The Social Processes of Civil War: The Wartime Transformation of Social Networks

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Abstract

Little attention has been paid to the social processes of civil war—the transformation of social actors, structures, norms, and practices—that sometimes leave enduring legacies for the postwar period. In this article, I explore the changes wrought by six social processes: political mobilization, military socialization, polarization of social identities, militarization of local authority, transformation of gender roles, and fragmentation of the local political economy. Some of these social processes occur in peacetime, but war may radically change their pace, direction, or consequences, with perhaps irreversible effects. I trace the wide variation in these processes during the wars in four countries: Peru, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone. I analyze the effects of these processes as transformations in social networks. These processes reconfigure social networks in a variety of ways, creating new networks, dissolving some, and changing the structure of others.
INTRODUCTION

Scholars have recently opened up the “black box” of civil wars, exploring the bargaining aspects of war, the logic of wartime violence, the forging of institutions likely to contribute to durable settlements, and the challenges of postwar demobilization and reconstruction. An important recent advance is the emphasis on analyzing variation in patterns of violence, participation, and institution building across civil wars.

Despite these advances in scholarly understanding, less attention has been paid to the social processes of civil war—by which I mean the transformation of social actors, structures, norms, and practices at the local level—that sometimes leave profound social changes in their wake. The literature describing and analyzing these processes in their divergent patterns is dominated by case studies and policy discussion, with as yet insufficient attention to causal analysis and comparison across cases.

In this article, I explore six social processes: political mobilization, military socialization, the polarization of social identities, the militarization of local authority, the transformation of gender roles, and the fragmentation of the local political economy. These are processes that sometimes have enduring legacies. For example, wartime polarization may lead to electoral polarization, segregation, and a distrustful political culture in the postwar period.

Civil wars differ in the extent to which these processes are at work. Just as forms of violence vary across and within civil wars, so too do these processes. To be sure, some of the social processes I discuss are ongoing in peacetime as well, but war may radically change the pace of existing processes, redirect them, or alter their consequences, with perhaps irreversible effects. In focusing on social processes other than violence, some of which predate the conflict, this article extends the work of anthropologist Stephen Lubkemann (2007, 2008), who argues that in their emphasis on wartime violence, scholars have neglected the agency of ordinary people struggling to realize life projects in the context of war in ways shaped by prewar social norms and patterns as well as violence. In contrast to Lubkemann, who focuses on how life projects in particular settings lead to contrasting patterns of wartime migration, I widen the focus to discuss a variety of social processes. I do not address the legacy of civil war for processes of state and regime formation.

As with other aspects of civil war, it is extremely difficult to measure the extent of these social processes. I trace the variation in these processes during the wars in four countries chosen to illustrate the wide differences in these processes, namely, Peru, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone. As we shall see, patterns of violence, processes of mobilization and recruitment, and the extent to which local authorities were militarized, gender roles transformed, and economies fragmented varied widely across these conflicts. This article draws on field research I conducted for 26 months in El Salvador as well as short trips to Sri Lanka and Peru.

I analyze the effects of these processes as transformations in social networks. These processes reconfigure social networks in a variety of ways, creating new networks, dissolving some, and changing the structure of others, as when the local clients of a patron are mobilized into an armed network with a new central figure. A social network consists of persons (network nodes) linked by different kinds of relationships (edges). For example, wartime polarization may reshape friendship networks in a village, fracturing the network into two distinct networks with no edge between them.

I first describe the civil wars in these countries, particularly the differences in the strategies of the armed actors evident in their distinctive patterns of violence. I then describe the six social processes in turn, contrasting their apparent incidence in the four conflicts and making some observations about other conflicts. In the conclusion, I briefly discuss their varied consequences for the postwar period.
CIVIL WARS IN EL SALVADOR, PERU, SRI LANKA, AND SIERRA LEONE

Wartime social processes are strongly shaped by the strategies of the armed actors, particularly the patterns of violence they wield, including whether violence against civilians is carried out disproportionately by one side, whether violence is generally indiscriminate or selective (individuals are targeted for their individual behavior), the intensity of violence, and the repertoire of violence deployed by the parties to the war. By repertoire of violence, I mean the violent subset of what Tilly (1978, 2003, 2008) calls the repertoire of contention, namely, that set of violent practices that an armed group routinely engages in as it makes claims on other political or social actors. A particular group may include in its repertoire any or all of the following: kidnapping, assassinations, massacres, torture, sexual violence, forced displacement, and so on. Although Kalyvas (2006), Weinstein (2006), and other scholars have analyzed the variation in lethal violence, the variation in other forms of violence remains underanalyzed [but see Wood (2006, 2007) on sexual violence, Steele (2007) on displacement, and Hoover (2007) for a theory of armed group organization and repertoires of violence].

In particular, how distinct repertoires of violence shape other social processes is not well understood. The social effects of a particular form of violence depend on the context; in particular, its meaning to social actors depends on the cultural setting (Ellis 1995, 1999). The same act of violence, e.g., the rape of a young woman by a neighbor who is a member of a local militia, may in one context be understood as part of the ethnic cleansing of the neighborhood and in another as a private act unrelated to the war aims of the parties. The pattern of violence varies sharply across our four cases in intensity, repertoire, the mix of selective and indiscriminate violence, and the degree of symmetry in the wielding of violence by the armed parties to the war.

In El Salvador’s civil war, leftist insurgents influenced by Marxist/Leninist ideology and liberation theology rebelled against an authoritarian state whose military rulers colluded with economic elites to maintain a highly unequal society based on a labor-repressive model of agriculture (Wood 2000). Violence during El Salvador’s civil war was extremely asymmetric: State agents were responsible for 85% of deaths whereas the insurgent group, the Frente Farabundo Martí para Liberación Nacional (FMLN), was responsible for 5% (the rest were unattributable; Truth Commission for El Salvador 1993). Violence against civilians by state agents was widespread, particularly early in the war: More than 50,000 civilians—in a country of five million people—were killed during the war (Seligson & McElhinny 1996).1

Violence was often indiscriminate; entire families and villages were targeted in response to proinsurgent activities by a few members. Sexual violence, though not nearly as widespread as in some other conflicts, was also committed disproportionately by state agents; indeed, the Truth Commission for El Salvador lists no cases perpetrated by the FMLN among the 150 cases in the unpublished annexes to its report (Wood 2006). The overall pattern of violence through the war was one of restraint on the part of the FMLN and increasingly selective violence on the part of state agents (with the exception of the state’s response to the FMLN’s 1989 offensive in San Salvador). The pattern of relative restraint in violence by the insurgents was remarkable given the group’s complicated command structure (the FMLN was a coalition of five distinct organizations).

1The gold standard of civil war mortality estimation, namely multiple systems estimation (MSE), has not yet been done for the Salvadoran civil war, so the figure could be significantly different. MSE more than doubled the estimated number of dead and disappeared in the case of Peru, whereas the same technique halved the number in East Timor (Ball et al. 2003, Silva & Ball 2006, Lynch & Hoover 2007).
In sharp contrast, lethal violence in Peru’s civil war was much more symmetric. The insurgent group Sendero Luminoso was responsible for 46% of reported fatalities, and state agents for 30% (Ball, Asher, Sulmont & Manrique 2003, p. 2). Violence was concentrated in the indigenous highlands of the Andes (three quarters of the victims of lethal violence spoke Quechua as their primary language), the Amazonian lowlands, and Lima. Responsibility for the cases of sexual violence reported to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was asymmetric, with Sendero Luminoso responsible for 11% of the reported cases of rape and state agents for 83% (CVR 2003, Vol. 6, Ch. 1, pp. 274–79). The insurgents became increasingly abusive of civilians as the war progressed, particularly after they were pushed out of their initial strongholds (which occurred in many highland areas by 1984 or 1985). Throughout the 1980s, Sendero carried out an increasing number of massacres, while state forces became much more selective in their violence (Degregori 1999, p. 79). Sendero units forced entire communities to move to base camps to work on behalf of the insurgency; community members were not allowed to leave. In some camps, insurgent leaders forced girls and young women into sexual relationships (CVR 2003, Vol. 6, Ch. 1, pp. 287–92).

Sri Lanka’s civil war of ethnic secession pits a secessionist Tamil group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE), against a state dominated by two Sinhalese parties that since independence have competed for votes in a classic pattern of ethnic outbidding. Each party has used the other’s efforts at ethnic compromise to rally voters against the other. Violence in Sri Lanka’s war appears to be roughly symmetric, but I know of no credible estimate of civilian deaths disaggregated by perpetrating group.²

²See the various issues of Sri Lanka: State of Human Rights, an annual report by the Law and Society Trust, the various reports on Sri Lanka by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and the many publications by the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna).
according to Humphreys & Weinstein (2006). Much of the violence seemed to have little purpose other than terrorizing the population (TRC 2004, Vol. 2, Ch. 2, p. 34). State agents engaged in a wide repertoire of violence but were responsible for less of the violence against civilians than the RUF.

The strategies of armed actors and their distinct patterns of violence shape other social processes to varying degrees, accelerating some ongoing processes and setting in motion others. I address each in turn.

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

Political mobilization often precedes civil war as contestation deepens over claims made by nonstate actors (or dissident state actors) to resources, power, and voice. In both El Salvador and Sri Lanka, extensive political mobilization occurred before civil war began, as nonviolent social groups attempted to persuade state actors to address their grievances. In the wake of state violence in El Salvador in the late 1970s and widespread ethnic violence in Sri Lanka in 1983, political mobilization was supplanted by armed conflict. In El Salvador, intense and indiscriminate state violence led to a rapid growth in insurgent ranks from 1979 to 1981, as many formerly nonviolent activists, disillusioned with conventional political forms, reacted with moral outrage (Wood 2003). Even where overt social mobilization is not evident, covert political mobilization almost always occurs as nonstate actors attempt to expand their numbers, territory, and resources in anticipation of the struggle to come, armed or not. In Peru, Sendero Luminoso organized covertly, and its goals and actors showed little continuity with earlier forms of political mobilization. In Sierra Leone, the RUF also recruited initial members covertly with little effort at building civilian support networks; indeed, much of the initial recruitment and training occurred in Liberia and Libya (TRC 2004, Vol. 2, Ch. 1, p. 9; Vol. 3A, Ch. 3). Less analyzed than prewar social mobilization is the ongoing collective action by civilians that occurs during many civil wars. For example, civilian insurgent supporters carried out land invasions on a large scale in El Salvador (Wood 2003).

Approximately half of civil wars since World War II were fought as irregular wars, in which nonstate combatants mingle with civilians and rarely mass in significant numbers for set battles (Balcells & Kalyvas 2007). There are some exceptions to this general pattern among our cases: Insurgents in El Salvador fought conventional battles until 1983, and some of the most pitched battles in Sri Lanka’s civil war have been fought along conventional lines, as in the struggle for control of Elephant Pass. Warfare has been predominantly irregular in all four cases, with the possible exception of Sri Lanka. The pursuit of irregular war relies on the ongoing support of at least some civilians, unless extraordinary resource availability renders the combatants effectively self-sufficient. The frequent contact with civilians in most cases of irregular warfare implies that everyday social processes may be reshaped by conflict processes. However, many of the social processes analyzed here occur in broadly similar form during conventional civil wars, despite the significant difference in specific patterns. For example, civilians in the largely conventional Spanish Civil War were mobilized in rear-guard areas to contribute food and to work as volunteers in direct support of armed groups (L. Balcells Ventura, personal communication).

In irregular wars, civilians provide “cover” for nonstate combatants as well as intelligence, supplies, transportation, and fresh recruits. Although the last three can be coerced relatively effectively, as evident in the pattern of forced recruitment in Sierra Leone, the coercing of high-quality intelligence is much more problematic (Wood 2003). Coercion, like torture, gives rise to perverse incentives to provide false information in order to satisfy the coercers, particularly if the civilian does not in fact know the required data. State agents and actors allied with the state also attempt to mobilize political backing, or at least to interrupt mobilization on behalf of
nonstate actors. One common consequence of this pattern of warfare is increasing political polarization in areas of conflict or anticipated conflict as civilians feel themselves caught “between two fires" (Stoll 1993).

The form of civilian mobilization varies significantly across conflicts, across actors within conflicts, and over time. The FMLN relied on voluntary provision of intelligence; it built up ongoing collaborative networks of covert civilian support that produced intelligence the government could not match in quality, despite various efforts to build government support through land reform and resettlement programs (Wood 2003). Mobilization in El Salvador also varied over time. Overt political mobilization re-emerged in the mid 1980s thanks to two sets of actors with varied covert ties to the insurgents: Rural residents carried out extensive land occupations, and unions mounted massive demonstrations and marches. In Peru, Sendero Luminoso initially relied on persuasion to recruit members, but the group became increasingly coercive. Cadre acted with increasing violence in communities in the Andean highlands, forcing communities to attend meetings and publicly killing community leaders and suspected informers (Starn 1995, CVR 2003). Although the Sri Lankan insurgents also attracted significant numbers of volunteers in the aftermath of the 1983 ethnic violence against Tamils, they soon developed highly coercive relations with civilians, assassinating rival Tamil elites as well as local people who favored rival groups (Tambiah 1986, Somasundaram 1998, Narayan Swamy 2004).

Local elites generally mobilize existing social networks, particularly kin and clientelist ties, to counter actors encroaching on their interests—not only insurgent organizations but also rival elites seeking advantage in the disorganized context of war. Initial mobilization often includes not only the arming of these networks but also attacks on civilian groups perceived to be supportive of insurgent organizations, as in the case of the paramilitary groups in Colombia (Leal Francisco 1990, García 1996, Romero 2003). In Sierra Leone, the traditional kamajor societies were mobilized by local elites against the insurgents in the form of Civil Defense Forces, which carried out widespread violence in the southern part of the country against those perceived as supporting the RUF (TRC 2004, Vol. 2, Ch. 2). In El Salvador, land-owning elites directed informal groups of clients to suppress protests calling for land reform with increasing violence through the 1970s, derailing a land reform initiative in 1976 (Brockett 1990, pp. 147–48). Militias often originate in such networks but may rapidly escape the control of their founders, as was true of Colombia’s paramilitary groups.

State actors may also bolster their forces by drawing on clientelist networks of local allies or organizations of retired soldiers to found civilian militias or defense forces. In El Salvador, well before the outbreak of civil war, the state greatly extended its paramilitary networks. Many of the peasants in these networks were clients of powerful patrons or former soldiers, and supplied intelligence on rural troublemakers in exchange for loans, access to health services, immunity from any consequences of their paramilitary activities, and agricultural inputs such as land and fertilizer (Stanley 1996). In Peru, the state armed groups of residents—the rondas campesinas who organized local resistance to Sendero Luminoso, a form of civil defense that proved very effective against the insurgents (Starn 1995, Degregori 1999, Del Pino 2005). In Rwanda, local elites drew on kin and social networks to recruit participants in the genocidal killing of neighbors (Fujii 2009).

Both the state and insurgent groups may draw combatants from these networks of civilian supporters through a variety of mechanisms. Armed organizations often draw from particular groups, e.g., a specific ethnic group, not only because incoming recruits will be much more likely to endorse a particular agenda of secession or redistribution, but also because they are likely to bring with them norms and beliefs concerning the
appropriateness of violence against other groups. Of course these norms and beliefs can be radically altered by socialization into the armed group, both through formal training and through informal small-group dynamics such as hazing (see below). The Salvadorean insurgents relied on persuasion, as did the Peruvian insurgents initially. Contributing to the recruiting of youth to both the Peruvian and Salvadoran insurgencies was the social mobility participation offered (Degregori 1999, Wood 2003). (Sendero Luminoso also recruited a significant number of university students through sexual seduction of new members by more experienced cadre.) Later in the war, Sendero Luminoso forcibly recruited members, including children—a pattern also seen in Sri Lanka, where the LTTE requires at least one member from each Tamil household in areas they control. Insurgent organizations do not always draw recruits from social networks, however. The RUF in Sierra Leone forcibly recruited members without regard for local social networks, resulting in a heterogeneous force with weak internal social ties between members when recruited (Humphreys & Weinstein 2006). The organization’s pool of recruits may also reflect its resource base: Groups without economic resources are more likely to attract recruits willing to make long-term commitments to ideological goals, whereas those with income flows from control of resources are more likely to attract opportunistic recruits (Weinstein 2006).

In contrast, state militaries often attempt to draw or conscript recruits from a wide range of subcultures in order to build national unity (Weber 1976). For example, the Guatemalan military forcibly recruited indigeneous soldiers as part of its program of national integration (Black 1984). In particular, the state may recruit disaffected members of an ethnic community on whose behalf an insurgent organization is seeking autonomy or secession, a practice called “ethnic defection” (Kalyvas 2008). For example, in Sri Lanka, rival Tamil militant groups defeated by the LTTE have become paramilitary organizations working with the state (including the Karuna faction, a splinter group of the LTTE in eastern Sri Lanka). In Peru, the arming of the rondas campesinas led to new ties between state agents and local indigeneous residents in many highland communities despite previous state violence (Starn 1995, pp. 562–63). State actors may also build militia forces by militarizing a social, political, or ethnic cleavage, as in the case of Sri Lanka, where state efforts to develop Muslim Home Guards sharply increased the tension between Tamil-speaking Muslims and Hindus in eastern Sri Lanka and led to the LTTE’s decision to expel Muslims from northern Sri Lanka in 1990 [Hashbullah 2001, International Crisis Group (ICG) 2007].

Of course, not all civilians mobilize. Where violence is intense or indiscriminate, or comprises a broad repertoire, the social implications are likely to be severe for ordinary residents. Victims of political violence, particularly sexual violence and torture, often suffer not only from physical injuries but from shame, fear, ostracism, distrust (both of others and by others), and the inability both to remember what happened and also to forget (Levi 1988, Pedersen 2002, Human Rights Watch 2003, Denov 2006, Mookherjee 2006). As a result, victims frequently retreat from social interaction, living isolated from even their family and neighborhood. Thus, many traditional forms of mutual aid weakened or disappeared in the Peruvian highlands during the years of the war; the overall effect was to demobilize, not to mobilize. Yet, some of those who suffer political violence against themselves or family members mobilize rather than retreat. They found civil society organizations to advocate for the return of loved ones (or at least to learn what happened and to retrieve their bodies), or they join armed organizations.

Thus the political mobilization of civilian networks into support networks for armed groups reshapes social networks. In El Salvador and Peru, for example, networks of insurgent supporters came to wield significant
power in some areas, displacing networks that linked clients to landlords and local citizens to government authorities. In the case of Peru, in many of those areas, networks later emerged linking residents to the state through the rondas campesinas. The dissolution of traditional networks is not always achieved by the emergence of new networks, however. The pattern of dissolution may be one of increased social isolation rather than new network ties, particularly where armed groups coerce support. As discussed below, political mobilization also indirectly reshapes social networks through the mechanisms of polarization and militarization of local authority.

MILITARY SOCIALIZATION

When political mobilization takes the form of mobilization in support of an armed group, the result is a distinctively military form of socialization that has consequences for both combatants and civilians (Bourke 1999). The consequences of military socialization for combatants are not well documented, but they surely include the effects of recruitment and training processes as well as the effects of witnessing and wielding violence (Sofsky 2003). Whether recruits of armed groups are volunteers or have been coerced, they have to be socialized in the use of violence for group, not private, purposes, if group leaders are to control the violence deployed by their combatants, typically through the building of strongly hierarchical organizations (Huntington 1957, Siebold 2001). Training and socialization to the armed group take place both formally, through the immersion experience of “boot camp” (surprisingly similar across state militaries and insurgent armies alike), and informally, through initiation rituals and hazing. In state militaries, the powerful experiences of endless drilling, dehumanization through abuse at the hands of the drill sergeant, and degradation followed by “rebirth” as group members through initiation rituals typically meld individual recruits into a cohesive unit in which loyalties to one another are felt to be stronger than previous loyalties, such as those to family (Holmes 1985, Dyer 2004). Once deployed, combatants experience (to widely varying degrees) violence as perpetrators, as witnesses, and often as victims. Combatant memoirs consistently report the traumatizing effects of watching the death or injury of fellow combatants, as well as the harrowing effects for many of using violence themselves (e.g., O’Brien 1999, Beah 2007). Among the psychological mechanisms possibly at work in these processes of socialization to group membership and the wielding of violence are compliance, role adoption, internalization of group norms, cognitive dissonance reduction, habituation to violence, diffusion of responsibility onto the group, deindividuation, and dehumanization of the victimized group (see Straus 2007 and Lynch 2007 for analyses of these mechanisms and the evidence concerning their contribution to mass killing). Some of these processes may also support prosocial psychological transformations, such as altruistic solidarity with nonkin, as in the emergence of a new insurgent political culture of solidarity in contested areas of El Salvador (Wood 2003).

The profound effects that these processes can jointly exert on combatants are illustrated most sharply by the extreme violence deployed by forcibly conscripted child insurgents in Sierra Leone. Young recruits were forced by their RUF commanders to exert lethal violence, sometimes against family members; some were forced to commit sexual violence, a few against family members (Human Rights Watch 2003, pp. 35–42; TRC 2004, Vol. 2, Ch. 2, p. 17 and Vol. 3A, Ch. 4, pp. 486–530ff). Violence suffered, observed, and wielded was an integral part of the process of socialization of RUF combatants (Macure & Denov 2006, Denov & Gervais 2007; see Honwana 2005 on Angola and Mozambique). As a result of the traumatic socialization that young recruits received, many came to view their commanders as father figures, and the armed organization as family (Macure & Denov 2006).
Similarly, the socialization processes of ordinary life were displaced and transformed among those fighting on the other side: The traditional rite of passage to adulthood for male youth in many areas became the induction ritual for joining the Civil Defense Forces, as the traditional *kamajor* societies were transformed into paramilitary militias (Hoffman 2003).

The frequently observed widening of repertoires of violence over the course of the war likely reflects the ongoing effects of these underlying mechanisms, particularly dehumanization, diffusion of responsibility, habituation, and deindividuation, all of which are likely to undermine constraints on violence (Hoover 2007). As noted above, Sendero Luminoso was increasingly abusive toward civilians and coercive toward its own members as the war continued. This may have reflected the weakening of communication with the leadership after the group was forced to abandon initial strongholds as well as the group’s evolving strategy, which increasingly alienated former supporters. The apparent divergence in repertoire across Sendero units is consistent with this suggestion; as central control weakened, units developed particular elements of their repertoire. A widening of the repertoire of violence—in particular, the addition of sexual violence—was also evident on the part of the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party in their contest for control of KwaZulu Natal in the final years of the conflict in South Africa (and in the years immediately following; see Bonnin 2004). The effects of participation in and witnessing of violence in the South Africa case appear to have contributed to the undermining of traditional norms restraining sexual violence.

Military socialization has consequences for civilians as well as combatants. As we will see in more detail below, the recruiting of combatants has various effects on local civil society: an increased emphasis on particular political identities; the flight of youths from their homes (and sometimes their country, as in the mass exodus of Salvadorans to the United States) due to fear of forced recruitment and violence; changes in the demographic profile of rural households, particularly the shifting of new kinds of responsibility and labor to female members; and sometimes the presence of former combatants who return after their service. In El Salvador, for example, insurgent cadre sometimes moved between combatant and civilian roles; their presence in villages reinforced the civilian insurgent support networks (Wood 2003). Similarly, the presence of former soldiers in other villages reinforced networks of state loyalists.

Recruits’ socialization into military life reshapes social networks in many ways. Rather than transitioning to adult life through traditional cultural rituals of maturation, apprenticeships to particular occupations, and participation in migrant labor networks, young recruits are socialized to adulthood through their integration into armed groups and the wielding of violence. In Uganda, former child soldiers were significantly disadvantaged by their loss of schooling and skill development, and a minority was significantly traumatized as well (Blattman & Annan 2007). An overarching pattern is the substitution of complex everyday ties, shaped by multiple overlapping networks of family, employment, and community, by ties with members of the armed group.

**IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION AND POLARIZATION**

Violence, political mobilization, and military socialization usually have the joint effect of polarizing local identities, as is widely argued for the case of ethnic identities (Kaufmann 1996; Fearon & Laitin 2000), but the process is complex. Before conflict begins, it is often the case that local cleavages are distinct from those emphasized in the rhetoric of the parties to the conflict. What appears at the national level to be the key issue—for example, class relations, constitutions, or ethnic secession—may not be salient at the local level, which may be dominated by conflicts...
between families or clans or other social groupings concerning particular local grievances (Harding 1984, Degregori 1999, Kalyvas 2003, Lubkemann 2008). Even where local cleavages are similar to national ones, local politics reflects the specific history of the locale and its actors. For example, in El Salvador, the cleavage was fundamentally one of class, as the poor, particularly the rural poor, organized against the long-standing privileges of rural elites. Yet, landless laborers did not always support the insurgents, and mechanics and truck drivers numbered among insurgent supporters (Wood 2003). Civilian supporters of the insurgency distinguished between “good” landlords and “bad” landlords based on the history of past relations.

As extralocal actors begin mobilizing residents or carrying out violence against them, the local cleavage may increasingly align with the national one as a result of at least three processes. The first occurs when local actors choose sides opportunistically, perhaps as a means toward local advantage, as when one local faction denounces to one national party another faction as collaborators with the other party (Kalyvas 2003, 2006). A second process is more straightforward: Civilians may have to support one party in order to gain protection against another. This situation occurs with particular intensity when violence by one party is indiscriminate; if one’s behavior provides no safety against indiscriminate violence, joining the other side may be the safest course (Mason & Krane 1989, Goodwin 2001, Kalyvas & Kocher 2007). Violence may of course be counterproductive in other ways, as when it leads to seeking revenge through membership in the opponent organization. Revenge is said to be a common motivation for Tamils to join the LTTE voluntarily, and other Tamils join rival groups or state forces to avenge violence by the LTTE.

A third, often neglected mechanism of alignment is moral outrage in response to violence. As mentioned above, in the wake of extreme state violence, some hitherto nonviolent activists in El Salvador joined the insurgent organization. In Sri Lanka, ethnic violence against “estate” Tamils (Tamils whose families immigrated from India beginning in the mid nineteenth century to work on the tea estates) led some to support the LTTE, which previously had drawn exclusively from so-called Sri Lankan Tamils (based largely in the north). In contrast to opportunistic or protection-seeking motives, outrage aligns not just public but private loyalties with one side of the national cleavage.

More generally, civilians caught “between two fires” must choose—on inadequate information and in a context of high uncertainty—which side to support, particularly when combatants force residents to declare such choices. The armed parties can attempt to influence civilian choice with incentives as well as punishment. Even in largely ethnic conflicts, loyalties do not necessarily map onto the ethnic cleavage; states often attempt to build loyalist militias and civilian support bases by offering incentives (including protection) for ethnic defection, as we saw above in the transformation of rival Tamil militant groups into state paramilitary organizations.

However, such polarization does not always occur. In contested areas of El Salvador, beginning in the mid 1980s, it was possible to be neutral (Wood 2003). Residents had to give water and sometimes food to combatants of either side passing through the neighborhood, and both sides acted against residents if they were identified as actively collaborating with the other side. But residents were not forced otherwise to choose sides. In several areas of Usulután province, for example, about one third of residents actively supported the FMLN beyond this coerced minimum, providing high-quality intelligence as well as supplies. Two thirds did not do so but were allowed nonetheless to remain in the area as long as they complied with the coerced minimum. This unusual pattern was possible because the conflict in the later years of the war pitted an insurgency that was unusually restrained in its use of violence against...
Even where polarization does occur, local public loyalties may reverse polarity. In the Andean highlands, as violence by Sendero cadre exceeded local norms, some villages reversed allegiance and aligned themselves with state forces. This pattern spread quickly as state violence became less repressive and Sendero's violence more indiscriminate in the late 1980s (Degregori 1999, Theidon 2000, CVR 2003).

One result of the general pattern of increasing polarization of public loyalties—and, to varying degrees, of private identities as well—is the increasing segregation of communities. One reason is, of course, flight. The amount of displacement of civilians in three of these conflicts is staggering. In El Salvador, by 1987 ~10% of the population was internally displaced, at least 10% was in the United States, and another 5% was in Mexico and other Central American countries (Gersony 1986; Montes 1987, p. 34). In Sierra Leone, at least 800,000 people (~20% of the population) left their homes for elsewhere in the country and ~400,000 for neighboring countries (Amowitz et al. 2002, p. 514; other estimates are significantly higher, suggesting that 50% of the population was displaced). In Peru, 500,000–1,000,000 people were displaced, the great majority from indigenous communities in the highlands (IDMC 2007a). In Sri Lanka, the levels of displacement are much lower: ~460,000 people (2%) are displaced, with another 125,000 registered as refugees in other countries (IDMC 2007b, UNHCR 2007). Of course, not all were displaced by the direct exercise of coercion or even in an immediate context of fear; some left because they judged their life projects were best realized elsewhere (Lubkemann 2007, 2008).

If one side is perceived as dominant, the flight of those who feel threatened by that group leads to increasing homogeneity of the community as those allied to the group remain behind. An armed party may attempt to create such homogeneity, forcing everyone but its allies out of the area. Such political “cleansing” occurs at the local level in many civil wars, not just in wars of ethnic secession or genocide. Organizations may also be purged, as when local communal bodies are taken over by residents loyal to one party, forcing those loyal to the other party to leave the area. In eastern Sri Lanka, for example, an area where before the war Tamil, Sinhalese, and Muslim families lived and worked together with little acrimony, villages tended to become increasingly homogeneous over the course of the war, as neighbors fled the occurrence or prospect of violence against them and their coethnics (ICG 2007). In some conflicts, urban neighborhoods also segregate along political lines, either because incoming individuals and families settle preferentially in areas where residents share political loyalties or aversions, or because armed actors prohibit them from settling in particular neighborhoods (Steele 2007).

Even when residents of diverse loyalties remain in the area, mobilization, violence, and polarization often lead to increasing social segregation. In El Salvador, residents of contested areas who did not support the insurgents founded and joined local evangelical churches, in large part because they perceived the Catholic Church as supporting the insurgents. This perception was due to the role of liberation theology in the mobilization of poor people before the war and the extreme state violence against that movement and its advocates, including the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero (Wood 2003).

The polarization of political identities that frequently occurs during civil war breaks apart prewar networks, as former neighbors are shunned and coloyalists are favored. Even communities with high degrees of intermarriage before the conflict can split along cleavage lines, as occurred in Bosnia, Croatia, and Rwanda. The newly distinct networks may
also move through space as those with particular identities flee or segregate.

**MILITARIZATION OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

In most civil wars, local authority becomes militarized in the wake of political mobilization, violence, and polarization. By militarization I mean the supplanting of local forms of governance with new forms that reflect the influence of armed actors. In some conflicts, local elites flee from contested areas. They may be particularly targeted by armed actors, and they are more likely to have the resources to travel and the means to resettle elsewhere, including urban properties and connections, and sometimes even visas for foreign travel, as in the exodus of Tamil professionals and their families from Sri Lanka beginning in 1983 (Human Rights Watch 2006). Their flight is an opportunity for others to fill their place—most likely actors bearing arms, given the risk and uncertainty that led the old elites to flee. Insurgents and their supporters may build new local orders in a variety of patterns, depending on insurgent strategy, community structure, and local political loyalties (Arjona 2007). The militarization of governance takes place in at least some areas of nearly all civil wars, as armed actors displace civil authorities or as hard-line military or paramilitary forces displace “softer” authorities such as police when conflict intensifies.

Even when civilians continue to govern, their rule is often militarized. They may rely on their ties to coercive forces more than before, or the site of effective authority may be displaced to nearby military bases or camps. In Peru, by the mid 1980s, military bases ruled surrounding territory, often with extreme abuse of power including arbitrary detention, torture, and sexual violence of residents (CVR 2003). In Sri Lanka, the LTTE strictly controls local civilian administration; those thought to collaborate with the state or to support inadequately the LTTE are punished, and are sometimes assassinated, as documented in many reports by the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna). In Colombia, both the leftist insurgents and the paramilitaries insist that municipal authorities follow certain rules and norms (Arjona 2008; see also Leal Buitrago 2002). Elections or other processes of selection may be held in circumstances deemed illegitimate by some residents, as favored candidates or parties may not participate. Alternatively, elections may be deferred for years, leaving in place nominal leaders seen as illegitimate given their absence from the locale or their inadequate management of wartime challenges. In El Salvador, for example, wartime municipal elections were often held not in the municipality but in another town or city, with candidates competing who no longer lived anywhere near the municipality. Usually only a fraction of eligible voters participated, a fraction that disproportionately represented those no longer residing in the municipality.

Where armed actors displace civil authorities, a common result is a generational inversion of authority, by which I mean armed youth supplanting traditional elders and local authorities. This occurred in the Peruvian highlands (Degregori 1999, p. 64), areas of Sierra Leone dominated by the RUF (TRC 2004 Vol. 2, Ch. 2, pp. 34, 45), and Darfur (Flint & de Waal 2005). This inversion may mean that traditional social norms constraining violence are no longer enforced. In Medellín, Colombia, young members of rival armed groups at one point controlled different neighborhoods, severely restricting civilian lives in some, as depicted in the documentary film *La Sierra*.

The inversion may also occur along class or ethnic lines, particularly where insurgent groups govern the area, if the insurgents draw chiefly from subordinate ethnic or class groups. In areas controlled or contested by the FMLN, for example, ordinary residents came to exert unprecedented authority in the absence of both economic elites and civil authorities. Their authority was limited, to be sure, by the overarching authority of the FMLN,
and in contested areas by that of the military as well. Nonetheless, local residents made decisions about who could reside in the area and who could not, what land would be occupied (some surreptitiously, others formally), and whether to allow particular former residents, including landlords and the mayor, to return (Wood 2003). In Peru, generational conflict brought enormous violence to some areas of the highlands, as armed teenagers allied with Sendero Luminoso revolted against their parents and other traditional authorities (CVR 2003, Vol. 1, Ch. 2, pp. 95–96; Vol. 2, Ch. 1, p. 451). Insurgent governance in many areas also had ethnic and class connotations, as insurgent-allied residents who ruled some towns briefly in the early 1980s were generally both more poor and more indigenous than those they supplanted.

Yet generational inversion does not always occur. In southern Sierra Leone, traditional militias, the kamajors, became effective civil defense forces (TRC 2004, Vol. 2, Ch. 2, pp. 76–78). The groups initially relied on traditional indoctrination rituals under the leadership of respected elders. However, those ties to tradition were increasingly disrupted by a particular elder who came to control many militias, introducing distorted, violent rituals that other elders saw as a perversion of traditional practices (TRC 2004, Vol. 2, Ch. 2, pp. 77–79).

Insurgent governance takes an unusual form in Sri Lanka. Beginning in 1987 and intensifying after 1990, the LTTE developed an extensive civil administration in areas it controls (Byman et al. 2001, Wayland 2004, Stokke 2006, Mampilly 2007). The insurgent administration draws on the state administration; the group cooperates with the government civil service in providing health care and education. (The state cooperates with this arrangement because if it refused to cooperate, the LTTE’s argument that a separate Tamil state was necessary.) However, the insurgents maintain exclusive control over security, including new policing and judicial agencies. They appear to place particular emphasis on education, insisting on curricula that focus on Tamil history, grievances, and aspirations. They also require participation in military training: All schoolchildren over the age of 14 are compelled to participate in exercises including security roles and mock battles (de Mel 2007). The group carries out “social cleansing,” threatening or killing local rapists and thieves, and institutes sanctions for domestic violence (Gomez 2005). The LTTE collects taxes from civil servants (12% of their government-paid salary) and professionals in areas it controls, and in some other areas of the country as well, and also taxes members of the Tamil diaspora, maintaining elaborate records of contributions, incomes, and promises of deferred payments (Human Rights Watch 2006). In Peru, Sendero Luminoso initially carried out locally popular acts of social cleansing but soon turned to political cleansing, often via public accountability sessions, in which local communities voiced complaints about local leaders—complaints often followed by their murder, despite calls for punishment instead (Degregori 1999).

The example of civilians in El Salvador making local decisions—with the implicit backing of the FMLN—indicates that the degree of militarization of local authority varies significantly. Indeed, there are important exceptions to this general pattern. In El Salvador, the town of Tenancingo—twice deserted owing to conflict in the town itself, including bombing by the Air Force—was resettled as a zona inerme (unarmed zone) under an agreement between the FMLN and the military negotiated under the auspices of the Archdiocese of San Salvador (Wood 2003). Although both sides soon returned to carrying arms through town and conflict resumed very nearby, the town did not suffer from a resumption of severe conflict through the remaining years of the war. In Colombia, some communities have declared themselves comunidades de paz in an effort to protect themselves from the incursions of armed actors, with mixed results.
(Uribe de Hincapie 2004). Some indigenous communities have succeeded in limiting the incursion of armed actors, including by founding their own armed group (Peñaranda 1999; A. Steele, personal communication).

The militarization of local authority often displaces prewar governance networks, replacing them with new ties between some residents and the new local authority (or authorities, if dual authorities are present—a frequent occurrence in El Salvador and Peru). The new governance network may be directed by civilians but usually relies on armed actors for their coercive authority and sometimes their legitimacy, as in El Salvador, where local civilians worked closely with the FMLN.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER ROLES

War transforms gender roles through a variety of mechanisms. The most dramatic, of course, is the carrying of arms by female insurgents, who comprised \(\sim 30\%\) of combatants in the Peruvian, Salvadoran, and Sri Lankan insurgencies and \(\sim 25\%\) in the Sierra Leone insurgency, unusually high fractions among armed groups (Mason 1992, p. 250; Barrig 1993, cited in CVR 2003, Vol. 8, Ch. 2.1, p. 56; Bouta 2005, p. 7; Humphreys & Weinstein 2004, p. 14). Female insurgents broke traditional social norms in these societies. Some provided household, logistic, or medical services, but some served as combatants; the mix varied across groups. Although women were among the members of high-level command councils in Peru, El Salvador, and Sri Lanka, in Peru and El Salvador women generally served under male commanders (with more exceptions in Peru than El Salvador). In Peru, access to power appeared to depend largely on sexual relationship with powerful men (including Guzmán; CVR 2003). In El Salvador, that was not the case; rather, women high in the insurgent organization were either founding members of the FMLN’s constituent organizations or advanced through the ranks. Recruits were generally unmarried girls and young women, reflecting their lesser family responsibilities (what sociologists term biographical availability), particularly those living in refugee camps, where social expectations of joining were high (Viterna 2006).

In Sri Lanka, women and girls comprise separate units, train in their own bases, and carry out missions separately as well as jointly with male units (Ann 1993, Balasingham 2001, Trawick 2007). Women also carry out suicide missions, including the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi (Narayan Swamy 2004). The motivations of girls and women to join the LTTE appear broadly similar to those of their male counterparts, including revenge for state violence and nationalism. The emergence of feminist aspirations among some experienced cadre apparently reflects their wartime experience rather than their motivation for joining (Alison 2003). The presence of female combatants does not appear, however, to displace male combatants’ notions of womanhood; male cadre appear to prefer traditional Tamil women and girls, not their fellow combatants, as wives. Although female cadre dress in guerrilla uniforms with trousers and frequently have short hair, the LTTE enforces traditional Tamil dress among noncombatant girls and women (Trawick 2007).

Civilian gender roles may also change dramatically during war. In El Salvador, Peru, and Sri Lanka, women became the primary interlocutors with the state as they sought news of their detained or disappeared menfolk. Particularly in Peru, where indigenous women of the highlands were much less likely to speak Spanish and had little prior contact with state authorities, carrying out this necessary task was fraught with risk and suffering (CVR 2003, Vol. 8, Ch 2.1, Theidon 2007). Significant numbers of women inquiring about male relatives were themselves detained, and some suffered sexual violence while in detention (CVR 2003). Some founded or joined human rights groups; for most that did so, this was an unprecedented role in civil society (Cordero 1998). In Sri Lanka, some
Tamil widows do not comply with the traditional social norms of widowhood, refusing to retire into the private sphere and insisting on wearing the putee, a traditional mark on the forehead that is usually denied to widows (Rajasingham-Senanayake 2001, pp. 106–7).

Patriarchal networks are often radically reshaped during war because women and girls take on unprecedented roles as combatants and interlocutors with authority, and (as discussed below) take on new forms of work. The extent of the transformation of gendered networks varies greatly across areas and conflicts but is nonetheless frequently evident in the high fraction of female-headed households both in contested areas and in areas where refugees and displaced persons congregate. In El Salvador, female-headed households comprised about one quarter of displaced households in 1985 (USAID 1987). Many female-headed households are deeply impoverished despite girls and women taking on new roles as landless laborers and farmers.

**FRAGMENTATION OF THE LOCAL POLITICAL ECONOMY**

With the displacement of local elites, the supplanting of traditional authorities, and the departure of household members to serve in armed groups, new patterns of production and labor emerge. Particularly in highly contested rural areas, household members make difficult choices in the wartime context of uncertainty and risk (Collier 1999, Humphreys 2003).

One pattern in some conflicts is the “peasantization” of formerly commercial agriculture. In the absence of elite investment and management, large properties are cultivated in small plots planted by individual rural households. Because foodstuffs are increasingly unavailable for purchase in markets, either because markets do not function or because cash income has declined, household members typically plant food rather than market crops, either with the permission of an absent landlord (negotiated via some local agent or in risky trips to urban areas), or illegally, as in the contested areas of wartime El Salvador (Wood 2003). The exception to this pattern of foodstuff production and the feminization of agricultural labor is the production of illicit crops such as opium or coca in areas of Peru, Colombia, Burma, and Afghanistan. Even in those cases, production occurs predominantly on smallholdings, whose small scale renders them less likely to be detected by state authorities or rival groups.

In contrast to the general pattern of suppression of most markets, conflict processes may fuel land markets. Landlords may be willing to sell if productive use of their properties is unlikely, if rent payments are low or nonexistent, and if buyers are willing to pay an acceptable price. In El Salvador during the war, very few buyers were willing to purchase large properties (those not nationalized under the agrarian reform) at a price the owner would accept because the buyer would face the same wartime risks as the current owner did. Some land-poor and landless residents received remittances from family members who had fled to the United States. Thus, the subdivision of a large property for local sale provided a larger return than sale of the entire property (Wood 2000).

In El Salvador, land markets flourished in the later years of the war around small cities and towns. There were two principal reasons: first, the formal occupation of nearby properties by insurgent supporters, coupled with landlord perceptions that labor relations would be difficult at the war’s end; and second, the ability of poor residents to buy, thanks to remittances from family members who had fled to the United States. Although many properties were subdivided and sold for housing, others were sold for smallholdings. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the changes wrought in the landscape around the town of San Jorge, a small town on the shoulder of a volcano in eastern El Salvador. These maps (originally published in Wood 2003) were drawn for me at the war’s end by members of the Cooperativa Candalaria, Un Nuevo Amanecer (“a new dawn”).
Before the war (Figure 1), the area consisted mainly of medium-sized coffee estates. The town is shown at the lower edge of the map. Each field and grove are labeled with the name of the owner, and the crop is indicated with symbols. Figure 2 is the cooperativists’ representation of the postwar landscape. Militant campesinos founded the cooperative during the war and claimed 322 hectares of the now-rundown coffee estates at the war’s end, including a significant fraction of the coffee groves north of town. Those properties are labeled “propiedad de la cooperativa” [sic] (“property of the cooperative”). The abandoned coffee estates (shown at the top of Figure 2) were more forest than farm, as indicated by the serpent near the upper right corner, the broken coffee branches near the upper left, and notations such as “propiedad destruida” (destroyed property) and “bosque destruido” [sic] (destroyed forest). Corn was more widely planted (not evident in the figure, but easily noted when I visited the cooperative).

In other settings, the large earnings of narco-traffickers may fuel markets in large properties. In Colombia, for example, illicit crops are produced on smallholdings, but earnings often go toward property acquisition (Reyes 1997, Romero 2003). Insurgent-controlled economic activities may lead to the emergence or strengthening of markets, as in the illicit production and transport of coca in some areas of Peru (Weinstein 2006). In northern Sri Lanka, smugglers regularly cross the straits between the Indian coast and LTTE-held areas, transporting arms, cadre, and supplies (Balasingham 2001, Narayan Swamy 2004).

A transformation of agrarian land and social relations may also be imposed by armed actors. Insurgents may require the production of certain crops or particular labor processes, as when the FMLN attempted to introduce some collective cultivation in areas it controlled in northern El Salvador in the early years of the war. In Peru, both the insurgents and the military repeatedly confiscated livestock, decimating the savings of rural households, a pattern evident in many of the testimonies presented to the Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación. Sendero Luminoso not only attempted to impose collective production in some areas of the highlands but also attempted to forbid peasant participation in markets (Starn 1995, Degregori 1999, p. 66). The state, too, forcibly resettled some communities as a counterinsurgency measure (Starn 1995).

In El Salvador, the state carried out a land reform in an effort to undermine the FMLN’s appeal. Approximately a quarter of arable land was turned over to landless workers and small tenants, including hundreds of large estates where coffee, cotton, and beef had been produced before the war. Although the initial plans called for the continuation of large-scale production under a cooperative model with access to credit from the state, within five years most properties were worked as smallholdings by cooperative members, as corruption and inadequate management quickly led to high operational debts. A distinctive part of the reform is evident in Figure 2: Two properties in San Jorge were distributed to residents in the early 1980s under the “land-to-the-tiller” phase of the agrarian reform; one is labeled “parcelas de FINATA,” (the acronym of the administering agency) and the other simply “FINATA.”

Counterinsurgency efforts may also take the form of development projects other than agrarian reform, including credit and technical support for crops to replace illicit crops whose marketing may fund armed groups, infrastructure development, and the provision of health services. The classic literature on counterinsurgency calls for such nonmilitary means to win over civilian populations (see, e.g., Trinquier 1964 and Galula 1964). In addition to the agrarian reform, the Salvadoran government repeatedly attempted to resettle displaced families in new villages at strategic sites. These efforts were unsuccessful because the families were often displaced again, or their loyalties to the state proved less reliable than assumed (Wood 2003). Beneficiaries...
of the agrarian reform did not necessarily become loyal to the state; insurgent combatants used to rest and regroup on several land-reform estates in southern El Salvador. In eastern Sri Lanka, the state favors the land claims of Sinhalese farmers, often relatively recent arrivals resettled in the area through various state development programs. This policy has led to increasing conflict with Tamil families over land and ongoing displacement of Tamil families from their lands and villages (Peebles 1990, ICG 2007). In contrast, the Peruvian state initiated relatively few development projects during that country’s civil war, and those displaced by the conflict were largely left to fend for themselves in the peripheries of Lima and provincial cities (Kirk 2005). In Colombia, a renewal of conflict was triggered by the rapid expansion of palm oil production on land abandoned by civilians who left the area because of the war (IDMC 2007c).

War fragments most rural markets, as commercial production stagnates, input and output transportation networks cease to function, and financial institutions withdraw services. Also fragmented, as a result, are the social networks linking owners of large properties to their workers and to providers of inputs. Similarly, the social networks that undergird public and private service provision to the rural poor also wither. Residents of contested areas thus increasingly turn to family production of foodstuffs and services. In the wartime climate of uncertainty, distrust, and polarization, traditional social networks of mutual aid may likewise weaken. In some cases, new social networks with economic functions emerge, as in the case of the insurgent cooperatives in El Salvador, and the illicit networks of coca production and transport in Peru and of sea transport between the Indian coast and LTTE-held areas of northern Sri Lanka.

CONCLUSION
The wartime social processes discussed here occurred to varying degrees and in different ways in the civil wars in El Salvador, Peru, Sierra Leone, and Sri Lanka. Political mobilization, military socialization, the polarization of social identities, the militarization of local authority, the transformation of gender roles, and the fragmentation of local political economies reshaped a wide range of local social networks, destroying some, breaking others into subnetworks, and creating new ones.

What, if any, enduring legacy do these processes leave for the postwar period? The recent emergence of debate in Spain about whether and how the civil war should be memorialized, particularly the controversy over the excavation of mass graves, suggests that the legacy of mobilization, violence, polarization, and the militarization of authority may have lain dormant through the years of dictatorship and initial democratic rule. Indeed, Balcells Ventura (2007) found that patterns of lethal violence during Spain’s civil war were associated with voting patterns in elections in Catalonia four decades later.

Any assessment of legacy should be very cautious about drawing firm conclusions. For example, the transformation of gender roles during war is often reversed once war draws to a close. Social norms may reassert themselves, with women leaving or being pushed from their jobs as men return to civilian roles, as was the case in both the United States and France after World War II. Institutional actors, including those working toward reconciliation, may structure incentives or procedures such that women’s new roles are undermined, as when land transfer programs neglect to issue titles to women as well as men, and demobilization programs favor male combatants over females, whose role may not be recognized. Women may be displaced from leadership positions in political parties and civil society organizations when male combatants, particularly officers, return to civil society.

Nonetheless, sometimes the social processes of civil war leave enduring changes in their wake. In El Salvador, war left a legacy of leftist civil society organizations and a new insurgent political culture based
on substantive democratic and redistributive claims in areas of strong FMLN influence (Wood 2003). Indeed, the transformation of the FMLN into a political party marked an unprecedented representation of the political left. The process was conflictual, given the group’s complex internal structure and ideological diversity. Although the party has yet to win the presidency, it performs well in municipal and legislative elections, repeatedly serving as the lead opposition party in parliament.

In other cases, in sharp contrast, the legacy of wartime polarization may inhibit the reintegration of combatants and their supposed supporters. In Peru, there is significant opposition to any recognition of the suffering of family members of Sendero combatants, seen by many as terrorists whose reintegration is neither morally desirable nor politically palatable. A generation of local leaders was decimated by the war; community leaders were assassinated for their supposed political loyalties, particularly by Sendero cadre, both in the highlands and Lima neighborhoods (Burt 1998, CVR 2003). In Sri Lanka, the social processes of war have largely eliminated any articulation of Tamil autonomy except for that embraced by the LTTE. Nascent class politics remains eclipsed by ethnic politics, as the two Sinhalese political parties repeatedly play the “Tamil threat” card to mobilize followers, rather than appeals along other lines.

A common pattern of enduring change is demographic. War changes the population structure of countries, often in profound ways. In El Salvador, for example, the rural to urban ratio of 60:40 was reversed over the course of the conflict, a significant acceleration of the prewar rate of urbanization. It appears that war may also accelerate the transition to nuclear households from more extended forms as family networks disperse during the war. War often leaves an increased number of female-headed households, not only because of the higher death rate of males but also because of the dispersion of families and the disruption of stable labor migration patterns. Labor relations may be transformed, even if there is some rollback to prewar forms. It is not always the case that women and girls retire to their prewar roles; they may remain to some degree in new occupations, particularly in the absence of male partners. And women may continue in leadership roles in new civil society organizations such as human rights groups, particularly in settings where combatants of neither side are welcomed into civil society, as in Peru.

This article raises many more questions than it answers. Further research on the social processes of civil war would be a valuable contribution. Under what conditions does each process occur with particular force? Under what conditions do these processes have enduring, important consequences? To what extent do answers depend on who wins the war? To what extent do they depend on the intensity of conflict, or its duration? Is it possible to distinguish the legacies of distinct processes of war? The challenge will be to develop research designs that allow the untangling of the consequences of distinct processes, a challenge that may be best addressed by research strategies that take advantage of subnational variation.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author is not aware of any biases that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

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LITERATURE CITED


Figure 1
San Jorge, El Salvador, before the war. Reprinted from Wood (2003), used with permission of Cambridge University Press. A more detailed version can be seen at http://www.cambridge.org/us/features/wood/.
Figure 2
San Jorge at the war’s end. Reprinted from Wood (2003), used with permission of Cambridge University Press. A more detailed version can be seen at [http://www.cambridge.org/us/features/wood/](http://www.cambridge.org/us/features/wood/).
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