

# Maintaining Dominance: Explaining the Rise of Late-Entering Insurgent Groups in El Salvador and Guatemala

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## ABSTRACT

Although there exists substantial political science research on insurgent group fragmentation, this process remains ignored in the decades long civil wars of El Salvador and Guatemala. A comparative analysis of insurgencies in El Salvador (1979–1983) and Guatemala (1962–1969 and 1979–1983) investigates whether late insurgent groups arise from opportunities created by early groups' ability to: (a) present attractive ideologies; (b) establish cohesive organizations with popular, effective leaders; (c) and acquire resources. My findings suggest, late insurgent groups arise because early groups cannot create cohesive organizations with effective leadership. The effects of ideology and resources—important in research on insurgencies—are inconclusive.

El Salvador and Guatemala are post-conflict societies where civil wars between leftwing guerrillas and rightwing, authoritarian states ended with peace agreements. The Salvadoran peace accord of 1992 and post-conflict transition, however, empowered new elites, albeit more commercial and modern than their pre-war counterparts.<sup>1</sup> Violence increased as criminal gangs emerged in the vacuum left by the state because of familial disintegration, dislocation, poverty, unemployment, and via the complicity of political leaders across the two major parties and popular distrust of state institutions.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, ten years after Guatemala's 1996 peace accord, its indicators on poverty, infant mortality, and income disparity remained Central America's worst.<sup>3</sup> A decade later, Guatemala's indigenous communities were poorer, while the military interfered in politics and carried out policing duties.<sup>4</sup>

Evaluating the electoral fortunes of regional insurgent groups, Michael Allison noted how organizational fissures then and their political organizational capacities—during, but primarily after the conflicts—interact with electoral strategies to determine their continued success in post-conflict elections and, by implication, the political representation of non-elite social groups.<sup>5</sup> Whereas post-conflict electoral politics receives attention, except for Eric Mosinger's study of the 1970s Nicaraguan insurgency, studies ignore intra-insurgent dynamics during Central America's civil wars.<sup>6</sup>

A core characteristic of intra-insurgent politics is group fragmentation: “an event in which a segment of a rebel organization formally and collectively exits that rebel

organization and establishes a new, independent rebel organization".<sup>7</sup> This paper broadens the definition of fragmentation to include the rise of new groups—from disaffected members of political parties, student and labor unions, as well as social movements—within existing insurgencies. Late entering groups have leaders and members who splintered from preexisting groups and/or whose leaders and members are distinct from preexisting groups.

Fragmentation arises from insurgent groups' battlefield success and failures,<sup>8</sup> partly because states repress insurgencies or concede to their demands by calculating how such actions' will encourage or deter future insurgencies.<sup>9</sup> Recent research shows, state repression of insurgents' civilian sympathizers also causes fragmentation.<sup>10</sup>

Accessibility to natural resources increases fragmentation and violence against civilians,<sup>11</sup> while pre-conflict social networks and leadership cohesion determines whether resources fragment or unify groups.<sup>12</sup>

External sponsors discourage fragmentation by supporting insurgent groups' incumbent leaders or encourage it by supporting challengers, when incumbent leaders disregard the sponsors' preferences.<sup>13</sup> Single state sponsors decrease cohesion,<sup>14</sup> while multiple sponsors encourage fragmentation.<sup>15</sup>

This article applies theories of insurgent group fragmentation to compare insurgencies in Guatemala (1962–1969 and 1979–1983) and El Salvador (1979–1983). Specifically, I evaluate whether late groups arise from opportunities created by early groups' failure to capitalize on their advantages to maintain dominance by: (a) presenting distinct ideological 'frames' that identify problems and provide solutions; (b) establishing cohesive organizations with popular and effective leaders; and (c) capturing resources, specifically foreign funding.

El Salvador and Guatemala are suitable for testing these explanations because the variables of interest are all present. That all three insurgencies were defeated by security forces also disassociates the findings from implications for the outcome of the insurgency because it is a constant across the cases.

Furthermore, these studies permit two comparative research designs: the within-case comparison and the cross-case comparison. The comparison of the two waves of Guatemala's insurgency, leverages minimal variance in control variables. The comparison of El Salvador's insurgency with Guatemala's first wave insurgency leverages greater variance in control variables.

Although El Salvador and Guatemala are both located in Central America, their institutional, economic and cultural legacies varied. The differences include methods of military domination of politics: direct control in Guatemala and indirect control and electoral facades in El Salvador. The origins and political power of entrenched economic elites who controlled plantations and light industries: U.S. companies in Guatemala and local oligarchs in El Salvador. The conjunction of poverty, inequality, and racial identity of the two societies: poverty in both countries, but urbanization in El Salvador, and the overlap of poverty and rurality with indigenous identity in Guatemala. Topographically, Guatemala is the largest regional country with inaccessible terrain and El Salvador the region's smallest, most densely populated country.

Besides demography, topography, and economy, two other factors are treated akin to control variables because they are constant in the three cases either by their

presence or absence. First, state capacity to repress insurgencies is initially absent and subsequently present in all cases.<sup>16</sup> Second, the spoiling of negotiations between early insurgent groups and the government by late insurgent groups<sup>17</sup> is absent in all cases. Moreover, external support from foreign countries, wherein the rise of late entrants is explained through sponsors' shifting support,<sup>18</sup> namely Cuba and Nicaragua, is available to all groups in umbrella organizations.

The within-case comparison of Guatemala's 1962–1969 and 1979–1983 insurgent waves, shows the rise of late insurgent groups depends on two characteristics of early groups: (a) attractive and distinctive ideologies; and (b) group cohesion and effective leadership. It does not support the explanation (c) that early groups' inability to capture resources incentivizes late entrants.

Comparing the different cases of El Salvador (1979–1992) and Guatemala (1962–1969) indicates, Salvadoran late insurgent groups arose from opportunities created by early insurgent groups' failure to leverage their advantages by: (b) establishing cohesive organizations with popular and effective leaders. Consequently, the comparison does not support the explanations that early groups have to: (a) present distinct and attractive ideological 'frames'; and (c) capture resources.

Taken together, findings from the two comparisons indicate that organizational and leadership capacity is critical for early groups to maintain their dominance. Ideologies are important in some contexts, but resources alone cannot explain early groups' dominance.

The source materials for the studies are from historiographical, political, and anthropological research. These are supplemented with declassified reports by the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency of the United States, as well as documents from the RAND Corporation and the Guatemalan Truth Commission's (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico) report.

## **How Early Insurgent Groups Cannot Prevent Fragmentation: Definitions and Explanations**

Research on insurgencies focuses on motives and processes. Fearon and Laitin define insurgencies as “a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerilla warfare from rural base areas”.<sup>19</sup> Insurgencies are motivated by grievances about: the dislocating effects of economic modernization and state building on subsistence-oriented peasant communities;<sup>20</sup> frustrated economic expectations;<sup>21</sup> and the political and economic exclusion of ethnonational groups.<sup>22</sup> Insurgent groups also decide to fight based on expected costs and utility from rebelling.<sup>23</sup>

Insurgencies also need to overcome collective action barriers. Insurgent groups overcome such barriers if a state cannot maintain control over a territory<sup>24</sup> and if portable resources are available for looting and exportation by insurgent groups.<sup>25</sup>

Domination by an early insurgent group is minimally defined as its control of an umbrella insurgent organization that seeks to unite all insurgent groups. A sort of *primus inter pares*. Such domination extends to hegemony, wherein an insurgent group prevents other groups from arising, co-opts, and/or destroys them. Both minimal or hegemonic domination by early groups depend on their: (a) presenting popular

ideologies; (b) having cohesive organizations and effective leadership; and (c) capturing resources.

In terms of ideology, whether early groups capitalize on their pioneering status to create ethnic, religious, or class 'frames' and popularizes them incentivizes or disincentivizes the rise of new groups. Frames introduce concepts like injustice and tyranny, assign responsibility to individuals, groups, and institutions for these problems, and provide solutions from defending autonomy to capturing the state.<sup>26</sup>

Insurgent groups appeal to wider audiences by linking "ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames".<sup>27</sup> In northeastern Nigeria, for example, the Boko Haram merged Salafist doctrines from the Middle East, which were anti-traditional elite and egalitarian, with concerns of the marginalized Kanuri ethnic group.<sup>28</sup> Groups 'amplify' to include larger numbers of issues or social cleavages.<sup>29</sup> For example, the communist Sri Lankan Janata Vimukthi Perumuna used Sinhalese youth unemployment, inequality, and Sinhalese nationalism to attract recruits for the 1971 and 1986–1987 insurgencies.<sup>30</sup> Groups extend frames to include hitherto distinct groups,<sup>31</sup> like Uruguay's peasant centric Tupamaros insurgents' support for urban moderate leftwing parties in the *Frente Amplio* in the early 1970s.<sup>32</sup> Finally, insurgent groups change frames when they become redundant or opposed to social norms,<sup>33</sup> such as *Frente Amplio's* rejection of violent revolution and acceptance of neoliberal policies and Catholic parties in the early 2000s.<sup>34</sup>

Analyzing 1970s Nicaraguan insurgent groups, Mosinger connects the ideological appeals by insurgent groups with the nature and prevalence of social grievances to demonstrate how widespread grievances by diverse social groups, akin to a large market, attract and sustain more insurgent groups.<sup>35</sup> Applying Weinstein's insight,<sup>36</sup> he shows groups exploiting and looting from civilians cannot monopolize the insurgency, while groups building social connections can. Furthermore, the relationship between the depth and spread of grievances is akin to a bell curve, wherein deep and widespread grievances force fragmented groups to unite in umbrella organizations.<sup>37</sup> The above-mentioned theories and evidence leads to our first proffered explanation: *the rise of late insurgent groups is contingent on their relative ability to offer attractive and distinctive ideologies.*

Sinno's research on the Soviet-Afghan War and its aftermath demonstrates that insurgent organizations need to acquire safe havens and capacity to centralize determines their ability to mobilize society, prevent internecine conflict and defection, learn from their environment, and implement strategic objectives.<sup>38</sup> With regards to insurgency fragmentation, Mahoney argues insurgent groups with greater membership at the time of splits survive for longer periods and have a greater chance of achieving their goals.<sup>39</sup> Only when groups of similar size compete, do strategies of violence versus nonviolence determine survival and success.<sup>40</sup>

Combining market and firm level approaches, Parkinson's research on Palestinian insurgent groups shows social embeddedness through female noncombatant members increases group cohesion and resilience against state repression.<sup>41</sup> Larson and Lewis find homogenous social and familial networks increase groups' desire to start insurgencies in Uganda.<sup>42</sup> Fjelde and Nilsson's cross national study indicates strong social networks of incumbent groups prevent the rise of new groups by depriving them of civilian sympathizers and recruits.<sup>43</sup>

This article combines the above insights on organizational capacity. Organizational strength is observed through the presence of leadership conflicts and turnover; splinter groups based on leadership fragmentation; whether groups are built around individual leaders rather than organizational structures; through the sub-national territories in which a group operates; and the numbers of combatants and sympathizers of a group. This definition yields the explanation that: *the rise of late insurgent groups is contingent on early groups' lack of popular organizations and cohesive leadership.*

Although the direction and effects of the relationship between resources and organizational strength remains disputed, organizational strength and resources are distinct factors that affect insurgent groups' capacity to fight and proneness to fragmentation. Comparing the Ugandan Resistance Army, the Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) from Mozambique, and two distinct branches of the Peruvian Sendero Luminoso, Weinstein demonstrates insurgencies relying on natural resources like cocaine or petroleum, develop weak organizations with undisciplined recruits.<sup>44</sup> Thus, increasing defection of members, harming relations with local populations, and undermining support from non-participants. In turn, insurgent groups relying on scarce revenues, collected as taxes or levies on agricultural produce and businesses, cultivate good relations with local populations and develop strong organizations and ideologies to deter rent seeking behavior and discipline recruits.<sup>45</sup> Fjelde and Nilsson extend this insight by showing intra-insurgent fighting is related to acquiring material resources and leverage against governments.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the probability of such conflicts increases in areas where narcotics is cultivated, areas inaccessible or weakly controlled by governments, as well as the relative strength of insurgent groups.

On the other hand, in his study of insurgencies in India, Staniland elaborates those abundant resources—from ethnic diasporas, narcotics, or minerals—strengthens the efficiency and organizational cohesiveness of insurgencies if built on “preexisting [social] networks that combine strong horizontal links pulling together individuals across different localities with vertical ties between organizers and local communities”.<sup>47</sup> Conversely, abundant resources fragment insurgent organizations and reduce their efficiency if built on weak horizontal linkages when a community is divided on religious or sectarian lines or weak vertical linkages if leaders are not from local communities.<sup>48</sup> The above-mentioned theories and evidence lead to the third explanation that: *early groups' ability to capture and deploy resources determines the rise and sustenance of later groups.*

## **Findings: Organization and Leadership Matters**

The within case comparison of Guatemala shown in [Table 1](#), shows the rise of late entering insurgent groups depended on the early groups' ideologies, as well as the cohesiveness of organizations and effectiveness of leaders. The evidence does not show resources played a role in preventing or encouraging late entering groups because similar resources were available to both early and late entrants.

The cross-case comparison of El Salvador's insurgency with Guatemala's first wave of insurgency, illustrated in [Table 2](#), shows that the critical causal factors are cohesion and effectiveness of early insurgent groups' organizations and leadership. However, ideological variations and resources remain constant.

**Table 1.** Within case comparison of Guatemala.

	Ideology	Organization and Leaders	Resources	Late Entrants
Guatemala I (1962–1969)	Similar	Cohesive Organizations and Effective Leadership	Available to all groups	No
Guatemala II (1979–1983)	Distinctive	Weak Organizations and Ineffective Leadership	Available to all groups	Yes

## Guatemala: The Origins of the Insurgency

Although it is Central America's largest and most populous country, Guatemala has low population density.<sup>49</sup> Approximately 40 percent of Guatemalans identify as indigenous, the majority with Mayan ancestry, while 60 percent of Guatemalans identify as ladino. The indigenous groups predominantly reside in rural areas in northern and northwestern Guatemala, specifically the department of Petén and the Franja Transversal del Norte that runs from east to west, covering the departments of Huehuetenango, Izabal, Quiché, and Alta Verapaz.

Guatemala relied on exports of coffee and bananas with the direct involvement of U.S. corporations. The government granted taxation and landholding concessions to the United Fruit Company (UFC) in 1904.<sup>50</sup> The U.S. based International Railways of Central America and Electric Bond and Share providing the country's railway network and electricity, also enjoyed concessions. Because UFC held controlling shares of the latter companies, it became politically influential.<sup>51</sup>

Poverty rates remained high with 62–63 percent of the population classifiable as poor in 1989 and 54–56 percent in 2000, four years after a peace agreement between the government and rebels.<sup>52</sup> Consumption and income remained unequal and racialized: indigenous groups who made up 43 percent of the population during 1960–1990, claimed 23 percent of consumption and income,<sup>53</sup> and had a poverty rate of 76 percent compared to 41 percent for the non-indigenous.<sup>54</sup>

Although it dominated politics, Guatemala's military had internal differences about the extent of such participation. The military accepted democracy in 1944, after the personalist dictatorship of Jorge Ubico Castañeda was deposed. It also accepted an official program to remove social backwardness and "economic colonialism", under the presidency of educator Juan José Arévalo, backed by Colonels Francisco Arana and Jacobo Árbenz who became Chief of Armed Forces and Defense Minister respectively.<sup>55</sup> Ironically, via Árbenz and Arana's participation, it was during this era when the military's role in politics and autonomy from civilian oversight became institutionalized.<sup>56</sup>

Besides democratization, the presidencies of Arévalo and then Árbenz presided over substantive socioeconomic reforms, including the enfranchisement of indigenous groups. The Labor Law of May 1947 delivered workers' rights like unionization, striking, forty-eight-hour work weeks, regulations regarding employment of women and adolescents, and workplace health and safety standards.<sup>57</sup> Under Árbenz, the Agrarian Reform Law of 1952 redistributed land from plantations to poor ladino and indigenous peasants. More than labor laws and land redistribution, the core transformation was the dissolution of the elite planter dominated ideology of political order and development, which was unrecoverable despite three decades of political repression that followed the coup of 1954.<sup>58</sup>

**Table 2.** Cross-case comparison of Guatemala I and El Salvador.

	Ideology	Organization	Resources	Late entrants
El Salvador (1979–1983)	Similar	Weak Organizations and Ineffective Leadership	Available to all groups	Yes
Guatemala I (1962–1969)	Similar	Cohesive Organizations and Effective Leadership	Available to all groups	No

The coup, backed by the United States' Eisenhower administration—at the behest of the UFC whose lands the Árbenz regime confiscated—funded, trained, and equipped a small force under exiled Guatemalan officer Col. Castillo Armas to invade Guatemala from Honduras. The invasion succeeded, and Árbenz' exile to Mexico led to the retrenchment of reforms and the political and economic restoration of major domestic and foreign landowners.<sup>59</sup> The UFC had 99 percent of its lands returned, a permanent tax break “on all interest, dividends, and other profits payable to foreign investors; agricultural cooperatives were abolished; and lands made available for redistribution became restricted to those that were inaccessible or of poor quality.”<sup>60</sup>

### ***The First Wave, 1962–1969: The MR-13 Dominates FAR***

The restoration of the old landowning elites faced opposition from students and union leaders, but also from nationalist junior officers of the army who resented the U.S. sponsorship of the 1954 coup. A presidential guard assassinated then President Castillo Armas in 1957. Although the assassin's political loyalties and backers remained uncertain, the official Guatemalan reason became that he was a Communist, and the U.S. followed and propagated the Communist link.<sup>61</sup> The subsequent Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes presidency (March, 1958 to March, 1963) witnessed protests and strikes by labor unions, university students, and professors.<sup>62</sup> However, peasants were noticeably absent from the protests.<sup>63</sup>

During the unrest, an abortive revolutionary coup occurred on November 13, 1960, against President Fuentes. It was undertaken by 120 officers and 3,000 soldiers: a third of the army.<sup>64</sup> The coup leaders were junior officers of the Guatemalan Army, Lt. Marco Antonio Yon Sosa and Lt. Luis Turcios Lima, who had studied counterinsurgency at the United States Army School of the Americas in Panama and the United States Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, Georgia.<sup>65</sup>

### ***Groups and Ideologies***

The first insurgent group, led by Yon Sosa and Turcios Lima, was the Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre (MR-13) founded in February 1962.<sup>66</sup> Their initial attempts to recruit other soldiers failed: forcing them to seek refuge in El Salvador.<sup>67</sup> The Frente Guerrillero del 20 de Octubre (FGEI), named after the date of the 1944 Revolution, was created in October 1962 by the Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo's (the Guatemalan Communist Party—PGT) youth league and the Partido Unión Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Unity Party—PUR). Another group comprised of left-wing students called itself the Movimiento Revolucionario 12 de abril (April 12 Movement), commemorating the death of three student activists. The above mentioned

groups allied with another group to form the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Revolutionary Armed Forces—FAR) in December 1962.<sup>68</sup>

With regards to ideology, all these groups were inspired by the example of the Cuban Revolution of 1959.<sup>69</sup> The FGEI claimed to hold the same ideology as MR-13: “looking to defeat the government to establish a free, sovereign and democratic Guatemala”.<sup>70</sup> However, the Cuban strategy of *foquismo*, wherein the rural population becomes critically conscious due to the guerrillas’ exemplary actions led to their neglect of rural support.<sup>71</sup> Thus, they were neither based on local social and economic grievances nor local opportunities or threats from political elites.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, ideological rigidity led to inflexibility in the methods for insurgency.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Resources Foreign and Domestic***

In terms of resources, the U.S. suspected Cuba of sponsoring the FAR,<sup>74</sup> According to a CIA report cited by Vázquez Olivera and Campos Hernandez, Cuba trained insurgents of the umbrella group FAR and provided them with funds, international connections, and help through its embassy in Mexico. The report noted \$200,000 of the \$250,000 given by Cuba to the Guatemalan groups in 1964 “went to Marco Antonio Yon Sosa’s group”, i.e. the MR-13.<sup>75</sup>

But Cuba did not privilege MR-13 over other FAR groups. Initially, Che Guevara invited Carlos Paz Tejada, former minister of defense under President Árbenz, to present his plans to launch an insurgency.<sup>76</sup> The PGT acquired support from Cuban leaders from then onwards, and leaders from their youth wing received training in guerrilla warfare in Cuba during 1961-1962.<sup>77</sup> The student leaders participated in the earliest operations in 1962,<sup>78</sup> which were quickly crushed by the military. In August of 1962 the leaders of MR-13 Yon Sosa, Turcios Lima and Luis Trejo Esquivel went to Cuba, met Che Guevara and former President Arbenz.<sup>79</sup> Upon their return, MR-13 began collaborating with PGT and Movimiento Revolucionario 12 de abril.<sup>80</sup>

In terms of domestic resources, PGT in Guatemala City provided the primary financial support and some bases of operation, while MR-13 was primarily responsible for combat activities and operations.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, Cuba stopped involvement in guerrilla operations across South America after the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967.<sup>82</sup> Subsequently, the CIA noted that resources were gathered from Guatemala by kidnappings and extortion.<sup>83</sup> Thus, neither domestic nor foreign resources ultimately solidified the MR-13’s dominant position.

### ***Organizations and Leaders***

The MR-13’s first operation in Huehuetenango Department in March 1962 failed when the locals gave up the insurgents to the army.<sup>84</sup> But that did not undercut its dominance because the same month, the army repelled a column of the *FGEI 20 de Octubre* (FGEI), led by Carlos Paz Tejada,<sup>85</sup> and killed 14 of its 23 members, the others escaping or being captured.<sup>86</sup>

After FAR formed, the MR-13 controlled Alejandro de León Front led by Yon Sosa fought in the lowland departments of Izabal and Zacapa.<sup>87</sup> The Edgar Ibarra Front in the Sierra de las Minas was initially led by Turcios Lima until his death in an



automobile accident in September 1966, after which it was led by Alejandro de León “who lacked the military talents and charisma of Turcios Lima.”<sup>88</sup> The PGT was active in Guatemala City.<sup>89</sup>

FGEI and MR-13 became “politically and militarily isolated,” and without “secure geographical and population bases to recruit from, the insurgents could use only one form of action—military.”<sup>90</sup> The distinct areas controlled by them, moreover, reduced inter-group collaboration.<sup>91</sup> Rodrigo Asturias, an insurgent leader who subsequently headed another group in the 1970s-1980s, explained the failure was due to improvisation, bad choice of terrain, members’ unpreparedness and inexperience, and because the peasants of the zone [of operations] denounced them to the security forces.”<sup>92</sup>

However, the official FAR history of the period also notes FGEI suffered due to infighting between leaders and its reliance on the logistical support provided by the Guatemala City based PGT.<sup>93</sup> Both contentions were later supported by the Guatemalan Truth Commission’s report.<sup>94</sup> Thus, FGEI could not challenge MR-13’s dominance.

The insurgency continued because of the military’s unwillingness to crack down on the former officers leading the insurgency.<sup>95</sup> A taboo overcome after insurgents ambushed an army column in May 1965, killing a lieutenant and seventeen soldiers.<sup>96</sup> The Guatemalan government’s subsequent brutal counterinsurgency program from 1965–1969 supported by U.S. training and equipment, “killed several top leaders, decimated the cadres, and broke up FAR’s support networks.”<sup>97</sup>

MR-13 split from FAR in 1964, but the groups remained on good terms,<sup>98</sup> and MR 13 rejoined FAR in 1968.<sup>99</sup> Yon Sosa was injured, fled to Mexico, and was killed by Mexican security forces in 1970.<sup>100</sup> Thus, despite robberies and spectacular kidnappings of foreign dignitaries and local businessmen in Guatemala City, the first wave of insurgency ended.

### ***The Second Wave, 1979–1983: EGP Fails to Prevent the Rise of ORPA and Dominate URNG***

Facing massive state repression, FAR split from its alliance with PGT, and a period of exile and factional infighting concluded with the formation of a splinter group in 1968 led by Julio César Macías and Ricardo Ramírez. Beginning operations in January, 1972, the group named itself the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (Guerrilla Army of the Poor—EGP),<sup>101</sup> and operated in the inaccessible Ixcán jungle of the northern departments of Huehuetenango and Quiché, which had a mainly indigenous population.<sup>102</sup>

#### ***Groups and Ideologies***

The second wave’s early group was effectively EGP: founded and led by former FAR leader and ex-member of PGT Ricardo Ramirez de Leon, who was trained in Cuba in the early 1960s.<sup>103</sup> EGP differed from FAR in location and makeup: based principally in the departments of Quiché, Huehuetenango, Alta Verapaz, and Chimaltenango,<sup>104</sup> it recruited from indigenous groups there, who by 1983 became the majority of EGP’s regulars.<sup>105</sup>

EGP’s turn toward creating a revolutionary “mass base” among indigenous groups and moving away from the capital city in the eastern side of the country, with its

predominantly ladino and creole population, was based on internal criticisms of FAR's original *foco* strategy of revolt.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, EGP retained ties with “ladino and indigenous FAR veterans, ladino university and secondary school students, and radicalized Catholics” in the mountains, rural and urban areas.<sup>107</sup>

The major late entering group was the Organización Revolucionario del Pueblo en Armas (ORPA). Founded in 1971, ORPA began military operations in 1979/1980<sup>108</sup> led by a former FAR leader Rodrigo Asturias, the son of Nobel laureate Miguel Ángel Asturias. Despite an indigenous identity centric ideology and years recruiting from and building sympathy among indigenous groups,<sup>109</sup> ORPA leadership remained urban guerrilla veterans, “intellectuals, professionals, young Catholics, and university students”.<sup>110</sup>

ORPA's ideology was distinctive because it rejected the rigid class-analytic terms of FAR and EGP, and considered that in “Guatemala, the engine of revolution was not the proletariat but rather the ‘pueblo natural,’ the Mayan majority” repressed by ladinos and criollos for centuries.<sup>111</sup> Even the CIA noted, ORPA was “less ideologically rigid” than EGP and FAR.<sup>112</sup> The NSA considered it a “nationalist group” aiming to “cleanse the country of the ‘corrupt elite’ which it alleges oppresses the people”, more focused on “opposition to the governing regime, on corruption, and other abuses rather than on ideology,” which neither used Marxist rhetoric in its propaganda to the indigenous groups nor had Marxist symbols like the other groups in its organizational logo of an exploding volcano.<sup>113</sup>

Aside from EGP, ORPA, and FAR, a smaller group arose as a PGT dissident faction, the PGT/D, led by Jose Alberto Cardozo Aguilar based in Mexico City.<sup>114</sup> Its ideological flexibility did not allow ORPA to maintain unity: a small group of insurgents had splintered from it in 1976, to form the Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo—Ixim (MRP-Ixim, or Ixim) because of their more radical demands for indigenous groups.<sup>115</sup> The remnants of FAR also continued their insurgency based in the far northern Department of Petén.<sup>116</sup>

### ***Resources Foreign and Domestic***

Cuba's primary “mission was to unite” the different groups, and nearly succeeded.<sup>117</sup> The above-mentioned January 1981 CIA report stated, Cuba it supported ORPA, which “may be a significant factor in ORPA's rise to prominence”.<sup>118</sup> But subsequent CIA reports noted, Cuba was equally supporting all groups: it helped create a unified umbrella organization, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) in early 1982.<sup>119</sup> Cuba's efforts in uniting the groups were supported by the Sandinista regime of Nicaragua, which hosted talks between EGP, FAR, ORPA and PGT/D in Managua through 1980, which signed the agreement to form the URNG there.<sup>120</sup>

According to the CIA, Cuba and the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua also “trained several hundred insurgents”, provided funds, and weapons.<sup>121</sup> About 25 percent of Guatemalan guerrillas received training in Cuba.<sup>122</sup> However, a later report from 1986, citing a 1985 study by the U.S. embassy in Guatemala City stated Cuba was dissatisfied with the Guatemalan groups' inability to unite, and periodically threatened to cut off arms supplies.<sup>123</sup>

The URNG's core political-military body, based in Nicaragua, was the General Revolutionary Command (CGR) with members from all four groups.<sup>124</sup> The EGP could not influence the CGR, and it became divided and nearly nonfunctional. Initially, the ideological divisions between the smaller orthodox-Marxist FAR focusing on the urban sectors as the revolutionary vanguard and the new-left oriented EGP that incorporated the indigenous peasants' grievances, continued to divide the organization.<sup>125</sup> ORPA had similar reservations about URNG being dominated by any one ideology, implying the Marxism of EGP, FAR, and PGT-D.<sup>126</sup>

EGP also faced organizational challenges within itself, as did other groups. "ORPA leaders and the in-country leadership of the EGP immediately began questioning the CGR's decisions and even its right to exist", ORPA chief Asturias did not attend CGR meetings regularly, and the "political commission of the PGT-D questioned the right of its members to represent the PGT-D in the CGR".<sup>127</sup> Finally, unlike their first wave counterparts, the URNG groups refused to unify their military command.<sup>128</sup>

### *Organizations and Leaders*

After three years of organization, EGP began guerrilla operations in 1975 in Quiché's indigenous dominated Ixil Triangle area, and soon expanded to control the entire departments of Huehuetenango and Quiché.<sup>129</sup> The group operated six "fronts" controlled by a "Front Directorate", which subsequently developed distinct military and political commands; the former reported directly to EGP's National Directorate.<sup>130</sup> ORPA operated in the sparsely populated mountain range departments of Esquintla, San Marcos, Sololá, Quetzaltenango and Chimaltenango and parts of Huehuetenango dominated by indigenous groups.<sup>131</sup>

With support from the indigenous groups providing food, shelter, and recruits, and their location in the inaccessible terrain of the northwestern highlands, EGP and ORPA started attacking Guatemalan security forces and government officials from 1979. In 1981–1982, all groups started a bombing campaign to destroy Guatemala's economic and communications infrastructure and undermine the tourist industry. By 1982, insurgents were operating in nineteen out of Guatemala's twenty-two departments and in the capital Guatemala City; they completely controlled three departments; and had captured a department capital sixty miles from Guatemala City.<sup>132</sup>

Given the military's brutal yet ineffective counterinsurgency operations during President Fernando Romeo Lucas Garcia's tenure from July 1978 to March 1982, the number of insurgents swelled to 6,000 due to support from the indigenous groups and backing from Cuba and Nicaragua.<sup>133</sup> By one estimate, there were nearly a million active supporters for the insurgents in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>134</sup> In terms of relative group capacity, a January 1981 Intelligence Assessment by the CIA stated, EGP was the "largest and most potent guerrilla organization", however, "if ORPA continued to increase its operations at the present rate" it could "eclipse the older organization".<sup>135</sup>

The March 1982 coup led by Efraín Ríos Montt intensified counterinsurgency efforts. Having determined that insurgent groups were recruiting from the indigenous population, the military targeted Mayan communities for indiscriminate retaliation.<sup>136</sup> The government also created, trained, and armed municipal-level paramilitary groups called

civil patrols to man checkpoints, guide soldiers through local terrain, and provide information about locals.<sup>137</sup>

By 1983 total insurgent strength was reduced to between 2,000 and 2,500.<sup>138</sup> EGP remained the largest group with 800–1,000 combatants.<sup>139</sup> But its network for resources and recruits among the indigenous Highlands population was destroyed.<sup>140</sup> Every member of EGP's central governing body, the National Directorate, was forced to leave Guatemala, while the group's then leader Ricardo Arnaldo Ramirez de Leon remained outside Guatemala after 1980.<sup>141</sup>

Though it remained the second largest group with 700–800 combatants,<sup>142</sup> ORPA's Guatemala City organization was destroyed in 1981 and rural organization crippled in 1982–1983. By the end of 1981, it was forced to stop operations in Chimaltenango—handing over insurgent activity to EGP—and security forces prevented it from reestablishing in Guatemala City in mid-1982.<sup>143</sup>

By 1983, smaller groups like the Movimiento Popular Revolucionario (Popular Revolutionary Movement—MPR) splintered from ORPA and left the URNG. FAR's efforts at expansion in the Chimaltenango Department failed (Rudolph, 1983: 161). Also, new groups arose outside the URNG itself, such as the Guatemalan version of the regionalist Trotskyite Partido de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos (Central American Workers Party—PTC).<sup>144</sup>

The military's brutal repression reached genocidal proportions against the indigenous populace.<sup>145</sup> An October, 1982 attack by EGP, killing 19 soldiers in the Department of Petén, led to military retaliations against EGP and civilian sympathizers that included the burning of homes, crops and a massacre in the village of Dos Erres.<sup>146</sup> According to the findings of the Guatemalan Human Right Commission, the military's Kaibil Unit, special forces trained for counter-insurgency operations, killed 300 civilians, including 113 children below 14 years of age: the soldiers first threw babies down the towns' wells; women and children were then collected in churches; the women were subsequently raped and the children beaten before being thrown down in wells, some alive; finally, the men were bludgeoned to death before their bodies were thrown into wells.<sup>147</sup> Thus, although the conflict continued for more than a decade, the window of opportunity for the EGP to dominate the insurgency was lost.

## **El Salvador: The Origins of the Insurgency**

El Salvador is the smallest, most densely populated Central American country. With two mountain ranges, El Salvador's population and economy is concentrated in the central plateau and a narrow pacific coastline with the most fertile lands. During the 1980s, 89 percent of the population identified as ladino, with mixed indigenous and European ancestry, while 10 percent identified as indigenous.<sup>148</sup> In the 1970s–80s, the Salvadoran economy primarily relied on coffee production and exports based in large estates owned by a small segment of Salvadoran elites, who also invested in cotton and sugar cultivation, which became the second and third ranking exports, while taxes on coffee export earnings supported light industries.<sup>149</sup>

Despite diversification, poverty remained undiminished.<sup>150</sup> There existed massive inequality in agricultural landholdings: 92 percent (approximately 250,000) of the farms

making up 27 percent of the total farmland, while 8 percent of farms (1,951 farms) greater than 100 hectares controlled 73 percent of farmland.<sup>151</sup> Landless rural workers increased from 27.6 percent of agricultural workers in 1961 to 38.1 percent in 1971.<sup>152</sup> Land reform measures in 1980 to mollify the insurgent groups failed due to opposition by major landholders allied with segments of the military and rightwing death squads.

The Salvadoran military's political involvement differed from its Guatemalan counterpart. It attempted a top-down socioeconomic modernization from the 1930s, participating in electoral politics via preexisting local and national patronage networks within national-level political parties and allied paramilitaries.<sup>153</sup> Its political dominance remained unbroken until the 1980s. Although the military distanced itself from the coffee-based oligarchs' interests in the 1980s, it protected institutional prerogatives via deals with civilian politicians.<sup>154</sup>

Though insurgent groups formed in the early 1970s, the Civil War escalated in late 1979 and early 1980, following a coup against the right-wing military dictator Gen. Carlos Humberto Romero on October 15, 1979, which installed a reformist military-civilian government. The military's rationale for the coup and a series of reforms, extending from land redistribution to the disbanding of the paramilitary organization ORDEN (Organización Democrática Nacionalista) led by active-duty officers, was to disassociate the military from the plantation owning oligarchy that controlled El Salvador's economy and politics.<sup>155</sup> The military's reformism was impelled by Nicaragua's 1979 revolution, which destroyed the pre-revolutionary National Guard.<sup>156</sup>

The junta had civilian reformers and military officers supportive of the oligarchy. José Napoleón Duarte (1984–1989), a political exile from the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), returned to join the junta as president. Duarte realized the source of divisions: the Labor Ministry was controlled by a Communist, Gabriel Gallegos, and taken over by leftist mass organizations along with the Education Ministry, while the Defense Minister Colonel José Guillermo García maintained repressive policies, including covert support for the continued operation of ORDEN.<sup>157</sup> Concomitantly, Roberto D'Aubuisson, a far right-wing military officer and death-squad commander, led the newly formed Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) to dominate the Constituent Assembly. Such divisions among reformers, as well as kidnappings, torture, and disappearances by security forces, also revealing the Salvadoran state's lack of institutional capacity, economic resources, and political will,<sup>158</sup> facilitated the insurgency.

### ***Groups and Ideologies***

A contemporaneous report by the CIA noted the major insurgent groups that participated in the 1981 "final offensive" were 1970s breakaways from the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS), consisting of "various combinations of dissident members of PCS, student activists, religious dissidents, campesino and labor groups."<sup>159</sup> PCS' disintegration was caused by the rigged presidential elections of 1972, whose victor Jose Napoleón Duarte—backed by a coalition of PCS, the Christian Democratic Party and the National Revolutionary Movement—was forcibly exiled.<sup>160</sup>

Recent research also supports the contention about common social bases of all insurgent groups, but highlights the role of Ecclesial Base Communities (ECB) founded

by the Catholic church in the 1960s and early 1970s in politicizing the peasantry before insurgents arrived from urban areas.<sup>161</sup> Peasants were also recruited through “local networks” centered on “kinship bonds” and disputes.<sup>162</sup> Thus, ideological differences between the groups were superficial, centering more on leaders’ personalities.

The earliest group was Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FPL), founded in April 1970, and led by Salvador Cayetano Carpio, alias Commander Marcial, who followed a Vietnamese style rural people’s war ideology seeking to draw in and destroy the army. FPL was based in the Chalatenango department and its ungoverned disputed border areas with Honduras called *bolsones*.

Salvadoran security forces thought FPL was created by the combination of Jesuit led peasant organizations, labor unions, and the national teacher’s union, the Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños (ANDES).<sup>163</sup> Later research showed that besides recruiting from peasants and unions,<sup>164</sup> FPL leaders used liberation theology, ritualized social networks based on *compadrazgo*, organizations like peasant cooperatives like the Unión de Trabajadores del Campo,<sup>165</sup> and networks centered on catholic priests like Benito Tovar in Chalatenango,<sup>166</sup> to attract recruits and supporters.

Carpio followed a rigidly Marxist-Leninist line of privileging armed revolution and rejecting political collaboration with non-revolutionary social groups to acquire national power.<sup>167</sup> According to the CIA, Carpio’s departure from PCS after being ousted by Shafik Jorge Handal from the General Secretary position, set a “precedent and a model for future leaders” to leave groups that they disagreed with.<sup>168</sup>

Next, the Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) formed in 1972. ERP followed the Cuban *foco* strategy, wherein small insurgent groups inspired mass uprising rather than wait for political and economic crises.<sup>169</sup> The group’s broader ideology combined Communism with Liberation Theology, and it was led by Joaquín Villalobos, Eduardo Sancho and Ana Guadalupe Martínez. ERP attracted a “middle-class and female following and counted several former adherents of the PDC”.<sup>170</sup> Specifically, their recruit pools were Christian student organization PDC members.<sup>171</sup> It recruited in Morazán via the “Catholic networks organized by Father Miguel Ventura” and organized support in parishes through church networks.<sup>172</sup>

By 1977, however, Villalobos sidelined other leaders to become the head of both the armed and civilian wings.<sup>173</sup> Prior to this, ERP split into two groups. A small group called the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos – El Salvador (PRTC) with Trotskyite leanings, which viewed the Salvadoran revolution as part of a broader Central American one, was formed in 1976 by Fabio Castillo Figueroa. Many ERP members sought to attract social sectors, like trade unions and students, and consequently lessen the emphasis on violence. After the assassination of their leaders Roque Dalton and Armando Arteaga in May, 1975 by another ERP faction, the dissenters formed the Resistencia Nacional, with the Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional (FARN) as its armed wing. Despite changes in leadership through the 1980s, FARN remained the most moderate group with a Marxist-Christian identity.<sup>174</sup>

All groups justified the decision to escalate the insurgency in 1980, but from different ideological perspectives. FPL viewed the above-mentioned coup as “merely an attempt to improve the system of domination” and called “for stepped up pressure,” ERP was “calling for insurrection,” and FARN took a “more optimistic view of the

potential for change”.<sup>175</sup> The similar nature of the different groups’ ideological outlook was best revealed when PCS itself formed an insurgent group in 1979, the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación (FAL), because it failed to win power through peaceful means throughout the 1970s,<sup>176</sup> and was encouraged by the successful Nicaraguan Revolution that year.<sup>177</sup>

### ***Resources Foreign and Domestic***

The October 10, 1980 formation of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) under Cuban guidance united the five Salvadoran insurgency groups.<sup>178</sup> The main domestic source of funds for FMLN groups was kidnapping wealthy Salvadorans, a practice begun in the 1970s primarily by ERP and FAL,<sup>179</sup> but most intensely used against executives of foreign companies in 1978–1979 by FARN.<sup>180</sup> Bank robberies were another funding source for all groups.<sup>181</sup> Thus, FPL could not monopolize domestic resources.

FMLN groups also relied upon funds from solidarity organizations in the United States, Mexico, and Western and Eastern Europe.<sup>182</sup> The Soviet Union, unlike claims in U.S. official documents, was not directly involved.<sup>183</sup> Rather, Cuba’s support to the Salvadoran groups focused on the insurgent groups’ personnel, organization, political strategy and supplying weapons and training.<sup>184</sup> Cuban training from the late 1970s until the early 1980s focused on FMLN special forces, specifically sappers and naval commandos, using North Vietnamese techniques.<sup>185</sup> Cuba later trained FMLN officers in using artillery.<sup>186</sup> Cuba also provided “unrestricted medical support for the wounded and crippled”.<sup>187</sup> However, Cuba did not differentially support FMLN’s constituent groups.

Nicaragua hosted an FMLN office after the Sandinista regime took power. It also supplied small arms, ammunition, medicines, and clothing via Honduras in 1981–1982,<sup>188</sup> as well as provided training camps.<sup>189</sup> The CIA reported, Cuban and Nicaraguan officers were involved in “command and control” of insurgents in El Salvador: selecting targets, propagandizing, and giving “logistical support...including food, medicines, clothing, money and—most importantly—weapons and ammunition”.<sup>190</sup>

By making support contingent on insurgent unity,<sup>191</sup> Cuba helped form FMLN in October 1980, subsequently intervening to prevent the break of FMLN and its component groups,<sup>192</sup> and shaped insurgent strategy. An ex-leader of FARN revealed, FPL’s Carpio was forced to sign a pact in 1982 in Havana, at the behest of FARN and ERP, in which FMLN gave up the goal of communist dictatorship and accepted democracy.<sup>193</sup> This contention is confirmed by a CIA report that Cuba supported FMLN negotiations with the Salvadoran government because the “maintenance of the status quo” was disadvantageous to FMLN.<sup>194</sup> However, the CIA suspected such a truce would help FMLN “regroup and rebuild, offer the chance of political gains,” and sway domestic public opinion in the U.S. against “further military support for El Salvador”.<sup>195</sup>

Resources from Cuba and Nicaragua decreased after 1981 due to threats of ‘military reprisals’ against them by the U.S.<sup>196</sup> The decline in foreign and domestic resources was noted by the CIA, which stated that FMLN’s “lack of funds and basic necessities—such as medicine, food, shoes, and clothing” posed “serious problems for the

guerrillas”.<sup>197</sup> Thus, decline of Cuban and Nicaraguan resources crippled the insurgency in the early 1980s.<sup>198</sup>

### **Organizations and Leadership**

In terms of organizational cohesion and effective leadership, FPL both failed to influence the other groups and dominate the organization. It collaborated with FARN and PCS to form a Political-Military Committee (CPM), but ERP did not participate, and FPL, FARN, and PCS did not invite PRTC because of “its regional structure, foreign leadership based in Honduras [with which El Salvador had fought a war in 1969], and insignificant military capabilities”.<sup>199</sup>

Divisions between FMLN’s constituent groups continued: each group continued selecting and retaining their leaders, as well as maintaining pre-unification internal structures and sources of funding.<sup>200</sup> The groups’ tactics continued to vary regarding the necessity for escalating rural insurgency versus political outreach to create broad fronts.<sup>201</sup> Consequently, the “final offensive” of January 1981 failed, as FARN did not engage, ERP did not provide weapons, and FPL insisted on a strategy of rural insurgency.<sup>202</sup>

After the failed offensive, different areas became dominated by distinct groups: the Morazán department was controlled by ERP; La Unión was controlled by ERP and FARN; San Vicente was controlled by FPL, ERP, and FARN; and all five groups operated in the capital San Salvador.<sup>203</sup> A senior Salvadoran military officer noted, ideological disagreements between constituent groups, ambitious leaders in each group, and *caciquismo* (political bossism) in areas under insurgent control weakened and divided the insurgency as a whole.<sup>204</sup>

The worst example of this came from FPL itself. Carpio’s ideology of popular war to install a communist dictatorship, without collaborating with mainstream political groups, continued influencing FPL even after it joined FMLN. He subsequently ordered the assassination of fellow FPL leader and ex-president of ANDES, Melida Anaya Montes, in April 1983<sup>205</sup> because she opposed Carpio’s ideological rigidity.<sup>206</sup> Facing overwhelming condemnation, Carpio committed suicide a week later. After his death, under younger moderate leaders, FPL began fully cooperating with the other groups in FMLN, increasing its cohesion<sup>207</sup> and willingness to negotiate with the government.<sup>208</sup>

These organizational divisions, however, did not lower recruitment to the groups: the insurgency garnered sympathizers and resources because of the intensity and popularity of grievances in Salvadoran society ala Mosinger’s insight about Nicaragua.<sup>209</sup> As Elisabeth Wood’s research and interviews reveal: rural Salvadorans viewed their participation as an assertion of “their dignity in the face of condescension, repression, and indifference”.<sup>210</sup> Also, FMLN’s partnership with the civilian opposition group Frente Democrático Revolucionario—led by prominent intellectuals, businessmen, and professionals—lent an aura of greater cohesion and success.<sup>211</sup>

FMLN successes against Salvadoran security forces until 1983—imposing massive losses in soldiers and materiel as well as destroying transportation and communication



infrastructure—reflected the security forces' weakness.<sup>212</sup> The Atlacatl Battalion, trained by the U.S. for counterinsurgency operations, initially failed to eject FMLN forces from the Chalatenango department.<sup>213</sup> By 1982, it lost a quarter of its soldiers, necessitating the creation of new battalions.<sup>214</sup>

Security Force's overzealousness in using torture, extra judicial killings, and massacres by right-wing death squads associated with ORDEN, the most famous of which was the Movimiento de Acción Nacionalista Organizado, better known as Mano Blanca, also made its counter-insurgency efforts unpopular. Up to nine such death squads were allegedly commanded by the Salvadoran army and trained by U.S. advisors.<sup>215</sup> By 1984, due to enhanced U.S. support for the security forces and concomitant election of President Duarte, the insurgency remained popular, but the military situation stalemated.<sup>216</sup>

## **Conclusion: Analysis and Wider Applicability**

The comparative analysis of Guatemala and El Salvador shows early groups' cohesive organizations and effective leadership prevented the fragmentation of insurgencies, be it via splintering of preexisting groups and/or the rise of new ones. Three explanations are evaluated about how early groups dominate insurgencies: (a) by presenting popular ideologies; (b) having cohesive organizations and effective leaders; (c) and capturing local and foreign resources. Findings from studies of insurgent groups' origins in the first and the second waves of the Guatemalan insurgency support two explanations.

In the first wave, a shared Cuba inspired foco ideology and ex-military leadership of MR-13 and FGEI created the unified insurgent group FAR. The insurgency was funded by robbing banks. Foreign support played a minor role. The MR-13 dominated FAR until the insurgency wave receded.

In the second wave, the early group EGP could not dominate the insurgency. Despite ideological differences, EGP and ORPA (the major late entering group) recruited mostly from the indigenous population in rural areas. However, inter-group competition continued after the formation of the Cuban sponsored umbrella organization URNG, which EGP was unable to control before the insurgent wave subsided.

The findings from the study of El Salvador's insurgency also show how early groups' failures create opportunities for late entrants. First, the early group FPL faced continual divisions between leaders. A second insurgent group ERP arose but was riven by ideological divisions: one segment split from ERP to establish FARN. Cuba backed the umbrella organization FMLN, delivering resources to all constituent groups. Consequently, FPL neither controlled FMLN nor monopolized Cuban resources.

The comparative analyses reveal that cohesive organizations with popular and effective leadership are the most salient factors that prevent the entry of new insurgent groups. As was the case with FAR in the Guatemalan first wave insurgency. However, there is insufficient evidence to support the explanation that early groups maintain their monopoly by presenting attractive ideologies: neither the ideology of EGP in Guatemala's second wave insurgency nor the ideology of FPL in El Salvador garnered sympathizers and recruits to grant them outright dominance or influence in URNG and FMLN respectively. Finally, EGP and FPL were unable to control the flow of foreign and domestic resources in their respective umbrella groups of URNG and FMLN.

It seems, Cuba realized the importance of organizational cohesion and effective leadership because Fidel Castro and the Department of Americas led by Manuel Piñero focused on unifying insurgent groups in umbrella organizations as the cornerstone of insurgency.<sup>217</sup> Unity became so fundamental to the Cuban strategy in the Salvadoran insurgency that they made the disbursal of weapons and supplies contingent upon it.<sup>218</sup> The other aspect of Cuban involvement was in training, strategy, and medical support especially in the Salvadoran case.<sup>219</sup> However, Cuba's emphasis on cohesion, training, and strategy did not privilege any one group, it did not take sides in ideological divisions, choosing to focus on the practicalities of warfare and achieving political goals.<sup>220</sup>

The findings presented here contribute to cross-regional studies of insurgencies by verifying their theories and extending them. The studies dovetail with Woldemariam's contention—based on insurgencies in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia—that battlefield victories (and failure) determines success.<sup>221</sup> With regards to external sponsors, the findings show a single sponsor Cuba enhanced unity among insurgent groups by creating umbrella organizations and refraining from favoring any one group. Thus, challenging Sinno's contention based primarily on Afghanistan that single state sponsors incentivize fragmentation,<sup>222</sup> as well as Tamm's findings from comparing Sudanese and Lebanese groups that foreign sponsors encourage or discourage fragmentation contingent on groups loyalties to the sponsors.<sup>223</sup> Finally, the findings about the role of ECB's in El Salvador and the indigenous communities in Guatemala, confirm Staniland's theory based on South Asian insurgencies that pre-conflict social networks shape insurgent group cohesion and strategy.<sup>224</sup>

Future research projects could follow two lines of enquiry by focusing on whether and how late entering insurgent groups learn from early ones. Specifically, do late entrants note early groups' strategies to acquire resources, their cohesion, leadership, and ideologies? Furthermore, how do late entering groups develop and implement methods to acquire resources, maintain cohesion, inculcate leadership skills, and do they reshape their ideologies accordingly? The findings will advance the study of insurgencies as organizations interacting with one another.

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## Disclosure statement

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