

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects

CUNY Graduate Center

9-2021

Nuances in Bottom-Up Interpretations: Colombia's and Guatemala's Radically Different Approaches to Transitional Justice

Chelsea L. Carrick

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/4604

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).

Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

NUANCES IN BOTTOM-UP INTERPRETATIONS: COLOMBIA'S AND GUATEMALA'S
RADICALLY DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

by

CHELSEA CARRICK

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2021

© 2021

CHELSEA CARRICK

All Rights Reserved

Nuances in Bottom-up Interpretations: Colombia's and Guatemala's Radically Different Approaches to
Transitional Justice

by

Chelsea Carrick

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political
Science satisfaction of the thesis requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Date

Desmond Arias
Thesis Advisor

Date

Alyson Cole
Executive Officer

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

Nuances in Bottom-up Interpretations: Colombia's and Guatemala's Radically Different Approaches to Transitional Justice

by

Chelsea Carrick

Advisor: Desmond Arias

Scholars have treated “bottom-up” transitional justice processes as a non-nuanced whole, situating grassroots actors in direct opposition to large-scale, or “top-down,” approaches to transitional justice. Such an analysis is limited because it fails to take into account complex contextual factors that contribute to the ways in which bottom-up mechanisms manifest. Colombia and Guatemala are two cases in which bottom-up actors have strived to influence the ways in which peace and justice were articulated by their respective governments; however, the methods and outcomes are strikingly different. In Guatemala, grassroots actors sought to achieve ethnic inclusion, neglecting class and land-based demands. Colombia's grassroots groups, however, have favored an anti-hegemonic approach through which bottom-up actors seek to redefine transitional justice in anti-hegemonic terms, frequently favoring radical land reform and redistribution and opposing neoliberal forms of post-conflict development. I argue that there are three primary variables influencing how bottom-up actors in Colombia and Guatemala responded to civil conflict and articulated transitional justice: 1. The ethnic nature of the conflict and the delineation of victims and perpetrators. 2. The countries' respective access to resources 3. The role of religion (Catholic Liberation theology vs. conservative evangelism)

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my faculty adviser, Dr. Desmond Arias, for his valuable support and patience during the research and writing process. Without his suggestions the project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the Graduate Center faculty for creating an environment in which I could intellectually grow. I would like to thank Jennifer Hendricks for her constant support, both editorial and emotional. Without the support of my family the pursuit of my goals would never have been possible. To all of the above and more, thank you.

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Towards a more robust theory of “bottom-up” transitional justice initiatives</i>	5
<i>Colombia: Antagonistic Visions of Transitional Justice</i>	8
Background on the Conflict: Colombia’s State of Perpetual War	8
Variable 1: The Multi-faceted Nature of Colombia’s Conflict	12
Variable 2: The Role of Resources in the Colombian Conflict	23
Variable 3: Catholic Liberation Theology and Radical Interpretations of Peace	30
<i>Guatemala: neoliberalism at the grassroots</i>	36
Background on the Conflict: A 36 Year Genocide.....	36
Variable 1: The Genocidal Nature of the Guatemalan Conflict	40
Variable 2: Resources and NGO Reliance	46
Variable 3: Neo-Pentecostal Influence	51
<i>Conclusion</i>	56
<i>References</i>	59

Introduction

Guatemala and Colombia are two countries that have embraced elements of bottom-up transitional justice, thereby incorporating community-specific endeavors meant to create a more lasting and stable post-conflict order. There are, however, important differences between the two countries' mechanisms and desired outcomes: In Guatemala, activists took a conservative approach friendly to neoliberal notions of transitional justice, largely choosing not to strive for land or class-based reforms. Following the country's civil conflict, grassroots groups did encourage ethnic inclusion; however, the nature of their demands were not radically indigenous-centered, and the state retained power over who was considered a "good" or "bad" indigenous Maya dependent upon openness to market-oriented approaches to post-conflict recovery (Vogt 2015). In Colombia, on the other hand, bottom-up approaches to transitional justice remain anti-hegemonic and opposed to neoliberal forms of development and extraction (Diaz 2008). Colombia's methods frequently revolve around use and access to land.

In 2016, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or FARC) signed a historic peace agreement ending what was characterized as the "longest-running armed conflict in the Western Hemisphere" (International Center for Transitional Justice). The FARC agreed to pursue political representations through traditional institutional channels, symbolically laying down their arms and preparing to re-enter civilian life. During the past five years since the peace treaty was signed, however, domestic peace remains elusive: More than 1,000 human rights leaders have been killed, and the military continues to carry out abuses on the civilian population (Power 2020). 1,400 agreements within the peace treaty have yet to be fulfilled (Campo Palacios & Dest

2020). As a result of the perceived failures of the 2016 Peace Accords, various grassroots groups have opposed the state's interpretation of transitional justice, underscoring the state's unreliability through refusal to participate in traditional political channels.

Guatemala formally ended its thirty-year civil war in 1996. The majority of the 200,000 victims were Mayan peasants, who were massacred at the hands of the Guatemalan military and their associated paramilitary groups (Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza 2008, 144). Guatemala's post-conflict process implemented bottom-up forms of transitional justice, emphasizing indigenous accounts of the violence, creating "opportunity structures" (Tarrow 1998), and granting marginal communities access to "elite allies" (Destrooper and Parmentier 2018, 323). Unlike Colombia, however, where grassroots groups have positioned themselves as antagonistic to institutional transitional justice mechanisms, Guatemala has proven remarkably susceptible to international and national influence of a neoliberal character, even in cases in which it ultimately harmed indigenous rights efforts around the country.

I argue that there are three primary variables through which to understand the differences in bottom-up approaches to transitional justice in Colombia and Guatemala. The first, and likely most vital, is the ethnic nature of the conflict and the delineation between who is a victim and a perpetrator. In Colombia, the multi-faceted nature of the conflict created a context in which various voices and interests were heavily impacted by the violence, decreasing the country's capacity to create a unified narrative in which there were clear victims and perpetrators. As a result, bottom-up voices in Colombia have failed to create a single space or avenue for political participation, forcing them to rely on non-institutional means of participation. In Guatemala, the state carried out a "scorched earth" policy, with violence clearly aimed at the nation's ethnic Maya. As a result, Guatemalan grassroots actors contributing to the peace process had a specific

framework in which to operate, which encouraged them to emphasize ethnic political inclusion and recognition over land and class-based reforms.

The second variable involves the countries' access to resources, which has shaped the conflicts in various ways. During Colombia's civil conflict, armed groups such as the FARC were able to fund their actions and endeavors through the lucrative drug market, which contributed to their ability to maintain power and presence in areas with little state support (Vargas Meza 1998). Additionally, other armed actors, including the paramilitaries and criminal gangs, could rely on the illicit market for funding, contributing to the multivariate nature and perpetual continuation of the conflict (LeGrand 2003). Guatemala's guerrilla forces had no such resources and were more easily defeated, making the Guatemalan military the primary armed actor in Guatemala's civil conflict. Due to their lack of financial resources, Guatemalan Maya necessarily relied on international NGO support to rebuild their communities after the civil conflict. As a result, Guatemalan grassroots groups have frequently adopted a donor-driven approach, rendering more popular modes of mobilization infrequent (Edelman 2005).

The third variable on which I will focus is how religion influences the conflict's actors. Although not as prominent as it was during the 1970s, Catholic liberation theology still plays a role in the philosophy of Colombia's grassroots actors, encouraging peace and autonomy through anti-imperialism and redistribution (Celis and Furio 2016). Neo-pentecostalism has spread throughout Guatemala, which encourages close adherence to conservative politics and Christian-Cultural dominion, as well as an individual approach to peace and a "forgiveness"-centric vision on amnesty (Reu 2019). Evangelical missionaries have also villainized an explicitly Maya identity, condemning traditional practices as "evil" and discouraging radical reforms.

The following analysis seeks to contextualize the Guatemalan and Colombian post-conflict cases, identifying differences in bottom-up approaches to transitional justice and considering possible explanations. Where scholars do focus on a bottom-up approach to transitional justice, they frequently focus exclusively on the importance of marginal inclusion and how bottom-up voices can impact a country's prospects for peace. While important, such an analysis neglects the variations in bottom-up approaches that can occur dependent on a country's context. Guatemala and Colombia make compelling comparative cases due to grassroots groups' distinctly different responses to inter-country violence and can form a basis for how such responses form a nation's post-conflict future.

Towards a more robust theory of “bottom-up” transitional justice initiatives

The goal of this essay is to understand nuances in bottom-up approaches to justice, therefore it is necessary to further elaborate on the term “from below” and determine precisely how it is understood differently from transitional justice efforts as organized, or imposed, “from above.” According to McEvoy and McGregor (2008), the term “from below” implies communal or civil society actors mobilizing towards a goal or resisting unwanted actions or interventions from outside actors. Grassroots groups may assume an antagonistic stance towards “powerful hegemonic political, social or economic forces” (3); however, “from below” does not necessitate direct resistance (as will be demonstrated by the Guatemala case), but may simply be mobilization by community groups organized by and for victims of conflict. “From-above,” by contrast, implies hegemonic understandings of transitional justice as imposed on victims of conflict, components of which may be upheld by international governing bodies or outside organizations.

While the start of the Transitional Justice field in the Americas is largely attributed to the post-authoritarian transitions in the Southern Cone, and the processes that then followed, the first “phase” of transitional justice as it is currently defined began with the Nuremberg Trials after World War II (Paige 2009, 328). According to Teitel (2003), Putting Nazi war criminals on trial set an important precedent; however, as Paige states, “none of the actors involved would have described it as such” (2009, 328), and many of the war criminals were not ultimately tried. Paige, as well as McGregor (2008), attribute the creation of “transitional justice as a discourse” to the late-1980s and extending to the mid-1990s when transitional justice began to emerge as a scholarly field, as evidenced by the creation of the term (Paige 2009, 327) and broad political shifts away from authoritarianism (336). The dilemmas surrounding transitioning states led to the

development of a transitional justice field, which focused on the ethical and practical questions surrounding post-conflict and post-authoritarian modes of justice and reconstruction.

As a result of increased attention to transitioning states and the appropriate methods of engaging with post-conflict and post-authoritarian reconstruction and justice, scholars widely studied the impact transitional justice mechanisms have on democracy, peace, and human rights. A number of scholars (O'Donnell & Schmitter (1986), Sikkink & Walling (2007), and Dancy & Wiebelhaus-Brahm (2015), for example) demonstrate a link between democratization and national-level transitional justice initiatives; however, an analysis of democratic participation by marginal actors is outside the scope of their studies. Caldeira and Holston (1999) conclude that without the inclusion of marginalized sectors, a failure of “civil citizenship” can occur. While large-scale analysis of the links between democratization and transitional justice initiatives is important, observing local processes and their impacts can help researchers better understand how post-conflict endeavors create local definitions of citizenship and democratic governance. If transitional justice mechanisms are to meet their goal of creating “a democratic political culture” (Carmody 2017, 211), then they must include the marginalized.

Transitional Justice as a field was created to solve the “complex, legal, and practical questions” that arose from states recovering from repressive regimes and internal conflict (Paige 2009, 324). Varying global experiences contributed to what Paige refers to as a “knowledge-base” on how to “deal with the past” (324). While early approaches to the study of transitional justice focused primarily on large-scale initiatives and their impact on democracy, they gradually expanded to include “bottom-up” voices, incorporating the considerations of grassroots groups and addressing issues of community ownership of transitional justice processes (Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza 2008). I argue that expanding the knowledge-base to incorporate “bottom-up”

voices in the transitional justice process is not sufficient, and that it should be further expanded to closely analyze the localized understandings, contexts, and associated mechanisms behind why grassroots actors understand transitional justice in the way that they do. In-depth comparative analyses on grassroots transitional justice will illuminate the variations in bottom-up approaches dependent on a country's conflict-based context.

Top-down approaches have been typologized based primarily on the degree of amnesia imposed: to what degree are human rights violators punished for their crimes? Will truth commissions create a more stable peace? However, the top-down approach neglects to understand the varied and complex processes which occur at the grassroots level. National level truth commissions, and UN brokered agreements and peace treaties, are objects of international attention; however, the ways in which smaller communities respond to periods of prolonged violence through negotiated ideas of justice, accountability, and memory should also be treated with a high degree of scholarly importance. While scholars have striven to understand the various types of top-down transitional justice methods, there is a knowledge gap on the nuances of bottom-up approaches to community-based transition and justice.

Colombia: Antagonistic Visions of Transitional Justice

Background on the Conflict: Colombia's State of Perpetual War

The length, degree, and nature of Colombia's conflict set it apart from others in the region. The magnitude of the country's internal war have led some scholars to posit that Colombia a "culture of violence," or an inclination towards perpetual war (Waldmann 2007). While much of the violence that has historically occurred in Latin America was under the reign of a military dictatorship, Colombia's has taken place within a liberal democracy (LeGrand 2003, 170). The origins of Colombia's conflict is a subject of debate, with some scholars tracing it as far back as the bloody bipartisan battle between liberals and conservatives during what was called the War of a Thousand Days (LeGrand 171). The conflict lasted from 1899 to 1902, meaning that under such an estimate Colombia's war persisted for more than a century. The more conservative estimate put forward in an 800-page report by Colombian historians considers the conflict's beginning to be "La Violencia," a decade-long period of bipartisan violence beginning in 1948 (Alsema 2015).

The conflict at the center of "La Violencia" is one that continues to persist in Colombia's ongoing fight: Inequality of access to land. In 1957, the Colombian state of Tolima's head of agriculture, Hugo Pasquali, stated, "peace cannot be a reality without first establishing an equilibrium of property" (Sánchez 1992, 115). Colombian peasants have long been plagued by displacement, forcing them to reassert their rights to the land using squatter movements (LeGrand 1992), a practice which ultimately contributed to "La Violencia." Persistent land issues and their surrounding conflicts gave rise to a number of guerrilla movements, all politically motivated by the peasants' right to the land (Pizarro 1992). Amongst the multiple rebel groups which formed during this period, the FARC was largely the most politically experienced. They

formed slowly, developing strategically in response to the land disputes which continuously occurred between landowners and rural workers (Pizarro 1992, 182). As a result of its heavy involvement, FARC was able to gradually increase its regional control, developing relevance and political strength in the areas in which it carried out operations.

The FARC formed in the 1960s, followed closely in the 1960s and 1970s by other well-known guerrilla groups with similar ideological aims, such as the M-19 and the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, or ELN). All three of the guerrilla groups held goals related to land-reform and social justice for peasants (Felter and Renwick 2017). At the same time, the country was rotating power between the dominant Liberal and Conservative parties every four years as part of the National Front, which had formed in 1958. While the intent behind the National Front's formation was to prevent violence, it left little space in which leftist groups could politically participate and institutionally combat elite landholdings. As a result, guerrilla groups relied on armed struggle. Initially, the FARC's military power was limited; however, by the early 1980s, the group managed to control a great deal of land in the country's southern territories (Vargas Meza 1998).

Colombia's conflict has been marked by a series of failed cease-fires and negotiations, one of which, occurring in 1983, demonstrated a series of changes and escalations to the war. The brief cease-fire and bout of negotiations emphasized political participation and acknowledged agrarian issues surrounding access to land, both of which were central components to the conflict. Unsurprisingly, Congress and Colombia's oligarchy opposed the treaty, and the Unión Patriótica (UP), the Colombian Communist Party, faced widespread violence and intimidation at the hands of paramilitaries and narco-traffickers. Ultimately, a path to political participation for the FARC failed, and the violence continued to escalate (Vargas

Meza 1998). In 1985, the violence intensified further with the M-19 occupation of the Palace of Justice, an event that caused the death of about 100 individuals (Treaster 1985).

During the 1980s, self-defense groups formed as a result of extortion and kidnapping threats from the guerrillas. By the 1990s, they morphed into well-organized paramilitary factions with external support both from the state and private entities (Power 2020). The escalation of paramilitary forces contributed greatly to the scale of the violence. According to the Colombian Center for Historical memory, paramilitary forces were behind the bulk of the war's atrocities, and they carried out their acts with shocking brutality (Historical Memory Group 2016). Groups such as the Death to Kidnappers (*Muertes a los Secuestradores* or MAS) organized under the broader banner of the United Self-Defense group (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, or AUS), relying on increasingly shocking and indiscriminate tactics. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, paramilitary groups massacred civilians suspected of guerrilla ties, regardless of how loose or peripheral they may have been (Rozema 2008).

It was also during the 1980s when narco-trafficking began to play a more central role in the war. While the guerrilla forces could initially rely on Soviet funding, it began to dwindle during this time. As a result, they increasingly relied on extortions, kidnappings, and the profitable drug trade to fund their endeavors (Vargas Meza 1998). Paramilitaries also relied on funds from cocaine production, and wealthy drug cartels launched attacks on civil and political infrastructure, social activists, politicians, and other public figures (Rampf & Chavarro 2014). Elites who feared a loss of political control formed alliances with the paramilitary groups, further exacerbating the nation's violence and creating a crisis of political legitimacy. As a result, Colombians demanded a more viable political opening for armed factions, which was largely perceived as an anecdote to the ever-present violence in the country during the time.

Despite multiple attempts at political reform, including the creation of a new constitution in 1991, political institutions remained flawed and incapable of addressing the nation's deepening crisis.

In 2010, under the Juan Manuel Santos Presidency, dialogue between the FARC and the state was finally put forth as an alternative to the country's long history of civil conflict. In 2012, in Havana, negotiations centered around key issues of the conflict and its recovery, including institutional political participation for the FARC, development policy, justice and reparations for victims of the conflict, drug policy, and reintegration (Gutierrez 2016). In 2016, the negotiations culminated in a comprehensive Peace Agreement, which was subsequently followed by a period of disarmament in which former combatants ceremoniously forfeit their weapons and prepared to again enter civilian life. Despite the early promise of the accords, peace has remained elusive and severe challenges remain.

Variable 1: The Multi-faceted Nature of Colombia's Conflict

The Colombian conflict's multifaceted nature created a context in which various voices and interests were heavily affected by the violence, decreasing the country's capacity to create a unified narrative in which there were clear victims and perpetrators. As a result, bottom-up voices in Colombia have failed to create a single space or avenue for political representation, forcing them to rely on non-institutional means of articulating common grievances. As the conflict's history shows, the nature of the war was perpetually shifting, with the boundary between victim and perpetrator blurring throughout the course of the country's long conflict. As a result, it was difficult for grassroots groups to organize on unified grounds, and it made creating a comprehensive peace agreement in which all victims were acknowledged, and the nature of the conflict clearly defined, difficult. Because the conflict was not fought along ethnic or religious grounds, grassroots groups have attempted to unify around the common cause of land use and restitution, which has often put them at odds with the Colombian government and other national or international interests.

The Various Actors in the Colombian Civil War

Colombia's conflict was fought and formed by numerous domestic factions, including armed guerrillas, far-right paramilitaries, the armed forces, and those involved in the drug trade. International entities, such as private corporations and the US, also impacted the course of the war, contributing to its complexity. Because the conflict is so long-lasting, it has evolved to align with changing domestic forces within the country and with the international climate. While Colombia's war was once a battle between guerrilla forces and the state, other armed groups began to contribute to the scale of the nation's violence, which ultimately impacted all sectors of the population. While, like in most conflicts, the rural and urban poor likely suffered the most,

Colombian political and social elites were also targeted. The magnitude and scope of the conflict is difficult to grasp, with over 200,000 dead and more than 8.2 million displaced (World Report 2021: Colombia).

The primary guerrilla group in Colombia is the FARC, which is the largest in the world (Restrepo, Spagat, and Vargas 2004). The ELN, the second largest guerrilla group in Colombia, shared similar ideological aims and tactics. Initially, when the civil war was a battle between guerrillas and the state, the guerrillas made little military progress, and the casualties of the war remained low. In the 1980s the conflict escalated and the murder rate soared into the early 2000s, which was attributable at least in part to the introduction of new actors. During the Cold War, Soviet States funded the guerrillas, allowing them to further solidify as ideologically-based military groups. As the Cold War ended, however, the guerrillas increasingly relied on extortion and kidnapping, which primarily targeted multinational enterprises and national elites (Restrepo, Spagat, and Vargas 2004). The US funded the counter-guerrilla operations and continued their influence well after the Cold War years. As a result of the complexity of the war, and the evolving and changing scale of the actors involved, the state's response has been largely inadequate at addressing the war's grievances. Its inability to cohesively define a specific victim or group of victims, and the difficulty of identifying a single perpetrator, has made the transitional justice process more challenging for institutions to carry out.

In addition, the state's ability (and willingness) to carry out justice is largely contingent upon Colombia's extremely diverse geography, with much of the country's "periphery" having little to no state presence. According to data by García Villegas and Espinosa, 60 percent of Colombian territory does not have access to state institutions (2015, 2). Because of the state's inability to respond to the diverse needs of its population, 6 million citizens lack access to a

state-sanctioned political community. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities are most likely to reside in areas without a state presence. As a result, communities have relied on illegal armed actors to mediate conflict and create governing institutions. There are a number of implications regarding the lack of state presence and how this has formed the grassroots response to transitional justice. For one, because geographically peripheral communities have relied on unofficial institutions for the duration of the conflict and likely after its formal end, they do not have a basis or history on which to base institutional participation. They have persistently been denied those avenues. Also, as a result of changing local dynamics and varying degrees of state support, control by armed actors, and community cohesion, an antagonism to a state-sanctioned peace process is to be expected. The state is unable to adequately articulate the needs of such a diverse population and cannot alone instigate recovery from a conflict so multi-faceted.

The Colombian government has also had trouble responding to the evolving array of armed actors present in the conflict, making a negotiated peace challenging. While the Colombian government has historically focused its demilitarization tactics on the FARC, Restrepo, Spagat, and Vargas's data set (2004) demonstrates why the intensity of the conflict is the result of multiple intersecting actors rather than one particular guerrilla group. Beginning in 1997, the paramilitaries began to escalate their anti-guerrilla operations, and both the guerrillas and paramilitaries targeted what they referred to as "civilian infrastructure," attacking communities believed to be supporting one group over the other. Civilians demonstrating perceived support were considered military assets, and were thus considered legitimate targets by the warring factions. According to LeGrand (2003), paramilitaries are responsible for the majority of civilian murders and 70% of civilian displacements.

As paramilitary violence escalated throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, it became clear that an end to conflict required not only disarmament of, and negotiations with, guerrilla forces, but also with the paramilitaries. In 2003, President Álvaro Uribe initiated a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process with the paramilitaries; however, the government continued its financial support of paramilitary groups and continued to offer them intelligence sharing (Franz 2016). There were also few, if any, consequences for those who did disarm. Punishment for former paramilitary combatants was limited to a maximum of eight years in prison, and money designated for reparations frequently went to the paramilitaries who disarmed rather than the victims who once suffered because of them (Rozema 2008).

President Uribe himself was believed to have military ties, and despite mild attempts at paramilitary disarmament, he increased his militarization against the FARC and any supposed sympathizers (Rozema 2008). The government's strongly militarized stance against the FARC and comparatively mild stance against paramilitary combatants posed problems towards a lasting peace. Not only did it mean that the paramilitary atrocities were treated with less severity, it also meant that the increased militarization towards the FARC made the armed forces complicit in grave human rights violations. To make it appear as though the battle against the guerrillas was being effectively fought, the military carried out "false positives," the practice of murdering civilians and framing them as combatants (World Report 2021: Colombia). Faith in the state was further eroded, and the ability for the government to condemn specific parties to the conflict was tainted. In addition, peasants in the Colombian countryside had difficulty airing grievances against one specific group, because they were simultaneously targeted by the state, paramilitaries, and the guerrillas.

The role of drug cartels and traffickers are not to be underestimated, as they also shaped the trajectory of the conflict by increasing the scope and magnitude of violence and allowing the conflict to continue (Espejo Duarte 2021). The war between the cartels and the state is considered by Espejo Duarte (2021) to be a separate conflict, a “non-conventional” violence in which the state can be stripped of its monopoly on violence and even territorial control. The significant degree to which the drug cartels in Colombia were able to influence the political sphere is also striking. The drug cartels are significant because they added a new layer to an already existing conflict; however, they also allowed the armed factions within the country (both guerrilla and paramilitary) to continue and even bolster their operations.

While the Colombian government successfully broke apart the large and politically powerful drug cartels, the void created upon their defeat attracted new criminal gangs and existing guerrilla and paramilitary forces as armed actors sought to control the isolated regions in which cocaine was produced. The drug trade also encouraged increased US intervention. By 1992, Colombia was the recipient of an abundance of US aid, with most of it going towards military affairs or the national police (Rochlin 2011). The US-backed “Plan Colombia” funded Colombia’s war on cocaine and its associated cartels. A cornerstone of the program was aerial fumigation of the coca crop, which has been widely condemned for negatively impacting the health of those near fumigation sites (Rochlin 2011). In addition, fumigation did nothing to create legal economic alternatives for the rural poor, ultimately bolstering support for guerrilla forces (Vargas Meza 1998). The above scenarios all demonstrate a war that was constantly evolving, making it difficult to adequately end. Demilitarization of the guerrillas would do little to address the other armed actors in the war, and the state’s response proved to be inadequate, as is demonstrated by the Victims’ Law.

The ANC and the The Victims' Law: Incomplete Restitutions

In the 1990s, there was an attempted opening for political participation through the creation of a new constitution under President César Gaviria. The Constituent Assembly of Colombia (ANC) strived for a more complete and open democracy, and through it a path towards disarmament and eventual peace (Rampf & Chavarro, 2014). The 1991 constitution was an important acknowledgment of inequality of political representation, and it did attempt to address the need to include marginalized voices in the peace process. There were, however, important flaws in its implementation. While there were initial public hearings in various sectors of Colombian society, including guerrilla camps, participation remained unequal. Domination by intellectual elites, a limited list of “acceptable” topics for the assembly, and a marked absence of Afro-Colombian input were only a few of its limitations. Crucially, the government bombed the FARC headquarters Casa Verde leading up to the ANC elections, damaging the ongoing peace negotiations and discouraging the group from sending their own delegation to the assembly (Rampf & Chavarro 2014). The absence of FARC harmed the ANC’s prospects for genuine political inclusion.

Implementation of the 1991 Constitution was flawed. Barriers to political participation persisted through, for example, discouraging the use of new legal mechanisms by making their application intentionally arduous (Rampf & Chavarro, 2014). Political elites formed new alliances with paramilitaries in an effort to protect their political influence, resulting in intimidation and violent attacks against social activists and movement leaders. While participation was theoretically encouraged in the new constitution, the actual practice remained dangerous, and new democratic spaces remained out of reach for many Colombians. The 1991 ANC is an important moment in the Colombian conflict because it points to the limitations of a

singular attempt at inclusion of marginalized voices. While the assembly did attempt to obtain public input from various sectors of society, including those at the margins, it could not bear the burden of addressing a complex set of diverse participatory barriers in a country in which experiences and organizational approaches differed radically. Despite attempts at political inclusion, restrictive measures remained largely intact and institutional political participation remained out of reach for much of the population.

In 2011, there was another attempt towards peace through restitution for victims. Due to the high levels of displacement as a result of the Colombian conflict, land restitution and reparation is a central component to the country's post-conflict plan. The Victims' Law, or Law 1448, was meant to provide displaced persons with access to land and to move concentrated landholdings from the control of drug barons (Montoya Londoño and Vallejo Mejía 2016). International actors influenced the law, with organizations such as The World Bank providing funds for its application (Unidad para las Víctimas). The law, which was the state's way of acknowledging restitution as a necessary component of the peace process, was limited in what it could realistically achieve.

The Victims' Law was unable to adequately compensate victims because it failed to address the multiple groups vying for control over resource-rich areas that were once home to a number of displaced persons. Victims were forced to prove their rightful ownership over the land, a task which was challenging for individuals who had been forced to flee (Montoya Londoño and Vallejo Mejía 2016). Rather than ending land-based conflict, new battles arose; cattle ranchers with paramilitary ties, national and international corporations, and displaced peasants all wanted a formalized claim to land. While the law appeared to benefit displaced people, it heavily contributed to "commercial rural development," with the state considering

“modernization” a precondition for lasting peace (Montoya Londoño and Vallejo Mejia 2016). No matter the means with which owners had seized or occupied land, if the intended purpose was to carry out industrial agricultural projects, then victims could not reclaim that land. Instead, they were given compensation. In formulating and sponsoring the law, national and international elite actors failed to recognize the multitude of meanings place can have for victims of the conflict. While the Colombian government did adhere to international standards of justice in its transition towards peace, the frame in which it operated was insufficient on a local level.

In Colombia, there was no single ethnic identity under which to organize for a specific vision of post-conflict justice. A universal definition of “victim” is insufficient in the Colombia case. Reparations had multiple meanings. For many, land and the right to it was at the center of a meaningful transition and proved to be the primary focal point towards which multiple marginalized communities in the country could organize. While the Victims' Law acknowledged displacement as a core grievance of those impacted by the conflict, the state failed to recognize that the right to land is made up of more than legalized ownership; it must also recognize localized governance over the type and scope of development that is permitted to occur on land historically home to marginalized Colombians. The Victims' Law was also incapable of rupturing the complex ties between corporations, paramilitary forces, criminal armed groups, and the state. The multiple actors involved in the conflict not only complicates who is a victim, and therefore who is entitled to compensation and to what type, but it also makes it more difficult to discern who victimized them. As a result of the state's persistent failures and broad lack of presence in the regions most impacted by violence, grassroots groups have had to act outside of state-sanctioned means to articulate their demands, which require a different framework from that employed by the Colombian government.

Bottom-up attempts to organize towards a unified goal

Because various actors have suffered as a result of Colombia's long-running conflict, it has been difficult to achieve a single victimized identity, and therefore victims of the conflict have faced organizational challenges in terms of officially airing their grievances. As a result, grassroots groups dedicated to specific causes have evolved, relying on non-institutional means to achieve specific goals. One example of this is "The Minga," which is a word of Quechua origin describing the process of reciprocity (Murillo 2009). According to Murillo, the Minga implies resistance, encompassing multiple marginalized communities in their quest for political inclusion and engagement. The movement gained international attention in 2008 due to a mass mobilization of Colombia's indigenous population. Since then, the movement has attracted new actors who have been systematically excluded from national-level political discussions. For one month in 2019, the Minga blocked a part of the Pan-American highway in Cauca in response to President Ivan Duque's persistent refusal to engage with the country's indigenous population (Laurent 2019). This year, when the Minga marched from Cali to Bogotá in an effort to again confront the President, Peace Commissioner Miguel Ceballos condemned the group's reluctance to rely on traditional political institutions (Campo Palacios and Dest 2021).

Efforts to retain rights to ancestral territory have been historically complicated and often met with violent resistance at the hands of various armed groups and the state. In 1991, twenty people, including four children, were killed by hooded gunmen who stormed a meeting held by indigenous people over land rights (Gomez Lizarazo 1992). Government-sponsored reports regarding the incident dismissed it as drug related; however, it was later reported that the gunmen had ties not only to landowners who feared collective action from the indigenous community, but also to the Colombian military (Murillo 2009, 141). The massacre makes the

complex ties between illegal armed groups and the military clear, and underscores the difficulty of identifying a specific antagonist in the conflict. It also demonstrates the extent to which land issues and associated restitution are central to the conflict, and how grassroots groups must act outside of institutional-political channels in their fight towards political inclusion.

Initially, the Minga was organized around a unified indigenous identity, serving as a central space through which to engage around rights to the land and territory (Murillo 2009, 140). Their primary goal was to combat “deterritorialization,” or the removal of indigenous groups to accommodate external actors, including land-owners or those with a corporate interest (141). The group soon evolved to include other communities and regions whose populations had been heavily affected by displacement or land seizure, such as the Afro-Colombian population on the Pacific Coast. Buenaventura, a major Colombian port city, has experienced endemic violence; criminal gangs fight to control the region’s illegal economies and associated transport, and many of them have proven associations with corporations with business interests in the region (Schmidt 2021). In 2008, thirty-five homes were burnt down on the same site an industrial project was scheduled to take place, and anonymous armed groups forcibly displaced countless others in the area when some refused to sell their homes to developers (Schmidt 2021).

What this section makes clear is the complex intersection of identities and causes in Colombia’s conflict. The Colombian government has been unsuccessful at opening meaningful paths towards political participation for those involved in, or impacted by, the conflict. Various attempts at peace, including the most recent 2016 Accords, have made it apparent that the state has not effectively addressed the diverse needs of a population with complex understandings of the conflict. Multiple perspectives on justice, amnesty, and peace underscore the need to envision transitions at the local level. In conflicts that fall along ethnic or religious lines, they are able to

create a post-conflict narrative that effectively defines a victimized identity. In Colombia's case, however, no such clarity of narrative exists. As a result, disparate groups can only organize towards their most common goal: a radical vision of land use that is at odds with what the Colombian government defines as necessary for post-conflict development. .

Variable 2: The Role of Resources in the Colombian Conflict

While the primary variable influencing bottom-up interpretations of transitional justice in Colombia is the multifaceted nature of the conflict, the country's access to resources is another relevant variable that has impacted how grassroots actors frame transitional justice. The nation's rich natural resources have proven to be both a source of conflict and a way to fund the war's continuation. Resource extraction has proven to be one of the primary sources of contention between grassroots groups and the Colombian state and multinational corporations. Additionally, both guerrilla groups and paramilitaries funded their endeavors through the tax revenues from, and production of, coca crops. Without such a source of funding, it is unlikely the conflict would have been able to persist, and FARC's reliance on the coca crop ultimately alienated them from their civilian base. Grassroots groups formed in opposition to territory-based conflict to enact their own vision of the land and its associated use.

Natural resources: A blessing or a curse?

Colombia is a resource rich country. Its biodiversity contributes to a wide range of agricultural potential, and its nonrenewable resources include gold, other minerals, oil and gas, and others. To facilitate extraction, there have been high rates of displacement in resource abundant regions throughout the country. In regions with oil and gas reserves, the daily average number of displaced persons is around 1,029 (Hristov 2005). Resource rich regions remain the most violent, with the state taking an increasingly militarized stance against its residents. In Montes de Maria, an isolated region near the Caribbean coast, the state created what's called a "Zone of Rehabilitation and Consolidation." The region previously suffered from an absent state, and numerous massacres were carried out there. While increased security may appear necessary

given the region's tumultuous history, the government is using its designation as a way to increase militarization and neoliberal development (Brody 2008).

Other regions throughout the country are facing similar issues in which competition over natural resources has led to violence and displacement. The bulk of recent atrocities in the country have occurred in regions undergoing extractivist development: In 2020, six people were killed in Tambo, a potential coal-mining site; There were two massacres in Nariño, a site dedicated to mining gold and other minerals; and the highest numbers of atrocities occurred in Antioquía, where there are various mining concessions (Power 2020). In regions where the FARC disarmed, smaller criminal gangs have attempted to take control over the resource rich territories (Rueda 2020).

The resource curse, which in its origins was concerned with economic growth relative to resource abundance (Auty 1993), is not as applicable to Colombia as revisions of the theory, such as that stated by Collier and Hoeffler examining the relationship between resources and internal conflict (1998). Their theory states that access to natural resources increased a nation's likelihood of internal conflict, contingent on a variety of economic causes. Sarkar and Sarkar (2017) expand upon the theory further by analyzing how access to resources influence insurgent relationships with civilians, using FARC as a case study. During the group's early stages of development, they acquired little power, relying primarily on small-scale land development to gain limited amounts of capital. During the early 1980s, however, the FARC's prospects changed as coca production and distribution boomed.

Coca, the FARC, and damaged insurgent-civilian relations

Coca is perhaps the most influential resource in the Colombian conflict. Its illegality means it is not subject to regulation, and those who control the processing and distribution

centers can yield substantial profits. FARC's relationship with coca production is complicated. Initially opposed to production of the crop because it was "a rapacious form of capitalism that was against the group's Marxist doctrine" (Sarkar and Sarkar 2017, 884), they soon formed alliances with drug traffickers for a few reasons: First, FARC held military control over much of the coca producing region, allowing them easy access to funds derived from taxation. Second, opposing coca production meant losing settler support. Because the economic potential of coca production was so high, and because they could not compete with international producers growing traditional food crops, opposing coca would have meant losing part of the FARC's existing support base (Sarkar and Sarkar 2017). According to LeGrand (2003), the FARC made between 200 to 500 million USD per year from taxation alone.

After the FARC decided to engage with the cocaine trade, beginning in 1982, their military power multiplied, with the number of fronts increasing from 24 to 48 (Sarkar and Sarkar 2017, 885). While the FARC initially organized around the defense of settler-land and peasant rights, control over elements of the cocaine trade allowed the group to redefine its goals. Not only did they expand their military presence, they made national-level power their objective (Sarkar and Sarkar 2017). Over the next several years, the FARC gradually evolved from a primarily political presence to a more militarized one, increasing their offensives against the Colombian armed forces and advancing their combat structures.

While the FARC did rely on other sources of funding, it is unlikely that the group would have grown as militarily strong if they could not rely on the high taxations gained from the production and distribution of cocaine. Sarkar and Sarkar also note, however, that accumulation of military power left the FARC isolated from a civilian base, forcing them to neglect social projects at the expense of military ones. While they once relied on locals to offer supplies and

financing, money gained from cocaine rendered the need for local support nearly obsolete. Because they did not need local approval, meeting military economic demands grew to be the group's top priority, and they were less reluctant to engage in practices such as kidnapping. As a result, popular support was further eroded.

Paramilitary groups escalated their self-defense tactics in response to the increase in kidnappings, which further changed the nature of the conflict. Because kidnappings and extortion were often indiscriminate, people perceived it as “deeply unfair” and animosity towards the group increased even in regions in which they once experienced support (Kalyvas 2006, 153). At the same time, paramilitary groups terrorized the countryside, committing massacres and brutalizing civilians at alarming rates (Hristov 2005). Rural Colombians, often indigenous, occupy territories of enormous importance to the state, paramilitaries, and guerrilla groups. As a result, civilians inhabiting contested regions are often attacked by all three groups. According to data produced by Garcia Villegas and Espinosa (2015), a high density of coca crops corresponds with “very low” and “low” levels of state-supported justice-based institutions (10). Their data also demonstrates, unsurprisingly, that levels of displacement are highest in coca-producing regions. This means that the state is most absent in locations where there is the highest number of victims in need of state support.

Although past peace treaties and the 2016 accords emphasized political inclusion for the FARC, civilians have little reason to rely on them to articulate their demands, particularly when they treated their land as a militarized commodity. Additionally, the FARC is hostile towards unions and other political organizations in the region, considering them political competition (Sarkar and Sarkar 2017). In areas in which the FARC has demilitarized, rather than an increased state presence in which vulnerable Colombians are protected, other criminal gangs and armed

groups have moved in to control the land. As a result, grassroots groups are left to redefine a vision of land use and ownership that is at odds with the country's primary political forces.

Bottom-up voices against extraction

Various grassroots groups, particularly those in indigenous regions, have situated themselves as antagonistic not only to corporate extraction, but also to the FARC, the paramilitaries, and the Colombian state. Bottom-up voices have politically positioned themselves against all forms of economic and cultural subordination, which includes the FARC fronts (Sarkar and Sarkar 2017, 888). Despite aligning themselves with Colombian peasants and rural laborers during the early years of the conflict, the earnings gained from the production of coca alienated the FARC from their base and encouraged grassroots groups to form in opposition to them. The Quintin Lame Armed Movement, for example, was a guerrilla group created to promote indigenous land defense, partially against the FARC. They contributed to the 1991 constitution in which indigenous rights to the land were at least partially recognized.

The Regional Council of Cauca (*Consejo Regional Indígena de Cauca*, or CRIC) was established in 1971 to peacefully combat the state-sanctioned imposition of neoliberal extractivist policies in Colombia (Hristov 2005). The group formed because of decreasing access to cultivable land as a result of seizure by non-indigenous entities and has been persistently targeted by the state and other groups hostile to its mission. Since its formation, CRIC has relied primarily on land occupation as a tactic, centering access to ancestral land as essential to indigenous identity. Like the Minga, the group has indigenous origins but has expanded to accommodate a variety of ethnicities and identities who have been subject to displacement (Hristov 2005). Despite alliances with other cultural groups, however, the CRIC remains firmly place-based, focusing most of its efforts on the indigenous plight within Cauca.

According to Hristov, CRIC has successfully weakened the “pillars of political and ideological domination and institutionalized repression” (2005, 99). The group has successfully combated external influence to create a grassroots movement centering local autonomy and a vision of economic exchange that exists entirely outside of the state and other militarized forces in the region, such as the FARC and the paramilitaries. The CRIC’s creation of the *resguardo*, or legalized protection of collective lands, has allowed community members to control their own labor power and to establish economic organizations based on collective farms and stores (99).

Currently, social movements in Colombia frequently revolve around land and resource extraction, with the relationships between paramilitaries, the guerrillas, and private interests frequently intersecting. Chiquita banana company, for example, was convicted of funding the AUC paramilitaries (INDEPAZ). Despite promises that the paramilitaries have disarmed, human rights organizations have identified persistent threats from paramilitary groups against human rights leaders in Colombia (Front Line Defenders). According to the Armed Conflict Locations & Event Data Project (ACLED), there were 600 recorded attacks against civilian social leaders or farmers on coveted land in 2020. The 2016 Peace Accords emphasized disarmament of the FARC while failing to consider the power vacuum that would result from their demobilization. Drug cartels and other armed groups are now violently fighting for control over Colombia’s most resource-rich regions. The government’s inability to adequately consider how land and resources have shaped and will continue to shape the conflict has forced grassroots groups to be the sole advocates for their communities. Because their goals are often at odds with the state and its development goals, they act without protection.

The FARC initially emphasized peasant rights and autonomy and fought for their political representation. However, as they were better able to fund their military expansion using

profits from coca production, their social projects faltered, and civilian-insurgent relations grew strained. At the same time, Colombia's abundant natural resources have created a continuous battle for land, with the Colombian state considering "commercial rural development" a precondition for peace (Montoya Londoño and Vallejo Mejia 2016). Communities in resource rich regions are frequent victims of displacement, and in state-abandoned territories the FARC once controlled, criminal gangs have attempted to take control of the region. Because of the central role resources have played in Colombia's conflict, bottom-up voices have struggled to retain or regain control of their land, with autonomy and territorial control a central part of their vision for a successful post-conflict transition.

Variable 3: Catholic Liberation Theology and Radical Interpretations of Peace

Catholic liberation theology was most prominent in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, with many considering it to be currently obsolete. As Celis and Furio (2016) observe, however, liberation theology continues to influence Colombian social movements, even if components of the ideology have slightly shifted. Adherents of radical Catholicism consider imperialism and capitalism to be responsible for the violence and inequality in the so-called “underdeveloped” region. As a result, grassroots groups with a radical, faith-based understanding of justice frequently pursue an approach to peace that is antagonistic to that put forward by the state and other economic interests. Land is at the center of liberation theology in Colombia, with defenders of territorial rights frequently invoking religious themes and imagery, and receiving the support of religious leaders in the community.

Liberation Theology and its history in Colombia

As a result of the Second Vatican Council, followed by the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America in Medellín, the Catholic church and its leaders reassessed and discussed its role in society and its responsibility towards the economic and political crises of the era. Liberation theology emerged partially from such discussions, and partially in response to post-WWII developmentalist policies in which wealthy countries such as the US imposed progress towards an industrialized economy (Celis and Furio 2016). Before the advent of liberation theology, there was widespread discussion among the wealthy Christian class about its responsibility towards the poor. They lamented the technological and economic divide between the global north and south, while failing to account for the intentionality behind the existing economic system. Their response was bent on “modernization” and was widely criticized as

“analogous to the civilizing mission imposed on Latin America since European colonization” (Celis and Furio 2016, 71).

Rather than rely on monetary assistance from the wealthy North, countries in Latin America began to adopt a liberatory stance, choosing instead to fight for social justice struggles. They criticized the entire global economic system that allowed some countries to be the providers of aid and others to be the recipients while maintaining existing structures of dominance (Celis and Furio 2016). Rather than progressing towards the end goal of development, adherents of liberation theology questioned the idea of development itself. They did not believe in progressing along a path towards economic prosperity and peace as hegemonically defined, but rather liberating themselves from intentionally created oppressive structures in which “peripheral” nations provide materials and labor for those at the economic center. Rather than peace, liberation theologians and its adherents called for armed struggle (Celis and Furio 2016).

In Colombia, several groups dedicated to anti-capitalist Catholicism formed. The Golconda, for example, was a group of Catholic priests dedicated to combating foreign power and dependency, often through military means. Many of the member priests ultimately joined Marxist guerrilla forces, and as a result the group was rapidly disbanded. Those suspected of Golconda membership were tortured, killed, disappeared, and stripped of their power and titles (Celis and Furio 2016, 74). It’s important to note that Catholic leadership did not unanimously support liberation theology, and that the church’s internal structures mimicked those of the broader world. Powerful priests from wealthy countries largely condemned liberation theology or retained ambiguity in their responses to it (Celis and Furio 2016, 76); in Colombia and in other parts of Latin America where humanitarian crises took on an everyday urgency, the defense of

human rights became an essential element of survival. Church leaders in marginalized regions of Latin America who led congregations full of brutalized people inevitably acted in solidarity with them, and saw in their suffering a connection to biblical texts and imagery. They, like their followers, saw in themselves the crucified Christ.

Liberation theology in Colombia rapidly expanded throughout the 1980s, as base communities and theological-social educational initiatives centered the defense of human rights and its associated political mobilization (Celis and Furio 2016). Catholic Churches which adhered to liberation theology organized victims of the war's many atrocities, channeling their outrage into concentrated martyrdom. Rather than fear the state's oppression, liberation theology encouraged them to fight towards a broader vision of justice. In 1989, for example, the ELN had a large political presence in many sites of land struggle. Rather than rapidly expanding their military control, the ELN instead exerted ideological and social control, garnering enough power to pressure landlords to migrate away from their large land tracts (Berman-Arévalo 2019).

The ELN was largely motivated by liberation theology, in part due to the influence of the priest and theologian Camilo Torres. The group emphasized "living with dignity" and was known for possessing a specifically "moral" character, as exemplified by the fact that the ELN (unlike the FARC) refused to fund their projects with the drug trade (Gruber and Pospisil 2015). It was with a "messianic" approach that they fought the landowning elites, advocating for peasant rights to the land and an eradication of capitalism and imperialism. It was this same sense of solid moral identity that encouraged the ELN to view alternative political ideologies as a monolithic enemy. The US, the Colombian state, and the landowning elites are all on the side of evil, and negotiations towards a state-sanctioned peace would not, in the eyes of the ELN, be a peace at all.

Contemporary manifestations of Liberation Theology in Colombia

The ELN's ideological reliance on radical Catholicism may help to explain why peace talks with that guerrilla group have persistently failed, and why many communities who once relied on their support share a similarly radical approach to contemporary extractivism. Current adherents, or the "heirs of liberation theology" (Celis and Furio 2016, 79), attribute human rights violations to capitalist development, largely because the violations against which they are trying to defend are the result of the state's perceived need to impose a specific economic model. For many Colombians living in extraction zones, such development entails not only the disappearance from the land via displacement, but through "radical breaks with their environment and way of life" (Celis and Furio 2016, 79). In the early 2000s, for example, the Colombian government created economic development plans designating palm oil as an alternative crop to coca, allocating financial and military resources to producers and growers of palm oil. Using the theology of liberation and human rights, residents within the palm oil producing regions of Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó created an alternative vision of development and transition, combating the state's narrative of how the production of palm oil could help produce peace (Celis and Furio 2016).

The Colombian state favors the production of palm oil and other similar crops because, due to its myriad potential uses, it is considered stable and therefore valuable to investors (Sankey 2016). As part of President Santos' development plan, the expansion of agricultural products such as palm oil was one of the five necessary components for economic growth and post-conflict stability. While rural development projects were predicted to decrease rural violence, it has led to further land appropriation of peasants and neglects a place-based understanding of peace. Peasants in agro-extractivist regions in Colombia have relied on various

organization strategies to combat the state-sanctioned narrative of development, including continued land occupations and resistance. Their strategies are often supported by the Catholic Church in their respective communities.

In Chocó, on the Colombian Pacific Coast, for example, radical Catholic bishops helped form religion-ethnic organizations specifically supporting the Afro-Colombian population. According to Ríos Oyola's examination of church practices in Chocó, territory was an essential element to identity, and extractivism a direct threat to it (2017). Religious leaders in the region have attempted to facilitate dialogue between Pacifica coastal communities and armed actors or state institutions. While the ELN was driven to armed action as a result of liberation theology, it has multiple manifestations as evidenced by a number of the religious groups in the Pacific Coast region; they want autonomy over their land but do not want to rely on armed conflict. Instead, they have created "humanitarian zones" in which civilian populations are exclusively entitled to certain segments of land. With the support of organizations such as the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, they organize towards protecting their civilian humanitarian zones from armed displacement and economic development projects (Celis and Furio 2016, 80).

While the state framed the narrative of displacement as a direct result of the ongoing armed conflict, residents instead put forth a narrative in which the displacement was sponsored by the state to make space for powerful economic interests (Celis and Furio 2016, 80). Catholic liberation theology still plays a role in the philosophy of Colombia's grassroots actors, encouraging autonomy through anti-imperialism and redistribution. While liberation theology is not entirely monolithic, with some adherents advocating armed struggles and others more peaceful forms of resistance, they share an emphasis on the economic and developmentalist nature of violence and displacement: For Colombia's indigenous and Afro-descendant

populations, capitalist development implies violence, a rupture from their environment, history, and way of life (79). As a result, grassroots groups in many parts of rural Colombia have explicitly rejected the narrative of post-conflict transition as imposed by the state and powerful economic interests.

Guatemala: neoliberalism at the grassroots

Background on the Conflict: A 36 Year Genocide

Between 1944 and 1954 in Guatemala, the “Democratic Revolution” promised to radically improve the lives of indigenous Guatemalans. Previously, they had been forced to face unfair laws in which they had to labor for nearly non-existent wages on plantations or infrastructure projects throughout the country (Copeland 2011). They faced rampant violence and dispossession. Beginning in 1944, however, the country began to change. Land and labor reforms resulted in the potential for radical redistribution and the possibility for workers to unionize for improved conditions and better wages. In 1954, hope for reforms ended when the CIA overthrew Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, plunging Guatemala into a period of military control and brutal authoritarianism. During this time, several guerrilla groups formed, engaging in “consciousness raising” and organizing towards land reform, ultimately hoping for true democratic participation through armed struggle (Copeland 2011). They recruited indigenous Guatemalans into their ranks, and in the 1970s a Maya movement began gaining momentum. The groups emphasized political education, organizing in small, “semi-clandestine organizations” (Vogt 2015, 33).

The conflict reached its peak intensity in the 1980s when the Generals Lucas García and Efraín Ríos Montt embarked on a brutal “scorched earth” campaign against the guerrilla soldiers and the country’s ethnic Maya (Hatcher 2009). They believed the indigenous population to be “natural allies” to the guerrillas, and the military therefore targeted them based on their racial and ethnic identity (McDonnell 2018). The military and associated Civil Self-defense Patrols (PACs) carried out massacres of shocking brutality throughout the countryside in an attempt to destroy “the social base of the guerrillas” (McDonnell 2018). The Guatemalan government considered

the indigenous residents to be insufficiently patriotic and poorly “integrated into state structures” (Hatcher 2009, 141), and therefore more amenable to radicalization. In their attempt to “drain the sea to kill the fish” (Briggs 2013), they destroyed entire villages and terrorized civilians through a variety of means, including forced disappearances, rampant sexual violence, and massacres targeting all age groups (Hatcher 2009). Those who were spared were forced into “model villages” in which the army held complete control over the indigenous people who resided there. The military used the villages as an attempt to demonstrate heroism, materially providing for those they had already displaced. They attempted to control the narrative of war by portraying the guerrillas as entirely responsible for the violence in the country.

While the counterinsurgency failed to ever fully defeat the guerrillas, Guatemala’s civil war came to an official end in 1996 when the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (*Unidad Revolucionario Nacional Guatemalteca*, URNG), an umbrella group of guerrilla forces, signed a peace accord with the Guatemalan government. While other guerrilla groups successfully transitioned into political parties after a negotiated end to conflict, such as the FMLN in El Salvador, the URNG failed to ever successfully do so (Allison 2016). In part, this may be attributed to their lack of military and political cohesion. Towards the end of the Civil War, those URNG members who were not killed fled into exile or chose to defect from the guerrilla army (Allison 2016). During the UN-sponsored demobilization process, it was discovered that the number of guerrillas had been overestimated and that there were only about 1,000 to 1,500 combatants (Allison 2016, 1049). The URNG had minimal political knowledge or experience. Many of the combatants who joined the guerrillas during the later years did so because they wanted to enact revenge on Guatemalan military members, not because they adhered to the URNG’s political ideologies.

While defined as an internal war, the majority of the 250,000 lives lost were Maya (Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza 144:2008). While they make up the ethnic majority in the country, they were considered a “racial underclass” (Copeland 2011), and therefore the war had a distinctly genocidal characteristic to it. As part of the peace accords, the URNG and the Guatemalan government agreed to a mutual attempt to understand and relate the history of the armed conflict. As a result, the Commission for the Clarification of History (CEH) was formed (Hatcher 2009), followed by the Recuperation of Historical Memory Project (REMHI). Each group produced documents detailing the Civil War’s history.

The memory groups and ensuing documents were created in an attempt to recognize the human rights violations which occurred during the country’s conflict, and also to strengthen democracy and prevent future instances of mass violence (Hatcher 2009). According to the truth commissions, the Guatemalan military was responsible for over 90% of the deaths that took place during the course of the war (McDonnell 2018). Despite such statistics, the documents largely emphasized amnesty, failing to attribute responsibility to any individual and leaving the generals who oversaw brutal civilian massacres to live with impunity. As a result of the documents’ limitations, the Catholic Church created the Recuperation of Historical Memory (*Récupération de la Memoria Histórica*, REMHI) project, from which they produced the *Nunca Más* report consisting of over 6,500 interviews conducted largely in Guatemala’s indigenous languages (Hatcher 2009).

While the *Nunca Más* report was expansive and complimented the work of the other two memory groups, it too facilitated a process of “forgetting,” emphasizing forgiveness and reconciliation. It was not until 2013 when General Ríos Montt was finally convicted of genocide. Initially, the conviction was hailed as a landmark case. It was the first time a head of

state had ever faced a formal genocide charge in his own country (McDonnell 2018). Only two weeks later, however, the genocide conviction was overturned. “Forgetting” remains a cornerstone of the Guatemalan conflict and shapes the way grassroots actors have attempted to transition towards peace.

Variable 1: The Genocidal Nature of the Guatemalan Conflict

Due to Guatemala's scorched earth policy clearly aimed at the nation's ethnic Maya, Guatemala grassroots groups had a specific framework in which to operate; they emphasized ethnic political inclusion and recognition, which ultimately superseded other demands within the conflict, such as land and class-based reforms or accountability for war crimes. Unlike Colombia, in which varying competing narratives make it difficult for the conflict to be easily defined, Guatemala's conflict was largely one in which the military and associated PACs carried out crimes against civilians in an effort to defeat and demoralize the supposed social base of the guerrillas. Maya were the clear victims of the conflict and, as a result, a "bottom-up" interpretation of peace took the form of the recognition of indigenous Guatemalans as politically active agents who are entitled to institutional inclusion. However, due to the war's brutality and targeted nature, inclusion was made complicated and fear-ridden, and grassroots actors ultimately fought for a state-sanctioned neoliberal peace. The Guatemala case fits into what Hale calls "neoliberal multiculturalism," which is characterized by symbolic inclusion and endorsement, but with firm opposition to substantive transformation (2004 as cited in Vogt 2015).

Heterogeneity and a Disarticulated Movement

The conflict initially opened up opportunity structures for Maya mobilization, and various indigenous coalitions formed during the 1990s, greatly influencing the peace process (Vogt 2015). According to Edelman (2005), the cessation of civil conflict and move towards greater democratization allowed previously excluded actors political inclusion. Because of their "arduous struggle" in Guatemala's conflict and post-conflict processes, Maya felt empowered to

claim participatory space (30). While at first, it appeared as though they were gaining political ground, the Maya movements quickly stagnated, stunting indigenous rights within the country.

There are a few reasons why the indigenous political movement in Guatemala lost momentum. One primary theory, according to Vogt (2015), is that heterogeneous groups have a more difficult time mobilizing. While the peace process emphasized Maya inclusion, it failed to account for the various linguistic and cultural groups within the country. While in some countries disparate indigenous groups are able to make radical demands of the state (Bolivia, for example), in Guatemala they have largely failed to do so. During the peace process in Guatemala, grassroots indigenous groups participated in the reconstruction of the country, and they had access to institutional political space. The power was distributed in a sectoral way, however, allocating different topics to different commissions. This sectoralization, according to Vogt, ultimately divided the Maya and discouraged them from forming cohesive indigenous demands. It was a “divide and rule” strategy (41). Without state support and before the brutality of the 1980s, grassroots groups did articulate radical visions of indigenous territorial control. It was when the state began to include (but control) the indigenous narrative that their demands grew less radical.

State Violence and Post-Conflict Indigenous Identity

The heterogeneity of Guatemala’s indigenous groups is only a small factor in the disarticulated Maya movement. More vital factors are the state’s influence on ethnic identity and its horrific history of violence. It is important to mention the persistent political exclusion and institutional violence that has historically plagued the Maya. A lack of economic and social resources has made political mobilization materially challenging. During the Liberal Revolution, beginning in 1871, powerful *ladinos* (non-indigenous Guatemalans) began to build a nation

characterized by sharp racial divides and inequality (Vogt 2015), divisions that contributed to the civil war and ensuing ethnic violence. The guerrillas initially received the support of indigenous civilians, and their presence initially spurred feelings of political agency and belief in the transformative power of collective action (Copeland 2011). Despite the early optimism of radical politics, attempts towards radical reforms were brutally suppressed. It wasn't until the peace accords were signed and the nation had to contend with its ethnically motivated violence and associated international condemnation that the Maya could participate openly in institutional politics (Vogt 2015). A major success of the peace accords was that they formally acknowledged Guatemala as a "multiethnic and multilingual state" (34). Although indigenous ethnicity was formally recognized, it was also influenced by the state.

According to Vogt, the state has persistently employed rhetoric in which they distinguish between who is a "good" Maya and who is "bad," and have also made claims towards defining who can be considered "authentically" indigenous (2015, 40). Typically, the Maya are defined as "bad" when they question the fundamental basis of Guatemala's government or raise doubts about state legitimacy. When relying on extra-institutional means to enact power, they are quickly labeled "radicals," "anarchists," or "terrorists" (41). While such rhetoric may be typical of many governments, in Guatemala, given the history of state-sanctioned violence and associated fear, the implications are graver. Also as a result of the country's history of targeted violence, Guatemalan Maya are often likely to distance themselves from the left, which is typically a natural alliance for indigenous rights groups (Vogt 2015). "Good" Maya, on the other hand, make their demands compatible with state-led neoliberal reforms and primarily rely on non-confrontational tactics to make their demands.

Due to the trajectory of the conflict, indigenous Guatemalans' "strategic assumptions of identity, including forced complicity with repression, were crucial to war-time and post-war survival" (Copeland 2011, 490). During the scorched earth policies of the 1980s, the Maya grew to fear the brutality of the state and to learn that radical ideologies would be met with oppression. The conflict shaped indigenous identity in ways other than deep-seeded fear, however. The army often forced indigenous Guatemalans to fight the war against the guerrillas, making them abandon their language and heritage in the process. In addition to counterinsurgency operations, their forced recruitment was also a form of coerced assimilation. The soldiers were creating a "new Guatemala," which was meant to be free not only of leftist radical thought but of indigenous Mayan practices as well (Hatcher 2009). The military intentionally created a state-sanctioned Maya group they would later use to leverage against those who believed in radical redistribution as a fundamental indigenous right.

After the army began to shift its tactics, relying less on its "scorched earth policy" and more on community development in order to bolster support, they united indigenous villagers under the common goal of political inclusion. As the army realized it could not win a war without a support base, they began building a future in which some Maya were "state-sanctioned," or, in other words, "anti-guerrilla, pro-army, and nationalist" (Copeland 2011). They supported some local level indigenous political initiatives in which Maya leaders sought representation, and united the community under development-oriented projects. In the late 1980s, the National Advancement Party (*Partido de Avanzada Nacional*, or PAN), a conservative party made up primarily of the oligarchy, provided funds and electoral support to indigenous leaders. Their support was, of course, conditional on their disavowal of radical reforms and associated groups (Copeland 2011).

The above-mentioned political context may help explain why indigenous Guatemalans support surprising initiatives, such as their widespread support for the conservative Guatemalan Republican Front (*Frente Republicano Guatemalteco*, or the FRG). Their support was made more shocking given that Efraín Ríos Montt, the general responsible for carrying out and ordering genocide throughout the Guatemalan highlands, was the party's presidential candidate. As part of his campaign, Ríos Montt promised to compensate ex-PACs with US\$640 each. Although the PACs were responsible for much of the civil war-era brutality, the initiative received widespread indigenous support. In his 2011 study on indigenous advocacy for the FRG, Copeland concludes that while many Maya held a desire to see radical reforms, they were dissuaded from articulating them due to continued fear of state violence and lingering pessimism about the state's ability to make change. In addition, the FRG candidates promised development projects to towns in which they received the most votes. As a result, indigenous Guatemalans were deterred by a government they believed to be inevitably oppressive and encouraged by politicians' promises for personal gain. Even those Maya who did articulate revolutionary and anti-extractivist ideas felt "collectively defeated" and "powerless" (2011, 504).

Ultimately, the recognition of Guatemalan Maya identity was an essential element of the peace accords. Massive inequality between *ladinos* and indigenous Guatemalans, and a history of ethnically driven violence, led to the 36 year period of conflict in the country. The political recognition of Guatemalan indigenous identity was strategic, however, both for the state and for the persistently brutalized Maya. Conditional recognition and inclusion of indigenous leaders in the political sphere created a context in which political rights were granted only to "good" Maya who were friendly to the state's terms and neoliberal reforms. The Maya also shaped their identity and politics strategically. As a result of the war's evolution from periods of extreme

ethnically-targeted violence to an eventual emphasis on development, many Maya began to associate personal prosperity and security with neoliberal development. Grassroots groups formed alongside these goals.

In addition, the sheer brutality of the war and its targeted nature influenced the way indigenous Guatemalans respond to the state. Those who survived their massacres were silenced by fear, and many witnesses to the military's crimes were killed themselves. The war created a cycle by which the state was seen as immovable and inevitably repressive. Rather than working to reform the government, the Guatemalans have so little faith in the government and its capacity to change that they don't put any faith in its possible reformation (Carey 2004, 79). Guatemalans who attempt to articulate political demands outside of institutional channels are still met with brutality. In 2005, for example, protestors fighting against free-trade agreements were shot by the national police (Copeland 2005, 505). While there have been repeated protests in the country over the course of the last decade, they are typically to speak out against crime and corruption, with radical demands involving the country's widespread inequality and indigenous rights far less frequent. The pervasive memory of state violence has created a culture of fear for grassroots groups throughout the country and, as Copeland (2015) demonstrates, political pessimism.

Variable 2: Resources and NGO Reliance

Grassroots groups in Guatemala did not have a strong resource base on which to rely. Given persistent poverty in indigenous Guatemalan communities, the grassroots groups that formed after the conflict relied on international funding to articulate their demands. The civil war gained international attention and, as a result, international NGOs were drawn to the region. While their funding was necessary given the lack of resources local communities held, it ultimately depoliticized certain causes and forced grassroots groups to compete for much-needed donor funding. Rather than creating a unified voice for indigenous struggle in Guatemala, they adopted a donor-driven approach and altered strategies and demands based on what would result in an influx of funds. As a result, bottom-up voices have formulated goals that are amenable to neoliberal policies, and popular modes of mobilization are infrequent.

The Transnational Advocacy Network

After the war, Guatemalans relied heavily on international NGO support to “place their complaints, obtain capacity-building training, and receive support in their lobbying to the state” (Vogt 2015, 36), relying on what Keck and Sikkink (1998) refer to as the “transnational advocacy network.” The transnational advocacy networks “link activists in developed countries with others in or from less developed countries” (69), which was largely the case in Guatemala. According to Copeland (2011), roughly three-fourths of Guatemalan grassroots groups relied on international support. There are a few different reasons why this is the case. First, Guatemala suffers from widespread poverty and inequality, which is particularly persistent for indigenous groups (The World Bank in Guatemala). Second, there was widespread mistrust amongst Guatemalans towards the justice system, forcing them to rely on external means of achieving their goals. And third, the increase in NGO attention to the region following the conflict allowed

for increased donor activity, allowing a number of foreign and local NGOs to partner and flourish during the years following the conflict (Edelman 2005).

Destrooper and Parmentier (2008) offer a favorable view towards NGO influence on the transitional justice process in Guatemala. They conclude that the transitional justice process supported indigenous grassroots efforts by offering them access to elite allies, while still allowing them the opportunity to form their own goals, agenda, and justice-based processes (2018, 323). NGO influence was especially favorable in the case of Guatemalan indigenous women's groups, in which, according to the authors, "transitional justice from below" was permitted to take place with the support of external resources (324). The civil war and post-conflict processes ultimately altered the opportunity structures for indigenous women's groups in the country, creating a "dynamic and complex civil society" (328). In fact, a number of indigenous women's groups did evolve during the transitional justice process, emphasizing their political inclusion and specific experiences with conflict.

The *Actoras de Cambio* (actors for change) was a partnership among several regional indigenous women's groups that emphasized specific, place-based experiences of conflict and local ideas of justice. They engaged in memory work through various exercises, hoping to use memory and its associated healing processes as a mode of community recovery (Destrooper and Parmentier 2018). The *Grupos de Mujeres de Kaqla* (The Kaqla Women's Group) is another organization with similar goals and processes. They focused on how recovery could better cater to indigenous women, using indigenous practices to form a rights-based discourse. Both the *Actoras de Cambio* and the *Mujeres Maya de Kaqla* were, as a result, able to integrate locally-based truth-telling and healing practices with the national and international agenda of "justice and women's rights" (Destrooper and Parmentier 2018, 335).

Despite their emphasis on place-based notions of justice, however, neither of the groups strived for truly transformative changes in rights and distribution (Desdropper and Parmentier 2018). During the post-conflict period, many international NGOs focused on funding groups that emphasized societal healing through psychosocial well-being and experience-based approaches (336). While micro understandings of experience and justice are important towards individual and community healing after conflict, they are at risk, Desdropper and Parmentier admit, of depoliticization (338). They also fail to account for the root causes of the conflict. Such a statement is not meant to delegitimize the valuable and important work healing-based groups engage in with their respective communities, but rather to begin the discussion on how place-based movements can be deradicalized by reliance on NGO funds.

“NGO-ization” and the battle for funding

In the 1990s, there was considerable scholarly discussion surrounding the role of NGOs and their impacts on social movements. From this conversation came the word “NGO-ization,” coined by Sonia Alvarez in 1998 (as discussed in Alvarez 2009), which reflected how NGOs depoliticized grassroots groups and oriented their goals towards neoliberal ones. This is frequently the case with Guatemala. While the transnational advocacy network may allow groups access to elite allies, strategies, and funding, it may not always lead to radically improved circumstances for victims of conflict. Much of the funding Guatemalan grassroots groups received was contingent upon specific activities and goals as defined by the donors (Vogt 2015), which problematized local autonomy in a number of ways. Grassroots goals and needs grew to reflect those which would garner increased funding and attention, forcing popular organizations to undergo NGO-ization.

Edelman (2005) examines the impact of NGO funds in his examination of the association of Central American Peasant Organizations for Cooperation and Development (*Asociación de Organizaciones Campesinas de Centroamérica para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo*, or ASOCODE). The organization quickly rose to prominence among Central American NGOs, eventually gaining enough funding that it was in excess of the needs of its projects (33). As a result, success in fundraising began to be conflated with political success, even if little change or local impact had been made. The organization, which was meant to serve various smaller organizations in the region, soon grew to be structurally top-down. It changed its needs based on donor demand rather than on what local communities required. While ASOCODE aligned itself with popular organizations and did not define itself as an NGO, it quickly began to resemble one. Relying on a series of popular buzzwords such as “sustainability” and “accountability,” the organization soon began to spend its funding on unnecessary excesses, such as weekend trips to Costa Rica (Edelman 2005, 34). Those local organizations that relied on ASOCODE were forced to tailor their goals towards what their foreign donors required. “Activism” was defined in terms of “seminars, workshops, and congresses, each with its corresponding declaration, poster, and funding report” (39).

Because indigenous grassroots groups in Guatemala relied on external funding, they often competed with one another for much-needed donations, diluting what could have been a cohesive set of demands (Vogt 2015). External project funding “hobbled the re-emergence of viable social movements in Guatemala” (Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza 2008, 166) and prevented groups from striving for radical change. According to Vogt (2015), donor agencies typically prefer to fund NGOs that are well-organized around a single topic, rather than on groups pursuing broad social change (36), and the funding is also tied to the execution of specific

activities. While the resources from international donors have helped Guatemalan Maya articulate their political claims, it has also encouraged them to make specific types of claims, many of which were condoned by donors with neoliberal leanings.

The Guatemala case illustrates why the transnational advocacy network can prove fruitful, but it also demonstrates its cracks. Guatemalan indigenous groups had few resources of their own on which to rely, particularly given the destruction caused by the civil war and centuries of political marginalization. Access to elite allies and international courts are often necessary, particularly when a national government may be unable or unwilling to address its own injustices. In Guatemala, however, international influence depoliticized local movements and forced them into a neoliberal framework in which substantive change was never fully articulated or realized. The Guatemala case proves how access to resources (or lack thereof) can impact how bottom-up voices are limited in their quest for justice.

Variable 3: Neo-Pentecostal Influence

The third variable that has influenced how grassroots actors articulate their vision of transitional justice is religion. While Colombia was largely influenced by liberation theology and its associated radical teachings, Neo-Pentecostalism has gained momentum in Guatemala, discouraging radical change and collective action. The evangelical movements encourage close adherence to conservative politics and Christian-cultural dominion, as well as an individual over communal approach to peace and a “forgiveness”-centric vision of amnesty. Evangelical missionaries have also villainized an explicitly Maya identity, condemning traditional practices as “evil” and discouraging radical reforms which would explicitly benefit them (Reu 2019). Neo-Pentecostal churches are frequently the grassroots actors in the region, organizing their congregations around issues pertaining to the individual. While evangelical church leaders and their followers may not consider themselves “grassroots groups,” there’s no doubt that they are the voices influencing politics in the region.

The Rise of Evangelical Neo-Pentecostalism in Guatemala

The Neo-Pentecostal movement began to spread throughout Guatemala during the conflict. In his attempt to “sanitize” indigenous community members from communism, General Ríos Montt requested that Neo-Pentecostal missionaries from the US arrive to the newly-created “model villages” to “spiritually” and physically nourish the residents (Philpot-Munson 2009, 44). As a result, residents began to associate the arrival of necessary aid (such as food) with the Neo-Pentecostals. As a result, those sites most damaged by the civil war were also the sites of concurrent Pentecostal conversion, and the rates of conversion were highest during the most brutal periods of the war (Philpot-Munson 2009, 46). Among Latin American countries,

Guatemala has the highest number of non-Catholic congregants, with recent data indicating that forty-three percent identify as evangelical (2019 Report on International Religious Freedom).

While, based on the above data, the dominant religion in the country is still Catholic, the influence Neo-Pentecostalism has had in indigenous communities specifically, and therefore on bottom-up indigenous voices, is the primary focus of this section. Catholic liberation theology was a major influence in the country in the 1970s, with sympathy towards guerrilla groups and armed struggle in the name of the poor (Copeland 2011). Evangelicals, on the other hand, broadly denounced the guerrillas and the revolution more broadly. Catholicism and its adherents were targeted as potential radicals, which may partially explain the high rates of conversion during the worst years of the war; immersing oneself in evangelical communities was seen as a form of protection. It was safer than Catholicism.

There were other reasons for the appeal of protestantism in Guatemalan communities. According to Weber (1930 as cited in Reu 2019), the protestant ethic views salvation through individual responsibility, self-discipline, and business and personal success. As a result, personal growth and prosperity was associated with the protestant ethic. In other words, while radical Catholic churches emphasized liberation from oppressive economic forces, the Neo-Pentecostals claimed that changes to individual behavior could allow one to benefit from the market economy. It's unsurprising that some indigenous groups, who suffered from persistently high levels of poverty followed by decades of brutality, gravitated towards such teachings. If indigenous groups found the state to be immovable and oppressive, then it becomes clear why many would be drawn to a doctrine emphasizing self-growth. It is far easier to control.

According to Gooren (2002), Neo-Pentecostal adherents rarely joined social movements (38). However, while congregants did not consider themselves to be part of a social movement as

it is typically understood, there is no doubt that that is precisely what religion is. Leaders organized their congregants around a specific set of goals and values. Attending church not only allowed for spiritual reflection and learning, it was a way to network and to “cultivate new skills and responsibilities” (Gooren 2002). After the economic crisis in the country during the 1980s, many Guatemalans were forced to rely on the informal economy. The Neo-Pentecostal church gave them the tools and moral framework in which to turn their work into a “small-scale enterprise” (Gooren 2002, 39). The church community was, above all, a grassroots group advocating for personal and spiritual betterment.

Evangelical beliefs have impacted the peace process in many ways. Namely, they have advocated for increased military presence and are critical of the peace accords as a whole. They believe the proliferation of indigenous rights will “bring the wrath of God” (Philpot-Munson 2009, 46). Former President Jorge Serrano Elías and Harold Caballeros, a pastor and politician, formed the Vision with Values (*Visión con Valores*, or VIVA) party, which “pits an implicitly Mayan idolatrous past against the prosperity that evangelical conversion supposedly brings to individuals and the nation” (Reu 2019, 758). Neo-Pentecostal adherents have prevented the pursuit of justice for war crimes, and have even tried to stop the exhumation of mass graves (Philpot-Munson 2009, 46). The evangelical church has also radically impacted the ways indigenous groups respond to possible reforms, such as the 1999 Referendum.

The 1999 Referendum and the Evangelical Influence

The 1999 Referendum, which was born from the recognition of Guatemala as a multiethnic state, was created to guarantee further rights and ethnic equality for the Maya (Carey 2004). The referendum sought to address the most neglected aspects of the peace accords, including reducing the size of the armed forces, demobilization of the PACs, and the addressal of

socioeconomic inequality (71). Despite the early promises of the peace accords, indigenous Guatemalans remained politically marginalized and with far less access to resources than their *ladino* counterparts. The 1999 Referendum was meant to address such failures. If successful, it would permit Congress to pass legislation implementing the remaining elements of the peace accord. The majority of Guatemalan citizens voted “no” on its implementation.

There were a number of articles in the referendum explicitly revolving around indigenous rights and recognition in the country, namely the official recognition of 25 languages, access to sacred sites and lands, and direct consultation on all measures that would impact them (Carey 2004, 72). While many Maya were in support of the referendum, a shocking number opposed it. According to Carey (2004) this can partially be attributed to evangelical influence in the region, who “warned against a return to Maya religious practices” (74). Evangelical pastors relied on various strategies to dissuade their congregations, including telling their congregants that a “yes” vote would plunge the country once again into conflict, as evidenced by the slogan “If you want peace, vote NO” (84). Given that the indigenous community was still deeply scarred, this was an effective strategy to employ.

There are a number of reasons why Neo-Pentecostalism was attractive for indigenous Guatemalans. After the conflict in which their communities were destroyed and they were systematically massacred, a deep sense of pessimism towards political change set in (Gooren 2002). They could control only themselves and their families. Evangelical Christians came to Guatemala during a crucial time, preaching to a people in the midst of a civil war and its aftermath. Their teachings appealed to a broad swath of indigenous Guatemalan society. This may help explain why bottom-up indigenous voices, such as those found in the Christian churches, did not articulate a radical vision of social change or strongly advocate for indigenous

rights. Rather, they drew their advocacy inward, focusing on problems related to the self and each individual congregation (Gooren 2002). Neo-Pentecostalism is friendly to neoliberal reform, and its adherents organized around small-scale business opportunities and the promise of individual salvation.

Conclusion

While both Colombia and Guatemala have strong grassroots voices articulating their respective visions for transitional justice, the two countries strongly differ in the mechanisms bottom-up groups use to articulate their demands. Various grassroots groups in Colombia have positioned themselves as antagonistic to the state, refusing to comply with the government's development-oriented vision of peace. They often rely on non-institutional means to articulate their grievances, and radical land-based demands remain at the center of their vision of transitional justice. Guatemala, on the other hand, has taken a decisively non-radical approach in its bottom-up transitional justice endeavors. Grassroots indigenous groups in the country have focused on ethnic political inclusion, working to support a "neoliberal multicultural democracy" (Copeland 2011) that is firmly integrated within a hegemonic understanding of transitional justice.

There are three primary variables influencing the differences between grassroots groups in Guatemala and Colombia. The first, and most influential, is how the nature of the conflict shaped demands. For Colombia, there was no one victimized identity around which to organize. The conflict was in many ways "democratic," impacting all segments of society. As a result, the goal around which many marginalized groups could organize was access to land, encouraging a number of grassroots groups to radically contend with this objective. In Guatemala, however, ethnic identity was at the center of the conflict, and therefore there was a specific narrative with which to frame the peace accords. Rather than focusing on land distribution or inequality, both of which contributed to the conflict, the targeted nature of the violence encouraged grassroots groups in Guatemala to fight for political inclusion and ethnic recognition. The brutality of the

state in their response to previous indigenous-led radical demands discouraged bottom-up voices from pursuing them after the conflict.

Colombia's conflict was shaped by a battle for resources of a different kind than Guatemala's. Colombia's access to resources fueled the conflict in varying ways. First, coca production funded the guerrillas, allowing them to militarily expand and changing the nature of the conflict. It also invited new actors into the war, escalating paramilitary response and encouraging the formation of new criminal gangs. Colombia's abundance of natural resources has also allowed the conflict to persist. Widespread extraction has led to displacement and continuing battles over land and its use. As a result, grassroots groups have made radical demands regarding who has access and autonomy over land. In Guatemala, it's the lack of resources that have influenced how grassroots actors respond to post-conflict processes. Because indigenous groups in Guatemala lack financial resources, they have been forced to rely on NGO funding, which has limited their capacity to make radical demands and substantive change.

The third variable to impact how grassroots groups in Guatemala and Colombia respond to transitional justice is religion. While Catholic Liberationists in Colombia were opposed to capitalism and dedicated to collective solutions, the Neo-Pentecostals in Guatemala were guided towards the free market. Religion and its associated communities are an important element to examine when studying bottom-up voices because churches help determine how citizenship is performed. In the case of Colombia, where liberation theology still influences political practice, adherents are opposed to capitalist extractivism and are willing to rely on radical means to prevent it. In Guatemala, where Neo-Pentecostalism is gaining influence, the pursuit of wealth, or at least financial stability, was a higher calling to serve one's family. As a result of remaining fear towards the state and the attraction of controllable, personal growth, Guatemalan grassroots

indigenous groups in the region gradually adopted an evangelical interpretation of peace and its associated anti-radical practices.

The comparison of Guatemala and Colombia demonstrates the importance of understanding how specific contexts shape grassroots actors and the mechanisms upon which they rely. The phrase “grassroots” is automatically considered to be subversive, incorrectly conflated with radical and anti-hegemonic. While grassroots groups in Colombia have positioned themselves as antagonistic to the state, Guatemalan grassroots groups have frequently been friendly to neoliberal reforms and largely non-combative. The differing nature of the countries’ respective conflicts can account for such radical disparities. Scholars and policymakers frequently make the mistake of assuming that the inclusion of bottom-up voices is sufficient to pave the way towards a lasting peace. Understanding the nuances of bottom-up approaches and interpretations to transitional justice is an important step in determining how grassroots actors will shape their countries after conflict.

References

- 2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: Guatemala.* (2019). Office of International Religious Freedom.
- The World Bank in Guatemala.* (2021). The World Bank.
- Unidad para las Víctimas.* (n.d.). Unidad Para La Atención y Reparación Integral a Las Víctimas. Retrieved April 22, 2021, from <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es>
- World Report 2021: Colombia | Human Rights Watch.* (n.d.). Retrieved April 8, 2021, from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/colombia>
- World Report 2019: Colombia | Human Rights Watch.* (n.d.). Retrieved February 25, 2021, from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/colombia>
- ACLED. (2021). *10 Conflicts to Worry About: Colombia.*
- Allison, M. E. (2016). The Guatemalan National Revolutionary unit: the long collapse. In *Democratization* (Vol. 23, Issue 6, pp. 1042–1058). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2016.1159557>
- Alsema, A. (2015). *Historic Commission releases report on causes of Colombia's conflict.* Colombia Reports. <https://colombiareports.com/historic-commission-releases-report-causes-colombia-conflict/>
- Alvarez, S. E. (2009). Beyond NGO-ization?: Reflections from Latin America. *Development*, 52(2), 175–184. <https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2009.23>
- Arriaza, L., & Roht-Arriaza, N. (2008). Social Repair at the Local Level: The Case of Guatemala. In K. McEvoy & L. McGregor (Eds.), *Transitional Justice from Below: Grassroots Activism and the Struggle for Change* (pp. 143–166). Hart Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472564405.ch-007>
- Auty, R. (1993). *Sustaining development in the mineral economies: The resource curse thesis.* Routledge.
- Berman-Arévalo, E. (2019). Mapping violent land orders: armed conflict, moral economies, and the trajectories of land occupation and dispossession in the Colombian Caribbean. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 48(2), 349–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2019.1655640>
- Briggs, B. (2013). *Guatemala, Genocide, and the Hope for Justice.* Amnesty International UK.
- Caldeira, T. P. R., & Holston, J. (1999). Democracy and violence in Brazil. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41(4), 691–729. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417599003102>

- Campo Palacios, D., & Dest, A. (2021). *Empty Seats and Full Streets in the Colombian Minga*. NACLA. <https://nacla.org/news/2020/10/23/empty-seats-and-full-streets-colombian-minga>
- Carey, D. (2004). Maya perspectives on the 1999 referendum in Guatemala: Ethnic equality rejected? *Latin American Perspectives*, 31(6), 69–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X04270640>
- Carmody, M. F. (2017). From Transitional to Posttransitional Justice: Continuity and Change after Democratization. *Latin American Perspectives*, 44(5), 210–215. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x16683367>
- Celis, L., & Furio, V. J. (2016). The legacy of liberation theology in Colombia: The defense of life and territory. *Latin American Perspectives*, 43(3), 69–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X16639270>
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (1998). On economic causes of civil war. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 50(4), 173–183. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203842256>
- Copeland, N. (2011). ‘Guatemala Will Never Change’: Radical Pessimism and the Politics of Personal Interest in the Western Highlands. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 43(3), 485–515. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X11000411>
- Dancy, G., & Wiebelhaus-Brahm, E. (2015). Timing, Sequencing, and Transitional Justice Impact: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Latin America. *Human Rights Review*, 16(4), 321–342. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-015-0374-2>
- Destrooper, T., & Parmentier, S. (2018). Gender-Aware and Place-Based Transitional Justice in Guatemala: Altering the Opportunity Structures for Post-Conflict Women’s Mobilization. *Social and Legal Studies*, 27(3), 323–344. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663917718050>
- Diaz, C. (2008). Challenging Impunity from Below: The Contested Ownership of Transitional Justice in Colombia. In K. McEvoy & L. McGregor (Eds.), *Transitional Justice from Below : Grassroots Activism and the Struggle for Change* (pp. 189–215). Hart Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472564405.ch-009>
- Edelman, M. (2005). When Social networks Don’t Work: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Civil Society Initiatives in Central America. In *Social Movements: An Anthropological Reader* (pp. 29–45). Blackwell.
- Espejo-Duarte, M. P. (2021). Drug-Trafficking in Colombia: The New Civil War against Democracy and Peacebuilding. *Co-Herencia*, 18(34), 157–192. <https://doi.org/10.17230/coherencia.18.34.6>
- Felter, C., & Renwick, D. (2017). *Colombia’s Civil Conflict*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/colombias-civil-conflict>

- Franz, T. (2016). *Plan Colombia: illegal drugs, economic development and counterinsurgency - ...: EBSCOhost*. 34(4), 563–592.
<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=6a1b48c3-53ed-4ae8-a745-ed2ad4b67244%40pdc-v-sessmgr02>
- Front Line Defenders. (2021). *#Colombia*.
- García-Villegas, M., & Espinosa, J. R. (2015). The geography of Justice: Assessing local justice in Colombia's Post-Conflict phase. *Stability*, 4(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gc>
- Gomez Lizarazo, J. (1992). *Colombian Blood, U.S. Guns*. The New York Times.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/28/opinion/colombian-blood-us-guns.html>
- Gooren, H. (2002). Catholic and Non-Catholic Theologies of Liberation : Poverty , Self-Improvement , and Ethics among Small-Scale Entrepreneurs in Guatemala City. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41(1), 29–45.
- Gruber, B., & Pospisil, J. (2015). ‘Ser Eleno’: Insurgent identity formation in the ELN. In *Small Wars and Insurgencies* (Vol. 26, Issue 2, pp. 226–247).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2015.1007562>
- Gutierrez, D. (2016). The Coming of Los Buendia: Colombia's Peace Process and the Difficulty that Lies Ahead. *Harvard International Review*, 37(3), 4–6.
- Hatcher, R. (2009). Truth and Forgetting in Guatemala: An Examination of Memoria del Silencio y Nunca Más. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 34(67), 131–162.
- Historical Memory Group. (2016). *BASTA-YA! Colombia: Memories of War and Dignity*.
<http://centrodehistoriamemoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/informes2016/basta-ya-ingles/BASTA-YA-ingles.pdf>
- Hristov, J. (2005). Indigenous struggles for land and culture in Cauca, Colombia. In *Journal of Peasant Studies* (Vol. 32, Issue 1, pp. 88–117).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0306615042000322402>
- INDEPAZ. (2020). *Macrocriminalidad con licencia legal*.
- Isacson, A. (2019). *Restarting Aerial Fumigation of Colombia Drug Crops is a Mistake*. WOLA.
<https://www.wola.org/analysis/restarting-aerial-fumigation-of-drug-crops-in-colombia-is-a-mistake/>
- Justice, I. C. for T. (2009). *An Overview of Conflict in Colombia*. www.ictj.org
- Kalyvas, S. N. (2006). *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge University Press.

- Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). Transnational Advocacy Networks in the Movement Society. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The Social Movement* (pp. 217–238). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers In.
- Laurent, V. (2019). *Colombia's Minga Protests Demand Justice, but President Duque Isn't Listening*. NACLA. <https://nacla.org/news/2019/04/16/colombia%27s-minga-protests-demand-justice-president-duque-isn't-listening-translation>
- Legrand, C. (2003). The Colombian Crisis in Historical Perspective. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 28(55–56), 165–209.
- Márquez, F. (2020). *Hay una “política de la muerte” para asesinato de líderes*. Semana. <https://www.semana.com/semana-tv/semana-en-vivo/articulo/francia-marquez-habla-en-semana-sobre-asesinato-de-lideres--noticias-hoy/690456/>
- McDonnell, P. J. (2018). Guatemala's Civil War Devastated the Country's Indigenous Maya Communities. *Los Angeles Times*.
- Mcevoy, K., & McGregor, L. (2008). Transitional Justice From Below: An Agenda for Research, Policy and Praxis. In K. Mcevoy & L. McGregor (Eds.), *Transitional Justice from Below : Grassroots Activism and the Struggle for Change* (pp. 1–14). Bloomsbury Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472564405.ch-001>
- McGregor, L. (2008). International Law as a ‘Tiered Process’: Transitional Justice at the Local, National and International Level. In K. McEvoy & L. McGregor (Eds.), *Transitional Justice from Below : Grassroots Activism and the Struggle for Change*. Hart Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472564405.ch-003>
- Montoya Londoño, C., & Vallejo Mejía, M. (2016). Law of victims and land restitution in Colombia: Public debates and “Glocal” agendas. *Latin American Policy*, 7(1), 80–105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lamp.12093/full>
- Murillo, M. A. (2009). The 2008 indigenous and popular minga in colombia: Civil resistance and alternative communication practices. *Socialism and Democracy*, 23(3), 137–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300903180804>
- O'Donnell, G. A., & Schmitter, P. C. (1986). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*.
- Paige, A. (2009). How “transitions” reshaped human rights: A conceptual history of transitional justice. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 31(2), 321–367. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.0.0069>
- Pardo Abril, N. G. (2020). Memorialization and armed conflict: The construction of narratives for peace in Colombia. *Revista de Estudos Da Linguagem*, 28(1), 479–506. <https://doi.org/10.17851/2237-2083.28.1.479-506>

- Philpot-Munson, J. J. (2009). Peace under Fire : Understanding evangelical resistance to the peace process in a postwar guatemalan town. *Maya in Postwar Guatemala: Harvest of Violence Revisited*, 42–53.
- Pizarro, A. (1992). Revolutionary Guerila Groups in Colombia. In C. Bergquist, R. Peñaranda, & G. Sánchez (Eds.), *Violence in Colombia: The Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective* (pp. 169–195). SR Books.
- Power, T. (2020). *Massacres in Colombia Lay Bare Next Phase of the Conflict*. NACLA. <https://nacla.org/colombia-massacres-duque>
- Rampf, D., & Chavarro, D. (2014). The 1991 Colombian National Constituent Assembly. *Inclusive Political Settlements Paper 1*.
- Restrepo, J., Spagat, M., & Vargas, J. (2004). The Dynamics of the Colombian Civil Conflict: A New Data Set. *Homo Oeconomicus*, 21(2), 396–428. <http://personal.rhul.ac.uk/uhte/014/Research.htm>
- Reu, T. (2019). Leadership in the Mold of Jesus: Growing the Church and Saving the Nation in Neo-Pentecostal Guatemala City. In *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* (Vol. 24, Issue 3, pp. 746–762). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jlca.12412>
- Rios Oyola, S. M. (2017). The Local Church’s Defence of Human and Ethnic Rights in Chocó, Colombia. *International Journal of Latin American Religions*, 1(2), 309–330. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41603-017-0028-z>
- Rochlin, J. (2011). Plan Colombia and the revolution in military affairs: The demise of the FARC. *Review of International Studies*, 37(2), 715–740. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000914>
- Rozema, R. (2008). Urban DDR-processes : paramilitaries Medellin , Colombia. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 40(3), 423–452.
- Rueda, M. (2020). Wave of massacres signals new chapter in Colombia’s conflict. *The Washington Post*.
- Sánchez, G. (1992). The Violence: An Interpretive Synthesis. In C. Bergquist, R. Peñaranda, & G. Sánchez (Eds.), *Violence in Colombia: The Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective* (pp. 75–125). SR Books.
- Sankey, K. (2016). *Communities Against Capital? Unravelling the Politics of Resistance to Colombia’s Agro-Extravivist Project*.
- Sarkar, R., & Sarkar, A. (2017). The rebels’ resource curse: A theory of insurgent-civilian dynamics. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 40(10), 870–898. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1239992>

- Schmidt, L. (2021). *Afro-Colombians Protest Violence and Government Neglect in Buenaventura* | NACLA. NACLA. <https://nacla.org/news/2021/03/11/afro-colombians-buenaventura-ports-violence>
- Schmidt, L. (2021). *Afro-Colombians Protest Violence and Government Neglect in Buenaventura*. NACLA. <https://nacla.org/news/2021/03/11/afro-colombians-buenaventura-ports-violence>
- Sikkink, K., & Walling, C. B. (2007). The impact of human rights trials in Latin America. *Journal of Peace Research*, 44(4), 427–445. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343307078953>
- Tarrow, S. (1998). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Updated an). Cambridge University Press.
- Teitel, R. G. (2017). Transitional justice genealogy. *The Criminology of War*, 2009(1997), 489–514. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315086859>
- Treaster, J. B. (1985). Death toll at 100 after rebel siege in Colombian city. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/11/09/world/death-toll-at-100-after-rebel-siege-in-colombian-city.html>
- Vargas Meza, R. (1998). The FARC, the War and the Crisis of the State. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 31(5), 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.1998.11722771>
- Vogt, M. (2015). The Disarticulated Movement : Barriers to Maya Mobilization in Post-Conflict Guatemala. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 57(1), 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.l>
- Waldmann, P. (2007). Is There a Culture of Violence in Colombia. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*, 1(1), 61–75. <https://doi.org/10.4119/UNIBI/ijcv.21>