

# **Maintaining Rebel Cohesion for the Purpose of Peace?**

## **Explaining Subnational Variation in Peacebuilding in Colombia**

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### **Abstract**

Post-conflict peacebuilding initially involves Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs, designed to reduce ex-combatant incentives for returning to armed conflict. While some DDR programs focus on disbanding rebel groups, others have employed former military networks towards building peace. What explains variation within a country case in keeping ex-combatants together and creating economically viable projects for their reintegration? This paper offers a subnational analysis of post-conflict peacebuilding, arguing that maintaining the command-and-control structure of rebel groups after war ensures success in demobilization and collective reintegration of ex-combatants. It contributes to theories of peacebuilding by adding a meso-level, which considers group structure and interaction after civil war. The paper explains why, of the twenty-four demobilization and reintegration camps built across Colombia, following the peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), some have been more successful in retaining ex-combatants and building economically viable communities. First, it introduces ETCR-24, a novel dataset of the twenty-four camps, and tests macro- and meso-level hypotheses, offering a meso-level theory of collective peacebuilding success. Next, the results are substantiated with a comparative qualitative case study of two demobilization camps, located in the same province of Tolima.