

Abstract

The Ideological Socialization of Civilians During Civil War

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What explains variation in how effective coercive actors are in changing civilian beliefs about the world? What are the long-term effects of rebel group ideological socialization of civilians on civilian political ideas? This dissertation seeks to provide both theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of ideas during war by explaining variation in the success of socialization, measured through the degree of civilian belief change achieved by Colombia's Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The FARC represents a good case due to its recent demobilization and large within-group variation in the type of civilian socialization. I provide a theory of why rebel groups do or do not ideologically socialize civilians in the first place and then under what conditions socialization succeeds in changing civilian beliefs. Principally, I argue that groups that engage in participatory socialization and have territorial control are more likely to succeed in changing civilian beliefs. My empirical strategy is three-fold. First, interviews with FARC ex-combatants clarify the ideological training they received, how they passed it to civilians, and whether there were differences across FARC units. Second, ethnographic research in a paired comparison of two municipalities clarifies the mechanisms through which socialization occurred. This ethnographic work also allows for in-depth, credible measures of civilian political ideas. Finally, a quantitative analysis examines the relationship between FARC territorial control, coded with qualitative information, and civilian political beliefs, measured through a survey of more than 10,000 civilians in conflict zones.

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