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**A study on the chains of strategic interactions between civilians and  
belligerent organizations over resources, in the midst of the Colombian  
armed confrontation (1990 – 2010)**

**APPROVED BY  
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**A study on the chains of strategic interactions between civilians and  
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**by**

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## **Abstract**

### **A study on the chains of strategic interactions between civilians and belligerent organizations over resources, in the midst of the Colombian armed confrontation (1990 – 2010)**

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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Based on interview and survey data, this document explores the logics of these interactions as well as their aggregate outcomes. Unlike customary accounts that portray civilians as mere subjects of belligerent's power or receptors of their violence, the study of how belligerents and civilians solve what I coin as the "Resource Dilemma" reveals that, rather than passive actors, civilians are strategic in making a set of decisions, resort to social, cultural and economic capitals, and have the capacity to negotiate the terms of their subjection. As such, this document explores how, why and when civilians cooperate, negotiate, prevaricate, or resist with a belligerent organization's demand for resources.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“War serves different purposes. You would not understand that. However, in general, it can be said that wars are made to steal. Older men steal money, cattle, and other sorts of things. Young men do more than that, they steal girls!”*

-Efe Gómez, 1987. In Gutiérrez Sanín (2004)

Violence defines Diana Garzon's life<sup>1</sup>. She remembers that, as a child, she used to overhear the elders talk about horrifying massacres that were happening in distant provinces. Unlike Tolima, Antioquia or Valle, Huila used to be a peaceful region back in the 1960s. However, Huila, like several other agricultural frontiers in Colombia, was a prime receptor for the countless refugees who were forced to migrate from the inter-Andean valleys after *La Violencia* – Latin America's last civil war. The estate of Grandpa Gabriel –a prosperous rancher who built his fortune selling livestock during the Colombia-Peru War– was a sanctuary for those who were being persecuted, regardless of affiliation. Here, both conservatives and liberals would live and work together as ranch hands. It was a fresh start for anyone who was driven. Gabriel was not interested in politics, Diana explains; he only wanted to help those in need.

Things began to change in the 1980s. First, the M-19 began extorting ranchers or anyone who had some wealth. At times when her family could not pay the ransom, belligerents seized cattle and equipment until payment. FARC came a few years later and established dominion. Her nephew was butt-stroked with a handgun in the forehead. Her uncle Hector was killed while driving to the family ranch. In the following months, the guerrillas started kidnapping her neighbors and friends. Some returned, others did not. In 1989, Iván Márquez –an old family friend who had recently become commander of FARC's XIII Front– kidnapped Diana's mother, Doña Clara, demanding a sum that was impossible for the family to pay. These were hard times indeed, but Diana almost

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<sup>1</sup> Real names has been withheld for security reasons, as expanded in chapter 4.

immediately learned how to negotiate with the kidnappers and leave her “silly sentimentalisms” behind. First, she sold some animals and, with the money in her hands, renegotiated the payment. It was still a substantial sum, so she brought the issue to a few local politicians and social leaders. Diana negotiated the amount once more. “Don’t worry Doña,” Diana recalls one of the belligerents saying to her mother during captivity “nothing will happen to you. Important people have already interceded on your behalf”. The quantity demanded was significantly lower this time. FARC released Doña Clara on March 5, 1991, safe and sound.

Diana’s story illustrates the chain of strategic interactions over resources in which civilians and belligerents engage amidst the Colombian armed conflict. Based on interview and survey data, this document explores the logics of these interactions as well as their aggregate outcomes. Unlike customary accounts that portray civilians as mere subjects of belligerent’s power or receptors of their violence, the study of how belligerents and civilians solve what I coin as the “Resource Dilemma” reveals that, rather than passive actors, civilians are strategic in making a set of decisions, resort to social, cultural and economic capitals, and have the capacity to negotiate the terms of their subjection. As such, this document explores how, why and when civilians cooperate, negotiate, prevaricate, or resist with a belligerent organization’s demand for resources. While several scholarly works had pointed out the importance of transnational sponsorships (Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014), most academics sustain that warfare depends on belligerent’s capacity to systematically extract resources from local communities (Azam & Hoeffler 2002; Snyder 2006; Weinstein 2007; Gutierrez-Sanin 2008; Norman 2012; Wood 2014). Accounts of such processes tend to display analytical interest in the belligerent’s opportunities for predatory accumulation, analyzing the links between belligerent’s forms of governance to their operational constraints (Mac Ginty 2004). Although a more recent group of scholars has begun to study civilians’ capacity to contest belligerent governance by looking at sundry factors such as pre-conflict social relationships (Koc-Menard 2007; Mampilly 2015), ideological preferences (Wood 2003; Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013) or even their contentious collective action (Barter 2012, Arjona 2016; Kaplan 2017); there is a lack of

theorization about the interplay all of these factors. As I will show in this document, resource extraction is not a transaction mediated by a set of aggregate or contextual variables. It is a complex, case-specific, and socially embedded process that entails constant negotiation between the belligerent organization and the civilian on the amounts, frequencies, and modes of extraction –as well as reprisals for not cooperating. The complex solution to this kind of wartime dilemmas escapes to current instrumentalist approaches, but it is a determining factor when explaining the variation of violence in times of war.

This study focuses on a set of interactions between civilians and belligerent forces in the midst of the Colombian armed confrontation to put forward a better-grounded theory for wartime resource extraction. More specifically, the study argues that the different strategies used by civilians in a view to resolving the resource dilemma are central to any explanation to the variation of violence in the midst of an armed conflict. Rather than addressing resource extraction as a one-time, rational transaction, I frame it as a reoccurring “dilemma” (Jasper 2008). Dilemmas emerge when the solution of a problem has causes and consequences in different spheres of social life. It is reoccurring as belligerent organizations demand resources with certain periodicity; but with each new demand, a new dilemma is presented. In times of need, selling the cattle may be an easy alternative to collect the solicited sum, but it might compromise the productivity of the ranch. Talking to local authorities might be effective at other times, but could also trigger a chain of unintended retaliations. What about speaking with an old friend who happens to be a belligerent commander? Would he remember the family’s generosity towards displaced communities? When faced with a dilemma, individuals have to be strategic: take the context into account and balance costs and benefits in different fields, act and interact with their immediate interests, and resort to economic, cultural, or political resources –when available– to solve it efficiently. Dilemmas, at times, are resolved with one simple act – paying the ransom–; but at others, they require a complex set of actions that compromise valuable resources necessary to address future dilemmas.

The argument here presented is based on the study of a 2012 survey conducted by the Colombian Livestock Federation –Fedegán– to 4,129 ranchers who declared

themselves victims of the armed conflict<sup>2</sup>. Fedegán collected data through the use of standardized indicators and open-ended questions for each declarant, offering a window of opportunity to analyze strategies and patterns of action and interaction. These results were triangulated with 57 in-depth interviews to cattle ranchers to attain a nurtured understanding of both the logics of strategic action and the outcomes of strategic interaction. To better appreciate the context in which these interactions occur, I also conducted a panel data analysis of 1122 municipalities in Colombia between 1990 and 2010. As I will argue throughout the document, civilians tend to conform, as a way to prevent the occurrence of other forms of violence. However, they also know that things are better when they are “cheap at half the price” and, if they see a window of opportunity, they will negotiate, evade, or resist belligerent’s repertoires of coercion.

Moreover, by expanding the analysis of resource extraction beyond lucrative natural resources such as oil, timber, or diamonds (Collier Hoeffler, and Rohner 2008; Findley and Marineau 2015) towards a more socially embedded mode of production –cattle ranching—, this document also contributes to a deeper understanding of effects of household resources in context of political violence. When analyzed at the individual level, what and how much resources an individual has, is relevant to the way in which he or she resolves the dilemma. Households that depend on fragile economies or that lack resources, as I show by way of empirical demonstration, suffer more from direct forms of violence – homicide, death threat, and forced displacement– than those better off. On the other hand, those who own more resources can engage more strategically with belligerents, and while their patrimonies will be severely affected, their lives will not.

The document is divided into six chapters. The first one is the present introduction to the study. In the second chapter, I offer an overview of the current academic stances and present the general argument that this study hopes to put forward. In the third chapter, I give the reader a sense of the Colombian armed confrontation and provide a brief description of the belligerent organizations here analyzed. In the fourth chapter, I describe

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<sup>2</sup> The results of this survey were originally published in the book “Acabar con el olvido. Segundo informe” (Fundagán 2013).

the data, methods, and research design. In the fifth and main chapter, I present the study on how, when and why civilians and belligerents engage in strategic interaction. In the sixth chapter, I highlight the key results of the study and conclude by discussing specific ways in which my theoretical approach contributes to a nurtured understanding of the mediating effects of resource availability during warfare.

As closing remarks, some clarifications. First, it is important to stress that while there are vast differences between the multiple belligerent parties participating in the Colombian armed conflict (Gutiérrez Sanín 2008), the organizations here analyzed will be collectively referred as “belligerents.” Unlike delinquents, criminals, or Narcos; belligerent organizations will be understood as non-state armed societal networks that wield coercive capacity to challenge or reformulate pre-existing social orders. Although they might have unified agendas, leaders, symbols, and even organizational cultures, belligerents are contextually suited for the 21<sup>st</sup> century ‘new wars’ (Kaldor 2013); that is, there are not necessarily structured hierarchically, most of the times they depend on local or regional lines of command, and they work in nodes that are connected but do not rely on each other. Unlike traditional armed structures, belligerent organizations are civil-society based actors involved in both licit and illicit activities and participating both liberal and illiberal economies (Davis 2010). They might be motivated at times by greed and at times by grievances; however, by recurring to coercion to defend their ideas, territories, or access to commodities, they have a substantial political effect in their host communities (Wood 2008). They are rebels, in their way.

Second, despite the fact that this document focuses on the strategic interactions in which belligerents and civilians engage to solve the resource dilemma, this does not mean that economic transactions mediate all actions that occur during an armed confrontation. It is important to recall that FARC declared war against the livestock sector (Aguilera 2013) and committed countless of crimes that should be first and foremost related to the logics of terrorism and political violence. On October 29, 2002, a bomb hidden inside a milk canteen exploded in front of the headquarters of the Atlantic Cattlemen's Association, located in Barranquilla. On October 14, 2003, FARC militias launched a rocket against Fedegán's

national headquarters in Bogota. FARC killed several presidents of the local cattle committees throughout the Caribbean region, forcing these guild-like institutions to close for almost a decade. Both ranchers and ranch hands were slaughtered all across the Colombian territory without any prior reason for its occurrence. However, what I am trying to argue is that a better understanding of an armed conflict should take into account that violence is not a sum-zero game, but the outcome of the complex interplay between political, economic, and territorial logics.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review and argument**

The analysis of warfare has a long history within the fields of sociology, economy and political science. Although these diverse literature has traditionally focused on understanding the onset of civil wars, why populations mobilize for and against their régimes, and what contextual factors increase the chances of occurrence of violence; there is little consensus on a comprehensive set of causes and mediating factors of violent outbreaks. Some scholars argue that social grievances are the causes of violent conflicts. Others claim that it is the existence of a political opportunity. Some others sustain that warfare is the expression of greedy criminals looking to horde resources.

Political, societal or economic factors? Part of the disagreement can be attributed to the temporal and spatial variation in the cases studied, but it is ultimately explained by the different methodological and theoretical conventions within each field. The argument here presented draws on the insights of these three scholarly traditions –namely, political economists that focus on the onset and conclusion of civil wars, political scientists concerned with the micro-foundations of wartime order, and political sociologist who study the forms of social power and political contention–, often treated in isolation. For reasons discussed below, I will draw on the empirical results, methodological reflections, and theoretical insights of these fields, respectively. I argue that accounts that center either on detecting the macroeconomic factors that facilitate violent outbreaks, the micro-level factors that explain variance, or the path dependence of social and political systems; fail to recognize that warfare is the result of “complex and ambiguous processes that foster an apparently massive, though variable, mix of identities and actions” (Kalyvas 2003:475). Warfare, I sustain, depends on the availability of resources, is mobilized by social grievances, occurs at the local level only when and where it is feasible, and it is constantly being reshaped by the social, cultural, and political universes where it takes place. In what follows, I will discuss these traditions, followed by a presentation of a general approach to the study of civilians and belligerents’ engagement as strategic interaction.

## **ECONOMIC THEORIES OF CIVIL WAR ONSET**

In 1998, economists Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler wrote a seminal piece on the causes of civil war, arguing that it was greed and economic “opportunities” what explained its occurrence. Rebellions cannot survive without adequate funding, as belligerents need resources to finance their purchases of arms, food, and labor. Drawing on rational choice theories, Collier and Hoeffler (1998) claimed that, although political violence might be a function of a set of factors, the incidence of civil wars could only be explained by the abundance of lootable resources. Thus, building on elaborate econometric models, the authors argued that while social grievances are to be found in many different countries, only in those where the opportunities for economic gain coincide with these grievances, civil war will be likely to occur. Several studies have tested the strength of this argument (Fearon and Laitin 2003). While they had not found evidence of grievances such as ethnic or religious polarization (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002) or lack of democracy (De Soysa 2002) triggering civil war onset, all of them had identified a significant positive relationship resources and civil war.

The results of the Collier and Hoeffler study are one of the most remarkable contributions to the analysis of political violence, being studied by numerous scholars (Sambanis 2004). After years of debates, the results have only been refined but not refuted (Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2008). In their 2004 paper, for example, Collier and Hoeffler tested the argument with disaggregated national data, identifying both highly significant and considerable positive relationship between natural resource dependence and civil war risk. Unlike other types of resources, looting natural resources impacts a belligerent organization’s finances, and therefore, commodities such as diamonds, oil, timber, even poppy and coca have been proved to be excellent predictors of civil wars ((Ross 2015). In a similar vein, studies has also been shown that civil wars tend to occur in less economically developed countries (Sambanis 2002), being Collier and Hoeffler (2000) and Fearon and Laitin (2001) the first studies to find evidence on how high poverty levels and slow economic growth have significant effects on civil war.

The explanatory power of the Collier and Hoeffler model relies on its econometrical analysis about the conditions of viability for warfare. However, a substantial number of scholarly works sustain that the proposed argument relies on several theoretical and methodological flaws (Crammer 2002). First, in an attempt to capture civil wars efficiently, the model reduces the variation of political violence into an easily operationalized dummy variable –presence or absence of civil war. Second, as the model relies on over-aggregated national data, the main findings are extremely sensitive to coding and measurement procedures (Collier Hoeffler, and Rohner 2008). Third, there is a considerable distance between the indicators used –many of them proxies– and the theoretical constructs of the argument (Fearon et al. 2007). Fourth, the model suffers from endogeneity in some of the independent variables (Miguel et al. 2004). Fifth, there is insufficient and unsatisfactory theorization on the causal mechanisms (Sambanis 2004) as well as a lack of reflection on the foundations of the model (Gutierrez Sanin 2004).

In a nutshell, it can be said that while the Collier and Hoeffler model succeeds at identifying a key relationship in the analysis of political violence –belligerents need resources to fund their actions–, but the distance between theory and empirical results undermines the argument. Is it a war for resources or are the resources for war? Critical scholars argue that the root of this problem lies on its econometric approach, as it cannot grasp the complexity of armed violence (Keen 2008). Does wartime-related violence occur in the same communities where resources are being produced? More modest postures argue that the model fails to grasp the correct unit of analysis (Kalyvas 2006). By relying on national-level statistics, the Collier and Hoeffler model neglects the richness of local variation, which is fundamental to identify the causal logic and explain the development and duration of warfare (Tarrow 2007). Countless accounts reiterate that political violence is regionally shaped, conditioned, and situated. Terrorism in Peru, for example, can only be understood once we start to notice the differences between Sendero Luminoso actions in Ayacucho and Huallaga (Koc-Menard 2007). Direct violence against civilians during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) cannot be explained without a proper consideration of local electoral competition (Balcells 2010). The patterns of violence in Sri Lanka, also,

need to be analyzed according to the presence of political clientelistic networks of survival (Korf 2005). Warfare is deeply tied to regional cleavages that do not necessarily correspond to broad national grievances nor to the imagined logics of the “Homo oeconomicus” but that, if unaccounted, becomes mere noise for the national aggregate.

#### **THE MICRO DYNAMICS OF CIVIL WARS**

In response to these concerns, an innovative research program emerged in the field of political science in the mid-2000s: the Micro-dynamics of Civil War (Kalyvas 2008). Revolving around the works of Stathis Kalyvas on the Greek civil war (2006), this cluster of scholarship combines a systematic collection of both quantitative and qualitative sub-national data and its sophisticated statistical analysis. Unlike the Collier and Hoeffler model, the Micro-dynamics of Civil War (MDCW) research program studies sub-national spatial patterns of violence within the context of a civil war. For these authors, political violence is a co-production between local actors and belligerents, when animosities of the former overlap with the strategies of the later. Civil wars are not the product of central social cleavages, as earlier macro-level studies assume it. Neither are they the sole product developing political identities, as journalistic or ethnographic accounts portray it. Instead, by analyzing the articulations of the micro and the macro worlds, this body of works suggests that civil wars are instances of social effervescence in which macro political violence is privatized –to settle local scores– and mobilized to meet the belligerent’s end goals (Maleševic 2010).

Scholars within the MDCW program tend to contextualize patterns qualitatively and test them through statistical analysis, resorting to the level of Incumbents and belligerents’ territorial control as the main explanatory variable (Kalyvas 2008). Incumbents and belligerents compete to control territories that are vital for their long-term goals and strategies. In the process, they recur to violence to contest or reconfigure dominion. However, they cannot resort to indiscriminate violence, as it is too costly and ineffective. With a view to gain control of a given territory, both parties need collaborators—defectors—to gain the populations support and to eliminate possible detractors.

Therefore, parties recur to selective violence, jointly produced by civilians and combatants—civilians monopolize information on local affiliations while belligerents monopolize the use of violence—, as a way to minimize externalities and maximize control. In Kalyvas account (2006), the variation of violence against civilians is explained as a direct function of the struggles between belligerents and incumbents forces over territorial control. In the Greek provinces where either party has total control, he argues, the occurrence of direct forms of violence decreased—the party monopolizes both information and use of violence—; whereas in provinces where control is being contested, violence increased —civilians are divided into factions, and incumbents and belligerents act without full information on local identities. Against conventional explanations of warfare, Kalyvas’ work suggests that violence does not necessarily occur in the regions where the incumbent party lost its control. Rather, it happens in the locations of contestation and transition.

Several studies have pursued this argument, suggesting a set of theoretical and empirical insights about the compound co-production of violence amidst a civil war. A first group of studies has focused on the mediating factors that determine belligerent’s abuse on civilian population, such as the combatants political training (Hoover Green 2016), the organization sponsorship and access to resources (Hazen 2013; Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014) its patterns of recruitment (Weinstein 2007), the internal characteristics of a fighting unit (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006), the timing and desperation to win the war (Downes 2008), or territorial competition with other belligerent organization (Metelits 2009; Raleigh 2012). While belligerents also have the capacity to transform local forms of sociability by displacing pre-war governance networks and replacing actors, structures, norms, and practices with ones that are favorable for the belligerents (Wood 2008); a second group has insisted on the civilians’ capacity to resist and contest belligerent’s abuse. By looking at diverse factors such as pre-conflict relationships, social cohesion, and sociocultural group composition (Koc-Menard 2007; Norman 2012; Mampilly 2015), civilians ideological preferences (Wood 2003; Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013) or the contentious collective action in which communities engage during wartime (Barter 2012,

Arjona 2016; Kaplan 2017), this group of scholars has re-centered the academic conversation around the social –and not organizational– mediating factor in the distribution of violence during civil wars.

The MDCW approach enables a study into the connections between the civilians and belligerents in a way that is equally productive, broadening, and comprehensive. Zooming-in towards the sub-national data while relying on statistical analysis is a double move that, unlike previous scholarly works, also provides an effective methodology to explain why and when does political violence occurs. However, despite Kalyvas's (2003) criticism of Collier's formalistic and rational-theory driven model, MDCW scholars tend to conceive interactions as the encounter of rational individuals acting in the pursue of determined interests; this is a theoretical approach which is best fit for formal algebraic models than for a thorough understanding human relations—what ultimately hopes to explain. As sociologists have insisted for decades, social interaction is always richer, complex, and messier than any balanced formula allows for (Bourdieu et al. 1991; Desmond 2014; Wacquant 2016). Thus, by reducing their findings about the micro-level to simple formulas —about goals, choices, players, and arenas—MDCW scholars overlook the fact that the meaning of action does not lie in the minds of individuals, but in their social worlds, in the interactions, in their communication, in their shared beliefs and feelings. Interaction is a social pursuit per se, not a mathematical calculation (Jasper 2008) and, if ethnographic and journalistic accounts had insisted in something, is that wartime violence is the outcome of love and hate, of economy and politics, of culture, grievances, and greed.

#### **POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL RESEARCH**

While a currently overlooked subject of study in sociology (Maleševic 2010), warfare was once at the core of the field's research agenda. Like the MDCW scholars, one of the most important calls from political sociologist that study warfare is that of de-naturalizing and contextualizing any political process (Tilly 1992; Mann 1993). The formation of States, rebellions, social movements, or civil wars are all the outcomes of complex social

interactions embedded in unceasing conflicts over the distribution of capitals –economic, social, or symbolic—and the constant reshaping of the social world. Unlike MDCW scholars, political sociologists place emphasis on the contexts and the chain of events that facilitated a political outcome, as politics cannot be understood by what it is ought to be, rather by the contentious process by which it arose.

Methodologically, this means that the analytical strategy must focus not on individual or societal interests, but rather in sequences of their action, relations, and interactions. Within sociology, Comparative historical research is the primary method used to understand historical sequences and chains of causality, focusing on how early events decisively contour the unfoldings of processes over time (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003). Understanding how wars became a process of state making –not the other way around, as sustained in previous accounts of state development in Europe –, for example, allowed historical sociologist Charles Tilly (1992) to detect how apparently dissimilar forms of social organization like banditry, piracy, or nation states are all part of the same continuum defined in the interaction between political authorities and manipulators of capital. Likewise, in his study on the sources of social power, sociologist Michael Mann (1993) argues that hegemonic accounts on the modes of political organization tend to naturalize certain nominal distinctions –namely, that between the modern Nation State and the Civil Society—; ignoring the fact that, within each process of State formation, rivaling modes of political organization were never eliminated, just transformed and coopted into the State apparatus. The State and the Society, the author recalls, are not simple realities: “Whatever centrality, whatever private rationality, the state possesses, it is also impure, different parts of its body politic open to penetration by diverse power networks” (1997:56).

“When things happen within a sequence” Tilly puts it, “affects how they happen” (1984:14). This is a critical methodological reflection for the present study, as I argue that the chains of strategic interaction between civilians and belligerents are fundamental, in order to understand variation of political violence in the midst of an armed confrontation. When belligerents arrive at a new territory, they have to negotiate their position in the

political arena and rely on local means of production to extract resources efficiently. The outcome of this process is not solely determined by either interests or ideological compatibility of the involved parties, but by the endless pursuit of a solution over the resource dilemma —how much can I take? / How much can I give? –

The proposed argument seems consistent with the trajectory of a different mode of political organization, as studied by political sociologist: the formation of the Nation State. During the seventeenth century, these scholars claim, European political authorities faced several options when it came to collecting resources from their constituencies. On the one hand, coercive methods –direct violence and looting–were more efficient for rulers in the short term, but it produced resistance from the ruled against the ruling power in the long run. On the other hand, consensual taxation offered incentives to both the ruler and the ruled, as it allowed the former to extract more resources in the long run, while the latter benefited from the increased stability and protection against other voracious armies. While the variance in the modes of accumulation of capital and coercion explains the emergence of different States; with time, the inter-state waging of war stimulated the convergence around a particular model that balanced both capital and coercion accumulation —as in France or England— (Tilly 1992). Thus, by focusing on contexts, relations, interactions, and power differentials, sociology’s attention to sequences is a suitable approach to identify the causal configurations that produce outcomes of interest in this study<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> This fruitful approach is not without its critics. Despite being one of the earliest and most prolific methodologies in modern social sciences, comparative historical sociology has been challenged both theoretically and methodologically (Osinsky and Eloranta 2014). First, because it is used to analyze “long processes” –such as the emergence of the modern State, social classes, or social revolutions–, comparative historical analysis tends to rely on the study secondary accounts, which may be misleading and dependent on the accountant’s interpretations of the events. Second, by prioritizing descriptive accuracy of their unique events, comparativists compromise scope and analytical power of their theories. Third, by comparing large processes and social events, practitioners of this approach tend to put forth arguments that are only testable in a reduced number of cases –usually selected in the study due to their rare conditions–. In response to these criticisms, comparativists have resorted to different strategies. The first is to take multiple approaches to causal analysis, drawing from Statistical strategies that parallel multivariate regression techniques to those of narrative analysis distinctive to qualitative research. Secondly, comparative historical researchers have resorted to combine different methodologies that enable them to triangulate their results, as well as to collect first-hand accounts when possible. Third, in their accounts, comparativists tend to raise a nurtured discussion about their reliance on secondary evidence and, like anthropologist and historians do, they account any imprecision that might skew their findings.

## **STRATEGIC INTERACTIONS AND THE RESOURCE DILEMMA**

Dealings over resources are fundamental to the course of warfare (Tilly 1992). Belligerents interact with populations to collect these precious resources (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). At times, resources can come in the form of currency, but at times they come in the shape of clothing, medicine, or food to name a few (Hazen 2013). However, while belligerents do have the means of coercion to loot them, they need to be strategic. They have to moderate their use of violence and resort to mechanisms of coercion that do not compromise the entire mode of production, as warfare takes several years and resources are scarce. Civilians, on the other hand, want to minimize risks. Should they cooperate, negotiate, prevaricate, or resist with the belligerent organization? While wartime is a period of true uncertainty (Kalyvas 2006), they have to take into account many factors to define a strategy that reduces belligerent's capacity to retaliate and that enables them to continue with their lives in an orderly way.

A “resource dilemma” emerges when these two parties –belligerents and civilians– need to find a solution to two fundamental questions: how much can the belligerents take? Moreover, how much can the civilians give? Unlike common interpretations on resource extraction, I argue that solving the resource dilemma requires taking into account causes and consequences in different spheres of social life. Solving a dilemma is “a social pursuit, not a mathematical calculation” (Jasper 2008: xi). It requires intuition, social attunement, and one's capacity to anticipate the multiple effects each action has. It is a complex, case-specific, and socially embedded process that entails constant negotiation between the belligerent organization and the civilian on the amounts, frequencies, and modes of extraction –as well as reprisals for not cooperating. The complex solution to these wartime dilemmas escapes to current instrumentalist approaches, but it is a determining factor when explaining the variation of violence in times of war. Resource extraction is not an ‘all-else-equal’, one-time transaction; it is a reoccurring dilemma, as belligerent organizations demand resources with a certain periodicity. However, with each new demand, the context changes and a new dilemma is presented –how much violence can the belligerent forces inflict upon me and how much resources do I have left?

Civilians solve the resource dilemma through the practice of “strategic actions” – actions that have effects in several different games at once. Dilemmas, at times, require just one action –paying the ransom–; but at others, they need a chain of various activities that might compromise valuable resources that are necessary to resolve future impasses. Belligerents also resort to strategic actions: at times they can convince local communities into paying protection rackets, at times, they can resort to direct violence to maintain their status quo. However, as the present study is concerned with and is attentive to civilian’s capacities to moderate violence against themselves and their communities, I will address belligerent’s responses to the resource dilemma as “repertoires of coercion,” that is, the set of coercive practices that belligerents routinely engage.

When parties engage in a series of actions in response to each other’s movements regarding the resource dilemma, they are part of what sociologist Erving Goffman referred to as “strategic interaction” (1969). Strategic interactions are dependent on both one’s and the other party’s capacity to act and react. They occur as a chain of events, as they are the sequence of actions that respond to each other. They are defined as “strategic” as the interacting parties make calculations and respond to the dilemma in one of the four different ways: negotiation, cooperation, prevarication, or resistance. A death-threat, for example, may be taken seriously if the belligerent organization is in control of the province, but it could also be read as a bluff if the incumbent forces are making a territorial presence. When engaged in strategic interaction, the involved parties are continually taking into account the place of the other and see the interaction from his or hers point of view. While there is, as Goffman notes, a “true median interdependence,” this disposition is motivated by the need to estimate what is at stake. Unlike what game theory preaches, strategic interactions do not follow a rational path; it is contextually situated. What is important about the strategic interactions over resources is not necessarily the resources per se. As it will be discussed in chapter 5, civilian’s strategic actions have the capacity to constrain or enhance the belligerents resort to violence. A civilian that decides to cooperate with the belligerent forces might not be victimized with as much severity as a civilian who decides to resist and confront. However, what happens to the former when an opposing party attains

territorial control over his province? Being strategic is fundamental to survival amidst warfare.

### Chapter 3: The Colombian armed conflict

The Colombian conflict is the longest ongoing internal armed conflict in the western hemisphere. Fought between the national government and more than a dozen belligerent organizations, no identifiable general grievance mobilizes all the involved parties. However, its causes lay in the violent legacies of a mid-century civil war; the emergence of grassroots movements, guerrilla insurgencies, and paramilitary structures within the context of the cold war; and the consolidation of transnational narco-trafficking cartels. A set of conditions also help explain the duration of the confrontation, such as the availability of natural resources; the favorable weather for poppy, marijuana and coca plantations; a fractured State presence, generalized corruption and cooptation of government agencies in hands of a few local and regional elites; the accumulation and concentration of land ownership and the expansion of industrial agriculture; war on drugs; and the hurting effects of neoliberal economic models.

While experts claim that political violence has been a constant since the Colombian independence in 1810, the present-day armed conflict began in the aftermath of South America's last civil war— *La Violencia* (Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2013). Elicited by the assassination of populist leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in April 1948, *La Violencia* was a period where the Colombian society was mobilized by and divided into two opposing political sub-cultures—liberals and Conservatives (González 2004). To self-defend and eradicate the opposing band, liberals and conservatives organized guerrilla groups— *Bandoleros*— all across the national territory. From 1948 to 1966, the total number of fatalities attributed to the *Bandolero's* political violence exceeded 200,000—that is 2.8% of the total population aged 15 years and over— whereas the material costs are invaluable (Oquist, 1976). While most of these armed structures demobilized in 1953, some *Bandoleros* did not lay down their arms, triggering intense military operations during 1954 and 1965—when Efraín González, the last active conservative *bandolero*, was killed. In 1966, liberal *bandolero* leaders Ciro Trujillo and Manuel Marulanda, in conjunction with Jacobo Arenas from the Colombian Communist Party, presided over the second national guerrilla conference. This conference, in which 250 guerrilla members participated, gave

birth to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a Marxist belligerent organization which chief political goal was to seize the State apparatus (Aguilera 2013).

FARC was the first, but certainly not the only one of its kind. A significant number of belligerent organizations soon followed FARC's lead and rebelled themselves against the State such as the National Liberation Army (ELN) –trained in Castro's Cuba–, the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), –of Maoist orientation–, 19th of April Movement (M19) –which combined nationalism with revolutionary socialism–, or the Quintin Lame Armed Movement (MAQL) –Latin America's first indigenous guerrilla–. The conflict between these parties and the government was characterized by its low intensity and its low frequency until the mid-1970s when the belligerent forces began a process of expansion from their marginalized Andean strongholds towards the Caribbean plains and urban centers. There are two causes for this. First, the organizations stretched out towards providences with no history of Political Violence but with powerful legacies of social mobilization against land concentration (see Zamosc 1986), where they were expecting to find social support<sup>4</sup>. Second, belligerents expanded their repertoires of action and, in hopes to intervene in the political arena, began extorting and kidnapping wealthy *hacendados*, social leaders, and regional elites.

Several Colombian provinces were afflicted by high rates of political violence by the end of the decade. However, while the belligerents were able to attain relative attention within regional and national politics, popular support was harder for them to achieve. Unlike El Salvador where poor rural residents were directly motivated by the moral benefits they received from supporting belligerent groups (Wood 2003), Colombia struggled to find a succinct political agenda –a legacy from *La Violencia*– continuing to deepen the divide between different political bands. Moreover, the high costs of warfare, the coexistence of multiple organizations, and their competition over scarce resources led

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<sup>4</sup> Property rights over public lands became a pressing matter in Latin America with the development of internal and external markets by the end of the XIX century (Baretta and Markoff 1978). In Colombia, property rights were granted to the political elites in large in the period from 1870 to 1931 (Kalmanovitz and López 2006), which facilitated land maldistribution and concentration.

belligerents to overtax their constituencies and erode the little support they had attained in their earlier years (Gutiérrez Sanín 2008).

The revolution never came. M-19 demobilized in March 1990. EPL and PRT did it in February 1991, followed by Quintin Lame which did it in May 1991. At the same time, ELN and FARC –Colombia’s strongest belligerent organizations– were being evicted from their territories by a set of new organizations: the self-defense militias. As a direct response to the guerrilla expansion, in 1994 the national government allowed private security firms to acquire and use assault rifles in rural areas as well as to train their members with the military. This measure circuitously enabled local elites –with the support, tolerance or carelessness of the national forces– to legally organize their self-defense groups, and thus become the legal authorities in provinces that lacked solid State presence (Romero 2000). By mid-1990s, these militias banded together into a national confederation, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), which amalgamated an army of more than 15,000 combatants. Unlike the other belligerent organizations, AUC did not seek to seize the State apparatus. This organization self-identified as “an anti-communist advance guard in ‘defense of private property and free enterprise” (Romero 2000:66), focusing on the consolidation of politic and economic sovereignty in and for the afflicted regions. AUC’s *modus operandi*, however, was much more than a self-defense organization. A few months after its formation, AUC began an aggressive campaign towards the FARC’s and ELN’s strongholds, committing an unprecedented number human rights violations all across the national territory.

With the emergence of several drug cartels and a transnational criminal network that required their protection from the State, the coffers of the belligerent organizations began to be supplemented by narco-money, either by soliciting for protection rackets or direct participation<sup>5</sup>. By mid-1990s, most belligerent forces primarily fund their activities with drug-money (Saab and Taylor 2009), a business that proved to be a more lucrative activity than taxing, looting, or extortion. Narco-money also facilitated belligerent’s

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<sup>55</sup> In many regions of Colombia, belligerent forces regulated the cultivation of coca leaves (Arjona 2014), while in others, they processed and distributed the narcotics themselves (Saab and Taylor 2009).

territorial expansion. As a consequence, Colombia experienced a rapid escalation in the rates of political violence as well as an increase in the number and frequency of hostilities between belligerent —both Marxists and paramilitaries— and incumbent forces between 1996 and 2006 (see figure 1). This was a period in which the relations between belligerents with the civilian population changed considerably. Since narco-money required little to no interaction with their host communities, belligerent forces addressed popular support as a secondary concern. While direct military confrontations between the belligerent and the incumbent forces were the most frequent type of conflict activity before 1996, one-sided attacks against civilians began to dominate the conflict from 1998 onwards (Restrepo, Spagat, and Vargas 2003). In 2002, for example, the number of homicides committed in Colombia increased 1.5 times the rate presented in 1995; whereas the rate of civilians being forcibly displaced increased 6.4 times —that is a 62,5465 civilian difference. Mass extermination of populations and communities, also called “Tierra arrasada” —scorched lands— was the most efficient and recurring strategy to attain de facto occupation of territories for drug production during those critical years (Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2013). If the former period was a time of negotiation, collaboration or persuasion between civilians and the involved parties; by the end of the century, massacres and forced displacement became the dominant grievances in the majority of provinces afflicted by political violence.

**Figure 1.** Total number of crimes per year / Reported cases in ACEO per year



Source: Panel Municipal del CEDE - Universidad de los Andes, Fundagán  
 "Acabar con el olvido" (ACEO)

In the 2002 presidential elections, Colombia demanded an end to all forms of political violence. As a result, the newly elected president Uribe Velez and his team almost immediately began negotiations with the belligerent organizations. On 15 July 2003, AUC and the government signed the Santa Fe de Ralito agreement, which included the terms of the concentration and demobilization of all combatants. In total, 31.671 AUC combatants collectively demobilized; however, nearly 4,000 former militants re-armed and in a couple

of years they were organized in dozens of smaller criminal bands —*Bandas Criminales* o BACRIM— that still operate in 17 departments of Colombia. In the same way, In September 2012, President Santos began negotiations with FARC in Havana, Cuba. Almost four years later, the negotiating teams announced that they had reached a final agreement to end the conflict. By mid-2017 –period in which this document is being written–, FARC has turned over 7,132 individual weapons to the United Nations mission in Colombia for registering and storing, while 6,900 FARC militants wait for demobilization. ELN is also negotiating an agreement with the Colombian government and hopes to cease fire by the end of 2017.

## Chapter 4: Research strategy

This document is based on the results of a 2012 survey conducted by the Colombian Livestock Federation –Fedegán– to ranchers who declared themselves victims of the armed conflict. The survey was carried out as part of Fedegán’s Human Rights Initiative –*Acabar con el Olvido*. Respondents did not receive any monetary retribution for participating in the survey, but they were provided with free legal assistance on how to receive symbolic and monetary compensation from the State under the terms established by Colombia’s 1448/2011 law –better known as the “victim’s law.” Data collection occurred in two stages. In the first stage –fall 2011–, Fedegán distributed handouts that informed ranchers about current legislation –law 1448/2011– that granted executive compensation for victims of political violence. The handouts were circulated in every ranch that vaccinated against afebrile fever that year – 97% of the national territory– and, if the ranchers were interested, they were invited to complete and send a form –included in the handout– to Fedegán’s central offices. More than 22,000 forms were received. If the information was duplicated or if contact information was missing, the form was not taken into account. In the second stage –spring and fall 2012–, Fedegán representatives contacted more than 7,000 ranchers and surveyed them by phone. If the ranchers gave their consent, the collected information was included in the book, “*Acabar con el Olvido: Segundo informe*,” published by the non-profit Fundagan in 2013. Once the survey was completed, the call was redirected to a legal advisor. In total, Fedegán collected 4,129 narratives; all included in this study.

Due to the nature of the survey, Fedegán’s data has a few limitations<sup>6</sup>. While better data could have been collected for the present study, this is still a unique dataset in many regards. First, it is one of the few publicly available datasets in Colombia that records

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<sup>6</sup> First and foremost, data was not collected using an adequate sampling strategy. The telephone survey sample was not randomly drawn from the entire population of ranchers –nor ranchers who had been victimized. Those who effectively participated in the study, were motivated by the possibility of economic and symbolic compensation. Also, the dataset only collects the experiences of those ranchers who suffered direct forms of violence, paying no attention to the accounts of those who did not undergo any type of traumatic experience. Finally, the dataset collects rancher’s accounts of how they remembered the events happening. At no point of the survey the ranchers were requested to provide supporting documentation.

information disaggregated to the individual level. It is extremely well documented, especially in profiling victims and perpetrators, information that is often ambiguous in other sources. Twelve different belligerent organizations and more than 174 military units were accounted as responsible for 6,887 crimes occurring between the years 1950 and 2013. It is also the only dataset in Colombia that collects information about how violence was sequentially inflicted, making it a unique opportunity to explore patterns of action and interaction. Furthermore, Fedegán generously provided relevant information about the size of herd and geographic location of 3,147 cattle ranchers –76% of the total sample– who were previously registered as members of this corporation<sup>7</sup>. This information was handy to the analysis of resource extraction in the individual level, as it enables the study of how resource availability mediates belligerents’ differentiated use of violence. Although the entire dataset is publicly available through Fundagan’s book, the dataset was de-identified. I had used pseudonyms or withheld the names of almost all civilians quoted in this document.

The results were triangulated with 53 extended interviews to cattle ranchers all around Colombia<sup>8</sup>. A panel data analysis of 1122 municipalities in Colombia between 1990 and 2010 was also conducted in order to understand the contexts in which these interactions take place. Secondary information was collected from Fedegán, the Colombian Ministry of Defense, and the National Center for Historical Memory. The Center for Economic Development Studies (CEDE for its acronym in Spanish) at Los Andes University generously granted me access to their datasets. With all this input, I built a new panel dataset in which municipality/year was the unit of analysis, ranging from 1990 to 2010. In Colombia, there is ample quantitative and qualitative information about the armed conflict. However, no centralized entity collects it or publicly distributes it. While many institutions

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<sup>7</sup> Fedegán provided an inventory of total head of cattle associated with each producer. This corporation also classified each producer into the following categories, according to their respective herd size: Very small <10, Small 11-25, Medium / Small 26-50, Medium 51 -100, Medium / Large 101-250, Large 251 -500, Large Medium 501 -1000, Very large >1000. For the purpose of this study, I collapsed these eight categories into three: Small (<10 - 50), Medium (51 - 250), and Large (>251).

<sup>8</sup> The interviews were conducted by the lead researcher of this document and were also included in the book “Acabar con el Olvido: Segundo informe”.

gather information related to political violence since the 1980s, they all resort to different methodologies and modes of operationalization (Espinosa 2011). For the contextual analysis, I tested different measures of the same variables, and decided to rely on —when possible— information that came —in respective order— from an academic institution, an NGO, or a State agency.

<b>variable</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Coca Plantations</b>	Presence of coca plantations – Dummy	Uniandes
<b>Conflict Index</b>	Incidence of armed political conflict – Percentage	Ministry of Defense
<b>AUC</b>	Presence of paramilitary (AUC/BACRIM) organizations – Dummy	Uniandes (1993 – 2010)
<b>ELN</b>	Presence of ELN – Dummy	Uniandes (1993 – 2010)
<b>FARC</b>	Presence of FARC – Dummy	Uniandes (1993 – 2010)
<b>La Violencia – 1948-1953</b>	The municipality was affected by political violence in 1948-1953 – Dummy	Uniandes
<b>Land Conflicts - 1901-1931</b>	The municipality was affected by political violence in 1901-1931 – Dummy	Uniandes
<b>Number Of Homicides</b>	Total number homicides – Absolute	CNMH (1990 – 2010)
<b>Number Of Kidnappings</b>	Total number of kidnappings – Absolute	CNMH (1990 – 2010)
<b>Reported Thefts</b>	Total number of cases of theft (personal and commercial) – Log	Uniandes
<b>Municipal Revenue</b>	Total amount of income of the municipal administration – Log	Uniandes
<b>Rurality Index</b>	Rural population / total population – Percentage	Uniandes
<b>Heads Of Cattle</b>	Total number of heads of cattle – Log	Fedegan (2001 – 2010)
<b>Distance Wholesale Market</b>	Linear distance from municipal center to a main food wholesale market – Log	Uniandes
<b>Unmet Basic Needs</b>	Population living under the poverty line – Percentage	Uniandes (1993 – 2010)

*\*The unit of analysis is municipality – year (1990 – 2010)*

This study recurs to triangulation of different sources, as complementarity is a fit strategy to ensure reliability and validity in studies where data is partial, fractured, or inexistent, such as armed violence<sup>9</sup>. Even though the multi-method is not the prime strategy in contemporary sociology, students of volatile political processes recommend the integration of different types of data and analytical approaches (Tarrow 1995; Kalyvas 2008; Fearon and Laitin 2011). This study relies on a sequential research design, as each step enables me to identify and understand the mechanisms that emerge at every level of analysis (Tarrow 2007). The main objective guiding the analysis is to explore how civilians resolve the dilemma of resource extraction. Secondary objectives are to understand the contexts in which these strategic interactions occur and examine their aggregate effects.

The empirical analysis unfolds in three stages, where each complements the general argument. In the first stage, I present the context in which the interactions take place. I explore the factors that determine the presence of belligerent organizations in a municipality, as well as the variables that relate to the commission of violence against cattle ranchers. In the second stage I highlight the strategies which cattle ranchers declared having used to solve the resource dilemma –negotiation, cooperation, prevarication, and resistance. In the third and final stage, I study the causes and effects of these strategies – what I call chains of strategic interactions– from the civilian’s point of view. Here, I also present a study of “*Acabar con el Olvido*” quantitative data in which I identified the

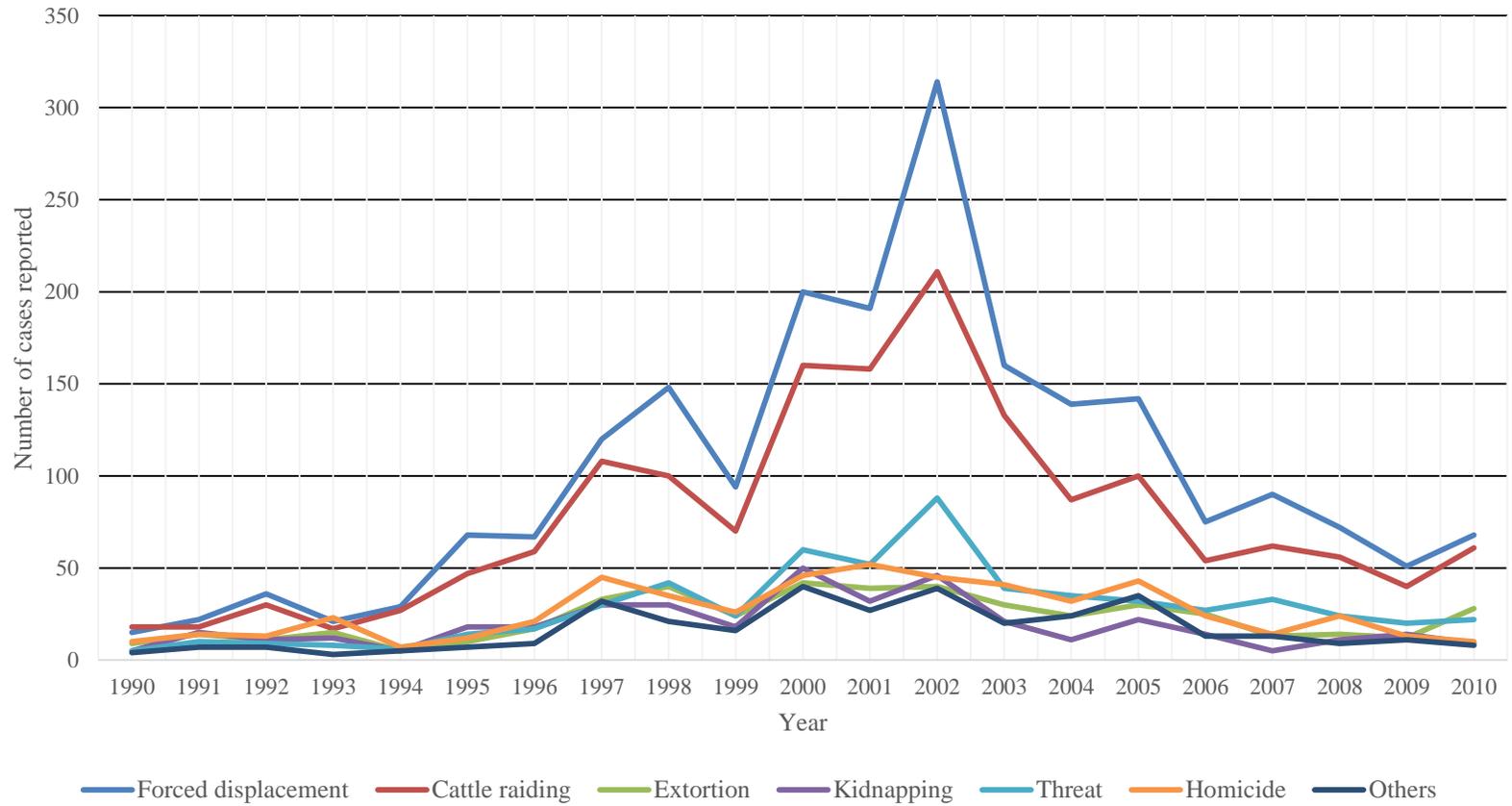
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<sup>9</sup> The study of social phenomena amidst armed confrontation presents a set of methodological conundrums (Robben and Nordstrom 1995; Lynch 2013; Salehyan 2015). First, field sites with security constraints such as Colombia limit the researcher’s capacity to collect data that best fits her research strategy. At times, researchers cannot access certain localities, conflict-related movements may have altered the population compositions, and key informants might not willing to talk about hazardous subjects, if they have not been already silenced physically or mentally. Second, firsthand accounts are virtually impossible to collect (Collins 2008). Third party accounts and records, which might be the only data available, only provide partial interpretations. Third and final, there is little or no secondary data available for regions where political violence did not took place, compromising variance. Political violence is complex, has long-lasting effects, and it should not be studied without a significant effort to link methodological reflections to in-field dynamics. While there are many analytical alternatives ranging from contrasting sources to building robust statistical models; the argument here presented is best developed through complementary multi-methods analysis as it hopes to build a “thick-description” of a war-related social process.

repertoires of coercion against ranchers and try to connect strategic actions to belligerent's repertoires of coercion.

This study comprises the years 1990 to 2010. Data availability defined this selection. As it was discussed concisely in the previous chapter, the decade that goes between 1996 and 2006 has been identified by scholars as the period when political violence critically intensified (Grupo de Memoria Historica 2013). This is also the period when corporations began collecting data related to political violence (Espinosa 2011). While Fedegán began gathering information in 2011, 67.6% of the observations collected in the database correspond to actions that occurred in the 1996 – 2006 period (See figure 2). The year 1990 was selected as the baseline as a third of the belligerent Colombian organizations demobilized that year – a major change in the Colombian political arena. The year 2010 was chosen as the end-line year, as it is the year when President Juan Manuel Santos – Nobel Laureate responsible for the demobilization of FARC and the dialogues with ELN– was elected president. In sum, this 20-year span comprises 88% of the observations.

**Figure 2.** Total number of crimes committed against cattle ranchers (1990 – 2010), diagregated by crime



## Chapter 5: Findings

Living under the shadow of warfare is a nerve-wracking experience. “There is a relative calm nowadays”, Santiago, a cattle rancher from Caldas asserts, “but you never know. You just don’t know what might happen tomorrow.” Back in the mid-1990s, leaving the house was a tortuous experience for him and for his wife. Just a few miles away from their ranch, FARC and AUC were fighting for control over the Magdalena Medio region. “You knew when you are leaving, but you did not know if you were coming back.” In Colombia, civilians have been deeply affected by the last decades of armed confrontation (Grupo de Memoria Historica 2013). Ranchers describe the experience as living in the crossfire: they were reluctant to take bands, there was much uncertainty about what was going on, and everyone feared for his or her own lives. Their ranches were, at times, the battlefields. Moreover, when the guns were silenced, their properties were the spoils of war. However, life had to keep going on. As Alberto F. puts it, “little by little, we learned how to defend ourselves and to coexist in this situation.”

In this chapter, I will present the key results of the study. In the first section, I will present a general analysis of the Colombian armed conflict looking at the factors that explain the presence of belligerent organizations and violence against cattle ranchers. In the second section, I expand on the strategic actions in which ranchers engaged in, to resolve the resource dilemma. While scholarly accounts tend to equate resource extraction to looting (Mac Ginty 2004), I will show that resource extraction occurs in a highly contested manner –through cooperation, negotiation, prevarication, and resistance. Finally, I will expand on how these strategic actions become part of the chains of strategic interactions, and how they are interconnected with belligerent violence. Resource extraction, I argue, is not just a form of political violence (Mac Ginty 2004); it is also the negotiation over the resort to other modes of coercion.

## EXPLAINING VARIANCE AT THE SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL

Colombia is administratively divided into 32 departments and 1122 municipalities. Between 1990 and 2010, in only 88 municipalities there is no recorded presence of belligerent forces. In other words, 92% of these territorial units were afflicted by the armed conflict. The geography of warfare, however, is neither homogenous nor covers with equal intensity the entire nation. Each belligerent organization has a particular agenda and cater to different constituencies (Gutierrez Sanin 2008), making their trajectories significantly different<sup>10</sup>. Scholars have claimed that they are contingent on various factors, such as the forms of social, political and economic organization (Arjona 2016); the region's integration into the national and global economy (Rettberg 2010), or the differentiated and unequal presence of the State apparatuses (González 2004). Scholars have also suggested that the currently armed confrontation might be a continuation of earlier manifestations of political mobilization and violence, such as *La Violencia* and the agrarian revolts of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Hristov 2014).

To understand the geographies of political violence in Colombia, I use a set of fixed effects logistic regression models to identify the determinants of belligerent presence at the municipality level. The dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether or not belligerent forces have been reported in a given municipality between the years 1993 and 2010. Here, I focus on the three most important belligerent organizations in the country: FARC, AUC, and ELN. I will test three dominant theoretical approaches discussed in chapter 2, that is, the manifestation of social grievances, the presence of lootable or taxable resources, and the struggles between different bands over territorial control. I test these three theories in separate models, separately for each belligerent organization – a total of nine models. Accordingly, the first model controls for the percentage of rural population in the municipality, percentage of population under the poverty line, and the electoral

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<sup>10</sup> While Marxist belligerents began in semi-autonomous peripheral zones of peasant colonization and expanded to wealthier provinces; the paramilitaries emerged in more prosperous and economically integrated zones where the elites felt threatened by the Marxist advance, expanding towards other more peripheral regions where they could find the support of the local elites. This differentiated logic of territorial expansion is best described as a “counter-path” (González 2004:55), and it ultimately responds to the clash of two contradictory economic models for rural development (González et al. 2003).

competitiveness index. If social grievances are determinant to the presence of political violence, I expect to find that municipalities with higher rural population and higher rates of unmet basic needs will be likely to have FARC and ELN presence, while AUC will be associated with urban populations. Less electoral competitiveness is expected to be related to all the belligerent forces. In the second model, I test the “Greed vs. Grievance” argument (Collier and Hoeffler 2008), adding a set of economic variables –municipal revenue, the presence of coca plantation, agricultural GDP, the number of heads of cattle, and distance to closest wholesale market– to the preceding model. If economic opportunities are determining factors, I expect to see a relation between coca plantations and the presence of all the belligerent forces (Saab and Taylor 2009). In the last model, I test the importance of previous forms of political violence as well as the presence of other belligerent organization in the municipality. Until the mid-1990s, FARC, M-19, ELN, EPL, *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* and Quintín Lame participated in the “Coordinadora Guerrillera Simón Bolívar,” an organization that seeks to coordinate the actions and unifies the strategy of several guerrilla organizations in Colombia. Thus, FARC and ELN are expected to concur in the same municipalities. I also hope to see a relation between *La Violencia* and FARC presence, while AUC with previous forms of Land conflicts (Romero 2000).

**Table 1. Log odd – ratios for the presence of belligerent organizations (1993 – 2010)**

	FARC			AUC			ELN		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Total Population (log)	0.860*** (11.50)	1.626*** (12.02)	1.192*** (9.86)	0.444*** (8.99)	1.557*** (10.13)	1.170*** (8.19)	0.798*** (11.50)	1.644*** (11.38)	1.028*** (7.93)
Rurality index	-0.0195 (-0.05)	0.525 (1.26)	0.316 (0.85)	-1.410*** (-5.69)	-1.237*** (-3.99)	-1.337*** (-4.63)	0.0417 (0.12)	0.324 (0.80)	0.242 (0.68)
Unmet basic needs	-0.0114*** (-4.15)	0.00552 (1.48)	0.00446 (1.30)	-0.00669** (-2.72)	0.00172 (0.59)	-0.00207 (-0.76)	0.00886*** (3.29)	0.0130*** (4.07)	0.0111*** (3.80)
Electoral competitiveness index	-0.240 (-1.72)	-0.748*** (-3.87)	-0.540** (-2.87)	-0.715** (-3.89)	-1.273*** (-6.13)	-1.053*** (-5.26)	-0.614*** (-4.24)	-0.730*** (-3.80)	-0.391* (-2.09)
Heads of cattle (log)		0.0601 (0.98)	-0.00292 (-0.05)		0.457*** (7.44)	0.448*** (7.90)		0.000199 (0.00)	-0.0639 (-1.20)
Municipal Revenue (log)		-0.736*** (-7.28)	-0.385*** (-3.93)		-1.537*** (-9.82)	-1.312*** (-8.78)		-1.084*** (-8.77)	-0.683*** (-5.77)
Coca plantations (dummy)		0.800*** (4.45)	0.788*** (4.75)		0.655*** (5.00)	0.500*** (4.09)		0.669*** (4.13)	0.556*** (3.75)
Distance wholesale market (log)		0.160 (1.46)	0.169 (1.68)		0.0203 (0.24)	0.0156 (0.20)		0.0481 (0.45)	0.00278 (0.03)
Agricultural GDP (log)		0.0364 (0.57)	0.0431 (0.77)		-0.0784 (-1.49)	-0.0996* (-2.02)		-0.0132 (-0.19)	0.0130 (0.21)
La Violencia - 1948 to 1953 (dummy)			1.148** (5.84)			0.190 (1.24)			0.208 (1.13)
Land conflicts of 1901-1931 (dummy)			-0.351 (-1.00)			0.341 (1.81)			-0.0866 (-0.33)
ELN (dummy)			1.418*** (15.17)			0.975*** (11.07)			
AUC (dummy)			0.642*** (6.81)						0.946*** (10.22)
FARC (dummy)						0.729*** (8.53)			1.521*** (16.70)
Constant	-8.238*** (-9.61)	-11.33*** (-8.77)	-10.25*** (-8.85)	-5.268*** (-8.76)	-5.935*** (-6.55)	-4.342*** (-5.28)	-9.882*** (-12.20)	-9.019*** (-7.24)	-7.016*** (-6.46)
lnsig2u	1.182*** (18.46)	1.529*** (19.47)	1.230*** (15.66)	0.305*** (3.49)	0.715*** (6.43)	0.431*** (3.60)	1.145*** (16.78)	1.370*** (15.45)	0.964*** (10.20)
<i>N</i>	<b>19074</b>	<b>9035</b>	<b>9035</b>	<b>19074</b>	<b>9035</b>	<b>9035</b>	<b>19074</b>	<b>9035</b>	<b>9035</b>

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 1 shows the results of the nine fixed effects logistic regression models—three per belligerent organization—using panel data at the municipal level that varies from 1993 to 2010 for the first model, and 2001 to 2010 for the second and third model<sup>11</sup>. Because events associated with political violence are heavily skewed to the right—concentrated closer to zero, with a few large values—, several variables were logged for the model estimation—as noted in the table. Unlike what was expected, there are mixed results for the effects of populations living under the poverty line. As the first models show, municipalities with higher rates of populations living under the poverty threshold—unmet basic needs—are significantly less likely to host FARC and AUC forces. However, for ELN—which is a Castro-trained guerrilla—, it has a positive and significant effect which might be accounted for ideological differences.

The second model shows that the municipalities with coca plantations are significantly more likely to host belligerent forces. As discussed in chapter 3, coca is a valuable natural resource that fuels political violence in Colombia. A Higher number of heads of cattle do not have a homogeneous effect, but it does relate to AUC presence and organization which—as previously discussed— was the outcome of both the livestock sector’s support and organizational capacity. Also, these results show that higher municipal revenues reduce the probability of belligerent presence. Thus, it can be argued that mayoralties that can collect more taxes are doing better at maintaining public order. Likewise, it can be argued that warfare is a phenomenon not only in low-income countries (Collier and Hoeffler 1998) but also of low-income regional entities. Municipalities with a greater the degree of electoral competitiveness<sup>12</sup> also have a higher probability of belligerent presence. This can be interpreted as either belligerent's target municipalities

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<sup>11</sup> Data for Heads of cattle could only be found from 2001, while information about coca plantations began to be collected in 1999.

<sup>12</sup> There are multiple ways to measure electoral competitiveness. The most widespread electoral competitiveness index is calculated taking into account the weight of the two political forces with more support after given elections. The index here used measures the numeric distance between the percentages of votes between two presidential candidates. This index is expressed in absolute terms and it reflects the distance between both contenders. The less difference there is, the lower the value. The interpretation, follows a logic contrary to its magnitude. The lower the result of the calculation, the greater the degree of electoral competitiveness and the greater the real possibility of alternation (Oñate and Ocaña 1999).

with higher rates of political mobilization and contention, or belligerent forces mobilize their constituents towards an alternative candidate and increase the degree of electoral competitiveness. Whatever is the direction of this relation, results reveal a significant relationship between warfare and politics that cannot be disregarded. Finally, municipalities with larger populations have higher risks of war. Interpretations to this correlation are theoretically and empirically ambiguous.

Table 2 also shows that there is a significant variation between the belligerent organizations. While FARC was present in 88.4% of the municipalities, ELN in 69%, the paramilitaries –either as AUC or BACRIM– were only present in 65.5%. But not all the belligerent organizations are present in the same municipalities. As it is shown in Table 1, there are significant differences. While Marxist guerrillas have been traditionally accounted as a rural phenomenon, the results presented in table 1 indicate that, for the 1990s and 2000s, rurality is not necessarily a significant predictor for neither FARC nor ELN. Between 2002 and 2003, for example, FARC was present in 55% of the Colombian municipalities. They were able to execute major urban attacks such as high-jacking a commercial airplane, kidnapping 12 deputies in downtown Cali –Colombia’s third largest city–, or igniting 200 kilograms of explosives in *El Nogal*, an elite social Club in the heart of Bogota’s financial district. For AUC, on the other hand, rurality index seems to have a negative effect. Thus, it can be argued that paramilitarism is more an urban phenomenon as it caters to the economic elites. While there is a co-existence of the three forces here analyzed, it seems like FARC and ELN share more territories than AUC and either of them. As expected, municipalities affected by La Violencia seem to be more likely to have FARC presence.

Nevertheless, the presence of warfare does not necessarily imply that these municipalities are equally afflicted by political violence (Kalyvas 2006). In the second test, I estimate a set of linear regression models to determine what factors lead to the victimization of cattle ranchers. Table 2 shows the results of five fixed effects OLS regression models using panel data at the municipal level from 1993 to 2010. The main dependent variable is the yearly sum of reported crimes committed against cattle ranchers

by belligerent forces, as recorded by Fedegan. Model one is a baseline model where I test rurality index and municipal revenue. Model two adds up economic variables, such as the total number of heads of cattle, the distance to a wholesale market, and the percentage of population living under poverty line. In the third, I test the control variables, three dummy variables for AUC, ELN, and FARC presence, and the index used by the ministry of defense to calculate the impact of armed conflict per municipality. In the fourth model, I test a model in which I integrate the occurrence of a set of crimes —indiscriminate of the target population— but subtracts the dummy variables for the presence of armed actors. Lastly, I test all the determinants outlined in the previous models.

As table 2 shows, there is a significant and positive relation between kidnapping and displacement, and crimes committed against cattle ranchers across model 4 and 5 – probably an endogeneity problem. Homicides, however, do not seem to be necessarily associated. Likewise, the presence of armed actors appears to have no effects while the conflict index is both significant and negative, suggesting that crimes against ranchers are being committed in the territories where armed confrontation and killings are not necessarily taking place. Across the five models, rurality index is a significantly good predictor for violence against cattle ranchers; but as table 2 shows, it is a negative relation –urban rather than rural.

There might be a few limitations with these results. First, due to difficulties to document it otherwise, Fedegán recorded the municipality of occurrence of the crime as the municipality where the rancher lived at the time when the crimes were committed if no further information was provided. While it is true that most ranchers in Colombia keep their operations in the rural areas of the municipality they reside, some of them own ranches that are not located in the same municipality. Second, while they might be extorted or kidnapped in an urban area where they reside, the nature of these crimes might be associated with the economic activities realized in other municipalities –as it will be expanded in the following section. Nevertheless, table 2 also suggest that crimes against ranchers occurred at higher rates in municipalities with higher numbers of heads of cattle.

**Table 2.** Fixed effects regression for number of report of crimes committed against cattle ranchers, per municipality.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Total Population	0.159*** (3.36)	0.374*** (4.05)	0.124* (2.52)	-0.0774 (-0.30)	-0.269 (-1.08)
Rurality index	-0.602** (-3.20)	-0.935*** (-3.87)	-0.603** (-3.29)	-2.289*** (-3.61)	-2.183*** (-3.47)
Municipal Revenue	0.0260* (2.16)	-0.320*** (-3.90)	-0.00263 (-0.23)	-0.185 (-1.31)	-0.0995 (-0.77)
Unmet basic needs		-0.00133 (-0.55)		-0.0100 (-1.92)	-0.00798 (-1.50)
Heads of cattle (log)		0.108*** (4.58)		0.139** (2.88)	0.140** (2.96)
Distance wholesale market (log)		0.226*** (3.81)		0.208* (2.11)	0.204* (2.12)
AUC (Dummy)			0.470*** (4.42)		0.0420 (0.37)
ELN (Dummy)			0.206*** (3.88)		0.128 (1.48)
FARC (Dummy)			0.0439 (1.29)		-0.0506 (-0.36)
Conflict Index			0.0203 (1.01)		-0.406*** (-4.06)
Number of homicides (log)				0.0251 (0.45)	0.0753 (1.29)
Number of kidnappings (log)				0.394** (3.27)	0.396*** (3.31)
Number of displacements (log)				0.328*** (3.31)	0.417*** (3.98)
Constant	-1.081* (-2.09)	-1.858** (-2.78)	-0.544 (-0.90)	0.380 (0.18)	-0.867 (-0.39)
<i>N</i>	18225	10159	18225	2830	2830

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

“We began to take the necessary precautions and to learn to defend ourselves,” Alberto F. continues. “It was a new situation for us, something that we did not know how to handle because we had not experienced something similar before.” Learning to survive amidst armed violence is a recurring theme within cattle rancher’s narratives. Ranchers expressed that in these times of crisis they had to learn many things such as how to shot a gun, what times were good for driving and what the best routes were; but most importantly, they learned whom to talk to, how, and when. Information is a critical component to understanding how political violence occurs in times of war (Kalyvas 2006). Setting a common ground of mutual understanding is fundamental to solving the resource dilemma, as ranchers need to know costs, causes, and consequences.

While one-sided violence against civilians is the most common form of violence in Colombia during the period here studied (Restrepo, Spagat, and Vargas 2003), this does not mean that warfare does not follow a particular logic (Kalyvas 2006, Arjona 2016). Ranchers and belligerents meet with a certain regularity to inform the other party and to define the price of the ransom. Normally, a small unit –10 heavily armed young males—<sup>13</sup> pays a visit, discusses the sum and possible retaliations. In case they felt it was needed, ranchers would ask an interview with the commander of the front and set things clear with him directly. Ranchers would hop into a horse or truck, and head towards the mountain and confront his or her persecutor. These meetings can take a few minutes, a siting, or a visit. They can happen at the civilian’s house or the belligerent’s camp. They can also extend for months, take a member of the family as a hostage, and require the collective efforts from both bands to agree on what are the possible actions to be taken. In them, belligerents would explain to the victim what the situation was, gave a few options, and –if it was possible— they would provide information about times, places, sums of money they needed to pay.

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<sup>13</sup> While “Acabar con el Olvido: Segundo informe” only collected information about belligerents and fronts; an earlier study also conducted by Fedegán in 2009 collected detailed information on weaponry and size of the military units. The sample of that former study was 438.

These initial interactions seem to follow a purely economic logic. However, the calculations and strategies adopted by ranchers did not. They took into account a set of political, cultural, and social factors –as well as objective and subjective dispositions– before deciding if they were going to cooperate, negotiate, prevaricate, or resist the belligerent organization’s demand for resources. In this section, I will present the four top strategies used by civilians and the principal resources that they declared taking into account when determining each strategy. For this purpose, I will rely both on the interviews collected and to the narratives component of the Fedegán Survey.

The first strategy, as well as the most common, is cooperation. Most of the ranchers who participated in the survey, resorted to this strategy at some point of their interactions. If the rancher decided to cooperate, he or she would be charged a weekly, monthly, or yearly fee that will be paid either directly by the rancher, or indirectly –through the ranch hand or the hacienda’s accountant. The main resource taken into account was economic: how much of the ranch’s income can go into warfare? The outcome of these interactions resemble what can be known as a system of taxation and contribute to the establishment of what current scholarship has identified as the state like functions of nonstate violent organizations (Davis 2010, Scheper-Hughes 2015, Arjona 2016, Arias 2017, Wolff 2017).

A second factor that was accounted was risk. Primary, proximity, and capacity of the belligerent organization. Subsequently, Ranchers took into account the community’s disposition towards belligerent forces. Ranchers argued that, in their communities, there were networks of informants that the belligerents paid to keep them posted about the local occurrences. “The peasants were frightened, subjugated,” a small rancher from Tolima said, “We lived by the law of silence.” In several communities, neighbors would not only cooperate but ally with belligerents, making it difficult for them to do otherwise. A snippet from the interview to a rancher in Caquetá expands on this theme:

[FARC] is an industry here in San Vicente. The guerrilla gives many jobs and thus has many followers who feel protected by them. They have many people working for them, a lot of front men, a lot of merchants [...] I believe

that they have thousands of followers, then follow you and everything you do [...] The guerrilla is like a religion in this town.

While no rancher self-described himself as an ally, these later group of civilians who cooperated with the belligerents –as described by secondary accounts– seem to take into account future revenue. This is the type of disposition that Samuel L. Popkin (1979) described as the Rational Peasant. Regarding allies to Marxist belligerents, a few ranchers in the Caribbean coast and the Orinoquian planes complained about their neighbors being “vividores”; people who supported warfare and did a business out of it. Vividores are defined as peasants or small ranchers with no land. When belligerents displaced populations, the “vividores” would invade their plots and re-sell them. In Norte de Santander, for example, ELN took possession over a set of big states and redistributed them among those who supported them. “They are professionals doing that.” Vividores would exploit their proximity to the belligerent faction, and provide anything they needed: housing, food, or clothes. They would finance the organization but, in compensation, they would benefit from their actions. Likewise, several big ranchers in the north coast reported that, at times of violence, FARC would distribute cattle amongst supporters. Vividores were usually described as organizers with strong social ties to both the community and to the belligerent organizations.

On the other hand, those who were allied with the paramilitaries were described in the rancher’s narratives as individuals legitimately reacting in a context of lack of State authority. Most of them were described as owners of big states. While there is no clear account of how small ranchers, hands or peasants saw these big ranchers, their peers described them as gentlemen, investors, or *people of society*. “Today, everyone demonizes the paramilitaries,” a wealthy cattle rancher from Popayan asserted, “but we forget that there was a time when the situation was so overwhelming that everyone supported the paramilitaries or at least agreed.” Ranchers who supported and allied with paramilitary organizations would do so, not calculating future revenue, but the costs –both material and symbolic– of opposing and terminating with the Marxist guerrillas.

Despite the fact that compliance tends to be the norm, negotiation is a recurrent strategy in the chains of strategic interactions. Negotiation happens when resources are scarce, extraction compromises production, or when compliance compromises civilian's capacity to act or interact with other fields. In other words, when the situation is not "all else equal." During a negotiation, the set of resources is infinite. It is a strategy that forces the two parties to engage in mutual recognition, and thus, everything counts. During a negotiation, civilians, and belligerents mutually present their capacities –coercive and financial, respectively–, and redefine the belligerent's demand. First, the negotiation is on economic resources. During his captivity in the hands of ELN, a small rancher from Cimitarra was asked for 150.000.000 pesos and was taken as hostage. Militants opened a grave in the earth and treated his wife to place him there if she refused to pay. However, after 18 days of negotiations, ELN militants reduced the amount to 100.000.000 pesos. Negotiation is also a strategy for civilians to let belligerents know what their material and economic constraints are. In Antioquia, a prominent rancher was kidnapped by ELN, demanding \$ 1,500,000 US dollars for his release. While the nature and duration of the negotiations were not provided, the sum that was finally paid for his release was 250,000,000 of pesos –84.000 USD– as belligerents learned in this time that some of his properties were joint ownerships –and thus, unsellable under time constraints. As a rancher from Sucre says, "even if they initially asked for 300.000.000 pesos, they would take 200.000".

However, money is not the only resource subject to negotiation. While belligerents tend to extract local currency –and US dollars for those who are better set–, not all ranchers have sufficient liquidity. Thus, depending on the circumstances, the fee can be negotiated and changed to a vast array of resources such as heads of cattle, food, clothes, or even medicine. In Nariño, paramilitaries would negotiate either with pesos or with information. In Santander, a prominent rancher would be asked to employ guerrilla supporters in their ranches. In Tolima, a FARC front proposed a rancher that, instead of paying the ransom, he could provide rifles. If agreed on that, ransoms were paid in installments and, at times, the deadlines were able to be re-scheduled. Likewise, if the belligerent organization held a

hostage, the family could negotiate and send another family member in exchange. When a parent is ill, for example, a sibling takes his place. Older take the place of younger. Those who are needed to sign a deal were released while their siblings waited in captivity.

Social capital is the third main resource taken into account while negotiating. Political inclinations, family relations, or simple acquaintances become fundamental to determine how and when to engage in this strategy. During the 1998 – 2002 period, both FARC and ELN executed a particular mode of coercion, “Pescas Milagrosas,” in which they would retain all vehicles transiting a particular road and take everyone as hostages until they paid the ransom. Once in their power, belligerents would run a background check on civilians and release those whom they thought would not be able –or didn’t need— to pay a ransom. Here, who you were and whom you knew became vital. Members of wealthier families were taxed the most, while those who were not at times would even be exempt from taxation. Paradoxically, in communities afflicted by violence, knowing a figure in power –the judge, major, police officer, political candidate– was not necessarily useful for negotiation, as war imposes new social hierarchies. When Laura’s father—a rancher from La Plata, Huila— was kidnapped, the first thing she did was to talk to a ranch hand that was friend with a prominent guerrilla commander. The commander, who used to be the school teacher in the town before joining the insurgency, was informed about the ransom and personally handled the situation. Although that connection did not guarantee the release, it gave the family a few more days to collect the money. The type of social capital that matters in a negotiation is what could be classified as “belligerent social capital”: having connections to individuals that could influence the course of war –allies, supporters, militants, enemies.

Prevarication is the third strategy used to resolve the resource dilemma. Prevarication refers to the moment when civilians would partially comply with the belligerent’s demand by extending or evading their responsibilities for a period. Prevarication goes from not answering a phone call, taking extra days to pay the ransom, leaving the municipality, or simply hiding from the belligerent forces for a while. Prevarication is first and foremost a calculation on who much resources an individual

rancher has followed to a calculation about time - how long I need to get sufficient resources to keep the operation going? How long can belligerent forces sustain their threat? Prevarication is extending the resolution of the dilemma until something else changes the conditions. During the period here studied, several ranchers administered their states via telephone and radio; change their phone numbers, would go less often to the ranches; prefer traveling by day and not staying overnight; send relatives and acquaintances to supervise, or meet with the ranch manager in a third location. They would also avoid being identified. Many ranchers used different strategies such as borrowing different cars, drive through dusty roads, or wear peasant attires when visiting their ranches. Deceiving the enemy is one of the subthemes that emerges in the narratives that revolve around prevarication as belligerent forces can identify civilians by name, but it was hard for them to recognize their targets physically. Eliezer's account provides a suggestive vignette on this matter:

I was working with "Toñito" Fonseca and with two other workers, when a couple of guerrilla members arrived at the ranch. It did not take them long to find us. They got off the bikes, laid them against the fence, and approached to where we were working. After a polite greeting, they asked us: "Have you seen Don Eliezer?" "Don Eliezer stayed at the house," replied Toñito Fonseca. To my fortune, it was clear that the guerrillas did not know me, which allowed me to pass as a regular ranch hand.

Finally, ranchers could resist belligerent's demands. When resources were not available or giving them away compromised the household's sustainability; resisting was the only option. To some others, paying any ransom was a moral dilemma. Fernando, a rancher from Corozal, claims that he has never been able to negotiate because "how was I going to negotiate my integrity? I have no price". While a minor fraction of the accounts recorded by Fedegán, some narratives account for instances when ranchers directly opposed and resisted the belligerent's modes of coercion. Carlos, a rancher from Barrancabermeja, was detained by AUC members who demanded his truck:

I told them "I bought this truck. You gave me permission to buy it because the other one was very old. So, if you are going to take it, go ahead, kill me and take it; but do not fuck with my truck". They began shooting so I turned the wheel, accelerated, and drove to Yarima with the tire rimmed and with gasoline coming out from the side of the truck.

Fedegán's dataset includes an important set of accounts about courageous individual ranchers that favored confronting belligerents than paying ransoms. However, resisting is a risky strategy, as the balance of power tilts towards the belligerent organizations. Nevertheless, those who could resist were calculating two fundamental variables: the presence of an organization able to provide protection and the community's social cohesion. If the rancher was able to attain protection from another organization – being self-defense, incumbent or opposing belligerent forces– and begin a strategic interaction with it, the rancher was able to invert the balance of power and fully resist. Likewise, when resistance is addressed as a case collective action, ranchers have greater chances to implement common strategies for protection (Arjona 2016, Kaplan 2017). These two factors are not mutually exclusive. As previously discussed, cattle ranchers organized themselves and collectively funded self-defense groups that later became part of the AUC organization, to fully resist the over-taxation of Marxist belligerents. Resistance can certainly be effective, but when communities –and not individuals— mobilize and organize collective actions against their perpetrators. The ethical question is: at what price?

#### **CHAINS OF STRATEGIC INTERACTIONS**

The strategies used by civilians to solve the resource dilemma has significant effects on how belligerents respond and resort to coercion and violence. While cooperating –and even allying– with Marxist revolutionaries might be the safest strategy while being threatened, it might be a problem when the paramilitaries come into town. Resisting in a first encounter might hinder future opportunities to negotiate. Delaying a payment might lead to an increase in the monthly sum being taxed, but it might be read as opposition and might have fatal consequences. While strategic actions respond to both civilian's resources and capacities, strategic interactions are the chain of events that link civilian strategies to belligerent's modes of coercion, regarding the resource dilemma. Some civilians are better connected and can evade their wartime responsibilities as they know that the belligerent's won't resort to direct violence, while others decide to simply comply as they have sufficient economic capital to stay afloat while the war goes on. Variation is practically infinite, but

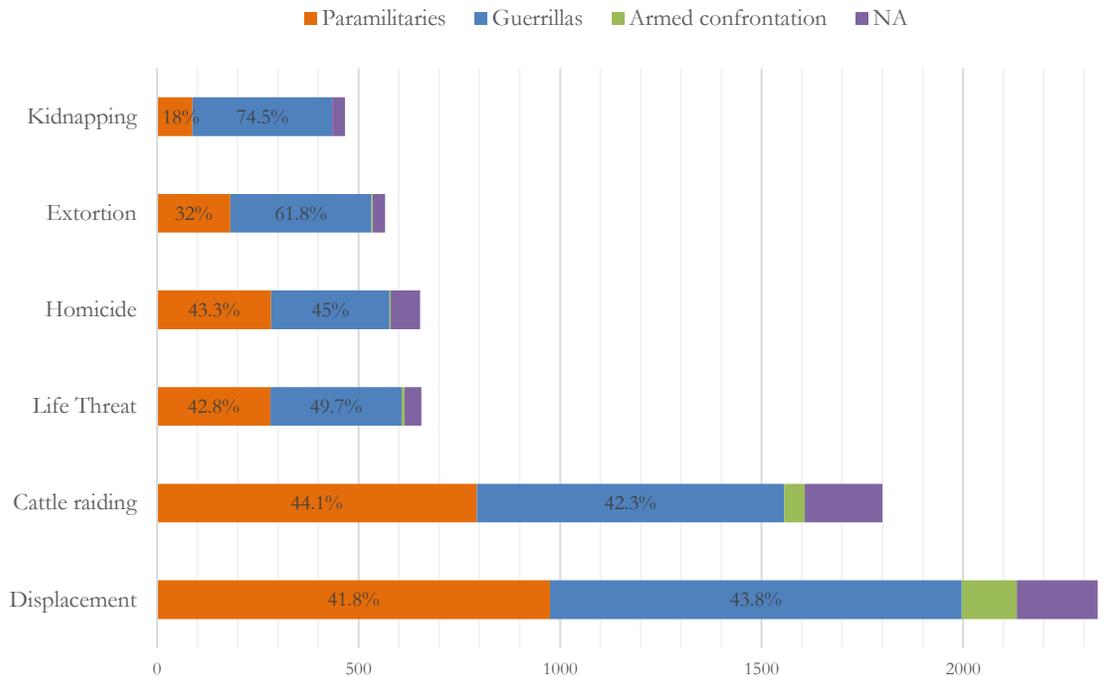
what is important to draw attention to is that resource availability –in different fields– has a mediating effect in how and when belligerents resort to violence.

In this section, I present the general patterns of strategic interactions in which belligerents and civilians engaged in, looking at the effects of resource availability in the belligerents' use of violence. To do so, I rely on the results of both the narratives and the quantitative components of the Fedegán survey. Although they were administered in sequence, this two instruments provided both complementary yet contrasting results<sup>14</sup>. While the vast majority of the narratives referenced interactions and actions related to resource extraction, the panorama presented in the qualitative component is not the same: only 0.6% of the reported crimes correspond to properties being stolen, and 6.8% of the reported crimes correspond to cases of extortion. Conversely, 33.9% of the reports correspond to forced displacement and 26.2% to cattle raiding –the two most important reported crimes (see figure 3). While a well-integrated dataset would be desired, in this section I will rely on the accounts of the offences as narrated by ranchers, using the quantitative as an additional input to the argument.

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<sup>14</sup> This disarray may be explained by the differentiated nature of the instruments: the narrative component was collected by Fedegán for the book “Acabar con el Olvido: Segundo Informe” (Fundagan 2013) and the quantitative component was used to provide legal support to the ranchers who solicited symbolic and monetary reparations under the umbrella of Colombia’s victim law –as explained in chapter 4. Thus, it might be argued that while resource extraction did happen and it is a key component of how ranchers make sense of political violence –a rancher described the years here studied as “living amidst violence and the extortions, but above all, extortions” –, they did not consider it to be reportable crime to attain reparation. Extortion, is expressed in the language of “collaboration with pressure”; ransom, “they called the mandate”. In their words, supplying resources is “not a specific crime of war” but, actually, a “contribution to war”.

**Figure 3.** Total number of crimes committed with their respective responsible

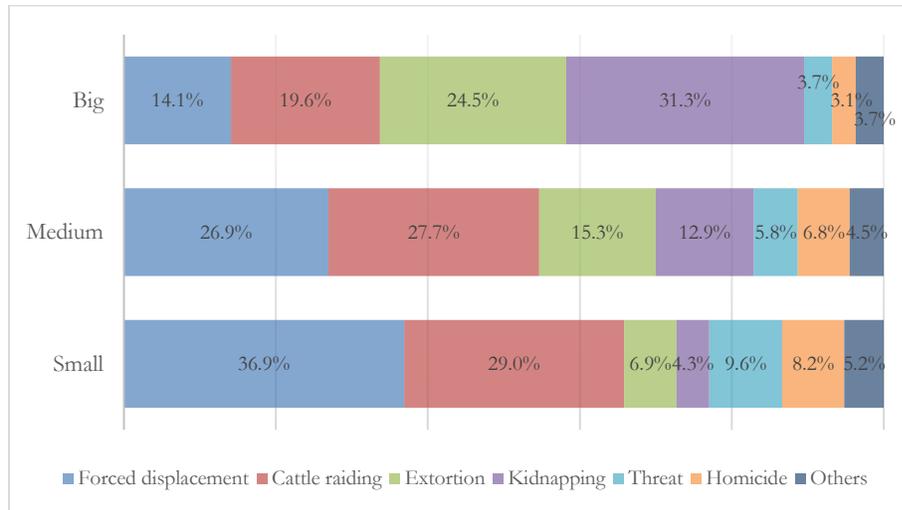


**Source:** Fundagan, “Acabar con el Olvido”

A leading question in this section is, how much of the variation in the use of violence can be attributed to resource availability? As figure 4 reveals, there are important differences in the repertoires of coercion used against ranchers when accounted for the size of the ranchers’ herd. Owners of bigger herds –better-set ranchers– seem to report being forcibly displaced much less than owners of smaller herds. Likewise, small herd owners report being threatened three times more than big herd owners. Both homicide and life threat, on the contrary, decrease the size of the herd, as it does more direct forms of violence –physical and sexual abuse, torture, and forced recruitment. Big herd owners declared four times more that they were being extorted by belligerent forces than small herd owners. Kidnapping –which the narratives reported that, in its vast majority, they were motivated by economic interest– occurs almost seven times more to big herd owners than small herd owners.

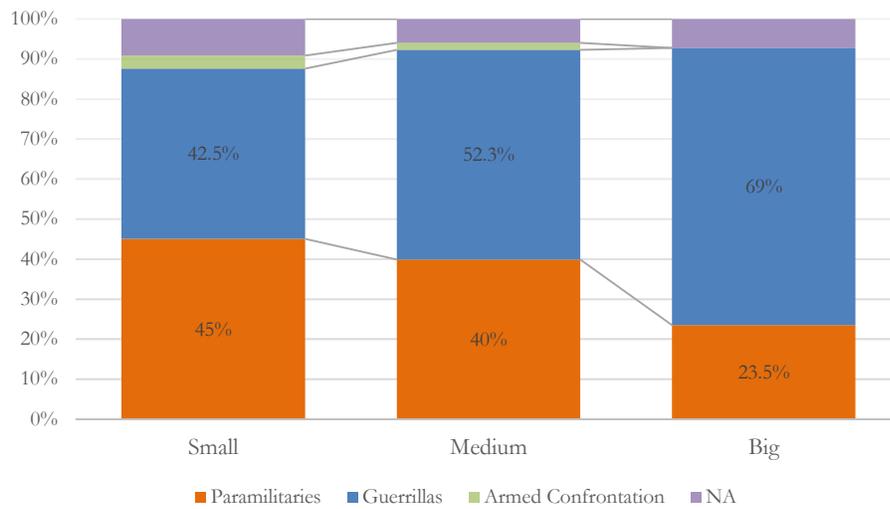
While this study found no significant variation in the results when desegregated, both mode of coercion and the belligerent organization responsible for the crime, Marxist guerrillas tend to target big herd owners more than Paramilitaries, whereas the later tend to target small ranchers more than the later (see figure 5). This can be attributed to the different political platforms and to the models of the rural economy that each organization defends –a reminder that patterns of violence do not only follow economic but also politic and territorial logics.

**Figure 4.** Percentage of actions committed in each category vs. herd



Source: Fedegán

**Figure 5.** Percentage of actions committed by armed groups vs. classification of the ranchers



Source: Fedegán

In a similar vein, big herd owners seem to have more encounters with belligerent organizations, as they reported more crimes than their counterparts. As table 3 shows, 7.3% of the big ranchers declared being victims of four or more crimes in the hands of belligerents, while small ranchers only reported 0.8% of the times. However, they correspond to a different set of interactions, and herd size –resource availability— also seems to have some explanatory power for these differences. Large herd owners’ most recurrent chain of crimes is: solely being kidnapped (19.5%), being kidnapped and extorted (8.5), or being extorted and threatened (6.1%). Small ranch owners, on the other hand, are first and foremost displaced (14.7%); killed (12.8%), and displaced and had their herds stolen (11.9%).

**Table 3.** *Percentage of crimes reported by ranchers, disaggregated by herd size.*

	<b>One</b>	<b>Two</b>	<b>Three</b>	<b>Four</b>
<i>Small</i>	43.1%	40.3%	15.7%	0.8%
<i>Medium</i>	41.7%	40.2%	16.9%	1.2%
<i>Large</i>	35.4%	35.4%	21.9%	7.3%

*N: 2254*

The narratives also tell a different story about violence when resource availability is a mediating factor: not all ranchers can engage in the same strategies –cooperation, negotiation, prevarication, and resistance– as each one of them implies different costs and outcomes. While cooperation is the joint denominator for wartime interactions, not all ranchers can engage in it. “What happens is that under the pressure of violence, people to say ‘*to survive in silence, I will support*’” Argemiro, a small rancher from Cesar sustains, “but the threat and coercion change everything.” If a civilian cooperates, belligerents do not resort to violence; they just keep the resources flowing. To keep things orderly, belligerent organizations initially set up concrete systems of taxation –ranch owner who has more than 1,000 head of cattle; who owns more than 1,000,000,000 pesos; 10,000 pesos

per head of livestock. They tax “[a]ny parishioner who has “purchasing power.” Those who were not “taxable” –small ranchers with little to no financial liquidity – were asked to “to stand by them, support them, give them food, and serve as informants”. Thus, while big ranchers who cooperate saw their economic capitals compromised, small ranchers compromised their social and symbolic capitals.

Within the category of those who had to pay monetarily, there is significant variance. Ranchers who owned operations big enough to stay afloat and produce profit while taking belligerent random into account were the only ones that could sustain this mode of interaction. Medium sized herd owners, on the other hand, faced a challenge: the resources demanded by belligerents were, most of the times, more than the total production of the ranch. With time, cooperation compromised the subsistence of the ranch. First, ranchers had to “pay with the money that comes from selling the milk.” Then, they had to “sell the hay, the machinery” and finally, they had sold the cattle. Those who were not able to cooperate declared that belligerents either took their animals –which would explain the high number of cases of cattle raiding in the database– or were taken as hostages. Fernando, a medium sized rancher from Cesar, was held hostage “until they got 10,000,000 pesos. I had to sell one of my best cows [...] to get the money because if I did not meet the deadline, [...] [belligerents would] raise the quota to 40,000,000 pesos”. Extortive kidnapping became a common denominator for violence in many regions in Colombia. As civilians could not afford to raise the solicited money, “kidnapping became almost massive.”

A second problem that ranchers had to resolve when collaborating was that different belligerent organization were present in their region and demanded collaboration from them at the same time. In Tolima, it was widespread for people to pay the AUC and FARC fronts because both of them were operating in the same region. In Huila and Valle, ranchers declared having to pay different fronts of the same organization. Each organization taxed according to how much a rancher could produce, and if they did not know that the civilian was collaborating with other organization, demanded what they calculated was their corresponding “war tax.” However, if either of the belligerent

organizations knew that the civilian had any form of interaction with an adversary, he would be in trouble. Amparo, from Valle del Cauca, declares:

For a long time, the guerrillas visited my father. When he could not pay, they took our cattle. They visited us constantly and once they even took my dad. One day, in 2000, the paramilitaries entered the region and took my dad for three months. When he returned, the guerrillas killed him saying that he was a paramilitary.

During the 1996 – 2006 period, collaboration became the most costly strategy. However, most the homicides —as accounted in the narratives— were either committed because the victim was either a sympathizer or suspected or direct collaborator of an opposing party. This does not mean that all collaborators were executed. Far from that. In most instances, information about collaboration was unknown, as belligerent organizations demanded and imposed what became to be known as “the rule of silence” —no one talks about anything related to the organizations. However, when available, resource seem to have, again, a mediating effect. When AUC’s *Bloque Norte* arrived at the town of Chiriguaná (Cesar), they met with several of the prominent ranchers and merchantmen in town. “Commander Harold,” retells Ulises —one of the ranchers participating in the meeting— “had a list in his hand claiming that it contained the names of everyone who collaborated with the guerrillas.” Ulises stood up, and answered back “commander, please include me and all of the people here present in your list, because all of us had to collaborate with the guerrillas [...] we had to live with them for almost twenty years.” Commander Harold left that day with enough provisions for his men, and no was prosecuted for collaboration. The story of AUC’s expansion is different when retold by Elvira, ranch women from the impoverished town of Trujillo (Valle):

People were terrified. They wanted to destroy the entire community. They said that it was because the neighbors helped the guerrilla penetrate the region. The paramilitaries said we could not do anything about it. What could a defenseless peasant do with a kitchen knife? A lonely woman? If they came, I could not do anything. They did what they wanted to us because they were the ones with power. Those were terrible times for our families.

Usually, those who collaborated also had to renegotiate their contribution to the belligerent organizations at some point of the interaction. Negotiation involves the use of different resources and capitals; requires full commitment to the negotiation from both parties, and has effects in multiple fields of social life. In her testimony, Diana Garzon declared that she had to cry in front of her mother's captors to let them know that the sum she was asking for was as far as she could go. Juan, a rancher, and a doctor from Barrancas (Cesar), negotiated his ransom for a hundred doses of anti-tetanus vaccine. While his profession enabled him to get a bulk of them, he had to ask several of his friends to buy five shots each as he did not want to "scandalize" the pharmacists with the situation.

Negotiation is a strategy that, if recognized by the belligerents, implies no coercive retaliation from the interacting party. In fact, negotiation seems to be a strategy that all belligerent organizations expect to occur –and take advantage of it. During a negotiation, belligerents have more leverage as they can accept or reject the offer and, at times, negotiation is more costly to the civilian –but the cost can be paid back with resources that are available to the civilian. After being deprived of his herd, 80 AUC militants came to Alvaro's ranch in Santander, and he had to give them food, breakfast, and a place to stay. Although he did not have the resources, this negotiation could have cost him his reputation as an ally. "I did not have another way [...] I have always said that people are in the middle [of war]." Civilians negotiate many things with belligerents, such from working in construction, driving a car, or lending them a property. It is all dependent on the negotiation.

If the negotiation is rejected by the belligerent, it could either lead to the termination of the interaction –either killing the civilian— or the appreciation of the resources demanded. Several testimonies on extortive kidnappings ended when the civilian's family made an offer that was way under the expectations of the belligerents. Likewise, many testimonies of ranchers who were collaborating declared being victims of displacement and

rustling after informing the organization about their economic constraints and need to renegotiate the agreement. “We had a meeting in which they [FARC] told me that we had to have the cattle ready and collected for pick up. If we denounced, our lives were in the veil”.

Again, as in collaboration, resources matter. Those who have more resources and can offer more options to the belligerent are able to engage in a better negotiation. In those cases where the belligerent has kidnapped a rancher, for example, testimonies indicate that those negotiations over bigger sums of money were able to end up in a more beneficial outcome for the civil party than those where the negotiation was on smaller amounts of money. Likewise, civilians who have more resources can negotiate with more ease than those who lack them. Belligerents, at it, seems from the testimonies, prefer negotiating than terminating a valuable interaction. However, as negotiations involve resources that are valuable and have effects in different fields, the biggest drawback is to be identified as a collaborator and thus, be victimized by an opposing faction.

In prevarication, information is fundamental. It occurs when the civilian has either collaborated with the belligerent organization previously –and has let them know about his material and economic conditions– and both parties have full information on the proper course of action and expectations; or when information is missing, and the civilian party uses this circumstance to their advantage. When there is full information, prevarication is understood as a reasonable outcome, and –if there is variation in the expectations of the interaction— it is usually followed by collaboration or renegotiation of times and costs.

However, when prevarication is the product of missing information, there are several factors that intervene in the outcome. First, when civilians resort to prevarication because they have information that the belligerent party does not, it tends to work for their benefit. Luis Alberto made a deal with his cousin, Raul, who paid him with 300 heifers branded with his mark. AUC members noticed the entering of the heads of cattle and were planning to take them in the night. While AUC was taxing Luis Alberto, Raul was not. However, Luis Alberto learned about AUC’s plan the night before and, with the help of his ranch hands, moved the heifers at 4:00 A.M. back to Luis Alberto’s ranch where he hid

them for a few months. “Guerrilla’s greatest weapons are not their rifles,” a rancher from Caqueta declares, “but their capacity to recognize the members of the community.” As foreigner forces, belligerent’s lack of information plays on the ranchers’ advantage.

When part of a chain of strategic interactions, prevarication is a strategy that is not sustainable in time. While prevarication might be optimal to delay the interaction, this delay has critical costs that the civilian has to be willing to incur on. In their testimonies, both the ranch and the rancher were severely affected by prevarication, as the rancher had to pay for extra costs –having to invest in new technologies, pay more to ranch hands– while as neglecting the ranch –not visiting it, avoiding credits or making investments–. Ranchers cannot maintain the high costs of prevarication and, as part of a larger chain of strategic interactions, belligerents will be able to resolve the informational disparity in a short time. If the latter is the case, the civilian is at risk of being identified as a defector or double agent, and the consequences can be fatal.

Resisting, as a strategy to resolve the resource dilemma, has two modalities: resign or repel. When resigning, resisting tends to be first or last in the chain of strategic interactions. First, because when confronted with the resource dilemma, several ranchers preferred to confront their oppressors and contest their authority. Alfredo, from Valle del Cauca, remembers that his brother’s last words were “You guys are not going to take me,” followed by three gun shots. He killed one of the belligerents and wounded another, but they shot him on the back. Resigning is also the last option to resolve the resource dilemma, as civilians resort to it when they have no resources or options left.

Homicide, as expected, is strongly related to this strategy. Displacement – understood here as a total evasion of interaction– can also be linked to this strategy as ranchers, concerned about their security, chose to disengage from the situation and leave the province. While the latter tends to be effective –it gives the belligerent no possibility to retaliate–, it works the best for those who are better set off –having the resources to move to the capital or a foreign country for a while– than those who do not –migrating to shantytowns and becoming part of the urban underclass. The former, paradoxically, seems

to be partially ineffective –at least in the narratives of the livestock sector. As resource extraction occurs about particular modes of production that do not rely on individuals; when a civilian is killed, belligerents are going to extort another member of the same household to collect the treasurable resources. Diego’s testimony illustrates this conundrum:

[ELN] had planned to kidnap my cousin. We were driving down a dirt road where they detained the car. Daniel [Diego’s cousin] was armed, he had a revolver inside of the car. I got off from one side of the car, and he did the same from the other side. When I got off, I did not realize that they were talking [...] Daniel took the gun out and shot them. Then, the militants surrounded him, shot and killed him. The insurgents who were close to me, grabbed me and said, "Look, we know you are his cousin. Do not do anything stupid because we already killed him [...] that is how I was kidnapped.

Lastly, when resistance occurs as repelling the belligerent forces, it either ends up in a fatality or the engagement of a new interaction. To be effective, repelling requires to even up the relation between civilians and belligerents in a way that the former can fend off the later. Some ranchers resorted to self-defend themselves individually. In Huila and Caqueta, the figure of Ismael Diaz Gaitán has a prominent place in the collective memory of ranchers as an exemplary case of resistance. Back in the 1990s, Diaz Gaitán decided to resist FARC and embarked himself in a confrontation with this organization. He declared war on them by hiring a team of bodyguards who were ready to shoot and kill anyone who menaced their patron. FARC stole more than 4,000 head of cattle from him and tried to kill Diaz Gaitán nine times –but killing several members of his family–. However, the rancher never surrendered to the belligerent’s demands. He was found dead in his bed in late 2003, and the circumstances of the fatality are still unknown.

The consolidation of AUC is –in the cattle rancher’s imaginary– on the other hand, is another example of effective resistance, but this time as the logical outcome of the collective action. This paramilitary organization is described both as being created and supported by cattle ranchers to resist the Marxist belligerents’ regime. “It is the product of our union. The banana planters had their self-defense organization, the sugar cane

producers had their organization, the cotton farmers [had their organization], and so the cattle men in Cesar had theirs too.” However, resisting by supporting a different party only changes the actors; the resource dilemma is still present. “If the [belligerents] charged 10.000 pesos per hectare at that time,” Alfredo from Cesar asks, “but the paramilitaries asked for the same sum for protecting the population [...] what does a ‘good cause’ matter for?” As a final point, resistance through supporting a rival organization ignites the cycles of violence related to territorial domination, as information on loyalties is blurred and there is an increased risk of collateral damage. As the Fedegan data reveals, cattle ranchers, although advocates of the paramilitary solution, were severely affected by it (return to figures 3 and 5).

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Common depiction of civilians in the midst of an armed confrontation tend to fall in what the great Guatemalan historian Arturo Taracena describes as the “great sandwich” theory: civilians –political parties, trade unions, peasants, indigenous peoples, and so on– are trapped in the middle of a brutal confrontation between two warring camps (Taracena Arriola 2007). Civilians are portrayed as sufferers, mere collateral damage with no capacity to intervene in the course of warfare. However, in the past decade, an emergent group of scholars has shown that civilians are not passive to this violence, but that they do arbitrate and counter belligerent’s actions in productive and constructive ways (Koc-Menard 2007, Norman 2012, Mampilly 2015, Arjona 2016, Kaplan 2017).

By exploring how civilians and belligerents engage in strategic interactions over the resource dilemma –How much can I give? / how much can I take? –, the present document contributes to this joint effort. As the study reveals, civilians are strategic in making a set of decisions, resort to social, cultural and economic capitals, and have the capacity to negotiate the terms of their subjection. Civilians cooperate, negotiate, prevaricate, or resist with the belligerent organization’s demand for resources when taking their social and material works into consideration. However, each action builds towards a chain of interactions; a cumulative, relational, often unnoticed organizational process that has long term effects for the parties involved.

Drawing from the insightful arguments proposed by Collier and Hoeffler (1998) on the relationship between the onset of civil wars and the abundance of lootable resources, this paper also shows that, at the individual level, resource availability can reduce direct forms of violence –if and only if the mode of production cannot be compromised. Civilians who had more resources could engage longer in strategic interaction and receive less violence. Civilians that lacked resources, regardless of their perpetrator, were victimized with a higher frequency. Still, the study also shows that resource extraction is a complex, case-specific, and socially embedded process. The multifaceted solution to the resource dilemma escapes to current instrumentalist approaches, but it is a determining factor when explaining the variation of violence and thus needs to be taken into consideration.

Methodologically, this argument suggests that even at the sub-national level, there are microscopic variations that should be taken into account. Warfare is directed and inflicts its violence on individual bodies; and as a social scientist, we need to take this call seriously.

In contrast to the romantic –or demonic– depictions, this study shows that belligerent and civilian interactions are not –only— those of love or hate. The results here presented complicate simplistic models that describe wartime violence and order through either interest-driven or ideology-driven theories. While cooperation is the common denominator when belligerents are in total control, in everyday life of an armed conflict, there are more options than compliance or resistance. The nature of warfare –contrary to some scholarly opinions– is that of uncertainty, change, and constant re-adjustment. There is no possible way to understand dispositions as if they are framed in a context that is universal to any eruption of political violence. As I reiterate all over this document, every interaction between the involved parties is a dilemma, was the parties need to take into consideration innumerable factors to decide the best route to follow. Warfare is ambiguous and risky, and we need to take more theoretical risks when we are trying to explain and contest it.

This study poses two challenges for future research. First, for the students of the Colombian armed conflict, the findings of this study reiterate that political violence does not necessarily follow a Manichean logic. Belligerents and civilians are dependent on each other's actions while being partially autonomous. Self-defense groups were the product of an economical class that saw an option in repelling their victimizers, but at the same time, it is important to be aware that AUC was a phenomenon of itself. Cattle ranchers recognize their responsibility –as the narratives attest– and claim to not being demonized for resorting to a solution that at the time seemed like the only way. Recognizing this transitions in the individual dispositions –when is it correct and ethical to reject one's creation– is fundamental to any research agenda committed to peace building.

Second, the study has only explored the calculations, rationalities, and strategies of a subset of civilians that were all part of a particular economic sector. In Colombia, cattle

ranchers have been specifically targeted by certain belligerent organizations while being protected by others. This initial disposition influence how the members of the sector calculate the set of actions and interactions in which they engage in. Future research needs to expand the sample not only to other social spheres of life but include a thorough analysis of the motivations of belligerent forces. The ongoing peace-implementation process will surely facilitate collecting this still unavailable data.

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