

Legacy of the Guatemalan Civil War:  
Breaking the memory of silence

By

Léo-Paul Ned Alfred Marc Eli Francois Teboul  
S1340247

Supervisor: Dr. J.C. Aguiar



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## Introduction

Centuries ago now, the first Europeans set afoot on the lands of the Americas forever by installing a highly unfair, exploiting and marginalizing colonial system with an economy of extraction and the systemic, linguistic as well as cultural annihilation of indigenous populations throughout the Americas. The sheer cruelty with which the Western European Powers ruled the whole continent, left an undeniable legacy which has been passed on to the ladino elite. The Ladinos are contemporarily recognized as a distinct non-indigenous ethnic group and the direct descendants of the Hispanic colonizers, as recognized by the Ministry of Education in Guatemala. They also were commonly associated with being rich land owners, to the contrary of the indigenous population. It is this elite which carried on once in power with the same relation between subject and state, not as equal but as a relation of power and dominance. The basic acknowledgement of this historical consequence, has been the fuel for the research which will be presented in the following pages.

Aside the historical necessity to provide investigation in the field of the subject's identity in a post-colonial society, contemporarily the question of the subject's identity is crucial to understand in order to prepare for the future migrating waves from populations in zones of conflict as well as populations from zones exposed to natural catastrophes caused by the grim reality of climate change. A thorough historical contextualization of the main event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Guatemala, the Thirty-Six Years War or Civil War, will be provided in order to depict and contextualize the importance of memory in post-colonial Guatemala. The following study therefore anchors itself as an analysis which is historically relevant to our contemporary societies, and furthers the understanding of the subject's identity in post-colonial societies.

Historically, the modern development of Latin American countries has been linked with the concept of post-colonial societies which has been for decades, since the advent of Said's *Orientalism*, an academic field of its own as well as the myth in anthropology of the 'noble savage' before that. The investigation which was conducted and the data which was collected in this study, as anchored the following thesis as a contemporary development of the academic field of post-colonial theory. As it offers a deeper understanding, on how the inner workings of internal colonization still play a major role into the identity creation and formulation of the post-colonial subject. However the true purpose of the study is to offer an academic bridging point between the academic field of post-colonial theory and the one of memory studies. Hence Guatemala has been chosen, as the most worthy case study to illustrate the connections between both, being a society which can be characterised as post-colonial while also being post-war. Most especially for the importance which memory of the shared historical experiences plays in the creation of the individual's identity and its relation to the state in such societies. A further

academic overview of the current debates regarding both fields will be provided during the first Chapter, which will account for the state of the arts.

The historical lens will highlight the importance as well as the context necessary to understanding the answers which will be provided in the following paper. Answers to one guiding question which has spurred for this investigation, *'How is subject's identity created in a post-colonial society? Especially considering its relation with the state and the memory of shared historical experiences.'* This question brought the need to investigate and formulate a line of questioning in order to find possible informants that would be willing to participate in said study, and provide the necessary data for the analysis. The scope of the study involved various actors of society, but mainly focused on the subject and the individual citizen of Guatemala. The subjects which participated in the study were divided among the two following groups for the sake of the analysis: the 'older' generation which has lived through the war but emigrated and the 'younger' generation which has not lived through the war but remained in Guatemala. The informants were however not informed of the distinction, and a one on one interview with open questions was conducted as well as recorded with each in order to provide data and insight into the reality that is the Guatemalan Identity.

The thesis is broken down into three distinct Chapters, with each respectively focusing on, the academic debate, the historical context and finally the analysis of the data. All those parts will allow to explain the factors that are at stake in the process of identity creation among post-colonial Guatemalan citizens after the memory trauma of the Civil War.

## **Chapter I: Postcolonial Theory and Memory Studies: a concise state of the arts**

The later analysis which will be presented in this chapter, ought to be understood with the help of a postcolonial lens and the importance of memory in the creation of the subject. The respective academic debates surrounding Postcolonial Theory as well as Memory Studies will be presented in order to grasp the state of the art before digging into the analysis of the data which has been collected in regards to the case study.

Both debates are modern academic debates that have emerged in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and have since led major roles in the humanities, especially for historical, political, identical and social analysis. The following two parts of this chapter, will attempt to provide a fair reflexion of the state of the arts regarding both debates. While an origin of each debate, as well as definitions that will be later used in this paper will be proposed in the following page, the effort will be to summarize as concisely as possible the significant amount of academic content which has been written about these two debates. The likes of Spivak, Bhabha and Said, to only mention a few will be used as the stepping stone upon which the Postcolonial Theory will be discussed, for they are seen as the forefather of the field of Postcolonial studies and each are respectively acclaimed postcolonial intellectuals. The understanding of the creation of the subject or the subaltern, is a key understanding in order to analyse the development of the postcolonial subject, and its identity.

While the first part of this chapter will focus on the Postcolonial Theory, and Internal Colonialism the second part will focus on memory and the creation of identity. Which are the concepts and processes that occur in a postcolonial society during the creation of the postcolonial subject, this guiding question will provide the need of exploring central concepts in order to understand these processes. A special focus will be dedicated to discourse analysis and its processes since it is the main bridging point between both academic debates. Since both debates have a certain focus on hegemony and dichotomy as central concepts of their understanding and analytical system for societies. The field of Memory studies ought to be studied in order to put forth the academic understanding that exists regarding the importance of historical experiences in the creation of the subject, the individual and the subaltern. Memory and its impact on the individual/subaltern has been a key relation between both fields, in the last decade since it has helped understand the identity movements and most especially the indigenous movements in Latin America, which have roots in the colonial times of struggle and have remained. Both fields are crucial conceptually in order to understand the adverse effects of post colonialism on the individual in modern Latin American societies. The hypothesis that Memory ought to be an integral part of postcolonial theory, in order to project and understand thoroughly the subaltern, will be the assumption under which the following framework will be built.

## 1.1 Postcolonial Theory

The forces of colonialism have had a cruel impact on the non-Western civilization ever since the great explorer and colonizing ventures, at least since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Institutions, structures, markets and the economic system set up by the colons in order to introduce mercantilism in the American continent still hold today, and have defined the Latin American societies for centuries. The residue left by Western colonisation and the conflict which have arisen from resisting to it have shaped the modern reality of the continent. The reach and impact of the societal/systemic residues left by Colonization, have been studied and theorized. Postcolonial studies as a field as seen the involvement of great intellectuals and philosophical approaches of the past decades in order to be where it is currently. One of the academic turning points of last century was the relevant question asked by Gayatri Spivak, who wondered whether the subaltern could speak? (1985, 243). The subaltern being the oppressed subject/individual in a society, oppressed according to Spivak by the imperialist forces which are remembrance of the colonial era. However it is the founding and core publication of Edward Said and his notion of *Orientalism* in 1978 which has spurred postcolonial studies into the academic world as a field of its own. Said developed a critique of how knowledge and power were perpetrated during colonial times and how they persisted after (1978). This remark and line of question fit in particularly well with the emergence of Postcolonial studies in the 1980s. A field which focuses on the critique and analysis of cultural, societal and economic hegemony of European powers over their former colonies as well as the availability of agency in a postcolonial society (Gandhi and Benett 2003,44).

The field of postcolonial study therefore focuses on the relations, power structure, culture exchanges and historical tensions between the colonizer and the colonized. As well as how each of these relations relate to the former colonization of said colonized. While the field used to historically focus on the economic and financial relations between the coloniser and colonised, it has since evolved from a Marxist economic analysis to a Marxist socio-economic approach which has enabled research about identity and citizenship to be included in the state of the art. A simple way to understand postcolonial theory is to picture it has the field which studies the conflict and relations between forces of Western Civilization and Non-Western Civilizations, through the study of individuals, institutions and power structures since these relations have shaped the current contour of most peripheral countries in the world (Prasad 2003, 4).

A concise and summarized way of understanding postcolonial theory, and the postcolonial field is to pinpoint the importance of the colonial historical era when European powers had controlled of overseas territories. The field critically and analytically look upon this period through different approaches, be they economic, political, social or artistic, in order to understand current societal

developments in former colonized countries. Said came forth with the notions of *Orientalism* effectively describing regions that were not attached to the core of Western European colonized, and were identified as the ‘other’, spurring forth the ‘us’ vs ‘them’ debate (1978). Said also incorporated colonial discourse as the elementary approach in order to understand texts and institutions in formerly colonized countries (ibid). *Orientalism* is crucial in order to understand postcolonial societies, because it gives an understandable framework to understand the dichotomy between exploited, marginalized communities and the state. Understanding this dichotomy is crucial for the case study of Guatemala, and struggle between minorities and the state. Another great postcolonial theorist which built his work upon a critic of the Said’s work was Bhabha, who in 1994 emerged with the concept of *colonial mimic-hybrid*, and focusing on the exchanges as well as adaptations from the colonized population as a way of resisting oppression especially through language (1994,33). He further claimed that as much as the colonized affected the colonizer the opposite relation also was true, mainly due to exchanges between the colonizing nation and the colonized nation as well as their respective populations (ibid). While these ideas have been at the centre of the postcolonial field for the two first decades of its existence, recent years have seen a focus on power structure, institutions, arts and identity in order to englobe the whole of postcolonial society. However the importance of *colonial mimic-hybrid* is crucial as a concept to understand the future colonial like actions that were taken by the Guatemalan government, and in understanding the power relations within the dichotomized society.

## **1.2 Internal Colonization and the Elite**

Understanding colonization is crucial to understand how it create the hegemony within a postcolonial society, and how it has affected indigenous populations to be dominated by the phenomena which has been coined as Internal Colonization in the academic debate. Internal Colonization is the occurrence of colonialism within the borders of a country unlike previously in history. It has been widely popularized by Latin American economists and social scientists in order to describe the national inequalities within their countries. It is a term used in order to pinpoint unequal relations with a country, through colonial institutions, mind set or actions. Therefore Internal Colonization focuses on the internal subjugation of communities by a dominant group/elite within a country. It ought to be noted that due to its apparent link to Marxist theory, and contentious politics the question was massively omitted from the social sciences during the first decades of the Cold War, before re-emerging during the 70’s (Stafford, 503).

Internal Colonization focuses on studying the relation, structures that enforce a kind dependence and exploitation similar to the ones that were in place during colonial times, this has been illustrated by the emergence of the dependency theory and its core vs periphery debate. This allowed for Internal Colonization to emerge and be part of the beginning of the postcolonial studies field (ibid,



504). As Wolpe also established, Internal Colonization doesn't have one concrete definition and can be shaped in order to understand societies in Latin America, North America and Africa. According to him Internal Colonization, is focus on labour exploitation and extensions of imperialism within one country. For Internal Colonization is the power of an entity over marginalized or minority ethnic groups within the same territory (Wolpe 1975, 105-114). Further and later analysis of the topic proposes that the emergence of capitalist industrialism has offered the possibility for nations to internally exploit certain groups, and therefore giving birth in postcolonial societies to what was to be called Internal Colonialism (Smith 1998, 58). Internal Colonialism is direct consequence of modernism, and is carried out by the ends of the Elite, through institutions that represent power in said country (Ibid, 59). However Internal Colonization does not only manifest itself through economic endeavours and labour exploitation, there are other means of Internal Colonization such as education, discrimination and limitations of opportunity for certain ethnic groups. This was represented and observable through an increase in unequal social ties between the core and the periphery, which has developed throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Internal Colonialism is helped by the strong will of individuals to bind into ethnic groups in the periphery, in order to protect their cultural integrity which has become the most important characteristics of ethnic groups (Hechter 1975, chapter 3-4-5). This solidarity between groups helped sustain a polarization of groups, and serves the interest of the Elite and/or the governing class to maintain control and structural exploitation through the means of internal colonization of indigenous populations (Smith 1998, 58). This is highly observable in countries of the Latin American region, for throughout most countries the ruling class has always emerged from groups that were not indigenous which therefore helped sustain the structural exploitation of these communities through the means of labour, institutions and education (ibid). The processes of Internal Colonialism go even further has to assign a non-neutral position to the State and major institutions, pin pointing has them responsible for the production of groups and their respective identity (Jung 2008, 79).

This act of group production by non-neutral postcolonial states and institutions, often leaves out the diversity as well as the right group definition for indigenous populations for the purpose of exploitation and generalization from non-neutral actors. Those groups are formed according to a pattern of exclusion, which miscategorises individuals and ethnic groups for the benefits of the non-neutral actors, those actors being the fore representative of colonial times (Ibid, 80-82). According to Jung while indigenous populations are often legally recognized as separate ethnic groups from the remaining of the population, this separation is only ethnically based. Meaning that socially wise, the exclusion of these groups by the institutions is obviously not taken into account. This creates a feeling that they are citizens of the nation, but yet promotes discrimination against unassimilated groups, which in turn promotes their exploitation and abuse of their labour capital (Ibid, 80). This exploitation can be carried over generations through the structural and institutional help of education or lack thereof. Education being a key usually for minorities to escape scarce situations, it can also be the tool which is used to

limit their opportunities therefore perpetuating through generations the exploitation and unfairness (Hwami 2014, 1). The far reaches of internal colonization through the educational system, is a far more contemporary approach of internal colonization which has emerged in the 90's (Ibid).

The state of the arts englobing the concept of internal colonization, seem to have approached issues or marginalization through the lens of institutional analysis. This approach has allowed scholars to differentiate between the different actors, present and responsible in a postcolonial society. These actors and mainly the Latin American State is the next logical conceptual continuation of this Chapter, and will provide with an academic understanding of the Latin American State.

### **1.3 The Latin American State**

The concept of the Latin American State is one with a fluid definition that has evolved over decades of scholarly debate. However a definition which seem to have carried through all debates, is the illustration of the Latin American State as an actor which is set as an institution of reminders to the colonial times (Loveman 2014, 5). Loveman goes further and identifies the marginalization of ethnic groups and the inequality aim at their group to be a residue of colonial times which is enforced by the institutions of the Latin American State (Ibid, 6). Therefore one can identify and understand the postcolonial Latin American state as an actor which can act as a society divider as much as the enforcer of those divides, which in turn promote unfairness, inequality and exploitation.

One interesting possible contradiction which seems to arise, in the scholarly debate has been raised by Altman and Luna who identify like many other scholars that the Latin American State is often recognized by its weak institutions ( 2012, 523). While this may seem contradictory in understanding the role of the state and its institutions in perpetrating colonial behaviours, their weakness should not be confused with inefficiency, it rather is synonym of unfair, targeting, and corrupted institutions. Corruption is a main challenge concerning participation and representation within Latin American states, since corruption lessens the trust of citizens towards institutions and their will to participate in the political life of the country (Chals et al 2012, 7). The rampant corruption which is seen as a usual characteristic of the Latin American state, this in turn causes worse results than a mere lack of trust and participation from the citizens. The weakness of their institutions, as cause the emergence of the term dysfunctional state when it comes to describing the Latin American state, this concept is engrained in the academic understanding of the Latin American state. This characteristic has the ill effect of lessening the legitimacy of governing bodies and the state as a whole therefore, challenging the state's ability to govern and justify actions (Borzal and Riise 2016, 153). A reduced legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens also leads to a lessen effectiveness to govern and in the application of the rule of law. This especially emerges as an issue when it comes to the governability question of indigenous populations, which in

addition to mistrusting authorities as perpetrators of the colonial system, ought to refuse their legitimacy to rule in favour of self-rule.

Therefore in short, identifying the Latin American state as an actor seems to show that it is weak institutionally and carries out ethnic discrimination/ categorization through its structural apparatus. The lack of trust placed in the state, its apparatus and institutions seems to point towards the dissonance found between citizens and state/elite in Latin America. In turn the adverse effect of such mistrust, is felt in the ability to govern and the legitimacy of the state, threatening already fragile relation especially with population that are inclined to self-determination and self-rule due to the discrimination/marginalization led by the state. This in turn shows the clear catalysing impact or influence the State can directly have on the creation and maintenance of the National Identity.

#### **1.4 National Identity and the Postcolonial subject**

However the most crucial and relevant impact of the Latin American state for this study, is its importance in the creation of National Identity. The discourses generated by Latin American state are the building stone upon which National Identity have been created in postcolonial times, historically Latin American states have either suppressed the idea of plural identity societies through institutional means in order to promote and strengthen the national identity. As pointed out by Goebel the careful use of internal colonization as from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, allowed for states to control, and exclude certain groups from participating into the creation of the National Identity in Latin America (2016, 9). He also raises the issue of *mestizaje* which according to him, when used in relation with National identities is not as englobing as it seems, for this mix race ideal excluded European migrants and native indigenous population from the National Identity discourses that were portrayed by the Latin American states (Ibid, 3). The term *mestizaje* needs to be understood in the light of understanding the dominance imposed in the hegemony present in a postcolonial society. The narrative of *mestizaje* actually is destructive at the encounter of ethnic diversity, by englobing all folks within the same discourse. This analysis is crucial in order to understand the role played by the Guatemalan state in post-war Guatemala in creating and renewing the national identity which had been shattered to pieces during the conflict. The suppression of plural identity societies in Guatemala through institutional means is quite flagrant and an integral of how the postcolonial subject is maintained. The articulation of National Identity in postcolonial societies, as mentioned earlier is hugely done with language and the suppression of ethnic dialects. This has proved to be challenging for ethnic minorities to counter effectively, and the postcolonial narrative has often helped shaped a National Identity excluding diversity rather than including it (Larsem 2005, 300). Knowing this institutional exchanges, is crucial in order to understand what processes are at stake in the Guatemalan National Identity, and how the postcolonial subject in

Guatemala has been able, and through which means has he created an identity in this postcolonial, post conflict society.

The nation is made of subjects; they constitute the origin and backbone of the nation, but they are colonized. One focus of the Post-colonial studies is the result it has on the individual's identity creation, and how the post-colonial society affects the agency of the individual, the subject. The possibilities, for groups that have been marginalized during colonial time, to create or renew their cultural and personal identity are limited. As described by Smith during the colonial times, population's identity had been robbed and were non-existent (2014, 98). This happened through the eradication of indigenous languages, religions and educational system in order to assert colonial dominion. In nearly all cases the history and complex cultures of indigenous populations were obliterated by the colonizer, through this the colonizers' effectively erased the existence of indigenous populations, suppressed their agency and denied their identity. This total suppression of identity, and the cover up of it which followed seem to have effectively permanently erasure of cultural and personal identity (Ibid, 98-100). The colonising effect of education, religion, language and culture are still felt, and limiting the space within which the post-colonial subject can renew its identity. Since the 1990's the re-emergence of native languages, allows to challenge the colonizing powers of institutions and governing bodies (Ibid, 104).

The sometimes pejorative words associated with ethnic minorities and marginalized groups in postcolonial society appear as harsh and insulting. However the targeted groups can often use their own discourse, and the individual's ability to create his own identity to effectively reassigning meaning to this words, turning them to positive. A clear example of such tendencies has been identified in the *Jibaro* community of Puerto Rico, since while the *Jibaro* community was marginalized due to its coffee growing heritage from colonial times, they have used it as a richness and a way to express their identity (Velez et al 2017, 27). This also underlines the necessity of understand memory and its influence in identity creation, since the stigma which remained and discourses surrounding the coffee growing heritage directly affected today's identity of the *Jibaro* community. This observation proves once again the importance of Memory, in the development of discourses which nurture the creation of identity. However it also raises the issue that identity, and its creation processes are being colonized by themselves. Through at the use of heritage and traditions, Internal colonization aims to narratively be colour-blind while delimiting society about colonial heritage's understanding of the world.

The creation of identity of the postcolonial subject through reassigning meaning to words that were previously pejoratively attributed to them during colonial times, has been a way of empowerment for marginalized groups. This is a clear use of what Bhabha calls *colonial mimic-hybrid*, resistance through language as mentioned earlier in this chapter. This tendency can be observed and identified during the Guatemalan Civil War, this process was a catalyst for the indigenous populations in

challenging the state and its forces. This identification is crucial in understanding identity creation in the current society of Guatemala. It ought to be noted that marginalized groups in postcolonial societies are often the target of narratives and discourses that are often stereotypical from the Medias, which majorly portray the attitude of governmental institutions (Olivotti 2016, 476). It is important to note the fluidity of terms, their appropriation but also the meaning assigning to each depending on the groups and individuals, this furthers the complexity of identity creation in postcolonial societies. In the light of the future case study that will be presented in this thesis, the ability that marginalized groups have to deter and form their own identity aside the structurally/institutionally imposed national identity by the state, creates the whole relevance of understanding the subject in the post-civil war Guatemalan society.

In the light of those discourses and societies, it is important to understand the key role which the concept of Memory plays in the creation and perpetration of such colonial processes as well as the identity creation processes among the postcolonial subject. For often struggles and share historical experiences have played a role that is not to be undermined by society. Memory much like discourse can be appropriated, assigned and is a fluid concept that can be used for the best of the individual's or group's identity.

### **1.5 Memory Studies, state of the art**

The academic dedication to the study of Memory and its importance in the processes of identity creation has emerged in academia after the dreadful events of Second World War, which have shaped the modern European nations. Memory can shape up as many forms in order to serve its main purpose of providing a continuity to individuals' dislocations as well as their identity (Creet 2011,3). It is crucial to understand the historical connection between place and memory when it comes to memory analysis, since memory is most often associated with a location, often the longing for a home or in the form of a statue or museum, those are places in which memories live and change (Ibid). These places which are at the core of the memory creation often, create a will or sense within the individuals that they should eventually aim to return, return "home" (Rocca 2017, 1). One of the clearest examples of how memory can be used in the shaping of identity, ought to be the contemporary example of the Pied Noir immigration to France during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of the most important terms which is to be derived from this memory study is the notion of collective amnesia, referring to the French-Algerian War, an amnesia which affects both countries (Ibid). The psychological impact of this collective amnesia often is the basis upon which cultural, social and national identity is built. One of the key ways to investigate and research memory among communities is oral history, and oral history is often associated with a certain identity-group be it survivors, migrants, generational and so on (Keightley and Pickering 2013, 29). This notion of collective amnesia can be flagrantly identified in the processes used by the Guatemalan State in forming the national identity post-civil war as argued later in the thesis.

This justifies the focus on one on one interview which will be conducted with Guatemalan immigrants in order to understand their community and the process of identification related to oral history mainly concerning the Civil War. History can be understood as the tool which creates the bond between the individuals and places, making them inherent to their identities (Kroshus Medina 2003, 197). This connection between individuals, groups and places usually allows for the creation of a 'native' status in the discourse of the people, this 'native' status is often seen as a moral domination in aspects of political rights and economic resources, especially in Latin America with indigenous populations (Ibid, 200). The distinction between 'native' versus indigenous population was part of the discourse during the war but as this thesis sets out to prove, it still is an integral part of the society, while the violent may have ended the institutional, cultural and identity related conflict rages on in Guatemala.

### **1.6 Memory and the Subject's Identity**

In postcolonial societies more than anywhere else the use of Memory is crucial in order to create subject's identity, however some philosopher's such as Deruda seem to point out that, this identity will not be truly subjective and true to the group's or individual's essence. However the lack of subjectivity that was assigned to the subject's identity during the 70's, has since been challenged and it seems to point to the evidence that through constant formulation and reformulation of the memory and its experiences one is able to create a true subjective selfhood (Westerman 2016, 326 - 346). Hence placing the identity creation processes in post war Guatemala, at the centre of this type of study especially through the use of formulation and reformulation of the indigenous' population identity in order to challenge the government's institutions and create a true sense of subjective selfhood.

The recent developments and research in memory studies have since the beginning drawn a parallel between *collective identity* and *individual memory*, being Maurice Halbwachs key notion which until today still drives the studies of memory (Gensburger 2016, 397). The importance of shared experiences in the creation of links within individuals is undeniable, they are mentioned to be 'thick' relations, and those relations are maintained by the memory of shared historical experiences between individuals. To the contrary of 'thin' relations which are merely connection between individual based on the last of shared experience besides their common human condition (Margalit 2002, 109). This statement is of great importance because this argument can help us understand the possible discrepancies in identity, if there was not a sufficient work on identity or that the 'thick' relations between individuals were therefore severed due to lack of work on memory. The importance of shared historical experiences, and their impact on identity creation arises as a clear example of how memory is created post conflict. It is as if the conflict continued in the discourses of Memory, and along the way participated in the creation of Identity by assigning sides through oral and autobiographical history. Through the interviews that have been carried with the Guatemalan informants such discrepancies have

emerged concerning memory of shared historical experiences and national identity, some informants being in agreement with governments' discourse while others thought the differences preached by the means of institutions concerning the Civil War and the "truth" challenged the unity of a national identity in Guatemala, as will be further discussed in this thesis.

In summary the analytical lens which will be used to understand the postcolonial subject's identity in post war Guatemala, will be centred on the key concepts which have been mentioned in this chapter. The use of Internal Colonization in order to understand the complex historical context and reality of the country, the role of the State and its institutions in perpetrating colonial like endeavours to understand the impact it has on the individual. The use of discourse by institutions in order to manipulate the memory of historical shared experiences, is the challenge which today still sees individuals in conflict with their governing bodies. This differences are the aims of the following research, and with the understanding of the geopolitical situation of post-civil war Guatemala, it is central to have the preceding key concept in mind when analysing the situation and the individual's identity in Guatemalan postcolonial society. The individual's identity as a fluid, evolving and diverging entity is to be analysed through these concepts that are impacting these processes, especially in order to understand the data collected among the informants. Questions concerning institutions and language, were key in trying to understand the informants' data and point of view of the situation, while also being in contact with their governmental counterpart. The postcolonial lens approach allows this study to englobe as comprehensively as possible the challenges that are present in the individual's self-determination and identity creation in postcolonial societies, such as the one of Guatemala. The case of Guatemala however offers the dual interest of being a postcolonial society and a post-war society, therefore allowing an academic bridging point between the fields of Memory studies and Postcolonial theory.

## **Chapter II: The Guatemalan Civil war: the memory of silence**

Civil wars in general ought to be understood as crucial historical turning point in the understanding of National Identities, but most especially in countries where the conflict has had roots in colonial times and opposes forces that represent the struggle between subject and institutions. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and more precisely from 1960 to 1996, the Central American republic of Guatemala witnessed the unfolding of a tragic event, the Guatemalan Civil War. It also is referred sometimes as the Thirty-Six Years War. The horrific events and their origins have had lasting impact on the population, politics, culture, language and the identity of the country. The full scope the conflict has had unprecedented effect on National identity and the subject's identity, since it had been involving nearly all the population regardless of class, and background. This fact that it was such an enclosing conflict only magnified the impacts of the war as well as its repercussions on the population and individuals. The conflict and its origins need to also be understood through the geopolitical atmosphere that surrounded the World during the Cold War Era, must most especially in Guatemala were as quite a few other Latin American Nation, the United States of America meddled in internal affairs and the elections of heads of states. Guatemala was no different, since the country also had the quality of being quite significantly close to the U.S. compared to other Latin American countries. Hence since the 40's and the appointment of General Jorge Ubico, the U.S. was present in the political sphere of the country. While on paper the conflict seems to have emerge from a classic Cold War dichotomy of right wing vs left wing, capitalism vs socialism, when historians took a closer look and the various stages of development of the conflict they have noticed that it was more than mere ideologies clashing.

The following chapter will identify all the key events and major actors in the war, as well as linking it to the account given of the atmosphere as well as events by the informants that were interviewed for this study. Contextually placing the conflicts of identity within the Civil war between the insurgents, indigenous and state. How the conflict divided the society, into groups and whether these groups are still flagrantly divided nowadays in the Guatemalan postcolonial society. As well as focusing on the post war period, and how the state, through the means of institutions, dealt with the aftermath of the conflict. Especially when the state became confronted with the issues of memory and 'truth'. It ought to be noted that to this day the one key source for the question surrounding the Civil War has been the *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico* which has been championed by the U.N., and presented the particularity of being seated by a Guatemalan citizen, a Mayan and a neutral person. To this day this document remains unique in its genre, however its outcomes and its 'truth' have no all been acknowledged by the Guatemalan state. All these factors are contextually key to understanding the narratives, and evolution of the subject's identity in a postcolonial Guatemala. In order to do so both



academic sources and research papers that have been commissioned by governing bodies will be presented in order to give a fuller image of the events.

## 2.1 Origins of the conflict and the major events

‘Since the Spanish stole our ancestor’s land 500 years ago, we have born so much injustice. Our legacy has been pain, suffering and misery.’

Rigoberta Menchu (Nobel Peace laureate) in *When the Mountains Tremble*.

The 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1960 witnessed the military uprising, which was the first expression of discontent against the Guatemalan state and the government representing it. This was not an out of the blue, on the contrary the agrarian reforms and anti-communist act that were implemented during the 1940’s planted the seed of what was to erupt into a full blown internal conflict (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico 1999, 101). It is fair to assume that the conflict has its origins in past colonial tensions that had never been resolved, but that on the contrary were worsened by Internal Colonization by the state led institutions, marginalizing as well as excluding the indigenous population. This was worsened by the socio-economic marginalization of another part of the population during the 40’s and 50’s, the emerging conflict between opportunity deprived citizens and all powerful corporation accompanied by lack of negotiations between the state and its subject inevitable led to conflict (Ibid, 82 to 94). The emergence of the civil war was mainly due to the nature of the Guatemalan state, which was an oligarchic and exclusionary state. The state promoted patterns and structures of class, social and ethnic exclusions which had historically been present since colonial times, these structures eventually got challenged through the means of the Civil War (Brett 2016, 33). However as recorded during interview with the informants for this study, some have voice concerns and even certainty that the Guatemalan society was still being divided by such exclusions in 2018<sup>1</sup>.

The meddling of the United States in the Guatemalan politics after World War II eventually saw the rise of organized guerrilla forces in 1960. Those forces were inspired by the Cuban Revolution which a year earlier had just overthrown the Batista regime on the island. The insurgents were directly acting as counter power to the U.S. backed regime (Sittig 2016, 31). Those forces formed a unified front, under the banner for the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (F.A.R.) which was seen as the entity representing the whole insurgency until the involvement of the indigenous population in the 80’s. The conflict directly started due to the economic interest of the U.S. in the country, since the American Corporation and United Fruit Company were the biggest employers of the country at the time, and both U.S. owned (ibid). The corporations were also responsible for the marginalization of indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> As recorded during the interviews with two informants (G.Carranza and J.L. Moreira). Both identified societal issues surrounding divides based on ethnicity and social class. J.L. Moreira even furthered identified a divide based on political affiliation, and a dichotomy between the elite and the leftists.

populations and their rights by appropriating land which had been in indigenous hand for centuries. The exploitation suffered at the hands of the corporation, nourished an anti-government feeling which eventually drove most citizens of rural areas to join the conflict on the side of the Guerilla, which identified the government as a puppet of the U.S. in Central America. The U.S. involvement is to be understood through the scope of the cold war, and their tactics to reduce and avoid the rise of 'leftist' as well as 'communist' government in America (Jonas 2000, 17).

While the origins of the conflict seem to point to an economic and social struggle, after years of conflict the violence stirred tensions which had previously not been voiced and acted upon. Indigenous populations which are first were not concerned by the conflict besides the appropriation of their land by the Corporation, were now targeted by the campaign of "disappearances" started by President Osoria in the 70's, a campaign which effectively targeted anyone who, however remotely, could be shown to have sympathy for the insurgents (Ibid 36). The indiscriminate targeting of indigenous populations increased in 1982 when President Montt adopted the scorched earth campaign effectively razing to the ground any village "suspected" of harbouring or helping guerrilla insurgents (Ibid, 32). This campaign targeted only certain groups which had previously been seen as supported of the rebel movement, however the use of the scorched earth indiscriminately targeted all in these regions, regardless of whether they did cooperate or not with the rebel forces (Kubota 2017, 48).

These tactics however were also applied in urban sectors which were thought to be supportive of the rebel cause, hence one of the informants remembered the fear that governed each of her parents actions as soon as they saw soldiers in the streets next to their house, each item which could be remotely associated with the rebel cause or socialism was rapidly hidden and stashed in order to not face repercussions from the for ever marauding troops. These campaign besides their obvious violence, and targeting of civil population also led to the recurrence of human rights abuse, and abuse of power by paramilitary as well as government officials. A significant part of the population was scared by the government's forces, and their ruthless actions and abuse of power including a few of the interviewees as will be discussed at length in the following Chapter. The state has often justified its actions by claimed they were proportionate reactions to rebel activities, that argumentation still echoes in the academic debate regarding the use of state led violence during the Guatemalan Civil War. However the prevailing argument in the academic field concerning the violent actions that were ordered by the Guatemalan state point to the reality of internal colonization and racism towards marginalized groups of the population (Kubota 2017, 49).

While the conflict remained on a rather minor scale previous to the early 80's, the mobilization of some of the indigenous population in the western region of the country, was significant in the theatre of war. Due to their repeated and historical opposition to the government, indigenous populations

became the target of state violence, since there were seen as a possible threat in the Civil War. It turns out that these harsh actions led to the participation of the indigenous population who had remained rather neutral until the 80's. However the government and the residues of colonial racism, according to the state lessened their moral obligation towards such population, and therefore made their elimination easier for the counterinsurgency forces (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico 1999, 325). The moral implications of seeing the indigenous population as inferior is a key factor in understanding the creation of the postcolonial subject's identity in Guatemala after the war, especially for the creation of a dichotomized narrative that is so crucial in identity creating processes as well as national identity.

In conclusion the context of Guatemala is extremely complex however, it is possible to comprehend the origins of the war and the events which unfolded during it by understanding this highly complex situation created by; the absence of a democratic tradition, historically weak judiciary system, in egalitarian distribution of wealth, income and land (Staff 1992, 4). However the impact of the war was more brutal and concentrated towards the indigenous populations of Maya decent, they were especially targeted by the 'disappearances' which occurred throughout the war (Procurador De los derechos Humanos 1992, 24). Those programs that were usually carried out by 'Death-Squads' or more commonly known as paramilitary groups, were at the centre of the post war inquiries, and little investigation that was conducted regarding Human Rights abuse and the Genocide.

## **2.2 Human rights abuse and Genocide**

'In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring the children of the group to another group.'

UN 1948's Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes of Genocide

As previously discussed, the Guatemalan civil war has had several periods of higher intensity due to a change in administration, often forced or encouraged by the backing of the U.S.. The height of the Human rights abuse and the development of systemic killing leading to genocide clearly emerged in the early 80's, on the other hand traces of state violence can be traced by to firstly colonial times but more modern to the 1950's. However to this day, no Court has yet condemned or judged the cases of systemic violence as genocide, even though a pattern of state violence aimed at the destruction of Mayan communities has been acknowledged by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR). The IACHR is the only institution to have condemned the Guatemalan state for the massacre in 1982, the famous case of Plan de Sanchez named after the village which saw the death of 282 beings on July the

18<sup>th</sup>, 1982. The same court, judged it did however not have enough knowledge, and access to data to rule definitively in favour of a Genocide. This ruling represented a historic recognition of the Guatemalan Genocide however not a legally binding one (Johnston and Slyomovics 2009, 184). This ruling which has emerged in 2004 and urged financial compensation to the survivors as well as next of kin. It has been acknowledged as a stepping stone into challenging the narrative of non-responsibility that the Guatemalan state had adopted until then. However it also seem to show the hardship that courts and justice in general has had to investigate the events and true nature of the violence that was perpetrated during the Guatemalan Civil War. This hardship does show the Internal Colonization working processes of controlling information in order to control the population, in this case this illusory discourse led control is aimed to suppress the indigenous populations that had fallen victims of the various violent campaign of the Guatemalan State.

This case also allowed to shine a light on the post-war violent techniques of repression of political representation among the indigenous populations in Guatemala. Most indigenous communities have since the 1950's incorporated in their collective identity, the reality of state violence towards their communities (Ibid, 186). This historical instance of identity fragmentation since the 1950's, is a clear indication of the issues that were raised when the Guatemalan National Identity had to be remodelled after the Peace Accords were signed. It is among those communities that the Civil Defence Patrols (essential Paramilitary groups), tortured, assassinated, conducted institutionalized rape and massacre during the period of the 'scorched earth' campaign that was initiated by the Guatemalan government. However by looking at the definition furnished by the UN *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes of Genocide* and the one from the International Criminal Court (ICC), one will notice that the Guatemalan state is responsible, for acts of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes. As According to the ICC's precise definition of these, the Guatemalan state is accountable for the following accounts; Genocide's account of killing members of a targeted ethnic group and causing bodily as well as mental harm to members of this group. Crimes against humanity's accounts of murder, transfer of population, rape, torture, enforced disappearances and persecution. War crimes account of wilful killing and torture. All these accounts are identifiable in the conduct of the Guatemalan State and its forces during the war, all these accounts are understood to be condemnable crimes and are recognized as such by the ICC (Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court 1998. Article 5,6,7 and 8).

The Guatemalan state of the early 80's which started the systemic and violent homicide of parts of its own population, has justified and covered up the genocide under the argument of legitimate response to the insurgents' movement in the country (Brett 2016, 213). Violence which targeted the indigenous populations of Guatemala, has reinforced the historical divide and conflict between these populations formed of subjects and the state, while at the same time decimating the social and man power base of the F.A.R., since the campaign of systemic violence also cause the displacement of over

one million civilians (Ibid). This systemic violence was justified by the state through their belief of pre-existing ideological frameworks which characterized, the groups they target as dispensable or inferior to them (Strauss 2015, 10). These frameworks also allowed the orders of systemic violence to resonate within the armed forces and paramilitary which already identified with those beliefs of pre-existing ideological framework which depicted the indigenous populations as inferior to others, and therefore dispensable. It ought to be notes also that the Guatemalan state besides justifying those actions, pursued such campaign to literally and brutality obliterate the Guerrilla movement by annihilating or displacing any groups and individual that might have been according to them tempted to join their ranks (Brett 2016, 213).

The search for truth has been crucial in the formulation of the postcolonial subject's identity in Guatemala, as it expressed perfectly the hegemony of dominance between state and subject. The one document which has been since held as coming relatively close to the truth has been the *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico* which the Guatemalan State has been pressured into accepting by the UN with its Mission in Guatemala and the Catholic Church which throughout the conflict already had been challenging the actions of the government. The conflict which had raged on the battlefield, is now fought in cases and tribunals, to hopefully one day uncover the truth about the death and/or disappearance of so many Guatemalan citizens during the Civil War. One may start to understand most state led actions during the war to be an expression of Internal Colonization, in order to keep exploiting the indigenous populations of the country. It should however be pointed that the post-war period was as crucial, in the implementation of Internal Colonization and manipulating truths in order to maintain dominance and control.

### **2.3 Peace Accords and Post-War Justice**

'It is the a right of the Guatemalan people to know the complete truth about the human rights violations and acts of violence that occurred during the internal armed conflict'

1996 Peace Accords

To understand the unfairness and brutality with which the post-war relation between state and subaltern indigenous populations were negotiated, a simple look at the awful results that emerge during Guatemalan Constitutional Referendum of 1999, which in result saw the rights of the indigenous population be limited constitutionally furthering the dreadful decades use of Internal Colonization and its dominance. The use of political power by the elite furthered the losses of the subaltern indigenous population, by limiting the victories they had gained negotiating during the Accords by vetoing or voting against those resolutions once put up for a vote at the Congress. Besides showing the dominance of the elite in the political sphere, this clears presents a fact, the fact that indigenous populations are only represented in civil society but not or barely represented within the political sphere of influence. It also ought to be noted that the Guatemalan state and the military were not favourable to a UN led

peace negotiations, they only admitted to it once they realized a military victory was out of reach (Jonas 2000, 38).

In order to grasp the impact of the Peace Accords, one nearly has to observe them as a post-conflict struggle in themselves. One of the key areas in which, it limited equal opportunities and institutionally furthered Internal Colonization was in education. Education can be used to preserve pre-war position of economic, political and social privilege of a certain group, often identifiable as the Elite (Poppema 2009, 384). Education reforms were a strong advocating point of the indigenous communities of Guatemala during the Peace Accords, and were championed as key to reduce the discrimination and social marginalization which their group had been suffering (Ibid). However the brutal realisation of the present, over two decades after the signing of the Peace Accords, points towards the fact that institutional, monetary and material changes that had been negotiated during those accords by the subaltern and indigenous population have not been implemented. The Peace Accords remain a long lost dream in the mind of the marginalized (Ibid, 402). The non-implementation of the terms from the Peace Accords by the state is a contemporary example of Internal Colonization in order to keep controlling and exploiting the indigenous population of Guatemala.

One of the best ways to understand the Peace Accords from the victims' point of view, is that it was their chance to put an end to the established legal mechanisms which had made the violence possible in the first place, and therefore dismantling the engrained culture of Internal Colonization and Political Violence which has plagued the country for decades on end (Brett 2016, 9). The key change which ought to have brought significant restructuring of the relationship between the indigenous subaltern and the state, should have been the 1995 Accords on Identity and Rights of the Indigenous People. If properly implemented and kept, these Accords which were negotiated jointly with the Peace Accords, would recognize Guatemala as multilingual, multicultural and multi-ethnic which seemed to be logical since 60% of the population of the country identifies itself with an indigenous community (Jonas 1997, 8). However the optimism that was present for the implementation of those changes, soon disappeared as business as usual in post-colonial Guatemala restarted and the processes of internal colonization once again targeted, exploited and marginalized the indigenous populations of Guatemala. As clearly pointed out at the time when the Accords were ratified, the constitutional changes and new policies had to go to congress which still hosted as their second most powerful party, the extreme-right party of ex-dictator Montt which made sure to not collaborate with most of the Accords which would empower civil society, the individual and especially the subaltern vis-a-vis of the state and the army (Ibid, 10). The fore mentioned persona of Montt, which has been the dictator of Guatemala during the 80's, has been arrested a few days for his crimes before being released by the supreme court of the country (Brett 2016, 33). He enjoyed a political career after the war running for president and congress, before finally being trial in 2013, however though convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity

he was released on bail and retrial as he appealed. This dark character finally died of a heart attack on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April of 2018 being to this date the only head of state convicted of genocide in his own country.

The fact that there still was a struggle for change between the political elite and the subaltern championed by civil society, meant that the early optimism of the common Guatemalan Citizen was drenched with defeatism and nihilism quite quickly regardless of the minor victories which had been achieved. To understand such defeatism one must only look at the reluctance the Guatemalan Government had in cooperating with the UN mission in Guatemala, commonly referred to as MINUGUA. The government even went further as to harden their work of investigation claiming a breach of sovereignty in its internal affairs (Jonas 2000, 49). The political elite opposed to changes, used the argument that it feared the re-emergence of the F.A.R. which it had promised to eradicate during its political campaign. This merely once again clearly shows the pattern through which political entities work against the indigenous populations in order to greedily retain control and power. This is clearly one of the characteristics, which has described and plagued the Latin American States over the decades as previously discussed in the first chapter. The Peace Accords were ratified by all parties in 1996, but years of independent investigation followed, and the work of the truth commissions began in order to hopefully shine light onto the human rights abuse that occurred during the conflict.

In brief it would be fair to assume that the carnage and messiness of relations during the Civil War seems to have endured, throughout the Peace process and Accords, which in turn did not solve the most crucial issues which were at heart of the cause of the genocide and systemic violence. The origins of the conflict focused, on the exclusionary and elitist nature of the state which has not drastically changed since, which has prone an increase involvement of indigenous populations into civil society and social movements in order to hopefully as well as peacefully challenge still present pre-existing ideological framework that have not been erased by decades of Civil War. The field of battle seems to be the only thing which has changed, as will be further explored in the following chapter. The exclusionary oligarchic system which had been one of the deepest issue, seems to be re-emerging through bad political management, and crisis.

The struggle which the indigenous populations have had to face as marginalized subjects, has been a struggle which has survived passed the end of the War, and has been at the centre of the relation between the State and the indigenous communities. The emergence of civil society as an instrument of challenging and negotiation with the state has helped to transform the conflict (Cojti 2009, 144). Guatemala has not been able to relinquish the old tensions which have spurred the Civil War, and therefore once again through political tensions face another challenging chapter of their history. Most especially for the fact that the indigenous question, has over the past two decades gained international traction and support, therefore reinvigorating the marginalized subaltern in identity, social, cultural and

political conflict with the state. This struggle can be embodied by the *Campesinos'* March against State Corruption which contemporarily has been the biggest involvement in the streets by the indigenous population. While this struggle is characteristic of a post-colonial society, it also is, identity wise crucial to both actors since their discourses are based on the perpetuation of their struggle and conflict.



### **Chapter III: An Identity in Conflict: The Struggle Continues**

In the following chapter all the evidence that was collected from the informants which participated in the study will be present in order to depict a credible answer to the hypothesis which aims to understand the processes of identity creation in post-colonial and post-war Guatemala. On a sub-question level, the differences between the subaltern's identity compared to the Guatemalan National Identity and the power relationships at play in this dichotomy will be observed through the data. To understand what happens to the subaltern's identity in the post-colonial society of Guatemala the study was conducted through the means of recorded one on one interview, which allowed to give a voice to both Guatemalan Citizens that decided to leave the country regardless of the provisions that were agreed during the Peace Accords, and the younger generation which has been born post-war. It is crucial for contemporary Guatemala and the academic field to analyse the subsiding tensions from the war, and how they passed on regardless of the end of the conflict. Their impact on the identity of all subject is not negligible, especially in a country which harbours what is typical defines the Latin American state in academia as well as an acute tendency to internal colonization.

Through those interviews, an analysis of the identity creating processes of the subaltern in post-colonial society will be provided, in order to display the fairest possible answer with the available data. As displayed in the following part of the Chapter the informants were divided among two groups, which allows for a clearer understanding of the collected data. The crucial concepts that were discussed in earlier chapters are they key contextual lens through which the collected data will be interpreted, and while the data is tangent for the sake of future research it should be dully noted that further investigation ought to be made to fully determine the answer to the previously mentioned hypothesis. Since while most prevailing factors will be presented, they might not be all that is necessary to understand the identity creation processes in a post-colonial society.

#### **3.1 Methodology: on the collection of data**

The means of contact with the participants was fairly smooth, written contact was established in order to assess the validity of the informant and to also get their profile to assess that they qualified to be a sample for this study. The period between November 2017 and February 2018 was dedicated to research, and the collection of data in order to make this study possible. Each informant that was contacted, had to have Guatemalan citizenship. Then the informants were split into two categories those who had moved away from Guatemala during the war, these informant would be constituting the 'older' generation and those who were born after the war and still be living in Guatemala these informants would be representative of the 'younger' generation. The informants were however not aware of the

split, that was only done data wise, besides that there was no difference in the content of the interview except for each personalized follow up questions. It ought to be noted that due to personal affiliation with the country of France, and the contacts that existed with the Guatemalan identity there most of the older generation contacted had immigrated to France.

This allowed the study to have a homogenous groups of informants for each category, in order to reduce variables and offer the best possible analysis of the data given by each informant. Each informant was first asked to fill in a profile description on a survey page that was created especially for the study, in order to attest of their tangibility with the topics that were at stake as well as the demographics which came into play. This allowed to provide a sample of the informants that were going to be interviewed, and recruit participants to the study as suggested by a proper use of internet surveys while doing research in the social sciences (Bickman 2009, 412). It also ought to be noted that the web was preferred medium through which contact was drawn due to the time difference, but also the expanding use of internet in Guatemala which is now used by over 40% of the population compared to a mere 19% 5 years ago<sup>2</sup>. This huge acceleration in access to internet has mostly been responsible for the emergence of the ‘younger’ generation on the virtual political scene hence the importance of this study to be present there. Once this was assessed, they were first informed of the intention of the study, and possible inquiries they may have. After which if accepted a date for an interview was arranged as well as an agreement to use the written and if applicable the future recorded data. Besides those informants, representatives of the Guatemalan state in the form of the Guatemalan embassy for the Kingdom of the Netherlands was contacted in order to conduct an interview.

The interviews were recorded in all awareness and agreement by the informants, they were short interviews between 15 minutes and 30 minutes each. They did not follow any predefine structure, but only broad questions which allow for follow up questions in order to get the most relevant answers out of each informant. This design of questions allowed for a certain flow in the conversation as well. All informants were informed that in case a question was too sensitive or they did not feel comfortable to answer it, they of course could pause the interview or decline to answer. This approach led to a very relaxed atmosphere during the interview, which promoted the flow of information coming from the informants, which were set as the main protagonist at the centre of the research. Besides the fondness that each informants had in participating in this study, they identified with the issues that were at stake especially in delivering their vision of Guatemalan identity and the challenges faced in its creation vis a vis of the State.

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<sup>2</sup> Figure collected from <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/guatemala/> from which an exponential estimate was calculated based on the surveying that was done in 2016.

These two categories of informants have allowed this study to draw a parallel, and a broader understanding of the situation when it comes to identity processes between the subject and the Guatemala state. Each individual was interviewed during a recorded one on one session, which allows for a back and forth of relevant lines of questions regarding their Civil War experience, and the thoughts they regarding the dealings of the state in the aftermath of the conflict. All informants were eager in helping out a study which concerned their nation which showed a clear attachment to their country regardless, of some of the tragic stories which some had to tell. The following chapter will be parted into three parts, the first will offer an in depth analysis of the first group of informants, the ‘older’ generation, the second will do the same but focus on the ‘younger’ generation, the third and final will offer a cross examination as well as answering the pressing questions raised during this thesis while delivering the final findings of the research.

### 3.2 The ‘older’ generation from past to present

A general remark which might be stating the obvious but ought to be mentioned is that all informants from this group have lived and were born in Guatemala during the conflict, before immigrating outside of the country as shown below in **Figure 1**. Most of them have been affected by the events of the war, personally or within their close circle of relatives. The lasting impact of the war on these informants’ lives, seemed to have sowed a critical stance and justifiably hostile towards the Guatemalan State. Therefore their answers ought to be understood through the lens of an individuals whom has suffered personally from the violence and repression which were current during the Guatemalan Civil War. However regardless of such impact, all informants from this group displayed a deep identity attachment to the country and the land, as illustrated below.

[...] regardless of how many years I have been living in France, my head and my heart still think and feel for Guatemala, it always will be as such.[...] I cannot detached myself from it [Guatemala].<sup>3</sup>

The importance of the roots remain central in the creation of their identity, regardless of the migration away from their homeland. This importance has been observed in many migratory groups of the first generation. The criteria upon which they were each eligible for this study allowed to have a homogenous group and identify discrepancies more effectively. It also was a key option in order to contrast their views, understanding and experiences to the ones that were voiced by the ‘younger’ generation. This parallel is key in pin pointing and exploring the identity processes that are at stake in post-colonial Guatemala. Before dwelling into the analysis Figure 1 will present the profiles of the informants regarding this particular group.

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<sup>3</sup> Original quote in French, Interview with G. Carranza, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, France.

The first remark that ought to be made is the dedication which each member of the ‘older’ generation had towards the understanding and knowledge of the conflict as well as the political life of Guatemala. While they all displayed an extensive knowledge, most of them held dear a certain detachment from the what they called ‘fake’, ‘hurtful’ and ‘corrupted’ political life of their home country.

‘[...] I am distancing myself the much I can from the political life of Guatemala, for it hurts me too much. Every time I hear about it, it frustrates me to anger. Even though I use to be quite politically involved even just 10 years ago, now I turn a blind eye and try not to care. [...]’<sup>4</sup>

The choice of words, expressing distance is but a revealing factor of how the informants from the group live their relation with Guatemala, in a very passionate but hurtful way. Most of them as well voiced the decadent and corrupted political sphere of the elite, as a main reason as to why they had emigrated out of Guatemala even post-war while most of their compatriots that had emigrated to neighbouring countries during the war were returning during this era of democratic hope after the Peace Accords were signed. As the quote shown above lets transpire, the involvement in the political life seem to have only brought disillusion to the members of this group. The political disillusion seemed to be a characteristic of the informants from the older generation, which is one variable that can explain the split in identity between the National Identity portrayed by the Guatemalan state and the one of the subject.

Those differences in identity were clearly identified by all of the informants from the ‘older’ generation, which noticed the perpetration of internal colonization and the exclusionary tactics of the State. One especially acute informant underlined the elitist nature and racist nature of the State towards its subjects, and with such a stance a different history and therefore memory was created for subjects and the subaltern in parallel to the one the state was creating.

‘[...] The first thing I think of when I am reminded of Guatemala it’s the fragmentation, [...] it’s a really divided country and the ‘enemies’ are not united by a common identity, however we make a whole. The differences [which create the fragmentation] are firstly ethnic and secondly linked to social class.’<sup>5</sup>

The informant acknowledges that the tension between what she would call ‘natural’ enemies were still present and unresolved, this quotation clearly shows negative sphere of internal colonization which has not managed to be broken by the Civil War and the Peace Accords. The acknowledgement of all of the racist and exclusionary tactics such as and primarily the lack of opportunity of access to the political system for citizens as referring to the second quote the involvement in politics for common citizens is hard and frustrating. The state retains political power and distributes it nearly exclusively to the elite. These remarks gathered from the informants seem to underline a severe continuation of the tradition of

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<sup>4</sup> Original quote in French, Interview with L. Polanco, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018, France.

<sup>5</sup> Original quote in French, Interview with G. Carranza, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, France.

internal colonization regardless of the improvements that had seemed to be coming their way after the ratification of the Peace Accords. Informants also pointed out that such society was possible due to the a-politicization of the ‘younger’ generation, which they thought was not as politically educated as they were being born after the conflict, and therefore taking the internal colonization and fraction between state and subject as a normality<sup>6</sup>. They also raised the issue of detachment from the political life from most subject due to the lack of trust and belief in the democratic system which is offered in post-colonial Guatemala. One may notice that those are critics which could resonate through Latin America, and are often used by subjects to describe the Latin American State as portrayed in the academic debate.

**Figure 1**

Group 1	Age	Born and lived in Guatemala during the conflict	Emigrated after the conflict + Country of residence	Written Contact	Interviewed Oral and/or Written
L. Polanco	43	✓	✓ (France)	✓	✓
G. Carranza	50	✓	✓ (France)	✓	✓
L. Ortega <sup>7</sup>	Undisclosed	✓	✓ (Netherlands)	✓	✓
J.P. Chaclan	50 +	✓	✓ (France)	✓	
I. Tauty	50 +	✓	✓ (France)	✓	
A.P. Schwartz	41-60	✓	✓ (France)	✓	✓
M. Santizo	41-60	✓	✓ (France)	✓	

Regardless of the critics which the informants have offered they all agreed with one aspect of the Guatemalan identity or the ‘Chapine’ identity, that according to the informant they all seemed to have a blind, non-questioning and devoted nationalist stance. This blindness, the culture of closing an eye has for them been reinforced within the younger generation after the war, and the a-politicization<sup>8</sup>. The non-involvement and blindly turning an eye to the action of the state, seem to be an integral part of the contemporary post-colonial Guatemalan national identity. Informants also voiced the concern that in order to realise the blindness national stance that the ‘Chapine’ identity promoted, one had to be able to move out of the country and freely be able to investigate the relations between the state and its subjects. This leaves the future to obscure trails, led by an elitist society which through the use of internal colonization holds on to power, enticing the struggles which all had thought to be extinguished after the Civil War. An enticing and blind nationalism that can be clearly shown in the following quotes:

<sup>6</sup> Interview with L. Polanco, G. Carranza and Personal Collection A.P. Schwartz, January 2018, France.

<sup>7</sup> It ought to be noted that L. Ortega, is affiliated with the Embassy of the Republic of Guatemala to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with L. Polanco, G. Carranza and Personal Collection A.P. Schwartz, January 2018, France

‘ [...] the elite they are not concerned with the events of the Civil War, they do not have the same history as us [...]’<sup>9</sup>

‘ [...] to be a little less ‘blinded’, and admitting that there are some issues [regarding the country as whole but most especially tensions between individuals and state] and to fight to change them, like the French do... This is something I have learned in France, which I am trying to share and pass on to my fellow Guatemalans.’<sup>10</sup>

In order to get a statement from the governing authorities, the Embassy of Guatemala to the Kingdom of the Netherlands was contacted during this study. While the contact was positive at the beginning it quickly and abruptly stopped once the line of questioning concerning the Civil War, and the indigenous question was raised. This again shows the contemporary reluctance of the government in participating in a dialogue concerning issues which are still causing much tension in the country. It seems that the policy of blocking and reducing the accessibility to information, testimonials and citations about the Civil War is still in vigour as it was when the Guatemalan government was interfering in the investigations led by MINUGUA in the aftermath of the war (Jonas 2000, 49). While in no way the decision to not answer the interview offered to them on the basis of the topics has the same impact as their interference during MINUGUA, it does display the same attitude towards investigation that ought to be carried within the governing bodies of the Republic of Guatemala. This once again proves the manipulations and concrete actions taken up by the state in order to change the truth as well as the portrayal of memory regarding the conflict. The state intervention in those matters should be understood as a factor in the identity creation processes, since it emits a certain discourse as well as a narrative to the subject.

Conclusively, one may assert of the discomfort with which the ‘older’ generation witnesses the actions and political life surrounding the Guatemalan state still up to this day. The importance of this love and hate relationship is crucial, in the formation of their own identity basing it on a dichotomy which is itself based on the struggles and tensions of the Civil War. To even start to grasp the importance of the relationship between the subject and the state in this particular case one must only look at the fact that regardless of physical detachment from the country, since they had all emigrated, their identity still relies on their relation with their parent state. Hence, a fracture which has never been resolved and which has left the Civil War discourses to run rampant and become the key factor in identity processes among this group. The last remark to be made regarding the data collected during those interviews, is that all participating informants from the ‘older’ generation agreed to point out that the Guatemalans were in fact divided and that did include a fragmented identity<sup>11</sup>. This means that for the ‘older’ generation the conflict and differences from the Civil War live on. As observed before their narrative

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<sup>9</sup> Original quote in French, Interview with G. Carranza, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, France.

<sup>10</sup> Original quote in French, Personal Communication with A.P. Schwartz, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017, France.

<sup>11</sup> Opinion collected from all participants of group 1

of conflict versus the state, seem to be fuelling their own identity, through a discourse of displaced victims which have had enough of the doings of their home state.

### 3.3 The ‘younger’ generation, a nation’s future

What defines the ‘younger’ generation profile is their age, as they could be considered young adults but also the fact they are still living in Guatemala and therefore are an integrate part of the upcoming generation. Refer to **Figure 2** in order to fully grasp their profile and involvement in the study. This belonging to the newer generation allows to draw academically pertinent parallels, when it comes to identifying the evolution of identity processes of the Guatemalan subject. While the same line of questioning as for the ‘older’ generation was asked it has been adapted for throughout the interviews, the ‘younger’ generation displayed a noticeable lack of knowledge regarding the Civil War. Internal Colonization and the control it exercises through education is to be understood as a main responsible reason for this lack of knowledge and even interest. All members of the ‘younger’ generation however displayed the avid necessity of trying to answer questions regardless of their knowledge, all displayed traits of affection and deep care for the nation which they call theirs.

One opinion which seem to be prevailing among all participants of the ‘younger’ generation, is that the ethnic divides and tensions are no more according to them, only political divides seem to be present. Their vision of success regarding the Peace accords seem to be indeed greatly higher compare to the informants of the ‘older’ generation group<sup>121314</sup>. While one did acknowledge the ethnic, and racial tension to still be present, according to the informant they were now playing the second role compared to the political tensions.

‘[...] Identity in Latin America, and that does include Guatemala is based on conflict. [...] And while it used to be the conflict between indigenous and colonizers, it now has become the bourgeoisie [elite] against the marginalized. [...] Conflict is crucial to the Guatemalan Identity.’<sup>15</sup>

This understanding of tensions could possibly due to the slow entry in politics or social movements, such as the indigenous social movements which through time institutionalized to finally be part of the system and participate in elections. This difference of understanding the relations between state and subject in comparison to the understanding displayed by the ‘older’ generation has a deep impact on identity creation processes, since the actions of the state will not be analysed as based on race but rather ideologically or socio-economically justified. As shown in the quote above, the youth tends to focus on

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<sup>12</sup> Original quote in Spanish, Interview with J.L. Moreira, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, France Marlon and A.R. Gonzales Roque

<sup>13</sup> Original quote in English, Personal communication with Marlon, 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2018, Guatemala City

<sup>14</sup> Original quote in Spanish, Interview with A.R. Gonzales, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Guatemala City

<sup>15</sup> Original quote in Spanish, Interview with J.L. Moreira, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, France

the socio-economic tensions with the state rather than anything else, this makes it less critical concerning the on goings of internal colonization, and the struggles of the indigenous populations which are seen as a struggle of the past.

**Figure 2**

Group 2	Age	Born during or after the peace Accords	Currently living in Guatemala	Written Contact	Interview Oral and/or Written
J.L Moreira	24	✓		✓	✓
Marlon	18	✓	✓	✓	✓
A.R. Gonzales Roque	24	✓	✓	✓	✓
M. Del Valle	19	✓	✓	✓	

Another contradiction which has arisen between the two groups as well, has been the homogeneity of the Guatemalan identity, while the ‘older’ generation pointed to a divided and fragmented identity, the ‘younger’ generation seem to depict an image of a society with tension but regardless of those having a unified identity since the end of the Civil War. This crucial distinction, is key in understanding why those two generation have managed to develop different identities and most especially how the processes of internal colonization still clearly affect the identity creation processes in a post-colonial society. Analytically, identifying those two discourses is a practical example of how through internal colonization and the use of education the State has managed to change the narratives regarding the nation and the war effortlessly, which in fact marginalizes the older generation. Marginalized so much that it is frowned upon for the ‘younger’ generation to evoke and talk about the topics regarding the Civil War, as displayed during the exchange with an informant who was prompted by his father to not talk about what he did not know and effectively stopped the recording as well as the flow of information coming from his son<sup>16</sup>. While this was the only hands on demonstration of the taboo which still surrounds the conflict, the decision by most Guatemalans to avoid it, in a non-seen, non-heard attitude, all the other informants of group 2 also expressed from the beginning of contacts that their knowledge regarding the Guatemalan Civil War were limited if not inexistent. After inquiry, it turns out that there barely is a presence of the Civil War in the schools’ curriculum, which effectively keeps the ‘younger’ generation that did not live through the events in the dark regarding the topic. Only one of the informants belonging to this group displayed personal interest in investigating the Civil War, and even then his knowledge was limited as well as biased relying on old political dichotomy from the Cold War. No informant could provide a good reason as to why they would think the topic of the Civil War was not approached in more depth in the school’s curriculum.

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<sup>16</sup> Scene happened during the interview of Marlon, 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2018, Guatemala City



‘ [...] we were barely taught anything about the War in school [...]’<sup>17</sup>

‘ [...] talking about history is like a threat to the state, therefore the select oppressively the data available and what goes through to schools regarding those matters.’<sup>18</sup>

The informants acknowledged the lack of education surrounding the conflict, its actors and the struggles which came with it. However they all displayed a nonchalance, and a rather lack of envy to find out more. Taking their lack of knowledge for granted and normal. However besides the lack of impact that the events of the Civil War seemed to have had on this groups’ identity and understanding of their personal identity as well as national identity, all informants from the group displayed the same lack of trust in the state as the ‘older’ generation did. This feeling of mistrust seem to have passed on, and could nearly be called a feature of Latin American state with post-colonial societies, a global mistrust emerging form their citizens regardless of the subject’s identity and collective historical experiences.

### **3.4 Education, Political Involvement and Identity**

‘ [...] the weakness of the state is responsible historically for societal wrong doings [...]’<sup>19</sup>

The main focus of the study was to find out the factors which are at play in the identity creation processes of subject’s in a post-colonial and post-war Guatemala. In order to do so the differences between how the identity of the ‘older’ generation and the ‘younger’ generation will be compared, this will provide us with the lasting factors which remain and govern the possibilities of identity creation in Guatemala today. Once identified, these factors can serve as a basis for further study in order to further the academic debate into post-colonial theory by including another layer to the dimension of the identity of subject and subaltern. This would hopefully enable an application of the following results to a broader spectrum of nation which have been experienced a Civil War in the past century and are now to be considered post-colonial societies.

The first and main factors is, shared historical experiences. The difference in life spam between the two groups allows us to draw a line of comparison, regarding the impact the devastating events of the Guatemalan Civil War has had on the development of the subject’s identity as well as relation towards the state. While from the point of view of mistrust towards the state both groups of individuals seem to display a same characteristic mistrust of the state, the reasons and the origins of the mistrust differ. Those differences also therefore change the importance of the relation between subject and state for the identity creation processes. The informants of the ‘older’ generation displayed an attachment to the struggle between them and the state, depicting it as the central tensions which generate the discourse of their Guatemalan Identity. Most especially due to the state’s corrupt manners, as well as its massive

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<sup>17</sup> Original quote in English, Interview with Marlon, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Guatemala City

<sup>18</sup> Original quote in Spanish, Interview with J.L. Moreira, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, France

<sup>19</sup> Original quote in Spanish, Interview with J.L. Moreira, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, France

involvement during the atrocities of the war. The informants of the ‘younger’ generation however had more mixed feelings, as they seem to recognise some good actions coming from the state all while reserving their thoughts. Only one of the informants from the ‘younger’ generation voiced concern at the lack of investigation regarding the Civil War as well as the lack of accessibility to the material in schools. However the ‘older’ generation more easily recognised the process of racial classification which is linked to internal colonization, while the ‘younger’ generation seem to be more stuck on the political differences between themselves and the state. Therefore one can understand the importance of the first factor, which beside affecting the individual experience with the state, having lived through the events of the Civil War seem to make the subject more analytical and aware of the use of internal colonization while the ‘younger’ generation which has not shared those experiences is less analytical, as well as less politically engaged than elders. This conclusion is reached through analysis of the data from the younger generation, which has voiced a disinterest in the political life, as well as a lack of knowledge in the historical struggles. This lack of knowledge and interest, are mainly due as shown in the quotes below by the state’s use of education to limit knowledge regarding the conflict as well as the lasting habit of non-questioning, referring to the ‘blindness’ which was previously mentioned when it came to the younger Guatemalans.

‘ [...] I don’t know much about the Civil War nor the current political events currently, I hope I can however still participate and help you in your study [...]’<sup>20</sup>

‘ [...] we were barely taught anything about the War in school, I don’t have any knowledge regarding that part of our history and it is hard to ask questions about it.’<sup>21</sup>

The second key factor, which is directly link to the fact that the informants of the ‘younger generation’ are still living in Guatemala, is the inaccessibility of information and the morbid acceptance of the ‘memory of silence’ which has been rampant since the Peace Accords. All informants regardless of the group, age and location agreed with the following statement, ‘Would you say that *‘memoria del silencio’* fairly describes the memory of the Civil War in Guatemala?’. This total agreement regarding this statement, shows that the way the war is portrayed and the accessibility of data is noticed by each individual, noticed enough for them to mention it and demarking its importance in their lives. The only informants from the ‘younger’ generation whom did not live in Guatemala, was more critical and offered an understanding of Guatemala that was way closer to the one of the older generation. This proves that the lack of access in addition to the state’s selectiveness when it comes to memory limits the critical analysis of its own actions by the subjects. This as in turned affected the political participation of the ‘younger’ generation, and ensured the closeness of the elite political system. The ‘younger’ generation seem to have adopted an attitude of moving on without questioning the reality of

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<sup>20</sup> Original quote in Spanish, Interview with A.R. Gonzales Roque, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Guatemala City.

<sup>21</sup> Original quote in English, Interview with Marlon, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Guatemala City

their elders, once again proving their less critical stance towards the state. A collective disinterest in the political life of their country, while admitting that it is currently its main issue, shows the lack of engagement from the younger generation which still lives with the fear of political divide and possible reprisal. The fact that they are non-participating could possibly point towards a closed political system, which pinpoints once again the cruel mechanisms behind a political elite in power for decades in Guatemala. While both groups have identified the elitism present in the political system as well as its closeness, only the 'older' generation seems to have participated while the 'younger' generation is disillusioned by change that never was. This is a lasting effect of the spectrum of the Peace Accords, which were seen as the saviour of Guatemalan democracy but turned out to be unfulfilled and forgotten by the 'younger' generation (Jonas 1997, 9).

These factors hope to be the ones used to understand the creation of identity in a post-colonial society in Latin America, the involvement of the youth in the political system and how said system is crucial in understanding the identity of each subject compared to the state. The case of Guatemala, seem to clearly show us the evidence that shared historical experiences is key in order to break the habits of internal colonization, if the memory of said experiences is not passed on properly the post-colonial habits of the state along with its dominance take back the power which has been challenged during said historical experiences. Which is precisely what seem to have happened in Guatemala, the long sought out successes of the Civil War, had brought promise however through a close political system in addition to the 'memory of silence' the Guatemalan State effectively limited the changes that ought to have been brought after the Peace Accords. By doing so the state ensured to retain power and dominance over its subject, and foster a non-questioning younger generation by limiting its access to evidence, political opportunity and controlled education. All these generation of internal colonization form the identity of the post-colonial and post-war subject in Guatemala.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, one can assert that the relevance of the Guatemalan case within the fields of Post-Colonial theory and Memory Studies is crucial for furthering the bridging points between both academic fields. This approach of both fields ought to be researched further as well as extended to other countries which offer similar context as Guatemala in order to further assess the processes of identity creation in those post-colonial societies. This could offer the building stone upon which government can be offered policy recommendation in order to improve the relation between state and subject in Central American but also Latin American region as a whole. This would effectively anchor the recorded data and the research as whole within the tradition of both fields, as well as promote a more extensive approach when it comes to identity creation processes in post-colonial societies.

With the data that has been presented during the study, one may grasp the importance that internal colonization still plays in the identity creation processes in a post-colonial society, like the one present in Guatemala. Such factor can however be further enhanced should there be a historical cleavage of tensions and rule of the elite. Therefore the previously offered analysis and collection of data promotes a bridging point between the academic fields of Post-Colonial studies and Memory studies, in order to further research and assess the lasting impacts of colonization on identity and conflict resolution. Those should be the main lessons that ought to be remembered from the Guatemalan case study, which through its historical context could allow a renewal of research into the Post-Colonial theory, for the importance it has on the subject's identity and how it shapes its relation with the state. While the data shows the disparity between the informants of both generations, the importance is to notice their different appreciation of the country's history which seem to directly affect their political involvement and their will to identify will alternative Guatemalan identity to the contrary of the Guatemalan national identity promotes by the State. For while the lasting impact of the Civil War is undeniable, it seems to fade away as both groups are still identifying tensions and differences which are commonly identifiable as processes of internal colonization in post-colonial societies.

This study anchors itself perfectly within the tradition of post-colonial studies, by going further and considering the individual as the most valuable source of data. However the analysis seems to be pointing to a broader importance of memory, especially in the creation of identity, this importance as rather been underplayed in the field of post-colonial studies, as the academics seem to have favoured the role of institutions and the state. This study goes against the analysis of relations from top to bottom, but rather studies it from the bottom up, from the subject to the state, and not vice-versa. Hence anchoring this study perfectly well into the contemporary research of the fields of post-colonial studies. All while also encouraging the inclusion of memory studies into the framework which could allow for a better understanding of identity creating processes in post-colonial societies.

The other main ingredient which seems to be fuelling the machine of identity creation is the memory which each individual is attached to the Civil war and/or its aftermath. Their relation with the events, obviously defined by the events which they had to live through or not, therefore dictated by their age. However regardless of this distinction, each participant expressed concerns about the 'memory of silence' that was still burgeoning all over Guatemala. This fact made it hard for the 'older' generation to establish a trusting relation with the state while it put forth the lack of accessibility and availability of data about the topic to the 'younger' generation. This may be perceived as information violence, driving the 'memory of silence' a little further deeper and closer to the core of relations between individuals and the state in Guatemala. The persistence of the 'memory of silence' does not seem promising as to the future evolution of relations between the individual and the state.

With all this in mind, it ought to be noticed that the 'younger' generation's tendencies to be less politically involved. This could also be matched to the global trend of apoliticization which is striking contemporary democracies due to lack of interest from the individual into the political life and the social movements, however since Guatemala still is a younger republic, there is a chance for further studying this factor and point of interest. All of this while conclusively showing the importance of the mechanism of internal colonization, shared historical experiences, the discourses of both the subject and the state's in the creation of the subject's identity, it also creates a space in which the politicization of the youth in Latin America ought to be discussed as well as contextually understood.

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