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HOW HAS THE 2016 COLOMBIAN PEACE PROCESS IMPACTED THE FARC IN TERMS OF ORGANIZATION, IDEOLOGY, AND TRANSFORMATION?

by

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The 2016 peace accords between the Colombian state and the FARC created great expectations of peace across the region. However, four years later, Colombia is experiencing a growing wave of violence from numerous actors, including former FARC dissidents. What drove the emergence of splinter groups after the 2016 peace accords? This thesis argues that insurgents' levels of cohesiveness and ideological commitment during negotiations significantly condition the long-term prospects for successful accord implementation. When insurgencies enter these processes with low levels of these two factors, peace accords tend to transform, rather than end, the conflict. The thesis examines this argument through an analysis of the FARC's organizational and ideological properties throughout history and finds that while the FARC had traditionally been a cohesive organization, during the 2000s the COIN strategy and Plan Colombia weakened its organizational structure. Furthermore, its incorporation in the drug trade contributed to the dilution of its ideological commitment. When accords were signed, the FARC lacked the necessary levels of cohesiveness and commitment to implement and enforce the accords in their ranks, causing the emergence of splinter groups. This thesis recommends that in an eventual negotiation with insurgencies, governments must give careful consideration to both the organizational and ideological properties of such organizations to avoid splintering and recurrence of violence.

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I. INTRODUCTION

After almost sixty years of war, in 2016 Colombia signed a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), in hopes of bringing permanent and sustainable peace to the country. According to the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN), 13,330 ex-FARC members laid down their arms and started the process of reincorporation into the civil society.[1] However, this process of demobilization, disarmament, and reincorporation has been fraught with challenges. As in most peace deals, not all combatants demobilized; in the case of Colombia, between 700 and 900 FARC members remained in arms after the peace accords were signed.

Dissident groups such as the First Front, which concentrates in southern Colombia, have continued to engage in violence against the state and the civilian population. However, dissidence has also been growing since the signing of the accords. Ex-FARC members that had initially accepted the peace process have since re-organized and conformed a new insurgency called "The Second Marquetalia" in the place where FARC was born in the early 1960s.[2] Notably, this new insurgency includes prominent ex-FARC leaders such as Ivan Marquez and Jesus Santrich, who had been central actors throughout the peace negotiations. Moreover, another 700 ex-FARC combatants (five percent of those previously de-mobilized) have since abandoned the peace process, though it remains unclear whether they did so to re-join the dissidence (or any other organization) or to return to civil life on their own.[3]

Thus, despite having been formally dismantled, the FARC has not ceased to exist, and recent reports suggest that, rather than disintegrating, the FARC dissidence continues

[1] "ARN en Cifras Corte febrero 2020" Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización (Bogotá: Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización, February 2020), http://www.reincorporacion.gov.co/es/agencia/Documentos%20de%20ARN%20en%20Cifras/ARN%20en%20cifras%20corte%20febrero%202020.pdf.

[2] "Colombia: Ex-FARC Commander Marquez Says Will Take Up Arms Again," *Aljazeera*, August 29, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/colombia-farc-commander-marquez-arms-190829085250617.html.

[3] "ARN en Cifras."

to grow in numbers. Recent estimates by Insight Crime suggests that around 2,500 members are in arms, though other open sources believe the number to be higher.[4] The Colombian government now refers to these ex FARC dissidents as a Residual Organized Crime Group.

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

These demobilization and dissidence dynamics raise important questions not only about the effectiveness of the peace process, but also about the transformations that the FARC has undergone as a result of the peace deal. How has the peace process impacted the FARC? What transformations and mutations has this group undergone organizationally, ideologically, and in its character? What are the motivations for the continued fighting? A study of this transformation will shed light on any underlying trends in the patterns of demobilization and dissidence. These insights will help inform policy and actions towards these groups and the war on drugs that have shown a growing tendency in last years.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The study of the transformations undergone by the FARC before and after the 2016 peace agreement is gradually gaining more relevance among scholars and policymakers in Colombia and the United States. The current trends of violence in Colombia still raise many questions regarding its origins and goals, and this thesis could shed light on this topic. Establishing whether the FARC disappeared or mutated after the peace accord is essential to understanding the extent to which the peace process actually achieved the central aim of ending the conflict and reducing violence.

Colombia has seen a sharp increase in the cultivation and production of cocaine since the peace negotiations began.[5] President Trump has indeed put more pressure on

[4] Juan D. Posada, "FARC Dissidents Growing Faster Than Colombia Can Count," Foundation, Insight Crime, December 20, 2018, https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/farc-dissidents-growing-faster-colombia-can-count/.

[5] "Cocaine Production in Colombia Is at Historic Highs," *The Economist*, accessed June 5, 2020, https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2019/07/06/cocaine-production-in-colombia-is-at-historic-highs.

Colombian authorities to disrupt this trend.[6] This study aims to elucidate potentially new dynamics that caused the sudden growth in cocaine production offering a better perspective in the war on drugs. Whether the FARC disappeared or evolved has implications for the different actors involved in the conflict, both in terms of structures and goals.

Insights from this research can inform policies by the Colombian and United States government in their fight against both terrorism and drug trafficking organizations (DTOs). These threats have gradually strengthened their capabilities, in large part, due to their control of illicit economies. Despite the massive Colombian and American efforts, it is unquestionable that the advances in permanently dismantling these organizations, or even keeping them away from their primary financial sources, have been insufficient.

Finally, as the next section will address, most theories suggest that negotiated settlements bring fewer conflicts to peace than decisive military victories. It does not mean that negotiations cannot be practiced, it means that they require stronger commitments from either side and the international community. Establishing the causes that allowed the transformation of the FARC before and after the 2016 peace process, whether it was caused by an internal malfunction in the group, or a natural process of degeneration into a criminal organization, would be of great importance for theoretical purposes and future studies due to the particular complexities evidenced in the Colombian case with the FARC.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Peace processes offer a promising signal about the potential ending of civil conflict. When warring parties sit at the negotiating table and successfully agree on a set of terms for ending a prolonged civil conflict, the odds of a peaceful conflict resolution increase markedly.

Yet, even after accords are signed by the various participants to a conflict, not all peace processes succeed. Scholars have found that nearly 91 out of 216 peace processes

[6] W. J. Hennigan et al., "Colombian President Faces U.S. Counter-Narcotics Pressure Amid Refugee Crisis," *Time*, accessed June 5, 2020, https://time.com/5795003/duque-trump/.

signed between 1975 and 2011 around the world failed during the implementation phase.[7] In cases such as Sri Lanka (1987-89), Angola (1992-93 and 1994–99), Rwanda (1993-94), Somalia (1993), and Sierra Leone (1996-98), violence resumed within five years of signing a comprehensive peace agreement.[8] These numbers suggest that the signing of a peace accord is just the beginning of a continuous process that aims for sustainable peace but that often fails, leading to recurrence of violence. This literature review will engage with findings from the civil war, insurgency, terrorism, and narcotrafficking literature to identify the factors that contribute to the resolution of a conflict and/or the transformation of its actors.

1. Ending Civil Wars

Explanations for failure of peace processes point in varied directions. One dominant approach within this scholarship comes from the literature on bargaining in civil wars. Scholars such as Pillar, Walter, and Licklider focus on the power that actors have at the time peace accords are signed, and argue that negotiated conflict settlements tend to be more vulnerable to breakdown than those where a decisive military victory was achieved.[9] This happens because of the many bargaining problems—often related to a lack of information about the relative distribution of power between the main parties to the conflict—that take place at the different stages in negotiations: before, during, and once war ends. Similarly, Wagner explains that negotiated settlements of civil wars are more likely to break down into large-scale violence than military victories.[10] This is because the

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[7] Stina Högbladh, "Peace Agreements 1975–2011 - Updating the UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset," in *States in Armed Conflict 2011, Research Report 99* (Upsala University: Department of Peace and Conflict, 2012), 51, https://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/667/c_667482-l_1-k_peace-agreements-1975-2011final.pdf.

[8] Stephen John Stedman, Implementing Peace Agreements in Civil Wars: Lessons and Recommendations for Policymakers (International Peace Academy New York, 2001), 12.

[9] Paul Pillar, *Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process*, 1983, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400856442; Barbara F. Walter, "Bargaining Failures and Civil War," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, no. 1 (June 2009): 243–61, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.101405.135301; Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton: University Press, 2002); Roy Licklider, "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars," *The American Political Science Review* 89, no. 3 (1995): 681–90, https://doi.org/10.2307/2082982.

[10] Robert Harrison Wagner, "The Causes of Peace," in *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End*, ed. Roy Licklider, (NYU Press, 1993), 261, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfkjq.13.

peace agreement is more likely to create an internal balance-of-power that makes it extremely difficult for the government to function properly, thus causing more conflict.

In line with this approach, Connable and Libicki differentiate between insurgency outcomes where the government definitively defeats the insurgents, those where the government loses, those where the conflict results in either a stalemate or a negotiated resolution, and those where the conflict is inconclusive or ongoing.[11] They argue that a return to civil conflict is more likely when insurgencies end through government victories, since, often, governments fail to address the root causes of the insurgency. Further, the authors find that a lasting peace is more likely when insurgencies win in a protracted war because most neutral actors, including government officials, tend to join the winning side; in this case, the insurgents. Finally, the authors find that stalemates or negotiations seldom occur, and "only a quarter to a third of modern civil wars (including anti-colonial wars) have found their way to negotiation."[12] Nonetheless, few cases have found a positive way to peace through negotiated settlements. El Salvador, Guatemala, South Africa, Lebanon, and Northern Ireland are some of the few examples in which conflicts were ended through negotiations.[13]

The literature on terrorism, while surprisingly disconnected from these conversations, tends to support the conclusion that negotiated ends to conflict—whether in the form of civil war or terrorist activity—are prone to failure.[14] Thus, negotiations should not be taken as the main strategy to defeat terrorist groups, but as an important element in a broader range of policies to marginalize them, as it reduces violence, the splintering of the opposition, and facilitates its longer-term decline.

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[11] Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, vol. 34 (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, The, 2010), https://doi.org/10.7249/mg965mcia, 13–20.

[12] I. William Zartman, *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995), 3.

[13] Connable and Libicki, How Insurgencies End, 19.

[14] Audrey Kurth Cronin, How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns (Princeton: University Press, 2009), 71.

2. Negotiated Conflict Resolution

Various scholars have focused on negotiated conflict resolutions to determine how the content of peace accords and negotiated settlements facilitates or hinders conflict resolution.

This literature suggests that more inclusive peace accords, those that address a range of grievances, tend to be more effective at enabling peace implementation. In line with this, Zartman finds that peace accords that incorporate power-sharing mechanisms for warring groups to transition to non-violent forms of political participation tend to be more conducive to success than those that lack similar guarantees.[15] Similarly, Lyons emphasizes the flexibility and the demilitarization of politics as the main cause of sustainable peace during the phase of implementation.[16] Taken together, these studies support the idea of ending civil wars through negotiated settlements despite the difficulties evidenced during the processes.

While the literature on civil conflicts and peace accords sheds light on broad trends about the prospects of a return to conflict after the signing of a peace agreement, in reaching its conclusions, it tends to make several key assumptions about insurgent groups. The first of these assumptions is that insurgent groups enter peace agreements with similar organizational structures or that, to the extent that there is variation amongst these groups, it concentrates on groups' bargaining strength. Yet, insurgent and terrorist groups vary significantly in their organizational structure. Kilberg argues that some groups are based on bureaucracy and tend to have a hierarchical organization.[17] Other organizations are characterized by having a hub-spoke or central-point structure, such as a franchise or a cartel in which actors are tied to a central element, not in terms of hierarchy, but as a method of coordination and communication. Some others are identified by having a market organization that is more fragmented and makes it difficult for authorities to follow. And a

[15] Zartman, Elusive Peace, 25.

[16] Terrence Lyons, "Successful Peace Implementation: Plans and Processes," *Peacebuilding* 4, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 71–82, https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2015.1094906, 71.

[17] Joshua Kilberg, "A Basic Model Explaining Terrorist Group Organizational Structure," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35, no. 11 (November 1, 2012), 814, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2012.720240.

more unusual type of organizations, those that have an all-channel organization that requires a multi-directional communication to function well. Such variations in insurgent groups' organizational structure at the time of signing the agreement may significantly shape the prospects of peace consolidation.

Relatedly, the literature also assumes that when peace negotiations break down and the conflict restarts, it does so with the same actors and organizational structures that entered the peace negotiations. From this standpoint, peace processes are treated much like a pause button; when the insurgents or the government pushes play, the conflict resumes right where it was left off when the negotiations began. Yet, peace processes may significantly alter patterns of conflict. Insurgent groups may act in unison in response to peace agreements, or they may splinter in response to agreements and adopt different positions and behaviors. It may also be the case that, as peace negotiations progress, insurgent groups shift their conflict strategies to adapt to the new environment. Peace processes, in other words, may—intentionally or unintentionally—reshape the civil conflict in significant ways such that the organizations that emerge on the other side of the negotiations have little resemblance to the ones that initially sat at the table.

Finally, the literature also tends to overlook the ways in which insurgent groups evolve—or degenerate—ideologically and the impact that such dynamics may have on the prospects of successful negotiations. As some scholars on terrorism such as Cronin and Mockaitis reveal, however, insurgent organizations can sometimes become so ideologically diluted that they undergo a "reorientation," meaning they transition from a primary reliance on terrorist tactics toward criminal behavior.[18] These transformations are crucial for defining the prospects of successful peace negotiations: whether insurgent groups are predominantly ideologically or criminally driven will shape the nature of their demands as well as their incentives for demobilization. In line with this approach,

[18] Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, 2009; Thomas R. Mockaitis, *Resolving Insurgencies* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011), 37.

Weinstein proposes two type of rebel groups: "activists" and "opportunistic."[19] The former tends to have economic constraints which makes them more ideologically committed and to use lower levels of violence against the population. The latter groups usually have a high economic capacity avoiding problems with recruitment due to access to resources. However, according to the author, this strength opens the door for "opportunistic" figures with personal interests (as opposed to ideological ones) and new members with high tendencies to use indiscriminate violence against the civilian population.

To summarize, the literature on civil wars, peace accords, and terrorist organizations provides important insights into the prospects of success of peace processes. While negotiated settlements tend to have mixed success, the content of peace accords can go a long way towards increasing the likelihood of successful peace deals. Nonetheless, to my knowledge, the literature has tended to overlook how variation in insurgent movements' ideological and organizational properties at the time of peace negotiation impacts the prospects of peace. Furthermore, it has also tended to assume that peace negotiations have little to no effect on the properties of the insurgent groups going forward. This thesis challenges these assumptions and aims to fill these gaps.

3. Theory On Organizational Structures

This thesis builds on literature on terrorist and insurgent organizations to develop an argument about the relationship between insurgents' organizational properties and peace processes. The thesis argues that to understand the prospects of successful peace negotiations, it must be considered the insurgent groups' organizational properties and, in particular, their level of organizational cohesion and ideological commitment during the peace negotiations. Such properties will not only condition the prospects of success, but they will also make the insurgent organizations more or less vulnerable to transformations resulting from the peace negotiations themselves.

[19] Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), 207, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808654.

When it comes to peace processes, the organizational cohesiveness of insurgent or terrorist groups at the time of signing peace accords can significantly shape the prospects of success. Staniland defines organizational control and insurgent discipline as two main factors that shape organizational cohesion in insurgent groups.[20] Organizational control is central to military struggle and affects the prospects for peace, by influencing negotiations, demobilization, and postwar stabilization.[21] Discipline plays a key role in explaining insurgents' violence against civilians during war. An organization that cannot control its fighters, is unable to keep the unity, and that lacks discipline among its members is not a reliable bargaining partner. These complications will likely lead to the appearance of splinters and spoilers.

Staniland introduces a typology of insurgent groups and differentiates between integrated, vanguard, parochial, and fragmented organizations, based on comparative cases from South and Southeast Asia in which he explains the origins and changes of insurgent groups overtime.[22] The author then classifies the two groups into two categories based on the type of organization: integrated and vanguard insurgent groups are robust, while parochial and fragmented are fragile. A robust organization coordinates strategy and retains loyalty of its key leaders making them more suitable to establish peace deals due to their central authority and strong leadership. By contrast, fragile organizations are more prone to splits due to their decentralized structure or lack of leadership.

This logic of organizational coherence can be extended to the peace processes. Robust organizations have clear leadership, exercise command and control, and have a functional differentiation such as a political wing or some specialized department.[23] Thus, robust organizations that sign onto peace accords are more likely to enforce disciplined compliance amongst their militants, particularly in the process of demobilization and demilitarization. In contrast, fragile groups tend to lack central control and thus, discipline.

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[20] Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse,* Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 2.

[21] Staniland, 3.

[22] Staniland, 2.

[23] Staniland, 9.

Fragile groups that sign onto accords are more likely to experience a transformation of their organizational structure as a result of the process of accord implementation. In particular, they are vulnerable to the emergence of spoiler groups, which, according to Stedman, are "leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it."[24]

After signing a peace agreement, both the government and insurgency leaders, are subject to different types of attacks from different spoilers trying to promote violence recurrence.[25] Spoiler groups may differ in their goals; some of them may have limited and material goals, and others may have strategic and political goals. Other scholars have agreed about the nature of spoilers in peace processes.[26] The appearance of spoiler groups with the signing of peace accords is likely to result in the transformation rather than the conclusion of the conflict.

Another significant way in which insurgent groups may vary is in the degree of dilution of their ideological commitment. Arguably, the prospects of successful peace negotiations decrease significantly when groups have either a profound or shallow ideological commitment. I will focus here on the latter. The ideological degeneration of an insurgent group brings them closer to becoming a criminal organization. This transformation limits the prospects of success of peace accords in various ways. In particular, it dilutes the effectiveness of structural government promises and increases the financial incentives for criminal activity. Once fighters are driven by profits rather than ideology, it becomes difficult to satisfy militants' demands with social and political transformations.

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[24] Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997), https://doi.org/10.2307/2539366, 5.

[25] Stedman, 5.

[26] Lisa Blaydes and Jennifer De Maio, "Spoiling the Peace? Peace Process Exclusivity and Political Violence in North-Central Africa," *Civil Wars* 12, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2010): 3–28, https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2010.484896; Juliette R. Shedd, "When Peace Agreements Create Spoilers: The Russo-Chechen Agreement of 1996," *Civil Wars* 10, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 93–105, https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240802062648; Edward Newman and Oliver P. Richmond, *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution*. (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2006), 15–19.

I posit that insurgent groups' organizational cohesion and ideological commitment before and at the time of peace negotiations will determine the prospects of success of such processes. When insurgencies are organizationally cohesive and are generally (though likely not intensely) ideologically committed, peace accords are more likely to be implemented successfully. Alternatively, when these groups lack cohesion and ideological commitment, peace accord implementation will be more likely to fail. This is because the deficiencies in leadership may cause a meaningful change in the strategic objectives that were present during the origins and evolution of the group, and that at the moment of negotiations, are not relevant for the group leaders anymore.

This thesis posits that when peace accords are signed but implementation fails, insurgent groups—in particular, those with fragile organizational structures and shallow ideological commitment—are likely to be transformed by the process, both organizationally and ideologically, such that the organizations that follow the signing of the accords will look much different from those that preceded it. Specifically, the transformation is likely to result in the atomization of the original group's organizational structure and ideological motivations. Insurgent groups that enter accords fragmented and with a shallow ideologically commitment will likely splinter along both dimensions, generating numerous but smaller insurgent and criminal organizations, each with divergent goals.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

After conducting a preliminary research, I found three potential hypotheses that could answer the research question.

1. Hypotheses 1: Content of Peace Accords

The literature on peace accords suggests that more inclusive agreements—those that address the root causes of the conflict—tend to be more conducive to a lasting peace than less inclusive ones. From this perspective, Colombia's peace accords—which are considered to be highly inclusive and to incorporate a wide range of political, economic, social, and military agreements—should produce lasting peace. If this is the case, then we should observe the continued decline of FARC remnants, and the violence that is taking

place will result from a territorial void left by the FARC rather than by a reconstitution of the guerrilla organization itself.[27]

2. Hypotheses 2: Organizational Cohesion

An insurgent group's degree of organizational cohesion at the time of peace negotiation will shape the likelihood of peace consolidation. When peace accords are negotiated with highly cohesive groups—those that are more hierarchically organized and have a disciplined militancy—lasting peace is more likely. Alternatively, when accords are negotiated with groups that lack organizational cohesiveness—those that are internally fragmented and lack internal discipline—lasting peace becomes less likely. Instead, the group will be more prone to undergo an organizational transformation and to emerge from peace negotiations further atomized.

This thesis posits that when the FARC entered peace negotiations, it did so, lacking significant organizational cohesion. Recent government offensives, in an effort to weaken the FARC and bring it to the negotiating table, had resulted in the beheading of the FARC organization, with the killing of two of its historical leaders. The organization that emerged from those offensives, although still hierarchically structured, was, nonetheless, significantly weaker and lacking in cohesion. This hypothesis proposes that this lack of organizational cohesion increased the likelihood of peace accord failure in Colombia. While FARC leaders negotiated and signed the accords, fragmentation and lack of militant discipline, nonetheless, undermined their implementation. This resulted in the atomization of the organization and the emergence of splinter groups with varying levels of strength.

3. Hypotheses 3: Ideological commitment

A final hypothesis focuses on the organization's ideological commitment. The literature has shown that insurgent and terrorist groups can degenerate and, over time, lose their ideological commitment to such a degree that they begin to look more like criminal

[27] Deborah J. Yashar, Homicidal Ecologies: Illicit Economies and Complicit States in Latin America (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 65.

organizations.[28] The result of this ideological transformation is likely the reorientation of the organization's strategic objectives, away from ideological or programmatic demands and towards guarantees of profit.

Research has documented the deep ties of Colombia's FARC with narcotrafficking and their links to other illegal economies such as extortion, kidnapping, and illegal mining.[29] In 2014, the FARC was categorized as the third wealthiest terrorist group in the world with an annual turnover of around $600 million.[30] The organization's participation in these illicit economies has also been associated with an ideological dilution that has resulted in the organization often prioritizing territorial control for the sake of profits rather than community liberation.[31] Given this, I hypothesize that the FARC's significant focus on illicit profits decreases the likelihood of successful peace accord implementation.

Coupling this hypothesis with that on organizational cohesion, I hypothesize that insurgent organizations that enter peace accords with low levels of organizational cohesiveness and ideological commitments are more likely to be transformed by the peace process than disappear altogether as insurgent or terrorist organizations. In such instances, peace processes are likely to result in the atomization of the organization and the emergence of significant splinter groups with different degrees of ideological commitment. I posit that Colombia's FARC, rather than disappearing, shattered into many pieces, each of which now has different levels of commitment to the political cause and many of which have shed their ideology and become solely profit-seeking criminal organizations.

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[28] Cronin, How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns, 2009, 149; Mockaitis, Resolving Insurgencies, 37.

[29] Alfredo Rangel S., "Parasites and Predators: Guerrillas and the Insurrection Economy of Colombia," *Journal of International Affairs* 53, no. 2 (2000), https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357766; Insight Crime, "The Criminal Portfolio of the Ex-FARC Mafia," InSight Crime (blog), November 11, 2019, https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/criminal-portfolio-ex-farc-mafia/.

[30] Forbes International, "The World's 10 Richest Terrorist Organizations," accessed June 1, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesinternational/2014/12/12/the-worlds-10-richest-terrorist-organizations/#5fa291ae4f8a.

[31] Kimberley L. Thachuk and Rollie Lal, Terrorist Criminal Enterprises: Financing Terrorism through Organized Crime (ABC-CLIO, 2018), 5.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis evaluates the proposed hypotheses through an analysis of the FARC insurgency and the peace accords signed in 2016 with the Colombian government. I evaluate the organizational cohesion, ideology, goals, and levels of violence generated by the group; all of these factors are analyzed both before and after the 2016 peace accord. Due to the longevity of this particular conflict with the FARC and this thesis's focus on the structure of the organization during the negotiations, this research focuses on the last decade. It was during this time that the FARC's organizational cohesion and ideological commitment reached a tipping point.

To analyze the FARC's organizational cohesion and ideological commitment before and after the peace accords, I use a wide variety of sources. I draw primarily from secondary sources to provide a background of the Colombian conflict and trace the evolution of the FARC's organizational cohesion and ideology prior to the signing of the peace accords. To understand more recent transformations along these key dimensions, I use original data and analysis gathered by *Insight Crime* and the *Institute of Studies for Development and Peace (INDEPAZ)*. Insight Crime is a foundation dedicated to the study of the principal threat to national and citizen security in Latin America. With projects in most countries in the region, this think tank offers reliable data based on their on-the-ground research by speaking directly with first-hand sources. The organization has collected extensive data on patterns of violence since the start of negotiations between the FARC and the Colombian government. Another important source is *INDEPAZ*, a non-governmental organization (NGO) part of the peacebuilding organizations in Colombia. Its work is based on researching and spreading information about the conflict. It has produced several reports on the status of victims and armed groups, drug trafficking, demobilization, de-armament, and reintegration (DDR) process, and government initiatives for peace.

Additionally, I use the University of Notre Dame's *Peace Accords Matrix* to evaluate the current implementation of the 2016 peace accord. I also work with other databases such as the *Global Terrorism Database (GTD)*—that offers accurate data on terrorist acts since 1970—the *Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)* and the *Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC*—that specializes in the study of armed violence in

Colombia—to further the analysis. Finally, this thesis also looks into some of the most important newspapers in Colombia—such as *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, and *Revista Semana*—to trace key moments in the FARC's organizational and ideological evolution.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND DRAFT CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is organized into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the research question and identify theoretical explanations for variations of outcomes in civil wars, insurgencies, and terrorist groups. The second chapter addresses the organizational cohesion of FARC both before and after the peace agreement. Chapter three explains the ideological commitment of the FARC before and post-accord. Finally, the fourth chapter concludes the thesis summarizing the findings and explaining some recommendations for scholars and policymakers.

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II. ORGANIZATIONAL COHESION BEFORE AND AFTER THE PEACE ACCORD

The FARC has stood out as one of the oldest insurgent organizations in the world. In fact, a study by the RAND Corporation suggests that if an insurgency exceeds the initial stage of formation, it could last an average of ten years;[32] however, the case of the FARC does not fit this conclusion. The RAND study also suggests that if an insurgency exceeds 16 years of survival, the chances of ending the conflict are significantly reduced. This conclusion could be more easily adjusted to the case of the FARC, which to date has survived for approximately 56 years, even as the vast majority of its members demobilized in the peace process carried out with the Colombian government in 2016.

The longevity of the FARC may be analyzed from an organizational point of view. In this regard, the initial concept of its organization, characterized by being vertical, extremely bureaucratic, and based on the centralization of command, offered great advantages for its own survival since such characteristics raised the level of cohesion in its lines of command. This level of organizational cohesion achieved great advances for the FARC until the late 1990s when due to its great war capacity, the FARC infringed several major military defeats against the legal forces of the Colombian state.

It can be argued that the FARC came very close to fulfilling its main strategic objective in the late 1990s, in large part, due to its high level of organizational cohesion. However, in the early 2000s, the FARC began its process of decline as a result of a very important factor: the Colombian government's military counterinsurgency strategy supported by the United States with the so-called "Plan Colombia." The Colombian government's strategy adopted in the early 2000s focused on the killing of high-ranked FARC commanders, causing them systematic failures in the strategic decision-making process.

This chapter is focused on evaluating how the Colombian peace process impacted the FARC group in the organizational aspect in order to understand the current evolution

[32] Connable and Libicki, How Insurgencies End. 27.

of different dissident groups that subsist in the country. My argument in this chapter is that, despite its longevity and level of organizational cohesion, the FARC entered the peace process with the Colombian government in 2010 with a completely divided strategic leadership, which prevented centralized and efficient decision-making. This caused that, during the 4 years of negotiations, and even after the agreement was signed, several of FARC´s strategic and tactical leaders renounced the possibility of demobilization and returned to arms and isolation. These defections generated in turn several dissident groups, largely disconnected from each other, and made it even more difficult for the Colombian authorities to fight them.

A. BACKGROUND

The FARC's origins are directly related to the era of bipartisan violence in the 1940s. By 1946, political polarization led to high levels of violence among supporters of Colombia's two main political parties, Liberals and Conservatives, which intensified after the assassination of the then-presidential candidate for the Liberal party, populist Jorge Eliecer Gaitán on April 9, 1948. This event unleashed a wave of violence in the city, historically known as the "Bogotazo"; that day approximately 2,500 people died in Bogota and other parts of the country in the wake of the violence unleashed by followers of Gaitán.[33] Besides, this event was the beginning of a long bipartisan war known as "The Violence" in which around 200,000 people lost their lives in the 15 years of armed conflict between Liberals and Conservatives.[34]

The violence generated between some partisan followers and internal differences within the Liberal Party led to some leaders such as Pedro Antonio Marín, more commonly known as Manuel Marulanda Velez or "Tirofijo" (Sure shot), to separate himself from the

[33] "9 de abril de 1948: Del Terror a la Desesperanza," *El Tiempo*, April 9, 2020, https://www.eltiempo.com/politica/partidos-politicos/que-paso-el-9-de-abril-de-1948-dia-del-bogotazo-482798.

[34] Norman A. Bailey, "La Violencia in Colombia," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 9, no. 4 (1967): 561–75, https://doi.org/10.2307/164860.

´clean liberals´[35] and join the ´commons.´[36] Motivated by the ideological principles of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC), Manuel Marulanda took a more radical path by clinging to the Marxist-Leninist ideology that increasingly gained space in Latin America and the world within the context of the Cold War. For several years, Manuel Marulanda developed proselytizing activities in southern Tolima (a mountainous region in Central Colombia) in his attempt to encourage the masses of the rural population to rise in arms against the state. It was in May 1964 when Senator Alvaro Gomez Hurtado in a congress debate denounced that, in Marquetalia and other nearby places, an area where Manuel Marulanda and his men took refuge, "several independent Republics outside the state control were being declared."[37]

Worried by these allegations, the Colombian government on the head of Guillermo Leon Valencia ordered the execution of a military operation called "Marquetalia" in order to take back control of the territories. Although the guerrillas escaped the military operation, the state was able to temporarily resume territorial control; however, proper governance was not possible due to the state's inability to address the social problems of this region. General Alvaro Valencia Tovar, who participated directly in the aforementioned operation explains that: "the socioeconomic plans prepared by the Army [as a state representative] to rescue the affected areas were not executed, except for *Riochiquito*, a former indigenous reservation. Therefore, after some time the guerrillas returned."[38] This was a major loss for the state that saw its credibility with the peasant population diminish and support for the communist narrative increase. This event is recognized by the FARC as a foundational moment in which they ceased to consider themselves a self-defense group to become a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla aimed at defending

[35] ´Liberales limpios´or ´Clean liberals´were those who remained loyal to the liberal principles of the party.

[36] ´Liberales del Común´ or ´Common Liberals were the communist guerrillas.

[37] Luis A. Villamarin P., Operación Marquetalia: Mitos y Realidades del Origen de las FARC (Luis Villamarin, 2020), 63.

[38] "Marquetalia 35 Años Después," *Revista Semana*, June 28, 1999, https://www.semana.com/especiales/articulo/marquetalia-35-anos-despues-seccion-especiales-edicion-891-jun-28-1999/39734.

the rights of peasants seeking an agrarian reform that would guarantee access to land and equity for all.

The FARC advanced their own version of Operation Marquetalia—which differed significantly from that of the state authorities—and turned it into their origin story. According to the group: "The operation came under the guidelines of the LASO (Latin American Security Operation) plan, designed by the American Pentagon and the American Embassy [in Bogota]."[39] The group suggested that there had been direct participation by the United States through its anti-communist campaign in Latin America as an effort to avoid the socialist ideals to spread in the region. The FARC wisely took this idea of "international intervention" in Colombian domestic affairs as part of its narrative against what they always rejected, "American imperialism." Likewise, the FARC argues that the Colombian Army launched an excessively large and oppressive military operation against only 48 peasants who defended their territory against the state and its prosecutors with weapons. According to the FARC narrative, 16,000 soldiers swept away the population of Marquetalia supported by planes that dropped Napalm bombs and even glass cups filled with viruses as a rudimentary use of biological weapons.[40]

Thus, the FARC largely justified their revolution in the "abuses" of the Operation Marquetalia by the Armed Forces of Colombia. This narrative was debunked in different investigations carried out by the Colombian authorities and the media. However, it nonetheless became the trigger used by Manuel Marulanda to develop the First National Guerrilla Conference in 1964, institutionalizing the guerrilla organization initially known as ´Bloque Sur´[41] or ´Southern Bloc´. This group, made up of approximately 48 guerrillas, moved from having a self-defense profile to become a political-military organization with Marxist-Leninist ideas.

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[39] Juan G. Ferro and Graciela Uribe, *El Orden de la Guerra: Las FARC-EP, Entre la Organización y la Política* (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2002), 26.

[40] Mario Aguilera P., *Las FARC: La Guerrilla Campesina, 1949–2010 ¿Ideas Circulares en un Mundo Cambiante?*, 1. ed (Bogotá (Colombia): Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, CNAI, 2010), 37.

[41] Eduardo Pizarro L., *Las FARC (1949-1966): De la Autodefensa a la Combinación de Todas las Formas de Lucha*, 1. Ed, Sociología y Política (Bogotá: UN, Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1991), 197.

B. EVOLUTION OF THE FARC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

According to article 1 of the FARC's statute, the FARC defines itself as "the highest expression of the revolutionary struggle for the national liberation. The FARC is a political-military movement that develops its ideological, political, organizational, propagandistic and armed guerrilla action, in accordance with the tactics of combining all forms of mass struggle for power to the people."[42] The FARC´s fundamental principles are based on the Marxism-Leninism ideology, and the group is ruled by its strategic plan, the revolutionary program, the national conferences, the plenary sessions of its Central General Staff, and the internal regulations. For command and control purposes, its management is strictly collective.

One of the most important factors for FARC's decision-making is the national conferences. Also called "National Congress of the Revolutionary Army," the conferences take place every ten years, but this is not extremely enforced and depends on the need to restructure the FARC's strategy or if the conditions are optimal to meet. The national conferences are convened by a Plenary or by the National Secretariat and the members of the Central General Staff, delegates of the command structures, and rank participate in it. This is why it is known as the highest authority and direction of the FARC, where all the organization policies are defined, issues of strategic interest are discussed, and preparation and issuance of general plans are evaluated. Their decisions are mandatory for all members of the organization. The conferences display the organizational and ideological transformations the FARC underwent and help us get a sense of what the FARC looked like in terms of organizational cohesion. These are the main conclusions of the ten Conferences made by the group throughout its history.

- **1964 Conference**: The group adopted the name of Southern Bloc. Different plans were approved to accomplish military and political actions, to establish a political and mass organization, and to organize the education and propaganda system.

[42] "Estatuto FARC-EP" (2007), https://www.farc-ep.co/pdf/Estatutos.pdf.

- **1966 Conference**: For the first time the group adopted the name of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and established a Staff as well as a disciplinary regime regulation. They also identified themselves as a Marxist-Leninist group aiming to take the power of the state through the protracted people's warfare. In this conference, the FARC determined the initial structure of the guerrilla movement that was continuously modified until the final organization developed in the eighth conference. At the lowest level, the smallest organizational unit of the FARC is the squad. Each squad consists of 12 men. Squads combine into guerrillas, then into companies, columns, and then fronts. Front blocs consist of five or more fronts and their staff is designated by the Central General Staff or its Secretariat.[43]

As shown in Figure 1, this type of organization shows a hierarchical structure with different levels of command that favored the vertical exercise of power from the leaders and the full incorporation and connection between its various elements and levels. As an example, every single order given by the FARC´s general secretariat had a strong sense of legitimacy within the organization and was duly enforced through the chain of command down to the lowest levels. It also proves that the FARC had a regional organization and that the different levels of command were connected to each other, improving the level of communication.

[43] FARC-EP, 10.

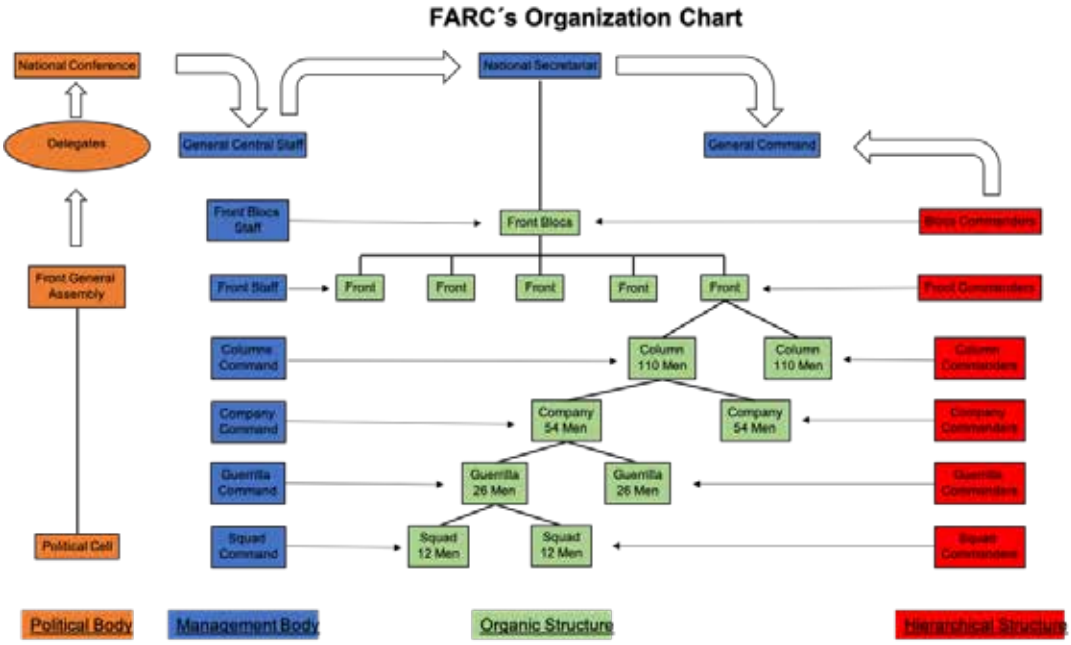

Figure 1. FARC's organization chart after the 1966 Second Conference[44]

- **1969 Conference**: The group created the Fourth Front in the Magdalena Medio region and the school of ideological formation.

- **1971 Conference**: A general reorganization of the staff and the leadership was adopted. The Fifth Front is created in the Urabá region and a new military strategy aiming to attack the fundamental bases of the state such as the military forces, the transport system, the main sources of economy, and the infrastructure of communication.

- **1974 Conference:** The Staff is again re-organized by increasing its members to 13 principals and 5 alternates. The Intelligence and Counter-intelligence Services are organized.

- **1978 Conference:** The FARC had 1,000 men in arms now. They planned to create one front by Department through the "desdoblamiento" strategy, (every front must increase its members and then be divided into two equal

[44] Ferro and Uribe, El orden de la guerra, 44.

fronts with the same responsibilities as the original). Adoption of a system to enforce the Disciplinary Regime Regulations.

- **1982 Conference:** They change the name to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP). They designed the "Strategic Plan for Seizing Power" using the Leninist principle of "combining all means for struggle" (the use of the political and electoral system, the peaceful and political struggle in an open way, and of course, the armed struggle). They also adopted a military strategy with a much more offensive approach and established that the recruitment of its new members would be from the age of 15.

- **1993 Conference:** They planned the national insurrection; the main objective was to finally take the state's power. They designed a plan to finance the Strategic Plan based on collecting taxes from national and international companies.

- **2007 Conference**: The FARC held the ninth conference nearly 14 years after the last one in part due to their commitment to the general offensive launched throughout the 1990s and the subsequent retrieval in early 2000s due to the government's counterinsurgency strategy that forced them to withdraw and change the general strategy. During these years, the FARC was structurally experiencing the devastating effects of the Colombian counter-insurgency strategy. Indeed, the FARC leaders could not meet in person to develop this conference, they rather had to do it in a virtual mode through the exchange of emails.[45] The conclusion of this conference brought a more political and financial approach such as the strengthening of the Clandestine Communist Party and a plan to invest their money in legal businesses as an effort to finance the strategic plan

[45] Carlos M. Gallego, *FARC-EP: Notas para una Historia Política, 1958–2008* (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, Grupo de Investigación de Seguridad y Defensa Actores Armados, 2009), 342.

and as a system of money laundering to legalize the income coming from illegal economies.

- **2017 Conference**: With the tenth conference, it came the approval of the peace agreements with the national government in which the organization laid down their arms and agreed to conform the FARC's political party, this time under the name of the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force.

For more than 30 years, the FARC achieved exponential growth in its ranks, helped in large part by its organizational structure that guaranteed a high level of cohesion. The aforementioned conferences demonstrate how the armed group's decision-making process was properly structured and had the ability to enforce it down to the lowest levels. However, after the eighth conference in 1982, the year in which they launched the Strategic Plan for the seizure of power, which began to materialize in offensive actions throughout the 1990s, the FARC reached its "tipping point" as evidenced by the scholars Ben Connable and Martin Libicki in a RAND investigation.[46] During the 1990s, the group reached a high capacity for mobility and concentration of forces. Furthermore, in the latter part of the 1990s, the FARC launched a general offensive aiming to surround the Colombian capital city, Bogota.

This advancement motivated the FARC's decision to move from guerrilla warfare, which is characterized by sporadic attacks with small units (attack and escape), to the mobility warfare, in which the group was able to launch large offensives against the Colombian military and Police force. The FARC managed to concentrate around 500 or 600 guerrillas to attack isolated military or police bases in isolated areas causing hundreds of deaths and kidnapped personnel who were used later to pressure the government for political purposes or as an exchange for guerrillas in Colombian jails. The maps in Figure 2 show how the FARC rapidly grew and positioned itself across most Colombian territory until the late 1990s. One of the deadliest attacks carried out by the FARC occurred on November 1, 1998, the day in which around 1,500 guerrillas took over the police station

[46] Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, 57–62.

in Mitu, an isolated town on the border between Colombia and Brazil. That day about 160 people died, including soldiers, police officers, and civilians. Also, the FARC kidnapped 61 soldiers who survived the attack.[47] This was by far, the largest attack carried out by the FARC against the Colombian authorities and one of several others that killed hundreds of soldiers in the 1990s.

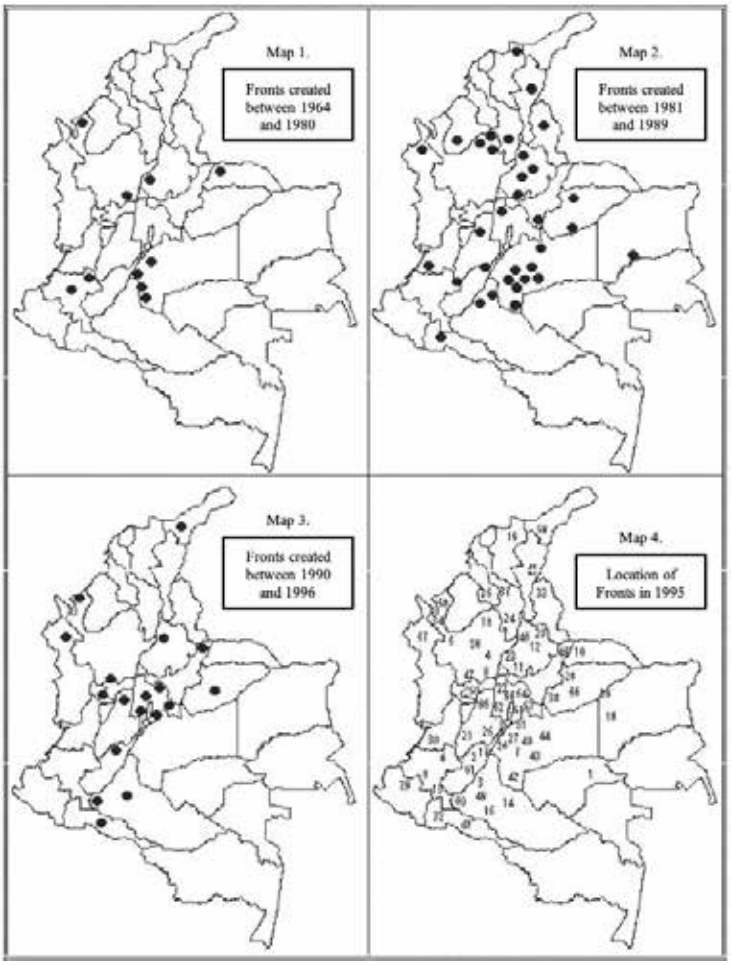

Figure 2. Locations of FARC's fronts until 1995[48]

[47] Pilar Lozano, "El Ejército Colombiano Recupera una Ciudad Ocupada," El País, November 4, 1998, sec. Internacional, https://elpais.com/diario/1998/11/05/internacional/910220416_850215.html.

[48] Daniel Pécaut, "Las FARC: Fuentes de su Longevidad y de la Conservación de su Cohesión," Análisis Político 21, no. 63 (May 1, 2008), 31, https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/anpol/article/view/46015.

To sum up, at the end of the 1990s, the FARC had an organizational structure that was highly conducive to organizational cohesion. It had deep roots in rural communities, geographical presence in nearly 70% of all Colombian departments, and a hierarchical system that placed authority on a national leadership enjoying the required legitimacy and power to enforce decisions across all levels of the organization. Yet, it was that same cohesive and hierarchical organization that made the FARC vulnerable once the Colombian government launched a new counterinsurgency strategy in the early 2000s supported by the "Plan Colombia" aiming to kill most of the FARC´s main leaders. Something that ended weakening the structure due to its high reliance on organizational cohesiveness.

C. THE DECLINE OF THE FARC´S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

After having reached its peak of organizational growth, posing a serious threat to the Colombian authorities in the late 1990s, the FARC began its process of decline ending up negotiating its demobilization in 2016. Inevitably, the assaults at different military bases and police stations that killed hundreds of soldiers and civilians in remote regions of the country, as well as the exponential growth of illicit cocaine crops that ended up being used by the FARC as a new source of income helping them to gain a high combat capacity, motivated Colombian President Andrés Pastrana Arango to initiate dialogues with the U.S. government seeking assistance in the fight against these two threats to the state itself. The U.S. response in 1999 was the approval of USD 1.9 billion for the first four years in what was called the Plan Colombia.

Despite the significant assistance offered by the Plan Colombia, the plan was only intended to combat the illicit drug business leaving aside the war against insurgencies. Its main strategic objective was to reduce the coca crops by 50% over the next 4 years. Indeed, the U.S. policy towards Colombia through the Presidential Decision Directive 73 (PDD-73) left it clear stating that "the United States would not support the counterinsurgency effort in Colombia."[49] A large part of these funds was used to create, endow, and train the Counter-Narcotic Brigade, as part of the Colombian National Army. It was also used for

[49] Carlos G. Berrios (2017) Critical Ingredient: U.S. Aid to Counterinsurgency in Colombia, Small Wars & Insurgencies, 28:3, 546–575, DOI: 10.1080/09592318.2017.1307610, 548.

the acquisition of 13 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters aiming to improve the mobility and effectiveness of this newly created unit. It is important to mention that Colombia has a fairly high geographical complexity that has always imposed a great obstacle to governance and territorial control for the state authorities. Therefore, the need to have new and better helicopters that guarantee the proper mobility of the troops.

A very important factor that changed the main objective of Plan Colombia was the terrorist attacks of September 11th in New York. As the war on world terrorism began, the new context was smartly used by the Colombian president, Alvaro Uribe Velez after his presidential possession in 2002. President Uribe obtained the support of the U.S. government to make use of the resources from Plan Colombia to fight the FARC and the remaining active armed groups in the country. With more resources and the assistance of the U.S. military, the Colombian government launched a systematic reform program of the security sector seeking to professionalize the Military Forces and the National Police. Additionally, Colombia´s military spending nearly doubled from $5.72 billion in 2000 to $10.42 billion in 2010.[50] This meant a complete turnaround in the government's fight against the FARC since the new government's policy, *Democratic Security*, proposed a massive military offensive under the concept of counterinsurgency called *Plan Patriota* (Patriot Plan), using all the powers of the state with the main objective of defeating the FARC militarily.

President Uribe's Democratic Security policy was based on guaranteeing security throughout the national territory.[51] Thus, the Military Forces and the National Police played a fundamental role since these were the only state institutions that, thanks to their capabilities, had access to the most remote and isolated areas of the territory. In this context, the military, under the concept of the *Plan Patriota*, and with the use of Special Forces, launched a military campaign to kill both Military Objectives of High Strategic Value (OMAVE by its name in Spanish), and Military Objectives of National Interest (OMINA).

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[50] Matt Ince, "Defeating Colombia's Oldest Insurgency," The RUSI Journal 158, no. 1 (February 1, 2013), 21, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2013.774636.

[51] Jerónimo Ríos Sierra and Jaime Zapata García, "Política de Seguridad Democrática En Colombia: Aproximaciones a Un Modelo de Contra-Insurgencia Centrado En El Enemigo," Revista de Humanidades 0, no. 36 (March 28, 2019): 129–54, https://doi.org/10.5944/rdh.36.2019.19837.

The former included the main leaders of the FARC's secretariat, and the latter were medium-level leaders such as Commanders of Blocks and Fronts. The objective of this campaign was based on dismantling the structural organization of the FARC through the killing of its main leaders.

The literature on structural organizations in armed groups suggests that centralized structures tend to collapse more easily when they lose one of their leaders. Audrey Cronin explains that the Shining Path in Peru, an organization with a highly centralized structure, basically disintegrated after the arrest of its main leader Abimael Guzman.[52] Thus, the Colombian strategy focused on the killing of FARC leaders, since the group certainly characterizes itself as a centralized, hierarchical, and bureaucratic organization. During the following years, the FARC suffered major military attacks that removed many of its main leaders, disrupted the decision-making process, and initiated the collapse of the organization.

Rapidly, the Democratic Security policy began to generate results in the ranks of the FARC. In 2004, one of the first leaders to fall was Ricardo Palmera, known by his alias as "Simon Trinidad," who was captured by the Colombian authorities in the neighboring country of Ecuador. Simon Trinidad served as the principal spokesperson for the FARC and the principal financial administrator of the FARC. After his capture, he was extradited to the United States and sentenced to 60 years in prison for the kidnapping of three American citizens on Colombian territory.[53] With this capture, the FARC lost one of its main political and administrative leaders, which meant a serious setback for the organization.

Later on, in September 2007, during a joint military operation, Tomas Medina Caracas, alias "El Negro Acacio," was killed during a military raid. He worked as commander of the FARC's Front 16 in the Vichada Department, eastern Colombia, on the

[52] Audrey K. Cronin, How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 18.

[53] James Vicini Garcia Adriana, "Colombian Rebel Leader Gets 60-Year U.S. Prison Term," Reuters, January 28, 2008, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-crime-colombia-idUSN2851472320080128.

border with Venezuela.[54] A month later, Gustavo Rueda Díaz alias "Martin Caballero" was killed in the northern region of the country. Caballero, commander of the Front 4 of the FARC, was responsible for the kidnapping of the former Colombian foreign minister, Fernando Araujo.[55] Despite these two commanders did not belong to the FARC's Secretariat, both casualties meant a strong blow to the organization since, in the first case, Acacio was in charge of operations to guarantee the production and transportation of cocaine abroad; and in the second, Caballero was one of the main ideologues of the organization, but he was also the main commander in the Caribbean region of the country, which made it even more difficult for the FARC to replace him.

2008 was one of the worst years for the FARC's organization. Three members of the secretariat were killed, destabilizing the decision-making process completely. As a result, the FARC was forced to rethink its strategy for the following years withdrawing its forces from the urban to the rural and isolated areas; and returning to the previous strategy of guerrilla warfare. The first to fall was Manuel Jesus Muñoz alias "Ivan Rios" in March 2008. This member of the FARC's secretariat was shot and killed by his own security chief while he was sleeping; the perpetrator, after killing him, cut off his right hand and took it to the state authorities as proof of his boss' death.[56] By doing this, the executor tried to collect the reward of USD 5 million that was offered for information that would lead to the capture of the FARC leader showing a clear sign of internal leadership issues.

The second was probably the biggest blow to the organizational structure of the FARC, its maximum leader and founder of the FARC Manuel Marulanda Velez alias "Sure Shot," apparently died from a heart attack. His death forced the FARC to completely restructure the secretariat aiming to replace its top leader.[57] The third was killed after one

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[54] Fernando Ramos, "Colombian Military: Key Rebel and Drug Trafficker Killed," *CNN*, accessed October 3, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/americas/09/03/farc.rebel.death/index.html.

[55] Patrick Markey, "Colombia Says Top Guerilla Leader, 18 More Killed," *Reuters*, October 26, 2007, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-guerrilla-idUSN2552844220071026.

[56] "Otro Golpe a La Cúpula de Las FARC Con Muerte de Ríos," *El Universo*, accessed October 3, 2020, https://www.eluniverso.com/2008/03/08/0001/8/5B2C8F45E3C34028B1AE878B7B826CA5.html.

[57] "Las FARC Reestructuran Su Cúpula Tras La Muerte de Su Número Uno, 'Tirofijo,'" *El Mundo*, accessed October 3, 2020, https://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2008/05/26/internacional/1211759940.html.

of the most important Colombian military operations in the history of the conflict. Edgar Devia Rueda, alias Raul Reyes, was killed in what the Army called "Operación Fénix," or Phoenix. Raul Reyes served as the main spokesperson and second in command of the FARC, he handled a large part of the international relations that supported not only the actions of the FARC but also with those with whom they had all kinds of businesses such as the acquisition of weapons and ammunition, relationships that the organization lost to a great extent once the information was openly published by the media.[58] This information was later confirmed through the digital material recovered after the bombing ordered by the government of President Uribe to the camp located in Ecuadorian territory, near the border with Colombia, in which the high leader of the FARC died.

The best way to demonstrate the deterioration of the FARC's structure was the two successful rescue operations of the personnel kidnapped by that guerrilla organization called "Jaque" or Check and "Camaleón" or Chameleon. In July 2008, Colombian Army's intelligence members rescued 15 hostages alive, including former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancur, the three American contractors kidnapped in 2000, and several soldiers and police officers who remained in their power.[59] Within the context of "Information Operations," the Army's intelligence members supplanted orders from the FARC secretariat, convincing the commander of the Front 1, who was in charge of the hostages, to hand them over to an alleged humanitarian mission, actually made up of members of the Army. This humanitarian mission would be in charge of transporting them and delivering them to another FARC front. This deception operation affected the FARC's command and control structure in two ways: first, Operation Jaque demonstrated that the FARC's chain of command, control, and communication had been completely infringed and exposed; second, it deprived the FARC of having hostages of great strategic value with whom they had been exerting pressure on the Colombian government and increasing its international image.

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[58] "Raúl Reyes, 'Canciller' y Miembro del Secretariado de las Farc, fue Muerto en Combate en Ecuador," *Revista Semana*, March 1, 2008, sec. On Line, https://www.semana.com/on-line/articulo/raul-reyes-canciller-miembro-del-secretariado-farc-muerto-combate-ecuador/91318-3/.

[59] "Jaque Mate: La Operación Perfecta," *Revista Semana*, June 28, 2008, sec. Nación, https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/jaque-mate-operacion-perfecta/93666-3/.

On the other hand, Operación Camaleón also dealt a severe blow to the FARC's military structure and image. In June 2010, the Colombian Army Special Forces infiltrated through the thick Amazon rainforest of Guaviare, the country's southern region, and after a direct assault on the FARC's Front 1, they managed to rescue three police officers and one soldier alive.[60] Among the hostages, there was a Major General of the national police who had been kidnapped 12 years ago and was by far the highest-ranking officer under FARC's captivity. This military defeat revealed a FARC organization already weakened and disconnected from its high command, which shows once again the constant decline in its organizational structure and its military capabilities.

Finally, in September 2010, this time under the newly elected President Juan Manuel Santos, who superseded Alvaro Uribe, the Military Forces killed Victor Julio Suarez Rojas, alias "Mono Jojoy".[61] This was undoubtedly one of the most important military defeats of the FARC since he served not only as a member of the secretariat but was also considered the highest military leader of the FARC, something that ended up weakening the operational capacity of the armed organization. A year later, during the so-called Operation "Odysseus," the then FARC commander Guillermo Leon Saenz Vargas alias "Alfonso Cano" was also killed. Cano had replaced "Tiro Fijo" as the top commander of the armed structure after his death in 2008. With this blow, the FARC began the negotiation process with the government until reaching an agreement in 2016.

By the end of 2010, it was clear that the FARC´s Strategic Plan projected during the 7th conference and executed during the 1990s and early 2000s had failed. The decision to move from guerrilla warfare to movement warfare generated partial victories during the 1990s; one of them was the way they briefly surrounded Colombia´s capital city, Bogotá. However, after the modernization of the Military Forces supported by Plan Colombia, this strength became a great vulnerability. The tactical movements of the FARC, now in larger groups, began to be easily detected by the Colombian intelligence, which served as the

60 "Detalles de la 'Operación Camaleón', la Misión que Rescató a los Uniformados," *Revista Semana*, June 13, 2010, sec. Nación, https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/detalles-operacion-camaleon-mision-rescato-uniformados/117984-3/.

61 "Colombian Army Kills Top FARC Rebel Leader Mono Jojoy," *BBC News*, September 23, 2010, sec. Latin America & Caribbean, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-11399914.

basis for launching important military operations that profoundly unbalanced the organization of the armed group suffering serious damage to its leadership structure. This drawback caused the FARC to withdraw its troops around Bogotá, forcing the group to adopt a more conservative strategy by hiding in remote and isolated areas, and resuming the tactics of guerrilla warfare using small groups without the greater capacity to face the Colombian Army troops in open battle, but with high capacity executing terrorist attacks.

D. PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND THE EMERGING OF SPLINTER GROUPS

One factor that completely changed the development of the conflict with the FARC in 2010 was the election of President Juan Manuel Santos. Santos, who served as Minister of Defense in the Uribe government, was able to gain the confidence of the president due to his strong character against the FARC, something that motivated Uribe to support him politically in his candidacy since he saw in Santos the perfect candidate to continue with the same objective of the democratic security policy, to defeat the FARC militarily. By the end of 2010, the popularity of the Uribe's democratic security policy was at its highest. Colombia's GDP growth between 2002 and 2008 was close to 4.5%,[62] largely due to the strengthening of security in the country reflected in the weakening of the FARC, which attracted more foreign investment; and also to the rise in the price of oil of which the Colombian economy depends to a large extent.

Once in power, President Santos continued the military offensive against the FARC while he began exploratory and secret dialogues with the armed group in search of a path to peace. The product of this military pressure on the FARC was the killing of alias Alfonso Cano, the top leader of the armed group and who had replaced Manuel Marulanda Velez after his death. This fact could have led to the final decision of the FARC to openly negotiate its demobilization, which began formally in 2012.[63] But Santos' decision to

62 "GDP Growth (Annual %) - Colombia | Data," accessed October 7, 2020, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2010&locations=CO&start=2001.

63 "El Gobierno de Colombia y las FARC se reúnen en La Habana para preparar el diálogo de paz," *RTVE.es*, November 6, 2012, https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20121106/colombia-farc-reunion-cuba/573043.shtml.

negotiate with the FARC raised strong political confrontations, especially with former President Uribe, now a Colombian senator for the ruling party and who, after this moment, became the main political opponent of Santos. Uribe took this move by Santos as a betrayal of what was agreed before being elected, arguing that the best way out of the conflict was to continue the military offensive until the FARC was completely defeated.

The negotiation process with the FARC was directed by teams designated to represent both parties: on the state side, the Santos government appointed Liberal and former vice president of Colombia Humberto de la Calle as chief negotiator; among the technical team included Sergio Jaramillo (Peace Commissioner), Frank Pearl (former Peace Commissioner), Luis Carlos Villegas (Colombian businessman), and as a strategic move from the government side, it included two retired generals representing the Military Forces and the National Police aiming to give confidence to both forces that their survivability was not being negotiated.[64]

The FARC designated as members of the negotiating team, mostly members of its Secretariat; alias Ivan Marquez commander of the Caribbean Bloc, Pablo Catatumbo commander of the Western Bloc, Rodrigo Granda international representative of the FARC, Andres Paris commander of the Eastern Bloc , Jesus Santrich, a member of the Caribbean Block, and Ruben Zamora, commander of the Front 33 (the only one who was not part of the secretariat).[65] To ensure the required secrecy throughout the process and its advancements, both parties decided that the negotiations must be abroad; thus, they took place in Oslo, Norway and in Havana, Cuba, guarantor countries of the peace agreement between the Colombian state and the FARC.

Even before the negotiations were concluded in Havana, symptoms of the breakdown in the FARC organization began to be more exposed. Some desertions began to generate mistrust in the Colombian public regarding whether the FARC negotiators were

64 "Conozca al Equipo Negociador Del Gobierno Que Dialogará Con Las FARC," *El País*, September 5, 2012, https://www.elpais.com.co/judicial/conozca-al-equipo-negociador-del-gobierno-que-dialogara-con-las-farc.html.

65 "¿Quiénes Son Los Negociadores de Las FARC y El Gobierno Para El Proceso de Paz?," *El País*, October 17, 2012, https://www.elpais.com.co/judicial/quienes-son-los-negociadores-de-las-farc-y-el-gobierno-para-el-proceso-de-paz.html.

really representing the entire organization or only a part of it. Thus, in June 2016, the commander of the Front 1 of the FARC, Ivan Mordisco, in a letter sent to the organization's secretariat, indicates that his group was not willing to be part of the demobilization process and that, therefore, they had decided to continue in arms.[66] Immediately, the FARC secretariat responded that the entire troop should submit to the majority decision, since "if the commanders and combatants involved have the desire to embark on an uncertain adventure, it is up to them to do so by taking a different name from that of the real structures."[67]

The desertion of Ivan Mordisco was a severe blow to the FARC leadership structure, which at that time was focused on demonstrating its capacity for cohesion in its attempt to generate confidence in the peace process, which had many "spoilers" in the country. For his replacement, the FARC named alias Gentil Duarte in charge of the command of the Front 1; Duarte was also in charge of the Front 7 and was an active member of the FARC's secretariat. Both fronts had their main area of influence the departments of Guaviare, Vaupés, and Meta, commonly known for being rural and marginal areas, and some of the most coca productive lands. After renouncing the peace process, the Front 1 expanded its area of operations towards the border with Brazil, in the region of La Pedrera and Puerto Córdoba, thereby increasing the demand for cocaine from the neighboring country.[68] This desertion generated great uncertainty about the peace process with the FARC, which was used by the government's opposition led by former President Uribe as an excuse to avoid negotiation and return to the military offensive strategy.

Days before the signing of the final agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, the guerrilla organization held the tenth conference which was attended by all the high command, including Gentil Duarte, and in which they agreed to the terms for demobilization. Nonetheless, one month later, Duarte changed his mind and declared

66 "The Evolution of the Ex-FARC Mafia," InSight Crime (blog), November 11, 2019, https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/evolution-ex-farc-mafia/.

67 "La Dura Advertencia de las FARC al Frente Primero," *Revista Semana*, July 8, 2016, https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/farc-hace-una-advertencia-al-frente-primero/481045/.

68 "The Evolution of the Ex-FARC Mafia."

himself a dissident, rejecting the Havana agreements.[69] Thus, there were already two Front commanders and about 450 men-in-arms who had decided to conform splinter groups largely due to their high responsibility in recent years in the drug business in their area of influence. The new splinter groups detached themselves from both the national organizational structure and each other. Not responding now to a national conference, they had the organizational flexibility to generate a new vision, organizational framework, and strategy for themselves. The roots of the post-peace accord insurgent scene and Colombia had been planted: numerous groups, now lacking in organizational cohesion and therefore each following their own set of rules, would continue to splinter and form.

By the end of 2016, one month after the signing of the final agreement, the now FARC political party had already expelled several of its leaders who did not join the demobilization process. Among these was Luis Alfonso Lizcano Gualdrón, alias "Euclides Mora," Géner García Molina, alias "John 40," alias "Giovanny Chuspas" and Miguel Díaz Sanmartín, alias "Julián Chollo."[70] One after another, various leaders abandoned the demobilization process, increasingly undermining its general credibility. At the beginning of 2017, it was the turn of Walter Arizala alias "Guacho," who escaped from one of the concentration areas where the demobilized FARC members were temporarily located. Guacho recruited members of the extinct Daniel Aldana column and created the Oliver Sinisterra Front, located in the municipality of Tumaco, Cauca; the epicenter of the coca business in the country.[71] Despite not having been a notorious figure in the defunct FARC, Guacho quickly became a high-value target for the Colombian government, especially after having assassinated three Ecuadorian journalists on the border with that country.

After Guacho, other former FARC leaders followed the same path. Names such as Rodrigo Cadete, Mono Jojoy's trusted man also abandoned the process and settled in the Putumayo department, in the south of the country. Once there, he tried to establish an

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[69] Shannon Kirby, "Miguel Botache Santillana, Alias 'Gentil Duarte,'" InSight Crime (blog), March 9, 2018, https://www.insightcrime.org/colombia-organized-crime-news/miguel-botache-santillana-alias-gentil-duarte/.

[70] "The Evolution of the Ex-FARC Mafia."

[71] Parker Asmann, "Walter Patricio Arizala, Alias 'Guacho,'" InSight Crime (blog), January 18, 2019, https://www.insightcrime.org/colombia-organized-crime-news/walter-patricio-arizala-alias-guacho/.

alliance with Pedro Oberman Goyes alias "Sinaloa," who had also deserted but he was not willing to make alliances with any other group.[72] All these abandonments of the peace process caused strong criticism on the government of Santos and especially, on FARC, whom the majority of the Colombian people have barely trusted, putting the future of the process and its implementation at risk. However, the process was never in more risk than when the main FARC negotiators in Havana, Ivan Marquez and Jesus Santrich, abandoned it. After the Attorney General's office, with support of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration office (DEA), captured Santrich on charges related to cocaine deals with Mexican cartels, which was demonstrated through a video recorded by an undercover agent, the criticism from the representatives of the FARC party did not wait.[73] Its top leader, Timoleón Jimenez alias "Timochenko," along with Ivan Marquez who now served as senators in Congress, argued that this event had been a setup by the U.S. authorities with opponents of the Colombian peace process.

After several years of avoiding the extradition to the United States, the Colombian Supreme Court of Justice ordered the release of Santrich, while it continued with the investigation. He immediately escaped and joined Ivan Marquez, who had left his chair in Congress six months before to return to the arms together with alias "Paisa," one of the most fearsome perpetrators of terrorist acts in the country, and who also abandoned the peace process.[74] Both reappeared months later through a video in which they appeared in uniform and carrying long-range weapons. In the video, Marquez justified that his desertion had been motivated by the injustice committed against Santrich and also by the constant failures and opposition to the implementation of the peace process. Likewise, they reported that, from now on, they created the guerrilla movement "La Segunda Marquetalia"

[72] "The Evolution of the Ex-FARC Mafia."

[73] "Colombian FARC Leader Arrested on Drug Trafficking Charge," BBC News, April 10, 2018, sec. Latin America & Caribbean, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-43707435.

[74] Dylan Baddour and Anthony Faiola, "As Colombia Peace Accord Unravels, Ex-FARC Leaders Take Up Arms, Announce Return to Conflict," *Washington Post*, accessed October 8, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/as-colombia-peace-accord-unravels-ex-farc-leaders-take-up-arms-to-resume-struggle/2019/08/29/e2a50bd6-ca5d-11e9-9615-8f1a32962e04_story.html.

or the second Marquetalia, resuming the fight against the Colombian state with the same political objectives of the demobilized FARC.

E. THE CURRENT FRAGMENTIZED ENVIRONMENT

It is clear that the demobilization of the FARC in 2016 meant a reduction in its ability to influence Colombian territory through arms. However, the different dissident groups still maintain a considerable presence in different parts of the country, especially in rural areas. Figure 3 shows how the FARC went from having an armed presence in 249 municipalities in 2011, to having it in only 85 municipalities in 2019. Despite this decrease, since 2016 dissidents have been increasing not only their number of members but also the areas where they have an armed presence, which has increased the rates of violence in those regions.

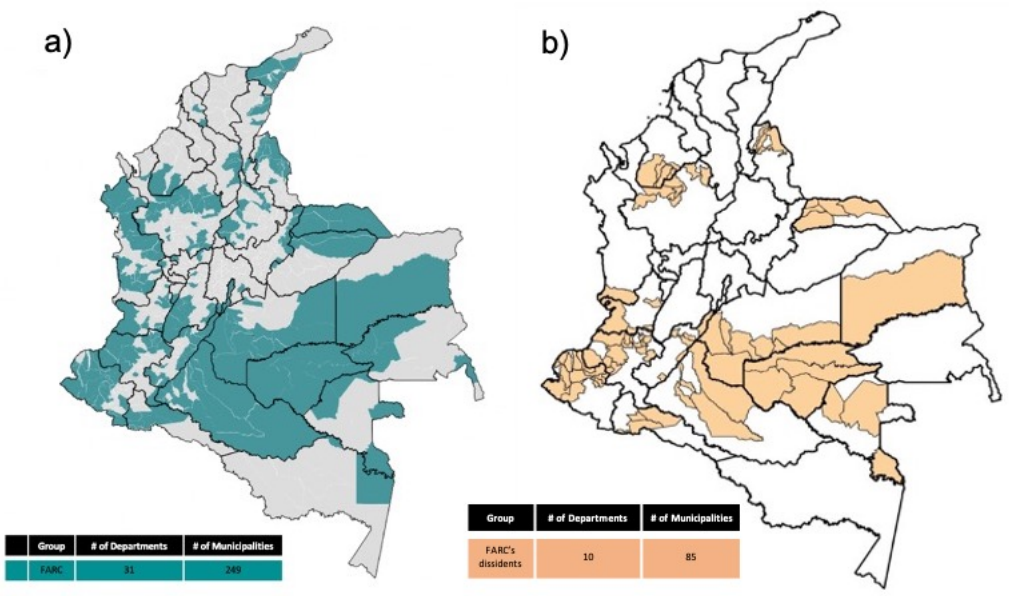

Figure 3. a) FARC presence in 2011. b) Municipalities with presence of dissident groups 2019.[75]

The organizational situation of the different dissident groups in Colombia is far from clear. The Peace and Reconciliation Foundation estimates that by the end of 2019 there were 23 splinter groups that have some kind of presence in 83 of the 1,204 Colombian municipalities. Among the 23 groups, the foundation estimates that they have around 1,800 combatants, of which approximately 800 had rejected the peace process since its signing in 2016.[76] The *Washington Office for Latin America* (*WOLA*), a Non-Governmental Organization for human rights adds to these numbers between 600 to 800 new recruits that according to their study do not have a guerrilla background which might increase the total dissidences to 2,400 combatants.[77] If these figures are accurate, it means that splinter

[75] Camilo Gonzales, "Los Grupos Post FARC: Un Escenario Complejo" (INDEPAZ), accessed October 8, 2020, http://www.indepaz.org.co/los-grupos-posfarc-ep-un-escenario-complejo/; Fundación Paz y Reconciliación, "Más Sombras que Luces, Un Análisis de Seguridad en Colombia," August 28, 2019, https://pares.com.co/2019/08/28/mas-sombras-que-luces-un-analisis-de-seguridad-en-colombia/.

[76] Fundación Paz y Reconciliación.

[77] "FARC Dissident Groups," Colombia Peace, accessed October 8, 2020, https://colombiapeace.org/farc-dissident-groups/.

groups have grown by approximately 1,600 combatants after the signing of the final agreement, something that might explain the current rates of violence in the country.

Unlike the former FARC, the dissidents do not have a vertical and hierarchical organization. In fact, it is still difficult to estimate to what extent alliances have been made between the different dissident groups. However, Chris Dalby from *Insight Crime* suggests that their organization currently obeys more of a type of federation in which "commanders coordinate actions according to their economic interests, rather than working as a hierarchical organization."[78] Similarly, WOLA explains that among the 23 dissident groups suggested by the Foundation, 11 are grouped around the Front 1, under Gentil Duarte, 4 are grouped around the Second Marquetalia under Ivan Marques, and the rest are independent dedicated to drug trafficking and "in the process of decomposition."[79] Judging from the way the groups have been behaving in recent years, these hypotheses effectively explain their persistence of a post-accord organizational framework lacking central command. The new fragmented organizational landscape poses unprecedented challenges for the Colombian authorities aiming to disrupt these groups.

In terms of location, the alliance between Gentil Duarte, Ivan Mordisco, and John 40 around the Front 1 and the Eastern Bloc have managed to gain more territory than other structures, making them one of the strongest groups to fight. Today, Gentil Duarte with his Eastern Bloc operates in the department of Meta; Mordisco maintains a strong presence in the eastern part of the country, in the departments of Caqueta, Narino, Cauca and more recently in Guaviare and Vaupés; and John 40 tends to operate in the extensive department of Vichada and controls the border with Venezuela.

As for the Second Marquetalia, despite being much smaller in size than Duarte's group, it enjoys much more national recognition due to the background of its heads. Ivan Marquez, Jesus Santrich and El Paisa have organized a late alliance that has left them with few combatants to prevail over others. Nowadays, Marquez's group is more focused on

78 Chris Dalby, "Ex-FARC Mafia," Insightcrime (blog), October 27, 2019, https://es.insightcrime.org/colombia-crimen-organizado/ex-farc-mafia/.

79 "FARC Dissident Groups."

achieving alliances in order to strengthen the structure; however, he does not seem to have been very successful since his leadership in the peace process turns him against those who always rejected the negotiations and therefore, they might be isolating him.

The organizational structure of the dissidents appears to be more similar to that of the National Liberation Army (ELN) due to its horizontality. Today, the dissidents are led by many middle leaders who do not seem to want to follow orders from a single leader as they did in the extinct FARC. On the contrary, the scenario looks more like that of a large number of groups with relative combat power motivated to continue in arms but who share a single methodology, the internal struggle for control of the areas where cocaine is grown.

After discussing the different arguments presented throughout this chapter, it is important to mention some of the different findings, which confirm that after reaching an agreement with the Colombian state, the FARC did not completely disappear to simply become a political party. Instead, due to the weakened organizational structure shown by the group during the negotiation process caused by the multiple defeats inflicted by the Military Forces, they were prone to fragmentation in the process as it certainly happened.

FARC´s top leaders and negotiators did not have the necessary leadership or sufficient legitimate authority within the organization to enforce the entire group to demobilize. Furthermore, the appearance of new leaders in different regions of the country challenged the traditional centralization of orders to which the group was accustomed since its creation. This situation led to a disconnection between the different levels of command, making it impossible to impose the decision across all levels, which in turn, generated the emergence of dissidents that, in most cases, act independently in their quest to control territory and gain as much power as possible.

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III. IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT BEFORE AND AFTER THE PEACE ACCORD

The FARC demobilization process, which began in 2016, filled an entire country that has lived in conflict for more than 50 years with hope. Once the FARC laid down its weapons, this hope began to wane due to the growing threat posed by different splinter groups that emerged during and after the signing of the final agreement. From its inception, the FARC proved to be a cohesive armed organization with an ideological commitment focused on its political and social objectives. However, since the 1980s, when the secretariat decided to launch its strategic plan for the seizure of power, it generated the need to grow rapidly in numbers in order to achieve such ambitious objectives. That was the moment when the group's actions began to show a tendency to weaken its ideological principles due to the incorporation of new personnel and methods that ended up hindering the achievement of its strategic objective.

This chapter examines how the ideological commitment with which insurgent groups enter peace negotiations shapes the accords' prospects of success and the patterns of splintering that follow. In the case of Colombia, the FARC entered the peace accords process with significant ideological dilution: across its different commands and levels of authority, members' level of ideological commitment varied significantly. While some internal groups remained committed to the ideological foundations of the FARC and sought to gain power to transform Colombian society, others became absorbed by their participation in the illicit drug economy. The variation in ideological commitment within the FARC itself, I argue, complicated the peace accord process, since not all members of the FARC shared the same goals. In a context of significant variation in a group's level of ideological commitment, as well as marked organizational fragmentation (as discussed in Chapter 2), the peace accords had unintended consequences: rather than leading to the FARC insurgency's disappearance, they enabled its transformation. The outcome was an organization fractured into uncoordinated micro-parts that varied significantly in their ideological commitment, with some dissident groups returning to insurgency, dissatisfied

with the social concessions included in the peace accords, and many others being explicitly motivated by illicit economic interests and power pursuits.

This chapter will begin by describing the FARC's ideology in its origins. It will then describe how the organization became ideologically diluted as a result of its increasing participation in narco-trafficking. The chapter will then turn to consider how the significant variation in ideological commitment within the FARC interacted with the peace accords to produce the organizational and ideological splintering of the organization.

A. FARC'S INITIAL MOTIVATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

A central ideological motivation of the FARC's agrarian revolutionary struggle were the disputes related to the equitable distribution of land in the country. For this reason, during its First Conference on July 20, 1964, the Southern Block, as the FARC was initially named, proclaimed the National Agrarian Program.[80] According to FARC's narrative, the attack suffered in Marquetalia two months earlier had been carried out by Colombian authorities in order to displace them and expropriate the lands from the peasants of the region. Furthermore, to accomplish this goal, the Colombian state used a large arsenal supported by North American specialists.[81] In response, the group argued, it was necessary to create a revolutionary guerrilla group that could fight for political changes to improve the agrarian situation in the country, defeat the Colombian state whom they accused of being oligarchs, and carry out an anti-imperialist struggle.[82] The program sought a radical change in the social structure of the Colombian countryside that would guarantee completely free access to land for peasants who want to work the land, thus avoiding concentration of land in the hands of large landowners.

Two years later, once the organization adopted the name of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) for the first time during its Second Conference in

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[80] FARC-EP, "Estatuto FARC-EP" (2007), https://www.farc-ep.co/pdf/Estatutos.pdf.

[81] FARC-EP, "Programa Agrario de los Guerrilleros de las FARC-EP - FARC_Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común," April 2, 1993, https://www.farc-ep.co/octava-conferencia/programa-agrario-de-los-guerrilleros-de-las-farc-ep.html.

[82] Juan G. Ferro and Graciela Uribe, *El Orden de la Guerra: Las FARC-EP, Entre la Organización y la Política* (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2002), 34.

1966, the group projected its objectives at a more strategic level. Although the initial motivations continued to be a fundamental part of its armed struggle, as of this conference, according to Alape, the FARC leadership declared that the Agrarian Program was now part of a longer-term objective: "a political project that sought the seizure of power and transformation of the state structures."[83] The author also claims that, it is at this moment when the FARC first proposed a national revolution based on a Marxist-Leninist ideology in order to seize power and establish a communist government that guaranteed the equitable distribution of all resources. Nonetheless, despite considering these great and ambitious goals, the FARC lacked a clear strategy and sufficient force until the early 1980s when they developed the Seventh Conference.

B. FARC AND THEIR CONNECTIONS WITH THE DRUG TRADE

The Seventh FARC conference in 1982 marked a turning point in the organization, not only because for the first time the FARC proposed a serious strategy to accomplish its political objectives, but because such a strategy required significant growth and more importantly, sufficient resources to finance it. It was at this conference that the FARC first implemented the Strategic Plan for the seizure of power. The plan introduced two important changes: a significant reorganization of the FARC's financial strategy to assume the control of new sources of income, and the order of leaving behind the FARC's classic guerrilla warfare in which the group adopted mainly defensive positions to take a much more offensive attitude in which it looked for army or police units to attack and seize them.[84]

The ambitious strategic plan proposed in 1982 brought itself the need to make difficult decisions that in the end, not only affected the size of the organization but also its ideological commitment. Thomas Marx explains that due to the goal of growing the organization into 48 fronts to carry out the Strategic Plan, the FARC was forced to find a source of income that would guarantee better returns than those it had been using up to that

83 Arturo Alape, *Tirofijo: Los Sueños y las Montañas: Biografía de un terrorista* (Ediciones Abejón Mono, 2018), 84.

84 Mario Aguilera P., "Las FARC: Auge y Quiebre de su Modelo de Guerra," Análisis Político 26, no. 77 (January 1, 2013), 87, https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/anpol/article/view/44005.

moment (kidnapping and extortion).[85] In Table 1 , Aguilera shows how the FARC rapidly grew in numbers during the 1980s and 1990s, passing from 3,600 to 17,000 members as an effort to fulfill the Strategic Plan objectives. According to the author, to enable this significant expansion, the FARC became increasingly involved in the narco-trafficking business.

Table 1. Evolution of FARC Membership, 1979–2010.[86]

YEAR	# of Members	# of Fronts	Militias
1979	802	9	-
1986	3,600	32	-
1995	7,000	60	-
2002	17,000	-	10,000
2004	12,515	-	-
2010	8,000	-	-

The FARC's significant participation in the narco-trafficking economy significantly undermined the ideological commitment of its members. While participation in an illicit economy does not in and of itself make an insurgent group ideologically diluted, it is, nonetheless, a strong predictor of this. According to Weinstein, the structure of rebel organizations (including their recruitment strategy and financing) affects the tactics used and the relationships created between insurgent groups and the population.[87] More

[85] Thomas A. Marks, "FARC, 1982–2002: Criminal Foundation for Insurgent Defeat," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 28, no. 3 (May 4, 2017): 498, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2017.1307612.

[86] Aguilera P., "*LAS FARC*.," 93.

[87] Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), 204, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808654.

importantly, Weinstein explains that, generally, groups with high economic capacity do not tend to have problems with recruitment due to access to resources, yet their increased access to such resources causes subsequent problems: groups, according to the author, become "opportunistic," meaning that they are characterized by leaders with personal interests (as opposed to ideological ones) and new members with high tendencies to use indiscriminate violence against the civilian population. In contrast, "activist" groups with little access to resources tend to have more ideologically committed leaders and recruits that tend to use lower levels of violence against the population.[88] By becoming involved in the drug economy, the FARC increased its economic capacity to carry out its political plan and was also able to recruit significantly more members. At the same time, however, it became significantly more vulnerable to ideological dilution through the increased recruitment of opportunistic members.

The first FARC's relationship with narco-trafficking was evidenced in 1980 when the group began to collect "taxes" from drug traffickers in exchange for security for their drug laboratories.[89] In addition, the FARC also extorted peasants who harvested coca leaf as well as middlemen who bought coca base and paste to be further processed.[90] This new source of income largely explains the significant growth of the FARC during the latter part of the 1980s, when the FARC became a real threat to the Colombian state, something that had not happened so far since the organization was focused solely on surviving as an insurgency.

After experimenting with taxes on drug cartels, especially after 1996, the FARC leaned towards other phases of the drug trafficking chain, becoming involved in the production, transportation, and marketing of cocaine. In 2013, a report by *Insight Crime* reported that "most of the FARC fronts operating in coca-growing areas collected taxes on coca growers (up to $50 per kilo of coca base), and on buyers of coca base (around $200 per kilo). Fees were also charged to drug laboratories in these areas, the transit of cocaine

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88 Weinstein.

89 Daniel Pécaut, *Las FARC: ¿Una Guerrilla Sin Fin o Sin Fines?* (Grupo Editorial Norma, 2008), 90.

90 Alexandra Guáqueta, "The Colombian Conflict: Political and Economic Dimensions," in *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 80.

shipments and the departure of flights with drugs."[91] According to this source, most of FARC's fronts were also involved in the process of crystallization of cocaine either directly operating coca laboratories or subcontracting operators under the group's supervision. However, Alexandra Guáqueta also argued that the group "began to acquire plots, process coca leaf into cocaine, and develop contacts of its own with regional mafia networks, such as the Mexican Tijuana cartel."[92] An example of these connections was the capture of the Brazilian drug lord "Fernandinho" while meeting with FARC members in Colombia in 2001. Once in captivity, Fernandinho declared that "the FARC is the wealthiest and most powerful guerrilla in the world. Its leaders live like any other capitalist: good women, good food, and good liquor."[93] These examples contradict the versions of the FARC in which its leaders justify having benefited only from the collection of taxes on drug traffickers.

This involvement in the different phases of the drug chain became more common through the different fronts of the FARC. Another example was the seizure of four tons of cocaine belonging to the FARC's Western Joint Command in the Cauca department in the west of the country.[94] After a skirmish between troops of the Colombian Army and guerrillas from the Front 60 of the FARC under the command of alias *Grillo*, the material was recovered in a drug crystallizer that, according to the authorities, had a capacity to produce around one ton of the alkaloid per day. It is estimated that this cargo was valued at around $90 million once placed in the U.S. to where it was intended to be transported through the Pacific Ocean.[95] This kind of seizure from the FARC became more common from the 1990s onwards, showing a higher commitment of the armed organization in the production and trafficking of drugs.

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[91] Jeremy McDermott, "Criminal Activities of the FARC and Rebel Earnings," InSight Crime (blog), May 21, 2013, https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/farc-criminal-activities-income/.

[92] Guáqueta, "The Colombian Conflict: Political and Economic Dimensions," 80.

[93] "La Confesión de Fernandinho," *Revista Semana*, May 28, 2001, https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/la-confesion-fernandinho/46121-3/.

[94] "Incautan Cuatro Toneladas de Coca en Gigantesco Laboratorio en Cauca," *El Tiempo*, March 16, 2013, sec. archivo, https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-12694723.

[95] Miriam Wells, "Multi-Ton 'FARC' Cocaine Seized in Southwest Colombia," InSight Crime (blog), March 27, 2017, https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/farc-cocaine-seized-southwest-colombia/.

By the end of the 1990s, the FARC reached its economic tipping point largely as a result of its revenues from the drug trade. According to Alfredo Rangel, at this point, the FARC's income from drugs was nearly $360 million a year, around three times the earning of *Banco de Colombia*, one of the largest financial institutions in the country.[96] Furthermore, a 2003 estimate suggests that 48 percent of the FARC's budget was raised from participation in the drug industry, 37 percent from extortion, 9 percent from kidnappings, and 6 percent from cattle theft.[97] Of course, financing a war demands large amounts of resources, and the FARC certainly found them through the incorporation of illicit economies. Interestingly, a 1998 study suggested that, in fact, the FARC expenses were nearly half their incomes by the end of the 1990s.[98] The same study explains that the FARC quickly learned to hide large amounts of money by taking advantage of the weaknesses of the Colombian state in controlling money laundering. Thus, this research states that, the FARC focused on investing its money in different legal businesses such as banks, commerce, stock exchanges, the agricultural and transport sector, security companies, real estate, supply centers, and the livestock and food industry. With this economic capacity, the FARC was able to build a strong criminal enterprise that guaranteed its longevity.

This economic power raised the FARC's popularity worldwide. One example was the 2014 assessment carried out by Forbes International in which it ranked the FARC as the third richest terrorist organization in the world, with an annual turnover of $600 million from the production and trafficking of drugs.[99] Furthermore, a study by Insight Crime suggests that a good portion of FARC's revenues were pocketed by individual FARC

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96 Alfredo Rangel S., "Parasites and Predators: Guerrillas and the Insurrection Economy of Colombia," Journal of International Affairs 53, no. 2 (2000), 585, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357766.

97 Guáqueta, "The Colombian Conflict: Political and Economic Dimensions," 93.

98 "Informe 1998" (Bogotá, March 1999); Revista Semana, "Los Negocios de las FARC," Semana.com Últimas Noticias de Colombia y el Mundo, April 5, 1999, https://www.semana.com/especiales/articulo/los-negocios-de-las-farc/38960-3/.

99 "The World's 10 Richest Terrorist Organizations," accessed June 1, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesinternational/2014/12/12/the-worlds-10-richest-terrorist-organizations/#5fa291ae4f8a.

leaders that systematically robbed the guerrilla for years.[100] This "opportunism" may help explain why these commanders have decided to move away from the path of demobilization to continue in criminality.

One of the most controversial debates was the FARC's use of the demilitarized zone offered by the Colombian government as a signal of willingness to negotiate a potential demobilization between 1999 and 2002. According to different sources, in this period, the FARC used this area to export cocaine to other countries in the region in exchange for weapons and money.[101] McDermott and Guáqueta, affirm that the demilitarized zone—around the size of Switzerland—served the group as a safe haven for three years, in which the FARC took advantage of this area to increase its criminal capacity. The same article points that the FARC established new international contacts such as Carlos Charry, who, by order of Mono Jojoy, held meetings with members of the Arellano Félix Cartel in Tijuana, Mexico in 2000. In addition, according to interviews with inhabitants of this area, it was possible to establish with certainty the cocaine transactions carried out by the group and its transportation from that site to the Pacific coast for export.[102] With these activities, the FARC not only began a long commercial relationship with different Mexican drug cartels with whom they maintain negotiations to date, but it also trampled on the trust that the government had given it in another of many failed negotiations.

The FARC constantly denied any involvement in the drug business. Either due to a lack of knowledge in its highest ranks of such activities carried out by middle ranks (which would indicate a break in leadership and organizational control) or as a strategy avoiding the damage that this criminal activity could cause to the legitimacy of the FARC. In an interview with its top leader Alfonso Cano in 2011, the guerrilla chief said, "I would like

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[100] Jeremy McDermott, "The FARC's Riches: Up to $580 Million in Annual Income," InSight Crime (blog), September 7, 2017, https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/farc-riches-yearly-income-up-to-580-million/.

[101] McDermott, "Criminal Activities of the FARC and Rebel Earnings"; Guáqueta, "The Colombian Conflict: Political and Economic Dimensions," 80.

[102] Mark S Steinitz, "Policy Papers on the Americas: The Terrorism and Drug Connection in Latin America's Andean Region," accessed October 19, 2020, 14, https://www.csis.org/analysis/policy-papers-americas-terrorism-and-drug-connection-latin-americas-andean-region-volume.

to be exhaustive in this: no FARC unit, according to the documents and decisions that govern us, can grow, process, trade, sell or consume hallucinogens or psychotropic substances. Everything else that is said is propaganda."[103] Both scenarios are possible. Once front commanders came into contact with so much money during a process of organizational expansion that meant a natural sense of independence due to the difficulty of proper control and efficiency of communications, those leaders likely decided to improve their drug revenues by controlling the rest of the drug trafficking chain.

One of the FARC fronts that established direct businesses with Mexican cartels was Front 48. This front, whose chief of finance was Oliver Sinisterra, operated in the Putumayo department on the border with Ecuador. Various sources suggest that in 2008, the Front 48 sold large quantities of cocaine to the Mexican Sinaloa cartel using routes through the neighboring country.[104] Similar patterns were evidenced with Fronts 33, 16, and 10 located east of Colombia across the border with Venezuela and Front 57 across the border with Panama.[105]

It is important to clarify at this point that the FARC's growing involvement in drug trafficking does not mean a total incompatibility with their ideological commitment itself; in fact, most insurgent or terrorist organizations in the world rely on different criminal economies to fund their struggles. However, the more money coming from the drug trade, the more dilution in their ideological principles, since eventually, most FARC members, especially those who joined the organization during the coca boom in Colombia, might have lost the original principles and discipline of the FARC.

Additionally, in 2005, Paul Saskiewicz projected the devolution of the FARC into several criminal enterprises if some factors continued their current paces, such as the

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103 "Siempre Será Posible Construir Escenarios de Negociación Con El Gobierno," Público, June 11, 2011, sec. Internacional, https://www.publico.es/internacional/siempre-sera-posible-construir-escenarios.html.

104 "Colombia Rebels Linked to Mexico Drug Cartels (Published 2008)," *The New York Times*, October 7, 2008, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/08/world/americas/08mexico.html.

105 "Panama's Police Kill FARC Guerrilla, Capture 7 on Colombia Border," Reuters, December 1, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-panama-farc-idUSBRE8B003620121201; McDermott, "Criminal Activities of the FARC and Rebel Earnings."

changes in the leadership that were weakening the organization, and the recruitment of non-ideologically motivated and poorly educated fighters.[106] This disproportionate growth in which the need to recruit new fighters in large numbers increased, together with the adoption of illicit economies, led to a gradual dilution of ideological commitment over the years.

Although the FARC had a high recruiting ability that led it to have a force of around 17,000 combatants in the early 2000s, its retention capacity was extremely low. According to the Colombian Ministry of Defense (MoD), in the period 2002–2013, a total of 18,539 FARC members demobilized through the Humanitarian Program of Attention to the Demobilized (PAHD in Spanish).[107] In 2008, a study found that, among the reasons for joining the organization, were forced recruitment, 20%; the allure of weapons and uniforms, 20%; false promises (salary, good treatment), 16%; conviction, 12%; and fear or vengeance (regarding the Army or the paramilitaries), 10%.[108] Similarly, the reasons for leaving the guerrilla were ill-treatment (37%); lack of salary (19%); lack of liberty, 17%; and false promises, 16%. This influx of personnel due to the FARC's low retention rate certainly increased the chances of incoming opportunistic figures among the ranks and the leadership, especially since the FARC's main area of recruitment has always been the marginal countryside. These opportunistic leaders changed the FARC's initial approach with drug traffickers.

The FARC also adopted new technologies aimed at improving the transportation of cocaine. In 2011, the seizure of a submarine, owned by the Front 29, was reported in the port of Buenaventura on the Pacific coast. The group was preparing to move seven tons of

106 Paul E. Saskiewicz, "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP) Marxist-Leninist Insurgency or Criminal Enterprise?" (Monterey, California, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005), 3.

107 "Ministerio de Defensa, PAHD 2014" (Bogotá (Colombia): Ministerio de Defensa, 2014), https://www.mindefensa.gov.co/irj/portal/Mindefensa?NavigationTarget=navurl://4ce4836ab8c2ca6452e6b37040619.

108 Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, "Telling the Difference: Guerrillas and Paramilitaries in the Colombian War," Politics & Society 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 22, https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329207312181.

drugs to Central America.[109] A 2016 study from the University of Maryland demonstrated "how FARC's systematized acquiring of information and expertise has resulted in the accomplishment of fully submersible vessels, capable of transporting more than 10 tons of illicit product."[110] These examples suggest that most of the FARC fronts, especially those located near the Pacific or Atlantic coast, eventually became completely focused on guaranteeing the flow of cocaine abroad in order to improve the revenues leaving behind the strategic political objectives.

Through a report developed by the Colombian Attorney General's Office, it was found that the FARC did participate in the different phases of the cocaine production chain. The report highlights that the organization not only participated in the collection of taxes or "grammage" as the FARC itself called it, but also became involved in the sowing of the coca leaf, its transformation into coca paste and cocaine hydrochloride, and the distribution of cocaine.[111] This research was based on data obtained in military operations during the period 2004–2014 confirming the direct participation of the FARC Front 33 and Company "29 de Mayo" as main actors in the Colombian Central Region; Fronts 6, 29, 30, 57, and 60, and the Company "Daniel Aldana" in the Pacific Region; and Fronts 7, 14, 15, 16, 32, 44, 48, 49, and Mobile Column "Teófilo Forero" in the Southeast Region. It is important to clarify that this evidence, while conclusive, is only partial information that relates the FARC with the drug trade, since it was the product of only several military operations and it likely misses a large part of the information regarding the rest of the organization's finances.

Before its demobilization in 2016, and despite being significantly decimated by the Colombian government's counterinsurgency strategy, the FARC still managed to survive largely due to its control over cocaine crops around the country. Figure 4 shows a

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109 "Farc's Drug Submarine Seized in Colombia," *BBC News*, September 25, 2011, sec. Latin America & Caribbean, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-15051108.

110 Michelle Jacome Jaramillo, "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Development of Narco-Submarines," *Journal of Strategic Security*; San Jose 9, no. 1 (Spring 2016), 48, http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.5038/1944-0472.9.1.1509.

111 "Fiscalía Determinó el Narcotráfico como fuente de Financiación de las FARC" (Bogotá, June 9, 2016), https://www.fiscalia.gov.co/colombia/noticias/destacada/fiscalia-determino-el-narcotrafico-como-fuente-de-financiacion-de-las-farc/.

dependent relationship between the location of the FARC fronts and the coca crops in 2016. Estimates suggest that the FARC held control of nearly 70 percent of all coca crops in the country.[112] For the FARC, it was imperative to continue dominating the drug business, since it was neither militarily nor politically managing to advance in its fight for the seizure of power. Certainly not all the FARC fronts at a national level were incurred in criminal activities related to drug trafficking, in large part because coca cannot be grown in all areas; however, there is a generalized pattern in most fronts to resort to this illegal economy.

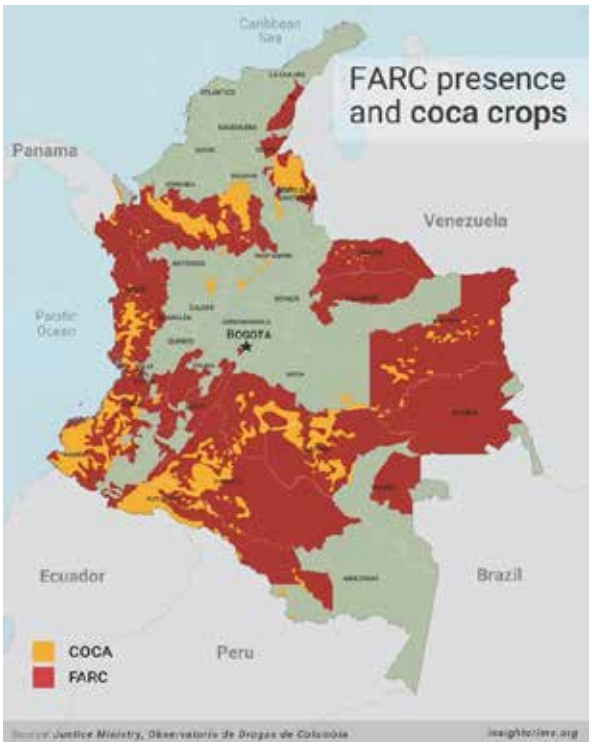

Figure 4. Locations of FARC's Fronts before their demobilization in 2016.[113]

C. ALLIANCES WITH TRADITIONAL ENEMIES

Another area where the shift from politically to economically driven behavior—and thus, ideological dilution—can be observed, is the FARC's relationship with other

[112] McDermott, "Criminal Activities of the FARC and Rebel Earnings."

[113] McDermott, "The FARC's Riches."

armed groups in Colombia. This was the case of eventual alliances that the FARC developed with one of its strongest rival groups, the paramilitaries. Early in the 1980s, when the coca boom was near its peak in Colombia, the FARC began taxing the drug cartels of Medellin and Cali. Tired of the "taxes" collected by the FARC (around 10 percent per kilogram of coca base),[114] and victims of the extortive kidnappings of their relatives, the alliance between the Medellín and Cali drug lords including Pablo Escobar Gaviria, as well as large landowners, created the group Death to Kidnappers (MAS in Spanish) in 1982. The MAS began as a self-defense group of around 200 members who guaranteed the protection of drug lords, landowners, and their families by confronting the FARC.[115] However, later this group ended up not only acting against the FARC but also against any public or political figure who had a voice in support of the guerrilla group. This is how the paramilitary groups began to be known in Colombia, which grew and gained independence once the cartels disappeared. These groups continued the fight against the FARC, no longer for protection purposes but with the intention of taking over the drug business.

The self-defense groups eventually got the necessary strength and leadership to fight an ideological war against left-wing guerrillas including the FARC. Led by brothers Carlos, Vicente, and Fidel Castaño, the United Self-Defenses of Colombia (AUC) carried out selective assassinations and massacres against what they called "guerrilla supporters" in areas where the guerrillas had more territorial influence, something that generated massive displacement and widespread terror across the country.[116] One of the most known cases was the 2002 Bojayá massacre, a marginal population located in the rural area in the west of the country in which 117 civilians died, including 45 children; at least 114 other civilians were injured during a reported clash between the FARC and the AUC, that saw at

[114] John Otis, "The FARC and Colombia's Illegal Drug Trade," Wilson Center, November 2014, 3, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-farc-and-colombias-illegal-drug-trade.

[115] Alan Benjamin, "Colombia One More Death Squad," *NACLA Report on the Americas 16*, no. 2 (March 1, 1982): 32–35, https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.1982.11723654.

[116] Laura Ávila, "AUC," InSight Crime (blog), May 25, 2011, https://www.insightcrime.org/colombia-organized-crime-news/auc-profile/.

least one gas cylinder bomb fired by the FARC struck a church that civilians were using as a refuge.[117]

While the FARC constantly fought against the AUC, its interactions with this group varied significantly across the various regions of the country, revealing significant variation in the degree of ideological commitment of the various fronts. While in some places such as Putumayo or Catatumbo—regions with a high density of cocaine crops—both groups constantly fought for control of the territory; in other places such as the *Serranía de San Lucas,* both groups coexisted and avoided the armed conflict.[118] In this case, the pact meant that, while the guerrillas controlled the coca growing areas, the AUC protected the rivers and roads, guaranteeing the transportation of drugs. These regional alliances might suggest two conclusions: first, the alliance between these groups was more common in areas where coca crops were present, and not in places where there was not; second, these singular alliances indicate an ideological degradation in the FARC's organization in which many of its middle leaders likely began to make decisions without the approval of the secretariat, getting every time closer to criminality.

This coexistence between the two groups remained after the AUC demobilized in 2006; in fact, this relationship spread throughout the country. Many members of the former AUC continued into the illegality, forming what the Colombian government called Criminal Bands, or BACRIM in Spanish, which were completely dedicated to drug trafficking. According to a report presented by Insight Crime, "there have been [multiple] reports of FARC-BACRIM relationships in [the departments of] Antioquia, Cauca, Caquetá, Chocó, Córdoba (the army captured members of the [BACRIM] "Urabeños" and an emissary from the FARC's Front 58 together in a drug laboratory), Nariño, Norte de Santander, Meta, Putumayo, and Valle del Cauca."[119] During the 2000s, as the government's strategy was fulfilling its objectives (decapitating the FARC leadership), the

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117 *BBC News*, "Colombia Rebels Admit Church Attack," May 8, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1974463.stm.

118 Jeremy McDermott, "Criminal Activities of the FARC and Rebel Earnings," *InSight Crime* (blog), May 21, 2013, https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/farc-criminal-activities-income/.

119 McDermott, "Criminal Activities of the FARC and Rebel Earnings."

emerging commanders who came to replace the disappeared ones not only showed a lack of experience, but their ideological principles were also easily negotiable.

One of the reasons that explains the alliances between the FARC and its former enemies the AUC, today BACRIM, was the tough military campaign carried out by the government in the first decade of the 2000s against all the armed groups in the country. In the eastern plains, as argued by Avila and Nuñez in 2008, alias *Cuchillo*, (or Knife), a former member of the AUC and today commander of the BACRIM group *Héroes del Guaviare*, maintained an alliance with the FARC Fronts 43, 27, and 39 since the end of 2006.[120] Besides having coca businesses, the authors explain that, the pact meant a respected control of the territory between the two groups, the FARC in the rural area, and the men of "Cuchillo" in the urban sector of several municipalities in the south of the department of Meta and north of Guaviare. Due to the weakening caused by the Colombian authorities, both groups established alliances both for economic purposes and as a non-aggression pact seeking mutual strengthening.

Similar alliances were also developed in the north-west of the country. In absence of the AUC, two structures emerged in this sector, the Bolivarian Self-Defense Forces (AUB in Spanish) and the Black Eagles, both fighting each other for control of the territory in which there was a large presence of coca crops.[121] The ELN and FARC guerrillas also had a high presence in this sector; both guerrillas established a non-aggression pact and an alliance with the AUB to fight the Black Eagles due to their attempts to completely take over the south of the department of Bolívar. This type of pattern occurred in various sectors of the country; in the Bajo Cauca, the FARC-alias *Don Mario* alliance; in the south-west, the FARC-*Los Rastrojos* alliance; in Vichada and Meta, the alliance of *Cuchillo-John 40* of the FARC, who had relieved *Tomas Medina Caracas*, alias *El Negro Acacio*, killed by the Colombian military in an airstrike.[122] By the end of the 2000s, although it was not in all FARC structures, but in many, there were already patterns of behavior on the part of

[120] Ariel Avila and Magda P. Nuñez G., "Expansión Territorial y Alianzas Tácticas" (Bogotá: Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2008), 56, www.ideaspaz.org/tools/download/54293.

[121] Avila and Nuñez G, 58.

[122] Avila and Nuñez G, 60.

many of their commanders that suggested a collapse of their ideological capacity, and more worryingly, the possibility of dissident groups in the event of a potential negotiation process with the government.

As the FARC increased its recruitment capacity in order to carry out the strategic plan, or, to replace its casualties in combat with the Colombian Army, some alliances with different criminal groups became more normal. Another example of these relationships was the arsenal seized by the Colombian Police in 2012, with which the criminal gang and drug trafficking organization *Los Rastrojos* pretended to pay for a high amount of cocaine from the FARC.[123] In this operation, 160 rifles, 150 hand grenades, and 25 pistols were seized, among others. These results show that the FARC not only developed alliances with criminal groups to benefit from the money in exchange for its drugs but also to provide itself with the weapons and ammunition necessary to sustain its armed struggle.

One of the most interesting cases to analyze has been the FARC's relationship with other Colombian left-wing guerrillas, especially with the ELN. A study carried out by the *National University of Colombia* concluded that the relationship between both guerrillas in the eastern department of Arauca was marked by similarities in their strategic objectives, but with confrontations in some parts of the country as a result of their struggle for economic resources.[124] In Figure 5, it can be seen that between 2005 and 2010, although both organizations drew a limit to divide control of the territory, different confrontations also occurred, most of them in areas with the presence of illicit crops and not in areas where they benefited economically from extortion to oil companies or smuggling. This pattern was also evident during the same period in areas such as the southwest of the country in the departments of Nariño and Cauca; however, in the northeast region, a coexistence between the two groups around the drug trade characterized the Catatumbo area.

123 "Policía Halla 160 Fusiles y Granadas de las FARC y BACRIM," Portafolio.co, April 24, 2012, https://www.portafolio.co/economia/finanzas/policia-halla-160-fusiles-granadas-farc-bacrim-100558.

124 Luis M. Buitrago R., "La Relación entre las FARC y el ELN: Guerra sin Cuartel y Confraternidad Revolucionaría (2005-2010)" (Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2016), 60, http://bdigital.unal.edu.co/56968/1/1023916755.2017.pdf.

Figure 5. Scenarios of confrontation between guerrillas, illicit crops, and smuggling locations on Arauca between 2005 and 2010.[125]

As a result of this fight between the two guerrillas, the level of violence against the civilian population increased considerably. According to a 2014 study, between 2000 and 2013, in Arauca, armed groups committed a total of 3,632 homicides, which was above the national average in each of the years.[126] In this same period, the report shows a considerable increase in the number of displaced people, peaking at 14,000 inhabitants displaced in 2007. These two methods were used by the FARC and ELN because they were the best tactic to attack and displace the other's social bases and thus consolidate their territories with civilians loyal to their organizations.

D. DISSATISFACTION WITH PEACE ACCORDS

After the weakening caused by the government's strategy, the constant territorial disputes with other non-state actors, the FARC decided to negotiate its demobilization with the Colombian government. However, it is very important to point out that the FARC that negotiated its demobilization was very different from the organization that emerged in the 1960s. On this occasion, it was a group that, due to the nature of its disproportionate

125 Buitrago R, 61.

126 "Dinámicas Del Conflicto Armado En Arauca y Su Impacto Humanitario" (Bogotá (Colombia): Fundación Ideas para la Paz, June 2014), 42, http://cdn.ideaspaz.org/media/website/document/53e2ac3725816.pdf.

expansion and organizational weakening, had undergone an irreversible ideological transformation process. Many of its commanders at different levels adopted controversial practices that, ultimately, limited the effectiveness of the peace agreement by generating dissatisfactions with the concessions offered by the Colombian government.

Once the FARC entered the negotiation process with the Colombian state, many of the problems related to its lack of cohesion and, especially, to its low level of ideological commitment became more evident. Despite the fact that the peace accords in Colombia have been internationally cataloged as being ambitious and comprehensive since they attempt to solve many of the root causes of the conflict and attend most of the demands done by the FARC since its inception, some of its members rejected the negotiations as they did not feel that the concessions would satisfy their own demands.

Here, it is important to remember the demands and strategic objectives of the FARC since its origins. One of the most important ones was the equitable distribution of lands, in which the poor peasants, deprived of their lands, had a place to work and an income to subsist on. It is also important to mention that within the factors negotiated in Havana, the first chapter of the agreement, indeed, corresponds to the comprehensive rural reform, which is focused not simply on giving lands to the peasants who, as a result of the conflict, at some point had to abandon them, but also establishes clear policies intending to close the gap of inequality between the urban and rural areas. The summary of the rural reform that was agreed states:

> The agreement on 'Comprehensive Rural Reform' (Reforma Rural Integral) will foment structural change in the countryside, closing up the differential that exists between rural and urban areas and creating conditions of well-being and quality of life for the rural population. The 'Comprehensive Rural Reform' (CRR) must incorporate all of the country's regions, contribute to the eradication of poverty, promote equality, and ensure full enjoyment of the rights of citizenship.[127]

[127] Juan M. Santos and Timoleón Jimenez, "Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace" (2016), 7, http://peaceaccords.nd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Colombian-Peace-Agreement-English-Translation.pdf.

The difficulties in implementing the agreement are many, and this somehow generates uncertainty for the actors in the conflict, especially those who are demobilizing. However, despite being an ambitious agreement, which from the beginning of the negotiations had countless critics due to the high political and economic costs that they implied, the Colombian government has been making progress in accordance with the deadlines established for its implementation. Figure 6 shows the advances made up as of November 2019; according to the latest *Kroc Institute* report, the progress has been in accordance with the Initial Implementation Plan (PMI).[128] Such a plan establishes the short-term (2017-2019), medium-term (2020-2022), and long-term (2023-2032) commitments in which, progress was made in all terms, including some partial advancements in the medium-term and long-term commitments. This evidence casts doubt on the claim made by some of the leaders who abandoned the peace process and returned to arms, such as Iván Márquez, Jesús Santrich, and El Paisa, who argued that they did so largely due to a lack of guarantees in the implementation of the agreement.[129]

128 "Tres Años Después de la Firma del Acuerdo Final de Colombia: Hacia la Transformación Territorial Diciembre 2018 a Noviembre 2019" (Bogotá (Colombia): Universidad de Notre Dame, 2020), http://peaceaccords.nd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Cuarto-Informe-Final-with-Annex-Link-1.pdf.

129 "Iván Márquez, Santrich y el Paisa vuelven a la lucha armada y lo anuncian desde el monte," *Semana.com* Últimas Noticias de Colombia y el Mundo, August 29, 2019, https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/ivan-marquez-santrich-y-el-paisa-vuelven-a-la-lucha-armada-y-lo-anuncian-desde-el-monte/629636/.

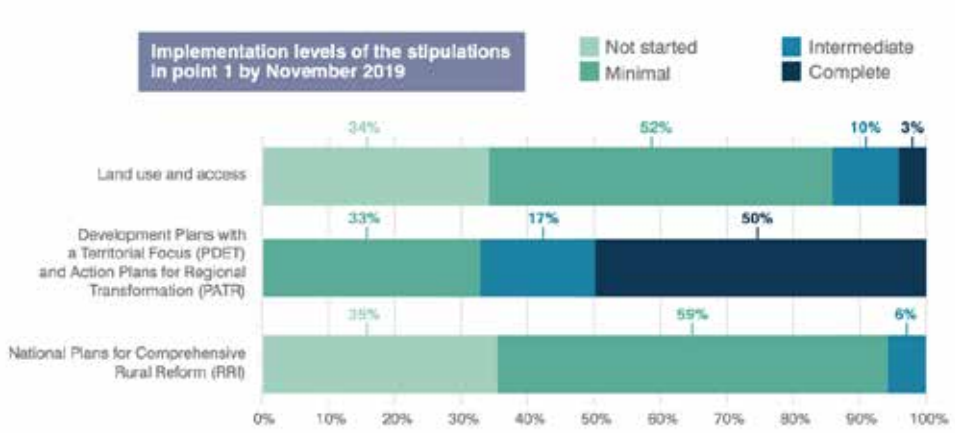

Figure 6. Implementation levels of the land reform stipulations by November 2019.[130]

The progress shown from December 2018 to November 2019 was six percent, and in the three years of implementation, the report states that 25 percent of the commitments have been fully completed, while 15 percent have a level of intermediate progress, which indicates that it is on track to be completed in the established time.[131] It also explains that another 36 percent of the commitments are in a minimal state, meaning that they simply started; and the remaining 24 percent of the agreement needs to start being executed. This report provides a degree of reassurance in the face of criticism from different sectors interested in hindering the peace accords, but it also highlights the need to continue with the pace of implementation, which will require the highest level of political and institutional commitment. Many of the FARC's demands have made some progress as of November 2019. The report shows that the FARC's political participation, the Justice for Peace system, and different social programs such as the substitution of illicit-use crops, or its socio-political reincorporation to civilian life have shown significant advances.

Taking into account the aforementioned conclusions, as a result of the report published by the institution in charge of monitoring the implementation process, it is fair

130 "Point by Point: The Status of Peace Agreement Implementation in Colombia" (Bogotá: University of Notre Dame, August 2020), https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/barometer/colombia-reports.

131 "Tres Años Después de la Firma del Acuerdo Final de Colombia: Hacia la Transformación Territorial Diciembre 2018 a Noviembre 2019," 12.

to conclude that, despite the political and economic difficulties in financing such an ambitious accord as the Colombian one, the political will of the government remains in force, complying as established by law. In the case of the abandonment of the peace process by some members of the FARC, two reasons might explain their decisions to remain in arms: some did it for ideological and political differences within the organization, and some others, those "opportunistic" figures did it because the robust concessions made by the government meant to leave behind the "benefits" that illegal economies offered them in their daily routine.

Negotiating a demobilization with a cohesive organization, ideologically structured, would have meant a better prospect for peace. However, the patterns of fragmentation of the FARC made evident that a significant gap exists between the old leaders of the organization, who had maintained their Marxist-Leninist ideals, and those who joined the organization around the 1980s when the cocaine boom surged in Colombia and was adopted by the FARC as a method of financing the war strategy or for profit reasons. Among those who represented the FARC during the bargaining process were leaders from both types of characteristics, ideologically motivated and profit-motivated.[132]

The FARC chose a group of negotiators with different profiles that varied between historians, ideologues, and even some with controversial backgrounds. By 2012, the year in which the peace talks began, the supreme commander of the FARC was Timoleón Jiménez alias "Timochenko." Jiménez appointed the second in command of the organization, alias Ivan Márquez, as head of the negotiating group in Havana. Márquez joined the organization in 1977 and was always characterized by his political work, which allowed him to be on the waiting list for a potential replacement of the maximum commander of the FARC.[133] However, once "Tirofijo," founder of the FARC, died in 2008, the secretariat decided to choose Alfonso Cano as commander, who was later killed

[132] "¿Quiénes Son Los Negociadores de Las FARC y El Gobierno Para El Proceso de Paz?," *El País*, October 17, 2012, https://www.elpais.com.co/judicial/quienes-son-los-negociadores-de-las-farc-y-el-gobierno-para-el-proceso-de-paz.html.

[133] El País.

by the Army in 2011 during the development of a military operation.[134] It was then since 2011 that Timochenko took command of the organization, frustrating Márquez's chances of one day becoming the top leader. This could have been the reason that explains the differences between Timochenko and Marquez ending up with the latter rejecting the peace accord after signing it.

Márquez's ideological commitment, despite also being involved in drug deals, has barely been questioned. Likewise, several others who accompanied him during the negotiations had a long political background, including Rodrigo Granda, Jesús Emilio Carvajalino or "Andrés Paris," Luis Alberto Albán or "Marcos León Calarcá," and the ideologist Juvenal Ricardo Ovidio Palmera, known as "Simón Trinidad," who was imposed by the FARC despite serving a 60-year prison sentence in the United States for kidnapping three American citizens. However, the most controversial figure who also accompanied Marquez was Seuxis Paucias Hernández Solarte, alias "Jesús Santrich," a member of the organization since 1991 and very close to Marquez.[135]

Santrich, despite being the Commander of the Caribbean Bloc, performed propaganda and ideologue functions for the organization. Two years after the peace agreement, he was captured for sending 10 tons of cocaine to the United States between June 2017 and April 2018, which violated the rules established in the peace agreement consisting of not resorting to such criminal activities.[136] According to the DEA, the information that led to the capture was given with the collaboration of Marlon Marín, Ivan Márquez's nephew, who the DEA would have previously captured for receiving $5 million from an undercover DEA agent who posed as an emissary of a drug cartel.[137] As on many occasions, this information was flatly denied by both Marquez and Santrich, claiming that

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[134] Jack Simpson, "Alfonso Cano: Dramatic Footage Finally Released Showing the Operation," *The Independent*, October 21, 2014, sec. News, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/alfonso-cano-dramatic-footage-finally-released-showing-operation-killed-notorious-rebel-leader-9808504.html.

[135] "¿Quiénes Son Los Negociadores de Las FARC y El Gobierno Para El Proceso de Paz?"

[136] "Colombian FARC Leader Arrested on Drug Trafficking Charge," *BBC News*, April 10, 2018, sec. Latin America & Caribbean, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-43707435.

[137] Chris Dalby, "Seuxis Pausías Hernández, alias 'Jesús Santrich,'" insightcrime. (blog), May 23, 2019, https://es.insightcrime.org/colombia-crimen-organizado/seuxis-pausias-hernandez-alias-jesus-santrich/.

it was a setup by the Colombian authorities with the collaboration of the United States, which ended in the escape of both members of the FARC to return to arms and form the group "La Segunda Marquetalia."[138]

These ideological and opportunistic differences before and during the negotiations triggered a wave of desertions, initially from opportunistic, and later from ideological leaders. This was the case of John 40 and Gentil Duarte. According to different sources, the former was already one of the most prominent drug traffickers of the former FARC since the 1980s and gained more popularity after replacing "El negro Acacio," killed by the Colombian Army. John 40 operated the coca routes in the department of Arauca and Vichada, in the eastern part of the country, guaranteeing the flow of drugs to the neighbor country, Venezuela.[139] The FARC experienced a similar situation with Gentil Duarte who was sent to replace John 40 after the organization expelled him during the peace negotiations, but Duarte rejected this proposal and established an alliance with John 40 conforming two of the strongest splinter groups until today.[140] Sectors within the FARC had experienced a process of "degeneration"[141] in their ideological commitment proving to be more resistant to demobilization than the more ideologically inclined sectors of the organization.

Alias Guacho was another example of those leaders who put aside their ideological principles to focus entirely on criminal activities after rejecting the peace accords. Despite repeatedly arguing that he was still part of the FARC and that he continued with the same

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138 "Colombia: Ex-FARC Commander Marquez Says Will Take Up Arms Again," *Aljazeera*, August 29, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/colombia-farc-commander-marquez-arms-190829085250617.html.

139 "Géner García Molina, Alias 'Jhon 40,'" InSight Crime (blog), March 9, 2018, https://www.insightcrime.org/colombia-organized-crime-news/gener-garcia-molina-alias-jhon-40/.

140 On December 13, 2016, the FARC expelled five of his commanders from their ranks: Miguel Botache Santanilla, alias "Gentil Duarte;" Géner García Molina, alias "John 40" or "Jhon 40;" Luis Alfonso Lizcano Gualdrón, alias "Euclides Mora;" Ernesto Orjuela Tovar, alias "Giovanni Chuspas;" and Miguel Díaz San Martín, alias "Julián Chollo." According to the FARC's press statement: "This decision was motivated by their recent conduct, which has brought them into conflict with our political-military cause."

141 This type of behavior might be explained by Cronin and Mockaitis who argue that insurgent and terrorist groups can degenerate and, over time, lose their ideological commitment to such a degree that they begin to look more like criminal organizations.

political objectives, the facts always showed his true goals by controlling the coca business in the southwestern part of the country and lacking a clear political agenda. His links with the Mexican cartel of Sinaloa to which he sold cocaine produced in his area of influence greatly alerted the Colombian authorities who, after a great search effort, were able to kill him in December 2018 in the middle of a large military operation.[142] Guacho was able to gain control of all coca routes across the southwestern region of the country, a strategic location due to its proximity to the porous borders with Ecuador and Peru, and the access to the Pacific ocean where most of the Colombian cocaine is being moved using small and fast boats.[143] All these desertions had something in common; they all grouped and located themselves in areas of high cocaine production in order to financially exploit those areas once held by the former FARC.

The current panorama of this coexistence between illicit crops and splinter groups of the FARC demonstrates once again their commitment to controlling this economy. In Figure 7, it can be seen that the dependent relationship between FARC dissidents and illicit crops has not changed with respect to the locations held by their predecessors just before their demobilization.[144] Furthermore, given that cocaine production in Colombia reached its highest point in 2019 (951 ton),[145] these dissidents' locations suggest their high commitment to controlling the cultivation areas, for which they have confronted different armed groups and each other in a quest to achieve control. An example of these struggles is currently taking place in the department of Nariño, where the dissident structures Olives

142 "Alias 'Guacho' Es El Brazo Armado Del Cartel de Sinaloa: Fiscal General," El Espectador, April 19, 2018, https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/alias-guacho-es-el-brazo-armado-del-cartel-de-sinaloa-fiscal-general/.

143 Parker Asmann, "Walter Patricio Arizala, Alias 'Guacho,'" InSight Crime (blog), January 18, 2019, https://www.insightcrime.org/colombia-organized-crime-news/walter-patricio-arizala-alias-guacho/.

144 "The Criminal Portfolio of the Ex-FARC Mafia," InSight Crime (blog), November 11, 2019, https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/criminal-portfolio-ex-farc-mafia/.

145 "Según EE. UU., producción de cocaína llegó a 951 toneladas en 2019," *El Tiempo*, March 6, 2020, sec. justicia, https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/cifras-record-de-cultivos-y-de-produccion-de-coca-en-colombia-en-2019-469630.

Sinisterra and the United Guerrillas of the Pacific are fighting for control of the coca crops.[146]

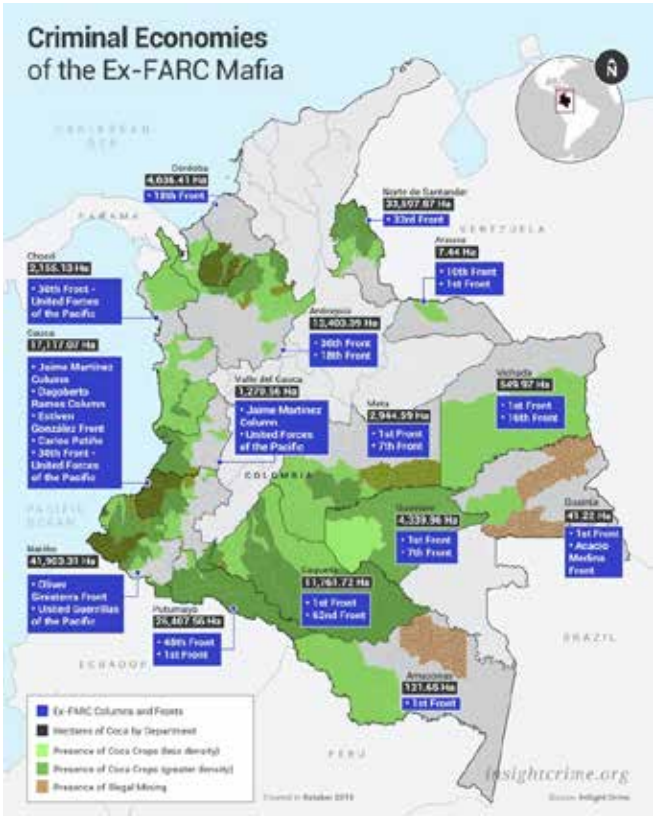

Figure 7. Dependency between coca crops and dissident groups.[147]

E. CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

At present, the situation of the different dissident groups of the FARC could not be more worrying for the Colombian state and for the FARC political party. Since the signing of the peace agreement in 2016, dissidents have been growing steadily and located in territories characterized by their high levels of cocaine production. Despite the difficulties in assessing the strength of different dissident groups, some sources suggest that there are

146 Jeremy McDermott, "Op-Ed: Promoting the Formation of New Criminal Menace in Colombia?," InSight Crime (blog), March 16, 2019, https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/promoting-formation-new-criminal-menace-colombia/.

147 "The Criminal Portfolio of the Ex-FARC Mafia."

currently around 37 groups reaching nearly 3,000 members.[148] Jeremy McDermott states that these groups could be divided into three broad categories: those that still profess some sort of ideology, those former FARC members involved in criminal activities but with a low level of ideological commitment; and those rebels that never entered the peace process, but remained in the field, keeping control of criminal economies.[149] This assessment is not that far from what this thesis is arguing, a completely fragmented organization with different levels of ideological commitments and a more federalized organization in which there is no single leadership, as there was in the former FARC, but one in which most of the groups seek to profit from the drug trade.

Among the most prominent groups are the First Front under the command of Iván Mordisco and the Seventh Front under Gentil Duarte, both of which have two main objectives: to generate alliances with other dissident groups and to control the territory of coca crops. Both groups have generated a cooperative relationship, but not a hierarchical one, for which they agreed to distribute the territory.[150] Figure 8 illustrates the most current presence of these two Fronts, which seems to have a presence in nine departments in the southeastern part of the country, along with other smaller dissident groups.

148 "The Evolution of the Ex-FARC Mafia," InSight Crime (blog), November 11, 2019, https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/evolution-ex-farc-mafia/.

149 McDermott, "Op-Ed."

150 "Peace and Conflict after the FARC: Ex-FARC Mafia," Colombian Observatory of Organized Crime (blog), accessed November 6, 2020, https://insightcrime.org/indepth/observatory-rosario/criminal-actors/ex-farc-mafia/.

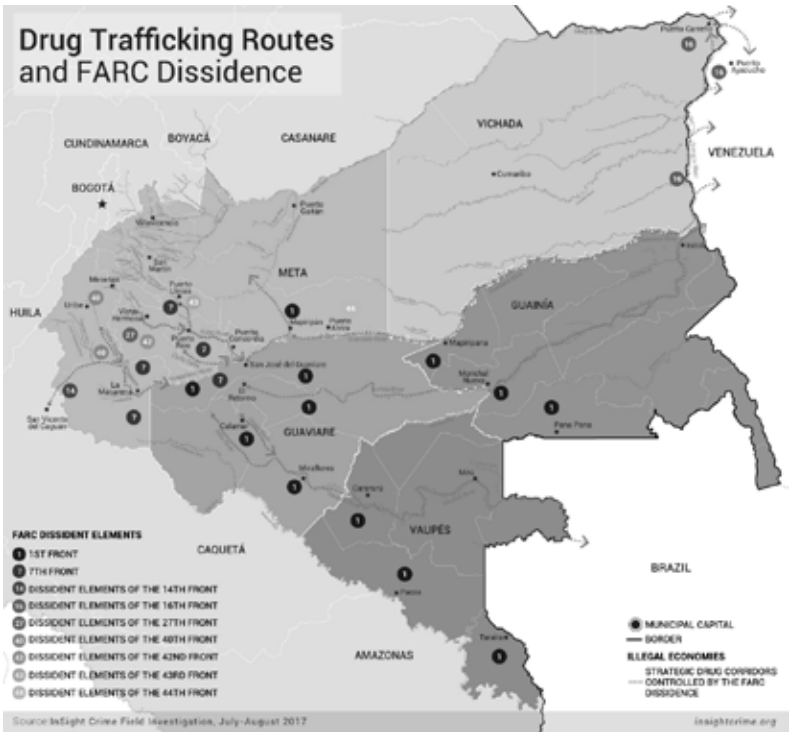

Figure 8. Locations of First and Seventh Fronts in southeast Colombia.[151]

Another important dissident group was the one created by the alliance among Iván Márquez, Jesús Santrich, and El Paisa. Despite the circumstances in which some of its leaders were involved when they returned to arms, this is arguably the most ideologically committed group among all of the splinters. Iván Márquez, in his book published just after resigning his seat in Congress, made it clear what the objectives of his new guerrilla group were:

> So, clearly, it is insisted that it is our role to continue to rearm the utopia, to continue demanding the impossible, because others take care of the possible every day. That of continuing to open the way towards the construction of socialism; hopefully in the face of the decline of capitalism, with a counter-face that shows the combination of resistance and offensives of all kinds, operating as a phenomenon with a global dimension, acting in dispersed order, expressing a diversity of cultures, different levels of struggle and

151 Insight Crime.

> consciousness, with the leading role of the immense mass of the oppressed and suffering.[152]

Taking into account the recent actions of La Segunda Marquetalia, which have been more focused on establishing alliances with different dissidents trying to regain sufficient strength to guarantee their survival, it is possible to recognize that a large part of its narrative and ideological commitment continues to play a great role in its fight against the state. According to Insight Crime, "The Segunda Marquetalia seems to be operating mostly along the border between Colombia and Venezuela, where it allegedly held meetings with other criminal groups in the state of Apure in Venezuela and Colombia's Arauca state."[153] However, the group has also been operating in the department of Cauca, where a large part of the conflict has taken place. In a recent military operation, 12 members of this group were captured in northern Cauca, and the Colombian authorities have claimed that this group is responsible for the killing of several members of the rival dissidence *Jaime Martinez* for the control of the coca routes through this area.[154] This means that the group has struggled to unify some splinter groups that likely are enjoying a more independent strategy and that, besides their political objectives, they continue seeking resources to fund the war through the drug trade. Furthermore, it is also possible that as top negotiators in the last peace deal, Marquez, Santrich, and El Paisa are being rejected by the remaining splinter groups, blaming them for those differences that arose during the bargaining process.

One of the factors that most worries the Colombian authorities is the alliance that dissident FARC groups have been strengthening with Mexican drug cartels. A 2018 report presented by *La Silla Vacía*, a leading Colombian think tank, highlights these connections.

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152 Iván Márquez, *La Segunda Marquetalia: La Lucha Sigue* (Unpublished Book, 2019), http://farc-ep.net/?p=1151, 24.

153 Chris Dalby, "Segunda Marquetalia," InSight Crime (blog), August 18, 2020, https://www.insightcrime.org/colombia-organized-crime-news/segunda-marquetalia/.

154 "Capturan a 12 integrantes de estructura de la 'segunda Marquetalia' en Cauca," *Revista Semana*, October 20, 2020, https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/capturan-a-12-integrantes-de-estructura-de-la-segunda-marquetalia-en-cauca/202041/; El Tiempo, "¿Quién es Grande, de la 'Segunda Marquetalia?," El Tiempo, October 7, 2020, https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/quien-es-grande-de-la-segunda-marquetalia-542044.

According to this report, alias John 40, a middle command of the former FARC, controversial for his multiple connections with drug trafficking and who was expelled from the organization by the secretariat before the peace negotiations ended, has been increasing efforts in the troubled lands of the Catatumbo area in order to seize the coca crops in the region in alliance with the Mexican Sinaloa cartel.[155] According to interviews with locals conducted by the same source, "Mexicans have the hegemony of the [drug] market," and although their power is not yet based on the use of arms, the influence of Mexicans in this region seems undeniable due to their high economic capacity. This alliance represents a clear advantage for John 40 who poses as one of the strongest dissident leaders due to his access to illegal economies and leadership.

The general panorama of the FARC dissidents reflects a completely divided organization, without a central command, and with different ideological motivations. However, the vast majority, including those with some degree of ideological commitment, continue to wage their struggle around illicit cocaine crops and other sources of financing that, although it is common for an insurgent, terrorist, or criminal organization to seek the necessary resources to finance their struggle, the way the FARC dissidents continue to traffic drugs allows their ideological base to be easily attacked by the Colombian state and by the public in general. Figure 9 illustrates the locations of all incidents with dissidents between 2018 and 2019; despite that the levels of violence after the signing of the peace agreement had been significantly reduced throughout the whole country, as dissidents' strength has been growing, likewise violence has seen a sharp rise.

[155] Jineth Prieto and Ana León, "La Unión de las Disidencias Queda Probada en el Catatumbo," La Silla Vacía (blog), August 22, 2018, https://lasillavacia.com/silla-santandereana/la-union-de-las-disidencias-queda-probada-en-el-catatumbo-67555.

Figure 9. Locations of incidents with dissidents 2018–2019.[156]

After evaluating the proposed theoretical argument with the evidence presented, we might suggest that the FARC underwent a process of ideological transformation in which it mutated from an "activist" to an "opportunistic" group. Since its onset, the FARC grew as a peasant organization with scarce resources seeking the support of the civilian population, always justifying social grievances in the Colombian state. However, once it had access to the invaluable resources from the drug trade, extortion, illegal mining, and kidnapping, the group underwent a process of ideological transformation, becoming a predominantly "opportunistic" group. At least, this pattern has been evident in most sectors of the organization, despite that some few structures continue to show signs of political

156 "The Evolution of the Ex-FARC Mafia."

goals and some ideological commitment. Furthermore, the need for the group to replace its founding leaders—who left by natural reasons or due to the state's beheading strategy—led to an ideological dilution since new leaders entered the organization with higher levels of personal interests and used indiscriminate violence against the civilian population in order to guarantee the access to such resources.

This ideological dilution that began as a product of the decisions made in the Seventh Conference gradually undermined the FARC's political goals. The introduction of large amounts of resources from the drug trade meant a negative influence, especially for recruits who were more inclined to satisfy their personal interests by using in most times indiscriminate violence against the civilian population, instead of seeking to achieve the political objectives of an ideologically declining organization. This issue in turn caused the absolute loss of popular support both domestically and abroad, and forced the FARC leadership to negotiate with the Colombian government. Thus, after four years of a bargaining process filled with controversy, spoilers, and a number of risks of failure, the final peace accord was signed; it was an ambitious accord that, in spite of its comprehensiveness, was insufficient to satisfy the variety of demands from a fragmented organization with low levels of ideological commitment. In the end, the organization never disappeared; it transformed into different uncoordinated splinter groups fighting for control of coca crops and with a fake semblance of ideology, and sometimes not even so.

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IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After five decades of a ceaseless and intense war fought in much of the Colombian territory, the peace negotiations, which culminated with the demobilization of the FARC in 2016, had generated a high expectation of peace in the country. The agreement between both sides stipulated the complete demobilization of the organization, as well as the total surrender of its weapons, and its inclusion in the country's political process, thereby putting an end to one of the longest active conflicts in the history of Latin America, and even the world. However, the events evidenced in the following two years suggest that rather than ceasing the hostilities and, therefore, the violence, the conflict has transformed, and armed activity has gradually increased its level. Numerous splinter groups have emerged in the post-accord era and have gradually increased in number, size, and capacity to generate violence. What happened?

This thesis examined the organizational and ideological transformation of the FARC that resulted in the emergence of splinter groups after the signing of the 2016 peace accords in Colombia. Specifically, it assesses why and how the peace accord process transformed rather than ended the Colombian conflict. The thesis argues that to understand the political landscape in Colombia's post-accord era, we must consider the organizational and ideological properties of the insurgent groups that sit to negotiate. Differences in the level of organizational cohesion and ideological commitment of insurgent groups, the thesis argues, will be associated with the effective implementation of peace accords or the emergence of splinter groups capable of threatening lasting peace. While some insurgent groups enter the peace accord negotiations with significant organizational cohesiveness—reflected in their capacity to enforce the entire demobilization of their members—others enter the peace accords organizationally fragmented. Fragmentation limits insurgents' capacity to agree and enforce the decisions taken by group leaders. Furthermore, while some share a high level of ideological commitment across their different levels of command and ranks, others enter peace processes more ideologically diluted. When groups are characterized by low levels of ideological commitment, accords can lose their appeal particularly when the economic incentives to mobilize remain in place. Thus, this thesis

suggests that the FARC, as an insurgent armed group, did not disappear in its entirety, but was fragmented into many uncoordinated smaller groups. These groups also vary in their ideological missions; while some rejected the peace accords driven by a commitment to political objectives, many others did so, driven by profit motivations and in an effort to fill the narcotrafficking spaces left by the FARC. Organizational fragmentation and low levels of ideological commitment interacted with the peace process in Colombia to exacerbate, rather than end, the Colombian conflict.

A. WEAKENING THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Chapter II examined the evolution of the FARC's organizational structure from its founding to the post-accord era of group splintering. It sought to understand how transformations in the organizational structure impacted the negotiation process and the post-accord outcomes. The analyses revealed several key findings. First, the FARC had a long history of significant organizational cohesion as a result of its strictly vertical and bureaucratic hierarchical structure that resembled the organization of a regular army. These characteristics guaranteed the high command the proper centralization of orders through the FARC secretariat, who made the group's strategic decisions and enforced the discipline throughout the organization. This level of organizational cohesion meant longevity and organizational growth for the FARC, which, in the late 1990s, was close to meeting its strategic objectives.

Second, the counterinsurgency strategy supported by Plan Colombia significantly transformed the FARC's organizational structure due to the systematic attacks on the FARC leadership at its different levels. Starting in 2002, the Colombian state launched a comprehensive military campaign based on offensive operations and civic-military actions aimed at weakening the organizational structure of the FARC and strengthening relations with the civilian population.[157] Despite that the FARC enjoyed a high level of organizational cohesion until the 1980s, its rapid growth afterwards significantly exposed

[157] Jerónimo Ríos Sierra and Jaime Zapata García, "Política de Seguridad Democrática En Colombia: Aproximaciones a Un Modelo de Contra-Insurgencia Centrado En El Enemigo," *Revista de Humanidades* 0, no. 36 (March 28, 2019): 129–54, https://doi.org/10.5944/rdh.36.2019.19837.

them to the state's military offensive beginning in 2002. The counterinsurgency strategy aimed to weaken the FARC and force it to an eventual surrender or the negotiation of its demobilization. The strategy was effective at weakening the FARC, eliminating many of its leaders and debilitating the organization's internal communication structure. Ultimately, the counterinsurgency also undermined the FARC's organizational cohesiveness.

Third, as a result of a successful counterinsurgency campaign, when the FARC agreed to sit down to negotiate the end of the conflict, it was a fundamentally different organization than the FARC that reached its tipping point in the 1990s. The organization that negotiated its demobilization was a weaker and fragmented group with different internal issues including divisions in its leadership system. Staniland argues that "insurgent cohesion affects the prospects for peace by influencing negotiations, demobilization, and postwar stabilization."[158] The FARC's fragmentation significantly undermined the organization's ability to enforce the peace accords once they were signed since several of its leaders rejected the peace agreement, forming several disconnected splinter groups with different types of objectives.

B. IDEOLOGICAL DILUTION

Chapter III considered the evolution of the FARC's levels of ideological commitment to evaluate how variation in this commitment interacted with the process of peace negotiation—and organizational fragmentation—to produce splintering in the post-accord period causing a growing recurrence of violence in the country. The chapter offered several important insights. First, while the FARC began as an ideologically committed organization during the 1960s, its determination to grow with aims of overthrowing the state and increasing participation in the drug economy enabled the organization to grow rapidly while also chipping away at its ideological commitment. In order to grow and meet its strategic objectives, the FARC had to multiply its income using drugs as its main means. In addition, the group had to recruit a significant number of members who entered the organization with different levels of ideological commitment, including a large number

158 Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 3.

who were predominantly motivated by profit. As a result, the FARC suffered a process of ideological dilution in which a large part of its political and strategic objectives were replaced by personal economic interests.

When the leaders of the FARC entered peace negotiations, they commanded over a fragmented and ideologically diluted (and dispersed) organization as a result of the significant variation in members' level of ideological commitment. The divisions during the negotiation process imposed a serious threat to the final accord since not all FARC members shared the same goals. Therefore, different FARC leaders abandoned the peace process alleging ideological differences with the organization's high command, forming various dissident groups disconnected from each other, and in most cases, with a fake political objective; or in others, not even so.

Ultimately, this shaped the patterns of post-accord splintering: splinter groups have emerged predominantly in key coca production areas where they have been establishing alliances and confrontations with other armed groups or even among themselves in their effort to recover the areas that were once under control of the FARC. Several FARC leaders that were known to be involved in narcotrafficking prior to peace accords have returned to fight since the concessions offered by the government were not enough to satisfy their demands. Despite its comprehensiveness, the 2016 peace accords—focused on social and political gains—have ultimately proven insufficient to end a conflict that for at least some militants was no longer about the social/political issues.

C. KEY THEORETICAL TAKEAWAYS

This thesis has made three theoretical contributions. First, this study has established that the literature on peace processes has largely ignored exploring how the peace process interacts with organizational features to end or transform the conflict. This thesis highlights the role of two central factors—organizational structure and ideological commitment—that shape the outcomes during negotiations with insurgent groups. Negotiations with hierarchically structured, cohesive, and ideologically committed groups tend to generate better outcomes than those with fragmented groups with low levels of ideological

principles. The latter group configuration significantly increases the chances of splintering and recurrence on violence post-conflict.

This first finding is somewhat counterintuitive. On the one hand, the literature suggests that peace processes have a greater likelihood of getting started when insurgent groups become weaker. This is precisely what Plan Colombia set out to do: weaken the FARC organizationally to twist its arm into a peace process that would put an end to the conflict. Yet, while the mission may have been effective at getting the FARC to sit down for negotiations, it may have also contributed to reducing the chances of success of the peace accords. The same weakened structure that brought the FARC to the table also seems to have limited the peace accords' chances of success. This is because implementation is most effective with hierarchically structured and cohesive organizations.

This thesis proposes that negotiations with organizations that enjoy a high level of ideological commitment tend to generate better outcomes than those with "opportunistic" groups motivated by more profit rather than political interests. In this field, the available literature suggests that negotiating with groups characterized by high ideological dilution represented by a high tendency to criminality limits the prospects of success in peace accords. This is evidenced in the dilution of the effectiveness of the concessions offered by the government which limits the satisfaction of the insurgents' demands since they are now driven by profit rather than ideology. During the negotiations with the FARC, the Colombian government offered concessions that satisfied many of the traditional FARC demands on social, political, and economic issues. However, due to the ideological dilution in the organization while negotiating, these concessions did not satisfy the demands of all its members, producing splinter groups and a recurrence of the conflict.

Finally, the thesis points to the understudied effects of peace accords. The existing literature usually approaches peace processes as a conflict termination method, arguing for two possible outcomes: sustained peace or recurrence in conflict. However, this approach falls short. The peace processes themselves do not necessarily mean a pause in the conflict but can also mean a transformation in the nature of violence. In the latter scenario, due to the decline in organizational cohesion and ideological commitment, many actors simply transform their objectives by continuing a conflict that apparently seems to be the

continuation of the one that is ending, but which in reality is nothing more than the start of a completely different one.

D. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research was limited by the timeline and geography. One of the main problems in this type of conflict has always been the reliability of the data obtained, since in many cases they contain biases that can influence the investigation. Therefore, the impossibility of carrying out fieldwork and accessing the main actors of the conflict partially limited access to a more truthful reality. However, in order to counteract this issue, varied databases, articles, and books from different sources and perspectives were analyzed in an effort to find a middle ground and thus avoid the results showing polarization to one of the sectors.

This study contributes to broader conversations on insurgent organizational structures and peace accords. Future studies may examine in greater depth how variation in the configurations of insurgencies shapes the prospects for, on the one hand, getting groups to negotiate and, on the other, successfully implementing the peace accords. This research suggests that the characteristics that lead groups to negotiate may also ultimately undermine the success of the accords. Relatedly, while this study finds that low levels of ideological commitment decrease the appeal of social and political accord concessions and increase the likelihood of continued (if non-ideological) conflict, the ways in which different levels of ideological commitment shape the prospects of accord implementation remains unclear. Therefore, it is important to study in more detail the variations in ideological commitment to better predict, correct, or evaluate confusing post-conflict scenarios.

E. KEY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The analysis of the Colombian case with the FARC leaves important policy implications that could be used to improve the situation of violence that the country is experiencing today as a result of the fight among different groups motivated by the drug trade. First of all, in an eventual negotiation process with an insurgent or terrorist group, the government must give careful consideration to both the organizational and ideological

configuration of the organization that sits down to negotiate a potential demobilization. Through a careful analysis of these two factors, governments can avoid negotiations that, from the beginning, generate a high risk of failure, or develop mechanisms to overcome these challenges.

Second, governments must be aware that military campaigns aimed at weakening the organizational structure of insurgent groups, besides from weakening the group's military capacity, also transform its decision-making system, affecting an eventual negotiation process. In Colombia, much of the counterinsurgency campaign supported by Plan Colombia led to the fragmentation of the FARC before the negotiation process began. This counterinsurgency strategy was successful at weakening the FARC and bringing them to the negotiating table; yet it may have also undermined the success of the peace accords. This study suggests that attention must be paid to how counterinsurgency efforts impact the structure and enable or compromise long term prospects for peace.

Third, peace processes seem to have a greater chance of success in contexts where social and political, rather than economic interests, motivate insurgent action. Despite that the Colombian state has shown great progress in social and economic development issues, the strategy to combat drug trafficking has proven to be inefficient, at least since 2016, when cocaine production resumed its upward trend. The micro-groups that emerged since the demobilization of the FARC are being more difficult to locate and attack by Colombian authorities when compared to the already demobilized organization. In fact, many of these groups have been getting stronger as a result of the income perceived by the drug business. This implies that the Colombian government must restructure its strategy, recognizing drug trafficking as the center of gravity of the conflict, and as the focus of the violence that the country is experiencing today.

Policy makers can also be attentive to the ways in which the peace process itself will impact the conflict. There are not only two possible outcomes to a peace accord: success and peace or failure and war. The conflict that emerges on the other side of accords, even when signed, may be totally different from the one that they sought to solve at the negotiating table. Considering and accounting for these potential transformations can increase the chances of peace accord success. It is precisely this transformation what could

explain the Colombian case after the demobilization of the FARC. The conflict did not end, instead it completely mutated from a struggle against a large group (FARC) with ideological variety, to one against many fragmented groups, disconnected from each other, competing with each other for control of territory, especially the territory where coca is grown, which largely explains its ideological inclination.

Finally, the Colombian effort in the fight against drug trafficking should be focused on strengthening alliances with neighboring countries where drugs are being moved towards the United States and the European Union. The war against this transnational crime requires a high degree of commitment not only from Colombia but also from the countries that are being used as routes and destinations for the alkaloid. Therefore, the United States and the European Union, although they have been supporting Colombia in this fight, not only must increase their efforts to combat the final phases of the drug trade such as transportation, distribution, and marketing, but they must also increase support with sufficient resources to the country of origin (Colombia), in which despite showing a high commitment in this war on drugs, there is also evidence of a lack of resources that have made the strategy ineffective. This commitment could not only increase the effectiveness of the anti-drug policy by stopping the flow of drugs abroad but could also create new livelihood opportunities for small coca producers who currently have no other source of income.

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