

31 levels of violence and conflict. This is not to suggest a reductionist understanding of the
32 relationship (i.e. resource curse) between extractive economies and ‘weak’ or ‘fragile’ states
33 (e.g. Bannon & Collier, 2003; Collier et al., 2008; Collier & Hoeffler, 2005). Rather, we
34 follow more critical thinking (Le Billon, 2012; Mitchell, 2013; Peluso & Watts, 2001), which
35 understands that the harmful outcomes of an extractive economy stem from structural
36 conditions and institutional arrangements rooted in political agendas which empower capital
37 at the expense of civil society (McNeish, 2017, pp. 500–501).

38 Other resource conflicts in rural areas in Guatemala, such as those associated with
39 hydropower and the agroindustry (oil palm and sugarcane plantations) are also accompanied
40 by intense violence (Aguilar-González et al., 2018; Aguilar-Støen, 2015, 2016; Aguilar-Støen
41 & Bull, 2016; Alonso-Fradejas, 2012, 2015, 2018b; Granovsky-Larsen, 2013; Hurtado Paz y
42 Paz, 2006; Mingorría et al., 2014; Mingorría, 2018). Violence, therefore, does not seem to be
43 endemic to mining itself. We thus argue that the mining sector is of strategic value, rather
44 than purely economic value, to powerful actors in Guatemala and that violence is part of
45 securing control over land more generally and operationalizing the mining sector in
46 particular.

47 To substantiate this claim, we examine why an industry of limited economic
48 importance has been accompanied by so much violence and, in doing so, we attempt to
49 explain the strategic value of mining to elites in Guatemala. Participation in anti-extractive
50 movements is about more than expressing discontent over the unequal distribution of the
51 impacts and benefits of extractive projects (Hall et al., 2015). Environmental conflicts are
52 also a means for environmental and community activists to assert themselves as political
53 actors within the state (Grant & Le Billon, 2019). In Guatemala, this threatens the interests of
54 the country’s powerful elites and military who benefit from maintaining the current socio-
55 political order. We thus use mining conflicts as an analytical lens to examine the
56 reorganization of violence in the post-genocide Guatemalan society (McAllister & Nelson,
57 2013). This focus furthermore allows for considering the complexities surrounding mineral
58 extraction and resource governance in post-conflict societies beyond Guatemala, particularly
59 in the context of weak institutions and strong elites (Bannon & Collier, 2003; Bull, 2014;
60 Collier et al., 2008; Le Billon, 2012, 2018; McNeish, 2017; Peluso & Watts, 2001; Rustad &
61 Lujala, 2012).

62 Post-conflict societies are often characterized by “multiple transitions” including the
63 transition from war to peace, but also, as the case of Guatemala illustrates, democratization,
64 decentralization, market liberalization etc. We define post-conflict societies as those in

65 which, even after the formal end of the armed conflict, violence continues to be part of the
66 political repertoire used by various actors. Post-conflict societies are also characterized by
67 poverty and lack of opportunities with high inequality. In many cases, like in the case of
68 Guatemala, the structural causes of the conflict remain unresolved (Aguilar-Støen & Bull,
69 2017; McAllister & Nelson, 2013) and finally post-conflict societies are often characterised
70 by weak institutions, including land ownership, taxes and other redistribution mechanisms
71 (Bull, 2014).

72 The literature on environmental conflicts is vast (e.g. Le Billon, 2015). Scholarship
73 has focused on how civil society groups and grassroots movements shape the politics and
74 practices of resource use towards positive social and ecological outcomes (e.g. Bebbington et
75 al., 2008; Escobar, 1998; Guha & Martinez-Alier, 1997; Kenney-Lazar et al., 2018;
76 Martínez-Alier, 2002; Scheidel et al., 2018; Villamayor-Tomas & García-López, 2018).
77 Other scholars have argued that movements in defence of nature and equitable resource use
78 are a promising force for environmental sustainability and social justice (Nagendra, 2018;
79 Scheidel et al., 2018; Temper et al., 2018). Nonetheless, activism often comes at a heavy cost
80 and despite mostly using nonviolent forms of protest, environmental defenders face high rates
81 of criminalization, harassment, physical violence and assassinations (Scheidel et al., 2020).
82 Scholarly attention has primarily focused on ‘community-level’ responses in environmental
83 conflicts, increasingly conceptualized as ‘political reactions from “below”’ (Borras et al.,
84 2012; Borras & Franco, 2013; Hall et al., 2015). However, as argued by Geenen and
85 Verweijen (2017, p. 758), to understand how environmental conflicts transpire it is critical to
86 also study how ‘political reactions “from above”’ emerge and take shape.

87 In this article, we examine how the relationships between extractive firms, the elite,
88 the military and the government engender violence in response to anti-mining mobilizations.
89 In particular, we analyse the interplay between corporate/government/elite strategies and anti-
90 mining mobilizations, exposing how violence is embedded in the dialectical relation between
91 political actions and reactions both ‘from above’ and ‘from below.’ With our article we
92 respond to calls for further scholarly engagement with the “internal perspectives of
93 government authorities and mining companies on resistance” (Conde & Le Billon, 2017, p.
94 697) the role that the interplay of repression and resistance plays in shaping environmental
95 governance (Middeldorp & Le Billon, 2019; Rasch, 2017). Furthermore, by turning
96 analytically and empirically to the role of elites and their entanglements with the state and
97 extractive firms we also engage with ongoing discussions about the ways in which elites and
98 industry actors shape environmental governance (Aguilar-Støen & Bull, 2016; Alonso-

99 Fradejas, 2012, 2015, 2018a; Bull, 2015; Bull & Aguilar-Støen, 2015, 2016, 2019;
100 Dougherty, 2019; Geenen & Cuvelier, 2019). Finally, we situate our article within broader
101 scholarly discussions on environmental conflicts, resource extractivism and struggles over
102 land in Guatemala (Aguilar-González et al., 2018; Aguilar-Støen, 2015, 2016; Aguilar-Støen
103 & Bull, 2016; Alonso-Fradejas, 2012, 2015, 2018b; Dougherty, 2011; Fox, 2015;
104 Granovsky-Larsen, 2019, 2013; Hurtado Paz y Paz, 2006; Laplante & Nolin, 2014;
105 Mingorría, 2018; Mingorría et al., 2014; Nolin & Stephens, 2010; Pedersen, 2014; Urkidi,
106 2011; Yagenova et al., 2012).

107 Overall, we argue that mining conflicts in Guatemala are profoundly shaped by the
108 country's 36-year-long civil war and its ensuing peace process and pathway to democracy
109 (e.g. McAllister & Nelson, 2013). This process reshaped the relationship between state,
110 market and citizens in ways that opened certain political spaces to the participation of civil
111 society groups and subaltern actors in formal decision-making arenas. However, they also
112 resulted in the emergence of new elites and new factions within the traditional elite, which
113 has sharpened elite competition for control over resources and the state (e.g. Bull & Aguilar-
114 Støen, 2019). Finally, the emergence of new private security actors following the
115 demobilization of the military shapes how means of force are used in mining conflicts.

116 The article proceeds as follows: In the next section we present our analytical
117 framework and methodological approach. In Section 3, we analyse the strategic value of
118 mining to elites in Guatemala, examining how certain elite factions have fortified their
119 position in the current context of elite disputes and elite shifts. Our analysis also shows how
120 other actors, particularly private security providers, play a key role in shaping private sector
121 and governmental responses to mining opposition. In Section 4, we analyse the specific
122 strategies used by corporate/government/elite networks in reaction to anti-mining activism,
123 which we find to be characterized by a multidimensional pattern of violence.

124

125 **2. Analytical framework and methodological approach**

126 Alonso-Fradejas (Alonso-Fradejas, 2018a, 2018b) argues that a new politics of class-
127 domination has emerged from Guatemala's transition to liberal democracy. These politics are
128 shaped by a rise in what Alonso-Fradejas calls "authoritarian corporate populism"
129 (authoritarian corpopulism hereafter), a political agenda advanced by the country's
130 entrenched elite networks and backed by the state to advance resource extraction and
131 agroindustry. The authoritarian corpopulist agenda relies on strategic support from the state
132 and for the private sector and elites to be deeply entangled with the state (Alonso-Fradejas,

133 2018a, 2018b). The result is the reproduction of the racialized class hegemony of the white
134 elites, who have controlled Guatemala’s means of production (land, labour, commercial
135 institutions, banks and industries) and political system since the colony to the present day
136 (Casaús Arzú, 2010; Dosal, 1995, 2005).

137 We argue that these dynamics take place within a “fragmented security state” that is
138 emerging in parts of Latin America and which employs violence as its main repertoire of
139 governing and shapes a social order favourable to elite interests (Pearce, 2018). However, the
140 fragmented security state and elites within it are not monolithic. Rather the fragmented
141 security state is marked by intra-elite conflicts that both produce high levels of violence and
142 allow spaces for contestation to be manipulated. Following Bull (Bull, 2015) we use a
143 “resource-based” definition of elites as “groups of individuals that due to their economic
144 resources, expertise/knowledge, social networks, or positions in political or other
145 organizations stand in a privileged position to influence in a formal or informal way decisions
146 and practices with key social and environmental implications” (Bull, 2015, pp. 17–18). This
147 is a multifaceted definition of elites that allows for the existence of both parallel and
148 competing elites.

149 Environmental conflicts can ultimately be understood as attempts to renegotiate the
150 state, where different actors compete for control over resources and the state apparatus.
151 Therefore, within the fragmented security state, people engaged in environmental conflicts
152 actively create, accept or contest political legitimacy and authority in ways that can shift the
153 terms of hegemony in a manner that can either solidify or unsettle the status quo (Gramsci &
154 Nowell-Smith, 1972; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Rasmussen & Lund, 2018).

155 Environmental conflicts in Guatemala are profoundly shaped by the country’s 36-
156 year-long civil war and ensuing peace process. The civil war produced some of Latin
157 America’s most terrible instances of state terror that culminated in acts of genocide. The
158 signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, which marked the end of the war, did little to address
159 many of the root causes of the civil war (Brett, 2016; CEH, 2012; ODAH, 1998). To this day,
160 Guatemala’s state crafting project remains a strategy that combines democracy with
161 counterinsurgency and builds on long-evolving patterns of rural repression (Grandin, 2011).
162 The incapacity and lack of interest on behalf of elite factions to arrive at broad agreements on
163 a nation and state building project has fostered a particular type of state in Guatemala (Illmer,
164 2018). This is characterized both by a lack of state hegemony in the Gramscian sense and by
165 the absence of a monopoly on the legitimate use violence in the Weberian sense, which
166 becomes further compounded by disaccord about what counts as legitimate violence. As

167 Gramsci argued, the absence of hegemony by dominating groups in the formation of
168 discourses, subjectivities and political blocs, leads to a domination of subalterns that is
169 dictatorial and crude (Gramsci & Nowell-Smith, 1972).

170 Violence remains recourse in most political struggles in Guatemala, also between
171 elites in their competition for domination and economic gains (Bull, 2014). One expression of
172 the failure to establish a monopoly on violence is the instrumental but shifting relationship
173 between the economic elite and the military. The fact that the military controlled much of the
174 state, held high positions in various state enterprises, and acquired economic benefits from
175 such positions, increased tension among dominating sectors within the economic elite, who in
176 the 1990s were advocating a minimalist state (Bull, 2005).

177 Towards the end of the war, governments favouring economic liberalization and
178 decentralization emerged, contributing to consolidate the privileged position of private
179 business in the economy. Following the Peace Accords, the government began implementing
180 a policy package that enabled a new wave of investments in the primary sector, which was
181 embraced enthusiastically by the domestic private sector (Bull, 2005). Furthermore, the new
182 policies highlighted the participation of the private sector in natural resource-based sectors
183 such as agribusiness, hydropower development and extractive industries. The model was also
184 based on close collaboration with private business, both domestic and transnational, in the
185 formulation of laws, the selection of priorities regarding public policy, and regulatory
186 frameworks (Dougherty, 2011).

187 Elites' preferences and strategies profoundly impact on the evolution of state
188 structures, not least in elite-dominated contexts such as the Latin American ones (Bull, 2020).
189 In the case of Guatemala, the fragmented security state, a state whose security services offer
190 fractured, selective security that reproduces violence in society, particularly amongst the poor
191 and the marginalized, is favoured by the elites because of its permeability to influence
192 peddling, which in turn best protects and promotes their interests (Pearce, 2018). As the case
193 of Guatemala exemplifies, the fragmented security state comes at the cost of public
194 accountability and judicial independence. Furthermore, in such state projects, violence not
195 only remains a state repertoire for governing but is also unbound by legality. The
196 entanglements of bureaucratic and political actors with these elites secure the legitimization
197 of this *de facto* governance model. The fragmented security state in Guatemala, with violence
198 embedded in its logic, is aimed at guaranteeing impunity and shaping a social order
199 favourable to elite interests. Elites, extractive firms and criminal actors all appear to accept –
200 if not share – an interest in maintaining the “stable instability” emerging from the logics of

201 the fragmented security state (Pearce, 2018, p. 23). Violence, then, is *de facto*, an everyday
202 tool of political, social and economic interactions.

203 The mechanisms used to secure the expansion of natural resource extraction and agri-
204 business started to take shape towards the end of the war, including legislative changes
205 regarding the extractive sector, market mechanisms for redistribution of land, mapping of
206 resources and new institutional arrangements (Aguilar-Støen, 2016; Alonso-Fradejas, 2012;
207 Dougherty, 2011; Granovsky-Larsen, 2013, 2018; Solano, 2013). These processes were also
208 taking place in the particular context of the global expansion of mineral and green energy
209 booms (Bridge, 2004a, 2004b, 2008). Access to “new” resources as in the case of
210 hydropower and minerals is secured by re-configurations of the relationship between natural
211 resources and institutional orders that happen at particular moments in particular places
212 (Rasmussen & Lund, 2018). In Guatemala, this reconfiguration was accompanied by a
213 complex form of violence, and state crafting in the wake of the war which played a
214 significant role in setting the stage for the emergence of Guatemala’s current systems of
215 resource governance.

216 In our study, we focus on four mining projects (Table 1.) and the violence observed in
217 each of the cases, as well as the forms of organized resistance from the communities
218 impacted by the projects. Violence is a contested concept and its definition continues to
219 evolve (de Haan, 2008). Navas et al. (2018) find that the common understanding of violence
220 in environmental conflicts as a direct event in time and space is only the tip of the iceberg
221 and that violence can reach not only environmental defenders, but also communities, nature,
222 and sustainability of their relations. Given these diverse forms of violence, we adopt the
223 approach of Navas et al. (p. 658), who have called for a multidimensional approach to
224 violence (encompassing “slow”, structural, cultural, and ecological forms of violence, and not
225 only direct quick episodes of physical violence) as a tool for a wider conceptualization of
226 violence for analysis of environmental conflicts. We furthermore follow Peluso and Watts (p.
227 5) in their understanding of violence as “a phenomenon rooted in local histories and social
228 relations yet connected to larger processes of material transformations and power relations.”

229 The two commissions of historical clarification in Guatemala (RHEMI and CEH)
230 established after the end of the civil war, used an inclusive definition of violence. Because we
231 conceptualize current violence as emerging from the post-war transition in Guatemala, we
232 also adopt an inclusive definition of violence as “the exercise of power over others by some
233 individual, agency, or social process that denies those subject to their humanity either by
234 reducing them from what they are or by limiting them from becoming what they might be”

235 (de Haan, 2008, p. 5). We furthermore understand violence as a process rather than simply an
236 event (Tyner & Inwood, 2014) that not only perpetuates or reshapes conditions of access and
237 control over resources but is also transformative of resources and environments (Le Billon &
238 Duffy, 2018, p. 248).

239 In the conflicts we studied (Table 1.), direct violence, including assassinations and
240 armed attacks, were observed in all cases and other forms of physical violence, such as sexual
241 violence or threats thereof, were common in two of the cases. In addition, other forms of
242 symbolic violence, like defamations, threats, criminalization, and surveillance are observed in
243 all cases. In one case, violence was expressed as the denial of the existence of the Xinka
244 Indigenous people.

245 Our research draws on 49 qualitative interviews and participant observation
246 conducted in Guatemala between 2013 and 2017, as well as the three authors combined years
247 of experience in the country. We bring together information gathered from a wide range of
248 different actors, including Indigenous leaders, environmental activists, and rural smallholding
249 farmers involved in anti-extractive movements, as well as legal advisors representing them
250 and allied organizations. Through interviews, participant observations and informal
251 conversations, these actors described their experiences of mobilizing and organizing in
252 defence of their environment and territories, as well as their experiences of the
253 criminalization, repression and violence that they faced because of their involvement in
254 environmental activism.

255 We also interviewed corporate representatives from transnational mining companies,
256 multinational conglomerates and agro-industrial organizations, as well as leaders of business
257 associations and industrial business networks, board members of umbrella associations
258 promoting private sector interests, and powerful political and economic elites. Through
259 interviews and during participant observation, these actors explained their perspectives on
260 environmental conflicts, what they see as the underlying causes and main drivers of these
261 conflicts, as well as the main challenges currently facing extractive industries in the country.
262 Participant observation included visits to four different mining sites; three were mineral
263 mines, and one a cement plant. Two visits were tours of the mining facilities with
264 representatives of the mines, whereas the other visits were with community activists and took
265 place outside of the mines. We also participated in a week-long, grassroots-led anti-mining
266 gathering, which brought together environmental defenders from across Latin America the
267 Caribbean and Africa to share their experiences and build solidarity among transnational

Project	Fenix project	Marlin Mine	El Tambor (La Puya)	El Escobal	San Gabriel
Owner/Operator:	1977-1982 INCO (CA) 2004 Hudbay (CA) 2011 Solway Group (RU)	Goldcorp (CA)	2009- Kappes, Cassiday & Associates (USA) 1999-2009 Radius Gold (CA)	2019- Pan American Silver (CA) 2010-2019 Tahoe Resources (CA)	Cementos Progreso (GUA)
Operations:	1977- ongoing	2005-2017	2012- (suspended in 2016)	2013- (suspended in 2017)	2005- ongoing
Mineral extracted:	Nickel	Gold	Gold	Silver	Cement
Location:	El Estor, Izabal	San Juan Ixtahuacán and Sipakapa, San Marcos	San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc, Guatemala	San Rafael las Flores, Santa Rosa	San Juan Sacatepéquez, Guatemala
Mobilisation strategies:	Demonstrations, protests and marches. Lawsuit in Canada regarding the killing of Adolfo Ich, the shooting of German Chub Choc and the rapes of 11 Q'eqchi' women.	Roadblock for more than 30 days in 2004. Community referendum (the third in Latin America, after Tambogrande, Peru (2002), and Esquel, Argentina (2003)).	Roadblock from 2012 to date; blockade in front of Ministry of Energy and Mines in 2016; Demonstrations and marches. Various legal cases brought to Guatemalan courts.	Roadblock in San Rafael as Flores in 2013; numerous demonstrations and marches in Guatemala City as well as in Santa Rosa, Jalapa and Jutiapa; roadblock in Casillas from 2017 to date. Community referendums and various legal cases brought to Guatemalan courts, as well as international tort claims in Canadian courts, and shareholder claims in US courts.	Demonstrations, protests, blockades.
Types of repression/violence:	Killings, sexual violence, forced evictions, threats, defamation, criminalization, state of emergency.	Killings, armed attacks, defamation, criminalization, state of emergency.	Killings, armed attacks, threats, defamation, criminalization, state of emergency.	Killings, armed attacks, displacement, threats, surveillance, defamation, criminalization, state of emergency.	Killings, armed attacks, threats, surveillance, defamation, criminalization, state of emergency.
Actors involved in the attacks:	State security forces (during war), private security forces.	National police and the military.	National police, riot police, private security of the mine.	National police, military and private security of the mine.	National police, military and private security, as well as paramilitary actors.

Table 1. Mining conflicts in Guatemala

270 activist networks³. We also conducted participant observation during private sector
271 conferences, numerous anti-extractive demonstrations and protests, several community
272 meetings, press conferences, and court hearings. Interviews and participant observation were
273 complemented by an analysis of policy documents, media articles, and government
274 documents and reports.

275

276 **3. Unpacking the strategic value of mining to the elite**

277 Here we explore the strategic value of mining to certain factions of the elite in
278 Guatemala. Elites are involved in Guatemala's mining sector as partners, intermediaries and
279 beneficiaries. We argue that by engaging in activities that facilitate mining (as landowners,
280 service providers, knowledge providers, door openers etc.), some elites strengthen their
281 position in the current context of elite disputes and elite shifts. Other actors, particularly
282 private security providers, also play a key role in shaping private sector and governmental
283 responses to mining opposition.

284

285 **3.1. Shifting elite dynamics and a strengthened civil society**

286 The combination of political changes related to post-war democratization and
287 economic changes starting in the 1980s led to the emergence of new elites and new factions
288 within the traditional elite. The economic elite adapted to global economic changes by
289 forming alliances with transnational corporations, who often control access to markets and
290 technology, and by expanding regionally and globally (Bull et al., 2014). Additionally, new
291 groups controlling important resources in the country started to challenge the economic
292 dominance of the old landed elite, including in the media sector and telecommunications, as
293 well as illegal and criminal networks (Bull, 2005, 2015, 2016; Bull & Aguilar-Støen, 2019;
294 Solano, 2015a). The extractive industries also saw the emergence of new international actors,
295 e.g. Canadian, Russian and U.S. mining firms, European firms in hydropower development
296 and Nicaraguan groups in sugarcane production. Finally, former military officers who gained
297 riches through illegal activities during the war joined the fight for the control of political
298 parties, and largely control private security firms (Argueta, 2012).

299 There are also various new ways in which domestic elites collaborate with
300 transnational firms in the post-war era. This includes domestic economic groups participating

³ <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/Campesinos-protestan-contra-la-mineria-en-Guatemala-20150316-0038.html>

301 as minor partners in specific projects. Domestic companies function as service providers for
302 transnational companies, for instance, providing electricity, infrastructure and equipment.
303 They also function as political “door openers” for transnational companies who are
304 dependent on the domestic business elite who control important political resources, networks
305 and information without which international actors could not operate. As a result, the
306 traditional business elite have remained powerful, keeping transnational corporations in
307 subordinate positions (Bull et al., 2014; Schneider, 2012).

308 It is within this context that the strategic value of the mining sector can be understood.
309 As expressed during our interviews, domestic elites lack the technology necessary to develop
310 the mining industry in Guatemala. However, they own the land and control other resources
311 (i.e. the know-how and the know who) necessary to operate extractive industries and provide
312 services, such as electricity, infrastructure and equipment. As corruption cases⁴ under
313 investigation in Guatemala have revealed, infrastructure development has been a continuous
314 business for the domestic elite. However, the emergence of new actors and the ascent of non-
315 elites to power has signified challenges to elite control over the state apparatus and the elite’s
316 loss of hegemony (Bull & Aguilar-Støen, 2019).

317 The fall of former president Pérez Molina and former vice-president Baldetti in 2015
318 due to the discovery of a corruption ring in the toll office, known as “La Línea,” shows that
319 control of the state apparatus is no longer exclusive to the economic elite. The military,
320 particularly war officers, had disputed control over the toll office since before the signing of
321 the Peace Accords (Estrada & Rodriguez, 2015; Peacock & Beltrán, 2003). Changing elite
322 dynamics also led to new ways to control the state through campaign financing, as revealed
323 by the now defunct International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG, for its
324 acronym in Spanish). While in the past the economic elite was the main financier of electoral
325 campaigns, currently the economic elite contributes 25% of the funding, 50% comes from
326 companies providing services to the state, and the remaining 25% comes from illicit
327 structures, mainly drug trafficking (CICIG, 2015).

328 Both the legislative and executive branches are increasingly sites of competition
329 between old and new elites with the Legislative Assembly acting as a marketplace where
330 political favours are traded, open to influence trafficking by groups associated with licit and
331 illicit sectors (Briscoe & Rodríguez-Pellecer, 2010). Despite this, the traditional elite
332 continues to hold strong influence in the legislative and executive branches of the state.

⁴ <https://www.cicig.org/casos-listado/>

333 Naveda (2011) suggests that the most powerful Guatemalan elite (family) corporations
334 contributed to funding the political campaigns of former presidents Arzú, Berger and Pérez
335 Molina. Once their candidate is in office, members of these groups take positions in the
336 government (Valdez & Palencia Prado, 1998; Valdez, 2003, 2015). Ideological affinity is not
337 a requisite for the elite to support candidates. Rather, they pursue a strategy of supporting
338 whoever has better odds of winning to secure their economic interests and to establish new
339 business opportunities that further strengthen their position. This happens, for example,
340 through their influence on the drafting of favourable laws that allows them to advance their
341 business interests and political agendas, notably for our case, the mining bill and the electric
342 energy bill (Aguilar-Støen, 2015; Dougherty, 2011). In sum, in the context of shifting elite
343 constellations, mining offers a site in which various competing actors can form alliances and
344 as we will discuss in the next section, the provision of security became key to such alliances.

345 New institutional arrangements and changing opportunity structures emerging from
346 the peace process reshaped the relationship between state, market and citizens in ways that
347 opened certain political spaces to the participation of civil society groups in formal decision-
348 making arenas. Prominent actors, including International Financial Institutions and the
349 modernizing faction of the elite promoted neoliberal reforms jointly with the promotion of
350 liberal political institutions, and emphasized the importance of civil society participation
351 (Bull & Aguilar-Støen, 2019; Rettberg, 2007). A series of new national and international
352 legal instruments that sought to strengthen popular and/or Indigenous participation in
353 decision-making were also adopted. The UN-International Labour Organization's (ILO)
354 Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (No. 169, 1989), as well as on the
355 country's Municipal Code, Decree 12-2002, and the Law of Local Development Councils all
356 secure rights to participation in decision-making regarding local development and Free, Prior
357 and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous peoples, and in certain cases, of local non-
358 Indigenous communities. However, the state's embrace of neoliberal governance models also
359 resulted in private actors assuming control of environmental governance mechanisms – EIAs
360 in particular – perceived to protect social and environmental rights (Aguilar-Støen & Hirsch,
361 2015, 2017; Deonandan & Morgan, 2016).

362 Within these institutional arrangements, public participation and FPIC codified within
363 EIAs have become the primary (formal) accountability mechanism for groups affected by
364 mining (Dougherty, 2019). The combined outcomes of these processes would set the stage on
365 which Indigenous and other rural peoples would attempt to legitimize their rights to political
366 participation and demand accountability from the state in contemporary environmental

367 conflicts. For instance, we find that groups opposing both mining and hydropower projects
368 increasingly leverage international instruments and institutions like the ILO's Convention
369 169, but also UNDRIP and IACHR, to bolster their claims to self-determination and political
370 autonomy in natural resource governance (Domingo, 2010; Sieder, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2017;
371 Xiloj, 2016; Xiloj & Porras, 2008). Environmental and community activists also draw on
372 these same instruments, mobilizing procedural tactics and legal mechanisms, to challenge
373 market-driven and technocratic notions of 'participation' and 'consultation' as effective
374 means for public accountability. They also develop innovative public accountability
375 mechanisms, such as deliberative community-led consultations, to challenge their exclusion
376 from decision-making arenas and demand accountability from the state (Urkidi, 2011; Walter
377 & Urkidi, 2017).

378

379 **3.2. The demobilization of the military and the emergence of private security groups**

380 In addition to competition between old and new elites, the demobilization of the
381 military also led to various power struggles and shifting opportunity structures that resulted in
382 novel, emerging private security providers. Military personnel entered illegal activities during
383 the civil war (smuggling, tax evasion, drug trafficking) through diffuse and shifting networks
384 by way of which they amassed considerable fortunes (Peacock & Beltrán, 2003). As a result
385 of the volatility of such networks and the illegal nature of their activities, it was crucial to
386 secure access to and control of the intelligence offices of the government. A key resource was
387 the *Estado Mayor Presidencial* (EMP). Several corruption cases revealed that struggles over
388 the EMP also centred around the fight for political power and authority. The goal of
389 controlling intelligence offices seemed to be related to the opportunities it provided for
390 monitoring and maintaining surveillance of competing illegal networks.⁵ The dissolution of
391 the EMP in 2003 did not mean that the military completely lost access to intelligence offices.
392 Indeed, some of them entered newly created civilian intelligence offices while others joined
393 the private sector, as well as organised crime, drug trafficking and other legal and illegal
394 activities (Argueta, 2012).

⁵ Various former military members who worked at the EMP are accused in the aforementioned corruption cases, are also accused or convicted in cases related to crimes committed during the civil war; or both. i.e. Manuel Antonio Callejas y Callejas (Caso Moreno, Caso Molina Thyssen, drug trafficking); former general Luis Francisco Ortega Menaldo (Caso Moreno); Otto Pérez-Molina (Caso la línea, caso cooptación del estado); Juan Guillermo Oliva Carrera (Caso Moreno; Caso Mirna Mack).

395 The private security sector absorbed a considerable number of former military
396 members in a process that intensified after 1996 (Argueta, 2012). International security
397 advisors, particularly from the USA and Israel, who advised the military on intelligence
398 during the civil war, were pioneers in providing security services to the private sector in
399 Guatemala. This proved a lucrative business and Guatemalan actors eventually established
400 their own private security firms in alliance with Israeli and British companies (Argueta, 2012;
401 Solano, 2015b, 2015c). As a result, private security entities in Guatemala have become
402 important economic actors. They are organized in the Chamber of Commerce and provide
403 services to the government with a cost that is equivalent to 16% of the BNP (Chávez, 2019a).
404 Additionally, as exemplified by the case of an Israeli security provider, they can gain
405 temporary positions within the government as advisors or consultants and also sell
406 ammunition and arms (Chávez, 2019b). Private security companies compete to secure
407 contracts with the state and with private corporations producing, as Abrahamsen and
408 Williams (2009) suggest, new institutions, practices and forms of security governance.

409 These changes indicate important developments in the relationship between security
410 and the state, structures of political power and authority, and the operations of global capital,
411 all of which corresponds with the emergence of the fragmented security state (Pearce, 2018).
412 As we have discussed, violence remains a common tactic to manage dissent in environmental
413 conflicts and enforce compliance with extractive projects. We find, however, that the main
414 difference between the past and the present situation are the shifting constellations where the
415 state increasingly relies on private security to uphold their coercive functions.

416

417 **4. Corporate/government/elite mobilization strategies in response to mining resistance**

418 In this section, we analyse the mobilization strategies used by
419 corporate/government/elite networks in response to anti-mining activism. We do so by
420 examining in more detail three forms of violence present in Guatemalan mining conflicts: 1)
421 direct physical violence; 2) discursive strategies; and 3) “the rule of law” and ‘soft
422 techniques’ of violence.

423

424 **4.1. Direct violence**

425 In Guatemala, corporate and state actors have historically mobilized violence and
426 repression in attempts to manage dissent and maintain social control. During the civil war
427 reactions to mining opposition were decisively violent. At the height of the war in the 1970s
428 and early 1980s numerous human rights abuses were committed by the military at the Fenix

429 nickel mine⁶ in the El Estor region (Nolin & Stephens, 2010; Solano, 2013). To this day, we
430 find that violence and repression, including assassinations, assaults, forced evictions, rape,
431 and criminalization of dissent remain a common response to contemporary mining
432 opposition. However, whereas during the civil war the main perpetrators were public security
433 forces, currently, public security forces operate in tandem with private security firms. The
434 various types of links and networks that international mining companies establish with
435 Guatemala's domestic elite also include connections to private security firms, which often
436 have ties to international security firms.

437 To illustrate we draw on an ongoing land conflict between Mayan Q'eqchi'
438 communities and a mining company in El Estor. The conflict dates back to the days of the
439 civil war, when Q'eqchi' communities were driven off land that is now considered as part of
440 the Fenix mine (Deonandan et al., 2017; Fox, 2015). In January 2007, 11 Q'eqchi' women
441 were raped by private security forces, police and military during the forceful expulsion of
442 Q'eqchi' families from their farms and homes in the remote community of Lote Ocho. Two
443 years later, on September 27, 2009, Adolfo Ich Chamán, a Q'eqchi' community leader, was
444 brutally killed by private security forces employed by Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel
445 (then subsidiary of HudBay, now under the ownership of Russian Solway) at the Fenix mine
446 close to the town of El Estor. Later that same day, German Chub Choc too was shot in an
447 unprovoked attack by the head of security for the Fenix project, leaving him paralyzed
448 (Klippensteins, Barristers & Solicitors, 2018b, 2018a).

449 Another recent case of violence against anti-mining activist is the 2013 shooting of
450 peaceful protesters outside the Escobal mine in Santa Rosa. In April 2013, shortly after the
451 Canadian-owned mine received its exploitation license, the company's private security
452 opened fire on a group of people peacefully protesting outside the mine and seven people
453 were shot. Others we interviewed were severely beaten by the national police as they fled the
454 scene. Alberto Rotondo, a former Peruvian military officer, was the head of security for
455 Tahoe Resources at the time. According to wiretap evidence filed in court, Rotondo was later
456 recorded saying: "I gave the order to kill some of those sons of bitches" (Solano, 2015c).
457 Aided by Guatemalan police, Rotondo later fled the country and is currently in his native
458 Peru. Several days after the shootings, the Guatemalan government declared a "state of siege"
459 in the municipalities closest to the mine, deploying thousands of troops to the area,

⁶ The Fenix nickel mine in El Estor was the first transnational metal mining project in Guatemala. For a detailed discussion of the history of the Fenix Project and INCO see Fox (2015).

460 suspending constitutional rights in the region. Otto Perez Molina, the then-president, justified
461 the state of siege on grounds of terrorism and drug trafficking. The violence surrounding the
462 Fenix and the Escobal mines are only two examples out of many more we studied in
463 Guatemala. Other cases, such as La Puya and the Marlin mine, were rife with violent
464 repression too.

465 As these examples illustrate, violence and repression continue to be used to secure
466 resource control and force compliance with extractive projects in ways that constrain the
467 conditions of possibility for those who oppose such projects in Guatemala. There is an
468 unsettling uptake in killings of activists and Guatemala is now among the most dangerous
469 countries in the world for those who engage in environmental/land related activism (Butt et
470 al., 2019; Global Witness, 2019). Guatemala experienced a five-fold increase in the number
471 of murders of land defenders between 2017 and 2019, making it one of the deadliest
472 countries per capita (Cuffe, 2019; Global Witness, 2019). However, there have been shifts
473 and rescaling in the spatiality of violence and there has been an introduction of new actors,
474 from the public security forces holding a legitimate monopoly of violence (albeit a weak one)
475 to new private security actors. These actors emerged, as we discussed above, in the aftermath
476 of the civil war and in the context of the changing dynamics of intra-elite conflicts and
477 competition.

478

479 **4.2. Discursive strategies as repression**

480 One of the most salient tactics employed by the Guatemalan elite when its interests
481 are threatened is to conjure up the image of the internal enemy by demonizing its opponents
482 as ‘communists,’ ‘insurgents’ or ‘terrorists’. This is by no means a new strategy. In order to
483 protect its interests, the extreme right-wing landowner elite and the private sector have
484 traditionally cultivated and depended upon visceral reactions to the guerrilla and to
485 ‘communism’ among the military and certain segments of Guatemalan society (Schirmer,
486 1998). In the contemporary context, the government and the private sector utilize the notion
487 of the internal enemy as a response to the growing opposition against mining. This strategy
488 discursively unifies otherwise divided elites and justifies the use of violence against
489 dissidents who threaten ‘national security’, economic growth and development, further
490 entrenching elite power, which now also includes military elites. The following quotation is
491 illustrative. When we asked about mining opposition, a representative from the extreme right-
492 wing, pro-military group “Foundation Against Terrorism” (*Fundación Contra el Terrorismo* -
493 FCT), answered:

494 *“There are two important aspects to it. In the first place it [opposition to mining] is an*
495 *aggression against private investments which at the end will undermine*
496 *Guatemalans’ development opportunities via dignified jobs...on the other hand, we*
497 *see that those who are against mining are the same people who have promoted [legal]*
498 *actions against our war veterans... there is a very intricate situation regarding*
499 *human rights and the environment... we filmed the people who were blocking the*
500 *entrance to the mine and we identified [name of two people]... they are the*
501 *protagonists in the hunting of our veterans, then that’s why we are now hunting them,*
502 *right? It’s us hunting them... we are a reaction to it.”⁷*
503

504 Ibarra (2006, p. 195) argues that the decade between 1944 and 1954 created a space
505 for collective subjects’ political participation in a way that was unacceptable for the business
506 sector, the ecclesiastic hierarchy and the extreme right wing. The figure of the internal enemy
507 was conceived and could be applied to members of the communist party, opposition
508 politicians, catholic priests, union leaders, students, intellectuals, and rural activists (Oglesby
509 & Ross, 2009). Its purpose was to legitimize violence and eventually genocide against the
510 Indigenous population during the civil war (Brett, 2016; Ibarra, 2006; Sanford, 2003;
511 Schirmer, 1998). Nowadays, the figure of the internal enemy primarily assumes the form of
512 ‘communists’ or ‘terrorists’ and frequently in ways that intersects with racist discourses about
513 Indigenous people. Indeed, our analysis indicates that anti-communist and anti-terrorist
514 rhetoric is often intertwined with racist discourses about Indigenous people in the media. In
515 the early 2000s groups like Liga Pro-Patria,⁸ the Foundation Against Terrorism and the
516 Military Veterans’ Association (AVEMILGUA) started to portray those fighting for
517 transitional justice as communists and enemies of the state (Molden, 2016). Then, as the first
518 protests against mining emerged in the early 2000s⁹, a similar rhetoric was used against
519 environmental activists. To illustrate, we quote a document prepared by a professor at a
520 private university in Guatemala who provided consultancy for the association of energy
521 providers in 2010, to analyse mobilization and opposition to mining and hydropower

⁷ Interview ECN18 conducted in Guatemala in November 2016 by second author.

⁸ Liga Pro-Patria was formed by Francisco Bianchi, pastor of the evangelical church Verbo, the same church to which Ríos Montt belonged (Handy, 2003).

⁹ The conflict associated with the Marlin mine that broke out in 2004 marks perhaps the beginning of Guatemalan anti-mining movement in the current frontier moment.

522 development.¹⁰ According to the document, one of the common factors explaining opposition
523 to extractive industries was:

524 *“The nostalgia for the 1970s, with its idealized vision of the “people” and that sooner*
525 *or later there would be a social uprising. According to this vision, given the poor*
526 *social indicators of the country and the historical experience of the October*
527 *revolution and the internal armed conflict, Guatemala is kind of a ticking bomb and*
528 *their job [of those involved in protests against extractive industries] is “to sharpen the*
529 *contradictions” so that the people would finally rebel and take power to create a new*
530 *political order; thus the fight against dams, mines, transgenics or cement plants are*
531 *opportunities to organize the people... to prepare for the revolution that is pending*
532 *since 1954 (p.4).”*

533

534 Furthermore, because former guerrilla organizations failed to succeed as a political
535 party after the war, members of these organizations sought other alternatives of which
536 opposition to mining becomes a niche:

537 *“To sum up, many of the mobilizations do not have the objective of improving the*
538 *environment or the situation of indigenous peoples or of women, but simply to create*
539 *the “objective and subjective conditions” of the “necessary revolution” which despite*
540 *the failure during the war are still “pending” ...Some of them [former guerrilla] ...*
541 *have found a refuge in social movements including those converted into*
542 *environmentalism... opposition to hydropower (though even to a greater degree*
543 *opposition to mining) can result in the suspension of investments without solving the*
544 *problems of the communities...(p.7).”*

545

546 It was after the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York that the rhetoric of the military
547 veterans and their sympathisers increasingly started to use the term “terrorist”
548 interchangeably with “communist.” Terrorist was of course a term used during the cold war,
549 but its popularity as the new stereotype of the “other” that threatens national security
550 increased only recently in Guatemala. In 2005, the penal code was amended to include the
551 legal figure of “terrorist,” which allowed FCT, Liga Pro-Patria and the Public Prosecutor’s
552 Office to charge human rights activists who oppose extractive projects with terrorism. The

¹⁰ Miguel L. Castillo Girón (2010) "Análisis de actores involucrados en acciones de oposición a la ejecución de proyectos energéticos y propuesta de estrategias para enfrentarles" (the document is available upon request to the authors).

553 Public Prosecutor's office (*Ministerio Público*) charged activists who protested mining in
554 Santa Rosa with terrorism charges in 2013, charges which were later dropped. One activist,
555 who had to go into hiding for seven months, described their experience as following:

556 *"It affected me a lot because it is very hard when they issue an arrest warrant for you*
557 *without having anything, without there being any crime. And they charged me with*
558 *many false crimes, which I never committed... They said that we belonged to Los*
559 *Zetas, to organized crime, that we had killed two police officers and a lot of other*
560 *things that I never did."*¹¹

561
562 Corporate-government networks also draw on the discursive production of the
563 internal enemy vis-a-vis national security to justify violent responses to extractive opposition.
564 This connects to the government's frequent evocation of the supposedly ongoing war against
565 drug trafficking. In our analysis of government discourses the link to antidrug policy became
566 apparent. Former president Perez Molina declared in an interview with the press shortly after
567 the 2013 state of siege was declared in San Rafael las Flores:

568 *"The result of our investigation demonstrates that not everything that has happened*
569 *here [around San Rafael las Flores] is related to the mine [El Escobal] as some would*
570 *like to make it appear. There has been a series of crimes and offences related to*
571 *organized crime and other interests that have provoked anarchy in this region"* (Otto
572 Pérez Molina, May 3., 2013)¹²

573
574 In the same interview, the secretary of communications of the presidency stated that the state
575 of siege had the objective of capturing members of the "Zetas" a Mexican drug trafficking
576 group, who according to the department of interior of Guatemala operated in the region
577 around San Rafael las Flores.

578 In each case where a state of siege had been declared since 2012, the government
579 justified it as a means to combat drug trafficking (Paley, 2014). However, these states of
580 siege also coincided with places experiencing ongoing opposition to extractive projects.
581 Finally, as illustrated in the aforementioned quote by the environmental activist, charges of
582 drug trafficking and of belonging to criminal syndicates are frequently brought against
583 leaders of the anti-mining resistance movements to undermine their activism. These

¹¹ Interview conducted in Guatemala in July 2015 by first author.

¹² <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/global/2013/05/02/897095>

584 narratives of civil resistance as leftist plot, and/or as threats to national security, seek to
585 delegitimize resistance to extractive projects and to justify its repression.

586

587 **4.3. “The rule of law” and soft techniques of repression**

588 Corporate-government networks also employ softer techniques to manage dissent, maintain
589 social control and enforce compliance with extractive projects. Often, these softer means aim
590 to render conflict manageable rather than to outright eradicate oppositional groups (e.g.
591 Tansel, 2017).

592 In Guatemala, mining companies engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by
593 establishing their own community relations’ offices and sustainable community development
594 programs. These mechanisms involve quasi-development programs that may involve health
595 and educational services, technical capacitation, agricultural extension, infrastructure
596 construction and even political training of community leaders. CSR initiatives might result in
597 internal divisions within communities or even within families between those who see CSR
598 initiatives as goods and those who see CSR as co-optation. For example, several members of
599 the anti-mining movement we spoke to in Santa Rosa, as well as their spouses, lost their jobs
600 as teachers after the mining company starting funding local schools through CSR initiatives.
601 Furthermore, pro-mining parents would take their children out of schools where people
602 connected to the anti-mining movement worked, essentially segregating local schools
603 between pro- and anti-mining families. Anti-mining activists we spoke to, particularly in San
604 Rafael las Flores, also voiced concerns about not daring to seek medical services in their
605 community for fear of reprisal because the newly established clinic was funded by the mining
606 company.

607 The extractive sector has also secured control over mechanisms that govern public
608 participation in environmental decision-making. These mechanisms through which public
609 participation has been formalized, EIAs in particular, are perceived to protect social and
610 environmental rights. Notwithstanding, EIA practices in Guatemala have precluded any
611 meaningful participation, consultation or consent from groups affected by resource extraction
612 activities. Not only are EIAs enveloped by a lack of transparency, they are also used as a
613 technical device to delimit and control public participation (Aguilar-Støen & Hirsch, 2015,
614 2017).

615

616

617 However, communities affected by mining increasingly mobilise innovative strategies
618 to challenge technocratic notions of ‘participation’ and ‘consultation’ and to contest
619 prevailing systems of environmental governance. In the cases we observed, communities
620 used legal strategies to challenge EIAs and FPIC through formal-procedural mechanisms to
621 contest the regulatory approval of mining projects. Communities also challenge their
622 exclusion from decision-making processes by developing grassroots-driven forms of
623 governance practices, such as deliberative community-led referendums, which they use to
624 legitimize their right to self-determination and political autonomy in environmental
625 governance. In both of these tactics, communities strategically draw on local, national and
626 international laws, regulations, conventions, treaties and instruments to legitimize their
627 claims and demands for accountability. These strategies have resulted in Guatemalan courts
628 suspending mining licenses and revoking regulatory approval of several projects. The courts
629 based their decisions on the ILO 169 Convention, which Guatemala ratified in 1996 and is
630 binding to its signatories, citing the infringement on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to prior
631 consultation.

632 In response to the relative success of these strategies, the private sector has taken
633 several seemingly contradictory measures. One prominent strategy has been to try to
634 undermine claims for participation and delegitimize mechanisms like the community
635 referendums. In such instances, the private sector has raised strong concerns about the ‘lack
636 of legal certainty’ surrounding any participatory practices that fall outside the scope of the
637 EIAs. One prominent business leader explained:

638 *“In the mining and hydroelectric sector, part of the challenges we are experiencing is*
639 *the lack of legal certainty, the lack of clear rules and some court decisions that do not*
640 *build that type of legal certainty and stability.”¹³*

641
642 The private sector has particularly sought to undermine and control the ILO 169
643 because Indigenous groups draw on it to legitimize their claims in the judiciary. In July 2017,
644 the umbrella organization of the Guatemalan private sector – CACIF - petitioned the ILO to
645 intervene in Guatemala, claiming that the Convention was being violated and manipulated.
646 CACIF claims that recent unfavourable court rulings undermine legal certainty in the country

¹³ Interview conducted in Guatemala in September 2016 by first author.

647 and infringe on the right to freedom of enterprise and work, generating social conflict
648 (Bolaños & Gramajo, 2017).
649



650
651 *Figure 1. Community outside of court after victorious ruling upholding results of community*
652 *consultation. Photo by first author.*

653 The private sector also attempts to deny the existence of Indigenous peoples in areas
654 affected by extractive projects to negate the right to prior consultation and informed consent.
655 In the case of the Escobal mine, following the 2017 court rulings which temporarily
656 suspended the mine’s licenses for failure to meet prior consultation requirements, the private
657 sector along with several government institutions made statements denying the existence of
658 the Xinka people, either outright or in the vicinity of the mine. The then president of CACIF
659 was quoted saying that the Supreme Court’s resolution was based on a “non-existent
660 community” [referring to the Xinka people] and that, as such, the court’s resolution was false
661 (Prensa Libre, 2017). The minister of Energy and Mines supported the private sector, saying

662 that prior to the authorization of the license in 2013 the state had determined that there are no
663 Xinka in San Rafael las Flores (Prensa Libre, 2017).

664

665 **5. Conclusion**



666

667 *Figure 2. Xinka demonstration against Escobal mine in 2017. Photo by first author.*

668 In this article we explain why popular opposition to a relatively small industry is met
669 with so much violence and repression in post-war Guatemala. We started our analysis
670 suggesting that mining, rather than having a high economic value, holds strategic value to
671 elites in Guatemala. In recent years, Guatemala has witnessed the entrance of new
672 transnational elites associated with multinational mining corporations from Canada,
673 Australia, the United States and Russia. While these new elites control access to international
674 markets and technology, they remain in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the old, local elites
675 because the latter still exercise control over crucial political resources, networks of
676 information and land. By forming alliances with and providing services to transnational
677 mining corporations, a faction of the economic elite strengthens and secures its position as a
678 powerful political actor and its access to profitable business, i.e., infrastructure development
679 or selling energy to mining companies.

680 A frequent positive social outcome of observed across environmental conflicts
681 globally is strengthened participation among affected people, including cases of increased
682 civic engagement and participation in consultation, planning, and politics related to project
683 development (Scheidel et al., 2020). In Guatemala, participation in anti-extractive
684 movements is resulting in new forms of politics of mobilisation and resistance and people
685 caught up in mining conflicts increasingly assert themselves as political actors within the
686 state. However, this threatens the interests of the country's powerful elite and military who
687 benefit from maintaining the current socio-political order that is characterized by a racialized
688 class hegemony favourable to elite interests. This happens in a post-war context of shifting
689 elite dynamics, where violence remains a major repertoire of governing and plays an integral
690 part in securing control over and operationalizing the mining sector.

691 Mining conflicts in Guatemala are profoundly shaped by the country's war and
692 democratic transition. The peace process transformed how the public interacts with the state
693 by opening up political spaces to civil society participation in formal governance arenas.
694 However, the peace process also resulted in the emergence of new elites and new factions
695 within the traditional elite, which has sharpened elite competition for control over resources
696 and the state. As these groups compete and collaborate in shifting constellations, they are less
697 interested in neutralizing resistance and dissent via concessions and forms of compromise,
698 but instead opt for the explicit exclusion and marginalization of oppositional forces by
699 various strategies ranging from discursive framings and legal mechanisms to outright
700 violence and repression. Violent techniques of governing are further impacted by the
701 emergence of new private security groups following the demobilization of the military, which
702 further shapes how means of force and violence are employed in mining conflicts.

703 We find that corporate/government/elite reactions to anti-mining activism are
704 characterized by a multidimensional pattern of violence, from direct violence to symbolics
705 and structural violence. Violence is justified by linking opposition to mining to the figure of
706 the "internal enemy" framed within a rhetoric of terrorism. Corporate-government networks
707 also frame problems and their causes so to delegitimize opposition, particularly with
708 reference to national security and terrorism. This is observable in the frequent use of the state
709 of siege where martial law is declared in areas experiencing strong opposition to extractive
710 projects, usually justified on the grounds of "the war on drugs" and organized crime. The
711 private sector and the government also try to symbolically erase Indigenous people from
712 areas where mining takes place in attempts to preclude requirements for consultation and
713 consent.

714 However, despite the resources at their disposal and the asymmetrical power relations
715 that define the Guatemalan context, corporate-elite networks do not always succeed in their
716 goals, at least not easily. Despite repression and criminalization, activists are increasingly
717 able to assert the rights of affected communities to self-determination in environmental
718 decision-making in ways that unsettle the legitimacy and authority of prevailing systems of
719 resource governance. This dynamic interplay between corporate/government actions on the
720 one hand and grassroots mobilization on the other shapes the conditions of possibility for
721 those engaged in mining conflicts in ways that can transform social power, shift the terms of
722 hegemony and upset the status quo. In turn, struggles over resource control and mining
723 conflicts are profoundly shaping the Guatemalan state. While retaining several of the violent
724 and authoritarian features that the state has historically been characterized by, and that were
725 deepened during the civil war, the fragmented security state is less monolithic and more
726 shifting than before. This partly reflects elite divisions and a strengthened civil society and
727 continues to influence natural resource governance and mining conflict dynamics.

728 Finally, our aim with this article has been to present a nuanced reflection on the
729 relations between the mining sector, conflict processes, forms of violence and elite dynamics
730 in post-conflict contexts. Our hope is that analysing the reorganization of violence in the
731 post-genocide Guatemala through the study of mining conflicts may strengthen
732 understandings of the intense complexities surrounding mineral extraction and resource
733 governance in other post-conflict contexts as well.

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1149 **Figure 1.** Community outside of court after victorious ruling upholding results of community
1150 consultation. Photo by first author. Photograph showing group of community members
1151 outside of courthouse in Guatemala City after they received a victorious ruling upholding the
1152 result of their community consultation on mining in their community.

1153 **Figure 2.** Xinka demonstration against Escobal mine in 2017. Photo by first author.
1154 Photograph showing group of young men at an anti-mining demonstration in Guatemala City
1155 in 2017.