Resisting War

In civil conflicts around the world, unarmed civilians take enormous risks to protect themselves and stand up to heavily armed combatants. This is not just counterintuitive – it is extraordinary. In this book, Oliver Kaplan explores cases from Colombia, with extensions to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and the Philippines, to show how and why civilians are able to influence armed actors and limit violence. Based on original fieldwork as well as statistical analysis, the book explains how local social organization and cohesion enables both covert and overt nonviolent strategies, including avoidance, cultures of peace, dispute resolution, deception, protest, and negotiation. These “autonomy” strategies help communities to both retain civilian status and avoid retaliation by limiting the inroads of armed groups. Contrary to conventional views that civilians are helpless victims, this book highlights their creative initiative to maintain decision-making power over outcomes for their communities.

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Resisting War

How Communities Protect Themselves

OLIVER KAPLAN

University of Denver
To the campesinos of Colombia: the true experts on making peace.

To Ben.
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This project began with a question and a curiosity. How can we tell if civilians in conflict settings can protect themselves through social movements? The reigning theories all said this was unlikely, and yet there were cases that suggested, shouted, that protection was possible. I wanted to know why, when, and how these kinds of efforts succeed or fail. I was motivated by the idea that research could help answer these questions and even contribute to the protection of people living in the direst of situations. The choice of Colombia as a research site was dictated by the question, then, rather than the reverse.

I had lived in Central America but had never been to Colombia and knew little about the country, except that it was probably not an easy location in which to do research. I started learning all I could, became drawn to the place, and realized research could be quite feasible and enjoyable, as long as one uses common sense, or does not dar papaya (literally to “give papaya”). I found a beautiful country with warm, humble, thoughtful, determined people and, thankfully, great coffee and rich chocolate. What started as my doctoral research became a journey of discovery that led to the findings presented in this book. It was a true education, full of new experiences, treasured memories, and fast friends. It would also hold my first experience with tear gas and encounters with unbearable heat and unimaginable carsickness, among other pleasantries.

I realized early on in my research that I would have to keep a list of all the people that helped me along the way because I was racking up and continued to take on many, many debts of gratitude. In this sense, this book is the result of a true and broad collaboration. However, any remaining errors are, lamentably, my own.

I first express mis sinceras gracias to all those who shared their precious time, knowledge, and histories with me and invited me into their homes or stores for a tinto, aguapanela, or arepita. Not only did they offer friendship and
fascinating, hilarious, and somber tales and insights, but they also genuinely looked out for my well-being and helped me get to where I needed to go. This book would be nothing without them. I was also received warmly during my shorter time in the Philippines, which was similarly eye-opening.

I was fortunate at Stanford to have an amazing group of advisors. My dissertation committee of David Laitin, Terry Karl, Ken Schultz, and Jeremy Weinstein gave me a combination of healthy skepticism, constructive criticism, and frequent encouragement that pushed me to do better. I could not have overcome many of the research hurdles without them. Other faculty also gave instrumental guidance. Karen Jusko was incredibly helpful with breaking down research design issues and I also had many enlightening conversations with Alberto Díaz-Cayeros, Beatriz Magaloni, Jim Fearon, Josh Ober, Steve Krasner, and Mike Tomz. I am especially grateful to Eliana Vásquez, for our conversations and her unwavering enthusiasm and support, and to her family. I also thank my undergraduate advisors Barbara Walter and David Lake at UC San Diego for helping me first get started in political science research.

My peer group of fellow Stanford Ph.D. students were good friends and commiserators throughout. I thank Claire Adida, Mike Albertus, Leo Arriola, Rik Bhavnani, Thomas Brambor, Matt Carnes, Darah Cohen, Luke Condra, Roy Elis, Alejandro Feged, Joe Felter, Brodie Ferguson, Desha Girod, Bethany Lacina, Natan Sachs, Jake Shapiro, and Jessica Weeks for suffering discussions with me, serving as sounding boards, and giving great feedback. My colleagues at the Josef Korbel School at the University of Denver also provided encouragement and helpful comments on various later drafts: Debbi Avant, Erica Che-noweth, Rachel Epstein, Cullen Hendrix, Danny Postel, and Aaron Schneider. Thanks also go to all my other friends and colleagues at Stanford, Princeton, the University of Denver, and elsewhere for their support.

I thank Robert Dreesen, my editor at Cambridge University Press, for believing in this project and his guidance in the publication process. I also thank Brianda Reyes, Sarah Lambert, Anand Shanmugam, and Julia TerMaat for their editorial assistance and the three anonymous peer reviewers of the manuscript, who provided valuable criticism and insights. I thank Marcela Vega Vargas, a talented Colombian artist, for masterfully channelling my vision in her wonderful illustration of the cover image.

I am indebted to Mauricio García Durán and Teófilo Vásquez of the Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP), Fabio Sánchez Torres of the Universidad de Los Andes, Jeff Villaveces at the United Nations (OCHA), Sol Santos, Nathan Cruz, Zakia Shiraz, and Grant Miller for their facilitation of data, sage advice, and friendship. I also thank Padre Mauricio Uribe at the Universidad Sergio Arboleda for his encouragement, wonderment, and polite driving.

A number of individuals both in Colombia and in the United States were also extremely supportive and helpful. These include Gloria Inés Restrepo, Esperanza Hernández Delgado, Hernán Molina, Luis Emiro Valencia, Camilo
Preface and Acknowledgments


This book was greatly enhanced by excellent research assistance by Liz Carolina Garzón, Marie Claire Vásquez Duzán, Juan Jurado, Daniela Uribe, Anjali Menon, Jenna Rodrigues, Kate Castenson, and Natalie Southwick.

A number of organizations also provided great insight and assistance during my research. These include the Asociación Campesina de Antioquia, the staff at FOR-Colombia, the Corporación Júridica Libertad, and the Taller de Vida. I also received invaluable assistance and support from various offices in the Government of Colombia. These include the High Advisory for Reintegration, the Colombian Vice-president’s Human Rights Observatory, and the Ministry of the Interior. In the Philippines, I am grateful for assistance from Catholic Relief Services and The Asia Foundation.

During my research I was honored to present my project as it evolved at the Instituto Fedesarrollo, the CEDE seminar at the Universidad de Los Andes, and CERAC, all in Bogotá, as well as the Department of Political Science at the University of Maryland – College Park, the American Political Science Association Annual Conference, and Stanford’s Workshops in International Relations and Comparative Politics. The feedback I received from these presentations greatly steered my thinking.

I am grateful for funding support from the Dwight D. Eisenhower/Clifford Roberts Fellowship, the Smith Richardson Foundation World Politics and Statecraft Fellowship, the Stanford Goldsmith Writing Award in Dispute Resolution, the Stanford Diversity Dissertation Research Opportunity Grant, the Stanford CICN Research Grant, the Stanford Graduate Research Opportunity award, Stanford’s FSI O’Brien Schultz Dissertation Travel Fellowship, and Princeton’s Bradley Foundation Research Fellowship. I received support as a Postdoctoral Fellow at Stanford and Princeton through the Empirical Studies of Conflict program (ESOC), for which I am also grateful.

Lastly, I am thankful to my family. I am thankful to my parents, Sue and Ron, for instilling in me the good sense to be able to complete this work with sensitivity and insight and without harm. I also know that my “Colombian journey of discovery” caused them at least a few sleepless nights and for that, I am sorry. I am appreciative of my brother, Ben. Through the highs and lows, you were always there with a smile on your face, maybe not always following whatever I might have been droning on about as a struggling student, but always nudging me to keep going. Thanks. You are an inspiration.
Abbreviations

ACIA Integral Peasants Association of the Atrato Region
ACR High Advisory for Reintegration/Colombian Agency for Reintegration
ACVC Peasant Farmer Association of the Cimitarra River Valley
AFP Armed Forces of the Philippines
ANA Afghan National Army
ANUC National Peasant Association
ARMM Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ASOPROA Association of Small- and Medium-Scale Producers of Eastern Antioquia
ATCC Peasant Workers Association of the Carare River
AUC United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia
CAFGU Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units
CDF Civilian Defense Forces
CINEP Center for Investigation and Popular Education
CNAC National Confederation of Communal Action
CNRR National Commission on Reparation and Reconciliation
COCOMACIA Community Council of the Peasant Association of the Atrato Region
CPP Communist People’s Party
CPR Communities of Populations in Resistance
CRIC Cauca Regional Indigenous Council
DANE National Administrative Department of Statistics
DAS Administrative Department of Security
ELN National Liberation Army
EPL Popular Liberation Army
EZLN Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FARC Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
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<td>Federally Administered Tribal Areas</td>
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<td>FMLN</td>
<td>Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front</td>
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<td>FSA</td>
<td>Free Syrian Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGO</td>
<td>Intergovernmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISAF</td>
<td>International Security Assistance Force</td>
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<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</td>
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<td>JAC</td>
<td>Community Action Board</td>
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<td>LCC</td>
<td>Local Coordination Committee</td>
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<td>LRA</td>
<td>Lord’s Resistance Army</td>
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<td>M-19</td>
<td>Movement of April 19</td>
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<td>MAQL</td>
<td>Quintín Lamé Armed Movement</td>
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<td>MAS</td>
<td>Death to Kidnappers</td>
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<td>MBNC</td>
<td>Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia</td>
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<td>MILF</td>
<td>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNLF</td>
<td>Moro National Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDF</td>
<td>National Democratic Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Nongovernmental organization</td>
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<td>NPA</td>
<td>New People’s Army</td>
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<td>PCCC</td>
<td>Colombian Clandestine Communist Party</td>
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<td>RUF</td>
<td>Revolutionary United Front</td>
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<td>SDA</td>
<td>Special Development Area</td>
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<td>UP</td>
<td>Patriotic Union Party</td>
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<td>ZOP</td>
<td>Zone of Peace</td>
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