



A Theory of Civilian Noncooperation with Armed Groups

Civilian Agency and Self-Protection in the Colombian Civil War

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Abstract

This study deals with the collective roles that civilians come to play in the context of civil war.

Concretely, it documents and analyzes a little studied pattern of civilian agency: civilian noncooperation with armed groups. It develops a theory that specifies where and when civilians are more likely to organize themselves to refuse non-violently to cooperate with armed organizations. Where territorial control is shifting, where violence against civilians has recently spiked, and where targeting is perceived as unavoidable, a desire for noncooperation is likely to evolve. However, this desire is not enough for us to observe organized noncooperation. Campaigns of noncooperation are likely to emerge when desire meets capacity for collective action. Localities with a prior history of mobilization and/or with the support of external actors are more likely to count on the leadership and the associational space needed for organizing action. These conditions are found to be individually necessary and jointly sufficient across three different ideal types of noncooperation: oblique, pacted and unilateral. Complementing this set of expectations, the study specifies a limited number of cognitive and relational mechanisms that explain the pathway towards noncooperation.



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Bio

Juan Masullo is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Bremen International Graduate School of the Social Sciences (BIGSSS). During the 2016 – 2017 academic year he was a Research Fellow at Yale's Program on Order, Conflict and Violence. His academic interests include civil wars, collective action and, more broadly, contentious politics. His current work explores micro-dynamics and social processes of civil war, with a particular focus on civilian agency and civilian (self) protection. His work combines multiple types of evidence and relies extensively on immersive fieldwork in conflict-affected areas. At BIGSSS he is associated with the Methods Center, where he teaches and supports researchers in the areas of qualitative and mixed methods and research design. His work has been published in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *Mobilization*, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, *Global Policy Journal*, and by Amsterdam University Press and the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict. He has also contributed to *The Monkey Cage* and *openDemocracy*