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Introduction

The FARC were everything in this village. They had the last word on every single dispute among neighbors. They decided what could be sold at the stores, the time when we should all go home, and who should leave the area never to come back .... They also managed divorces, inheritances, and conflicts over land borders. They were the ones who ruled here, not the state.

Local leader, village of Librea, municipality of Viotá[1]

We did interact with the FARC all those years. A little more than a decade. [At first] they came here, walked by, told us things, asked that we did certain things like not talking to the army .... Then they started to set rules and tell us how things needed to be done. They wanted to take power over these people and this land. But they couldn't. We had to obey them in certain ways, of course, because they have the weapons. But we [the peasant leaders] are the authority here. People recognize us as such. They could not take that away from us. They didn't rule us.

Local leader, village of Zama, municipality of Viotá[2]

These are the testimonies of two individuals who lived in neighboring villages, less than 2 km apart, in the Colombian Andes. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC), one of the world's oldest guerrilla groups, controlled the area for about twelve years, but did so in drastically different ways in the two

[1] Personal interview, village of Librea, Viotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia, 2007. Given that the Colombian conflict is ongoing, I do not use the real names of my interviewees or their communities, only their municipalities.
[2] Personal interview, village of Zama, Viotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia, 2007.

places. In the village of Librea, the FARC ruled over the political, economic, and social life of the population. Most people cooperated with the rebels and obeyed rules governing everything from mobility, public speech, and domestic violence to economic activities and conflict resolution. Things were quite different in the village of Zama, where civilian leaders remained the ultimate authority. The FARC regulated some aspects of civilian conduct, but locals remained in charge of arbitrating disputes, deciding the rules that guided social interaction, and holding meetings to discuss community problems and decide important issues. Whenever the FARC tried to intervene in their affairs, the community successfully limited their influence.

The situation of these villages illustrates a puzzling aspect of civil war: far from being chaotic and anarchic, war zones are often orderly. Although fear and violence exist, chaos is seldom the norm. In many places there is a sense of normality – even if different from that of peacetime – and people have expectations about what might happen. There is a new order in place, which civilians recognize, that marks many aspects of daily life. Furthermore, different forms of order frequently coexist in areas controlled by the same non-state armed group. Adjacent villages, or even neighborhoods, end up living under very different institutions – understood broadly as the formal and informal rules, norms, and practices that structure human interaction (North 1990) – which give way to different patterns of being and relating. In some cases, rebels establish institutions to regulate a myriad of conducts, while in others their intervention is minimal. What explains the emergence of order in war zones? Why, when order emerges, does it take different forms?

Media coverage of war and commonplace understandings of war zones are far from what these villages experienced. Most of what we hear about war entails destruction, death, and disruption. This is certainly part of the story, and we are prone to focus on it for obvious reasons – war is indeed a deeply devastating event. But much more than violence happens during war. Armed actors do not only kill, but also create institutions, endorse ideologies, form alliances with local actors, provide public goods, recruit, and, in so doing, transform the societies in which they operate. Civilians, on the other hand, do not only suffer from war – they also cope with it, adapt to it, and shape it. They bargain with armed actors, influencing how their communities are governed, and how they live. In sum, life goes on in war zones and we need to understand how.

This book investigates social order in civil war conceptually, theoretically, and empirically. Conceptually, I propose a typology to distinguish, first, between conflict zones in which civilians live with great uncertainty, which I call *disorder*, and those where a formal or informal social contract between civilians and combatants allows them to form clear expectations, which I call *order*. Second, the typology distinguishes between situations of order where rebels (or counter-rebels) intervene broadly in civilian affairs, which I call *rebelocracy*, and those where rebels rule in a minimalist way, leaving most local affairs in the hands of others – be it state officials, traditional leaders or some other local actor – which I call *aliocracy*.[3] Hence, the book introduces and conceptualizes a novel phenomenon in the study of civil war.

Theoretically, I propose a model to explain variation in wartime social order across time and space by examining the interaction between the warring sides, on the one hand, and between civilians and combatants, on the other. There are two factors that determine what kind of social order will emerge in conflict zones: armed groups' time horizon – that is, whether or not they care about future outcomes more than they do about present ones – and the quality of preexisting local institutions, particularly those for adjudicating disputes. First, I argue that rebels with short-term goals will produce disorder in the territory. Most groups operate under long-time horizons most of the time, but when they face internal indiscipline or competition with other warring sides, their preferences shift and they care more about present outcomes than future ones. This may also happen under certain peace negotiations. It is in these situations that disorder emerges, forcing civilians to live under great uncertainty. Second, rebels with long-term horizons will seek a rebelocracy. In areas where local institutions are effective and legitimate, civilians have bargaining power because they can threaten rebels with collective resistance. In such cases, the rebel group has incentives to settle for aliocracy as its form of rule. On the other hand, where preexisting civilian institutions are either ineffective or illegitimate, civilians are unlikely to resist collectively, and therefore lack bargaining power. In these cases, rebels are able to establish rebelocracy.

Empirically, the book undertakes two tasks. First, it describes in great depth how distinct forms of social order function in Colombian conflict

[3] The neologisms *rebelocracy* and *aliocracy* come, respectively, from the Latin words *rebello*, which means "rebel," and *alios*, which means "other." The Latin root *cracy* forms nouns meaning "rule by" or "government by." I provide a formal definition of these terms in Chapter 2. This typology, together with some of the material in Chapters 1 and Chapter 2, was introduced in a journal article in Arjona (2014).

zones. Using surveys, interviews, and memory workshops, I reconstructed the history of interaction between non-state armed groups and seventy-four local populations throughout the country, creating a large dataset as well as local histories that provide a nuanced account of social order in conflict zones. Based on these sources, I present evidence on the institutions that armed actors have established, as well as on the local dynamics that those institutions engender. I also recount how different aspects of daily life change with the new order, and how civilians and combatants perceive those changes.

The second empirical task is to test the theory. I rely on a multi-method approach to test the central hypotheses that emerge from the model, as well as their underlying microfoundations – that is, the assumptions on individual behavior on which the argument is built – and mechanisms. I take advantage of the strengths of various methods to achieve distinct goals, and rely on different kinds of evidence that I collected on civilians, combatants, communities, and armed groups in multiple waves of fieldwork conducted between 2004 and 2012 in Colombia.

CIVILIAN–COMBATANT INTERACTIONS, WARTIME INSTITUTIONS, AND THE STUDY OF CIVIL WAR

The existing literature on irregular civil wars – those fought by at least one nonconventional force – has widely recognized that this type of conflict entails a close interaction between civilians and combatants. Moreover, the quality of this interaction is often seen as a key determinant of war outcomes: the idea that popular support is essential for victory has been stressed by rebel theorists, military historians, and scholars alike (Galula 1964; Trinquier 1964:8; Taber 1965; Mao 1978; Guevara et al. 1997). Debates about counterinsurgency also revolve around the importance of civilian collaboration with the warring sides in conflicts ranging from Vietnam, to El Salvador, to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Civilian–combatant interactions are crucial also because they shape the context in which both civilians and combatants make a wide range of choices. Understanding the terms of those interactions is therefore central when we ask why people join rebels and militias, why families decide to flee, why combatants kill, why locals support or boycott counterinsurgency operations, and why former fighters successfully reintegrate into their communities or fail to do so. Even when we ask questions about macro-level outcomes such as the duration of war, the stability of peace

agreements, or the effects of peacekeeping operations, our theories and interpretations of empirical results rely on assumptions about how actors make decisions on the ground – and such decisions are deeply influenced by the nature of civilian-combatant relations.

Despite the centrality of the interaction between civilians and combatants, its variation has seldom been described systematically, let alone theorized. To be sure, there are excellent studies of civilian–combatant relations and of the fate of populations in conflict zones. However, scholars have mostly focused on rebel behavior, or on how civilians experience war and cope with it, instead of theorizing and documenting the interaction between the two.

For a long time, what happens in areas where rebels or paramilitaries are present was essentially a black box that the literature depicted with two contrasting views. The first relies on the "hearts and minds" metaphor, portraying rebels as freedom fighters who try to gain popular support on the basis of good behavior and ideological propaganda. The second view emphasizes the criminal behavior of non-state armed organizations: combatants are assumed to rely only on coercion to induce cooperation from local populations. This dichotomy leads to the simplistic assumption that civilians are either politically supportive of the rebels or cowed and victimized by them. Accounts that explain war dynamics on the basis of rebels' criminal or idealistic nature have further advanced this view. For example, according to Weinstein (2007), idealistic groups recruit ideologically motivated individuals, limit their use of violence against civilians and provide them public goods, and garner popular support; predatory groups, on the other hand, attract greedy persons to their ranks, exploit local populations, and fail to obtain civilian support.

Evidence of life in war zones, however, confounds this view. A given guerrilla or militia group often opts for different strategies towards neighboring local populations. The Chinese People's Liberation Army, for example, followed strict rules governing its treatment of some communities, while, in others, combatants showed little restraint (Hinton 1966; Girling 1969; Hartford 1995). What is more, while an armed group may rule in one place as an occupying army that controls only security and taxation, in other communities it can become a proto-state by functioning as the police, court, and public-goods provider.

Civilians, for their part, exercise agency despite the hardship of war and can respond to the presence and behavior of armed groups in different ways: some cooperate enthusiastically, others passively obey, and others

resist fiercely. For example, even under the surveillance of one of the world's most powerful armies, civilians in Afghanistan have often helped the Taliban in a myriad of ways – from hiding rebels in their homes, to flying kites to signal the arrival of American troops (*NYT* 2010b). At the same time, others have taken risks to aid American forces in areas where the Taliban has a strong presence (*NYT* 2010a). Civilians can also choose to flee when living in a war zone becomes too risky or strenuous. Furthermore – and despite common beliefs – civilians can resist armed groups' ruling attempts. Instances of armed resistance have been documented in many cases like Mozambique (e.g., Weinstein 2007), Kenya (e.g., Anderson 2005), and Peru (e.g., Isbell 1992). An emerging literature shows that peaceful resistance to armed actors has also emerged in many armed conflicts – from Peru to Colombia to Sudan to Indonesia (e.g., Hancock & Mitchell 2007; Kaplan 2013b). Ethnographic evidence on several rebellions has also shown that civilians find ways to make demands on the rebels, bargain with them, and strike deals (Weber 1981; Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers 2004b; Lubkemann 2008; Arjona 2015; Barter 2015; Förster 2015).

Clearly, civilian–combatant relations can take many forms, leading to substantial variation in the nature of daily life in war zones. Even though this variation is staggering in its range across and within civil wars, our understanding of its causes and effects is still quite limited. A new literature on rebel governance has made excellent contributions but, for the most part, has focused on variation *across* armed groups, rather than *within* them. In addition, the few existing accounts focus on explaining why combatants govern civilians or not, rather than on why they govern them *differently*. Furthermore, the focus of these studies tends to be rebel provision of public goods rather than the creation of new institutions.[4]

The neglect of wartime institutions is actually quite widespread in the literature on civil war more generally. Despite the general agreement that institutions shape behavior, the study of how civilians and combatants make choices in war zones tends to overlook the role of wartime institutions. Disregarding the effect of institutions in the analysis of individual and collective behavior would be astounding in many social sciences; however, it has endured in civil war studies perhaps because war is assumed to be chaotic and anarchic, as the widespread use of concepts

[4] I discuss this and other literature in Chapter 2.

such as failed states, collapsed governance, and ungoverned spaces suggests (Justino 2013).

Yet, the emergence of local institutions – and, with them, order – in the midst of war makes sense. To start with, war often weakens, and sometimes destroys, state institutions. Different literature has shown that in contexts where access to effective institutions is lacking, new informal institutions are likely to emerge. For example, rural communities that depend on limited, public natural resources often develop norms that facilitate collective action (Ostrom 1990). Illegal markets where property rights and contracts cannot be enforced by law also tend to develop their own parallel institutions (e.g., Gambetta 1996; Volkov 2000; Varese 2001; Skarbek 2011). Some theorists have argued that every tight social group develops norms that encourage cooperative behavior (Ellickson 2009:167). The emergence of the state itself has been explained as a process whereby one actor offers institutions and protection in exchange for taxation, thereby transforming a situation of anarchy into one where clear rules allow for higher predictability, productive activities, and capital accumulation (e.g., Tilly 1985; Olson 1993). Even within contexts where institutions do exist, actors often attempt to provide private orderings to "realign incentives and embed transactions in more protective governance structures" (Williamson 2002; see also Dixit 2007:438). These insights suggest that when prewar institutions are weakened in war zones, some sort of new institutions that establish order are likely to emerge.

The existence of wartime institutions should not be surprising for another simple reason: armed groups have incentives to create them. First, as Tilly (1978) suggests, in order to overcome their competitors, warring sides try to monopolize the means of violence, extract resources from local inhabitants, and, at the same time, promote capital accumulation. Even though Tilly was referring to a long historical process, armed actors fighting civil wars are likely to learn that in order to advance their cause, they need to create a sustainable system of resource extraction to fund their operations. Such a system, in turn, requires some security and limited taxation for civilians to engage in productive activities (Olson 1993) – in other words, it requires institutions. In addition, as I will argue in this book, armed groups interested in controlling territory have incentives to establish institutions because doing so helps them to both gain territorial control and strengthen their organizational capacity.

Overlooking wartime institutions and the emergence of new forms of order has important implications. Theoretically, by ignoring the different

ways in which armed groups approach civilians, we fail to understand how the former seek obedience and support, how they are able to grow and survive, and how their behaviors affect local populations. At the same time, overlooking the roles that a given armed group comes to play within a given community leads us to investigate civilian behavior without paying attention to the institutional contexts in which civilians live. Hence, our understanding of civilians' decision to cooperate with armed actors, flee, or join or oppose combatants, ignores a crucial aspect of the context in which they make their decisions.

Neglecting the different forms that war takes on at the local level also has important consequences for our understanding of post-conflict outcomes. Civil war triggers many processes that transform economic activities, infrastructure, demographic patterns, social fabric, and political identities, among others (Wood 2008; Arjona 2009; Justino 2013). Yet, assuming that these processes are homogeneous across regions or within an armed group is inconsistent with available empirical evidence. Precisely because the way in which armed groups occupy territories varies across time and space, we cannot assume that these processes affect all local populations – even those in the same region – in the same way. Ethnographic evidence shows that there is great variation in how neighboring communities within a province experience war (e.g., Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers 2004a). As I show in this book, systematic data supports these findings. The effects of war cannot, therefore, be assumed to be constant within a country or its regions. Accounting for that variation is essential to understanding both wartime dynamics and their effects in the post-conflict period.

Concerning policy, understanding the behavior of armed groups and civilians is essential to identifying the challenges and opportunities for different sorts of intervention. Efforts to limit civilian casualties, prevent displacement, or promote development in war-affected areas have to be grounded in a realistic assessment of the local dynamics of war. Civilian-combatant relations are also at the core of counter-insurgency studies. The idea that gaining popular support is essential for victory has been invoked to plan, or criticize, counterinsurgency strategies across the globe. Yet, such strategies cannot be evaluated without assessing how armed groups gain territories, settle in them, and secure civilian obedience and support, as well as how civilians respond in different contexts.

Finally, if institutions are, as many disciplines believe, an essential building block of economic, social, and political phenomena, we need to

understand how they are transformed by war, and how this differs across localities. The challenges and opportunities for reintegration, reconciliation, poverty alleviation, and institution-building may well vary depending on the type of social order that emerged during the war. Yet, as Blattman and Miguel (2010) note, the institutional legacies of armed conflict have been largely neglected.

Challenging the assumption that civil wars are characterized by chaos and "collapsed governance" (Justino 2013; Risse 2013; Reno 2011), I argue that our understanding of the conduct of war as well as its legacies demands a theory of the creation of social order during wartime. By offering such a theory, this book aims to open the black box of civilian–combatant relations and institutional arrangements that characterize war zones. In the remainder of this introduction, I lay out the central components of the theory (which is presented in Chapter 3), the research design, and the organization of the book.

A THEORY OF SOCIAL ORDER IN CIVIL WAR

I propose a theory of the creation of social order in irregular civil wars by analyzing the interaction of state and non-state armed actors as well as between them and civilian populations. My central argument is that, in any given war zone, the length of an armed group's time horizon determines whether or not it establishes a social contract with the local population, giving place to local order. In situations where a social contract is established, I argue that the quality of the preexisting local institutions – defined as their legitimacy and efficacy – determines whether rebelocracy or aliocracy emerges.

The logic of the argument is as follows: I assume that rebels aim to control territories as a means of pressuring the incumbent and increasing their strength. I also assume that a secondary goal is to maximize the byproducts of that control – such as obtaining material resources, attracting recruits, and expanding their networks – which help rebels build their organizational capacity. Given these two goals, I argue that rebels prefer order to disorder and, among the possible types of order, they prefer rebelocracy to aliocracy.

Order is instrumental to maintaining territorial control, which is hardly possible in the absence of clear rules that regulate both civilian and combatant behavior. Such rules facilitate rebel monitoring of civilian conduct (such as helping the enemy), and also make civilians more likely to voluntarily obey and offer support. Rebels, therefore, have

incentives to establish a social contract with the local population, where both sides are subject to certain rules. However, as Olson (1993) argued, establishing a social contract pays off in the long run: actors incur the costs of limiting their behavior in the present for the sake of future benefits. When rebels have short time horizons, they have incentives to reject any commitments that limit their present behavior.

I identify two conditions under which a given armed group, or one of its units, operates under short time horizons. The first is when a group faces armed competition with other warring sides in a given territory, which forces it to focus on defense. When fighting to preserve territorial control, rebels have fewer incentives to restrain their behavior and abstain from conduct that they expect will increase the odds of winning that territory. A social contract with the local population becomes a burden, as it does not help the group to achieve its short-term goals and can, on the contrary, hamper its success. Furthermore, preserving order becomes too costly, as the group prefers to devote resources and manpower to fighting its enemy. Disorder, or the absence of a social contract, is therefore likely to emerge when two or more warring sides actively compete for territorial control. This argument is consistent with theories of rebel and criminal violence and predation (e.g., Kalyvas 2006; Metelits 2010; Skaperdas 2001), in which armed competition pushes armed actors to use more violence and neglect social contracts.

The second condition under which armed groups operate on a short time horizon is when they lack internal discipline. Different factors can affect the internal organization of armed groups, such as their social networks, ideology, and the type of recruits they attract (e.g., Weinstein 2007; Staniland 2014), making them more or less disciplined. In the absence of an internal structure that makes combatants follow rules and orders from their commanders, fighters are likely to engage in behaviors to satisfy their individual preferences. Rules that limit combatant behavior are often disobeyed, and civilians face great uncertainty about how combatants will act. Disorder is, therefore, more likely to emerge when combatants can disregard the orders of their commanders. This argument is consistent with theories that stress the role of organizational structures in rebel violence and governance (Weinstein 2007).

In the absence of armed competition and indiscipline, armed actors are more likely to operate under long time horizons, establishing a social contract with the local population. The ensuing social order may take one of two forms. The first form of social order is *rebelocracy*, or the