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Uncovering the sources of revolutionary violence: the case of Colombia's National Front (1958-1964)

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ABSTRACT

Scholars often explain political violence by highlighting factors such as state weakness. This article shifts the analysis to a focus on state character. More specifically, the article analyses how the growth of revolutionary violence in 1960s Colombia was shaped by the earlier period of the National Front (1958–1964). This earlier period is crucial to understanding the outbreak of revolutionary violence because it gave rise to a project of state reorganization which refashioned the relationship between dominant and subaltern groups. The reorganization of alliances under the National Front helped to significantly reduce inter-party violence, but because of the way in which the form of state was reorganized, the National Front produced new conditions of conflict, which culminated in the growth of revolutionary violence. In making this case it is argued that the birth of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), reflected through the military offensive against Marquetalia in 1964, can only be effectively captured by appreciating how dominant forces implemented a state reorganization project, which produced new dynamics of conflict and ultimately failed to incorporate key subaltern groups.

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Introduction

Colombia during the 1950s was marked by an intense period of inter-party conflict leading to the deaths of more than 200,000 people – mostly dependent *campesinos* organized by landed elite interests along clientelist lines into one of the two dominant political parties.[1] In 1958, witnessing the ascendance of radical-popular struggles and the threat of a third party, the Liberal and Conservative Parties implemented a power-sharing agreement known as the National Front. This agreement is crucial to understanding developments in the 1960s because it gave rise to a project of state reorganization which

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refashioned the relationship not only between the two traditional parties but also between dominant and subaltern groups.[2] The reorganization of alliances under the National Front's earlier period helped to significantly reduce inter-party violence, but because of the way in which the form of state was reorganized, the National Front produced new conditions of conflict, culminating in the growth of revolutionary violence.

The National Front as a state-making project sought to restore dominant authority based on a dual approach. On the one hand, the National Front instigated a process of state reorganization by enacting reforms to pacify popular unrest and incorporate subaltern groups into capitalist development. On the other hand, unable to establish popular consent, the National Front increasingly relied on coercion to secure authority. This failure to incorporate key subaltern groups compelled the National Front to implement a more aggressive strategy for managing popular resistance. The growth of revolutionary violence can therefore only be understood by analyzing how the National Front reorganized the Colombian form of state, especially the way in which it altered the security environment, excluded subalterns, and produced an apparatus of coercion targeting resistance. Indeed, according to former FARC leaders and others, the dynamics of conflict engendered in this earlier period of the National Front strongly influenced the FARC's emergence.[3]

Analyzing the National Front as a state reorganization project is important because it suggests how state-making processes, even those intending to resolve conflict, can actually generate new conditions of violence and exclusion. Whereas literature on political violence is dominated by analysis which isolate conflict drivers into variables or "problems" to contribute to large-N studies,[4] such approaches overlook the historical specificity and character of state-making processes that underscores conflict. Indeed, a leading explanation behind political violence, particularly in Colombia,[5] emphasizes factors of state weakness.[6] This article therefore questions such conventional explanations by asserting the need to examine state character, particularly how states are historically constituted by distinct social forces, which then influence political developments.

In calling attention to state characteristics and the historical complexities of state-making processes in facilitating revolutionary violence, this article deploys a Critical Realist (CR) mode of enquiry. Unlike strict empiricism, which tends to reduce scientific knowledge to summaries of observation, this post-positivist CR framework differentiates between the 'real' and 'the observable' world and acknowledges unobservable structures as central to explaining observable developments. CR can be distinguished from empiricism in regard to surface appearances, consisting of observations. It views these as potentially misleading as to the true character of actions, and holds that developments can only be understood if

underlying (unobservable) structures are incorporated into analysis. CR therefore contends that there are variable means of representation, other than direct observation, that can support knowledge claims.[7] In this light, theory is used in this article not as a hypothesis-testing exercise but as an analytical framework to understand the deeper substance and meaning of developments. Specifically, the 1958–1964 period of the National Front will be analyzed through a historical materialist analytic lens. As I will argue in the next section, such a lens is superior to alternative frameworks because it facilitates a focus on the internal relations underpinning developments and enables the problem of ahistoricism and static approaches to be overcome.

In terms of sources for this article, evidence from Colombia's *Archivo General de la Nación*, *Archivo de la Presidencia*, and *Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango*, collected during fieldwork, have been used to support this article, as have documents from the U.S. National Security Archives. Findings have also been supported by semi-structured interviews conducted with former FARC commanders and retired Colombian military officers. In making this argument the article will begin with a theoretical discussion conceptualizing state-making processes from a Marxist perspective, and in doing so the approach will cast doubt on explanations which tend to reduce violence to factors of state weakness. The article will then follow with a section analyzing the National Front (1958–1964) as a state-making project which combined reformist concessions with coercion. Ultimately, it will be argued that the failure to consolidate even a weak position of hegemony compelled dominant forces to launch a repressive offensive that intensified the dynamics of conflict.

Conceptualizing state-making processes

A leading explanation behind political violence emphasizes factors of state weakness.[8] Structural realism's conceptual focus on uneven distributions of power has underpinned much of state weakness theory. According to this realist influenced analysis, the state's inability to deter potential threats is a leading cause of armed conflict. Along these lines Paul Collier has argued that state weakness is fundamental to explaining armed conflict, declaring that rebellion is basically decided by "whether rebels have access to guns and money, and whether the state is effective in opposing them".[9] McDougall has outlined this approach in relation to Colombia, highlighting how state weakness enables conflict in three crucial ways.[10] Firstly, a weak state provides opportunity for armed groups to emerge. Secondly, state weakness enables armed groups to exploit resources to engage in rebellion. Thirdly, state weakness makes it possible for armed groups to engage in a process of "state-building" and parcel out a situation of "multiple sovereignty". Together, these

three factors are regarded as responsible for reproducing conditions of state weakness and conflict.

To explain the outbreak of conflict and changes in warfare, including the decline of Colombia's armed conflict and the 2016 peace agreement, state weakness theorists often place emphasis on the role of the state's military in confronting insurgents and striking fear among potential sympathizers of revolutionary violence. In Colombia, the Revolution in Military Affairs (RIMA) is cited as having played a key role in re-establishing state authority and weakening armed groups.[11] According to this approach, the likes of advanced airpower, satellite technology, foliage penetrating radar systems, and tiny GPS micro-chips that can be hidden in everything from food and shampoo to boots and uniforms, are characterized as explaining the changing outcomes of state strength and insurgent weakness.[12]

State weakness theories do not always focus on military force and economic resources to explain the feasibility of armed conflict. Colombia's complex topography is said to have made it difficult for the state to establish authority across the national territorial landscape. Mountainous features are regarded as explaining why Colombia tended to become highly regionalized as opposed to establishing a strong centralized state.[13] Kline in turn argues that Colombia's failure to create a strong army or national police brought about a tradition of private violence, exacerbated from the 1980s by the state's failure to prevent drug profits and guns from falling into the hands of private groups.[14] Indeed, the unevenness of Colombia's geography is highlighted to explain not only state weakness but also the endurance of guerrilla groups.[15] Protection provided by jungle canopy and mountainous terrain undermines the state's ability to combat guerrillas effectively.[16] As such, state weakness in the form of a lack of territorial control is seen as opening up "ungoverned spaces" paving the way for armed actors to fill in the vacuum.[17]

Counterposed to state weakness theories which analyze conflict statically and ahistorically with an appeal to universal validity, this historical materialist (HM) approach analyses how the outbreak of Colombia's armed conflict is internally related to social property relations and social forces, particularly during the first period of the National Front (1958–1964). While state weakness theories overlook the internal relations in which state-making projects are developed, a HM approach can incorporate such underlying dynamics into the analysis at the same time as emphasizing the important role of agents, including military force, economic resources, and unequal power distributions. The questioning of states as constituted by social forces calls attention to the armed conflict as influenced by historical structures rooted in underlying social property relations. The philosophy of internal relations enables a conceptualization of how social property relations, social forces, and social orders, can be internally linked

as part of a self-forming whole.[18] Whereas state weakness theories treat problems to be solved as independent objects of investigation as part of a philosophy of exterior relations, a philosophy of internal relations conceptualizes states and agents as bound up internally with bundles of social relations.[19] The philosophy of internal relations, by recognizing development as internally related rather than externally interacting as part of a dualistic ontological framework, represents a "revolt against the violence of abstraction through which concepts all too commonly become fetishised, or treated as things, so that such material features come to replace specific social relations".[20]

It is through this philosophy of internal relations that capital can be understood not as a 'thing' or 'factor of production' but as an embodiment of social relations internal to capital itself.[21] In this way, 'factors of production', such as value, exchange, profit, and labor, are not conceptualized as externally relating on the basis of independent logics but are internally related in capital and production as social relations. This conceptualization of capital as an embodiment of social relations avoids the distortions that come with a focus on 'factors' that are treated as wholly apart from the other.[22] During the National Front (1958–1964), Colombia's social formation was largely organized around capitalist accumulation based on exploitation of labor-power. However, Colombia's capitalist social formation should not be understood in the 'idealized sense' as being only made up of manufacturers and industrial workers. Colombia has been significantly influenced by non-capitalist property relations, especially a quasi-feudal political economy of agriculture whereby *campesinos* are partly tied to the land and vulnerable to exploitation by landowners. Nonetheless, the capitalist mode of production based on competitive accumulation has been the dominant mode of production underscoring Colombia's development since the country's 19th century incorporation into world markets through agricultural exports.[23]

Capital as an embodiment of social relations is understood in this article as engendering social forces as key collective agents. As Karl Marx summarizes, competitive accumulation leads to highly uneven conditions of development, whereby to valorize itself capital is compelled to increase the rate of exploitation of workers and make labor-power more productive relative to that purchased by competitors.[24] This dynamic of accumulation, marked by the fact that capital is forced to be reproduced through the market at a profitable rate, involves contradictory social relations of production and antagonism. To realize a profitable return under competitive accumulation, capital engenders the capital-labor relation. This is expressed by the emergence of competing social-class forces as key collective actors reproducing themselves through the market. As capital is compelled to valorize itself by increasing the rate of exploitation of labor-power over time, development tends to be marked by

antagonism and conflict involving various social forces, embodied in capital as a social relation.

Political and economic conditions can be shaped and transformed by social forces engaging in class struggle. As states are conceptualized here as arenas through which social forces struggle for hegemony, the basis for molding a particular state formation is determined by social forces engaging in power struggles.[25] Antonio Gramsci criticized theories treating states as unitary actors standing above and external to the broader environment of social relations as engaging in "statolatry critiques".[26] By treating states as unitary objects simply consisting of government functionaries and coercive capabilities, statolatry analysis overlooks how states are shaped historically by distinct social forces, including competing interests and aims. Power in this article is defined in the Gramscian sense of consent and coercion. A hegemonic state is one in which particular social forces occupy a position of dominance over contending social forces at the level of production, as well as civil and political society. Following Gramsci's definition, for a state to be hegemonic it must have integrated key social forces into the political and economic order based on shared interests and beliefs, expressed through widespread consent and popular legitimacy.[27] This represents a strategic unity between production, political, and civil society, in securing a particular state form. This concept of the state shifts the focus away from ahistorical factors of "state weakness" to a focus on "state character" and the internal relations in which states are historically situated. More specifically, this HM approach analyses the Colombian State during the National Front (1958–1964) as historically constituted by social-class forces inserting themselves through civil and political society (the integral state) and shaped by social property relations.

Importantly, as Adam Morton highlights, while hegemony always includes a variable degree of coercion and consent, it is ultimately the dynamic of consent that makes a configuration of social forces "hegemonic".[28] Short of hegemony, social forces must rely more strongly on coercion to safeguard a political project and state form. To capture this dynamic and to characterize the National Front between 1958–1964, the concept of passive revolution is useful. Passive revolutions can be conceptualized as projects of revolution-restoration, whereby state forms are reorganized (revolutions) but changes are instigated to pacify popular opposition and safeguard positions of dominance (restoration).[29] Passive revolutions thus contain elements of transformation and conservativism, grounded in their reformist character at the same time as helping dominant forces to restore authority and overcome the prospect of more radical change.[30] In this way passive revolutions are linked to a dominant class 'war of position'.

Given that direct violence is associated with civil wars, it is important to note that the appearance of passive revolutions do not necessarily take an

'inert, literally passive' form.[31] Colombia is an example where passive revolutionary processes have involved significant violence, resistance, and conflict, which in turn has stunted the direction in which passive revolutions appeared to be taking. Although the National Front is characterized as a coalition building project involving the two parties,[32] this dialectical process of revolution-restoration made coercion a central element. Indeed, as passive revolutions lack hegemony, there is a strong tendency for dominant forces to use strategies of coercion to re-assert control. In Colombia, the concept *trasformismo*, associated with passive revolutions, effectively describes the ruling coalition's strategic approach to reorganizing the state through co-option. Gramsci argued that a strategy of *trasformismo* can be used to neutralize opposition forces, for example by integrating popular leaders and ideas into the ruling coalition.[33] The concept of *trasformismo* highlights how the authority of social forces is progressively restored through pacification, co-option, and alliance building, leading to exclusion and marginalization of more radical voices. Subsequently, the lack of hegemonic stability and popular legitimacy in passive revolutions encourages the use of strategies of exclusion and repression, including the possibility of producing new conditions of conflict.

Based on the methodological framework outlined above, I will now turn to analyzing the National Front (1958–1964) and highlight how dominant forces reorganized Colombia's form of state while simultaneously confronting radical-popular opposition, thereby escalating conflicts and the growth of revolutionary violence.

The National Front (1958–1964) as a state-making project

Building legitimacy and securing consent

Colombia in the 1948–1958[34] period experienced a severe crisis of legitimacy. Dominant authority was threatened from three key angles. Firstly, inter-party conflict erupted into violence following the assassination of left-populist Liberal leader Jorge Gaitán in 1948. This not only led to a decade of inter-party violence and instability, but confirmed to many subaltern groups that there was no institutional route to progressive change.[35] Secondly, government repression and inter-party violence prompted subalterns, notably *campesinos*, to organize self-defense communities from 1949 onwards. These self-defense groups did not emerge in a vacuum but were developed from decades of struggle in the countryside.[36] Even though subject to repression during the 1950s, their communal structures and roots among *campesino* communities helped the self-defense zones to survive.[37] Thirdly, military government between 1953–1957, initially supported by the two parties, threatened to create a third party, and end the traditional bi-partisan system.

Such developments influenced the traditional parties to re-establish their authority by undertaking a state reorganization project through the National Front.[38]

As mentioned previously, passive revolutions can be understood as projects to restore dominant authority through reforms.[39] Given the cycle of instability and inter-party conflict over preceding years, the reorganization of alliances was placed at the center of the National Front's purpose. According to Robert Dix,[40] "the National Front was to be the instrumentality for retaining real power in elite hands while at the same time carrying forward Colombia's economic development, and instituting those changes in the social order which would both advance elite material interests and ward off social revolution". To restore traditional authority, the National Front was organized around a bi-partisan agreement which ensured Liberal and Conservative control over national, regional, and local policy, while excluding opposition forces.[41] This involved several aspects. Public office, including the Supreme Court, was to be divided equally between the Liberals and Conservatives. The Presidency would be alternated between the two parties, while Executive Cabinets were also divided equally, with a two-third majority required to approve legislation.[42] Government officials and public administration employees were also appointed evenly.[43] These developments helped the traditional forces to engage in a "modernization project" while preserving political power.

The bi-partisan agreement above reshaped alliances in several crucial ways. The stabilization provided by the bi-partisan agreement helped the dominant forces to reduce the inter-party violence that had created an opening for radical-popular movements.[44] The National Front enforced a rehabilitation policy, which offered concessions to the *campesinos* that suffered most from repression in the 1950s.[45] Additionally, by restoring their political leadership through the mechanism of the National Front, the two parties were able to widen the patron-client networks on which their power had historically been based. As the traditional parties were the only parties in the political system, they were in a strong position to co-opt opposition leaders and subsume radical tendencies within the formal institutions.[46] Archival documents show that trade union leaders were working closely with government to conduct an anti-communist campaign and build a climate of inter-class harmony within the National Front.[47] At the same time, key leftist opposition elements were officially integrated into the Liberal faction *Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal* (MRL) founded in 1959, and headed by Alfonso López Michelsen, son of former president Alfonso López Pumarejo (1934–1938/1942–1946).[48]

In addition to political reforms, the National Front embarked on several development initiatives centered on pacifying *campesino* resistance.[49] Throughout the 1950s large numbers of *campesinos* organized against

landowners, independently of the two parties through land occupations.[50] Frequently, agrarian conflict erupted into violence and various self-defense zones were formed in response.[51] The zones of self-defense were organized according to distinct social relations of production and can be conceptualized differently than property relations based on direct coercion by a *hacendado* or exploitation of "free labor" by capitalists challenging landed interests; rather the self-defense zones were collectively organized, with community representatives and militias. They were grounded in communal social property relations and constituted autonomous spaces of counter-power, which distributed land, property, and food. As there was no basic services or infrastructure in such areas, according to the testimony of more than 300 *campesino* families, the communities also built roads, schools, and health clinics.[52] Declassified reports expressed strong concerns over these groups, and the lack of *campesino* co-operation in supporting military campaigns.[53] The National Front was thus strongly pressured to enact measures of pacification.

One key national program of the National Front was the creation of *Juntas de Acción Comunal* (JACs) in 1958.[54] Although portrayed officially as a non-political development program to support rural communities,[55] the JACs can be conceptualized as a counter-insurgency initiative closely connected to dominant class interests. The JACs, funded by the government and controlled by political bosses, served a dual purpose. They helped to pacify *campesinos* by directing them away from radical-popular mobilization and towards government-sponsored "self-help" projects like building and repairing roads, bridges, and schools.[56] They were also useful counter-insurgency tools for restoring public order under capitalist development, since they were tied to political elites and designed "to improve rural conditions without altering the real balance of social power in the countryside".[57] Situated in local communities and benefiting from government protection, the JACs extended the influence of the state.[58] The JACs were "systematically directed towards areas of organized left-wing political action" and used to counter independent mobilization.[59] According to Bagley and Edel,[60] the JACs were part of a broader counter-insurgency offensive under the National Front to bring "peasant groups into closer contact with national agencies" and reduce "the organizational and ideological coherence of the radical groups". Along these lines, the JACs can be understood as part of a state reorganizing project in that they helped to pacify subalterns, undermine radical-popular mobilization, and restore stability within dominant class structures.[61]

Another important initiative for restoring dominant class authority and pacifying *campesino* resistance was the creation of the *Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria* (INCORA) and the approval of agrarian reform in 1961 through Law 135. The reform recognized that a key reason for agrarian unrest was due to grievances over land.[62] In 1960 only 1.7% of landowners owned 55% of land fit for cultivation, whereas 62.5% of producers were forced to

meet subsistence levels on less than 1% of arable land.[63] The National Front needed to reintegrate *campesinos* into capitalist development to tackle radical-popular struggles. Political and economic grievances were recognized by leaders as fundamental to radical opposition.[64] Indeed, the *Comando General de las FF.MM*[65] estimated in a confidential report that 30% of the electoral population supported the leftist faction within the Liberal Party, the MRL, whereas entire populations of some regions were judged by military commanders as being 80% made up of communist sympathizers.[66] Government reports also highlight that there was a widespread problem in terms of gaining *campesino* support.[67] In the context of the Cuban Revolution, there was a greater willingness for Colombia's dominant classes to support reform.[68] Concurrently, the National Front needed to show that it had the capacity to address grievances.[69] While the National Front enacted a whole series of reforms to pacify subalterns, the JACs and the 1961 agrarian reform were central.[70]

It is important to avoid reifying historical structures and to identify explicitly the particular social relations influencing developments. Moreover, whereas state weakness theories tend to reduce armed conflict to distributions of power in military and economic terms, this HM approach considers the internal relations underpinning historical structures as important for shaping events. The 1961 agrarian reform can be conceptualized as a capitalist development initiative that did not support the redistribution of landed wealth.[71] The reform was inspired by Accelerated Economic Development (AEC) based on improving farming output under capitalist relations, largely through credit and technical expertise. Irrespective of support provided to *campesinos* through the 1961 agrarian reform, in the same period government assistance for agro-industrial interests led to a rise in land inequality and economically compelled displacement.[72] Furthermore, as *campesinos* then warned, the agrarian credit system facilitated a price-drop in cash-crops, was only offered for commercial rather than agricultural purposes, and would "only benefit the farms who invest credited money in commercial operations".[73] Although the agrarian reform assisted some 10,000 *campesinos*,[74] it was not a measure to democratize, but to promote commercial agriculture, incentivize *colonos* to withdraw from *latifundia* spaces, and pacify *campesino* resistance.[75] Indeed, archives show that military threats to withdraw *Caja Agraria* assistance were used as part of government strategy to dissuade *campesinos* from supporting radical-popular groups.[76] In other words, agrarian reform was connected to dominant class interests and part of the National Front's strategy of *trasformismo* based on partially incorporating subaltern demands.

The National Front's project of reform was severely constrained by the uneven dynamics of global capitalism. The Colombian economy was highly reliant on coffee production and had been since the 1880s. Between 1957

and 1962 coffee represented more than 65% of exports.[77] This hyper-dependence on coffee for access to world markets and foreign exchange limited the possibilities of reform and made Colombia vulnerable to price fluctuations and transnational accumulation.[78] Indeed, the National Front emerged in a context of decreasing export income, making it difficult to respond to the needs of agricultural and industrial development, not to mention meeting the demands of subaltern forces.[79] Capitalist development also implied a need for producers to compete internationally, which meant that producers were limited to what they could churn out competitively, based on increasing surplus value through intensification of labor exploitation. Capital required a competitive environment for accumulation, based on an exploitable workforce that enabled extended reproduction. Capitalist social relations therefore limited reforms and influenced the strategies available.

Moreover, the uneven character of agrarian class structures was fundamental to the viability of reforms. As highlighted, Colombia was highly unequal, and fertile land was dominated by a landholding elite. Even mild agrarian reform like Law 135 of 1961 implied confrontations with dominant class interests. For example, in 1963 dozens of *campesino*s from the municipality of Villarrica, Tolima, wrote to the President complaining that the 1961 agrarian reform had been"worthless" and "continues to be attacked by the large landowners and absentee owners who do not even visit the territories monthly … while the best land is owned by large landowners who neither exploit it nor give it to be exploited".[80] Zamosc and others conclude that dominant class opposition at local and regional levels prevented Law 135 from supporting *campesinos*.[81] Ultimately, a major consequence of the 1961 reform, based on extensive credit assistance to modernize agriculture around commercial production, was to encourage "semi-feudal estates" to transform into "large commercial farms within capitalist relations", which frustrated *campesinos* and significantly increased agrarian conflicts.[82] In other words, the formation of agrarian class structures prevented the National Front from incorporating key subaltern groups.

Following the Cuban Revolution in 1959, fears over radical-popular struggle substantially increased. The belief that such resistance was driven by political and economic instability influenced U.S. strategic planners to launch a capitalist development strategy for certain Latin American states, known as the Alliance for Progress (AFP). Although dominant class forces already recognized the need for reform, the AFP substantially influenced Colombia during the 1960s. Between 1961 and 1969 Colombia became the second largest recipient of the AFP, receiving US$761.9 million. This focused on promoting public order, political stability, and economic growth under capitalist relations, including by financing liberalization in a context of declining coffee prices.[83]

Although the AFP cannot be dealt with comprehensively in this article, Colombia became a leading recipient of AFP for several key reasons. As this section has argued, Colombia's dominant social forces were already open to implementing "modernization" reforms to stabilize capitalist development and counter radical-popular mobilization. The National Front was considered a suitable mechanism through which the AFP could be enforced. Concurrently, the AFP was linked to U.S-based capital. The AFP did not offer development assistance as a humanitarian gesture: there were social-class interests underpinning it. Specifically, the AFP was conditional upon Colombia enacting reforms privileging U.S. interests. In return for loans to support rural housing, health programs, and other projects, the AFP required that Colombia devalue its currency and open to U.S. capital. According to Taffet,[84] a currency devaluation coupled with economic opening was perceived by U.S. planners as beneficial to U.S. capitalist interests. Furthermore, the Cuban Revolution and radical-popular mobilization threatened not only Latin American elites, but also U.S.-based interests. Colombia was of particular importance because of its geostrategic position as the gateway to Central and South America, neighboring the Panama Canal, and bordering five countries which possessed significant natural resources. A February 1959 U.S. Strategic Assessment makes such a case, referring to Colombia as a guard of "our back door", particularly highlighting the importance of the Panama Canal and Latin American natural resources.[85] Indeed, Colombia itself offered, based on a history of communist guerrilla struggle predating the Cuban Revolution by 10 years,[86] strong evidence of widespread *campesino* support for radical-popular groups. As the next section will point out, these concerns were expressed by the speed at which U.S. Planners moved to reviewing Colombia's internal security situation following the Cuban Revolution (6 weeks) and concluding that the U.S.-Colombia relationship needed to be readjusted primarily around internal security as opposed to foreign aggression.[87] Pressures to safeguard capital accumulation generally as well as U.S. capitalist interests in particular underpinned the AFP.

As this article has argued, passive revolutions are characterized by an absence of hegemony. They are therefore strongly contested processes and can escalate conflicts rather than develop solutions. While passive revolutions are social-class projects aiming to restore authority, they do not necessarily succeed. Indeed, the fact that passive revolutions are characterized by an absence of hegemony implies that they must frequently rely on coercion. Even though Colombia's National Front reorganized class alliances, it was actively organized around coercion. As argued in this sub-section, the Colombian state's integration into global capitalism restricted the scope for reforms, and limited ways through which class struggles could be resolved. In turn, key subaltern groups viewed the National Front's reforms as a poor answer to their demands.[88] Accordingly, in uncovering the National Front as

a source of revolutionary violence, the next sub-section will consider how coercion became a defining dynamic.

Combining the carrot with the stick

While the National Front aimed to restore dominant class authority based on a passive revolution, as a non-hegemonic project the National Front was pressured to make coercion central to the reorganization process. As Perry Anderson[89] has pointed out, even under hegemony, coercion lurks in the background and appears with a vengeance at crisis junctures. Passive revolutions, therefore, as non-hegemonic projects, are strongly organized around coercion. As such, alongside limited reforms, the National Front's "assumption of the challenge of reorganization" was accompanied by "the implementation of a counter-insurgency warfare plan designed within the parameters of the Doctrine of National Security".[90]

One of the most important developments explaining the growth of revolutionary violence in the 1960s was the National Front's enabling of a comprehensive internal security system supporting the deepening of counter-insurgency activities against subaltern groups.[91] Historically, according to General Jorge Mora,[92] the military had been weaponized by one of the two parties as a partisan instrument. The problem of inter-party elite conflict had influenced all Colombian institutions. By managing inter-party conflicts through the National Front, greater commitment could be placed against the spreading threat to dominant class forces: radical-popular mobilization.[93] The military was thus reorganized from a traditional party instrument and deterring foreign aggression to internal stabilization.[94] According to Armando Borrero,[95] through the National Front's reorganization of the state, the military was 'institutionalized' and detached from traditional inter-party conflicts. This process in turn helped dominant forces to consolidate their position by reducing inter-party polarization and targeting subaltern groups. Indeed, the National Front represented a shift away from *La Violencia* and inter-party conflict towards a more distinct period: one characterized more by repression of subalterns based on a Cold War narrative.

The National Front's first government made anti-popular measures along U.S. "National Security" guidelines a priority.[96] As late as February 1959, "the only existing formal military agreement [between the U.S. and Colombia] . . . [made] no mention of internal security".[97] While reforms were offered to pacify subaltern struggles and integrate them into capitalist development, the National Front redefined and expanded the scope of counter-insurgency activities.[98] The National Front was able to benefit from U.S. assistance, whose fear of radical-popular mobilization rapidly increased following the Cuban Revolution in January 1959.[99] Already by February 1959 the U.S. Government was reviewing Colombia's internal security situation and advising that the

"greatest threat of Communist imperialism is through internal subversion rather than external aggression" – expressing particular fear over *campesino* mobilization and guerrilla activity.[100]

Military reorganization around confronting radical-popular mobilization was facilitated by the National Security doctrine of combating the "internal enemy". The Colombian historian Regán Vega Cantor[101] highlights that this counter-insurgency redefinition

> emerged as a doctrine of total war, going beyond anti-guerrilla military actions, and involving psychological warfare, training of local forces to confront insurgents, the creation of paramilitary groups, promotion of terrorist actions, carrying out of covert actions by the CIA and other U.S. agencies, the improvement of espionage operations, encouragement of informing by local populations, the support of trade unions and "free world" organizations, the encouragement of civil-military action to get the army out of the barracks and into everyday life, military-based economic aid, and the promotion of counterinsurgency publications by local armies.

This changing doctrine of National Security under the National Front is essential to understanding revolutionary violence in the 1960s because it identified the key threat to the "nation" as coming, not from foreign aggression or the dominant forces, but from subaltern groups like trade unions, *campesino*s, and third parties.[102] While strict empiricists may highlight that the concept of 'internal enemy' was usually addressed to communist subversion rather than subalterns more generally, such interpretations overlook how underlying dynamics shaped policy constructions. They brush aside the internal relations and social-class interests underpinning "National Security" processes in favor of summarizing dominant narratives. As Delgado-Ramos and María[103] point out, the redefinition of the "internal enemy" in the 1960s under the banner of combating 'international communism' facilitated the stigmatization of subalterns generally and provided an ideological rationale for repression of subaltern struggles. The doctrine was clearly tailored to safeguarding class structures, in this case represented by the National Front. Accordingly, as this section will reveal in more detail, military reports and personal testimonies express a generally repressive attitude against radical-popular groups. In essence, as the National Front was unable to integrate key subaltern forces into the dominant project, the National Security doctrine emerged to justify repression.

The redefining of the 'enemy' as encompassing subaltern groups influenced the formation of various coercive initiatives. The *Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad* (DAS) was developed in 1960 as an internal security service, notably to conduct covert intelligence activities against radical-popular groups. According to intelligence documents, DAS was widely involved in conducting surveillance of trade unions and other subaltern movements, including leftist Liberal Party

elements.[104] Highlighting the National Front's concerns over *campesino* unrest, DAS was also built with a department dedicated to rural intelligence.[105] Archival documents disclose that military intelligence was spying on all labor unions suspected of Cuban government links.[106] Meanwhile, the government incorporated a "vigilante group" created in the 1950s by wealthy cattle ranchers, and under Decree 414 in 1961, this group became a state institution.[107] Other initiatives were also created.[108] This included the founding of an official magazine in 1959, the *Revista del Ejercito*, which aimed to intellectually organise the Armed Forces around combating the internal enemy. Reflecting the offensive against radical-popular mobilization, Brigadier General Jorge Quintero in 1961 began a civic-military program with the objective "to convince the peasant that the army, rather than the guerrilla leader, is his friend."[109]

While the military was institutionalized and portrayed by the National Front as no longer politicized, against communists and other opposition forces, including third parties, trade unions, student groups, and *campesinos* - the military was anything but non-political. The hostile approach to subalterns was evidenced in the February 1961 intervention by the then Minister of War in the Council of Ministers, the Major General Rafael Hernández Pardo. The intervention shows that the failure to establish popular legitimacy amongst *campesinos* compelled the military to use violence. Despite recognizing that grievances and a lack of legitimacy were fundamental to growing communist influence, agrarian instability, and lack of cooperation in combating "*bandoleros*,"[110] the Minister called for a mainly repressive solution to the problem. He concluded that the measures should focus on increasing military and police sizes, improving mayors and judges, constructing more prisons, and gaining citizen collaboration.[111] Meanwhile, a 1961 government instruction to the Washington-based Colombian Embassy concerning requests for U.S. military aid highlighted the threat of *campesino* resistance, including "easily intimidated and semi-civilized indigenous people [who] could provide collaboration to subversive elements".[112] In the Department of Caldas, a Public Order Report noted that night-time raids against *campesinos* were causing significant disturbances and tragedies and strengthening "communists".[113] In internal military instructions under the National Front, communist activists, as well as "sectarian individuals of the political currents adverse to the Government and the constitutional President", were designated as 'enemy forces',[114] suggesting that the military was very much a politicized institution hostile to popular mobilization. Indeed, military reports highlight that "communists" were prohibited from joining the security forces, but that preventions needed to be improved in DAS and the Police in particular. The same report warned about communist influence in the Liberal Party and universities.[115]

Colombian-based archives reveal widespread evidence of repression during the National Front. Illuminating how quasi-feudal inequalities remained in place in the 1960s, *campesinos* complained that landowners – linked to the two traditional parties – acted as dictators and could summon the police to champion their interests without cause or investigation.[116] Simultaneously, landowners and military units were widely accused of organizing bandits to assassinate *campesino* organizers, burn their crops, and close down hospitals and schools to subdue *campesinos*.[117] The influential indigenous leader Jacobo Prías Álape "Charro Negro" was assassinated in 1960, as were many other popular organizers.[118] In 1963 the army killed 12 cement workers and injured 39 more in *La Masacre de Santa Bárbara*.[119] Personal *campesino* testimony reporting military abuses are countless: the *Sindicato de Trabajadores Agricolas de Municipio de Granda Departamento del Meta* pleaded in a letter to the Colombian president to stop abuses being committed by the military, claiming that on the 26 September 1963 the latter killed 30 *campesino*s in *Natagaima*.[120] Others expressed fear over local military units and claimed they were acting as personal security guards for foreign companies.[121] These personal testimonies suggest how coercion became a key ordering mechanism as the National Front failed to integrate subaltern groups through reforms.

Coercion was also instigated covertly. Networks of power were developed between political and civil society: for example, radios and newspapers were weaponized,[122] and a government propaganda campaign was established with USAID to delegitimize "communist-inspired" groups.[123] According to intelligence reports, assistance was discreetly offered to NGOs like the *Centro de Estudios y Acción Social*, understood by the U.S. Embassy[124] to be made up of wealthy Colombians from the two parties with a "truly significant amount of power" which offered "a potentially excellent mechanism to influence Colombians both constructively and negatively against Communism", including through black propaganda. This same group worked with "anti-communist labor unions, university professors, and the Catholic Church", and acted through the NGO *Accion Popular*, radios, and the newspaper *El Campesino*.[125] Archival documents show that the two largest unions – the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia* (CTC), and the *Unión de Trabajadores de Colombia* (UTC) - were on the front lines of purging suspected radicals from the labor movement and union leaders requested assistance from the U.S. Embassy to do so.[126]

Following the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the U.S. sent a Special Military Team, which became the "first major effort of the U.S. to influence the internal security problems of Colombia".[127] Colombia became a top priority for U.S. counterinsurgency assistance,[128] including through the Foreign Assistance Act, Peace Corps, USAID, The Inter-American Police Academy, and the CIA-led Overseas Internal Security Program.[129] The U.S. Team

recommended sweeping changes to Colombia's counter-insurgency approach, notably in areas of civil-action, troop indoctrination, propaganda, and psychological warfare. The U.S. Team recommended that psychological warfare should combat communists by depicting the "bandits" as "murdering Colombia like snakes eating young chickens and game".[130] Perhaps anticipating why so many Colombian insurgents were given negative nicknames by dominant forces over the years,[131] the Team called for "bandits" to be "renamed by government propagandists, using ludicrous and insulting names based upon personal or family characteristics". For those "people who support and protect the bandits", they should be shown as "cowardly half animals pointing out their sleeping young to the snakes". The report called for shaping press narratives to delegitimize the enemy, clandestine operations, and black propaganda, including "paramilitary, sabotage and/or terrorist activities against known communist proponents … before communist proponents become too strong to combat".[132]

Attached to the AFP, in 1962 a comprehensive counter-insurgency plan was implemented through Plan LASO. Plan LASO, based on the recommendations of the U.S. Special Military Team, reorganized the Colombian counterinsurgency strategy around confronting radical-popular groups.[133] Strengthening counter-insurgency operations, Plan LASO enforced aggressive military campaigns against the various self-defense communities mentioned earlier.[134] While this effectively displaced the self-defense communities, the counter-insurgency reorganization intensified the conflict dynamics. The indication of sharpening struggles in this period became no more apparent than surrounding "Operation Marquetalia" in 1964. According to the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica,[135] a 16,000 strong force attacked Marquetalia with bombings, napalm and bacterial warfare, the effects of which were nicknamed "*viruela negra*" and "*espuela de gallo*" by *campesinos*. Documents in Colombia's *Archivo de La Nacion* illuminate how Operation Marquetalia exacerbated class conflicts. Labor unions, youth, and women's groups, MRL politicians, international entities, citizens, and the *Marquetalianos* themselves, wrote letters protesting the attack.[136] On the 21st May 1964, the Communist Party newspaper,[137] carried the headline *¡Marquetalia no Está Sola … !* and filled its pages with messages of solidarity from labor unions,[138] while the business association *Sociedad de Agricultores* (SAC) organized a hotel dinner party for military officers, describing the president and military as heroes "engaged in actions of pacification" to reclaim national sovereignty.[139] While Operation Marquetalia successfully occupied the area, it also led to the emergence of mobile guerrilla warfare through the FARC.[140]

By conflating the "internal enemy" with communism and radical-popular struggles, subaltern groups were stigmatized and targeted as agents of international communist aggression. As the National Front was unable to establish hegemony through a project of reformist pacifications, dominant forces required an apparatus to target subaltern opposition forces. The

process of achieving "internal security" was therefore inherently political and linked to the National Front as a state reorganization project grounded in dominant class interests and capitalist development. This means that the National Front's turn to counterinsurgency against radical-popular mobilization, even as it enacted reformist concessions, was strongly influenced by the form of state and the failure to incorporate contending struggles. Subsequently, only by acknowledging how the National Front was internally related to underlying processes of class formation is it possible to explain the escalating dynamics of conflict. This in turn shines a light on one of the key functions of the National Front: that of restoring dominant class authority and weakening the resistance of radical-popular groups.

Conclusion: uncovering the sources of revolutionary violence

This article has contended that the National Front's (1958–1964) early period can be characterized as a passive revolutionary process. To overcome the crisis of authority experienced during the 1950s and to restore stability to capitalist development, Colombia's dominant class forces - supported by U.S. interests in the context of the Cuban Revolution – pursued a state reorganization process. To do this a dual approach was embraced. Firstly, dominant forces recognized the need to incorporate certain subaltern demands through reformist concessions and co-option. Analytically, this strategy for securing consent has been conceptualized along the lines of Gramsci's concept of *trasformismo*, whereby the correlation of forces is shifted in favor of dominant interests through pacification measures, including co-option. Secondly, the article highlighted that a central component of the National Front has been coercion. As Colombia's form of state was characterized by an absence of hegemony and popular unrest, dominant class forces had little choice but to make coercion a central component, which was developed through an anti-popular doctrine of National Security. Repression was therefore not an incidental reality of government or due simply to state weakness, but rather grounded in the way Colombia's state was shaped and reorganized by distinct social forces. In other words, the growth of revolutionary violence during the first period of the National Front can only be understood by analyzing the response of dominant forces to a crisis of authority, experienced throughout the 1950s, by instigating a passive revolution through the National Front.

Importantly, nonetheless, while certain subaltern interests were incorporated into the state, as a non-hegemonic project the National Front did not fundamentally address radical-popular demands. Instead, the conditions of passive revolution produced and intensified new dynamics of conflict, influencing the rise of armed revolutionary groups like ELN and the FARC.[141] The National Front ultimately produced new conditions of conflict for various reasons. Firstly, there was a clear disconnect between key subaltern demands and reforms

implemented.[142] Along these lines, the National Front was perceived by key subaltern groups as a project to restore dominant class authority and maintain relations of domination-subordination.[143] Secondly, the historic reality that Colombia's social formation was heavily oriented around coffee exports reduced room for maneuver and weakened the possibilities of reform, thus undermining the dominant class's ability to secure widespread consent. This highlights the importance of incorporating capitalist social relations into analyses of the Colombian conflict. Thirdly, that the state's character was passive revolutionary as opposed to hegemonic meant that it was vulnerable to contestation. While some might argue that the National Front constituted a weak hegemony because it incorporated some subaltern groups and was grounded in the consent of the two parties, this overlooks the reality that entire areas of Colombia's countryside were controlled by radical-popular forces. Fourthly, failure to integrate key subalterns and achieve popular legitimacy compelled dominant forces to rely heavily on repression. In doing so, the state intensified conflicts, and Colombia continued to be marked by violence in spite of concessionary reforms. Consequently, any complete explanation behind revolutionary violence must give credence to the failure of the dominant classes to establish hegemony at state levels. The National Front's strategy of co-option and concessions, coupled with repression, closed space to legitimate political alternatives and propelled subalterns towards revolutionary violence.

In other words, the FARC's birth in 1964 is intimately linked to this earlier period whereby dominant forces undertook a project to reshape the Colombian form of state, but in doing so initiated new confrontations with key subaltern groups. It was the National Front which, through Plan LASO in 1962, launched an aggressive military campaign against Marquetalia and other self-defense communities in 1964. Although the communities were forced onto the retreat, the military campaigns failed to subdue the *campesinos*. Instead, the retreating *campesinos* regrouped with other communities at the *Primera Confernecia Guerrillera* in Riochiquito, Cauca in 1965, where they concluded that the strategy of self-defense was no longer appropriate to the new reality. It was at this conference where the *campesinos* decided that a different form of struggle would be adopted: that of mobile guerrilla warfare based on political-military expansion, thereby leading to the FARC's founding as an insurgent organisation.

Notes

1. Schmidt, "La Violencia", 102.
2. Silva, "Lleras Camargo y Valencia", 211.
3. Beltrán, *Las FARC-EP*, 140–45; Former FARC Secretariat Member A, Personal Interview; Former FARC Secretariat Member B, Personal Interview; González, *Poder Y Violencia*, 319–22.
4. Gray, "The New Research", 64.

5. Retired Colombian Army Colonel B, Personal Interview.
6. Gray, "The New Research", 63.
7. Benton and Craib, *Philosophy of Social Science*, 17–18, 120.
8. Gray, "The New Research", 63.
9. Collier, "Doing Well out of War", 96.
10. McDougall, "State Power", 322–24.
11. Retired Colombian Army Colonel B, Personal Interview.
12. Davis, "Building the Tools", 55; Former FARC Commander C, Estado Mayor Central, Personal Interview.
13. Ceballos and Cronshaw, "The Evolution of Armed Conflict", 166.
14. Kline, "Colombia: Lawlessness", 161.
15. Rochlin, "Plan Colombia", 717–18, 728.
16. Davis, "Building The Tools", 51.
17. Dion and Russler, "Eradication Efforts".
18. Bieler and Morton, *Global Capitalism*, 8–9.
19. Wolf, *Europe and the People*, 3.
20. Bieler and Morton, *Global Capitalism*, 10.
21. Ollman, "Marxism and the Philosophy", 11.
22. Ibid., 21.
23. Leal, *Estado y Politíca*, 84–105.
24. Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, 325–322, 646.
25. Cox, *Production, Power*, 106–7.
26. Gramsci, *Selections*, 268.
27. Ibid., 161.
28. Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci*, 94–95.
29. Hesketh, "Passive Revolution", 398–99.
30. Chodor, *Neoliberal Hegemony*, 11.
31. Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci*, 104.
32. Silva, "El Origen Del Frente Nacional", 179.
33. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 58.
34. I realise that there are good reasons for tracing *La Violencia* to 1946. However, for the purposes of this article, which is driven by Gramscian concepts, the true magnitude of the crisis of legitimacy is traced from 1948, with state-sponsored repression leading to the first communist-influenced self-defense communities in 1949.
35. Londoño, "Carta a Medófilo Medina".
36. CIA, "Banditry and Insurgency"; CNMH, *Guerrilla y Población*, 30–33; Sanchez, *Ensayos de Historia*, 13.
37. CNMH, *Guerrilla y Población*, 54; Pizarro, *Las FARC*, 68.
38. Leal, *Estado y Politíca*, 158–59.
39. Hesketh, "Passive Revolution", 401.
40. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions*, 130–31.
41. Vázquez, *Historia Crítica*, 111.
42. Kline, *Between the Sword*, 13–15.
43. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions*, 134.
44. CIA, Latin America; Leal, *Estado y Politíca*, 155.
45. Vieira, "La Pacificacion Del Frente Nacional", 211.
46. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions*, 131, 147–58; Sanchez, "La Violencia: De Rojas al Frente Nacional", 167–69.

47. Comité Ejecutivo, "Resolución 03"; Mercado and Conde, "Despidos Colectivos de Trabajadores".
48. The leadership of MRL was ultimately subordinate to by the Liberal Party establishment, which eventually led to the departure of more radical elements, many of whom later helped to establish the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) in 1964. González, *Poder Y Violencia*, 252.; Villamizar, *Las Guerrillas*, 327. MRL's leader, Alfonso López Michelsen, later became President in the first post-National Front election of 1974, after dissolving the MRL in 1967 to become governor of *Cesar Department*.
49. Bagley and Edel, "Popular Mobilisation Programs", 259–60; CNMH, *Guerrilla y Población*, 31–32; Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions*, 398.
50. CNMH, *Guerrilla y Población*, 31–32.
51. Sánchez, "Violencia, Guerrillas", 147–48.
52. Los Colonos y Campesinos de Marquetalia, "Carta Abierta".
53. Bagley and Edel, "Popular Mobilisation Programs", 259–60; Comando General de las FF.MM, "No. 2"; Jaramillo, "Puntos Principales"; U.S. Department of State Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, "Communist "Enclaves" in Colombia".
54. Bagley and Edel, "Popular Mobilisation Programs", 259–60.
55. Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change*, 261.
56. Bagley and Edel, "Popular Mobilisation Programs", 259–60; Valencia, "Historia, Realidad", 1–2.
57. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions*, 153; Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question*, 38.
58. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions*, 354; Junta Directiva, "Carta al Señor Ministro"; Taffet, *Foreign Aid as*, 153.
59. Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change*, 162; Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, 466.
60. Bagley and Edel, "Popular Mobilisation Programs", 261–62.
61. It is important to note that many *Acción Comunales* would be transformed by struggles from below over later years and weaponized against dominant forces Brittain, Revolutionary Social Change, 164–167; Former FARC Political Advisor although others continued to be used as important resources for the counter-insurgency Mayor General Manuel Murillo, "Carta al Doctor".
62. Silva, "Lleras Camargo", 222.
63. Leech, *The FARC*, 19.
64. Jaramillo, "Puntos Principales".
65. Comando General de las FF.MM., "Situacion Interna No. 21, 4".
66. Comando General de las FF.MM., "Anexo No. 3", 8.
67. Secretario del Consejo de Ministros, "Puntos Principales".
68. Borrero, *De Marquetalia*, 45–50; Silva, "Lleras Camargo", 222; Comité Ejecutivo de UTC, "Declaración de La U.T.C."
69. SJM, "Meetings of Foreign Ministers".
70. Taffet, *Foreign Aid*, 152–54.
71. Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question*, 36.
72. Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change*, 7–8.
73. Caamaño et al., "Carta al Señor Presidente".
74. During the first five years of INCORA, around 10,000 families per year benefited from the land distribution program, which was outweighed by the growth of approximately 40,000 farming families per year. Kalmanoff, The Coffee Economy, 25. Ultimately, the 1961 reform did not resolve the issue of land.

Colombian archives show that the 1961 agrarian reform was effectively opposed by local landed interests and seen by many *campesinos* as a deception. Campesinos del Los Alpes Tolima, "Carta a Guillermo"; Marciales and Chitiva, "Resolución".

75. Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change*, 7; Leech, *The FARC*, 18–20.
76. Secretario del Consejo de Ministros, "Puntos Principales".
77. Taffet, *Foreign Aid*, 158.
78. Estrada, "Acumulación Capitalista", 299.
79. Fajardo, "Estudio Sobre", 385.
80. Campesinos del Los Alpes Tolima, "Carta al Señor Presidente".
81. Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question*,36; González, *Poder Y Violencia*, 326.
82. Fajardo, *Haciendas, Campesinos*, 121–22; Janvry, *The Agrarian Question*, 232.
83. Taffet, *Foreign Aid*, 149, 159, 172–73.
84. Ibid., 158–60.
85. U.S. Embassy Bogotá, "Map Program", 19.
86. Guaraca, *Asi Nacieron Las FARC*.
87. U.S. Embassy Bogotá, "Map Program", 14.
88. Silva, "Lleras Camargo", 216.
89. Anderson, "The Antinomies",13, 44.
90. Fajardo, "Estudio Sobre", 385–86.
91. Borrero, *De Marquetalia*, 65.
92. Mora, "La Historia de Colombia", 128–29.
93. SJM, "Meetings of Foreign Ministers"; Vázquez, *Historia Crítica*, 156.
94. Rempe, "Guerrillas, Bandits", 305–8; Retired Colombian Army Colonel A, Personal Interview.
95. Borrero, *De Marquetalia*, 65.
96. U.S. Department of Defense, "Planning and Objectives".
97. U.S. Embassy Bogotá, "Map Program", 1.
98. Borrero, *De Marquetalia*, 26–28. In 1962, the outgoing Liberal Party President, Alberto Lleras, expressed 'serious concern' to the U.S. about growing 'communist inspired' activity in Colombia CIA, "Daily Brief: Colombia"., while the newly inaugurated Conservative Party President Valencia pointed to agrarian unrest and armed resistance in the countryside as the country's "most serious problem". CIA, "Central Intelligence Weekly Summary: Colombia".
99. Randall, *Colombia*, 207–13.
100. U.S. Embassy Bogotá, "Map Program", 14.
101. Vega Cantor, "La Dimensión", 762.
102. Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Memorandum for"; U.S. Department of Defense, "Planning and Objectives"; Zuluaga, "U.S. Security Policies", 113–15.
103. Delgado-Ramos and María, "Political-Economic Factors", 96.
104. Ministerio Público Procuraduría, "Informe"; U.S. Embassy Colombia, "Administrative Department of Security".
105. U.S. Embassy Colombia, "Administrative Department of Security (DAS)".
106. Dirección General de la Policía Nacional Estado Mayor, "Información General".
107. Department of State, "Special Report".
108. Importantly, in 1964, the Government of Valencia provided the legal justification for private armed groups which evolved into paramilitarism Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Colombian Autodefensas: History and Organization", 3. Even prior to this however, as a U.S. Embassy Cable highlights, "Since as long ago as the War of a Thousand Days (1899–1902) and the years of strife known as La Violencia (which

began in 1948), rival landowners have employed bands of armed men to fight their battles". U.S. Embassy Bogotá, "Paramilitaries in Colombia", 3.

109. U.S. Embassy Bogotá, "Colombian Army Civic Action".
110. '*Bandolero'* was then the official term to describe communist *campesino* agitators. Military reports are filled with such references to communists and *campesino* agitators. These were the terms used to delegitimize opponents, preceding the use of labels like 'narco-guerrilla' and 'narco-terrorist' that came later. For example, in the Colombian military's official magazine, Revista del Ejercito, "La Acción Cívica. Cómo Cumplirla", 502., the editors express that there is no difference between guerrillas and bandits, and that guerrillas should be described as *bandoleros*.
111. Jaramillo, "Puntos Principales".
112. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, "Instrucciones al Embajador".
113. Campo, "Informe Sobre La Violencia".
114. Comando del Batallón, "Orden de Operaciones No. 003".
115. Comando General de las FF.MM, "Departamento No. 2", 12–24.
116. Dirección Nacional del MRL, "Carta al Presidente"; Ochoa and Escobar, "Carta al Presidente".
117. Amaya and José, "Carta Abierta"; Ligas campesinas Los Andes-Peñas Blancas", "Carta al Presidente".
118. Álape, "El 9 de Abril", 168–69; Marulanda, *Resistencia de Un Pueblo*, 13–34.
119. Guevara, "Carta al Presidente".
120. Briceno and Rodríguez, "Carta al Presidente".
121. Guevara, "Carta al Presidente".
122. U.S. Embassy Bogotá, "Colombian Army Civic Action".
123. Brown, "Meeting with U.S. Ambassador"; USAID, "Monthly Report (April 1964)"; U.S. Embassy Colombia, "First Progress Report".
124. U.S. Embassy Colombia, "Anti-Communist Campaign".
125. Visbal, "Communist Infiltration".
126. Comité Ejecutivo de la Unión de Trabajadores de Antioquia, "Resolución 03". Expinosa, "Carta al Presidente". Mercado and Conde, "Despidos Colectivos"; U.S. Embassy Colombia, "Request for Advice".
127. Rempe, "Guerrillas, Bandits", 305.
128. Rogers, "Letter to Dr. Carlos"; U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Report of Visit".
129. Randall, *Colombia and the United States*, 220–24; Rempe, "Guerrillas, Bandits", 50.
130. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Report of Visit".
131. For example, this is most famously so in the case of the FARC's historic leader, Manuel Marulanda, who was given the nickname 'Tirofijo' (Sureshot) by his enemies. A Former FARC Senior Political Advisor who knew Marulanda personally told me in an interview that 'he hated the nickname' and was assigned it to make him appear indistinguishable from criminals.
132. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Report of Visit".
133. Beltrán, *Las FARC-EP*, 140–43; Rempe, "Guerrillas, Bandits", 52; U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Report of Visit".
134. Beltrán, *Las FARC-EP*, 140–43; U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Report of Visit".
135. CNMH, *Guerrilla y Población*, 49–59.
136. Campesinos del Oriente del Tolima, "Carta al Presidente"; Comité Pro-Defensa del Barrio Manrique Oriental et al., "Carta al Presidente"; Los Colonos y Campesinos de Marquetalia, "Carta Abierta".

137. Voz Proletaria, ""¡Marquetalia No Está Sola. . .!".
138. There were many messages of solidarity publicly expressed by subaltern groups that can be found in Colombia's National Archives. See for example Caja 150 1964 in the section *Orden Publico*. There is no doubt that the military offensive against and subsequent occupation of Marquetalia was a national event attracting international interest See CNMH, *Guerrilla y Población*, 50.
139. SAC, "Trascendental Homemaje", 10.
140. Beltrán, *Las FARC-EP*, 140; Rich, "People's War Antithesis", 471.
141. Medina, *FARC-EP Y ELN*, 26, 126, 158.
142. Marciales and Chitiva, "Resolución. La Junta Directiva"; Marulanda, *Resistencia de Un Pueblo*, 13–34.
143. Even a CIA Report at the time recognized this, saying that the National Front was 'an obvious attempt by Colombia's oligarchy to preserve its traditional political dominance' CIA, "Political and Economic Strains in Colombia".

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