Ideological Warfare: Interpreting Leftwing Insurgencies In Colombia

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Abstract

Since the early 1960s, Colombia has been home to violent leftwing insurgencies, some of which are still active. The corollary for the rise of the guerrillas was the deadlock in domestic politics and a dismal agrarian law since the 1930s. The disagreements between the liberals and conservatives at the time led to ideological clashes and the founding of leftwing rebel groups such as FARC, ELN, and M19. On the other side of the political spectrum, the conservatives relied on the United Self-Defenses of Colombia (AUC)—paramilitary units—to counterbalance the rise of leftwing insurgencies. The state, as the leading actor in stabilizing the country, faced rising political violence spurred by ideological intolerance. More importantly, the state lacked a trained military and adequate police force to combat the guerrillas, the drug cartels and stop the conflict from spreading.

This research uses FARC and other leftwing uprisings in Colombia to create a framework for ideological insurgencies, focusing primarily on their evolution and disintegration once the ideology faded. The research found that there is a positive correlation between ideology and insurgency. The insurgency's success, such as the number of members it enlists, the territories it captures, the population support, and financial security, depended on the strength of its ideological base, the *Zeitgeist*, and the international support. At the same time, when these factors weakened, then ideology became irrelevant.

The study revealed that grievances and politics of contentions drove the rhetoric with the intent to create a propagandistic machine to enlist guerrillas and secure a solid financial basis to leverage the cause and achieve political goals. However, once the ideology became outdated and failed, the insurgency changed its course and turned into a greed-based insurgency seeking to maximize profits through illicit activities.

Keywords: Insurgency, grievance-based insurgency, greed-based insurgency, ideology, leftwing ideology, Marxism, agrarian revolution, rebelocracy, multinational operations, military operations, Plan Colombia, military assistance, guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency

Guerra ideológica: interpretar las insurgencias de izquierda en Colombia

Resumen

Desde principios de la década de 1960, Colombia ha sido hogar de violentas insurgencias de izquierda, algunas de las cuales todavía están activas. El corolario del ascenso de las guerrillas fue el estancamiento de la política interna y una deprimente ley agraria desde los años treinta. Los desacuerdos entre liberales y conservadores en ese momento llevaron a enfrentamientos ideológicos y a la fundación de grupos rebeldes de izquierda como las FARC, el ELN y el M19. En el otro lado del espectro político, los conservadores confiaron en las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), unidades paramilitares, para contrarrestar el aumento de las insurgencias de izquierda. El Estado, como actor principal en la estabilización del país, enfrentó una creciente violencia política estimulada por la intolerancia ideológica. Más importante aún, el Estado carecía de un ejército capacitado y de una fuerza policial adecuada para combatir a las guerrillas, los cárteles de la droga y evitar que el conflicto se extendiera.

Esta investigación utiliza a las FARC y otros levantamientos de izquierda en Colombia para crear un marco para las insurgencias ideológicas, centrándose en su evolución y desintegración una vez que la ideología se desvanece. La investigación encontró que existe una correlación positiva entre ideología e insurgencia. El éxito de la insurgencia, como el número de miembros que recluta, los territorios que captura, el apoyo de la población y la seguridad financiera, dependieron de la fuerza de su base ideológica, el *zeitgeist*, y del apoyo internacional. Al mismo tiempo, cuando estos factores se debilitaron, la ideología se volvió irrelevante.

El estudio reveló que los agravios y la política de contiendas impulsaron la retórica con la intención de crear una máquina propagandística para reclutar guerrilleros y asegurar una base financiera sólida para aprovechar la causa y lograr objetivos políticos. Sin embargo, una vez que la ideología quedó obsoleta y fracasó, la insurgencia cambió de rumbo y se convirtió en una insurgencia basada en la codicia que buscaba maximizar las ganancias a través de actividades ilícitas.

Palabras clave: Insurgencia, insurgencia basada en agravios, insur-

gencia basada en la codicia, ideología, ideología de izquierda, marxismo, revolución agraria, rebelocracia, operaciones multinacionales, operaciones militares, Plan Colombia, asistencia militar, guerra de guerrillas, contrainsurgencia

意识形态战：解析哥伦比亚的左翼叛乱

摘要

自20世纪60年代初以来，哥伦比亚一直是暴力左翼叛乱的发源地，其中一些叛乱仍然活跃。游击队崛起的必然结果是国内政治的僵局和自20世纪30年代以来惨淡的土地法。当时，自由派和保守派之间的分歧导致了意识形态冲突，并导致了哥伦比亚革命武装力量、民族解放军和M19等左翼叛乱组织的成立。在政治光谱的另一边，保守派依靠哥伦比亚联合自卫队(AUC)——准军事部队——来制衡左翼叛乱的崛起。作为稳定国家的主要行动者，哥伦比亚面临着意识形态不宽容引发的不断上升的政治暴力。更重要的是，国家缺乏训练有素的军队和足够的警察部队来打击游击队、贩毒集团并阻止冲突蔓延。

本研究利用哥伦比亚革命武装力量和哥伦比亚的其他左翼起义来创建一个意识形态叛乱框架，聚焦于意识形态消退后叛乱的演变和瓦解。研究发现，意识形态与叛乱之间存在正相关关系。叛乱分子的成功，例如其招募的成员数量、占领的领土、人口支持和财政安全，取决于其意识形态基础(Zeitgeist)的强度和国际支持。与此同时，当这些因素减弱时，意识形态就变得无关紧要了。

研究显示，不满情绪和政治争论推动了这些言论，其目的是创建一个宣传机器来招募游击队，并确保坚实的财政基础来利用这一事业并实现政治目标。然而，一旦意识形态变得过时并失败，叛乱分子就改变了路线，变成了以贪婪为基础的叛乱组织，寻求通过非法活动来实现利益最大化。

关键词：叛乱，基于不满的叛乱，基于贪婪的叛乱，意识形态，左翼意识形态，马克思主义，土地革命，叛乱(rebelocracy)，多国操作，军事操作，哥伦比亚计划，军事援助，游击战，反叛乱

In the last thirty years, Colombia has been at the center of the U.S. policy for Latin America due to the ongoing armed conflict between the state and leftwing insurgents. Decades of counterinsurgency (COIN) proved challenging to deter the most prolonged political and military insurgency from controlling substantial parts of rural Colombia.[1] Throughout the 1980s, the country's future looked grim. The proliferation of drug production and trafficking added another layer to the conflict. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) controlled strategic infrastructure and governed their territories inside Colombia's national territory. They had uncontested power and ran a shadow "government" parallel with the state in the disputed zones. The inside conflict threatened the state's legitimacy. Colombia risked losing territorial sovereignty to the insurgents in the zones where the state's presence was weak or challenged. As the conflict prolonged for decades, the Colombian state had exhausted a great deal of resources to fight the rising leftwing insurgency. Still, more importantly, it lacked a trained military, technology, and adequate strategies to combat the rebels.[2]

FARC emerged into the conflict as an extremist faction of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC Partido Comunista Colombiano) in the 1960s. Like many ideological insurgencies of their time, such as the Vietcong, the Cuban Revolution, and Cuban-instigated insurgencies in Latin America, it adopted the same zeitgeist rhetoric.[3] The leftwing ideology served as the bond to keep the organization together, seeking to cause an agrarian revolution with the potential to seize power and establish a regime.

The role ideology plays in political violence can be of great interest to understanding the political game and how political actors behave. Insurgencies and political movements tend to degrade when ideology is no longer relevant to the cause. Once the doctrine fails, the movement morphs from a grievance-based to a greed-based insurgency, initially in efforts to fund the war until it turns profitable. This study will try to explain the following dilemmas while analyzing the conflict's particularities.

- How does an insurgent group use ideology to justify political violence?
- How do internal and external factors affect ideological insurgency's evolution and dissolution?

There is a plethora of literature on ideology and insurgency. However, analyzing the transition of FARC from grievance-based to greed-based insurgency needs a more critical approach. FARC has a place in the literature about rebellions and rebelocracy, yet the role of the ideology as the bonding agent is less evident. The studies concerning FARC focus mainly on military operations and capacities as part of the conflict that spurred violence. Other works introduce a new phenomenon in discussing civil wars: Wartime and social order. Such a study uses the case of Colombia to postulate that insurgencies tend to create systems within the chaos to perpetuate their existence. It analyses

how social order functions in conflict zones. While the argument is valid and sound, it focuses primarily on FARC as an illegitimate organization able to compete with the state. Yet, it leaves out ideology and propaganda as the moving force in the conflict.

This research seeks to create a framework for ideological insurgencies, focusing primarily on their evolution as part of a larger conflict and the disintegration process once the ideology weakens.

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgents. [Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS.) - Strategic Assessment 1998: Engaging Power for Peace, Chapter 7, The Americas.]

Roots of the Colombian Insurgency: Ideology and Propaganda

Insurgency thrives on ideology and propaganda.[4] It is a bonding agent between the cause and the population affected by the injustice. The basis of the Colombian insurgency stemmed from a revised form of Marxist ideology combined with lessons and practices from the Chinese agrarian revolution.[5] In the early 1900s, a new wave of political movements fueled by Marxist ideology spread around the globe. The events gave birth to communist systems across Europe and globally. In 1930, Colombia founded the communist party with the help of the Soviet Union and the Comintern.[6]

Hence, the catalyst for the rise of the leftwing insurgencies in Colombia were internal failures in land policy, the agrarian reforms, and finding an equilibrium between the agro-economic sector and small landowners. The discontent with the agrarian laws and property rights prompted a conflict and the founding of armed rebel groups in the 1960s seeking more than land and wealth distribution.[7] The Marxist concepts of class warfare and primitive accumulation served as the ideological basis of the Colombian insurgency since its inception—and the revolution was the only solution to the problem. The agrarian revolution found a solid basis in the communist ideology and propaganda due to the country's socio-economic situation coupled with the unsolved land problems it had inherited from the past.

Propaganda is a powerful instrument to generate support, whether local or international. The key to an intense propaganda campaign is the heated rhetoric and the diffusion of firm beliefs that the war is justified and it is the only means to appease the repertoire of contentions.[8] The end objective of ideological campaigns is always fundraising, recruiting, collecting taxes locally, and finding outside support from state or non-state actors. Effective propaganda during the conflict helps legitimize the insurgency's goals, discredit the government, and internationalize the armed struggle by bringing a movement's message to a broader audience.[9] The international leftist movements, new political models, and propaganda campaigns against the state made Colombian insurgencies unique for the time and the entire region. Combating the insurgency was a paramount task. It required understanding how and where it operated and understanding the power of ideology used to recruit new members. It meant knowing the enemy of the state. The conflict had many particularities attributed to Colombia's historical past and the ongoing political deadlock.[10]

Insurgency and Ideology

Nowadays, a general perception of ideology at the center of political violence is that it lacks relevance. Can ideological movements fall into the category of social movements, and as such, can they convert into armed insurgency? Marxist insurgencies have fallen out of the political discourse after the collapse of communism.[11] A Marxist insurgency strives to establish institutions that seek some form of an egalitarian society, a planned economy, and a highly centralized government. As a transnational ideology, Marxism seeks support from various countries or individuals who embrace the cause.

Insurgency is a prolonged political-military activity aiming to control a country's territory and resources through non-statal military force and illegal political structures. Insurgency tactics include guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and political activism, such as propaganda and recruitment. The insurgency operations are designed to weaken government control and delegitimize it, debilitate, or reduce its pres-

ence in zones they control.[12] Four types of insurgencies generally challenge the state: political, military, traditional, and urban. The kind of insurgency will also dictate its strategies, territory, zones of operations, and leadership. Strategically, insurgencies function as organizations and must have clear objectives to achieve their political agenda.[13] Insurgent movements produce short-term results, but they are rarely successful. In the case of Colombia, the insurgencies embodied characteristics from all four types. FARC was a rural movement operating in the Colombian countryside, and M19—was an urban guerrilla operating mainly in the city, especially the administrative centers such as Bogota. The actions carried out by both groups had particularities based on the areas of operation. Urban insurgencies and rural insurgencies are both political. However, in the case of Colombia, FARC-EP had a military structure, whereas M19 was organized in operations units and recruited young students.

Areas containing FARC presence. [National Counterterrorism Center. https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/farc_fto.html]

Multinational Operations and Counterinsurgency

Solving an internal conflict became a challenging task for the Colombian state. The dire situation and the pronged conflict made it quite impossible for the state to find the means to fight on different fronts without casualties. Counterinsurgency was one of the most challenging endeavors for the state, combatting at least three active

armed insurgencies: FARC, ELN, and M19. During an armed conflict, the warring parties receive support from the populace supporting the cause and international interest groups, whether state or non-state actors. International support is essential for any movement. At the same time, any state with an internal conflict would seek support from various states or institutions—whether direct military assistance or diplomacy—to lessen and stop the conflict from spreading. The collaboration between states to combat insurgency is part of a particular military doctrine known as a multinational operation.

Multinational operations are conducted by forces of two or more nations, usually undertaken within the structure of a coalition or alliance. In a strategic context, cooperating nations form regional, geopolitical, and economic relationships to promote national interests, ensure mutual security against real and perceived threats, conduct foreign humanitarian assistance peace operations, and promote their ideals.[14]

When discussing the multinational cooperation between the U.S. and the Colombian state to combat the insurgency, it is paramount to consider the magnitude of the conflict, its complexity, the warring parties, and how it impacted national security. A series of factors prompted Plan Colombia. Among others was the threat FARC posed to the U.S. national security and the U.S. assets in the region. The U.S. assistance comprised counterinsurgency measures, reforming the penitentiary system, strengthening the military, the police force, and the air force, and introducing new technology in combatting both drug cartels and insurgents.[15] The most important tenet of the multinational operation between the U.S. and Colombia was redesigning COIN practices and measures through Plan Colombia.

The FARC

The 1960s marked a period where the communist movements consolidated throughout Latin America. The Cuban influence in the region was substantial, and the communists realized that traditional politics were insufficient to come to power.[16] Instead, a violent revolution was the only means to take over.[17] The Colombian conflict precedes the formal founding of the FARC on May 27, 1964.[18] Colombian political and social life has always suffered from polarization and violence stemming from inequalities and failure to apply democratic principles. After a brief military rule (1953–1958),[19] the two major parties (Liberals and Conservatives)—arranged a power-sharing agreement and formed a National Front Coalition. Under the agreement, the parties would rotate power every four years. This power-sharing agreement lasted for sixteen years, yet it did not settle the disagreement between the extremist factions within the parties.[20] The disagreements drove the left-wing factions into extremism and launched two insurgencies: The FARC–EP and the Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN) (1964). The guerrilla groupings

emerged in stages. The first-generation clusters were the EPL (Ejército Popular de Liberación) and ELN.[21] In 1974, Movimiento Autodefensa Obrera and Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores emerged as urban guerrillas.[22] The insurgent groups operated in urban areas and the countryside. FARC and ELN shared the same totalitarian ideology, justifying totalitarianism and a full-blown revolution as beneficial and good. The leftwing insurgencies in Colombia competed with the state and the political elite for power. They also competed with the paramilitaries to hold on to the agricultural sector and vast territories.

During the years of violence, the PCC recruited many poor farmworkers from rural central Colombia in the provinces of Tolima and Cundinamarca.[23] The PCC operated as a mobilizing political structure to unite the peasants, directly threatening the Liberal and Conservative elite during the conflict. Hence, the PCC was an instrumental force in organizing the self-defense movement, and its leaders, Marulanda Velez and Jacobo Arenas were also PCC members and the founders of FARC–EP.[24]

FARC-EP FLAG [National Counterterrorism Center. https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/farc_fto.html]

Social Order Under Insurgency

As a belligerent party, the insurgency had many structures and levels and operated in rural and urban areas.[25] The rebels sought to debilitate and paralyze the state's presence in the disputed regions, establish rules where they were absent, dismiss the state's laws, and install a new order. This way, they would create some sense of normalcy. The insurgent factions (FARC and ELN) sought to form a parallel government in the controlled zones during the conflict.[26] Anna Arjona (2017), in her work *Rebelocracy: A Theory of Social Order in Civil War*, refers to it as life under rebelocracy. In such a setting, rebels seek order within the chaos; they control the infrastructure and local governance, including

schools, hospitals, roads, and bridges. In other words, insurgency in Colombia threatened national security and sovereignty.[27]

Establishing a rebelocracy did not produce any political results for FARC M19 or ELN members. As an extreme faction of the PCC, they were out of Colombian mainstream politics. Even when a few former guerrilla fighters and leftwing politicians tried to join mainstream politics in the 1980s, they were assassinated. Such were Bernardo Jaramillo of Union Patriotica and Carlos Pizzarro Leongomez of the Democratic Alliance.[28] It was a failed revolution within a larger conflict that never translated into a transformative process. Although the most prolonged insurgency expanded in number and scope, it stalled in strategic planning and execution. Survival became a primary goal. With the fall of communism in the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, the ideology was no longer relevant to leftwing movements.

Losing the ideological axis transformed FARC from a grievance-based organization to a greed-based insurgency. In 2000, FARC sought to revise its ideology by founding a new political structure, Movimiento Bolivariano por la Nueva Colombia (The Bolivarian Movement for the New Colombia). It attempted to rekindle the organization's ideology, espousing Bolivar's universalism. The party dissolved in 2017 after FARC demobilized as part of the peace deal.

FARC engaged in terrorist acts, violent crimes, kidnapping, and assassinating members of the Colombian political elite.[29] During the conflict, 35,000 murders were committed only by the leftwing guerrillas, FARC, ELN, and M19.[30] FARC was, without question, a violent insurgency and operated in 242 areas, making up approximately 22 percent of Colombia's territory. It was a serious threat, a mobilized political and military force that competed with the state and the paramilitary. Recruiting tactics were pure propagandistic means to solicit the population affected the most by the agrarian law. Many of the members who joined were landless peasants and indigenous people.[31]

The presence of the state in the areas occupied by the movement was also an indicator of the scope of the operations. In the case of FARC–EP, the state's presence was questionable in the regions where FARC had the most popularity. FARC was the corollary of pent-up frustration with the agrarian reform and appealed to the lower strata—significantly displaced farmers. A CIA special report revealed that FARC was considered banditry and not a threat to national security and stability, at least in the early sixties.[32]

The guerrilla warfare in Colombia was diverse and complex. It had many clusters varying from militarized forces operating in the Colombian jungle to attacks by urban guerrillas in cities and institutions. M19,[33] a leftist guerrilla, was responsible for carrying out actions ranging from car bombing to kidnapping until the assault on the Justice Palace in 1985. Twelve Su-

preme Court Justices were killed, along with 48 Colombian soldiers. The rise of the guerrilla movement in Colombia resulted from two significant developments in the first half of the twentieth century.[34] First, it was conceived from political violence. The movement sought to transform itself into a revolutionary action. By creating a military force, the guerrillas aspired to exceed the preponderance of the state, combat it, and eventually supplant it. Secondly, the guerrillas rose as an auto-defense military cluster to protect the farmers and their territory. In either case, their ideal objective was to turn the war into a revolution with a set of ideological beliefs, take over the state, and eventually replace it with a new political regime.[35]

The FARC: Structure and Operations

"The guerrilla as a military organization is offensive, professionalized in its legal structure, and governed by elementary command rules," argued Jacobo Arenas, one of FARC's ideological leading figures.[36] Arenas was known for his aggressive tactics in challenging the state using guerrilla warfare, such as city sieges and direct combat. Apart from his ideological warfare view, Arenas also sought the revolution as the only means to overthrow the Colombian government and establish a regime run by insurgents.[37]

From a structural point of view, FARC was a hierarchical military organization. The ultimate power was vested in a six-member general secretariat under the leadership of Marulanda Velez. Structurally, FARC operated with blocs. Twenty-five higher commanders oversaw the blocs dispersed in various country areas. The blocks were then divided into fronts. The front was a ranking military unit, a guerrilla command operating in a specific geographic jurisdiction. A front included the combat troops, which made up its core.[38]

Apart from the combat troops, there were support and infrastructure elements. Usually, at the core of the front were the combat units, generally one or several companies. Every company consisted of 50-55 fighters. In addition, a company was made of two platoons or guerrillas, each having 25 soldiers. A further platoon subdivision was the squads with eight fighters. At the front level, various commissions such as finance—tax collection service, logistics, intelligence gathering, public order, and mass work commissions reassured that the insurgency was functioning and had sufficient funds for operating.[39] The communists in the rural communities sought to recruit and organize people contingent on guerrilla operations and sympathizers.[40]

The tactics were strictly guerrilla warfare, ambushing state military units and raiding farms to seize land from wealthy landowners. FARC sought to capture hostages and military equipment to secure food and supplies. Illegal mining also became a source of income.[41] Since 2002, the group has increased its capability to attack major cities. With the advent of the War on Terrorism, FARC could focus more on U.S. targets.[42]

Pedro Antonio Marin, also known as "Tirofijo" or "Manuel Marulanda", the top commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). [AFP PHOTO/Rodrigo Arangua. https://www.denverpost.com/2008/05/24/top-rebel-reported-as-dead-in-colombia/]

In 1997, FARC entered the list of terrorist organizations. Until then, FARC was a threat to Colombia's internal stability. Per Rand.org, FARC increased its military operations during Plan Colombia: "…As discussed above, this expansion is closely correlated to perceived increased threats from the U.S. backed – Plan Colombia. Thus, we conclude that FARC has the resources and ability to manage its weapons supplies strategically and could threaten the United States should it choose to do so."[43]

At the beginning of the movement, FARC generated income mainly from taxes and serving as security units for the narco-traffickers, and then, when realizing that they had the resources and the infrastructure to trade cocaine,

it seized the opportunity by directly engaging in the production and sales of cocaine. The drug trade now funded their agrarian revolution, yet FARC did not have a robust military strategy—except for occupying and operating in rural Colombia.[44] Later, the assistance from the U.S. gave Colombia's military a boost. As a result, FARC suffered losses and a decrease in numbers. Survival became a priority. To prohibit failure within, it established codes and rules.[45] "In 2000, the United States and Colombia initiated Plan Colombia, a $9 billion U.S. military aid program meant to help the Colombian government combat the drug trade, reassert authority, and increase its capacity throughout the country. … However, some credit Plan Colombia with increasing the strength of the Colombian state and military, as well as initiating the FARC's decline."[46]

From Grievance-based to Greed-based Insurgency

The disintegration of FARC as an insurgency cannot be attributed only to the fading of communism globally. Instead, it was a slow internal process, a combination of internal processes and external factors, including the state's power, its monopoly over the use of force, various actors vested in the cause, and international support. Since its origin, FARC arose as an insurgency in response to the ongoing political conflict and the failure of a fair agrarian reform. Demagogically, FARC justified the means and their actions, conforming with Marxist theory and overlooking all democratic means to solve the crisis, yet sought to cash in drug money in the last decade, becoming notorious drug traffickers. Scholars, especially from a military background, distinguish two types of insurgencies in how FARC survived and operated—first, the grievance-based insurgency, and second, the greed-based insurgency. The grievance-based insurgencies became popular during the Cold War. When communism was established in various parts of the world, the disenchanted and marginalized population was suddenly left out or, in many cases, persecuted for religious, ideological, or political convictions. The bitterness was enough reason to fight or overthrow systems and governments.[47] In a polarized world such as during the Cold War era, grievance-based insurgencies were supported by both the United States and the Soviet Union.[48] While the U.S. foreign policy consisted of stopping communism from exporting in other regions of Latin America, the Soviet Union backed left revolutions or insurgencies such as in Cuba and Chile. Even in countries where it did not bring about a communist revolution, the Soviet Union supported the communist parties created before or after the 1940s.

To fight a substantial war, insurgencies must have widespread popular support, especially in domestic conflicts. It is the center of gravity for an insurgency to thrive and survive. Thus, despite support from key international actors, the insurgents must find resources and self-sponsor the war.[49] The key to its success is the number of fighters it enlists and a steady flow of income and resources. Grievance and ideology

are the most efficient recruitment motivators, and propaganda is the tool for success. Even the most rogue insurgency has its rhetoric: "Whatever the cause might be, it is always the right one, and the government is the oppressor."[50]

In the case of greed-based insurgency, there are underlying assumptions that illicit activities, looting, extortion, drug trafficking, and other profiting trades or businesses make a substantial income to finance the war. Greed-based insurgencies do not seek to overthrow a government but limit their scope to a) having access to illicit activities and b) having fewer clashes with the government. In this case, greed-based insurgencies do not have a clear ideology.

In the case of FARC, its nature is more complex, and FARC embodied characteristics from both defections. Hence, as a grievance-based insurgency, FARC had a clear ideology based on the Marxist concept of primitive accumulation and class warfare and demanded that a revolution solve the agrarian problem. As for the greed-based insurgency—FARC used the means to accumulate substantial wealth from the drug trade to sponsor the agrarian revolution and maintain thousands of guerrilla soldiers enlisted in the movement. The intent of FARC as a greed-based insurgency was not at the same level as the drug cartels because FARC operated on ideology and propaganda. While drug cartels were after the state to obstruct the extradition law, FARC was a military structure operating as a shadow government in the regions where the state's presence was not significant. It could run entire areas, control their infrastructure, schools, and hospitals, and run an illicit economy.[51]

FARC's means were scathing to the people of Colombia who became victims during the conflict and challenging for the Colombian state since it operated parallel for decades. FARC revealed a deep social wound. It exposed a divided society ravaged by violence and bad politics. It also showed how fragile the state becomes while sovereignty and jurisdiction over the national territory are in peril.

The Necessity of Plan Colombia

Throughout the 20th Century, Colombia has witnessed many insurgencies, some still active. One of the reasons for this unusual form of political discontent was low tolerance in identity politics and political impasse. The precursor of the Colombian armed conflict was the Bogotazo, a violent outbreak in Colombia in 1948 between the liberals and conservatives over the assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, a liberal politician. At that time, the political turmoil in Colombia was a corollary of the lack of consensus and the desire to solve the agrarian reform through democratic means. Over the years, the conflict developed many complexities and spread across the country. In the late 1990s, the state had exhausted its human resources and military capacity. The state was involved in multiple fronts with non-state actors such as guerrillas and drug cartels that cooperated amongst each other or against each other. The guerrilla move-

ment was backed by autocratic regimes or ideological insurgencies such as the Sandinistas, the Cuban and Venezuelan governments, and even the Russian government.

The urgency to assist Colombia in combatting the insurgency was paramount for the United States. The conflict had utterly changed the fabric of Colombian society. People were born in violence and grew old with the violence. A RAND publication, "Victory Has a Thousand Fathers," details the reasons and factors why counterinsurgency measures fail. As mentioned above, fighting insurgent factions is one of the most challenging endeavors for a state, especially when the insurgency is highly ideological and has support from the populace. The populace affected by the conflict and in support of the insurgency is the key to determining the success of COIN.

Apart from the insurgency having control over parts of the national territory, the zones of guerrilla operations converted into coca labs for the drug industry. The conflict had many layers. The guerrillas fought the state and the paramilitary at the same time. The state, on the other hand, faced two violence-producing entities involved in drug trafficking. Drug cartels were openly against the Colombian state's justice system and funded campaigns to influence the politics and the extradition law.

Rural Colombia and the red zones became battlefields where the state and FARC guerrillas often exchanged fire. FARC mined their controlled land to keep the state and the paramilitary out. The population in these zones lived in dire situations. Various interest groups and political adversaries, including the Colombian political elite, were divided on many issues. The extradition law—was one of the critical issues since it alleviated some of the pressure in domestic politics. It impacted the financing and the income of the warring groups in the conflict: the insurgents, the state, and the drug cartels.

During the Clinton Administration, the approach to assisting Colombia in solving the crisis was primarily diplomatic. The United States' foreign policy did not consider the conflict a threat to U.S. sovereignty. After drug trafficking increased in the late 1990s, Colombia's internal strife became a stability threat in the region. Designing and implementing Plan Colombia became a necessity. FARC and ELN have always been opponents of the state and endangered Colombia's internal stability and sovereignty. The funds generated from drug trafficking funded FARC and its operations. Before entering the drug trade, FARC generated income mainly from taxes and served as security units for drug traffickers. Realizing that they had the resources and the infrastructure to trade cocaine, they seized the opportunity by directly engaging in the production and sale of cocaine.[52]

The U.S. assistance to Colombia's military began in the 1940s. The United States trained Colombian army officers in the U.S. military schools, boosting their capacity, especially with the rise of the insurgency. The long-time co-

operation comprised many areas, and the U.S. support poured onto Colombia's national security to invigorate the fight against the narcotics and the left-wing rebels. The military agreements between the U.S. and Colombia started right after WWII, and it soared in the early 1950s with the deployment of a Colombian combat battalion to the Korean War. During the Korean War, Colombian soldiers fought along with the U.S. units.[53]

ELN fighters in Catatumbo [TV San Jorge: "Cifras Del Conflicto Que Estremecen El Catatumbo." YouTube, July 29, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AtwbQgEvww.]

Plan Colombia was a United States foreign, military, and diplomatic initiative to combat Colombian drug cartels and left-wing insurgencies. It was initiated by Andres Pastrana, the Colombian President (1998–2002), and the U.S. President Bill Clinton, and it was passed in Congress in 2000. By the early 2000s, the U.S. and the Colombian military had increased their cooperation in combating narco-trafficking. The U.S. Special Forces continued to boost the Colombian military by providing technology and devices used in air traffic. In addition, the U.S. Air Force radar sites assisted in aircraft tracking and shared information with the Colombian military. The U.S. Special Forces helped Colombian police and the DEA intercept illegal activity, especially the drug laboratories in the jungle.

The joint operations between the U.S. and Colombia continued well from 2001 to 2007. With the new technology, the Colombian military, guided by the U.S. and Special Operation Forces, could precisely locate FARC's activity. Yet, capturing the rebels was challenging at times. While the detection of FARC training camps was precise, they dispersed as soon as they detected activity.

To deter and decrease insurgent activity, the U.S. provided helicopters and tested the smart bomb for the first time. Yet they were only used with U.S. approval. The Pentagon held the codes

to the smart bombs as a secret to avoid being misused to eliminate political opponents or for any other faulty intentions. The U.S.'s role in shifting Colombian politics cannot be diminished or denied. For decades, military assistance created more prepared military leaders with clear strategies and objectives. These strategies became paramount in decreasing FARC's capacities and operations, including the dismantling of drug cartel networks.

Findings and Analysis

This study sought to analyze how ideological insurgencies function and operate as political and military entities in opposition to a democratic or semi-democratic system.

There is a positive correlation between ideology and insurgency. It moves upward when ideology is strong and downward when ideology is weak. The upward trend comprises solidifying the movement, more substantial support, the proliferation of guerrilla fighters, increased resources and tax collection, expanded control over the territories, and conducting well-planned military operations. The insurgency justifies violence to solve grievances. In the case of FARC, and as I discussed above, the political faction (FARC–EP) was an illicit organization—yet *de facto* still part of the PCC, including its leaders. FARC aimed to challenge the state at a military level. In contrast, the Communist Party of Colombia challenged the system in mainstream politics. Even though they operated as two entities—FARC and PCC had the same political objective and ideology- they used different mechanisms to address grievances. FARC–EP, M19, and ELN used violence and justified it for the greater good.

The role that leftwing propaganda played in the Colombian conflict was influential. It enabled the mobilization and recruitment of new members. With the help of the PCC, FARC was able to increase its numbers. PCC would provide FARC with the ideological basis, political leadership, strategies, and assistance in its occupied zones. From the 1960s until the 1990s, during the Cold War era, the Eastern Bloc, including the USSR, had built close ties and alliances with the communist parties in Latin America, such as Cuba, Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. The zeitgeist of that period was to create a multipolar world order to counterbalance the West's military and economic power. The turmoil of the 1990s in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union caused a shift in the balance of power in favor of the West. Hence, the collapse proved that the leftwing ideology that kept the systems together was flawed. The decline was a blow to leftwing insurgencies.

Financing the movement remained one of the biggest challenges that FARC–EP faced. Rising as a revolutionary army, the FARC used the ideology to gather support for the cause. Founding a shadow government in mostly rural Colombia enabled the rebels to create a system of collecting taxes and governing the occupied zones. Establishing rebelocracy meant securing some normalcy in the FARC-controlled areas while the cash flow continued.

In conclusion, the conflict in Colombia could not be alleviated without the help and assistance it received from the U.S. Hence, international support was paramount to deter left-wing insurgencies and drug cartels. U.S. military assistance enabled Colombia to strengthen its institutions and boost its confidence. Colombia remains a U.S. partner in the War on Terrorism, yet the political situation remains fragile and problematic. ELN is still active, and there are reported paramilitary activities in Santa Marta.[54] Illegal activities and various armed groups are still present in the region. The Colombian government is currently showing more leniency toward drug trafficking, making it again the most profiting industry in the area—exceeding earnings from oil exports.[55]

Endnotes

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