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WOMEN IN INSURGENT GROUPS IN LATIN AMERICA

by

Omar Manual Roberto-Cáez

March 2014

Thesis Co-Advisors:

Douglas Porch
Maiah Jaskoski

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WOMEN IN INSURGENT GROUPS IN LATIN AMERICA

Omar Manuel Roberto-Cáez
Major, United States Army
B.A, University of the Sacred Heart of Puerto Rico, 2002

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March 2014**

Author: Omar Manuel Roberto-Cáez

Approved by: Douglas Porch, Ph.D.
Thesis Co-Advisor

Maiah Jaskoski, Ph.D.
Thesis Co-Advisor

Mohammed Hafez, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

In Latin America, the use of political violence against authoritarian regimes increased after the Cuban Revolution. In the 1970s, women began to join revolutionary movements in ever-growing numbers, to the point that the presence of female guerrillas or terrorists was no longer remarkable. The most important factors that influenced women to join insurgencies were political ideology, state and domestic violence, culture, social networks, and changes in guerilla tactics. Women took on various insurgency roles, including those of fighter, supporter, and sympathizer. The post-conflict repercussions of female participation in political violence vary, depending on the capacity of the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration process. So far, however, U.S. military counterinsurgency doctrine has barely acknowledged this evolution in the gender make-up of insurgencies. The increasing inclusion of females in U.S. combat military occupation specialties should allow the military more flexibility in the way it identifies, classifies, and approaches gender in conventional and counterinsurgency operations.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACEU	Catholic Association of University Students
ACR	High Commission for Reintegration
AQM	Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia
AUC	United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia
CODA	Committee for Laying Down Arms
COIN	counterinsurgency
CONTRAS	Coalition of Nicaraguan Counterrevolutionary Groups
CST	Special Operations Cultural Support Teams
DDR	disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DDS	Defense and Democratic Security
ERP	Popular Revolutionary Army
EZLN	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army
FET	Female Engagement Teams
FHET	Female Human Intelligence Exploitation Teams
FPL	Popular Liberation Front
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
HTT	Human Terrain Team
IPB	Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield
IDP	internally displaced persons
IT	information technology
JUCO	Communist Youth Party of Colombia
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MAP	military assistance program
MAPP-OEA	Support Mission for the Peace Process in Colombia from the Organization of American States
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MOS	military occupation specialty
MPC	Popular Woman's Movement

MRTA	Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement
PAHD	Program for Humanitarian Assistance to the Demobilized Persons
PCS	Salvadorian Communist Party
PRT	Provisional Reconstruction Teams
PRTC	Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers
RN	National Resistance
SL	Sendero Luminoso
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
URNG	Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Cold War and successful revolutions in Cuba (1959) and Nicaragua (1979) intensified and internationalized Latin America's seemingly endemic political violence.¹ Young men and women—university students, peasants, or of indigenous minorities—flocked to join insurgencies that promised to combat state repression, class domination, and social injustice.² The reaction of many states, in the shadow of what they and the U.S. government saw as an international communist threat, was further to emphasize the historic focus of Latin American security forces on internal defense against 'the enemy within.' The result, however, was usually an increase in violence against the civilian population, which further fed instability and raised protests at home and abroad.³ Beginning in the 1970s, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala were counted among the countries that experienced massacres, rape, and other acts of violence against civilians carried out by the security forces. The result of state violence was instability and revolutionary movements across Central America. In the 1980s, Colombia and Peru also witnessed an expansion of hitherto miniscule-armed groups financed with cash from illicit drugs, which challenged governmental control over great swaths of those countries.

Men were, and continue to be, the main participants in these violent non-state organizations. However, from the 1970s, women began to join revolutionary movements in ever-larger numbers, to the point that the presence of female guerrillas or terrorists was no longer remarkable, even though their role and level of participation varied across time and organization. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) had no significant female participation among its leadership or fighters during its formation in 1964.⁴ However, women in the FARC surged to make up to thirty percent of

1 Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 16.

2 Ibid., 23–28.

3 Ibid., 60–65.

4 Keith Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology: A Case Study of Women Who Join the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes*, ed. James J.F. Forest (Westport, Conn: Praeger Security International, 2006): 140.

the total fighting force by 2000.⁵ This stands in contrast to the experience of women during the Cuban Revolution in which only five percent of the guerrillas with Castro in the Sierra Maestra were females.⁶ Wickham-Crowley concurs that in Cuba (1958), “one in twenty Cuban guerrillas was female.”⁷ The participation of women increased in other parts of Latin America. In 1979, when civil war erupted in El Salvador, and women’s participation in the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) reached nearly 30 percent.⁸

Females appear to be more attracted to leftist than to right-wing terrorist groups. For instance, in Nicaragua, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) had an estimated 30 percent female participation, while the Coalition of Nicaraguan Counterrevolutionary Groups (CONTRA) counted between seven and 15 percent.⁹ Women were almost totally absent from the right-wing paramilitary groups that demobilized in Colombia from 2003 to 2006.¹⁰ The leftist umbrella organization, Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), counted less than 20 percent of females in its ranks; perhaps because it was a largely indigenous organization in which women were not expected to bear arms.¹¹ The absence of females as formal members of the organization does not mean that they were not active in providing logistical support, intelligence gathering, message transport, and other tasks. In the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), an indigenous organization active in the southern Mexican

5 Margaret, Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Groups* (London: Routledge, 2008), 41.

6 Karen Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, and Cuba* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 118.

7 Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution*, 21.

8 Jocelyn S. Viterna, “Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded: Explaining Women’s Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army,” *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 1 (July 2006), 6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/502690>.

9 Alexis Henshaw, “Why Women Rebel: Understanding Female Participation in Intrastate Conflict,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2013), <http://arizona.openrepository.com/arizona/handle/10150/293429>.

10 Albert Carames and Eneko Sanz, “Colombia (AUC, 2003–2008),” in *Carames and E. Sanz, DDR 2009. Analysis of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Programmes in the World During 2008*. Belterra: School for Culture of Peace, 2009, 53, 58.

11 Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 4.

state of Chiapas since 1994, women contribute almost “one-third of the combatants, and half of the support base.”¹²

The fact that large percentages of these insurgent organizations are made up of women should influence counterinsurgency strategies. Indeed, French counterinsurgency theorist David Galula argued that women were a key element in insurgency—even in a support role—and that one of the great shortcomings of French counterinsurgency in Algeria, was the failure to factor an appeal to women into their COIN strategies.¹³ While Galula exaggerated the neglect of French outreach to women in Algeria,¹⁴ Latin American countries, such as Colombia, have failed to include a female dimension into the counterinsurgency strategies.¹⁵ Nor are they unique.¹⁶

This thesis seeks to answer three questions:

- Why have women increasingly joined insurgent organizations in Latin America since the 1970s, especially those on the left, especially given that often where some of the most stalwart guerrillas and determined fighters have been women, even though women are seldom promoted into leadership positions?
- Are women more prominent in Latin American insurgent groups than elsewhere (i.e., in the Viet Cong, Sri Lanka, Chechen insurgency, or in the many groups in Africa)?
- Finally, which COIN strategies might be most effective in targeting females for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR)?

A. BACKGROUND

The United States will continue to partner and assist Latin American states to combat international and domestic terrorism in support of common national security

¹² Ibid., 84.

¹³ David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria 1956–1958* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2006), vi.

¹⁴ Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 94–95, 112, 126, 173, 175, 234, 24–50, 254–55.

¹⁵ Presidency of the Republic, “Democratic Security and Defense Policy,” Ministry of Defense, 2003, San Diego State University, 1–25, <http://usregsec.sdsu.edu/docs/Colombia2003.pdf>.

¹⁶ It took the United States security forces in Afghanistan ten years before the USMC developed female engagement teams (FETs), and even then they were ad hoc formations with no clear strategic purpose or dedicated, specially trained personnel. Beyond building schools for girls and other minor wrinkles, a gender-based strategy was considered too controversial to apply in Muslim countries. FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency contains no entry for women or female in its index.

interests. Women are an essential part of leftist groups that threaten the stability of America's partners and allies in Latin America. It is important to understand the role of this essential demographic inside society, armed groups, and in auxiliary support clusters. Persuading female combatants to reintegrate into society can also improve the quality of life for their families and communities. USAID's Office of Women in Development recognizes that, "women's participation in war contributes to a social transformation of identity and roles within the society."¹⁷ In other words, in this view, a woman's participation in an armed group is a bid for recognition of a status equal to that of men. Do women join these groups to gain status? Do they join for reasons such as ideological, individual, or coercion? If they believe that enlistment will enhance their status within their communities, as USAID obviously believes, is this in fact the case? Are women more likely to be disillusioned by life *para el monte*?¹⁸

U.S. military assistance to Latin America began in World War II as a way to protect the South American continent from foreign encroachment, mainly German and Soviet. The Bolivian Revolution of 1952 prompted the U.S. to worry about the vulnerability of many Latin American states to the Communist overthrow, which became the source of the 1954 CIA orchestrated coup of the Jacobo Árbenz regime in Guatemala. Castro's overthrow of the Batista regime in Cuba on New Year's Eve in 1959 became Washington's wake-up call. Initiated in March 1961, the Alliance for Progress sent millions of dollars to Latin America, much of it to economic development, literacy campaigns, land redistribution, and democracy promotion. This financial support was sent on the theory that poverty and political disenfranchisement were the primary sources of discontent that was exploited by leftists to build a popular constituency for insurrection.¹⁹

A Military Assistance Program (MAP) and other AID-funded programs also sought to prepare Latin American militaries, police, and intelligence organizations to

¹⁷ Office of Women in Development, "Interstate Conflict and Gender Information Bulletin-9," U.S. Agency for International Development, December 2000, 1–2.

¹⁸ *Para el monte*: reference to the hardship of living in the jungle.

¹⁹ John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2011), 265, 266, 287, 288, 289.

confront internal subversion. The economic, military, and moral outcomes of those programs have become a subject of significant dispute among policy makers and scholars of the region. However, the impact of women in insurgency is a topic that is infrequently covered by security strategists, and has only recently begun to attract the attention of security experts. Therefore, the amount of information available about how military assistance programs and counterinsurgency strategies impact gender perceptions is limited. The United Nations calls for the integration of gender in strategic and operational planning of counterinsurgency; moreover, the report draws attention to the negative effects that some security measures are having on non-governmental organizations (NGO), women demobilization efforts, and reintegration of female combatants into society.²⁰

This thesis argues that women participation in insurgencies increased because of ideological shifts of male guerrilla leaders, the development of a social revolutionary culture, changes in guerrilla strategy, and a mix of personal factors. This work found that the Catholic Church and Liberation Theology support was a factor unique to the Latin American region, which influenced the expansion of women mobilization and provided resilience against government counterinsurgency efforts. This research also found that Andean insurgencies refusal to embrace religion hindered the capacity to gain mass mobilization and material support; therefore, the lack of resources shifted the organizations priorities to survivable tactics, like the trafficking of illicit drugs, rather than the pursuit of their political ideological goals. This study adds knowledge about the recruitment, roles, and integration at different levels of women in insurgent organizations by reviewing biographies, periodic accounts, and ex-combatant interview transcripts. Additionally, the United States Armed Forces can learn from the experience of women in combatant roles in low-intensity conflict. Formal Army and rebel groups differ in structure, legal status, and legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Still, each should consider the gender dimension of low-intensity conflict. While the role of women in

20 Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Rafia Barakat, and Liat Shetret, "The Roles of Women in Terrorism, Conflict, and Violent Extremism: Lessons for the United Nations and International Actors-April 2013," Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, 6, 13, 14, http://www.globalct.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/NCF_RB_LS_policybrief_1320.pdf.

irregular groups is at the center of the thesis, some of the conclusions might apply to women in regular state security forces. Therefore, the discussion of women in low-intensity conflict is important as a means to understand the nature of society at war, and help evolve appropriate counterinsurgency and demobilization strategies.

B. HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY

1. Hypothesis

Research on women in armed insurgencies in Latin America suggests an increase in female participation during the 1970s, although variations in participation and differences in the level and nature of their contributions exist among leftist groups. There are three hypotheses that can explain these variations based on the literature that was analyzed: ideology, social conditions, and coercion. The first hypothesis is that women are drawn to groups whose ideology promises a greater degree of sexual equality. Right-wing organizations like the Nicaraguan Contras, the Colombian *autodefensas*, and the criminal cartels, are more likely to see violence as an exclusively male preserve, and to view women in the traditions of Latin American machismo as part of the spoils of war. Additionally, the shift in women's attitudes toward society, and female roles in the household, influenced their integration into insurgent groups. Furthermore, ideological shifts within the organization also account for the increase in women's participation in insurgencies.

The second hypothesis is that social conditions enabled the increase of women in violent organizations. Some of the grievances that women faced were the following: pay discrimination, domestic abuse, lack of education, and opportunities for upper mobility. These social conditions, combined with the demand for excitement and need to break out of their routine lives, pushed female peasants and middle-class students into leftist groups.

The third hypothesis is that women are coerced into the armed struggle by violence from either the state or the insurgent groups. Women have often found

themselves forced to defend their families and protect their traditions.²¹ In this scenario, households where women are primary wage earners became radicalized by a struggle for survival, rather than from ideology or mere poverty. On the other hand, in areas controlled by insurgent groups, young people are often conscripted or co-opted to act at the behest of insurgents.

2. Methodology

The main limitation for this study is accessibility to primary sources related to specific groups. Official data collection of activities of women in Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), Shining Path (SL), and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), are not properly collected because women did not participate in formal DDR programs. On the other hand, the information on women combatants in El Salvador is more accurate and available because the FMLN did exit via a formal DDR process.²² The majority of the material for this study will depend on secondary sources and narrative information, rather than statistical data. The bulk of the information in articles and books was taken from original sources, which make finding variations problematic. However, these shortcomings are compensated for by numerous interviews and biographies of group leaders available online and in books.²³ The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism database provides valuable information regarding women terrorist attacks since the 1970s.

Another potential challenge is that any discussion of women in insurgency covers multiple and diverse areas of study, such as gender studies, sociology, military history, and comparative politics. This study will benefit from the aforementioned diversity by incorporating work from all of these perspectives. This thesis will draw heavily on research by Karen Kampwirth and Alexis Henshaw about why women join revolutionary groups.

21 Natalia Herrera and Douglas Porch, "Like Going to a Fiesta—the Role of Female Fighters in Colombia's FARC-EP," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 4 (December 2008): 610, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09592310802462547>.

22 Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 4.

23 Interviews, press releases, and other communication collected from Center for Documenting Armed Struggles in Latin America, <http://www.cedema.org/index.php?ver=portada>.

This study will examine the trajectory of female fighters through a comparative study of women in terrorist organizations in Latin America. The study will include women in non-state armed groups in the following countries: El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, and Peru. Based on the analysis of these cases, the argument will use Karen Kampwirth's framework in Central America to examine why women joined guerilla movements in the whole Latin American region.²⁴ The classification of the roles of women will follow Pamala L. Griset and Sue Mahan groupings, including sympathizers, spies, warriors, and dominant forces,²⁵ in accordance with the typology of participation provided by Griset and Mahan. Additionally, this analysis will use Alexis Henshaw's Gendered Theory of Rebellion, which merges theories of mobilization, based on grievances with feminist views, to study the motivations of women in rebel groups. Henshaw divides the grievances that enable mobilization of women into the following categories: economic, ethno-religious, political, and human security. These two similar approaches form the basis for this study. In addition, we provide reviews that detail variations in interpretation by comparing intra-state terrorist groups. An effort was done to analyze women terrorist acts collected by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), based at the University of Maryland, to provide other perspectives of the participation and roles.²⁶

In its analysis of counterterrorism strategies, the thesis is based on the review of secondary sources, NGO and government reports, military strategic plans, and other referenced sources.

The findings are presented as follows. Chapter II will provide an overview of previous studies and conclusions on the subject. Chapter III will focus on the motivations

24 Karen Kampwirth uses structural changes, ideological and organizational changes, political factors, and combination of all factors to explain demobilization in Central America. Karen Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, and Cuba* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 2002), 14.

25 Pamala L. Griset and Sue Mahan, *Terrorism in Perspective* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2009), 158–159.

26 Global Terrorism Database is an open source database from 1970–2011. Currently has over 104,000 cases categorized by country, regions, and searchable related words.

of enlistment, which include political, ideological, and personal reasons. Chapter IV will focus on the roles and satisfaction of women insurgents. Chapter V will cover the importance of gender for U.S. military operations. Chapter VI will include a summary of findings, recommendations to policy makers, and suggestions for further research.

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II. WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICAN INSURGENCIES

To understand the participation of women in Latin American insurgencies, it is necessary to examine the most common explanations for the emergence of the revolutionary movements. Historically in Central America, poor social and economic conditions are generally thought to mobilize disenfranchised sectors of society behind revolutionary movements. This classic explanation is put forward by Walter LaFeber, who argues that revolutions in Central America were inevitable because of the economic and social grievances caused by internal and external neo-dependency on U.S. economic power.²⁷ However, in his well-known book about the subject, Jeff Goodwin argued that social grievances alone were insufficient reasons to join a revolutionary group, have contested LaFeber's conclusion.²⁸ Rather, he finds that weak state institutions and repression are also important for explaining both the emergence of insurgent movements, and their success (or failure). These two explanations of the outbreak of Latin American revolutions and their success in attracting insurgents also influence how academics address the question of why women join terrorist organizations.

Karen Jacques and Paul Taylor, from the Lancaster University, conducted a review of the literature written over the past 25 years that analyzes women in terrorism. The authors found that 70 percent of all work on female terrorism analyzes female terrorism after 2002.²⁹ The authors divided the literature into six categories: "portrayal in media; feminism; interviews with terrorists; group roles; motivations and recruitment; and environmental enablers (access to target, etc.)."³⁰ Furthermore, they argue that the study of women in terrorism is an "un-integrated body of knowledge spread across many

²⁷ Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: Norton, 1983), 13–20.

²⁸ Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 143.

²⁹ Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, "Female Terrorism: A Review," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 3 (2009): 502, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09546550902984042>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 499.

disciplines.”³¹ One of the key observations made by Jacques and Taylor is that academics described the issue, rather than explaining why women join insurgent groups.³² Literature on Latin American women varies in quality and quantity. For instance, information about El Salvador’s FMLN is numerous because of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes after the peace agreement. On the other hand, information about the Nicaraguan right-wing groups, like the CONTRAS, is scarce.

Some scholars argue that female socio-economical grievances did not suddenly change; however, the effects of ideology, religious convictions, and migration/dislocation altered gender roles, constraints, and expectations that radicalized many women and persuaded them to join armed groups.³³ For instance, in Mexico, females who joined the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) felt empowered by a series of social and political changes in their communities that freed them from normative roles and patterns of family structure.³⁴

Literature by Linda M. Lobao, David T. Mason, and Linda L. Reif concurs that social roles and sexual division of labor limits the participation of females in armed groups. Lobao argues that during the early stages of the insurgencies female participation was less, because society in general restricted them to roles and tasks different from those of men.³⁵ Reif reinforces this idea by attributing the limits of female roles in Latin American to patriarchal control of activities outside the house.³⁶ Reif also posits that, “women’s role in reproductive activities thus constitutes a major barrier to their involvement in nondomestic political action such as guerrilla struggle.”³⁷ On the other hand, in her study of guerrilla groups in Central America, Karen Kampwirth found that

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., 511.

33 Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 14–15.

34 Ibid., 93–94.

35 Linda M. Lobao, “Women in Revolutionary Movements: Changing Patterns of Latin American Guerrilla Struggle,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 15, no. 2–3 (1990): 211–212, <http://link.springer.com.libproxy.nps.edu/article/10.1007/BF00264654#>.

36 Linda L. Reif, “Women in Latin American Guerrilla Movements: A Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Politics* 18, no. 2 (January 1986): 147–149, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/421841>.

37 Ibid., 148.

the emergence of social organizations, and changes to them, helped overcome the limiting factors Reif and Lobao studied.³⁸ She also found that women were drawn to armed groups through religious organizations that advocated for women movements and social organization. Additionally, she argued that migration patterns were critical in radicalizing women in urban and rural settings.³⁹ In general, their conclusions were that a breakdown or significant alteration in gender roles had to occur before women joined armed groups in Latin American.

Kampwirth, Lobao, and Reif also argued that the increase in female participation in armed groups in the 1970s and 1980s occurred following a significant opening of political space and association for females through women's networks and work organizations. Furthermore, in his study of El Salvador and Nicaraguan revolutionary forces, David Mason found that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were critical in expanding women's networks and arming them with the skills necessary for later participation inside leadership position in the armed groups.⁴⁰ NGOs proved powerful actors in Latin America, and helped the expansion and communication of feminist ideals. More recently, organizations like Amnesty International helped provide an outlet where women in Chiapas, El Salvador, and Colombia could express grievances, and receive support from transnational actors. The strengthening of the Organization of American States (OAS) and United Nations (UN) helped to bring attention through annual reporting on women rights and human rights violations. The communication channels and work programs focused on women helped connect the rural and the urban female communities.

Despite the fact that these transnational organizations aimed to offer a conduit for women to become more politically and socially active through non-violent activities, only a minority joined insurgent groups for political or personal reasons. However, their experience inside those organizations seems to have heightened their awareness of the need for more female participation in governance. For instance, in El Salvador, former

38 Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 8–12.

39 Ibid., 15–19.

40 David T. Mason, "Women's Participation in Central American Revolutions: A Theoretical Perspective," *Comparative Politics Studies* 25, no. 1 (1992): 79, <http://cps.sagepub.com/content/25/1/63>.

female guerrilla leaders were instrumental in incorporating woman rights into their new constitution. Lobao, Kampwirth, and Gonzalez-Perez, found that integration of reforms occurred favoring gender equality occurred when the male leaders had contact with female militants or NGOs with feminist agendas.⁴¹

Alexis Henshaw developed a gendered theory of rebellion to explain, “why women rebel?”⁴² Similar to that of Kampwirth and Mason, her argument is that a combination of circumstances and personal issues, as well as threats to one’s family or existence, are critical motivations for women to join groups. Nevertheless, she concluded that women would be less active in leadership positions because joining became an end in itself, rather than a means for achieving their goals.⁴³ Henshaw’s Doctoral dissertation “Why Women Rebel: Understanding Female Participation in Intrastate Conflict,” is one of the most ambitious works reviewed. Henshaw carried out a comparative analysis of women in over seventy rebel groups active in the post-Cold War era, and concluded that non-combat roles continued to be the primary function of women in insurgencies. Henshaw found that the use of women in noncombat roles in Latin American terrorist groups led eventually to greater participation in leadership and even combat roles.⁴⁴ Rebel groups in other regions, where women did not participate fully in supporting roles in insurgencies, saw fewer women in leadership or combat.⁴⁵

Henshaw also argued that, “women’s empowerment is more frequently a product of, rather than a factor contributing to, women’s involvement in armed rebellion.”⁴⁶ This last argument contradicts Keith Stanski and Douglas Porch’s observation that women joined insurgencies in Colombia because of the sense of empowerment that the organizations seemed to promise, while some became disillusioned with the constant abuses and lack of upper mobility. Indeed, Herrera and Porch argue that some women

41 Lobao, “Women in Revolutionary Movements,” 215.

42 Henshaw, “Why Women Rebel,” 16.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 180–182.

45 Ibid., 178.

46 Ibid.

joined the FARC in Colombia precisely because they felt that uniforms and weapons gave them power and status.⁴⁷ In keeping with the spirit of Henshaw's argument, the FARC then continues this sense of empowerment by giving them jobs like nurse or radio operator that makes them feel they are important to the success of the organization.⁴⁸

Literature is scarce about intra-state variations in Latin America. However, Andrea Mendez's doctoral dissertation provides some evidence of variations among the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the FARC. Mendez found that "to a certain extent, women in the [paramilitary forces] AUC had the ability to choose if they wanted to be treated differently."⁴⁹ Herrera and Porch found that females in the FARC felt that they had to work harder to gain respect from their male colleagues and even outperform them in many tasks.⁵⁰ In the case of the FARC, women excelled more in gathering intelligence, propaganda, popular outreach, and recruitment of other females.⁵¹ Herrera and Porch also emphasized the role of the female sexuality inside the FARC, to the point that the "FARC's success and survivability are centered on the sexual services provided by female guerrillas."⁵² However, sexuality is a double-edge sword for the FARC because it often becomes a source of jealousy, unhappiness, and disillusion, especially when couples are broken up when they become too emotionally attached.⁵³ This may fit a paradigm of sexual violence in Colombia that Cockburn argues, "is endemic against women and used by three main actors: guerrilla, armed forces, and paramilitary forces."⁵⁴

47 Herrera and Porch, "Like Going to a Fiesta," 616.

48 Ibid., 620.

49 Andrea Mendez, "Militarized Gender Performativity: Women and Demobilization in Colombia's FARC and AUC," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, 2012), 169, http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/ddr-militarized_gender_performativity-_women_and_demobilization_in_colombias_farc_and_auc.pdf.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Herrera and Porch, "Like Going to a Fiesta," 622–625.

53 Ibid.

54 Cynthia Cockburn, *From Where we Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis* (London; New York: Zed Books, 2007), 16.

The issue of reproduction is contentious and leads to abuse and abortions in both organizations; however, the AUC remained more flexible when it came to motherhood, often because they operated from towns and women were fewer in number and less central to organizational success. Furthermore, Keith Stanski argues that the FARC's control over pregnancy does not promote equality of gender, since it only applied to the females, who in most instances had to abort.⁵⁵ An Amnesty International report condemned the grave situation of gender and sexual human rights violations in Colombia armed groups.⁵⁶ Pregnant combatants often flee because of threat against them of forced abortion.⁵⁷ Indeed, the FARC's attitude is that pregnancy is an ill-disguised desertion attempt. However, even if they succeed in escaping the armed group's control, females struggle to reintegrate into society, both because they lack skills and because they carry the stigma of service in armed groups, where promiscuity reigns.

In Central America, Karen Kampwirth found that females join guerrilla groups because of changes in the household structure (women became head of the household), migration patterns (urban versus rural), and changes in religion (liberation theology).⁵⁸ In case of the FMLN, women grew were about 4,492 women at the time of demobilization in 1994.⁵⁹ Kampwirth argued that the FMLN female ranks were full of peasants who fought for better life conditions more than for female equality,⁶⁰ although one would seem to imply the other. Additionally, she reasoned that the conduit for women to join armed groups in El Salvador was the influence of the church (liberation theology), and the participation in unions and other existing networks. Forced migration and family traditions and loyalties rounded off the reasons for enlistment.⁶¹ Kampwirth found that

55 Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology," 148.

56 "Colombia: Scarred Bodies, Hidden Crimes: Sexual Violence Against Women in the Armed Conflict," Amnesty International, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR23/040/2004/en/eeb9c46a-d598-11dd-bb24-1fb85fe8fa05/amr230402004en.html>.

57 Douglas Porch and María José Rasmussen, "Demobilization of Paramilitaries in Colombia: Transformation or Transition?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (June 13, 2008): 530, doi:10.1080/10576100802064841.

58 Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 151–156.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 59–60.

61 Ibid.

personal convictions acquired through family tradition of resistance were important for women joining the FMLN.⁶² Likewise, Ilja A. Luciak argued that family suffering and threats of violence pushed young females to see the armed struggle as necessary to progress.⁶³

Gunhild Schwitalla, Luisa Maria Dietrich, Keith Stanski, Douglas Porch, and Ingvild Magnaes Gjelsvik all argue that women view enlistment in armed groups as an escape from dreary lives circumscribed by poverty. The feeling of power, adrenaline, and participation in an armed group is attractive when life's prospects are otherwise so limited. Specifically, women in their teens and early twenties were drawn to armed groups for social, political, and personal reasons.⁶⁴ According to sexual violence reports, domestic abuse in rural areas of Colombia is one of the main reasons they feel compelled to join armed groups.⁶⁵ The World Health Organization (WHO) concluded that, in Colombia, approximately 20 percent of women were victims of domestic violence.⁶⁶ Joining insurgent groups filled females with a false sense of empowerment by escaping a role of submission and victimhood in their communities. Accordingly to Stanski, the FARC offers women a "life of adventure and meaning, as well as a sense of gender equality (in both training and enforcement of discipline), that could not be found in civilian society."⁶⁷ Women joined the FARC because of family ties, revenge, custom, and to improve living conditions.⁶⁸ Similarly, Ingvild Magnaes Gjelsvik, found that Colombian females joined because of socioeconomic and political reasons, coercion, and to seek refuge from domestic violence. Gjelsvik argued that men and women have similar

62 Ibid., 60.

63 Ilja A. Luciak, "Gender Equality in the Salvadoran Transition," *the Salvadoran Transition, Latin American Perspectives* 26, no. 2 (March 1, 1999): 45–47, <http://lap.sagepub.com/content/26/2/43>.

64 Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology," 140–143.

65 Gunhild Schwitall and Luisa Maria Dietrich, "Demobilisation of Female Ex-combatants in Colombia," *Forced Migration Review: Sexual Violence: Weapon of War, Impediment to Peace*, no. 27 (2007), 58–59, <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR27/full.pdf>.

66 Maria de Bruyn, "Violence, Pregnancy, and Abortion," *Issue of Women's Rights and Public Health*, 2nd edition. Chapel Hill, NC, 2003, IPAS, 4, <http://www.ipas.org/~media/Files/Ipas%20Publications/VioPregAbortionEng2.ashx>.

67 Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology," 140–143.

68 Ibid.

reasons to join the groups; however, the main difference among them is the degree in which empowerment influences the decision to join.⁶⁹

Herrera and Porch found that women guerrilla members have a sense of fulfillment and retain an optimistic outlook.⁷⁰ They found that the “relative freedom and control over their choices in the FARC and the subordinate position held by women in Colombian society makes reintegration into civilian life especially difficult for former guerrillas [fighters].”⁷¹ Additionally, in terms of recruiting, the FARC had the psychological advantage by promoting a gender-neutral environment.⁷² The FARC’s recruitment is overwhelmingly rural for the following reasons: the recruiting pool for armed groups is in remote areas far from government control, females join to escape domestic violence or rural poverty and limited prospects, and because participation in guerrilla is seen as normal in areas under insurgent control.⁷³

Kampwirth also found that middle class women were more active in the city because of the universities created space for participation; for instance the education level of the women joining varied.⁷⁴ Kampwirth cites Maruja Barrig’s finding that “57 percent of the women [in Peru Shining Path] had a college degree, ten percent had a professional degree or had completed postgraduate studies, something only four percent of the men had done.”⁷⁵ One can posit that schools and universities were hotbeds of indoctrination and recruitment for the SL among a relatively well-off group of females.

Academics note that female combatants are more vulnerable than males during the reintegration because they suffer more from persecution, abuse, and family

69 Ingvild Magnaes Gjelsvik, “Women, War, and Empowerment: A Case Study of Female Ex-Combatants in Colombia,” (Master’s Thesis, University of Tromsø, Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2010), 36–41, <https://129.242.170.252/munin/bitstream/handle/10037/2674/thesis.pdf?sequence=2>.

70 Herrera and Porch, “Like Going to a Fiesta,” 611.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid., 617–618.

73 Schwitall and Dietrich, “Demobilisation of Female,” 58–59.

74 Ibid.

75 Maruja Barrig, “Female Leadership, Violence, and Citizenship in Peru,” ed. Jane Jaquette and Sharon Wolchik, *Women and Democracy: Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 154.

disruption. Schwitalla and Dietrich, report that for many demobilized a “return to their families is out of the question.”⁷⁶ They also highlight that “85 percent of those who individually chose to leave armed groups . . . live [later] in Bogotá and Medellín.”⁷⁷ Women who may have fled domestic violence obviously have little incentive to seek reintegration in their families. Going home is simply to embrace the same constraints and lack of opportunity that put them on the road in the first place. Linda M. Lobao agrees with Jane S. Jaquette’s argument that “Latin American family is an effective institution of social control and it has been attacked by radical movements supporting social change.”⁷⁸

Ernesto Che Guevara wrote the following about women in guerrilla movements: “The woman is capable of performing the most difficult tasks of fighting beside the men...”⁷⁹ However, even Guevara, a symbol of the revolution, dismissed the women’s role as leader or combatant. He later contended that women’s role should be one of logistical support and spying because of their persuasive ways with men.⁸⁰ The literature discredits Guevara’s notion of females as only supporters, and exposes their contributions as fighters and strategists.

76 Schwitall and Dietrich, “Demobilisation of Female,” 58–59.

77 Ibid.

78 Lobao, “Women in Revolutionary Movements,” 213.

79 Ernesto Guevara, Brian Loveman, and Thomas M. Davies, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 111.

80 Ibid.

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III. MOTIVATIONS FOR ENLISTMENT

I chose to do politics in a country where doing politics implies violence.

—Tanja Nijmeijer,
member of the Colombian guerrilla group Revolutionary Armed Forces

A. INTRODUCTION

The motivation of Latin American females to join insurgencies varies with individual and by the willingness of insurgent organizations to accept and utilize them. Karen Kampwirth's research on Central American insurgencies found that motivations depended on the country, age group, prior existing networks, religious beliefs, ideology, expectations of security, family structure, and social status.⁸¹ However, as a general proposition, the argument of this chapter is that the increase in female participation in insurgencies in Latin America from the 1960s occurred for four main reasons. First was the increased ideological appeal of the Left in the wake of the Cuban Revolution as some households and communities, religious groups, and political parties, found Fidel Castro's experiment attractive. Second, guerrilla organizations began to reach out to entire communities, not simply to military age males. As females were part of the community, they were actively recruited by many insurgent organizations that empowered them by assigning them important roles. Third was a shift in gender relationships in a society in which women increasingly took control of their lives and choices. Finally, there were personal reasons for enlistment, the most important being domestic abuse and family relationship.

⁸¹ Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 135.

B. IDEOLOGICAL SHIFTS IN WAKE OF CUBAN REVOLUTION

1. Revolutionary Counterculture and Liberation Theology

a. Revolutionary Counterculture

The formation of Central and Southern American countries after the Spanish American wars of independence created a region full of political and racial contradictions that continue to prevail. Huge variations in wealth caused the dispossessed and their middle class advocates to find inspiration in the Cuban Revolution as a mechanism to change the status quo in Latin America. Revolutionary Cuba under Fidel Castro also actively promoted revolution in Latin American with training and equipment to would-be insurgents. However, Cuban sponsorship was not the primary factor, which saw an uptick of insurgent activity in the region. Rather, revolutionaries were able to leverage social, economic, and political conditions to promote the cause of violent change.

Some of the factors that contributed to challenges to the status quo in Central and South America were inequality, corruption, authoritarian regimes, political oppression, economic and racial divisions, and the foreign exploitation of agrarian-based economies. Marxist-Leninism and Liberation Theology provided the ideological framework that rationalized the decision of men and women to fight against regime viewed as corrupt or undemocratic. The key point is that these ideologies shifted the strategic thinking of the male leaders of the organizations, which caused them to see the utility of the participation of women in the revolutionary insurgency. Male leaders also saw a force multiplier advantage to having women in their organizations. Revolutionary movements in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala included female participation in all levels during the conflict. However, during the negotiation and post reconstruction process, female issues were seldom addressed which led to fractures and the creation of new female advocacy organizations. For example, during the post-conflict period in Nicaragua, the FSLN male leadership and women advocates disagreed over issues like female participation in the armed forces, abortion, and the role of women in politics.⁸² The majority of the women

⁸² Karen Kampwirth, *Latin America's New Left and the Politics of Gender: Lessons from Nicaragua* (New York, NY: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC., 2011), 5–6. (Loc 170, Kindle edition).

returned to household roles performed before joining the insurgency. Others continued their political activism in women's organizations within the FSLN. From 1979 to 2007, female organizational skills and persistence paid off, according to Kampwirth: "far more women have been elected to the National Assembly representing the FSLN than any other party . . . they comprised 65.85 percent."⁸³ The shift in ideology helped the FSLN gain support and greater legitimacy.

The creation of a revolutionary counter culture has its roots in the Spanish American wars of independence. The consolidation of the former colonies continues to see violence exacerbated by ideological struggle of liberalism versus conservatism. The legacy of social divisions, European violence, and lack of developed liberal ideas led to the instability of post-independence politics.

Identity shifts of Spanish-born Europeans, Blacks, and indigenous contributed to violent uprisings that resulted in the later independence wars. Signal of this change can be seen in early independent revolts. For example, Father Miguel Hidalgo sought to rally Mexican peasants by framing the narrative of revolt as one between Creoles and Peninsulars.⁸⁴ Hidalgo's uprising is significant not only for its defiance of imperial rule, but also for highlighting the key grievances of the peasantry, land rights foremost among them.⁸⁵ Land ownership in the Americas continues to be one of the main grievances in the countryside. The modernization of agriculture systems, which favors land consolidation, the spread of cattle ranching, and the migration of workers to cities have altered the peasantry's relationship to the land. However, the lack of land titles, especially in the wake of civil wars, has caused considerable displacement of populations, and continues to be an issue in Peru, Colombia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Chiapas.

The wars of independence spawned two main currents of ideology. In a nineteenth century context, liberalism was seen as progressive because it promoted independence, individual liberty, equality of opportunity, economic development,

⁸³ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁴ Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, 96.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

parliamentary systems of government, and it tended to be secular and hence anti-clerical. Nevertheless, it remained very much an ideology of elites, which excluded minority groups like Blacks and indigenous people. The main problem for liberals was that the newly independent Latin American states lacked institutions to implement the liberal agenda. The overwhelmingly agricultural economy and inability to produce manufactured goods stymied development. Political and social friction led to violence and civil wars that were too often resolved, if only temporarily, with the emergence of caudillos.⁸⁶ Intra-state wars were also a feature of post-independence Latin America, like for instance the War of the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation (1836–1839), and that of the Triple Alliance (1865–1870).

The mercantilist legacy of Spain and Portugal left Latin America commerce underdeveloped. Following the revolution, free trade attracted foreign investment, which propelled infrastructure, communication, and importation of technology. However, with little capital of their own, the former colonies relied on investment from abroad, so that their assets, such as they were, were mortgage to foreign interests. A fractured and weak region had little choice but to acknowledge U.S. hegemony in the hemisphere.⁸⁷

Modernization, such as it was, seldom trickled down to peasants and the poor. E. Bradford Burns argues, “[elites] always identified (and confused) class well-being with national welfare.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, the transition to independence and the opening of markets challenged the landowners to produce crops for export. What little indigenous industry that existed was swamped with cheap goods from abroad. The economic dependency on U.S. and foreign investment required an alignment of political ideology of capitalism.⁸⁹ The so-called “imported progress”⁹⁰ was resisted by some and viewed with mistrust by others. Land reform and property laws remain the one issue that seems to lie at the root of all the insurgencies in Latin America since the nineteenth century.

86 E. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (California: University of California Press Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980), 13.

87 Chasteen, *Born in Blood*, 144, 145, 181.

88 Burns, *The Poverty of Progress*, 9.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

Peasants displaced by export-oriented agriculture practices migrated to cities in search of jobs and security. However, reform met with entrenched resistance, often backed in Central America by the muscle of the United States. For instance, a peasant rebellion in El Salvador in 1932 led by Agustín Faribundo Martí (who later inspired the name for the FMLN) and the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS) produced a violent civil war as known as *La Matanza or The Killing*, in which “some 30,000 men, women, and children were killed to ensure that El Salvador’s rulers would not soon be confronted with another uprising, and to intimidate the lower classes generally.”⁹¹ In mid-twentieth century Latin America, the modernization of agriculture combined with the perceived corruption of the state, a lack of upward mobility, education, healthcare, and safety net programs, combined with an anti-U.S. sentiment to make insurgency seem an attractive option to many in the region.

The era of the Cold War also contributed to the revolutionary culture that affected the region. The story of multinational industrial corporations moving into agrarian based countries imposing new economic model, plundering resources like land, and causing cyclical unemployment became common throughout the region. John Charles Chasteen has argued that the “expansion of multinational corporations was a natural development of global capitalism . . . [that] any kind of Latin American economic nationalism was therefore ‘un-American,’ something to be combated.”⁹² Washington associated economic prosperity with national security. Therefore, ideologies that hindered the development of multinational corporations were also considered a threat. The United States pressured Latin American countries through the Organization of American States (OAS) to combat communist and Marxist threats.⁹³

91 Robert W. Taylor and Harry E. Vanden, “Defining Terrorism in El Salvador: ‘La Matanza’,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, International Terrorism (September 1982), 110, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1043615>.

92 Chasteen, *Born in Blood*, 263.

93 Ibid.

In 1954, the OAS issued the Declaration of Caracas, saying that all Marxist revolutionary ideology was necessarily alien to the Western Hemisphere . . . [therefore] would be treated as a foreign invasion.⁹⁴

Marxism, at least in the abstract, was attractive to peasants, sympathetic revolutionary elites, and later religious leaders, because it provided an explanation that fit the perceived history of exploitation of classes. Marxism combined with Leninist theory of imperialism informed the bedrock beliefs of Leftist political parties and insurgent groups who opposed militaristic and authoritarian regimes in Central and South America. But ideology, while much debated, was hardly something that could provoke revolt on its own. An anti-U.S. sentiment also appealed to nationalists, who argued that Washington maintained their corrupt leaders in power. As J. Michael Waller argues, “The unifying theme [of people in the FMLN] to generate mass support was not ideology, but the corruption and injustices of the pro-Western governments under attack.”⁹⁵ While many of the leaders of the left were men, women were extremely active. For instance, in her study of insurgency worldwide, Alexis Henshaw included those groups in Latin America, and found that “the numbers for redistributive movements, at 84.2 percent [non-combat role], and 52.6 percent [combat role] respectively, were significantly higher than the averages, and appeared to confirm earlier observations that women appeared to be more active in Leftist movements.”⁹⁶ She also found, “that a Leftist, redistributive ideology along Marxist or Socialist lines has a strong, positive relationship to rates of female participation.”⁹⁷ In sum, Henshaw confirms that Marxism Left-leaning ideology increases the participation in all aspects of the organization.

The promise of social, gender, and class equality imported by European thinkers like Marx was intriguing for women and incorporated by men into the insurgencies. In 1868, Karl Max wrote to a friend, “Everyone who knows anything of history also knows that great social revolutions are impossible without the feminine ferment. Social progress

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ J. Michael Waller, *The Third Current of Revolution: Inside the 'North American Front' of El Salvador's Guerrilla War* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 2.

⁹⁶ Henshaw, “Why Women Rebel,” 158.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 169.

may be measured precisely by the social position of the fair sex.”⁹⁸ The FARC-EP, SL, EZLN, FSLN, URNG, and FMLN used ideology as a recruitment tool for women. In Central American insurgencies, Kampwirth found that the possibility of class equality influenced women into the insurgencies in greater numbers rather than feminism.⁹⁹ The following are three quotes highlighted by Ilja A. Luciak of revolutionary organizations appealing to females:

The following is from a FMLN Letter of principals and objectives:

The construction of a true democracy entails the full realization of women and their creative participation in all spheres of national life. This is a fundamental principle in the societal program for which the FMLN fights. We have a commitment to win equal rights for women, [and] to overcome their marginalization and oppression in Salvadoran society.¹⁰⁰

The following is from the FSLN Historical Program:

The Sandinista revolution will abolish the detestable discrimination that women have suffered with regard to men [and] establish economic, political, and cultural equality between women and men.¹⁰¹

The following is a statement from the URNG:

To the Guatemalan woman has to be guaranteed, under conditions of equality, her full participation in political, civil, economic, social, and cultural life, and the eradication of every form of gender and sex discrimination that constitutes an obstacle for full display of her talents and potential in support of the development and progress of the country.¹⁰²

These organizations promoted gender equality in theory. However, the reality based on the ex-guerrillas’ account could be quite different. Marta and Liliana,

98 Karl Marx, “Marx to Ludwig Kugelman in Hanover,” Marx-Engels Correspondence 1868, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1868/letters/68_12_12.htm.

99 Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 6.

100 Ilja A. Luciak, *After the Revolution: Gender and Democracy in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 149.

101 Ibid., 167.

102 Ilja A. Luciak, “Gender Equality, Democratization, and the Revolutionary Left in Central America: Guatemala in Comparative Context,” in *Radical Women in Latin America: Left and Right*, ed. Victoria Gonzalez and Karen Kampwirth (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001), 189.

demobilized fighters, were abducted by FARC-EP when still minors. Both claimed to have been beaten and raped just days after arriving in the insurgent camps by the commanders.¹⁰³ Marta later recalled that being raped soon after arrival “was the rule rather than the exception.”¹⁰⁴

In summary, the revolutionary culture of Latin American countries was a result of political, economic, and social conditions that predated the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban government provided inspiration, material, and organizational skills for groups to unite and plan from Cuba. The authoritarian abuses and corruption of many regimes gave legitimacy to religious, communists, Marxists, and general political resistance. The emergence of Communist organizations and Marxist-Leninist inspired insurgencies appealed to women because of the prospect to remove the regime and improve their lives. The overlay of ideology onto what had been traditional peasant ferment from the 1960s encouraged the insurgencies to open their ranks to women.

b. *Liberation Theology*

The first thing we discovered was that the parish is not the church building or a certain geographical space with all its inhabitants, but rather a community of brothers and sisters who visit one another, pray together, and help one another in hard times, as members of the family of God.

—Félix Jimenez
Spanish former priest

The Church is one of the most resilient institutions in Latin America. The emergence of liberation theology in what historically had been an extremely conservative institution dedicated to preserving the status quo in economic as well as gender relationships, exposed women to ideas that heretofore had been available only to men and intellectuals. While the term “liberation theology” was only coined in 1971, it represented a movement that emerged in 1950–1960 Latin America that held that it was the Church’s

103 Mauricio Rubio, “No Llores por Tania, Colombia: Mujeres en el Conflicto Armado,” Fundación Ideas por la Paz (FIP), FIP Working Papers 12, April 2013, 13, <http://www.ideaspaz.org/publications/posts/92>.

104 Ibid.

duty to “liberate” the faithful from social injustice and poverty. Until denounced by the Rome’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the 1980s, Liberation theology was represented a shift in ideology that influenced men in insurgencies to open up the ranks for women participation. Inspired by this new doctrine, the institution of the Church now provided women with a space to organize, gain political and leadership skills, and served in many instances as collaborators and a center of recruitment for women to join the insurgency. The following section will provide an historical background that explains the influence of the Church in the life of women, the development of liberation theology, and how it contributed to them to enlist.

Since the conquest, the Catholic Church influenced every level of society. With the help of the religious order of Franciscans, the takeover of the Yucatan region by Spaniards went through a strong inquisition to convert indigenous souls, who struggled unsuccessfully to keep their identity and religion. Led by Diego de Landa, the Franciscans attacked people’s identity, while at the same time subjugated them to European control through ideology, which kept the region stable for “three long centuries.”¹⁰⁵ John Chasteen characterized these events as “an earthly and spiritual conquest, the defeat of the old gods.”¹⁰⁶ The religious leaders and the *encomendados* contributed to the inequality among the people, by claiming spiritual authority over the natives and imported black slaves.¹⁰⁷ The Church, therefore, reinforced European superiority by giving it divine sanction. One just has to examine the *Requerimiento* (requirement), an early version of a modern Miranda Rights declaration, to understand that religion was a central tool of the colonization process, which established the superiority of European culture, discredited indigenous practices, and cemented the social and economic hierarchy.¹⁰⁸ It is hard not to find in Latin America a capital city that does

105 Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, 49.

106 Ibid., 41.

107 Encomendado: A person rewarded with indigenous people and lands for cultivation, which provided the crown with revenue and tributes. Point of contention among Conquistadors after Spain tried to limit and restrict its practice. From John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2011), 37–38.

not have a Catholic Church near the Presidential Palace or center of power. The initial organization of the cities evolved around a plaza, which had a designated place for a Church. Religious activities dominated the calendar and while Church rituals set the tone and rhythm of local life.¹⁰⁹ The Church represented an essential tool of conquest and subsequently for social control.

In many instances, the members of the Church were given *encomiendas* themselves. Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, as many other religious leaders, was given many *encomiendas*, which he converted to Catholicism and later openly advocated for humane treatment of indigenous peoples in Spanish courts.¹¹⁰ The idea of better conditions for the oppressed remained present in Church teachings throughout the centuries, although it may have seldom been applied in practice. In 1968, the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) concluded that to confront poverty required radical changes in Latin America.¹¹¹ The liberation of men no longer meant only spiritual—they agreed that the Church should “[give] preference to the poorest and most needy sectors.”¹¹² Among the many topics covered, they concluded that the conditions in Latin America could lead to violence and radical mobilization.¹¹³

The most significant aspect that came out of the aforementioned conference was the Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs). The CEBs decentralized groups in the communities of approximately 30 people, which tried to apply biblical teaching to their work, family, and even political views.¹¹⁴ The Church influenced women by organizing

108 Louis Segal, “NS3501 Class Handout Summary January 9, 2014,” Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 2. The Requirimiento document informed the habitants of the new world about their responsibility to obey the God through the representatives of the Crown.

109 Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquest: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517–1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 39.

110 Chasteen, *Born in Blood*, 44–45.

111 Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 29–31.

112 Ibid., 30.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid., 25–26.

self-help groups. For example, in Nicaragua, the Church created an environment where women felt safe and were able to exchange ideas, and even recruited other Sandinistas.¹¹⁵ “[In El Salvador], Participation in Christian “base communities” brought many urban and middle-class women into rural communities to lead Bible discussions and to perform services like sewing, teaching literacy skills, and offering health advice.”¹¹⁶ In El Salvador, religious organizations also operated many refugee camps during the Civil War, where indoctrination and political radicalization of women occurred. Former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, Edwin G. Corr, observed, “a characteristic of all the refugee camps was that only housed women, children and elderly men . . . These camps were channels for providing food, medicine and even arms to FMLN guerrilla units.”¹¹⁷ Nydia Díaz, prominent female guerrilla fighter in the FMLN and later legislator in El Salvador, started her radicalization at a very young age by doing social work influenced by liberation theorist teaching at her school.¹¹⁸ Jocelyn S. Viterna, found that women mobilization often occurred by religious networks and family ties with people inside the Christian organizations.¹¹⁹ The CEBs became common practice across Central America shifting the way women interacted, learned about religion and politics, and organized.

Kampwirth found that religious mobilization contributed to the mobilization of women in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Chiapas. She reasoned that the lack of similar religious community based organizations like the CEBs in Cuba, where liberation theology did not exist, could explain the low participation of women in the Cuban revolution.¹²⁰ Contrary to Kampwirth’s framing of the role of religion, Ilja Luciak argues that liberation theology hindered attention to women’s issues and limited their participation because of the patriarchal tradition of the Catholic Church.¹²¹ Luciak argues

115 Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 38–39.

116 Henshaw, “Why Women Rebel,” 104.

117 Waller, *The Third Current*, xxv, xxvii.

118 Tracy A. Phillips, “Nidia Díaz: Guerrilla Commander,” Montgomery, AL: Air Command and Staff College, 1997, 7, www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA394030.

119 Viterna, “Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded,” 9, 21.

120 Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 125.

121 Luciak, *After the Revolution*, 13–14.

that the incorporation of radical ideas about gender in the revolution and women's rights occurred while the political cadre interacted with feminist movement ideals in other countries.¹²² Viterna and Kampwirth do agree on the importance of pre-existing networks as a contributing factor for mobilization. Viterna points out "Being in a participation-supporting network therefore increases an individual's probability of mobilization, but does not guarantee it."¹²³ The explanation then is that pre-existing networks in general contribute to women mobilization and not necessary the nature of religious ideology.

Liberation theology in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Chiapas targeted women for mobilization. The institution and structure of the Church filled gaps of government outreach. In Chiapas for example, the church based communities advocated for women emancipation and worked arduously to mobilize them to improve their lives. The Church often preached about the equality of man and women. However, the impact of the organization improved the organizational and leadership skills of females inside their communities.¹²⁴

In summary, the liberation theology message of change and empowerment resonated with women and encouraged them to break away from standard roles of a patriarchal society, although not in all areas. Church leaders influenced by liberation theology assisted overtly and covertly the insurgency because of shifts in religious theology that advocated for the poor and labeled the regimes practices as unjust. The leaders of insurgent organizations naturally saw in these organizations a way of growing support by rapidly overcoming patriarchal barriers that limited female participation. The religious groups provided women with the experience organizing and political indoctrination required for the people's revolutionary war tactics and strategies discussed in the following section.

If we analyze additional cases comparatively, religious motivation has not been as crucial as Kampwirth claims. Despite a lack of liberation theology in Colombia and Peru,

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Viterna, "Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded," 5.

¹²⁴ Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 98.

a large number of women joined insurgent movements in those countries. In the case of the FARC and SL, their Marxist discipline rejected religion and any other authority that competed with their organizations. Carlos Ivan Degregori wrote on the subject of Sendero Luminoso and religion:

The religious clash merits particular comment. According to del Pino (1996), the senderistas were exasperated by the militant zeal of the Protestant Evangelicals (who won considerable converts in the countryside) and their refusal “to serve two masters.” As for Andean religion and popular Catholicism, Shining Path considered such beliefs archaic and disgusting, and actively tried to suppress community rituals and fiestas.¹²⁵

2. Guerrilla Mobilization Strategies

Although guerrilla fighting in Latin America benefited from the Cuban experience in ideology and material support, the theory of Che Guevara *foquismo* was not exportable to other countries in Latin America, especially those who faced strong military regimes backed up by U.S. security and cooperation programs. The need to change from a small group insurrection to a more popular people’s war, similar to that in Vietnam in the 1940s-1970s, opened the participation of women in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Peru. Under Che Guevara’s *foco* theory, small groups of armed guerrillas can spur a mass rebellion by accelerating the necessary conditions for the uprising through the armed struggle, and then emerge in rural areas with the support of the peasantry to win over a tyrannical regime.¹²⁶ Considering that Guevara wrote his guerrilla strategy theory after the Cuban Revolution, it is questionable how much was a reflection after the events rather than a description of what happened. Walter Laqueur points out that Guevara’s view of how to conduct guerrilla warfare was in some aspects contrary to other revolutionary theories like Maoism and Marxism-Leninism. Che considered the armed struggle as the tool to convince the people to rise up rather than mobilizing the people around a political ideology. In the classical Maoist approach the

¹²⁵ Carlos Ivan Degregori, “Harvesting Storms: Peasant Rondas and the Defeat of Sendero Luminoso in Ayacucho,” in Steve J. Stern, *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980–1995* (New York: Duke University Press, 1998), 152.

¹²⁶ Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 330.

political ideology and will is more important than the armed struggle.¹²⁷ Mao argued that a strong and loyal guerilla force were the product of political indoctrination. Furthermore, Mao argued that, “guerilla leaders spend a great deal more time in organization, instruction, agitation, and propaganda work than they do fighting, for their most important job is to win over the people.”¹²⁸ On the other hand, Marx-Leninist approach to insurrection saw the lack of control of a central organism and unorthodox nature of the guerilla tactics as political liability in the post-conflict. Marx argued, “they [the guerrillas] must in times of peace, form the most dangerous mob.”¹²⁹ Guevara tried to export the practice of *foquismo* guerilla strategy against the Bolivarian military units supported by the US and died in the process in 1967. *Foquismo* worked in Cuba because of the freedom of movement and recruitment in the rural areas of Sierra Maestra, a culture of revolution in the ungoverned areas, weak government, propaganda, political repression, and the popular backlash against military violence against civilians.¹³⁰ The conditions of regime repression against the insurgencies in Central America and South America diminished the utility of *foco*. For example, the Nicaraguan government’s repressive practices disrupted the initial years of the FSLN by eliminating leadership and countering attacks effectively. The FSLN quickly found that guerilla fighting alone could not remove the regime, so they adapted to the circumstances and implemented guerilla lessons learned from China and Vietnam. In 1967, the FSLN shifted to a more people’s war approach, which provided wider range of recruits and support that including women, peasants, workers, Christian organizations, and discontent middle class organizations.¹³¹ These tactics and techniques spread to neighboring countries and the Andes region.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Mao, Zedong, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (Urbana, III: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 8.

¹²⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Revolution in Spain* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), quoted in *The Myth of the Guerrilla: Revolutionary Theory and Malpractice*, ed. J. Bowyer Bell (New York: Knopf, 1971), 9.

¹³⁰ Thomas Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2001), 9–11.

¹³¹ Waller, *The Third Current*, 17.

The Vietnam War influenced guerrilla popular notions of who could participate and how to execute an insurgency against the US influence. Ho Chi Minh's victory in the Vietnam War not only cemented the idea that people's war was a feasible endeavor, but also that U.S. support could be countered with information operations and propaganda. Additionally, Ho advocated for equal rights and participation of women, something insurgent organizations in Latin America incorporated in their recruitment strategy towards national liberation. Ho declared, "Women are half the people. If women are not free, then the people are not free."¹³² This message not only resonated with women in Vietnam, but was also used by Communist and insurgent groups in Latin America, and much later reiterated by FET officers in Afghanistan, to bring attention to the importance of gender considerations in COIN. The framing of the struggle motivated women in Vietnam to fight for their country, and also motivated them to break with standard traditional roles and practices. In just over three years, women in the Northern Vietnam workforce grew to over 500,000.¹³³ The call for participation of women pushed them to the front lines to perform numerous roles that included manning anti-aircraft guns, moving ammunition and supplies, spying, cooking, and road repair.¹³⁴ Women in insurgencies like the FMLN, FSLN, URNG, EZLN, FARC, and SL benefited from the proven blue print produced by the women in the Vietnam War. The experience of women in Central America and the Andes Region insurgencies are closer to the Vietnamese than those who participated of the Cuban Revolution. In Cuba, women represented around five percent of the guerrilla fighters, and by Guevara's own account, they were better suited for supporting roles than fighting.¹³⁵ As discussed in the introduction, the majority of Latin American insurgencies since the Cuban Revolution have over 30 percent women who occupy positions from fighters to support.

¹³² Ho Chi Minh, quoted by Helen E. Anderson, "Fighting for Family: Vietnamese Women and the American War," in David L. Anderson, *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2011), 309.

¹³³ Helen E. Anderson, "Fighting for Family: Vietnamese Women and the American War," in *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, ed. David L. Anderson (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2011), 312.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 309.

¹³⁵ Guevara, Loveman, and Davies, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 111.

J. Michael Waller makes a persuasive argument about shifts of tactics and strategies used by revolutionaries in Latin America in Post-Cuban Revolution. He argues that Vietnam lessons helped Central American revolutionaries in the area of non-military tactics. It was mobilization through the spread of internal support systems, rather than the transfer of Cuban methods, that was the primary influence.¹³⁶ He uses the FMLN and on occasion, the FSLN case studies to argue that American activism helped expand networks of domestic and international support that eventually checked efforts of the U.S. Congress to become involved. Although this argument is unconvincing as Washington has been deeply involved in checking the spread of revolution in Latin America, from the Alliance for Progress of the 1960s to Plan Colombia of 2000. The point is not that the activism directly swayed women to join the insurgency in Latin America, or impacted the outcome of the revolutions, but rather it highlighted an exchange of ideas relating to gender between activists and insurgents. During the time leading up to the insurgencies in Latin America, the feminist movements in the United States were expanding and winning significant battles regarding reproductive rights (Roe vs. Wade, 1973), education (Title IX of the Education Amendments), discrimination of gender (Executive Order 11375 Affirmative Action policy expansion), and approval of the birth control pill (1960). The premise is that the Vietnam War and 1960s political activism somehow managed to influence, through contact and application of guerrilla tactics, the inclusion of women in larger numbers into their organizations. For example, in El Salvador the FMLN used women groups “to secure funds from development agencies eager to support women’s organizing.”¹³⁷ The impact on mobilization, propaganda, intelligence collection, support, and as fighters increased the numbers and capacity of the rebels. The FSLN is the prime example of a movement that, after their initial setbacks, regrouped, and was able to build the kind of mobilization required to remove the military regime. The FSLN experience taught other insurgencies in the region that international networking and gaining support of the people was more sustainable than Guevara’s approach.

¹³⁶ Waller, *The Third Current*, 1–3.

¹³⁷ Luciak, *After the Revolution*, 150.

The mentioned shifts in strategy are important for the development of women in insurgency in Latin America. No longer is the destiny of the guerrilla in Latin America exclusively in the hands of bearded men fighting from the mountains. Rather, ownership of the revolution shifted to students, workers unions, peasants, international women organizations, and the even the support of church organizations to gain political goals and synchronize a popular movement strong enough to overthrow a regime or make substantial changes in the system. Since the mobilization of the masses included different levels of society and experience, the recruitment of savvy women in already structured organizations resulted as a perfect match. For example, in El Salvador, the FMLN used the Association of Salvadorian Women (ADEMUSA) as a hotbed for FMLN activities. A raid of the offices of the ADEMUSA, uncovered “eleven firebombs and stocks of gasoline, scores of steel tire-punctures used to make streets impassible, a Soviet-made 9-millimeter pistol, and bomb-making materials.”¹³⁸

The shift of guerrilla tactics and interaction with external actors increased female participation in the groups. The outcome of the insurgencies varied in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The use of outside network support helped the Sandinistas in Nicaragua to topple the Somoza regime in 1979. However, in El Salvador it helped maintain a state of chaos that forced the government to negotiate political, educational, and social reform. The URNG pressure also led to a peace process and substantial political changes in Guatemala. The EZLN Internet campaign gathered massive international support that pressured the Mexican regime to grant some autonomy and investment in the Chiapas region. Women indigenous in Chiapas gained progress in the areas of education, women’s health, and economic independence through small business projects. The application of people’s war in Colombia also helped increase the number of women in the FARC-EP. On the other hand, the FARC-EP outreach to domestic and international women organizations failed to network effective means of support. Colombian information operations campaign targeting women to demobilize and anti-recruitment propaganda pushed the FARC-EP to establish Internet blogs, Facebook, and Websites

¹³⁸ Waller, *The Third Current*, 190.

with limited success. The FARC-EP image of legitimacy has been tainted by their human rights abuses against women and drug financing methods.

The SL also based its insurgency strategy on Mao's popular war, which helped them open to the recruitment of people from all genders during the initial phases of the insurgency. However, they isolated themselves from the population by utilizing forced recruitment of entire communities and relying on weak hierarchical organization structure and utopian ideology. SL's version of mass mobilization is not the same as that the rest of the insurgencies in this study. The Senderista's recruitment of the people through propaganda and political indoctrination grew the support base, or *masa*, during the initial phases of the guerrilla. However, when pressured by security forces and scarce resources, it shifted to forcing entire communities into the organization coercion, and terror became the primary source of recruitment. After 1988, the conditions were so ruthless that "around 100 children and adults died for lack of food. The children, who did not have anything to eat, often ingested herbs and dirt that caused their deaths."¹³⁹

Interestingly enough, Steven Stern found that when the SL forced their children into the insurgency, it was the women who first resisted the guerrillas.¹⁴⁰ Stern argues that the women were the "ones who could most effectively wield the power normally exercised by the men."¹⁴¹ The *masa*, composed of women and children, suffered greatly. The security forces rescued a community deep in guerrilla zone, and found "160 Asháninkas and 40 colonos [indigenous tribes]. Among the group (80 percent were children and women), all were sick and malnourished, and 95 percent had tuberculosis, anemia, or gastrointestinal disorders."¹⁴² The women within the SL co-opted men to demobilize.¹⁴³ Stern concludes, "The family, as the most important web of social and

139 Ponciano Del Pino, "Family, Culture, and Revolution: Everyday Life with Sendero Luminoso," in *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru 1980–1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham, NC: University Press, 1998), 177.

140 Del Pino, "Family, Culture, and 'Revolution,'" 179.

141 Ibid., 180.

142 Ibid., 178.

143 Ibid., 183.

affective ties, managed to announce the end of the utopia—to break the grip of ‘total domination.’”¹⁴⁴

In summary, the shifts in mobilization tactics and strategies enabled women to participate willingly in some groups and unwillingly in others with great variations in commitment the outcome for the insurgencies.

C. PERSONAL FACTORS

Women often have a more substantial array of grievances to rebel against than men.

—Kim Cragin and Sara Daly,
Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs, 2009

Women also joined insurgencies for a diverse set of personal reasons that are not centered on ideology and shifts in insurgent strategy. In particular, many of them joined willingly or unwillingly because of three main reasons: domestic abuse, boredom and empowerment, and subsistence and security. All the insurgencies in Latin America were/are different in ideology, organization, social makeup, and goals. Therefore, generalizations about why women enlist in such dangerous endeavors are difficult to make. Nevertheless, there are factors that do affect women at the personal level and influence their choices more than that of men. Political organizations, environment, political opposition, and cultural factors mold each insurgency. The personal reasons discussed in the next section concentrate mostly on examples of the FARC-EP. The following section will address domestic abuse and the combination of perceived benefits as factors to pull and push women into the guerrilla force.

1. Domestic Abuse

In Colombia, domestic abuse is one of the most important factors for women and teens abandoning their communities and families to join the insurgency. In 1999, the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

number of domestic abuse was 40,469 and 2,049 cases of rape.¹⁴⁵ The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor report on Colombia 2012 learned of 32,934 new investigations for domestic violence, although as usual these were most likely desperately under reported.¹⁴⁶ In Colombia, violence against women is endemic and is a leading reason why young girls join insurgent ranks. More than 27 percent of the women that joined insurgent groups in Colombia were thirteen years or less of age¹⁴⁷ (see Figure 1). The women in rural areas have higher percentage of mobilizing at a young age because of access to the guerrilla groups, and domestic abuse by family members. Additionally, 63 percent of the rural women demobilized in Colombia mentioned domestic violence as a reason they seek protection inside the rebel organizations.¹⁴⁸ Overall, 46 percent of the women claim that domestic violence was a motivation for joining the organization.¹⁴⁹ Reports highlight that in 65 percent of peasant sexual abuses the perpetrator was a family member.¹⁵⁰

145 Colombia: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 1999, U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/1999/380.htm>.

146 Colombia 2012 Human Rights Report, U.S. Department of State, accessed December 23, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204648.pdf>.

147 Rubio, “No Llores por Tania,” 34.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid., 36.

150 Ibid., 10.



Figure 1. Young girl in the FARC-EP.¹⁵¹

In 2012, reporter Anne Phillips interviewed Athena [alias], a propaganda leader for the FARC, about her reasons for joining. She found that Athena fled home because of the abuse of the parents and continuous beatings by her brother. Once outside the home, she was offered protection, but was later handed over to the guerrillas. At the time that Athena joined the guerrillas, she was thirteen-years-old. She soon began training with weapons, political ideology, and performing nightly sexual duties in the camp. She was smart, attractive, and politically savvy. Her promotion to propaganda leader came because of her display of commitment and political utility to the unit. While acting as a propaganda leader, she felt empowered and accomplished her need to fill equal among the men in the organization. Later, she became pregnant and then disenfranchised with the group after a forced abortion. The most important finding of the interview was that the experience of the forced abortion increased Athena's violent temper during combat, and her attitude towards danger. The abortion experience helped Athena's decision to abandon the organization. She finally escaped and reintegrated into society through the government's individual DDR program.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Estafania Rodriguez, "Abuso Sexual A Niñas Soldado en las FARC," Niños Soldado Blogspot, May 6, 2008, http://childsoldiers2008.blogspot.com/2008_05_01_archive.html.

¹⁵² Anne Phillips, "Fighting Mad. Why Women Turn to the FARC—And How the FARC Turns on Them," *Foreign Affairs*, June 1, 2012, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137672/anne-phillips/fighting-mad>.

The story of Athena is common among demobilized women in Colombia. In a study published in 2013 by Mauricio Rubio, nine percent of demobilized forces stated that coercion or trickery was the primary reason for joining the guerrillas.¹⁵³ Guerrilla organizations target victims of domestic abuse through common acquaintances by offering protection. Based on statistics of demobilized guerrillas, 41 percent of FARC-EP women had their first contact with the guerrillas through a friend or family member.¹⁵⁴ The issue is more complex when men are the main providers in the household, where domestic abuse can extend to economic deprivation. In the aforementioned study, 20 percent of women from rural areas and fully 38 from urban settings identified economic deprivation as the primary reason for joining the guerrillas.

Natalia Herrera's interviews of women in the FARC also found that domestic violence was a main contributor of women seeking protection and empowerment offered by the guerrillas. She argues that the physical abuse, combined with family fragmentation, creates an environment for women to abandon their household. Furthermore, she claims that the domestic environment and family relations are key to understanding personal motivations for joining the guerilla.¹⁵⁵

Mariana Díaz Kraus also found domestic abuse to be the number one reason that girls join armed groups like the FARC-EP or ELN. During her research girls claimed they thought that by joining the guerrillas, it would automatically give them the security and protection that they lacked at home.¹⁵⁶ The following is part of Díaz interview with a girl that was given to the FARC-EP when she was 11 years old:

I remember that my Mom got me up on Saturday morning very early, and packed three sets of clothing that I had. We went to the hills until we found a camp. When we arrived, she told me that she was leaving me there because she loved me and she did not even have for a sugar water, and that

153 Rubio, "No Llores por Tania," 35.

154 Ibid., 33.

155 Natalia Herrera, "Análisis de Entrevistas: Historia de Vida," (Unpublished paper part of Master's Thesis, University of the Andes, Social Sciences Faculty, Department of Political Science, Bogota, May 2007), 2-4.

156 Mariana Díaz Kraus, "Las Niñas de la Guerra: Motivos y Experiencias" (BA Monography, University of the Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, 2005), 14-15.

there I was going to be better off. I cried a lot and begged her not to go, but a man took my hand and held me hard, and then she left. I never saw her again.¹⁵⁷

In summary, Colombia has a large population of women victims of domestic violence who are recruited, coerced, or tricked to joining the guerillas. To overcome the patriarchal barriers, women seek emancipation inside groups that offer equality of gender. However, they are confronted by a cruel reality when the issue of motherhood arises. Even Elda Neyis Mosquera, alias Karina, one of the most known women leaders in the FARC, spoke out about the abuses and suffering regarding motherhood.

It is not complicated [being a women inside the FARC]; however, women suffer more, [because] women cannot have children over there, fortunately I was able to have my daughter because until 1993 abortion was not mandatory. Only after '93 did abortion become mandatory.¹⁵⁸

Domestic abuse is one of the personal motivations to join. However, access to the guerrilla groups, boredom, the need for sexual partners for the men, and economic deprivation are contributing factors of the high rate of women in the FARC-EP.

2. Perceived Benefits

In this war, you don't get involved because you want to, but because you have to. Because if you don't, they kill you. Even though you didn't know anything about the war.

—Julia, demobilized FMLN guerrilla

Insurgency organizations offer a chance for women and teenage girls to escape traditional roles, and for some excitement, in their otherwise powerless and boring life. The lack of resources and an unhealthy domestic environment push females to lose confidence in their communities, and seek to escape. This section discusses the following perceived benefits women consider when joining the guerilla forces: resources, protection, and monetary benefits.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵⁸ "Soy un Objetivo Militar de las FARC: Elda Neyis Mosquera," El Universal, November 9, 2012, <http://www.eluniversal.com.co/cartagena/nacional/soy-un-objetivo-militar-de-las-farc-elda-neyis-mosquera-97702>.

Ingvild Magnaes Gjelsvik quoted an ex-guerrilla in Colombia alluding to the perceived benefits girls saw in the guerrilla: “I saw the women with them (the male soldiers) in the cars, with money . . . I became motivated and enthusiastic.”¹⁵⁹ Herrera found some perceived cosmetic benefits, in that “how the guerrilla looked, why they were so pretty, they always were well groomed.”¹⁶⁰ A girl’s contact with the guerrillas in their communities helped recruitment because the propaganda was constant and the guerrilla targeted women at will. For example, 50 percent of demobilized women in the rural areas claimed that were taught how to handle weapons by the guerrillas prior to joining the organization.¹⁶¹ Of course, this presupposes that these recruits came from areas dominated by the guerrillas, which in the 1990s were extensive, especially in Southern Colombia, where President Andrés Pastrana granted the FARC-EP a large *despeje* or “cleared zone” in the south as a precondition for negotiations.

In a recent study of demobilized women in Colombia, 30 percent claimed economic deprivation as the primary reason for enlistment, 23 percent indicated a need for protection, while eight percent indicated a search for adventure or change. ; Only eight percent claimed ideological affinity with the insurgency.¹⁶² Rubio acknowledged that it is “difficult to understand how poverty pushes young people to join an organization that normally does not pay anything.”¹⁶³ He further highlights that the main difference, based on his research of demobilized men and women, was that “men focus more on the economic reasons [for joining]; however, women [mention more reasons] related to power and protection.”¹⁶⁴ For example, the number one reason that women from rural areas join, is for power and protection. On the other hand, approximately 38 percent of those demobilized from urban areas cite economic reasons for joining.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Gjelsvik, “Women, War, and Empowerment,” 39.

¹⁶⁰ Herrera, “Análisis de Entrevistas, 8.

¹⁶¹ Rubio, “No Llores por Tania,” 35.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 9.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 35.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Rubio does not attempt to explain these variations. One can posit that women from urban settings might feel more entitled to a higher standard of living and material things than women from impoverished rural areas. This is significant, because until recently, literature claimed that men and women joined insurgencies for the same reasons. Authorities can use the understanding of what motivates men and women, and focus on variations from rural and urban settings to create tactics and strategies to encourage female participation in community organizations and regional politics. The government can provide women with the opportunity to participate in community security forces and encourage education in the affected regions. Then the argument is that relative deprivation theory could explain Rubio's finding of poorer women from rural areas seems to care less about economic needs, than those that come from the urban setting. Similar to Kampwirth's findings, women became radicalized due to migration patterns between rural and urban settings. Migration and refugee status from internal conflict developed a deep sense of inequality in Central American women, leading them to mobilize against a perceived injustice in larger numbers.¹⁶⁶

This combination of poverty, domestic violence, a sense of empowerment, and in some cases, experience as internally displaced persons (IDPs), can push women into viewing the guerrilla organizations as instrumental in fulfilling their needs, or at least the best option they have. According to the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Colombia has one of the highest percentages of IDPs in the world (4.7 million), making it the largest in the Western Hemisphere.¹⁶⁷ Estimates consider "women heading up to 56 percent of displaced households (NRC, 2002a), and their families are highly vulnerable."¹⁶⁸ The Humanitarian Policy Group found that many of the IDPs fear asking for help from the authorities and suffer discrimination once they

¹⁶⁶ Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 7–8.

¹⁶⁷ "2014 UNHCR Country Operations Profile-Colombia," UNHR: The UN Refugee Agency, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e492ad6&submit=GO>.

¹⁶⁸ Deborah Hine and Raoul Balleto, "Assessment of Needs of Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia" (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002,) 8, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/2676.pdf>.

reach an urban setting because they are viewed guerrilla supporters.¹⁶⁹ This population of women is by far the most susceptible to coercion and persuasion to join the guerrillas.

D. FRAMING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN MILITANCY

Terrorism is a tactic used by some guerrilla groups. It is useful to explore the theoretical framework of terrorism to explain motivations of female participation in insurgencies and violence. This analysis will center on the case of women in the FARC.

The United States considers the FARC-EP to be a terrorist organization, because of the numerous atrocities committed against the rural communities. The START database analyzed 954 incidents in which the FARC focused their attacks against non-governmental individuals.¹⁷⁰ Since 1982, terrorist organizations in Colombia have incorporated women in the fighting guerrilla forces.¹⁷¹ This section will define Martha Crenshaw's instrumental and organizational approaches to terrorism and apply them against the case of women terrorists in Colombia. Several empirical observations emerge from this analysis. First, the tangible and intangible benefits serve as motivation for women to join the FARC-EP. Second, the Colombian repression encouraged recruitment of women into the terrorist organization, especially in FARC-governed territories. Third, competition between genders was associated with the increase in brutality within the organization.

Martha Crenshaw categorizes terrorist organizations' decisions as rational activities in two ways: instrumental and organizational. The first one explains terrorist

¹⁶⁹ Karina Wong, "Colombia: A Case Study in the Role of the Affected State in Humanitarian Action April 2008," Humanitarian Working Group, <http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/2555-colombia-state-humanitarian-action>.

¹⁷⁰ Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and responses to Terrorism, last modified December 2013, http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&criterion1=yes&criterion2=yes&criterion3=yes&ctp2=all&success=yes&country=45&perpetrator=576&target=6%2C1%2C8%2C9%2C10%2C12%2C14%2C15%2C16%2C17%2C18%2C19%2C21%2C22&ob=GTID&od=desc&page=2&count=100#results-table.

¹⁷¹ Herrera and Porch, "Like Going to a Fiesta," 610.

activities based on the cost and benefits analysis of a politically motivated actor.¹⁷² In her view, this approach to terrorism is rational and “represents a strategic choice.”¹⁷³ Terrorist organization actions are justified by their political views, and events are triggered because of “the perception of incentive and opportunity.”¹⁷⁴ For instance, Tanja Nijmeijer, the Dutch woman who famously enlisted in the FARC-EP, stated that, “I chose to do politics in a country where doing politics implies violence.”¹⁷⁵ Her explanation suggests that violence is a rational choice for the FARC-EP. Tanja’s reasoning for joining and participating in the kidnapping of American citizens and bombing of innocent civilians, follows Crenshaw’s instrumental approach in which “terrorism is a means to a political end.”¹⁷⁶ Tanja’s defense for the FARC’s terrorizing of hundreds of peasants is known as “‘cognitive restructuring,’ through which reprehensible conduct is presented as honorable.”¹⁷⁷ Tanja’s version of attacks promotes a view of the violence that becomes acceptable to women who seek political change. This legitimization of violence against civilian targets provides other women sitting on the fence with an excuse to sympathize or even join the effort of militants in actions to which they would otherwise be opposed. For example, Isabel, a young Colombian university student, convinced that her revolutionary ideals required her to take violent actions against the government and sympathizers, joined the FARC-EP.¹⁷⁸

Crenshaw’s second approach, called Organizational Process Theory, explains terrorism on the basis of organizational survivability, and “internal group dynamics.”¹⁷⁹ This approach considers individual ambitions, frustrations, and internal disagreements to

172 Martha Crenshaw, “Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches,” in *Inside Terrorist Organizations*, ed. David Rapoport (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 13.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid., 14.

175 Victoria Baker, “The Unconventional Faces of Terrorism,” *Georgia Political Review*, October 14, 2013, <http://georgiapoliticalreview.com/the-unconventional-faces-terrorism/>.

176 Crenshaw, “Theories of Terrorism,” 13.

177 Donatella Della Porta, “The Logic of Underground Organization,” *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 129.

178 Frank Piasechi, *Guerrilla Girl*, DVD, Sydney, N.S.W.:SBS, 2007.

179 Crenshaw, “Theories of Terrorism,” 19.

explain collective violent actions, as well as political fragmentation.¹⁸⁰ Crenshaw's organizational model posits that terrorist organizations can survive without successful political expectations if they can provide incentives that appeal to their supporters and combatants.¹⁸¹ Many women from rural and urban areas of Colombia felt deep grievances and lack of options to channel their aspirations of education, jobs, and health care. The average unemployment rate of females in Colombia was 15.41 percent between 1980 and 2010.¹⁸² In Colombia, the FARC replaced the legitimacy of the government by providing governance in areas they controlled, as well as providing security to peasants and middle-class women against paramilitary forces. They also gave peasants access to better food and weapons, and, more importantly, gave females a sense of empowerment and an opportunity to break away from standard gender roles.¹⁸³ Women excelled in the FARC in areas of intelligence, propaganda, popular outreach, and recruitment of other females.¹⁸⁴ Crenshaw argues that "incentives for joining a terrorist organization . . . includes a variety of individual needs: to belong to a group, to acquire social status and reputation, to find comradeship or excitement, or to gain material benefits."¹⁸⁵ Other factors that increased female recruits in the FARC were family ties, revenge, custom, a sense of adventure, and improvement of living conditions.¹⁸⁶ In the FARC, some women initially found all those aforementioned needs. For example, Isabel considered that she found a new family during the first three months of her military indoctrination.¹⁸⁷

The FARC-EP filled communities with propaganda, spreading a message of gender equality and empowerment of women.¹⁸⁸ In rural areas, peasants were lured into the insurgency because of links to youth political groups, family, lack of opportunity, and

180 Ibid., 19–20.

181 Ibid., 19.

182 Colombia Economic Indicators, The Global Economy.com, http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Colombia/Female_unemployment/.

183 Stanski, "Terrorism, Gender, and Ideology," 140–143.

184 Crenshaw, "Theories of Terrorism," 19.

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.

187 Piasechi, *Guerrilla Girl*.

188 Phillips, "Fighting Mad."

indoctrination. However, even middle-class females were also vulnerable to recruitment through education. For example, Lillian Lopez Alias Olga Lucia Marin, commander of the FARC, found communism appealing at the Juan Ramon Jimenez College when she migrated from the Colombian interior city of Armenia to the urban Bogotá.¹⁸⁹ Radicalization of migrant women between rural and urban environments was also present in other groups throughout the Latin American region.¹⁹⁰ Some women saw the disparity of urban versus rural life, which built up resentment and even anger against the existing social and political order. They came to see their perceived oppression as the product of the capitalist economic system.

Young women's opportunities, already limited, were further undermined by domestic abuse and state violence against the guerrilla and civilians. By 2000, females surged to an average of 30 percent of FARC-EP fighters.¹⁹¹ These changes in gender composition inside the organization helped prevent exit and discontent among the most isolated men fighting in the rural areas. Some experts explain that the inclusion of women led to high levels of male recruitment, arguing that, "FARC's success and survivability was centered on the sexual services provided by female guerrillas."¹⁹²

Demobilized women in militant groups in Colombia commented that they entered into a non-stated gender struggle with their male comrades,¹⁹³ which made them more aggressive during attacks to prove the worth of females in the field.¹⁹⁴ "The courage and efficiency of female fighters—not to mention ferocity—set the gold standard of audacity under fire."¹⁹⁵ This gender competition can lead to an increase in violence and brutality of the terrorist attacks. Some observed that, "a woman is more dangerous than a man . . .

189 Patricia Lara, *Las Mujeres en la Guerra* (Bogota DC Colombia: Planeta Editorial Planeta Colombiana, 2000), 86–87.

190 Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 151–156.

191 Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism*, 41.

192 Herrera and Porch, "Like Going to a Fiesta," 622.

193 Camarada: A term among revolutionaries that means brother in arms.

194 Luz María Lodoño and Yoana Fernanda Nieto, *Mujeres No Contadas: Procesos de Desmovilización y Retorno a la Vida Civil de Mujeres Excombatientes en Colombia 1990–2003* (Medellín, Colombia: La Carreta Editio, 2006), 44.

195 Ibid.

many women in male-dominated organizations feel that they must out-perform men to be taken seriously.”¹⁹⁶

In conclusion, Crenshaw’s explanatory framework of terrorism – the instrumental and organizational approaches—can help to understand the rationality of why women join and remain in the FARC-EP. The benefits of women joining the FARC-EP outweigh the otherwise dreary, insecure, and often brutal peasant life. The instrumental approach explains the rationality of women who accepted violence as the only way to achieve political change. The organizational approach explains why women join for the benefits acquired. Once inside the organization, the gender competition increased their ferocity within the organization, which is explained by the idea of a competitive environment proposed by Crenshaw’s organizational approach.

E. CONCLUSION

The Cuban revolution reinforced and empowered other groups in Latin American with training and equipment. However, internal factors rather than Cuban contamination explain the emergence and spread of insurgencies in Latin America from the 1950s. Marxist-Leninism and liberation theology are two ideological currents that lured men and women into organizations to fight against the regime. These ideologies shifted the strategic thinking of the male leaders of the organizations, which caused them to see the utility of female participation in revolutionary groups. The emergence of Communist organizations and Marxist-Leninist ideological insurgencies appealed to women, because of the hope that regime change would improve their lives.

196 Herrera and Porch, “Like Going to a Fiesta,” 614.

IV. FEMALE ROLES IN INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will cover roles of females in insurgencies in Latin America. The goal is to understand the positions of females in different groups and outline factors that contribute to variations in the number of females in leadership. The first part of the analysis will focus on the experiences of Tanja Nijmeijer (FARC-EP), Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider (Tania the Guerrilla or *Tania la Guerrillera* in Spanish), Karina (FARC-EP), Nidia Díaz (Maria) (FMLN), and Augusta La Torre (SL). Women participate in insurgencies as sympathizers, spies, warriors, and dominant ideological forces. However, the factors that determine the transition of roles are political militancy, leadership and communication skills, physical appearance, personal preference, and family ties (see Figure 2). The last section of this chapter will focus on the influence that advancements in technology have on female roles and agenda inside the insurgencies.

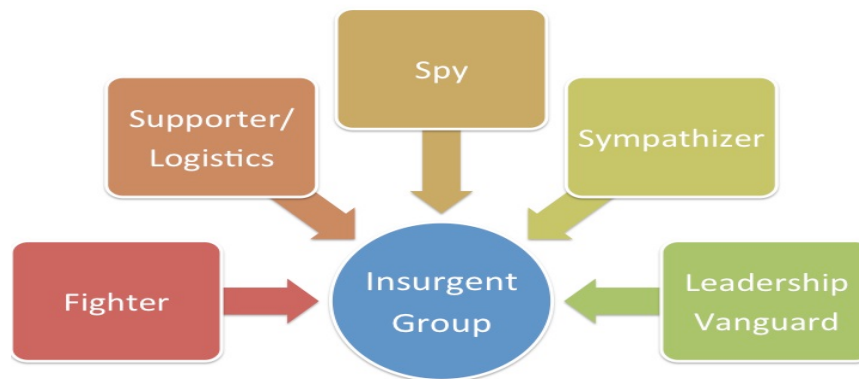


Figure 2. Main female role types

B. UNLIKELY GUERRILLAS

Tanja (alias Alexandra) Nijmeijer is one of the most recognized female guerrilla fighters in Latin America and from the FARC-EP. Before Tanja, Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider, alias *Tania the Guerrillera* (Tania the Guerrilla), was the most recognized female

insurgent on the western hemisphere. *Tania la Guerrillera* was fatally shot in 1967, while aiding Che Guevara in a failed revolution in the Bolivian jungle. Tanja and Haydée's participation in the revolutionary movements share similarities, although their participation and roles vary.

1. Tania La Guerrillera—International Spy and Guerrilla

Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider, better known as *Tania La Guerrillera*, fought Bolivian troops in the jungle until her death. Like Tanja, Haydée had a deep commitment to the revolutionary struggle. Haydée was born in Argentina in 1937, the daughter of two communist exiles from Germany, Erich, and Nadia Bunke. Her family returned to Germany, where she studied, and at the age of 14, joined the Free German Youth (FGY). She learned several languages and played guitar. Like Tanja, Haydée started working in grass-roots organizations, and translating as part of her political duties. She felt great admiration for the Cuban revolution, getting involved in several political activities in Cuba. Haydée found inspiration in the prospect of revolution, in other parts in Latin America. While in Cuba, she trained in military affairs, but never saw any real combat. Che Guevara himself recommended Haydée from a short list of smart women for a secret mission to overthrow of the government of Bolivia.¹⁹⁷ She accepted the assignment and began training. Her selection occurred because of her linguistic skills, sense of culture, intelligence, and commitment to the cause.¹⁹⁸ Figure 3 displays pictures of the different identities that Haydée used in her role as a spy, after training throughout Cuba, Europe, and Bolivia.

¹⁹⁷ Ulises Estrada, *Tania: Undercover with Che Guevara in Bolivia* (Melbourne [Australia]: Ocean Press, 2005), 22–29.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.



Figure 3. Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider multiple identities.¹⁹⁹

In a meeting with Che Guevara, Haydée confirmed her commitment by stating, “I will never betray this trust while I am still alive and breathing.”²⁰⁰ With those words, Haydée sealed her role as the spy who would organize an urban network to support Che’s urban revolution. Later, she was told by her handlers that her primary mission was to develop an urban cell to support the armed revolutionary groups.²⁰¹ After a yearlong training process on communication equipment, clandestine messaging, escape and evasion, and military weapons training, she was ready for Bolivia.²⁰² Haydée traveled to Europe, and later in 1964, arrived at La Paz, Bolivia as Laura Gutiérrez Bauer. She quickly started making contacts, and even casually met the Bolivian dictator, General René Barrientos.²⁰³

In 1966, Haydée met with Che in Bolivia, and in 1967, incorporated completely into the rural guerrilla.²⁰⁴ Che Guevara and other Cuban insurgents tried unsuccessfully to gather popular support among the peasantry, and soon were located by U.S. trained security forces. In August 1967, the Bolivian Army ambushed Haydée and a group of 13

¹⁹⁹ Mijael Vera, Tania, La Guerrillera, Anajnu.cl, accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.anajnu.cl/tanialaguerrillera.htm>.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 29.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 37.

²⁰² Ibid., 40.

²⁰³ Ibid., 81–82.

²⁰⁴ Luis Arce Borja, “Tania La Guerrillera: La Lucha es Con Las Armas,” *El Diario Internacional*, February 24, 2007, <http://www.eldiariointernacional.com/spip.php?article992>.

guerrillas trying to cross a river. The ambush killed Haydée and twelve of the other, leaving only one survivor.²⁰⁵ Her body remained in Bolivia until 1998, when it was transferred to Cuba. The Castro Government named her a national hero of the revolutionary movement, commemorating coins and postal stamps in her honor (see Figure 4 and 5).



Figure 4. Cuban One Peso in honor of *Tania La Guerrillera* (Haydée Bunke)²⁰⁶



Figure 5. Tamara Bunke fifth anniversary of the Day of the Guerrilla Stamp²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Cuban Tania La Guerrillera Commemorative One Peso Coin 1988, <http://www.todocoleccion.net/moneda-medalla-cuba-tania-guerrillera-10-pesos-calidad-proof-1-onza-plata-perfecta~x19162399>.

²⁰⁷ Juan Hernández Machado, "La Mujer Enaltece la Filatelia Cubana (II)," *Filatelia desde Cuba*, March 8, 2013, <http://filateliadesdecuba.wordpress.com/2013/03/08/la-mujer-enaltece-la-filatelia-cubana-ii/>.

2. Tanja Nijmeijer from Fighter to Peace Negotiator

Tanja and Haydée were two females who grew up in strong households with parents who participated actively in their education. They both were well educated, traveled, spoke various languages, played guitar, and developed a deep revolutionary conviction to fight against the established regimes in Latin America. Tanja grew up in the town of Denekamp in the Netherlands, where her dad worked as a construction technician, and her mother as a store manager.²⁰⁸ She attended college at the University of Groningen. In 1999, she traveled to Colombia as an exchange student, where she worked for one year as an English teacher in the city of Pereira. Tanja's radicalization occurred while researching the causes of the FARC's struggle, and traveling across diverse sectors of Colombia. She left her exchange student experience as a different person. Jorge Enrique Botero, Tanja's biographer, recalled her saying that during her initial stay in Colombia, she was bitten by the "fever of the revolution."²⁰⁹ She returned to Colombia in 2002, and participated in clandestine and grass roots movements, including a demonstration called March for Life to benefit Northern area peasants.²¹⁰ She then started working with the urban segment of the FARC-EP, and participated in the bombing of police stations and bus networks in the city of Bogotá.²¹¹

In an interview in February 2013, Tanja stated that she became concerned with the great inequality and suffering of the peasants. During the same interview, she compared the right to take arms against the Colombian government as equal to the allied forces bombings against fascist forces during World War II.²¹² In an interview for The

²⁰⁸ Rubio, "No Llores por Tanja," 8.

²⁰⁹ Mirian Wells, "The Dutch Woman Who Ran Away With Colombia's FARC," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 11, 2012, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2012/1111/The-Dutch-woman-who-ran-away-with-Colombia-s-FARC>.

²¹⁰ "Conozca Quien es Tanja Nijmeijer, La Holandesa Seducida por las FARC," *El País.com.co*, October 17, 2012, <http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/judicial/noticias/conozca-quien-tanja-nijmeijer-holandesa-seducida-por-farc>.

²¹¹ Jorge Enrique Botero and Sibylla Brodzinsky, "Dutchwoman Swaps FARC AK-47 for Peace Talks with Colombia Government," *The Guardian*, January 2, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/02/dutchwoman-farc-peace-talks-colombia>.

²¹² "Tanja Nijmeijer, the Dutch Girl Fighting for the FARC," *France 24 International News*, <http://www.france24.com/en/20130215-week-americas-tanja-nijmeijer-farc-scientology-jenna-miscavige-pope-latino-vila-isabel-samba-banana-joe-dog/>.

Voice of Russia American Edition in 2014, she narrated how the transformation occurred, and described the different roles in which she participated inside the FARC-EP. Following are her answers to questions of how she joined the guerrilla.

It was a very gradual process. First, I thought, “I am going to work with grassroots movements in Colombia, or with union leaders.” Then I started to realize that all those people who fight for another Colombia, for a new Colombia, who have other ideas than the government are being threatened, are being put in jail, are being killed. That’s an everyday question. So when I discovered that, I went back to Holland first, then I came back, but finally I decided to join the guerrilla force.²¹³

Well first, I started to work, do little stuff, like write things for the guerrilla, and then I got more and more involved. I started to work in Bogotá, I moved to Bogotá . . . then I started to work in the militia. The militia in Colombia is like, it’s not guerrilla, they live in cities mostly but also in the countryside, and they just work with the guerrilla force. So I started to work as a militia in Bogotá. And after some while, after some six months, they [asked] if I wanted to go to the jungle for a while. And I was like, why not? I could try it. I mean, I wasn’t thinking about joining the guerrilla force or staying in the jungle or something like that. It was just like, I’m going to do a course for some three or six months, and then I’ll see what I’ll do. And then, when I arrived at the jungle, I saw all those guerrilla people, and I saw the education that was given to them, and I saw how they were living, and I heard their stories about their lives. I saw how daily life in the guerrilla is. So, after some two months, I decided to stay.²¹⁴

Tanja’s education level enabled her to transition from writing propaganda and other clandestine work, to becoming a full-time guerrilla. Currently, she is part of the negotiating delegation of the FARC-EP in Cuba, where the Colombian government hopes to put an end to the guerrilla insurgency. In 2003, an ex-demobilized FARC-EP commander stated that, “Tanja represents an efficient propagandistic instrument that will allow the FARC to clean their international image . . . [that] is something that has been in the works for over a year, time which Tanja used to prepare.”²¹⁵ He added that her

²¹³ Brittany Peterson, “Dutch Woman Explains Why She Joined the FARC Guerrilla,” *The Voice of Russia*, February 19, 2014, http://voiceofrussia.com/us/2014_02_20/Dutch-woman-explains-why-she-joined-the-FARC-guerrillas-1823/.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Rubio, “No Llores por Tanja,” 6.

astronomical rise to the top levels of the FARC-EP, and even a seat at the negotiation table, were because of “her [Tanja’s] knowledge of English, nationality, sometimes innate analytical ability, and on other occasions, her sexual chicanery.”²¹⁶

During a raid in 2007, security forces found emails on a computer belonging to Victor Julio Suárez, alias Mono Jojoy, in which Carlos Antonio Lozada “highlights the qualities and capacities the foreigner [Tanja] had to become part of the International Commission.”²¹⁷ Tanja’s standing inside the FARC-EP was not always as good. During the same raid in 2007, Tanja’s diary turned up in a search of the bombed camp of Mono Jojoy. Under the code name Eillen, Tanja wrote strong criticisms of the commanders, and questioned their reasons for fighting.

I'm tired, tired of Farc, tired of the people, tired of communal life. Tired of never having anything for myself. It would be worth it if we knew why we were fighting. But the truth is I don't believe in this any more . . . I don't know where this project is going. How will it be when we come to power? The girlfriends of the commanders in Ferrari Testarossas, with breast implants, and eating caviar?²¹⁸

Several authors have translated her diary and outline the major points.

She writes that the FARC is a jail, a garbage dump... where some have Rolexes and others are treated like animals (like she) and the private life of the guerrilla. She says that in the middle of the solitude of the jungle, the FARC guerrilla members have sex all day long, to the point of getting AIDS, in other words . . . to fuck, kill, and fuck because this world is coming to an end!²¹⁹

Because of her diary, Jorge Botero wrote that the higher command of the FARC considered executing her.²²⁰ Tanja performed many roles in the years of participation in

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ “Conozca Quien es Tanja.”

²¹⁸ Rory Carroll, “Diary of ‘Eillen’ Tells of Life with Colombia’s Communist Rebels,” *The Guardian*, November 25, 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/nov/26/colombia.rorycarroll>.

²¹⁹ Juliana Rincón, “Colombia: Dutch Women’s Secret FARC Guerrilla Diary,” Global Voices, English version, September 6, 2007, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2007/09/06/colombian-newspaper-unveils-dutch-woman’s-secret-farc-guerrilla-diary/>.

²²⁰ Jorge Enrique Botero, “Jojoy Estaba Animado con el Montaje de su Orquesta,” *Confidencial Colombia*, December 27, 2011, <http://confidencialcolombia.com/es/1/105/2809/Jojoy-estaba-animado-con-el-montaje-de-su-orquesta.htm>.

the FARC-EP. Tanja worked in the support roles as a writer, English translator, and a teacher. She also worked as a warrior in the rank and file in the front lines, and fought next to senior leaders like Mono Jojoy. She currently has warrants for her arrest for bombings in Bogotá, and for her participation in the kidnapping of three Americans.²²¹ The most recent role as negotiator in Cuba keeps her busy with public relations, press releases, and interviews with the international and Colombian press. The Colombian press is of the opinion that *La Holandesa's* (Dutch Woman) is far from the typical guerrilla woman, whom she claims to represent.

As discussed in Chapter III, many young girls and teens joined the FARC-EP because of social, economic, and personal conditions. Many of the typical guerrillas grew in unstable households, dropped out of schools, had a life full of boredom, and lacked the opportunity to learn to read and write. Once these girls were inside the organization with promised equality and opportunity, they found that upper mobility and opportunity is still based on discriminatory and arbitrary conditions. If this is true, then what other factors allowed women like Tanja to attain upper mobility in the organization?

Research by Mariana Díaz Kraus found that, “differences regarding the hierarchy among the girls, particularly based on physical features of youngsters, contributed to them establishing relationships with the commanders and receiving benefits, for example, in labor assignments.”²²² On the other hand, Herrera notes that the “women share the same rights, tasks, and responsibilities as men; therefore, the upper mobility inside the organizational structure can be attributed to commitment, capacity, and good conduct inside the group.”²²³ In the case of Tanja, her upper mobility can be attributed to language skills, commitment to the political cause, intelligence, and close relationship with other guerrilla leaders. Below are some pictures of Tanja Nijmeijer in the fields of Colombia and in Cuba.

²²¹ Ingrid Cobben, “Self-made Guerrilla Tanja Nijmeijer, The Face of FARC?” International Political Forum, November 1, 2012, <http://internationalpoliticalforum.com/self-made-guerillera-tanja-nijmeijer-the-face-of-farc/>.

²²² Díaz Kraus, “Las Niñas de la Guerra.” 7.

²²³ Herrera, “Análisis de Entrevistas,” 11.



Figure 6. Tanja Nijmeijer and her mother, Hannie, at FARC-EP camp.²²⁴



Figure 7. Tanja Nijmeijer (right) at a FARC-EP guerrilla camp.²²⁵



Figure 8. Tanja Nijmeijer reading a press release to reporters about FARC-EP and Colombian government negotiations in Cuba 2012.²²⁶

²²⁴ “La Guerrillera Holandesa Incluida a Última Hora por las FARC al Grupo de Negociadores,” Noticias Montreal, October 16, 2012, <http://noticiasmontreal.com/66637/tanja-nijmeijer-la-guerrillera-holandesa-incluida-a-ultima-hora-por-las-farc-al-grupo-de-negociadores/>.

²²⁵ Peterson, “Dutch Woman Explains.”

²²⁶ Foto de Internacional November 29, 2012, Que!, <http://www.que.es/ultimas-noticias/internacionales/fotos/guerrillera-holandesa-fuerzas-armadas-revolucionarias-f610285.html>.

Both Tanja and Tania's middle-class childhoods in Europe, access to higher education, language skills, and international travel, made them unlikely recruits for revolutionary insurgencies in Latin America. For instance, women in modern insurgencies in Colombia live surrounded by domestic and state violence, are often less educated than their urban counterparts, and lack other opportunities for upper mobility.²²⁷ Both guerrilla icons gave up prosperous lives – Tania the life of a translator and political advocate and Tanja the one of an educator, for a life of armed revolution.

Many women joined the insurgencies because of social economic and protection issues. However, Tanja and Tania participated because of deep ideological convictions and probably a sense of guilt and an infatuation with a romanticized image of guerrilla life. Tania served as spy, guerrilla warrior, clandestine group organizer, radio and written communicator, and translator. Tanja's participation in the insurgency included guerrilla warrior, writer, translator, arsonist, clandestine group organizer, strategic communicator, and more recently, negotiator. The combination of personal skills helped them to advance within the ranks of the organizations. The differences that Tania and Tanja have with the other rank and file guerrilla fighters are exactly why they were so valuable to insurgent organizations. Based on the experience of Tania and Tanja, upward mobility within their respective insurgent organizations occurred because of their language skills, physical appearance, international education, sexual attributes, and more importantly, a commitment to the revolutionary cause. Above all, each was seen as projecting a positive international image for their guerrilla organizations. The next case study of Elda Neyis Mosquera, alias Karina, offers another perspective from that of Tania, and Tanja.

C. KARINA FROM GUERRILLA LEADER TO PEACE PROMOTER

Elda Neyis Mosquera Garcia, also known as Karina, recalled the day she almost lost her life: "I was going to hell . . . It was horrible, but I know that is where I was going."²²⁸ During a battle with security forces, Karina suffered a dislocated jaw,

²²⁷ Herrera, "Análisis de Entrevistas," 1–3.

²²⁸ David Baracaldo Orjuela, "Yo Iba Pa'l Infierno," Kienyke.com, April 2, 2013, <http://www.kienyke.com/historias/yo-iba-pal-infierno/>.

permanent damaged to an eye, and multiple scars on her body.²²⁹ Unlike Tania or Tanja, Karina did not study abroad, learn to play instruments, or even finish high school. Nor is she physically attractive, another avenue of preferment for females in the FARC. Furthermore, she is Afro-Colombian, a disadvantaged group in Colombia. Nevertheless, over her 24-year career in the FARC, she rose to become the leader of a FARC front, a position rarely held by women.²³⁰ The case of Karina underlines that the following factors are critical for upper mobility inside the organization: seniority, commitment to the organization (not necessarily ideology), discipline and, above all in her case, ruthlessness.

She is one of the most brutal ex-guerrilla leaders of the FARC-EP. According to David Baracaldo Orjuela who interviewed her, Karina grew up with her grandmother—who mistreated her—in a poor area of Colombia called Currulao. She balanced primary school and domestic duties by selling fruits and arepas (a maize based flatbread popular in Colombia and Venezuela) between classes. During that time, the guerrillas appeared in her neighborhood with Marxist and Communist propaganda. Karina’s family pulled her out of school, so that enlisting in the guerrillas became an option to break away from the boredom and abuse.²³¹

Elda recalls her Dad’s reasoning for not letting her continue her studies:

My dad said in his brutality that human beings did not need to study, let alone raise children and have a husband. Also in the case of a man, did not need to learn anything more than to work the land.²³²

Orjuela reported how Karina became involved with the organization from a very early age. At the age of 15, she joined the Communist Youth party of Colombia (JUCO), an antechamber to the FARC. In 1984, a female FARC-EP member recruited Karina by simply asking her if she wanted to join. During her initial months in the guerrilla, she learned quickly that loyalty was something valued in the FARC-EP. She recalled that one

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ “Las Karinas que Enfrentó la Guerra,” La Patria.com, March 10, 2012, <http://www.lapatria.com/sabatina/las-karinas-que-enfrento-la-guerra-460>.

²³¹ Baracaldo, “Yo Iba Pa’l.”

²³² Ibid.

of the initial tests was to kill a male friend accused of being a spy for the government security forces, with only a machete. She killed him without hesitation.²³³ Katina's experience is similar to another ex-guerrilla interviewed by Mariana Díaz Kraus:

I happened to kill a friend who was caught trying to defect to save her baby, she did not want an abortion. In the war council, I voted not to kill her, but my vote did not win. For that reason it was my responsibility to shoot [her], just for trying to help.²³⁴

In 2008, Ricardo Ospina interviewed Miguel Paz, who was a former victim of Karina's violence. According to Miguel's Paz account, Karina's unit stopped a bus near Caucheras in 2000. After pulling the passengers off the bus, they searched them and took some of the males as hostages. As an agribusiness developer specialist, Miguel Paz refused to comply and follow the guerrilla men into the woods. According to Miguel, Karina, the guerilla leader, "cut my penis and testicles off with a machete."²³⁵ Miguel added that Karina also hit his wife during the event. Miguel's wife recalled that over 60 minors participated in the incident.²³⁶

Karina's role as the leader of the 47 Front Block of the FARC-EP ended in 2008 when she surrendered to authorities, following intense pressure from security forces who had prioritized her kill or capture, and because she feared other guerrillas would sell her out to collect the significant bounty offered for her capture.²³⁷ Figure 9 displays a photo of Karina's surrender in 2008.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Díaz Kraus, "Las Niñas de la Guerra," 29.

²³⁵ Ricardo Ospina, "Alias 'Karina' era 'Sanguinaria y Desalmada,' Dice Una de Sus Víctimas," Caracol.com.co, September 25, 2008, <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/judiciales/alias-karina-era-sanguinaria-y-desalmada-dice-una-de-sus-victimas/20080925/nota/677772.aspx>.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Jeremy McDermott, "Nelly Avila Moreno, FARC's 'Karina,' captured by Colombian Forces in War on Drugs," *The Telegraph*, May 19, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1989610/Nelly-Avila-Moreno-FARCs-Karina-captured-by-Colombian-forces-in-war-on-drugs.html>.



Figure 9. Elda Neyis Mosquera Garcia surrenders in 2008.²³⁸

After her surrender, she traveled Colombia as part of a campaign against the FARC-EP, and encouraged other women to abandon the militant groups. The government sent her to prison, and used her as a *Gestor de Paz* (Peace Promoter) during a campaign to bring peace between victims and perpetrators.²³⁹ This is a far cry from what she once claimed, “in the guerrilla, there is a saying: those who cannot kill, serve to be killed.”²⁴⁰ The image of Karina changed dramatically from a savage guerrilla leader to a repentant and outspoken critic of the war against the government. Figure 10 displays Elda campaigning for peace.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Alejandra Santacruz Arenas, “La Reconciliación, Camino Hacia la Paz,” Ciudad Sur, <http://www.ciudadsur.co/noticias/derechos-humanos/63-la-reconciliacion-camino-hacia-la-paz>.

²⁴⁰ Baracaldo, “Yo Iba Pa’l.”



Figure 10. Elda Neyis Mosquera Garcia as a peace promoter.²⁴¹

In summation, Karina was a sympathizer for the Communist party during her childhood. Later, during her teens, she joined the FARC-EP as a guerrilla fighter. During her 24 years as a guerrilla, she moved from the rank and file level to leader of a unit of 300 fighters.²⁴² In contrast to Tanja and Tania, Karina's advancement within the organization was done through years of fighting experience, toughness, and violence. Karina's example is not an isolated case in the FARC-EP. While still Minister of Defense current President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos, said that Karina "was a woman who rose in the ranks because of her audacity and cruelty."²⁴³ Other intelligence sources claimed, "to become a FARC leader you have to be utterly ruthless and vicious even more so if you are a women . . . Karina was both."²⁴⁴ While some guerrilla fighters like Karina ruled with an iron fist, others like Nidia Díaz, were able to use political skills and intelligence to advance in the FMLN.

María Marta Valladares was known in the FMLN insurgent group as Nidia Díaz. She held several roles in the FMLN including that of guerrilla commander. Unlike the FARC-EP which is controlled by a central Secretariat, the FMLN was an organization composed of several groups, which included the National Resistance (RN), the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC), the Popular Revolutionary

²⁴¹ Santacruz Arenas, "La Reconciliación, Camino Hacia la Paz."

²⁴² Chris Kraul, "Colombia Touts Rebel Leader's Surrender," *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/may/20/world/fg-rebel20>.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ McDermott, "Nelly Avila Moreno."

Army (ERP), the Popular Liberation Front (FPL), and the Salvadorian Communist Party (PCS). Nidia served in the ERP, and later in the PRTC. She became radicalized through her literacy work in church organizations affiliated with liberation theology called the Catholic Association of University Students (ACEU). She soon distinguished herself during the student movement, and later was recruited by the armed groups. During the initial stages of the insurgency, Nidia remained active in the urban clandestine groups, where she made contacts and gained experience.²⁴⁵

According to Tracy Phillips, Nidia's role in the student movement gave her leadership skills and a reputation sought after by leaders of the rebel groups. Because of her commitment and knowledge, she joined the Political Affairs Coordinating body of the ERP in 1973. In 1975, she was part of the group of rebels that formed the PRTC, where she performed roles of logistician, guerrilla cell leader, political strategist, and coordinator of large-scale military plans. The effectiveness of her logistical work landed her a seat on the PRTC leadership board, and later she became one of the negotiators during the peace process.²⁴⁶ Figure 10 displays Maria Marta Valladares with other members of FMLN negotiators.

²⁴⁵ Phillips, "Nidia Díaz: Guerrilla Commander," 7–9.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8, 9, 12, 17.



Figure 11. Nidia Díaz during the Peace Agreement dialogs.²⁴⁷

Although Nidia climbed rapidly to a leadership position, she claimed that to have upward mobility in the organization, one had to have combat experience.²⁴⁸ Leadership inside the organization was not easy for her because of patriarchal attitudes towards female leadership. For instance, she stated, “I always gave the urban front war reports using men’s names because I didn’t want it detected that one of its principle chiefs was a woman.”²⁴⁹ Phillips claimed “Her willingness to defend the principals of the struggle and pay the social cost of participation gained her respect and recognition.”²⁵⁰ Phillips also claimed that the appeal for Nidia in the organizations was because “she was able to communicate with everyone.”²⁵¹ One can conclude that the rebel organization recruited Nidia because of her political skills and proven track record in other progressive networks. This recruitment path influenced the way she experienced the war and capacity to advance within the organization. In summary, the case of Maria Marta Valladares (Nidia) highlights two important factors that determine upper mobility of women in the

²⁴⁷ “Galería Fotográfica: Acuerdos de Paz,” *Elsalvador.com*, <http://www.elsalvador.com/especiales/2012/acuerdosdepaz/galeriapaz.asp>.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁴⁹ Nidia Díaz, *I Was Never Alone* (Melbourne, Australia: Ocean, 1992) 62, quoted in Tracy A. Phillips, “Nidia Díaz: Guerrilla Commander,” Montgomery, AL: Air Command and Staff College, 1997, 14, www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA394030.

²⁵⁰ Phillips, “Nidia Díaz: Guerrilla Commander,” 22.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

insurgencies: preexisting networks and political skills. She is the current FMLN International Relations Secretary of El Salvador. Figure 11 displays a recent photo of Maria Marta Valladares.



Figure 12. Maria Marta Valladares as the FMLN International Relations Secretary.²⁵²

D. AUGUSTA, ELENA, AND LORI IN PERU INSURGENCIES

The following case study shows women in the role of ideological leaders. Augusta La Torre, alias Comrade Norah, was part of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path or SL) from 1980 until her death in 1988. Her husband, Abimael Guzmán, became the intellectual and supreme leader of Shining Path. Augusta, Abimael, and later Elena Iparraguirre, constituted the intellectual and operational leadership of the organization. The case of Augusta confirms that personal relations are important for upper mobility and influences the role of women and their experience in the insurgent organization. Figure 12 displays of a photo of Augusta.

²⁵² Netito, "Nidia Díaz: Biography," Nidia Díaz Blogspot, <http://fundemusa.blogspot.com/p/biografia.html>.



Figure 13. Augusta La Torre alias Comrade Norah.²⁵³

According to investigative reporter Miguel Gutiérrez, Augusta La Torre was born in Huanta, Peru, in 1946 into a lower middle class family. Guzmán and Augusta's dad struck up a friendship, which led Augusta to meet him and fall in love. They married in 1964. Guzmán created the Popular Woman's Movement (MCP) and named Augusta as their leader. The MCP served as a recruiting and propaganda organization for women into SL. She traveled to China with Abimael, where they studied Mao's guerrilla strategy. Gutiérrez report highlights that Guzmán together with Augusta and Elena Iparraguirre led and planned SL operations, including the one massacre of 67 civilians in 1983.²⁵⁴ The revolution against the government soon turned into cruel struggle to control the peasants as a source of resources and manpower, which produced an estimated 70,000 deaths, most of them peasants.²⁵⁵ Figure 14 displays a photo of Augusta, and Figure 15 displays her funeral with Elena Iparraguirre and her husband, Abimael Guzmán in 1989.

²⁵³ Daniela, "Mujeres Que Hacen La Revolución," Blogspot, November 17, 2011, <http://mujeresrevolucionaria.blogspot.com/2011/11/augusta-la-torre-carrasco-aka-comrade.html>.

²⁵⁴ Miguel Gutiérrez, "Los Misterios de Norah/ Foto 2," La Republica.pe, February 17, 2008, <http://www.larepublica.pe/17-02-2008/los-misterios-de-norah#!foto2>.

²⁵⁵ Pamela Perez, El Despertar de Sendero Luminoso, Latin American Studies, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/peru/sendero-vizcatan-2003.jpg>.



Figure 14. Augusta La Torre alias Comrade Norah Second in Command of Sendero Luminoso Terrorist Organization.²⁵⁶



Figure 15. Elena Iparraguirre and Abimael next to August's dead body in 1989.²⁵⁷

On January 20, 2014, Abimael Guzmán and Elena Iparraguirre, among other people, were charged of the notorious bombings in the Tarata Street in residential area of Miraflores in Lima, Peru. The terrorist attack consisted of a coordinated explosion of two car bombs in 1992, which killed 25, and injured 150 people. The government of Peru accused 11 members of the SL, five of which were women. This bombing marked a significant event in the newly elected Alberto Fujimori presidency, which then realized that the terrorist organization operations were operating in the capital, rather than only in

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Guerrillas in Peru: Sendero Luminoso/ Shining Path, Latin American Studies, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/sendero.htm>.

isolated areas in rural Peru. The incident led to an aggressive reaction by the security forces and public to fight back against the SL forces and support groups.²⁵⁸ Figure 16 highlights the number of victims per president of Peru since 1980.

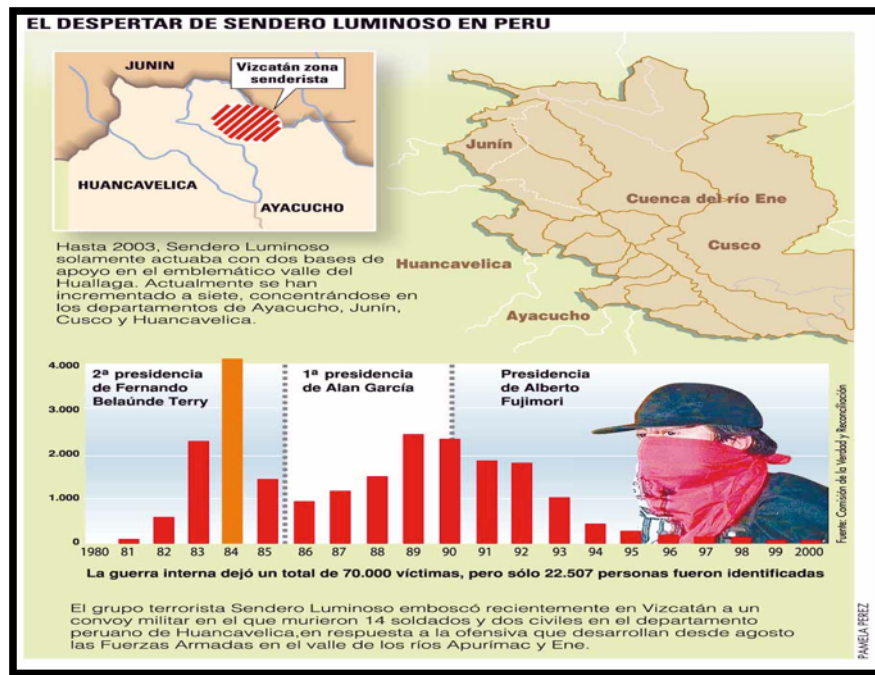


Figure 16. Map location and graphic of SL victims since 1980.²⁵⁹

The participation of women like August and Elena in terrorists groups in Peru, was not an isolated incident or exclusive to the Shining Path. In 1995, security forces from Peru arrested an American born, 26-year-old Lori Berenson for aiding the terrorist group Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). Like other foreign, middle class females who rallied to insurgent groups, Berenson was attracted to the cause of Latin American equality while a student at MIT. The MRTA was a terrorist organization that plotted to overthrow the Peruvian Government by armed struggle. She was in Peru on a journalist assignment and was later detained with the wife MRTA leader Nestor Cerpa.

²⁵⁸ “Hoy se Inicia Jucio Contra Cúpula de Sendero Luminoso por Caso Tarata,” Tuteve.tv, January 20, 2014, <http://www.tuteve.tv/noticia/actualidad/198918/2014/01/20/hoy-se-inicia-juicio-contra-cupula-de-sendero-luminoso-por-caso-tarata>.

²⁵⁹ Perez, *El Despertar de Sendero*.

They accused Berenson of treason and aiding the MRTA plan during an attack on the Peruvian Congress. Prior to her arrest, Lori Berenson visited the Congressional Palace, where her photographer, the wife of the M.T.R.A leader, took pictures as she drew notes of the seating arrangement of the congress members. When in 1995 the security forces raided the house where she had stayed, MRTA members who occupied it fought for over ten hours killing one police officer. Inside the house, police discovered the plans to attack the legislative body, MRTA fighters, and weapons cache.²⁶⁰ The raid also captured the second in command of M.R.T.A., Miguel Rincon. At the time of her capture, Berenson had lived in Peru for a year. She claimed to have sublet rooms in the house in Lima to M.R.T.A. members in Lima; however, that the fact that she had been unaware of their activities, the presence of arms, or that the woman she had hired to take photographs of the Peruvian congress was an M.R.T.A. member, are claims that the court refused to believe.²⁶¹

In January 1996, Berenson went in front of the Peruvian Press and shouted in Spanish, “In the M.R.T.A. there are no criminal terrorists. It is a revolutionary movement!”²⁶² Figure 17 displays Lori shouting in front of news reporters in 1996. She was sentenced to 20 years of prison and was released after 15 years on parole.²⁶³ Her dramatic story has captivated the Peruvian and international press since her apprehension. While she was in prison, Lori married a convicted M.R.T.A. terrorist. Lori still lives in Peru with toddler son named Salvador, awaiting the end of her sentence in 2015.²⁶⁴ Figure 18 displays photos from the New York Times report about Lori and her son in Peru in 2011.

²⁶⁰ Jennifer Egan and Mary Ellen Mark, “The Liberation of Lori Berenson,” *The New York Times*, March 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/06/magazine/06berenson-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0. Photo by Mary Ellen Mark.

²⁶¹ Robert D. McFadden, “Peru Arrests U.S. Woman, 26, Linking Her to Guerrilla Group,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1995, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/05/world/peru-arrests-us-woman-26-linking-her-to-guerrilla-group.html?ref=loriheleneberenson>.

²⁶² Egan, “The Liberation of Lori Berenson.”

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.



Figure 17. Lori Berenson 1996 defiant in front of Peruvian Press.²⁶⁵



Figure 18. Lori and son in Salvador in 2011.²⁶⁶

In summary, the participation of women in insurgencies is common and range from ideological leaders to supporting roles in Peru. Augusta La Torre's role (alias Comrade Norah) in insurgency shifted from supporter to ideological leader because of her relationship with the insurgent leader Abimael Guzmán. The case of Augusta and Elena inside the SL leadership is rare and not consistent with other insurgencies in Latin

²⁶⁵ R. Mendoza, "TC Declara Improcedente Demanda para Revisar Semilibertad de Lori Berenson," *Diario Correo*, June 14, 2013, <http://diariocorreop.pe/ultimas/noticias/5028875/tc-declara-improcedente-demanda-para-revisar>.

²⁶⁶ Jennifer Egan and Mary Ellen Mark, "The Liberation of Lori Berenson," *The New York Times*, March 2, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/06/magazine/06berenson-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0. Photo by Mary Ellen Mark.

America in which the majority of the ideological leaders were men. The increase in the number of women participants in the leadership positions, and as members within the SL, is representative of the university environment where the SL built its base. The role of Augusta as the leader of MCP bolstered the role of women in the SL because it combined two powerful factors consistent with the mobilization of women: first, preexisting networks, which helped recruitment; second ideology, which targeted a disenfranchised minority (women) in a patriarchal society.

The lack of information about Augusta's guerrilla fighting experience suggests that not all women in leadership need combat experience to reach leadership positions, as suggested by Nidia Díaz's experience with the insurgent organization. One could argue that Lori Berenson and Augusta had personal relationships with members of their respective terrorist organizations, which led them to experience and participate in diverse roles that otherwise would have been different. Female participation in insurgencies as highlighted in the diverse set of cases varied depending upon the way they were recruited and their aspirations. Women continued to find ways to support, and in some cases lead, as the insurgencies evolved with technology and communication strategies. The following section focuses on how evolution in communication technology influenced the female narratives and roles in insurgencies.

E. GENDER AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

In 1994, Chiapas—the southernmost state of Mexico—experienced an insurgency carried out by the EZLN.²⁶⁷ While the outbreak of yet another insurgency in Latin America was hardly headline news, the way the EZLN used their strategic communications struck students of revolution as innovative. The attention that the EZLN was able to draw from the international community took the Mexican government by surprise. This section will address the question of how advances in communication technology helped guerrillas overcome military weakness, in particular by enlisting

²⁶⁷ Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN) is not officially labeled a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department. Newspapers in Mexico reported targeting of civilians to coerce and reduce legitimacy of the central government anti-narcotrafficking efforts in the zone. EZLN members are known in some areas for kidnapping and attacking landowners. Delal Baer, "Mexico's Coming Backlash," *Foreign Affairs* 78 no. 4 (1999): 99, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20049367>.

women. The main argument is that modern communications opens a new role for women to participate more actively in the insurgencies strategic messaging and recruitment; however, the success of their efforts depends upon the public perception of the insurgency. It is important to highlight that the FARC-EP has a negative image of sexual slavery, coercion, forced abortion, and exploitation of women that goes back 50 years, so the current effort to feminize the guerrilla actions, through the use of, technology is very difficult. On the other hand, Chiapas insurgency used gender as a key point of discussion in their initial messaging, which made the task to feminize the guerrilla issues more effective.

The case of Chiapas illustrated how information technology can multiply the effects of strategic communication by changing the perception of non-state actors, both in indigenous and international audience. In particular, information technology revolutionizes gender participation in two ways: first, information technology (IT) allows insurgent groups to incorporate female emancipation messages into the revolutionary strategic communications, with a persistence and frequency not allowed by more traditional means of communication; second, information technology opens new avenues for female participation in insurgencies as women assume new roles as bloggers, webmasters, and execute online information operations by using social media, television, and mobile networks to appeal directly to a women audience. The following sections will discuss the use of information technology by the EZLN and the FARC to associate their movements with the progressive cause of women's rights. The first part highlights how the promotion of women's rights by the Chiapas insurgents helped to publicize the issue more generally and, by association, boosted the cause of the EZLN. The second part focuses on the strategic messaging used by the FARC to burnish its otherwise tarnished image during peace talks ongoing at the time of writing in Havana, by presenting itself as a champion of women's rights.

1. Chiapas and the Internet

Globalization and expansion of communications technology has given even relatively obscure insurgent movements access to national and international audiences.

Digital media have the advantage of interaction over print or radio delivery, although both continue to be used.²⁶⁸ First, new IT technology reduces the risk of capture and harassment by security forces, as the content production and transmission can be located in neutral countries. Second, IT becomes a strategic communications recruiting tool to draw in new enthusiasts including women. This protracts the conflict, which increases the potential for success.²⁶⁹ Third, by quickly disseminating their versions of events via the Internet, terrorist groups can keep the government on the defensive, and therefore, improve what some have called their frame amplification,²⁷⁰ or in the words of Bruce Hoffman, “perception management.”²⁷¹ Fourth, the information revolution has the potential to bypass and to a degree delegitimize the government by bringing together numerous NGOs and their financial supporters to avert the need to rely on governmental services.²⁷² This technique of advertising and providing alternative services worked well for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or Sadr Movement in Iraq.²⁷³ Finally, the anonymity of the Internet encourages involvement in a cause by intensifying levels of anger while lowering the perceived risks of pursuit.²⁷⁴ In this way, the Internet becomes a vehicle to express grievances against governments by mouse clicks rather than physical attacks. Non-state actors and insurgents take advantage of this new trend to advance their strategic goals, by broadening their influence and base of support to the international level. The challenge for the non-state actors is how to communicate purely local grievances in ways comprehensible to an international public.

²⁶⁸ “Army Shuts Down FARC Radio Station: Transmissions Continue,” *Colombia Reports*, November 20, 2011, <http://colombiareports.co/army-shuts-down-farc-radio-station-transmission-continues/>.

²⁶⁹ Bruce Hoffman, “The New Media, Terrorism, and the Shaping of Global Opinion,” in *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 225.

²⁷⁰ Frame amplification is divided in two forms: value amplification (elevation of one or more values essential that are repressed) and belief amplification (presumed relationship between two things) in David A. Snow et al., “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation,” *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 4 (August 1986), 469–472.

²⁷¹ Hoffman, “The New Media, Terrorism,” 202.

²⁷² Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terrorist in the Twenty-first Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 116.

²⁷³ Although the Muslim Brotherhood and Sadr are both considered political groups they are also considered terrorists by several international organizations. For instance Russia considers the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization.

²⁷⁴ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 115.

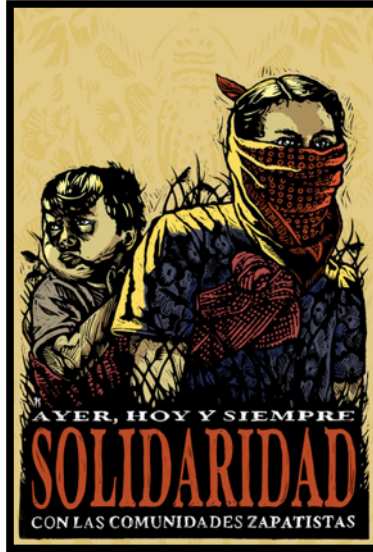


Figure 19. October 2012 Zapatista Campaign Poster UK-based support group.²⁷⁵

The EZLN is known for their innovative and efficient use of information technology. José Gurría, former Mexican Foreign Affairs Secretary, said, “Chiapas has been a war of ink, written words, a war on the Internet.”²⁷⁶ Figure 19 is an example of newspaper headlines. The social justice and equality message quickly persuaded domestic and international NGOs to join the struggle and propagate the EZLN’s agenda. See Figure 21 for example of 2014 propaganda that still supports the Zapatista struggle. Karen Kampwirth argues that the “Zapatista Rebellion is also a women’s rebellion.”²⁷⁷ The EZLN included ten demands in the Revolutionary Women’s Law regarding women’s rights in their first proclamation.²⁷⁸ The proclamation focused on a woman’s right to choose her partner and the number of children she could conceive. It called for the participation of women in community politics, and even in the fighting and leadership of the rebellion.²⁷⁹ Their strategic messaging regarding gender issues resonated in places like Italy, the United States, in neighboring Latin American countries, and more

²⁷⁵ “Cities of the World Make a Worldwide Echo in Support of the Zapatistas,” on the Day of Indigenous Resistance,” UK Zapatista Network Blog, <http://ukzapatistas.wordpress.com/past-events/>.

²⁷⁶ Hoffman, “The New Media,” 202.

²⁷⁷ Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 84.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 112–113.

importantly, inside Mexico. The Mexican government felt the pressure from international civil rights advocates and free-trade economic partners to peacefully resolve the situation.²⁸⁰ The government retook the contested areas militarily; however, despite government occupation, communities in Chiapas have declared themselves as unilaterally autonomous, the EZLN organization continues to survive, and governance remains a contested issue in the region.²⁸¹ The Chiapas case illustrates how strategic messaging can enhance the bargaining power of a militarily weaker armed non-state actor. Angela M. Giordano argued, “What marks the Zapatista rebellion as extraordinary is its emergence as one of the first information age insurgencies to make such efficient use of these mediums [internet propaganda].”²⁸²



Figure 20. Newspaper title collage.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Hoffman, “The New Media,” 203.

²⁸¹ “Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities and Regions,” International Service for Peace Website, <http://www.sipaz.org/en/chiapas/facts-about-chiapas/397-municipios-y-regiones-autonomos-zapatistas.html>.

²⁸² Angela Maria Giordano, “Study of a Storm: An Analysis of Zapatista Propaganda,” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1997), V, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA340892>.

²⁸³ “The Zapatista Rebels,” University of Tennessee Knoxville, http://web.eecs.utk.edu/~miturria/project/zapatistas_frame.html.

Strategic balance “refers to the relative capabilities of the two sides to achieve their respective strategic objectives in relation to the other.”²⁸⁴ In the case of the EZLN and the Mexican government, the shift of the insurgent’s main tool of persuasion from armed struggle to mass communication, gave the insurgents the strategic advantage and increased their resources. Around the world, numerous international organizations collected money and goods for refugees in support of the EZLN.²⁸⁵ Angela Giordano stated that the Zapatistas were “able to reach over 25,000 activists and organizations in more than 130 countries.”²⁸⁶ The EZLN goals were to gain autonomy for the region, improve the democratic system in Mexico, obtain equal citizenship for indigenous people, promote women’s rights, and more education, health, and governmental services for the communities. Their message was well received at the international level because the values of social equality, justice, women’s rights, and liberty were universal regardless of the language or culture.

The EZLN exploited common grievances and drafted several communications over the Internet and other media that framed the nature of the struggle. This gave legitimacy to the insurgents and shifted the dynamic of mass communication away from the Mexican government.²⁸⁷ The new strategy of attacking the reputation of the Mexican government internationally and domestically by using information technology persuaded the authorities to constrain their violence. Previously the Mexican regimes dealt with protesters violently. In 1968, several hundred protesters were massacred by state in antigovernment policy demonstrations in Mexico’s Tlatelolco Square.²⁸⁸ Figures 21 and 22 display examples of propaganda that portray the current EZLN struggle.

²⁸⁴ Bonnie S. Glaser, “Strategic Balance,” Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), accessed 23 November 2013, <http://csis.org/programs/international-security-program/asia-division/cross-strait-security-initiative-/strategic-ba>.

²⁸⁵ Giordano, “Study of a Storm,” 47.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Hoffman, “The New Media,” 204.

²⁸⁸ Jack A. Goldstone, *States, Parties, and Social Movements* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 419, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=527575>.



Figure 21. EZLN Rebel Dignity of Women Propaganda.²⁸⁹



Figure 22. Film Director Oliver Stone and EZLN Sub-commander Marcos.²⁹⁰

Bruce Hoffman posits, “The implications of this [terrorist capability to bypass state control of communications] development are enormous.”²⁹¹ Hoffman argues that the messaging can be for supporters, security forces, and internal use.²⁹² He also interprets terrorist activity as a way to “attract attention and then, through the publicity it

²⁸⁹ “Todo lo Que Incomoda al Poder: Subcomandante Marcos,” Blogspot, <http://antesdequetevayas.blogspot.com/2012/01/todo-lo-que-incomoda-al-poder.html>.

²⁹⁰ Tod Robberson, “Rebels Show Flair for Communicating,” *Washington Post Foreign Service*, February 9, 1994, A14, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/mexico/overview/keymarcos.htm>.

²⁹¹ Hoffman, “The New Media,” 198.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

generates, to communicate a message.”²⁹³ Hoffman’s views are supported by the case of Chiapas. In the words of Sub Commander Marcos, “in a war, the decisive thing is not the military confrontation, but the politics at stake in the confrontation. We didn’t go to war to kill or be killed. We went to war in order to be heard.”²⁹⁴ The EZLN men and women drew attention to their cause by conducting violent acts against the security forces and those civilians that resisted. On the other hand, the quote could be a way to minimize their military defeat. On the other hand, the EZLN support grew more effective internationally and domestically after they ceased the nine days of violence. International organizations like the International Service for Peace (SIPAZ), human rights groups, and other non-governmental organizations intervened with services already provided by the central Mexican government. The strategic balance favored the side of the Zapatistas, because they presented themselves as fighting for a just cause in the eyes of the international community, while the NGOs around the world and inside Mexico organized protested on their behalf.

Nevertheless, the EZLN fell short of accomplishing all of their objectives stated in their manifesto and agreements negotiated in the San Andres Accords. In February 1996, in San Andres, the government of Mexico and representatives of the EZLN agreed to reduce military presence in the area, respect indigenous authority, judicial reform, greater autonomy, and equality of gender under the law.²⁹⁵ Among the provisions agreed stands out the following clause:

Social policy must promote priority programs to improve health and nutritional standards among the children of indigenous peoples; it must also support, on an egalitarian basis, the training of women, expanding their participation in the organization and development of the family and the community. Priority must be given to the involvement of indigenous

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Cesar Chelala, “Subcomandante Marcos Comes to Wall Street,” Common Dreams Website, <https://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/10/19-7>.

²⁹⁵ “Joint Proposals that the Federal Government and the EZLN agree to remit to the National Debating and Decision-Making Bodies in Accordance with Paragraph 1.4 of the Rules of Procedure,” United Nations Peacemaker, 7, http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MX_960216_Joint%20Proposals%20to%20remit%20to%20the%20National%20Debating%20and%20Decision-making%20Bodies.pdf.

women in decisions regarding projects for economic, political, social, and cultural development.²⁹⁶

However, the EZLN survived as an organization, resisted state repression and persecution, and gained legitimacy and support for their agenda from the Mexican Congress and Executive branch. Because of the rebellion in Chiapas, the Zapatistas created new modes of interaction with the central government. They established five autonomous administrations called Caracoles (Snails) with individual Juntas de Buen Gobierno (Communities of Good Governance) in 2003, conducted a referendum on indigenous rights in 1999, participated as observers in the national elections, and gained substantial investment in education and infrastructure. The influence of women in the insurgency led to expansion of the feminist agenda in the communities. Today, the “Zapatista women are aware of their rights, are able to choose whom they marry, and know that if their husband uses violence against them, the community assembly will intervene and defend the woman.”²⁹⁷ Neil Harvey argued that the result of the Chiapas uprising was to “shift[ing] the balance of forces in favor of popular and democratic movements.”²⁹⁸ Stemming from Harvey’s analysis of the root cause for the uprising, one can conclude that the events in Chiapas were successful in expanding democratic values throughout Mexico. More importantly, use of media and the management of the uprising prevented the violent repression of the state. The popular support gained internationally through the media gave the EZLN protection from the Mexican authorities.

David Ronfeldt, from the Rand Corporation, describes the Zapatista as a “netwar.”²⁹⁹ Ronfeldt argued that, “networks are superior to hierarchies-still used by

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 7.

²⁹⁷ Andalusia Knoll and Itandehui Reyes, “From Fire to Autonomy: Zapatistas, 20 Years of Walking Slowly,” January 25, 2014, <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/21427-from-fire-to-autonomy-zapatistas-20-years-of-walking-slowly>.

²⁹⁸ Neil Harvey, “Rebellion in Chiapas: Rural Reform and Popular Struggle,” *Third World Quarterly* 16, No 1 (1995): 39, quoted in “Looking Back at Mexico’s Masked Guerrilla Uprising,” Nathaniel Parish Flannery, *Forbes Online Magazine*, June 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/nathanielparishflannery/2013/07/22/looking-back-at-mexicos-masked-guerilla-uprising/>.

²⁹⁹ David F. Ronfeldt and John Arquilla, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Santa Monica California: Rand Corporation, 2001) in Maria Elena Martinez-Torres, “Civil Society, the Internet, and the Zapatistas,” *Peace Review* 13, No. 3 (2001): 353.

governments and the military.”³⁰⁰ The Chiapas use of the Internet decentralized the struggle to an almost leaderless resistance directed by international ideals rather than masked men and women in the jungle. The Zapatista’s information technology tilted the strategic balance in their favor. In Ronfeldt’s later book with John Arquilla, they reemphasized how the Zapatistas “put the Mexican government on the defensive during 1994–1998.”³⁰¹

In the Chiapas case study, the EZLN thwarted the state repressive actions. The Mexican government’s previous handling of similar challenges to its authority had resulted in blood baths. The EZLN’s control of the messaging drove the government to negotiations and to invest millions of dollars in the region. The uprising raised the specter of foreign disinvestment in Mexico, which at the time was crucial for their development and competition against Southern Cone rival Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) alliance. The Mexican government had experienced previous revolts and protests. However, the Zapatista uprising proved a greater challenge and raised political costs, not only locally but also internationally. The Mexican government still today has not fully gained control of the region, after granting the Zapatistas numerous concessions and autonomy not available in any other region in Mexico.

In summary, control of information through technological innovation can shift resources and public opinion to the militants inside a territory, if the message resonates with the audience. Women in insurgencies can benefit from technology by including their feminist agenda and by eliciting popular sympathy for a cause presented as just. The participation of women in revolutionary insurgencies in Chiapas benefited from the media and information technology to gain support of a broader audience. The Council on Hemispheric Affairs considers that the Revolutionary Women’s Law of 1993, proposed by the Zapatistas, was critical in securing women rights in the region.³⁰² The inclusion of

³⁰⁰ Maria Elena Martinez-Torres, “Civil Society, the Internet, and the Zapatistas,” *Peace Review* 13, No. 3 (2001): 353, doi:10.1080/13668800120079045.

³⁰¹ Ronfeldt and Arquilla, *Networks and Netwars*, 172.

³⁰² “Women’s Rights in Chiapas: Future Made Possible by Revolutionary Law,” Council of Hemispheric Affairs Website, July 18, 2011, <http://www.coha.org/womens-rights-in-chiapas-future-made-possible-by-the-revolutionary-law/>.

feminist agenda in the insurgency proclamations attracted numerous NGOs who remain in the region to provide services. The information battle over the nature of the revolutionary movement hindered government counterstrategies, increased military and infrastructure spending, and risked the legitimacy of the regime among international partners resulting in greater autonomy for the Chiapas region and their women. Other groups in Latin America used the revolution in their countries to advance women's rights with mixed results. Women in El Salvador, more than Nicaragua, felt disenfranchised once the revolutions concluded.³⁰³ The following section will focus on how the FARC-EP women are currently using technology and the media to shift attention to gender issues.

F. ROLE OF FARC-EP WOMEN AND THE INTERNET

On October 11, 2013, the FARC-EP women launched the Website Farianas: Mujeres de Las FARC-EP (Farianas: Women of the FARC-EP), with the intent to promote the female guerrilla groups' experience, and advance Colombian women's struggle against the perceived regime injustice. The website's catch phrase is translated as "the FARC-EP also has a women's face."³⁰⁴ What they are trying to make clear to the domestic and international community is that the FARC-EP is a united struggle of men and women. The website is a combination of guerrilla propaganda, world events, news about women in Colombian culture, and a blog about the role of women in the current peace negotiations in Cuba. The website comes almost twenty years after the EZLN promoted women rights on the worldwide web.

The Farianas and Chiapas female guerrillas use technology as an outlet to promote their revolutionary ideals while promoting women rights; however, the FARC-EP used the Internet as a way to break away from men controlled communication outlets. The FARC-EP male leadership acknowledges that is something new, and that women

³⁰³ Iljia A. Luciak and Cecilia Olmos, "Gender Equality and Guatemalan Peace Accords," in *Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping*, ed. Dyan E. Mazurana, Angela Raven-Roberts, and Jane L. Parpart (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 216.

³⁰⁴ Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army, Farianas, Mujeres de las FARC-EP, accessed December 28, 2013 <http://www.mujerfariana.co>.

earned to have their own space in the Internet to communicate.³⁰⁵ There is still some skepticism about the initiative even in the FARC-EP Supreme Leader and Bloc Commander, Timoleón Jiménez, calling the initiative “a beautiful adventure.”³⁰⁶ The FARC-EP women shifted their communication strategy because of the organization’s failure to respond effectively to the government’s own anti-guerrilla campaign, persuade peace talk negotiators to include women rights in the agenda, and help the overall support for the revolutionary movement.



Figure 23. Tanja Nijmeijer reflecting on the death of alias Alfonso Cano in 2011.³⁰⁷

The strategic messaging on the part of the women in the FARC-EP can be interpreted as a response to the information operations, led by the Colombian government. The Colombian Ministry of Defense invested thousands of dollars to counter the guerrilla message all over the country, with a media campaign that included radio, television, and social media Websites like You Tube and Facebook. Part of the campaign targeted women by using demobilized ex-guerrillas as the prime spokespersons in the radio and television commercials. The ex-guerrilla of the FARC, known as Karina, is the highest female ex-militant to demobilize. Karina spent twenty-four years as part of the FARC-EP, and formed part of the leadership of the forty-seventh front of this

³⁰⁵ Timoleón Jiménez, “Presentation of Webpage Dedicated to the Colombian Women,” Farianas, Mujeres de las FARC-EP, <http://www.mujerfariana.co/index.php/inicio-portal/presentacion>.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Botero, “Jojoy Estaba Animado.”

organization.³⁰⁸ The government used Karina in an online and television campaign to encourage women to leave the FARC-EP.³⁰⁹

Like Karina, many other demobilized women joined the government in their anti-guerrilla campaign. In 2011, the military radio stations in Cali sponsored time featuring demobilized women talking about the negative experiences and calling for others to leave the insurgent group.³¹⁰ The television media also had commercials, which encouraged women to ‘feel women again,’ and alluded to the right of motherhood and opportunities after the guerrilla life.³¹¹ Unlike the EZLN’s use of the Internet, which put the Mexican government on the defensive, the Farinas Website was the FARC’s reaction to the Colombian government’s aggressive media campaign to point up FARC crimes, and their cynical exploitation of female guerrillas. On the first day of the website, Farianas the FARC-EP women issued a statement calling themselves victims of a malicious media campaign that discredits their participation in the organization and labels them as victims of their male *camaradas*.³¹² One can find numerous references of the FARC-EP’s concern over the government’s messaging campaign towards women. Tomás Molinares, directly responded through the website to the governments messaging efforts. Molinares stated that “the counterinsurgents find the topic of gender as a weak link of the guerrilla . . . [and] the messages of abortion, love, and maternity . . . want to break the insurgency ranks and delegitimize in the eyes of the people.”³¹³

³⁰⁸ “FARC Commander Gives Up, Calls for Dialogue,” CNN, May 19, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/americas/05/19/farc.rebel.surrender/index.html>.

³⁰⁹ “Comerciales Programa de Atencion Humanitaria al Demobilizado,” YouTube video, 4:45, Compilation of Television Commercials by Ministry of National Defense of Colombia, posted by “MinDefensa Colombia,” October 7, 2009, <http://youtu.be/AeFDn0tW4ag>.

³¹⁰ Maria Fernanda Aldana, “Ejercito Nacional Realiza Campaña de Declaración a Mujeres Palmirana,” YouTube video, 2:36, from a televised news Canal CNC Cali in March 2011, posted by “massificar,” March 10, 2011, <http://youtu.be/5wDgj6YGtV8>.

³¹¹ “Campaña de Desmobilizacion par alas Mujeres,” MINDefensa Colombia, YouTube video, 16s, produced by the Ministry of National Defense of Colombia, posted by “MinDefensa Colombia,” March 9, 2012, <http://youtu.be/KJz7ST6D3NU>.

³¹² Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army, “Declaración Pública,” Farianas Mujeres de la FARC-EP, <http://www.mujerfariana.co/index.php/vision-de-mujer/declaracion-publica>.

³¹³ Tomas Molinares, “La Mujer y el Proceso de Paz en Colombia,” Farianas, Mujeres de las FARC-EP, <http://www.mujerfariana.co/index.php/vision-de-mujer/142-la-mujer-y-el-proceso-de-paz-en-colombia>.

In Colombia, 55 percent of the population has access to the Internet, and women represent over 50 percent of the population.³¹⁴ The new strategic message over cyber space, led by the women in the FARC-EP, has two other purposes: first, recruit and gain support of the international community; and second, incorporate female participation in the negotiations. Timoleón Jiménez alluded to the dual mission of the website by stating, “from your perspective, can revolutionary women help expand awareness, or move more people to fight for a country and a better world, even closer to the day of triumph?”³¹⁵ President Juan Manuel Santos administration answered this message in November 2013 by including two females in the government team to peace negotiations in Havana.³¹⁶ President Santos wanted women able to discuss female issues in the affected areas. He picked Nigeria Rentería Lozano because of her public service to the most affected regions. Rentería will assure focus on gender issues and equality throughout the process on behalf of the government.³¹⁷

The Farianas Website is one of the main messaging outlets for men and women in the FARC. Although the forum is by and for women, men have felt the need to give their opinion on topics related to gender. Tomás Molinares, guerrilla fighter and member of the Delegation for Peace in Cuba, lashed out through the Farianas Website against the government, accusing them of espousing the “hypocrisy of the oligarchy,”³¹⁸ and of trying to gain political points with women in the upcoming elections by including women in the negotiations.

Technology and social media is changing the role of some women inside the FARC-EP—women are used to post blogs, stories, and strategic communication to counter the Colombian government. Marc Sageman posits that the type of people with

³¹⁴ Internet World Stats: Colombia, Internet World Stats, last updated July 18, 2012, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/sa/co.htm>; “CIA Fact Book: Colombia People and Society,” CIA Fact Book, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/co.html>.

³¹⁵ Jiménez, “Presentation of Webpage.”

³¹⁶ “Santos Incluye a Dos Mujeres en su Equipo para Lograr la Paz con las FARC,” *El Diario*, November 26, 2013, <http://www.eldiario.ec/noticias-manabi-ecuador/294776-santos-incluye-a-dos-mujeres-en-su-equipo-para-lograr-la-paz-con-las-farc/>.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Molinares, “La Mujer y El Proceso.”

access and knowledge of these new technologies are, “transforming the threat in terms of age and gender of the terrorist.”³¹⁹ The timing of the website takes full advantage of the international media in Cuba covering the events related to the peace negotiations. The rebranding of the FARC-EP image still has to overcome the many stories of abortion, rape, and abuse inside the organization told by demobilized women. The Colombian government reported that from the 244 women demobilized in the year 2012–2013, 43 spoke of forced abortions.³²⁰ The FARC’s appeal for sympathy towards guerrilla fighters, who have a history of after almost 50 years of abuse and terror against women, will be hard to overcome.

In summary, the women in the Zapatista and FARC-EP insurgencies use technology to bring attention to gender issues to domestic and international audience. The Zapatista women focused on incorporating their gender needs as part of the original demands to the government, which helped broaden the international perception of the Chiapas movement. The FARC-EP females are trying to interconnect their experience inside the revolutionary struggle with broader gender movements inside Colombia, by using different media outlets to expand their audience. Unlike the EZLN, the FARC effort was a belated, reactive one. The FARC-EP women working on strategic messaging over the Internet had to overcome 50 years of negative news, disenfranchised women testimonies, and other damaging information written about the organization’s sexual slavery, coercion of girls, and forced abortions. At best, it forced the Colombian government to include females in their negotiating team in Havana. On the other hand, Chiapas guerrillas enjoyed little negative perception toward women, because of their short history. The EZLN exploited an image of defenders of women’s civil rights, education, and healthcare. The FARC-EP’s current strategic messaging about the female needs can provoke a different outcome from the FMLN and FSLN, whose gender issues were not recognized in the immediate post-conflict negotiations. The role of women in

³¹⁹ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 111.

³²⁰ “Colombia: Women, Conflict-Related Sexual violence and Peace Process,” ABColombia, November 2013, http://www.abcolombia.org.uk/downloads/ABColombia_Conflict_related_sexual_violence_report.pdf.

insurgencies in Latin America will continue to change as militant organizations adapt to modern technology.

G. CONCLUSION

Women participate in insurgencies in Latin America as sympathizers, spies, warriors, and dominant forces; however, the shift in roles depends on four main factors: first, the method of recruitment; second, skills needed inside the organization; third, willingness to assume greater responsibility; and finally, personal relationships. These four factors can also determine the level of satisfaction inside the organization. For example, in the case of Tanja Nijmeijer, she joined the organization for political reasons, which drove her to assume greater responsibilities in the area of political-military affairs. Tanja during recent interviews broadcasted over the Internet and international television, displayed high levels of satisfaction and sense of accomplishment by landing a seat as a negotiator in Cuba.³²¹ Elda Neyis Mosquera Garcia's experience was quite different. She joined the organization because of protection, boredom, and a sense of empowerment, which kept her working in the role of guerrilla fighter. The role of fighter or warrior exposed Edna (Karina) to an exciting life, where as a woman she could gain respect through violence. In the case of Edna, the violence that propelled her through the ranks also caused dissatisfaction and later her demobilization. The majority of women that joined an insurgency willingly displayed some level of empowerment. The exception is those women that were pushed into the insurgency unwillingly. The anonymity of the Internet, and other advancements in technology, enable women to become more active in strategic communication and propaganda because of the low risk and decentralized nature of the media; however, the utility of this new machinery depends on the history of the conflict and level of information operation that it is attempting to resist.

³²¹ Peterson, "Dutch Woman Explains."

V. WOMEN, INSURGENCY, AND DEMOBILIZATION

The need to engage the female population for counterinsurgency in Afghanistan has been underestimated for the better part of 10 years.

—Maj. Patrick McCarthy

A. INTRODUCTION

As the U.S. military continues to face challenges to national interests abroad, it is evident that it must consider the significant role that women will continue to play in insurgency. Therefore, U.S. counterinsurgency operations should include gender into the human terrain analysis when devising strategies, both in combat and during demobilization. While theorists of counterinsurgency, like David Galula, speak of the critical importance of co-opting female allegiance,³²² current military COIN doctrine, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) practices fail to emphasize the role and special requirements of women. The following remarkable asymmetry results: while insurgents themselves frequently realize the vital role played by women in revolutionary success, and find imaginative and useful ways to incorporate them into their organizations, COIN approaches to female engagement have proven tardy, ad hoc, frequently clumsy or self-defeating.

The United States and other countries struggle to understand the human terrain and gender issues in insurgencies. For insurgents using terrorist tactics, gender still remains a communication weapon that dramatizes their message. The recent increase of spectacular suicide bombings performed by Chechen women in Russia, has catapulted the discussion of gender in insurgencies, and more specifically, in suicide terrorist tactics to front-page news. In December 2013, two female suicide bombers detonated explosives at a train station and on a bus in Volgograd, Russia, causing major security concerns for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. The headline news around the world centered on the gender of the perpetrators, rather than the destruction and death caused. News reporters

³²² Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 79.

and pundits assailed the morality of terrorist groups that enlist women to perform such acts. Moscow based correspondent Ana Nemstova investigated historical trends, and found that “in the last 12 years, 46 women have turned themselves into suicide bombers in Russia, committing 26 terrorist attacks (some attacks involved multiple women). Most of the bombers were from Chechnya and Dagestan.”³²³ A Chechen insurgent separatist group that opposes both President Vladimir Putin and U.S. policy in the Middle East accepted responsibility for the terrorist attacks. Many Chechen women become pro-Muslim and pro-Chechnya activists out of political motivations. For the most radical among them, suicide bombing becomes an acceptable tactic to communicate their deep grievances. Therefore, one obvious conclusion to draw is that political radicalism is not gender specific.

Counterinsurgent practices continue to focus on threats coming from military-aged men in fatigues, rather than a woman in a hijab. The identification and targeting of females fighters, as in the case of recent Russian bombings in Volgograd, surprised the authorities and forced the government to implement expensive security measures. The 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi deployed about 40,000-law enforcement officers and imposed other security measures throughout the country.³²⁴

One contention of this chapter is that military COIN effectiveness could increase if strategies, operations, and tactics factor in females as part of the human terrain of the battlefield. While women figure most prominently in Latin American insurgent groups as combatants, supporters, and leaders,³²⁵ they are also present in insurgencies in Asia, Central Asia, Europe, and Africa. The U.S. military perception towards women as docile and motherly figures incapable of violence, contributes to the view gender is irrelevant to COIN success. Indeed, U.S. soldiers generally view women as non-combatants. This section will argue that U.S. COIN operations resist factoring gender-oriented policies for

³²³ Anna Nemstova, “Inside the Mind of Russia’s Black Widows,” *The Daily Beast*, August 26, 2013, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/witw/articles/2013/08/26/a-mother-s-despair-chechen-and-dagestani-mothers-radicalize-after-losing-sons-and-husbands-to-war-with-russia.html>.

³²⁴ Paul D. Shinkman, “3 Weeks to Sochi: Are Russian Security Forces Ready?” *U.S. News*, January 22, 2014, <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/01/22/3-weeks-to-sochi-are-russian-security-forces-ready>.

³²⁵ Henshaw, “Why Women Rebel,” 136.

four primary reasons. First, it regard COIN primarily as an offensive operation focused on military-aged male fighters. Second, the human terrain is complex and gender roles in insurgencies are not understood in depth. Third, the military resists employing females in COIN operations because until recently laws excluded them from combat. Finally, insurgencies in some quarters are seen as essentially criminal endeavors in which women play at most a limited role. This deemphasizes the social dimension of COIN, and puts a premium on decapitation strategies, and even neo-liberal economic approaches that may further disaggregate societies under stress. It is important to consider that COIN is an operational process, rather than an end state. Therefore, DDR should integrate gender considerations once the population has shifted to the side of the counterinsurgent. The case study of Colombia, a close U.S. partner, provides insight on how a lack of gender sensitivity discourages female demobilization as well as undermines their reintegration into the community once the decision is taken to demobilize.

B. WOMEN IN COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

During the last decade, the U.S. military developed new concepts that focused on winning the “hearts and minds” of the population, like human terrain teams. However, these teams frequently failed to devise strategies to deal with the female population. While Western counterinsurgents understand that gender relationships are fundamental to the order of every society, they fail fully to comprehend what role women play from a social or political perspective that differs from those of their fathers, brothers, husbands, or sons. Even if women oppose the insurgency, what impact will this have? Female suicide bombers, who have become prominent tools in the Middle East and South East Asia, contradict the Western perception that women play little part in combat.

The U.S. military still has laws and regulations that limit the participation of women in combat. On the other hand, in Iraq between 2003 and 2011, female suicide bombers carried out forty-three attacks, resulting in 748 deaths, and 1,507 wounded.³²⁶ Meanwhile, the Army and Marine Corps doctrinal and tactical manuals devote barely two

³²⁶ Female Suicide Attacks in Iraq, Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, University of Chicago, accessed December 23, 2013, http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search_results.php.

paragraphs to the importance of women in insurgency. The section in the doctrinal manual that mentions women is entitled: “Engage the Women; Be Cautious around the Children.”³²⁷ Clearly, the focus of COIN on women in insurgency is not a priority, nor is it much different than the engagement of children in battle.

Other official government guidelines avoid any gender-specific considerations by design and practice.³²⁸ COIN tactics designed to co-opt communities often fall short of effectively influencing the political, sectarian, or tribal-based communities by focusing almost exclusively on deterring, demobilizing, or killing male fighters as a method to create security. In this way, the U.S. military missed the opportunity to address half of the population and a significant portion of the support base for counterinsurgencies.

The initial operations in Iraq and Afghanistan failed to engage women, in part so as not to offend Muslim sensibilities. However, this left women more vulnerable to recruitment, and aided the insurgents in various ways—as logisticians, collectors, and disseminators of intelligence, or even as participants in violent attacks. In 2007, President Bush approved a surge of 20,000 U.S. troops, mainly in Iraq’s Anbar province, to secure and co-opt the population, rather than perform kill-or-capture operations against insurgents. Insurgent groups changed tactics, which included an aggressive recruitment of females for suicide attacks. The number of women performing suicide attacks increased from five in 2007, to twenty-six the following year, resulting in over 389 deaths, and 80 injured.³²⁹ In 2008 in Dhuluiya, Iraq, eighteen women participating in the terrorist organization Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia (AQM), took advantage of an amnesty plan to demobilize, although, how far this could be attributed to female engagement is unclear.³³⁰

³²⁷ United States Army, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3-24 (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army Government Printing Office, 2006), A6, <http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS79762>.

³²⁸ Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative (U.S.), *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative 2009), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf>.

³²⁹ Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, Suicide Attack Database, University of Chicago, accessed December 23, 2013, <http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search.php>.

³³⁰ Katherine Zoepf and Riyadh Mohammed, “Amnesty Plan in Iraq Draws 18 Insurgents,” *New York Times*, November 27, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/28/world/middleeast/28amnesty.html?_r=0.

From 2009–2012, the U.S. Marine Corps created Female Engagement Teams (FETs) in Afghanistan to focus on communicating with, and gathering intelligence from, Afghan females. The new established units were indeed capable of gaining access to Afghan households in a non-intrusive way, if the arrivals of a U.S. platoon armed-to-the-teeth can be defined as non-intimidating. To the surprise of some U.S. officers, the FETs were mostly well received, or at least tolerated, by the local Afghan population, although the reasons for this are not entirely clear.

Washington Post correspondent Tom Ricks reported that on occasion, Afghan women invited military females inside houses, while U.S. males remained on the perimeter of the compound.³³¹ FET teams not only broke barriers inside infantry patrols, but also pioneered the approach of gathering intelligence and engaging the Afghan communities literally from inside their homes. Ricks quoted a villager in Afghanistan, commenting on the perception of FETs in operations “your men come to fight, but we know the women are here to help.”³³² The U.S. military was slow to understand that although women lived in a patriarchal society, they still played a critical role inside the home, and on occasion, beyond. A 2008 Human Terrain Teams (HTT) report pointed this out:

HTT approached individuals the military does not usually address—women, children, etc.—asking what was important to them. This would start conversations that others would join . . . The Taliban targets vulnerable portions of the population such as medical professionals, women, and schools . . . Midwives are a key target audience. They have status as the medical care providers to females in the rural villages; they are permitted to travel outside the village; and they are the main source of news, commentary, and gossip for women. They are often targeted by the Taliban for this reason. Actions to assist, train, and protect midwives will reach a large audience quickly with a positive message.³³³

³³¹ Thomas E. Ricks, “Women in COIN (II): How to Do it Right,” *Foreign Policy*, October 9, 2009, http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/10/09/women_in_coin_ii_how_to_do_it_right.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Bryan N. Karabaich, “Memorandum Subject: Human Terrain Team (HTT) Debrief, November 1, 2007, Center for Army Lesson Learned, January 3, 2008, https://call2.army.mil/rfi/attachments/rfi45730/FOUO_CALL_Human_Terrain%20Team%20Debrief_3Jan08.pdf.

Some scholars posit that FETs broke normative barriers to the point that Afghan men saw women in FETs as a “third gender.”³³⁴ One significant downside of the FETs was that the U.S. military had underestimated the resistance of Afghan men to military women in operations. Afghans acted puzzled, when not shocked and repelled, by the spectacle of uncovered U.S. females in uniform, operating in the company of men who were not their husbands or brothers, an unthinkable transgression of Afghan social norms and customs.

The recent positive evaluation of the effectiveness of women in counterinsurgency operations has its critics. However, the majority of later reports on the FETs and similar groups were positive.³³⁵ The results are not widespread and depend on the cultural nuances of the tribes. In a HTT social-cultural study of Spin Boldak District in Afghanistan, teams found it difficult to overcome traditional Pashtun cultural barriers. Nevertheless, the team still saw the value of having women in their ranks:

However, if some men continue to reject our presence, even to visit their village, I suggest we still go and be in the background. Just having females with our Troops opens doors; we present a "softer" side, and both females and children respond to us. In addition, we have been engaging the men and this is no problem.³³⁶

The same report also highlighted the benefit of having females in the patrols:

The 'Lioness Program,' implemented in Iraq paid high dividends. The same should be applied here, especially given the condition of the females and children in this country. Just by seeing women out there, working alongside the men, assists our soldiers' efforts and the success of governance, reconstruction and development.³³⁷

³³⁴ Matt Pottinger, Hali Jilani, and Claire Russo, “Half Hearted: Trying to Win Afghanistan Without Afghan Women,” *Small Wars*, February 18, 2000, quoted in “The Gendering of Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan,” Keally McBride and Annick T.R. Wibben, *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2012), 210.

³³⁵ Tyra A. Harding, “Women in Combat Roles: Case Study of Female Engagement Teams,” U.S. Army War College 2012, Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2012, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA561195>.

³³⁶ Laura Jurgensen, “Female Engagements in Spin Boldak,” in “Human Terrain In Spin Boldak District Afghanistan: AF8 Human Terrain Team,” US Army 5/2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Center Army Lessons Learned Request for Information, 58, https://call2.army.mil/rfi/attachment.php?rfi_attachment=176320.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

In 2004 in Iraq, the Lioness program provided U.S. forces with female soldiers or Marines to search for women during tactical seizures, at checkpoints, and in other gender-sensitive situations during combat operations. Initial attempts at female engagement by U.S. troops were ad hoc, lacked cultural sensitivity, and were limited to minor roles, because it was not a concern for the first few years of the war. Infantry patrols gathered females from support military specialties in the unit, and formed house search teams, or sent them to man checkpoints without the training experience to do such missions. Other programs, in which women participated, were the Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), Special Operations Cultural Support Teams (CSTs), and Female Human Intelligence Exploitation Teams (FHETs).³³⁸

It became apparent that gender insensitivity was alienating part of the population, and the non-linear battle space required more military, female participation in operations. The transition from an enemy-focused to a more people-focused counterinsurgency emphasis in Iraq, and later in Afghanistan, expanded the role of women in COIN. One general assumption is that in COIN operations, the goal of security forces is to break the links of support for the insurgency. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have a history of abusing and disenfranchising women that might make them vulnerable to U.S. outreach. Keally McBride and Annick Wibben posited in 2012 that the “outreach to women could be the key for isolating the insurgency from the local population.”³³⁹ They argue that FETs could shift the masculine nature of the war through engagement of females, which impacts families, and can influence the long-term memory of the communities. To support this claim, McBride and Wibben quote Nina D’Amato, U.S. Marine Corps Officer operating in Regional Command South West, who concluded that women in Afghan communities are sedentary, and provide the best continuity opportunity.³⁴⁰ According to them, D’Amato insists that, “If you want your narrative entrenched, you

³³⁸ Stephanie K. Erwin, “The Veil of Kevlar: An Analysis of the Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan,” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), 9–14.

³³⁹ Keally McBride and Annick T.R. Wibben, “The Gendering of Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3, No. 2 (Summer 2012), 206, doi: 10.1353/hum.2012.0012.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

focus on the women.”³⁴¹ Furthermore they advance the idea that this less aggressive approach and focus on females and family offers a more civilized option that is likely to appeal to host nation citizens.³⁴² As an added bonus, reframing the narrative of counterinsurgency through a gender lens can help gain support at home.³⁴³ For example, during the initial stages of the war in Afghanistan, the domestic narrative had some gender undertones in rhetoric. Former First Lady Laura Bush stated that the operations were also “a fight for the rights and dignity of women.”³⁴⁴ However, the execution took almost a decade to begin approaching them systematically during operations. A further complication is that, by pitching these latest wars as a crusade to empower Muslim females, it both presents a “clash of civilizations” dimension which may alienate many in the region, opens females who collaborate with the invading power to retaliation, while courting challenges of abandonment when the time for withdrawal comes.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of appealing to women as part of a COIN operational approach depends upon mission goals, training, and motivation, as seen in the case of later versions of FETs in Afghanistan. Employing female U.S. personnel in COIN provided several advantages: first, they gathered valuable intelligence by interacting with Muslim females; second, the presence of U.S. women prompted a more positive attitude toward U.S. troops from male and female villagers alike; third, female engagement opened a communication channel to men through their wives, sisters, and mothers; finally, it was good domestic narrative to include a female agenda to bolster support for wars that seemed to be long, costly, without results, and which had little to do with U.S. interests.

A more important advantage that women bring to U.S. COIN operations is that they advance gender equality in U.S. ranks. Tom Ricks argues that “the main barrier to more intensive and extensive use of the teams seems to be the inflexibility, not of Afghan

³⁴¹ Ibid., 206–207.

³⁴² Ibid, 199–202, 206.

³⁴³ Ibid, 206.

³⁴⁴ James Gerstenzang and Lisa Getter, “Laura Bush Addresses State of Afghan Women,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 2001, <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/nov/18/news/mn-5602>.

men, but of U.S. Marine and Army officers.”³⁴⁵ While the U.S. military continues to struggle with the integration of women in the military, insurgents continue to recruit, train, and employ women in insurgent and terrorist groups.³⁴⁶ The DOD has systematically sought to analyze and codify this experience of female engagement and to transform it into doctrine.

C. COLOMBIA DDR AND GENDER MARGINALIZATION

Like the United States, Colombia, a close partner, has been slow to recognize a female dimension to its endemic security problems. It is even more remarkable because females figure prominently, especially in Left-wing insurgent groups in that country, like the FARC and the ELN. These Leftist groups often include up to 30 percent of females in their ranks.³⁴⁷ Over the years, Colombia frequently reached peace negotiations, conceded safe havens to insurgents, and even applied the more standard counterinsurgent practice of *mano dura* tactics. However, these seemingly opposing security strategies shared a common tendency to ignore females, failed to develop any sort of outreach to women in communities, or until very recently to evolve specialized programs to demobilize and reintegrate former female combatants into society. Furthermore, the application of Defense and Democratic Security (DDS) policy from 2003 failed to address female victims of human rights violations.

Between 2003 and 2006, the demobilization of the Auto-defense Units of Colombia (AUC) neglected female requirements, in part because, unlike Left-wing insurgent groups, the percentage of females in paramilitary groups was small. The Uribe government demobilized over 31,671 armed paramilitary soldiers, of which only 2,920 were women.³⁴⁸ In a 2009 speech to the London School of Economics and Political Science, Former President Uribe spoke about the key factors that enabled his regime to gain control of the contested areas.

³⁴⁵ Ricks, “Women in COIN (II).”

³⁴⁶ Phillip Perry, “The White Widow and the Growth of Female Terrorism,” Guardian Liberty Voice, September 27, 2013, <http://guardianlv.com/2013/09/the-white-widow-and-the-growth-of-female-terrorism/>.

³⁴⁷ Gonzalez-Perez, *Women and Terrorism*, 41.

³⁴⁸ Carames and Sanz, “Colombia (AUC, 2003–2008),” 55.

Governance was accomplished by the triangle of confidence. It is based on three key pillars: security with freedom, investment promotion with social responsibility, and the advancement of social cohesion . . . security and investment need validators to become a long-term investment.³⁴⁹

Uribe promoted progress and development in Colombia by providing security, economic investment, and building cultural institutions. The Uribe regime called it Defense and Democratic Security (DDS), because the security efforts took place within a democratic framework. The logic was to seize control of territory and establish security measures that could improve democracy, which would push investment to the affected areas, and eventually improve the lives of the people. At the time, some NGOs claimed that the process was more smoke and mirrors than an actual assertion of state power, as elements of the AUC simply reconsolidated in a different form.³⁵⁰

The additional goals of his policy were to arrest the internal violence and achieve peace, gain control of contested areas, protect the population, demobilize existing armed non-state actors, and regain the confidence of the people in the central government.³⁵¹ To do so, the Colombian military expanded by a third, “from 192,000 in 2002, to 254,000 members in 2006.”³⁵² Additionally, the Uribe regime expanded “a national network of one million informants, and paying citizens for information.”³⁵³

If the premise is that women form the core of communities, then according to Cristina Rojas, Uribe’s strategies have destroyed or at least imperiled those communities

³⁴⁹ Alvaro Uribe, “A Public Address By: His Excellency Álvaro Uribe, President of the Republic of Columbia Former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe,” Institute of Politics - John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum, Harvard Kennedy School/The Institute of Politics, podcast audio, October 5, 2009, iTunes U.

³⁵⁰ “Smoke and Mirrors. Colombia’s Demobilization of Paramilitary Groups,” *Human Rights Watch* 17, no. 3(B) (August 2005): 1–2.; James Bargent, “Neo-Paramilitary Groups Consolidating in Colombia,” *In Sight Crime: Organized Crime in the Americas*, 13 March, 2013, <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/colombia-bacrim-paramilitary-cartels-nuevo-arco-iris>.

³⁵¹ Presidency of the Republic, “Democratic Security and Defense Policy,” Ministry of Defense, 2003, San Diego State University, 1–25, <http://usregsec.sdsu.edu/docs/Colombia2003.pdf>.

³⁵² Cristina Rojas, “Colombia’s Neoliberal Regime of Governance: Securitization by Dispossession,” *In Post-Neoliberalism in the Americas*, ed. Laura Macdonald and Arne Ruckert. (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 237.

³⁵³ Cynthia Arnson, *In the Wake of War: Democratization and Internal Armed Conflict in Latin America* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012), 193.

through what she calls “securitization by dispossession.”³⁵⁴ Rojas argues that Uribe used the security crisis to deepen neoliberal economic reform, ignore land issues, and redefine the parameters of citizenship.³⁵⁵ In Rojas’ view, Uribe made the benefits of citizenship contingent on one’s degree of commitment to the security activities of the government.³⁵⁶ The effects of participation in these reforms were felt more in the rural areas, where armed groups and their influence supporters continued to have influence despite “demobilization.” Land reform, always a sensitive issue in Colombia, failed to alleviate the grievances of the poor and rural habitants dispossessed by the conflict. Security became the excuse to repeat previous errors of taking land away for those who needed it most. As a consequence of these land reforms and militarization of security zones, “0.04 percent of the owners possessed 61 percent of the land, [and] food insecurity increased.”³⁵⁷ The neoliberal economic reforms exacerbated grievances in the most rural areas that previously pushed male and females alike into the armed groups.

Josefina Echevarria Alvarez argued that the Colombian government framed the insurgency as criminal in nature, rather than a social, economic, and political phenomenon.³⁵⁸ According to Echevarria, if armed groups are portrayed as fighting for control of the profit of drug trade rather than to change the political status quo, then the government no longer has to respond with reforms.³⁵⁹ This change in narrative from political to economic driven insurgency, seemed to resonate more on the Right, which dismissed social grievances as being root causes of the conflict and has opposed negotiations with the FARC. Echevarria concluded that the Uribe regime framed the conflict as the cause of the grievances; therefore, the “war will only end when the enemy is defeated militarily.”³⁶⁰ This perspective that the enemy was merely a band of criminals

³⁵⁴ Cristina Rojas, “Colombia’s Neoliberal,” 236–237.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 242–246.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 242.

³⁵⁸ Josefina Echevarria Alvarez, “Doing Gender in the Midst of War: The Example of the Demobilization Process of Paramilitary in Medellin, Colombia 2003-2007,” *Peace Studies Journal* 13, No. 2, 2009: 55–56.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

undermined a more measured approach to DDR, one that included recognition of gender specific requirements. Until quite recently (when did this change?), DDR of insurgents was under military control.

The Program for Humanitarian Assistance to the Demobilized Persons (PAHD) is under the administration of the Ministry of Defense, and investigations of human rights violations by the military fall under the military justice system authority.³⁶¹ The militarization of the demobilization process shielded further action from civilian scrutiny. Human rights observers are caught in the middle of the conflict, between the regime, the guerrillas, and Right-wing paramilitary or criminal organizations. In 2012, “at least forty human rights defenders and community leaders, and twenty trade union members were killed.”³⁶² Female organizations received threats, and “some were raped in order to punish and silence them.”³⁶³

The DDS plan addressed females as victims of human rights violations, and not as perpetrators in need of reintegration and rehabilitation. Herrera and Porch argued, “Female fighters continue to be seen as collateral victims of male violence.”³⁶⁴ The majority of the proposed reforms in the DDS focused on treating females and children in the same category, similar to the U.S. COIN doctrine. Plan Colombia, a security plan dating from 2000 funded in part by the United States, acknowledged that the conflict altered gender roles among thousands of internally displaced persons (IDP), by placing increased responsibilities on females as head of households. The security strategies failed to address deep grievances caused by gender violence in rural areas, which may be a significant factor in the recruiting of female insurgents seduced by the prospect that inclusion in armed groups may improve their lives.

³⁶¹ “Amnesty International Report 2013: The State of the World’s Human Rights,” Amnesty International, 67, accessed June 14, 2013, http://files.amnesty.org/air13/AmnestyInternational_AnnualReport2013_complete_en.pdf.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Herrera and Porch, “Like Going to a Fiesta,” 610.

Kimberly Theidon believes that DDR is the key to consolidation of peace, and a process that could transform the relationship between individuals and the community.³⁶⁵ The process of reintegrating former combatants is complicated, as seen in the post-conflict reconstruction in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. For example, in the post-conflict period in El Salvador, women felt disenfranchised from the political party of the FMLN, fragmenting the preexisting networks of female guerrillas into women organizations.³⁶⁶ The lack of support for women's rights in society, and demands from the newly established political party created divisions among female supporters of the FMLN that did not exist prior to the peace process.³⁶⁷ In Colombia, the situation is different, because DDR is being carried out while conflict is still active.³⁶⁸ Because former female guerrillas may face violence if they attempt to return to their original communities, "85 percent of those who individually chose to leave armed groups . . . live [later] in Bogotá and Medellín."³⁶⁹

Several organizations that practice DDR concur with the importance of consideration of gender, during the reintegration. During the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies 2008 DDR Course, the attendees attributed the shortcomings of DDR programs to their "focus on processing of adult male ex-combatants to the detriment of female combatants, child soldiers, support personnel, and combatants families."³⁷⁰ Porch and Rasmussen evaluated Uribe's DDR as successful overall. However, they cited the lack of flexibility of Colombian DDR to adapt "programs to the experience, ethnicity, gender, or age of the participants, or to regional variants."³⁷¹ The DDR process that began under Uribe applied to collective

³⁶⁵ Kimberly Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants," *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1, 2007, 66–67, doi: 10.1093/ijtj/ijm011.

³⁶⁶ Luciak, *After the Revolution*, 150–151.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 149.

³⁶⁸ Porch and Rasmussen, "Demobilization of Paramilitaries," 522–525.

³⁶⁹ Schwitall and Dietrich, "Demobilisation of Female," 58–59.

³⁷⁰ "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration," Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies March–April 2008, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 1–24, http://edocs.nps.edu/npspubs/scholarly/Proceedings/csrs/2008/csrs_mar_apr08.pdf.

³⁷¹ Porch and Rasmussen, "Demobilization of Paramilitaries," 531.

demobilization of the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia (AUC). The main intention was to remove Right-wing armed groups so that the FARC could no longer claim that they needed to remain armed for their own protection. However, because many of the AUC simply reconsolidated under a different name, the logic of this argument has proven to be deceptive.³⁷²

The Office of High Commissioner for Peace managed the process at the collective level through the Support Mission for the Peace Process in Colombia from the Organization of American States (Mission de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz en Colombia de la Organización de los Estados Americanos (MAPP-OEA). At the individual level, the Ministry of Defense managed DDR through the Program for Humanitarian Attention to Demobilized People (PAHD). The High Commission for Reintegration (ACR) and the Ministry of Interior managed the reintegration process for both.³⁷³ The transition from fighter to a productive member of society for individuals could take more than 24 months.³⁷⁴ During the demobilization process, the Committee for Laying Down Arms (CODA) certified demobilized guerrillas. The certification granted the demobilized access to training, monthly stipends, assistance to their families, and safety opportunities.

The Uribe administration's management of DDR was criticized for granting impunity for crimes, allowing the expansion of FARC controlled lands, and causing that the paramilitaries to transform themselves into criminal groups called 'Bandas Criminales' or BACRIM.³⁷⁵ As mentioned previously, the DDR process ignored needs of women such as childcare, medical treatment of sexual transmitted diseases product of sexual promiscuity or assault, reproduction training, and prevention of domestic violence.³⁷⁶

³⁷² Enzo Nussio, "Learning from Shortcomings: The Demobilization of Paramilitaries in Colombia," *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 6, no. 2 (2011): 88-92, http://www.urosario.edu.co/urosario_files/12/12e19478-ae60-455d-9923-ae4b888ce77.pdf.

³⁷³ Porch and Rasmussen, "Demobilization of Paramilitaries," 526–529; Mendez, "Militarized Gender Performativity," 116–119.

³⁷⁴ Porch and Rasmussen, "Demobilization of Paramilitaries," 527–528.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 530.

³⁷⁶ Mendez, "Militarized Gender Performativity," 169–170.

The reintegration of women into Colombian society depends on the capacity for them to form new patterns of interaction with partners and family members. The institution of family is essential for many cultures, including the Colombian culture. The process of demobilization interrupted gender relationships built inside the armed organizations. Women and men inside the family nucleus could not help break the cycle of domestic violence and sexual abuse. As seen in Chapter III, some women joined the guerrilla groups because of family ties, and intolerable conditions in the home. Focus on family planning, drug abuse prevention, and sexual education, could have helped break cycle of violence. Having stable and guerrilla-free families could not deter everyone from joining a terrorist or insurgent organization. However, it could provide conditions that would give women other choices.

Social reform requires a combination of the rule of law to work. The DDR process reduced the levels of violence directly related to the conflict, and across the rest of Colombia. However, it did little to address women's rights. Reform of the treatment of women in society in general could facilitate the transition of former female combatants into the communities. DDR programs could shift from a male focused reintegration, and adopt female and family focused policies to advance the transition for all fighters. Women in traditional social roles could encourage male participation in DDR. As seen earlier in the case of SL, women members co-opted the men to deceive the organization. In Colombia, women with strong traditional roles could form strong families that could appeal to demobilized men by providing stable relationships.

Demobilized female insurgents need the support to reinforce traditional and nontraditional gender roles, because typically, DDR places the requirement to end violence and disarm groups over the needs of women in demobilization. Mendez found that "the types of medical care, childcare requirements, and education needs of women ex-combatants are different from those of men ex-combatants."³⁷⁷

In summary, Colombia's gender-neutral approach to DDR limited the effectiveness of the reintegration of former female insurgent combatants into society. The

³⁷⁷ Mendez, "Militarized Gender Performativity," 13.

application of DDR as a gender-free approach failed to address those who were victims of human rights abuses, and so isolated and disenfranchised a great portion of the demobilized females. The stigma created toward those associated with armed groups hindered the reintegration of females into their communities. Colombian women often joined armed groups to escape violence, improve their opportunities, or because of family ties to other guerrilla members. DDR programs did nothing to address those conditions, assuming that security and economic opportunity created by neo-liberal policies would take care of the problem. The DDR process of Colombia is an example of how the focus on security could isolate portions of the population, specifically women, which make them vulnerable.

D. CONCLUSION

U.S. COIN doctrine and Colombia DDR are examples of areas where governments underestimate the importance of the role of women. The lack of understanding of the role played by women in insurgent groups hinders the implementation of COIN efforts. The Department of Defense Combat Exclusion Policy for females contributes to reinforce the idea that war is the exclusive preserve of men. The U.S. military's views of women in overseas operations reflect more cultural and organizational shortcomings than the reality on the ground. In 1991, during a congressional hearing, General Robert H. Barrow stated, "if you want to make a combat unit ineffective, assign some women to it. ... In three wars—World War II, Korea, and Vietnam—I found no place for women to be down in the ground combat element."³⁷⁸ U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Colombian security forces, struggle because of the cultural and social view of women as nourishing and caring mother figures, incapable of the physical tasks of combat, and incapable of violence. As the U.S. military gradually integrates women into combat branches, including the infantry, it will also need to refine views of females as a non-violent actor. On the other hand, insurgents fully recognize the adaptability and utility of females in their

³⁷⁸ Matt Barber, "Women in Combat: Felony Stupid," Townhall.com, February 18, 2013, <http://townhall.com/columnists/mattbarber/2013/02/18/women-in-combat-felony-stupid-n1514581/page/full>.

organizations. Henshaw summarizes this point by stating, “first, even if women are not fighting for the U.S., they may be fighting for the other side.”³⁷⁹

It is also important for U.S. COIN operations to recognize that female demobilization is another form of female engagement. The case of Colombia highlights the need for active and enduring supervision and metrics to account for the equal and early integration of females into society. U.S. COIN operations have not seen mass female DDRs, and can learn from the Colombian experience, whose lessons include the following: 1) security forces that include females in all phases of the reintegration process; 2) work with host nation authorities to provide attention to women’s special needs like childcare, sexual transmitted diseases, and their reproductive health; and 3) women leaving insurgencies often demonstrating severe posttraumatic stress disorder, and psychological anxiety and depression.

Drug surveys in countries with victims of insurgency violence, such as Peru, found that drug consumption among women was on the rise. Alcohol consumption in Peru rose from 81.5 percent in 1997, to 85.7 percent in females in 1999.³⁸⁰ They also found that anxiety and violence history exacerbate the dependency on drugs and anxiolytics.³⁸¹ Domestic violence by male partners often contributed the abandonment of women, making them vulnerable to predatory criminal practices, or other insurgent groups. Demobilizing females can persuade other women and their male partners to join DDR efforts. The security of women combatants returning to their communities is at risk if the perception of them is negative. This could discourage other women who are might consider demobilizing. In Colombia, more than half of women fighters who demobilized preferred to stay near major cities, rather than return to their urban communities.³⁸² There is still more to learn from the experience of governments and their handling of women

³⁷⁹ Henshaw, “Know your Enemy.”

³⁸⁰ M.B. Rondon, “From Marianism to Terrorism: The Many Faces of Violence Against Women in Latin America,” *Archives of Women’s Mental Health* 6 (3) (2003):160–161.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 160.

³⁸² Schwitall and Dietrich, “Demobilisation of Female,” 58–59.

insurgents in Latin America. Chapter VI will focus on planning considerations that include women in insurgencies useful for policy makers, military, and statesman alike.

VI. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Only through a shared appreciation of the people's culture, needs, and hopes for the future can we hope to supplant the extremist narrative.

—Admiral Michael Mullen
former chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

A. MAJOR FINDINGS AND SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

This thesis seeks to add to the understanding of the complex operational environment of COIN, specifically on the aspect of women in insurgencies in Latin America. It has explored why women enlist in insurgencies, how far their expectations are met inside the organizations, they adapted to life in the guerrilla, and how their presence changed the attitudes and behavior of these insurgent organizations. The key points and findings are the following:

First, the increased participation of women in insurgencies in Latin America occurred because of changes in the attitudes of men, who recognized their value both for ideological and operational reasons. Despite talk of gender equality and the fact that a handful of women have achieved influential positions in some groups, organizational needs, rather than a sudden commitment to female emancipation was the primary influence in this attitude change. In the 1960s and 1970s, male insurgent leaders witnessed the successful utilization of women in the Vietnamese independence movements and sought to replicate this successful model in Latin America. This marked a dramatic change from the Cuban Revolution, which saw only a minor participation of women as fighters. In fact, their role had been limited because of social attitudes, guerrilla tactics, and internal group machismo. The FSLN in Nicaragua may be seen as the Latin American pioneers of the enlistment and utilization of females in the insurgency. Women were hardly mere bystanders in this process—in fact, the FSLN was also reacting to the increase of political engagement by females. The causes of this are complex, but they involved faster means of communication, the interaction of women in

refugee situations in which they unexpectedly became head of households, and NGO activity that targeted women.

A second, influence in the increasing engagement of women can be found in social networks spawned by a Church inspired by liberation theology. Liberation theology was instrumental to the recruitment, indoctrination, and mobilization of women in the refugee camps in Central American into revolutionary movements. The support networks organized through the Catholic Church spread the experience of women to adjacent countries contributing directly to an increase of females within similar timelines. This last point is important because it helps explain why Latin America has the most women participation in rebel groups in the world.³⁸³ Alexis Henshaw posits that the cross-cultural-regional differences occurred because of “the overlap between regional and ideological differences . . . insurgencies active in Latin America during this time period overwhelmingly adhere to Marxist ideology, and some groups in Central America cooperated or at least influenced one another.”³⁸⁴ This thesis argues that Henshaw’s observation is correct and adds that liberation theology in Central America was instrumental to this described interaction among insurgencies. Furthermore, this research concludes that the contribution of liberation theology goes beyond creating structures of mobilization, but also influenced the identity of the oppressed population by providing them with a just reason for using violence. This factor is extremely important in the development of an insurgency decision-making process to choose violence over other available political venues.³⁸⁵ Of course, there are exceptions, the most notable being the FARC-EP that remains hostile to religion in the historic anti-clerical traditions of the Latin American left.

Additionally, the impact of the support of external forces in insurgencies in Latin America contributed to the development of a revolutionary counterculture, which was appealing to middle and peasant women. As described in Chapter III, Cuban ideological

³⁸³ Henshaw, “Why Women Rebel” 143.

³⁸⁴ Henshaw, “Know Your Enemy.”

³⁸⁵ Paul K. Davis and Kim Cragin, eds., “Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together,” RAND National Defense Research Institute, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2009, 46, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG849.pdf.

and material support was an important factor to the insurgents because it helped strengthen the rebel group's resilience and ability to resist regime pressure. The longevity of the struggle, repressive state actions, the perceived durability of insurgent movements, and an absence of viable alternatives in the limited universe of the Latin American peasant offered a revolutionary alternative in which some men and women were willing to invest. An egalitarian narrative, promoted by insurgent groups taken from the Cuban Revolution, was especially attractive to women, at least in theory. David Galula said it best, "the best cause for the insurgent's purpose, by definition, can attract the largest number of supporters and repel the minimum of opponents."³⁸⁶ The involvement of U.S. support for the existing regimes encouraged anti-American sentiment and legitimized the insurgent's assertion that capitalism and northern influence was the cause of the deep social-economical grievances. These conditions influenced women to prefer Leftist insurgencies to Right wing groups because their interests were better represented and the later was usually associated with the existing regime's forms of power and control.

Third, women are not necessarily deterred from enlisting because of the lack of success of the insurgencies. For example, SL and FARC continue to survive although their ability to overthrow the governments of Peru and Colombia respectively appears remote. Although reduced in numbers, between 30–40 percent of these insurgencies are made up of women. What does influence female participation, as well as a general influence in the public, is the failure by insurgent groups to engage Church-sponsored activist networks. Again, the main advantage of Central American insurgencies over Andean ones studied in this thesis was the willingness to interact with networks. These networks provided greater human and monetary capital, which let the administrative arm of the organization focus on political matters rather than mere survival.

Fourth, women join insurgencies for both ideological and personal reasons. However, little is said in the current literature on how women shift from political support to enlistment as active guerrillas. There are four factors that determine the decision to become more active: a decision by insurgent groups to recruit women; skills required

³⁸⁶ David Galula and John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 13.

within the organization that women can fulfill; a willingness on the part of females to assume greater responsibility within the organization; and personal relationships. Figure 24 attempts to sum up the most common characteristics discussed in the female case studies in Chapter IV for the recruitment and promotion of females within insurgent organizations. For example, the FMLN recruited Nidia Díaz because of her capacity to mobilize and organize as demonstrated by her activity in networks such as university student groups. She participated in similar activities during her time in the FMLN. On the other hand, for uneducated females, advancement inside the guerrilla organizations required fighting experience and proof of political indoctrination. Drawing from Mao's assertion that a good guerrilla fighter is one who has a solid political commitment, the insurgencies in Latin America constantly reinforced Marxist-Leninist political teaching and mixed it with a narrative that appealed to the female identity. Initially, women's roles were limited to logistics, messaging, nursing, informants, smuggling, and other supporting roles (see Figure 24 for comparison of upper mobility and characteristics). The mid-level leadership, like Karina in the FARC, highlights that an extensive combat record, experience (leadership), discipline, and capacity to commit violence were key for her to achieve leadership positions. The factors that propel women into higher-level leadership roles can be a combination of skills in any from any of the three levels. However, personal ties and education seem to distinguish female leadership in the highest echelons. It is still unclear, because of lack of information, at what point women willingly decide to accept greater responsibility inside the organizations. For example, in the case of the FARC-EP, one can suggest two possibilities: first, that woman decided to seek greater responsibility because they wanted to improve their status within the organization. Second, that as the Colombian regime's decapitation of male leadership succeeded, women stepped up to fill the vacuum. The aging leadership, distracted with drug smuggling operations to survive, failed to build a robust male cadre to replace them, opening space for qualified women (experienced fighters with political skills) to advance into better positions. It is equally true that in the last few years, the Colombian security forces have also focused on demobilizing female guerrillas as well—witness Karina and an increasing effort put toward the demobilization of female guerrillas. Therefore, further

study on a composition of mid-level FARC cadres is required before one can firm up this assumption.

Fifth, women in insurgency can benefit from advances of technology in two ways. First, the Internet provides anonymity, which allows them to participate freely in political activity without the permission or disapproval of a patriarchal culture. Second, advances in communications technology can help to push gender issues to the fore as in the case of the EZLN in Chiapas, Mexico. In groups like the FARC-EP, women are challenged to connect with audiences through the Internet because of the perception that the FARC is a violent organization that exploits its recruits.

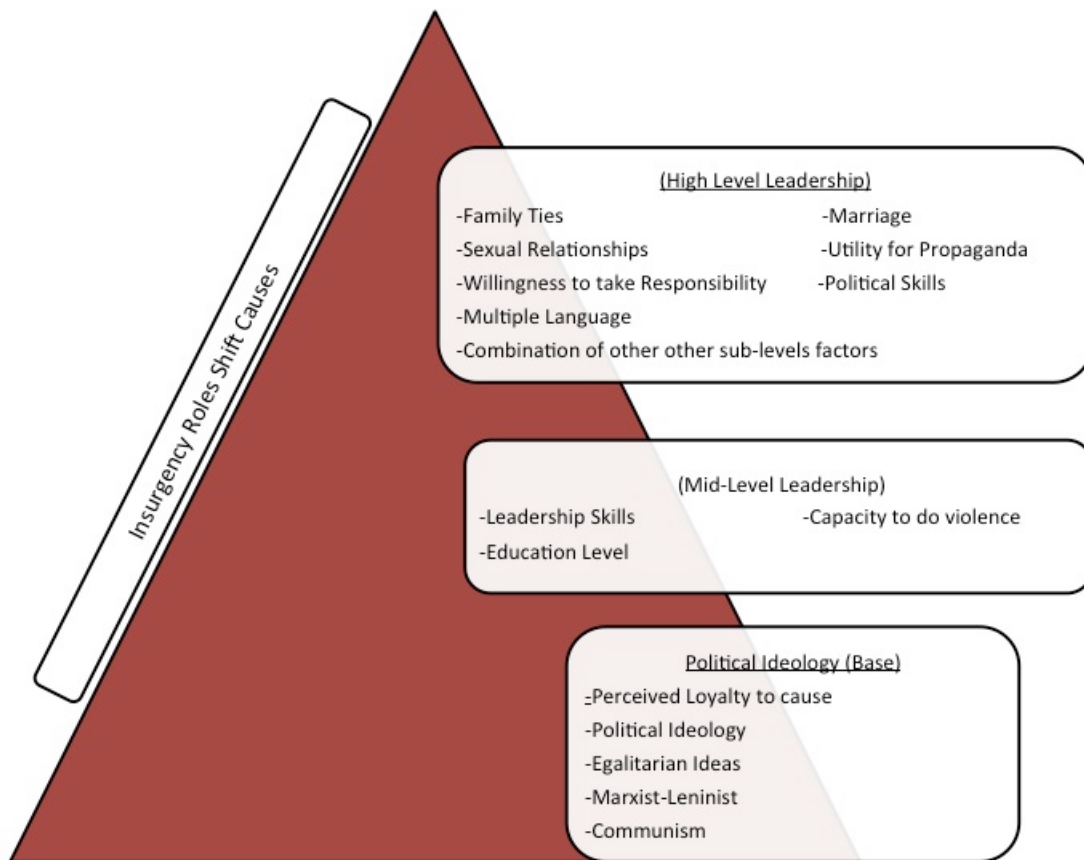


Figure 24. Women Upper Mobility in Insurgencies in Latin America.

This study asserts that U.S. COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have been slow to include a gender dimension because of military regulations and cultural barriers

rather than tactical constraints on the battlefield. The tactics and mentality, of group think tainted by patriarchal attitudes towards women, hindered a potentially valuable understanding of human terrain gender dynamics during COIN operations. The aforementioned factors left half of the population free to be coerced or recruited by insurgents. Culture and language, of course, also handed the insurgency a huge advantage in gaining the confidence and support of the female population. Lessons learned from Afghanistan and Iraq underline the need for COIN doctrine to incorporate outreach to women as source of information and influence within the family nucleus. Female engagement is key to gather information about health, activities, and expectations towards governance and infrastructure activities critical to winning over “hearts and minds.” While a laudable initiative, the female engagement teams need clear objectives within an overarching plan. Otherwise, they remain an ad hoc, tardy, ill-conceived and clumsy effort at outreach. Patience and trial-and-error are key to determining what works in a specific region. Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) needs to address gender issues to support all phases of planning of the engagement.

Finally, culture helps to determine how women behave within the insurgencies. In Latin America, although women lived in patriarchal societies, the Christian religion provided a sense of providence and a counter point to the machismo culture M.B. Rondon calls this Marianism, a culturally induced view that women must be docile and tolerate violence against them.³⁸⁷ Marianismo can help to explain why women remain in the insurgency even if their expectations are not fulfilled or they become victims of abuse. The deep cultural acceptance of violence as a normative way of life requires that women accept their fate inside insurgencies and enables them to perform violent acts upon others with match, perhaps even exceed, those inflicted by their male counterparts.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Adapting to the complex operational environment requires intelligence to develop successful counterinsurgency approaches that integrate legitimacy, governance, and security. This study recommends three primary paths to develop better planning and

³⁸⁷ Rondon, “From Marianism to Terrorism,” 157–159.

understanding about gender dimensions of COIN within the U.S. military and in the analysis of the human terrain. A commander's understanding of gender and grievance can produce a valuable understanding of the target society, and not just the males in it. An awareness of the gender dimensions of COIN must be included in officer professional development. Ground forces commanders should incorporate females into their force structure during deployments and training exercises. The success of the female outreach in COIN depends on the feasibility, time, and flexibility of the goals established by the command. Building relationship with women, especially in patriarchal societies, takes time and commanders should be patient and understanding of the dynamics of the human terrain. Finally, leaders with some background in human psychology and sociology should be developed through broadening programs, advanced education opportunities, or even at the local unit level through officer development seminars or self-study.

Efforts are under way to eliminate barriers for women in combat arms in the U.S. Army. This will certainly shift male perceptions, unfortunately too stubborn in this writer's view, that women adapt badly to combat. The indoctrination process of basic training and officer basic courses need gender training to understand the complexity of the combat environment, but also to reduce sexual harassment and build trust between genders. The armed forces will be more representative of U.S. society as they include women in operations. This inclusion can break machista attitudes towards women, and therefore, break down stereotypes of women on the battlefield as violent actors.

Ground force commanders should organize their units in a way that supports the integration of female in COIN and for conventional war operations. The organic constraints of numbers and structure could be overcome by conducting cross training of male and female military occupation specialties [MOS] to enable female heavy units to function normally when they have to perform other tasks in support of combat units. The issue of women in combat arms distracts from an understanding of the reality of the operational environment. This thesis concludes that women willingly or unwillingly join and fight, often tenaciously, in insurgent groups. The issue of opening many MOS in combat arms to women seems to be more political in nature than a lack of interest by women in taking on more dangerous assignments. In a recent 2014 poll, a survey of

Army women revealed that “less than eight percent are interested in a combat role—but those who say they want one of those jobs want to go right into the heart of the battle.”³⁸⁸ In this writer’s opinion, the experience of COIN in Iraq and Afghanistan prove that women should and are an asset to ground commanders as a way to engage the people and understand grievances to develop better supporting tactics to counter the insurgent influence over the female population.

Lastly, the professional development of the Officer Corps during the last decade benefited from the experience of combat operations like never before. The all-volunteer Army proved that it could fight and win the nation’s wars. However, the later changes in budget and the loss of experienced officers to the civilian workforce will hinder future planners and critical operational thinkers among the U.S. military. This will require an expansion of advance education programs as incentives to retain promising officers that could later serve as operational planners and strategists. As the U.S. pivots to other regions, it is important to have qualified planners at all levels that understand the importance of civilian considerations in the battlefield. Special consideration should be given to regional studies, social science, political science, history, gender relations, economy, emotional intelligence, and stabilization and reconstruction studies. The education and diverse experience of officers will prepare them to better conduct assessments of the human terrain, and translate the implications into operations. Based on the discussion of this thesis, gender is a factor that must be considered when planning conventional or unconventional operations, including effective disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process. The study of female insurgents in Latin America highlights the importance of gender in support, combat, and reconstruction operations.

³⁸⁸ “Survey Reals Low Interest among Army Women in combat Jobs,” KY3 News, February 26, 2014, http://www.ky3.com/news/local/survey-reals-low-interest-among-army-women-in-combat-jobs/21048998_24702582.

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