



Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict

Pathways toward terrorism and genocide

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Recruitment and remilitarization

Nicholas Barnes

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BOOK REVIEW

Recruitment and remilitarization

Organized violence after civil war: the geography of recruitment in Latin

America, Sarah Zukerman Daly, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016, 315 pp., \$90.98 (cloth), \$29.37 (paper), ISBN 9781107566835

Sarah Zukerman Daly's *Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America* poses an important and timely question for scholars of political violence: following peace agreements, why do some non-state armed groups transition away from violence by fully demilitarizing, while others remilitarize and reinitiate conflict? The book investigates this puzzle in the context of the Colombian civil war by focusing on 37 powerful paramilitary organizations that signed peace agreements with the Colombian government between 2003 and 2006 but half of which had remilitarized within five years. Daly's focus on post-conflict paramilitary organizations is a notable one for two reasons: first, political science has focused overwhelmingly on rebel and insurgent organizations while largely overlooking the role of paramilitaries, militias, and self-defense organizations in civil wars; and, second, the study of non-state armed groups is often segmented with the end of outright hostilities but, as Daly systematically details throughout the book, many of these armed organizations retained significant organizational and coercive capabilities in the postwar period as they sought to translate their wartime capacity into more formal political and economic power.

To account for the divergent post-conflict trajectories of Colombia's paramilitaries, Daly has constructed a novel and parsimonious theory which builds on models of bargaining with asymmetric information that have been frequently applied to interstate dynamics but seldom to intrastate conflicts. The argument developed in the book is, simply, that recruitment patterns determined the likelihood that paramilitaries remilitarized in the postwar period. Daly begins by distinguishing between paramilitaries that recruited locally and those primarily comprised of non-local recruits, arguing that locally recruited combatants remained in their area of operation after peace agreements while non-local combatants more often resettled outside these areas. Therefore, paramilitaries with local recruits retained their cohesion in the postwar period and could more accurately assess their organizational capacity, allowing them to renegotiate the local balance of power with other armed actors as these situations evolved. Non-locally recruited paramilitaries, on the other hand, lost their ability to accurately assess their organizations' capacity and were unable to successfully renegotiate power imbalances, resulting in remilitarization. Daly then theorizes how these intragroup dynamics influence intergroup relations by arguing that post-conflict areas that included non-local paramilitary groups were more likely to rearm and experience renewed conflict, while configurations involving only paramilitaries that recruited locally led to full demobilization.

Daly uses both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to evaluate her causal claims. The sheer quantity of data she has gathered over the course of more than a decade of research in Colombia is striking. In addition to several hundred interviews with former combatants and considerable historical expertise on the conflict, Daly gathered micro-level data on recruitment and demobilization patterns from 11 large sample surveys of former combatants from all 37

paramilitary organizations (three of which she designed and implemented herself). In successive empirical chapters, she uses these surveys to test more than a dozen observable hypotheses that pertain to both the intra- and intergroup dynamics contained in her theory. The result is two highly credible and persuasive chapters. Daly then provides two detailed qualitative chapters, one that traces the trajectory of a locally recruited paramilitary and their full demobilization and another that analyzes several cases the theory fails to correctly explain. These chapters are fascinating reads due to the utter complexity of the micro-level dynamics involved but also Daly's careful tracing of the causal pathways and her attention to alternative explanations.

While the book has much to be commended for – a persuasive theory, extensive data collection and fieldwork, as well as careful quantitative and qualitative empirical work – there are several concerns and numerous questions that remain. For one, Daly largely ignores the role of wartime dynamics as her argument jumps from the recruitment phase directly to demobilization, mostly skipping over the processes of mobilization, territorial consolidation, collective violence, and wartime governance inherent to the conflict. Daly claims recruitment patterns to be exogenous to these dynamics, a valuable analytical move, but one that is difficult to swallow for those familiar with much civil war scholarship that demonstrates how civil wars are intrinsically endogenous processes. To her credit, Daly defends her assertion by showing that local and non-local paramilitaries do not vary systematically along several dimensions and even includes several regression models demonstrating wartime dynamics – as measured by military effectiveness, the presence of various illicit resources, and levels of violence during war – cannot account for postwar outcomes. Nonetheless, the book offers only sparse analysis of how and why recruitment patterns emerged in the first place and mostly ignores how they may have been shaped by the conflict itself. A fuller discussion of these dynamics is warranted.

Despite this shortcoming, *Organized Violence after War* remains essential reading for scholars of political violence. Perhaps the most important idea to emerge from the book concerns how we conceptualize and understand post-conflict contexts. Throughout the book, Daly documents how many paramilitary groups retained their organizational structure, use of coercion, extortion rackets, and access to illicit markets on a local level long after the end of outright hostilities. More problematically, the paramilitaries that ended up fully demobilizing were also those that maintained the greatest degree of territorial control and capacity immediately post-conflict. In the end, Daly argues that the best we may hope for in many post-conflict contexts is just such a “negative peace” in which the state continues to allow armed actors to operate so long as they do not actively employ violence. The resulting fragmentation of authority and undermining of state institutions, however, has massive implications for post-war politics and development. Daly's book begins to think through some of these difficult truths that are especially germane to contemporary Colombia, where another massive demobilization process is underway. Although the position of the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) vis-à-vis the state is less ambivalent than their paramilitary counterparts, Daly's theory regarding the geography of recruitment is undeniably applicable and remains a powerful analytical tool for predicting where conflict may return to Colombia.

Nicholas Barnes
Brown University Watson Institute for International Studies, Providence, USA
 nicholas.barnes81@gmail.com

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