. These are important statistics that back the premises of this regional study on Meta, which is a rural region with a mainly rural-based conflict and an agricultural economy.

The number of FARC/ELN that have rural and urban origins is fifteen and two, respectively – with one participant growing up in both settings. With respect to paramilitaries, instead, most participants are urban-based (six), while four of them were raised rurally, one grew up in both settings, and two paramilitaries did not disclose this information. This statistics is in

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[242] While I did not include indicators of poverty or vulnerability in this statistics profile, interestingly, I built *ex-post* an indicator on family abuse and/or neglect from participants' answers. While talking about family background and social origins, unsolicited, twelve participants (39%) admitted the difficult family conditions in which they were raised, being either victim of domestic violence, abuse and/or neglect, or growing up without one or both parents. It is worth noting that all five female participants in the sample were victim of domestic neglect, violence or parental absence. Instead, there is no remarkable differentiation between ex-guerrilla and ex-paramilitary members. I will come back later on this – i.e. how instability and/or violence at home may contribute to recruitment by armed groups.

line with the social origins and location of both groups (Brittain, 2010). On the one hand, the mixed nature of paramilitaries and the AUC, which started as a rural reaction to the power of the guerrilla, and progressively became powerful in several urban centres. On the other hand, the overwhelmingly predominant rural origin and operation of the guerrillas, both FARC and ELN, is confirmed by the fact that only two ex-guerrillas out of eighteen come from an urban environment. Thus, this statistics strengthens the general validity of the sample (FARC are mostly rural-based while paramilitaries have mixed origin), and allows for some generalization of the findings from the present research (Gutierrez Sanin, 2008).

One last parameter to be mentioned concerns the length of time spent in the armed group. This is an important point. Since one of the focus of the research is on 'employment' within the armed group, it was crucial to collect testimonies from armed group's members who had different experiences in terms of amount of time spent in arms.   Thus, my sample includes junior, mid-level and senior members of armed groups (in terms of time, not necessarily in terms of rank). Thus, on this level, the sample is well balanced – as it is represented by the table below.

TABLE A2.1: LONGEVITY OF EX-COMBATANTS IN NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS

# of years in arms	# of FARC XCs	# of AUC XCs
0-2	2	5
3-5	3	4
6-10	3	3
11-20	6	0
20 +	4	0
N/A	0	1
Tot.	**18**	**13**

There is an important difference here between ex-guerrilla and ex-paramilitary participants. The most 'senior' ex-paramilitary in the sample spent eight years in arms. For ex-paramilitaries the average time in the armed group is less than four years. The ex-guerrillas have a completely different profile in this respect: average time in the armed group is twelve and half years. The ex-FARC with most years in the group spent thirty-two years in arms, while twelve of them spent ten or more years in the group. There are several reasons for this. First, the FARC as an armed organization started its activities in 1964, whereas modern paramilitary formation only took place in the late 1990s – with AUC demobilizing in 2003-2006. The relative short time of the AUC explains first of all the difference between the two groups. Second, the higher longevity of guerrilla members is due to the permanent condition of a FARC member: once admitted in the group, an individual could not quit and leave but membership was for life.

Annex 3: List of Interviews

Interviews with Ex-Combatants

Date	Location	Name	Affiliation
December 2012	Villavicencio (café)	Cesar	FARC
November 2013	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Mauricio	AUC
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Alejandro	AUC
	Villavicencio (University)	Jairo	ACCU
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Ibarbo	AUC
	Villavicencio ('Peace House')	Carlos	FARC
	Villavicencio ('Peace House')	Walter	FARC
	Villavicencio ('Peace House')	Giovanni	FARC
February 2014	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Laia	FARC
	Villavicencio (social work site)	Roberto	FARC
	Villavicencio (social work site)	Raul P.	FARC
	Villavicencio (social work site)	Laura	FARC
	Villavicencio (social work site)	Maria Victoria	AUC
	Villavicencio (social work site)	Radamael	AUC
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Juan Manuel	AUC
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Camilo	AUC
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Jon	AUC
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Faustino	ELN
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Cristina	FARC
	Puerto Gaitan (café)	Pablo	AUC
	Puerto Gaitan (local school)	Wendy	ACMV
	Puerto Gaitan (local school)	Sergio	FARC
	Puerto Gaitan (local school)	Fernan	FARC
	Puerto Gaitan (local school)	Ignacio	ACMV
	Puerto Gaitan (local school)	Cristiano	FARC
	Villavicencio ('Peace House')	Muriel	FARC
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Jaime	FARC
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Enrique	FARC
	Villavicencio (ACR office)	Juan	FARC
	Villavicencio (café)	Marco	AUC
	Villavicencio (café)	Ivan	FARC

Interviews with Key Informants

Date	Location	Position and Organization
November 2013	Bogota	Professor of Politics, University of Rosario
		Senior Officer, Reintegration Program (ACR)
		Senior Officer, Reintegration Program (ACR)
		Manager, Organization of American States (MAPP-OEA)
		Senior Technical Advisor, UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS)
		Assistant Professor, University of Los Andes
		External Relations, Reintegration Program (ACR)
		Coordinator of Projects, INDEPAZ
		Director, Observatory of Peace and Conflict (formerly ODDR), National University of Colombia
		Professor, University of Externado
		Program Officer, Consolidation Programs, Govt of Col
		Assistant Professor, University of Los Andes

		Program Officer, Social Prosperity (DPS), Govt of Col
		Director, Historical Memory Centre
		DDR Officer, USAID, US Embassy
		Sr. Consultant, UNDP
		Sr. Research Fellow, GIGA
		Sr. Researcher, *Fundación Ideas para la Paz* (FIP)
		Security Officer, DAS, Govt of Col
November 2013	Villavicencio	Coordinator Economic Development, Consolidation Programs, Govt of Col
		Coordinator Illicit Trafficking, Consolidation Programs, Govt of Col
		Regional Director, Reintegration Program (ACR)
		Reintegration Officer, Reintegration Program (ACR)
		Reintegration Officer, Reintegration Program (ACR)
		Economic reintegration, Reintegration Program (ACR)
		President of District Council (JAC), Reliquia, Villavicencio
		Victim's Office, Municipality of Fuente de Oro
		Victim's Office, Municipality of Fuente de Oro
		Reintegration Officer, Reintegration Program (ACR)
		Regional Coordinator, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
		Reintegration Officer, Reintegration Program (ACR)
February 2014	Villavicencio	Consultant, Conflict, Development and Human Rights
		Independent Researcher on Human Rights
		Program Officer, UN Human Rights
		Counsel, Reintegration Program (ACR)
		Regional Coordinator, Social Prosperity (DPS), Govt of Col
		Professor of History, University of Meta
		Professor, Observatory of Territory, University of Llanos
		DDR Officer, Organization of American States (MAPP-OEA)
		Regional Coordinator, Organization of American States (MAPP-OEA)
February 2014	Bogota	Sr. Researcher, CINEP
		Professor of Economics, University of Los Andes
		Sr. Researcher, Nuevo Arco Iris
		Sr. Researcher, Nuevo Arco Iris
		Program Coordinator, World Bank
		Manager, World Bank (retired)

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