

Understanding Everyday Insecurities Emerging from Fragmented Territorial Control in Post-Accord Colombia

Authors : Clara Voyvodic

Abstract : Transitions from conflict to peace are by no means smooth nor linear, particularly from the perspective of those living through them. Over the last few decades, the changing focus in peacebuilding studies has come to appreciate the everyday experience of communities and how that provides a lens through which the relative success or efficacy of these transitions can be understood. In particular, the demobilization of a significant conflict actor is not without consequences, not just for the macro-view of state stabilization and peace, but for the communities who find themselves without a clear authority of territorial control. In Colombia, the demobilization and disarmament of the FARC guerilla group provided a brief respite to the conflict and a major political win for President Manuel Santos. However, this victory has proven short-lived. Drawing from extensive field research in Colombia within the last year, including interviews with local communities and actors operating in these regions, field observations, and other primary resources, this paper examines the post-accord transitions in Colombia and the everyday security experiences of local communities in regions formerly controlled by the FARC. In order to do so, the research focused on a semi-ethnographic approach in the northern region of the department of Antioquia and the coastal area of the border department of Nariño that documented how individuals within these marginalized communities have come to understand and negotiate their security in the years following the accord and the demobilization of the FARC. This presentation will argue that the removal of the FARC as an informal governance actor opened a space for multiple actors to attempt to control the same territory, including the state. This shift has had a clear impact on the everyday security experiences of the local communities. With an exploration of the dynamics of local governance and its impact on lived security experiences, this research seeks to demonstrate how distinct patterns of armed group behavior are emerging not only from a vacuum of control left by the FARC but from an increase in state presence that nonetheless remains inconsistent and unpersuasive as a monopoly of force in the region. The increased multiplicity of actors, particularly the state, has meant that the normal (informal) rules for communities to navigate these territories are no longer in play as the identities, actions, and intentions of different competing groups have become frustratingly opaque. This research provides a prescient analysis on how the shifting dynamics of territorial control in a post-peace accord landscape produce uncertain realities that affect the daily lives of the local communities and endanger the long-term prospect of human-centered security.

Keywords : armed actors, conflict transitions, informal governance, post-accord, security experiences

Conference Title : ICPCR 2019 : International Conference on Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolutions

Conference Location : Berlin, Germany

Conference Dates : July 22-23, 2019