Through the lens of the early aftermath of war and genocide in Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, a nearly all-Maya municipality in Guatemala’s western highlands, or altiplano (1997–2004), I empirically explore the long-lasting legacies of violent militaristic practices impacting rural communities. This critical ethnography took place in the context of my fieldwork with the United Nations’ Commission for Historical Clarification (in Spanish, La Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico [CEH]) a year after the UN-sponsored Peace Accords ended the bloody war (1962–1996) between the state and the left-wing Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG).

To verify compliance with the accords, the United Nations’ Observer Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) was established in 1997. The commission concluded that the military launched vicious, U.S.-trained, financed, and equipped counterinsurgency campaigns against real or imagined subversives. In the eyes of the army, Maya communities became the country’s “internal enemy” in its rallying Cold War rhetoric, allegedly menacing the country’s national security and capitalist development. Across the region, the anticommunist National Security Doctrine (NSD) promoted by the United States, and to a lesser extent by the French Counterinsurgency Doctrine, was embraced by local armies, Daniel Feierstein asserts.¹ As Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea points out, “The Cold War was the ideological pretext used to dehumanize, imprison, torture, and kill anyone demanding higher salaries or land reforms.”²

In Guatemala, this doctrine was used to squelch a widespread uprising that coalesced with the rebels. As a result, beginning in the late 1970s the state committed 626 massacres—half of them in the Department of El Quiché’s deep mountain areas where I collected testimonies. The war left 200,000 people dead—many tortured, sexually assaulted, and thrown into unmarked graves.³ Some 50,000 victims disappeared, the whereabouts of their remains still to be disclosed by the perpetrators, showing the widespread impunity embedded within institutions and society at large. Most victims belonged to one of the twenty-three Maya groups. More than 1.5 million people escaped the bloodshed by crossing into Mexico and the United States.

Guatemala: Memory of Silence, the Truth Commission’s final report, concluded that the Ladino (or non-Indigenous state)⁴ had committed acts of
genocide between 1981 and 1983, a period remembered as “La Violencia.”5 The Archdiocese of Guatemala’s 1998 Guatemala: Never Again!, known as the Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Interdiocesan Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory), REHMI Report, reached a similar conclusion. In Colombia, La Violencia refers to the period 1948–1953, when 200,000 to 300,000 left-wing labor activists were killed. During the Cold War era, 30,000 people were tortured in Chile, while some 70,000 were killed in El Salvador, leaving behind a trail of polarization, widespread impunity, dehumanized social relations, and—this book hopes to show—the lingering footprints of grassroots militarization and militarism. In retrospect, growing up under General Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship (1973–1990) somehow prepared me to become a privileged witness to survivors’ experiences with war and genocide. Over time, I began to reconnect with my own political history and experience with deep socioeconomic inequalities.

Local Contexts: Santo Tomás Chichicastenango

A few months before the end of my stay in El Quiché, I was assigned by the commission to carry out an in-depth historical analysis of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango (“Chichi,” for short) about 145 kilometers (90 miles) northwest of Guatemala City.6 Locals are called Maxeños or Chichicastecos. Every Thursday and Sunday are día de plaza, or market days, when the administrative center, el pueblo or cabecera municipal, located 1,965 meters above sea level, transforms itself into a bustling commercial center for local farmers and artisans selling colorful merchandise such as the handmade embroidered huipiles worn by Maya women.

Chichi is a preferred tourist destination for Guatemalans and foreigners alike, who pour into the otherwise forgotten streets, snapping photos of traditional Maya authorities dressed in colorful ceremonial garb. This is particularly the case during celebrations every 21–22 December honoring the town’s patron saint, Santo Tomás, when the Cofradías, a religious brotherhood, carry the Santo Tomás statue to the loud sound of marimba music. Images of these festivities are sold on colorful postcards by the Guatemalan Institute of Tourism (INGUAT), which also promotes trips to nearby Pascual Abaj, where Mayan priests celebrate ceremonies showing how the Maya religion has survived in “syncretic forms.” For many, Chichi is also known as the place where the Maya-K’iché Popol Vuh, or the Book of the Community, which records K’iché’s pre-Conquest traditions, was recovered in the early eighteenth century by Fray Francisco Ximénez.7

Once I was done collecting interviews, I mapped out testimonies and I asked myself why fewer than 2 percent of all registered human rights crimes corresponded to communities roughly located in the western area (see front map). What had prevented western communities from testifying before the commission? These are located in the hinterlands, far from the paved Inter-
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American Highway (known also as Panamerican, or CA-1) spanning the country from Guatemala City to Northern El Quiché. Compared to the more remote western communities, most eastern communities considered in this book are along, next to, or just off the highway.

This geographical and political schism had already been noted in the 1930s by anthropologist Ruth Bunzel when she asserted, “A tradition of hostilities existed between them … a mysterious division, each with its own responsibilities, maps … traditional highest authority, the principal.” But the phenomenon was left largely unexplained. Today, as well as by the time of this study, this east-west division also applies to rural settlements being administratively divided into microregions, a partition facilitating communities’ access to the few public services available in the countryside (see front map).

“My Soul Is a Military Soul”

In late 1999, I went back to Chichi to investigate this overarching silence. This second time in Chichi, I faced an utterly boisterous army, which showed no signs of guilt for its past human rights crimes. A year earlier, for instance, the army had “defamed” spokesman Colonel Otto Noack for asserting that the army should apologize for past human rights crimes. Quite the opposite, it was emboldened by the rise to power of the hardline Guatemalan Republican Front (Frente Republicano Guatemalteco, FRG) party, created in 1989 by General José Efrain Ríos Montt, the very same dictator who had unleashed callous counterinsurgency campaigns during the genocide (1982–1983). To the dismay of local and international observers, including me, his handpicked candidate, Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, was sworn in as president on 14 January 2000. Cabrera vowed to bring peace and security to the country, giving continuity to the national security state.

Although it seems counterintuitive, this sustained post-Peace Accords, top-down militarization helped pave my way into a tight network of pro-army authorities, I term the “amigos,” who were serving at the time in community and municipal-level posts. I rented a cozy room at Posada Conchita, conveniently located adjacent to both the non-Indigenous municipality (or municipal board) and the Indigenous mayor’s office (known as the Auxiliatura Indígena or Alcaldía Indígena), from which the principales Elders Council (Tzanabe in Maya-K’iche) impart their traditional authority over religious, administrative, and political affairs. The Auxiliatura Indígena is a unique form of Maya organization that still prevails in some townships in El Quiché, Sololá, and Totonicapán. At the community level, each village system of authority—which can be traced back to colonial times—is made up of a principal, auxiliary mayor (coordinating with the Auxiliatura Indígena) and variously named ad hoc committees responsible for administering infrastructure and community chores (see front diagram, Traditional Maya Authorities).
As I discuss in Chapter One, my fieldwork took place within an eerie climate shrouded in the utmost secrecy, which made it feel as if the war was still going on. Moreover, my access to western community authorities, through the army's local Civil Affairs and Local Development Division (S-5) maintaining relations with the locals, can be seen as still more evidence of the overwhelming control exercised by the military over communities. On 14 July 2000, sipping a hot cup of coffee, I interviewed Rigoberto, acting as president of the Friends of the Army Association, Amigos del Ejército. Rigoberto proudly showed me a photograph of himself dressed in military gear that was hanging around his neck on a loose lace. When I asked him why he was not wearing a uniform during our encounter, Rigoberto boasted, “I do not need this uniform [as he grabbed his photograph] any longer because my soul is a military soul. That is what is important.”

Since 1987, Rigoberto had been tied to the nearest army outpost in different military capacities. First, he had served as a military commissioner, a type of plainclothes rural police, the lowest-ranked military personnel and reservist, rounding up young men for military service and acting as informant, the army’s “eyes and ears.” Second, Rigoberto was a former member of the civil self-defense patrols (Patrulleros de Autodefensa Civil, PACs), a plainclothes auxiliary force made up of poverty-stricken Maya peasants linked to the army’s chain of command. Nearly 80 percent of the rural population became unpaid patrol members by 1983. According to the commission, PACs perpetrated 18 percent of all human rights crimes committed between 1962 and 1996. Officially, PACs were disbanded following the 1993 Human Rights Accord and the 1996 Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and on the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society. In the early aftermath, across El Quiché, however, some unofficially activated pockets of ex-patrols and ex-military commissioners continued targeting human rights groups.

Informed by the human rights literature emphasizing victimhood, I found it difficult to fathom Rigoberto’s identification with the army, as well as other pro-army authorities I soon would interview, who had brutally killed and looted families and communities. What could explain Rigoberto’s veneration of the army?

Aims of This Book

Based upon the failed dismantling of the patrol system, this timely book will challenge the transitional justice and posttransitional paradigm that ignores the fact that the “old order” terrorizing the population was, in fact, not destroyed. Scholars focusing on Latin America have largely been seduced by legalistic responses to reckon with the past bloodshed and have left unexamined...
the unbroken relations between the army and sectors of the population across the region.

As I argue in *Legacies of State Violence in Latin America*, since 2000, the transitional justice field can be seen as a Janus-faced paradigm because it has been used as a rallying cry by human rights organizations, while at the same time it often has been co-opted by international and domestic elites. This co-optation has hindered grassroots attempts to achieve historical memory, truth, and justice for victims of human rights crimes. Moreover, the field has been criticized for overlooking the continuities of structural inequality and economic exploitation. I hope to show that it also has diverted attention away from the study of the revival of war’s destructive “abiding legacies,” in the words of historian Frank Biess when analyzing the aftermath of WWII.

To go beyond the legalistic field of transitional justice, I discuss the often-disconnected fields of postcolonial, military sociology and the interdisciplinary field of genocide to tackle the legacies of enduring community-level militarization and militarism. This entrenched military control creates not only silences regarding war and genocidal atrocities themselves but also silences linked to relations between the oppressed and the oppressor that preceded the genocide. As I discuss in Chapter Two, a growing body of literature emphasizes the conquistadors’ grappling with the pivotal importance of having the Indigenous peoples cooperate in warfare.

In *Indian Conquistadors*, historians Laura E. Matthew and Michel R. Oudijk highlight the particular colonial racist ideology justifying the use of Indian allies, the “amigos,” in their capacity as fighters, interpreters, and scouts to usurp Indigenous lands. Historian Philip Wayne Powell succinctly points out, “The Indians of America were the conquerors—or destroyers—of their own world, to the advantage of the European invaders.” I use the term “Indian” to refer to colonial Maya and “Maya” to their descendants, as discussed by Victor Perera.

I tease out the powerful meaning of the deafening silence concealing the army’s fascist ideology—surprisingly little studied in the Latin American experience with right-wing violence. While there are various types of fascism, I use the term to imply state control over every aspect of national life, an ideology having as key elements “racism, the masculine, military, radical nationalism rehearsed … by symbols from flags to uniforms.” To achieve this control, fascism deceptively calls for the national unity of social classes but actually promotes the division of people by ethnicity, age, sex, gender, culture, nation, or religion.

A central thesis in this book is that the Cold War militarization—through training, arms sales, and ideological propaganda—added another layer of internal colonialism to Maya communities. It deeply strengthened unequal post-colonial ties between the oppressed and the oppressor, as the army reified its racist views of Indigenous peoples. Following Alex Alvarez and others, I define
the crime of genocide as unfolding in various stages over time, rooted in a “destruc-
tive and deadly form of state policy” against a targeted group perceived
historically as “the other,” its defining characteristic.21

As Holocaust scholars long have observed, aftermaths are a specific historical
stage of the process of genocide. They have different historical temporalities
that shape collective memories and silence during which, as in the wake of
the Reconstruction Era in the United States (1865–1877), gains toward social
justice can be rolled back. Aftermaths are time periods when the “ideologi-
cal garbage” takes on an afterlife of its own, if it is not fully disentangled and
perpetrators are not held accountable for their past wrongs.22 From a post-
colonial viewpoint, embodied in the writings of Martiniquais-French Frantz
Fanon focusing on postcolonial Africa, the immediate aftermath of regime
change involves unrealized promises previously made by militants fighting for
independence.23

As opposed to later aftereffects, I distinguish at least three immediate after-
maths: after each massacre or collective disappearance, after the height of the
genocide (1981–1983), and in the war’s early wake (1997–2004). While partic-
ular to historical periods, aftermaths are all part of larger, ongoing postcolonial
legacies in which current iterations of colonialism are interconnected to the
genocides of the Conquest and the Cold War.

Sociologically, my emphasis is on communities’ collective responses to the
Cold War patrol system reenacting colonial collaboration, the colonial prac-
tices of “divide and conquer,” and the brutality committed against native pop-
ulations. In this regard, Latin America is composed of a series of historical
déjà vu, with a long tradition of praetorianism and coup d’état armies conniv-
ing with local amigos to quell organized opposition demanding social justice,
resulting in crimes against humanity. Yet, Silenced Communities is less about
patrols as human rights perpetrators as it is about systems of exploitation in-
herited from colonial times that have continuity to this day.

As elsewhere, Indigenous communities in Guatemala are highly vulnerable
to outside pressures “that cause ‘closure’ under pressure but permit ‘opening’
in its absence,” as anthropologist Carol Smith argues.24 Far from adopting an
apologetic posture toward oppressive pro-army groups, however, I examine
how grassroots’ militarization and militarism can create silence and how these
are reinforced by the oppressed themselves. As Christopher Browning has as-
serted, “Explaining is not excusing; understanding is not forgiving.”25

**Explaining the Civil Self-Defense Patrols (PACs)**

At the time of the commission in the late 1990s, the prevailing view regarding
the participation of peasants in the patrol system was suggested by anthropol-
ogists David Stoll and Paul Kobrak, who argued that villagers felt “trapped be-
tween the two forces demanding their cooperation.” This ill-informed notion of being “caught between two evils,” found elsewhere in Latin America, equates state armies supported by the United States with poorly armed left-wing guerrillas. Most troubling, this approach strips Maya peasants of political consciousness. Stoll wrongly suggests that patrols disintegrated in the late 1980s.

Recently, Kobrak’s analysis of the patrol system in Colotenango, Huehuetenango does not problematize those factors, except fear of the army, leading to villages “enthusiastically accepting the army’s call to organize.” A more nuanced historical picture explaining the patrols’ collaboration developed by anthropologists Matilde González, Simone Remijnse, and Ricardo Sáenz de Tejeda’s examinations of Joyabaj, El Quiché and in Huehuetenango suggests that responses to patrolling varied according to each community’s unique local history, preexisting militarization, and local consciousness. Despite their heterogeneity, however, patrols’ responses were constrained by their subordinated position to the army’s ironclad control. I will use the terms “postcolonial” and “neocolonial” interchangeably to denote legacies rooted in colonial times.

Unusual Dialogues: Postcolonial and Military Sociology

While postcolonial studies in the region are today a vibrant field, as exemplified by the scholarship of Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Boaventura De Sousa, and Karina Bidaseca, among others, the field has grown disconnected from military sociology and genocide studies that could account for why the subjugated mimicked and continue to mimic their oppressors in the war’s aftermath. In fact, Andrew Hussey, the director of the Center for Postcolonial Studies (CPCS) has criticized the field for being “too textual and theorized” and has called for more empirical research investigating the lived experience with “coloniality,” a term that encompasses the continuity of colonialism linked to urgent socioeconomic and political themes, not just cultural and literary ones.

The Scourge of Internal Colonialism

Surprisingly, while the United States’ imperialist policies in the region, which date back to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, have been thoroughly documented, few studies have focused on how local armies exploit the internal colonialism produced by these policies to gain communities’ collaboration. In the 1960s, Mexican sociologists Rodolfo Stavenhagen and Pablo González Casanova coined the term “internal colonialism,” asserting that Latin American independence from Spain did not translate into the end of the “coloniality of power.” Accordingly, a self-proclaimed, light-skinned, dominant national
group uses systems of exploitation to control the original ethnic population’s lands and resources, which are affected by systematic disadvantages, such as disparities in education and health. Shaping this internal colonialism are “labor repressive systems” that often lead to fascism, as explored by Barrington Moore’s benchmark study *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.

In the case of Guatemala, Jeffery Paige’s Marxist analysis points to the unequal concentration of land and production maintained by the oligarchy of coffee processors, manufacturing capitalists, and the financial and commercial class, all part of “one elite.” For Paige, “Guatemala constitutes … an extreme case of a country dominated both by a landed elite and by its pre-Columbian past.” Paige illustrates this point by noting that coffee production in Guatemala is less efficient than in El Salvador because the elite continue utilizing an oppressive agrarian system to maintain control over the socioeconomic infrastructure of the state. The elite, to uphold its privilege, maintains the illiteracy of the Indigenous people through a feudal agrarian system, which does not allow them to acquire a critical consciousness. Privilege, Tunisian Albert Memmi writes, is at the “heart of the colonial relationship.”

This aggressive agrarian system caused extreme poverty and enormous social inequality in the Guatemalan highlands that impacted, for example, children’s health, as reflected by their below average height. In 1979, 2.6 percent of the population controlled 64.5 percent of the land; in 2000, four years after the accords, 1.5 percent controlled 62.5 percent. Framed by both the internal conditions of colonialism maintained by the Coordinating Committee of Agriculture, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations (CACIF), the landowners’ association (AGA) and the broader globalized extractive economy (mining, natural gas, petroleum, hydroelectric), lending institutions such as the World Bank, and a host of multinational corporations, militarized groups that maintain order for the army continues relentlessly.

Peasants are faced with the growing threat of landlessness rooted in their exploitation as “peasants,” defined as small-scale farmers holding plots of land that are smaller than two acres who “engag[e] in the production of … food crops for family needs or for sale at a local market.” Elucidating how the organizing principles of internal colonialism intersect can shed light on how they shape peasants’ forced and voluntary collaboration with their local army outpost. This voluntariness is illustrated in the little problematized fact that in 15 percent of all the cases, PACs acted alone, that is, unaccompanied by the army. Against a historical context of enduring military control through conscription and counterinsurgency campaigns, peasants became dependent on the army building an “implacable dependence, [which] molded their respective characters and dictated their conduct,” as suggested by Memmi in his analysis of the relations between the colonizer and the colonized in post-colonial Algeria.
Memmi and Fanon long have argued that internal colonialism enables the army’s exploitation of peasants’ extreme poverty to compel them to collaborate in reenacting a longstanding paradox: the oppressed collaborate with the oppressor in his own exploitation, forging a warped and distorted relationship. In *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Memmi points out the inherent ambiguity characterizing postcolonial relations and famously notes that the colonizer frames the colonized into “concrete situations, which close in on the colonized.” From this perspective, Indigenous peoples are born into a pre-designed coercive situation framing their war and genocidal roles and molding what I term, “subordinated alliances,” with the army.

While Memmi had the French rule of Arab territories in mind, his insights are nonetheless relevant to how colonial institutions allocate roles to the subjugated, and they are particularly useful in explaining what is, ultimately, a colonial and postcolonial paradox: the oppressed who are forced to act out these roles against their neighbors during war and genocide and their aftermath. Furthermore, in the case of Peru, Kimberly Theidon points out the “intimate killings” involving an enemy who was “a son-in-law, a godfather, an old schoolmate or [from] the community that lies just across the valley.”

This paradox initially created by the Conquest has prevailed over time and is poignantly illustrated by Richard Arens in the case of the early 1970s genocide against the Ache in Paraguay, when the army “order[ed] the captive Aches to hunt the free Aches … if they wished to achieve recognition as humans.” The coercive situation leading the oppressed to turn against their own kin does not mean that each individual is a passive recipient, an insight long understood through subaltern studies in India, convincingly challenging the monolithic image of the colonized. This sociological insight has great relevance because it leaves space to explore not only the oppressed’s collaboration but also peasants’ acts of collective resistance to the army’s violence and exploitation, an engagement that is limited to neither complete assimilation into the oppressors’ ideology nor outright violent revolt.

As Memmi observes, “It is common knowledge that the ideology of a governing class is adopted in large measure by the governed classes.” Decolonization, as suggested by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, implies challenging the “colonial situation.” This points to the need to consider its continuity in the postwar years to begin tackling the mutual dependence maintained between the Guatemalan army and pockets of former patrols, both of whom fear each other but are simultaneously bound, with devastating consequences for impoverished communities.

By contextualizing the collaboration of Indigenous peoples with the military, we can attain a more nuanced understanding of the deeply violent ties the army maintains with Maya peasants. Uncannily, these ties were encouraged by Liberal public projects and, later, Cold War civic action programs,
which involved psychological operations (PSYOP), all part of a multipronged strategy used to gain the collaboration of “white communities” or “pro-army communities.” These military operations illustrate the efforts the army undertook to persuade the subaltern to support its patrol system. As scholars point out, even the colonizer is forced to negotiate spaces, as there are various types of colonizer-colonized relations. In the process of delivering this aid, the army reconfigured its image as the friend of Maya communities (Chapter Three). Charles H. Wood and Marianne Schmink also have suggested that the army rewarded peasants to win over the population in the Brazilian Amazon.43

Grassroots Militarization and Militarism: The Missing Link

Cultural anthropologists dominating the study of the postwar years in Guatemala, while acknowledging the precarious life engulfing rural areas due to neoliberal policies, have argued that the “countryside has been demilitarized.”44 In contrast, political scientists, such as Jennifer Schirmer, have argued for its continuation, which she refers to in her groundbreaking work The Guatemalan Military Project about the army’s long-term control over rural areas.45 Following Andrew Ross’s distinction between militarization and militarism, I define militarization as a step-by-step process composed of military expenditures, arms imports and production, and, in general, military buildup.46 To differentiate it from militarization, Ross defines militarism as the ideological marks resulting from military values, loyalty, patriotism, and due obedience being instilled, surpassing the true military purpose of defeating the enemy,47 and “carrying military mentality and modes of acting and decision into the civilian sphere,” as Alfred Vagts suggests.48

Pivotal for my study is Ross’s assertion that militarism can occur in the absence of militarization. That is, at the local level, people can remain militarized because a military mindset and social practices have been normalized. I link militarization and militarism experienced at the local level to the reenactment of deeply rooted racist ideology and violent practices that shape the aftermath of wars, even when military “buildup” is not apparently present or robust.

The field of military sociology lags behind in the study of legacies of militarization and militarism, neglecting the use of critical ethnography that can account for entrenched military control and military-Indigenous relations. Instead, it has overly emphasized a top-down approach, examining the state system or interstate conflicts through quantitative, cross-national research an approach that ends up avoiding the difficulties involved in carrying out the complicated and dangerous fieldwork of militarized contexts.

Military sociologists have been faulted for “standing in harmful isolation” not only in relation to the social sciences49 but also within the humanities and war and genocide studies. Conversely, the field of genocide focusing on Latin
America has overlooked the study of militarization and militarism as shown, for example, in a special volume, *Debates from the Latin American Margin*, that ignores the need to examine ongoing, and unequal, grassroots military-civil relations in the aftermath of the Cold War.50

A postcolonial-military sociology needs to pay more attention, for example, to the role of the rural police and state-sponsored Indigenous militia forces carrying out genocidal policies. These forces are similar, in the sense that they were members of local communities, to the Janjaweed in Sudan, the Interahamwe in Rwanda, and rural militias assisting the German Einsatzgruppen in Poland and Russia.51 Military commissioners and their auxiliaries largely resembled the rural police in Europe in World War II, such as the Gemeindepolizei or Gendarmerie, which were under the Order Police Main Office, the small-town local police hunting Jews.52

Civilian-military relations are defined in Kurt Lang’s words: “The attitudes of uniformed men and the civilian population toward one another … and the political alliances between military and civilian groups help determine what influence the armed forces will exert, not only in politics, but also on social life generally,”53 Samuel Huntington’s theory of civilian-military relations in the United States has dominated discussions over the subordination of the army to civilian power. In *The Soldier and the State*, he asserts that the professionalization of an army serves to render the military “politically sterile, neutral … ready to carry out the wishes of any civilian government.”54 In contrast, Morris Janowitz’s *Professional Soldier* argues that armies will become a pressure group but nonetheless can be “responsible, circumscribed, and responsive to civilian authority.”55

Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies argue that in the Latin American case, politics for the military has historically meant “class conflict and instability,” which has encouraged the army’s intervention “to cleanse the body politic of political corruption.”56 In the early twentieth century, “professionalized” armies maintained ties to traditional elites. What is needed to modify their corrupted nature, a modernizing view argues, is to “expose foreign militaries to the modern, professional training embodied by the U.S. military.”57 The standard to professionalize the military is a form of U.S. imperialism because the underlying assumption is that a Eurocentric way of behaving is the norm.58 However, as elsewhere in the region, in Guatemala, the historical role of the army in perpetrating crimes against Indigenous communities refutes the notion of the army as “professional.”

Espousing this approach of the Guatemalan army as professional is Richard N. Adams, a scholar of civilian-military relations, who asserts, “The identification of the military with the nation, and the creation of a career for officers, have produced an increasingly professional officer.”59 For Adams, the army’s identification with politics is not an obstacle as much as the fact that the sal-
ary system is insufficient for “ambitious individuals … [who] expected to see additional incomes.”

As Fanon suggests, a postcolonial view of the military, such as that in post-colonial Algeria, implies that politicizing the army, the “dividing line … represented by the barracks and the police stations,” compartmentalizing the world of the colonized, could be eradicated. This is because the army was an institution that could erase inequalities in addition to “rais[ing] the level of national consciousness,” where recruits would aid in the reconstruction of the country, while militias would be mobilized in the “case of war.”

Ignoring the postcolonial continuity of military control—with the exception of Loveman’s work—military sociologists have made poor assumptions about the nature of democracy in the region. Since the 2000s, arguing for the “complete transition” into democracy, David Pion-Berlin has said, “At the dawn of the new century, civil military relations … are more stable than they were a decade or two ago.” He argues that the “coup or no-coup question is not the defining one for this era.” Pion-Berlin has asserted that the “completed transition” has driven scholarship to focus again on “the patterns of civilian-military relations developing under democratic auspices.” However, an analysis of the patrol system will suggest that prolonged militarization hinders the subordination of the army to civilian power at the grassroots level since people themselves reproduce militaristic worldviews and practices.

As Karen Remer suggests, scholars “moved from the study of democratic breakdowns to the study of … transitions without pausing to analyze the authoritarian phase that came in between.” Regarding Central America, Pion-Berlin has argued, “Militar[ies] are smaller, more compliant, and less interventionist than they once were.” Most studies have focused on military prerogatives, remnants of the authoritarian regimes, such as in Argentina and Brazil, entrenched at the state level, and referred to in the literature as the “authoritarian enclaves.” However, on the one hand, these views largely overlook the persistent role that unequal civilian-military relations play in shaping collective memory and constructed silence at the community level, long after formal civilian control has been attained. On the other hand, the underlying assumption that armies have become subordinated to civilian regimes since the end of the Cold War ignores how local armed forces now play a prominent role in U.S.-led wars against drugs and global terrorism in communities reeling from the legacy of state violence.

Recruitment of the Internally Colonized

While Indigenous groups recruited by the colonizer are generalized phenomena, this is not always problematized by scholarly discourses, with some valuable exceptions. In Spain, Moroccan soldiers and militias were recruited to
fight imperial wars during the Franco regime. Similarly, France recruited the Harkis in Algeria, who were prompted by extreme poverty to ally with the French to support their families. For many, conscription into the colonizer’s military was advantageous because it seemingly offered a way out of a precarious life, as U.S. activist Winona LaDuke argues in the case of Native Americans who “voluntarily” serve in the U.S. military despite compelling reasons to resist enlistment.

Past scholarship focusing on civilian-military relations in Guatemala points out “the recruitment of Indigenous males into the army, mainly from rural areas, by coercive means.” For many peasants, “the military provided their only access to education … [resulting in] Kaqchikel’s renewed confidence to stand up to Ladino persecution.” And while “few Mayan men looked forward to military recruitment,” because of the brutal treatment received from the army, anthropologist David Carey argues that Kaqchiquel men remember that under General Jorge Ubico Castañeda (1931–1944), they “gained confidence from their military service.”

In the case of service in the Cold War patrol system, the assertion that recruitment into the patrol made Maya peasants feel, to paraphrase Kobrak, newly enfranchised in the Guatemalan nation, suggests that army-Maya peasant relations are inherently exploitative. Yet, men are, the argument goes, at the same time empowered by military service to fight back against abuses from the Ladino elite. These suggestions are highly problematic because they ignore that the cost of this “empowerment” has been Indigenous peoples’ dehumanization and that their oppressors have benefitted. The perverse outcome of this practice is most aptly summarized in the words of Fanon: “It is the ‘peoples of color’ who annihilated the attempts at liberation by other ‘peoples of color.’”

Cold War Ideology, Propaganda, and Myth Making

Research has established that policies of annihilation require the support of the population. But how do armies maintain grassroots political support? As past studies have shown, in addition to a longstanding suspicion of outside institutions, Maya communities were shocked into silence by the fear of a violent death, which many barely survived during the war. As Beatriz Manz notes, “The purpose of the terror … was to intimidate and silence society as a whole, in order to destroy the will for transformation, both in the short and long term.” Less discussed in the literature, as anthropologist Diane Nelson notes, is why “indigenous people [have] actively engaged in counterinsurgency campaigns?” Instead, as Alvarez and others have suggested, we need to examine the role of ideologies in helping create and organize the “justification needed for populations to engage in genocide.”
Propaganda campaigns disseminating rumors about the war enabled the army to co-opt and recolonize right-wing peasants’ and communities’ historical memory by usurping masculine representations of pre-Hispanic warring pasts while, at the same time, they reinforced the army’s heroic memory of defeating the conquered. With militarism comes the culture of hypermasculinity embodied in the state, which spilled over into Maya peasants’ local systems of power. Conversely, it is important to highlight those socioeconomic, ideological, and religious factors accounting for resistance to militarization within “red,” or pro-URNG communities, which I discuss in Chapters Four and Five.

Propaganda is defined as “a form of mass communication and persuasion” controlling people’s minds with the goal of “guaranteeing a popular response as desired by the propagandists.” In Latin America, with the notable exception of Nina Schneider’s examination of different types of propaganda used by the state to legitimize itself in Brazil during the dictatorship and how they were received, few studies have explored how the Cold War’s grandiloquent rhetoric of national security and development ideology was used to fabricate war mythology that cast the army as the savior of poverty-stricken communities. In the *Ethics of Memory*, Avishai Margalit claims, “A myth lives within a community when members of the community believe the myth as a literal truth.” In Guatemala, Cold War myths interacted with local histories and layers of silence, ultimately leading groups of ex-patrols and their families to cover up the war’s unpalatable truths in ways that went beyond criminal complicity to silence their neocolonial relations to the nearest military outpost.

As I discuss in “Impossible Memory and Postcolonial Silences,” the commission “did not quite reveal the war myths,” such as the army’s rhetoric glorifying the patrols for their service, internalized by co-opted patrols. This is displayed in a rather hidden memorial that Remijnse found in the Joyabaj municipality with the text “Their memory lives on in our hearts, as an example of the duty and glory to our free and sovereign fatherland.” Above all, these were the systematic lies, the made-up stories the army used to build its mass-based support in the countryside, relying on a fascist propaganda containing false promises of security and development as a means of recruitment into the patrol system.

Memmi asserted that “fervent feelings of belonging” to the nation, corresponding to a “mob psychology appealing to passionate motives,” created the conditions of internal colonialism that were fertile ground for nationalistic propaganda to find compelling reasons for peasants to join the patrols, in the context of fear not just of military violence but also of further uprootedness, as sociologist Manuel Antonio Garretón notes regarding the Chilean experience with right-wing dictatorship.

My emphasis on ideological resonance allows me to revise my earlier view that overly stressed the NSD mindset the army had “imposed” upon Maya
groups. Instead, I now examine how people received and incorporated war propaganda, transmitting alienating ideologies, as determined by Siniša Malešević, who argues that for effective war propaganda to resonate, a preexisting process must unravel. This involves the “ideologization of the ‘masses,’ or centrifugal ideologization.” Similarly, the Khmer Rouge, Alex Hinton notes, set up its ideological model through radio broadcasts, songs, and slogans to encourage peasants to seek revenge against “the capitalist and reactionary classes.” Examining the 1972 Burundi situation, René Lemarchand argues that the state misrepresented the origins of the violence through what he terms an “inverted discourse,” or false metanarrative. Similarly, in Guatemala, the army created an inverted discourse that proved central in mobilizing patrol platoons against the country’s “internal enemy.”

In the volatile early aftermath, a military mindset, understood as a “cluster of attitudes … the various elements … related to the nature of military expertise,” remained deeply embedded within pro-army communities’ everyday lives. Yet, there has been little discussion about its revival and how it continued to perpetuate loyalty to the army that was rooted in blurry binary identities. In fact, the Cold War patrol system is a quintessential example of a subaltern group exhibiting overlapping identities under extreme life and death situations: between victims and perpetrators and between civilians and soldiers. Dirk Moses suggests that it is important to move beyond binaries in order to view war and genocide roles in less rigid terms, and he warns us of the danger of representing “passive victims, wicked perpetrators, and craven bystanders.” This is an approach that echoes Tzvetan Todorov’s remark that “mutually exclusive categories of angels and demons cannot explain how ideology shapes multiple roles.”

Similarly, Omer Bartov observes that lumping together war identities “produce[s] tremendous social, political, and psychological tensions,” obscuring the complexity of bloodshed. In Brazil, sociologist Martha Huggins suggests that victims also can take on the role of perpetrators under extreme duress, denoting a complex gray zone. For Guatemala, peace and conflict scholar Lieselotte Viaene has argued that genocidal violence created more gray areas than the “clear victim-perpetrator dichotomy,” further accentuating the contradictory war and genocide roles of Maya peasants. As Nelson suggests, participation in the patrol system at the village level made “the line between victim and perpetrator difficult to see.” A second binary, that of the civilian identity, has been challenged since civilians have become “irregular combatants,” according to Martin Shaw.

On 26 January 2012, I found the picture below (Fig. 0.2) of Gilberto Reyes lying outside of the supreme court building. Proving conscription, it shows these overlapping binaries. On this day, a lower-court judge was hearing allegations of crimes against humanity of Ríos Montt. Reyes’s photograph vividly
parallels portrayals of victims dressed in camouflage uniforms hanging on the bare walls of homes when I was collecting testimonies for the commission. Often, these photos were some of the only ones families had of their relatives. The rest were taken by the army when their son, brother, father, grandfather, cousin, or uncle either had been conscripted into military service or had “volunteered” to serve.

This mindset is one of the pillars sustaining community-level militarism found within pro-army groups and communities. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, “Old habits of thought die hard,” concurring with Leo Kuper's assertion that ideologies are not easily taken apart. Writing about Rwanda’s perpetrators, Omar McDoom argues that such a mindset was required to mobilize Hutu perpetrators. Once beliefs defining the war in cultural terms were activated, the escalation “into genocidal violence [became] the product of a complex interaction of other motives ranging from coercion, opportunism, habituation, conformity, racism, and ideological indoctrination.” Similarly, Helen Fein remarks that asking what leads people to kill requires a theory that explains “how structural, situational and cultural forces” can account for mass atrocities. By focusing on the type of perpetrators, Fein notes, we can begin unveiling genocidal ideologies and how—I hope to show in this book—they
were reenacted in the war’s unsettled aftermath by the internally oppressed themselves. Sociologists have examined different levels of collaboration, relying on different terms—accommodation, collaboration, and cooperation—to differentiate between involuntary and voluntary cooperation. In Nazi Germany, Hannah Arendt accused the Judenräte, the Jewish councils, of collaboration with the Nazis, a thesis refuted by Bauman’s groundbreaking studies. Andrew Rigby has also distinguished between five types of collaboration during World War II involving local populations and their occupiers. Historian Timothy Brook’s Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China emphasizes collaboration between the invaders and local Chinese elites in the first year of the occupation that began at the bottom, in the towns, rather than at the top, as in the case of France’s Vichy regime collaboration with Nazi Germany.

Studies of collaboration with the army during genocides are lacking in Latin America. Nelson insightfully has observed, “We must be alert to the contradictory ways militarized power also incites, induces, and seduces Guatemalans, including the Maya,” a seduction linked to addictive power. Manz concurs in her analysis of postwar ongoing violence. This was particularly the case in the poorest Chichicastenango communities that failed to testify before the Truth Commission. From a critical postcolonial point of view, these findings are important, since they suggest that the army targeted the poorest communities for mobilization as belligerent groups in support of its patrol system. Far from recognizing their collaboration, however, the post-Peace Accords administrations sought to systematically undermine their amigos’ grievances as war veterans, or what I term “subjugated allies,” which I discuss in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, particularly.

Enduring Social Silence

Elucidating the interplay between the failed demilitarization of the patrol system and the reproduction of constructed social silence as one more element shaping the war’s wake can shed light on the relentless military control over local populations elsewhere in South Asia and Africa. In Latin America, since the late 1990s, scholars have examined official memories justifying or denying past crimes against humanity and the rise of human rights groups promoting the historical memory of victims targeted for their political views. Social silences have a specific purpose as people codify and enforce norms within the “inner space of the circle of silence.” In “Courageous Soldiers,” I explore “pacts of silence” in the Chilean experience in which impunity regarding human rights crimes showed that both current and former military officers, and
their civilian collaborators, do not “just” refuse to speak. Rather, they engage in an “active silence,” one that reveals their unbroken loyalty to the military, long after the 1990 demise of the Pinochet regime.\textsuperscript{114}

Jay Winter and others have argued that silences are social practices, and in the context of war and genocide, he highlights one particular silence, a “political” or “strategic silence,” which refers to a chosen mechanism to avoid further conflict. An example of this type of silence took place in Spain after the end of the Franco regime, when a “transition” led to the denial of a state-led inquiry about past atrocities.\textsuperscript{115} In *Shadows of War*, sociologist Efrat Ben-Zeev argues that silences constructed regarding wars were tacitly agreed to and maintained over the years by Israeli soldiers. Yet, they began breaking as veterans grew older. In the same volume, Eviatar Zerubavel suggests that social silence is “more than simply absence of sound.”\textsuperscript{116} Rather, it implies a consensual denial and deliberate avoidance of taboo themes. Similarly, I emphasize how postwar militarism facilitated the reproduction of these silences, and the issues they denied, to reveal instead the lies the army told Maya peasants about the origins of the war.

For the case of El Salvador, Robin Maria DeLugan, in *Reimagining National Belonging*, observes how museums and monuments initiated by civil society grappled with the unpalatable truths of the 1981 El Mozote Massacre, which otherwise have been silenced by the state.\textsuperscript{117} Focusing on Africa, historian Ruth Ginio suggests that silences are selective, especially regarding “the ugliness of a colonial past in which black soldiers broke the protest of black men and women struggling against their French masters.”\textsuperscript{118} Ginio observes that the oppressed betrayed decolonizing struggles, exemplified in the *tirailleurs sénégalais* being ordered to repress the Malagasy revolt in 1947 or the loyalist Taitai allying with colonial settlers against the revolutionary Mau Mau seeking independence (1952–1960).

In Guatemala, pro-army peasants resembled an Indian informer in his betrayal of the Maya K’ichés that led to their defeat during the Conquest\textsuperscript{119} as well as the “Ayaconas,” the Mapuche term assigned to those who sell out to the Chilean state. Those communities where a military ethos is most entrenched, which I define as “garrison communities,” are analyzed in Chapter Eight. In this type of community, the prolonged coerciveness of military control and economic deprivation nurtured interconnected cultures of “fear,” “violence,” and “silence.”\textsuperscript{120} In Chapter Nine, to illustrate how military-like violence was used as reprisal against those denouncing human rights crimes, I examine *La Cadena* (the Chain) in the 2000 Xalbaquiej lynching, which enabled the legacies of genocide to continue in the form of public executions.

In the initial chapters, I offer background to this book. On a continuum of postwar militarization and militarism, I then divide this book into two comparative parts. In Part I (Chapters Four and Five) I examine the unfolding
polarization process affecting some sixteen outlying communities in the east, particularly from the Chupol area, which is identified by the army as “red,” or “pink.” In Part II (Chapters 6-9) through the unique voices of ex-patrollers, ex-military commissioners, reserves, and civil affairs specialists (S-5) I focus on a cluster of western communities most likely defined by the military as “white” or pro-army communities (Mactzul, Paxot, and Saquillá), which are located on the northwestern corner of Chichi.

Notes

3. CEH, Conclusions, 18.
4. The term “Ladino” indicates people of mixed Indigenous and Spanish heritage.
5. CEH, Conclusions, 38, 39; Also see Victoria Sanford for a quantitative discussion of how during La Violencia, under the General José Efraín Ríos Montt regime, there was “a 25 percent increase in the number of massacre victims …” Sanford, Buried Secrets, 158.
6. Geographically, the township is characterized by steep hills forming part of a volcanic ridge, with altitudes ranging from 1,900 to 2,500 m (6,233–8,202 ft).
7. Also written as Wuj. See the translation by ethnologist Dennis Tedlock.
8. Bunzel, Chichicastenango, 236.
10. Also known as “ACODER.” At the community level, I will use hamlet, village, community, and canton interchangeably.
11. Author interview, Rigoberto.
13. CEH, II.234.
15. Biess, Homecomings, 1.
18. Powell, Soldiers, Indians, and Silver, 158.
21. Alvarez, Genocidal Crimes, 4, 12. The crime, Helen Fein and others have noted, is executed by a bureaucratic apparatus characteristic of modernity and it happens regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim. Fein, Genocide Watch, 3.
23. See particularly Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, 97–144.
24. Smith, Guatemalan Indians and the State, Kindle locations 1041–42.
25. Browning, Ordinary Men, xx; see also Sluka, Death Squad, 27.
26. Stoll, Between Two Armies, 6.
28. Sáenz de Tejeda, Victimas o Vencedores?
29. Reisz, “High and Popular Culture.”
30. Paige, 56.
31. Ibid., 67–69.
34. “Guatemala Squeezed,” 5.
38. Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 93, 90.
42. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 2.
45. See also Schirmer, “Prospects for Compliance.”
58. I am grateful to Jenny Escobar for her insightful comment on the power dynamics between the United States and Latin America’s armies formation.
60. Ibid., 4027.
61. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 3.
62. Ibid., 141–42.
64. Ibid., 9.
69. Mechbal, “Los Moros.”
71. LaDuke and Cruz, *Militarization of Indian Country*.
74. Carey, *Our Elders Teach Us*, 179.
75. Ibid., 185–86.
77. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 85.
82. Crucial aspects in the propaganda were “the goal of national unity, and the realization of the ‘common good.’” Schneider, *Brazilian Propaganda*, 6.
86. Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 96.
87. Garretón, “Fear in Military Regimes.”
91. Lemarchand, *Forgotten Genocides*, 42.
102. McDoom finds that 57 percent of respondents attributed their participation to obedience to authority, followed by an ideological mindset of war (33 percent), which meant fighting for their country or defending themselves against the enemy. The third most popular answer was coercion (20 percent). McDoom, “Rwanda’s Ordinary Killers,” 14.
105. Helen Fein notes that collaboration is motivated by reward, incentive, or a desire to retain one’s status as well as mutuality of goals.” Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, 34.
107. They are political, military, horizontal, social, and economic collaboration. Rigby, *Justice and Reconciliation*, 19.
111. Chuchiak, “Forgotten Allies,” 175–76.
112. The field of memory studies in English is quite rich. For Argentina, see Jelin, *State Repression* and Feierstein, *Genocide as Social Practice*. For Chile, see Stern, *Memory Box of Pinochet’s Chile* and Gómez-Barris, *Where Memory Dwells*.
120. REMHI 1998, I.107.