Recent Changes in the Armed Conflict in Colombia

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Abstract

Analyst in the strategy and operations of guerrillas and paramilitaries, have suggested that the Colombian conflict analysis should show the differences between clusters paramilitary. Not only because after the 80s, drug trafficking has played a decisive role, but because the geography of territories and control combinations have not been studied sufficiently. Geography of armed conflict should also provide tools to understand the impact of war on natural resources, for example. We sustain that while the drug economy has filtered the structure of semi-groups, promoting market competition and private security protection, drug trafficking does not explain absolutely all sources of violence in Colombia. The strategy of armed conflict has its main actors incentives are deeply rooted in unequal economic relations. There differences between regions in the center and the periphery of the Colombia and asymmetrical forms of development, poverty, unemployment and corruption. These are variables in which the drug is not directly involved but are part of historical attitudes that require our analysis.

Keyword: Colombia, Armed Conflict, Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime, Paramilitary Counterinsurgency War, Game Theory and Inconsistent Information.
INTRODUCTION

The Colombian armed conflict has evolved over the last decade. However, this evolution has not necessarily been reflected in the analyses of some researchers who have heavily influenced public opinion. The following hypotheses are the most relevant for the questions that will be raised in this article:

1. Neither an armed conflict nor a civil war exist in Colombia: the para-state groups have disarmed, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (hereafter referred to as the FARC) and the National Liberation Army (hereafter referred to as the ELN) are being defeated (official version upheld by the Uribe government according to José Obdulio Gaviria, Posada Carbó and Alfredo Rangel).

2. Due to their causal relationship, violence and the conflict in general have evolved in a uniform manner. As such, present examples of both can be explained using similar methods (Daniel Pecaut).

3. Colombian violence manifested in diverse modalities (such as homicides, crime and massacres) is derived from the armed conflict; and vice versa, the armed conflict has caused chains of civil violence and state anomie (Waldmann).

4. In the end, the strategies employed by the guerrillas and the paramilitaries have become analogous with regards to both their objectives and their procedures. An extended learning curb has demonstrated that their differences are minimal (Fernando Cubides, José Obdulio Gaviria, Sofismas del terrorismo en Colombia, Bogotá, Editorial Planeta, 2005; Posada Carbó, Eduardo, La nación soñada, Bogotá, Editorial Norma, 2006, pp. 388; even though less dogmatic than the former in his public position though less dogmatic, the reports and columns of the journalist, Alfredo Rangel, have echoed in the Uribe government: “Long Live Plan Colombia” (Semana, 21/03/2009); “Alan Jara’s absentmindedness” (Semana, 21/02/2009); “What did the FARC last agree on?” (Semana, 16/03/2008. Rangel has had a reactionary tendency over the last decade and has defended economic sectors that have received benefits under the Uribe government. To see the change in his position, please consult: http://www.seguridadydemocracia.org/)

5. Daniel Pecaut argues for this hypothesis in his famous article, The past, present and future of the violence: “The violence has become a functional mode of society, given the birth of diverse networks that exert influence over the population and of official regulations. It is better not to analyse the violence as a provisional reality. This all suggests that a durable situation has been created, Revista Análisis Político, 30, 1997, IEPRI, Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

6. Peter Waldmann, Guerra civil, terrorismo y anomia, Bogotá, Editorial Norma, 2007, pp. 304. Waldmann’s position reflects a variant interpretation supported by analysts whose sources are limited to opinion. This does not constitute an extensive critic of Waldmann’s work in general, but the observations concerning Colombia are seen as forced so as to support his hypothesis. The magazine, Revista Análisis Político, has also published the article The habitualization of violence in Colombia 32, sep/dec. 1997.

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5. The driving force behind the functionality of the para-state groups and their persistence over the last two decades has been the drugs industry. The drugs economy and other related businesses are fundamental factors in the Colombian armed conflict (Duncan, Camacho Guisado).

Each hypothesis expresses a predominant analytic focus on the strategic evolution of the armed conflict. It must be emphasised that this analytic classification is not meant to impose a complete taxonomy and, even less, does it intend to accredit the analysts with rigid positions. However, it is contended that to a great extent the classification does reflect both academic publications and media sources that generate public opinion. Those who believe that Colombia has consolidated a constitutional democracy with full guarantees to security and a reduction in violence during the Uribe government (1) will also share the hypothesis that the violent outlashes are nothing more than revenge and retaliations between the cartels (5). The analysts that have explained the conflict through social science categories (3) are found to have similar conclusions to those who observe regularities or small differences in the conflict over a large period of time (2). Lastly, those that identify and use economic variables to explain the conflict will uphold that there is little difference between the strategies and the military operatives of the violent actors (4) – (5). Whilst voicing their support for the Uribe government, the analysts can uphold hypotheses (1) – (4) – (5); or alternatively, they can deny the hypotheses (2) – (3).

It is obvious that with the evolution of the armed conflict the analysts could offer less superficial hypotheses than those articulated above. The armed conflict and displays of violence in Colombia are both variant and continuous in kind. Since the eighties, the drugs industry has influenced

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4 Fernando Cubides has reviewed the fundamental differences in strategy employed by the paramilitaries and the insurgents, and in particular he has focused on the use of intimidation and mutual learning, please see: Burocracias armadas, Bogotá, Editorial Norma, p. 200; also please see León Valencia’s report: Parapolítica, la ruta de la expansión paramiliar y los acuerdos políticos, Bogotá, Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, 2007, p. 396.

5 Duncan, Gustavo, Los señores de la guerra: de paramilitares, mafiosos y autodefensas en Colombia, Bogotá, Planeta, 2006. In 1991 Álvaro Camacho Guisado stated: “the drugs industry, without a doubt the newest phenomenon and that which characterizes most adequately contemporary violence, a situation that is considerably complex, can already explain all the threads of the conflict”, Bogotá, Análisis Político, No. 12, Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales (IEPRI), Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
the illegal trade market including arms, smuggling and drugs; but how has this interfered with fundamental sectors of the legal market, such as real estate, tourism, transport, and less obviously with poultry sector? How does communication operate between organized crime, kidnapping, the guerrillas and the paramilitaries? To what extent has the conflict transformed living conditions in urban and rural Colombia? Unfortunately, these are questions that have failed to be addressed in the conventional interpretations of violence perpetuated after the 60s.

OTHER FRAMEWORK FOR INTERPRETATION

In order to complement previous studies, the present article aims to balance on the one the substantiated arguments, and on the other, the strategic evolution of the conflict. Taking into account limitations, the reach of the article is confined to addressing problems that have been confronted within the last decade (argumentation, strategies developed within a civil war and asymmetric information). As such, the objective is to present an analysis of the conflict and its recent evolution in the context of private security actors. It is contended that the evolutionary state of the conflict offers unprecedented aspects with respect to the violence perpetrated in the 60s and the war fought between the drugs cartels during the 80s. Contrary to hypothesis (1), it is argued that the reinsertion of paramilitary forces as part of a Democratic Security policy has not given definitive results. The guerrilla groups have as yet not been defeated and the reinserted paramilitaries have merely returned to their organisations (in contradiction to hypotheses (1) and (4)). The geographic makeup of the armed conflict shows dynamics of territorial competition between paramilitary groups and insurgents acting in coalition with drugs cartels [hypothesis (5)]. As a result, the evolution of the armed conflict has provided fertile ground for a private

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6 A study addressing such changes should identify the profound geo-political and territorial transformations that have provoked the armed conflict. The maps that are in use serve to limit localising the positions of the para-state groups, dwarfing greater analytic developments concerning their strategies. The geographic dynamic should take into account, for example, local and regional strategies. A systematic comparative study of the last half century could demonstrate continuities and identity changes of the principal agents. Please see the attempted studies by Reyes, Alejandro (2009); Echandía (2006); Deas, 1999); Pecaut (2008).

7 While writing this article President Uribe and his government offered recompensation for information concerning 10 ringleaders who are in charge of 10.000 paramilitaries. The expansion of the emerging (paramilitary) groups and their armed mobilisation in that territory speaks against the proclaimed end of the war in Colombia. See: “Captura de capos de bandas emergentes tendrá la misma prioridad que la de máximos jefes guerrilleros”, El Tiempo, 10th March 2009.

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security and protection market, further demanded by a geographical and territorial transformation⁸.

Let us sustain that the questions relating to the continuation and evolution of the conflict over the last decade are to some extent different to those relating to its original causes and embryonic evolution addressed by the principal actors (contrary to hypothesis (2)). Taken from this perspective, the various organisations have behaved and continue to behave according to their own rationale. However, some analysts feel comfortable with characterising the paramilitaries, insurgents and criminal gangs as equivalent. This tautology does not have explanatory force. In Colombia the actors violate common expectations of normal conduct, to an implausible degree.

An aspect that has received little attention in conventional literature is that the majority of those integrated in the para-state groups tend to violate a basic general principal: namely, preservation of one's own life. This applies to a lesser degree to insurgents, and even less to members of criminal organisations. This violation becomes more worrying in as much as the para-state organisations seem to break the dictates of instrumental rationality: the actors should preserve their integrity when there is a great risk posed against their life. A correlation between unemployment and illiteracy and an early intake into the criminal networks weave threads into the tapestry of the conflict and present complications for any analysis (contrary to hypothesis (5)).

In the explanatory framework of the violence perpetrated in Colombia, geography has assumed a secondary role. Research undertaken over the last decade has constructed conflict maps that only partially represent the changes that have taken place regarding para-state territorial presence. The map still does not differentiate between the unprecedented strategies advanced by the organisations, nor does it reveal the territorial confrontations between such groups. Further questions need to be addressed: How can the geography of the violence help to explain the struggle between insurgents and paramilitaries to control the dominant smuggling areas? Likewise, how can intra-group incentives explain the distribution and negotiation of territories, drugs and arms in border zone?

These questions expose the need to introduce a geographic dimension to conflict analysis. The conflict maps should address group structure and

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⁸ The paramilitary and insurgent activity has been especially concentrated in Nariño, Cauca, Meta, (towards the Southern); Córdoba, Sucre and la Guajira, (in the Northern regions en las regiones). Please see: “Se crece el enano: la expansión de las Águilas Negras” Revista Semana, 05/31/2008.
gauge possible changes. Indeed, paramilitary mobility seems to correspond to different factors to that of the anti-insurgent movement advanced by the public forces and with the support of Carlos Castaño and Salvatore Mancuso. Significantly, the war of territorial control does not seek to displace the ideological enemy, but to compete in the drugs market (hypothesis (5)). Additionally, a geographical map of the conflict should address the changing political dynamics within principal and secondary cities. A model outlining territorial competition strategies between para-state groups and conflicts within the organisations is attached in the annex.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Why do in some regions in Colombia seem to have such a persistent incapacity for economic and social growth? Collective action and growth have been severely stunted by the Colombian conflict in which violence is the primary instrument. Over time, broader factors have also come into play. Regions that lie in the centre of the country, for example cities such as Bogotá and Medellín, have been significantly developed, offer broad employment opportunities and are relatively superior to regions situated in the peripheries of Colombia, such as Bojayá and Leticia. The geography of disproportionate economic development corresponds to historical and social deviations, the importance of which has been vastly overlooked (Lora/Gaviria, 2005). In part, these conditions can be explained by the evolution of institutionalisation and the Colombian state, and additionally by problems in the structure of collective action and beliefs (North, 2007). Some critics have also diagnosed the problem as a lack of confidence. These precarious factors negatively affect the possibility to achieve a better quality of life in these zones that have been beaten down by the armed conflict. As has been recently noted, the lack of a capital within which the citizens can have confidence, has brought perverse effects to the whole Colombian society (Gaviria 2005).

9 The categories of centre/periphery are used to historically describe disequal social relations in the regions that have been researched by Roldán Mary, A sangre y fuego. La violencia en Antioquia, 1946 - 1953, Bogotá, Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Banco de la Republica, 2003, 435 pp.

10 Lora’s/Gaviria’s controversial hypotheses have been the object of Estrada’s analysis (2007b).

11 The contrast between these social relations has been exasperated by distrust in the principal confrontation zones and geographical areas where drugs are produced and trafficked. The distrust frequently threatens minimal existent relationships due to manipulation of information by those who exercise military control in these territories. It is important to emphasise that mistrust in Colombia varies over time and space. Those who arrive in Cartagena for tourism and who never leave the departmental capitals have no comprehension of distrust in the other regions.

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However, another focus area that has been of progressive interest for many analysts is related with the reverse of the previous questions: How is it possible that citizens achieve productive activity in spite of the social order? Which aspects condition or restrain the debilitation of social order? These questions change the way that conflict studies addresses information that circulates in the form of propaganda, the news and public opinion. For many analysts, Colombia represents a laboratory of investigation: contrasting markets, an entrepreneurial society, and indicators of optimum levels of happiness in all the regions.

It was during the 80’s, more so than previous decades that the para-state groups (insurgents, self-defence groups and criminal organisations) began to offer a lucrative service: private protection. Given the vacuum left by the State and the mistrust of key organisations in economic development, these groups undertook illegal activities in various regions of the country. To start with they offered subtle mechanisms of protection at a low cost and afterwards they used intimidation. The paramilitaries and insurgents managed to integrate into local political life and in some cases their intervention exceeded basic social relations, intervening in, with or without authority, the resolution of disputes and quarrels fought amongst members of the communities.

The protection agencies caused decisive profound changes in the territorial geography of the country that affected regional governability. As they amplified the number of their fronts in zones such as Magdelena Medio and Puerto Boyacá, they also expanded their radius of political influence in the

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12 “Latin America, a happy region”, El Tiempo, 15/11/2008. “I am happy, we are from the third world”, El Tiempo, 4/06/2008.
13 Truly unusual of cases like that which occurred in the municipal of Pelaya located in the south of Cesar: since September of the previous year, the self-defence units have prohibited the posting of philosophy and social science teachers in all schools. A teacher, who had to flee from the zone, explained that the order was given without more details and that he had to question it, “Even Plato left running”. “Hasta Platón lo sacaron corriendo”, El Tiempo, 4/22/2001. Articles written by Estrada, Gallego, Fernando, “Ciénaga Grande viaje al corazón de la barbarie”, Magazine NUMERO., v.28, pp.70 - 73, 2001; “Dilemas de la guerra y la política”, Newspaper Catedra Libre, Universidad Industrial de Santander, 2001; “El desplazamiento forzado en Colombia”, Magazín Dominical, Vanguardia Liberal, Bucaramanga, 2001-09-07; “Peque, ataque guerrillero a la población civil”, Analítica, Venezuela, 2001-06-10; “Viaje al corazón de la barbarie”, Jornada Semanal, Ciudad de México, 2001-02-11; “La retórica del paramilitarismo”, The Universidad Nacional de Colombia newspaper, 2001-12-15; “Argumentos sobre el conflicto”, Magazín de Vanguardia Liberal, Bucaramanga, 2001/04/17.
Pacific Coast, the Guajira and up to the reaches of the south of the country in departments such as Cauca and Nariño. In certain towns, the policies undertaken by the para-state groups served to reduce the incident of common delinquency (Deas, 1999). Also, they planned a redistribution of contracts designed to develop public work, but the plan was never followed through with. These are examples that show that the para-state groups undermined the state whenever they deemed necessary. The vigilence that they provided gave relative calm to the citizens, also forms of social and political contract in the shadow of the state

This extensive global mechanism of extortion greatly exemplifies parasite forms of social contract. The self-defence forces intervened in local power, saving the appearances of a reality that reduced governability for three consecutive governments: Gaviria, Samper and Pastrana. The long-term effects have been devastating. The para-state groups used random methodology to manage high cost business transactions across various sectors and exponentially raised general mistrust. The alliances and coalitions between self-defence forces and the drugs cartels or between insurgents and landowners spoilt legitimate constitutional order and legitimate power in various regions, capital cities and intermediate towns.

An accumulation of necessities caused by unemployment or a low income in certain municipals create an abundance of potential human resources to be recruited into the para-state groups. These groups manage to recruit indolence and youth, whose age oscillates between 13 and 20 years old, into their fronts. By providing the local population with incentives aiming at satisfying their basic necessities, the self-defence forces and the insurgents were able to get a stronghold in strategic territories where they were then able to reek fear and control the illegal markets. Within the localities, illegal mechanisms were adopted to resolve domestic disputes. Those who were favoured by the commanders were assured power for illegal business deals and transactions within and outside of their zones. This new order managed to work perfectly thanks to indulgent government employees and entities who soiled their hands in para-state activities, or merely acted dumb.

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14 Estrada, Gallego, Fernando, “Guerra civil y contractualismo político incompleto”, Revista Analítica Premium, Caracas, Venezuela, 04/09/2008; García, Villegas, Mauricio et. al., Jueces sin Estado, Fundación Konrad Adenauer y The John Merck Foundation, Bogotá, 2008. This book collected testimonies and cases which demonstrate of the exercise of justice in zone dominated by para-state groups. It recognizes how the groups took over the State through providing a fundamental pillarstone of government: justice.

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The influence that these agencies have had on collective Colombian life has been negative. The local mafias, self-defence forces, insurgents and paramilitaries have affected regional territorial structure and conditioned new cultural standards. The incentives and belief that wellbeing consists in material goods, together with an inversion of community values, profoundly undermined the affirmative conventions of work, education and collective responsibility. Progressive weakening public confidence was caused by political agreements which assured the functioning of the private security agencies and para-political intervention in government. A panorama of this magnitude was obviously going to structurally affect the institutions.

The territorial configuration of the protection agencies has left concomitant consequences. Perhaps the most alarming is the distrust that Colombian society has of the state and the coalitions that formed between the elite, organised crime and para-state groups. A broad look at the structure of the private protection agencies reveals new organisational modalities and perverse mechanism of contract. This image below shows new illegal groups and patterns of shared learning (Cubides, 2005). Additionally, the continual sequence of intra-community conflicts has puts breaks on development initiatives and economic and social change which would otherwise be of great benefit to the populations situated in the geographic periphery of the country where these illegal armed protection agencies are prominent.

This lifestyle spread which caused unprecedented transformations in intermediate sized cities such as Pereira, Tuluá, Valledupar and Bucaramanga (where commanders and gangsters were given temporary refuge). It also contributed to increased legalisation of paramilitary activities that oiled the machinery of their alternative form of governance. The informal economy and open-door boarder smuggling fused with legal production and economy to form a dominant symbiosis. Additionally, a mutually supporting system made up of the legal and the mafioso had come to constitute a resourceful platform for those offering security. Furthermore, abandoned populations provided a fruitful pool of clientele to which protection agencies could provide their services. The choice between anarchy or protection agencies has not been considered by those who make decisions in government. Above all if those affected count on additional resources coming from business with the same protection agencies.
STRATEGIC CORRELATIONS

The research in this article has avoided being misguided down two common paths. First, there is a marked tendency to typify the actors as protagonists. The history of the self-defence forces and insurgents written by journalists is generally speculative in kind, characterising the criminals as Robin Hood heroes. Second, the analysis of para-state business is prejudiced because it is considered in isolation, every group being judged within different strategic systems. It is illogical to explain operational mechanisms outside of their macro contexts and not consider the holistic structure of the various organisations.

During the initial stage of the Uribe government, the reinsertion programme in which various paramilitary fronts participated (which is still presently being run) was accompanied by triumphal rhetoric concerning the dawning of such criminal organisations. Many academics support Uribe’s project to demobilize the irregular armies that have been the authors of numerous massacres over the last decade. Commissions of what have been organised for various purposes: to obtain financial support and respect from the international community, to create a memory for the victims, to offer reinserted soldiers employment in business and industry. Also, there was a considerable amount of media hype that covered the governmental paramilitary reinsertion project. A delirious degree of confident in the project has driven many to conclude that no armed conflict exists in Colombia [Hypothesis (1)] 15.

However, reality has had a different face than the ideology. Evidence shows that the paramilitaries have been restructured and the coalitions between the drugs cartels and the emerging groups who aim to occupy territories, control illegal businesses and traffic drugs within the illicit international markets have been renewed 16. Novel forms of competition have developed

15 Banks, C.M., Sokolowski, J.A., “From War on Drugs to War against Terrorism: Modeling the Evolution of Colombia’s Counter-Insurgency”, Social Science Research, 2008. This article evaluates the phenomenon of political anti-insurgency in bilateral Colombian-US relations, discussing the changes that drugs trafficking and the war on terrorism have made on the identity of the para-state groups. For an evaluation of the coca eradication programmes and the intervention of the actors of the armed conflict please see: Joshua D. Angrist and Adriana D. Kugler, “Rural Winfall or a new resource curse? Coca, income and civil conflict in Colombia”, The Review of Economics and Statistics, Vol XC May 2008 number 2.

16 The sustainment of the illegal drugs market and smuggling has recently been documented, please see: Cajas, Juan, “Globalización del crimen, cultura y mercados ilegales”, Ide@s, Concyteg, Año 3, Núm. 36.

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between the para-state groups, above all, amongst small combat units and the information systems that they use are designed to relocate rapidly when the enemy attacks. By concentrating their laboratories in smaller localities, the protection agencies and groups of drugs traffickers manage to keep the market reasonable stable\textsuperscript{17}.

The expression of the emerging groups has inherited the operatives that the insurgents and paramilitaries traditionally employ: threats of the population, threatening the local governors, displacement of the nucleus of many local populations and assassination of indigenous leaders and farmers. On top of this, intelligence work and information are used to selection the target victims of the group [Hypothesis (4)]. In the relocate strategy stage, the groups escalate the war in the predominate territory. Even though the conduct of the various groups is relatively insular, they compete to offer security to those who can pay, and the rest of the population is available for extortion and threat.

As can be observed, a decreased intensity of war coincides with the increased asymmetry in relation to aggressive resources and to the defensives employed amongst the para-state groups. This makes sense, especially when the asymmetry is in the extreme, on the grounds that the groups represent only a small fraction of the population and their possibility of success in a military confrontation is abysmally low, with little probability that they take up arms. In our case, we cannot measure the form of total relationship i.e. when the combating front have equal force, it also may be the case that they are reluctant to initiate a high cost war when the probability of beneficial results is hazy. As the asymmetry grows, the strongest group may be tempted to act more oppressively and provoke a reaction. When evaluating the present stage of the conflict, we observe a difference in the increased asymmetry, which reaches a higher peak in relation to paramilitary activity.

During this time the conflict has unfolded between paramilitaries groups not fully differentiated [Hypothesis (2), (4)]. Its territorial location techniques and their means of control are integrated into a process of

\textsuperscript{5} de junio de 2008; and for research specifically regarding Colombia: Ocampo, José Antonio, \textit{Historia económica de Colombia}, Bogotá, Planeta, 2007.

\textsuperscript{17} Mostly due to one of the most powerful drugs cartels of the last decade: the cartel of the North Valle y. The business of this cartel extends to Mexico, Venezuela, the United State and Europe and its operations take on such forms as social cleaning in regions beyond that of the Cauca Valley. Its activities were strategically supported by the paramilitaries and guerrillas, as described in: \textit{El cartel de los sapos}, Bogotá, Editorial Planeta, 2008.
mutual learning. Its distance is not too pronounced. Between the lines intersect at the right end; angle reflection of their actions is small. In other words, while the odds are much against the weaker group, the feasibility of an outbreak of confrontation could be, *ceteris paribus*, higher among the security forces and the FARC or the ELN, which between government forces and groups emerging (paramilitary). Empirically this happened when a coalition of paramilitary’s fronts found consistent with military objectives of the security forces.

In many cases the ideological allegiances or financial incentives consistently acted in favor of more resources towards combative. These could be kept temporarily. Each group provided normative conditions of recruitment, training areas, operational, wages and provisions, are fighting for exclusive loyalties especially when confrontation intensifies. In zones of territorial influence populations experiencing fears of assimilation and annihilation on the other side and excluded induced empathy shared sensibilities and beliefs. In summary, it was reasonable during the high frequency of armed conflict to find expressions of support group’s para-statal’s. In regions such as the Serranía de San Lucas, Magdalena Medio and the Pacific Coast, the paramilitaries reached a "capital support" who managed to spread among the residents, and in times of massacres led to the fronts and differentiate their businesses with more careful not to be confused with the identity of the FARC or the ELN.

**RECENT EVOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT**

Relate para-statal groups, (AUC, paramilitaries, insurgents, criminal organizations) with a specific period of history in Colombia is common. Conventional history, however, tend to cause violence originating in an uneven distribution of property, the feudal nature of the linkages between farmers and landowners in the late nineteenth century. A clear social and economic inequality, which would be extended considerably with the lack of a solid political and institutional system. A distant ruling class was promoting extreme aggravation of political fanaticism that would have bipartisan violence of the 50s enduring one of its expressions.

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But if the Colombian insurgents in its confrontation with the State are discursively heir to nineteenth-century wars, this trial did not have the same force in the case of irregular clusters, such as self-defense and paramilitary forces during the second half of the twentieth century. The emergence and evolution of paramilitary activity and its relationship to drug cartels responding to a rather specific and differentiated conditions. These relate to a world determined by new values: consumption, crime and demographic concentration of urban poverty. A mixture of components that provides opportunities for those who can show more power to negotiate and offer protection in areas where land conflicts are being intensively [Hypothesis (2), (5)].

A fallacy promoted in the analysis suggests that the spiral of conflict grew so aggressive as the means employed. If during the original violence of mid-twentieth century, liberals and conservatives defended their beliefs by killing and topping, it is believed that after the 80s, vengeance and retaliation deepened thanks to the sophisticated weaponry that was bought with drug funds [Hypothesis (5)]. This interpretation is partially correct. Then as now faced by those territories and populations, also are motivated by revenge, scams, and duels of honor. Generations of violent actors who left us so-called violence to maintain their causes classical achieved within a context of more complex claims and disputes.

However, as we have emphasized, the evolution of abundant evidence against parastatal groups contrasts with few new developments in research models. The literature lacks empirical basis for effect and analytical relationships are weak. Several authors are more interested in spreading common places to relate their information sources [Hypothesis (1)].

**TERRITORIAL EXPANSION**

This unit is close to problems of work within Garfinkel / Skaperdas (2007) in the sense of exploring how disputes arising from civil wars are related to defective forms of competition for economic resources. More specifically, the analysis made in the context of civil wars show a marked tendency to the formation of scale underlying business operating on property rights and an expanded private protection. The authors call this phenomenon: technologies of conflict. Our objective is similar to the extent that we also investigate the effects of the illegal market of private protection on income: the decisive aspects in the distribution of the local mafia powers or modes how a group relates paramilitary defects with marginal productivity in areas that remain in dispute. In other words it means asking how the
protection operates in the informal markets depending on the intensity of competition and demand to the citizens for greater security.

The analytical framework Garfinkel / Skaperdas, has served us well to observe the mechanisms of adaptability and change with the clusters within a given territorial area. What elements of economic behavior prevalent among combat units: the commanders and regular soldiers. What incentives for capital accumulation and how specific influences may have illegal markets between those who determine market decisions. The role of governors and the sharing of political powers are dangerous. The distribution of resources in areas under pressure from paramilitaries and insurgents is akin to a hobbesian war\textsuperscript{19}.

Recent research on dynamic changes of the armed conflict in Colombia has an extensive list of problems: How much has changed from political geography and territorial reintegration and delivery of paramilitary fronts? "In the hands of those who have been protected areas and regions and exploited by the FARC and the ELN during the Uribe government? How has recovered the State territorial presence in region to compete until recently by paramilitary and guerrilla? What is this presence of the State itself and what government policies in regions like the Pacific and the Urabá Chocó? These questions require a look at different economic and social geography as well as an analysis of strategies that correlate between paramilitary movements (black eagles, countries, and stubble), drug cartels and guerrilla fronts. Proceed with an auxiliary hypothesis in our approach: the FARC military crossroads during the Uribe administration and the rehabilitation program of the paramilitaries has not meant the final stage of the conflict, but rather we sustain that such conditions have forced officials to change violent their operational plans and find coalitions to maintain its dominance and local political power, [contrary to Hypothesis (1), (2)].

In several recent research findings protection agencies are presented as unitary actors, strategies and objectives homogeneous territorial control

unit and organizational unit. Nothing could be farther from reality. Because parastatal groups, especially during the Uribe administration have been forced to make internal adjustments in their foreheads, movements between middle and top (paramilitaries, FARC, ELN) and military coalitions in large regions of the country [Contrary to Hypothesis (5) ]. The strategic dynamics tend to differentiate their identities. New denominators semantic (black eagles) are combined with lessons learned in the field of conflict. At the same time, those affected in areas under parastatal control mechanisms seek to protect their interests and properties.

Within this scheme of territorial projections, ranchers, businessmen, landowners and merchants seek again to reduce their transaction costs. The safety and security goods returned as attractive between paramilitaries and insurgents. Throughout the past century has informally evolved a system of interconnection between paramilitaries and insurgents seeking to replace the strength and legitimacy of the state. So the interests (assets, properties, businesses, families) and the funds paid are not charged individually. Those working the supply side know what they do: associate with each other, guerrillas and paramilitaries, organized criminals and kidnappers, have entered into close relations key strategic areas of regional geography. On rare occasions the division of labor depends on specialties ranging from street robbery to the slaughter, through kidnapping and extortion.

It is likely that such a situation the individual incentives as a result of complete fragmentation affecting collective action. And the rewards of government campaign to gradually weaken the FARC. The individual reattachment act positively on the operating balance of forces although official figures for experts are exaggerated (Isaza 2009). The central questions revolve around budgets less encouraging: rearrangement insurgency, territorial division and negotiations between political actors and commanders; escalation of conflict in ascending sequence: intimidation, extortion, threats, and selective killings. One of the key issues in this scenario: how intra organizational balances established and local resource competitions between parastatal groups now replace paramilitaries and insurgents?

Research in the context of international civil wars may be promising to better observe our case. The relationship between clusters and semi-internal relations among members of an organization, as well as its geographic expansion and strategic, is central to understanding the trends of territorial conflict in Colombia. So part of our next goal is to make a partial assessment of these specific problems in the Colombian context. We'll see if the
dynamics that determine changes locally specific aspects shared with other regions in the world.

EMERGING BANDS

The political disintegration of clusters paramilitaries is one of the most difficult to address. Should we say des-ideological? Take up arms against the state”? Or use the State to "fight those who oppose the State? This double movement triggers a misleading way of posing the problem. If politics is lost in the conflict, what are the reasons? It was argued by many analysts is that the drug trade and drug trafficking explain everything [Hypothesis (5)]. Again, this means putting everything in one basket.

And is it not so? The social have worked with differences? Mono-causal question is as flawed as its response, ceteris paribus, explanations that place within the same level: strategies, objectives, policy, armament. The need to differentiate and develop a reclassification (by regions, territories, incentives, resources and power), is essential. The changes provided in locations such as Puerto Boyacá Puerto Triunfo and after the paramilitary reintegration program are sufficient to understand that we were wrong to simplify the conflict and its resolution.

Is it the rearmament of paramilitary? Pure drugs business? Who are their leaders less "spectacular”? Who pays? What area of political / military project? Questions whose require question’s of critical geography and logical extension in the localities. The explanations are divided between those positions in emerging bands fragmented expression of common crime and organized crime, or who were concerned to rearm and consolidate in former territories of the paramilitaries. The picture is cloudy. The truth, however, is that the actions of urban crime in border towns and illegal businesses, they reveal a strategic expansion whose geography has not been studied yet.

Part of conventional geography has been used in order to divert attention from critical areas of conflict. Exploit the fears and hostility feeds. Depending on the source providing the information is abused mapping to develop interpretations. A map is presented as reality; however, the maps are not reality. It is possible that further studies of critical geography teach us, by example, not only in what regions or areas of the country there is expansion of emerging bands, but to contribute to better define the dynamics of transition and learning the paramilitary groups. If
paramilitary gangs are emerging should be able to expose what updates or changes its projections territorial behavior and strategic\(^{20}\).

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegation (DDR) of the paramilitaries, have you failed? Being negative response, what explains the return of member's combatants to areas that were predominantly paramilitary? There are many concerns expressed serious institutional difficulties to handle a problem of dimensions that transcend the boundaries of government. However, in the Colombian case, the gaps in the program seem to respond to original conceptions of the process with severe limitations. Veterans do not surrender all their weapons. Businessmen, traders and, in general, economic sectors gave no support to the expectations of employment and occupation. And gradually the incentives of the program have been giving their way to new demands and proposals on the protection market. The negative influence of these factors, coupled with retaliation and crimes of ex-playing elements that deserve consideration [argument to be against the hypothesis (1)].

If government policy is to confuse emerging drug gangs, there are reasons to test their hypotheses. The emerging bands, it is claimed, do not have a counter-ideology that separates the paramilitaries. The paramilitary groups that were formed and evolved from Puerto Boyacá during the '80s, until the fronts of the Calima Bloc, dominant in the Pacific region, "were organized around a program counter? It is not clear. First, because their structures are not preserved uniformity of command (each front emerged and responded to specific demands of those who financed their creation). Second, its members did not share resources from a single supplier. Third, their statements and not ideologically conceived. The "paramilitary ideology" was really more an artifact\(^{21}\).

Some works have explored the relationship between paramilitary groups and regional powers\(^{22}\). Documentation found in computer files and papers

\(^{20}\) A test that evaluates in an international context the emerging gang problem: Hoffman, Michael H., "Emerging combatants, war crimes and the Future of international humanitarian law", *Crime, Law & Social Change* 34: 99-110, 2000. The reflections are concerned with the need to distinguish combatants and to degrade and paramilitaries groups and design problems arising from limited categories of international humanitarian law,

\(^{21}\) Cubides, Fernando: *Burocracias armadas*, Bogotá, Norma, 2006. The rhetorical force that had insufficient paramilitary commanders (Carlos Castaño, Salvatore Mancuso and Jorge 40) to demonstrate the ideological program was offset by the academic services provided by some Argentines and Colombians. Cubides carried elements related to the analysis of this phenomenon.


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(bills, notes or receipts book) makes a clear influence on contracting mechanisms, and resource transfers and municipal departments. Injected capital flows to regional economies by drug traffickers were protected by the warlords.

CCONCLUSIONS

Far from being ordered in accordance with strategic plans of a single organization, emerging bands have become increasingly common, despite the hostility caused by the Uribe administration and the propaganda against [Hypothesis (1), (5)] has proved devastatingly effective. The ideology that mobilizes its actions in regions such as Córdoba, Cauca, Valle, Nariño and La Guajira, not politics, not even be described as a counterinsurgency strategy, but rather a specific narrative of unmet basic needs. It is possible to believe that in conditions of desperate unemployment, for example, will become an effective policy.

This interpretation of suffering violence will shake if focuses on a guilty (the State) which in turn can isolate the causes of violence casually addressing the problem. These narrative units are offered as a means of justifying causes quite far from their origins. The emerging bands, paramilitary, guerrilla and criminal organizations have enough speech in favor of its strategic objectives. If suffering is seen as natural or without cause shall be considered a misfortune instead of injustice and produce resignation rather than rebellion. Therefore, mafia, guerrillas or paramilitaries claimed its causes in speeches that seek to prosecute, rather than assuming the status of perpetrators.

It happened with the FARC from its origins in Marquetalia, with the AUC of Magdalena Medio, with the MAS (Death to Kidnappers), with the paramilitaries in Cordoba and Antioquia Urabá, with paramilitaries under Ramon Isaza and the Black Eagles under the command of Don Mario, every one of the main actors of the conflict is delivered to a discourse of guilt.


In the words of the same drug traffickers this seems like a fable, but they are common components of speaking about the reasons given by some groups to join paramilitary: "As the people remain child poverty, corruption, unemployment, lack of opportunity and is in the drug's only chance of escaping poverty, the tentacles of crime and drug contagion bacteria without remedy, "ibid., p. 311. As heroes, drug traffickers are presented in television series and media publishers. This is the case of Andrés López whose book: *El cartel de los sapos*, Bogotá, Norma, 2008, as a libretto adapted for television, has just won an honorable prize India Catalina in Cartagena, Colombia.

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Interpret the actions of their enemies as crimes, inserting an all-encompassing discourse on monstrosity of his actions. Outreach campaigns and territorial dominance, population displacement and destruction in the regions should be observed also by creating a myth that will help sustain the conspiracy.

Demonizing its enemies and responsible for the atrocities of the war not only helped to neutralize the scruples to kill peasants and Indians ("guerrillas dressed in civilian clothes," said Jorge 40 and Carlos Castaño). He allegedly also helped intensify recruitment for their cause. If the regions where groups did not operate in a limited way-or-with a legitimate presence of state agencies, the opportunity was unique to invoke the need for his presence, and the discipline imposed on populations. The enemy was seen as a destroyer of peaceful coexistence, the state as indifferent and insulated to the center. This was the condensation of their ideology. But the causes alleged hidden interest in the discourse of higher crime and criminal scope.

The ideology had abdicated her political identity. Shares of emerging bands seem to be defined instrumentally by the drug economy and the dominance of strategic geography. The recruitment of youth and adolescents preferably made in depressed areas of Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Bucaramanga and Barranquilla, basically show that the conviction is not doctrinaire. For some emerging rescue their unemployment and poverty, incorporating the main workforce at little risk. We have passed since the violence of the 60s classic, low imperatives disguised by the discourse of the Cold War, into a product of the first decade of the century, where conflicts of interest between groups paramilitaries, is reduced to the drug markets and drug trafficking [hypothesis (5)].

What we sought in this review of research on the conflict in Colombia is to hire our work with some of the assumptions most influential among the public. In no way were completed articles or books released in the last decade, nor in his fullness we have examined the authors dealing with conflict. The hypothesis we have proposed as predominant versions, have been outlined leaving out details that do not affect the whole. In the introduction we said that these are not caricatures, but strongly held belief among those who put their theories about the Colombian conflict.

We show, contrary to the hypothesis (1), which indeed we have reason to be wary of rumors about the end of armed conflict and the final dismantling of paramilitary groups. The facts of war are striking and show us that the FARC, though diminished in their action, remain structurally intact. And the paramilitaries were able to sell at a relatively low price the idea of

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reintegration, in fact, maintained camps Vicente Castaño and rear with new heads of emerging bands (Don Mario, stubble). The armed conflict in Colombia has taken on new faces, like Clausewitz's metaphor.

An explanation of the armed conflict [Hypothesis (2), (3)] has been complemented in our approach from a theory of the Schelling strategy / Nozick. We believe that addressing the conflict from the strategies and territorial geography promises less simple observations. New wars do not necessarily mean radical breaks with the strategy of violent actors of the 60s, but no doubt that incorporate aspects such as drug trafficking and smuggling, are variables whose explanation is more complex. Game theory and asymmetric information and discourse analysis contribute substantially to improved research methods.

There are sufficient aspects of analogy. Analyst in the strategy and operations of guerrillas and paramilitaries, have suggested that the Colombian conflict analysis should show the differences between clusters paramilitary. Not only because after the 80s, drug trafficking has played a decisive role, but because the geography of territories and control combinations have not been studied sufficiently. Geography of armed conflict should also provide tools to understand the impact of war on natural resources, for example. Our approach is complementary to the hypothesis (4) of the introduction.

Finally, we sustain that while the drug economy has filtered the structure of semi-groups, promoting market competition and private security protection, drug trafficking does not explain absolutely all sources of violence in Colombia. The strategy of armed conflict has its main actors incentives are deeply rooted in unequal economic relations. There differences between regions in the center and the periphery of the Colombia and asymmetrical forms of development, poverty, unemployment and corruption. These are variables in which the drug is not directly involved but are part of historical attitudes that require our analysis.

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