

BOOK REVIEW

The Importance of Being Local: How Recruitment Affects Postwar Violence

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Sarah Zukerman Daly. *Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 315 pp., \$32.99 paperback; \$110.00 hardback; \$26.00 electronic (ISBN: 978-1107566835).

The last ten years have witnessed a deepening intellectual symbiosis between the study of civil war on one hand and Colombia on the other. Rather than a conflict whose complexity renders it *sui generis*, scholars view Colombia's long civil war as a kind of laboratory in the field. In just the last few years, at least three book-length treatments have emphasized how the Colombian experience updates our understanding of war and peacebuilding (Arjona 2016; Karl 2017; Firchow 2018). Sarah Zukerman Daly's book on the trajectory of militarized groups after their formal demobilization ably contributes to this fruitful marriage. Her careful theory-building and stunning evidence makes this book a must-read for students both of armed groups and of Colombian politics.

The Geography of Recruitment in Brief

Daly begins with a simple question: what happens to nonstate armed groups after they make peace? This question has inspired scholars to study national-level conflict recurrence (as in Hartzell and Hoddie 2007; Fortna 2008; Matanock 2017) and microlevel decisions made by ex-combatants to return to combat (as in Humphreys and Weinstein 2007).

Daly has other designs, focusing instead on the mesolevel. She convincingly argues that geographic patterns of recruitment (i.e., whether armed groups recruit fighters locally or nonlocally) profoundly shape their post-demobilization trajectory. Local groups (i.e., those whose recruits operate in their home communities) possess a built-in advantage after demobilization: recruits usually stay at home, close to their former commanders and each other, preserving wartime ties and information on their relative strength. Nonlocal groups (i.e., those whose recruits operate away from their home communities) weaken as their former fighters scatter to the winds. Dynamics of violence and remilitarization depend on whether local and nonlocal groups operate in the same areas. Areas with only local groups remain peaceful, but these groups retain their power. In areas with only nonlocal groups, intermediate levels of post-demobilization violence occur: as the groups weaken, former commanders lack information about the commitment of former fighters and remilitarize weakly. In areas with a mixture of local and nonlocal groups, the same information asymmetries drive remilitarization: local groups remilitarize more

powerfully and high levels of post-demobilization violence occur, resulting in the nonlocal groups' defeat.

Chapter 2 draws out and tests the implications of this theory for the inner workings of armed groups, their interaction with each other and the state, and regional variation in postaccord violence. Daly's remarkable research centers on the demobilization of thirty-seven paramilitary groups in the early 2000s after they signed peace accords. She collects a vast array of both qualitative and quantitative evidence on these groups' postaccords histories: eleven original surveys; over three hundred interviews with ex-combatants, military personnel, and civilians; and geo-referenced event data on violence after the paramilitaries' demobilization. This mountain of evidence allows Daly to test each step of her theory in chapters 4–7. Her results broadly support the argument.

Implications for the Study of Conflict and Peacebuilding

Daly's important work raises at least two questions for the study of nonstate armed groups and peacebuilding. First, *Organized Violence after Civil War* provocatively counters influential recent studies finding that prewar resource endowments or social ties have important consequences for groups during war (Weinstein 2006; Staniland 2014). Daly disagrees, finding that wartime socialization patterns and military prowess do *not* depend on recruitment patterns (82–86): instead, the impact of recruitment does not materialize until after groups demobilize. Future research should untangle these conflicting predictions. Furthermore, geographic patterns of recruitment—unlike Weinstein's (2006) focus on resource endowments or Staniland's (2014) attention to prewar social ties, which are immutable—result from decisions by commanders (55–56). What drives these recruitment decisions? If commanders recognize the advantage of local recruitment, why do they often recruit nonlocally?

Second, Daly exemplifies the literature on armed groups by reducing questions of *conflict* to questions of *nonstate armed groups*. Here, the influence of Paul Collier is clearly felt: since the primary difference between societies in conflict and societies at peace is the existence of nonstate armies, investigating the origins and dynamics of war is primarily a matter of investigating armies' origins and dynamics (Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2009, 3). The state recedes in comparative theoretical importance. For Daly, post-demobilization violence depends little on armed groups' relationships with the state, whether friendly or hostile; only the organization of nonstate armed actors and their interactions with each other matter (34–35). This positioning conditions the theory's external validity. In Colombia, paramilitaries deeply permeated the state, as she duly notes. Does her theory hold when antistate insurgents make peace? Chapter 8's brief sketches of other conflicts suggest it does, but more research is needed to answer these questions.

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