Militarized peace: understanding post-conflict violence in the wake of the peace deal in Colombia

Sara Meger & Julia Sachseder

Published online: 14 Jan 2020.

Submit your article to this journal ↗

Article views: 1542

View related articles ↗

View Crossmark data ↗

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

🔓 OPEN ACCESS   ⓜ Check for updates

Militarized peace: understanding post-conflict violence in the wake of the peace deal in Colombia

Sara Meger ⓘ [a] and Julia Sachseder ⓘ [b]

[a]School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia; [b]Department of Political Science, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

ABSTRACT

After more than 50 years of war, in 2016, the Colombian government signed a historic peace accord with the country's largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Although the cessation of hostilities between the rebel group and the government is a monumental step, violence remains rife in the country. By drawing attention to the correlation between neoliberal economic development in the country and militarism, this paper sheds light on several structural issues that have been left potentially unresolved by the peace negotiations, each with the potential to ignite further violence. We introduce the concept of militaristic neoliberalism to argue that there is a fundamental link between Colombia's neoliberal development and a culture of militarism, which relies on gendered and racialized constructions of 'self' and 'other', that exacerbate structural inequalities and severely hampers prospects for achieving peace for many of Colombia's citizens post-conflict.

KEYWORDS
Colombia; peace accord; paramilitaries; political economy; feminist theory; militaristic neoliberalism

Introduction

In late 2016, the Colombian government and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC) announced a ceasefire agreement that effectively saw the end of the country's 52-year civil conflict, which has claimed 220,000 lives and displaced more than seven million people (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2017). As of 2018, the Colombian government has registered more than eight million armed conflict-related victims (El Tiempo, 2018), including those who have been disappeared, kidnapped, forcibly recruited, forcibly displaced, and physically and sexually violated. After four years of negotiations, a final peace agreement was signed in Cartagena de las Islas in September 2016. While it is but the latest in a series of peace agreements signed since the 1980s, the 2016 peace deal is the one that has received most optimism that peace will finally be realized in Colombia.

In particular, many critical scholars have lauded the 2016 peace agreement for its unprecedented focus on issues of gender, race, class, land, sexualities, and other structural sources of inequality. Amongst its provisions, the final agreement recognized the structural impacts that the armed conflict has had on women and on marginalized ethnic groups, namely Afro-Colombians and indigenous

---

communities, and stipulated a 'transversal approach' to peace, including a focus on gender, family and inter-generational dimensions as guiding principles (Céspedes-Báez, 2017). It also includes a number of key elements designed to ensure the effective demobilization and re-integration of FARC ex-combatants into society, and as such has generated significant hope for demilitarization of the country post-conflict.

Yet, this article raises the question as to whether this optimism has been premature, if not misplaced. We challenge the idea that the demobilization of FARC will be the thing that brings peace to Colombia by drawing attention to residual structural – and particularly economic – forces that have exacerbated existing modes of violence and militarism in the country and fomented new ones. This article combines critical political economy with feminist theory to understand the persistence of gendered and racialized post-conflict violence within Colombia that undermines the objectives of the 2016 peace deal and the achievement of sustainable peace in the state. By highlighting the integral role that paramilitary violence has played in the neoliberal development of Colombia's economy, this paper not only advances our understanding of militarism as a province of primitive accumulation (Luxemburg, 1913/2003), but also of how the violence of Colombia's neoliberal project has exploited and exacerbated racial and gender inequalities in the country.

We posit that Colombia's peace agreement is unlikely to end violence because a culture of militarism is reinforced by the dual forces of patriarchy and neoliberal economic interests, both of which benefit from, and contribute to the durability of, structural and overt violence against civilians in Colombia, especially against women and Afro-descendant and indigenous groups, and class-based opponents to capitalist accumulation. This violence, we argue, reinforces a system of economic advantages that are tacitly accepted if not actively supported by the Colombian state (Hristov 2009, 2014), and which we classify as part of a larger project of militaristic neoliberalism.

We take the concept of 'authoritarian neoliberalism' proposed by Bruff (2014) and Tansel (2017) as an analytical starting point. We modify the concept for the Colombian case, wherein the interests of elite classes, of paramilitary actors, and of the Colombian state have converged in such a way as to enable the outsourcing of the violence of authoritarian neoliberalism to non-state actors. Thus, the reliance on both state and non-state militarist security apparatii has played a crucial part in establishing and enforcing militaristic neoliberalism, which we argue played a key role in the outbreak and longevity of the conflict, and persists post-FARC demobilization.

At the same time, both the processes of militaristic neoliberalism and its effects in Colombia have been highly gendered and racialized. Afro-descendant and Indigenous groups, and among them particularly women, have been disproportionately affected by militarist violence. Thus, we combine the critical political economy analysis with feminist critiques of militarism and the state to better understand both the appeal of militarism as means of practicing 'authoritarian neoliberalism', as well as the specific means by which it has been enacted in Colombia in overtly gendered and racialized ways, by targeting victims on the basis of sex, gender expression, and racialized identities. Colombia's neoliberal development has relied on the masculinist fetishism of militarism as a form of power, and as such a critical feminist lens sheds light on how violence is rationalized and made effective on the basis of underlying gendered and racialized social relations. This approach allows us to examine simultaneously the ways in which securing the conditions necessary for neoliberalism in Colombia has required the deployment of militaristic violence, and how this violence is made meaningful and effective through hierarchies of gender and race. As such, our approach provides the necessary analytical tools to understand the

fundamental relationship between neoliberalism and militarism that strongly indicate the continuity in gendered and racialized violence in the post-conflict period.

From authoritarian neoliberalism to militarist neoliberalism in post-colonial states

According to the concept of authoritarian neoliberalism, the state as an institution – particularly states in the Global South – plays a key role in the protection and reproduction of neoliberalism as a regime of capital accumulation (Bruff, 2014; Tansel, 2017). Far from being guided by the will of entrepreneurial citizens and the free hand of the market, neoliberalism is inherently non-democratic (Bruff, 2014) and both relies upon and reinforces 'coercive state practices that discipline, marginalize and criminalize oppositional social forces' and produces state institutions that 'limit the avenues in which neoliberal policies can be challenged' (Tansel, 2017, p. 2). Developed to consider the strong-handed interventions of states like Turkey in enforcing neoliberal reforms, we extend this analysis to include the measures undertaken in so-called weak states, as well, through outsourcing the coercive functions to non-state actors acting in concert with the interests of political and economic elites (Meger, 2017). Rather than requiring absolute authority and sovereign control of a territory to enact authoritarian neoliberalism, our concept of militaristic neoliberalism allows for coercive practices of neoliberal reforms to be deployed by state and non-state forces in concert.

While proponents of the concept of authoritarian neoliberalism have acknowledged the reliance of the so-called free market on coercive forms of state and institutional power, including security apparatii (e.g. Briken & Eick, 2017), the logics of militarism as an effective means of deepening compliance with an authoritarian neoliberal order have been less explored. Organized and systematic violence perpetrated by security and armed forces are taken for granted by scholars of authoritarian neoliberalism, with little attempt to contextualize and historicize organized and armed violence *itself* in this framework. Far from natural or necessary, a critical feminist lens exposes the constructed nature of militarism and the gendered and racialized investments of militarism as an ideology and militarization as a practice. Thus, particularly in understanding the form of *militaristic* neoliberalism employed in Colombia, we argue that a critical feminist anti-militarist perspective can shed new light on the operations and effectiveness of militaristic neoliberalism in reconfiguring state and institutional power in the service of capital interests, and that such a perspective also raises serious questions for the prospects of sustainable peace in a state so reliant on militarism for the realization of its neoliberal agenda as Colombia.

The political economy of militaristic neoliberalism

The correlation of capital accumulation and militarism has a long history and was perhaps earliest theorized by Rosa Luxemburg, who argued that the very logic of capital accumulation, which requires the continual expansion of the market into non-capitalist spaces in order to absorb surplus value, relies on the material force of the state to open these non-capitalist spaces (Luxemburg, 1913/2003). Thus, militarization is the necessary corollary of capitalist accumulation, as the state uses force to achieve accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003). While contemporary applications of Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation', as represented by Harvey's 'accumulation by dispossession', are robustly contested (Zarembka, 2002), arguably the process continues today through the removal of subsistence farmers from communal lands for the purpose of corporate and private production (Glassman, 2006). In the Colombian case, the concept is useful to understand the 'forcible usurpation' of common property and subsequent acts of enclosures firstly by means of violence,

predominantly by private and corporate interests, and later through law (Marx 1967, p. 724). The role of violence in this process is best theorized by Rosa Luxemburg, who argues that militarism serves a dual function of displacing peasant economies (accumulation by dispossession) and producing new markets for production and consumption of, for example, weapons and infrastructure for executing military endeavours (Luxemburg, 1988; see also Bieler et al., 2016; Schmidt, 2010).

Given this, many now argue that armed conflict and other forms of political violence are not, as liberal international theory posits, a temporary rupture or discontinuity in an otherwise 'peaceful' system and contra to the project of neoliberalism, but rather a necessary, endemic, and constitutive element for its survival (Escobar, 2004; Harvey, 2003). Particularly in countries on the periphery of global capital, the postcolonial state has long been investing in militaristic neoliberalism because, according to Patomäki (2008, p. 149), these are the countries that bear the disproportionate cost of systemic crises and re-stabilization. In this way, neoliberalism has been 'productive of authoritarian, despotic, paramilitaristic, and corrupt state forms as well as agents within civil society' (Brown, 2005, p. 38). Especially when faced with a challenge, the postcolonial capitalist state has shown 'a significant escalation in the state's propensity to employ coercion and legal/extra-legal intimidation, which is complemented by 'intensified state control over every sphere of social life … (and) draconian and multiform curtailment of so-called "formal" liberties' (Poulantzas 1978/2014, pp. 203–204; in Tansel, 2017, p. 3). In such states, where the internalization of neoliberal social norms has failed to prevent popular challenge, the state has resorted to militarist strategies, including 'incarceration, military surveillance, organized violence and intervention' (Gill, 2008, p. 222).

Masculinist fetishism of militarism

Yet, understanding the reliance on *militaristic neoliberalism* in Colombia requires an analysis of the masculinist fetishism of militarism as a form of power, as well as how violence exerted on marginalized groups is effective and rationalized through already existing gendered and racialized hierarchies. For this reason, we propose synthesizing the concept of authoritarian neoliberalism with a critical feminist, anti-militarist analysis in order to better understand both the appeal and power of militarism in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Here, we note the distinction between militarism as an ideology of the valorization of the military as an institution and of armed violence, and militarization as a material process of preparedness for armed violence. While the two are closely related, they do not necessarily correlate. Militarism can and often does exist without overt militarization. Militarism, like sexism and racism, is an ideology that forms an integral part of the social forces that maintain systems of structural and overt violence. But also, like sexism and racism, it is more than just an ideology – it is also a manifestation of social relations and thus a social structure in and of itself that maintains and perpetuates inequalities in a given social context. Also like sexism and racism, militarism manifests differently in different contexts, contingent upon its interlocking relationship with other social forces that similarly shape that society, including gender, ethnic/racial, and class relations. Militarism helps maintain a particular social order, and is promoted as necessary for achieving 'national security' (Enloe 1983–1988, p. 11). Militarism may appear as the rational response of a state to the outbreak of civil war. Certainly, it is in the name of national security and neutralizing an internal threat that states threatened by civil war or domestic insurgency respond with militarized violence. Thus, it is not just the fact of militarization on the part of the state that interests us. Rather, it is the relationship between militarism as an ideology, the interests of capital, and the actions of the state that we will focus on in order to

highlight how, even after the cessation of conflict, the prospects for lasting peace are limited by continued reliance on militarism to secure economic interests.

Thus, a key tool for our analysis is a feminist anti-militarist lens that makes visible the forms and operations of militarism that pervade long before combat breaks out and long after combat ends. Feminists have long been articulating the need for more comprehensive and human-centred frameworks for thinking about and responding to war and armed conflict (Cohn, 1987; Enloe, 2007; Prugl, 2003; Sjoberg & Via, 2010). Studies of post-conflict peacebuilding, in particular, have sought to expand our purview of what processes and mechanisms are required to transform a society from being 'at war' to 'at peace' (Cahn & Ni Aolain, 2009; Cockburn, 2010; Myrttinen, 2003). Beyond disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating of soldiers, feminists have sought to expose the more obscure and deeply embedded forms of militarism that become infused through social, economic, and political practices of the state (Barry, 2011; Enloe, 2000; Sjoberg, 2015), and are fundamentally rooted in the structural condition of patriarchy (MacKinnon, 1989; Pateman, 1988).

Of particular interest to us is the imbrication of militarist masculinities with social, economic, and political structures of a conflict-affected society that persist post-conflict. Feminist scholars have shown how the period of transition from 'war' to 'peace' has been key for the reformation of masculinities (Duncanson, 2015; Hamber, 2016) and for the consolidation of a new gender order (Duriesmith & Holmes, 2019). War and heightened security environments enable what Duncanson (2015, p. 5) refers to as 'combat-oriented masculinity' to become dominant, with the effect of further valorizing militarization practices. In such an environment, not only are patriarchal gender relations reified, but so too are hierarchies of race and class. This reification is a deliberate manoeuver driven by what MacKenzie and Foster (2017, p. 208) term 'masculinity nostalgia', which they define as 'both the *yearning* for an idealized, secure and peaceful time in which gender roles were presumed to have been clear and uncontested, and a *quest* to reclaim patriarchal power and authority' (original emphasis). Thus, the transitional period from 'war' to 'peace' is a volatile moment wherein militarist masculinities gain hegemony whilst holding a desire to restore 'rightful' social, political, and economic order, often with grave implications for women as well as ethnic, racial, sexual, and other minorities.

In order to sell militarization as both an economic and political strategy states first must foster the ideology of militarism. Many have noted the distinctive feature of 'crises' as precipitating violence and militarization, and justifying militarized practices and organized violence in the global economy (Cowan, 2014; Short, 2012; True, 2012). In postcolonial states, the intersection is more visible in the links between members of the military and other armed factions in the main exporting industries (e.g. in so-called conflict minerals in the DR Congo; in the oil industry in Nigeria; and, in agribusiness and oil in Colombia; see Meger, 2017) that become securitized as key state assets. The ability of capital to exploit violence for the purpose of accumulation rests on the exploitation of gender and race norms and hierarchical relations across multiple levels of analysis. By blurring the distinctions between 'war' and 'peace', and between 'military' and 'civilian' spheres, militarism enables the sorts of hyper-masculine traits cultivated in the military to become not only valorized but omnipresent across a society at the individual, the social and institutional level (Sjoberg & Via, 2010). Thus, the logics of militarism enable not only the deepening and broadening of market penetration of particular industries (like armaments and others implicated in the military-industrial-entertainment complex [Der Derian, 2009]), but also operates as an ideology to perpetuate neoliberal subjectivities through security discourses and practices so that the *idea of violence* as omnipresent also comes to shape social relations under militaristic neoliberalism (Meger, in press). Thus, to speak about militaristic neoliberalism without problematizing the gendered dynamics of militarism risks obscuring how militarism becomes naturalized, and can further camouflage the interests, agendas, and politics

that give rise to it in the first place. Thus, we are interested in how 'identities, ideologies, and institutionalized practices interact to normalize […] and mobilize' (Peterson, 2010, p. 26) militaristic neoliberalism in Colombia, and its systemic effects on social, political, and economic relations in the country.

Colombia's militaristic neoliberalism

The conflict in Colombia can be traced to the period that became known as *La Violencia* (1948–1964), after the populist politician Jorge Eliécer Gaitan was murdered in the streets of Bogota. Riots broke out in the city along party divisions, culminating in political conflicts between Liberals and Conservatives in the countryside. For over a decade, these factions clashed, resulting in 200,000 dead, until elites from both parties signed a political pact known as *Frente Nacional* (National Front), agreeing to a power-sharing arrangement to last 15 years. Despite elections continuing in the name of democracy, for most Colombians, this restricted democratic system was elitist, clientelist, and corrupt. With limited avenues to achieve real political change, it was in this context that a number of armed left-wing guerrilla groups emerged in the early 1960s to challenge the monopolization of power by the Liberal and Conservative parties. Amongst those groups, the FARC emerged to support the establishment of independent peasant republics and communist organizing in the rural regions of the country, which were being bombarded with military attacks from the National Front government in an effort to quell resistance.

Concurrently, Colombia was undergoing a project of economic development that shifted from the principles of import substitution industrialization to export-led development, which put renewed emphasis on a process of what Richani (2013, p. 66) calls 'internal colonization', which saw the forcible displacement of largely Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations from rural regions in the country to facilitate agricultural and primary resource development. As a result, a core component of Colombia's neoliberal economic development was its commitment to 'national security' in the face of anti-capitalist social movements. By the early 1960s, the Colombian government adopted a national security plan, significantly influenced by US Cold War ideology, to eliminate all communist-influenced groups and sympathetic rural populations that posed a threat to capital interests.

Capitalist development, and particularly neoliberal capitalism, was fervently contested by FARC. Yet, far from disrupting the advance of neoliberal development and openness in the country, militaristic violence 'served to facilitate the country's impressive economic performance and integration into the global economy' (Maher, 2018, pp. 23–24). The new economic policy focused heavily on foreign direct investment (FDI), which became closely tied with militarism. Regions of the country that had until the 1970s been outside the logic of capitalist development suddenly became central as oil reserves, coal and gold deposits, and other resources were sought for exploitation. As previously peripheral regions of the country became of greater economic significance and the lands therein valorized, so too did these areas become highly militarized as state forces and paramilitaries competed with FARC to reduce their political influence amongst the peasant and indigenous.

Yet, as these developments were so heavily contested, the state required militarism to enforce its economic agenda and to defend the interests of capital. Yet, as the subsequent section will show, a significant feature of militarist neoliberalism in Colombia and other postcolonial states, particularly since the 1980s, is the *outsourcing* of armed and lethal violence in the form of organized criminal groups and mostly paramilitaries. This has had significant implications for the forms of militarism adopted in Colombia as well as the operations of gender – and particularly of militarized masculinities – that have been affected by militarism.

Outsourcing state violence to paramilitaries

Paramilitaries have their origin in the national security plan adopted in the early 1960s, which included advice from General William P. Yarborough of the US Special Warfare team that the state create and deploy paramilitary forces and execute 'terrorist activities against known communist proponents. It should be backed by the United States' (cited in McClintock, 1992, p. 222). While the financial and ideological aid for organizing and training paramilitary forces largely came from the US, they were legally authorized by the Colombian government's 1965 Decree 3398, which 'allowed the formation of paramilitaries as an explicit part of the state's strategy to combat the insurgency' (Richani, 2007, p. 406), and authorized the Defense Ministry to provide them with weapons that had been restricted to the sole use of the armed forces (Human Rights Watch, 1996). Since the 1960s, paramilitary organizations have considerably evolved, backed up by US military advisors' counter-insurgent strategies aimed at defeating leftist guerrilla movements (Tate, 2007; Theidon, 2009). It was in this context that the complicated relationship between the Colombian political economy, the US government and the paramilitaries began.

Despite this early enactment, it was not until the 1980s that paramilitaries became a significant force, assembled by drug lords, local political and economic elites, and organized crime (Hristov, 2014). The fusion of paramilitary organizations and drug trafficking gave rise to the phenomenon known as '*paramilitarismo*', the transformation of paramilitary groups into an economic, social and political actor that permeates Colombian society (Theidon, 2009). Politically, the collusion is evident in the close military relationship shared between the state and paramilitaries. Paramilitaries have fought side by side with the state military against the guerrillas, often through so-called non-intervention strategies. Their bases have often been in close proximity to those of the state military, and police have provided the illegal armies with weapons, equipment, uniforms and transportation services. Compared to other non-state armed groups, paramilitaries enjoyed more power within and protection from the state, and were able to influence the government via various forms of corruption (Hristov, 2014; Nussio & Kaplan, 2016).

An outcome of the outsourcing of militarism to paramilitaries was that it enabled a much broader social engagement with militarism as an ideology and militaristic practices at the individual and socio-cultural levels. Militarized masculinity was not restricted to soldiers in the armed forces, but became an accessible means of becoming a man for virtually all Colombians – a point to which we will return below.

Paramilitaries have played a significant role in the Colombian economy. While at their establishment, they ostensibly acted out of an ideological commitment to combat FARC and other guerrilla activities, 'all paramilitaries sought to protect their own interests – whether land, a business, or political office' (Hanson, 2008). According to Richani, a central factor in the formation and consolidation of paramilitaries in the 1980s was the interests of landed elites that any political settlement between FARC and other leftist guerrillas and the government not 'undermine their class interests' (Richani, 2007, p. 407).

That paramilitaries in Colombia are an effect of militaristic neoliberalism is perhaps most evident from an examination of how and where the groups operated. The sudden interest of paramilitary groups in peripheral regions of the state coincided with the export-orientation of the economy under neoliberalization (Hristov, 2009, 2014). By the 1990s, the umbrella paramilitary organization, *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), declared gold-rich south Bolivar as its 'prime military objective', resulting in the massacre of hundreds of artisanal miners and the mass displacement of villagers (Richani, 2013, pp. 110–111). In other regions, the AUC have wrested control of lands

through which pipelines for British Petroleum, Total, and Triton pass (Richani, 2013), and have been integral to the growth of the palm oil industry (Maher, 2015). The collusion of interests between paramilitaries, multinationals, and the state have led Richani to conclude that 'the concerns of multi-national corporations intersect with the local war-system actors in their areas of operations' (Richani, 2013, p. 112) and implicate those corporations in massacres perpetrated against local populations considered 'guerrilla sympathizers'. Thus, the era of neoliberal development was the golden age of paramilitarismo, facilitated by the accelerated growth of narco-trafficking and the construction of FDI mega-projects in locations close to natural resources (Oslender, 2007; Maher, 2015; Maher & Thomson, 2011).

Paramilitaries' violence as primitive accumulation in Colombia's militaristic neoliberalism

Under these conditions of increased paramilitarism of the Colombian political economy, by the mid-1990s, forced displacement and civilian targeting reached its highest levels. Coinciding with the merging of various paramilitary forces into the AUC, this period saw the deliberate use of violence against civilians in resource-rich, rural regions of Colombia in order to seize valuable lands, expand drug-trafficking activities, ensure development of infrastructure projects, and 'to protect the interests of investors in projects of extensive agriculture and mining' (Garzon, 2017, p. 56; Hristov, 2014). At this height of their reign, paramilitaries perpetrated the majority of acts of conflict-related, civilian-perpetrated violence reported in the state, followed by Colombia's military forces (Leech, 2011).

   While the army, the police, the paramilitaries and guerrilla groups have all been perpetrators of violence, around 80 per cent of the lethal violence has been attributed to paramilitaries, who have largely been using this violence for the purpose of clearing land for commercial interests (Oslender, 2007; Hristov, 2014; Ibánez & Moya, 2007). This has been recognized by the former director of the Judicial Investigations and Intelligence Service in Colombia, Captain Cárdenas, who stated that 'the paramilitaries favor the interests of the multinationals in Colombia, and they are in charge of cleansing the terrain of people who represent a challenge to their interests, such as unionists or popular leaders, who disappear or are being killed' (Hristov, 2014, p. 77). A report compiled by the Colombian commission of jurists on the nearly 32,000 extra-judicial killings and forced disappearances that occurred between 1996–2006 – one of the most comprehensive analyses of political violence in Colombia – similarly found that nearly half of all instances were attributable to paramilitary groups (Pearce, 2008). They were also responsible for the majority of causes of massacres and internal displacement, particularly in rural and Pacific coastal regions, where paramilitary incursions have been motivated by 'the changing rationale for development the region and the re-born economic capitalist penetration and land appropriation' (Oslender, 2007, p. 575). Coining the process 'territorial conditioning', Bejarano, Salazar, and Monroy (2003) outline how, through violence, the lands have to be 'prepared' – that is, freed from locals – for capital-induced development. As such,

> The phenomenon of displacement in the Pacific region is not a consequence of the armed conflict, as the government wants to present it to the international public opinion. No. The displacement is a strategy of the conflict. Displacement occurs precisely to move people out. The armed conflict uses the strategy of displacement to empty these lands that they need in order to develop their macro- and mega-projects. (Oslender, 2007, p. 759)

   David Maher finds empirical evidence of the relationship, for example, between the violence perpetrated by armed forces and paramilitaries and the expansion of the palm oil industry, which is dominated by MNCs in Colombia (Maher, 2015). Examining paramilitary and state-led violence in Meta, Maher

concludes that this violence has been useful for clearing and securing areas for the expansion of the palm oil sector, and enforcing social conditions conducive to neoliberalism, including reducing labour costs and facilitating precariousness of labour conditions. In short, he says, 'Violence has thus created an attractive business climate for both domestic and foreign capital' (Maher, 2015, p. 321). The violence inherent in the cycle of palm oil production in Colombia mirrors other agribusiness and extractive sectors, and is outlined by Mingorance (2006 cited in Maher, 2015) as consisting of four elements:

> (1) Armed incursion by paramilitary groups; enabling (2) the illegal and violent expropriation of land; (3) forced displacement of owners and/or communities which occupy these lands; and (4) the planting of African palm on the 'conquered land'. This is then followed by (5a) the flow of palm oil towards both national and international markets; and (5b) territorial control. (Maher, 2015, p. 311)

Despite investigations and denunciations of complicity with armed groups, illicit mining and other operations extracting natural resources that fuelled the armed conflict, the Colombian government has been reluctant to intervene on behalf of the Afro-descendant and indigenous communities who reside in these regions, since the paramilitary and state security forces themselves have been committing this violence under contract as corporate security for multinationals like Occidental Petroleum, Goodyear, Nestlé, and Chiquita Brands International Inc. (Hristov, 2014; Meger, 2017). As violence and economic activity thus fed each other in Colombia's armed conflict, it is almost impossible to ignore the collusion of the state with paramilitary forces, the neoliberal agenda that requires militarism to achieve its goals, and the central role of global actors with economic interests in Colombia's armed conflict.

Gendered and racialized logics of paramilitary violence

While the economic rationale and benefits of this violence are clear, we argue that they contain their own gendered and racialized logics that make paramilitarism effective in achieving these ends. Here, we analyse the operations of these logics at the individual level, socio-cultural level, and structural level in order to explore how militaristic neoliberalism and the violence it entails is both rationalized and perpetrated, as well as its on the most vulnerable populations. The purpose is to demonstrate how these logics, which enabled so much misery during the height of the armed conflict, persist in the post-conflict period and thus frustrate the realization of lasting peace in the country.

At the individual level, the conflict in Colombia, as with other conflicts worldwide, provided opportunities for the realization of different forms of masculinity. One of the most theorized in feminist IR scholarship is militarized masculinities, wherein militaristic actions perpetrated by individuals are valorized as evidence of male toughness[1] (e.g. Goldstein, 2001; Myrttinen, 2003). In Colombia, Kimberly Theidon found that, while the Colombian armed forces promoted enlistment in the military as an opportunity of social mobility, former members of the FARC or the ELN indicated to have joined the respective groups because of a commitment to the group's ideology, or because doing so offered alternative opportunities to the prescribed gender roles individuals felt pressure to conform to (Kunz & Sjoberg, 2009; Theidon, 2009). Ex-combatants of the AUC, however, largely referred to economic motivations as primary incentives. Most of the paramilitaries grew up in marginalized communities and joined the groups to escape poverty, powerlessness and unemployment. Thus, the opportunity to join a paramilitary group offered an alternative pathway for living up to expectations of masculine identity of being financially independent

(True, 2012). Ironically, the very economic forces that were responsible for the deepening poverty and loss of employment opportunities came to be in whose interests that men attracted to paramilitaries fought.

While paramilitaries thus reflect broader class dynamics in terms of a 'political economy of masculinity' produced by limited life options and pervasive violence, Theidon's research also indicates that they learnt 'to be hard and impenetrable, both physically and emotionally' through trainings and experiences in combat (Theidon, 2009, p. 17). While all male combatants in Colombia likely internalized a specific form of militarized hyper-masculinity, it was particularly paramilitaries who referred to 'feel[ing] like a big man in the streets of their barrios' to 'go out with the prettiest young women and to dress well' as primary reasons to join the armed forces (Theidon, 2009, p. 17). For them, the economic benefits were supplemented with a promise of masculinity through guns and weapons: 'In a context of generalized violence, the proliferation of criminal networks, a limited legal labour market, and a cultural economy that fuses weapons, masculinity, and power, grabbing a gun is not necessarily an aberration' (Theidon, 2009, p. 17.). Being a 'good man' was associated with armed violence, partly because they had little access to other symbols of male prestige, including education, legal income or decent housing; and partly because

> militarized masculinity is part of a performance, and the audience comprises not only the other men with whom each men struggles for a place within the armed group's hierarchy but also young women who seek out these gran hombres (big men) as desirable partners in an economy of war. (Theidon, 2009, p. 18)

Many paramilitarists had thus been socialized in violent and heterosexist contexts, which rely on the gender dichotomy of men as strong and powerful and sexual violence and the subordination of women as natural (Sachseder, 2019).

The individual masculine anxieties that make joining an armed group attractive have also constructed socio-cultural or societal gender relations that entrench militarized masculinity as a hegemonic form of masculinity in Colombia and enables the marginalization and subordination of others. At the same time that picking up a gun and displaying a propensity for violence satisfies individual-level drives for militarizing masculinity, this violence 'simultaneously operates to (re)construct hierarchical relations, based on gender identity, establishing the superiority of the perpetrator' of violence on the basis of displaying militarized masculinity (Meger, 2014, p. 419). As feminists have long argued, the very definition of what it is to be a man is always made against femininity as its foil (Hooper, 2001, p. 43). As such, aggressive and militarized masculinities must display contempt for and even violence towards those traits associated with femininity (Duncanson, 2015). Paramilitary forces demonstrate a construction of the Colombian nation rooted in hypermasculinity and in the exclusion of some from full citizenship based on sexuality and gender. Groups of people have been feminized in this context for displaying alternative gender norms (e.g. Peterson, 2010) to the militarized masculinity adopted by paramilitaries, including women, sexual minorities, indigenous and Afro-Colombians, and even the guerrillas. Thus, violence directed at civilians by paramilitaries can be read as a means of physically overpowering the 'other', feminizing one's opponent through the employment of a symbolically or – in the case of rape – physically sexual weapon (Myrttinen, 2003). This may be against civilian men, whose masculinity is challenged by exposing his inability to protect his wife and children, or against civilian women, men, and children, who are effeminized through the physical penetration of their bodies, often sexually, whether with weapons or the perpetrator's own body (Meger, 2014; Myrttinen, 2003). The conduct of warfare thus valorizes the masculinity of the victors while subordinating the masculinity of the defeated (Sjoberg, 2013, p. 120).

In her doctoral dissertation, Garzon provides an illustrative example involving a Southern village in Putumayo, *El Placer*. First occupied by FARC, *El Placer* was an epicenter of coca production, and soon became contested by paramilitaries, who occupied the village from 1999 to 2006. During their reign, paramilitaries imposed a strict code of conduct over the population, including

> a specific gender regime through which members of this group differentiated between decent and indecent women, and divided the population between allies and enemies […] For instance, men's body postures, ways of walking, marks on the body, hair styles or ways of dressing were not only ways of disciplining masculinity, but also markers used to identify whether a man belonged to the guerrilla or whether he was a civilian. (Garzon, 2017, p. 239)

Women, too, were evaluated as guerrilla members or sympathizers based on their character, physical strength, physical fitness, or for 'walking briskly'. From this determination, the paramilitaries would then sentence offending peasants 'to forced displacement, torture, disappearance or assassination' for the men, with additional punishments of sexual violence, sexual torture, or rape for the women (Garzon, 2017, p. 239).

Feminist groups in Colombia have sought to expose the extent to which sexual and gender-based violence has been a feature in this armed conflict, which the government denied until 2009, and then claimed was not perpetrated by paramilitary groups (True, 2012, p. 127). Analysing stories collected by the National Center of Memory, feminist groups have highlighted how the paramilitaries in particular imposed 'a regime of [sexual] terror and system of sexual exploitation' (Garzon, 2017, p. 238) as an instrument of social control wielded to 'discipline women's behavior: their right to freely decide on their emotions and relationships, their body and their sexuality, and thereby reinforce traditional gender roles, deepening unequal power relations between men and women' (MTMCA 2010, p. 11). This becomes evident in an interview conducted by the Centro Nacional de Memoria Historia. According to the report, a paramilitary man screamed to a woman

> Bitch, you are here to take care of the children, and not to go to parties. As a consequence, they took her and publicly shaved her head, together with two other women of the village. She later said that she felt so ashamed that she only went out with a headscarf. (US Office on Colombia, 2013)

In addition, amongst the most common victims of the new paramilitaries' violence are those considered by the armed groups to exhibit 'undesirable' characteristics inconsistent with their regressive social attitudes. Deploying 'social cleaning squads' – known locally as *La Limpieza Social* – paramilitaries have targeted transgendered people, prostituted women, and the homeless with lethal violence as part of a broader strategy of social control (Garzon, 2017; Wienand & Tremaria, 2017). Sexual violence is employed by groups against such undesirables and against women transgressing gendered social roles as 'corrective violence' or to 'cleanse the population' of these undesirable influences (Sachseder, 2019). For example, a paramilitary commander of *Los Rastrojos* sought to punish two women for fighting in public by forcing one to sweep the streets the following day. When one of the women refused to clean horse feces, the commander tore off her clothes and forced her to eat the feces. When he later learned that the incident had been reported to the Red Cross, the commander ordered the townspeople to the sports hall, dragged the woman from the fight before the crowd, and then executed her (ABColombia, 2013, p. 10). In other cases, women have been targeted by paramilitaries for attending parties, perceiving them to not be fulfilling their duties as mothers, and punished them with public stigmatization by shaving their heads (ABColombia, 2013, p. 10). Reports to the UN indicate that sexual violence remains an integral

element to the means by which paramilitaries in Colombia institute social control and intimidate civilians, with women living in close proximity to mines at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse (UNSC, 2015).

As such, sexual and gender-based violence has not been confined to conflict-affected areas of the country, but has followed displaced women into urban centres, and has particularly been employed against vocal women's leaders fighting either to protect their land from mining operations or to have seized lands restituted (Sachseder, 2019). The pattern leads Garzon to argue that

> just as sexual violence is used by armed groups to prevent women from keeping or regaining control over their lands, so too is it used as a form of discipline, because their leadership is interpreted as a transgression against both traditional gender regimes and patterns of racial subordination. (Garzon, 2017, p. 240)

Thus, paramilitaries' violence is not only economically motivated, instrumental and in pursuit of a particular utility, but highly ideological and informed by both their hypermasculine identity and their ideologies about the rightful conduct of men and women, in a reflection of their 'masculinity nostalgia' (MacKenzie & Foster, 2017). They engage in an enforcement of a hierarchical gender order, with women being inferior to men, and certain groups of men (primarily Afro-Colombian and indigenous Colombians) as non-masculine and inferior to the militarized masculine hegemonic form, which thus reproduces violent forms of hyper-masculinity in their everyday activities as well as in their continued violence in Colombia's post-conflict period. It is precisely this persistence of paramilitarist masculinism in post-conflict Colombia that, we argue, poses a threat to sustainable peace in the country. Effectively, as a consequence of this paramilitarist masculinism, coupled with the economic interests of local and global actors, high levels of violence and forced displacement still occur in Colombia's current post-conflict reconstruction.

From this perspective, it is not an accident that most of the acts of terror and displacement that continue post-peace deal are concentrated in resource-rich and fertile areas, where FDI is high and increasing (Maher, 2018). Employing a feminist lens helps us understand how militarism and the neoliberalization are linked to an increase in violence against the marginalized and (re)produces gendered and racialized hierarchies. Tied to the state project of economic neoliberalization, the militarism and paramilitarization of the state was part and parcel of efforts to ensure Colombia became a market-friendly state. As numerous country-level studies have shown, economic restructuring in line with principles of neoliberalism in Global South countries have long had deleterious effects on women and the most marginalized in societies. In Latin America, these policies have forced women to '[compensate] for falling income by spending more time on day-to-day management of the household and by substituting unpaid work for commodities they could no longer afford' (Eckstein & Wickham-Crowley, 2012, p. 212). Meanwhile, masculinist subjectivities were coproduced in discursive campaigns in support of the neoliberalist project through strategies that encouraged Colombian citizens to adopt a militarist culture. Garzon uses the examples of community police officers actively promoting locals in particular neighbourhoods of the need to increase surveillance and security measures in the form of Local Security Fronts (LSFs) initiated in 1995 and Schools of Citizen Security created in 1996. By 2004, more than 37,000 citizens of Bogotá had attended these Schools while LSFs established covered nearly 50% of the capital city (Garzon, 2017, p. 146). The securitization of social issues, including activism in defense of working class interests, allowed for the obfuscation of the root causes of civil and political unrest in the state.

A pernicious and gendered effect of mass militarization in the state has been the feminization of families, both in terms of who is left in the home to manage the household, as well as in terms of the devalorization of the household itself (Seri, 2016, pp. 133–134). As with other contexts around

the globe, as capital expanded in the country, reproductive labour power became an unvalued but necessary commodity, the exploitation of which was compounded with the dismantling of social safety nets under neoliberalization. Women, as the primary labourers in households and in informal economic sectors, including subsistence farming, are thus even more gravely affected by militarization and armed conflict. Their livelihoods are threatened by not only the loss of their male provider, an arrangement that remains the norm in Colombia, but also by loss of their land and disruption to what formal or informal economic provisions and social safety nets remained available to them post-neoliberalization. Compounding these vulnerabilities has been the deliberate targeting of female-headed households by paramilitaries in the post-conflict context, where women have been forced to hand over their daughters to the groups for sexual exploitation and forced prostitution (UNSC, 2013).

Militaristic neoliberalism as an impediment to peace

Despite the nominal demobilization of paramilitaries in the early 2000s, paramilitarists and paramilitarism remain significant political forces in Colombia. Not only have a large number of ex-paramilitarists been found guilty of criminal offences since demobilization (Nussio, 2011), but so too has the appeal of paramilitarism not faded from society (Baird, 2017). Rather, what we are witnessing today is the emergence of new armed structures in the form of criminal successor organizations of paramilitaries, such as the *bandas criminales* (shorthand label 'bacrim'), which the head of the Colombian police described as the 'biggest threat for national security' (BBC, 2011). Conflicts between different bacrims have led to increased violence in certain regions, including the north and southwest of Colombia. According to Wienand and Tremaria (2017, p. 26), bacrims 'pursue functions of territorial, social and economic control exerted by violent means'. However, because the term 'bacrim' downplays the relation to former paramilitary groups, local communities and critical scholars increasingly call them 'neo-paramilitaries', or simply paramilitaries, given the similarity in their *modus operandi* and heritage (Richani, 2012).

According to INDEPAZ (2016), there remains narco-paramilitary activity in 344 municipalities in 31 departments in Colombia. Amnesty International (2017, 3 Feb) further states that 'residents in several hamlets in or near the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó continue to report the presence of paramilitaries'. These illegal groups

> engaged in a wide variety of illegal economic and political activities, in many ways similar to the pre-demobilization paramilitaries, including drug-trafficking, extortion, some limited counter-insurgency activities, the corruption of public and elected officials, and illegal mining and agro-industry to name a few. (Amnesty International, 2017, 24 March)

In pursuit of their objectives, these groups employ threats of violence, actual violence, and murders against the same groups as those targeted by the earlier paramilitaries: community leaders, trade unionists, human rights defenders, land and environmental activists, left-wing political activists, peace activists, and indigenous and Afro-descendant community leaders, 'many of whom live in areas rich in natural rich resources and which are therefore of political and economic interests to such groups' (Amnesty International, 2017, 24 March).

In particular, reports indicate that the same potential enemies to the militarist neoliberal project in Colombia continue to face threats, intimidation, violence, and killing. Since the signing of the peace deal in November 2016, multiple reports have emerged of the systematic killing of social activists, human rights defenders, and members of FARC (Graham-Harrison, 2017). The violence is primarily targeted against those who work for land rights and the rights for victims and it is

concentrated in the regions of Cauca, Chocó, and Antioquia, where communities have expressed strong concerns regarding the continued presence of paramilitaries and their ability to act with impunity. Although an Interior Ministry programme has been assigned for the protection of human rights defenders, trade unionists and journalists, the Foundation for a Free Press, a Colombian NGO that monitors press freedoms, reported threats against 91 journalists from January through October 2016 (Human Rights Watch, 2017). While the number of battle-related homicides decreased post-peace deal, more than 700 social leaders and human rights defenders have been murdered since the signing of the peace agreement (Amnesty international, 2018; El Tiempo, 2019). Around 200 more received threats to their lives, and around 490 violations of human rights were reported (Telesur, 2017). Additionally, more than 164 FARC members were killed since the signing of the peace agreement (BBC, 2019). While women play a crucial role in the defense of human rights, the state has been declared as one of the most dangerous countries in the world for human rights defenders and women (UN, 2017). Particularly women working on land restitution have been targeted by paramilitaries and subjected to repeated sexual assault (UNSC, 2015).

There is also reason to anticipate increased rates of domestic violence as ex-combatants face a loss in their 'fighter' identities, which can manifest in tensions at home and attempts to re-establish domestic dominance (Hollander, 2014). A study undertaken by UNIFEM in 2005 found that areas where former AUC combatants were gathered during demobilization saw a spike in sexual exploitation and violence against women and girls (Caicedo, 2005). A further study found high rates of domestic violence perpetrated by ex-AUC combatants and feelings of possessiveness and jealousy driven by their desire to exercise control over their women (Barraza & Caicedo, 2007). Ex-paramilitarists, upon reintegration into civilian life, have used violence to punish women for behaving outside traditional gender roles (Londoño & Ramírez, 2007).

The neo-paramilitaries or bacrims enjoy broad appeal amongst men in Colombia for the same reasons their predecessors had. Mirroring Theidon's (2009) findings of the appeal of paramilitaries, Adam Baird, in his research on gang violence in Colombia, found that gang members primarily come from conditions of economic and political exclusion and found the prospect of joining a gang an attractive means to contest the emasculating experience of unemployment (Baird, 2017; Baird & Rodgers, 2015). Not only had the foundations for the *modus operandi* of bacrims in Colombia been laid by the popularity and power enjoyed by paramilitaries, but so too were the economic avenues for their success left intact following the official demobilization. As such, Baird finds that contemporary gangs in Medellin focused on 'micro-territorial control of drugs sales and extortion' as a means of economic gain (Baird, 2017).

The infiltration of paramilitarism in Colombian society is thus a structural issue that has led to a heavy increase in violence despite the official demobilization of AUC (and, now, of FARC). In particular, the economic support by various business sectors and the strategic aid offered by the state army continues to allow paramilitary groups to survive. Moreover, although there is reason to believe that the demobilization of the FARC produces less criminal successor groups, given their strong political ideology compared to the more opportunistic paramilitary groups (Gutiérrez-Sanín, 2008), criminal organizations may use the same revenue streams as the FARC once did. New clashes between existing and emerging groups have already erupted over control of territory formerly occupied by the revolutionary armed forces, which may lead to a reversal in the trend of reduction of armed clashes, threats, attacks and mass displacements.

Moreover, the physical threat of paramilitarism is compounded with the ideological dependence on militarism, generally, in Colombia to the extent that the concept of security is conjured daily by politicians, pundits, and journalists in the country (Rodriguez, 2018). As a result, civic initiatives like

the National Strategy for Coexistence and Citizen Security have been adopted to foster increased civilian investment in national security. It was from this mass investment in the concept of security that Alvaro Uribe was elected to presidency in 2002, campaigning on the idea of 'fighting for security' (Garzon, 2017; Rodriguez, 2018). According to Rodriguez (2018, p. 9), Uribe was able to implement a process of mass civilian militarism in the name of 'Democratic Security,' which was 'assisted by a "friend-foe" tension that was promoted intensively by the president, who regarded any critic of either Democratic Security or himself as an enemy'. As a result, the violence perpetrated by persistent paramilitaries and bacrims is obscured from attention, or read through the lens of *defending* the security of the state from ideological rivals and any form of social organization considered to be left-wing or a threat to the state's order (Wienand & Tremaria, 2017, p. 40).

Thus, although the formal end of the armed conflict appears at least in the wording of the 2016 peace deal to open up new possibilities for counteracting persistent militarized structures and militarist ideology, we cannot assume that militarized masculinities and the social valorization of violence will automatically disappear with the cessation of conflict (Ní Aoláin, Dina Francesca, & Cahn, 2011). Violence continues and serves to strengthen already existing disparities in Colombia. Just as Gomez (2015) specifies that the Colombian conflict can only be solved if there are profound social transformations that eliminate marginalization and structural inequalities, the gender provisions of the current peace agreement, which mention the need to be aware of how rural and urban positioning may affect women's conflict experiences, seems to be insufficient for addressing the multiple and mutually reinforcing structural inequalities that put women and other marginalized groups at high risk of continued violence long after the ink dries. Most significantly, the gender provisions adopted by the peace deal focus solely on women. While important, the conflation of 'gender' with 'women' means that there are no efforts to address the militarization of masculinity or widespread culture of militarism that have become so embedded in Colombian culture and society. As we have however argued, this militarism has been so fundamental to Colombia's economic development that we do not anticipate an end to the valorization of this ideology in the country's near future.

In addition, the current president Iván Duque, a right-wing conservative politician in the ideological footsteps of Álvaro Uribe, appears to be a clear threat to the peace process, particularly regarding the implementation of a new Defence and Security Plan, which promotes an increase in militarization in rural areas and citizen participation in security services, closing the door with peace negotiations with the still operating guerrilla group, the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) (The International Office For Human Rights Action On Colombia [OIDHACO], 2019). Furthermore, likely as a result of the government's non-compliance of the peace agreement coupled with systematic killings of former FARC combatants, a group of former guerrilla fighters announced a rearmament to target 'the oligarchy' and the capitalist elite in Colombia in late August 2019 (ABColombia, 2019). While other former FARC combatants have voiced opposition to the re-armament, the re-mobilization may represent another setback to the peace process.

Conclusion

In this article, we have sought to expose the persistent structural and cultural conditions of Colombia that can help us understand post-peace deal violence. This article has argued that the violence in Colombia's post-conflict period can only be systematically understood against the background of militaristic neoliberalism, which has relied on the outsourcing of state violence to paramilitaries and those groups' employment of gendered and racialized logics that make paramilitarism attractive and its specific form of hyper-masculinity intelligible. By combining a feminist anti-militarist

framework with critical political economic analysis of authoritarian neoliberalism, our analysis has highlighted how the reliance on (para)militaristic neoliberalism in Colombia has fostered pernicious conditions for post-conflict peace.

In particular, the huge number of human rights violations perpetrated since the signing of the 2016 peace deal has been and still is made possible to a great extent by strong cooperation between state armed forces and 'its unofficial extension, the paramilitary', often under the behest of transnational corporations and the influence of the US in the name of fostering the conditions for neoliberal development (Hristov, 2014, p. 127). And while systematic, targeted, large-scale violence has been effective in the construction and maintenance of conditions for neoliberalization, we have argued that it is only through an understanding of the gendered and racialized logics of both the violence itself and the appeal to violence that we can comprehend its function as part of militaristic neoliberalism.

What this article has shown is that, despite such heavy investment in militarization and militarism, peace and security are far from being realized in Colombia. Rather, we fear that the normative attachments to militaristic neoliberalism may lend themselves to redirect the label of 'security threat' now from FARC to other, peaceful and democratic opponents to neoliberalization and certain economic projects. As militarism has culminated in a 'hyper-militarized self-confidence within society regarding how to address challenges' (Rodriguez, 2018, p. 11), it has also made challenging social, political, or economic consensus a very dangerous prospect in Colombia. Under such conditions, we are skeptical for the prospects of any enduring, or sustainable peace.

Given the reach of the military as an institution and of militarization as a practice well beyond the sphere of military operations and defense, securing 'peace' in a post-conflict context requires a much more expansive agenda than demobilizing troops and decommissioning weapons, or reducing military defense budget spending and closing forward bases. Demilitarization requires a more substantive transformation whose progress can be measured only in simultaneously tracing its retraction from the social, political, and economic spheres, as well. This is no simple feat, since militarism, in interlocking with numerous other social and political relations, including gender and race, comes to define and shape those relations. As such, using gender relations as evidence of the pervasiveness of militarism in social and political relations, Cynthia Enloe argues, 'demilitarization cannot be achieved unless women are empowered to the point that all forms of masculinized militarization are exposed and rolled back' (2007, p. 134). While the 2016 peace deal includes numerous provisions to advance women's social, economic and political position in Colombian society, systemic barriers continue to undermine these goals, chief among them a culture of militarism. As well, the gender provisions included make no reference to the forms of militaristic hypermasculinity that have become valorized in Colombian society and will continue to vividly shape post-conflict power systems, identities, and contestations (Cahn & Ni Aolain, 2009). By exploring these enduring relations between militarism, the economy, and social relations of gender and race in Colombia, and by exposing the reliance of the Colombian state's project of neoliberalization on militarism, this article calls into question prospects for peace post-2016 peace deal in the context of a political economy imbricated with conflict and lethal violence.

Note

1. There is a rich history of feminist theorizing on the relationship between the military and the construction of masculinity, or of militarized masculinity, as embedded within and relating to broader conditions of patriarchy (see Duriesmith & Ismail, 2019; Enloe, 2000; Reardon 1985; Whitworth, 2004).

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

Notes on contributors

Sara Meger is a Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Melbourne. Her research draws on the intersection of critical political economy and feminist perspectives on security, with particular focus on war and armed conflict and gendered violence. She is the author of *Rape Loot Pillage: The Political Economy of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict*, published in 2016 by Oxford University Press.

Julia Sachseder is a PhD candidate, researcher and lecturer at the University of Vienna and a former fellow of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2016–2019). Her research focuses on the intersections of gender, race and transnational capital in the production of violence against women in Colombia's armed conflict. She specializes in decolonial, post-colonial and feminist theory, IR and critical political economy.

ORCID

Sara Meger ⓘ http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4027-8117
Julia Sachseder ⓘ http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1077-3352

References

ABColombia. (2013, November). *Colombia: Women, conflict-related sexual violence and the peace process*. London: Author.

ABColombia. (2019, September 2). Key Ex-FARC-EP commanders announce return to arms. Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/key-ex-farc-ep-commanders-announce-return-arms

Amnesty International. (2017, February 3). *Colombia: Paramilitary build-up in peace community*. Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AMR2356142017ENGLISH.pdf

Amnesty International. (2017, March 24). *Correspondence of the campaigner for Colombia to the research directorate*. Retrieved from https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/country-information/rir/Pages/index.aspx?doc=457016

Amnesty International. (2018). *Colombia: Government must protect human rights defenders and community activists amid rising violence*. Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/04/colombia-government-must-protect-human-rights-defenders-and-community-activists-amid-rising-violence/

Baird, A. (2017). Becoming the 'baddest': Masculine trajectories of gang violence in Medellin. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, *50*(1), 183–210.

Baird, A., & Rodgers, D. (2015, September 28). Are Latin American gangs the new revolutionaries? *ResearchGate*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/blog/post/are-latin-american-gangs-the-new-revolutionaries

Barraza, C., & Caicedo, L. (2007). *Mujeres Entre Mafiosos y Señores de la Guerra*. Bogotá: Corporación Humanas – Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos y Justicia de Género.

Barry, K. (2011). *Unmaking war, remaking men*. Santa Rosa, CA: Phoenix Rising.

BBC. (2011). Colombia's criminal bands pose new security challenge. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-12804418

BBC. (2019). Colombia FARC: 85 ex-rebels killed since peace deal. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-46726118

Bejarano, E., Salazar, B. P., & Monroy, C. V. (2003). *Megaproyectos, corporativismo global y violencia en Colombia. Unpublished report.* Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, Observatorio del Manejo del Conflicto.

Bieler, A., Bozkurt, S., Crook, M., Cruttenden, P., Erol, E., Mortan, A., … Uzgoren, E. (2016). The enduring relevance of Rosa Luxemburg's the accumulation of capital: Conceptual and empirical Considerations. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 19(3), 420–447.

Briken, K., & Eick, V. (2017). Commodified Pacification: Police, commercial security and the state. In C. B. Tansel (Ed.), *States of discipline: Authoritarian neoliberalism and the contested reproduction of capitalist order* (pp. 47–66). London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Brown, W. (2005). *Edgework: Critical essays on knowledge and politics.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bruff, I. (2014). The rise of authoritarian neoliberalism. *Rethinking Marxism*, 26(1), 113–129.

Cahn, N., & Ni Aolain, F. D. (2009). Gender, masculinities and transition in conflicted societies. *New England Law Review*, 44(1), 101–123.

Caicedo, L. P. (2005). *Riesgos Para la Seguridad de las Mujeres en Procesos de Reinserción de Excombatientes.* Bogotá: UNIFEM.

Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. (2017, May). Basta ya! Retrieved from http://www.centrodeme moriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/informes2016/basta-ya-ingles/BASTA-YA-ingles.pdf

Céspedes-Báez, L. M. (2017). En los Confines de lo Posible: Inclusión del Enfoque de Género en el Acuerdo de La Habana. In L. M. Céspedes-Báez & E. Prieto-Ríos (Eds.), *Utopía u Oportunidad Fallida. Análisis Crítico del Acuerdo De Paz* (pp. 295–326). Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Del Rosario.

Cockburn, C. (2010). Gender relations as causal in militarization and war: A feminist standpoint. *International Journal of Feminist Politics*, 12(2), 139–157.

Cohn, C. (1987). Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals. *Signs: Journal of Culture and Society*, 12(4), 687–718.

Cowan, D. (2014). *The deadly life of logistics: Mapping violence in global trade.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Der Derian, J. (2009). *Virtuous war: Mapping the military-industrial-media-entertainment network* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Duncanson, C. (2015). Hegemonic masculinity and the possibility of change in gender relations. *Men & Masculinities*, 18(2), 231–248.

Duriesmith, D., & Holmes, G. (2019). The masculine logic of DDR and SSR in the Rwanda Defence Force. *Security Dialogue*, 50(4), 361–379.

Duriesmith, D., & Ismail, N. H. (2019). Militarized masculinities beyond methodological nationalism: Charting the multiple masculinities of an Indonesian jihadi. *International Theory*, 11(2), 139–159.

Eckstein, S. E., & Wickham-Crowley, T. P. (2012). *Struggles for social rights in Latin America.* New York, NY: Routledge.

El Tiempo. (2018). Noticias del desplazamiento. Retrieved from https://www.eltiempo.com/noticias/desplazamiento-en-colombia

El Tiempo. (2019). Lideres sociales, en la mira por amenazas en 8 departementos. Retrieved from https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/lideres-sociales-amenazados-y-asesinados-en-colombia-en-2019-325770

Enloe, C. (1983–1988). *Does Khaki become you?* (2nd ed.). London: Pandora Press.

Enloe, C. (2000). *Maneuvers: The international politics of militarizing women's lives.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Enloe, C. (2007). *Globalization and militarism: Feminists make the link.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Escobar, A. (2004). Development, violence and the new imperial order. *Development*, 47(1), 15–21.

Garzon, S. (2017). *Forcibly urban: Internally displaced persons' experiences of Bogota's neoliberal transformation* (Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Gender Studies). Central European University, Budapest.

Gill, S. (2008). *Power and resistance in the new world order.* London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Glassman, J. (2006). Primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession, accumulation by 'extra-economic' means. *Progress in Human Geography*, 30(5), 608–625.

Goldstein, J. (2001). *War and gender: How gender shapes the war system and vice versa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gomez. (2015). Colombia: How would a peace deal change the country? Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-29693391

Graham-Harrison, E. (2017, February 19). Colombia death toll rises as gangs fill vacuum left by Farc rebels. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/19/colombia-farc-activist-killings?CMP=share_btn_tw

Gutiérrez-Sanín, F. (2008). Telling the difference: Guerrillas and paramilitaries in the Colombian war. *Politics & Society*, *36*(3), 3–34.

Hamber, B. (2016). There is a crack in everything: Problematizing masculinities, peacebuilding and transitional justice. *Human Rights Review*, *17*(1), 9–34.

Hanson, S. (2008). Colombia's right-wing paramilitaries and splinter groups. *Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/colombias-right-wing-paramilitaries-and-splinter-groups

Harvey, D. (2003). *The new imperialism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hollander, T. (2014). Men, masculinities, and the demise of a state examining masculinities in the context of economic, political and social crisis in a small town in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. *Men and Masculinities*, *17*(4), 417–439.

Hooper, C. (2001). *Manly states: Masculinities, international relations, and gender politics*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Hristov, J. (2009). *Blood and capital*. Athens, OH: Ohio University.

Hristov, J. (2014). *Paramilitarism and neoliberalism: Violent systems of capital accumulation in Colombia and beyond*. London: Pluto Press.

Human Rights Watch. (1996). Colombia's killer networks: Military-paramilitary partnership and the United States. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/killertoc.htm

Human Rights Watch. (2017). Colombia. Events of 2016. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/colombia

Ibáñez, A. M., & Moya, A. (2007). *La Población Desplazada en Colombia: Examen de sus Condiciones Socioeconómicas y Análisis de las Políticas Actuales*. Bogotá: Departamento Nacional De Planeación. Retrieved from https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/Publicaciones/2008/6682.pdf

INDEPAZ. (2016). Informe de Presencia de Grupos Narco-Paramilitares en Primeros Tres Meses de 2016. Retrieved from http://www.indepaz.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Presencia-narcoparamilitar-2016.pdf

Kunz, R., & Sjoberg, A.-K. (2009, February 15–18). *Empowered or oppressed: Female combatants in the Colombian Guerrilla, the case of the revolutionary armed forces of Colombia – FARC*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the International Studies Association, New York, NY.

Leech, G. (2011). *The FARC: The longest insurgency*. London: Zed Books.

Londoño, L. M., & Ramírez, P. (2007). *La dominación de regreso a casa. Impacto de la reinserción paramilitar en la seguridad humana de las mujeres. Caso Medellín, Bajo Cauca y Urabá*. Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia, UNIFEM, Gobernación de Antioquia.

Luxemburg, R. (1913/2003). *The accumulation of capital*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Luxemburg, R. (1988). Militarism as a province of accumulation. In D. Gioseffi (Ed.), *Women on war: Essential voices for the nuclear age* (pp. 434–447). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

MacKenzie, M., & Foster, A. (2017). Masculinity nostalgia: How war and occupation inspire a yearning for gender order. *Security Dialogue*, *48*(3), 206–223.

MacKinnon, C. (1989). *Toward a feminist theory of the state*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Maher, D. (2015). Rooted in violence: Civil war, international trade and the expansion of palm oil in Colombia. *New Political Economy*, *20*(2), 299–330.

Maher, D. (2018). *Civil war and uncivil development: Economic globalisation and political violence in Colombia and beyond*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Maher, D., & Thomson, A. (2011). The terror that underpins the 'peace': The political economy of Colombia's paramilitary demobilisation process. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, *4*(1), 95–113. doi:10.1080/17539153.2011.553391

Marx, K. (1967). *Capital: A critique of political economy*. New York: International Publishers.

McClintock, M. (1992). *Instruments of statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism, 1940–1990*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Meger, S. (2014). Toward a feminist political economy of wartime sexual violence. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *17*(3), 416–434.

Meger, S. (2017). War as feminized labour in the global political economy of neoimperialism. *Postcolonial Studies*, *19*(4), 378–392.

Meger, S. (in press). A feminist political economy of global security. In A. Daniel, M. Richter-Montpetit, R. Mageza-Barthel, & T. Scheiterbauer (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on security*. Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Mesa de Trabajo "Mujer y Conflicto Armado" (MTMCA). (2010). *X Informe sobre Violencia Sociopolítica contra Mujeres, Jóvenes y Niñas en Colombia, 2000–2010*. Bogotá: Author.

Mingorance, F. (2006). *The flow of palm oil Colombia-Belgium/Europe: A study from a human rights perspective*. Human Rights Everywhere/Coordination Belge pour la Colombie.

Myrttinen, H. (2003). Disarming masculinities. *Women, Men, Peace and Security*, *4*, 37–46.

Ní Aoláin, F., Dina Francesca, H., & Cahn, N. (2011). *On the frontlines: Gender, war, and the post-conflict peace process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nussio, E. (2011). How ex-combatants talk about personal security. Narratives of former paramilitaries in Colombia. *Conflict, Security and Development*, *11* (5), 579–606.

Nussio, E., & Kaplan, O. (2016). Explaining recidivism of ex-combatants in Colombia. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *62*(1), 64–93. doi:10.1177%2f0022002716644326

Oslender, U. (2007). Violence in development: The logic of forced displacement on Colombia's Pacific coast. *Development in Practice*, *17*(6), 752–764.

Pateman, C. (1988). *The sexual contract*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Patomäki, H. (2008). *The political economy of global security: War, future crises and changes in global governance*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pearce, J. (2008, April 9). Colombia: Who are the enemies of peace and democracy? *OpenDemocracy*. Retrieved from https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/democracy_power/politics_protest/colombia_peace_and_democracys_enemies

Peterson, V. S. (2010). Gendered identities, ideologies, and practices in the context of war and militarism. In L. Sjoberg & S. Via (Eds.), *Gender, war, and militarism: Feminist perspectives* (pp. 17–29). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International.

Prugl, E. (2003). Gender and war: Causes, constructions and critique. *Perspectives on Politics*, *1*(2), 335–342.

Reardon, B. (1985). *Sexism and the war system*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Richani, N. (2007). Caudillos and the crisis of the Colombian state: Fragmented sovereignty, the war system and the privatisation of counterinsurgency in Colombia. *Third World Quarterly*, *28*(2), 403–417.

Richani, N. (2012). The Agrarian 'rentier' political economy: Land concentration and food insecurity in Colombia. *Latin American Research Review*, *47*(2), 51–78.

Richani, N. (2013). *Systems of violence: The political economy of war and peace in Colombia* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Rodriguez, S. M. (2018). Building civilian militarism: Colombia, internal war, and militarization in a mid-term perspective. *Security Dialogue*. Advanced, pre-publication version. doi:10.1177/0967010617743201

Sachseder, J. (2019). Cleared for investment? The intersections of transnational capital, gender and race in the production of sexual violence and internal displacement in Colombia's armed conflict. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. doi:10.1080/14616742.2019.1702473

Schmidt, I. (2010). Rosa Luxemburg's *accumulation of capital:* A centennial update with additions from long wave theory and Karl Polanyi's great transformation. *Critique: Journal of Socialist Thought*, *40*(3), 337–356. doi:10.1080/00111619.2012.69775.

Seri, G. (2016). To double oppression, double rebellion: Women, capital, and crisis in 'post-neoliberal' Latin America. In A. A. Hozic & J. True (Eds.), *Scandalous economics: Gender and the politics of financial crises* (Chapter 8, pp. 126–144). New York: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/Acprof:Oso/9780190204235.003.0008

Short, N. (2012). Militarism, 'new wars' and the political economy of development: A Gramscian critique. In A. Stavrianakis & J. Selby (Eds.), *Militarism and international relations: Political economy, security, theory* (pp. 45–58). London: Routledge.

Sjoberg, L. (2013). *Gendering global conflict: Toward a feminist theory of war*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Sjoberg, L. (2015). Intimacy, warfare, and gender hierarchy. *Political Geography*, *44*(1), 74–76.

Sjoberg, L., & Via, S. (2010). *Gender, war and militarism: Feminist perspectives*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Tansel, C. B. (2017). Authoritarian neoliberalism: Towards a new research agenda. In C. B. Tansel (Ed.), *States of discipline: Authoritarian neoliberalism and the contested reproduction of capitalist order* (pp. 1–28). London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Tate, W. (2007). *Counting the dead: The culture and politics of human rights activism in Colombia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Telesur. (2017, August 30). *101 social leaders killed in Colombia in 2017: Report*. Retrieved from https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/101-Social-Leaders-Killed-in-Colombia-in-2017-Report-20170830-0026.html

Theidon, K. (2009). Reconstructing masculinities: The Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants in Colombia. *Human Rights Quarterly*, *30*(1), 1–34.

The International Office for Human Rights Action on Colombia [OIDHACO]. (2019). International statement condemning attacks and threats against Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders. Retrieved from http://www.oidhaco.org/?Art=2318&Lang=En

True, J. (2012). *The political economy of violence against women*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

UN Report. (2017). *Report on the situation of human rights defenders working on the rights people on the move*. Retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/ReportPeopleonMove.aspx

UNSC. (2013). *Report of the secretary-general on sexual violence in conflict* (Report No. S/2013/149). New York: United Nations. Retrieved from https://www.refworld.org/docid/5167bd0f4.html

UNSC. (2015, March 23). *Report of the secretary general on conflict-related sexual violence* (Report No. S/2015/203). United Nations Security Council. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/report/s2015203-23-march-2015/SG-Report-2015.pdf

US Office on Colombia. (2013). *Large-scale mining in Colombia: Human rights violations past, present, and future*. Washington: Author. Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/large-scale-mining-colombia-human-rights-violations-past-present-and-future

Whitworth, S. (2004). *Men, militarism, and UN peacekeeping: A gendered analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Wienand, S., & Tremaria, S. (2017, January–June). Paramilitarism in a post-demobilization context? Insights from the Department of Antioquia in Colombia. *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*. No.103. Retrieved from http://erlacs.ubiquitypress.com/articles/10.18352/erlacs.10161/galley/10652/download

Zarembka, P. (2002, March). Primitive accumulation in Marxism, historical or trans-historical separation from means of production? *The Commoner*, pp. 1–9. Retrieved from http://www.thecommoner.org