

A NATIONAL CONTEXT FRAMEWORK TO INSURGENCY MOVEMENTS:

The Guerrilla Warfare Context in Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua

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ABSTRACT

What factors affect the outcome of insurgency? Insurgency is typically defined in terms of an organized resistance movement that uses subversion, sabotage, and armed conflict to achieve its aims of either overthrowing a government or changing a specific aspect of government. Traditional explanations of the outcome of insurgency focus on an insurgency's level of popular support acquisition, both domestic and international, which consequently leads to higher levels of resource mobilization, simply defined as monetary and human resources. I argue that guerrilla warfare, one of the most commonly used tactics by insurgents, is an important explanatory variable in understanding the outcome of an insurgency, and more specifically, the way insurgents develop guerrilla strategy within their specific national context. Comparing the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres in Guatemala, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias in Argentina, and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, I illustrate how specific guerrilla strategies may succeed or fail depending on the state's national context— the people's willingness to fight, the social and political reality, and the government's counterinsurgency capability. I find that history and culture influence the development of guerrilla strategy and that this strategy only leads to a successful insurgency when it aligns with the different factors that make up the national context. This conclusion has implications for both insurgency theory and for counterinsurgency policy.

Keywords: insurgency, guerrilla insurgency, popular support, resource mobilization, national context, Guatemala, Argentina, Nicaragua

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Military leaders, many of whom were students of counterinsurgency, recognized the dangers of an incremental escalation and the historical lesson that ‘trailing’ an insurgency typically condemned counterinsurgents to failure.

— U.S. Commander Stanley A. McChrystal, November 13, 2012

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ABBREVIATIONS

EGP	Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias
FSLN	Fuente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional
RM	Resource Mobilization (Theory)
UFC	United Fruit Company
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNDCC	National Committee for Defense Against Communism
PGT	Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes
CGTG	Confederación General de Trabajadores de Guatemala
CNC	Confederación Nacional Campesina
MR 13-N	Movimiento Rebelde 13 de Noviembre
LT	Liberation Theology
ORPA	Organización Revolucionaria del Pueblo en Armas
URNG	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional
PRT	Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores
FAL	Fuente Argentina de Liberación
FAP	Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas
UNO	Union Nacional de Oposición
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
GPP	Guerra Popular Prolongada
TP	Tendencia Proletaria

CHAPTER ONE

THE INSURGENCY PREDICAMENT

What factors affect the outcome of armed conflict between a government and an out-group, or insurgency?¹ With a world population of over 7.67 billion people² among 195 countries,³ more than 1.05 billion individuals are currently directly or indirectly affected by armed conflict in a total of 22 states— all of which are irregular wars,⁴ and 14 of which are insurgencies.⁵ In Northeast Nigeria alone, an Islamist insurgency that began in July, 2009— Boko Haram— has killed almost 350,000 people.⁶ That number is only

¹ By insurgency, I refer to “a conflict between a government and an out-group or opponent in which the latter uses both political resources and violence to change, reformulate, or uphold the legitimacy” of a certain aspect of politics, a definition by Bard O’Neill, cited in Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerilla Warfare*, (Potomac Books, 2002), viii. By modern insurgency, I mean an unconventional conflict as defined above, where the insurgents use “near-instant global communication,” giving insurgents the opportunity to “agitate and propagandize at a global scale.” It refers to the advent of communication technologies, which became widely accessible after 1945; I take this definition from Walter L. Perry, John Gordon, *The Nature of Modern Insurgency*, (Rand Corporation, 2008), 5.

² *U.S. and World Population Clock*, (United States Census Bureau, October 28, 2021), <https://www.census.gov/popclock/>.

³ *Countries in the World*, (World Meter, October 28, 2021), <https://www.worldometers.info/geography/how-many-countries-are-there-in-the-world/>.

⁴ By irregular war, I mean “a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations.” *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC)*, (Department of Defense, September 11, 2007), 6, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joc_iw_v1.pdf?ver=2017-12-28-162020-260.

⁵ *Countries Currently at War 2021*, (World Population Review, October 28, 2021), <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-currently-at-war>; *Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Mexico, Yemen, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia*, (Data Commons, October 28, 2021), <https://datacommons.org/place/country/>. In order to arrive at the number of people directly and indirectly affected by armed conflict, I add the populations of the 22 countries.

⁶ *Northeast Nigeria insurgency has killed almost 350,000 - UN*, (Reuters, June 24, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/northeast-nigeria-insurgency-has-killed-almost-350000-un-2021-06-24/>.

expected to increase as the country's war stretches into the horizon.⁷ In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Taliban insurgency, or the Afghan War, answers to 241,000 deaths, 71,000 of which were civilians.⁸

Insurgencies today are a new phenomenon in and of themselves. Modern insurgents are now able to exploit access to near-instant global communication networks and seek donors from around the world, exponentially widening their sponsor pool. What's more, TV screens around the world will inevitably show governments conducting counterinsurgency operations, hindering their chances at eliminating the out-group through repressive measures as was once the case.⁹ While this has favorable human rights implications, the advent of modern technology poses further challenges for governments dealing with insurgent groups spreading misinformation, particularly when combined with the use of guerrilla force on-the ground.

Guerrilla insurgency refers to a violent conflict between a state and a non-state group "stationed in a specified place in a certain area, armed and prepared to carry out a series of warlike actions" such as violence and unpredictable strikes, for an ultimate seizure of power.¹⁰ Along with civilian deaths and their security implications,¹¹ the cost of

⁷ *Northeast Nigeria insurgency has killed almost 350,000 - UN*, (Reuters, June 24, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/northeast-nigeria-insurgency-has-killed-almost-350000-un-2021-06-24/>.

⁸ *Afghan Civilians*, (Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs, Brown University, April, 2021), <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/afghan>.

⁹ Stephen Tynes, *The FARC and the FSLN: A Study in Divergence in Outcomes of Latin American Marxist-Leninist Insurgencies*, (Naval Postgraduate School, June, 2019, 17), https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/62783/19Jun_Tynes_Stephen.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

¹⁰ *Ernesto Che Guevara, Guerilla Warfare: A Method*, (Foreign Language Press, 1964), 2.

¹¹ Faith O. Olanrewaju, Oluwafunke M. Folarin, Sheriff F. Folarin, *Insurgency and National Security Challenges in Nigeria: An Introductory Analysis*, (Studia nad Bezpieczeństwem, 2017), 36.

guerrilla insurgency also manifests through the blockage of major trade routes, poverty and deprivation, and the internal displacement of peoples, among other socioeconomic ills.¹² Guerrilla insurgencies have become more effective since 1945, winning about 40% of their campaigns in comparison to only 20% prior to 1945.¹³ Due to the advent of global communication networks, guerrilla insurgencies show no signs of becoming less successful as national and international media coverage will only continue to increase, and as military academies continue to focus less on counterinsurgency.¹⁴

THESIS AND ARGUMENT

Most scholars in the field of military analysis agree that the outcome of guerrilla insurgency hinges upon the insurgent group's ability to foster enough domestic and international support to prolong the insurgency until the enemy stakeholders are depleted.¹⁵ While scholar-practitioners Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Mao Zedong argue that violence and unpredictable strikes are a means to achieve this support, guerrilla tactics have also provoked the opposite response.

¹² Cecilia Idika-Kalu, *The Socioeconomic Impact of the Boko Haram Insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin Region*, (Intechopen, May 6, 2020), <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/71366>.

¹³ Max Boot, *Max Boot - Invisible Armies*, (Pritzker Military Museum & Library, March 25, 2013), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_0tPNRKAUU.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Paul K. Davis, Eric V. Larson, Zachary Haldeman, Mustafa Oguz, Yashodhara Rana, *Understanding and Influencing Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism*, (National Defense Research Institute, 2012); Osonde A. Osoba, Bart Kosko, *Fuzzy Cognitive Maps of Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism*, (The Journal of Defense Modeling and Simulation, January 24, 2017); Steven Metz, *Rethinking Insurgency*, (The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, Routledge, 2012); Steven Metz, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, (The Washington Quarterly, 2003); Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerilla Warfare From Ancient Times to the Present*, (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013); Daniel Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, David Branna, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, (Rand Corporation, 2001); Ernesto "Che" Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare*, (BN Publishing, 2007).

Guevara's ambitious goal of toppling Bolivian President René Barrientos' government in 1967 is a case and point. The revolutionary clandestinely arrived in the Bolivian countryside with a group of followers, minimally informed of the on-the-ground conditions of the Camiri region— located on the banks of the Parapeti River east of the Andes.¹⁶ Guevara's biggest mistake was expecting assistance and cooperation from the local dissidents and the Communist Party of Bolivia, which he did not receive. Coupled with a lack of knowledge that the Bolivian Army was being supplied by the U.S. Army's Special Armed Forces, the unpredictable strikes by Che's guerrilla army served only to alienate civilians and dissidents of the Barrientos administration.¹⁷ Hence, we can conclude that raiding enemy supply depots and installations, cutting communication lines, and ambushing patrols and supply convoys along with other commonly-used guerrilla tactics,¹⁸ are only successful at inciting popular support under specific conditions. In the case of Bolivia, guerrilla war was unsuccessful because Che was reportedly unaware of the country's social reality, people's political preferences, willingness to fight, and the Bolivian government's strength and legitimacy,¹⁹ or what I refer to as the national context.

¹⁶ John D. Waghelstein, *A Theory of Revolutionary Warfare and Its Application to the Bolivian Adventure of Che Guevara*, (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, February 2, 1979), 38.

¹⁷ *Bidding for Che*, (Time, December 15, 1967), <https://web.archive.org/web/20081208122004/http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,837605,00.html>.

¹⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (Central Intelligence Agency, 2002), 1, https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/4B/4BB2A65F1FF9040B4BDBFBAB15CC01C1_%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8.pdf.

¹⁹ Christopher Ridriguez, *The Bolivian Insurgency of 1966-1967: Che Guevara's Final Failure*, (Small Wars Journal, September 23, 2018), <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/bolivian-insurgency-1966-1967-che-guevaras-final-failure>.

I employ the same line of thought for the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP) in Guatemala, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) in Argentina, and the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) in Nicaragua. Why did the use of guerrilla force fail in Guatemala and Argentina but succeed in Nicaragua? I operationalize the relationship between guerrilla groups' perceptions of the national context and the outcome of guerrilla insurgency by employing the latter as my dependent variable and guerrilla tactics and the national context as my independent variables. As I expand on later in this chapter, I choose January, 1960 to November, 1990 as my time frame in order to encompass the most intense and unsuccessful period of insurgency post-1945.²⁰

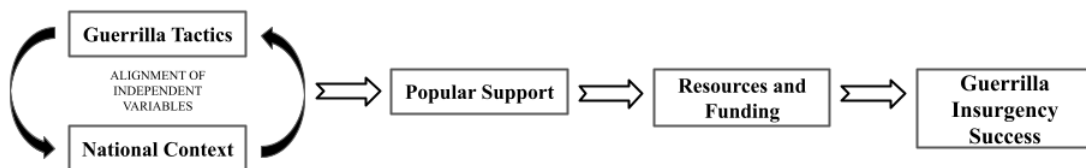
This thesis serves two purposes. The first is to develop a novel approach to examining the outcomes of guerrilla insurgency, the National Context Framework. Unlike other studies of this kind,²¹ this study takes into consideration the guerrilla group's ability to incorporate a rational understanding of its national context into its use of guerrilla warfare. Given the first purpose, the second is to draw conclusions as to whether the incorporation of the national reality into guerrilla warfare correlates with changes in domestic and international opinion and hence the outcome of insurgency. In other words, I examine the most common armed tactics used in insurgent strategy, guerrilla tactics, against the backdrop of the national context, observing their efficacy in mobilizing monetary and human resources. This study finds two related explanations for the inconsistency of guerrilla insurgency outcomes post-1945.

²⁰ Bethany Lacina, *The PRIO Battle Deaths Dataset, 1946-2008, Version 3.0 Documentation of Coding Decisions*, (Centre for the Study of Civil War, September, 2009), 7-9. Prior to 1967, there were a total of 10 insurgencies globally in comparison to 27 between 1967 and 1990, and 6 post-1990. In order to arrive at these numbers, I add the insurgencies in this dataset that correspond to each time frame.

²¹ Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Studies*, (National Defense Research Institute, September 26, 2013), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR291z2.html.

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, guerrilla warfare is only successful when the out-group understands and responds to the national context of the country in which it operates. If the movement is out of tune with the national context, violent tactics such as unpredictable strikes in populated areas will provoke a sense of insecurity among the population, in turn hurting the guerrilla insurgency's chances at success. Similarly, a misalignment between insurgents' understanding of civilians' political perceptions will cause the group to use guerrilla force against civilians' interests. It follows that a legitimate government will outlast the guerrilla insurgency by conducting counterinsurgency. Second, given that guerrilla insurgency becomes unsuccessful when it loses, or fails to acquire, the support of the domestic and international community, the group's guerrilla tactics must cater to these social and political conditions. Support, and thus funding and resources insurgents use to mobilize, only persists when local and international actors alike perceive a just cause fought for through acceptable means.

Figure 1.1: Alignment between Guerrilla Tactics and a State's National Context



SIGNIFICANCE

There are both theoretical and practical reasons to undertake this study. My approach to understanding modern insurgency synthesizes existing bodies of literature

that focus on the societal and geopolitical stewardship paradigms on security with theories of sociology— namely Resource Mobilization Theory and theories on mass communication²²— as well as guerrilla warfare theory— namely Foquismo or Foco Theory.²³ The synthesis of the literature on insurgency and guerrilla with literature by the two fields of sociology listed above allow me to develop my approach, which— using the event as the unit of analysis— thoroughly evaluates the efficacy of guerrilla warfare within a specific national context. This thesis has practical implications in addressing the timeliness of this topic by evaluating how events can contribute to violence and instability within nations, which if not understood, could lead to further conflict. A more comprehensive approach to understanding guerrilla insurgents’ decision making processes will better inform counterinsurgency operations and minimize the loss of lives.

THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Scholarship on modern insurgency has thus far identified two prominent factors affecting insurgency’s outcomes— the group’s popular support and its ability to mobilize resources²⁴— factors that states evaluate when assessing an insurgency’s threat level. In

²² Chinenye Nwabueze, Ebere Okonkwo, *Rethinking the Bullet Theory in the Digital Age*, (International Journal of Media, Journalism, and Mass Communications, 2018); Entisar Al-Obeidi, *Approach to the Theories Of Mass Communication*, (Al Dar Research Journal for Sustainability, 2018).

²³ Matt D. Childs, *An Historical Critique of the Emergence and Evolution of Ernesto Che Guevara’s Foco Theory*, (Journal of Latin American Studies, 1995).

²⁴ Robert B. Albritton, *Social Amelioration Through Mass Insurgency*, (*American Political Science Review*, 1979); Bob Edwards, Patrick F. Gillham, *Resource Mobilization Theory*, (Wiley Online Library, January 14, 2013), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9780470674871.wbespm447>; J. Craig Jenkins, *Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements*, (Annual Review of Sociology, 1983); John D. McCarthy, N. Zald Mayer, *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*, (Social Movements in an Organizational Society, Routledge, 2017); Paul Almeida, *3 Theories of Social Movement Mobilization, Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*, (University of California Press, 2019).

other words, these factors are capable of explaining policy on counterinsurgency by claiming that states react to social pressure from popular support and to the insurgency's organizational capabilities. Yet, scholarship fails to identify why the use of guerrilla force succeeds in some insurgencies but not in others, revealing a gap in policy makers' decision making today. For example, guerrilla warfare succeeded in the 1959 Cuban Revolution for the first time in modern Latin America, but failed in the EGP and FAR insurgencies in Guatemala and Argentina, respectively. In Latin America, it succeeded for the second and last time with the FSLN in 1990.

Although this inconsistency is well-documented,²⁵ why is there so little debate about the interplay of guerrilla warfare and an insurgency's popular support and resource mobilization? How does the interplay of specific guerrilla tactics²⁶ employed by insurgent groups and a state's national context affect an insurgency's ability to foster domestic and international support, and by extension, more effectively mobilize its monetary and human resources?

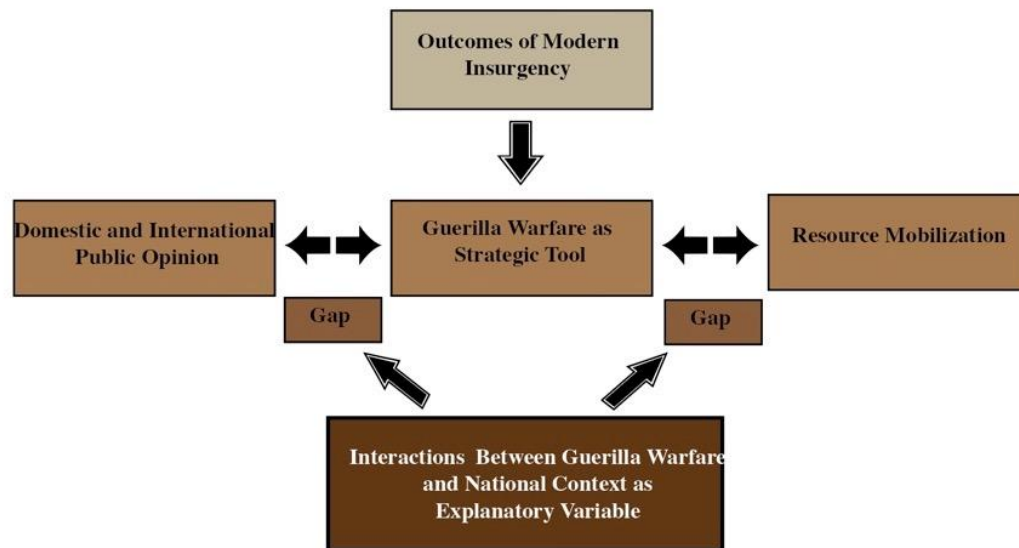
As illustrated in Figure 1.2, scholars are unable to explain why guerrilla warfare is conducive to popular support and an insurgency's ability to mobilize in some cases but not others, as is the case for the Cuban Revolution, the EGP, ERP, and the FSLN. Thus, scholarship has not answered what guerrilla warfare means in the context of the nation, and subsequently cannot explain why states formulate counterinsurgency operations in the way they do. In contrast to existing literature, I pay close attention to the national

²⁵ David S. Palmer, Thomas A. Marks, *Guerilla Insurgencies in Latin America*, (Oxford University Press, November, 29, 2011); Timothy Wickham-Crowley, *Two "Waves" of Guerilla-Movement Organizing in Latin America, 1956-1990*, (Comparative Studies in Society and History, Georgetown University, January, 2014).

²⁶ Ernesto "Che" Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare*, (BN Publishing, 2007)

context, in which the nation's social reality, people's political preferences, willingness to fight, and the government's strength and legitimacy, shape a guerrilla insurgency's strategy and outcome.

Figure 1.2: The Interplay of Guerrilla Warfare, Resource Mobilization, and Domestic and International Opinion in Insurgency— Explaining Insurgency Outcomes through the National Context



POLICY SIGNIFICANCE

The scholarly debate over the efficacy of guerrilla force in insurgency is inconclusive and yet, it is this ambiguous interpretation of guerrilla force in insurgency that often guides foreign and domestic policy decisions. The eruption of unconventional conflict, where the non-state actor employs guerrilla tactics, will continue unless a new approach for conceptualizing guerrilla warfare's relation to both popular support and

resource mobilization is established. This better addresses the nuances that policy makers continue to overlook when formulating national security decisions. Thus, I suggest that the outcome of insurgencies that utilize guerrilla tactics also be analyzed through the National Context Framework, an approach that understands the variation needed to refine policies toward such groups. This perspective allows policymakers to grasp what it means to assess the efficacy of a guerrilla insurgency, and to subsequently formulate security policies that are better geared towards nation-specific insurgency conditions.

Guerrilla warfare continues to be the most widespread tool used in insurgency, particularly in regions of the world that are already unstable due to governments' lack of legitimacy.²⁷ To illustrate a few examples, insurgency groups such as the Mujahideen in Afghanistan organized against the Soviets and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan through the use of guerrilla war in 1979, planting mines in roads, ambushing Soviet convoys, and conducting raids against military bases.²⁸ Following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Taliban, or former Mujahideen, utilized similar guerrilla tactics against U.S. and Afghan forces, albeit with more institutionalization, which the U.S. had previously provided the resources to realize during the Soviet-Afghan War.²⁹ Not only did the discord between the strategy employed by the Taliban and those of the U.S.-backed

²⁷ By legitimacy, I mean "the compatibility of the results of governmental output with the value patterns of the relevant systems," relating legitimacy to the values of the society, as in Peter G. Stillman, *The Concept of Legitimacy*, (University of Chicago Journals, 1974), 32, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.2307/3234268>.

²⁸ Theo Farrell, *Unbeatable, Social Resources, Military Adaptation, and the Afghan Taliban*, (Texas National Security Review, 2018), <https://tnsr.org/2018/05/unbeatable-social-resources-military-adaptation-and-the-afghan-taliban/>.

²⁹ *The U.S. War in Afghanistan*, (Council on Foreign Relations), <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

Afghan forces prolong the conflict,³⁰ public opinion also turned against American involvement in the war, with 62% of Americans believing the Afghan war was not worth fighting in a survey conducted during the U.S. troop withdrawal.³¹ The Taliban seems to have understood how best to navigate the Afghan national context and develop a popular support network that facilitated resource mobilization, all while conducting guerrilla war. A better understanding of how insurgent groups conducting guerrilla work within their environments would have helped U.S. policymakers foresee the shift in domestic and international support against them.

Finally, more often than not, legitimate governments assume counterintuitive tactical decisions by non-state groups are a product of inept strategic choice.³² The consequences of not considering my study are that overlooking why guerrilla groups take counterintuitive decisions by assuming them away as ineptitude will continue to have a detrimental effect on our scholarly understanding and policy responses toward them. As one of the most prominent and unpredictable forms of armed conflict in the 21st century, it is crucial for foreign policy decision makers to understand non-state actors' tactical choices. When dealing with violent groups that use guerrilla warfare as a form of armed conflict, decision makers will become better able to understand their form of struggle by placing it within their national context, and therefore respond to them more effectively.

³⁰ Theo Farrell, *Unbeatable, Social Resources, Military Adaptation, and the Afghan Taliban*, (Texas National Security Review, 2018), <https://tnsr.org/2018/05/unbeatable-social-resources-military-adaptation-and-the-afghan-taliban/>.

³¹ Associated Press, *Most Americans Say the Wars Against Afghanistan and Iraq Were Not Worth Fighting*, (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research), <https://apnorc.org/projects/most-americans-say-the-wars-in-afghanistan-and-iraq-were-not-worth-fighting/>.

³² David B. Carter, *Provocation and the Strategy of Terrorist and Guerilla Attacks*, (Department of Politics: Princeton University, August 24, 2013), 2, <https://www.iilj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Carter-Provocation-and-the-Strategy-of-Terrorist-and-Guerilla-Attacks-2012.pdf>.

Conversely, foreign policy makers would benefit from an increased understanding of friendlier groups that use guerrilla tactics, such as the U.S.-backed rebel groups in Syria, in order to help foster more successful policies geared toward conflict resolution. If we want to achieve the goal of better understanding guerrilla insurgents' decision making processes, one way to do this is to find out whether the success of guerrilla tactics they employ depends on the insurgent groups' awareness and responsiveness to their immediate environment.

RESEARCH DESIGN

APPROACH AND METHODS

In order to answer what factors affect the outcome of guerrilla insurgency in Latin America, I use Sharon Crasnow and Stephen Van Evera's definition of the case study method, where the case study provides evidence for causal claims unavailable through statistical methods³³ and explains cases of "intrinsic" importance,³⁴ respectively. The case study method is practical in answering the questions "how" and "why" when the investigator has little control over events, proving the most useful in observing guerrilla insurgents' decision making processes vis-à-vis their environments.³⁵ This is the case because an out-group's tactical choices cannot be manipulated through a controlled experiment. According to Van Evera, the case study is a strong method to test theory

³³ Sharon Crasnow, *The Role of Case Study Research in Political Science: Evidence for Causal Claims* (Philosophy of Science, 2012), 655.

³⁴ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Cornell University Press, 1997), 55.

³⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, (Sage Publications, 2003), 13.

because it defines how the independent variable causes the dependent variable.³⁶ By examining “the process whereby initial case conditions are translated into case outcomes,” causation can be determined using comparative process tracing.³⁷ The case study method thus allows me to deliberately cover contextual conditions which are pertinent to the outcome of guerrilla insurgency.³⁸ Additionally, the process-tracing method is especially practical when conducting a longitudinal, cross-time, and cross-country study, which my research question calls for. If I did not conduct a longitudinal, cross-time, and cross-country study, I would risk generalizing outcomes that may not have occurred under other unobserved conditions.

The outcome of guerrilla insurgency is my dependent variable and the out-group’s guerrilla tactics and the national context in which they operate are my independent variables. A guerrilla insurgency succeeds when it is able to achieve a movement’s goals. For example, the FSLN’s goal was to overthrow Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza, which they accomplished. Hence, the FSLN is a successful case of guerrilla insurgency. In other words, the FSLN was able to obtain the level of domestic and international support necessary to mobilize enough monetary and human resources to overthrow Somoza.

I draw from the approach used by Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan in their detailed analysis of 71 post-World War II insurgencies in which they measure tangible support, commitment and motivation, and flexibility and

³⁶ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 54.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Yin, 2003, 1.

adaptability to and of the insurgents.³⁹ Since my research question centers around examining guerrilla tactics employed by guerrilla insurgents, I observe the EGP, the FAR and the FSLN's responsiveness to locals' social realities, political preferences, willingness to fight, and perceptions of the Guatemalan, Argentine, and Nicaraguan governments' strength and legitimacy, respectively. I then assess whether the guerrilla tactics implemented by these groups align with the aforementioned factors, or the national context.

These scholars use quantitative data to examine 'good and bad' counterinsurgency practices.⁴⁰ However, my focus remains on 'good' and 'bad' guerrilla tactics as they relate to the national context and there is no quantifiable data available that encompasses the nuances of the national context as a concept, hence my use of the case study method. By 'good' and 'bad' guerrilla tactics, I mean those that either further or impede the respective guerrilla insurgency's ultimate goal, which I observe through shifts in public opinion and resource mobilization.

I use the case study method along with discourse analysis of newspaper articles, personal interviews, pamphlets and publications written by insurgents, and scholarship in order to triangulate my data per guerrilla insurgency, and comparative analysis between cases in order to factor out the guerrilla patterns unique to the successful Nicaragua case.

³⁹ Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Studies* (National Defense Research Institute, September 26, 2013), xviii.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

CASE APPROACH AND SELECTION

In order to answer the question: what factors affect the outcome of guerrilla insurgency, my empirical chapters constitute an in-depth analysis of guerrilla tactics utilized by the EGP, the FAR, and the FSLN. I select two unsuccessful guerrilla insurgencies, the ERP and the FAR, in order to make my comparison as robust as the time-frame of this study allows— by selecting only one unsuccessful case, I risk overlooking variations in the national context that comparing two cases allows me to overcome. I choose the FSLN as my third case given that it was the only successful guerrilla insurgency between January, 1960 and November, 1990.

I have selected Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua as my three cases in order to analyze the conditions under which the specific uses of guerrilla warfare changes the outcome of modern insurgencies on the following grounds: the independent and dependent variables in these two cases are of intrinsic value in that they (1) share historical conditions of intense government crackdowns on leftist movements, yet have different outcomes, (2) are subject to similar regional influences, such as U.S. involvement in internal affairs, (3) derive parts of their ideologies from Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s Foco Theory, which I expand on in Chapter 2 , and (4) have distinct perceptions and responsiveness levels to their respective national contexts. Therefore, I use John Stuart Mill’s method of difference⁴¹ in the cases of Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua to demonstrate how national contexts are perceived differently by the

⁴¹ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being A Connected View of the Principles of Evidence, and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, (John Parker West Strand, 2008), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/26495/26495-pdf.pdf>.

insurgent groups, leading to noticeable differences in the employment of guerrilla force and consequently, support for the insurgency.

The background conditions of these three cases are not identical, but it is the differences in these background conditions that allow me to develop my analysis of their use of guerrilla force. To illustrate, Argentina is located in the southernmost region of the hemisphere and at the time, was considered the most developed and homogenous country in Latin America.⁴² Conversely, Guatemala is a small-sized, developing country located in the northernmost part of Latin America— it is mostly rural with an indigenous majority.⁴³ Guatemala's social reality differs from Argentina's in that the latter has a substantially larger middle class than the former, and the former suffers from high rates of ethnic conflict compared to the latter. These differences in socioeconomic culture and distribution inherently make the Guatemalan population more likely to tolerate unpredictable attacks, especially considering the state's prolonged history of violent conflict, which I address in Chapter Three. I specifically choose Guatemala and Argentina because they are the most dissimilar out of all countries in Latin America undergoing a guerrilla insurgency within my time frame. If a pattern persists in both of these cases, I am better able to generalize my findings to the region as a whole.

I compare the successful FSLN with the unsuccessful ERP and FAR in order to draw conclusions as to why the former succeeded and not the latter two. If I did not do a

⁴² Edward L. Glaeser, Rafael Di Tella, Lucas Llach, Introduction to Argentine Exceptionalism, (*Latin American Economic Review*, September 25, 2017), https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/LAER%20Introduction%20to%20Argentine%20Exceptionalism_3c49e7ee-4f31-49a0-ba21-6e2b726cd7c5.pdf.

⁴³ Reuters Staff, *FACTBOX: Political and General Facts About Guatemala*, (Reuters, September 9, 2007), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-guatemala-election-facts/factbox-political-and-general-facts-about-guatemala-idUSN0924100820070909>.

longitudinal comparative analysis, I would lose the ability to contrast the strategic differences that might have led to the Sandinistas' success. While Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador, Colombia, and Peru⁴⁴ experienced insurgencies during my time frame, I limit my study to the cases that (1) are well-documented enough to conduct in-depth analysis, (2) and the cases that provide the most representative sample, given time limitations.⁴⁵

I conduct within-case analysis in order to reduce the risk of inferential errors that arise from using comparative methods alone,⁴⁶ and employ the process-tracing method in order to identify the intervening causal processes between the outcome of insurgencies, guerrilla tactics employed, and the national context in which the insurgencies take place.⁴⁷ One would expect a comparative study to examine cases in which nations share relatively common historical backgrounds, have similar political systems and social structures. I choose these particular cases of Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua because they provide enough variation in their historical backgrounds, political systems, and social structures, to represent country-to-country discrepancies within Latin America. Thus, I draw from geographically, culturally, and historically representative samples in order to achieve that balance.

⁴⁴ Richard Weitz, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Latin America, 1960-1980*, (Political Science Quarterly, 1983), 397.

⁴⁵ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Cornell University Press, 1997), 55.

⁴⁶ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, (MIT Press, 2005), ix.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

TIME FRAME

My study focuses on the continuity of cases between January, 1960 and November, 1990 because the time period saw a substantial number of insurgencies of which the preferred strategy was guerrilla warfare. Additionally, centering my study around Latin America in the early 60s to early 90s provides a more controlled environment for my study, seeing that the countries in the region succumbed to similar regional forces, such as U.S. meddling in their internal affairs.⁴⁸ In the third decade of the 21st century, guerrilla insurgency is at its most intense period since the 1990s, specifically in the Middle East and the broader Middle Eastern region. Prominent examples of devastating guerrilla insurgencies in the contemporary period include the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Houthis in Yemen, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in Syria. Utilizing historical cases for my analysis allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the present, given the information and security limitations of studying contemporary insurgents.

Latin America during this period also experienced the most intense post-1945 insurgency and counterinsurgency waves, influenced by the success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959.⁴⁹ If an insurgency succeeded under the harsh circumstances in Latin America during this period, it is all the more useful to draw implications from it. As Lipson demonstrates, “the hardest cases are those where your argument seems least likely to apply.”⁵⁰ A study of insurgency during the 60s and 90s, when counterinsurgencies

⁴⁸ Joseph S. Tulchin, *The United States and Latin America in the 1960s*, (Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs, Spring, 1988), 2.

⁴⁹ Matt D. Childs, *An Historical Critique of the Emergence and Evolution of Ernesto Che Guevara's Foco Theory*, (Journal of Latin American Studies, October, 1995), 595.

⁵⁰ Charles Lipson, *How to Write a BA Thesis*, (University of Chicago Press, 2018), 103.

against left-leaning groups were violently cracked down upon, is inherently biased against my study, with only one success. If guerrilla warfare in insurgency succeeds here, then it is likely to succeed in other circumstances. Similarly, if the National Context Framework is useful here, it is likely to be informative for easier cases.

SOURCES

I use a number of different sources to trace insurgents' guerrilla tactic decision making in order to understand how their responsiveness to the national context affects the insurgency's outcome. I do so by analyzing the arguments for specific guerrilla tactics employed in Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua and assessing them alongside the most objective model of the national context I am able to put together given the availability of sources at the time of these events. The study of primary and secondary sources allows me to analyze the employment of guerrilla warfare "in a historical and social context, by which we refer to the particular actors, relationships, and practices that characterize the situation under study."⁵¹ This allows me to theorize how insurgency groups' perceptions and social realities are constructed. Namely, I use this methodology to show how the result of specific guerrilla tactics are embedded in their alignment with a nation's context by exploring "how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created in the first place and how they are maintained and held in place over time."⁵²

Because my argument hinges on the national history narratives of the insurgents and non-participants alike, I utilize scholarship as my secondary source in order to

⁵¹ Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy, *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, (Sage Publications, June 12, 2002), 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 6.

contextualize guerrilla warfare in insurgency today. Scholarship in sociology and security, specifically, trace the development of insurgency movements since their origins. I then use primary sources such as declassified government documents, publications by insurgency groups, the websites of foreign publications, and personal interviews with experts in order to trace the development of guerrilla tactic transformations in insurgency.

SCHOLARSHIP

I weigh scholarship, particularly books, reports, and articles that recount the realities of Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua during the time of their respective insurgencies. In addition, I draw from books such as *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Making of an Imperial Republic*,⁵³ and *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation*,⁵⁴ and research articles from the Latin American Economic Review and the Hispanic American Historical Review. Examining scholars' compilations of facts enables me to build my model of the national context for each state.

NEWSPAPERS, INSURGENT PUBLICATIONS

I examine newspaper reports and insurgent publications to supplement the scholarship as they provide timely updates of each insurgency's on-the-ground actions as well as insurgents' thought processes and ensuing shifts in domestic and international opinion. For the EGP in Guatemala, I triangulate the scholarly literature with the

⁵³ Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Making of an Imperial Republic*, (Picador USA, March 2, 2021).

⁵⁴ Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation*, (Duke University Press, March 15, 2000).

newspapers Prensa Libre, La Hora Guatemala, and with *Compañero*⁵⁵, the insurgents' magazine. Likewise, I examine the Clarín and La Nación— the most widely circulated newspapers at the time in Argentina, in conjunction with advertisements by the FAR in publications such as Cristianismo y Religión. For the FSLN in Nicaragua, I utilize the online engine Prensa Escrita⁵⁶ which possesses all Nicaraguan newspapers in my time frame, and with the Sandinista Resistance Publications.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

I conduct personal interviews with experts and activists including Matéo Jarquín, Harry Ingham, Ambassador Francisco Villagrán, Martín Rodríguez Pellecer, and ex-Commander Gustavo Meoño in order to draw from their personal accounts and knowledge of the FSLN, the FAR, and the EGP, respectively.

LIMITATIONS

Insurgent capacity is multidimensional and involves a multitude of actors involved in the movement's organization, on the ground actions, resource mobilization, counterinsurgency logistical planning and execution, and intelligence. The complexity of insurgencies limits me in four ways. First, it is difficult to reach individuals involved in some of the cases I study, many of whom are either deceased, have disappeared or gone into hiding, or are currently imprisoned. This thesis attempts to make up for this technical

⁵⁵ *Compañero: the international magazine of Guatemala's Guerilla Army of the Poor, EGP*, (Solidarity Publications, 1985), <https://www.worldcat.org/title/companero-the-international-magazine-of-guatemalas-guerrilla-army-of-the-poor-egp/oclc/948067714>.

⁵⁶ Prensa Escrita: Todos los periódicos diarios, (2021), <https://www.prensaescrita.com/america/nicaragua.php>.

limitation by collecting and analyzing a wide range of primary and secondary sources, such as those previously exemplified.

Additionally, due to time constraints, I am unable to follow the plethora of actors involved in insurgency, especially due to the classified nature of some of the archival records. There are numerous political and non-state actors involved in the insurgency and counterinsurgency processes; it is outside of the scope of this thesis to understand how each is implicated in the outcome of insurgency. My thesis attempts to make up for this limitation by closely following the dominant participants in the Guatemalan, Argentine, and Nicaraguan insurgency movements over their time-spans in order to best understand prevalent trends in the employment of guerrilla warfare. Namely, I follow prominent insurgency leaders and take the state apparatus as a whole to be one actor.

Finally, my travel is restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to counter the absence of attainable archival records and non-electronic evidence located in other nations, I personally interview actors that were directly or indirectly involved in one of the three guerrilla insurgencies.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Two (“What is Insurgency and Guerrilla?”) evaluates and critiques the existing scholarship on insurgency and guerrilla warfare in order to show the gap in current knowledge. Chapters Three (“A Classic Foco Theory Approach— The EGP’s Failed Insurgency”) and Four (“The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias— Contextual Misalignment”) explains the tactical challenges faced by the Guerrilla Army of the Poor and the Revolutionary Armed Forces, given their national contexts and challenges at

promoting tangible support for their respective insurgencies. Chapter Five (“La Fuente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional— Success Through Alignment”) examines the only successful insurgency in this period through its use of guerrilla force within its national context (henceforth, the “FSLN” or the “Sandinistas”). I compare and contrast the three cases to factor out what led to the success of the Sandinista movement. Chapter Six (“The Guerrilla Insurgency Dilemma”) concludes by drawing implications for understanding guerrilla insurgencies today and for future foreign policy decision-making practices.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT IS INSURGENCY AND GUERRILLA?

This chapter addresses the key components of insurgency, guerrilla warfare, and the well-documented factors that affect a guerrilla insurgency's outcome. For the purpose of this paper, I pay special attention to the emergence, development, and concepts of Foco Theory, which played an influential role in the development of guerrilla insurgency in Latin America between the 60s and 90s. I then explain why Foco Theory became as popular a strategy in Latin America as it did. The revolutionary doctrine was applied to different extents by guerrilla insurgents in the cases of the Ejército Guerrillero de Los Pobres (EGP) in Guatemala, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) in Argentina, and the Fuente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) in Nicaragua.

Insurgency has traditionally been defined in terms of a government and an out-group— an opponent of government forces that utilizes both political resources and violence in order to “change, reformulate, or uphold the legitimacy” of several key aspects of politics.⁵⁷ These include (1) the integrity of the borders and composition of the nation state, (2) the political system, (3) the authorities of power, or (4) the policies that determine who gets what in societies.⁵⁸ The lack of popular representation by the state causes frustration among the population or a specific group within it, which perceives no

⁵⁷ Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerilla Warfare*, (Potomac Books, 2002), viii.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

other means to drive change other than armed organization. In other words, insurgency occurs when the masses, and oftentimes the political elite, are only capable of registering their grievances “through means other than legitimate political structures.”⁵⁹ Guerrillas as defined by Che Guevara are “the fighting vanguard of the people,” stationed in a specified place in a certain area, armed and prepared to carry out warlike actions for the one possible strategic end— the seizure of power. They seek the support of the worker and peasant masses of the region and of the whole territory in which they operate.⁶⁰ While Che Guevara’s definition of guerrilla warfare stems from its successful use during the Cuban Revolution, the employment of guerrilla warfare itself does not need the support of the population. The FAR guerrilla insurgency, where domestic support was split or lacking, respectively, is an example of a guerrilla group that does not fall under Guevara’s definition.

This chapter shows how the ways in which scholars have defined the outcome of guerrilla insurgency— particularly Che Guevara and Régis Debray— are typically structured to emphasize the factors required for its success. Most current arguments for the outcome of guerrilla insurgency, for example, examine domestic and international opinion, resource mobilization, and the level of nationalism⁶¹ (to name a few), in influencing the likelihood of success. Despite significant contributions made to our understanding by these three bodies of literature, they fail to give a coherent

⁵⁹ Gabriel A. Almond, G. Bingham Powell, *An Analytic Study: Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*, (Boston: Little-Brown, 1966), (page to be determined, taken from another source as citation).

⁶⁰ Ernesto “Che” Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare*, (Faculty Chass NCSU, 1961), <https://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/slatta/hi216/documents/che.htm>.

⁶¹ Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism from Revolution to Apocalypse*, (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2011), 160.

understanding as to how a specific guerrilla strategy, within a specific national context, affects a guerrilla insurgency's likelihood of success. Specifically, the existing paradigms do not consider the conditions under which guerrilla groups may accurately perceive the national context, which has consequently been inefficient in explaining the processes that lead to successful insurgency. I first synthesize these dimensions of insurgency into two levels as well as explain the shortcomings of each. I then explain, analyze, and critique Che Guevara's Foco Theory, and explain the need for my approach for the specific processes that lead to specific insurgency outcomes.

TWO INSURGENCY APPROACHES

There exists a wide array of literature by prominent scholars who argue that the success of social movement organizations (SMOs), and as a subcategory, of insurgencies themselves, depends on the insurgent group's ability to mobilize its resources.⁶² Many scholars also demonstrate the link between domestic and international opinion of the insurgency and its success.⁶³ Relatively fewer scholars have emphasized the country's political and social structure's role in an insurgency's efficacy.⁶⁴ This particular group discusses the value of a favorable domestic environment by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the responding government, as well as the population's breakdown of

⁶² Craig J. Jenkins, *Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements*, (Annual Review of Sociology, 1983), <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev.so.09.080183.002523>; John, D. McCarthy, and N. Zald Mayer, *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*, (American Journal of Sociology, The University of Chicago Press).

⁶³ Paul K. Davis, Eric V. Larson, Zachary Haldeman, Mustafa Oguz, Yashodhara Rana, *Understanding and Influencing Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism*, (Rand Corporation Santa Monica, 2012); Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism to Apocalypse*, (Washington D.C. Potomac Books, 2011).

⁶⁴ Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Exploring Revolution: Essays on Latin American Insurgency and Revolutionary Theory*, (Routledge, 1991).

preferences. Very few scholars attempt to link the use of guerrilla force to insurgencies through the intermingling of guerrilla strategy and tactics and the national context.⁶⁵ While revolutionary leaders Mao Zedong and Che Guevara have written extensively about the conditions needed for the effective utilization of guerrilla force in insurgency, they mostly draw from their own experiences in specific environments which, at that point in time, proved favorable to conducting guerrilla warfare, namely China and Cuba, potentially overlooking nation-specific conditions.⁶⁶ Aaron M. Young and David H. Gray do find evidence that the way in which guerrilla warfare is executed could be a substantial contributing factor in some cases, but the multidimensional relationship between guerrilla strategy and the national context remains unclear.⁶⁷

PUBLIC OPINION AS THE MAIN DRIVER

Experts tend to emphasize that guerrilla insurgency success stems from insurgent leaders' ability to drive public opinion and incite civilian support, given that civilians and foreign donors are insurgent groups' main source of funding and momentum.⁶⁸ As military historian Max Boot argues, "the biggest change of all has been the rise of the

⁶⁵ Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014).

⁶⁶ Mao, Zedong, *On Guerilla Warfare, on Protracted War, and Other Military Writings*, (New York, NY: CN Times Books, Inc., 2013); Che Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare: A Method*, (Victoria, British Columbia: Camas Books, 2018).

⁶⁷ Aaron M. Young, David H. Gray, *Insurgency, Guerilla Warfare and Terrorism: Conflict and its Application for the Future*, (Global Security Studies, Spring 2011), <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Insurgency%2C-Guerilla-Warfare-and-Terrorism%3A-and-its-Youn-g-Vt/9bb5873ca7235c16c5348cd739e1176adb35f156>.

⁶⁸ Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014).

three Ps: politics, propaganda, and public opinion.”⁶⁹ While Bard O’Neill describes nationalism as “continuing to play a part in galvanizing popular support for many insurgency movements,” Aaron M. Young and David H. Gray posit that successful insurgent action comes “not from the proletariat, but from the bourgeois class” which is better equipped at galvanizing support.⁷⁰ Some scholars have also emphasized the need for insurgencies to acquire international support, especially those of legitimate states.⁷¹ Despite disagreement on how best to foster popular support, there is a general consensus that public opinion is crucial to the success of guerrilla insurgency in the post-World War II world.

The real issue is not whether popular support factors into an insurgency’s gains, but rather how insurgent groups obtain widespread support. By synthesizing the following bodies of literature, we can hypothesize that successful insurgency occurs in a specific national context—in which the insurgent group is able to mobilize resources in a manner that furthers popular support for the movement, which circles back to further enable insurgents to mobilize through increased funding and momentum. However, the efficacy of guerrilla force, one of the most commonly used tools of insurgency, in achieving resource mobilization and inciting popular support (both domestic and international), given the population’s willingness to fight, social and political preferences,

⁶⁹ Max Boot, *Invisible Armies*, (Pritzker Military Museum & Library, March 25, 2013), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_0tPNRKAUU.

⁷⁰ Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism from Revolution to Apocalypse*, (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2011), 170; Aaron M. Young, David H. Gray, *Insurgency, Guerilla Warfare and Terrorism: Conflict and its Application for the Future*, (Global Security Studies, Spring 2011), 62, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Insurgency%2C-Guerilla-Warfare-and-Terrorism%3A-and-its-Youn-g-Vt/9bb5873ca7235c16c5348cd739e1176adb35f156>.

⁷¹ Daniel Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, David Brannan, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, (Rand Corporation, 2001).

and the legitimate state's strengths and weaknesses, remains unclear. Before delving into Foco Theory, the constant strategy adopted by guerrilla insurgent groups in Latin America post-1959, I analyze the value of Resource Mobilization Theory for the success of guerrilla insurgencies.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION (RM) THEORY

Developed in the 1970s, resource mobilization scholars sought to understand “how rational and often marginalized social actors mobilized effectively to pursue their desired social change goals.”⁷² The sociological work by Ward Edwards, John D. McCarthy, and a number of others helped develop a framework coined RM Theory. This school of thought posits that a key factor driving Social Movement Organizations, or SMOs' success is the revolutionary or insurgent leader's ability to put “people's money, energy, time, and other material contributions, at the service of the movement's goals.”⁷³ Emphasizing the social movement's key figure as the driving force behind its success, RM moves away from sociologists' tendency to assume a close link between “the frustrations or grievances of a collectivity of actors and the growth and decline of movement activity.”⁷⁴ The three most influential approaches to linking movement activity to discontent are those of Gurr, Turner and Killiam, and Smelser.⁷⁵ The movement's

⁷² Bob Edwards and Patrick F. Gillham, *Resource Mobilization Theory*, (Wiley Online Library, American Cancer Society, January 14, 2013), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9780470674871.wbespm447>.

⁷³ J. Craig Jenkins, *Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements*, (Annual Review of Sociology, 1983), 528.

⁷⁴ John, D. McCarthy, and N. Zald Mayer, *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*, (American Journal of Sociology, 1977), 1212.

⁷⁵ John, D. McCarthy, and N. Zald Mayer, *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*, (American Journal of Sociology, 1977), 1212.

logistical capacity, as RM theory demonstrates, outweighs the effects of the specific type of grievance on the movement's advances.

RM scholars tend to emphasize the role of the movement's leaders in facilitating resource mobilization. However, a close and careful examination suggests that this is insufficient for an understanding of the mechanisms through which the movement (in our case the guerrilla insurgency) gathers the means to mobilize. A body of literature refuting RM theory engages the strengths and weaknesses of various regimes, as well as peasant culture and social structure, concluding that these three factors' alignment steer the acquisition of insurgent movements' goals, less so resource mobilization.⁷⁶ The emphasis here is placed on the socio-political environment in which the movement evolves.

In the case of guerrilla insurgency, however, one must account for the efficacy of specific guerrilla strategy in fostering the means to mobilize. For example, Foco Theory is specifically tailored after the Cuban model of guerrilla insurgency—the strategy thus might not work in another country, as was the case with the EGP. The leaders' ability to maneuver their environment depends not only on their level of resource mobilization, but also on the national context in which they conduct guerrilla warfare. An insurgent group may excel in developing a network of mobilization in one country by means of guerrilla warfare. Placing an effective urban guerrilla group in an environment favorable to rural guerrilla insurgency, or vice versa, may produce a failed outcome, much like placing a group unable to mobilize its resources in a different socio-economic context may enable it to succeed. RM Theory raises a more complex question about how a guerrilla insurgent

⁷⁶ J. Craig Jenkins, *Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements*, (Annual Review of Sociology, 1983).

group's resource mobilization capacity is affected by the group's decision making based on its perceptions of the national context.

THE ORIGINS OF GUERRILLA WARFARE

The term guerrilla— Spanish for “little war” — originated during the Peninsular War in the early 19th century between the Spanish and French, after the defeat of Spain's regular army.⁷⁷ The term initially referred to the Spanish civilians and non-belligerents that rose up to defend Spain against French occupying forces. However, the practice of guerrilla warfare itself dates back to antiquity; the first actual guerrilla war is unknown, though scholars assume that what is now defined as a guerrilla conflict may have been the first form of war altogether.⁷⁸ The first reported case of guerrilla warfare dates back to biblical times with the Israeli conquest of Canaan, which involved the harassment and ambush of the enemy.⁷⁹ About a century later, the second case of guerrilla war was led by the Jewish Zealot sect in resistance to Roman rule, climaxing with the seizure of Masada, an ancient fortification in the Southern District of Israel, and with the successful massacre of the Roman garrison there in 66 AD.⁸⁰ The practice of guerrilla warfare has existed since the start of interactions between different civilizations. But how has guerrilla war evolved throughout time? More importantly, what is the place of modern guerrilla

⁷⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, *Guerrilla Warfare* (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 2002), p.1.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

insurgency in Latin America in this historical process? Is Foco Theory a continuation of ancient war practices, or does it deviate from it in a theoretically innovative way? Is there really one framework that can be applied everywhere? These questions are essential to answer for the purpose of placing the strategies of the EGP, the FAR, and the FSLN into their historical context. We cannot understand the utilization of Foco Theory in the three scenarios unless we contextualize what it means as a breakaway from previous guerrilla strategies. In order to answer these questions, I briefly trace guerrilla-like warfare throughout history, paying particular attention to its development in the Western World, where it was first coined, and in the New World, or present Latin America, until the 1960s.

The first guerrilla-like warfare mentioned in European history appeared in the 12th century, when Norman invaders were fiercely fought back by the Welsh.⁸¹ Though understudied, peasant revolts throughout Europe were also frequently characterized by guerrilla tactics such as ambushing and raiding enemy convoys.⁸² Guerrilla actions thus played major roles in nationalist uprisings,⁸³ and guerrilla groups today continue to use nationalism to foment popular support, as discussed earlier in this chapter.⁸⁴ The most notable examples of the intermingling between guerrilla tactics and nationalism was the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829) and Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi's efforts to unify Italy in the 1830s and 1840s.⁸⁵ Other classic examples of

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism from Revolution to Apocalypse*, (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2011), 160.

⁸⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, *Guerrilla Warfare* (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 2002).

pre-modern guerrilla warfare include the attacks of the francs-tireurs, a cluster of unofficial military societies in eastern France defending from invading German troops during the Luxembourg Crisis,⁸⁶ the Boer raids against British troops during the South African Wars (1899-1901), and the activities of the Maquis, underground bands who fought German occupying forces in France.⁸⁷ In the Western Hemisphere, guerrilla warfare has featured prominently in states' struggles for independence, with slave revolts against the Portuguese and Dutch in the 17th century and guerrilla-like actions led by South American patriot Simón Bolívar and Mexican revolutionary Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla in their fight against Spanish colonial rule.⁸⁸ Even the American Civil War has instances characterized by guerrilla tactics, namely the ranger raids led by Confederate soldier John Singleton Mosby.⁸⁹

Scholars tend to characterize the Maquis as the last pre-modern guerrilla group. This is because after World War II, the use of the word guerrilla began to extend to guerrilla-like tactics of any insurgency, rebellion, or uprising against an established government.⁹⁰ As stated earlier in this chapter, the modern definition of guerrilla also arose from guerrilla insurgents' increased access to the use of politics, propaganda, and public opinion in order to achieve their movement's goals, which allowed them an

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.2; Nathalie Lodhi, The 1867 Luxembourg Crisis, a play featuring Bismarck and Napoleon III (*Radio Television Luxembourg*, July 5th, 2019), <https://today.rtl.lu/culture/exhibitions-and-history/a/1371951.html>.

⁸⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, *Guerrilla Warfare* (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 2002).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

additional layer of organization and public sway.⁹¹ For example, although Mao Zedong's armies were not guerrilla forces in the traditional sense of solely sticking to ambushes, raids, and other unpredictable forms of attack, they used a combination of guerrilla tactics,⁹² agitation, and propaganda⁹³ until they had accumulated enough support— in terms of both monetary and human resources— to successfully engage the Nationalist armies in pitched battles. As the Foco Theory takes some influence from Zedong's writings on guerrilla warfare, I expand on his approach later in this chapter. Nevertheless, other leaders, such as Ho Chi Minh in his fight against the French government, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara during the Cuban Revolution, and Jules Régis Debray, a prominent French journalist who covered insurgencies throughout his lifetime, have advocated for Mao's approach to insurgency to different extents. The latter three would come to heavily influence the approach to insurgency in Latin America between the 60s and 90s, which I also expand upon later in this chapter. Before I get to the role of Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Jules Régis Debray in guerrilla insurgents' approach in Latin America, it is necessary to outline what purpose guerrilla warfare might serve in insurgency vis-à-vis other forms of combat.

⁹¹ Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014).

⁹² Central Intelligence Agency, *Guerrilla Warfare* (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 2002).

⁹³ Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare* (U.S. Marine Corps, April 5, 1989) p.8.

GUERRILLA WARFARE IN INSURGENCY

According to M. Young and H. Gray, while insurgencies themselves do not inherently utilize guerrilla warfare, its inclusion into the former serves two purposes.⁹⁴ First, the use of guerrilla warfare serves the purpose of demoralizing legitimate counterinsurgency forces when the population perceives that the state is incapable or refuses to represent them.⁹⁵ Second, guerrilla warfare, in conjunction with acts of terrorism such as the assassination of key figures, has the potential to diminish government or state support by the population.⁹⁶ Additionally, “the politicization and promotion of such actions leaves the insurgency with the upper hand due to their position in the population itself,” seeing that a key component of guerrilla warfare is the insurgent group’s ability to shelter itself among civilians.⁹⁷ In other words, the choice to utilize guerrilla warfare and terrorism tends to elicit violent and retaliatory responses by the receiving state, which manifests through violent actions against the civilian population, which then fosters civilian support for the insurgency movement. Furthermore, scholars for the most part agree that the conflict must continue until the movement has recruited and trained enough men and women, and come into possession of enough arms, to build a revolutionary army capable of defeating the state army in open battle.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Aaron M. Young, David H. Gray, *Insurgency, Guerilla Warfare and Terrorism: Conflict and its Application for the Future*, (Global Security Studies, Spring 2011), 62, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Insurgency%2C-Guerilla-Warfare-and-Terrorism%3A-and-its-Young-Vt/9bb5873ca7235c16c5348cd739e1176adb35f156>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerilla Warfare*, (Potomac Books, 2002), 13.

Following the tactical success of violent insurgencies by leaders such as Mao Zedong and Ernesto “Che” Guevara, guerrilla warfare⁹⁹ became the modus operandi of insurgency.¹⁰⁰ Reed M. Wood, Professor of Political Science at the University of Essex, formalized the concept decades later, arguing that violence is a function of insurgent capacity, used as a mobilization tool.¹⁰¹ According to Bard O’Neill, Professor of International Affairs at the National War College, “systemic failures in the areas of economic advancement, cultural and ethnic marginalization, inefficient political bureaucracy, and resource management” have encouraged leaders such as Mao Tse-Tung and Che Guevara to utilize guerrilla tactics during insurgency in order to garner domestic and international attention and support for their cause.¹⁰² Both leaders have extensively written about the set of conditions they consider imperative for the success of guerrilla warfare in insurgency. According to Mao Zedong, the guerrilla must secure at least two of the following conditions before positioning itself in a favorable setting for success. Referring to the initial stages of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Mao contends that:

- the population must actively support the Red Army,
- the terrain must be favorable for operations,
- all the main forces of the Red Army need to be concentrated,

⁹⁹ I use Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s definition of guerillas, “the fighting vanguard of the people, stationed in a specified place in a certain area, armed and prepared to carry out a series of warlike actions for the one possible strategic end - the seizure of power,” from *Ernesto Che Guevara, Guerilla Warfare: A Method*, (Foreign Language Press, 1964), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Aaron M. Young, David H. Gray, *Insurgency, Guerilla Warfare and Terrorism: Conflict and its Application for the Future*, (Global Security Studies, 2011), 68.

¹⁰¹ Reed M. Wood, *Rebel Capability and Strategic Violence Against Civilians*, (Journal of Peace Research, 2010), 601.

¹⁰² Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism from Revolution to Apocalypse*, (Potomac Books, 2011), 1.

- the enemy's weak spots have been discovered,
- the enemy has been reduced to a tired and demoralized state,
- and the enemy has been induced to make mistakes.¹⁰³

I adhere to the general consensus among scholars that guerrilla force is a tool used in insurgency, and insurgency has a long endgame. The tactics used to foster civilian support are not the goal in and of themselves, but rather a method to continue a certain momentum going, which nurtures the movement by prolonging its support. The real endgame is to bring about political change, whether that be a change of majority party in government, increased democratic representation, or access to resources such as food and water. However, while scholars in the field, including practitioners such as Che Guevara and Mao Zedong, tend to emphasize that violence and unpredictable strikes are a means to engendering enough attention and support by the local and international community to either reach a level of training and resourcefulness to seize power from a state, or to bring about international humanitarian intervention, violence and unpredictable strikes have also provoked the opposite response, as discussed in Chapter One. Support, and thus funding and resources insurgents use to mobilize, only persists when local and international actors alike perceive a just cause fought for through acceptable means. This perception directly hinges upon the insurgency's guerrilla strategy.

¹⁰³ Mao Tse-Tung, *The Art of War: Special Edition*, (Foreign Language Press, 2005), 13.

FOCO THEORY

While literature from the nineties points out the uneven focus attributed to the Cuban guerrilla group itself in explaining the success of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, Che Guevara's Foco Theory is a noteworthy piece of the puzzle in deciphering not only the Cuban Revolution's success, but also the outcomes of Latin American guerrilla insurgencies that succeeded it. Both the Cuban Revolution as an event and Cuban President Fidel Castro's policy of exporting and duplicating its success throughout Latin America are often cited as influential factors in the rise of guerrilla movements¹⁰⁴ such as the EGP,¹⁰⁵ the FAR,¹⁰⁶ and the FSLN.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, a better understanding of guerrilla strategy in insurgency, namely in the Latin American context, calls for a comprehensive breakdown of the emergence of Foco Theory, what it is, Che Guevara's incorporations to it, and why it became so attractive in Latin America.

To be precise, Che Guevara did not invent the idea of guerrilla warfare. He instead contributed to the unique approach of making revolution in Cuba through

¹⁰⁴ Richard L. Worsnop, *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America* (CQ Researcher Press, July 19, 1967), <https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrr1967071900>; Directorate of Intelligence: Office of Current Intelligence, *Cuban Subversion in Latin America Since June 1964* (Central Intelligence Agency, January 11, 1965).

¹⁰⁵ Frederick Kiel, *Once-Suppressed Guerrillas Reappearing in Guatemala* (The Washington Post, June 30, 1977), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/06/30/once-suppressed-guerrillas-reappearing-in-guatemala/a3eae82e-ef97-426c-8016-e528eb22b84e/>; Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Guatemala's Retreating in the Face of Government Pressure (Bureau of Intelligence and Research, March 3, 1983).

¹⁰⁶ Ángel Bermúdez, *Cómo fueron las intervenciones armadas impulsadas por Cuba en América Latina*, (BBC News Mundo, Marzo 29, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-47674885>; Carlos Ignacio Custer, *Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) en la Producción Bibliográfica sobre las Organizaciones Armadas Revolucionarias de los Setenta* (Universidad Nacional de General San Martín, Octubre, 2015).

¹⁰⁷ Gary Prevost, *Cuba and Nicaragua: A Special Relationship?* (Latin American Perspectives, Sage Publications, Vol. 17, No. 3, Summer, 1990), pp.120-137; William M. LeoGrande, *The Revolution in Nicaragua: Another Cuba?* (Foreign Affairs, Fall 1979).

guerrilla warfare.¹⁰⁸ One of Che's principal theoretical contributions from his leadership in the Cuban Revolution is the term *Foco Theory* or *Foquismo*, which he coins and details in his book *Guerrilla Warfare*, originally published in 1961.¹⁰⁹ Foquismo as an approach to revolution has two interconnected roots, which I describe in detail in the following section. The first is the realities of the Cuban Revolution itself, which directly contribute three fundamental tenets to Che's Foquismo. The second is Che's own interpretations of the Cuban Revolution—realities that Che claimed to be present during the Cuban insurgency which were absent in reality.

Originating from the first influential factor, namely the concrete realities of the Cuban revolution, are the following three tenets. First, that the “popular forces,” or the guerrillas, can win a war against the army.¹¹⁰ It is well-reported that Che and Castro's ground forces initially numbered two hundred men who were reduced to eighty-two.¹¹¹ These men proceeded to wipe out an army of about 30,000 professional soldiers.¹¹² The second tenet is that the guerrilla does not ought to wait for the opportune conditions for revolution— the insurrection itself can create them.¹¹³ Che likely referred to Castro's initial attempts at deposing Fulgencio Batista in an unsuccessful raid on a Santiago army

¹⁰⁸ Rachel May, *Theories and Experiences of Guerrilla Warfare across the Americas* (Oxford University Press, March 26, 2019), <https://oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-688>.

¹⁰⁹ Marco Antonio Gutiérrez Martínez, *El Che: foquismo y la guerrilla* (V Coloquio de Historia Bélica Universal, Facultad de Humanidades, Mayo 22, 2018), p.3.

¹¹⁰ Ernesto “Che” Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (Foreign Languages Press Peking, 1964).

¹¹¹ Larry James Bockman, *The Spirit of Moncada: Fidel Castro's Rise To Power, 1953-1959* (Marine Corps Command and Staff College, April 1, 1984), <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1984/BLJ.htm>, p.2.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ernesto “Che” Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (Foreign Languages Press Peking, 1964), p.2.

barracks in 1953.¹¹⁴ Castro and his brother Raúl Castro were immediately arrested and imprisoned, receiving amnesty and released in 1955.¹¹⁵ Clearly, favorable conditions were not present at the time of Castro's first attack. However, the event incited support by a large part of the Mexican population and informally by the Mexican government.¹¹⁶ Mexico proceeded to become a safe haven for the Castros, where they began to organize an invading force of Cuban exiles which would later foster the domestic support necessary for the success of the Cuban Revolution.¹¹⁷ Hence, in the case of Cuba, the insurgency itself created the necessary conditions.

The third tenet related to the events of the Cuban Revolution is that the main battleground, specifically in underdeveloped parts of Latin America, should be the countryside.¹¹⁸ Arguably one of the clearest lessons Che learned from the Cuban Revolution, the tenet reflects the approach by which the successful part of the insurgency began. The small band of 82 guerrilleros began their guerrilla campaign against Batista in the Sierra Maestra mountains, located in southeastern Cuba.¹¹⁹ Named the 26th of July Movement to memorialize the 1953 attack, the revolution continued into 1958 with sporadic raids, kidnappings of U.S. citizens and army personnel, and most importantly for

¹¹⁴ Jeff Wallenfelt, Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, *The rise of Castro and the outbreak of revolution*, (Britannica), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Cuban-Revolution/The-rise-of-Castro-and-the-outbreak-of-revolution>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ernesto "Che" Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (Foreign Languages Press Peking, 1964), p.2.

¹¹⁹ Jeff Wallenfelt, Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, *The rise of Castro and the outbreak of revolution*, (Britannica), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Cuban-Revolution/The-rise-of-Castro-and-the-outbreak-of-revolution>.

our purposes, stalling Batista's military offensives.¹²⁰ Although scholars who describe the insurgency as urban have some validity given rebel control of the provinces of Oriente and Las Villas, the origin of the attacks in fact occurred in rural areas of the nation, as Che argued in *Guerrilla Warfare*.¹²¹ On a similar note, through reading the works of Marxist philosophers such as Carl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, and Leon Trotsky, Che also incorporated the now widely accepted tenet that it is crucial for locals to perceive all forms of legitimate, civic processes as unfeasible for instituting change.¹²²

CONCLUSION

Taken together, a valid question is whether Che's Foco Theory was truly the strategy behind the Cuban Revolution given substantial evidence that suggests the contrary.¹²³ Although I do not tackle this question, the possibility that Foco Theory was never fully implemented adds a second layer of perception fallacy to the EGP, the FAR, and the FSLN's decision making process. The adherence to a theory with an unstable backbone may inherently be the reason for the EGP, the FAR, and the first wave of the Sandinistas' failures. However, the varying degrees of Foquismo implementation serve as starting points for measuring guerrilla insurgents' perceptions of their respective national contexts. This in turn allows for the study of the relationship between the foregoing, popular support, resource mobilization, and the outcome of guerrilla insurgency.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ernesto Guevara, *El libro verde olivo* (Diógenes México, 1970), pp.11-12.

¹²³ This question is not the focus of my thesis. However, this is a question that consistently arose during the development of this work that merits further study.

CHAPTER THREE

A CLASSIC FOCO THEORY

APPROACH—

THE EGP'S FAILED INSURGENCY

Quite literally, the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP) emerged because there was no reform alternative within the Guatemalan government system. A decade before June, 1954, Guatemala began to see the first lights of reform, starting with the democratic election of Juan José Arévalo in 1944.¹²⁴ Arévalo instituted an enormous wave of reforms never before seen in Guatemalan independence leadership history, which had until Arévalo been characterized by a series of authoritarian dictatorships shaped by U.S. interests.¹²⁵ President Jacobo Árbenz followed Arévalo's footsteps following his election in 1950, whereby the former instituted a more coherent and comprehensive reform plan, including the most famous and catastrophic Agrarian Reform Law (ARL), or Decree 900.¹²⁶ Essentially, the ARL redistributed acres of American-owned United Fruit Company (UFC) land to landless indigenous Mayans and Ladinos in order to ease the enormous economic disparity between Guatemalans of Spanish descent and mixed or indigenous Guatemalans. It was the response prompted by the U.S. that would change the core of Guatemala's recently improved government system, and would inevitably give rise to the EGP.

¹²⁴ United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Guatemala, Democracy and Human Rights*, (United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, June 1, 1997), p. 15.

¹²⁵ BBC News, *Guatemala profile - Timeline*, (BBC News, July 29, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19636725>.

¹²⁶ Piero Gleijeses, *The Agrarian Reform of Jacobo Arbenz*, (Journal of Latin American Studies, October, 1989), p. 454.

This chapter expands on the origins and strategies of the EGP within its national context in order to tailor out what actions caused the guerrilla insurgency to fail. The implementation of Foco Theory was successful in that it aligned with the recruitment target's willingness to fight and socio-economic realities, given centuries of repression of the indigenous Mayan population. Nevertheless, government counterinsurgency forces proved a horrific challenge to the insurgency given the targeting of innocent civilians perceived to be EGP sympathizers. The EGP's strategy of classic rural guerrilla warfare involved the recruitment of the most vulnerable population, the indigenous Mayans. Although Foco Theory worked to certain levels, a strategic necessity was the recruitment of political elites given their strong position to influence the state. The main strategic failure of the EGP was triggered by its leaders' flawed perceptions of Guatemalan government counterinsurgency capacity and indigenous Mayans' social realities. The series of Guatemalan leaderships that came after the formation of the EGP would not risk the seizure of power by any means, capable of conducting genocide of more than 200,000 indigenous civilians. The implementation of Foquismo is not a strategy that calls for the recruitment of the political elite and its participation was essential to the prevention of the Guatemalan Genocide. As government forces continued the indiscriminate killings of civilians, the EGP lost support from its local base. With popular support plummeting, the EGP gradually lost the monetary and human resources it needed to succeed in its seizure of power.

THE EGP'S ORIGINS

A couple of factors are mainly responsible for the rise of the EGP. First, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-led overthrow of President Árbenz sparked decades of repression against the Ladino and Mayan population.¹²⁷ The series of U.S.-backed authoritarian dictatorships that followed enacted laws and policies that effectively marginalized the Ladino and Mayan population, increasing economic disparity in the country and severe political underrepresentation of the indigenous community. Second was the support of the Cuban government.¹²⁸ The opportunity to mobilize with the funding, training, and resources provided by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara gave the insurgency a hopeful boost and exponentially enhanced its resource mobilization capabilities.

Eloquently stated by Juan Gonzalez, “the tragedy of modern Guatemala owes its origins to U.S. foreign policy.”¹²⁹ Given that the UFC not only had monopolized banana production by 1954, but also owned 42% of Guatemala’s land,¹³⁰ President Árbenz’s plans to nationalize its unharvested acres infuriated the American company.¹³¹ In just one

¹²⁷ Juan Gonzalez, *June 27, 1954: Elected Guatemalan Leader Overthrown in CIA-Backed Coup*, (Zinn Education Project, 2011), <https://www.zinnproject.org/news/tdih/jacobo-arbenz-guzman-deposed/>, p. 135-137.

¹²⁸ Directorate of Intelligence, Office of Current Intelligence, *Cuban Subversion in Latin America Since June 1964*, (Directorate of Intelligence, Office of Current Intelligence, January 11, 1965), <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/104-10338-10019.pdf>, p.2.

¹²⁹ Juan Gonzalez, *June 27, 1954: Elected Guatemalan Leader Overthrown in CIA-Backed Coup*, (Zinn Education Project, 2011), <https://www.zinnproject.org/news/tdih/jacobo-arbenz-guzman-deposed/>, p. 135-137.

¹³⁰ University of Maryland, *Baltimore County, RS#01: Background on the Guatemalan Coup of 1954*, (University of Maryland, Baltimore County), https://www.umbc.edu/che/tahlessons/pdf/historylabs/Guatemalan_Coup_student:RS01.pdf, p.1.

¹³¹ National Security Council Planning Board, *Effect on National Security Interests in Latin America of Possible Anti-Trust Proceedings*, (Office of the Historian, June 1, 1953), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v04/d45>.

month, the government confiscated a quarter of a million acres of company land for the purpose of distributing it to landless farmers.¹³² To no surprise, the move, along with Árbenz's other land reform policies¹³³ did not sit well with UFC's influential legal representative Sullivan and Cromwell, Allen Dulles' (then-Director of the CIA) former employer and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' current employer.

Decree 900 posed an additional threat to U.S. foreign policy. State Department officials interpreted it as a "potential opening for radicalization of Guatemala."¹³⁴ While Árbenz viewed the ARL as battling poverty and economic disparity in his nation,¹³⁵ the U.S. State Department perceived it in the broader context of the Cold War.¹³⁶ Given that Guatemala possessed great economic interest to the U.S., and that it is located in the Western Hemisphere, U.S. officials perceived a left-wing government in Guatemala as a potential target for influence by the Soviets. The Eisenhower administration began to view Árbenz's policies not just as an economic loss to a powerful U.S. multinational. Rather, the reforms discerned an inordinate shift toward leftist ideology that could allow Communist empowerment in the region. Operation PBSUCCESS, the CIA-led covert

¹³² Nick Cullather, Piero Gleijeses, *The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954*, (Stanford University Press, 2006), p.23.

¹³³ Douglas W. Trefzger, *Guatemala's 1952 Agrarian Reform Law: A Critical Reassessment*, (International Social Science Review, 2002), p.32-46.

¹³⁴ Nick Cullather, *The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954*, (Stanford University Press, 2006), p.23.

¹³⁵ Tiffany Kwader Harbour, *Creating A New Guatemala: The 1952 Agrarian Reform Law*, (Wright State University, 2008),
https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1994&context=etd_all, p.1.

¹³⁶ Stephen M. Streeter, *Interpreting the 1954 U.S. Intervention in Guatemala: Realist, Revisionist, and Postrevisionist Perspectives*, (The History Teacher, November, 2000), p.62.

operation for the deposition of Árbenz, was finalized in June, 1954 with the inauguration of U.S.-friendly President Carlos Castillo Armas.¹³⁷

What ensued were several decades of tumultuous internal unrest, described by Thomas R. Melville, prominent activist of the Guatemalan Genocide as “the U.S. holocaust in Central America.”¹³⁸ The formation of the National Committee for Defense against Communism (CNDCC) in 1954 was the first sign that the Guatemalan population would be targeted following intense encouragement by the U.S Ambassador and the CIA’s Station Chief Assistant.¹³⁹ In the following months, the list of presumed Communist suspects totalled more than 200,000, most of Mayan descent, and especially targeted were those who had received land under Árbenz’s ARL.¹⁴⁰ After several years of U.S.-backed government crackdowns against the Mayan population, a growing number of Ladino Guatemalans— or part indigenous, part Western European Guatemalans— began to organize in the early 1960s according to Che’s Foco Theory, marking the first wave of guerrilla rebels backed by the Cuban government.¹⁴¹

The factors that contributed to the rise of the EGP are important for two reasons. First, they inform Guatemala's national context (as a refresher, the Guatemalan population’s social reality, political preferences, willingness to fight, and the Guatemalan government’s strengths and weaknesses). Second, they allow us to compare these to the

¹³⁷ United Fruit Historical Society, *Carlos Castillo (1914-1957)*, (United Fruit Historical Society, 2001), <https://www.unitedfruit.org/castillo.htm>.

¹³⁸ Thomas R. Melville, *Through a Glass Darkly: The U.S. Holocaust in Central America*, (Thomas R. Melville, 2005), (page tbd)

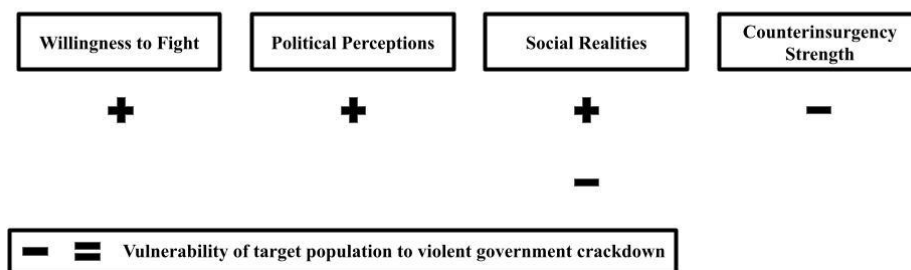
¹³⁹ Thomas R. Melville, *Through a Glass Darkly: The U.S. Holocaust in Central America*, (Thomas R. Melville, 2005), p.273.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Guatemala, Democracy and Human Rights*, (United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, June 1, 1997), p. 15.

EGP's newspaper publications, guerrilla leader accounts, and scholarly work on the EGP. This framework allows me to build as accurate a depiction of the EGP's perceptions of the Guatemalan national context. By doing so, we can conclude whether a dissonance between the national context and the EGP's perception of it played a role in their failure. I find that there is a discrepancy and that it did in fact affect the EGP's chances at success through the failure of several guerrilla tactics they utilized. Neither Rolando Morán's tactical decisions, the EGP's leader, nor Cuba's support efforts aligned with the national context, partly explaining the EGP's failure. As depicted in Figure 3.1, the national context was such that despite the indigenous Mayan community's political perceptions which aligned with the EGP's, as well as their willingness to fight, the U.S.-backed Guatemalan government forces were still capable of conducting genocide. The target population, the Mayan indigenous community, would be the first to be wiped out as perceived sympathizers of the EGP, namely in the Quiche region.

Figure 3.1: The Guatemalan National Context



ADDITIONAL GUERRILLA GROUPS AS THEY INFORM THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The EGP was the penultimate guerrilla group formed in Guatemala. In fact, the Guatemalan Civil War¹⁴² was fought between the government of Guatemala and a series of leftist rebel groups which included El Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (PGT) and Las Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR). I chose the case of the EGP for my study because their approach most closely resembles Foco Theory, yet the EGP appealed most to university students given their more eloquent message in comparison to the PGT and the FAR.¹⁴³ In order to contextualize the environment in which the EGP was formed as well as its development, a brief description of the PGT and the FAR is necessary.

EL PARTIDO GUATEMALTECO DEL TRABAJO (PGT)

The PGT initially emerged as the legitimate Partido Comunista de Guatemala (PCG), the only Marxist-Leninist political party in Guatemala in the late 1940s.¹⁴⁴ Its formation took about a year, between 1947 and 1948.¹⁴⁵ However, when the country began the formation of structures like the Escuela de Formación de Cuadros, a program initiative open to the public in which Marxists texts and topics were studied and

¹⁴² Luis F. Dominguez, *A Brief History of Guatemala's 36-Year-Long Civil War That Ended in 1996* (Homeschool Spanish Academy, June 28, 2021), <https://www.spanish.academy/blog/a-brief-history-of-guatemalas-36-year-long-civil-war-that-ended-in-1996/>.

¹⁴³ See Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), *The Guatemalan Revolution* (Contemporary Marxism, No. 3, Revolution and Intervention in Central America, Summer, 1981); the four articles and documents published here were written by the EGP and provide an in-depth characterization of their ideology.

¹⁴⁴ Ricardo Rosales Román, *Rasgos y características del momento en que se funda el PGT (I)* (Diario La Hora, 20 noviembre, 2019), <https://lahora.gt/rasgos-y-caracteristicas-del-momento-en-que-se-funda-el-pgt-1/>.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

discussed,¹⁴⁶ then-Guatemalan President Arévalo not only shut down the program, but also incarcerated those who attended the meetings.¹⁴⁷

The group continued their organization efforts. The gatherings spanned several months, until the founder of the PCG, Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez, as well as other former leaders of the ousted party, decided for the need of a Marxist-Leninist organization in Guatemala, however it may be.¹⁴⁸ Gutiérrez proceeded to rename the organization the Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo.¹⁴⁹ At this time, he reconsidered the peaceful approach he had originally taken, as Gutiérrez came to believe that there was no other alternative to achieving the goal of the organization through legitimate means. His militants and followers then became integrated into the PGT, and while Gutiérrez himself was assassinated in 1966, the PGT continued to grow.¹⁵⁰ It came to have a presence and organization throughout Guatemala, gaining popular support from farmers and the lower-income classes. The PGT, in conjunction with other Communist groups such as the Confederación General de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CGTG) and the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC), were able to organize openly in the period between 1951 and June, 1954, until they were again pushed underground during Castillo's presidency

¹⁴⁶ Resumen Latinoamericano, *Escuela de Cuadros. Programa de formación política* (Resumen Latinoamericano, 30 enero, 2017), <https://www.resumenlatinoamericano.org/2017/01/30/escuela-de-cuadros-programa-de-formacion-politica/>.

¹⁴⁷ Ricardo Rosales Román, *Rasgos y características del momento en que se funda el PGT (I)* (Diario La Hora, 20 noviembre, 2019), <https://lahora.gt/rasgos-y-caracteristicas-del-momento-en-que-se-funda-el-pgt-1/>.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

and eventually dissipated.¹⁵¹ The PGT, which was renamed the PGT-PC in 1978, and is responsible for setting the initial tone of armed rebellion in Guatemala.¹⁵²

LAS FUERZAS ARMADAS REBELDES (FAR)

The FAR took shape in December 1962 and represented the unification of three tendencies. First, the failure of the Movimiento Rebelde 13 de Noviembre (MR 13-N), the attempted military coup against the government of General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes in 1960, left the junior and senior officers involved unemployed.¹⁵³ Second, the Movimiento 12 de Abril, a broad wave of popular resistance to the Ydígoras regime in 1962 by secondary-school and university students, espoused indignation among the Guatemalan population about its violent crackdown.¹⁵⁴ Third, the PGT had already begun the guerrilla struggle. The guerrilla movement developed rapidly from early 1963 to the end of 1966, though mostly conceived of as “primarily military with a socialist orientation.”¹⁵⁵

During this period, the FAR attempted to create a broader political front like that of the PGT, with no success.¹⁵⁶ Instead, leaders of the FAR consolidated two focos, or guerrilla fronts, in Izabal and Zacapa and embarked on numerous small-scale attacks

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² DBpedia, *About: Guatemalan Party of Labour – Communist Party* (DBpedia, 2022), https://dbpedia.org/page/Guatemalan_Party_of_Labour_%E2%80%93_Communist_Party.

¹⁵³ Gabriel Aguiar Peralta, John Beverly, *Terror and Violence As Weapons of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala* (Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 7, No. 2/3, Central America: The Strongmen are Shaking, Late Spring-Summer, 1980), pp. 93-94.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

designed to repel the Guatemalan patrols which attempted to penetrate the areas they occupied.¹⁵⁷ An urban front, Resistencia, was also set up in Guatemala City. Between 1963 and 1966, the FAR's military activity also consisted of a number of offensive operations, namely the ambush and annihilation of an army column in San Zapote and Zacapa, among others.¹⁵⁸ The kidnappings of three government officials in May 1966 promulgated a sense in mass media that the guerrilla group was even close to seizing power.¹⁵⁹ Although the FAR continued to maintain some level of activity during the 1970s, it played a secondary role to other forms of mass struggle such as the October Days of 1978— a series of mass mobilizations predominantly in the capital to prevent a rise in transportation fares.¹⁶⁰ The rise and decline of the FAR strengthened future EGP leaders' perceptions that 1) a popular movement utilizing guerrilla warfare had the potential to successfully occupy areas in the countryside and 2) that the momentum built by both the PGT and the FAR could be utilized to recruit indigenous Mayans for its own insurgency.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp.95-96.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.; for more on the kidnappings, see Gabriel Aguiar Peralta, John Beverly, *Terror and Violence As Weapons of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala* (Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 7, No. 2/3, Central America: The Strongmen are Shaking, Late Spring-Summer, 1980), p.96.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.101.

**PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE GUATEMALAN CITIZENRY AND
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY
THE GUATEMALAN CITIZENRY**

As previously noted, the Mayan population in the western highlands was the main target of the CNDCC's campaigns seeking to eliminate any potential source of social support for leftist guerrillas in the late 1970s and 1980s.¹⁶¹ Guatemalan politics continued to be dominated by non-indigenous Guatemalans, who pushed for their bourgeoisie interests, for the most part aligned with U.S. interests in the state. Yet indigenous movements at the time of the EGP did not reach significant levels of political cohesion or mobilization.¹⁶²

Perhaps those targeted by the CNDCC campaigns did not make up a large enough proportion of the Guatemalan population to reach the level of public support needed for the guerrilla insurgency to be able to mobilize its monetary and human resources effectively. In fact, those directly affected by the initial wave of killings only constituted about 17.5% of the population in 1954.¹⁶³ However, this number continuously rose until the early 1990s,¹⁶⁴ signaling that public trust of authoritarian regimes such as Castillo's and those that came after him continued to decline. Public support for the Guatemalan government continued to tail off as more of the individuals who were not directly

¹⁶¹ Dinorah Azpuru, *Perceptions of Democracy in Guatemala: An Ethnic Divide?*, (Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 2009), p. 109.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ I calculated the percentage of people directly affected by the initial wave of CNDCC killings by dividing the Guatemalan population in 1954 (taken from Population Pyramid, *Guatemala 1954*, [Population Pyramid, 2019], <https://www.populationpyramid.net/guatemala/1954/>.) by the number of individuals on the government communist blacklist in 1954 (taken from Thomas R. Melville, *Through a Glass Darkly: The U.S. Holocaust in Central America*, [Thomas R. Melville, 2005], p.273.)

¹⁶⁴ Population Pyramid, *Guatemala (1954-1992)*, (Population Pyramid, 2019).

targeted increasingly suffered from racism, state oppression, and violence as a spillover effect, such as the Ladino population.¹⁶⁵ In other words, if the EGP did not succeed in its mission to establish a more egalitarian government, this could not have been attributed to a lack of internal support for the EGP's mission.

What we are left with are two factors that have yet to be analyzed. The first is international support for the guerrilla insurgency, which in this case constituted the Cuban government's support. The second are the guerrilla tactics utilized by the EGP, which would affect the way in which the Guatemalan population perceived the group. Despite consensus surrounding people's aspirations for government change, reforms, a democratic electoral system, and an end to the Guatemalan Civil War (or Guatemalan Genocide),¹⁶⁶ the EGP may have lost support due to a rejection of the practices it used to achieve its goal.

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND CUBAN SUPPORT OF THE EGP

In order to understand the strength of international assistance to the EGP, a brief background on Cuba's relationship to guerrilla warfare is necessary. In the years prior to 1959, Cuba underwent a guerrilla insurgency of its own.¹⁶⁷ The present explanation for the guerrilla uprising is that Cuba, previously a semi-colonialist society, "was so severely exploited by U.S. and Cuban capitalists that the condition of the working class eventually

¹⁶⁵ PBS, *Timeline: Guatemala's Brutal Civil War* (PBS, March 7th, 2022), https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/latin_america-jan-june11-timeline_03-07.

¹⁶⁶ Cultural Survival, *The Guatemalan Indian Civil Rights Movement*, (Cultural Survival, March 1st, 1983), <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/guatemalan-indian-civil-rights-movement>.

¹⁶⁷ Aviva Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015).

became intolerable,”¹⁶⁸ and tensions were especially whet under Fulgencio Batista’s presidency from 1952 to 1958.¹⁶⁹ Cuba was a poor country in many respects.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, it was one of the richer countries in Latin America, with a per capita salary of \$341 at its highest. A small wage, but considered to be high for Latin America.¹⁷¹

Among the many tactics that appear to correlate with Fidel Castro’s successful seizure of political power are:

1. “the undermining of the moral authority of the regime of Fulgencio Batista,
2. the exploitation of the charismatic qualities of Castro’s style of leadership,
3. the attraction of support among the peasantry,
4. the initial retention of middle-class adherents,
5. the application of the military doctrines of guerrilla warfare,
6. and the neutralization of the power of the United States.”¹⁷²

However, Castro’s pursuit of power principally assumed the form of guerrilla warfare, where he allocated major shares of his and his supporters’ resources to a sustained campaign of this unconventional form of warfare.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Hugh Thomas, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution*, (The World Today, October, 1963), p. 449.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Merle Kling, *Cuba: A Case Study of a Successful Attempt to Seize Political Power by the Application of Unconventional Warfare*, (The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, May, 1962), p. 42.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 42-43.

That being said, there is yet another factor that proved to be influential in Castro's decision to support the EGP: Che's involvement in the ousting of Batista from the Cuban presidency in January, 1959.¹⁷⁴ Guevara's Marxist thinking acquired the depth he would later be famous for in Guatemala.¹⁷⁵ During his travels across Central America, Che noticed that the reformist policies instituted by Arévalo and Árbenz between 1944 to 1954 signified a democratic shift away from the country's previous repressive, U.S.-backed authoritarian regimes.¹⁷⁶ A growing number of the rural, landless peasants in Guatemala continued to benefit from them. In addition to his personal accounts,¹⁷⁷ Che noted the massive number of Mayans and Ladinos who showed up to vote for Árbenz,¹⁷⁸ cementing his anti-imperialist views.¹⁷⁹ These views traveled with him to Cuba, as well as his thoughts on how to go about the deposition of an authoritarian dictator given his first-hand experience of Árbenz's overthrow.¹⁸⁰ The reason Cuba supported the EGP was not only because of Havana's goal to expand its influence vis-à-vis U.S. imperialist

¹⁷⁴ American Experience, *Che Guevara (1928-1967)*, (American Experience, 2022), <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americalexperience/features/castro-che-guevara-1928-1967/>.

¹⁷⁵ David T. Rowlands, *Guatemala: The coup that radicalized Che Guevara*, (American University, May 30, 2014), <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/guatemala-coup-radicalised-che-guevara>.

¹⁷⁶ Billy Perrigo, *The devastating effects of American intervention in Guatemala*, (The Panoptic, November 16, 2016), <https://thepanoptic.co.uk/2016/11/19/american-intervention-guatemala/>.

¹⁷⁷ Ernesto Che Guevara, *The Motorcycle Diaries: Notes on a Latin American Journey*, (Ocean Press, 1992).

¹⁷⁸ Zinn Education Project, June 27, 1954: *Elected Guatemalan Leader Overthrown in CIA-Backed Coup*, (Zinn Education Project, June 29th, 2021), <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/jacobo-arbenz-guzman-deposed/>.

¹⁷⁹ Ernesto Che Guevara, *The Motorcycle Diaries: Notes on a Latin American Journey*, (Ocean Press, 1992).

¹⁸⁰ Guevara, Che. *Guerilla Warfare: A Method*. Victoria, British Columbia: Camas Books, 2018.

tendencies, but also because the EGP embodied Fidel Castro's revolutionary ideals and sought to achieve them strictly through Che's Foco Theory.¹⁸¹

THE EGP AND FOCO THEORY— A CLASSIC APPROACH

As mentioned earlier, Foco Theory is essentially a revolutionary Marxist doctrine whereby guerrilla groups "can themselves create the necessary conditions for revolution through their vanguard actions and moral example."¹⁸² In the case of the Cuban Revolution, these vanguard actions consisted of unpredictable strikes and the occupation of rural areas. The EGP's guerrilla strategy can be characterized as the closest implementation of Foco Theory out of the three most significant guerrilla groups at the time (the EGP, the FAR, and the PGT) and was the largest of the political-military organizations.¹⁸³ The organization has also been distinguished militarily by its capacity to fend off attacks of a significant scale. For example, the counterinsurgency attacks on the occupied military airfield in Escuintla, the oil camp Rubelsanto in Alta Verapaz, and the town of Palin in Escuintla were all successfully repelled by the EGP.¹⁸⁴ The EGP also had the ability to mobilize large contingents acting in very distant regions of the country, such as in the eastern and western regions, the southern coast, and Guatemala City.¹⁸⁵ In this

¹⁸¹ Matt D. Childs, *An Historical Critique of the Emergence and Evolution of Ernesto Che Guevara's Foco Theory*, (Journal of Latin American Studies, October, 1995), p.593.

¹⁸² Massline, *Dictionary of Revolutionary Marxism*, (Massline), <http://www.massline.org/Dictionary/FO.htm>.

¹⁸³ Jared S. Bibler, *The Ideological Underpinnings of the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms* (Center for International Studies, Ohio University, March, 2007), p. 28.

¹⁸⁴ Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, John Beverly, *Terror and Violence As Weapons of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala* (Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 7, No. 2/3, Central America: The Strongmen are Shaking, Late Spring-Summer, 1980), p.101.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

section, I tackle the questions: How did the EGP become the most powerful guerrilla force in Guatemala despite being the penultimate organization formed of its kind? What aspects of Foco Theory did they incorporate into their strategy, and how did they deviate from its principles? How did its strategy lead to the EGP's demise?

The EGP was founded by former members of the FAR who became critical of both the FAR and PGT's tactics and ideological views.¹⁸⁶ They arrived at El Quiche in 1972 to establish a new guerrilla nucleus outside of Guatemala City, coming to the realization that the indigenous majority would need to play an important role in the movement were they to win the struggle.¹⁸⁷ Interestingly, the group effectively obtained a large indigenous support base in El Quiche through their engagement in liberation theology (LT),¹⁸⁸ offering Christianity as a tool towards a more perfect society and the indigenous community's liberation from then President Kjell Eugenio Laugerud García.¹⁸⁹ Along with their focus on indigenous Guatemalans in isolated countryside villages— a principle influenced by Foco Theory— the group ensured that, through LT, the targeted communities became aware of the root causes of their oppression, previously detailed in the corresponding section.¹⁹⁰ Consciousness-raising techniques that made indigenous Guatemalans aware of the political causes of their oppression thus made them

¹⁸⁶ Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1991), p.137.

¹⁸⁷ Jared S. Bibler, *The Ideological Underpinnings of the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms* (Center for International Studies, Ohio University, March, 2007), p. 28.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Olivia Singer, *Liberation Theology in Latin America* (Center for Latin America and Caribbean Studies, Brown University, 2022), <https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-15-culture-and-society/essays-on-culture-and-society/liberation-theology-in-latin-america/>.

¹⁹⁰ Harry E. Vanden, Gary Prevost, *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game* (New York: Oxford University Press, Fifth Edition, 2015), p.267.

more likely to join, or at a minimum support, the EGP. Although the emergence of LT is not directly related to Foco Theory due to its religious roots, the Cuban Revolution did popularize it as a form of inciting popular support from the lower-income communities in Guatemala.¹⁹¹

A valid question to ask is how religion and Marxist doctrine are reconciled through the EGP, given the conceptual antagonism of Foco Theory as a revolutionary ideology and LT. As Mario Payeras, one of the founders of the EGP, said in an interview, the organizational practice of the revolutionaries came before theory.¹⁹² Did the EGP stick mostly to Foco Theory because they were truly inspired by revolutionary doctrine? Or was it a mere coincidence—the true root of the similarity of their guerrilla activity being their interpretation of the national context? I argue that it is both, given the rural nature of the EGP's target population as well as Che's direct involvement in Guatemala. However, the implementation of Foco Theory also provoked a violent retaliatory response by the Guatemalan government, leading to the demise of the EGP.

THE FAILURE OF THE EGP

Thus far, I have alluded to several factors that led to the EGP's failure. The EGP failed first and foremost to attract the popular support necessary to win against a conventional army in open battle, partly because the group's political strategy did not include attempts at engaging the Guatemala City elite enough to receive monetary or political support or to

¹⁹¹ Luke Waldron, *Hope inspired by the Cuban revolution led to the emergence of liberation theology in Latin America* (The Irish Times, August 20, 2013), <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/hope-inspired-by-the-cuban-revolution-led-to-the-emergence-of-liberation-theology-in-latin-america-1.1498991>.

¹⁹² Nicolas Anderson, *Guatemala, escuela revolucionaria de nuevos hombres. Con el Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, 1981-1982, Experiencias, testimonios, y reflexiones* (México, D.F.: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1982), p.111.

utilize their political sway to put an end to the government's violent crackdowns on the Mayan population. I do not tackle the counterfactual of whether support from the Guatemalan elite was necessary for the EGP to take power if the government were not to have cracked down on the Mayan population. Rather, I argue that in the Guatemalan national context of serious government crackdowns, support from the political elite was crucial to softening the blow of losing the group's indigenous Mayan support base, the EGP's rudimentary human resource. Despite the guerrilla group's many sympathizers in the province of Quiche, the enormous losses in terms of lives caused its support numbers to plummet, both because of the assassination of guerrilla members and the massacre of Mayan and Ladino civilians.

THE GUATEMALAN GENOCIDE

The massacre of about 200,000 Mayans is indebted to several factors. First, Guatemalan statistics demonstrate persistent racism and discrimination against the Mayan population.¹⁹³ Despite the Mayan population making up more than half of the country's citizenry, their political representation has not been equitably reflected. The lack of political representation not only inhibited indigenous peoples in Guatemala from expressing their grievances, it also ostracized the group from seeking assistance when they were in harm's way. The military crackdown on indigenous peoples in Quiche in turn had no repercussions on the Congress of the Republic because of this lack of representation, providing no checks that could have inhibited the genocide from taking

¹⁹³ International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), *Indigenous peoples in Guatemala* (IWGIA, 2022), <https://www.iwgia.org/en/guatemala.html#:~:text=Indigenous%20Peoples%20in%20Guatemala,-Guatemala%20has%20a&text=Statistics%20clearly%20demonstrate%20persistent%20racism,participation%20is%20not%20equitably%20reflected>.

place. There exists both a push and pull factor in terms of criminalization and victimization of the Mayan population in the province of Quiche. The push factor is reflected in many Mayans' sympathies toward the EGP. More recently in the 1980s, indigenous Guatemalans articulated their support to armed guerrilla groups as well as their resistance to the overwhelming military repression underway.¹⁹⁴ As Martín Rodríguez Pellecer, investigative journalist, Editor in Chief of the Global Investigative Journalism Conference, and founder of Plaza Pública, stated in a personal interview, it is particularly difficult to quantify the Mayan population's involvement with the EGP.¹⁹⁵ While it is well-reported that many inhabitants of the Quiche region sympathized with the group, what is less known is to what extent they supplied resources. Essentially, the government counterinsurgency specifically targeted the Mayan population in the Quiche region as a prevention tactic against the spread of the EGP's ideology, consciously through the inculcation of fear. The push factor being the criminalization of the Mayan population for what was believed to be outright support of the EGP.¹⁹⁶

What resulted was the pillaging and destruction of Mayan villages and the subsequent annihilation of vast numbers of Mayans from the Quiche region. The Guatemalan Genocide itself provoked a negative reaction from the very people the EGP sought to recruit. The harder the government crackdowns, the less the target population was willing to house, feed, and support the guerrilla group. Therefore, despite not having eliminated a substantial number of EGP members themselves, the detriment to their most

¹⁹⁴ Rachel Sieder, *Reframing citizenship: Indigenous Rights, local power and the peace process in Guatemala* (Negotiating Rights: The Guatemalan Peace Process, November 1st, 1997), <https://www.c-r.org/accord/guatemala/reframing-citizenship-indigenous-rights-local-power-and-peace-process-guatemala>.

¹⁹⁵ Taken from personal phone interview with Martín Rodríguez Pellecer on February 27th, 2022.

¹⁹⁶ Taken from personal phone interview with Martín Rodríguez Pellecer on February 27th, 2022.

crucial support base significantly affected the EGP's chances at success. This is specifically the case considering the EGP's complete adherence to Foquismo, which conceptually limited their capacity to expand to urban areas of the country. In other words, one of the factors that make up the Guatemalan national context— the strength of counterinsurgency— simply was not conducive to the specific way in which the EGP led guerrilla warfare. The Ejército Nacional de Guatemala (the National Army of Guatemala), was not only too strong in numbers and equipment, it was also backed by the U.S. in terms of training and weaponry. More specifically, members of the counterinsurgency forces trained at the Escuela de las Américas (the Schools of the Americas) in order to attain the necessary tools to combat Foquismo.¹⁹⁷

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FOQUÍSMO ITSELF

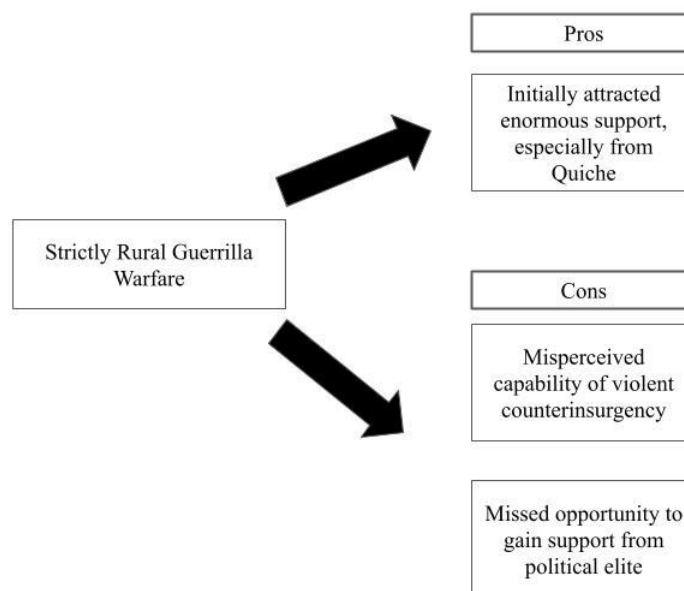
The implementation of Foquismo was not adequate for the Guatemalan national context given that restricting the EGP's operations to rural areas such as Quiche put the most vulnerable ethnic groups, the indigenous Mayans and the Ladinos, at risk of annihilation. However, the EGP continued to operate in this way until 1982, when four of the principal left-wing guerrilla groups (the EGP, the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), the FAR, and the PGT) combined to form the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) and began jointly conducting economic sabotage and targeting government installations as well as members of government security forces in armed attacks.¹⁹⁸ Members of the EGP and other armed organizations'

¹⁹⁷ Vicky Imerman, *Notorious Guatemalan School of the Americas Graduates* (Derechos, 2022), <https://www.derechos.org/soa/guat-not.html>.

¹⁹⁸ Global Security, *Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG)* (Global Security, 2022), <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/urng.htm>.

leadership realized that if they kept losing numbers to government forces, they would not survive individually. In 1982, the EGP recognized that the Foquista strategy had produced massive failures throughout the hemisphere but did not amend to an alternative strategy. As illustrated in Figure 3.2, Foco Theory proved the EGP's largest mistake because of its strict adherence to rural guerrilla warfare, both misperceiving the Guatemalan forces' willingness to violently crack down and missing an opportunity to expand to urban areas and acquire the political elite's support.

Figure 3.2: Foquismo's Failure in Guatemala



Ultimately, the unification was not conducive to the development of a successful political and military strategy until the signing of Guatemala's 1996 Peace Accords, an agreement between the Guatemalan government and the URNG that ended Guatemala's civil war. The Peace Accords also led to state recognition of the rights of Guatemala's

indigenous communities for the first time in the country's history.¹⁹⁹ However, the EGP did not successfully continue the "unfinished revolution" of President Árbenz, nor did it end the social injustice that permeates the country until today. The violent government crackdowns did not get any less severe after the URNG's formation, inhibiting the EGP from ending social injustice.

CONCLUSION

The EGP's failure goes beyond a simple misalignment of perception and national context. As reflected by the high member turnouts in the first decade of the EGP's existence mentioned earlier, the principle of recruiting and fighting in the rural countryside succeeded in earning the guerrilla group domestic support throughout its development. However, strong backing lasted a relatively short period because the Guatemalan national context of high government counterinsurgency preparation called for political support from the Guatemalan elite. Coupled with Guatemala's culture of discrimination and marginalization of the indigenous Mayan and Ladino population, the country's political and social reality would never allow Foco Theory to work. In the case of Guatemala, Foquismo facilitated the brutal massacre of over 200,000 Guatemalans because the Guatemalan government was both prepared and willing to fight and did not consider the target population an essential part of society, enough to allow for indiscriminate killings. Further, the URNG's attempts at conducting more urban guerrilla tactics failed because the organization did not recruit enough of the Guatemalan elite to

¹⁹⁹ Jeff Abbott, *20 Years of "Peace" in Guatemala* (North American Congress on Latin America, January 4th, 2017), <https://nacla.org/news/2017/01/04/20-years-%E2%80%9Cpeace%E2%80%9D-guatemala>.

soften the blow of the counterinsurgency on its support base. Thus, the perception of the Guatemalan national context by the EGP and URNG was idealistic enough to overlook all of these factors, culminating in their eventual disintegration.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIAS— CONTEXTUAL MISALIGNMENT

It is essential to note that between 1959 and 1977, there were more than 17 armed organizations in Argentina, all of which “proposed a combination of armed struggle and popular mobilization.”²⁰⁰ I choose the FAR because it had a much more complex relationship with guerrilla warfare than the others, including the EGP in Guatemala.²⁰¹ For one, the FAR’s organizational structure differed from other guerrilla organizations at the time. Unlike the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo— which had a father organization known as the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT)²⁰²— it was one of the only Argentine guerrilla groups that functioned autonomously under the leadership of Carlos Olmedo.²⁰³ This is important because the FAR’s autonomy and relatively small organizational structure compared to other Argentine guerrillas places it at a disadvantage, yet they still made considerable territorial gains. The FAR is also unique in that its strategy combined several doctrines, such as that of the Peronistas, Foquístas, and the Tupamaros to better fit their national context. In this chapter, I argue that the FAR’s relative success in comparison to the EGP is due to the attention they paid to the Argentine national context, whereas their ultimate failure reflects flawed

²⁰⁰ Pablo A. Pozzi, *The Argentine guerrilla and the masses: the ERP and its insertion*, (Santa Catarina State University, 2015), <https://www.redalyc.org/journal/3381/338144734019/html/>, p.401-402.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p.402.

²⁰² Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, *Formación*, (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, 2022), <https://prtarg.com.ar/lc-n103/>.

²⁰³ Esteban Campos, Evandro Lisboa, *Social classes, ideology, and national issue in the debate between the FAR and the PRT-ERP*, (Santa Catarina State University, September 21, 2015), <https://www.redalyc.org/journal/3381/338144734022/html/>.

perceptions of their goal of social justice. Namely, the FAR succeeded in reinstating Juan Perón into the Argentine presidency, though this did not facilitate their ultimate aim.

THE FAR'S ORIGINS

As with Guatemala, a tremendous force in the emergence of left-wing guerrilla groups was the thinking behind the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Inspiring left-leaning thinkers to adopt a nationalist stance “aimed at generating a national consciousness that would lead to liberation from the imperialist yoke” depended on the hegemony the U.S. held in the territory.²⁰⁴ The emergence of left-wing guerrilla groups in Argentina was to some extent due to U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. On the other hand, between 1930 and 1970, Argentina was regarded as an exception to Latin America, ranking among the richest countries in the world at the beginning of the 20th century.²⁰⁵ Prior to the U.S.-backed coup in April, 1976,²⁰⁶ the U.S. largely left Argentina to its own accord, trusting the thriving state to by-nature act on the behalf of American interests. The U.S. also perceived smaller guerrilla groups like the FAR to pose negligible threat and trusted Argentina to possess the military capability to swiftly conduct their

²⁰⁴ Michael Goebel, *Marxism and the revision of Argentine history in the 1960s*, (University College London, 2006), p.161.

²⁰⁵ Edward L. Glaeser, Rafael Di Tella, Lucas Llach, *Introduction to Argentine exceptionalism*, (Latin American Economic Review, October 27, 2017), https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/LAER%20Introduction%20to%20Argentine%20Exceptionalism_3c49e7ee-4f31-49a0-ba21-6e2b726cd7c5.pdf, p.1-2.

²⁰⁶ National Security Archive, *Argentina's Military Coup of 1976: What the U.S. Knew*, (National Security Archive, February 7th, 1976), <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/southern-cone/2021-03-23/argentinas-military-coup-what-us-knew>

counterinsurgencies.²⁰⁷ The emergence of the FAR, unlike the EGP, is rooted in Che's execution in the Bolivian uprising.²⁰⁸

As previously mentioned, Che's unsuccessful attempt at toppling the Bolivian government was unsuccessful partly because Che was unaware of the nation's political reality.²⁰⁹ The overconfident revolutionary believed that the methods leading to the success of the Cuban Revolution would apply almost universally. Che's well known manual for left-wing insurgency argues precisely this through his Foco Theory framework, whereby the guerrilla can successfully take initiative to make revolution without waiting for the ideal conditions to present themselves.²¹⁰ Foco Theory 'worked' in Cuba a decade and a half earlier because, regardless of the ideal national context, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara were aware of and able to work within it. The swift government crackdowns on Cuban guerrilla insurgents only informed Castro and Che's revolutionary process. The pair incorporated the lessons learned from their initial failures to turn away from directly striking military bases without first instituting a guerrilla foco, all the while pursuing intense recruitment of civilians.

Though a failure of Foquismo in Bolivia would logically imply a loss in the theory's credibility, the unsuccessful guerrilla insurgency had the opposite effect. Che's death through his final attempt at guerrilla insurgency did not promulgate a sentiment of

²⁰⁷ Harold F. Peterson, *Argentina and the United States 1960-1980*, (SUNY Press, June 20, 1964), (page tbd).

²⁰⁸ Mora González Canosa, *Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias: Orígenes y desarrollo de una particular conjunción entre marxismo, peronismo y lucha armada (1960-1973)*, (Universidad Nacional de la Plata, November 22, 2012), <https://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/tesis/te.808/te.808.pdf>, p. 1.

²⁰⁹ National Security Archive, *Che Guevara and the CIA in the Mountains of Bolivia*, (National Security Archive), <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/cuba-intelligence/2020-10-09/che-guevara-cia-mountains-bolivia>.

²¹⁰ Ernesto "Che" Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare*, (BN Publishing, March 18, 2013).

disillusionment among other revolutionaries.²¹¹ For example, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) reevaluated its objectives and created the FAR guerrilla following Che's assassination in Bolivia in 1967.²¹² The revolutionary's death turned him into a martyr across left-leaning circles, including the FAR and other militia groups in his home country, Argentina.²¹³ The Bolivian insurgency thus affected the Argentine national context through the reinvigoration of Marxism-Leninism, with Che perceived as a martyred hero by generations of leftists worldwide.²¹⁴

The Unity Act between the FAR and the Montoneros— another Argentine guerrilla group heavily influenced by Che's thinking— is an example of Che's ideological legacy within Argentine guerrillas.²¹⁵ In October, 1973, the groups co-wrote that “the political moment is characterized by a mounting offensive by Yankee imperialism,” which seeks to “perpetuate the domination and exploitation of [our] people,”²¹⁶ illustrating the continued role the Bolivian insurgency played in the FAR's perceptions of the national context. As I have proven, Che's death influenced Argentines' views about the U.S. However, these views, especially for the FAR, reflect a dissonance

²¹¹ Matt D. Childs, *An Historical Critique of the Emergence and Evolution of Ernesto Che Guevara's Foco Theory*, (University of South Carolina, October, 1995), https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1190&context=hist_facpub.

²¹² Clarín, *Un Capítulo de la Historia Política Argentina: La Fede, la juventud comunista que dio cuadros a la guerrilla y también a Menem*, (Clarín, February, 21, 2017), https://www.clarin.com/ediciones-anteriores/fede-juventud-comunista-dio-cuadros-guerrilla-menem_0_H1gCfKATYe.html.

²¹³ Robert Scheer, *The Martyrdom of Che Guevara*, (The Nation, October 10, 2007), <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/martyrdom-che-guevara/>.

²¹⁴ Sarah Caspari, *Global Perception of Che Guevara*, (Pulitzer Center, February 22, 2013), <https://pulitzercenter.org/education/global-perception-che-guevara>.

²¹⁵ Montoneros Archive, *Unity Act of the FAR and the Montoneros*, (Marxists, October 12, 1973), <https://www.marxists.org/history/argentina/montoneros/1973/unity-act.htm>.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

between the U.S.' actual hegemony in Argentina, and that perceived by the FAR. I have thus far covered Che's assassination as a factor that influenced Argentines' political perceptions. Another factor to consider is the general public's views on the state's democratic process, government, and economic stability.

POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE ARGENTINE CITIZENRY

Between 1966 and 1973, military President and General Juan Carlos Onganía executed a cultural campaign targeting the internal threat of communism.²¹⁷ Efforts at suppressing the spread of leftist ideology included a crusade against "immorality" directed against the country's youth, intervention in the national universities, censorship, and anti-communist legislation.²¹⁸ The 7-year long military government marked the fifth time in the twentieth century that the Argentine military seized control of the country in a coup d'état.²¹⁹

Despite Argentina's economic stability in relation to other Latin American countries, the political instability caused by constant military coups, as well as stagnating economic growth²²⁰ led to criticism of the Argentine government system. Even before the military takeover of 1966 and despite "certain democratic trappings such as popular elections," the Argentine government's leaders continued to repress the political

²¹⁷ Cyrus Stephen Cousins, *General Onganía and the Argentine [Military] Revolution of the Right: Anti-Communism and Morality, 1966-1970*, (University of Texas, Fall, 2008), p.65.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Rok Spruk, *The rise and fall of Argentina*, (Latin American Economic Review, 2019), <https://latinaer.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40503-019-0076-2>.

participation of certain political groups.²²¹ Given leftist Argentines' newfound Marxist-Leninist revolutionary zeal, the opposing forces led by the Argentine government only enhanced resentment toward military regimes.²²² Though the Argentine public considered the democratic process weak due to government censorship,²²³ Argentina also had one of the most developed and advanced systems of mass media in Latin America,²²⁴ enabling political dissidents to share their views with the general public, albeit with constant backlash.²²⁵ The availability and accessibility of mass communication networks also allowed these groups to further ideological debates, such as the FAR versus PRT discussion that took place in the latter half of 1971 (the public debate demonstrates the extent of freedom of speech; see more in the footnote).²²⁶ In order to comprehend the extent to which the FAR incorporated mass communication networks into its plan of action, a review of Peronismo, one of the three strategies utilized by the FAR, is imperative.

²²¹ Susan Tiano, *Authoritarianism and Political Culture in Argentina and Chile in the Mid - 1960's*, (Latin American Research Review, 1986), p.74.

²²² R. Dwight Wilhelm, *Censorship in Argentina*, (International Social Science Review, Pi Gamma Mu, International Honor Society in Social Sciences, Winter, 1991), p.21.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ According to R. Dwight Wilhelm, *Censorship in Argentina*, (International Social Science Review, Pi Gamma Mu, International Honor Society in Social Sciences, Winter, 1991), p.21, there existed 150 radio stations, 35 television stations, approximately 200 Spanish and foreign language newspapers, and numerous magazines.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ The trigger of these discussions was the controversial publication of an extensive report on the FAR by the serial Cristianismo y Revolución— Roberto Baschetti, *Documentos 1970-1973: De la guerrilla peronista al gobierno popular*, (Buenos Aires: De la Campana, 2004)— responded to by the ERP. Another related source is Esteban Campos, *Marxismo, ideología y experiencia en el debate entre las FAR y el PRT-ERP*, (Unité Mixte de Recherche Mondes américains, December, 2013).

PERONISMO

Peronismo is a populist political regime that emerged in the mid-1940s in Argentina, initially implemented by Lieutenant General and then-President Juan Domingo Perón and his wife Eva Duarte de Perón. Since then, Peronist ideology has been an important protagonist in Argentine politics.²²⁷ Peronismo is a doctrine that, despite having been created by a military lieutenant like Perón, is considered a leftist ideology that emphasizes the importance of social justice. Hence its official name: Justicialismo. Perón was a colonel in the Argentine army and won democratic presidential elections in 1946, 1952, and 1973.²²⁸ In the 1930s, he formed part of a group of young military men who were sent to Italy to absorb the techniques employed by dictator Benito Mussolini.²²⁹ Among other things, Perón learned the value of accessing mass media networks to mobilize the masses and spread an ideology. Between 1930 and 1943, Argentina underwent a period of corruption, electoral fraud, and party conflict commonly known as the *Década Infame* (the Infamous Decade).²³⁰ The period ended in 1943 with the outbreak of a second coup d'état in which a group of young military officials took power, among them Lieutenant General Juan Domingo Perón.²³¹

Peronismo emerged gradually starting in 1943. From the start, Perón developed close relations with different government branches which would eventually allow him to

²²⁷ Julia Máxima Uriarte, *Historia y Características— Peronismo* (Características, Last Edition, Noviembre 5, 2020), <https://www.caracteristicas.co/peronismo/>.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

access higher positions of power within the Argentine government. In 1945, the commanding military branch began to notice the influence Perón continued to amass and asked him to step away from government. Perón, as he learned from Mussolini, requested his goodbye speech to be broadcasted on the national radio, in which he thanked the support of the working class and warned that the social benefits he had propelled through government might not continue.²³² The speech touched thousands of workers and syndicate members, who on October 17th, 1945 gathered in the Plaza de Mayo in his favor.²³³ While Perón was asked by the military to calm the protests, Perón only agreed to do this in exchange for allowing him to run as a candidate in the upcoming presidential elections.

Under his first term in office between 1946 and 1951, Perón immediately began significant reforms. Among other measures, Perón nationalized the public transportation, energy, and communications sectors and applied restrictions to foreign commerce and the national bank.²³⁴ In 1949, he modified the 1853 constitution to situate the state as the central pillar of Argentine society, granting the Argentine government more power over the country's industries. The constitutional reform also allowed him to run for office again, which he successfully did in 1952 by running on a ticket with his wife Eva Perón. Peron's presidency continued until 1955, when he was overthrown by the Liberating Revolution, a civil-military dictatorship run by generals Eduardo Lonardi and Pedro

²³² Steven Hyland, *Argentina's Day of Loyalty and the Birth of Peronism* (The Ohio State University, Stanton Foundation, October, 2020), https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/argentina-s-day-loyalty-and-birth-peronism?language_content_entity=en.

²³³ Julia Máxima Uriarte, *Historia y Características— Peronismo* (Características, Last Edition, Noviembre 5, 2020), <https://www.caracteristicas.co/peronismo/>.

²³⁴ Ibid.

Eugenio Aramburu.²³⁵ Perón fled to Venezuela, then Panama, and finally Spain, and the ruling government ensured to eliminate all institutions, insignias, and messages related to Peronismo. According to Steven Hyland, Secretary-Treasurer of the Southeastern Council of Latin American Studies,²³⁶ all that Lonardi and Aramburu were able to accomplish was the transformation of Perón's image into a myth. Perón was reelected one last time in 1973 and was succeeded by his second wife after his death on July 1st, 1974.

Perón's leftist ideals created a ripple effect in Argentina's working class. The working class found themselves better off under Perón and resonated with his policies. In order to place the FAR's strategy into Argentina's national context, it is crucial to note that Peronismo was a more appealing concept to the masses than Foquismo because of Argentina's culture and history. When the FAR developed its strategy, it was relatively more aware of the national context than the EGP in Guatemala. The FAR's strategy incorporated a mix of Marxism, Foquismo, and Peronismo, which by definition incorporated the use of mass communication networks to spread ideology.²³⁷ The latter point is explored further in later sections, as the FAR developed correspondences with prominent newspapers such as the Buenos Aires Herald.²³⁸ Another realization by the FAR was that the working class, unlike in Cuba or Guatemala, were not receptive to the term "peasant" utilized by Foquismo. They adhered to Peronist rhetoric in order to

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ For more on the Southeastern Council of Latin American Studies see: Southeastern Council of Latin American Studies, *Home Page* (SECOLAS, 2022), <https://secolas.org/>.

²³⁷ Mora González Canosa, *Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias: Orígenes y desarrollo de una particular conjunción entre marxismo, peronismo, y lucha armada* (Universidad Nacional de la Plata, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, 1960-1973), p. 3.

²³⁸ From personal phone interview with Harry Ingham on February 27th, 2022, in a combination of Spanish and English. Harry Ingham is a political activist and journalist at the Buenos Aires Times.

combat discrepancies of this sort. As I discuss in the next section, Foco Theory was never fully implemented by the FAR, and Peronism was not either.

TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE FAR IMPLEMENT FOQUÍSMO?

Interestingly, the FAR came into the public eye on July 30th, 1970 after taking the locality of Garín in Buenos Aires, an action inspired by a similar one realized by the Uruguayan Movimiento de Liberación Nacional - Tupamaros (MLN-T) on October 8th, 1969.²³⁹ The group then seized the opportunity of a larger engaged public to issue a brief communication expressing that armed struggle was the only way toward “liberating the exploitation of man by man.”²⁴⁰ Acknowledging the existence of other armed revolutionary organizations, the FAR stated in the communication that it envisioned their future confluence. The unification of groups such as the FAR, the Frente Argentina de Liberación (FAL), the Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas (FAP), and the Montoneros, among others, would strengthen the opposition enough to take over power.²⁴¹ The Communist Party of Cuba began to notice their activity toward the end of 1970, when it contacted the leaders of all four organizations and set up regular correspondence. Havana specifically congratulated the FAR for the takeover of Garín and for the “technique and efficacy evidenced in its execution.”²⁴² In an article published in the Cuban national newspaper

²³⁹ Movimiento de Liberación Nacional - Tupamaros, *Actas Tupamaras* (Buenos Aires: Sapphire, 1971), pp. 136-178.

²⁴⁰ Carlos Ignacio Custer, *Con el fusil de Che: La estrategia de lucha armada de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) a través de su concepción, operativos y medios de difusión* (Universidad Nacional Arturo Jauretche, A Contracorriente, Vol. 18, n. 1, Fall, 2020), p. 83.

²⁴¹ Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR), *Comunicado n.1* (Cristianismo y Revolución, n.1, Septiembre, 1970).

²⁴² Carlos Ignacio Custer, *Con el fusil de Che: La estrategia de lucha armada de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) a través de su concepción, operativos y medios de difusión* (Universidad Nacional Arturo Jauretche, A Contracorriente, Vol. 18, Num. 1, Fall, 2020), p. 84.

Granma, the FAR pointed out that despite the successful venture, the group continued to struggle with “incorporating the masses into the process of revolutionary struggle.”²⁴³ In other words, the FAR initially planted the possibility of integrating Peronismo into its strategy since their first takeover, despite the insurgency’s renaming from the ELN to the FAR in honor of Che’s insurgency in Bolivia.

The FAR based itself on a strategy of strong emphasis on consistent armed action, a tributary to the Guevarista imprint on the organization. Guevara’s legacy and Cuban support, however, did not go as far as to drive the FAR exclusively to the rural countryside. Instead, the organization evaluated the national context to be favorable to urban guerrilla, similar to that conducted by the MLN-T in a comparable Uruguayan national context.²⁴⁴ The FAR is thus recognized as a group with both influences, the Guevarista and the Tupamaro, which can be defined as urban Foquismo. In line with developments in Argentine politics regarding Perón, the FAR proceeded to elaborate other documents in which, without deviating from its initial Foquista-Tupamaro alignment, deepened the conceptualization of its political-military strategy. In 1971, in another more extensive report which ultimately became the FAR’s emblematic document, the organization assumed Peronismo as its political identity after reevaluating the working class’ Peronist sympathies.²⁴⁵ The FAR sought to conserve Marxism as an analytical tool of reality, while assuming the majority political identity of the working class.

²⁴³ FAR, *Con el fusil del Che*, (Granma, Diciembre 11, 1970).

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ For more, see Mora González Canosa, *En las vísperas: debate y tensiones previas a la ‘peronización’ de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionaria (1970)* (Luchas Armada Anuario, 2013), pp.40-57.

The FAR tremendously valued support from the working class for two reasons. First, they believed that the working class was the social force capable of protagonizing a revolutionary movement.²⁴⁶ While attributing value to the working class does align with the principles of Foquismo, it is also an attribute of Peronismo in the sense that Peronismo's strategy of injecting its ideology through mass media implicitly suggests the worth it places on the working class, which is difficult to reach otherwise. Second, the strategic endgame was to create a social force that would appropriate and execute guerrilla-like armed struggle as the transformation instrument for their social conditions, and this depended on the FAR's recognition as the working class' political-military vanguard.²⁴⁷ By uniting with other Peronist armed organizations and conducting guerrilla warfare itself, it would create the conditions of popular support necessary for Perón to ascend to power for a third term. This would occur in October of 1973. Unlike the EGP, which united with other armed groups to create the URNG due to its failure, the FAR since the start sought to strengthen its reach by collaborating with other well-known armed organizations. The convergence into the Organizaciones Armadas Peronistas (OAP) occurred in 1971 between the FAR, the FAP, and the Montoneros.²⁴⁸

Ultimately, the FAR was relatively more conscious of its national context than the EGP, reflected in its transition into Peronismo and its partial implementation of Foquismo. However, the FAR was the only organization in the OAP that maintained the Foquista axiom that it is not crucial for all conditions to be present in order to conduct a

²⁴⁶ Carlos Ignacio Custer, *Con el fusil de Che: La estrategia de lucha armada de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) a través de su concepción, operativos y medios de difusión* (Universidad Nacional Arturo Jauretche, A Contracorriente, Vol. 18, Num. 1, Fall, 2020), p. 85.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ FAR, *Reportaje a la guerrilla argentina: Los de Garín* (Cristianismo y Revolución, n. 28, abril, 1971).

revolution, but rather that it is possible to create them through guerrilla insurgency.²⁴⁹ In order to do so in conjunction with the other organizations, they needed to gradually adapt a “war perspective” while ensuring that they completed the propaganda, recruitment, mass mobilization, and logistical support tasks crucial to supplying information to the public.²⁵⁰ By May 1973, the FAR’s operational capacity had increased hand in hand with the ascension of the new Peronist government of Héctor José Cámpora, despite the repressive ramming that the FAR underwent under the military dictatorship.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, the FAR did not succeed in their goal of creating long-lasting democratic elections in Argentina. While the FAR and more generally, the OAP, succeeded in bringing Perón to power, the FAR is considered an ultimate failure because it only fulfilled one of its movement’s goals.

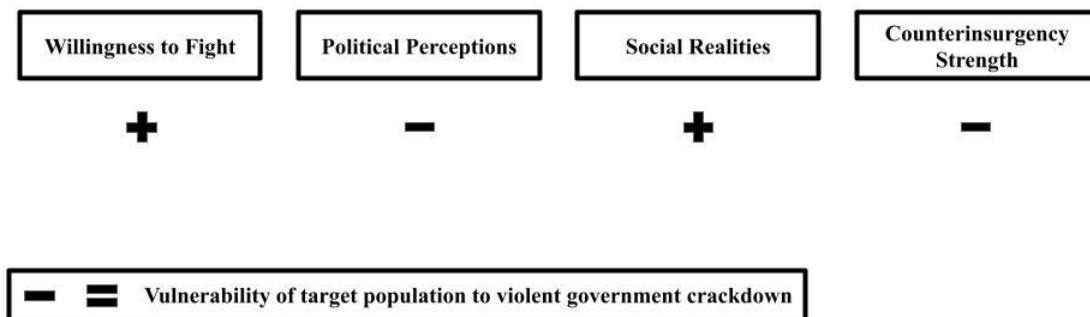
Figure 4.1 depicts the degree of alignment between the FAR’s strategy and the national context. The FAR had a solid Peronist support base and pursued a mixed urban Foquista-Peronist strategy in harmony with Argentines’ social realities, namely with the momentum surrounding Perón. However, as I discuss in the following section, the FAR’s political perceptions overlooked Perón’s priorities once he began his third term, as illustrated by the negative sign under the Political Perceptions category in Figure 4.1.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ FAR, *13 Preguntas de la Brigada ‘Jorge R. Masetti’ de las FAL* (CPM-Fondo DIPBA División Central de Documentación, Registro y Archivo, Mesa Ds, Carpeta Bélico, Legajo N. 641, 1971).

²⁵¹ Carlos Ignacio Custer, *Con el fusil de Che: La estrategia de lucha armada de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) a través de su concepción, operativos y medios de difusión* (Universidad Nacional Arturo Jauretche, A Contracorriente, Vol. 18, Num. 1, Fall, 2020), p. 90.

Figure 4.1: The Argentine National Context



Perón prioritized subduing the quarreling between left-wing and right-wing Peronists rather than enacting centralization policies that aligned with the FAR and the OAP more generally. Although the Argentine government’s counterinsurgency capability has always been strong, it came as a surprise to the FAR that Perón’s sudden death in 1974 would severely affect the Argentine national context. Once Perón’s second wife and then vice-president Isabel Perón succeeded Perón’s presidency, the official army’s counterinsurgency capability skyrocketed with the creation of Triple AAA, as I discuss in the following section.

THE FAILURE OF THE FAR

Despite having achieved a Peronist government, the FAR did not successfully institute democratic elections in Argentina. In other words, the FAR’s strategy of a combination of Foquismo, Peronismo, and Tupamaro was effective in securing a third

term for Perón but unsuccessful in materializing the political and social reality the group envisioned. I attribute this failure to several factors. The first is that, despite numerous guerrilla operations predominantly in urban areas, the FAR's unique urban guerrilla strategy served to popularize Perón but did not significantly push forth the second goal of the organization. Second, Perón in power did not translate to a change in the democratic process, seeing that Perón himself was not planning on rewriting the constitution, at least in the year before his death on July 1st, 1974.²⁵² Third, the divide between the Peronist right and the Peronist left took the front stage in terms of Perón's priorities during his short-lived presidency.²⁵³ Fourth, Isabel Perón's presidency, Juan Perón's second wife and former vice-president, proved incredibly repressive to opposition voices,²⁵⁴ changing the Argentine national context in a manner that the FAR and the OAP found difficult to reconcile, given her Peronist identity.

The coordination at the heart of the OAP, lasting between mid-1971 and the beginning of 1972, implied that the majority of operations conducted by the FAR were planned in conjunction with other OAP organizations. Out of 111 guerrilla operations under the OAP, 96 were realized exclusively by the FAR, 12 by a combination of the organizations that made up the OAP, 1 by the FAR and the ERP, 1 by the FAR, the ERP, and the Montoneros, and 1 by the Comando Argentino de Acción Popular, which shortly

²⁵² Jonathan Kandell, *Peron Dead at 78; Wife Takes Over A Divided Nation* (New York Times, July 2, 1974), <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/07/02/archives/peron-dead-at-78-wife-takes-over-a-divided-nation-a-mood-of.html>.

²⁵³ Daniel James, *The Peronist Left, 1955-1975* (Journal of Latin American Studies, Vol. 8, No. 2, November, 1976, p. 275).

²⁵⁴ Eugenia Iglesias, *Argentina's forgotten president, 'Isabelita,' turns 90 ostracised in Madrid* (Buenos Aires Times, February 6th, 2021), <https://www.batimes.com.ar/news/argentina/argentinas-forgotten-president-isabelita-turns-90-ostracised-in-madrid.phtml>.

after the dynamite attack on the Rosario Gulf Club, announced its integration into the FAR.²⁵⁵ The strength of these organizations acting together should not be overstated. Although one of the most effective actions by the OAP was the assassination of Lieutenant General Juan Carlos Sánchez, this was one out of 111 operations, most of which were not coordinated jointly. In other words, the extent to which the creation of the OAP was conducive to the FAR's goals is limited to the increase in Perón's political backing, rather than the overthrow of the entire system to institute the democratic process.

Second, Perón never once stated that the aim during his third term was to craft a new constitution, seeing that he had already done so in 1949.²⁵⁶ This is largely because of the third factor mentioned above: Perón's third term in office was marked by escalating conflict between the Peronist left and right. The conflict was fueled by the leader's growing ties to Ricardo Balbín, a right-leaning Peronist who ran for presidential office twice consecutively.²⁵⁷ Perón seemed stuck in the middle of growing tensions, and other guerrilla groups such as the ERP and the Montoneros were not pleased by his actions, turning to terrorist activity that would slowly disintegrate the OAP, in turn weakening the overall stature of Argentine guerrilla groups. The FAR continued its activities toward instituting a democratic process, but was not as intent on deposing Perón, which might have in fact worked toward the FAR's goals.

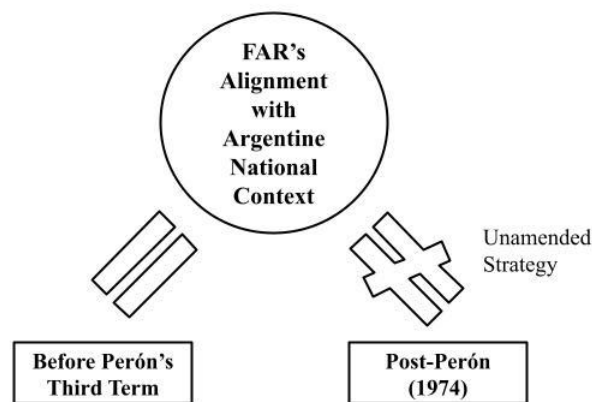
²⁵⁵ FAR, *Comunicado n. 30* (Cristianismo y Revolución, Septiembre, 1971).

²⁵⁶ Gabriel L. Negretto, *Constitutional Change as a Means to Consolidate Power: Argentina 1949* (Making Constitutions: Presidents, Parties, and Institutional Choice in Latin America, Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.113.

²⁵⁷ For more on Ricardo Balbín, see Argentina Unida, *Ricardo Balbín* (Argentina Unida, 2022), <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/secretariageneral/museo-casa-rosada/iconos-argentinos/balbin>.

Fourth, Perón’s successor and second wife, Isabel Perón (also known as Isabelita), changed the Argentine national context by increasing the strength of the counterinsurgency. Isabelita teamed up with her Welfare minister, José López Rega, who had created the right-wing paramilitary organization Triple A, to sign the first “decrees of annihilation.”²⁵⁸ The decrees allowed for the military, police, and paramilitary to torture, kidnap, and execute anybody that opposed the regime. The FAR not only had to reconcile the fact that Isabel Perón was wholly dissimilar from her husband, but also had to overcome increased repression and violence, which it did not amend its political-military strategy to encapture (as exemplified in Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: The FAR’s Alignment with the Development of the Argentine National Context



²⁵⁸ Buenos Aires Times, *Argentina's forgotten president, 'Isabelita,' turns 90 ostracised in Madrid* (Buenos Aires Times, February 2nd, 2021), <https://www.batimes.com.ar/news/argentina/argentinas-forgotten-president-isabelita-turns-90-ostracised-in-madrid.phtml>.

CONCLUSION

The FAR failed not because their guerrilla and political strategy was not up to par with the Argentine national context. Rather, the FAR's strategy was initially conducive to gains, such as the takeover of Garín and the eventual election of Perón. However, the failure to amend its strategy to a changing national context under Isabel Perón led to significant losses, as did the disintegration of the OAP due to the guerrilla groups' diverging interests. Foco Theory was partially implemented, as was Peronismo and Tupamaro, and some of its principles, such as the implementation of urban Foquismo, were effective until the critical juncture of Isabelita's election. The journey of the FAR in Argentina can be thought of as the opposite of what occurred with the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, which I expand upon in the next chapter. The FAR was initially successful due to its carefully crafted strategy, but did not change with the times.

CHAPTER FIVE

LA FRENTE SANDINISTA DE LIBERACIÓN NACIONAL — SUCCESS THROUGH ALIGNMENT

The Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) was founded by Silvio Mayorga, Tomás Borge, and Carlos Fonseca in 1961, three upper-middle class professionals (a lawyer, a law professor at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua-León, and a teacher and political activist, respectively), who sought not only the overthrow of the Somoza dynastic dictatorship, but also a long-term shift toward a socialist society.²⁵⁹ The group, as the EGP and the FAR, was inspired by Castro and Che's Cuban Revolution and sought to channel their Marxist-Leninist political views into Nicaragua.²⁶⁰ Namely, the FSLN sought to be a political-military organization whose objective is the seizure of political power through the destruction of the bureaucratic and military apparatus of Anastasio Somoza Debayle's dictatorship. According to Dennis Gilbert, expert on the Sandinistas,²⁶¹ the first members to join the Sandinistas in its early days were nationalistic students who were outraged not only at Nicaraguans' living conditions under Somoza, but also at what they saw as consistent U.S. intervention in Nicaraguan affairs.

The first half of this chapter is broken down into three sections that shed light on the group's ideology, their views on Nicaragua's political and economic reality, and

²⁵⁹ Brown University, *The Sandinistas*, (Brown University, 2022), https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/n-sandinistas.php.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ For clarification purposes, I use the terms Sandinistas and the FSLN interchangeably. The FSLN are commonly referred to as the Sandinistas.

organization. Namely, I provide background on the two main factors that gave rise to the FSLN—the economic and political inequality under Somoza’s regime and U.S. meddling in Nicaraguan internal affairs. I proceed to engage historical archives, personal interviews, and reports in order to paint a picture of the trends of popular support toward the guerrilla group, both domestic and international, which will assist the explanation of the group’s resource mobilization processes. I refer back to the first half of the chapter during my empirical section, which addresses the FSLN’s guerrilla strategy trajectory as it pertains to its efficacy in inciting popular support, which contributes to resource mobilization. I ultimately find that the Sandinistas’ initial failures are partly due to their insurrectionary guerrilla strategy, whereas their eventual success in overthrowing Somoza reflects the amendment of this strategy toward one that better fit the Nicaraguan national context. To be clear, I define the success of the Sandinistas as their initial takeover of political power in 1979.²⁶² The Sandinistas lost the February 26, 1990 elections and peacefully passed power to the National Opposition Union (UNO), but they no longer qualified as a guerrilla group but rather as a political party at this stage.²⁶³

THE ORIGINS OF THE SANDINISTA MOVEMENT

Interestingly, the Sandinistas were named after Augusto César Sandino, a fellow revolutionary who led the Liberal peasant army against the U.S.-backed Nicaraguan president Adolfo Díaz.²⁶⁴ Augusto Sandino also happened to be the first man executed by

²⁶² BBC News, *Daniel Ortega: From revolutionary leader to opposition hate figure*, (BBC News, January 10, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-15544315>.

²⁶³ Gary Prevost, *The Nicaraguan Revolution: Six Years after the Sandinista Electoral Defeat*, (Third World Quarterly, June, 1996), p.307.

²⁶⁴ Brown University, *The Sandinistas*, (Brown University, 2022), https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/n-sandinistas.php.

the *Somoza Dynasty*, the family responsible for the policies opposed by the Sandinistas.²⁶⁵ While the FSLN martyred Sandino and respected his revolutionary struggle against Nicaraguan and U.S. forces, the name Fonseca chose for the Sandinistas can be somewhat misleading. Sandino did use guerrilla warfare for his revolution, but the Sandinistas specifically attempted to mimic the Cuban Revolution's guerrilla strategy, to the letter. Their strategy took influence from Sandino's struggles indirectly, as Castro and Che studied the strategy and tactics of Sandino in preparation for the 26th of July Movement in Cuba.²⁶⁶ In fact, the group initially set a timeline identical to that set by Castro and Che in the month leading up to the 26th of July Movement, ending in the overthrow of Batista.²⁶⁷ Unlike the FAR in Argentina and the EGP in Guatemala, this chapter only furthers the discussion of Foco Theory in the context of Nicaragua because the FSLN's strategy was not a combination of theories, but rather Foco Theory and the group's unique deviations from it. However, Sandino and the FSLN concurred in their political grievances, which I proceed to contextualize.

THE U.S. FACTOR

The Nicaraguan state has a long and well-documented history of U.S. intervention in its internal affairs as well as U.S. pressure to limit the country's political autonomy. The most notable examples occurred in 1909, when the U.S. intervened in Nicaragua in

²⁶⁵ Jessica Whittemore, *The Nicaraguan Revolution: The Somoza Regime & Sandinistas*, (Study, 2003), <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-nicaraguan-revolution-the-somoza-regime-sandinistas.html>.

²⁶⁶ Gary Prevost, *Cuba and Nicaragua: A Special Relationship?* (Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 17, No. 3, The Sandinista Legacy: The Construction of Democracy, Summer, 1990), p. 122.

²⁶⁷ Taken from a personal phone interview with Matéo Jarquín on March 1st, 2022 in a combination of the Spanish and English language.

order to ensure “the rule of a government friendly to U.S. political and commercial interests” and preserve political stability in Central America.²⁶⁸ Nicaraguan President José Santos Zelaya’s political maneuvers— including the annexation of the Mosquito Coast (a previously British colony), his negotiations with the Japanese government over the construction of a transoceanic canal, his involvement in both Salvadorian and Costa Rican affairs, and above all his meddling with U.S. corporations— sparked discontent among U.S. government officials, particularly U.S Secretary of State Richard Knox.²⁶⁹ Secretary Knox was among the government officials behind the decision to provide covert support for the early stages of the revolt against Zelaya. He knew that if an election were held after the overthrow, Zelaya’s Liberals would win. The U.S. administration did not overlook an opportunity to intervene when two U.S. officers in the rebel army were captured and executed by Zelaya’s forces. While the William H. Taft administration claimed the intervention to be an attempt to “ensure good government,” many Nicaraguans perceived it as a foreign takeover of their political, banking, and railroad systems.²⁷⁰

Zelaya’s overthrow is a direct example of U.S. military involvement in Nicaragua. However, subsequent U.S. administrations have dabbled in Nicaraguan political affairs, as they have in Central American political affairs more generally. A notable instance of this phenomenon occurred in 1923, when the U.S. invited Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua to Washington in an effort to gain some control

²⁶⁸ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Intervention in Nicaragua, 1911/1912* (U.S. Department of State), <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/ip/108629.htm>.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

over their sovereignty.²⁷¹ The way in which they did this was through a series of treaties, of which the U.S. itself was not a party to, which dealt with limitation of armament, a Central American tribunal for arbitration, and “the general subject of peace and amity.”²⁷² Article II in the latter treaty in particular prohibited the contracting parties from recognizing any other government in any of the participating republics that would come to power through a coup d’état or a revolution, essentially disqualifying the leaders of non-government-sponsored movements from running in elections.²⁷³ Subsequent Nicaraguan presidents were likely ecstatic about the political security bestowed by these treaties. Nicaraguan citizens, on the other hand, began to recognize the power disparity among Liberal and Conservative politicians.²⁷⁴ Conservative politicians held greater power in government due to U.S. backing and meddling in order to keep them in power.

The U.S. ramped up their policy of supporting authoritarian regimes already in place throughout Latin America after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 in an effort to prevent another leftist administration from taking power in its neighborhood.²⁷⁵ The Somoza Dynasty not only was backed by the U.S., but also put into power by it.²⁷⁶ More specifically, American forces aided in the defeat of Augusto Sandino, a liberal

²⁷¹ Calvin Coolidge, *Intervention in Nicaragua*, (Teaching American History, January 10, 1927), <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/intervention-in-nicaragua/>.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Jessica Whittemore, *The Nicaraguan Revolution: The Somoza Regime & Sandinistas*, (Study, 2003), <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-nicaraguan-revolution-the-somoza-regime-sandinistas.html>.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

revolutionary who opposed the U.S.-backed government of Adolfo Díaz,²⁷⁷ concluding in the non-democratic election of U.S. friendly Anastasio Somoza,²⁷⁸ whose policies I discuss in the following chapter.

THE SOMOZA DYNASTY

Somoza's policies are most accurately illustrated by his unpopular government and the social climate's miserable state.²⁷⁹ For one, Somoza's regime was highly centralized, where only the inner circle of elites, a puny handful, held the largest proportion of political and economic power.²⁸⁰ As is the case with most states with a small winning coalition, Somoza's inner circle continued to amass unprecedented wealth while thousands of people were denied even the most basic needs for survival.²⁸¹ Nicaragua ranked among the lowest in social statistics in Latin America, and in terms of national income, 5 percent of the population received 28 percent of the country's GDP, and 50 percent of the population received only 15 percent.²⁸² Education was chronically underfunded, illiteracy rates were high even by underdeveloped nations' standards, and a

²⁷⁷ Freedom Archives, *La Lucha Continua: a talking mural, Augusto César Sandino*, (Freedom Archives), https://www.freedomarchives.org/La_Lucha_Continua/Sandino.html.

²⁷⁸ Jessica Whittemore, *The Nicaraguan Revolution: The Somoza Regime & Sandinistas*, (Study, 2003), <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-nicaraguan-revolution-the-somoza-regime-sandinistas.html>.

²⁷⁹ Laura M. Zaremba, *Nicaragua: Before and After the Revolution*, (Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 1992), p.9.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, *Report on the Situation of Human Rights in the Republic of Nicaragua Chapter IX*, (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, June 30, 1981), <http://www.cidh.org/countryrep/nica81eng/chap.9.htm>.

high number of Nicaraguans had no access to any kind of schooling.²⁸³ Most concerning of all is that by the mid 1970s, Somoza was considered one of the worst human rights violators in the Western Hemisphere.²⁸⁴

Governmental issues with underfunding went as deep into healthcare as they did into education. Nicaragua's high infant mortality rates and low life expectancy can be traced to serious shortages in medical supplies and facilities under Somoza's regime.²⁸⁵ The average life expectancy during this period was 53 years and the infant mortality rate was 120 per 1,000 live births.²⁸⁶ Although urban areas had somewhat more accessible healthcare given that hospitals were almost exclusively located in cities, residents of rural areas would typically have to travel for hours to reach basic medical treatment.²⁸⁷ There existed competition for resources among the few medical facilities, which would often affect the treatment of patients on a daily basis.²⁸⁸ Nicaragua's poor health care system can be most adequately demonstrated by the fact that the Somozas and their selectorate traveled exclusively abroad for medical attention. When President Somoza was fatally shot in 1956, he was immediately flown to a U.S. hospital in the Canal Zone.²⁸⁹

²⁸³ Laura M. Zarembo, *Nicaragua: Before and After the Revolution*, (Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 1992), p.9.

²⁸⁴ Rebecca Bodenheimer, *The Nicaraguan Revolution: History and Impact* (ThoughtCo., December 20, 2019), <https://www.thoughtco.com/nicaraguan-revolution-4777782>.

²⁸⁵ Laura M. Zarembo, *Nicaragua: Before and After the Revolution*, (Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 1992), p.9.

²⁸⁶ Laura J. Enríquez, *Harvesting Change* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 47.

²⁸⁷ Laura M. Zarembo, *Nicaragua: Before and After the Revolution*, (Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 1992), p.11.

²⁸⁸ Thomas John Bossert, *Health Policy: The Dilemma of Success in Nicaragua: The First Five Years* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), p. 347.

²⁸⁹ Richard Millet, *Guardians of the Dynasty: A History of the U.S. Created Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua and the Somoza Family* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1977), p.79.

The FSLN's political goal of a more equitable and democratic society is overwhelmingly backed by data from this time period. The aim was to overthrow the *Somoza Dynasty* in order to establish a democratic government that would more effectively address Guatemalans' needs. Although Cuba had considerably better statistics in terms of healthcare, education, and technological development prior to the Cuban Revolution, social inequality was rampant in the state, despite the presence of a comparatively large middle class.²⁹⁰ The non-democratic nature of the Batista regime is also comparable to that of Somoza, though non-dynastic. Finally, the U.S.' control and influence over Cuba mirrors that which the U.S. held over the Nicaraguan government, and if Cuba, as they propagandize it, successfully overthrew Batista through the use of Foco Theory, then Fonseca's Sandinistas had a clear model at their disposal.

FOQUÍSMO IN THE FIRST SANDINISTA WAVE: 1960 TO MID 1970s.

The FSLN opposed both the Somoza dynasty and its three decade-long dictatorship, as well as what they referred to as "the tactics of traditional politicians," regardless of Liberal, Conservative, or Socialist leanings.²⁹¹ Given the politically corrupt atmosphere described in the *Somoza Dynasty* section, the phrase "tactics of traditional politicians," though undefined, likely refers to the Somozas' practice of keeping a small selectorate by overcompensating politicians who served their interests and protected their political power. As with the EGP and the FAR, the first wave of the Sandinistas' guerrilla

²⁹⁰ James W. McGuire, Laura B. Frankel, *Mortality Decline in Cuba, 1900-1959: Patterns, Comparisons, and Causes* (Latin American Research Review, Vol. 40, No. 2, University of Texas Press, June, 2005), p.83.

²⁹¹ Elizabeth Dore, John Weeks, *The Red and the Black: The Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1992), p. 9.

strategy took inspiration from the Cuban Revolution.²⁹² Part of its ideology was also inspired by Augusto Sandino's murder.²⁹³ Returning to the influence of the Cuban Revolution, the first wave of FSLN organization and attacks closely aligned with Che Guevara's Foco Theory of guerrilla warfare.²⁹⁴ Following Che's principle that "the main battleground should be in the countryside,"²⁹⁵ the Sandinistas organized through the establishment of guerrilla columns in the mountains of north-central Nicaragua, known as the Serranías de Amerrisque (in Spanish) or the Amerrisque Mountains. Designing their *foco*, or center, amidst a 430 mile mountain range²⁹⁶ served three purposes.

First, it allowed the initial wave of Sandinistas to organize in a secluded area with low likelihood of army encroachment. This provided them planning privacy and minimized their chances of being eliminated by the Nicaraguan army, as they could build guerrilla columns elsewhere in the Amerrisques. The Amerrisque Mountains are also part of the Central American Range, extending from Honduras to Costa Rica and just a few miles away from the Caribbean. The range's location thus supplied an escape route especially to Costa Rica, which provided logistical support to the movement,²⁹⁷ serving the second purpose. Costa Rica's sympathy toward the FSLN is rooted in the history of its relations with Nicaragua. As early as 1824, the Nicaraguan province of Nicoya was annexed to Costa Rica and became present-day Guanacaste. The loss of this region has

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ernesto "Che" Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (Foreign Languages Press Peking, 1964), p.2.

²⁹⁶ DBpedia, *About: Amerrisque Mountains* (DBpedia), https://dbpedia.org/page/Amerrisque_Mountains.

²⁹⁷ Brown University, *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs: The Sandinistas* (Brown University, 2022), https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/n-sandinistas.php.

been a source of perpetual contention between the two states.²⁹⁸ The two neighboring nations have also been on the verge of war twice— once in 1856 over Costa Rica's efforts to put an end to William Walker's intervention into Central American affairs, and another in 1858 over possession rights to the San Juan River.²⁹⁹ Costa Rica served as an origin point for Sandino's armed incursions and sheltered anti-Somoza journalist Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, whose assassination serves as a critical juncture for the Sandinistas' success in 1979.³⁰⁰ Access to Costa Rican borders thus provided the FSLN with an essential safe haven were they to require retreat.

Third, locating the center of their operation in a secluded zone facilitated resource mobilization to an extent. The Sandinistas could train their guerrilla soldiers without attracting much attention, and were able to clandestinely receive supplies from the Cuban, Panamanian, and Venezuelan governments.³⁰¹ In addition, the guerrilla column's proximity to the Caribbean would allow Sandinista members to travel to Cuba for training on guerrilla strategy without a large risk of detection.

The FSLN's initial guerrilla tactics were inspired by the campaigns of Castro and Che, though these tactics continued to fail until the FSLN's wave of defeats in the mid 1970s.³⁰² As previously stated, some FSLN members traveled to Cuba for training, and a few went to Algeria for lessons on guerrilla tactics from the Palestine Liberation

²⁹⁸ Mitchell A. Seligson, William J. Carroll III, *The Costa Rican Role in the Sandinist Victory* (Vanderbilt University, 1979), p.331.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.332.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ Brown University, *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs: The Sandinistas* (Brown University, 2022), https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/n-sandinistas.php.

³⁰² Elizabeth Dore, John Weeks, *The Red and the Black: The Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1992), pp. 9-10.

Organization (PLO).³⁰³ However, the occasional attempts to come down from the mountains and directly confront the well-prepared Nicaraguan National Guard were no match for the U.S.-armed government troops, despite the attacks' unpredictability.³⁰⁴ One attempt to penetrate the Northern coast of Nicaragua, known as the Río Coco or Bocay-Raití campaign, is particularly notable as a devastating failure; "when the guerrillas did encounter the National Guard, they had to retreat... with heavy losses."³⁰⁵ Foquismo was not working. The Somoza regime and National Guard thought of the Sandinistas as nothing more than "a minor annoyance."³⁰⁶ Few Nicaraguans knew much about the Sandinistas, and even fewer had any contact with them.³⁰⁷ The Sandinistas particularly failed in mobilizing the middle and upper classes of Nicaraguan society to their advantage despite their familial ties. Most bourgeoisie lived in urban areas which the FSLN did not have a military presence in, given their exclusive use of rural guerrilla strategy.³⁰⁸

³⁰³ Karen DeYoung, *Sandinistas' Long Struggle for Victory* (Washington Post, Democracy Dies in Darkness, June 24, 1979), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/06/24/sandinistas-long-struggle-for-victory/d90e5b4a-9eb4-4af9-8f19-a847bb1f0821/>. Che Guevara landed in Gaza on June 18th, 1959, to instruct the Palestinian resistance fighters in the ways of guerrilla warfare, particularly his foco tactics. Training from the PLO can thus be interpreted as an extension of the training received in Cuba. See more information in Yoav Di-Capua, *Che in Gaza: Searching for the Story Behind the Image* (Not Even Past, 2009), <https://notevenpast.org/che-in-gaza-searching-for-the-story-behind-the-image/>.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Luciano Baracco, *Nicaragua: The Imagining of a Nation – From Nineteenth-Century Liberals to Twentieth-Century Sandinistas* (New York, NY: Algora Publishing, 2005), p. 66.

³⁰⁶ Karen DeYoung, *Sandinistas' Long Struggle for Victory* (Washington Post, Democracy Dies in Darkness, June 24, 1979), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/06/24/sandinistas-long-struggle-for-victory/d90e5b4a-9eb4-4af9-8f19-a847bb1f0821/>.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Phone interview with Matéo Jarquín on March 1st, 2022, in a combination of Spanish and English.

The critical turning point for the Sandinistas came in 1974, and not with major obstacles. First, the 1974 earthquake exposed and augmented Somoza's corruption. That year, a number of the Sandinista leaders, including Carlos Fonseca Amador, began to rethink their strategy of conducting guerrilla warfare exclusively. The group branched out to kidnapping and other domestic terrorist activities.³⁰⁹ In December of that year, the group seized the home of a wealthy Nicaraguan during a Christmas party and after three days of negotiations, the Sandinistas were able to exchange their hostages for 12 imprisoned FSLN members, marking their first win.³¹⁰ The released Sandinista members included Daniel Ortega, who became Guatemala's first president after Somoza's overthrow. Despite the small victory, the seizure also led to the partial disintegration of the Sandinistas. Some members decided that the fight should be won through political reeducation of the population "to the point where it would rise up en masse," while others "reaffirmed their commitment to Guevara-style rural fighting."³¹¹ This resulted in the division of the Sandinistas into the Prolonged Popular War faction— the traditional guerrilla fighters— and the Proletarian Tendency.³¹² While both followed Marxist thought, the differing tactical perspectives weakened the Sandinistas to an extent in terms of members, but also provided them with a fresh approach that would eventually enable their success.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.; domestic terrorism is defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as "violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature: Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Terrorism* (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2022), <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism>.

³¹⁰ Karen DeYoung, *Sandinistas' Long Struggle for Victory* (Washington Post, Democracy Dies in Darkness, June 24, 1979), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/06/24/sandinistas-long-struggle-for-victory/d90e5b4a-9eb4-4af9-8f19-a847bb1f0821/>.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

RETHINKING OF FSLN STRATEGY: PRE-1970 INDICATIONS AND THE MID-1970S TO 1979 SHIFT

From 1964 to 1966, the FSLN turned back to their earlier reformist approach of a popular-front strategy, whereby the group attempted to rally all forces that opposed the Somoza regime. The change in approach had some positive effects on the movement, especially in light of the failure of the first guerrilla campaign as well as Fonseca's imprisonment immediately thereafter. The student faction of the movement began to develop consciousness-raising methods for their communities, leading initiatives to improve access to water and electricity and providing literacy classes.³¹³ This student-led shift away from exclusively rural guerrilla was the beginning of an abandonment of the preconception that Foquismo was a universal strategy for Latin American insurgency toward a more socio-political approach to political change. However, Fonseca came to believe that this development could cause the movement to accommodate with the state and thus lose its revolutionary edge.³¹⁴ This point was later proven at a baseball game in 1966, when Sandinista and Social Christian students presented a banner that read "No More Somoza!" immediately eliciting the killing of most protesters by the National Guard.³¹⁵

Fonseca returned to Nicaragua in 1966, and a year later led the FSLN to launch a second rural guerrilla campaign from the Pancasán region. A few months later, one of the three guerrilla columns was destroyed by the National Guard, and the surviving

³¹³ Andrew Ryder, *A Turning Point for the Sandinistas: Nicaragua's 1968* (Verso Books, June 14, 2018), <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3881-a-turning-point-for-the-sandinistas-nicaragua-s-1968>.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

Sandinista fighters canceled the operation.³¹⁶ This is one of the critical points in the evolution of the Sandinistas, as the destruction of the guerrilla column, along with the murder of students at the baseball game, led to divisions within the group itself. Ultimately, the end of the 1960s saw the FSLN trying to resolve a series of ideological conflicts after a period of internal criticism regarding their military strategy, leading to a three-way split in the organization.³¹⁷

The first split has its roots in the decision to adopt an incursive strategy modeled after Foquismo. The first faction, the so-called Guerra Popular Prolongada (GPP), attempted to preserve “the notion that mountains were the natural habitat of the revolution.”³¹⁸ While they accepted urban resistance as inevitable, the GPP envisioned a power shift to the mountains through rural guerrilla and by incorporating peasants into the group.³¹⁹ During the same year, Carlos Fonseca and other exiled leaders hopped from Mexico to Venezuela,³²⁰ where they developed a formal structure to the FSLN and created the National Directorate.³²¹ Fonseca became the political-military head of the Directorate and Oscar Turcios the second in command. The creation of the National Directorate during Fonseca’s exile can be seen as a prelude to the coming together of the two other

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Martha L. Cottam, Bruno Baltodano, Martín Meráz García, *Cooperation Among the Nicaraguan Sandinista Factions* (Latin American Policy, Wiley Periodicals, Inc. Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011), p.18.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Global Security, *FSLN and the Guerrillas* (Global Security, 2022), <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nicaragua1.htm>.

³²¹ Martha L. Cottam, Bruno Baltodano, Martín Meráz García, *Cooperation Among the Nicaraguan Sandinista Factions* (Latin American Policy, Wiley Periodicals, Inc. Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011), p.18.

Sandinista factions that emerged after the creation of the GPP: the Tendencia Proletaria (TP) and the Terceristas (Spanish for “third way”).

As the strategies between the exiled leaders and those who continued to fight in Nicaragua diverged, FSLN members in Nicaragua developed further contradictions, leading to the birth of the TP.³²² The TP subordinated military strategy to class action, was a primarily clandestine, urban faction, with an air of class consciousness and caution with regard to strategy. By this point, the TP and GPP were working autonomously to the same end of overthrowing Somoza, yet still under the name of the FSLN. The split is most accurately portrayed by the expulsion of Jaime Wheelock, Luis Carrión, and Roberto Huembes— the TP’s leaders— from the FSLN in 1975, effectively conceding their separate identity.³²³ Prominent scholars in the field of Nicaraguan history consider this moment as a critical point for the loss of support from the Cuban government, which at the start of the movement provisioned training and weaponry.³²⁴ This is important because not only were the Sandinistas beginning to work in a disorganized fashion that led to internal conflict, their lack of organization also catalyzed a decrease in international support for the FSLN, which scholars argue is detrimental to the success of an insurgency, as seen in Chapter 2.

The Terceristas formed in June, 1976 after the death of Fonseca, who had returned to Nicaragua seeking to reconcile the GPP and the TP but was killed by the National

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Taken from a personal interview with Dr. Matéo Jarquín. Dr. Jarquín is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Chapman University, having joined after earning his Ph.D from Harvard University. He is in the process of writing a book on the international aspect of the Sandinista Revolution.

Guard in Zelaya.³²⁵ Under the leadership of the brothers Humberto and future President Daniel Ortega, the Terceristas were the first of the factions to develop relationships with non-socialist organizations³²⁶ and form alliances with political figures and the bourgeoisie class.³²⁷ The group held the powerful position of mediating between the GPP and the TP, as it favored a mixed urban-rural strategy.³²⁸ By this point, however, the three factions began to behave as separate entities, with their own organizational structures, strategies, and goals. For example, the GPP strived not only to depose President Somoza, but also to achieve a socialist society, whereas the Terceristas had given up the latter goal in favor of the former. The groups went as far as sabotaging each other's operations.³²⁹

As proven, FSLN's failure at mobilizing their resources, inciting, and sustaining domestic and international support effectively bears its roots in its initial approach to insurgency. The group's literal adhesion to Foco Theory was not a strategy that aligned with the Nicaraguan national context. First, willingness to fight within the rural population was lacking. The recruitment of university students was not enough to bring down the Somoza regime, whose small, yet powerful selectorate provided it with a safety net of support, precisely in urban areas where the Sandinistas did not initially have a presence due to their adhesion to Foquismo. Second, the average Nicaraguan found the

³²⁵ Martha L. Cottam, Bruno Baltodano, Martín Meráz García, *Cooperation Among the Nicaraguan Sandinista Factions* (Latin American Policy, Wiley Periodicals, Inc. Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011), p.18.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Taken from a personal interview with Matéo Jarquín.

³²⁸ Martha L. Cottam, Bruno Baltodano, Martín Meráz García, *Cooperation Among the Nicaraguan Sandinista Factions* (Latin American Policy, Wiley Periodicals, Inc. Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011), p.18.

³²⁹ Jaime Wheelock, Mónica Baltodano, Margine Gutiérrez, Napoleón Molina, personal communication, July 2008 as taken from Martha L. Cottam, Bruno Baltodano, Martín Meráz García, *Cooperation Among the Nicaraguan Sandinista Factions* (Latin American Policy, Wiley Periodicals, Inc. Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011), p.18.

group inaccessible for two reasons. The first was members' lack of ties to the lower classes. Most Sandinistas came from middle to upper class backgrounds and while university student members commuted from urban areas, the university environment itself can be characterized as a bubble that restricted significant interaction with the target population. The second was the Sandinistas' initial failures at propagandizing their movement. As previously mentioned, few people had heard of the Sandinistas until the rise of the Terceristas.

Third, the Nicaraguan National Guard was backed by the U.S., which by the 1970s had trained Nicaraguan soldiers in the Escuela de las Américas, a Panama-based institution that solely focused on training counterinsurgents in tactics to combat Focúista insurgents.³³⁰ Soldiers' training in this institution and U.S. material support of the National Guard reflect the strength of Nicaraguan counterinsurgency forces. Finally, the FSLN's failure to cohesively shift strategies is responsible for the prolongation of its unsuccessful period and their loss of international support. The period between the FSLN's creation and the mid-1970s has been characterized as "uniquely unsuccessful" by scholars in the field,³³¹ described by Régis Debray as the most disorganized rebel movement to date.³³² By the end of this period, Cuban officials continued to offer refuge to exiled Sandinistas (i.e. in 1970 when four Sandinistas, including Fonseca, were released in a prisoner exchange, and in 1974 when fourteen Sandinistas, including Daniel

³³⁰ School of the Americas Watch, *Apuntes de The School of Americas* (School of the Americas Watch, 2022), <https://soaw.org/escuela-de-las-americanas>.

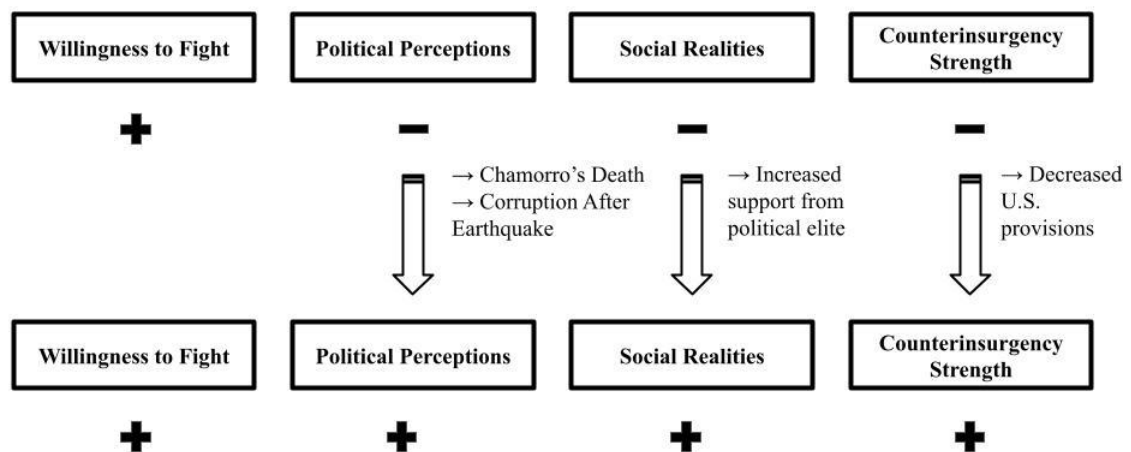
³³¹ Phone interview with Matéo Jarquín, March 1st, 2022, held in a combination of English and Spanish.

³³² As narrated by Matéo Jarquín in a March 1st, 2022 phone interview.

Ortega, were freed as a result of the successful Christmas party raid),³³³ but lost the interest they previously had in promoting insurgency in Nicaragua, as did the Soviet Union.³³⁴ The crucial role that Havana ceased to play in supplying weapons and training, coupled with the lack of popular support for the Sandinistas, are two critical factors that weakened the FSLN's capability to counter Somoza's counterinsurgency.

THE SUCCESS OF THE SANDINISTAS

Figure 5.1: The Process of Contextual Alignment in the Nicaraguan National Context



What changed in the Sandinistas' strategy and cohesion to cut short the spiral of failure? Two critical events led to the FSLN's victory. As depicted in Figure 5.1, first was Somoza's assassination of anti-Somoza journalist Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal on January 10th, 1978, whose brutal death led the Nicaraguan elite to decidedly turn against

³³³ Gary Prevost, *Cuba and Nicaragua: A Special Relationship?* (Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 17, No. 3, The Sandinista Legacy: The Construction of Democracy, Summer, 1990), p.123.

³³⁴ As narrated by Matéo Jarquín in a March 1st, 2022 phone interview.

Somoza and support the FSLN. More specifically, Los Doce, 12 members of the Nicaraguan government who were exiled by Somoza, were allowed to return and form a crucial part of the FSLN's support base. As was the case with the Cuban Revolution, a factor that would allow for the FSLN's overthrow of Somoza was a government perceived as illegitimate by its constituents— especially the political elite. Somoza himself facilitated this by assassinating Chamorro. Although Somoza's spokesman, Roger Bermudez, said the government denounced the killing and "had ordered authorities to spare no effort to find the gunmen,"³³⁵ others believe that Somoza masterminded the Chamorro killing.³³⁶ The second critical juncture is the unification of the GPP, the TP, and the Terceristas into the National Directorate in 1979, when the Terceristas' strategy of a combination of urban and guerrilla warfare and building political alliances with the upper echelons prevailed. By this point, the Terceristas had developed their popular support strategy enough to have a presence among the Nicaraguan elite— Chamorro's murder strengthened these ties. Figure 5.1 visualizes how Chamorro's death and the unification of the GPP, the TP, and the Terceristas favored the Sandinistas' process of national context alignment.

As it turns out, the main influence of Cuba became political rather than military or financial. Without Castro's mediation between the three FSLN factions, the Sandinistas may have remained divided and missed their opportunity to attack when Somoza was left weakened and isolated by Chamorro's assassination. Cuba's main contribution to the

³³⁵ Laurie Johnson, *Prize-Winning Editor Is Shot Dead In Nicaragua* (New York Times, January 11, 1978), <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/01/11/archives/prizewinning-editor-is-shot-dead-in-nicaragua-he-opposed-somoza.html?auth=login-google1tap&login=google1tap>.

³³⁶ Leonardo Lacayo, *Killers of Nicaraguan publisher given 30 years jail* (UPI Archives, June 19, 1981), <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1981/06/19/Killers-of-Nicaraguan-publisher-given-30-years-jail/2997361771200/>.

FSLN's success was Castro's role in merging the GPP, the TP and the Terceristas into a balanced National Directorate with three members from each faction.³³⁷ The Cuban leader also convinced the three factions to share leadership in a common political-military strategy that almost completely emulated the Terceristas'. Ultimately, Cuba might not have provided political support were it not for the position the Terceristas had acquired by the fall of 1978 in terms of connections with the elite. Havana calculated that the FSLN had a chance of insurgency success given the increase in popular support for the movement, especially given the increase in Sandinista armed resistance following Chamorro's assassination, which sparked an increase in Sandinista armed resistance numbers.³³⁸

Although Cuba played an important role in the unification of the Sandinistas, its overall influence should not be overestimated. The crucial financial support for the FSLN came from Costa Rica, Panama, and Venezuela,³³⁹ with the former providing the most logistical support given their proximity to Nicaragua and their hostile relations with the Somoza regime. The Sandinistas' successful insurgency should thus be in part attributed to their long-winded, yet ultimately successful change in strategy away from Foquismo. The FSLN's shift in strategy gave way to domestic support from the elite and international support from Cuba, Costa Rica, Panama, and Venezuela, in turn securing enough resources to mobilize at the opportune moment.

³³⁷ Gary Prevost, *Cuba and Nicaragua: A Special Relationship?* (Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 17, No. 3, The Sandinista Legacy: The Construction of Democracy, Summer, 1990), p.124.

³³⁸ Alejandro Bendaña, *The Rise and Fall of the FSLN* (North American Congress on Latin America, September 25, 2007), <https://nacla.org/article/rise-and-fall-fsln>.

³³⁹ Ibid.

By June of 1979, the FSLN controlled various regions, had struck a deal with Somoza's more moderate opponents, and named Daniel Ortega and two other FSLN members as members of a post-Somoza government.³⁴⁰ In July, the American ambassador to Nicaragua recommended that Somoza leave the country after Sandinista fighters began to move in on Managua and engaged in numerous shootouts with the National Guard.³⁴¹ The National Guard collapsed soon thereafter and the Sandinistas immediately established a provisional government, successfully deposing Somoza.

CONCLUSION

Initially, the Nicaraguan national context did not align with some of the principles of Foquismo. Rural guerrilla tactics did not work toward the insurgency's goal of overthrowing Somoza because it was the urban elite that the FSLN needed support from in order to have a real chance at success. Support from the upper urban class provided financial support and weakened Somoza's selectorate. Accordingly, the Sandinistas were initially unable to defeat the U.S.-backed National Guard until they amended their strategy to target what the Nicaraguan national context called for— support from the urban elite— which would strengthen the movement's support base, increase international support, and consequently allow them to mobilize en masse. Unlike in the case of the EGP, the implementation of Foquismo did not fail because of the government's annihilatory response to the guerrilla insurgency's support base. Rather, it failed because it did not target enough of the resource-facilitating population in

³⁴⁰ Rebecca Bodenheimer, *The Nicaraguan Revolution: History and Impact* (ThoughtCo., December 20, 2019), <https://www.thoughtco.com/nicaraguan-revolution-4777782>.

³⁴¹ Office of the Historian, *U.S. Department of State, Central America, 1977-1980* (Office of the Historian, 2022), <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/central-america-carter>.

Nicaragua, which a political-military strategy succeeded in doing. The Sandinistas succeeded because the group realized that Foquismo did not work and chose an alternative strategy. This has implications on the ways in which policymakers conduct counterinsurgency. The following chapter— A Guerrilla Insurgency Dilemma— draws implications for theories of insurgency outcomes and counterinsurgency policymaking.

CHAPTER SIX

THE GUERRILLA INSURGENCY DILEMMA

It is an immense oversimplification to explain the outcome of insurgency in terms of popular support, resource mobilization, or the degree of implementation of a particular theory. It would appear that insurgents are limited to pursuing decisions solely on the availability and accessibility of the domestic masses and international community, which then contribute the monetary and human assets to fund a guerrilla insurgency. However, with an approach that incorporates guerrilla insurgents' decision making vis-à-vis the national context, we are now better able to analyze the outcome of diverse strategies within a specific state and understand the insurgency process as it interacts under more specific conditions, such as people's willingness to fight, political perceptions, a state's social reality, and government counterinsurgency strength.

Through the comparative study of Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua, I answer a number of general questions that scholarship has been struggling to answer. What accounts for the decision making process when guerrilla insurgencies prepare strategies that pursue a revolutionary movement? Referring specifically to the cases of Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua, what accounts for the deviations and consistencies regarding the EGP, FAR, and FSLN's military and political strategy? What does this mean for their probability of insurgency success? The simple answer is that insurgents are highly susceptible to cultural and historical influences, particularly those pertaining to their immediate environments. The empirical findings resulting from this comparative study have implications for broader conceptual issues regarding this topic as well as implications for the central research question posed by this thesis.

This thesis started with the following research question: what factors affect the outcome of guerrilla insurgency? This research question is important for a number of reasons. Insurgency is the most common form of unconventional conflict today, so it is inevitable that the pursuit of revolutionary movements in differing national contexts should lead to adjustments in counterinsurgency, and in the case of friendly insurgencies, insurgency policy. The future of insurgency strategy is also unpredictable. As the current insurgency crisis in Ethiopia has proven,³⁴² insurgency strategy can shift as changes in the government's counterinsurgency strength and negotiation capability fluctuate, calling for new strategies to better address these crises. Put simply, the effects of guerrilla insurgencies and their outcomes extend outside of a nation's borders. Thus, understanding how events catalyze changes in guerrilla insurgents' decision making and strategy based on the specific state's national context reflects the future of counterinsurgency policy both within a nation as well as within larger geographic regions such as Latin America, and even across the world.³⁴³ The ways in which insurgencies gain resource access today and the strategies they implement in the present impact the future of counterinsurgency tactics, as do past insurgencies with present counterinsurgency tactics. Therefore, it is critical to make conscious and strategic decisions that take into account the unpredictable nature of insurgency. Each guerrilla insurgency strategy has benefits and drawbacks on their influence in the present, so understanding the conditions under which insurgency movements became successful in

³⁴² Farouk Chothia, *Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: How the TPLF has outflanked the army* (BBC News, November 18, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59288744>.

³⁴³ As mentioned in chapter 4, the influence of Che's actions during the Cuban Revolution reverberated across continents, including as far as Palestine with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. See Yoav Di-Capua, *Che in Gaza: Searching for the Story Behind the Image* (Not Even Past, 2010), <https://notevenpast.org/che-in-gaza-searching-for-the-story-behind-the-image/>.

the past allow nations to better foresee and prepare for their responses to insurgencies in the future.

To answer this research question, I analyzed the cases of Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua— three guerrilla insurgencies that began using the same strategy of Foquismo and eventually ran their respective courses— in the context of their specific nations. I showed how Foco Theory itself was most influential in Latin American insurgent strategy, but *insurgents' decision making was most effective when it aligned with the state's national context instead of aligning with a specific guerrilla warfare theory*. Using Resource Mobilization Theory, I was able to isolate strategic actions' efficacy in leading the insurgencies closer to their ultimate goals. I used the theory of popular support to show how events have the capacity to accelerate or alter resource mobilization by causing shifts in monetary and human support, both domestic and international. Theorizing the mechanisms for strategic change takes into account what happens with certain stimuli, as well as what transformations in the national context are more likely to be perceived by the insurgent actors. For example, actors in all three cases examined realized that their strategies were failing at a certain point in time, but this is not to say that all of them knew how to shift in order to align with the changing reality.

In order to explain why the decision making shifts might occur, one must attend to culture and history because they affect the extent to which events can trigger changes in insurgent strategy. That, in turn, shapes the range of possibilities for transformation of a guerrilla group within each national context. There is a clear link between history and counterinsurgency policymaking, and so this thesis contributes to the body of literature on insurgency by theorizing this linkage and analyzing the mechanisms through which

insurgents have decided their actions, and by extension, how those actions can happen and be shaped.

THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL CONTEXT ON GUERRILLA INSURGENCY DECISION MAKING

In chapters three, four, and five, I analyzed the metanarrative of the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres in Guatemala, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias in Argentina, and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and its importance in contextualizing the outcome of guerrilla insurgency. I then explained the national context factor, addressing the flaws of scrutinizing the outcome of insurgency through its ends— the insurgency’s achievement in acquiring popular support and resource mobilization— rather than its means— how insurgent guerrilla strategy works within its national context to acquire the foregoing. Applying the National Context Framework to conventional wisdom on insurgency, I made the following empirical findings:

1. Insurgent strategic decisions (specifically those pertaining to guerrilla warfare) are not necessarily determined by rational choice alone, but rather by the perception or misperception of the guerrilla insurgent group’s national context— the people’s willingness to fight, their social and political reality, and the government’s counterinsurgency capability.
2. The ways in which Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua responded to the EGP, the FAR, and the FSLN, respectively, depended on the U.S.’ reliability as an allied nation. Partnerships shift and overlap during insurgencies and cultural

dispositions within the nation determine how states rearrange for the purpose of action.

3. Latin American insurgents have much more difficulty in developing a conscious perception of the national context because of (1) the Cuban Revolution's legacy and (2) the saturation of Foco Theory within the Latin American field of revolutionary movements. This limits the range of possibilities for insurgents to align with the realities of their state and expands that of governments to pursue counterinsurgency, given foreseeable consistencies in guerrilla strategy.
4. Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua, although claiming to act for the benefit of the nation, pursued counterinsurgency policies in ways that are detrimental to state legitimacy. This is not meant to be a harsh critique of Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua but rather an indicator that pursuing like-minded counterinsurgency policies may have negative consequences on the future of civil liberties.

Taken together, we find that there is indeed a link between the outcome of an insurgency and insurgents' perceptions of the national context, one that is contingent upon historical and cultural circumstances specific to the four factors that make up the national context. The application of the National Context Framework to the study of insurgency validated the central theme of this thesis: insurgency is much more complex than summing up levels of popular support and resource mobilization.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GUATEMALA, ARGENTINA, AND NICARAGUA

Argentina is a unique case because it is the most active Latin American state in pursuing alliances with Western powers, with which it hopes to build the ties and support necessary to become a Western-like democracy. What this means is that censorship was relatively low despite the various military dictatorships, but dictatorships were nonetheless present. By contrast, Guatemala underwent a period of security instability commonly known as the Guatemalan Genocide. Nicaragua, on the other hand, was in the middle of a forty-year-long dictatorship. The political and economic reasons for insurgency in Guatemala, Argentina, and Nicaragua may seem self-explanatory. Yet theorizing the mechanisms of insurgent strategy allows us to reconsider what we think we already know about insurgency. The following are three interpretations of my findings from undertaking this comparison:

1. The EGP, although weighed down by their lack of alignment with the Guatemalan national context, may not have succeeded either were they to have implemented urban Foquismo because their goals most clearly aligned with those of Ladinos and indigenous Mayans precisely inhabiting the countryside. The EGP had the potential to achieve their goals were their national context to exclude the Guatemalan Genocide, which is a traumatic enough event to wipe out popular support. Guerrilla strategy, which in the case of the EGP was exclusively Foquismo, would not have prevailed even without the event of the Guatemalan Genocide because their nuclei were located at too large of a distance from the capital, distancing the political elite from the insurgency itself. Working alongside

the Cuban government and other supporting states did not counteract the detrimental effects of the death of more than 200,000 civilians.

2. The FAR should be applauded for incorporating different influences into their political-military strategy, which allowed for its early successes given relative alignment with the Argentine national context. However, the FAR should have also been aware that Perón in power would not necessarily translate into the achievement of their ultimate goals. Rather than strategizing on behalf of the Perón duo, the FAR should have scrutinized candidates to more accurately represent their interests. Whether or not it is possible that picking the right leader would have led to the success of the FAR is difficult to say; Perón's momentum might have been essential to the partial success of the FAR. However, drawing from the case of the FSLN in Nicaragua, this momentum can be built.
3. The FSLN should also be applauded, but not for their initial perceptions of the Nicaraguan national context. Rather, their early implementation exclusively of Foquismo was their gravest failure, but their absorption of the lessons learned from disregarding their immediate reality is partly what led to their ultimate success. Another takeaway from the Nicaragua case is that a critical juncture may be crucial to building the momentum for government takeover, given the group's initial misalignment. It is difficult to say whether this would be the case if the Sandinistas would have immediately implemented the right strategy. However, what we already know is that the Cuban Revolution underwent a similar path, with their own failures and their own critical juncture. The necessity of a critical

juncture for the success of an insurgency has the potential to be proven with further study.

INSURGENCY IN AN INCREASINGLY CONFLICT-PRONE WORLD

Understanding the root mechanisms of insurgency outcomes allow for a more thorough and nuanced analysis of contemporary conflict and the ways in which nations decide which counterinsurgency policies best fit a particular case. Counterinsurgency is much more elaborate than evaluating whether an insurgent group ticks the boxes of popular support and resource mobilization. It is, instead, a response to how culture and history become intertwined with practice, the product of which are counterinsurgent strategies that represent realistic perceptions of the target insurgent group in the national context.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY ON INSURGENCY

While traditional notions of insurgency ascribe the outcome to the level of popular support and resource mobilization, the application of the National Context Framework to this traditional body of literature has proven that the notion of insurgency is constructed through insurgent achievement. This thesis contributes to (1) the body of literature on insurgency by theorizing the processes through which insurgents perceive their immediate realities and (2) bodies of literature on counterinsurgency by applying the study of insurgency to frameworks and theories that have not yet been applied to this subject. Taking the contributions of these two subject areas, the following elaborates the

ways in which my research helps reconsider what we already know about how insurgents pursue revolution.

1. Insurgents organize and instigate the rearrangement of their strategy. This is significant because an understanding of culture and the national context allow governments to better hypothesize how they will react to insurgency. This process through which insurgency becomes scrutinized identifies the limits to insurgent perception of the national context. Time is implicated in the organization and transformation of guerrilla strategy, explaining how and why insurgent strategy varies across time and space.
2. Building on the first point, cultural and historical influences can be used either to blur insurgent perceptions or serve as a promulgator of successes. Using culture to understand the conditions for changes in insurgent strategy is practical because it allows for the application of the National Context Framework to other cases. It is not so much the ability to acquire popular support and resource mobilization that defines insurgency outcomes as it is the manner in which the insurgent groups are able to effectively do so within their respective national context.
3. This thesis calls for further study on the veracity of Foco Theory. Given my findings, the implementation of Foquismo failed not only in the Guatemalan, Argentine, and Nicaraguan contexts, but also in Cuba, where its full implementation is questionable. The use of urban guerrilla warfare in the Cuban Revolution directly contradicts the tenets laid out by the theory. Foco Theory may have never worked in any scenario.

4. History needs to be contextualized in order to understand how insurgents construct, conceptualize, and express their goals and strategies over time. The cultural narrative embedded in history justifies what insurgents consider their reality. In order to predict an insurgent group's success level and counteract its outcome, scholars must articulate the origin of their narratives and evaluate whether it lines up with the national context. If government actors are more aware of these mechanisms, then they can more accurately address their dispositions to a particular insurgency.

The mechanisms of insurgency are partly immaterial, meaning that they sometimes cannot be reduced to tangible concepts. The National Context Framework is a process through which the decision making mechanisms of insurgents are ascribed meaning, a theoretical contribution that complements the prevailing interpretations of how insurgencies succeed.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY FOR POLICY MAKING

This thesis has policy implications both at the national and international levels. At the national level, the National Context Framework can be applied to deconstruct the manners through which insurgents pursue revolution, and conversely the right policies to counteract it in any context. As explained in the aforementioned section, politicians would be better equipped to understand the repercussions of their counterinsurgency policies after examining the ideological developments that normally dictate insurgent

action. This would allow them to better anticipate responses to events. Additionally, the National Context Framework allows for a more complex analysis of insurgent behavior.

There are a number of implications for policy on the international level. The first is that an understanding of insurgent perceptions of the national context can assist in figuring out how national narratives can come to work together. The ways in which this can happen is by analyzing how culture can be influenced by external factors, like a recently successful revolution. Taking Latin America as an example, an event such as the Cuban Revolution may trigger a spillover effect that then deviates insurgent perceptions away from their immediate realities. This way, the different influences of previous insurgencies are taken into account and addressed at the regional level. This would allow for a supranational field of counterinsurgency practices in which national narratives can join to form an alliance.

THE FUTURE OF INSURGENCY

This thesis mostly focused on the field of insurgency in authoritarian states where insurgents were heavily influenced by Foco Theory. The next step is to transfer the utility of the National Context Framework to an analysis of the field of insurgency on the other side of the spectrum: that of non-authoritarian nations with other theoretical influences. What are the theoretical underpinnings that dominate insurgencies in other regions, such as Africa or the Middle East? How do the perceptions of those insurgents compare to those in Latin America? These regions of the world are characterized by complex, imperial histories that have much to say about the development of revolutionary

movements. This type of research complements what has been learned about the mechanisms of guerrilla insurgency in authoritarian nations.

As retired U.S. Navy Admiral stated, “You can’t kill your way to success in a counterinsurgency effort. You have to protect the people, get the civil-military balance right, train the locals, and practice effective strategic communications.”³⁴⁴ There will be future consequences for not rethinking counterinsurgency policies as they exist today. With the Taliban in Afghanistan having seized power, Boko Haram in Nigeria intensifying its efforts, and the U.S.-backed Houthis struggling for grip, the insurgency arena is rapidly transforming. There is, indeed, a need for a more contextualized approach to the study of guerrilla insurgency.

³⁴⁴ United States Army, *Army Field Manual: Countering Insurgency* (U.S. Army, Vol. 1, Part 10, January, 2010), <http://www.xtlearn.net/L/3160/25/M>, p.40.

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